

## **The Opinions of University Graduate Working Mothers Who Have 36-60-Months-Old Children about the Quality of the Time Spent with Their Children: A Phenomenological Analysis\***

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### **Abstract**

The main aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of university graduate working mothers who have 36-60 months-old children of the quality of the time spent with their children. In the study, the phenomenology design was used among qualitative research techniques. The study group consisted of 32 mothers selected by using a maximum variation sampling method. The data of the study were collected using the semi-structured interview technique, and the data were analyzed using the descriptive analysis technique. The majority of the mothers who participated in the interview described the quality time spent between the mother and child as the time which is spent with activities that the mother and child enjoy equally. The majority of the mothers stated that they believe that it is necessary to spend quality time with their children since it affects mother-child communication positively, they want to participate in the training during which they can learn activities appropriate to different age ranges and different areas of development with their children, they play games with their children to spend quality time, and they believe that spending quality time contributes to mother-child communication. Half of the mothers stated that the process was turned into quality time by including the child in all responsibilities at home, while the other half stated that no quality time could be spent with the child while fulfilling the responsibilities at home. The mothers emphasized that the periods that can be spent in a quality way are weekends and annual leave periods and stated that the main factor which prevents spending the quality time is the intensity of working hours. It is thought that organizing practical training seminars that will enable mothers to learn how to make the time spent with their children more qualified will contribute to mothers.

**Keywords:** Quality time, 36-60-months-old child, mothers' views, phenomenology

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## INTRODUCTION

The family is a social institution that consists of a mother, father and children and forms the basis of community life. The family takes a significant place in the development of the child, especially in the early years, so early childhood education starts and continues at home (Çağdaş & Seçer, 2010; Ülgen & Fidan, 2003). The child mimics the attitudes and behaviors of his/her mother and father, by observing them, taking them as a model, and identifying with them (Vaizoğlu, 2008). In this way, the child gains his/her first education through the parents, in his/her family. To which extent the child's genetic characteristics obtained from his/her parents will evolve and change is closely related to the socio-economic and cultural situation of the family, the relationships of the family members, the child-rearing attitudes of the parents, the parents' knowledge levels about child development and education, and the stimulus environments they offer to their children (Kaya, 1994). It is possible for children to be able to adapt to their social environment, to be effective in the friend relationships, entrepreneurial, and creative, be able to self-check and express emotions and thoughts freely through the healthy communication they establish with their parents (Yavuzer, 2010).

Children's daily interactions with their parents support their emotional, physical and intellectual development and develop their sense of self (Brazelton & Cramer, 1990; Dawson & Ashman, 2000; Tronick & Beeghly, 2011). Parents can support mathematics and literacy skills of their children through game interactions and support healthy brain development through a warm, sensitive, and soft care, and thus increase their children's academic achievement. They can also develop the skills which children need in order to succeed in life, manage their emotions and behaviors, establish healthy relationships with adults and peers, and adapt to new situations (Cook, Roggman, & Boyce, 2011; Lerner, Rothbaum, Boulos, & Castellino, 2002; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004; Rogoff, 2003; De Wolff & Van Ijzendoorn, 1997). For this reason, it is essential that the parents take equal responsibilities in the upbringing of the child because child education is a duty which is heavy and important to be left only to mothers (Eryaman, 2007; Saygılı, 2008). Fathers also have an important impact on their children at least as much as mothers have. Studies have demonstrated that children interacting with their fathers through games have the opportunity to develop more easily their skills such as emotional adjustment, problem-solving, risk-taking, coping with difficulties, communicating with others (Amato, 1986; Biller, 1993; Biller & Solomon, 1986; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1990; Labrell, 1996; Lamb, 2004; Paquette, 2004; Radin, 1982). Supporting the child in all developmental fields is the parents' most important responsibility which they should carry out in partnership within the team spirit. This case is the primary condition of child development as a healthy individual in every aspect. However, parenting studies focus mainly on the mother because mothers are considered as the main source of routine care, comfort, and safety of the child. The great part of the responsibility of raising children has been left to mothers since especially after birth, all physiological needs of the baby such as feeding, sleeping, and cleaning are met by the mother, and the mother is the person with whom the baby interacts first and who is the closest person to the baby (Çağdaş, 2002; Dempsey, 2000; Lamb, 2004; Parke, 1996). Babies establish important bonds also with their fathers. However, when the effects of the bond between mother-infant and father-infant on child development are compared, the mother-infant relationship has been revealed to have a stronger effect (Thompson, 1998).

