

# A Study on the Circumstances Affecting Elementary School Students in Their Family and School Lives and Their Consequential Emotions

Osman Samancı, Ramazan Kaya

**Abstract**—The purpose of this study is to determine the circumstances affecting elementary school students in their family and school lives and what kind of emotions children may feel because of these circumstances. The study was carried out according to the survey model. Four Turkish elementary schools provided 123 fourth grade students for participation in the study. The study's data were collected by using worksheets for the activity titled "Important Days in Our Lives", which was part of the Elementary School Social Sciences Course 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Education Program. Data analysis was carried out according to the content analysis technique used in qualitative research. The study detected that circumstances of their family and school lives caused children to feel emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear and jealousy. The circumstances and the emotions caused by these circumstances were analyzed according to gender and interpreted by presenting them with their frequencies.

**Keywords**—Elementary school students, emotional development, family and school, social development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

EMOTIONAL and social developments are the most important elements of children's maturation. Healthy emotional and social developments during the years of elementary education can help children make better contacts with the people around them. Normally developing children also adjust easily to social life and are more successful in school.

Emotions are related with an individual's basic needs and the behaviors resulting from these needs. Emotions are experienced as joy when peoples' needs are met; otherwise they are lived as sorrow. Joyful emotions are shown by rejoicing, happiness and delight. Positive emotions give colors to people's lives. They pave the way for their development, strengthen their emotion system, accelerate thought processes and bind people to life. Sorrow is displayed as anger, jealousy, hatred, temper and hostility if caused by someone else; it shows itself as fear, embarrassment, sadness, boredom, weariness and frustration when originating within the individual. These negative emotions create tension, despair and damage that saddens the individual and those around her

O. Samancı is with Atatürk University, Department of Primary Education, Erzurum, Turkey (Phone:+904422314260; e-mail:osman-samanci@hotmail.com).

R. Kaya is with Atatürk University Department of History Education, Erzurum, Turkey (e-mail: ramco@atauni.edu.tr).

[10] [1].

Emotions are an integrated part of human life. A life without emotions easily loses its meaning [13]. Every person has a particular quality and quantity of emotions that play an important role in maintaining one's life, making connections and directing behaviors [3], [6]. Emotions play a fundamental role in socialization [10].

People do not come to the world already with complete emotional development. They acquire and learn most emotions, attitudes and behaviors in time [11]. The vital physiological mechanism is acquired congenitally. In the meantime, the element determining which stimulus creates emotional reaction is most likely learning [2]. The studies revealed that children develop emotionally through maturing and learning, and neither of these two elements is effective by itself [14], [1].

The primary school years are when a child leaves his/her home, meets the external world and becomes completely involved in the social environment. This period ends when the child enters adolescence at approximately 12 years of age [17], [5]. In this period, home environment, family relations and teachers are fundamental for the development of children. The degree of parental and teacher interaction with children is among the determining factors in the personal and social developments of children [5].

In this period, the child meets a new adult who is important for him as well as his parents. The teacher's wishes and the appreciations slowly start to surpass those of the parents [8]. For this reason, the teacher's attitudes and approaches significantly influence children's development [5], [16], [17].

No matter how good the elementary school and its programs are, if students are under the fear of circumstances that will create negative emotions, a number of emotional disorders and misbehaviors are observed in these children. The emotions arising between teachers and students, as well as the emotions arising among children in the classroom, are among the factors affecting learning [4].

Children's emotional health and their ability to think and learn effectively are closely related to each other. They will develop positive emotions if placed in a comfortable, supportive environment where good guidance is available [1], [10].

Examining children's emotional developments in relation with social development is very important for achieving targeted gains in education and for children to gradually take a

place as healthy adult citizens. The purpose of this study is to determine what important circumstances affect elementary school students in their family and school lives and what kinds of emotions are produced in a child as a result of these circumstances.

