EXAMINING THE PROGRAM-BASED EXPERIENCES OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS ABOUT SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this research was to investigate how preschool teachers further the development of children's social skills including communication, empathy, social problem solving, sharing, and helping in the scope of Ministry of National Education [MoNE] Preschool Education Program. The researcher prepared a qualitative phenomenological study to determine teachers' views and self-reported practices and obtained documentary evidence of how they had sought to support children's social skills.

Data for this study were obtained from interviews with 13 in-service preschool teachers working with 5–6-year-old children in public preschools in Ankara, Turkey, and a review of the education plans they had used throughout the semester. As the data collection source, the interview questions and the document review codebook were prepared by the researcher. It was found that all participants consider early childhood education program to be very important for the development of children's social skills. All reported that they include social skills activities regularly in their education plans and consider program-based factors such as gains/indicators, materials, parent involvement and assessment while planning social skills activities. When the content

of teachers' education plans is examined, some similarities with teachers' self-reported practices in terms of activity type, material, and social skill type are seen. However, it was found that there were considerable inconsistencies between two data types regarding learning environment, interval of activities, gains/indicators, parent involvement and assessment. The study concludes with recommendations for further research and suggestions for all stakeholders involved in promoting preschoolers' social skills.

Keywords: Early childhood education, early childhood education program, social skills, preschool teachers, activity plans

ÖZ

OKUL ÖNCESİ ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ÇOCUKLARIN SOSYAL BECERİLERİNİ DESTEKLEMEYE YÖNELİK PROGRAMA DAYALI DENEYİMLERİNİN İNCELENMESİ

DEMİRCİ ÜNAL, Zeliha
Yüksek Lisans, Temel Eğitim, Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Bölümü
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Bu araştırmanın amacı, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin Milli Eğitim Bakanlığının (MEB) okul öncesi eğitim programı kapsamında çocukların iletişim, empati, sosyal problem çözme, paylaşma ve yardımlaşma gibi sosyal becerilerini nasıl geliştirdiklerini incelemektir. Araştırmacı, nitel bir olgu bilim çalışması ile çocukların sosyal becerilerinin geliştirilmesine yönelik öğretmenlerin görüşleri ve kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamalarını incelemiş ve bu olgu ile ilgili belgesel kanıtlar elde etmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın verileri, Ankara'da bulunan devlet anaokullarında 5-6 yaş çocuklarla çalışan 13 okul öncesi öğretmeniyle yapılan görüşmeler ve dönem boyunca uygulanan eğitim planlarının gözden geçirilmesi yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Veri toplama araçları olan görüşme soruları ve doküman inceleme kontrol listesi araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanmıştır. Tüm katılımcıların okul öncesi eğitim programını çocukların sosyal becerilerinin gelişimi için çok önemli buldukları tespit edilmiştir. Katılımcıların hepsi eğitim planlarında düzenli olarak sosyal beceri etkinliklerine yer verdiklerini ve sosyal beceri etkinliklerini planlarken kazanımlar/göstergeler, materyaller, aile katılımı ve değerlendirme gibi program temelli faktörleri göz önünde

bulundurduklarını bildirmiştir. Öğretmenlerin eğitim planlarının içeriği incelendiğinde, etkinlik türü, materyal ve sosyal beceri türü açısından öğretmenlerin kendi bildirdikleri uygulamaları ile bazı benzerlikler görülmektedir. Ancak öğrenme ortamı, sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin sıklığı, kazanımlar/göstergeler, aile katılımı ve değerlendirme ile ilgili iki veri türü arasında ciddi tutarsızlık olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, çocukların sosyal becerilerini geliştirmeye dahil olan tüm paydaşlar ve gelecekte yapılacak olan araştırmalar için öneriler verilerek sonlandırılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okul Öncesi Eğitimi, Okul öncesi eğitim programı, sosyal beceri, okul öncesi öğretmeni, etkinlik planı

To my amazing family, with gratitude

&

To my dear husband, Onur Ünal with love

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MoNE: Ministry of National Education

MoNE Program: MoNE Early Childhood Education Program

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Education is a social process. Education is growth. Education is not a preparation for life; Education is life itself."

(John Dewey)

The essential objectives of early childhood education are to facilitate the development of children's social and emotional skills alongside the growth in their cognitive, language, and physical abilities (Essa, 2003; Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2013; Willis et al., 2015). Social and emotional development is a learning process where children attain the skills to manage their emotions, have goals, display empathy, establish long-lasting positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional [CASEL], 2020). Moreover, it involves several different concepts which are temperament, attachment, social competence, emotional regulation, and social skills (Martin et al., 2020). Social skills especially are thought necessary for a child to advance their social and emotional development (Denham et al., 2014; Schmitt et al., 2018).

Social skills are expressed as verbal or non-verbal behaviors that initiate and maintain social relationships and facilitate the solution of problems in social relations (Gülay & Akman, 2009). Also, Elliot and Busse (1991) defined social skills as "socially desirable behaviors like sharing, helping, asking for help from others, starting relationships, congratulating, and using some words or phrases like 'please' and 'thank you'. Almost everyone would agree with the significance of these social skills" (p. 63). In daily life, people pursue their lives by interacting with other individuals. They find place in society only through the acceptance of other members of the community. Therefore, exhibiting social skills accepted by the society in which people live facilitates adaptation to the society (Topaloğlu, 2013).

Social skills are significant for young children, as their acquisition is an important step in their overall development with lifelong inferences for the quality of their social experiences (Danielson & Phelps, 2003; Fieldman & Eidelman, 2009; Luiselli et al., 2005; Quesenberry et al., 2016). Moreover, future success in life is founded on the social skills attained during early childhood (Maleki et al., 2019). Also, social skills are mentioned as part of a larger group of personality and cognitive characteristics which increase the likelihood of academic and social success (Kennedy, 2010; Salcedo, 2017). Besides these, while thinking broadly, social skills not only help to socialize children but are also effective in continuing society in a healthy way because the better our interrelationships, the stronger our social structure becomes (Akbaş, 2019).

Considering the importance of social skills in both early years and future life, early childhood education is a critical developmental window for improving social skills (Ferreira et al., 2021; Palmer, 2019). In other words, determining the social skill levels of children, and conducting activities in early childhood program to support these skills is an important step for them to find solutions to the adaptation problems they may experience in the future (Denham, 2016). Social skills can be improved through different ways in early childhood education such as supporting relationship between peers (Gander & Gardiner, 2007), teacher-student relationship and classroom discipline (Lin, 2016), using effective instructional strategies (Breen, 2018), and creating a safe learning environment (Gold, 2020). In addition, one of the most important ways to promote social skills is well planning and intentionally implementing the program (Church, 2015; Gobena, 2020; NAEYC, 2011). Program is about what should occur in the teaching program related to teachers' intention, the way they implement their intentions and assess the results (Quirk & Harden, 2017). In early childhood education, program, refers to what of children's learning as developmentally appropriate, is the responsibility of teachers in the school (Krogh & Slentz, 2008). Over time a variety of mainstream (Gülçiçek et al., 2019; Lunenburg, 2011) and national early childhood programs (Ministry of Women and Child Development of India, 2012; Finnish National Agency for Education, 2018) have emerged.

In Turkey, in-service preschool teachers follow the national early childhood education program issued by the Ministry of National Education in 2013 (MoNE, 2013). According to some general principles of this program,

> Preschool education should be appropriate to the needs and individual differences of the child. Preschool education should support the child's motor, social and emotional, language and cognitive development. While preparing the programs, the characteristics of the family and the environment should be taken into account. The active participation of the child and family in the education process should be ensured. The development of the child and the educational program should be evaluated regularly. (p.11)

Moreover, according to the principles of the program related to supporting social skills,

> With the preschool education, children's behaviors such as tolerance, cooperation, solidarity, and sharing should be developed. Children's imagination, creative and critical thinking skills, communication, and behaviors to express their feelings should be developed. (p.11)

Accordingly, the MoNE Preschool education program covers the learning process, parent involvement, assessment, and adaptation parts of the educational activities. Furthermore, the program specifies various gains and indicators which should be reached by children during the learning process in terms of their social and emotional development. Some of these are related to social skills such as “they express feelings and opinions about an event or situation in unique ways”, “they express other’s feelings about an event or situations”, “they solve their problems with others”. To support these gains and indicators regarding social skills, teachers are planning and implementing different kinds of activities like early literacy activities, music activities, language activities, movement activities (MoNE, 2013). While planning these activities, teachers are required to plan, implement, and assess activity plans using an “Activity Plan Template” (see Appendix G) for the purposes of improving children’s social skills, as required for the other skills.

From another perspective about the relationship between educational program and social skills, numerous researchers emphasized the significance of an educational program in terms of advancing the social skills of young children. According to Johnson et al. (2016), social skills instruction must take precedence as part of a well-

completed school program for educators. Moreover, learning important social skills should not be done randomly, rather it should be done in a planned and scheduled manner starting from childhood (Johnson et al., 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Pekdoğan, 2016; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019; Williams and Reisberg, 2003). Pekdoğan (2016) stated that it is possible to support social skills development of preschoolers and contribute to bringing up well-adjusted and high achieving individuals by providing appropriate materials and educational programs. Furthermore, Rebaque-Gomez et al. (2019) confirmed that it is critical to present social skills as a compulsory subject into the early childhood to develop some capabilities like relationship, communication, decision making, listening, assertiveness, emotional control, and empathy from the beginnings of education. Similarly, Williams and Reisberg (2003) pointed out that teaching social skills must be part of daily instruction like other subjects like math, arts, English/language, and science.

While considering the education program related to social skills, the importance of teachers cannot be denied (Lynch & Simpson, 2010). Preschool teachers learn theoretical and practical skills to plan and implement their own educational activities throughout their undergraduate education (Duman, 2013). The reason for this is that the success of early childhood education is directly related to the quality of the planned educational activities (Koçak, 2018). Therefore, preschool teachers play a critical role in developing the social skills of children as program planners and appliers through implementing different kinds of activities, maintaining good parent-school relationships, and assessing children's social skills (Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008). In the related literature, several studies also support the positive role of teachers on improving the social skills of children (Öneren-Şendil & Tantekin-Erden, 2012; Hu et al., 2017; Lynch & Simpson, 2010; Wu et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2020). According to Lynch and Simpson (2010), even everyday events often become teachable moments for teachers to teach appropriate social behaviors to young children during the educational process. Moreover, Palmer (2019) mentioned that teachers build children's social skills by conducting day-to-day activities and lessons with books, music, games, and group discussions and considering each child's individual needs in the context of their culture and family. Christenson (2004) highlighted that teachers

collobarate with the family to ensure the permanence of the learned social skills and inform families about how to reinforce them. In a similar way, the relationship between parents and preschool teachers is critical for the social skills development of children (Henrich & Blackman-Jones, 2006; Powell et al., 2010). Teachers can also document the social skill development of children by using different techniques to have detailed information about the progress of children (McLaughlin et al., 2017). Thus, it rests with preschool teachers to support social skills within the program.

1.1. Statement of the problem

The acquisition of social skills is closely related to children's academic (Frogner et al., 2021) and social development (Kennedy, 2010; Salcedo, 2017; Ferreira et al., 2021). It follows that the acquisition and advancement of social skills within early childhood education programs (Johnson et al., 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Pekdoğan, 2016; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019; Williams and Reisberg, 2003) depends significantly on the teachers who plan and implement the program (Conroy et al., 2014; Palmer, 2019; Quesenberry et al., 2016). According to Mclntosh and Mackay (2008), teachers must consider three significant steps while implementing educational program to improve social skills of children. Firstly, they should consider the planning and designing step based on which skills will be taught or who will join the activity. This is because written plans clarify the thinking of teachers and aid them in articulating their rationale for what they plan to do (Jackman, 2005). The second step is depending on the process of teaching social skills by conducting activities and practicing these skills. Lastly, teachers should consider assessing student progress after instruction using different assessment techniques like observation (Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008).

And yet, according to Bierman et al. (2016) and Gallegos (2014) social skill development can be ignored by prioritizing different areas in children's development although social skills are significant in an individual's life starting from the first years. Such oversights may arise when teachers prioritize the field in which they are academically competent and keep social skills teaching in the background. The second reason might be that parents don't see their children's social skills as important skills

in the foreground and they are, in terms of their expectations, focused on academic success (Aksoy, 2021). The other problem is that most teachers support these skills randomly through everyday interactions with children. However, it should be made a point to elevate the development of these skills to an explicit place in the program (Katz, 2014) because the education program related to social skills can improve those skills of children (Landry et al., 2014).

For this reason, it is of great importance that teachers should support children's social skills in the program besides the other developmental areas. Teaching social skills should not be done randomly, favorably it should be undertaken in a planned and systematic manner beginning from childhood for the strength of the social structure (Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008). Besides this, the opinions, and experiences of preschool teachers, who are in the position of planning, implementing, and assessing all kinds of activities within the scope of program, on social skills are extremely important (Hollingsworth and Winter, 2013). For this reason, firstly it is necessary to investigate the views of teachers on the importance of the educational program to improve social skills of children and the interval of social skills activities in the education program. Secondly, it is essential to examine teachers' self-reported practices in planning, implementing their plans, assessing children's social skills. Last but not the least, it is critical to analyze the content of teachers' educational plans to be able to understand whether the self-reported practices of teachers are consistent with their written plans.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the program-based views and experiences of preschool teachers to support children's five social skills including communication, empathy, social problem solving, sharing, and helping. When the literature was scrutinized, it was seen that social skills were categorized differently by researchers (Caldarella & Merrell, 1997; Goldstein et al., 1980; Gresham & Elliott, 1990). There are a lot of social skills and all of them cannot be considered when executing a study (Smogorzewska & Szumski, 2017). Due to the diversity about classification and types of social skills, the researcher decided to select social skills to be researched within the scope of this study, both by taking information from the field

and by looking at related literature. In the literature, the most studied social skills have been determined as communication, empathy, social problem solving, helping, and sharing skills (Breen, 2018; Caldarella & Merrell, 1997; CASEL, 2020; Davis & Qi, 2020; Goldstein et al., 1980; Gresham & Elliott, 1990; Karakuş-Özdemir, 2015; Lynch & Simpson, 2010). Moreover, the researcher asked 12 early childhood teachers who are working in public and private preschools to share their opinions about what the most important social skills would be in early childhood education. The answers of teachers and the social skills most frequently mentioned in the literature were compatible with each other. That is why social skills including communication, empathy, social problem solving, sharing, and helping skills are selected for this study. In consideration of these five skills, to reach the purpose of this study, the following research questions will be emphasized;

1. What are the views of preschool teachers about MoNE Preschool Education Program in terms of supporting children's social skills?
2. What are the self-reported practices of preschool teachers based on MoNE Preschool Education Program to support children's social skills?
3. What is the content of social skills activities in the educational plans of preschool teachers?
4. Are the self-reported practices of preschool teachers related to MoNE Preschool Education Program to support children's social skills compatible with the content of their education plans?

1.3. Significance of the study

This study aimed to add to knowledge of the field of early childhood education in the following ways. Firstly, experience means the essence of knowledge which it is in the first person (Lewis, 1934). Investigating the experiences of teachers are very essential because they influence the effectiveness of teachers and the capacity of education systems (Avvisati, 2018). Moreover, educational program can be developed and shaped by listening the experiences of teachers through asking questions regarding the constraints and conditions under which teachers explain about their stories

(Clandinin, 2007). From this perspective, the experiences of preschool teachers were investigated through taking the views, self-reported practices of them, and analyzing the content of their education plans in the scope of this study.

Studying the views of teachers aids researchers to comprehend the working and non-working dimensions of educational practice related to social skills and to find out influential solutions for the profits of all stakeholders in the education system. Also, it is known that teachers' views about social skills have an impact on their practices in the classroom (Viitaniemi, 2020). Therefore, it becomes very significant to investigate teachers' views because it is one of the factors influencing teachers' practices about supporting social skills of children. Moreover, not only the views of teachers but also self-reported practices of them should be investigated to elicit a comprehensive perspective. Self-reported practices, that are stated directly by the participants, are investigated by researchers to understand, and examined the current practices of people (Stone, 2000). However, according to some researchers, there are limited studies focusing on the views, experiences, and practices of teachers regarding the social skills of preschool children (Ferreira et al., 2021; Gallegos, 2014; Lane et al., 2007). Accordingly, it is significant to learn both the views of teachers, and their self-reported practices related to social skills to understand the program-based experiences of teachers effectively.

To increase the value of studies regarding social skills in the context of preschoolers, some researchers have highlighted the need to undertake studies with teachers regarding the promotion of social skills. For example, Özyürek and Ceylan (2014) concluded that a comprehensive study was needed to specify the needs of preschool teachers related to the development of children based on social skills. Another study recommended researchers examine the views of preschool teachers to improve theoretical and practical information, skills and experiences related to social skills by using multi-source data collection tools including observations, interviews, documents, and reports (Aksoy, 2021). Moreover, Gallegos (2014) made recommendations that more studies are needed that are related with best practices in the educational program to provide for the positive and healthy social-emotional development of preschool children and the role of the program on the development of

social skills of children. Furthermore, Çimen and Koçyiğit (2010) emphasized that future studies related to the preschool program are needed to investigate social skills including cooperation, interpersonal skills, and the problem-solving skills of preschool children. Considering all these recommendations, this study set out to address the gap in the literature in terms of taking the views and self-reported practices of teachers related to educational program on supporting the social skills of preschool children by using more than one data collection source.

Secondly, some researchers give voice to the inadequacy of practical information that teachers can use to support children's social skills. For instance, Ferreira et al., (2021) stated that teachers demonstrated to make use of limited strategies in terms of practicing social skills. This situation shows the requirement for greater attention to social skill practices in teachers' continuing professional development and their initial training. Katz (2014) confirmed this requirement by stating that it is imperative for early childhood educators to have a repertoire of practical strategies to promote social skills. Similarly, Sazak Pınar's (2014) study also revealed that according to teachers' opinions, the information is not given, and the way is not shown to the teacher about how those skills should be taught although social skills were included to a small extent in the program. Besides, it is recommended that how to teach social skills should be explained to teachers step by step and different resources should be provided for them (Sazak Pınar, 2014). Considering the necessity for demonstrably more social skill practices and resources mentioned in the related literature, it is thought that in the future, this study will probably be informative and helpful to pre-service and in-service teachers in terms of how they create their educational plans to promote the social skills of children. It is hoped that the findings of this study can serve an archive for teachers and teacher candidates within the scope of the social skills activity content.

Thirdly, planning and scheduling are significant in early childhood classrooms (Jackman, 2005; NAEYC, 2020). Although program planning may take a long time, it is very good idea to plan for better learning. Writing down several components and elements for each activity such as gains and indicators, evaluating the learning, the actual content of the activity, teaching procedures that will be used, the needed

materials, and the variations of children that should be considered is helpful for teachers to teach effectively (Krogh & Slentz, 2008). Huaranga and Arnaldo (2021) supported this perspective by mentioning a similar finding in their study that curricular planning for learning conducted by the teacher has positive effect on teachers' performance in the classroom and the achievement of students' learning (Huaranga & Arnaldo, 2021). Also, according to the Directorate General for Teacher Training (2017) among the professional skills of teachers, the ability of planning the education comes first. Therefore, teachers should be in charge of the writing of the daily and monthly curricular program, the designing activity plans and the implementing of the learning sessions that empower the teaching process related to social skills (MoNE, 2013; Huaranga & Arnaldo, 2021; Jackman, 2005). Considering the significance of program planning for better learning, it is important to investigate the content of preschool teachers' education plans consisting of activity plans, daily plans and monthly plans to understand whether teachers are doing effective planning to support children's social skills or not. Regarding the requirement of investigating teachers' plans, Koçak (2018) recommended to examine the content of activities planned in pre-school education so that the quality of education can be determined.

Moreover, considering the responsibility of teachers in program planning, it is very significant to investigate the consistency between the views, self-reported practices of preschool teachers and the content of their program planning to understand whether teachers plan social skills activities as they mentioned and whether they include activities for social skills in their plans regularly. Hence, this study will likely be unique to guide policy makers about strengthening preschool program for teachers' program planning in terms of social skills development of children in the future.

