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# The Perceptions of School Counselors and Principals Towards New Psychological Counseling and Guidance Services in Early Childhood Education in Turkey\*

Ramin ALIYEV<sup>a</sup>

Bengu ERGUNER-TEKINALP

Riza ULKER

Zirve University

Drake University

Zirve University

# Filiz SHINE-EDIZER

Zirve University

#### Abstract

The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions of the school administrators and psychological guidance counselors towards guidance service for early childhood education. The main objective of the study was to comprehend the perceptions of the administrators, and guidance counselors in regards to the psychological services given in pre-school. This study was qualitative in nature and data collection was conducted using qualitative methods. Data collection was conducted through the collection of personal information and open-ended questions on a survey. A descriptive content analysis method was used in analyzing the data and each author carried this out. The authors agreed on the main themes that emerged from the data. The findings suggest that the psychological counselors and administrators had not received enough education to apply counseling to pre-school child. Especially at the undergraduate level, courses were very limited and insufficient in preparing counselors for that particular age group. Specific training is needed for that age level so that guidance counselors feel confident that they may be able to provide knowledgeable guidance services in the early childhood age group. This is crucial because we know that there are many advantages to early intervention. This type of service is necessary if we want children to develop to their full potential.

# **Key Words**

Perceptions, School Counselors, Principals, New Psychological Counseling and Guidance Services, Early Childhood Education, Pre-school, Turkey.

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- a Ramin ALIYEV. Ph.D., is an assistant professor of Psychological Guidance and Counseling Department. Correspondence: Assist. Prof. Ramin ALI-YEV, Zirve University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Psychological Guidance and Counseling Department, Kizilhisar Yerleskesi, 27260 Gaziantep/Turkey. E-mail: ramin.aliyev@zirve.edu.tr; aliyevus@gmail.com Tel: +90 342 211 6666/6881 Fax: +90 342 211 6677.

Today education is increasingly crucial. Particularly because brain development of children is at its highest level between 0 - 6 years, awareness of preschool education in states, organizations and families have increased. Each and every child comes to school with different behaviors, interests and experiences. Desired results in the child's education might only be achieved by means of preschool education programs (Curtis, 1986 cited in Ugurlu, 2010). Information with regards to rapid developments of the children who live in innovative environmental conditions (Arnas, 2002), might be the indicator for the necessity of education gi-

ven during the pre-school education period (cited in Ugurlu, 2010).

The role of the educators in children's' education is important. According to Mialaret (1976); discoveries made in the sciences of psychology, biology, and sociology have helped comprehend the nature of children. Today, society regards the child as an individual. Honor and value given to the child in the guidelines with respect to rights of the children have started to rise in the 20th century. Learning during early childhood is easier than learning at later ages (Berlinski et al., 2006; Chiswick & DebBurman, 2004). Investments made in the early childhood years are more constructive and more result accomplishing. Services provided to children between the ages of 3 - 5 are a great infrastructure for preliminary education. Research has shown that early participation in pre-school education positively influences behavioral skills of the students. Behavioral skills such as discipline, power control, and attendance to lessons acquired during pre-school education ease socialization and self-control process of the students in elementary education years (as cited in Ugurlu, 2010).

## What do 3 and 4 Year Olds do?

During the ages of 3 and 4, preschool children's minds are amazing. They are not limited by rules and there are no boundaries to their thoughts. In fact, Pearce (1977) describes 4 year olds thinking as magical thinking; it does not require that it be tested against reality. During these years, thinking is incredible and hopeful (Pearce). It is as if by thinking you can change reality and therefore witches can cast spells, princesses can be magical, and dreams can be real. We also see that a matchbox can be a pirate ship thrashing against the big waves of the ocean as they journey to find the hidden treasures of unknown islands.

However, not everyone accepts this magical time and nor do some of us really comprehend the complexity of the magical child. Some adults even try to have the children think of only realistic things and have them discard magical thinking. During this time we should try to comprehend more about the child and let the child develop their thinking and imagination as they wish with less control and change (LeFrancois, 2001).

The following paragraphs will discuss the physical growth/motor, social/personal, cognitive/language and emotional development of 3 and 4 year olds.

In regards to physical growth /motor development, 3 years olds should be able to copy circles, manipulate clay, puzzles, use scissors and build things. They should be able to physically run around obstacles, walk on a line, hop and balance on one foot, ride a tricycle, throw a ball overhand and begin to use buttons and zippers while dressing. Usually by age 3, children have improved control of fine motor skills (LeFrancois, 2001).

Four year olds under this category are able to paint, use scissors, and draw. They can dress and undress themselves without help and are able to walk up stairs with changing each foot, By this time they are independent with bathroom skills. Physically they can run, skip, jump, hop, gallop and kick, bounce, throw and catch a ball (LeFrancois, 2001).

Social and Personal Development is an exciting time for 3 year olds. During this time, they should be able to tell their name and can join in play with others or just play next to their friend. They can share and they can also take turns although sometimes this may be a difficult task. Children at this age can demonstrate self-control and they are able to accept responsibility. Usually during this time, dramatic play and pretend begins. Also, this is the time children can and do enjoy singing (LeFrancois, 2001).

This is also an exciting time for 4 year olds under this category. Children during this time show interest in gender differences. They are eager to try new things and they are playing and interacting with their friends. Their dramatic play resembles reality and they can show this with details. They are able to participate in-group activities and they now can respect the materials of others. During this time they can solve minimal conflicts (LeFrancois, 2001).

