

Investigation of Preschool Teachers' Views on Outdoor Play Activities*

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the views of pre-school teachers on outdoor play activities. The research is designed in a qualitative pattern. The study group of the study was determined according to the "Turkish Classification of Statistical Region Units" (2003) by criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods, and 63 pre-school teachers were interviewed. In the research, "Interview Form for Outdoor Play Activities" was used as data collection tool. NVivo 12 Qualitative Data Analysis program and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. As a result of the research, it was stated that teachers prefer the outdoor play activities "when the air temperature is high and without rain"; it was determined that the reasons for not placing these activities or placing fewer in the program are "weather conditions", "parental attitudes" and "physical conditions". It was found out that the teachers allocated "30-60 minutes" to outdoor play activities and generally included these activities "in the middle of the day". It has been revealed that most teachers conduct outdoor play activities "both planned and free" and that these activities are directed by "teachers and children together".

Keywords: NVivo 12, Outdoor play activities, Preschool teacher, Qualitative research..

INTRODUCTION

Public open spaces are important for children both to move freely and to reveal their excess energy and to develop skills in various learning areas at the same time. It provides children with experiential and self-directed learning skills in a sensually rich environment (Rivkin, 2014). Outdoor play activities provide opportunities for children to develop their motor skills by running and jumping, as well as to interact, decide and solve problems independently with each other and the environment. Being active and moving actively in open spaces increases children's attention and supports verbal, visual and kinesthetic learning skills (Schilling, McOmber, Mabe, Beasley, Funkhouser & Martinez, 2006). In addition, in outdoor play activities, children become part of a group and interact with their peers and develop social skills. They learn to cooperate and compromise in conflicts that arise in playing conditions (Burdette and Whitaker, 2005). For this reason, open spaces are considered as an ideal place where knowledge and skills can be learned naturally and easily (Fjørtoft, 2004; Maynard & Waters, 2007).

Nowadays, access of children to outdoor spaces has decreased for a number of reasons and most of the children have started to spend their days indoors. Traffic, safety problems, injuries, diseases, environmental pollution and parental concerns are suggested as the main reasons that prevent children from being outdoors (Rivkin, 1998; Thigpen, 2007; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). The decrease in the time spent in the open spaces changed the play and movement patterns of the children and replaced the outdoor games to technological games.

This situation causes children to spend their time in front of the screens of technological devices such as tablets, phones and computers (Fjørtoft, 2001). Decreased physical activity causes an increase in childhood obesity and prevents the healthy development of their senses and skills due to the loss of their contact with nature (Fjørtoft, 2001; Louv, 2008). Since the time spent in open space in the daily life of children is limited, the role of educational institutions increases in providing outdoor play and learning environments (Renick, 2009).

According to the studies conducted in Turkey on the subject, it was seen that the majority examined the quality standards of the preschool education institutions (Yılmaz and Bulut, 2002; Özdemir and Yılmaz, 2008; Şişman and Özyavuz, 2010; Çelik, 2012; Duman and Koçak, 2013; Cevher Kalburan, 2014; Işıkoğlu Erdoğan and Caneldek, 2015; Taştepe, Başbay and Yazıcı, 2016). Considering the relationship between outdoor use and climate conditions, previous studies have limitations in that they have studied the topic only in certain locations. Having known that four seasons are experienced

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clearly in Turkey, it is very important to reveal the conclusions about whether different climatic conditions affect the play of outdoor games. In addition, there is very limited research on teachers' views on outdoor play activities of (Alat, Akgümüş, Cavali, 2012). Teachers are the main component in involving outdoor play activities in preschool education programs. Teachers play an important role in both planning and implementing outdoor play activities (Chakravarthi, 2009; Davies, 1997; Storli & Hagen, 2010; Rivkin, 1998; Niklasson & Sandberg, 2010). The fact that teachers include outdoor play activities in their plans and practices is influenced by the weather conditions, parental attitudes and the physical conditions of the institution, as well as their opinions and attitudes about these activities. Accordingly, in this study, applications for outdoor playground activities and factors affecting these applications can be determined in the preschool education institutions and suggestions for increasing outdoor playground activities can be presented. Also, the fact that this study was conducted on a large sample in various regional provinces representing Turkey and that teachers' perspectives were sought will likely contribute to the literature. In this context, the aim of this study is to investigate the views of pre-school teachers on outdoor play activities.

METHOD

Research Design

The research is designed in a qualitative pattern in order to investigate the views of pre-school teachers on outdoor play activities. Qualitative research tries to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they set up their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2013). Hence, this is a case study that is one of the qualitative research patterns in terms of examining the opinions of preschool teachers about outdoor play activity experiences. Case studies are investigated to one or more depths of the situation, the factors related to the situation are examined with a holistic approach, how these factors affect the relevant situation, and how it is affected by the related situation (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011).