1.4. Definitions of Key Terms

Early childhood: Early childhood, is a period of significant growth, defined as the process from birth to 8 years old (United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2021).

Early childhood education: This term refers to the program, programs, and settings that serve young children, from birth through the eight year of life (Jackman,

2005) and involves particular activities to improve socialization, cognitive skills and focusing on the overall development of children (Essa & Burnham, 2020)

Preschool children: The largest part of children in early childhood programs are preschool-age children involving young children from 2-3 years of ages or children been out of diapers until start formal schooling (Essa & Burnham, 2020).

Social skills; Social skills are expressed as verbal or non-verbal behaviors that initiate and maintain social relationships and facilitate the solution of problems in social relations (Gülay & Akman, 2009).

- **Communicating skills;** Those skills include both non-verbal and verbal communications which are used to initiate or respond to other people (Elliott & Busse, 1991; Oden & Asher, 1977).
- **Empathy;** It is defined as the ability to vicariously experience another's emotional state or condition (Vasta et al., 2004).
- **Social Problem Solving;** This is referring to people's ability of producing, selecting, and implementing solutions to the problems faced in everyday life (D'Zurilla et al., 2004; Spence, 2003).
- **Sharing;** Although sharing is defined as child's giving or offering objects into the peer's hands or lap (Hay et al., 1999), sharing takes various forms like emotion sharing, attention sharing, resource sharing, and information sharing (Brownell et al., 2013).
- **Helping;** This prosocial behavior is defined as the ability of thinking about 'is there a need for help, how and when to help' and offering to help (Gibbs et al., 1995).

In-service teacher; In service teacher is defined as having teacher certification or already teaching in a classroom (Koellner & Greenblatt, 2018).

Program: The word program defined as the collection of courses designated by a university or a school (Krogh & Slentz, 2008). Program is a multileveled process which encompasses what happens in an early education classroom each day, reflecting the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the early childhood program (Jackman, 2005). For early years, program refers to what of children's learning as developmentally

appropriate is the responsibility of teachers through working alone or in cooperation with others in the school (Krogh & Slentz, 2008).

- **Activity Plan:** It is referred to a plan focused on clearly describing the activity, the objectives, concepts, and skills of the activity, the space and materials needed, the step-by-step procedure of the activity, and the evaluation and follow-up of the specific activity (Jackman, 2005).
- **Learning process:** This is defined as the process and activity of attaining knowledge or skill through being taught, practicing, and experiencing something. This is about what children do or learn rather than what teachers do or teach (Stellenbosh, 2013).
- **Parent involvement:** This broad term involves a variety of participation form in the education like attending and responding to school activities, providing encouragements, modeling desired behavior, actively supporting their children at home, volunteering to help school activities, and taking an active role in decision making processes (Cotton & Reed Wikelund, 1989).
- **Assessment:** It is the collection of information or data on young children through observation and recordkeeping of what they do and how they do it as a basis for making educational decisions (Jackman, 2005)

Program-based experiences: This term refers to the experiences of teachers encountered during planning, implementing, assessing the program.

1.5. Summary

In this chapter, an introduction to the study including the statement of the problem, purpose of the study and research questions, significance of the study, and finally definitions of key terms were presented. The following chapter involves related literature review about the social skills development of children through program including the headings of theoretical background, social and emotional development, conceptualization, history, classifications and domains of social skills, social skills in early childhood education, the importance of school to improve social skills of children, how social skills can be supported in early childhood education program,

program models focused on the importance of social skills and finally national and international studies about social skills in early childhood education.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural Theory, Psychosocial Theory and Ecological Systems Theory are considered to be best suitable to guide the current study. In this part of the study, the connections between these theories and the current study are explained respectively.

Firstly, the Sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky identifies learning as a social process (Vygotsky, 1978). Specifically, he focused on zone of proximal development (ZPD) term to describe the idea that learning occurs as a social process with the assistance of adult or more capable peers. ZPD was explained by Vygotsky as "it is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, 131).

From this point of view, the first link between this current study and sociocultural theory is based on "learning as a social process" and "zone of proximal development". The teacher is a most-qualified person who supports and teaches social skills to children in a social environment so that they improve their skills to perform without assistance some time later. In parallel with this opinion, Vygotsky (1978) expressed that guidance provided to children is significant because the person who can do with assistance today, will be the one that he or she will be engaging independently tomorrow. In the educational process, teachers are providing different kinds of opportunities and preparing learning activities for children. This is going on not with one child, instead all the children who are in the classroom are participating in these activities. Hence, teachers support children's social learning and skills through interaction and relationship between children in activities. Moreover, if children lack social skills or they have difficulty performing these skills, teachers can help them to

gain these by creating an appropriate learning environment, enriching the materials, and increasing the number of activities related to those skills. In a similar way, Thomas (2000) mentioned that such a notion of ZPD significantly affects the decision of teachers regarding what kinds of learning activities to provide children so that they can master the skills they lack.

Vygotsky also focused on the importance of planning these social experiences regarding the development of children. Specifically, he indicated that both the content of what is being taught as well as the role of the specially trained adult who teaches children is carefully planned in the schools to internalize socially available skills for children (Vygotsky, 1978). The second reason why Vygotsky's theory emerged as theoretical framework for this study is because it supports program planning and the content of teachers' education plans is investigated in this study. Besides, the consistency between the teachers' self-reported practices and those education plans is examined in order to see whether teachers' education plans are similar to their self-reported practices. Thus, there is a clear connection between this theory and the planning aspect of this study.

Besides Sociocultural Theory, the Psychosocial theory of Erikson is useful to the present study. Erikson supported the idea that children need to adopt and adapt the various patterns of behavior that different cultures consider desirable if they want to be approved of by the society they live in (Thomas, 2000). Similarly, the nature of this study depends on the idea that children should gain social skills including communication skills, social problem-solving skills, or sharing skills to adapt to the society in which they live.

Moreover, according to Erikson, personality develops across our whole lifespan in a series of stages. For Erikson there are 8 stages in which there is a psychological conflict which must be successfully overcome in each stage for a child to develop into a healthy and well-adjusted adult (Erikson, 1987). The first three stages are "trust vs. mistrust" referring to a period from birth to 12 months old, "autonomy vs. shame and doubt" which occurs from 12 months to 3 years old, and "initiative vs. guilt" referring to a stage encountered between the age of 3 and 6 years old (Thomas, 2000). Especially, according to Erikson, the third stage is confronted in the preschool

years. Children are interacting socially and playing with other children in this stage. If children interact with peers socially, they can develop self-confidence and learn to enjoy having a sense of purpose. However, if children are not supported to interact with others and make their own decisions at this stage, they may lack ambition, take initiative, and feel guilt (Erikson, 1998). Social interaction, experiences, and relationships played a role in the beliefs, actions, and behaviors of children (Erikson, 1987).

This stage that fits with the approach used in the current study which takes as its starting point the notion that early childhood education is a very important period for supporting children's social skills. Children are strengthening their existing social skills in this period and learning how to deal with developmental challenges and successfully resolve inevitable conflicts (Leyden & Shale, 2012). In this period, if teachers foster the social skills of children such as communicating well with others, offering help, sharing through the educational program, children can continue their life with developed social skills. This enables children to lead a healthy social life.

The study is also supported by the ideas of Urie Bronfenbrenner who proposed the Ecological Systems Theory which explains how everything in the child's environment influences the development of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to the four structures including microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem, different elements which are the school, family, peer groups, neighbors, culture, religious, and the interactions between those elements affect the development of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The first two elements of this theory which are school, and family is directly linked to the current study. The educational program, teacher, and the family are focused on and related to the school element. The experiences of teachers are explained based on their educational program including parent involvement and educational activities in a detailed way to improve children's social skills within the scope of this study. The researcher believes in the importance of the interaction between teachers, educational program, and family on the social skills development of children.

Especially in a microsystem, Bronfenbrenner (1993) proposed two broad kinds of processes which support development. The first concerns children's interactions

with people and the second the activities in which children engage (as cited in Thomas, 2000). These two processes explain the theoretical framework of this study which investigates the education activities planned by teachers and their self-reported practices and related activities in support of developing the social skills of young children.

2.2. Social and Emotional Development

In the early years, social and emotional development is associated with developing satisfying and close relationships with adults and other children, experiencing, regulating, and expressing a variety of emotions (Palmer, 2019). Social and emotional development is described as a learning process where children attain the skills to manage their emotions, have goals, display empathy, establish long-lasting positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020). Social development is defined in this study as a learning area in which the individual uses several social skills like communication with the people, empathy developed towards people, solving the problems encountered, sharing, and helping during the socialization process. In the light of this knowledge, social skills will be explained in a more detailed way in this part of the study.

2.3. Social Skills

Here, social skill will be expressed in terms of its conceptualization, historical and theoretical background, classification, and domains.

2.3.1. Conceptualization of Social Skills

Social skills were placed under the social competence which includes both social skills and other adaptive behaviors like independent functioning, self-direction, personal responsibility, and functional academic skills (Gresham & Elliott, 1987). Social skills are defined as learned and composed of specific behaviors including initiations and responses that maximize social reinforcement (Merrell & Gimpel, 1998). Also, they are conceptualized as adaptive behaviors, whereas the failure to use them has been explained as social skill deficits (Hupp et al., 2009). Moreover, social

skills are described as verbal or non-verbal behaviors that initiate and maintain social relationships and facilitate solutions to the problems in social relationships (Gülay & Akman, 2009).

Therefore, significant outcomes of social skills may consist of psychological adjustment, and school adjustment, acceptance by others like teachers, parents, and peers (Gresham & Elliot, 1987) and coping with and adapting to demanding social environments (Walker et al., 1995). It may be said that social skills are learned, include specific behaviors, are composed of initiations and responses, maximize social reinforcement, are interactive and situation-specific (Merrell & Gimpel, 2014). If it is necessary to define social skills within scope of this study, they can be defined as behaviors in which social rules and relationships are formed, conveyed and changed through verbal and non-verbal means, and facilitating interaction and communication with others.

2.3.2. History of Social Skills

The history of socialization dates back to the method of social reconstruction proposed by John Dewey in 1890s. He viewed the school as a social institution and the role of teacher as forming of the proper social life. Also, he included social life skills to the program of his school to be a useful member of larger social group for children (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Then, in the 1960's, socio-political movements against the “war on poverty” along with the development of Piaget's theories sparked heightened interest in child social behaviors. It was during this time that the federally funded Head Start Program was conceived for disadvantaged preschool children. Head Start Program paved the way for the development of other social emotional learning programs with the aim of aiding children acquire the skills of self and social awareness, emotional regulation, responsible decision making, problem solving and relationship management (Zins et al., 2004, as cited in Breen, 2018). By the 1970's, social behavior became a central theme in the fields of education and psychology (Henry, 2006) with the need to treat social skill deficits and maladaptive social behaviors (Matson, 2017).

Therefore, the development of modern approaches to social skills training dates to the 1970s (McFall & Twentyman, 1973, as cited in Matson, 2017). Dr. Arnold P.

Goldstein developed structured learning therapy which is a pioneer of social skills (Goldstein, 1973). Structural learning methods stated that the behaviors based on anger and ineffective behaviors can be changed with learning new and alternative skills (McGinnis, 2016). In the 1980's, emphasis shifted to screening, assessment, and intervention of social skills (Henry, 2006). Then, social skills were conceptualized and defined by different researchers (Caldarella & Merrell 1997; Gresham & Elliott, 1984; McFall, 1982). Studies focused on a range of activities about social adjustment, problem-solving and interactions with others showed that this approach can be used in educational models for many groups although it was initially an intervention approach for special populations including intellectual disabilities, emotionally disturbed children (Matson, 2017). With time, the development of social skills became important for both children exhibiting no developmental disabilities and the children with disabilities (Erbay and Yıldırım Doğru, 2010; Smogorzewska & Grzegorz, 2017). Right after, the learning based didactic programs and entire programs related to social skills have emerged (Matson, 2017).

2.3.3. Classification and domains of social skills

Social skills are categorized differently by researchers (Caldarella & Merrell, 1997; Goldstein et al., 1980; Gresham & Elliott, 1990; Ömeroğlu et al., 2014). One of the earliest classifications belong to Goldstein et al. (1980). According to him, there are basic social skills (listening, starting a conversation), advance social skills (asking for help), skills to cope with emotions (being aware of the feelings), skills for developing alternatives to aggression (sharing and helping), skills to cope with stress (accepting the answer of "no"), and planning skills (deciding to do something). Also, Caldarella and Merrell (1997) stated five domains of social skills. These are offered as positive peer behaviors (offering help), self-management skills (controlling temper), academic skills (accomplishment of the tasks independently), compliance (complying with social rules, sharing), and assertion (making friends, initiating conversations).

Elsewhere, the CARES model offered by Gresham and Elliott (1990) identifies five major types of social skills. These are cooperation (sharing materials, complying with the rules, and helping others), assertion, responsibility, empathy, self-control.

Later, Ömeroğlu et al., 2014 divided social skills into four different categories during the OSBEP project conducted in Turkey. These categories of social skills are beginning skills (listening to others, greetings), academic support skills (asking questions, solving encountered problems), friendship skills (sharing, understanding friends' feelings), and skills to manage emotions.

As mentioned, there are several social skills and all of them cannot be considered when executing a study (Smogorzewska & Grzegorz, 2017). Due to this diversity in the classification of social skills, the researcher decided to focus on five social skills which are communication, empathy, social problem solving, sharing, and helping skills.

2.3.3.1. Communication

Matson (2017) expresses communication by dividing into receptive, expressive, and written subdomains. The expressive and receptive subdomains are most related to social skills. Communication is the process by which meaningful information is exchanged among individuals (Katz, 2014). Social communication includes social reciprocity and behaviors of communication which result in one's ability to communicate socially like using "yes" and "no" appropriately, initiating conversations with peers and adults, and using the word of "I" appropriately (Matson, 2017). It can be said that effective communication is the basis of positive relations between individuals (Atabey, 2018). Also, Kaffemaniene (2018) stated that communication skills are essential in the structure of social skills. For this reason, it is important to support communication skills of children by helping them to use volume effectively, to find the words to say, to express themselves through different opportunities like art experiences and make-believe play opportunities (Katz, 2014).

2.3.3.2. Empathy

Denham (1998) expressed empathy as the ability to feel the emotions of others and to care toward other people in need. Preschool children can feel empathy, they can demonstrate it with the expressions, words, and actions of them (Denham, 1998). It is critically important for early childhood professionals to support the development of

empathy (Katz, 2014). Also, supporting parents and other caregivers to realize the early developing empathic responses of children is a significant step toward promoting social development of children (Benson & Haith, 2009).

2.3.3.3. Social problem solving

Social problem solving involves problem definition, creating of alternative solutions, predicting consequences, selecting, and planning of appropriate responses (Spence, 2003). Also, social problem-solving skills can be defined as the ability of dealing with conflict situations people encounter in daily life by finding some solutions (Dinçer et al., 2019). Social problem-solving processes of young children are implicated in their kindergarten and early school success (Denham et al., 2014).

2.3.3.4. Sharing

Although sharing is identified as child's giving or offering objects into the peer's hands or lap (Hay et al., 1999), sharing takes a variety of forms like emotion sharing, attention sharing, resource sharing, and information sharing (Brownell et al., 2013). Children share all kinds of things with another person. For instance, a child can share the cookies with his friend when he is crying to make him happy although some children cannot share due to some reasons involving not understanding the need and desire of their friends or not feeling possessive about their own food (Brownell et al., 2013). Sharing skill is one of the significant social skills that should be improved in early childhood education.

2.3.3.5. Helping

This social behavior is defined as the ability of thinking about 'is there a need for help, how and when to help' and offering to help (Gibbs et al., 1995). In the construction of social skills taxonomy, Calderalla and Merrell (1997) included offering help and assistance to peers when required in the dimension of peer relations skills. Therefore, children should internalize the helping skills in the early years to adapt the society.

2.4. Social skills in Early Childhood Education

Early childhood is a significant developmental window to learn social and emotional skills (Ferreira et al., 2021; Palmer, 2019). Social skills are acquired from the first years of life and continue throughout life. Therefore, social skills should be taught to children to be able to have a peaceful, healthy, successful, harmonious, and happy life throughout their childhood, adulthood, and older ages (Smogorzewska & Grzegorz, 2017). Also, it was indicated that the influential mastery of social skills in early childhood promotes the successful life outcomes, involving social wellbeing and good health, educational attainment, the avoidance of social difficulties, and employment (Clarke at al., 2015). Similarly, social skill acquisition is a critical step in the development of young children with long lasting implications for the quality of social experiences during life (Ferreira et al., 2021; Fieldman & Eidelman, 2009; Özbey & Köyceğiz-Gözeler, 2020), school performance (Frogner et al., 2021), and academic success (Denham et al., 2014; Schmitt et al., 2018). Moreover, it is seen that children who are taking social skills education are at peace with themselves and others (Richardson et al., 2009), solving problems and are self-confident individuals (Jamison-Kristen et al., 2012). Hence, Atmaca et al. (2020) indicated that not being able to acquire social skills that should be learned at critical times can only make it difficult to learn in the future, but also negatively affect the social lives of people.

Social skill deficiencies can lead to many negative consequences in the life of children. According to Odom et al. (2008), if children have difficulties about social skills acquisition, they might have delays in physical development, communication and social awareness that limit their abilities to progress along a typical social developmental trajectory. Similarly, it is possible that children who have poor social skills are rejected by their friends more (Lovitt, 2007). For this reason, starting from the preschool period, determining the social skill levels of children, and conducting activities in this direction is an important step for them to find solutions to the adaptation problems they may experience in the future.

2.5. The importance of school to improve social skills of children

According to Frogner et al. (2021), school was found to be effective for the social skills of children. Also, Viitaniemi (2020) emphasized the role of the school for children's social skills development. The importance of school is expressed based on peer relations, teachers, and educational program to improve children's social skills.

Interaction with peers establishes social communication which shapes the experiences of young children with the social world throughout their lifetime (Jamison-Kristen et al., 2012). Moreover, with peer relationships, children can find the opportunity to practice verbal skills. They can learn various social skills including sharing, helping each other, asking for help, asking for suggestions, respecting the rights of others, and accepting the consequences of their behaviors (Akbaş, 2019).

One of the vital guides of children is teachers in early years (Mbugua, 2009). Specifically, the role of preschool teachers on improving social skills of children is very critical (Conroy et al., 2014; Palmer, 2019). During the educational process, everyday events often become teachable moments for teachers to teach appropriate social behaviors to young children (Lynch & Simpson, 2010). Thus, the teacher's role is essential in the creation of the classes that need to be enriched with activities that encourage the cooperation and mutual respect between the children (Gobena, 2020). Likewise, Palmer (2019) mentioned that teachers build children's social and emotional skills by conducting day-to-day activities and lessons with books, music, games, and group discussions and considering each child's individual needs in the context of their culture and family.

In addition to this, in terms of the program, teachers implement family involvement in the educational environment and at home to ensure the permanence of the learned skill and inform families about how to reinforce this learned skill (Akbaş, 2019). Moreover, they can document the social skill development of children by using different techniques to have detailed information about the progress of children (McLaughlin et al., 2017).

Moreover, Breen (2018) specified some instructional strategies as effective to support and promote the development of empathy and emotion regulation in preschool classrooms for teachers. These strategies, which are building positive relationships

with students, modeling, implementing role play, providing a quiet area, identifying feelings, and grouping students, are very critical to improve social skills of children (Conroy et al., 2014). Also, teachers can take a purposeful role in encouraging children to understand the value of peer relationships. They can identify, model, and highlight the skills of children required to enact positive social interactions with their peers (McLaughlin et al., 2017).

While social skill definitions may vary somewhat, there is a basic agreement as to how social skills are developed (Matson, 2017). The learning of social skills, which is very critical for the strength of the social structure, should not be at random. On the contrary, it should be in a planned and programmed manner starting from childhood (Johnson et al., 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Pekdoğan, 2016; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019; Williams and Reisberg, 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that participating in structured social skills education, especially in pre-school education institutions, has an important effect on the development of children's social adaptation skills and eliminating potential problem behaviors (Topaloğlu, 2013).