Cognitive/Language Development for 3 year olds is a time where problem solving begins and children are able to listen attentively, although not for long periods of time because their attention span is short. Their speech is understood and they are using sentences as well as referring to themselves as I or me. Children also begin to understand the concept of time. They are able to complete various tasks. They can express themselves verbally and are able to count as well as do comparisons of size. They can recognize and match colors and also draw pictures and explain their picture to an adult. They can also classify or group objects. Usually, most children know their name and age during this age. As their cognitive skills develop, 3 year olds can cluster objects together and compare their sizes (LeFrancois, 2001).

During this time, 4 year olds become interested in letters and sounds and their emergent literacy is more profound. They are able to count and by now are good listeners. They can follow directions and make decisions and choices. Usually they can complete a task without being distracted and can work independently. They will ask for help if needed and they are now trying to get things right. Children like to learn and they begin to see the relationship between effort and accomplishment. By age 4, a child is able to focus more than a 3 year old and this helps the child stay on task (LeFrancois, 2001).

Emotional development for 3 years olds is a time when they are developing their self-confidence. They can express their feelings in an appropriate manner and are able to accept constructive criticism. This a time where they may be silly and they are developing a sense of humor. On the other hand, they can regress back to their toddler years and manifest toddler behavior such as crying if unhappy or sucking their thumb (LeFrancois, 2001).

Four years old during this period can feel secure even when they are away from a familiar environment. Children are able to express their individual thoughts and their feelings as well as being able to separate from their parents. They develop self-confidence and are improving on ways in which they can control their anger and fears (LeFrancois, 2001).

Developmentally, 3 and 4 year olds are going through quite a bit. This is an exciting time as they begin to gain confidence and learn to work independently. When choosing a high quality daycare program, Clarke-Stewart, Gruber, and Fitzgerald (1999) suggest these elements: The first is that the caregivers need to be qualified and the program should be well designed and offer social and educational opportunities for children. These should be different that what can be offered at home. The school should have a low caregiver - child ratio. This allows for the caregivers to interact with the child more often. The environment should not be overly disciplined oriented. In previous studies, children who received less discipline and were able to make more choices and had more responsibility were found to be cognitively more advanced, more sociable, more compliant and able to get along better with other children (Clark-Stewart et al.)

Children should have abundant opportunities to interact with other children. The classes should be with mixed age group so that younger children are able to interact with older children (Dunn, Kontos,

& Potter, 1996). The physical setting should be invigorating. The parents and the caregivers' goals and beliefs about children should be similar.

# Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP)

Developmentally Appropriate Practices, as defined by Copple, Bredekamp and Gonzalez-Mena, meet children where they are in regards to teaching and supporting children in their continuous development and learning to reach their goals (Copple, Bredekamp, & Gonzalez-Mena, 2012). In order to have a DAP classroom, teachers need to know a significant amount about children. This knowledge will help them make decisions about their curriculum, the materials, instruction and the way that they interact with children on a daily basis in the classroom setting. Certain significant aspects should be contemplated when making decisions about children in a DAP Curriculum.

These aspects include age appropriateness, individual appropriateness, and cultural appropriateness (Copple et al., 2012). Understanding these aspects create the pathway to inform early childhood teachers and what they need to do in order to implement DAP principles in their classroom. The five fundamental conditions in regards to good teaching are creating a caring community of learners, teaching that encourages development and learning, planning an appropriate curriculum, assessing children's development and learning, developing reciprocal relationships with families (Copple et al.).

Another aspect of being a good teacher is being intentional. Good teachers use research based plans when preparing experiences for children. These teachers are also prepared to share their knowledge with parents, other teachers, and administrators. Good teachers know what they are doing as well as knowing the purpose of what they are doing. They are able to articulate their knowledge of why and what, based on child development and learning research. Being clear about the program and knowing how it helps to achieve the desired goals contributes to a teacher's effectiveness (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Creating a caring community of learners is essential when we want children to flourish in their development and learning. Children need to feel as part of a community of learners and be participants actively engaged in each other's learning and well being (Copple & Brendenkamp, 2009). It is crucial that teachers attempt to get to know the child as

well as the family. Knowing the family can lead to insightful information about the child such as individual interests, ways of learning and their personality. Family can provide teachers with valuable information in regards to the child, which may in return help the teacher make decisions that aid in the development and learning of the child. Children should feel a part of the community. Also, it is important the children are a valued, active member of their classroom and they respect and value one another. Teachers should make it a priority to develop a positive relationship with the children in the classroom as this relationship is extremely important in regards to the learning and development of the children (Copple & Brendenkamp). Knowledgeable early childhood teachers know that certain errors or misbehavior can be an excellent learning opportunity for the child and the teacher. A classroom community where the child feels that she or he is in a comfortable, safe, valued, and cared for environment helps to accomplish his/her future success in school. It helps to establish the groundwork for great beginnings.

Knowledgeable and informed teachers use different strategies to help the child learn what he/she needs to learn. Teachers need to be observant and need to know when and where to use which strategy that will be most effective for the child. According to Copple and Bredekamp (2009), here are some of the strategies that are available for the teachers' use. Teachers recognize what children do or say. They recognize this through observation or by sitting next to them or by verbally acknowledging something that they have done in a positive manner. Such an example may be " John thank you for helping Peter find his lunch bag." Secondly, teachers encourage determination and resolve and inspire the child's growth. An example of this might be, "Sarah you have shown many ways in figuring out this problem, keep thinking about it." Thirdly, they give specific feedback rather than an overall comment. In others words it is specific so that the child knows what to focus on and can make use of the feedback. An example of this may be, "Annie your story has a great start however we need to add an ending, can you tell me how the story should end."