Study Group

In the process of determining the study group of the research, criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used. The criterion sampling method involves selecting the research group from individuals or situations with the criteria set for the research problem (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). The criteria determined for participation in the research are determined to be teachers who have at least three years of professional experience, work as permanent staff or contracted, and represent at least 2 provinces from 26 sub-regions determined according to the Turkish Classification of

Statistical Region Units (2003). The criterion sampling method gave the opportunity to examine the research question clearly with concrete indicators and enabled to determine the study group with predefined criteria.

The study group was determined according to the "Turkish Classification of Statistical Region Units" (2003). "Turkish Classification of Statistical Region Units" is the classification based on population, geography, regional development plans, basic statistical indicators and provincial socio-economic development by Turkish State Planning Organization and the Turkish Statistical Institute. According to this classification Turkey is divided into 12 regions as Istanbul, West Marmara, East Marmara, Aegean, Western Anatolia, Central Anatolia, Mediterranean, Western Black Sea, Eastern Black Sea, Northeast Anatolia, Middle East Anatolia, Southeast Anatolia and 26 sub-regions. Accordingly, 63 teachers in the study group are selected to represent at least 2 provinces from each sub-region as they were from İstanbul, Edirne, Tekirdağ, Balıkesir, İzmir, Aydın, Afyonkarahisar, Kütahya, Bilecik, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Ankara, Konya, Antalya, Adana, Mersin, Hatay, Osmaniye, Aksaray, Niğde, Kayseri, Sivas, Karabük, Zonguldak, Çankırı, Sinop, Samsun, Ordu, Rize, Trabzon, Erzurum, Erzincan, Ağrı, Kars, Malatya, Muş, Van, Gaziantep, Kilis, Adıyaman, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Mardin and Şırnak provinces and serving at kindergartens and nursery classes affiliated to the Turkish Ministry of National Education, working as permanent staff and contracted, having at least 3 years of professional experience and willing to participate in the research. Teachers were given codes of T1, T2, T3 ... and T63 throughout the research. Personal information of the teachers participated in the study is presented in Table 1.

According to Table 1, it is seen that 7.9% (n = 5) of the teachers who participated in the study were male and 92.1% (n = 58) were female. 74.6% (n = 47) of the teachers had bachelor's degree, 12.7% (n = 8) had master's degree and 12.7% were distance education graduates. It was found out that 85.7% (n = 54) of the teachers participating in the research were permanent and 14.3% (n = 9) were temporarily employed (contracted). The ages of the participants varied between 25 and 45, and the mean age was 30.75. In terms of Professional experience, it is seen that the seniority of teachers varied between 3 and 25 years and the mean was 7,77.

Data Collection Tools

During the collection of data, semi-structured interviews were organized. One of the main data collection tools in qualitative research is the interview (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2007). The interview is conducted to learn about behaviors, emotions that we cannot observe or how people express the world around them. There are fully structured, semi-structured and unstructured types of interview. Semi-structured interview is a type of interview where participants

Table 1: Personal Information of the Study Group

		<i>n</i>	%	
Gender	Male	5	7.9	
	Female	58	92.1	
Graduation	Distance Education	8	12.7	
	Bachelor's degree	47	74.6	
	Master's degree	8	12.7	
Employment Status	Permanent	54	85.7	
	Temporary (Contracted)	9	14.3	
Region	Mediterranean	7	11.1	
	West Anatolia	4	6.3	
	West Black Sea	7	11.1	
	West Marmara	4	6.3	
	East Black Sea	3	4.8	
	East Marmara	5	7.9	
	Egean	8	12.7	
	South-east Anatolia	10	15.9	
	İstanbul	3	4.8	
	North-east Anatolia	4	6.3	
	Central Anatolia	4	6.3	
	Middle-east Anatolia	4	6.3	
	Min.	Max.		sd
Age	25	45	30.75	5.12
Professional Seniority	3	25	7.77	4.30

can express their thoughts with their own sentences, questions are open-ended and flexible, and different ideas can arise during the conversation (Merriam, 2013). In this study semi-structured interview type was used. For the semi-structured interview, the "Interview Form for Outdoor Play Activities" was developed by the researchers for the purpose of the research after conducting a relevant literature review. The form consists of two parts. The first part consists of questions prepared to collect personal information of teachers such as gender, age, type of school graduated, staff status, professional seniority year, city and region in which they work. In the second part, there are 9 open-ended semi-structured questions that represent the opinions of preschool teachers about their knowledge, tendencies and behaviors about outdoor play activities. The prepared form was presented to the opinion of three field experts for content validity. Since no suggestions of changes were made in line with the opinions of the experts, three teachers were piloted for the content comprehensibility of the "Interview Form for Open Field Play Activities". Based on the feedback from the pre-implementation, the interview questions were finalized.

Data Collection

The data of the research were collected through face-to-face meetings with teachers working in Ankara, and interactive communication (online Whatsapp and Skype meetings) with teachers working in different provinces. In the data collection phase, general information about the research was given to the teachers before the interview and the place and time to be interviewed with the teachers who wanted to participate in the research were determined. The interviews were recorded with the voice recorder for analysis by transferring them to the paper, after having consent of the participants. In addition to the sound recording, the researchers took notes during the interview. Each interview lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. The data were collected in July, August and September of 2019. In order to confirm the accuracy of the participant's statements, the meanings derived from their statements were asked to them and these inferences were confirmed to the participants. Merriam (2013) emphasizes that researchers should be neutral towards participants' knowledge and opinions. For this reason, it was stated to the participants before the interview that their names will be hidden during

the reporting phase of the research findings and that the quotations from the interview data will be transferred with the codings such as T1, T2, T3...