Also, the effect of the relevant program is very significant on social skills development in the period of early childhood education because it is the period when friendships are first created (Gobena, 2020). According to a study conducted by Gobena in Ethiopia in 2020, 85% of preprimary-school teachers rated the program which is irrelevant for social skills in early childhood education to be either moderately or highly affecting children's social skills development negatively.

2.6. How social skills of young children can be supported in the preschools

Social skills can be supported through different ways in early childhood education like supporting relationship between peers (Gander & Gardiner, 2007), teacher-student relationship and classroom discipline (Lin, 2016), using effective instructional strategies (Breen, 2018), and creating a safe learning environment (Gold, 2020). In addition, one of the most significant ways to promote social skills is well planning and intentionally implementing the program (Church, 2015; Gobena, 2020; NAEYC, 2011). Preschool teachers must consider three significant steps while implementing social skills activities in the scope of educational program (Mclntosh &

Mackay, 2008). Firstly, teachers should consider the planning and designing step based on which skills will be taught. Planning is very significant in early childhood education. Teachers should use an activity plan format that clearly describes the activity, the objectives, concepts, and skills needed for the activity, the space and materials needed, the step-by-step procedure of the activity, and the assessment and follow-up of the specific activity (Jackman, 2005). The reason for this is that a written plan clarifies the thinking of teachers and helps them to articulate the rationale for what they plan to do. Moreover, a wide variety of well-planned activities should reinforce the objectives and theme of the program (Jackman, 2005). The second step is depending on the implementation process of social skills activities while considering some factors like different types of activities, materials, parent involvement, and organization of learning environment. Lastly, teachers should take into account assessing student progress after instruction with the help of different assessment techniques like observation (Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008).

These steps are also specified in the MoNE Preschool Education program in Turkey. According to this program, teachers consider the needs of children and the environment in which children live while planning their social skills activities. They are also meant to focus on different program-based items including gains and indicators, concepts, materials, learning environment, types of activities, learning process, parent involvement, assessment, and adaptation throughout the processes of planning, implementing, and assessing activities (MoNE, 2013). In the following section, the relationship between these program-based items and supporting social skills is expressed in detail in accordance with the related literature.

2.6.1. Considering the needs of children and environment in which the program is being prepared

The personal characteristics of children are significant in the development of their social skills (Samancı, 2010). Instruction is more influential when the lessons are implemented according to the skills needed by children (Khusnidakhon, 2021; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008) because children learn at varying speeds and have different needs (Johnson et al., 2016). Silva Gomes and Sousa Pereira (2014)

confirmed the requirement of considering children's needs while planning by saying that differentiated instruction in educational practices based on the age and gender variables of children can improve their social skills development. Also, Katz (2014) said that the process must be individualized to meet the unique needs of each child because children differ from one another in so many ways. Thus, the process must take into account the developmental differences between children as well as developmental variability within a given child. Also, the process must be culturally appropriate for each child (Viitaniemi, 2020).

2.6.2. Organizing the learning environment and materials

Teachers should create opportunities to practice and develop children's social skills in early childhood education by arranging space to develop social play and selecting materials appropriately (LeBlanc, 1989). Based on the learning environment, Heyworth (2013) stated that the school philosophy regarding supporting the resilience of children in their social and academic learning is represented by the classroom environment through using charts and posters. Moreover, LeBlanc (1989) mentioned that preschool teachers can support positive peer interactions through making modifications in the physical environment and learning centers. Similarly, McGinnis (2016) stated that it is important to arrange the tables, desks, the place where children can sit cross-legged on the floor in a semi-circle, and the playgrounds and learning centers in the classroom. In addition, alternative school locations like corridors, playgrounds, or school buses are suitable places for practicing and teaching social skills (McGinnis, 2016).

Regarding organization of outdoor learning environments, Dowdell et al. (2011) stated that outdoor play provides more opportunities to promote the development of social interactions and socialization. Regarding this issue, Anggraeni (2018) revealed that outdoor activities can strengthen children's social skills including communication, cooperation, and sharing. Similarly, lower levels of outdoor play are related with poorer social skills despite higher levels of outdoor play are related with higher levels of social skills in the preschool children (Hinkley et al., 2018). Moreover, Loukatari et al. (2019) found that there is a statistically important correlation between

the participation of children in a structured program based on playful activities in the schoolyard and the development of their social skills.

In addition to the learning environment, the researchers mentioned the importance of material selection to support children's social skills. According to Mecha and Ayaga (2020), availability and utilization of functional play materials and frequency of children's participation in play activities supports preschool children's social skills. That's why, it is recommended that preschools must provide a variety of play materials for children because this approach probably enhances children's social development (Mecha & Ayaga, 2020). Furthermore, Gönen et al. (2012) recommended the use of language and literacy materials like storybooks by stating that one of the most influential ways for preschool teachers to teach social skills is using pictured story books and creating the book corners in their classroom.

Moreover, according to Krach et al. (2021), based on technological materials, a website called "the social express" can be used to teach social situations. Learning is divided into the comprehension of concepts. Children can learn how these concepts are explained in social situations and why these prosocial explanations are significant with the help of this website used by a variety of schools in African-American communities (Krach et al., 2021). Similarly, Caballero-Gonzalez et al. (2019) reported that using educational robotics and problem-solving activities in a playful way promotes the development of social interaction and the development of a learning experience in computational thinking.

In another approach, the National Council for Special Education (n.d.) proposed that visual materials consisting of a visual item, photograph, an object, black and white line drawings aid, and picture or sign improve communication because visual materials aid children to explain their needs and wishes. For instance, children can express their emotions and tell people how they are feeling with the help of visuals including emotions (National Council for Special Education, n.d.). Regarding visual materials, Odom et al. (1997) recommended using posters as reminders because it is useful to list the descriptive phrases and skills on a poster to be displayed in the play area where children engage in social interaction. Also, limiting materials like using

one set of cooking utensils for every two children is an effective way to strengthen interactions and joint projects (Odom et al., 1997).

Church (2015) recommended real-world materials to invite children to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings during play. Therefore, children learn by investigating the world through interacting with it.

2.6.3. Gains and indicators

Regarding gains and indicators, Çimen and Koçyiğit (2010) found that activities based on gains and indicators related to social skills in the early childhood education program are influential and supportive to acquire social skills for preschool children. Also, Odom et al. (1997), recommended to describe the activity goal which should identify the things children will do at the beginning of the activity. Similarly, according to the national preschool education program of Turkey (MoNE, 2013), it is important to prepare educational activities in light of the gains and indicators mentioned in the program. Also, it should be monitored to what extent the learning outcomes have been reached at the end of the process (MoNE, 2013). However, in the study on planning the gains and indicators conducted in Turkey by Başaran and Ulubey (2018), it was found that if the gains and indicators included in the MoNE program are organized according to the age groups, the program will contribute to its full potential. A study by Özsırkıntı et al. (2014), reported that preschool teachers felt that more gains can be added to the MoNE program and doing so would support the social and emotional development area.

2.6.4. Words and Concepts

According to MoNE (2013), key words and concepts must be incorporated into all activity plans. “Words” are new words that will enrich the vocabulary of children in the learning process and need to be specified, and “concepts” include new ideas to be encountered during the learning process, these two need to be specified and categorised (MoNE, 2013). Becoming familiar with the key words and concepts is critical for children since they use them as tools for furthering conceptual understanding when they discuss their thoughts (Haug & Odegaard, 2014). Thus,

preschool teachers should specify the level of children's word and concept knowledge related to social skills and implement educational activities to develop conceptual understanding of them.

2.6.5. Using a child-centered approach

Child-centered teaching methods and techniques are very important in the development of children's social skills (Samancı, 2010). As an example, according to Gholamalizadeh et al. (2018), child-centered play therapy helps to reduce social anxiety and increase the communication skills of preschool children. Also, one of the features of MoNE Preschool Education program is child-centeredness of it. This feature was expressed as:

> "Teachers are expected to let children plan, do, organize, examine, search, discuss and produce things as much as possible during the period of learning. It is important for the children to develop positive attitudes toward school, learning and research, he/she should a positive sense of self and establish interactions with peers and teachers. Also, we should let children participate in activities and choose the activities and materials he/she will play with in the learning environment (MoNE, 2013, p. 10).

2.6.6. Different kinds of activities

According to McArthur (2002), teachers cannot assume that students will automatically act in an acceptable manner. Instead, children need a variety of opportunities to develop and practice social skills; however, these opportunities must be carefully structured (Deborah, 2008). For this reason, educators, administrators, and parents must decide what social skills they should teach and what kind of activities they will use. Implementing various activities can improve the social skills of children (McArthur, 2002).

2.6.6.1. Play activities

Numerous research studies proved the importance of play to improve the social skills of children. For example, according to Deborah (2008), social skills games are

helpful to promote language skills, listening skills, cooperation skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, understanding concepts of fairness, empathy, tolerance, ability to tolerate waiting and to take turns. Also, Siregar et al. (2016) indicated that there is a correlation between educational games and social skills development in children aged 3-4 years. Similar to this study, there is a strong positive correlation between the social skills of preschool children and the availability of cooperative plays (Mecha & Ayaga, 2020), which means that if more cooperative play is included in the program, children are more likely to develop their social skills at preschool. In addition, social play develops children's social competence and social interaction through interacting with peers and adults, solving conflict, and mutually helping and sharing (Khusnidakhon, 2021).

Additionally, teachers can assist children to know each other and to build a sense of community in the classroom through play. For example, getting-acquainted games assist children to learn the names of others quickly (McArthur, 2002). Similarly, Deborah (2008) stated numerous games based on social skills including;

- Games about getting to know each other through warm-ups and ice-breakers games,
- Games about communication skills consisting of silent greetings, questions and answers, personal interviews, surprise stores,
- Games related to developing empathy including musical drawings, ladder of feelings, mirror talking,
- Games based on building cooperation and negotiation skills including drawing together, big ball parachute game,
- Games on solving problems in group interactions including the rule of the realm, story sharing.

From a different perspective, traditional games are useful for the social skills development of children involving cooperation, following the rules, communication, and accepting criticism (Ali et al., 2021). From a different perspective, modern games can importantly develop early childhood social skills (Utoyo, 2019). Also, Nissa et al., (2018) demonstrated that jump rope games are effective in learning and enhancing the motor and social skills of children.

2.6.6.2. Art activities

According to Arda (2009), children develop their social skills through establishing new friendships and learning to speak, listen, have empathy, await her/his turn, share, help each other and cooperate during art activities. Likewise, this study, Yazıcı (2017) revealed that art education program influenced preschool children's social skills in a positive way. Specifically, the artworks created in groups help children to make plans and realize them together in cooperation. Therefore, children can learn such skills including sharing objects, listening to others while working in cooperation with the help of art activities. Also, children can express their feelings and have peace by using dramatic art (Yazıcı, 2017). Similarly, visual arts such as painting, sculpting with various materials, pounding clay, and drawing are offering enjoyable opportunities for children to express themselves (Katz, 2014). Lastly, Coşkun et al. (2019) mentioned that art-based classroom teaching importantly develops children's empathy skills.

2.6.6.3. Language activities

A study conducted by Bonnie et al. (2000) with classroom teachers demonstrated that children's literature increases children's appropriate usage of social skills including empathy, self-control, responsibility, and conflict resolution. Also, Pekdoğan (2016) mentions story-based social skills training programs enhance 5-6 years old children's social skills. Similarly, Deborah (2008) stated that stories including different social situations can be an inestimable tool to promote the awareness of social competence. These stories can be both commercially produced and invented by children individually or in a peer group. For example, Katz (2014) mentioned that it would be useful for you to share your own stories, including mistakes you have made and how you could have handled a situation more effectively (Katz, 2014). Differently, Başdaş and Akar Vural (2017) found that drama-based digital storytelling programs affected the social skills involving interpersonal skills, peer pressure coping skills, and verbal explanation skills of six years old children positively.

2.6.6.4. Drama activities

It is recommended that drama can be used to support the social skills of children (Ceylan et al., 2019) because drama activities influenced five-year old children's social skills positively. Similarly, Çetingöz and Cantürk Güngan (2012) found that drama activities that were integrated into the program as a part of the daily plan result in the acquisition of social skills for six-years old children.

Salcedo (2017) suggested using creative dramatics activities like role playing to enhance the social skills of children in preschools because such activities improve cooperation, teamwork, and communication through portraying various roles by children. Role-playing is a useful intervention to promote children's social skills and via creative dramatics, children can learn the conversation dynamics like turn taking, asking, and answering questions, reading facial cues, and listening and comprehension (Salcedo, 2017). Likewise, Johnson et al. (2016) stated that role-playing scenarios make the social skills more accessible for children and such scenarios can help children become more comfortable while using the social skills across school settings. In addition to these, Nahar et al. (2020) investigated that social skills of 5-6 years old children affected positively with the help of macro roles in which children can experience real roles in a direct way through playing roles or characters. Moreover, social skills like cooperation, friendship, communication, and sharing can be enhanced by practicing the role-playing activities for 4 years old children (Hasan & Hazwani Zaini, 2021). Lastly, McArthur (2002) mentioned children can practice how to explain themselves when they are angry, or someone hurts their feelings with the use of role play.

2.6.6.5. Science activities

Children can improve their social skills with the help of science activities. According to Norman and Combs-Richardson (2001), cooperative learning in science activities enhances communication between group members. For example, children can be assigned different tasks to learn interdependence skills as well as independence in hands-on activities (Norman & Combs-Richarson, 2001). To exemplify, Kara and Aslan (2018) conducted a research study focused on determining the effect of drama-

based science activities on social skills in teaching five years old children about nutrients. The results of the study showed that the use of drama methods in teaching the subject of foods increased children's social skills including self-control, interpersonal skills, listening skills and verbal explanation skills (Kara and Aslan, 2018).

2.6.6.6. Math activities

Preschool teachers can also use math activities to support the social skills of children. Quesenberry et al. (2016) found that math activities promote the social skills development of preschool children and explained this by giving an example;

- One activity is depending on problem solving and peer interactions. In this activity, there are small groups of two or three children, and they move around the room while measuring objects and recording their answers on a computer or tablet. In this way, they can express their ideas to their friends and improve their social skills.

Moreover, Church (2015) stated math activities including sorting, classifying, patterning, seriating, graphing, counting, and measuring that can be utilized to build the essential social skills of cooperation, sharing, asking for help, acceptance in the group, listening, controlling oneself and playing fair.

2.6.6.7. Music activities

Music education is useful for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children (Terracciano, 2011). Specifically, music lessons provide to increase the development of social skills (Terracciano, 2011; Yetti & Anggraini, 2019), self-esteem, and cooperation (Heyworth, 2013). Moreover, some children are more comfortable expressing themselves through music than through words (Katz, 2014). For this reason, music provides preschool children with fun and engaging activities that support their social interactions (Terracciano, 2011).

2.6.6.8. Movement activities

Increasing movement activities in teachers' practices also affect positively the social development of children (Yapar et al., 2018). Similarly, Katz (2014) stated that dance and movement are natural ways for children to express themselves, children can communicate emotions and ideas through movement.

2.6.6.9. Free Play time activities

Free play time is specifically included in the daily educational flow under the national preschool education program (MoNE, 2013). Accordingly, when starting the day, the teacher introduces the children to learning centers, and asks them to express their preferences by asking questions such as "Where do you want to play today?" The children go to the learning centers they have chosen and start their activities. In terms of the relationship between social skills and free play time, Meran (2019) stated that free play activities contributed more to the social development of children. Also, according to Berk et al. (2006), children gain significant real-life experiences and awareness of self and others through imitating adult roles in free play. For instance, a child can play the role of mother and imitate how she controls the behavior of her child, while another can imagine being an astronaut and observing the rules for a spacewalk.

2.6.6.10. Field-trips activities

Kızıltaş and Sak (2018) made recommendations that preschool teachers should be educated more to support the social and emotional development of children by using out-of-class activities. Such activities can be implemented even in school environs. Integrating field-trip activities into other activities in early childhood program affected social skills of children positively (Kızıltaş & Sak, 2018). However, according to a study by Kızıltaş et al. (2018), field-trips activities were mentioned the least in terms of the social gains and indicators used by preschool teachers.

2.6.7. Parent involvement for social skills activities

Open communication between the school and the home would facilitate greater opportunities for both parents, teachers, and stakeholders to create clearer understandings of the practices, expectations, and responsibilities related with children's social development in early years (King & Boardman, 2006). The foundation of social skills is formed at home; however, school has a significant function of improving and maintaining such skills (Pulkkinen, 2002). According to Webster-Stratton (2011), parent involvement in education influences social skills of children and their success in a positive way. That is why, teachers should hearten parents to involve in the education of their children and work with them closely.

MoNE (2013) stated the importance of parent involvement for all developmental areas in early childhood education. It also provided a "Family Support Education Guide integrated with preschool education program" known as OBADER which included knowledge and recommendations for use in parent involvement processes. Also, Epstein offered six types of parent involvement for parents and schools to work together to maximize the development of children (Epstein et al., 2005). These types are as follows;

Type 1 Parenting: One of the basic responsibilities of the family is creating positive home conditions to support the school success (Epstein et al., 2005). Regarding this type, Ölçer and Güngör-Aytar (2014) stated that informing parents about their interaction with children and improving their educational levels are critical for correcting the behaviors of parents positively. The reason for this is that positive parenting practices are associated with higher scores for social behaviors in children (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2017).

Type 2 Communicating*:* Communication between school and home facilitates the flow of knowledge about children's progress and the school program (Epstein et al., 2005). In this context, it was determined that there is a significant relationship between children's social skills and family-teacher communication and cooperation (Gözcü Binbir & Ertürk Kara, 2020). Moreover, Adams et al. (2010) revealed that parent involvement is related to increased success of children when it involves two-way information exchange between the school and home. Specifically, parents have

reported that home notes assist to enhance social skills (Adams et al., 2010). In summary, Siperstein and Bak (1988) indicated that if schools give information to parents regarding their attempts to teach social skills, families are more likely to reinforce and practice these social skills at home (as cited in Adams et al., 2010).

Type 3 Volunteering: The amelioration of parents to act as volunteers to support and help school functions and initiatives is significant (Epstein et al., 2005). In terms of volunteering, researchers have conducted some studies related to social skills. For example, Boz et al. (2018) mentioned social skills games took place in-class and with family participation depending on various dimensions of social skills. Preschool teachers can help families to contribute to the development and education of their children, can work with them and enable them to participate in education actively through creating social skills activities with parent involvement (Boz et al., 2018). In a similar way, Gözcü Binbir and Ertürk Kara (2020) supported that involving parents in classroom activities based on their abilities and interest must be considered as an indispensable part in the preparation of activity plans.

Type 4 Learning at home*:* Parent involvement at home like assisting children with learning activities and homework depending on the knowledge provided by school is important (Epstein et al., 2005). Regarding the type of learning at home, a study carried out by Yurtseven and Kurt (2013) found that there is an important relationship between the social skills of children and the mothers' frequency of reading storybooks at home.

Type 5 Decision making*:* This type is related to parent involvement actively in school decisions and advocacy for the improvements of school (Epstein et al., 2005).

Type 6 Collaborating with the community: This aspect concerns the dissemination and identification of an available services network and resources in the community to help parents and schools in their efforts to enhance the education of children (Epstein et al., 2005).

In addition to the above types, Katz and Helm (2001) focused on a different way for parents to participate in the educational process of their children. This type is mentioned as;

Getting support from families in finding resources: In this parent involvement type, parents generally participate in the educational process by purchasing books or materials related to the subject learned at school or bringing resource books or materials from home to school (Katz & Helm, 2001).

Considering all these types and the related studies, it was recommended to support parent engagement in early childhood education and increase the understanding of parent engagements' important role as a way of supporting children's social skills (Bartz & Karnes, 2018; Connell & Prinz, 2002; Deloatche et al., 2015).

