



THE EFFECT OF WORKING CHILDREN'S MATERIALISTIC TENDENCIES ON THEIR FRIENDSHIP RELATIONS

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Abstract

It is thought that importance of earthly values affect environmental choices of working children to people and their relations. Having a good friend was valuable whereas a friend with nice outfits, a friend with an expensive car is more preferable. That's why; totally 150 voluntary respondents was selected by a simple random sampling method from the Center of Working Children of Ankara Metropolitan Municipality. Gender was not a significant variable on materialistic tendencies and friendship relations. Regarding age differences, 13-15 ages were more likely to show well on dissatisfaction and consumer orientation. Besides, self-disclosure is an important mediator of age differences. It was found that there were no significant relations between materialistic tendency of working children and their friendship relations.

Keywords: Social Work, Working Children, Materialistic Tendencies, Friendship Relations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Current our life is under pressure of material objects around our life environment or causing their problems and events. Our environment is full of material message which encourage to buy a lot wherever we go. Therefore, not only is consumption activity which address remove physiological needs, but also it has been identifying indication of status and class of people which reflects social and cultural process and being symbols and images. In industrialized capitalist cultures, given value personal economical success greatly cause increasing materialistic tendencies which include financial purposes, material goods, and popularity in social life (Purutcuoglu, 2008).

Although materialism is increasingly gaining research attention, theorists have yet to agree on a single definition. Early materialism researchers define materialism as 'an orientation which views material goods and money as being important for personal happiness and social progress'. Later, defined by Belk (1984), materialism as "the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions" and defined by Richins and Dawson (1992) "the importance a person places on possessions and their acquisition as a necessary or desirable form of conduct to reach desired end states, including happiness (Schaefer et.al.,2004; Chaplin and John, 2007).

Today's children are more materialistic than earlier generations. Adolescent consumers are being recognized today as an increasingly important group in terms of their purchasing behaviours, attitudes, and their impact on the national economy. A significant increase has been observed recently, not only in the overall number of adolescents in terms of population, but also in the amount of money they are contributing as consumers.

Materialism is generally defined as having a preoccupation with possessions and believing that products bring happiness and success. Materialism in children may be cause for concern, because it is often associated with lowered life satisfaction. Consumers high in materialistic values tend to monitor the environment and are influenced by others' behaviors and possessions. Likewise, Moschis and Churchill (1978) found a positive relationship between frequency of adolescent communication with peers regarding consumption matters and materialism and social motivations for consumption. They also found as social utility reasons for viewing television shows and advertisements increased, so did materialism and social motivations for consumption. These findings also support the notion that there is a positive relationship between materialism and susceptibility to influence. (Achenreiner, 1997; Clark et.al 2001; Oprea et.al 2011).

Children were affected by passing several cognitive and social process from their birth to puberty and adulthood. In this processes, children develop attitude, motivation and behavior patterns through commercialization which have increased recently and various socialization tools such as parents, schools, peers and mass media (Achenreiner, 1997). In studies about this subject was determined that children do this

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developmental processes as consumer in three socialization stages; perceptual, analytical, and intellectual. Perceptual stage (3-7 ages), perceptual behavior of child. Child was familiar with some brands or shops but he/she doesn't understand meaning of them exactly. Toddlers and preschoolers make frequent requests for certain products and make their desires known in many ways, including grabbing products off store shelves, begging, and whining.

Analytical stage (7-11 ages); increasing of analytical and more detailed approach to events. With the passing analytical stage, great changes were observed in terms of cognitive and social development of child. This stage includes most important developments in terms of consumer information and abilities. Children's drive to acquire goods can be very strong, with an immediate and overwhelming desire for items such as toys, cereal, and candy.

Intellectual stage (11-16 ages) means that child comprehend complex structure of consumption. In this stage, child gain a new dimension in terms of his/her cognitive and social development. As long as child develop his/her social abilities and method of information processing, his/her information about prices and brands belong to market has been more detailed and complex. The acquisition of desired items is usually an end in itself rather than being a means for achieving higher-order goals, such as self-enhancement, usually associated with materialism (Chaplin and John, 2007; Yanginözü, 2013;).

Individuals have tendencies which accept behavioral arrangements, familial and cultural values. Studies were demonstrated that materialistic values of children were shaped by their social environment and were also developed by imitating their familial values partly. Changes in family structure affect materialistic values directly. It is seen that young adults who meet changes throughout childhood try to inspire their emotions to person or objects they can control. It is determined that an important part of them start to orientated materialistic purposes when their attempts to remove their needs (Purutcuoglu, 2008). The basic values, attitudes, abilities, and efficiencies in life occur in childhood. In this stage, it is very important for them to protect from the undesirable conditions, to live their childhood by playing and entertaining, to continue their educations, to sustain their relationships with family and friend in terms of their developments. Working children is one of the most important group that affected by developmental process in unsatisfied and inappropriate conditions.