Data Analysis

NVivo 12 Qualitative Data Analysis program and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. After the data collection process was completed, the data was transferred to NVivo 12 Qualitative Data Analysis program and analyzed by content analysis. In the content analysis, the responses of the participants to each question were examined in depth, and units (codes) were determined, and categories were created by bringing together similar units. Then, similar categories were grouped and themes were determined. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the analysis was carried out by two researchers, and attention was paid to the confirmation of the participants, the detailed description and inter-rater reliability. In addition, without adding comments to the themes, categories and codes that emerge from the raw data, a detailed description has been made by staying true to the nature of the data as much as possible. The nine themes created as a result of content analysis are as follows:

- **Theme 1:** Teachers' frequency of allocating time for outdoor play activities in their' education program;
- **Theme 2:** Reasons of teachers not making / making less time for outdoor play activities in the program;
- **Theme 3:** The time teachers allocate to outdoor play activities in the program;
- **Theme 4:** Time preferences of teachers for outdoor play activities;
- **Theme 5:** Teachers' planning styles of outdoor play activities in the program;
- **Theme 6:** Ways of teachers directing outdoor play activities in the program;
- **Theme 7:** Teachers' views on the effects of outdoor play activities on development;
- **Theme 8:** Teachers' views on the effects of outdoor play activities on other activities and
- **Theme 9:** Teachers' suggestions to give more time to outdoor play activities.

Analyzes regarding the themes, categories and codings finalized by the regulations are shown in the figures created with NVivo 12 Qualitative Data Analysis program. The number of people in the figures (f) indicates how many people expressed opinions in the theme, category and code.

FINDINGS

Nine themes were determined in this study which was carried out to investigate the views of preschool teachers on outdoor play activities. In this section, the categories and codings for these themes are presented.

Theme 1: Teachers' Frequency of Allocating Time for Outdoor Play Activities in Their Program

The theme of the views of the teachers on the frequency of having outdoor play activities in their education program is presented in Figure 1 under three categories as "high temperature and dry", "low temperature and wet" and "regardless of air temperature" and codings are included.

According to Figure 1, 55 of the teachers (87%) stated that they performed outdoor play activities when the air temperature was high and without rain or snow. 30 (48%) of these teachers stated that they performed outdoor activities 2-3 times a week while 20 (32%) told once a day, and 5 (8%) reported they did once a week. 45 (71%) of the teachers stated that they also performed outdoor play activities when the air temperature was low and it's rainy or snowy. 28 (44%) of these teachers told they did 1-2 times a month while 10 (16%) told 2-3 times a week, 5 (8%) reported once a few months, 1 (2%) said once a week and 1 (2%) of them stated that they had one outdoor play activity every day. 9 (14%) of the teachers stated that they did outdoor play activities "regardless of the air temperature". 4 of these teachers (44%) reported that they planned outdoor activities 2-3 times a week, 3 (33%) said once a day, 1 (11%) told 1-2 times a month and 1 (11%) stated that he/she never did it.

Theme 2: Teachers' Views Regarding the Reasons for Not Making / Making Less Time for Outdoor Play Activities in the Program

The theme of "Teachers' views regarding the reasons for not making / making less time for outdoor play activities in the program" is presented in Figure 2 under 4 categories as "weather conditions", "parental attitudes", "physical conditions" and "attitudes of school management" and codings are included.

According to Figure 2, as teachers' excuses for not making time or making less time for outdoor play activities, 30 teachers

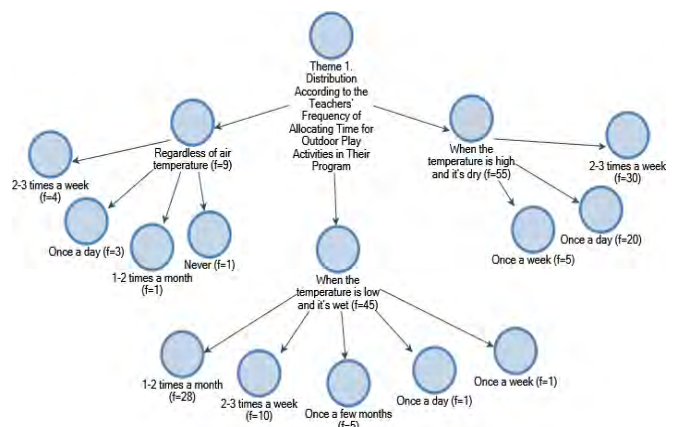


Figure 1: Distribution According to the Teachers' Frequency of Allocating Time for Outdoor Play Activities in Their Program

(48%) reported “weather conditions”, 27 teachers (43%) said “parental attitudes”, 18 teachers (29%) told about “physical conditions” and 3 teachers (8%) stated “attitudes of school management”.