2.6.8. Assessment in social skills activities

Preschool teachers must assess the development of children's social skills (Johnson et al., 2016; Luiselli et al., 2005). This includes prioritizing the selection of skills and aiding the design of the program-based on the needs of children (Buldu & Buldu, 2021; Isaacs, 2015; Johnson et al., 2016; Şahin-Sak, 2021). For this reason, there is a great requirement to find influential ways for social skills assessment (Merrell, 2001). Numerous types of assessment methods are used to assess children's social skills. These methods involve peer evaluations, direct observation, rating forms, and behavioral interviews (Elliott & Gresham, 1987).

According to the literature, generally there are several effective assessment strategies to assess the development of children (Gullo, 2005; Wortham, 2014). These are explained in detail below.

2.6.8.1. Observation

Observation is one of the most useful ways to be aware of young children's individual characteristics and their developmental milestones. Teachers can reveal how social behavior and development of children are improving through observation at natural settings (Gresham, 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Merrell, 2001) at play or interacting in classroom centers (Wortham, 2014). Similarly, observation of preschool children's social and emotional competencies must be considered because it is both highlighting specific needs of children and showing total impacts of programming (Denham et al., 2009; Denham et al., 2010). Specifically, LeBlanc

(1989) stated that it can be understood which child is experiencing problems while establishing positive peer relationships by observing the children's play behaviors.

2.6.8.2. Performance-based assessment

Performance based assessment involves games, activities, projects (Wortham & Hardin, 2020). These assessment types are as follows;

- **Games:** Games may be used to be aware of children's progress with a concept or a skill. The teacher can use observation to evaluate the abilities and thinking of the children.
- **Teacher-designed activities:** A performance measure that needs the children to apply knowledge in an activity specified by the teacher.

2.6.8.3. Portfolio and exhibitions

Portfolios are methods or processes in which information related to children's performance can be interpreted and stored (Wortham, 2014). They can be used to collect the children's works, teacher assessments, and other information contributing to the entire picture of children's progress. In addition, they are vehicles used to assess and report the progress and accomplishments of children to the parents and administrators. Work samples of children are examples demonstrating the developmental progress of children (Wortham, 2014). Regarding this issue, Yus et al. (2017) proved the effectiveness and feasibility of portfolio-based assessment to improve social skills of children in early years. For this reason, teachers are using portfolio-based assessment strategies effectively while choosing activities which children will perform and present the children's works to enhance social skills of kindergarten children (Yus et al., 2017). Moreover, specifically, Merrell (2001) stated that drawing can be useful for portfolios to gain reports about the social skills of children.

Different from gaining information about child development, the documentation of children's learning experiences through using portfolio guides the further planning of teachers and informs the program through assessment (Yılmaz et al., 2021).

2.6.8.4. Technology-based assessment

According to Wortham (2014) early childhood educators have access to the technology and assessments which are available via technology in the 21st century. One of the technological assessment sources is assessment software. Assessment with computer software which is linked to a particular program can be used by designing the lesson plans and activities (Wortham, 2014). Moreover, teachers can use various technological materials such as videos and animations to assess social skills of children.

2.6.8.5. Self-assessment of children

Teachers can also use self-assessment for children (Wortham, 2014). It is an assessment technique in which the individual reports about herself or himself. It is widely used because it is easy to implement, answer and evaluate (Ömeroğlu et al., 2014). On this issue, Mclntosh and Mackay (2008) mentioned children can monitor the social behavior of themselves via recording if they perform targeted social skills correctly or not.

2.6.8.6. Assessment based on questioning

The Ministry of National Education (2013) stated that the discussions held during and at the end of the activity can be directed with different types of questions including descriptive questions, sensual questions, questions related to gains and indicators, and daily life questions. The example questions are given below:

- Descriptive questions:

  Who was in the game we played?

  What was your role in the game?

- Sensual questions:

  Are you excited to watch the fishes in the aquarium?

  Which of the movements did you find the most difficult?

- Questions related to gains and indicators

  What types of materials can the sculptures be made up of?

  Why is being lined up necessary?

- Daily life questions

  Do you go to crowded places like markets with your family?

  What do you pay attention to in the places you go?

2.7. Approaches to early childhood education focused on the importance of social skills

There are various and widely utilized early childhood education program models and approaches including High/Scope, Reggio Emilia, Montessori, Primary Years Program, Waldorf approach, Creative Program (Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı [AÇEV], 2020; Gülçiçek et al., 2019; Lunenburg, 2011). These program models and approaches highlight the importance of supporting social skills.

High/Scope approach focused on adult-child interaction that includes positive interaction strategies and problem-solving approach to social conflict. In this way, children in High/Scope programs significantly outperformed children in the social relations area including social problem-solving skills (High/Scope, 2013). In Reggio Emilia Approach, children should be supported to learn the cultural values and roles in the society. Thus, this approach focuses on children's relationships with their peers, parents, teachers, and society, rather than approaching each child individually (Cadwell, 1997).

Moreover, Montessori puts emphasis on personal, social, and emotional development by promoting children to form positive relationships and develop respect for others and to develop social skills and have confidence in their own abilities (Isaacs, 2015). In Primary Years Program, social skills are explained as one of the five skills for learning approaches, and various program-based strategies are mentioned that can be used by teachers (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2018). For example, they create opportunities to practice and develop social skills, they reflect and give feedback to children about their social skills, they give different examples about social skills (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2018).

In Waldorf approach, the importance of social competence has been emphasized so that children can easily engage in human relations when they grow up without getting confused in social life. In this context, children in Waldorf schools

practice living in harmony with activities such as problem solving, role playing and working in cooperation (Lang, 2002). In addition, various social skills including communication, social problem solving, understanding the rights of one's own and others are included in the language and social-emotional developmental area of Creative Program (Teaching Strategies, 2020). Also, this program supports strategies to organize the physical environment effectively and provide different kinds of materials to support socialization of children (Dodge et al., 2014; Teaching Strategies, 2020).

Finally, the MoNE Preschool Education Program of Turkey offered by the Ministry of National Education in 2013 focused on promoting children's social skills. This program is compulsory for preschool teachers working in public preschools to apply. This program is expressed below in detail since this study was carried out within the scope of this program.

2.8. The MoNE Preschool Education Program of Turkey

In Turkey, preschool teachers use the national early childhood education program created by Ministry of National Education in 2013 (MoNE, 2013). Teachers plan their monthly education plan to organize all educational activities in a month using "monthly plan template" (see Appendix E), daily educational flow using a "daily plan template" (see Appendix F) regarding what they will do during the day based on this program. It includes times to start the day, play time, activity time and day evaluation time and routine activities such as eating and resting time. Specifically, teachers are preparing the activity plans while paying attention to the developmental characteristics, interests and needs of the children by using the "activity plan template" (see Appendix G). They consider different part of the activity plans including learning process (gains and indicators, concepts, type of the activity, materials, learning environment), parent involvement, assessment, adaptation for children who require special needs.

When the program is considered in terms of social skills, there are various gains and indicators which should be reached by children during the learning process in terms of their social and emotional development. The examples of these gains and

indicators related to social skills are “solving problems with others”, “expressing the emotions of others about an event or a situation”, “using the language with the aim of communication”, and “understanding the others’ emotions”. Moreover, it is recommended that teachers support the children’s social and emotional development by implementing different kinds of activities like early literacy activities, music activities, language activities, movement activities in the program (MoNE, 2013).

2.9. Studies about social skills in Early Childhood Education

Here, existing studies conducted in international and national perspective are presented. These are associated with the importance of social skills for the current and later development of children, the importance of the teacher's role and practices on social skills of children, and the importance of the educational program on social skills.

When international studies on supporting social skills were investigated, the researcher found that most are correlational and rarely review studies based on the importance of social skills for children’s development.

King and Boardman investigated the significance of children’ social skills from both parents’ and teachers’ perspectives in 2006. Their study included 16 preschool teachers and 63 preschool parents from government schools in Tasmania. The data were collected via mailed questionnaires and the Kindergarten Development check. The results of this study emphasized the importance of children’s social skills to prepare them for school. Also, there was an inconsistency between the expectations of school and home that impacted children’s social skills negatively.

In 2021, Frogner et al. conducted correlational research with the aim of examining the developmental path of social skills in early childhood, its effect on later school performance and the associated predictors. This longitudinal study involved 2,121 children aged 3-5 in a mid-sized Swedish municipality from the general population. The results of the study indicated that the risk of poor school performance increased with stable low social skills while the chance for good school performance was increased by stable high social skills in primary school.

A review study was conducted in 2021 by Khusnidakhon to provide basic knowledge related to the importance of supporting children’s social skills. According

to the results of this study, social emotional skills consisting of self-management, self-awareness, relationship skills, social awareness, and responsible decision-making assist children to have better performance, better adjustments, and better transition both at school and in their life.

Two longitudinal research studies were found that focused on teachers' effectiveness on supporting children's social skills and the association between teacher-related variables and children's social skills.

A study conducted by Lin as a master thesis investigated teacher effectiveness on improving not only student's academic achievement but also social and emotional skills. The hierarchical linear modeling was used in this early childhood longitudinal study. The sample of the study included 18,174 children from kindergarten through elementary school years. According to the results of this study, teaching characteristics such as teacher expectation, teacher-student relationship and classroom discipline are importantly related to not only academic achievement gains but also social and emotional skill development (2016).

In 2018, Wu et al., conducted another longitudinal study in Guangdong to understand the associations between teacher-child relationships and the social skills of Chinese preschool children. The sample of the study consisted of 59 preschools, 656 children, 59 lead teachers. The children were evaluated three times during the second and third preschool years. During the study, teachers reported on teacher-child relationships and parents rated the social skills of preschool children. The results indicated that there is an association between the social skills development of children and some teacher-related variables including teachers' characteristics, teachers' years of experience, and teacher-child interaction.

Also, there are mostly experimental and intervention studies and rarely descriptive and review studies based on the program and teacher practices on promoting the social skills of children.

A study conducted in Delphi explored social and emotional skills in early childhood instruction with a focus on identifying the methods that preschool teachers use to support the development of empathy and emotion regulation and to identify specific activities used to implement the six most highly rated methods (Breen, 2018).

The findings of this study show that building positive relationships with students, modeling, role play, providing a quiet area, identifying, and labeling feelings and group time are mentioned as effective instructional strategies by teachers to promote empathy and emotion regulation for children (Breen, 2018).

Loukatari et al. performed a study to understand the effect of a structured playfulness program on kindergarten children's social skills during breaktime in the schoolyard in 2019. The sample group of the study consisted of 28 boys and 32 girls aged between 5 and 6. This was an experimental study, and the participants were divided randomly into two groups as the control group and treatment group. The treatment group joined in a four weeks' playful program although the control group did not join in any type of structured activity. Results showed that there was a significant difference between social skills development level of children and their participation in the playful activities program in the schoolyard.

Gobena conducted a descriptive survey research design study in 2020 to assess social skills problems in the early childhood education program in Ethiopia. This study was performed by using a stratified random sampling procedure to gather data from 280 preschool teachers. It was found that the early childhood program was significantly affecting the social skills of children. Moreover, children did not have the competency to cooperate with their classmates when learning social skills and they were unable to solve their social problems during playing. Also, the researcher mentioned the suggestion that for early childhood education quality, the parents, administrators, teachers, non-government, and ministry of education of the country, all stakeholders must improve the program and training of teachers to improve the social skills of children in early childhood education.

Gold (2020) conducted a study with the aim of examining strategies that would aid create a safe learning environment for students such as a place where children could interact appropriately and work together to solve their problems and to reach a solution. The researcher modeled and introduced two solution centers before opening them to use in the classroom. The data was collected by using pre and post intervention behavior checklists, peace table surveys, observational notes, and feelings chart forms. According to the results of this study, the use of solution centers including a peace

table with solution cards and a feelings chart with a wheel of choice allowed students to utilize them and had an advantageous effect on problem-solving with a peer.

Mancha and Ahmad examined how extra-curricular activities influence children's social skills in a review study in 2016. They revealed a relationship between the levels of children's social skills and extracurricular activities. For this reason, they recommended that these kinds of activities should be included in Malaysia's education system.

Gresham published an article based on evidence-based literature on social skills intervention and assessment strategies for children in 2016. The study describes a variety of both conceptual and methodological issues in the interventions of social skills and details regarding specific strategies of social skills assessment. Also, at the end of the study, the discussion based on social skills intervention programs and implication to teach social skills in the school were provided.

Yus et al. presented their study about the models of portfolio-based teaching as an early childhood social emotional skills strategy in the second annual international seminar on transformative education and educational leadership in 2017. The first aim of this study was to develop a portfolio-based teaching model as a social emotional development strategy in early childhood education. The second aim of the study was to examine the feasibility and effectiveness of the portfolio-based teaching model as a strategy for social and emotional development in early childhood. This research started with need analysis, performing model design and revisions depending on advice of experts and teachers. The study included 89 children and 12 preschool teachers as participants and data were collected through observation method with document analysis, checklist instrument and discussion of continued focus group. The results demonstrated that portfolio-based teaching design emphasizing the components of child document preparation and assessment criteria was effective to enhance social emotional skills of children in early childhood.

In terms of national studies, various correlational and experimental studies and limited review and qualitative studies have been undertaken in terms of children's social skills in early childhood education.

In 2014, Gülay Ogelman conducted a descriptive study to review the theses investigating preschool children's social skills in Turkey for the time between 2000 and 2013. The study involved 23 postgraduate theses and 8 doctoral theses written on the social skills of preschool children. According to the results of this descriptive study, postgraduate theses generally used the survey method and doctoral theses focused on the experimental method. Moreover, the researcher recommended that more studies should be carried out with teachers and parents and more review studies should be conducted.

Aside from this review study, there are various national studies based on how social skill acquisition is effective to improve other skills for children. Güzel and Kurtulan (2017) investigated the relationship between cognitive and social skills of children aged 4-7 years old. The sample group included 420 children participating in preschool education and 1st grade of primary school in İstanbul. The "Word reasoning sub-scale of "Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence-III" was utilized to determine the cognitive skills of children. The researchers adapted this for use in Turkey and called it the "Marmara Social and Emotional Adaptation Scale". The results of this quantitative study showed that as the social skill scores of children increase, the cognitive skill scores also increase.

A study conducted by Şahin (2020) examined the problem-solving skills of children in a group based on their social skill levels in early childhood education. This study was conducted with 5-6 years old children who are selected randomly from Bahçelievler district in İstanbul. An explanatory mixed methods design was utilized, and the "Social Skill Scale" was used in the study. Based on the scores of the scale, the children were divided into 3 groups as low, medium, and high. A box of 100 pieces of colorful geometric wooden blocks was given to them and they were asked to solve relevant problems based on the instructions. According to results of this study, it was observed that as the level of social skills increased, the interaction and communication between children and problem-solving skills with the group also increased.

Some researchers have also studied the views of teachers about supporting children's social skills. In 2014, Özyürek and Ceylan performed a study with the purpose of evaluating the views of families and teachers about supporting the social

skills of preschool children. For this purpose, a focus group interview technique was used as one of the qualitative research methods. The working group included seven teachers working in official pre-school education institutions and eight parents having 4-6 years old children in Karabük. The results showed that preschool teachers and parents stated that they have educational needs because the methods that they use are not always effective for developing the social skills of children. Moreover, it was concluded that a comprehensive study is needed to determine their needs in terms of social skills development.

Aksoy (2021) studied a multi-directional evaluation of social skills in preschool from the perspectives of teachers. This study was conducted as a case study design from qualitative research. The sample group consisted of 58 preschool teachers from Tokat. According to the views of teachers, the most required social skills include initiating and maintaining communication and being respectful. Also, the frequency of teachers placing social skills activities in the education process was not sufficient. It was mentioned that the challenges confronted in supporting the social skills of preschool children are mostly included in situations regarding the parents' lack of support at home and their negative attitudes.

Some studies have also investigated the effectiveness of different programs in national literature. Pekdoğan conducted an experimental study with pre-test/post-test and retention test experimental design to investigate the impact of a story-based social skills training program on 5-6 years old children's social skill development in 2016. The experimental group involved 30 children and the control group consisted of 30 children. A story-based social skills training program was applied to the preschool children in the experimental group twice a week for five weeks and a "social skills evaluation scale" was used to collect data. The results of the study indicated that the difference between the scores of the control group and experimental group was significant and this training program was effective.

Kılıç and Güngör-Aytar (2017) examined the effect of social skill training for preschool children on social skill levels. The subjects were 55 preschool children aged 57-66 months in a study carried out with a pretest-posttest control group design. In the experimental group, a social skills training program was applied to children three times

a week for 8 weeks as well as a preschool educational program, while only the preschool educational program was implemented in the control group. The result indicated that the posttest average scores of children participating in the social skills training program were higher than the posttest average scores of the children in the control group.

Ergin and Özkan conducted a semi-experimental study with pretest-posttest control groups to examine the impacts of activities published in TUBITAK Meraklı Minik Magazine on preschool children's social skill levels in 2021. This research involved 40 children and a social skill assessment scale was used to specify the social skill levels of preschool children from Balıkesir. The findings of the research showed that the scores of social scales of children in the experimental group significantly increase as compared with the final scores of children in the control group.

Besides these, a variety of studies were carried out to understand the effect of program-based items on the social skills of children with correlational and intervention studies. In 2010, Çimen and Koçyiğit investigated whether or not the objectives and outcomes regarding teaching social skills in a preschool program for 23 preschool children had an impact on the acquisition of six-years-old children's social skills in Erzurum. The study used a pretest-posttest model without a control group. The results indicated that the activities depending on the objectives and outcomes in terms of the teaching of social skills in the program were influential on social skills acquisition of preschool children.

Regarding the material dimension of the program, Gönen et al. investigated story books published by different publishers for children in the early childhood education period in Turkey in terms of their social skills' level. In this study conducted in 2012, the researcher used a document analyze method and social skills categories were specified based on the categories of Calderalla and Merrell (1997) as an evaluation instrument. The findings of this study of 100 illustrated story books published by 40 different publishing firms for 2-12 years old children mostly focused on skills related to the peer's category however less focused on the skills related to other categories.

In 2017, Yazıcı investigated the effect of an art education program on preschool children's social skills. This experimental study with a pre/post-test control group consisted of 51 children in total. 26 of them were in the experimental group while 25 of them were in the control group. In the experiment group, the researcher applied "Art Education Program" for 40 minutes-one hour in 3 week days for 8 weeks in total. The result showed that the art education program was effective in favor of the experimental group based on the mean scores of the children in not only the experimental group but also the control group regarding their social skills.

In 2018, Kızıltaş and Sak performed a static-group pretest-posttest design to examine how social and emotional skills of children were influenced by integrating field trip activities with others in the preschool program. The sample group of the study consisted of 16 Turkish children between 48-66 months old. The activities were administered in the preschool institutions of Ağrı over twelve weeks during the 2015-2016 school year. The experimental group participated in field trips including activities in the existing program while the control group did not participate in any such interventions. The researchers used "the preschool social skill evaluation scale", "teacher form and the emotional skills evaluation scales" to collect data. The post-test results showed an important positive impact of field-trip activities on children's social and emotional skills in the experimental group. Initially there was no difference in pretest scores between the experimental and control groups.

Ceylan et al. investigated the impacts of drama activities on five-year-old children's social skills in 2019. An experimental design with a pretest/post-test control group was used in the study. The sample group included 32 preschool children from İstanbul. 16 children were randomly selected for the experimental group and 16 for the control group. The "general information form and preschool social skills assessment scale-PSSAS" were used to collect the data. 24 drama activities were applied to the children who attended the experimental group 3 times a week for 8 weeks. A statistically important difference was revealed between the pre-test/post-test total scores pertaining to the social skills of children in the control group and experimental group in favor of the experimental group.

Boz et al. carried out a study with the aim of revealing the effect of social skills games with family participation on the social skills of children in preschool in 2018. This research was an experimental quantitative study with a pretest-posttest control group design. The study sample consisted of 60-72 months old children attending independent kindergartens. A "Demographic information form" was used to obtain information about the child and the parent and "Kindergarten and Kindergarten Scale" was used to determine children's social skill levels. It was found that social skills games with parent participation had a significant effect on the social skills level of children.