## II. METHOD AND PROCEDURE

### A. Study Model

The survey model was used in this study. The survey model is a research approach that attempts to describe a situation in the past or present. The research subject, whether it be an event, individual or object, may be described the same as it is in its own conditions [7]. We tried to determine what important circumstances affect elementary school students in their family and school lives and what kind of emotions are caused by these circumstances.

### B. Sampling

A total of 123 5<sup>th</sup> grade students (63 females, 60 males) chosen by random sampling method from four elementary schools in Turkey.

### C. Data Collection

The data were collected by using the "Important Days in Our Lives" worksheet activity in the "I Know Myself" unit of Elementary School Social Sciences Course 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Education Program [9]. The worksheet was given to students and they wanted to write about the circumstances that affect them in their family and school lives and what kind of emotions chronologically arise from these circumstances.

### D. Data Analysis

The two researchers separately read and analyzed the worksheets according to the content analysis method used in qualitative research. The aim in content analysis is to reach the concepts and relations that can explain the collected data [15]. In the study, the common circumstances affecting students in their family and school lives were detected and expressed as one word or sentence first, and then the emotions created by these circumstances were determined. Tables display the results with their frequencies according to gender.

## III. FINDINGS AND COMMENTS

This section presents the findings about the circumstances affecting students in their family and social lives and the emotions created by these circumstances.

### A. The General Emotion Types Created by the Circumstances Affecting Students

The distribution of the emotions created by the circumstances affecting family and school lives of elementary school children according to emotion type and gender are given in Table 1.

Students expressed that the circumstances affecting them in their family and school lives produced happiness mostly, and then sadness, anger, fear and jealousy, consecutively. The happy circumstances were expressed 46.2 % of the time,

which is almost as much as all the other emotion types together. The least mentioned circumstances were those leading to fear and jealousy. As seen in the findings, female students were much more disposed than males to express the circumstances affecting them and the emotions created by these circumstances. This difference is seen especially clearly when considering anger.

TABLE I  
DISTRIBUTION OF THE EMOTIONS ARISING IN STUDENTS ACCORDING TO THE TYPES OF EMOTIONS AND GENDER

Emotions	Male		Female		Total	
	F	%	f	%	f	%
Happiness	94	44.5	117	55.4	211	46.2
Sadness	46	40.7	67	59.2	113	24.7
Anger	19	29.2	46	70.7	65	14.2
Fear	14	41.1	20	58.8	34	7.4
Jealousy	13	39.3	20	60.6	33	7.2
Total	186	40.7	270	59.2	456	100

### B. Circumstances Causing Happiness in Elementary School Students

The circumstances making students happy in their family and school lives and the distributions of these circumstances according to gender are given in Table 2.

TABLE II  
CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAKE STUDENTS HAPPY AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ACCORDING TO GENDER

The Circumstances Causing Emotion of Happiness in Students	Male	Female	Total
Starting school	14	16	30
Success in the courses	10	20	30
Celebrating birthdays	6	18	24
Participating in social activities in the school	6	12	18
Making friends	7	11	18
Going on holiday	8	8	16
Receiving presents	6	8	14
Participating in sports	13	-	13
Learning how to use a computer	10	2	12
Participating in social activities as a whole family	6	6	12
The birth of his/her sibling	4	5	9
Family affection	1	6	7
Making acquaintance with the teacher	3	2	5
Learning how to read and write		3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>211</b>

Students express that the happiest circumstances are to start school and achieve success in the courses. The fact that school-related elements bring happiness to students' lives is a remarkably positive result in terms of education. As it is known, the desire for success prevails in this period [2]. The desire to be successful helps the child feel good and feel his/her self-confidence from the beginning of school [4]. The next important circumstances are birthday celebrations, social activities in school and making friends. The interesting point is that these circumstances in the upper brackets make females happier more than males. Especially, it is seen clearly that celebrating birthdays and success in courses affect females in

terms of happiness more than males. On the contrary, sports and learning how to use a computer, which falls relatively mid-table, brought much more happiness to male students. Girls made no mention of sports at all. The biggest differences in the circumstances inspiring happiness in female and male students are in favor of girls for celebrating birthdays while in favor of boys for sports.