At least 42,000 children are estimated to be living or working on the streets in Turkey although unofficial estimates range as high as 80,000. Most if not all of these children come from socially excluded, migrant families who moved to the cities in search of a better standard of living that few municipalities were in fact able to provide. The phenomenon of their increasing numbers is perhaps the most visible example of children responding to the effects of widespread poverty (UNICEF, 2006). It is possible to say that working children generally use the streets as working field. That's why, it is also claimed that their parent relationships continue significantly and so their parent control maintains partly. As a result, these children and their parents are trying to overcome to the difficulties of living. Therefore, most of the children give their earnings to their parents or try to come up with the parents' financial difficulties by covering the school and education expenditures. The materialistic tendencies of working children change with depending on their parents' socio-economic level and relationships. Hence, when considered to their low self-esteem and reliance level, it can be estimated that importance of earthly values for working children is increasing by the influence of the mass-media and consumer-oriented livings. Achenreiner (1997) was found in his study that materialistic attitudes have been associated with insecurity or low self-esteem, it seem logical, then, that consumers having more materialistic attitudes would also be more susceptible to influence.

The development of self-concept forms in childhood, and one of the most the determining factor is friendship relations, except from parents. Communication with other children is very significant in the way of both interrogation of their self status and identity, and interaction with peers, fellows and opposite sex (Pembecioğlu, 2006). Kimmel and Weinner (1995) state friendship as a relation with two or more people, sharing with the important part of the life and protecting each other. On the other hand, Serrano define friendship as a person generally being fellow and peer, who are reliable and accessible (Şimşek, 2010).

Working children feel themselves under pressure to support their parents for bringing a certain amount of money. This situation cause the partial communication of children with their parents, being under the influence, and attaching themselves to their friends.

A group of friendship affect the being informed from products and brands, enhancing the belief and the knowledges about products, trying on products, knowing how to use the products, preference of stores and preference of brands in selected products. Belonging to a group or request of being accepted can require demonstrating different behaviour of children (Ateşoğlu ve Türkkahraman, 2009). Moschis and Churchill (1978) have also found that children that have frequent communication with their peers tend to be more



materialistic, and the more contact they have with these peers, the more susceptible to their influence the adolescents become (Clark et.al 2001). That's why; this research was planned and conducted to investigate the effect of working children's materialistic tendencies on their friendship relations.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Working Group

The study presented used a total sample of 150 voluntary respondents (65 female, 85 male) were selected by a simple random sampling method from the Center of Working Children of Ankara Metropolitan Municipality. Self-administered questionnaires were filled out by students to capture the aspects of the materialism and friendship relations and took approximately 15-20 min to complete.

2.2. Aims and Questions

The aim of this study is twofold: (1) to describe materialistic tendencies and friendship relationships of working children; and (2) to find the effect of working children's materialistic tendencies on their friendship relations.

The research questions are as follows: (1) What are the working children's materialistic tendencies by gender and age? (2) What are the working children's friendship relations by gender and age? (3) What are the relations between sub-dimensions of materialistic tendencies and friendship relations of working children?

2.3. Instruments

Questionnaire items were selected and adapted from Schor's (2004) Consumer Involvement Scale and Kaner's (2002) Friendship Scale. The data collected via five pages questionnaire. It was divided into three major sections. The first part contained fifteen questions to measure demographic characteristics of children included gender, age, education level, number of siblings, education level of parents, occupation status of parents, housing ownership status. Materialistic tendencies were measured by materialism scale in 18 items. Students were asked to rate the items concerning materialism using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The third part included a list of 18 friendship relations. Responses were rated on five-point scale ranging from 1 (very often) to 5 (never) (2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely) The validity of the translated and adopted version of the questionnaire was carried out 50 working children in order to evaluate their opinions on each item. For the materialism scale, exploratory factor analysis and reliability assessment were performed on 18 items using data. These analyses resulted in a scale containing 15 items that behaved consistently across the samples and possessed adequate reliability. Exploratory factor analysis suggested a scale with three moderately correlated factors: dissatisfaction, consumer orientation and hedonistic. Eighth items were proposed to encompass the concept of dissatisfaction like "I feel like other kids have more stuff than I do". Four items were proposed to capture the consumer orientation and like "I wish my parents earned more money". Three factors can be called hedonistic like "I like shopping and going to stores". Coefficient alpha was calculated for the items comprising the three factors. The subsequent analysis forcing three factors and using a varimax rotation showed that the first factor to have an eigenvalue of 3.85 and accounted for 48.1 % of the variance. The second factor with an eigenvalue of 2.48, accounted for 32.0 % of the variance. The third factor to have an eigenvalue of 1.66 and accounted for 21.9 % of the variance. Relative to the friendship relations scale, exploratory factor analysis and reliability assessment were performed on 18 items using data. These analyses resulted in a scale containing 14 items that behaved consistently across the samples and possessed adequate reliability. Exploratory factor analysis suggested a scale with three moderately correlated factors: interdependence, confidence and identification, and self-disclosure. Coefficient alpha was calculated for the items comprising the three factors. The subsequent analysis forcing three factors and using a varimax rotation showed that the first factor to have an eigenvalue of 4.84 and accounted for 60.5 % of the variance. The second factor with an eigenvalue of 2.62, accounted for 33.5 % of the variance. The third factor has an eigenvalue of 1.32 and accounted for 16.1 % of the variance. To show the relationship among scale items, Figure 1 and Figure 2 provide matrix from rotated component analysis and item total correlation.