2.10. Summary

In this chapter, the literature pertaining to the acquisition of social skills in early childhood education based on different aspects was reviewed. The literature review encompassed studies relevant to social and emotional development, social skills, social skills in Early Childhood Education, the importance of school to improve social skills of children, how social skills can be supported in Early Childhood Education program, approaches to early childhood education focused on the importance of social skills, and the National Early Childhood Education program of Turkey. National and international studies about social skills in early childhood were also included in this section.

When the literature is examined, it is possible to conclude that the present study can contribute to the field of program-based and qualitative studies by focusing on all dimensions of the early childhood education program such as gains and indicators, materials, learning environment, learning process, parent involvement and assessment by asking teacher's views and experiences about supporting social skills. Additionally, this study uses various theories along with the findings and recommendations of previous research studies and widely accepted program approaches related to social skills. The current study collected different types of data from samples by using two different instruments to determine how the development of children's social skills is supported in the MoNE Preschool Education Program of Turkey by preschool teachers.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In this chapter, research questions, the design of this study, participants and research context, instrumentation, data collection procedure, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study including validity and reliability, the ethical consideration and limitations will be described.

3.1. Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the views and experiences of preschool teachers based on the MoNE preschool education program to support children's five social skills including communication, empathy, social problem solving, sharing, and helping. In keeping with its purpose, this study made an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the views of preschool teachers about MoNE Preschool Education Program in terms of supporting children's social skills?

2. What are the self-reported practices of preschool teachers based on MoNE Preschool Education Program to support children's social skills?

3. What is the content of social skills activities in the educational plans of preschool teachers?

4. Are the self-reported practices of preschool teachers related to MoNE Preschool Education Program to support children's social skills compatible with the content of their plans?

3.2. The Design of the Study

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) expressed about qualitative research that "it is interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is, how people

make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world." (p. 15). Considered this definition, the researcher carried out qualitative phenomenological research in this current study to investigate the views and experiences of preschool teachers about supporting social skills of children in the scope of the educational program. In a phenomenological research design that is one of the qualitative research types (Creswell, 2007; Fraenkel et al., 2012), the researcher explains how people experience a phenomenon, how they describe it, perceive it, judge it, feel about it, make sense of it, remember it, and talk about it with others (Patton 2015).

In qualitative research, the relevant information can be obtained by using interviews, field notes or recordings by the researcher, so this makes the world more noticeable and observable (Creswell, 2007). Even though data collection tools are often interviews in phenomenological studies, documents, observations, and art may also be used (Maustakas, 1944, as cited in Creswell, 2007). Therefore, for this study, the experiences of preschool teachers in terms of supporting the social skills of children were examined through the application of semi-structured interviews and analysis of teachers' educational plans and associated documentation. In the first stage, semi-structured interview process was utilized to examine how participants express their program-based experiences about supporting the development of children's social skills. After that, the researcher investigated teachers' educational plans in order to reveal more detailed information, support the interview data and understand how participants experienced social skills activities including activity process, parent involvement and the assessment aspects in their plans.

3.3. Participants and Research Context

3.3.1. Participants

Saldana (2011) stated that a minimum of one to twenty participants is needed to make certain more credible and trustworthy findings for the interview in qualitative studies. Moreover, Patton (2015) mentioned abouut saturation sampling which permits the researchers to investigate the data and maintain to add new samples until there is no different data. Therefore, the researcher took into account both the needed number

of participants and saturation sampling for this current study. After data collection started, the researcher continued to interview teachers until the researcher realized that there was no new data after 13 participants and completed the interview process. The demographic information of the 13 participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 *Demographic Information of the Participants*

Participants	Age	Gender	Years of Experience	Age group	District of Ankara
P1	32	Female	9	6 years	Yenimahalle
P2	32	Female	10	5 years	Etimesgut
P3	41	Female	20	5-6 years	Sincan
P4	28	Female	6	5 years	Sincan
P5	36	Female	12	5 years	Etimesgut
P6	43	Female	20	5 years	Altındağ
P7	38	Female	16	5-6 years	Çankaya
P8	44	Female	23	5 years	Yenimahalle
P9	45	Female	22	5 years	Çankaya
P10	31	Female	8	5 years	Altındağ
P11	44	Female	20	5-6 years	Sincan
P12	35	Female	12	5 years	Elmadağ
P13	40	Female	17	5-6 years	Gölbaşı

Creswell (2015) explained that if the intention is not to generalize to a population in qualitative research, rather, to promote a deep understanding of a central phenomenon and to have useful information about a topic, the researcher chooses participants and sites in a purposeful or intentional way to be able to best explore this phenomenon. Hence, the participants were selected with the help of purposeful sampling. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that the researcher wants to best understand the central phenomenon which is supporting social skills in the program. Secondly, the researcher wishes to be able to access useful information and

different experiences about this phenomenon from participants and to share this knowledge and experiences with other pre-service and in-service teachers.

At this stage the researcher drafted some criteria for the selection of participants: (1) all participants should enthusiastically volunteer to participate in the current study; (2) all participants should have employment and educate 5-6 years old children in public preschools, under the supervision of Ministry of National Education, from different districts of Ankara province; (3) all participants should share their educational plans to be able to investigate the content of these documents; (4) all participants should hold a bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education; (5) all participants should have at least 5 and at most 25 years of teaching experience in the preschool.

There were some reasons to use these criteria while selecting the participants in this study. The first reason is that the researcher's intent is to reach different experiences and views, that is why in-service teachers were selected from different districts of Ankara including Etimesgut, Çankaya, Yenimahalle, Sincan, Altındağ, Elmadağ and Gölbaşı. Secondly, teachers from public preschools were selected for the current study because teachers from private schools are hesitant to share their activity plans due to the policies of private schools. Another criterion is that the researcher decided to focus the study on teachers educating 5-6 years old children. The reason for this is that the social and emotional developmental characteristics of 60-72 months old children are more developed compared to younger children (MoNE, 2013). Moreover, the researcher selected those participants who had completed a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. The reasoning being that pre-service preschool teachers who attend a teacher education program given by early childhood education departments are required to undertake a compulsory "Program Course". In this course, teacher candidates learn how to plan program-based activities in line with the expectations of the national early childhood education programs (Council of Higher Education, 2018). That is why the researcher wanted to conduct the study with the participants who know the expectations of current MoNE preschool education program and plan their education activities based on these expectations for young children.

Finally, the researcher wanted to include teachers who have at least 5 and at most 25 years of teaching experience because a study conducted about teachers' productivity by Tedmem in 2014 stated that the average productivity of teachers whose tenure is between 11 and 15 years is higher than the average of teachers whose tenure is between 1 and 5 and more than 25 years.

3.3.2. Research Context

The current phenomenological study was undertaken with 13 preschool teachers from public preschools in Etimesgut, Çankaya, Yenimahalle, Sincan, Altındağ, Elmadağ and Gölbaşı districts of Ankara. All the participating preschools are subject to the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). Only one teacher from each school participated in the study in order to minimize the impact of teachers on each other. Nine of these schools were kindergartens attached to primary schools, and four were independent preschools. The kindergartens attached to the primary schools only cater for 57-68 months old children while independent preschools cater for children between the age of 3 and 6 years old (National Education Statistics, 2020/'21). Moreover, all the preschool teachers participating into this study have to plan their educational activities according to the requirements of the MoNE Preschool Education Program of Turkey.

Both dimensions of the study, the interview and document analysis of teacher's activity plans over the period of the first semester, were applied to all participants. All interviews, as preferred by participants, were conducted online using the video conferencing platform called Zoom. All participants were interviewed when they were at home, outside of working hours. Thus, teachers did not have any time constraints and did not have to think and manage the education process of children during the interview. This allowed them to freely answer interview questions. Thereafter, the researcher investigated the content of each participant's first-term activity plans after the participants had completed them and sent a copy to the researcher via e-mail. In this study, a total of 2,652 activity plans, 1,222 daily plan, and 65 monthly plans were examined by the researcher.

3.4. Instrumentation

There are three main data collection sources which are interviews, observations and documents or artifacts for qualitative research study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In this study, the semi-structured interview was used with the aim of hearing firsthand and understanding the program-based views and self-reported practices of teachers regarding the promotion of children's social skills. The semi-structured interview is one of the most commonly used methods in qualitative inquiry (Saldana & Omasta, 2018) and especially in phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2007) as it offers some useful advantages. The first advantage is that interviews enable us to provide information about the attitudes, values, perspectives, feelings, and opinions of individuals or what they think about what they experience (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Saldana, 2011). Secondly, the researcher can carefully focus on not only the answers of participants but also other indicators such as body language and vocal tone through analyzing interviews (Saldana & Omasta, 2018).

From another perspective, according to Patton (2015), for qualitative research studies, although interview can be regarded as one of the most useful data collection methods, it is mentioned an irrefutable fact about this method. People can be selective while sharing their ideas and experiences instead of explaining their ideas with all details in the interviews (Patton, 2015). To overcome such prejudice, together with interview, data collection from documents was utilized to analyze the contents of activity plans of teachers related to their experiences on supporting social skills of children. According to Merriam (2018), document analysis, is considered as considerably consistent and documentary data, is more objective compared to other data source formats. Also, documents are real-world based because they are products of the context in which they were created (Merriam, 2018). Moreover, the products created by people also reflect their values, attitudes, and experiences because humans write things which transfer their thoughts and ways of thinking onto paper or digital formats (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). Given these benefits, the researcher deployed the document analysis method to analyze the activity plans of teachers with the aim of reaching objective knowledge. Using this data collection method enabled the researcher to supply additional descriptions and numerous examples of social skills

activities that might not have been shared in the interviews alone. In this way the researcher could enrich the findings of the semi-structured interview protocol and compare them with the self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their plans about the phenomenon.

Research questions of this study and the sources for data collection used to answer them are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 *Research Questions and Data Sources*

Research Questions	Data Sources
What are the views of preschool teachers about MoNE Preschool Education Program in terms of supporting children's social skills?	Interview
What are the self-reported practices of preschool teachers based on MoNE Preschool Education Program to support children's social skills?	Interview
What is the content of social skills activities in the educational plans of preschool teachers?	Document analysis
Are the self-reported practices of preschool teachers related to MoNE Preschool Education Program to support children's social skills compatible with the content of their plans?	Interview Document analysis

3.4.1. Semi-structured interview protocol

For this current study, a semi-structured interview protocol was used (see Appendix C) which contains a series of questions designed to elicit specific answers from respondents (Merriam, 2018). While preparing the semi-structured interview protocol, the researcher first sought to categorize the social skills that are thought necessary to be promoted in early childhood education by scanning the body of literature. However, there are many aspects to social skills and all of them cannot be considered when undertaking a research study (Smogorzewska & Grzegorz, 2017). Furthermore, it was seen that the categories and sub-categories of social skills are

explained in different ways (Caldarella & Merrell 1997; Goldstein et al., 1980; Gresham & Elliott 1990; Ömeroğlu et al., 2014). For this reason, the researcher approached 12 preschool teachers who are working in public and private preschools in Turkey to shape the content of the study. These teachers shared their opinions about the most important social skills for preschoolers to learn. The results of this consultation were then shared with a researcher who has completed several studies on social and emotional development. This expert confirmed the relevant social skills mentioned by the teachers in the preliminary fact-finding activity. The frequency of social skills they were mentioned as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 *Social Skills and Frequency*

Social Skills	The Frequency
Communicating	9
Empathy	6
Social problem solving	6
Sharing	5
Helping	5
Obeying the social rules	3
Having self confidence	3
Understanding own feelings	2
Protecting herself/himself	2
Comprehending the rules during play	2
Cooperation in the group	2
Being able to manage the play	2
Self-management	2
Being respectful for the others' opinions	1
Adaptability to the environment	1

The first five skills most pronounced by preschool teachers and the social skills most frequently mentioned in the literature were compatible with each other. For this reason, the researcher decided to study the five skills of communicating, empathy, social problem solving, sharing, and helping skills in preschool children.

After selecting specific social skills for the study, the researcher prepared the semi-structured interview questions for the interview protocol. In the process of creating a semi-structured interview protocol, the researcher benefited from both literature review related to social skills (Atmaca et al., 2020; Cook, et al., 2008; Church, 2015; Conroy et al., 2014; Elliot & Busse, 1991; Fieldman & Eidelman, 2009; Gobena, 2020; Kennedy, 2010; Ömeroğlu et al., 2014; Öneren-Şendil & Tantekin-Erden, 2012) and the content of different early childhood education approaches including Reggio Emilia, Montessori, High/Scope, Waldorf, Primary Years Program, Creative Program, and MoNE Program of Turkey (Cadwell, 1997; High/Scope, 2013; International Baccalaureate Organization, 2018; Isaacs, 2015; Lang, 2002; MoNE, 2013; Teaching Strategies, 2020). The information so obtained was used to structure the nature of the phenomenon and to determine program-based items that would be discussed during the interview, such as the learning process, parent involvement, assessment, materials, and the learning environment. After scanning the related literature and programs in early childhood education, 15 interview questions were created in Turkish.

Thereafter, the researcher obtained expert opinions to validate the questions and discover any amendments thought necessary. Three experts shared their ideas to evaluate the understandability and appropriateness of interview questions. One of the experts is an early childhood practitioner in a preschool and the others are members of early childhood education department in a public university. Following their feedback, one more question was included, and the structure of some sentences was edited for the interview questions.

In the next step, a pilot study was conducted with the intent to gain opinions on the effectiveness and appropriateness of testing the interview questions. Merriam and Grenier (2018) stated the importance of pilot study as “the key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions and asking good questions is based on

practice. Pilot interviews are crucial for trying out your questions. Not only do you get some practice in interviewing, but you also quickly learn which questions are confusing and need rewording, which questions yield useless data, and which questions, suggested by your respondents, you should have thought to include in the first place." (p. 117). For this reason, the researcher decided to test the clarity of the interview questions. The pilot study was implemented with 6 preschool teachers based on their availability. Following the pilot study, one question was excluded from the interview protocol because it did not yield useful data, and the structures of two questions were revised to make them more understandable.

The final semi-structured interview protocol contained 15 questions in three parts including some demographic information about the participants, teachers' views about the program in terms of supporting children's social skills, and their self-reported practices about planning, performing, and assessing social skills activities in class. The distribution of the semi-structured interview questions can be observed in table 4.

Table 4 *Distribution of semi-structured interview questions*

Sections	Questions
Demographic information	6 questions
Teachers' views about MoNE Preschool Education Program in terms of supporting social skills	2 questions (1 to 2)
Teachers' self-reported practices based on planning and the interval of social skills activities	2 questions (3 to 4)
Teachers' self-reported practices based on the learning process of social skills activities	3 questions (5 to 7)
Teachers' self-reported practices about parent involvement and assessment processes related to social skills activities	2 questions (8 to 9)

As seen in table 4, the interview begins with 6 questions related to demographic information comprising age, gender, years of teaching experience, age group, type of school and in which district of Ankara it is located. The aim was to ensure that the demography of the participants was balanced in terms of their background, experience, and current activities.

With the help of the first two questions, the researcher wanted to learn teachers' views about the importance, sufficiency, and requirement of the program on supporting the social skills of children. The purpose of the following two questions is to understand the experiences of teachers about planning and the interval of social skills activities. With the next three questions, the researcher intended to learn the experiences of teachers about learning process of social skills activities depending on materials and the learning environment, what social skills they support and how do they do so in the scope of the program. Questions related to parent involvement part involved teachers' experiences about the parent involvement process regarding social skills activities. Also, questions related to assessment included teachers' experiences about the assessment process they used for social skills activities. Table 5 contains sample questions for each section for the interview protocol.

Table 5 *Sample questions for semi-structured interview protocol*

Sections of Interview	Example of interview questions
Demographic information	What is your age? How many years of teaching experience do you have? In which district of Ankara do you work?
Teacher's views about the program regarding supporting social skills	What do you think about the importance of early childhood education program on supporting social skills?
Teachers' self-reported practices for planning and the interval of social skills activities	When preparing an activity plan on social skills, which factors do you pay attention related to program? How often do you conduct social skills activities?

Table 5 *Sample questions for semi-structured interview protocol cont'd*

Teachers' self-reported practices based on the learning process of social skills activities	What kind of materials do you use for social skills activities?
Teachers' self-reported practices about parent involvement process related to social skills activities	What kind of parent involvement activities do you implement to support social skills of children?
Teachers' self-reported practices about assessment process related to social skills activities	How do you assess the social skills of the children?

3.4.2. Document Analysis protocol

While interviewing is the main source of data collection strategy designed to gather data, documents are also valid sources of data in qualitative research studies (Saldana, 2011). Documents are most typically a natural part of the research setting and don't intrude upon or change the setting in the ways that the presence of the investigator might when implementing interviews or observations. Moreover, documents are easily accessible and contain information which would take an investigator enormous time and effort to gather otherwise (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For these reasons, the researcher created a codebook for document analysis to investigate the preschool teacher's educational plans related to supporting social skills following the semi-structured interview.

Document analysis yields data that are organized into major themes, categories, and case examples specifically through content analysis (Labuschagne, 2003). Mayring (2014) described the main features of categories as such coming from theory, previous studies, defining clearly, covering every aspect of the research topic, focusing on specific areas and being accurate and comprehensive. For this reason, the researcher separated the codebook into 4 categories which are general information about the selected activity, learning process, parent involvement, and assessment processes. These categories were included into both the interview questions and the document analysis codebook for this study. Due to the fact that the researcher investigated the

same research phenomenon, the content of these two data collection tools is related to each other. Therefore, these tools supported the results of each other. Similar to the semi-structured interview protocol, the researcher benefited from both literature review and the content of different early childhood education approaches while creating the categories and codes that took part in the document analysis protocol.

In the next step, the document analysis codebook was evaluated by experts for their opinions in terms of clarity, appropriateness, and the reliability of this instrument. After expert opinions were obtained, some words were revised in the codebook based on the nature of the data collection procedure that would be used in the study. For instance, the code for *selecting the concepts and words related to social skills activity* was changed to *planning the concepts and words related to social skills activity* because the researcher sought to investigate the plans of teachers rather than observing the activities in the procedure.

After this step, the document analysis codebook was piloted with 6 teachers mentioned in the semi-structured interview pilot study in order to gain their opinions on the effectuality, applicability, and appropriateness of the instrument. Following the administration of the pilot study, the codebook was rearranged while excluding one code from the category of activity process and combining three codes into one code in the assessment category. Also, some additional sub-codes were included. For instance, under the code for which activity type/s focused on social skills activity, the sub codes based on numerous activity types like drama, movement, music, science, and math were included in the codebook to be more applicable during the activity plan investigation process. After administering the interview protocol in the main study, the codes of the document analysis codebook were revised again. For instance, three codes from the category of activity process were excluded from the codebook based on the categories and codes emerging from the transcripts of the participants in the interview. In this context, according to Bowen (2009), predetermined codes can be used, especially if the document analysis is supplementary to other research methods conducted in the study. For instance, the codes used in interview transcripts may be applied to the content of documents (Bowen, 2009).

The final version of document analysis codebook can be observed in Appendix D and Table 6 presents sample codes for each category of the document analysis protocol.

Table 6 *The sample categories and codes for document analysis protocol*

Categories	Sample codes
General information about the selected activity	The number of social skills activities The pseudonyms of the social skills activity (P1.3, P5.7, …)
Learning process	Activity type/s focused on social skills activity (Drama, science, movement, …) Planning gains and indicators in accordance with the social skills (yes, no) Planning about which materials to be used in relation to the social skills activities (language activities, math activities, music activities, …)
Parent Involvement	Methods used to create school-family cooperation in the process of supporting social skills (educating parents about child development and parenting in terms of social skills, providing for families to enrich the learning process at home in terms of social skills, no parent involvement activity, …)
Assessment	Methods used for the assessment of social skills (making observations, children's self-assessment, no assessment process, …)

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher collected data for the current study by carrying out one interview with each participant and then investigating each participant's activity plans recorded over the period of one semester. Ethical permission was obtained by the researcher from the Research Center for Applied Ethics of a public university (see Appendix I). Thereafter, both the semi-structured interview questions and document

analysis codebook were tested in the pilot study. After rearranging the semi-structured interview protocol and document analysis codebook based on the pilot study, the researcher obtained permission from MoNE to implement the main study with preschool teachers working in public preschools in Ankara (see Appendix J). Thereafter, participants were invited to participate in this study with the help of invitation text (see Appendix A). To be able to reach the participants, the researcher contacted the manager of public preschools via telephone and e-mail in Ankara province. The managers announced the study to their teachers and ask them to respond to the researcher if they wished to volunteer as a participant. In this way, the volunteer participants were included in both the interview and document analysis procedure of the study.