While working mothers struggle with the difficulties of the business life, they try to fulfill their responsibilities related to house works, on the one hand, and make efforts to spend enough time with their children, on the other hand. The important point in parent-child communication is, undoubtedly, the quality, not the quantity of the time spent. Studies have demonstrated that the types of activities which parents do together with their children rather than the total time they devote to their children are more effective on the talent development and academic achievement of children (Mancini & Pasqua, 2012; Zick, Bryant, & Österbacka, 2001). Of course, it is not possible to speak of communication and interaction in environments where hours are spent side by side, but nothing is shared. For this reason, quality time can be defined as certain activities done in order to create and maintain the family's entertainment, interest, and togetherness, or it can be defined as spending the time needed by the child as minutes full of sharing which puts a smile on the faces of children and

parents, develops both sides, and provides mutual enjoyment (Christensen, 2002; Semerci, 2009). Quality time was defined as the mother-child interaction that will contribute to the development of children by Bryant (1992), as “close, nurturing and love-based” interactions between parents and children in everyday routines such as housework by Spock (1998), and as getting healthy, positive, nutritious experiences between the child and the parent by Fogarty and Evans (2009). Through quality time activities, it is significant that parents give the child the message that they are together not only physically but also with their feelings and thoughts. From this point of view, it is definitely not a quality time activity to walk around with the child and to do whatever he wants (Semerci, 2009).

There are studies demonstrating that working mothers allocate less time to their children in terms of primary care and quality time activities compared to non-working mothers (Anxo et al., 2007; Bloemen & Stancanelli, 2008; Bloemen et al., 2008; Burda et al., 2006; Connelly & Kimmel, 2007; Craig & Bittman, 2008; Kalenkoski, Ribar, & Stratton, 2008; Mencarini & Tanturri, 2004). However, there are also studies which demonstrate that working mothers spend more time helping their children in reading books and doing their homework, in comparison with non-working mothers, and in case the mother works, the quality time which is allocated by the parents to their children increases (Zick et al., 2001). The quality of mother-child interaction and attachment security is evaluated in relation to the number of hours the mother spends with the child and the number of hours the mother works (NICHD ECCRN, 1999; Thompson, 1998). Studies also emphasize that the time that mothers spend with their children partly depends on demographic factors. For example, there are studies which demonstrate that maternal education level affects the quality and quantity of mother-child social interaction (Bryant & Zick, 1996; Clarke-Stewart, Gruber, & Fitzgerald, 1994; Hill & Stafford, 1980; NICHD ECCRN, 1999). Some studies have revealed that the majority of working mothers want to spend more time with their children (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998) and that university graduate mothers spend more quality time with their children (Craig, 2006; Gutierrez-Domenech, 2008).

### **Aim and Importance of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of university graduate working mothers, who have 36-60-months-old children and who are in the age range of 25-45 years, of the quality of the time spent with their children. The question “What are the views of mothers about quality time?” constitutes the problem of the study. In accordance with the sub-problems of the study, the mothers were asked the questions about what quality time means to them, the necessity of this time, training needs, activities in this process, quality time in the context of responsibilities, the benefits of this process, the time they spend with their children in a quality way and the reasons that prevent spending the quality time.

In this study, based on the relevant literature, the quality of the time that mothers spend with their children was attempted to be addressed with all dimensions as much as possible. This study differs from the studies in the literature in that it determines comprehensively the views of university graduate working mothers about the quality time they spend with their pre-school children. Therefore, this study is thought to contribute to the literature. It is thought that this study will shed light on developing solutions for how to make this time more qualified by determining the views of working mothers about the quality of the time they spend with their children.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research, which was carried out in order to determine the views of mothers about the quality of the time they spend with their children, is a qualitative study. Qualitative research is studies in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview, and document analysis are used, in which data are collected in detail, and which follow the qualitative research process with the aim of learning directly participants’ perceptions, experiences and perspectives, understanding and

explaining current situations, and revealing the events in the natural environment in a holistic way (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2009; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this study. Phenomenology is an approach that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group and the facts that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding. The facts may appear in the forms like the events, experiences, perceptions, orientations, concepts, and situations in the world we live in. Phenomenology studies focus on the direct description of experiences. The primary objective of a phenomenology study is to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a person, or a group of people, around a specific phenomenon; that's to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon. Typically, interviews are conducted with a group of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of an event, situation or experience (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

