

Perspectives of parents in and from Turkey on early childhood, child development, and parenting - An intra- and cross-cultural comparative study on parental beliefs about children's nature and development, as well as parenting and encouragement in early childhood

The project carried out at Kassel University in cooperation with Yaşar University in Izmir examines parental beliefs about early childhood and parenting. This includes assumptions about the “nature” of the child and its development, evaluation of the child’s abilities considered to be of special importance, as well as expectations about the time in which certain developmental steps and abilities should be achieved. Additionally, the question will be raised about whether a child should be supported in attaining these abilities – if so, from whom and by which means should this support take place. Parents shape their children’s world of experience according to these beliefs and thus influence their social and emotional development.

Debates on parenting in (Turkish) migrant families in Germany tend to be overly simplistic. Because of their background, these families are often assumed to have traditional ideas about education and to be lacking in modernity in comparison with German parents and educational institutions. Even if in both Germany and Turkey basic parental assumptions about childhood, development, and education are culturally anchored, they are also subject to processes of social and cultural change and should therefore be recognized as dynamic, diverse, and changeable. The *Model of Family Change* by Kağıtçıbaşı (1996) picks up on these processes of modernization and classifies families into three different models:

Rural societies are characterized through strong family ties and parenting is oriented around control over and obedience of the child (*Family Model of generalized/general Interdependence*). While the child’s autonomy would be dysfunctional in this context, families in Western-urban spheres attribute vital

importance to it: children do not contribute to the family income and their independence does not pose a threat to the subsistence of the family (*Model of Independence*). However, in urban, economically developed regions in what were once loyalty-oriented societies, Kağıtçıbaşı finds educational goals, psychological attachment, and autonomy (*Family Model of Psychological Interdependence*).

In order to study parental beliefs and to test the model within the context of migration, a total of 120 guided interviews with mothers and fathers of children between the ages of two and five are conducted in Turkey and Germany. Their parental beliefs about the nature of the child, its development, and necessary forms of parenting and education are examined. In Germany, Turkish-German mothers and fathers from first and second/third-migrant generations are interviewed, as well as German parents without migration experience.

Researchers from Yaşar University in Izmir are conducting interviews with parents from urban and rural areas in Turkey who also differ in levels of education. The comparison of all these interviews shall shed light on similarities and differences in parental beliefs due to migration, ethnic and national culture, gender, as well as social and regional origin.

The project wants to compare parental beliefs about development and parenting in early childhood internationally and interculturally in order to get a more differentiated view on the effects of culture, migration, gender, education and regional belonging. In addition, guidance for institutions educating preschool children shall be developed.