The study was implemented in two phases, firstly interviews were conducted with 13 preschool teachers using the Zoom online platform. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained the aim and details of the research study. Then, the consent form (see Appendix B) was presented to each participant with a link created by google form for both being able to implement the study and to record the interview process. After each participant completed the consent form, the researcher also informed them about their privacy protection throughout the study. After taking permission to record the interview, the researcher began recording the interview to prevent spending time noting down teacher's responses and to include all knowledge in the study without losing data (Yıldırım & Şimsek, 2005). According to Saldana and Omasta (2018) whenever possible, it is advisable to record interviews so there is a tangible record of the discussion that researchers can refer back to in case they have questions about what was said. Moreover, before the interviews, the researcher tested all needed equipment and internet connections because Saldana and Omasta (2018) strongly advise that interviewers should test all equipment or Internet connections before the interview to ensure a successful recording. With all these necessary steps kept in mind, the interview protocol was conducted in November and December 2021. During the interviews, the researcher asked the same questions in the same order to each participant. Each interview lasted between 25 and 30 minutes.

After carrying out the interviews, in the second part of the study, the researcher requested the same teachers share their education plans for the first semester of the 2021-2022 academic year including the months of September, October, November, December, January. These plans were written records pertaining to the activities they undertook in class including activity process, parent involvement and the assessment components that teachers planned to implement in their early childhood education class. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), document is often used as an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study. Teachers shared their documentation via e-mail with the researcher in January of 2022, at the end of the first semester.

Once all the study data had been assembled, the researcher started to select the activities related to the five social skills from all activities (n of activities= 2652) in teachers' plans. While selecting these, the researcher used three inclusion criteria which are (1) social skills-based word or words taking place anywhere in the activity process, parent involvement and assessment parts; and/or (2) social skills-based gains and indicators taking place in the gains and indicators part; and/or (3) use of a social skills-based word or concept taking place in the word and concept part. For example, "sharing" or "share" was considered as a social skill-based word. Inclusion criteria are a set of predefined characteristics to include contents in a study and should respond to the scientific objective of the study and are critical to accomplish it (Velasco, 2010). These selected activities (n of activities=384) were examined by using a document analysis codebook prepared by the researcher. This codebook includes one category depending on the general information about the activity and three categories based on the program consisting of learning process, parent involvement and assessment. Therefore, all the content of the documents was investigated in relation to these categories.

3.6. Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the interview data through conventional content analysis to interpret the meaning from the content of text data. Conventional content analysis is used with a research study design whose purpose is to explain a

phenomenon (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Thus, conventional content analysis was conducted in the scope of this study because it was implemented with the design of phenomenological study and tried to describe a phenomenon which is supporting social skills. While analysing the content of interview data, Creswell's (2007) data analysis descriptions for interview protocol were implemented. Firstly, interview transcripts were prepared and significant statements including sentences or quotes were highlighted by the researcher. In this way, the researcher could understand how the participants experienced and thought about the phenomenon. Secondly, these significant statements were classified into categories by using codes and shortening the codes. Finally, the researcher presented the data by using figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell, 2007). All these steps were utilized from the perspectives of two different coders at different places. Then, these two researchers came together to discuss their perspectives based on the transcripts, categories, codes, and tables.

For the second part of the study, teachers' activity plans were analyzed by using a document analysis codebook. During the examination process, firstly the researcher selected and separated the activities about five social skills which are communication, empathy, social problem solving, sharing, and helping from all activities shared by all participants. Then, these selected activities were analyzed one by one according to the categories and codes in the document analysis codebook. For example, the researcher interpreted one activity based on the code of "selecting gains and indicators in accordance with the social skills" and this code was evaluated with the "yes" rather than "no" sub code for this activity. Another example is that the researcher evaluated the activity in terms of "which activity type/s focused on social skills activity" and this code was noted as "Drama" and "Science" sub codes for this activity. All activities were investigated alternately in this way.

After investigating all activities, content analysis of descriptive statistical procedures was undertaken to analyze the data obtained from activity plans. This is because the findings of this study were aimed to be presented as frequencies and percentages of totals. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), results can be finalized and presented through the use of frequencies or proportions of the certain data in recognition of whole data in content analysis studies. Hence, the data was analyzed by

using Microsoft Excel from the version of 2021. All the results of documents were recorded in Excel and reported through frequencies and proportions. The type of social skills, learning process, parent involvement and assessment were presented as the essential categories while reporting the results. In the current study, the researcher preferred to use categories and codes as they assist the researcher while organizing content and arriving at a narrative description of findings (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

To conclude, the practical aim of data analysis is to find answers to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The researcher tried to answer the research questions with the help of these two data analysis processes. The researcher answered the first and second research questions through the interview data analysis process and the third research question was answered by using the document analysis process. Finally, the researcher answered the last research question by comparing the consequences gained from data analysis process of both interview and document analysis to interpret the consistency between teacher's self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of supporting children's five social skills.

3.7. The trustworthiness of the Study

The validity and reliability of data are very significant for trustworthiness of the study in qualitative studies (Fraenkel, et al., 2012). For this reason, in this section the validity and reliability of the current study will be reported.

3.7.1. Validity

Validation in qualitative research is an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings, as best described by the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Some validation strategies were suggested to protect and document the accuracy of the study. Creswell (2007) mentions that triangulation, prolonged engagement, clarifying researcher bias, peer review, rich and thick description, member checking, and external audits are useful methods be able to establish the validity of the studies. Also, it is recommended by him that at least two of these strategies should be used to protect the validity of qualitative studies. Based on this suggestion, to document the accuracy of this current study, several validation strategies were applied.

Firstly, this study was executed with *triangulation* of data collection methods by using semi-structured interviews and document analysis because the researcher focused on strengthening and enriching the data of the study. Using more than one method of data collection (triangulation) including interviews, observation or document analysis is encouraged because it is significant to check the correctness and ensure validity of the data and that they can empower each other (Frankel et al., 2012; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Moreover, according to Patton (2015), triangulation is useful for not only providing various ways of interpreting the same phenomenon, but also adding to credibility by reinforcing confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn. Through triangulation, the researcher could gain information from multiple data collection sources with multiple methods of data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) to shed light on the phenomenon of this study which is supporting social skills through program. Moreover, analyzing the documents after the interview protocol enabled the researcher to acquire supportive evidence as to whether teachers plan their educational activities in parallel with their self-reported practices with regard to supporting social skills or not. Furthermore, the researcher could attain numerous activity examples related to social skills with the help of document analysis instead of being content with the activity examples mentioned by the teachers in their interviews alone.

The second common strategy which is called *member checks* or *respondent validation* was used to ensure the internal validity of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this strategy, the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account (Creswell, 2012). The researcher implemented member checks as a way of confirming the results and answers of participants. To secure respondent validation, the researcher sent back the transcribed version of the data and summary of the findings to one participant through e-mail and asked her if she did not concur with any perspective or answer. This participant confirmed her answers and the summary of findings accurately. In this way, the researcher could eliminate any misunderstanding and misinterpreting responses from the interview protocol.

From another perspective, according to Bowen (2009), the researcher should specify the relevance of documents to the research problems and purpose. Also, the researcher must ascertain whether the content of the documents fits the conceptual framework of the study (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, it is an essential requirement to determine the credibility, accuracy, and representativeness of the selected documents (Bowen, 2009). To increase external and internal validity of the study, the researcher used several *inclusion criteria* while selecting the activities regarding social skills among all activity plans for one semester of preschool teachers. According to Velasco (2012), appropriate selection of inclusion criteria will optimize the internal and external validity, minimize ethical concerns, and improve the feasibility of the study.

In addition, the researcher collected *expert opinions* from 3 experts in the early childhood education field to ensure the internal validity of the data collection sources which are semi-structured interview and document analysis codebook. After that, the pilot study was carried out with 6 participants. With the help of expert opinions and the pilot study, the researcher could revise and rearrange the interview questions and the content of the document analysis codebook.

3.7.2. Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of the scores obtained, based on how consistent they are for each individual from one administration of an instrument to another and from one set of items to another (Fraenkel et al., 2012). In addition, Creswell (2007) expressed that in qualitative research, "reliability" often refers to the stability of responses to multiple coders of a data set. Accordingly, he mentioned intercoder agreement when using multiple coders to analyze transcript data reliably.

This issue was taken into account to ensure the reliability of the current study. A second coder, different from the researcher, participated in both the coding process of the interview and document analysis process using a codebook independently. The second coder is a research assistant who is studying for a postgraduate degree at a public university. The reliability was evaluated by a subsample chosen from among all samples of main study with the help of random sampling. O'Connor and Joffe (2020) offered that based on the size of the data set, 10-25% of data units would be

ideal to be multiply coded, and it is critical to select the subsample randomly to assure the representativeness of the entire data set. According to this percentage, 2 of 13 participants for the interview and 62 of 384 social skills activities for document analysis were selected randomly for analysis by the second coder.

In the first section of the study, when the coders finished the coding process for the interview, they controlled to see if the same codes were assigned to the same situations. The percentage of agreement was calculated as 94% for the interview. Secondly, the researcher and the second coder analyzed the subsample of activity plans without knowing the assessment of each other. After the activities related to social skills were examined by two coders, they came together and determined the similarities and differences of their opinions on which activities with which codes. They discussed together to agree on these disagreeable activities. The final percentage of agreement was estimated as 93% for the document analysis. According to Miles et al. (2014), intercoder agreement should be within the 85% to 90% range, depending on the size and range of the coding scheme. Moreover, coefficients .90 or greater are considered highly reliable, and .80 or greater may be acceptable in most studies (Cho, 2011). Considering this range and percentages, the reliability of this study depending on both interview and document analysis was considerably assured.

3.8. The Ethical Consideration

The researcher took permission from the Ethical Board of a public university in Ankara numbered 249-ODTU-2021 to be able to carry out both the pilot study and the main study. After this step, permission from MoNE was taken by sending the ministry a form about the content of the research. After all permissions had been obtained, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to participants while inviting them to the study. If they agreed to participate in the study, the researcher sent a consent form with a link to the preschool teachers. In the consent form, it was stated that the answers of the participants will be kept completely confidential and will only be evaluated by the researchers. Also, it was mentioned that participants would be able to leave the study by informing the researcher if they changed their minds. After the

participants agreed to participate in the study, the researcher started to collect data from them.

3.9. Limitations

The researcher identified a number of limitations that should be considered regarding the interpretation of the results of the study. Firstly, this study was carried out only with the data collected by interview and document analysis to interpret the phenomenon of supporting children's social skills. Using observation as a different data collection tool could have enriched the data of this study.

The second issue is that the researcher included only activity plans for one semester for each participant in the current study rather than investigating all of them over the year. The reason for this situation is that teachers in early childhood education do not write all their activity plans at the beginning of the year. Instead, they tend to plan on a monthly cycle as suggested in the MoNE Preschool Education Program (MoNE, 2013). The researcher collected data at the end of the first semester and only the activity plans for one semester were available.

The program of Turkey is comprised of four main components which are the learning process, parent involvement, assessment, and adaptation. The present study addressed the learning process, parent involvement and assessment but not adaptation because there is no data related to it in both the interview part and teachers' activity plans. The reason for this is thought to be that there are no special needs children in the teachers' classes.

Another limitation is that this study consisted of only female participants because of the high number of female teachers in early childhood education, although this is not intended. According to National Education Statistics (2020/'21), while the number of female teachers working in preschool education institutions is 3.782, the number of male teachers is only 138 across Ankara province. This is thought to be the reason why all of the volunteer teachers are female in this study.

3.10. Summary

The methodology of the current study was reported in this chapter. At the beginning of the chapter, research questions were presented and then information about the design of the study was given. In addition, the participants and research context of the study were explained. Instruments to be used in the study, the semi-structured interview and document analysis were then presented by the researcher. Moreover, details about the data collection procedure and data analysis of this research study were set out. Detailed information about the arrangements put in place to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and its validity and reliability was presented followed by ethical considerations and explanations for some limitations were set out.

The following chapter involves the findings of the study. The findings are presented based on research questions through tables and figures to clarify the results.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This phenomenological study aimed to investigate the views and experiences of in-service preschool teachers regarding promoting children's social skills involving communication, empathy, social problem solving, sharing, and helping through MoNE Preschool Education program. In the first section of this chapter, the researcher will present the participants' demographic information. Secondly, the findings obtained with the semi-structured interview will be organized by using themes, categories, codes, and sub codes. The codes and sub codes will be presented under the related categories that were created while coding data. This will be followed by the data obtained with document analysis, and these will be introduced through tables and figures including frequencies and percentages of categories, codes, and sub codes. Later on, the researcher will present the data related to the comparison of two data types through tables.

The findings of these two data analysis processes will be presented respectively to be able to answer the research questions. The interview data will be reported under the first two research questions while the document analysis data will be introduced under the third research question. Lastly, the fourth research question will be presented by combining and comparing the data from both the interview and the document analysis. Additionally, the researcher will use the transcripts from the interview protocol and the written activity plans from the document analysis in order to illustrate the connection of the data with the categories and codes. Findings order summary is presented in Figure 1.

Findings based on the views of preschool teachers about supporting schildren's social skills in the scope of MoNE Early Childhood Education program

- The views of teachers about the importance of program to support children's social skills
- The views of teachers about the interval of social skills activities

Findings based on self-reported practices of preschool teachers about supporting children's social skills in the program

- Planning social skills activities
- The interval of social skills activities
- Using different activity types to support different types of social skills
- Using different types of materials to support children's social skills
- Organization of learning environment to support children's social skillsd
- Parent involvement processes to support children's social skills
- Assessments processes to support children's social skills

Findings based on the analyzing the content of teachers' education plans regarding supporting children's social skills

- General information about social skills activities
- Types of social skills
- Interval of social skills activities
- Gains and indicators selected in the social skills activities
- Words and concepts selected in the social skills activities
- Types of materials planned to use in the social skills activities
- Types of activities planned to use in the social skills activities
- The organization of learning environment for social skills activities
- Instructional approach (child-centered/teacher-centered) in social skills activities
- Types of parent involvement planned to use in the social skills activities
- Types of assessment planned to use in the social skills activities

Findings based on the comparison of self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their education plans

- Types of social skills
- The interval of social skills activities
- Gains and indicators
- Words and concepts
- The types of materials
- Organization of learning environment
- The types of activities
- Instructional approach (child-centered/teacher-centered)
- The types of parent involvement
- The types of assessment

Figure 1 *Findings Order Summary*

4.1. Demographic Information of the Participants

The researcher used pseudonyms like P1, P5, P13 as opposed to real names to conceal participants' real identity. Also, the activity plans shared by the participants were anonymously ascribed titles such as P1.1, P3.8, P10.12. The data were collected from 13 in-service preschool teachers working with 5- and 6-years old children in public preschools in different districts of Ankara, Turkey. The demographic data about the in-service preschool teachers were collected prior to the interview protocol.

According to the data, the participants' age range was between 28 and 45. All participants had a bachelor's degree from the department of early childhood education. One participant was continuing her master's level education in the early childhood education department of a public university, and another had completed her master's degree in the department of elementary and early childhood education of a public university. The participants' years of experience ranged between 6 and 23 years although most specified their years of experience as above 10 years.

4.2. The views of preschool teachers about MoNE Preschool Education Program in terms of supporting children's social skills

The answers of the participants to the first research question fell under the two themes of "*teachers' views related to the importance of the program in supporting the social skills of children*" and *"teachers' views on the requirement of including social skills activities systematically in their education plans".* The answers of teachers related to these themes will be explained respectively by dividing them into categories and codes to make the meaning clear.

4.2.1. The views of teachers about the importance of the program in supporting social skills

At the beginning of the interview, the participants were asked to share their opinions regarding the importance of the program in promoting the social skills of preschool children. The views of the teachers were divided into two categories, which were *"the program is important and sufficient"* and *"the program is important and but not sufficient".* The researcher analyzed the views of teachers by using codes

related to these two categories. Table 7 represents the categories and codes associated with the teachers' views on the mentioned issue.

Table 7 *The views of teachers about the significance of the MoNE Preschool Education Program in supporting preschool children's social skills*

Theme	Categories	Codes	Sub-codes	Participants
The significance of the program on supporting social skills of preschool children	Early childhood education program is important and sufficient (N=10)	The content of the program	Daily educational flow Gains and indicators Concepts	P1, P3, P4, P6, P10, P12
		The features of the program	Child-centeredness Flexibility Cyclical	P2, P8, P9, P12
		The qualification of the program		P9, P13
	Early childhood program is important but not sufficient (N=5)	Insufficiency in terms of gains and indicators based on social skills		P1, P5, P13
		Insufficiency of the program's content regarding social skills		P7
		Lack of support for social skills activities by stakeholders		P11

4.2.1.1. The program is important and sufficient

Most of the participants (N=10) expressed the opinion that the program is very important and sufficient in promoting the social skills of children. Specifically, as presented in table 7, preschool teachers emphasized the importance of the content, features, and qualifications of the program regarding this mentioned issue.

4.2.1.1.1. The content of the program

Six of thirteen participants mentioned that *"daily educational flow", "gains and indicators",* and *"the concepts*" are important related to the content of the program to support the social skills of children. Four of them emphasized that through daily educational flow including activity time, play time, and evaluation time for the day, children can get acquainted with skills and learn to become individuals by socializing. As an example, P6 stated her opinion about *activity time* as follows:

> As we know, the communication problems of today are many. We live in a time when we lack empathy, sharing, and cooperation. We always see this as a social problem. For this reason, I think the program is important for children's social skills, and the activities we implement are very important to me. So, for example, we work on empathy and helping skills in language activities via stories and integrative activities.

P10 expressed the following about *play time*:

> In the educational plan that I use, free play time is very important to support the communication skills of children, which is a social skill. Because I can observe their communication with each other during free play times.

Lastly, about *evaluation time of the day*, P6 stated:

> I prefer to support social skills, especially in evaluation time of the day by asking questions such as "what would you do if you were in the bird's place today?". In this way, I support their empathy and social problem-solving skills.

Also, two teachers expressed that "*gains and indicators*" under social and emotional developmental area help children to gain social skills such as expressing themselves, protecting the rights of themselves and others, understanding problems and solving them. In this context, P4 shared the following opinion:

> We have gains and indicators under the area of social emotional development, which is included in the program. These gains and indicators enable children to recognize the characteristics of themselves and others. They make children

> express themselves. They enable the formation of competencies such as understanding and solving problems with others. We support children in reaching these gains by preparing activity processes….I think that our education program is very important because it aims to support social skills with both gains and indicators.

Moreover, two teachers mentioned the importance of *"concepts"* being available in the program by saying "*I think that we are trying to implement all of these skills in our plans. Since we implement the plan, these are the topics that we go through almost every day, the concepts that are in our plans*" (P12), and "*our education program is significant because it aims to provide children with social skills with the help of concepts like sharing and cooperation*" (P4).

4.2.1.1.2. The features of the program

The ideas of teachers about the significance of the program in promoting preschool children's social skills were not limited to the content of it. Four participants stated that the features of the program involving child-centeredness, flexibility, and being cyclical are important to support the children's communication, empathy and sharing skills, solving their problems, and helping with the skills of each individual child. Regarding *child-centeredness* of the program, P2 shared the opinion below:

> When I think about the current version of the program, I see it as a child-centered program that encourages children to be more active, especially to solve their own social problems. I think they become more active with the help child-centered program, which enables them to think differently, especially about empathy and communication skills.

P9 stated her idea about *flexibility* of the program as follows:

> Since the program has a flexible structure, we can make additions and subtractions. In that sense, I think it is an easily managed program, and it is a supportive program in terms of social skills.