Teachers also serve as a model for students on how they should act. They need to demonstrate to children how they should problem solve and how they should act toward one another. An example, of this might be, "Let's see what am I missing in this story? Can anyone help me figure out what is missing? Thank you Ben for raising your hand before you speak so that we all can hear each other." Teachers explain or show the correct way to do something. For example, tracing the letter G with finger in shaving cream. Teachers create or add challenges in order to meet the individual needs of the children. For example some children may be ready to move forward with their reading with the help of the teachers while others may need to stay on the same level or go to a simpler level so they are not frustrated. It is about knowing where the child is and meeting the individual need of each child (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Assessment in a developmentally appropriate classroom involves ongoing authentic types of assessment through observation, anecdotal records, and portfolios. Assessment should show growth over time for the students and allow the student to take ownership of his /her own strengths and weaknesses. Samples and work of the children should help guide the teacher in planning for lessons. Teachers should adapt their teaching towards the developmental needs of the individual child. This also holds true in regards to the learning styles of each child. The outcomes of the assessment should be used to improve and individualize instruction. Assessment should show growth over a period of time. The curriculum is enriched with the observations and anecdotal records that the teacher keeps. Learning styles are fundamental in regards to assessing the progress and growth of the children. Assessment should be authentic. Strengths and weaknesses about their learning and needs should be shared with parents and teachers interchangeably. Assessment is ongoing and this allows the teacher to reflect and observe the success of students. These are some of the principles in assessment that should guide assessment in the developmentally appropriate classroom.

Good relationships with the family of the students are crucial in a developmentally appropriate classroom and can aid teachers immensely in getting to know the child in their classroom. Families can provide insights to the teacher and vice versa, which can help the teacher in regards to the development and learning of the child.

Knowing about the developmentally appropriate curriculum and some activities will help the children to develop and learn in the classroom. It is important to remember that the classroom should be child centered and educational decisions should be made in regards to where the child is developmentally. In general, the DAP theoretical framework suggests the constructivist approach to instructing children. It is built on the foundation that children are social learners who are meaning makers that construct meaning as they are engaged with their environment. Studies have demonstrated that children who are actively engaged in childcentered classrooms are more successful on measures of creativity (Hyson, Hirsh-Pasek, & Rescorla, 1990). They also have enhanced receptive verbal skills (Dunn, Beach, & Kontos, 1994) and are more self-assured in regards to their cognitive capabilities. It has been shown in research studies that children who attend developmentally appropriate programs in preschool actually achieved better on first grade standardized assessments. In fact, one study showed that children from improvised backgrounds who attended a developmentally appropriate pre-school demonstrated better reading scores in first grade than those who attended a traditional pre-school (Burts et al., 1993).

Since the foundation of the Republic, education has been always been considered as one of the most important tools for modernization and becoming westernized (Ergun, 1990). Psychological counseling and guidance in schools began in Turkey during the 1950s in the context of Turkish - American collaboration, in the wake of various recommendations of the academicians from The United States of America visiting Turkey (Doğan, 1998a, 1998b). At the same time, a number of academicians, educators, and master and doctorate students have gone to the United States of America in order to receive education (Yeşilyaprak, 2003). The profession of psychological counseling and guidance which has begun in the 1950s as a professional and academic orientation, and for the purpose of reaching the problem students, has aimed to spread the PCG (Psychological Counseling and Guidance) services within the school system in general, and reaching all students through implementation of programs based on developmental comprehensive psychological counseling and guidance models in the year of 2000. It has been emphasized that the Psychological Counseling and Guidance services should be devoted to all students (Doğan, 2000; Nazlı, 2003a). Comprehensive psychological counseling and guidance programs have initially been implemented in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades of the secondary schools, and as of 2005, mandatory counseling in the primary schools have been put into practice together with the lecture hours (Terzi, Ergüner-Tekinalp, & Leuwerke, 2011). Comprehensive developmental psychological counseling programs prepared by developmental guidance concept and covering achievements of 1-12<sup>th</sup> grades have been practiced for the first time systematically during 2006-2007 school year in primary and secondary schools, (Ergüner-Tekinalp, Leuwerke, & Terzi, 2009).

Psychological counseling and guidance services in schools require teamwork that includes parents, teachers, and school administrators. While entering the twenty first century, the roles and the duties of the school administrators, and the expectations from the administrators become more complicated. In a rapidly changing environment, the administrators who will be carrying the schools to the next century are expected to be very well acquainted with the school and the society, take the lead in order for the schools to be prosperous, consistently by improving themselves, and being in collaboration with the teachers and the psychological counselors of the school (Karip & Köksal, 1999). Duties of the school principal in order to ensure operating such services might be listed as follows:

- a) Leading and supporting the guidance program,
- b) Ensuring the organization of the program and mentoring,
- c) Obtaining funds for the program (Yeşilyaprak, 2002).

When all the regulations which methodize the psychological counseling and guidance services in schools are examined, planning and programming; providing necessary collaboration; implementation; procuring tools and materials; establishing an executive commission in the school for performing psychological counseling and guidance services; and presiding to such commission; and providing the requisite psychological counseling and guidance services in school to carry out the psychological counseling and guidance services are under the authority of the school principal (Yeşilyaprak, 2002). As the activities which are within the scope of psychological counseling and guidance are considered as the essential functions of the school, it is understood that it the school principal is responsible for the achievement of the psychological counseling and guidance services (Paskal, 2001).