### Study Group

The maximum variation sampling method among purposeful sampling methods was used to determine the mothers to be included in the study. In the maximum variation sampling method, the aim is to create a relatively small sample and to reflect the variation of the individuals who can be a part of the problem in this sample at the maximum degree (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The aim is not to provide variation in order to make a generalization, on the contrary, to try to find out whether there are common or shared facts and differences between different situations and to reveal different dimensions of the problem according to variation (Erdoğan, 1998; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). For this purpose, the diversity was taken according to age, education level, type of occupation, weekly working hours, and the number of children. The study group consisted of 32 mothers who have 36-60-months-old children, who are aged between 25-45 years, who have at most four children, who are university graduates, who work, and volunteer to participate in the study. Data on the mothers in the study group are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic Information on Mothers**

Demographic Information on Mothers		N	f	%
Age	25-29	32	8	25
	30-34		10	31
	35-39		8	25
	40-45		6	19
Education Status	Associate Degree	32	5	16
	Bachelor's Degree		13	40
	Master's Degree		8	25
	Ph.D.		6	19
Profession	Civil servant	32	14	44
	Worker		7	22
	Self-employment		11	34
Weekly Working Hours	Less than 40 hours	32	5	16
	40 hours		15	37
	More than 40 hours		12	47
Number of Children	1	32	9	28
	2		10	31
	3		7	22
	4		6	19
Number of 36-60-months-old children	1	32	21	66
	2		9	28
	3		2	6

According to Table 1, the majority of the mothers who participated in the study are between the ages of 30-34 years (10 - 31%), have bachelor's degree (13 - 40%), serve as civil servants (14 - 44%), work weekly for 40 hours (15 - 37%), have 2 children (10 - 31%), and have one 36-60-months-old child (21 - 66%).

### **Data Collection Tools**

In this study, in order to determine the views of working mothers about the quality of the time spent with their children, the "Personal Information Form," which includes questions intended for mothers, and a semi-structured "Mother Interview Form," which consists of open-ended questions suitable for qualitative research, were used as data collection tools. In the semi-structured interview technique, the researcher maintains his/her interview depending on the interview protocol which includes the questions that he/she has planned to ask in advance, but depending on the flow of the interview, the researcher can influence the flow of the interview with different side or sub-questions and ask the person to open his/her answers. This method is not as rigid as structured interviews, nor as flexible as unstructured interviews (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2009; Karasar, 2012; Türnüklü, 2000). Before starting the research, the literature was reviewed, and the researcher prepared the questions which were intended to be included in the interview form. Afterward, views of 3 domain experts were received in order to evaluate and validate the interview form in terms of aim, meaning, and scope, and a semi-structured interview form consisting of 8 questions was created. Pre-implementation of the interview questions was performed with three mothers who did not participate in the study, and the final state of the Mother Interview Form was decided. The views of these three mothers were not included in the study.

### **Data Collection**

While collecting the data, firstly the mothers were asked whether they wanted to participate in the study or not, and each of the 32 volunteer mothers was interviewed separately between 29 May and 16 June 2017. First of all, in order to prevent the loss of data, permission was obtained from the mothers to use a recording device in the interviews. The negative effect of using a recording device was tried to be reduced by stating that the mothers could listen to the recording again after the interview and that the sections that they did not desire could be removed in accordance with their wishes. All the mothers allowed to use a recording device and any adverse situation was not encountered. The interviews were conducted in environments where mothers felt comfortable and peaceful. In terms of the study, the importance of the mothers' expressing their opinions sincerely was mentioned, and each interview was limited to 40 minutes. After the interviews, the records were put down on paper.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the responses obtained from the interviews was performed by using the descriptive analysis technique which is one of the qualitative data analysis methods. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011) collect the descriptive analysis technique in four steps. The first one is "creating a framework for descriptive analysis," the second one is "data processing according to the thematic framework," the third one is "identification of the results", and the fourth one is "interpretation of the results." After the data collection process was completed, the data obtained for each question were examined in detail, and as a result of this review, the main heading for each interview question and sub-categories under this main heading were formed. The results in each category were supported by direct quotations from the mothers' views, and internal reliability was ensured. In the analyses, the mothers were given code numbers as (M1, M2, M3 ...). The results were presented with frequency and percentage values. Internal validity was provided by presenting clearly and in detail how the findings, results, and interpretations were reached, while external validity was provided by explaining all processes of the research in detail. In order to be able to test the study with other studies, explanations, conceptual framework, and all monitored processes related to data collection and analysis methods

were performed in detail, and external reliability was ensured. The obtained data were coded by the researcher and by a specialist, experienced in qualitative research, separately, and the codings were compared. The following reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) was applied to the codings of both researchers:  $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Agreement}}{\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement}} \times 100$ . Compliance between the two encoders was calculated to be 88%. The reliability analysis result greater than 70% is considered as reliable for research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). This result displays that the desired reliability level was reached for the research.