Regarding the program being *cyclical*, the following was stated by P8:

> I would like to talk about the repetition of gains in the program. Since children's development is not all at the same level, I think that it is of course beneficial for children's development to revisit skills such as communication, ... I do not pass gains after one activity implementation because I look at whether children have attained these gains and indicators that month. When 2 or 3 children do

not attain the gains, I feel I must include the same gains and indicators into the plan again.

The last but not the least category that two teachers focused on was the "*importance of the qualification of the program"*. They expressed that the applicability of the program helps promote children's social skills. Regarding this issue, P13 said "*I can say that our program is applicable at this point, and I can see that it is effective when applied in terms of social skills*".

4.2.1.2. The program is important but not sufficient

When asked the question "what do you think about the importance of the program in supporting social skills?", several participants (n=5) stated that the program is essential. However, they also added that there were several points where the MoNE preschool education program is not sufficient in supporting social skills. These included the "*insufficiency of the gains and indicators concerning social skills*", "*Insufficiency of the program's content regarding social skills*", and "*lack of support for social skills activities by stakeholders*".

4.2.1.2.1. Gains and indicators related to social skills are not sufficient

Three of these five participants emphasized that the *gains and indicators related to social skills are not sufficient* and *gains and indicators based on age differences are not sufficient* in the program. P1 stated the following:

> I think the gains and indicators are insufficient. They can be further elaborated because social skills are very wide-ranging. When we sometimes do a social skills activity with children, there is actually no gain or indicator in the program related to this activity…That's why we write this closest gain by saying this may fit. For example, it would be better if the topic of communication was detailed and taught more comprehensively to children.

Regarding the same issue, P13 expressed her idea by focusing on *"the requirement of enriching and elaborating gains and indicators related to communication skills"*. In addition, P5 highlighted the importance of *separating gains and indicators by age group* as follows:

> If we are limited to the formal early childhood education program, we do not find it sufficient because of developmental areas. For example, the program

> provides the same educational content and gains and indicators to ages 3, 4, and 5. As pre-school teachers, we do not find this appropriate at all. The same social skills for 3-year-olds, the same skills for 4-year-olds, should not be the same gains and indicators related to social skills for 5-year-olds…

4.2.1.2.2. Insufficiency of the program's content regarding social skills

Only one of the participants (P7) shared her opinion on *the insufficiency of the program's content regarding social skills* by saying:

> I think the program is insufficient in this regard. In my opinion, free time activities focus more on social skills because the activity plans we write in the program may not include such activities. The reason of it may be the insufficiency of the program's content. I think the most important feature of preschool is the social and emotional development of children, so we should include them in the program.

4.2.1.2.3. Lack of support from stakeholders for social skills activities

Also, another participant (P11) focused on the *lack of support from stakeholders for social skills activities in the program*. She stated the importance of field-trips to social environments like public places for the socialization of children. She added that although she likes to organize field-trips, the Ministry of National Education did not give permission for these trips due to the pandemic. She stated:

> I think the program is not enough. We are doing something with our own efforts. I was organizing very diverse field-trips ranging from those to Anıtkabir to certain museums. But after the pandemic, the national education immediately sent a letter saying not to take children to public places. And the things we do with our own efforts for the sake of socialization have also been prevented. As we know, socialization involves children's ability to act together, to learn the rules to be followed in the society. These are major things.

4.2.2. The views of teachers about the frequency of social skills activities in their education plans

In-service preschool teachers reflected their views on whether social skills activities should be included in their education plans systematically or not. Their views were divided into two categories, which are "*they should be included systematically*" and "*no need to include them systematically*". These categories are reported in connection with specific codes as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 *The views of teachers about including social skills activities in their education plans systematically*

Theme	Categories	Codes	Participants
The frequency of social skills activities	Should be included systematically (N=10)	Constantly Systematic	P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P11, P13
		Periodically systematic	P10
	No need to include systematically (N=3)		P5, P6, P12

4.2.2.1. Should be included systematically

When asked their views about including social skills activities systematically in their education plans, almost all of the participants (n=10) stated that they should be systematically included in education plans. Regarding this category, the opinions of the participants were divided into two codes as *"should be constantly systematic"* and "*should be periodically systematic"*.

4.2.2.1.1. Should be constantly systematic

Most of the participants (n=9) specified that social skills activities must be integrated into the plans in a constantly systematic way owing to several reasons. The participants specified these reasons as social life being the most basic fact of human life, the most important goal of early childhood being preparing children for the social environment, the most significant skills in the 21st century for children being social skills rather than knowing colors and shapes, social skills activities supporting not only children's but also teacher's social skills. Regarding this issue, P1 stated:

> Yes, I think these skills are not behaviors that can be gained with one activity. For example, I cannot say that today I implemented an activity with children and I taught them how to empathize. When we look at behavior change, it takes an average of one and a half to two months. There are many social skills that we try to improve, and we need to give them regularly in our activities in a cyclical way, so that children can acquire them.

Moreover, P4 expressed herself as follows:

> I definitely think it should be this way… When we look at children with social skills, we can see that they are more self-confident, active participants, and active listeners. They can adapt to their friends and social environments thanks to these skills. Of course, we see that they have learned how to solve problems. So that's why we absolutely have to support these skills in our plans on an ongoing basis.

4.2.2.1.2. Should be included in a periodically systematic way

Only one of the participants (P10) thought that social skills activities should be included in the plans in a periodically systematic way so as to support the adaptation of children to the rules and routines of the school at the beginning of the school year. She explained her opinion as follows:

> At first, kids don't know any rules when they just start school. First, they learn the rules, I set the rules together with the children. For example, the rules based on not hitting friends, not breaking toys, or sharing their toys. Also, as we practice communication skills, children practice words such as "thank you, sorry, good morning, see you, goodbye" at the beginning. It is important to include these in the first place as the children do not know each other. So, I prefer that.

4.2.2.2. No need to include systematically

On the other hand, very few of the participants (n=3) thought that it is not necessary to implement social skills activities systematically in the program due to some causes. These causes include the flexible structure of the program, the easily changing interests of children, and inclusion of spontaneous activities in the program. For example, P5 reflected herself as;

> There is no need to include social skills in a systematic way in our plans because we have a flexible structure. At that moment, a different situation may emerge according to the interests of the children. So, we should be able to add something else.

Moreover, P12 stated the following:

> I do not say that this week we are going to teach empathy, that week we are going to teach communication, I cannot think like that. However, if it is the week of the elderly, we go out to have a conversation with an elderly person in our neighborhood. This is a communication skill. Also, … These are implicitly interspersed in every activity. However, I do not need to check in the plan that we talked about communication this week, or about empathy that week.

4.3. Self-reported practices of preschool teachers related to supporting children's social skills in the MoNE preschool education program

For the second research question, the answers of early childhood education were elicited depending on seven themes: "*the factors teachers pay attention to when planning social skills activities", "the interval of social skills activities in the program",* "*using different activity types to support different types of social skills", "using different types of materials*", "*organization of learning environment*" "*using different types of parent involvement*", and finally *"using different types of assessment to assess social skills of children*". These themes will be expressed by separating them into smaller units as categories, and codes in order to ensure more detail and clarity.

4.3.1. Program-based factors regarded by preschool teachers when planning social skills activities

Preschool teachers expressed that they pay attention to certain program-based items related to the principles, features, and content of the program while planning a social skills activity. Table 9 shows the distribution of participants' answers, as well as the categories and codes based on program-based factors.

Table 9 *Program-based factors regarded when planning social skills activities*

Theme	Categories	Codes	Participants
Program-based factors paid attention when planning social skills activities	The content of the program (N=10)	Gains and indicators	P1, P4, P7, P9, P10
		Parent involvement	P2, P4, P9, P11
		Learning environment and materials	P2, P7, P10, P13
		Learning process	P4, P8, P9
		Field-trips	P9, P12
		Words/Concepts	P10, P12
		Assessment	P2
	The principles of the program (N=8)	The needs and individual differences of children	P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P13

Table 9 *Program-based factors regarded when planning social skills activities cont'd*

Program-based factors paid attention when planning social skills activities		The characteristics of the family and the environment in which the programs are being prepared	P2, P6
	The features of the program (N=1)	Child-centeredness	P4

4.3.1.1. The content of the program

As presented in table 9, the vast majority of the participants (n=10) mentioned that they take into account the content of the program including *"gains and indicators", "parent involvement", "learning environment", "learning process", "field-trips"," assessment",* and *"words/concepts".*

4.3.1.1.1. Gains and indicators

Five of the participants emphasized that they look for gains and indicators placed under social and emotional development and try to reach these gains and indicators while planning a social skills activity. P1 supported this view by saying:

> I look at gains and indicators. In general, I first look at the social and emotional development gains and indicators. If there are other areas where I can support social and emotional development gains, I turn it into an integrated activity. Basically, after placing social-emotional gains and indicators in the activity, I supplement these gains and indicators with additional ones under other developmental areas.

P9 added:

> I pay attention to the gains because we already consider them. The gains and indicators are a compass for us, and we implement different activities in order to reach those gains. For example, we do this with language activities, we do this with drama, we even do this with the science and nature activities, so the aim for us is to meet the gains and indicators there.

4.3.1.1.2. Parent involvement

Four participants stressed that they pay attention to the parent involvement process before planning the social skills activities based on some issues. These issues

are whether the parents will support the social learning of children or not, whether they will participate in the learning process actively or not, whether parents need to be directed about development of children's social skills or not. P2 gave countenance to her approach by stating:

> I pay attention to the profiles of parents because this is very important to me. In the first phase of school, about 1 month, we get to know the class before we start to implement the program. With the help of parent meetings, individual activities with children, I first look at my classroom profile. Whether the family supports me in this regard or not. If they do, I make an activity plan so that the families can support it at home. If I think that they will not support it, I will provide additional support to the child at school. If the family does not provide any support, I plan in a way that will enable me to fulfill the duty of the family at school.

Additionally, P9 said:

> I think parent involvement is important in this sense. For example, most parents need guidance in terms of social skills, no matter how well their education level is.

4.3.1.1.3. Learning environment and materials

Besides the points mentioned above, several participants (n=4) emphasized the need to consider the appropriateness of the learning environment including the indoor and outdoor physical environment, the layout, and materials in the planning process of activities related to social skills.

In this context, P13 highlighted the following:

> If I am going to support children to gain some social skills at that moment, I look to see if there is any kind of material in the classroom or if the environment is suitable. For example, we plan a garden game, but our garden is not suitable. I think there are such things that I consider.

Parallel to this view, P2 stated:

> First of all, I think about whether my classroom environment can handle this activity or not. Also, I look at the material I have. The physical conditions of the classroom or the weather may be important to me. Because if the classroom is not suitable for the activity and I must do it in a larger environment. …The activities I have done have always varied according to the classroom environment.

4.3.1.1.4. Learning process

In addition to these, three participants in the sample added that they consider the learning process in the activities to enhance children's social skills. For example, P8 emphasized the significance of art activities. She gave an example about recycling and mentioned supporting children's empathy skills with this art activity related to recycling. P8 detailed her view as follows:

> Since this age group learns through activities, I also focus on art activities a lot. I think, art activities are effective in terms of social skill development in children. For example, today we focused on recycling, it is more effective to give social skills to the child by doing an activity, rather than only explaining recycling. As recycling, we made a pencil holder by adding a figure from a toilet paper roll…There are social skills involved here, and it goes into sharing, empathy, helping, problem solving. For example, there are paper collectors, they come and collect the papers, then take them away and earn money. Children learn to empathize with paper collectors…

4.3.1.1.5. Field-trips, word/concepts, and assessment

Very few participants (n=2) focused on field-trips while reporting the factors given attention when planning social skills activities for preschool children. P12 gave an example about field-trips and mentioned visiting the garden of a neighbor. According to her, empathy and sharing skills of children were supported in this process. She explained herself in detail as follows:

> I work in a residential school where everyone has a garden, so I generally focus on field-trips. I can give an example. There was a garden I liked very much, and the host said I could visit with my students…Before going, I asked the children, "If someone came to visit your garden, what would you share with them?". One of them said "I would let them ride my bike". I told them there are very nice swings, tables, and chairs in this place where we are going. I said that the owner of the house wanted to share these with you, but they are not ours, we should use them carefully, we should not litter the environment. And I actually taught empathy in this way…For this reason, field-trips are crucial.

Moreover, only two participants focused on words/concepts. For example, P10 said "*I try to touch on the concepts in our monthly plan before implementing the social skills activity*".

Lastly, while planning a social skills activity, the least mentioned item was assessment (n=1) among the program-based factors that teachers paid attention to. P2

mentioned assessment by saying "*I consider the feedback that I get from the children in the assessment process to plan social skills activities for children's needs*".

4.3.1.2. The principles of the program

In the second category, preschool teachers indicated to focus on "*the needs and individual differences of children*" and "*the characteristics of the family and environment in which the programs are being prepared*" while planning social skills activities.

4.3.1.2.1. The needs and individual differences of children

More than half of the participants (n=7) gave voice to planning social skills activities by realizing the importance of individual differences, the readiness of children, age differences, gender differences, and their developmental level. For example, P5 stated:

> I look to see if social skills activity is suitable for children's readiness, so I think this is the most important thing. Or is it suitable for the age group, these two are almost parallel to each other. For example, distribution of boys and girls is very important, so I make sure the activity I prepare is suitable for these issues.

P6 added on that:

> I decide on the appropriateness of activities based on children's developmental levels. That is, I cannot carry out every activity related to empathy skills in my classroom, I have to ensure that it is appropriate for the age and development level of the children.

4.3.1.2.2. The characteristics of the family and environment in which the program is being prepared

Only two participants emphasized the principle of the program which is "*the characteristics of the family and environment in which the programs are being prepared*" in the planning process of social skills activity. Regarding this principle, P6 said:

> I consider whether the activity is suitable for the environment in which children live or not. For me, cultural differences are primary as we are in a disadvantaged area. Accordingly, we do certain activities, maybe if I worked in a different district, I could do other activities. For example, maybe there is

no Syrian child in Çankaya and teachers in Çankaya work differently. But since we have Syrian children, we do a lot of activities on communication skills. Or sometimes there are children who do not have parents. We need to prepare more carefully when doing activities about them or on a Mother's Day.

4.3.1.3. The features of the program

Within the scope of the last category, only one teacher mentioned that she was careful about the child-centeredness, which is one of the features of the program, during the planning process of the social skills activity. She said, "*I plan to organize social skills activities in a child-centered way so that they can take an active role in these activities*" (P4).

4.3.2. Self-reported practices of teachers about the interval of social skills activities

Related to this theme, the researcher also asked the in-service preschool teachers how often they include social skills activities in the program. The findings from this question are presented in accordance with the categories derived from codes and sub-codes. The codes were arranged under two categories, which are "*including the social skills activity systematically"* and *"not systematically".* The categories, codes and sub-codes are shown in table 10.

Table 10 *The experiences of teachers regarding the interval of performing social skills activities*

Theme	Categories	Codes	Sub-codes	Participants
The interval of social skills activities	Systematic (n=12)	Constantly systematic	Everyday	P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P12
			At least twice a week	P1, P4, P10
			At least once a month	P11
		Periodical systematic		P1, P8, P10
	Not systematic (n=2)			P1, P13

4.3.2.1. Systematic

Almost every participant (n=12) pointed out that social skills activities are indispensable, and they try to include social skills in the program systematically. They reported to carry out constantly or periodically systematic activities.

4.3.2.1.1. Constantly systematic

Most of the participants (n=11) responded that they implement social skills activities regularly at different periods, such as everyday, at least twice a week, or at least once a month.

Predominantly, many teachers (n=7) mentioned that they implement social skills activities daily in a systematic way by using play time or activity time that includes different types of activities like science, art, or math, and throughout every moment of the day. One of the participants (P3) stated that they use "*activity time*" everyday to promote children's social skills:

> Every day, we have a lot of activities such as play or art activities, where children will definitely communicate with each other. I aim to reinforce social skills even while teaching math skills. I always consider placing social gain in every activity.

Secondly, some participants (n=2) highlighted "*the requirement of free play time*" for promoting the social skills of children. Regarding this issue, P9 stated:

> I think our free play time activity that we routinely practice every day is a perfect social skills activity. For example, we do this every day and there is great social communication there, it is actually a period of time when children can easily communicate with their peers and teachers, open up their inner world, and perhaps express the problems they are trying to solve through games. That's why it's so important and we do it every day anyway.

Two other participants expressed their interval of conducting social skills activities as "*every moment of the day*". One of them (P12) reported to include these skills in every activity rather than planning a specific activity. She gave the following example:

> In almost every activity, all skills are involved, namely sharing, helping, or communication. Because these are the things that should simply be supported. Frankly, I don't think it's about spending time on these concepts individually, but rather these are topics that should be included in every activity. For

example, I usually use the method of putting a water bottle between two children even when they do watercolor painting. In this way, I reinforce the sharing skill, in every moment of the day.

Secondly, a few participants (n=3) declared their interval of performing social skills in the program as "*at least twice a week*". P1 expressed that "*there are 2 or 3 activities during the week, even if it is not in the plan*." P10 corroborated her by saying:

> There are definitely such activities at least 3 times a week. We also implement play activities, finger games, nursery rhymes to improve communication skills, but we touch upon social skills at least 3 times a week.

Thirdly, only one participant (P11) explained that she carried out social skills activities *"at least once a month"* by saying; "*I can say that I am implementing social skills activities at least once a month by visiting sick people, organizing field-trips to markets, bazaars, or the post office with my students*".

4.3.2.1.2. Periodical systematic

Three of the participants mentioned a different point of view about the interval of conducting social skills activities in the program. They mentioned that the interval changes completely based on the periodical needs of children. Regarding this issue, P1 reported to include activities on the communication skill in the first weeks of school, then moving on to activities based on empathy in the program. She stated:

> About communication skills, in the first weeks of the school, for example, we play meeting games based on how to meet, how to socialize. Bu then we continue with learning empathy a little later. Because children cannot shake their self-centeredness until the 2nd semester. As the first step of empathy, there are games like "doing the same thing I did", "imitating the other person" in the first semester. In the second semester, I try to introduce activities such as what the other person felt, how they would feel if they were in their friend's place.

Moreover, P8 added:

> In the first place, until the children get used to school, there can be social skills activities almost every day, especially until November. But we can reduce them later on. Especially with regard to communication skills, children start preschool for the first time, or some children may not even go to kindergarten before. Considering this, I encourage them to have a nice dialogue and listen to each other for communication skill since they are meeting for the first time.

4.3.2.2. Not Systematic

Two of the participants indicated that they do not carry out social skills activities systematically, instead the interval of implementing such kinds of activities change based on the types of social skills and the instant needs of children. For example, P13 focused on social problem solving, sharing and empathy skills by explaining the interval of social skills activities. She claimed to implement a lot of social problem solving and sharing activities as her students need these skills. However, she mentioned that empathy is more complicated than other skills for this age group, so it is included in the program a little bit later. Therefore, her social skills activities depend on the type of skill and needs of children. She stated:

> First of all, social problem-solving skill is a problem that I always face. We must help children develop in this regard. I've been doing a lot of activities about it. The second skill is sharing. Unfortunately, children today do not know what sharing is due to the introversion brought along by the pandemic, whether at home or in other environments. I have a daily activity about it and generally use free play time…However, they just don't understand what empathy means yet. When I say put yourself in your friend's shoes and think about how you would feel, they sometimes answer "I can't do it, I'm not him". But I think I will implement empathy activities a lot later on, especially in play activities. I think that activities such as mirror games and sculpture games are very good for empathy.

Moreover, P1 explained her view by focusing on the instantaneous needs of children about the interval of social skills activities:

> In this regard, sometimes spontaneous situations arise even if they are not included in the educational plan. You know, our plans are flexible. For example, when a kid makes fun of his friend because he falls off his chair. While confronting this kind of situation, I say let's play a game. In this game, I try to explain that it is wrong to laugh when their friend falls off her chair. I do small activities to show them how they would feel if their friends laughed at them when they fell off a chair.