In a study he made with respect to the perception levels for the guidance services offered in schools. Kecelioğlu (1984) established that significant differences exist about perceptions between the principals, specialists and teachers (cited in Özabacı, Sakarya, & Doğan, 2008). In his research, Özdemir (1991) studied expectations of the students, teachers, psychological counselors, and administrators from psychological counseling and guidance services, and whether these expectations differ according to some personal qualities. In consequence of this research, he discovered that expectations of the younger administrators with regards to psychological counseling and guidance services compared to older administrators, and of the ones who have participated in in-service training seminars, particularly in the trainings about guidance are significantly higher than the ones who have not participated in such seminars (Özabacı et al.).

During the recent years, as preschool gains wide currency, guidance counselors have begun to be assigned to pre-school. However, in this application both in the training of the psychological counselors, and effectively presenting the psychological counseling and guidance services, difficulties have been experienced. Through publication in the Official Gazette dated July 01, 2006 (Resmi Gazete, 2006) and within the framework of the 9th Development Plan, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) has taken a decision to gradually reach a 100% schooling rate in the 5-year-old age group as from the end of the year of 2013. The Ministry of National Education (MEB) aims to extend the mandatory pre-school education to the whole nation until the end of the school year of 2013-2014 by increasing the schooling year of the 5-year-old age group to 100% throughout the country. By publication in the Official Gazette dated February 22, 2011 (Resmi Gazete, 2011), The Grand National Assembly of Turkey has decided to assign a guidance counselor to each pre-school. The Ministry of National Education has begun the implementation of assigning pre-school classrooms a guidance counselor starting in 2011.

The purpose of this study was to gather the opinions of the school administrators and psychological counselors who work in the guidance counselor cadre where the psychological counseling and guidance services have recently begun. The research has the

characteristics of a pilot study or a more general national study. The primary goal of the research is to get opinions of the administrators and guidance counselors about the psychological counseling and guidance services provided in pre-school, thus offering an insight for future applications.

#### Method

#### Research Group

In total, 38 people who consist of psychological counselors and school principals commissioned in the pre-school institutions have participated in the research. Twenty of the participants are female and 18 of them are male. Professional seniority of the participants varies between 1 and 7 years. Thirty-three of the participants hold undergraduate degrees, and four hold master degrees, and one of them still carries on his/her doctorate. Whereas, 12 persons commissioned in the guidance counselor cadre are graduates of psychological counseling and guidance, the remaining four have graduated from other branches.

# **Data Collecting Tools**

In an effort to collect data for the research, personal information forms with demographic information of the participants was collected. In addition, openended survey questions, and a scale similar to the likert scale which the opinions about the importance of the psychological counseling and guidance services given in pre-school institutions were used.

In order to determine the opinions of the psychological counselors and school principals who work in the pre-school institutions with regards to psychological counseling and guidance services provided in the pre-school institutions, six open ended questions have been included in the psychological counseling and guidance services that have come into effect in the pre-school Institutions survey. These questions are as follows:

- 1. In your opinion, what are the responsibilities of a guidance counselor who works in the pre-school institutions? (Explain briefly.)
- 2. In your opinion, how do the psychological counseling and guidance services provided in the pre-school institutions differ from other levels (primary/secondary education)? (Explain briefly.)
- 3. In your opinion, what are problems encounte-

red by the psychological counseling and guidance services provided in the pre-school institutions? (Explain briefly.)

- 4. What are your recommendations in order to eliminate such problems encountered in offering psychological counseling and guidance services in pre-school institutions? (Explain briefly.)
- 5. What kind of education did you receive both during your undergraduate study and after graduation in order to offer psychological counseling and guidance services? (Explain briefly.)
- 6. Do you think that you are qualified for providing psychological counseling and guidance services in pre-school institutions? (If your answer is Yes/No, explain the reasons.)

Importance of the psychological counseling and guidance services in pre-school institutions

Questions of the scale named Importance of Psychological Counseling and Guidance Services have been adapted from the studies carried on by Özabacı ety al. (2008) with the school principles, and the questions used for the research have been transcribed according to the research group. In this scale, eight questions have been asked in total, and the questions have been graded on a quinary basis from "I do not agree at all" to "I totally agree."

**Personal Information Form:** In the research, a personal information form which covers the variables such as gender, professional seniority, educational status and the program graduated was used.

# Analysis of the Data

When analyzing the data, for frequency distribution and open-ended questions, a descriptive content analysis method was employed. The purpose of the descriptive analysis was to present the findings to the reader in an arranged and interpreted manner. Each author has individually carried out descriptive content analysis of the data obtained by the research. Each author has determined main themes that have been generated from the answers given to research questions for the purpose of the research. Later on, the authors came together and arrived at a consensus on the main themes generated, and established the final state of the themes. In conclusion, data consented according to main themes and sub-themes have been defined, and knowledge emerged through necessary citations have been presented by matching them with each other. Qualitative research methods are the methods, which are employed in situations where particularly obtaining thorough information is essential, by using small sampling groups. Qualitative research methods are especially helpful in studying the abstract subjects or subjects which have not been studied before.

Qualitative research is a variety of scientific investigation that tries to answer questions, collect data, and produce findings. This type of research is particularly effective in getting culturally specific information about the values, thoughts, manners, and social contexts of specific people.

Qualitative research is inquiry that focuses on studies that are in depth and therefore smaller samples can be used. In essence qualitative research is an exploration of a research question or situation in depth. The definition that Shank (2002) provides for qualitative research is "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (p. 5). This means that this type of inquiry is systematic and highly complex.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that qualitative research includes an interpretive and naturalistic approach. This means that inquiry takes place in its natural setting. The researcher tries to make sense of what occurs and tries to make sense of the experiences he or she sees. Qualitative research can include grounded theory, action research, ethnography, and narrative inquiry (Huxman & Vangen, 2000; Parry, 1998; Tierney,1996)

This type of research can help us often identify situations or issues that may be intangible such as gender roles, religion, ethnicity, norms, and socio economic status. Qualitative research usually tells the story of the human aspect of an issue that is often inconsistent manners, beliefs, emotions, relationships and thoughts.