### C. Circumstances Causing the Emotion of Sadness in Elementary School Students

The circumstances making students sad in their family and school lives and the distributions of these circumstances according to gender are given in Table 3.

TABLE III  
CIRCUMSTANCES CAUSING STUDENTS TO BE SAD AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ACCORDING TO GENDER

Circumstances Causing Emotion of Sadness	Male	Female	Total
Death in the family	9	8	17
Separation of someone from the family	7	9	16
Not getting on well with their friends	6	9	15
Failure in the courses	6	6	12
Being separated from a friend	3	8	11
Illness in the family	1	9	10
Being separated from the teacher	4	4	8
Starting school	4	4	8
Illness	1	2	3
Making the children work in the streets	-	3	3
Polluting the environment	1	2	3
Others	4	3	7
Total	46	67	113

The circumstances that upset students in their personal lives are primarily related with their families. Death in the family and the separation of someone from the family are the circumstances that upset students the most. Illness of someone in the family falls mid-table as a saddening event.

Temporary or permanent illness and disability of one or more individuals in the family affect the harmony of all members. The events shaking the family as a whole such as fire, flood, earthquake, or forced migration result in more devastating outcomes. Besides, separation of one or more individuals from the family, fathers working far away temporarily or permanently, separation of parents or divorce, death of mother, father or a sibling are traumatic events [17]. In this period, friendship has an important role in a child's development. Not getting on well with friends is one of the circumstances that cause children to feel sad. Failure at school and separation from friends closely follow as unpleasant circumstances. It is understood that illness of someone in the family and being separated from friends affected females much more. In other saddening events, there was no big difference between girls and boys. While academic success makes females happier than males, failure saddens both groups equally.

### D. Circumstances Causing Anger in Elementary School Students

The circumstances making students angry in their family and school lives and the distributions of these circumstances according to gender are shown in Table 4.

TABLE IV  
CIRCUMSTANCES CAUSING ANGER IN STUDENTS AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ACCORDING TO GENDER

Circumstances Causing Anger in Students	Male	Female	Total
To be slandered by their friends	5	11	16
Polluting the environment	6	6	12
Rude behaviors of their friends	4	6	10
Being teased by their friends	1	4	5
Making noise in the classroom	2	3	5
Family interference in their private lives	-	5	5
Parents' not meeting their desires	-	5	5
People picking up their personal belongings and using them confidentially	-	4	4
Family pressure for doing the homework	1	2	3
Total	19	46	65

According to the findings, the most important factor that makes students angry is the negative behaviors of their friends. The circumstance that most angers children is to be slandered by their friends. This situation makes female students angrier. Rude behaviors and being teased by their friends are the other circumstances making students (mostly girls) angry. When polluting the environment is examined in terms of ecological awareness, it can be assessed as an important result for education. Students are sometimes angered by their families. Only girls were angered when their families interfered in their private lives, parents failed to meet their desires or people picked up their personal belongings at home and school and especially used them confidentially at home.

### E. Circumstances Causing Fear in Elementary School Students

The circumstances making students afraid in their family and school lives and the distributions of these circumstances according to gender are displayed in Table 5.

TABLE V  
CIRCUMSTANCES CAUSING FEAR IN STUDENTS AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ACCORDING TO GENDER

Circumstances Causing Fear in Students	Male	Female	Total
Starting school	4	1	5
Academic Failure	1	4	5
Being alone at home	1	4	5
Having a bad dream	2	2	4
Having an accident	2	1	3
Watching horror movies	1	2	3
Others	3	6	9
Total	14	20	34

The circumstances making students afraid are ranged in close ratios with each other. According to the findings, the circumstances that make students afraid the most are starting school, academic failure and being alone at home. The start of school frightened boys the most; the other two conditions scared girls for the most part. Having a bad dream, having an accident and watching horror movies follow these

circumstances with close ratios. It is seen that female students mentioned the frightening circumstances much more than male students as has been the pattern for other emotions.