Theme 3: Teachers' Views Regarding the Time They Allocate to Outdoor Play Activities in the Program

The theme of “Teachers' views regarding the time they allocate for outdoor play activities in the training program” is presented in Figure 3 under 4 categories as “15 minutes”, “15-30 minutes”, “30-60 minutes” and “more than 60 minutes” and coding is included.

According to Figure 3, 33 (52%) of the teachers reported that they allocated “30-60 minutes” time to outdoor play activities in the program, 20 (32%) of them allocated “15-30 minutes” time, 12 (19%) gave “more than 60 minutes”, and 5 (8%) stated that they gave only “15 minutes”. Many of the

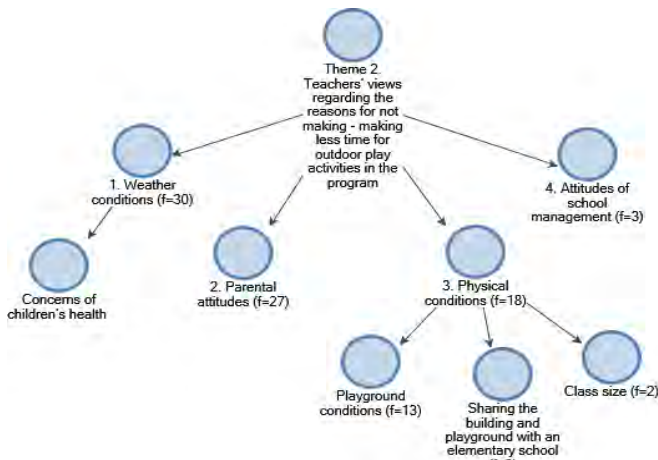


Figure 2: Distribution According to the Teachers' Views Regarding the Reasons for Not Making / Making Less Time for Outdoor Play Activities in the Program

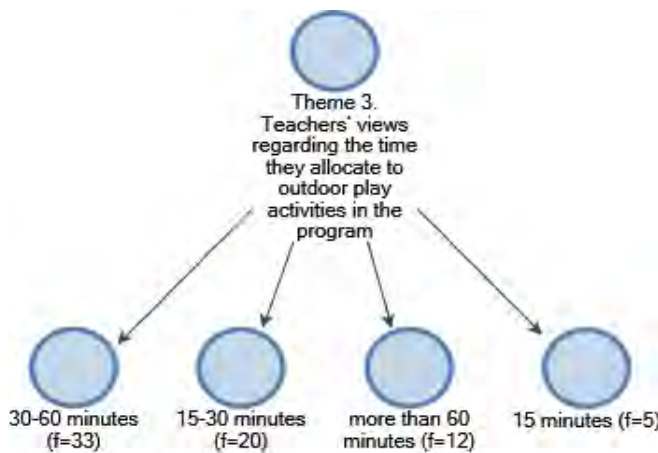


Figure 3: Distribution According to Teachers' Views Regarding the Time They Allocate to Outdoor Play Activities in the Program

teachers (52.4) stated that children loved to play outdoors so they stay for 30-60 minutes when they go out. Some of the teachers (32%) stated that they could only stay for 15-30 minutes due to the weather conditions.

Theme 4: Teachers' Views Regarding Time Preferences for Outdoor Play Activities

The theme of “Teachers' views regarding time preferences for outdoor play activities” is presented in Figure 4 under the categories of “at start of the day”, “in the middle of the day”, “at the end of the day” and “at various times” and the codings are included.

As the part of the day the teachers plan outdoor activities, 40 (63.5%) of them stated their outdoor play activities were “in the middle of the day”, 16 (25%) reported that they were “at the end of the day”, 5 (8%) responded as “at various times” and 3 (5%) teachers told they initiate an outdoor activity “at the start of the day”. Most of the teachers (63.5%) stated that they performed outdoor play activities after breakfast and this time coincided with the middle of the day. It is stated that the reason for this is that the children are very energetic after breakfast, and they have better participation in other

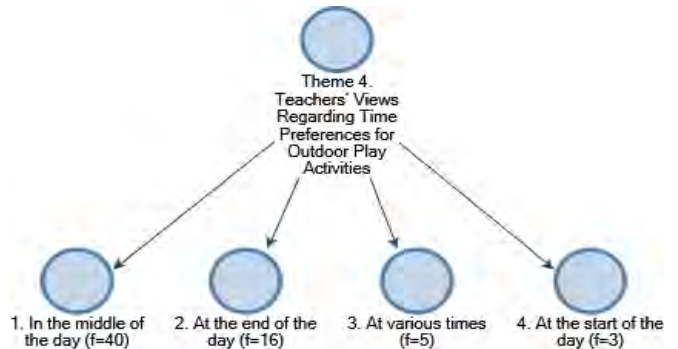


Figure 4: Distribution According to the Teachers' Views Regarding Time Preferences for Outdoor Play Activities



Figure 5: Distribution According to the Teachers' Views on Their Planning Styles of Outdoor Play Activities in the Program

activities after throwing their excess energy in the open area. Some of the teachers (25%) stated that they are doing it as the last activity of the day because it is difficult for children to put on and take off coats for outdoor play activities and afterwards they prefer to send the children home. Similarly, teachers (5%) who preferred to do outdoor play activities at the beginning of the day stated that they were doing outdoor activities without removing their warm clothes.