Figure 1. Factor Analysis and Items Loading of Materialistic Tendencies Scale

Dissatisfaction	Rotated component analysis	Items loading
I feel like other kids have more stuff than I do.	0.661	0.558
I wish my family could afford to buy me more of what I want	0.767	0.617
I wish my parents gave me more money to spend.	0.723	0.542



When I decide who to be friends with, I don't care what toys or stuff the person has. (r)	0.511	0.416
When I go somewhere special, I usually like to buy something.	0.656	0.601
Brand names matter to me.	0.744	0.594
.Being cool is important to me.	0.738	0.646
Eigenvalue: 3.85 Accounted variance: 48.1 % Alpha: 0.843		
Consumer orientation		
I wish my parents earned more money	0.837	0.545
I usually have something in mind that I want to buy or get	0.756	0.623
I want to make a lot of money when I grow up.	0.815	0.590
care a lot about my games, toys, and other possessions	0.738	0.554
Eigenvalue: 2.48 Accounted variance: 62.0 % Alpha: 0.793		
Hedonistic		
I like shopping and going to store	0.728	0.430
I like making collections	0.767	0.394
I like watching ads	0.733	0.369
Eigenvalue: 1.66 Accounted variance: 52.2 % Alpha: 0.591		

Figure 2. Factor Analysis and Items Loading of Friendship Relations Scale

Interdependence	Rotated component analysis	Items loading
My friends love me	0,684	0,569
My friends respect me	0,819	0,712
We love my friend very much each other	0,883	0,751
My friends interest in me.	0,839	0,735
My friends interest in my problems	0,814	0,692
My friends help me when I have problems	0,833	0,760
My friends give importance my opinions	0,720	0,659
I would like to be my best friend	0,587	0,429
Eigenvalue:4.84 Accounted variance:60.5% Alpha:0.901		
Confidence and identification		
I can trust my friends when things go wrong	0,760	0,570
Calling my friends relieve me when I feel bad myself	0,759	0,553
I trust my friends	0,552	0,690
I trust my friends as much as I can tell the truth	0,861	0,695
Eigenvalue:2.62 Accounted variance: 65.5% Alpha:0.818		
Self-disclosure		
My friends like hearing my thoughts	0,813	0,502
I talk my friends whether my parents understand me or not	0,813	0,302
Eigenvalue:1.32 Accounted variance:66.1% Alpha:0.484		

2.4. Data Analyses

Answers from the questionnaires were coded and analyzed using SPSS 16.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Science). For all variables frequencies and descriptive statistics were first computed. In order to find out differences related to the materialistic tendencies and friendship relations depending on gender, a *t*-test was applied and depending on an age, one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) was applied to calculate average scores. Finally, Pearson correlation coefficient was computed for the materialistic tendency and friendship relation scores. Statistical differences were set at $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$.

3. FINDINGS

The demographic data of working children surveyed in this study was tabulated in Table 1. According to the study, 43.3 % of the sample was girls and 56.7 % was boys. The subjects of the study were between 7 and 16 years of age, 46.1 % of the samples were between 10-12 years old. The number of family members is five and more for 71.1% of the students. Both of the parents (mother 98.0%, father 95.3%) are alive and they live together (88.0 %). Results showed that 39.3% of mothers of students graduated from primary school. In addition, 40.0% of the fathers of students graduated from primary school. Most of mothers (85.3%) were housewives and 40.0 % of fathers were self-employed, %22.7 were worker. Most of families (61.3 %) lived in as tenant. 80.7 % of families do not have any car. On the other hand, it was found that the children went out and talked with someone in their leisure times (20.3 %).