#### F. Circumstances Causing Jealousy in Elementary School Students

The circumstances making the students jealous in their family and school lives and the distribution of these circumstances according to gender are recorded in Table 6.

TABLE VI  
CIRCUMSTANCES CAUSING JEALOUSY IN STUDENTS AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ACCORDING TO GENDER

Circumstances Causing Jealousy in Students	Male	Female	Total
Being jealous of the behaviors of their siblings	6	5	11
Parents' dealing with his/her siblings	1	5	6
Successes of their friends	3	1	4
Teacher's dealing with his/her friends	-	4	4
His/her friend's getting closer with someone else	-	3	3
The birth of a sibling	2	-	2
Mother's loving the other children	-	2	2
Being excluded by their friends	1	-	1
Total	13	20	33

According to the findings, the most important spurs to jealousy are the students' siblings first, and then their friends. The behaviors of their siblings are the most important circumstance causing jealousy. Next important is the way parents treat the siblings.

Even though brotherhood and sisterhood are a source of love, there are serious problems between the siblings. According to many specialists, sibling relations are a competition first [12]. Siblings are embraced easily in game and school ages; nevertheless, this is not a rule. The situation differs from child to child and according to the parents' attitudes. For example, a child gathering all the love upon him and being pampered until eight years of age will not easily embrace his/her sibling [17]. The other circumstances that make children jealous are the successes of their friends and teacher's dealing with their friends. Examining the findings, the circumstances in which someone else other than themselves becomes the focus of interest and love, such as parents' treatment of the siblings, teacher's treatment of their friends, their friend's getting closer with someone else and mother's loving other children make especially female students jealous. The circumstances mentioned finally are expressed as the circumstances that make girls jealous (with the exception of one boy).

#### IV. RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Elementary school students mostly mentioned the emotion of happiness when reflecting on the circumstances affecting them in their family and school lives. This emotion was followed in significance by sadness, anger, fear and jealousy, consecutively. The circumstances bringing happiness are expressed as much as half as frequently as those causing all the other emotion types combined. Girls expressed the circumstances and the emotions caused by these feeling more

than boys did. This difference is clearly seen especially in the circumstances causing anger. Starting school and academic success make students happy. The circumstances that make them happy according to the table's higher brackets are much more prevalent in female students. The biggest differences of the circumstances creating happiness between girls and boys are in favor of females for celebrating birthdays and in favor of males for sports. The most saddening events in the personal lives of students are primarily related to their mothers. A death in the family and separation of someone from the family are the circumstances making students certainly. In a developmental stage when friendship is very important, not getting on well with friends is one of the saddening events expressed in the table's higher echelon. It is understood that the circumstances of the illness of someone in the family and being separated from their friends affected female students much more. In other saddening circumstances, there are not so big differences between girls and boys. The factors making students angry result from negative behaviors such as being slandered by their friends, rude behaviors of their friends and being teased by their friends; and their families' behaviors such as interfering in their personal lives and not meeting their desires. The stated circumstances made girls angrier with the exception of environmental pollution. The events making students afraid are ranged in close ratios with each other. The most frightening events are starting school, academic and being home alone. Boys were scared to start school, while the other two phenomena terrified girls for the most part. Students were primarily jealous of their siblings and then their friends. The most important circumstance causing jealousy in students is the behaviors of their siblings. Girls in particular got jealous if parents, teachers and friends showed interest and love to someone other than themselves.

The following suggestions can be realized while taking the study's findings into consideration:

1-The circumstances encountered by elementary school students in their family and school lives can inspire positive emotions such as happiness, but these circumstances can cause other emotions such as sadness, anger, fear and jealousy that affect their school and family lives negatively. For this reason, parents at home and teachers at school should abstain from behaviors that can cause children to have negative emotions.

2-When assessing especially the student behaviors in family and school environments, the reasons behind these behaviors and what kind of emotions are created by these reasons should be examined.

3- Democratic environments and various activities in which students can express their feelings comfortably should be created and implemented.