## FINDINGS

As a result of this study which was conducted to determine the views of mothers about the quality of the time spent with their children, 8 main categories were created: “definition of quality time”, “the necessity of spending quality time”, “training need”, “quality time activities”, “quality time in the context of responsibilities”, “benefits of spending quality time”, “periods of spending quality time” and “quality time obstacles.” The findings of these categories are listed below.

**Table 2. Views of Mothers About the Quality of the Time They Spend with Their Children**

Category	Sub-Category	n	f	%
Definition of Quality Time	Time spent with activities that the mother and child enjoy equally	32	21	66
	Time spent with activities intended for the child development		7	22
	Time spent with activities the child wants		4	12
The Necessity of Spending Quality Time	Necessary since it affects mother-child communication positively	32	28	88
	Unnecessary since every time spent with the child is important		4	12
Training Need	Training during which activities appropriate for different age ranges and different development areas can be learned	32	19	59
	Training during which activities to increase mother-child communication can be learned		13	41
Quality Time Activities	To play a game	32	15	47
	To carry out an educational activity		10	31
	To talk		4	13
	To cook		3	9
Quality Time in the Context of Responsibilities	Transformation of the process into quality time by including the child in all responsibilities at home	32	16	50
	Inability to spend quality time with the child while fulfilling responsibilities at home		16	50
Benefits of Spending Quality Time	Contribution to mother-child communication	32	10	31
	Contribution to the social-emotional development of the child		9	28
	Contribution to the cognitive development of the child		7	22
	Contribution to the language development of the child		6	19
Periods of Spending Quality Time	Weekend days	32	12	38
	Annual leave periods		12	38
	Weekday evening hours		8	24
Quality Time Obstacles	The intensity of working hours	32	19	59
	Excessive responsibilities at home		8	25
	Limited information on quality time activities		5	16

### Findings Regarding the Definition of the Quality Time Spent Between the Mother and Child

When the data obtained from the interviews were analyzed, three subcategories were created for the definition of the quality time spent between the mother and child, including “time spent with activities that the mother and child enjoy equally”, “time spent with activities intended for the child development” and “time spent with activities the child wants.” The majority of the mothers, who participated in the interview, i.e. 21 mothers (66%), defined the quality time spent between the mother and the child as the time spent with activities that the mother and child enjoy equally, while 7 of the

mothers (22%) defined it as the time spent with activities intended for the child development, and 4 of the mothers (12%) defined it as the time spent with activities the child wants.

Answers that define quality time as the time spent with activities that the mother and child enjoy equally are as follows:

*“It is the process during which my children and I spend time together by sharing happiness and by making all kinds of activities with great enthusiasm.” (M13)*

*“No matter what we do, every second we spend with our children enjoyingly means for us quality time.” (M17)*

Answers that define quality time as the time spent with activities intended for child development are as follows:

*“It is the time which I spend with various activities to support my child’s mental and social development.” (M4)*

*“It is the process that involves activities I do with my children for different areas of development.” (M28)*

Answers that define quality time as the time spent with activities that the child wants are as follows:

*“This is the time we spend with activities that my son enjoys doing.” (M31)*

*“It is the time when we play my kids’ favorite games, the time that we spend in the way just only they want.” (M7)*

### **Findings Regarding the Necessity of Spending Quality Time with Children**

When the data obtained from the interviews were analyzed, two sub-categories regarding the necessity of spending quality time with children were created, namely “necessary since it affects mother-child communication positively” and “unnecessary since every time spent with the child is important.” The majority of the mothers participating in the interview, i.e. 28 mothers (88%), stated that they believed in the necessity of spending quality time with their children since it affects mother-child communication positively, while 4 of the mothers (12%) stated that it was not necessary to spend quality time because every time spent with the child is important.

Answers stating that it is necessary to spend quality time with children since it affects mother-child communication positively are presented below:

*“I feel that our communication is improving considerably when my children and I are involved in common activities with which we will be happy.” (M3)*

*“It is really necessary for the mother to spend active time with her child for the quality of their communication.” (M21)*

Answers stating that it is not necessary to spend quality time because every time spent with the child is important are as follows:

*“I find it unnecessary to carry out activities which require special effort and to allocate time to these activities because every time spent by the mother with her child is precious.” (M19)*

*“The bond between the mother and child is so strong that without doing anything, even just being in the same environment strengthens communication, so I don’t think that it is necessary to do special things.” (M30)*

## **Findings Regarding the Training During Which Quality Time Activities Will Be Taught**

With regard to the training during which mothers can learn how to spend quality time with their children, two subcategories were created: “training during which activities appropriate for different age ranges and different development areas can be learned” and “training during which activities to increase mother-child communication can be learned.” The majority of the mothers participating in the interview, i.e. 19 mothers (59%), stated that they want to participate in training during which they could learn activities appropriate for different age ranges and different development areas, and 13 (41%) of the mothers wanted to participate in training during which they could learn activities that would increase mother-child communication.