Theme 5: Teachers' Views on Their Planning Styles of Outdoor Play Activities in the Program

The theme of "Teachers' Views on Their Planning Styles of Outdoor Play Activities in the Program" is presented in Figure 5 under three categories as "planned", "free" and "both planned and free" and coding is included.

According to Figure 5, 37 (59%) of the teachers stated that they carried out outdoor play activities as both planned and free activities, 22 (35%) told that the activities were always planned and 6 (9.5%) reported that they always carried out as "free" activities. The majority of the teachers stated that children loved to play free games in the open spaces, therefore they both released the children while they also carry out planned activities outdoors. The teachers, who carry out the outdoor play activities completely planned, stated that they prefer to do planned activities in order not to lose classroom control and protect children from possible dangers. The teachers, who carried out outdoor play activities completely free, stated that the children had enough planned activities in the classroom, and they needed to be free outdoors.

Theme 6: Teachers' Views on the Ways of Directing Outdoor Play Activities in the Program

The theme of "Teachers' views on the ways of directing outdoor play activities in the program" is presented in Figure 6 under three categories as "teacher", "children" and "both teacher and children" and coding is included.



Figure 6: Distribution According to the Teachers' Views on the Ways of Directing Outdoor Play Activities in the Program

According to Figure 6, 30 (48%) teachers stated that outdoor activities were directed by both themselves and children, 25 (40%) told they were directed only by themselves, and 12 (19%) reported that the activities were directed only by children.

Theme 7: Teachers' Views on the Effects of Outdoor Play Activities on Development

The theme of "teachers' views on the effects of outdoor play activities on development" is presented in Figure 7 under the categories of "cognitive development", "social-emotional development", "physical development", "language development" and "self-care skills" and coding is included.

According to Figure 7, regarding the effect of outdoor play activities on developmental domains, 51 teachers (81%) told the outdoor activities had effects "on social-emotional development" of children, 47 (75%) said "on physical development", 39 (62%) said "on cognitive development", 31 (49%) said "on self-care skills" and 29 (46%) stated that they have effects on language development.

Teachers stated that outdoor play activities socially support children's communication skills, improve their ability to act together and gain environmental awareness. Emotionally, they stated that children feel free, feel happy and have increased self-confidence. They also added that physically, it supports children's muscle development, motor development and movement development. From the cognitive perspective, they stated that outdoor play activities support children's learning skills, develop attention skills, increase their creativity, develop problem solving skills and observation skills. In terms of self-care skills, they stated that outdoor play activities reinforce the learning of cleaning rules of children, enables them to realize their needs, develops their ability to put on and take off their clothes and supports them to protect themselves from dangers. In terms of language development, they stated that such activities develop children's self-expression skills and broadened vocabulary.

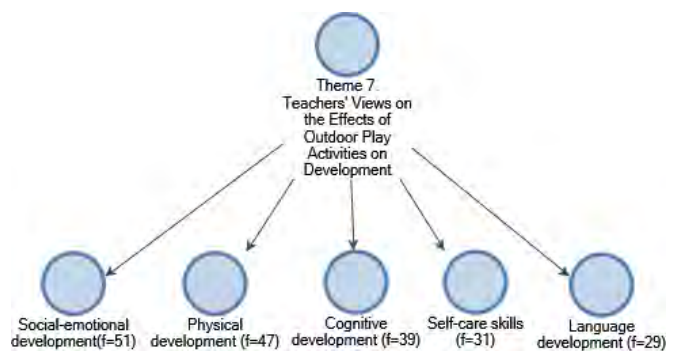


Figure 7: Distribution According to the Teachers' Views on the Effects of Outdoor Play Activities on Development

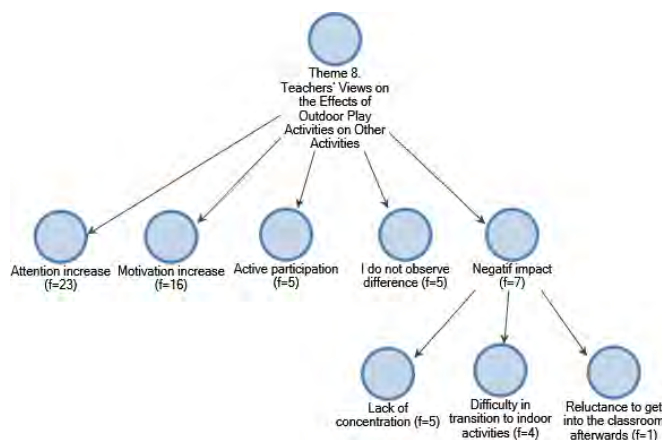


Figure 8. Distribution According to the Teachers' Views on the Effects of Outdoor Play Activities on Other Activities

Theme 8: Teachers' Views on the Effects of Outdoor Play Activities on Other Activities

The theme of "Teachers' views on the effects of outdoor play activities on other activities" is presented in Figure 8 under the categories of "attention increase", "motivation increase", "active participation", "I do not observe difference" and "negative effect" and coding is included.