The most common types of qualitative methods are participant observation, in depth interviews, and focus groups as well as grounded surveys. Qualitative research requires extensive, accurate field notes and all data can be thought of as field notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This data can include notes, pictures, transcripts, interview video tapings, official documents, official statistics, and other materials as well (Bogdan & Biklen).

#### Results

In the analysis of the data, the researchers have independently prepared all questions. Themes and codes emerging through perpetual meetings have been evaluated, an agreement has been reached, and the effectiveness has been increased. Findings for each question have been presented below. In this part, findings acquired through content analysis applied on the answers given by the participants to open-ended questions have been listed according to four main themes (responsibilities of the counselors in pre-school institutions, their differences from other levels, problems encountered, and solution suggestions).

In Your Opinion, What are the Responsibilities of a Guidance Counselor who Works in a Preschool Institution? (Explain briefly) (N=35).

Five sub themes emerged when the data for this main theme was examined. The themes include: "guidance", "being the information source", "being the equipoise", "preventive", and "other".

Guidance: (n=16) When this sub-theme was examined, the participants emphasize guidance activities. It is striking that primary duties of the psychological counselors in the schools are expressed as basic guidance activities.

"Knowing the classes,"

"Knowing the families,"

"Guidance for the teachers, guidance for the parents, guidance for the students,"

"Carrying out instructional guidance applications, carrying out individual guidance applications,"

"Adapting the RAM frame program to the school, and sustaining this program,"

"Enabling the students whose active participation are needed in the process of education and training from the psychological, emotional and behavioral points, and directing the students to the RAM frame program if needed."

Being the Information Source: (n=7) When the data in this sub-theme are examined, it was found that psychological counselors stated they regard themselves as parents, teachers, and an information source for the administration in the pre-school institutions. Also, their primary duties were providing information through psycho-education.

Psychological counselors commissioned in the pre-school institutions have suggested that they see themselves as experts, and their fundamental duties were carrying out preventive activities based on collaboration by providing information at this level."

"Education of the family,"

"Education of the teachers,"

"Distributing pamphlets - organizing seminars."

"Conducting surveys in order to find out expectations, monthly bulletins,"

"Participating in the works and commissions."

Being the Equipoise: (n=5) When the data in this sub-theme are examined, it was discovered that the psychological counselors working in the pre-school institutions have responsibilities for ensuring the balance between parents, teachers, administration and the students. In this sub-theme, collaboration in matters such as dealing with different problems, adaptability of the students, and supporting the teachers have been emphasized, and the role of the psychological counselor in building up this collaboration has been highlighted.

"Parents' visit, ensuring collaboration between the parents and the school,"

"Producing solutions with respect to issues in social or psychological education, working in coordination with all the stakeholders, teachers, parents, and students."

**Preventive:** (n=3) When the data in this sub-theme are examined, the psychological counselors expressed their most basic duties at this level were performing preventive works.

"Determining the problem children,"

"Advising the teachers and the parents in advance at the point of encountering problems,"

"Early identification of positive or negative situations."

Other: (n=4) A group of the participants gave responses which are against the other themes, as well as the purpose of the question. In order to display the general perception of the participants, this theme has been referred as "other".

"There is no clear job description,"

"Carrying out the works without limiting the personal rights of the people,"

"Updating the guidance quarter/column, and the web site."

In Your Opinion, How does the Psychological Counseling and Guidance Services Provided in the Pre-school Institutions differ from other Levels (Primary/Secondary Education)? (Explain Briefly.) (N=38)

When the answers to this question are examined, four sub-themes came forward. These sub-themes are "content of pre-school counseling", "developmental and behavioral diversities", "collaboration", and other.

Content of the Pre-school Counseling: (n=16) When this sub-theme is examined, the participants emphasized guidance and psychological counseling activities as well as the nature of their work being differentiated in pre-school institutions.

"Collaboration meeting with parents, education of the parents is different,"

"Since the number of students is less, a better communication is established compared to guidance services provided in the secondary education,"

"Observation based; observing the families, and the teachers,"

"Techniques other than tests are applied more,"

"Problems have not escalated, interventions produce results,"

"Can carry out all kinds of psychological counseling and guidance works with the exception of written material (student surveys etc.) applications."

"Issues such as test anxiety do not exist in the pre-school program,"

"Source of the problems experienced during the pre-school period is the families,"

"During the pre-school period there is a developmental guidance, whereas in primary and secondary education there is crisis management,"

"Nonexistence of guidance activities in the academic field,"

"In primary education, there is an educational guidance for adaptation problems during the pre-school period."

Developmental and Behavioral Diversities: (n=13) When this sub-theme is examined, participants emphasized the developmental diversities of students in the pre-school institutions, therefo-

re psychological counseling and guidance services differ.

"It has to address to emotions and behaviors of the children,"

"Children are very young, and they have difficulty in expressing themselves, therefore the guidance counselor has to be a good observer and his/her communication with the teachers must be strong,"

"Diversities in the interests, talents, physical, educational, and individual preparedness in the development levels of the students, differences in the parents' profiles, diversities of issues and problems,"

"It is completely different; you are not preparing the student for an examination,"

"Imitating a model is common, behaviors of the parents and guidance counselors are important,"

"As the children are small, guidance services are more child and family centered."