Answers about the training during which mothers could learn activities appropriate for different age ranges and different development areas are presented below:

*“There is a two-year age difference between my children, and I feel inadequate in preparing appropriate activities that differentiate by their age and needs, and I would like to receive training at this point.” (M2)*

*“As children grow up, developmental training needs become different, but I think I cannot keep up with this difference, so I want to support myself, hence, my children, not only with theoretical training but also with applied training.” (M11)*

Answers about training during which activities to increase mother-child communication can be learned are as follows:

*“I think that I cannot communicate with my child sufficiently, so I feel insufficient, and it is my greatest wish to receive training in which I can reach practical information on this issue.” (M29)*

*“The way we communicate with children is changing every day, but since I think I cannot adapt to this situation, I would like to participate in practical training which will support mother-child communication with different workshops according to different ages, and I want to improve myself and our relationship.” (M22)*

## **Findings Regarding Activities Conducted for Spending Quality Time with Children**

The activities carried out by mothers to spend quality time with their children were gathered in four sub-categories including “playing a game,” “carrying out an educational activity,” “talking” and “cooking.” The majority of the mothers participating in the interview, i.e. 15 mothers (47%), stated that they play games with their children for spending quality time, 10 mothers (31%) stated that they carry out educational activities with their children, 4 mothers (13%) stated that they talk with their children, and 3 mothers (9%) stated that they cook with their children.

Answers stating that games are played for spending quality time with children are as follows:

*“Both my children and I enjoy playing games of all kinds, and we have fun.” (M15)*

*“We definitely find a fun game to play at home, on the street, in the park, in short, everywhere.” (M23)*

Answers stating that educational activities are carried out in order to spend quality time with the child are presented below:

*“We make different origami with my children, and we keep them in the corner of our home.” (M26)*

*“We are doing different activities that are compatible with their level of development, such as painting, cutting and folding, playing dough, and we have much fun.” (M32)*

Answers stating that mothers talk with their children for spending quality time are as follows:

*“After my daughter comes from the kindergarten and I come from work, the first thing we do is to sit next to each other and to tell about our day, in our view, the most precious time of the day is these minutes.” (M7)*

*“After reading a book or watching a documentary, it is good for both of us to share on the issue and to listen to each other.” (M11)*

Answers stating that mothers cook with their children in order to spend quality time are presented below:

*“Our biggest pleasure with my daughter is to try new meals together and enjoy the meal with the whole family.” (M4)*

*“It is really enjoyable for both of us to have my son help me while cooking, offer creative ideas, and we try out those ideas together.” (M16)*

### **Findings Regarding Transforming Responsibilities into a Quality Time Activity**

Two subcategories related to the case of mothers transforming responsibilities for their children into quality time activities were created, namely “transformation of the process into quality time by including the child in all responsibilities at home,” and “inability to spend quality time with the child while fulfilling responsibilities at home.” Half of the mothers participating in the interview, i.e. 16 mothers (50%) stated that the process was transformed into quality time by including the child in all responsibilities at home, while the other half stated that they could not spend quality time with the child while fulfilling the responsibilities at home.

Answers stating that the process is transformed into quality time by including the child in all responsibilities at home are presented below:

*“In all the things I have to do at home, I would certainly ask my children to help according to their age, so that I share something with them, and they can develop some of their competencies.” (M8)*

*“My son is my greatest assistant while cleaning, preparing meals, washing clothes, that is, in all the housework. Our communication is getting stronger while we are doing these works together.” (M29)*

Answers stating that quality time cannot be spent with the child while fulfilling the responsibilities at home are as follows:

*“While I fulfill my responsibilities at home, my children often play games among themselves, and unfortunately, we cannot get in touch meanwhile because I am trying to catch up with every job.” (M20)*

*“Since my responsibilities and the work I do at home take too much time, unfortunately, I cannot spend time with my children in this process, so I feel very inadequate.” (M32)*

### **Findings Regarding the Benefits of Spending Quality Time**

Four subcategories were created as mothers stated that spending quality time with their children contributes to “mother-child communication,” “social-emotional development,” “cognitive development,” and “language development” of children. 10 (31%) of the mothers who participated in the interview, stated that spending quality time contributes to mother-child communication, 9 (28%) of the mothers stated that it supports their children’s social-emotional development, 7 (22%) mothers stated that it supports cognitive development, and 6 (19 %) mothers stated that it supports language development.