According to Figure 8, 23 (37%) of teachers responded that outdoor play activities increased attention span over other activities, 16 (25%) stated they provided motivation increase, 5 (8%) pointed out active participation, 5 (8%) reported no outcome while 7 of them (11%) stated that outdoor activities had negative effects. As the negative effects of outdoor play activities, teachers stated that children did not want to return to the classroom, they could not focus on the next activity after entering the classroom and they could not switch to the indoor activities.

Theme 9: Teachers' Views on Their Suggestions to Give More Time to Outdoor Play Activities

The theme of "Teachers' views on their suggestions to give more time to outdoor play activities" is presented in Figure 9 under the categories of "improving physical conditions", "developing educational policies" and "support of school management" and coding is included.

According to Figure 9, in order to give more time to outdoor play activities, 47 (75%) of the teachers stated that physical conditions should be improved, 34 (54%) of them pointed out the need of developing educational policies and 5 (8%) of them stated that the school administration should encourage outdoor activities. When the physical conditions category is analyzed, 19 (40%) of the teachers suggested arranging the playground, 15 (32%) suggested winter gardens, 8 (17%) told about kindergartens with its own playground, 3 (6%) suggested reducing the class size and 2 (4%) suggested providing material support. When the development of

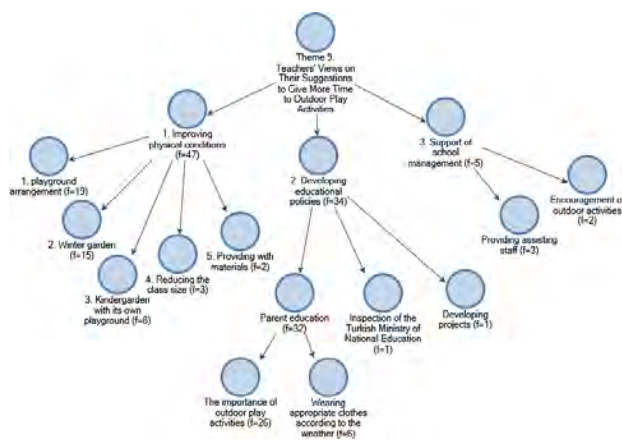


Figure 9: Distribution According to the Teachers' Views on Their Suggestions to Give More Time to Outdoor Play Activities

education policies category is analyzed, 32 of the teachers (94%) suggested that parent education seminars on the importance of playground activities and dressing children according to the weather conditions be organized, 1 (3%) said that projects should be developed under the supervision of Turkish Ministry of Education. When the support category of the school management is analyzed, 3 (60%) of the teachers suggested providing assisting staff, and 2 (40%) suggested that the school management should encourage teachers to make outdoor play activities.

DISCUSSION

In this study, which was carried out to investigate the views of preschool teachers on outdoor playground activities, teachers stated that they performed outdoor playground activities 2-3 times a week, once a day or once a week when the air temperature was high and without rain or snow. When the air temperature is low and wet, the majority of the teachers stated that they only had outdoor play activities 1-2 times a month. Few of the teachers stated that they did outdoor play activities "regardless of the air temperature" (Figure 1). This situation can be seen in Antalya, İzmir, Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa provinces where the air temperature does not decrease much in the winter months. However, open spaces are the areas where activities should be carried out in all weather conditions. In Northern European countries such as Denmark, Sweden and Norway, where the winter months are cold, the use of outdoor playgrounds is also common in the winter months (Borge, Nordhagen ve Lie, 2003; Aasen, Grindheim ve Waters, 2009). However, it is observed that the cold weather conditions in Turkey appear as a factor preventing outdoor play activities (figure 1). Similar to the result of the research, the research conducted by Güner Alpaslan and Tantekin Erden (2014) concluded that cold weather conditions prevented playing outdoors. The American Academy of Pediatrics emphasizes

that children need to play outdoors often for a healthy and active life (McBride, 2012). However, in a study by Sandra and Renick (2009), it was observed that the teachers were not motivated to carry out outdoor play even though they knew the importance of outdoor play for the development of young children. According to the research result given in Figure 1, it can be said that the teachers evaluated the air temperature and precipitation conditions as an important factor in the frequency of planning and implementation of the outdoor playground activity. This result may be related to the fact that parents and teachers have a common concern about children's illness.