Collaboration: (n=5) In this sub-theme, the participants emphasized that psychological counseling and guidance offered in the pre-school institutions is based on collaboration.

"Collaboration of the teacher,"

"Collaboration between the school principal, teacher, and guidance counselor in the works carried out,"

"Directing the parents and the teachers in order to bring the crucial behaviors of the age group of 0 - 6 years."

Other: (n=4) A group of the participants gave responses that are against the other themes, as well as the purpose of the question. In order to display the general perception of the participants, this theme has been referred as "other".

"Guidance activities which might be instructive for pre-school education have never been explained by the Ministry of National Education,"

"Since pre-school education is not compulsory, everything cannot be done as required."

"Guidance counselors who have not received any education for pre-school."

In Your Opinion, What are Problems Encountered with the Psychological Counseling and Guidance Services Provided in the Pre-School Institutions? (Explain Briefly.) (n=23)

When answers to this theme were examined, four sub-themes emerged. The themes include "problems originating from parents and teachers", "problems arising from the legislation", "education of the psychological counselors and the guidance counselors", and "insufficiency of working area".

Problems Originating from Parents and Teachers: (n=14) In this sub-theme, the participants stated issues arose from parents' and teachers' information and expectations about psychological counseling and guidance services, as well as from child-parents relations.

"Parents are not aware of psychological counseling and guidance before the school, and show no interest in it,"

"When no communication might be established with the parents, the problem is not being solved, little participation by the parents,"

"Education level of the family, lack of communication between the family and the child, differences with respect to perspectives of the family about psychological counseling and guidance services, and lack of information about psychological counseling and guidance work,"

"Collaboration with the parent is difficult as the parent works,"

"Pre-school teachers might say, 'I know,' and does not acknowledge you,"

"Observation studies are perceived as supervision by the teachers,"

"Families do not acknowledge the issues of their problem children,"

"Difficulty in the implementation of psychological counseling and guidance activities among parents, students, and stakeholders,"

"Guidance counselors are considered as an entity which immediately solves the problems, so expectations are high."

Problems Arising from Legislation: (n=10) In this sub-theme, adversities with respect to legislation and application have been emphasized. In general, guidance counselors who work at in -school institutions have specified the issues arising from the applications of the Ministry of National Education, as well as from the legislations, regulations, frame plans, and applications particularly both on the basis of the cities, counties, and schools in which they work.

"Guidance counselors must be more active, a comprehensive frame has to be formed for the work they shall be carrying out,"

"They do not feel that they belong to the school because of part time duties such as seminars."

"Shortcomings of the legislations,"

"Incapability of the school administration in this respect."

"As pre-school education is not obligatory, a mentality such as 'let the parent take his/ her child away and go' is prevalent; my first year in the pre-school institution; activities and gains are not definite and this makes the work difficult; pre-school education being optional; as in some schools no psychological counseling and guidance competent, not being able to offer psychological counseling and guidance services, frame plan must be more elaborate, difficulties experienced because of an extremely new field (psychological counseling and guidance in pre-school)."

Education of the Psychological Counselors and Guidance Counselors: (n=7) In the sub-theme, the participants expressed shortcomings in both pre-service and in-service trainings as primary concerns.

"Guidance counselor do not know what to do."

"Some guidance counselors see the preschool institutions as a place to lie down because of the limited number of the students,"

"Lack of education of the guidance counselors in the area of pre-school education,"

"They are inadequate with regards to the children who need special education,"

"Insufficiencies in the application of play therapy,"

"Who works with a competent psychological counseling and guidance expert does not experience any difficulties,"

"In the undergraduate education of the graduates of psychological counseling and guidance, pre-school education is less, and work devoted to this grade is limited,"

**Insufficiency of Working Area:** (n=2) The participants stated both their physical and psychological working areas prevent them from doing their jobs properly.

"There is no place assigned to guidance counselor, lack or insufficiency of a meeting room."

"Insufficiency of time."

What are Your Recommendations in order to Eliminate such Problems Encountered in Providing Psychological Counseling and Guidance Services in Pre-school Institutions? (Explain Briefly.) (N=24)

This theme found the solution recommendations by the participants showing parallelism with the responsibilities, diversities in the applications, problems encountered themes, which they have specified in previous questions. The participants responses were dealt into four sub themes: "family education and introduction", "legislation, activity, frame and special education", "education of psychological counselors" working area", and "collaboration".

Family Education and Introduction: (n=8) In this sub-theme, the participants accentuated the need for enlightening the families about guidance services and pre-school education.

"During enrollment, explaining to the parents the necessity of the psychological counseling and guidance services and opportunities in the schools,"

"The teachers and the parents must be told what a guidance counselor is and what it's not,"

"Parents get to know their children better, thus receiving the psychological counseling and guidance services more consciously,"

"Ways to communicate with parent has to be reviewed, and participation by the parents has to be increased."

Legislation, Activity, Frame and Special Education: (n=7) In this sub-theme, as solution recommendations, the participants brought forward that arrangements to legislations, regulations, and applications should be made.

"Eliminating the shortcomings of the legislations,"

"Eliminating the inadequacy of the school administration by means of education,"

"Guidance counselors have to take in their responsibilities and duties again,"

"Pre-school education has to be made obligatory,"

"Frame program has to make what we need

to do more explicit,"

"Psychological counseling and guidance services must absolutely be offered in each school"

Education of the Psychological Counselors: (n=5) In this sub-theme, the participants suggested that issues regarding the pre-service and in-service education of the psychological counselor and guidance counselors should be dealt with.