Answers stating that spending quality time contributes to mother-child communication are as follows:

*“Whenever I spend time with my daughter, I feel that a magical bond is formed between us that no one can damage.” (M8)*

*“After every precious second we spend together, we dig up lovely moments to our brains, so we know and understand each other better.” (M11)*

Answers stating that spending quality time supports the social-emotional development of children are listed below:

*“When we perform activities that both of us enjoy, I notice that my child becomes a more self-confident and happier child.” (M1)*

*“I observe that the more I spend and share time with my daughter, the more positively she can communicate with other people.” (M18)*

Answers stating that spending quality time supports the cognitive development of children are presented below:

*“In the intelligent games which we play with my child by having much fun, I am witnessing outstanding progress in his skills such as reasoning and establishing cause and effect relationships.” (M14)*

*“I think that the activities which we do during the time we spend together improve my child’s ability to solve problems positively.” (M18)*

Answers stating that spending quality time supports the language development of children are as follows:

*“We make evaluations together after a book we read, a cartoon film we watched, and this contributes to my son’s speaking skill.” (M6)*

*“We love to talk with my children about everything, and this improves their expression skills.” (M7)*

### **Findings Regarding the Periods of Spending Quality Time with Children**

Since mothers indicated that the periods when they could spend quality time with their children were “weekend days,” “annual leave periods,” and “weekday evening hours,” three subcategories were created. The periods when quality time could be spent were indicated as weekend days by 12 of (38%) the mothers who participated in the interview, as annual leave periods by 12 (38%) of the mothers, and as weekday evening hours by 8 (24%) of the mothers.

Answers stating that the periods when quality time can be spent are weekend days are as follows:

*“We collect the most beautiful memories with my children on Saturdays and Sundays, and we spend perfect time together.” (M15)*

*“We spend the weekends so full with my daughter that we never want them to end.” (M13)*

Answers stating that the periods when quality time can be spent are annual leave periods are presented below:

*“The most efficient time we can spend with my children is the period when I use my annual leave because I can spend all my time with them without any worry.” (M24)*

*“No time we spend together is not as effective as the time when I use my annual leave.” (M17)*

Answers stating that the periods when quality time can be spent are weekday evening hours are listed below:

*“My child and I have a special time that we spend with each other after work every evening on weekdays.” (M8)*

*“After work on weekdays, I spend all my time with my daughter, and even if I am tired, we do the activity which she wants together.” (M12)*

### **Findings Regarding Factors that Prevent Spending More Quality Time with Children**

Since the mothers indicated that the factors that prevent them from spending more quality time with their children were “the intensity of working hours,” “excessive responsibilities at home” and “limited information on quality time activities,” three subcategories were created. The factors that prevent mothers from spending quality time were indicated as the intensity of working hours by the majority of the mothers, i.e. 19 mothers (59%) who participated in the interview, as excessive responsibilities at home by 8 mothers (25%), and as limited information on quality time activities by 5 mothers (16%).

Answers stating that the intensity of working hours prevents spending quality time are as follows:

*“I am at work from 7 in the morning until 7 in the evening, when I get home, I am very tired, and I do not have any energy to spend time with my child.” (M19)*

*“My busy working program is the biggest obstacle in front of my spending pleasant time with my child.” (M27)*

Answers stating that excessive responsibilities at home prevent spending quality time are listed below:

*“The intensity of the works I have to do at home exhausts me too much, and I have minimal time for my children.” (M4)*

*“There is a limited time which I can spend with my child because things such as preparing food and cleaning take too much of my time at home.” (M6)*

Answers stating that limited information on quality time activities prevents spending quality time are presented below:

*“I feel like I am inadequate for my child; we just play the games he wants, I do not know what else I can do.” (M19)*

*“When we are alone, we are just playing lego with my son, and we are moving through the activity book, I am always anxious about what I can do differently for his development.” (M23)*