4- Qualitative research based on observation and interviews about the factors affecting emotional development of elementary school students should be carried out.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] N. Aral, G. Baran, Ş. Bulut, and S. Çimen, *Çocuk Gelişimi 2*, İstanbul: Ya-Pa Yayın Pazarlama, 2001, pp. 31-57.
- [2] B. Aydın, *Çocuk ve Ergen Psikolojisi*, Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 2005, pp. 105-116.
- [3] Z. Baltaş, *Duygusal Zeka*, İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2006, pp. 10-15.
- [4] İ. E. Başaran, *Eğitim Psikolojisi, Modern Eğitimin Psikolojik Temelleri*, Ankara: Kadioğlu Matbaası, 1992, pp. 103-118.

- [5] L. Ercan, "Okul döneminde (6-11 yaş) gelişim". *Gelişim ve Öğrenme* içinde, A. Ataman, Ed. Ankara: Gündüz Eğitim ve Yayıncılık, 2004, pp. 139-157.
- [6] B. Y. İnanç, M. Bilgin, and M. K. Atıcı, *Gelişim Psikolojisi, Çocuk ve Ergen Gelişimi*, Ankara: Pegem-A Yayınları, 2008, pp. 165-183.
- [7] N. Karasar, *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemi*. Ankara: Nobel Yayınları, 2008, pp. 76-109.
- [8] Y. Kılıççı, "6-15 Yaş öğrencilerinin gelişimsel güçleri ve kişilik gelişimini kolaylaştırma" *İlköğretimde Rehberlik* içinde, Y. Kuzgun, Ed. Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 2002, pp. 17-50.
- [9] MEB, *İlköğretim 4.Sınıf Sosyal Bilgiler Öğrenci Çalışma Kitabı*, Ankara: MEB Yayınları, 2008, pp. 16-29.
- [10] MEGEP, "Çocuk gelişimi ve eğitimi, duygusal gelişim", Retrieved 09 June 2010 from <http://cygm.meb.gov.tr/modulerprogramlar/kursprogramlari/cocukgelisim/moduller/duygusalgelisim.pdf>
- [11] Ö. Mestçioğlu, "Duygusal gelişim 1", Retrieved 09 February 2010 from <http://www.anneoluncaanladim.com/yazarlar/16/ozlem-mestcioglu/322/duygusal-gelisim-1>
- [12] E. Özensel, "Türk toplumunda çocuğun yetiştirilmesinde annenin rolü: Konya ili örneği", *Değerler Eğitimi Dergisi*, 2004, 2 (6), 77-96.
- [13] N. D. Saltalı, M. E. Deniz, N. Çeliköz, and R. Arı, "Altı yaş çocukları için duygusal becerilerin değerlendirilmesi testinin (ACES) Türkçe'ye uyarlanması: Geçerlik ve güvenilirlik çalışması", *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2009, 42/1, 403-420.
- [14] H. Yavuzer, *Çocuk Psikolojisi*, İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2005, pp. 27-51.
- [15] A. Yıldırım, and H. Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma*, Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 2000, pp. 155-185.
- [16] A. Yörükoğlu, *Gençlik Çağı, Ruh Sağlığı ve Ruhsal Sorunlar*, İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 1996, pp. 13-69.
- [17] A. Yörükoğlu, *Çocuk Ruh Sağlığı, Çocuk Yetiştirme Sanatı ve Kişilik Gelişimi*, İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2000, pp. 76-92.

**Osman Samancı** works as an assistant professor at Atatürk University, Turkey. He graduated from Atatürk University, Department of Classroom Teaching, in 1997. He completed a Master's degree in Educational Sciences at Atatürk University in 2000, and was awarded a Doctorate in the field of Primary Education Social Sciences Education in 2003. His research interests include social sciences education, democracy education in primary education, and social skills.

**Ramazan Kaya** works as an assistant professor at Atatürk University, Turkey. He graduated from Atatürk University, Department of History Education, in 1996. He completed a Master's degree in History Education in 1999 and was awarded a Doctorate in the field of History Education at Atatürk University in 2005. His research interests include history education, social sciences education, and popular history.