"Teachers must be chosen carefully,"

"Child psychology has to be further and more elaborately examined during the undergraduate study,"

"Supporting the teachers by means of on the job training,"

"Psychological counseling and guidance counselors for pre-school education have to be trained in development psychology and play therapy,"

"Psychological counseling and guidance counselors initially have to do internship, and then must be put through courses."

Working Area: (n=2) In this sub-theme, the participants suggested the need to resolve the issues with respect to working areas.

"Working areas must be materialized through research,"

"There have to be better institution buildings, and there have to be seminar rooms in the new buildings."

Collaboration: (n=2) In the sub-theme, the participants suggested collaboration for resolving the issues of the difficulties encountered.

"Guidance counselors have to exchange ideas,"

"Works have to be carried out in unity, the school administration has to follow up the works, the transactions, and spoken language has to be in conformity with the level of the children."

# Importance of Psychological Counseling and Guidance Services in Pre-School Institutions

Responses given by all participants regarding the psychological counseling and guidance services provided in pre-school institutions have been reviewed by means of frequency analysis, and presented in the following table.

**Table 1.**Opinions about Psychological Counseling and Guidance Services Offered in Pre-school Institutions

Scale Items	Answers	School Manager	Teacher of Guidance and Counseling
		f %	f %
Item 1 **	1 *	1	0
	2 *	0	0
	3 *	0	0
	4 *	2	0
	5 *	25	10
Item 2 **	1 *	1	0
	2 *	0	0
	3 *	1	0
	4 *	2	0
	5 *	24	10
Item 3 **	1 *	5	3
	2 *	13	5
	3 *	2	1
	4 *	5	1
	5 *	3	0
Item 4 **	1 *	11	2
	2 *	9	6
	3 *	2	0
	4 *	5	2
	5 *	1	0
Item 5 **	1 *	0	0
	2 *	2	0
	3 *	3	0
	4 *	10	5
	5 *	13	5
Item 6 **	1 *	0	0
	2 *	3	1
	3 *	5	0
	4 *	13	3
	5 *	7	5
Item 7 **	1 *	1	0
	2 *	1	1
	3 *	1	0
	4 *	4	9
	5 *	21	0
Item 8 **	1 *	0	0
	2 *	2	0
	3 *	0	0
	4 *	8	0
	5 *	18	10

<sup>\*1:</sup> I do not agree at all, 2: I do not agree, 3: I am undecided, 4: I agree, 5: I totally agree

- \*\* Item 3: I think guidance services in schools might effectively be carried out by classroom teachers and in-field teachers without instructions of the guidance counselors.
- \*\* Item 4: I think it would be sufficient if the guidance counselor limited guidance services with training seminars designed for students, parents, and teachers.
- \*\* Item 5: I am of the opinion that the guidance counseling service is a settled unit, which secures communication between teachers and parents.
- \*\* Item 6: I think the guidance counseling service in the preschool institutions intervene in the issues experienced in schools before they grow.
- \*\* Item 7: I think the student has to benefit from guidance counseling services in order to get to know himself/herself by recognizing his/her interests, capabilities and needs.
- \*\* *Item 8*: I think the guidance counselors play an active role in monitoring the development of the students.

When the table is studied, responses given in Item 1 reveal that, most of the school principals (N=25), and all of the psychological counseling and guidance experts (N=10) believe in the necessity of having psychological counselors in pre-school institutions.

Similarly in Item 2, most of the school principals (N=24), and all of the psychological counseling and guidance experts (N=10) think having the guidance counseling service, as a settled unit in the school, should be beneficial in terms of students' development.

In Item 3, majority of the school principals (N=13), and half of the psychological counseling and guidance experts (N=5) disagree with the opinion which states guidance services in schools might effectively be carried out by classroom teachers and in-fields teacher without instructions of the guidance counselors.

Looking into Item 4 reveals that there are differences between the opinions of the school principals, and the psychological counseling and guidance experts. The data shows, while the majority of the school principals (N=11) do not agree at all with the opinion which states that the guidance counselor to limit the guidance services with training seminars designed for students, parents, and teachers would be sufficient, more than half of the psychological counseling and guidance experts (N=6) do not agree with such opinion.

When we look into Item 5, we see that the majority of the school principals (N=13), and half of the psychological counseling and guidance experts (N=5) believe the guidance counseling service is a

<sup>\*\*</sup> Item 1: I think in each school there has to be a psychological counselor.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Item 2: I think presence of guidance counseling services, as a settled unit, should be useful in terms of students' development

settled unit that secures the communication between the teachers and the parents in pre-school institutions.

When Item 6 is evaluated, it has been seen that the majority of the school principals (N=13), and half of the psychological counseling and guidance experts (N=5) are of the opinion guidance counseling service in the pre-school institutions intervene in the issues experienced in schools without growing.

In Item 7, many of the school principals (N=21) have specified that they fully agree that the student has to benefit from guidance counseling services in order to get to know himself/herself by recognizing his/her interests, capabilities and needs, but the majority of psychological counseling and guidance experts (N=9) just agree with that opinion.

When Item 8 is studied, similarly many of the school principals (N=18), and all of the psychological counseling and guidance experts (N=10) think that the guidance counselors play an active role in monitoring the developments of the students.

#### Conclusion and Suggestions

In this research, data was collected from administrators and guidance counselors working in one the developed southeastern cities of Turkey during spring term of 2012. When the findings obtained through the research were examined, although significance of psychological counseling and guidance services in pre-schools have been highlighted both by the administrators of the schools and psychological counseling and guidance experts, it has been understood that some difficulties were experienced in terms of their implementations. When the data were evaluated, difficulties encountered while providing psychological counseling and guidance services in pre-school institutions, as well as solutions to these difficulties were shown. The data also revealed the participants emphasized the importance of education of the psychological counseling and guidance experts.