Table 1. Materialistic tendencies and friendship relations of working children by gender



Materialistic tendencies	Gender	N	\bar{X}	Sd	t
Dissatisfaction	Girls	65	23.88	8.90	1.70
	Boys	85	26.36	8.48	
Consumer orientation	Girls	65	15.25	4.18	0.17
	Boys	85	15.36	4.40	
Hedonistic	Girls	65	10.11	3.36	0.92
	Boys	85	9.62	2.99	
Friendship relations Interdependence	Girls	65	14.15	6.74	1.57
	Boys	85	16.01	7.76	
Confidence and Identification,	Girls	65	7.83	3.92	0.99
	Boys	85	8.56	4.38	
Self-disclosure	Girls	65	5.48	2.33	0.34
	Boys	85	5.34	2.54	

To determine whether there was a significant gender effect on materialistic tendencies and friendship relations among working children, the t-test analysis was conducted. A factor analysis was done by dividing the fifteen items into three categories in materialistic tendencies. What's more, a factor analysis was done by dividing the fourteen items into three categories in friendship relations.

The results of the materialistic tendencies and friendship relations subscales are presented in Table 2. As per the each subscale of materialism, the independent variable of gender did not have a significant relationship with materialistic tendencies scale ($p > 0.05$). On the other hand, the mean scores of the boys ($\bar{X} = 26.31$) were significantly higher than the girls ($\bar{X} = 23.88$) with respect to the dissatisfaction while the mean scores of the girls ($\bar{X} = 10.11$) were significantly higher than the boys ($\bar{X} = 9.62$) with respect to the hedonistic subscale. Furthermore, it was found that there were not any significance relations between gender and friendship relations ($p > 0.05$). However, the mean scores of the boys were significantly higher than the girls according to both interdependence, and confidence and identification subscales.

Table 2. Materialistic tendencies and friendship relations of working children by age

Materialistic tendencies	Age	N	\bar{X}	Sum of squares	Sd	Mean square	F
Dissatisfaction	7-9	39	20.56	BWG 1513.061	7.82	BWG 756.531	11.342*
	10-12	69	25.51	WG 9805.312	8.20	WG 66.703	
	13-15	42	29.19	T 11318.373	8.41		
Consumer orientation	7-9	39	14.56	BWG 136.300	4.12	BWG 68.150	3.838**
	10-12	69	14.81	WG 2609.974	4.67	WG 17.755	
	13-15	42	16.83	T 2746.273	3.44		
Hedonistic	7-9	39	9.77	BWG 8.897	3.22	BWG 4.448	0.443
	10-12	69	9.64	WG 1475.937	3.43	WG 10.040	
	13-15	42	10.21	T 1484.833	2.63		
Friendship relations Interdependence	7-9	39	13.15	BWG 233.127	6.69	BWG 116.564	2.181
	10-12	69	16.17	WG 7855.466	7.79	WG 53.439	
	13-15	42	15.52	T 8088.593	7.02		
Confidence and Identification,	7-9	39	7.03	BWG 75.955	4.03	BWG 37.977	2.200
	10-12	69	8.72	WG 2537.219	4.33	WG 17.260	
	13-15	42	8,48	T 2613.173	3.96		
Self-disclosure	7-9	39	6.00	BWG 39.140	2.53	BWG 19.570	3.389**
	10-12	69	5.52	WG 848.860	2.52	WG 5.775	
	13-15	42	4.64	T 888.000	2.06		

* $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$

On the other hand when the one-way variance (ANOVA) analysis of subscales itself, the results drawn in Table 3. As seen from the table, the analysis emphasizes that the dissatisfaction and consumer orientation dimensions of materialistic tendencies have considerable differences in age ($p < 0.01, p < 0.05$). According to the results, 13-15 ages are significantly more likely than other age group to place possessions and their acquisitions at the centre of their lives. Moreover, there is a significant relationship between self-disclosure dimension of friendship relations and age. The mean scores of 7-9 ages were significantly higher than the other ages group. This finding could have implicated that the adolescents less share their problems with their friends.