When the reasons of teachers' not giving / giving less time to outdoor play activities in the program were examined, it was seen that it was related to weather conditions, parental attitudes and physical conditions (figure 2). The common problem with weather conditions and parental attitudes is the anxiety that children can be sick. Parents negatively affect teachers in doing outdoor play activities, and teachers avoid doing outdoor play activities to avoid confrontation with parents. Similar to the result of the study, in the study conducted by Ata Doğan and Boz (2019), teachers stated that the factors that prevent children from playing outdoors were the weather conditions and parents' point of view. According to the study conducted by Jatasuriya (2014), the fact that the parents did not have information about school policies regarding the time children needed to spend outdoors at the kindergarten prevented the increase of the time spent by the children outdoors. According to the research conducted by Yalçın (2015), it was determined that the opinions of Finnish and Turkish parents and teachers about playing outdoors differ. That is to say, Turkish parents worried about children's health when they play outdoors in the winter season while Finnish parents stated that the season and weather conditions did not cause any concern for them. While Turkish teachers stated the factors that prevent playing games outdoors as parents' concerns, weather conditions, insufficient and unsuitable outdoor materials and equipment, Finnish teachers stated that there were no factors preventing children from playing games outdoors. The research result given in Figure 2 overlaps with the research results above. Accordingly, the majority of parents and teachers in Turkey saw cold weather conditions as obstacles to playing outdoors. Giving more programmatic and longer time to outdoor play activities in other countries may indicate that children have a stronger social perception of using open air.

Regarding the physical conditions, the teachers stated that the problems of sharing the building and playground with an elementary school not having a garden to be active in, and not having a safe garden caused less outdoor play activities (figure 2). Similar to the result of the research, insufficient physical conditions and lack of materials in preschool education institutions in Turkey are stated in the Internal Audit Activity

Report published by the Education Reform Initiative (ERG) and Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) and in the studies conducted so far (Arslan Karaküçük, 2008). Regarding safety problems, Ata Doğan and Boz (2019) concluded that teachers were concerned about the accident situations when children were playing outdoors. The research result given in Figure 2 overlaps with the research results above. Accordingly, it can be said that lack of physical infrastructure and materials directly affect the quality of outdoor play activities.

Many of the teachers stated that children love to play games in the open field, so they stay for 30-60 minutes when they went outdoors. Some of the teachers stated that they could only stay for 15-30 minutes due to the weather conditions (figure 3). Similarly, with the result of the research, it was observed that only 2 of the 6 pre-school education institutions participating in the research conducted by Çetken and Sevimli Çelik (2018) in Ankara have a time period determined for outdoor games in the daily flow. Accordingly, one hour in one of the schools and 30-45 minutes in the other is reserved for outdoor games. In a study conducted by Slovenian kindergartens by Kos and Jerman (2013), it was concluded that children spend 3 hours a week in warm weather and one and a half hours a week in cold weather in a natural environment. The research result given in Figure 3 overlaps with some of the research results above. The length of time children stay outdoors is influenced by the weather conditions both in Turkey and other countries. However, it is seen that this period is less in Turkey. Accordingly, it can be said that the teachers are knowledgeable about the importance of playing games in the open field, but they have enough time for outdoor games when the weather conditions are suitable.

A large number of teachers stated that they performed outdoor play activities after breakfast and this time coincided with the middle of the day (figure 4). The reason for this is that the children are very energetic after breakfast, and they have better participation in other activities after throwing their excess energy in the open area. Similar to the results of the research, Polat Topdemir (2016) found that using the garden frequently, even for a short time, doing activities that will increase the energies of children, being in nature, getting fresh air make a difference on children's learning. The research result given in Figure 4 overlaps with the research result above. Accordingly, it can be said that the teachers consider the needs of the children about the time of doing outdoor play activities, thus enabling the children to get rid of their energies and participate better in other activities.

The majority of teachers stated that they carried out outdoor play activities both planned and freely, some of them carried out planned all the time, and a few others carried out freely (figure 5). The teachers stated that the children wanted to play more free games in the open field, therefore they planned activities first and then they played free games. Regarding the

orientation of outdoor play activities, half of the teachers stated that they direct outdoor play activities with children, some of them directed themselves, and a few others directed children (figure 6). The majority of teachers stated that children love to play in the open field, therefore, they allow the children to direct the outdoor play activities and determine the children to play. Similar to the result of the research, Yalçın (2015) was observed when practicing both Finnish and Turkish teachers in outdoor activities frequently. In the research conducted by Maynard and Waters (2007), it was suggested that teachers miss the opportunities to learn outside because they see the outdoors only for games and entertainment purposes. However, Froebel stated that children play free games outdoors and feel the sense of justice, self-control and friendship skills (Tovey, 2007). The results of the research given in Figures 5 and 6 are similar to the results of the above research. Accordingly, it can be said that the teachers make both planned and free activities considering the wishes of the children, and the teacher and the children decide together in order to guide the activities.