Comprehensive developmental psychological counseling and guidance programs, which have been put into practice in Turkey, require a considerable exhaustive and intensive workload (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). In order for the psychological counseling and guidance experts to implement such programs, they have to be very well educated on this program. The research has revealed that psychological counselors in the schools face problems while conveying their education to their professions (Gibson, 2008). In terms of service quality, it is very important that the psychological counseling and guidance experts who work in preschool institutions be quite well educated with regards to both this age group, and comprehensive developmental psychological counseling and guidance programs. However, the findings imply that both school administrators and the psychological counseling and guidance experts have not received enough education in order to apply psychological counseling and guidance programs for this age group. Especially in Turkey, it is important to note that applied courses are insufficient in psychological counseling and guidance programs at undergraduate levels, and the amount of classes directed to pre-school age group are limited. In this case, the universities that educate psychological counselors should review their programs and renew them according to changing needs. It has been understood that the psychological counseling and guidance experts who work in pre-school institutions closely follow up profession related developments and changes, as much as their professional developments, be supported by the Ministry of National Education. This support is very important in order to offer adequate services to this age group. Furthermore, assigning persons who have no education in this respect to "guidance counselor" cadre will cause very serious problems in Turkey.

Findings of the research have depicted the need for psychological counseling and guidance experts to be in further collaboration with the teachers and the school administrators. However, both respective literature (Terzi, et al., 2011), and this research put forth that coming to a mutual understanding has failed. In other levels, "group counseling" activities being practiced by classroom teachers have revealed that these teachers do not have adequate capabilities in this respect (Güven, 2009; Nazlı, 2003b). Another study has shown that 85% of the counselors work has been adversely affected by the teachers and the school administrators (Hatunoğlu & Hatunoğlu, 2006). Findings of this research points out that this situation will be showing similarities in pre-school institutions too. Because of this reason, administrators of pre-school institutions and teachers of pre-school must be briefed about comprehensive developmental psychological counseling and guidance programs. They have concluded that in conducting the guidance services at other levels, there exists cooperation research; wide support by the school administration where the collaboration is at high levels; developmental communication; positive psychological counseling and guidance concepts; a mentality which care about education and development; preventive psychological counseling and guidance concepts; sensitivity to the needs of the students; fulfilling responsibilities; taking the role of the counselor seriously; and high participation by the families (Akbaş & Çam, 2003). Korkut-Owen and Owen (2008) have reached the conclusion that school administrators have positive opinions about the psychological counselors in the schools. This situation might be explained by on the job training, which the school administrators receive in comprehensive developmental psychological counseling and guidance programs (Korkut-Owen & Owen, 2008). It appears that school administrators and teachers receiving on the job training for guidance services who work in pre-school institutions should also be increasing the quality of the services offered in pre-schools just like at other levels (Hamamcı, Murat, & Esen-Çoban, 2004).

In order for psychological counseling and guidance services offered in pre-school institutions to be effective, it is important that psychological counselors, teachers and administrators of the schools develop a cooperation based on common understanding. Furthermore, findings of this research also reveal that no frame programs have been established for psychological counseling and guidance services provided in pre-school institutions and this situation leaves the psychological counseling and guidance experts whom duties and responsibilities have not been clearly understood in a difficult position. Not establishing the role definitions, duties and responsibilities in pre-school institutions might cause the experts who provide such services feel exhaustion and professional discontent (Hatunoğlu & Hatunoğlu, 2006). Studies have shown that psychological counseling and guidance experts allocate too much time for other jobs than established duties (Korkut-Owen & Owen, 2008). Unclear role definitions in pre-school institutions, as well as the expectations might add to this problem. Like at other levels, it is essential that clear and consistent role definitions be made for psychological counselors who provide services in pre-school institutions (Korkut-Owen & Owen).

Findings of this research have pointed out that participants mentioned insufficiency of working areas. Lack of activity books as well as measuring and evaluation materials in the field of psychological counseling and guidance is a known fact (Nazlı, 2003b). As this situation will be more explicit in the new pre-school psychological counseling and

guidance services field, such circumstances might lead to further issues. When there are no sufficient sources and materials available, psychological counselors carry the entire burden in order to be effectively able to provide these services. These circumstances might cause the psychological counselors to experience professional content at low levels and feel depressive (Gökcakan & Özer, 2003).

Education given during the pre-school period is an important process that might be influential on the future life of the child. Scientific research, and practices in the area of modern education have revealed that in order to bring up generations who are qualified, healthy, and have desired behaviors, starting the education at very early ages is essential. With increased significance of education, it is understood that giving a quality education at home is required (Seckin & Koc, 1997). Thanks to the expression, "education begins in the family," we understand how the role of the family is important in a child's life. Family, in a human being's life, as an institution, which begins at the prenatal period and carries on its influence on the person until the end of his/ her life, shapes and canalizes the spiritual development and behaviors of the child from economical, cultural and societal points as well as physiological point. Family is the most important environmental and social institution in the spiritual development of the child (Tümkaya, 2012). The family acts as a bridge, which stretches out, to the environment and the society for the growing child. Learning experiences and models provided by the family do play an important role in the child's developing positive social behaviors and values (Gürsoy & Köksal, 2001).

The research (Ensari & Zembat, 1999) shows that whenever participation by families is high, teachers will have a much broader perspective about the children's home and family environment, and they will be more sensitive about the home related individual needs, stress factors and changes of the children. Therefore, they will be ready to adequately meet the needs of the families and the children more empathetically and child centered.

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