Perception of Parental Love in 4-6 Year-Old Children

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Introduction

In the childhood, establishing a healthy bond of love between parents and children is the most important requirement. Feeling and expressing shapes of love vary in this period. When love is discussed as an emotion; types of feeling, identifying and expressing love may vary. In this sense; it becomes important how parents demonstrate their love expressions and statements and how children make sense of these love expressions and statements.
In this study, it was aimed to describe parents' love perception types of 4-6 age group children and answers to the following questions were sought:

• (1) Does parental love perceived by children aged 4-6 years differ?,

• (2) Does parental love perceived by children aged 4-6 years differ significantly in terms of gender of the children?

• (3) Does parental love perceived by children aged 4-6 years differ significantly in terms of age of the children?
Methodology

• The sample of the study consisted of 240 children.
• The data in this study were obtained from face to face meetings with children by using the mixed methods. It was asked from children to respond to questions; "How do you know that your mother/father loves you?".
• The content analysis of the data obtained from the interviews with children was made.
• Categories have been established on the children's perception types for parental love. Percent and frequency values of descriptive data of were calculated.
• Differences in gender and age of the child were analyzed with chi-square analysis.
Results

When the similarities and differences in children's expression were analyzed; six different categories were found in the parental love perception types of children. Detected categories were (1) physical contact with parents, (2) parental approval words, (3) spend quality time with parents, (4) being given presents by parent, (5) ensuring basic needs of child by parent and (6) meeting parental expectations.
Results

• It was seen that parental love perceived by children aged 4-6 years differed significantly in terms of children’s gender and parents’ gender.

• Girls perceived physical contact with parents and being given presents by parents as an expression of love while boys perceived spend quality time with parents and meeting parental expectation as main two expressions of love.
• Again; girls perceived physical contact with mothers and being given presents by fathers as an expression of love. Boys perceived spend quality time with mothers and meeting fathers’ expectation as an expression of love in the first place.
• According to the study findings parental love perceived by children aged 4-6 years did not change significantly in terms of children’s ages and parents’ gender.

• However; all the age groups perceived physical contact with parents as an expression of parental love in the first place.
• In terms of parents’ gender; children aged 4 years perceived ensuring basic needs of child by mothers, children aged 5 years perceived physical contact with mothers and children aged 6 years perceived being given presents by mothers as an expression of love in the first place.

• Again; children aged 4 years perceived physical contact with fathers, children aged 5 years perceived being given by fathers and children aged 6 years perceived approval words of fathers as an expression of love in the first place.
Conclusion

The current study drew attention to types of parental love perceived by children aged 4-6 years. When it is taken into consideration that a healthy parent-child relation may affect individuals’ lifelong relations from early childhood years; we are of the opinion that the study findings will make important contributions to literature. Yet, types of love expressions may vary according to cultures.
Therefore; the study can be replicated in different samples (Asian children, American children e.g.). Besides, the study was undertaken with children aged 4-6 years. The study can be repeated with elder or younger children to find out whether or not there is a distinguishing effect of age upon perceived parental love. Again, it can be studied whether or not such influential variables upon parent-child relation as parental authority, parental roles, self-concept about parental roles play a role in children’s perceiving parental love.
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