When the opinions of teachers about the effects of outdoor play activities on developmental domains were examined, the majority of teachers stated that the activities had effects on "social-emotional", "physical" and "cognitive development" and some of them told outdoor activities had effects on "self-care skills" and "language development" (figure 7). According to the literature, it is seen that the studies carried out so far share similar findings. For example, Timmons, Naylor and Pfeiffer (2007) observed that the more time children spend outside the more active they are and the more they show normal development. In addition, it is stated that the quality of development and learning of children, who interact with nature, spending time, discovering, and learning through experience, which are the most basic elements for development, will obviously show enhancement (Herrington and Studtmann, 1998). In terms of social development, teachers stated that outdoor play activities support children's communication skills, improve their ability to act together and gain environmental awareness. On the other hand, they stated that outdoor activities support emotional development through feeling free, happy and self-confident. Cosco (2006) reported that the games played outdoors improve social skills by establishing relationships with other children and living things. Montessori also stated that school gardens increase the sense of patience and responsibility (Bowker and Tearle, 2007). In terms of physical development, teachers stated that outdoor play activities support children's muscle development, motor skills and movement development. In their study, Cosco, Moore and Smith (2014) realized that outdoor games help children to recognize their bodies and physical limits. Furthermore, it was determined that the strongest effect on the physical activities of preschool children is to be outdoors. From the cognitive development perspective, teachers stated

that outdoor play activities support children's learning skills, improve their attention skills, increase their creativity, improve their problem-solving skills and observation skills. In a study conducted with children with attention disorders in United States of America, it has been determined that there is a serious increase in the attention levels of children who spend time in green and open playgrounds and who come into contact with nature (Gelfand and Freed, 2010). Louv (2008) emphasizes that in his book "The Last Child in Nature", which he published as a result of his many years of work, the child can basically gain the creativity, joy experience, imagination development and healthy life teaching from nature (James, 2013). Teachers stated that in terms of self-care skills, children are supported at learning the rules of cleaning, realizing their needs, wearing and taking off their clothes and protecting themselves from dangers when they are let out. In terms of language development, teachers stated that children's self-expression skills improved, and their vocabulary expanded. In the research carried out by Ata Doğan and Boz (2019), teachers stated that playing outdoors support the child's language development, communication, generating ideas and using courtesy words. The research result given in Figure 7 is similar to the research results above. Accordingly, it can be said that the opinions of the teachers reveal the importance of the outdoor playground activities in terms of all development areas.

The majority of teachers stated that outdoor play activities provide active participation, increased attention and motivation over other activities (figure 8). Similar to the results of the research, Polat Topdemir (2016) found that children in classes with direct access to the outdoor space in preschool education institutions were generally more obedient, more motivated, more participant and have longer attention span than those in the classes without direct access to the outdoor space. Moreover, it is stated that using the garden frequently, even for a short time, being in nature, getting fresh air and doing activities that increase energy make a difference on children's learning. The result of the research given in Figure 8 is similar to the research result above. Accordingly, it can be said that teachers are aware of the positive effects of having an outdoor play activity on other activities.

Most of teachers suggested "improving physical conditions", "developing educational policies" and "support of school management" in order to give more time to outdoor play activities (figure 9). When the category of physical conditions is examined, teachers suggested arranging the school garden, building a winter garden, independent kindergartens with its own playground, reducing class size and providing material support. When the category of education policy development is examined, teachers suggested holding seminars on the importance of outdoor play activities for parents and dressing children in accordance with weather conditions, developing

projects related to outdoor play activities and inspection of Turkish Ministry of National Education. When the category of support of the school management is analyzed, it is suggested that the assisting staff should be provided, and the school management should encourage the teachers to conduct outdoor activities. Similar to the result of the research, Öztürk (2009) evaluated the importance of outdoor education in Turkish early childhood education and claimed that the outdoor spaces of state-owned kindergartens do not support outdoor play activities. According to the 90th article of the Turkish Ministry of National Education Regulation on Preschool Education and Primary Education Institutions, "in preschool education institutions, it is essential to find a playground and a garden in order to carry out educational activities in a healthy, suitable and safe environment." (Legislation Information System, 2014). The research result given in Figure 9 is similar to the research result above. That is to say, teachers wanted to include more outdoor activities in the program, but they cannot give allocate time due to various problems.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the research, it was found out that teachers gave more time to the outdoor play activities "when the air temperature is high, and the weather is dry". It was concluded that the reasons for not making / making less time for outdoor activities in the program were "weather conditions", "parental attitudes" and "physical conditions". It was determined that the teachers generally allocated "30-60 minutes" to outdoor play activities and generally included these activities "in the middle of the day". It has been determined that most of the teachers conduct outdoor play activities "both planned and free" and that these activities are directed by "teachers and children together". Teachers stated that outdoor play activities support children in terms of "social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language development and self-care skills" and have positive effects on "active participation, increased attention and motivation" on other activities. Teachers stated as suggestions that "improving physical conditions", "developing educational policies" and "support of school management" in order to give more time to outdoor play activities.

SUGGESTION

In the light of the conclusions, the following suggestions are presented.

Attention can be paid to the arrangement of outdoor spaces that will ensure the health and safety of preschool children in schools.

Parents' thoughts on the subject can be changes by conducting parent education within the framework of parent involvement activities by using examples from other developed countries.

In development plans and preschool education dissemination activities, plans can be made regarding the construction of institutions suitable for open space use.

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