Table 3. Sub-dimensions of materialsitic tendencies and friendship relations: Pearson Correlation Matrix



Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Dissatisfaction	1	0.625*	0.431*	0.149	0.059	0.123
Consumer orientation	0.625*	1	0.460*	0.056	0.033	0.064
Hedonistic	0.431*	0.460*	1	0.089	0.037	0.021
Interdependence	0.149	0.056	0.089	1	0.652*	0.389*
Confidence and Identification	0.059	0.033	0.037	0.652*	1	0.474*
Self-disclosure	0.123	0.064	0.021	0.389*	0.474*	1

*p<0.01

Apart from the t-test analysis and ANOVA, Pearson Correlation Matrix was used to test the relationships on the sub-dimensions of materialistic tendencies and friendship relations in Table 4. The findings indicated that statistically significant differences exist among all dimensions with materialistic tendencies (p<0.01). It also demonstrated that there were significant relationships among all dimensions of friendship relations (p<0.01). Besides, it was found that there were no significant relations between materialistic tendency of working children and their friendship relations (p>0.05).

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The textbook definition of materialism states that it is a personality-like trait which distinguishes between individuals who regard possessions as essential to their identities and their lives and those for whom possessions are secondary (Schiffman and Kanuk 2005). Strongly held materialistic values indicate a commitment to identity construction through material goods (Antonides and Raaij Van 1998). Thus, materialistic values not only entail a strong focus on acquiring material goods, but are also associated with beliefs about the psychological benefits that consumer goods may provide (Dittmar et.al 2007). Existing scientific research on the value of materialism yields clear and consistent findings. People who are highly focused on materialistic values have lower personal well-being and psychological health than those who believe that materialistic pursuits are relatively unimportant (Kasser 2002). Moreover, students whose friendship groups are higher in materialism and social self-confidence. As Antonis's study (2001), students tend to report lower gains in cultural awareness in the first two years of college. Materialism increases from middle childhood to early adolescence and declines from early to late adolescence (Chaplin and John 2007).

The purpose of this study is to extend the understanding relationship between materialistic tendencies and friendship relations by gender and age. At the beginning of this work, it is expected that gender and age are significant variables on materialistic values and friendship relations. Our study demonstrated that gender had no a substantial impact on materialistic tendencies and friendship relations. Relatively, mean scores of boys are higher than girls'. Regarding age differences, 13-15 ages were more likely to show well on sub- dimensions of materialistic tendencies in terms of disclosure and consumer orientation. (p<0.05). Many observers believe that children begin to exhibit materialistic orientations as they approach adolescence (Chaplin and John 2007). Our findings support this idea that materialism develops as children enter adolescence and increases depending on age. According to the evaluation of the results based on friendship relations it is seen that self-disclosure is an important mediator of age differences. Self-disclosure - the sharing of personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences - is an important hallmark of adolescent friendships for initiating and deepening relationships. One important function of self-disclosure is social validation. Another important function is intimacy development: By sharing their fears and worries with friends (Valkenburg et.al 2010). Saunders et.al (1981) stated that self disclosure increases in age, and age significantly affect the relationship in researches on the development and change of relations between students and their parents. However, in our results showed that self disclosure tendencies of working children decrease with increasing their age. Whereas as a limitation of our research, since the sample is drawn from working children in 7-15 ages these listed findings would not extrapolate to the general population. Furthermore, it must be emphasised that each subscales of materialistic tendencies and each subscales of friendship relations were associated within each other for the sample in this study.

It is clear that a number of factors such as family environment, parenting style, peer interaction and media exposure influence materialistic tendencies. Therefore;

- It should be provided that families should be discouraged from sending their children to work on the streets in the first place. In this context, house-to-house visits will promote services for families of children at risk.



- That working children are forced to earn money by their families cause decreasing in their dependence to their families. Thus, they may give more importance materialistic tendencies. At this point, health, nutrition and social aids toward families should be provided by local governments.
- Financial aid should be made to sustain their education of working children. Within this context, improvement should be provided in social work provision.
- Working children feel themselves under pressure to support their parents for bringing a certain amount of money. This situation cause the partial communication of children with their parents, and attaching themselves to their friends. Hence, families should have knowledge to improve communication in family and they should be informed in order to prevent getting their children bad habits of their friends on the streets.
- Children should be encouraged to value themselves for who they are as people rather than what they own.
- Parents should have a responsibility to teach their children how to cope with materialism.
- Previous researches show that 9-12 ages believe happiness was linked to money, fame and beauty. Therefore, mass media and advertising exposure should ban on advertising children and adolescent, and support parental limits on TV exposure.
- In terms of social work perspectives, everything is related to the family should not take responsibility of a single-center. Thus, it is necessary to generalise Family Counselling Center in order to strenghten the integrity of the happiness and welfare of the familyand their family members.
- Social work discipline should carry out researches about why child is on the streets, what their feelings, thoughts, and assesments are, in order to determine evaluate and produce to a solution.

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