## **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The active participation of mothers in working life has caused concern that they will not be able to spare enough time for their children. As a result of this concern, researchers have investigated whether having a working mother affects children adversely. The researchers have evaluated the children of working and non-working mothers according to criteria such as psychological health, social cohesion, behavior problems, and academic achievement. These studies have demonstrated that being a working mother does not have negative consequences which will prevent mothers from working and that mother's working time does not constitute an obstacle for the quality time spent with the child (Belle, 1999; Galinsky, 1999; Hoffman, 1989). In contrast, there are studies which have proven that working mothers strive to interact more with their children in comparison with non-working mothers (Ahnert, Rickert, & Lamb, 2000; Booth, Clarke-Stewart, Vandell, McCartney, & Owen, 2002; Bryant & Zick, 1996; Nock & Kingston, 1988). One of the first famous debates about quality time was about the tendencies of mothers who had a managerial duty. In the study, most mothers stated that having a challenging career could affect their children negatively, but that they cared about the quality of time rather than the time spent with their children so that their children did not suffer (Business Week, 1977). In this study, the views of university graduate working mothers who have 36-60-months-old children about the quality of the time spent with their children were discussed in the light of the literature.

The concept of quality time emphasizes interactions of the parent and child rather than the amount of time they spend together (Milkie, Mattingly, Nomaguchi, Bianchi, & Johnson, 2004; Snyder, 2007). In general, mothers stated that they investigate what they could do on behalf of spending quality time with their children and how their children will benefit from this process, they read various books about this subject, and they try to develop themselves. Mothers described the quality time spent between the mother and child as “the time spent with activities that the mother and child enjoy equally,” “time spent with activities intended for the child development” and “time spent with activities the child wants.” As it is expressed in the literature, the majority of the mothers defined quality time as a process, which requires both the mother's and the child's participation and having fun (Christensen, 2002; Semerci, 2009) and in which a kind of interaction that will contribute to the development of the child (Bryant, 1992) is formed. It can be stated that the mothers' knowledge about the definition of quality time matches up with the literature, and this is closely related to their education levels, the research they conduct to improve themselves, and the books they read.

In the study, some of the working mothers argued that spending quality time is “necessary since it affects mother-child communication positively,” and they expressed that they were trying to perform more special activities in order to spend quality time with their children. The other mothers expressed their views about the necessity of spending quality time and stated that it is “not necessary since every time spent with the child is important,” so they mentioned that they were trying to make

the whole time they spent with their children quality. This case suggests that all mothers believe in the necessity and importance of spending time with their children. The studies demonstrate that working mothers, who are well educated, devote more time to their children, and they try to perform more activities both in terms of type and number (Craig, 2006; Gimenez-Nadal & Molina, 2013; Gutierrez-Domenech, 2008; Ichino & Sanz de Galdeano, 2004; Kalenkoski, Ribar, & Stratton, 2005; Ramey & Ramey, 2009).

Studies demonstrate that effective parenting behaviors can be taught through parenting programs. Parent support programs increase mother knowledge and self-esteem, decrease mother's stress and improve the mother-child interaction (Britner & Reppucci, 1997; Bunting, 2004; Reid, Webster-Stratton, & Baydar, 2004). Mothers stated that they need training in which they could learn activities which are "suitable for different age ranges and different developmental areas" and which will "increase mother-child communication," and that they felt quite inadequate in these subjects. This case may be caused by the fact that mothers were not able to transfer the theoretical knowledge they obtain from books into their communication with their children. Mothers stated that they needed workshops, especially which include different activities and practices. In this respect, it is thought that mothers will become more competent parents in their communication with their children through the parent support programs they will participate in.

Some studies suggest that the increase in the participation rate of mothers in the working life does not cause a decrease in the time allocated to their children and thus does not harm their children. Since the number of children per household is few, mothers can allocate time to their children, even it is little. What is important here is not the total time they allocate to their children, but it is the kind of activities they perform with their children (Craig, 2006; Sandberg & Hoffert, 2001; Zick et al., 2001). Studies demonstrate that mothers usually choose shared activities during the time they spend with their children (Baxter, 2010). Besides, more educated mothers spend their time playing games with their children, reading books and teaching them something (Hill & Stafford, 1985; Timmer, Eccles, & O'Brien, 1985). Activities that parents do on behalf of spending time with their children can vary in a wide range from education, sports, playing a game, going to a store or doing housework (Brown, Michelsen, Halle, & Moore, 2001; Türkoğlu, Çeliköz, & Uslu, 2013). The mothers mentioned that the activities which they do in order to spend quality time with their children are "playing a game," "carrying out an educational activity," "talking," and "cooking." The mothers who aimed to spend quality time by playing games and carrying out educational activities stated that they wanted to contribute especially to the communication skills and mental development of their children. The mothers who preferred to chat frequently with their children stated that they aimed to develop the language and social-emotional development of their children, while the mothers who expressed that they enjoyed cooking with their children wanted to strengthen communication between them by spending shared time with their children. It can be stated that mothers want to contribute to the development of their children, and therefore they choose quality time activities appropriate for the development areas they wish to support.

In the study, half of the mothers stated that they "transformed the process into quality time by including their children in all their responsibilities at home," while the other half stated that they were not "able to spend quality time with their children while fulfilling responsibilities at home." The mothers who involve their children and even their spouses in their responsibilities at home stated that they see every situation as an opportunity to interact with their children and that this situation facilitates their lives. However, the mothers, who stated that they neglected their children because of the works they had to do at home, mentioned that they tried to be sufficient for everyone and every situation, they had many responsibilities, so they felt inadequate. It was determined that the weekly working hours of the mothers who supported two different ideas were not very different from each other. In this case, it can be stated that whether mothers could make the time spent with their children quality or not is related to the mothers' temperament rather than their working status or working time. Nock and Kingston (1988) did not determine a significant decrease in the amount of quality time allocated by working mothers to their children. Even Zick et al. (2001) revealed that in the families

where the mother works, the amount of quality time allocated by both parents to their children increases.

In the study, the mothers indicated that spending quality time with their children contributes to “mother-child communication” and that it supports their children’s “social-emotional development,” “cognitive development,” and “language development.” The mothers stated that the more they spend time with their children, the more the communication between them improves, and through this, children recognize both their own and their mothers’ feelings easier, and they are able to express themselves more easily. The mothers who perform more academic activities to spend quality time with their children mentioned the impact of quality time on the cognitive development of their children. While most of the studies reveal that there is no difference between working mothers and non-working mothers in terms of mother-child interaction (Owen & Cox, 1988; Stifter, Coulehan, & Fish, 1993), some studies argue that working mothers are more interactive, sensitive and positive to their children than non-working mothers (Broom, 1998; Crockenberg & Litman, 1991). While fewer behavioral problems are encountered in children who interact more with their mothers (NICHD Eccrn, 2003), studies support that less mother-child interaction can also adversely affect cognitive and language development (Brooks-Gunn, Han, & Waldfogel, 2002; Han, Waldfogel, & Brooks-Gunn, 2001; Harvey, 1999; Waldfogel, Han & Brooks-Gunn, 2002).

Mothers indicated that the periods when they could spend quality time with their children were “weekend days,” “annual leave periods,” and “weekday evening hours.” The majority of the mothers stated that they were able to allocate more time to more enjoyable activities with their children during the weekends and their annual leave periods, but that generally, they performed calmer activities during the weekday evening hours. This situation may be thought to be due to the intensive work of mothers on weekdays and getting tired in the working environment. Studies show that working mothers try to spend more time with their children during the periods outside working hours and especially during the evening hours, and try to compensate for their absence during the day (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1985; Hill & Stafford, 1985; Nock & Kingston, 1988; Rushing & Powell, 2014; Zaslow, Pederson, Suwalsky, Cain & Fivel, 1985). Moreover, mothers are making a special effort to spend more quality time with their children on weekends (Hochschild, 1989; Rachlin, 1987).

Mothers indicated the factors that prevent them from spending more quality time with their children as “the intensity of working hours,” “excessive responsibilities at home,” and “limited information on quality time activities.” This situation can be thought to be mainly due to the fact that working mothers carry different roles at home and outside the home. Studies have demonstrated that due to their multiple roles and responsibilities, working mothers can devote more limited time and less energy to their children in comparison with non-working mothers, and that non-working mothers focus more on spending interactive and quality time with their children (Baydar, Greek & Gritz, 1999; Bianchi, 2000; Hochschild, 1989; Nock & Kingston, 1989; Rachlin, 1987).

In the light of the study results, the following suggestions could be made:

- Training seminars which will allow mothers to learn how to make the time they spend with their children more quality can be organized. In organizing these seminars, the necessary support may be requested from the Ministry of National Education, municipalities and non-governmental organizations.
- Mothers can be supported by practical workshops during which they can learn games and activities that will enable them to make the time they spend with their children more quality.
- For the mother to be able to have the time during which she can communicate with her child in a qualified way, the father must have a mission that will alleviate the responsibilities of his wife. For this purpose, it should be attempted to ensure that fathers gain the necessary awareness through educational seminars.

- In early childhood, teachers should try to help the mother and the child to make the time they spend together more qualified, by using different channels of information.
- In early childhood, the importance of quality communication between the mother and the child should be emphasized through the media channels, and the interest of society should be drawn to this issue more.
- Similar studies can be carried out with sample groups with different characteristics.

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