4.3.3. Using different activity types to support different types of social skills

Preschool teachers reported to use *"different activity types"* while conducting social skills activities and supporting different types of social skills. The researcher divided the answers of participants into eleven categories: "*language, art, drama, play, science, music, math activities, free play time, special days and weeks, field-trips,* and

instantaneous situations". Types of social skills supported by teachers will be explained under the categorizations of these activity types. The categories and participants are presented in table 11.

Table 11 *The types of activities used by teachers to support children's social skills*

Theme	Categories	Participants
The types of activities to support social skills of children	Language activities (N=10)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P12, P13
	Art activities (N=5)	P2, P3, P11, P12, P13
	Drama activities (N=5)	P3, P4, P7, P9, P13
	Play activities (N=4)	P1, P2, P8, P13
	Field-trips (N=2)	P11, P12
	Science activities (N=1)	P12
	Music activities (N=1)	P3
	Math activities (N=1)	P9
	Free play time (N=8)	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10
	Instantaneous situations (N=6)	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P12
	Special days and weeks (N=5)	P1, P4, P6, P10, P12

4.3.3.1. Language activities

Most of the participants (n=10) put emphasis on implementing language activities by giving some examples like using storybooks, having a talk, and practicing show and tell activities to support children's social skills. Specifically, six of them focused on communication skills by giving examples about language activities. Regarding this issue, P12 gave a detailed activity example based on show-and-tell:

> I strongly believe in the power of show-and-tell activities for communication skills. Every Monday, I want the children to tell something and give a presentation. For example, they bring photos for a week and introduce their families. Thanks to these activities, they communicate more closely with their friends. For example, last week, the children drew the map of their house on an A4 paper. Then each child presented where their house was, and they created sentences such as "there is a pharmacy next to our house" and "my friend's

> house is in front of our house. I think this can be a very good example for language activities related to communication skills.

In addition, some participants (n=4) stated that they support social problem-solving skills by using language activities. In this context, the example of P1 was as follows:

> My students constantly say that others don't want to play with them. They always come with a complaint. Then, I tell them to ask their friend why he might not want to play with them. When they ask, the friend says "no, I want to play with you, but you didn't say "can I play with you" to me". Then we start a story activity by saying "look, there is such a child, and he wants to play with his friend. However, he is waiting for his friend to invite him, then he decided to ask his friend "what are you playing? And can I play with you?" In this way, both children learn how to communicate to play with each other, and problems are solved.

Also, very few participants (n=2) emphasized that they support children's empathy skills with the help of language activities. In this context, P2 said:

> While telling stories to children, especially in language activities, I try to develop their empathy skills by enabling them to empathize with the characters in the story. I try to include more empathy activities with questions such as "what would you do if you were" or "what would you do if you were faced with such a situation" in these activities.

4.3.3.2. Art activities

Many participants (n=5) stated that they use art activities with techniques like drawing and painting to improve children's social skills. Most of those participants (n=4) specifically gave activity examples related to helping skills under this code. For example, P12 shared a detailed example:

> I develop helping skills with group work. For example, world dot day is very popular, and I love "dot" book. For example, in the dot work as a group, we place a large cardboard on the table. Then I cut the cardboard in half. I divide the class into 2 groups of ten and tell them "Those who think they draw circles well can draw circles, but those who say no, I do not want to draw circles, they are better at painting, can also paint the inside of the circles". I say, "this is also a form of helping based on what one of us cannot do that the other can". I want to create a group feeling where children complement each other, not compete.

Also, one participant (P11) focused on supporting communication skills through art activities by telling:

> For example, after a museum trip, I ask the children, "Let's take a picture of our trip. What did you see, what did we do, for example, what did you see when we visited Atatürk, how did you feel there, could you paint me a picture of it?" Then, they make presentations about their drawings, which improves their communication skills.

Only one teacher (P2) made a mention of sharing skills by stating "*although art activities may seem as individual, I usually try to make children to share more in those activities by implementing small group activities*"

4.3.3.3. Drama activities

Some participants (n=5) expressed that they promote empathy, communication, sharing and helping skills with the help of drama activities that involve role playing and improvisation. Three of these participants stressed empathy skills while explaining drama activities. For example, P3 expressed herself as follows:

> Sometimes I let children be teachers, they take on the role of teacher. I think this is a very effective method. I say, "you are the teacher of the class right now". I don't use empathy as a direct word, but I give them such opportunities to understand how I feel as the teacher. The phrase "if you were in your friend's place" might be a bit heavy for them. However, I usually do this with drama activities with some specific questions such as "what would happen if you were Ayşe and Fatma", when they are in the role.

Moreover, two participants mentioned that they are trying to improve children's communication skills with drama activities. Regarding this, P7 stated:

> Since I received drama training, I've been trying to improve communication skills by combining drama activities with language activities, mostly via improvisation activities. We usually do story reenactments. Here I assign a role to almost every child in the classroom, and the children are already motivated beforehand. Because they care about the story much more, they listen better to improvise the characters of the story.

4.3.3.4. Play activities

Few of the participants (n=4) highlighted the importance of play activities including meeting games, sharing games, mirror games, and musical chairs to improve communication, empathy, and social problem-solving skills of children. Three of the participants indicated that they use play activities to promote children's communication skills. In this context, P2 stated:

> We have some games, especially for the purpose of improving communication skills, for example, meeting games or sharing games. I use them to support one-to-one communication between children.

On the other hand, very few participants (n=2) concentrated on the critical role of play activities in improving the empathy skills of children. P13 expressed herself with an example:

> I am trying to improve empathy by implementing play activities. For example, children try to repeat the movements of the other person with mirror games. In addition, they try to shape the other person with clay or play dough by viewing him as a sculptor. Children try to understand the perspective of another person with the help of these activities.

4.3.3.5. Music, math, and science activities

For each of the music, math, and science activities, only one participant mentioned that they use these activity types to improve the social skills of children. For instance, P12 explained that she helps the sharing skills of children through science activities:

> Our school has a lot of green space because it is a very nice factory school. We always go out to pick pinecones, leaves, apples, pears from garden. In this process, I usually give a bag to two children so that they can learn to share it.

4.3.3.6. Free play time

More than half of the participants (n=8) put emphasis on free play time for promoting the social skills of children. Five of those teachers stated that they use free play time to improve children's social problem-solving skills. In this context, P6 said:

> Playtime is very important to solve problems for children. For example, the children may argue like "Let me be a mother, no, I will be a mother" while playing games. Another friend may say, "Okay, Ayşe, you be a mother, Fatma can also be a mother, and I will be the girl next door". Thus, they can naturally solve the problem among themselves…In other words, during free play time, a problem situation occurs but then this problem is solved.

In addition, P5 discussed how to strengthen the empathy skills of children with the help of free play time:

> I think free play time is very important in the program. For example, we have a rocking chair in our book center and children have trouble sharing this chair. They love to review books there, and while one child is sitting in the chair,

> another comes and wants to force him out of it. Then I ask the one who tries to forcefully remove his friend, "What would you do if you were in your friend's place". He says "I'm sorry". And I say, "But look, your friend is upset too, he wants to use the chair, just like you". In this way, they can empathize with and understand each other immediately. If you explain the reasons rather than telling them not to do something, it is easier to convince them.

4.3.3.7. Instantaneous situations

Almost half of the participants (n=6) answered the question "How do you support social skills of children with the program?" by saying that they support them with instantaneous events and ordinary conversations in the classroom. Two of the participants focused on social problem-solving skills through instantaneous situations. P3 stated;

> In fact, we solve problems socially from the moment we enter the school until we leave, because children are in constant interaction and communication. They are constantly faced with a problem…I try to make them understand how they can solve problems in every aspect of the day, based on these instantaneous events. I usually direct them by saying "you should handle this problem on your own". I'm actually getting them to think about it. I give directions such as "think about it, take a breath, think about what you need to do in this situation, go to your friend and talk about this situation".

Also, P12 gave an example about encouraging sharing skills in children in these instantaneous situations:

> For example, if I want to encourage children to help or share their food when there is a child who has forgotten to bring his food, I immediately give examples from myself. For example, I say "I forgot my food one day when I was in kindergarten" so that the forgetful child knows that even the teacher can forget things. Then I use expressions like "A friend like Emre gave me his food, I was very happy, and I thanked him". Then other children compete to help their friends. I really think it makes the children very happy. When they think that this has also happened to the teacher, they may be more willing to share their food.

4.3.3.8. Special days and weeks

Some participants (n=5) focused on special days and weeks including world disability week, and animal protection day to support children's empathy, helping, and sharing skills. Very few participants (n=2) pointed out that they focus on special days

and weeks to improve the empathy skills of children. For example, P10 shared her example activity related to empathy as follows:

> During the world disability week, I focus on activities such as making children draw with closed eyes, or drawing with their arms, or painting by holding the brush in their nose and mouth, with the aim of improving their empathy skills. It is necessary to also ask questions such as "how did you feel? If you were in their shoes, how would you like them to help you?". This can be a good example for instilling empathy.

From a different perspective, one participant (P4) supplied the following example activity related to sharing and helping:

> For example, there was the animal protection day recently. I told the children that animals also live in the nature, that they are our friends, that they also have the right to live, that we should help them, that we should give them food. Afterwards, we prepared cat food together, and I asked them to feed their animal friends.

4.3.3.9. Field-trip activities

Only one participant (P11) concentrated on field trips while explaining how to support children's communication through the program. She claimed to support children so that they can ask their questions to people and communicate with them freely during the field trip. She expressed her opinion as follows:

> When we organize a museum field-trip, I say "Children, definitely ask questions while we are there". We went to "Anıtkabir" for example, and I talked to the soldiers beforehand. I said, "I'll bring young students, but you should definitely tell them about Atatürk." They said, "No problem, we'll tell them." I also asked for help from the parents. For example, I said, "Help them about the kind of questions they will ask. But let them think for themselves, of course, set them free". Such field-trips are very important in terms of communication skills.

In summary, Table 12 presents which part of the program the participants focused on while supporting children's social skills and the social skills they focused on more.

Table 12 *The experiences of teachers with the parts of the program used to support social skills and the social skills they focused on*

	Communication	Empathy	Social problem solving	Sharing	Helping	Total
Language activities	(n=6) P1, P3, P7, P9, P12, P13	(n=2) P2, P4	(n=4) P1, P10, P12, P13	(n=5) P1, P3, P4, P5, P10	(n=1) P4	(N=10)
Art activities	(n=1) P11		(n=1) P13	(n=1) P2	(n=4) P2, P3, P12, P13	(N=5)
Drama activities	(n=2) P7, P13	(n=3) P3, P4, P9		(n=1) P4	(n=2) P4, P9	(N=5)
Play activities	(n=3) P1, P2, P8	(n=2) P1, P13	(n=1) P13			(N=4)
Music activities		(n=1) P3				(N=1)
Science activities				(n=1) P12		(N=1)
Math activities	(n=1) P9					(N=1)
Free Play time	(n=3) P3, P9, P10	(n=2) P5, P9	(n=5) P2, P4, P6, P8, P10	(n=1) P10	(n=2) P9, P10	(N=8)

Table 12 *The experiences of teachers with the parts of the program used to support social skills and the social skills they focused on cont'd*

Instantaneous situations	(n=1) P6	(n=1) P6	(n=2) P2, P3	(n=2) P5, P12	(n=3) P1, P3, P6	(N=6)
Special days and weeks		(n=3) P6, P10, P12		(n=1) P4	(n=2) P1, P4	(N=5)
Field-trip activities	(n=1) P11			(n=1) P11	(n=1) P11	(N=1)
Total	(N=11)	(N=10)	(N=9)	(N=9)	(N=10)	

As shown in table 12, a great majority of the participants (n=10) stated that they used language activities among the activity types while supporting the social skills of children. From the teachers' point of view, art and drama activities took the second place, followed by play activities. Lastly, music, science, field-trip and math activities were the least used activity types by teachers while supporting children's social skills. Besides the activity types, the participants mentioned different parts of the program that they use to support children's social skills. Most of the participants (n=8) mentioned that free play time in the program is very important for supporting social skills. Also, instantaneous situations (n=6) during the day are in second place in terms of supporting social skills from the perspectives of teachers. The next most mentioned part of program was special days and weeks (n=5).

In addition, teachers supported different social skills through the program. As presented in table 12, the skill that was most emphasized was communication (n=11). Social problem solving (n=9), empathy (n=10), sharing (n=9) and helping skills (n=10) were mentioned by preschool teachers almost equally.

4.3.4. Using different kinds of materials

Besides the other interview questions, the researcher also asked the in-service preschool teachers which materials they used to support the social skills of children through the educational program. The findings related to this theme were presented in accordance with the categories derived from codes. The codes were arranged under six categories, which are "*materials used based on different activity types", "materials created by the teacher", "no material use", "technological materials", "natural materials",* and *"recycling materials"*. The categories and codes are shown in table 13.

Table 13 *The types of materials used by teachers to support the social skills of children*

Theme	Categories	Codes	Participants
The types of materials to support social skills of children	Materials used based on different activity types (N=9)	Language Materials (n=7)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P9, P10, P12
		Play materials (n=3)	P2, P7, P13
		Drama materials (n=3)	P3, P10, P13
		Art materials (n=1)	P2
	Materials created by the teacher (N=3)		P2, P4, P10
	No material use (N=3)		P2, P3, P11
	Technological materials (N=2)		P4, P10
	Natural materials (N=1)		P5
	Recycling materials (N=1)		P8
	Multiple use of the materials (N=1)		P6

4.3.4.1. Materials used based on different activity types

Among the materials that teachers use to support children's social skills, materials associated with different activity types like *"language materials", "drama materials", "play materials",* and *"art materials"* are in the first place (N=9). These codes are expressed in detail by using quotations from the participants.

4.3.4.1.1. Language materials

A lot of participants (n=7) made a mention of using materials related to language activities including books, puppets, visuals/cards, and show-and-tell materials to promote the social skills of children. P4 mentioned "*There are actually very good story books with which we can teach social skills easily to children. In language activities, I usually share story books with the children*." Also, P10 focused on puppets by saying:

> We use puppets a lot in problem solving. We give a problem, and we ask them to solve it. We have puppets in the drama class and in our classrooms. I want the children to talk to themselves by using puppets first. Then I present a problem situation and lead them like, "Let's talk about it with each other and solve it together".

Different from books and puppets, P1 expressed how to use visuals and cards to support the social skills of children:

> Let's say I'm going to do an activity about empathy. I prepare some posters and visuals and hang them on the walls. Let's say there is an activity about sharing, I hang a picture of two children pulling toys from each other's hands. Next to it, I hang images of children sharing their toys and playing together. Then we talk about these visuals. I ask them, "What do you think these might be about?" They describe what they see in the pictures, such as "there are children fighting, or there are children sharing their toys".

4.3.4.1.2. Drama materials

Few participants (n=3) put emphasis on using drama materials based on improvisation materials like drama stage, costumes, and our body to support children's social skills. For example, P10 stated that "*We have a stage for drama there. We also have clothes and costumes. I do activities with them. When we read a story, we can also improvise it by using those materials.".* Concerning the same issue, P13 added

that "*you know, you can dramatize a book without the need to use any material other than your body.*" In contrast, P3 focused on a fairy tale cloth curtain:

> For example, I have a fairy tale curtain of 7-8 meters that covers the entire wall of the classroom. There is a door that opens from inside of this fairy tale curtain. I use it a lot, especially when I switch to drama activities, I make a transition to the land of fairy tales with it, passing through the door. Using this curtain, children present their ideas or work in front of their friends, showing off to their friends. First, we distribute the roles, then they go behind the curtain and play different roles there. Here we actually develop the empathy skills of children, or some of them forget what to say and other friends help them. It's a nice environment.

4.3.4.1.3. Play materials

Few participants (n=3) laid stress on using play materials including balls, ropes, and hula-hoops to improve the social skills of children. Regarding using ball and rope materials, P2 stated:

> If I'm going to do play activities, I use some play materials. For example, if I want to support sharing especially in games, I use balls so that they can share a single ball. I use rope, for example, we make a spider web with it by throwing it to each other. In this way, they share a single ball of yarn.

Different to this, P13 underlined the significance of hula-hoops for social skills:

> With a Hula-hoop, we can support sharing and helping skills. For example, the children hold their hands, and I run the hula-hoop through the head of the first child. That boy tries to pass it to next friend without removing it. In other words, he tries to pass the hula-hoop from his head to his legs without letting go of his hands. In the meantime, I actually observe how they help each other to transfer the hula-hoop.

4.3.4.1.4. Art Materials

Only one participant (P2) concentrated on art materials while explaining how to support children's sharing and communication skills in the classroom. She expressed her opinion as follows:

> For each table, I have one material box where I put art materials in it. Everyone uses the materials from there by sharing them with each other. I also put the scissors there, one child helps the other and cuts while the other asks him for help. In this way, they both develop their communication skills and learn to share.

4.3.4.2.Materials created by the teacher

Few of the participants (n=3) stated that they use different kinds of materials created by themselves like a puppet or toy used throughout the year, charts hung on the board, or visuals of emotions to support social skills of children. P2 mentioned focusing on a puppet or toy used throughout the year:

> I have a puppet or toy that I choose or create every year. We give a name to it with the children. With that name, I say, "Come on children, look, he came too, you should come too". Sometimes I create different fictions. For example, I can say that "such a thing happened to him today, his friend did not understand his feelings at all, what would you do if you were in his place?"... Children sometimes take it with themselves, make him talk, try to establish communication.

P10 also gave an example related to a material that she created:

> I make a television to improve empathy. Children can sing any song they want on the television I make. Or they can present the news. In which case they can pretend to be a singer or a news anchor.

4.3.4.3.Technological materials

Very few of the participants (n=2) mentioned technology-based materials like slideshows, videos, and animations among the materials they use to promote children's social skills. As an exception, P4 said:

> I use slide shows. For example, I put a visual related to the problem situation such as how to solve it in the first slide, and then we try to solve this problem step by step. Apart from that, I provide them with some supporting videos and beautiful cartoon animations. They can also learn by watching them.

Similarly, P10 stated "*Related to empathy, sharing and helping skills, videos are the things we use very often".*

4.3.4.4.No material use

Three participants mentioned that they do not use any specific material to enhance the social skills of children. One of them (P2) said:

> Sometimes I don't need materials because I think that the social skill is the person himself, so the person gains that skill himself, the biggest material is the person. My students themselves or me.

P3 supported this view by saying:

> I prefer to use the child himself. And I prefer to use "speaking"… Therefore, it is very important for me that they communicate with each other, communicate with me. So, I tell them "you can talk to me no matter what, you can share with me no matter what". In other words, the first material that I use to develop social skills is people, that is, myself and my students, and secondly, their communication with each other.

4.3.5. Organization of the learning environment

Lastly, the participants were asked to share their experiences regarding how they use and organize the learning environment to support the social skills of children. The views of teachers were divided into two categories which are "*indoors"* and *"outdoors".* The codes gained from the interview were grouped under these two categories. Table 14 represents the categories and the codes of teachers' views about the mentioned issue.

Table 14 *Organizing the learning environment related to social skills activities*

Theme	Categories	Codes	Participants
Organization of the learning environment to support social skills of children	Indoors (N=11)	In-class (n=10) (Visuals on the walls and the floor, using learning centers, organizing seating arrangement of the children)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P12
		Out of the class (n=3) (Drama room, library, play area, hallway, other classrooms)	P6, P7, P10
	Outdoors (N=4)	School Yard (n=3)	P7, P12, P13
		Out of the school (n=1)	P11

4.3.5.1. Indoors

While the participants shared their experiences about organizing the learning environment during the social skills activities, almost all of them (n=11) focused on the indoor learning environment including *"in-class"* and *"out of the class"* environment.

4.3.5.1.1. In-class

A majority of the participants (n=10) stated that they use their own classrooms by organizing the seating arrangement of the classroom depending on different types of activities, such as hanging some visuals and boards on the walls and spreading them on the floor, arranging learning centers to promote children's social skills. P1 expressed her views about "*decorations of walls and the floor"* by mentioning:

> For example, I hang a visual on the wall including children fighting. Then, when the children notice this picture, I say to them with the puppet in my hand, "Look children, this guest puppet has come to give us information about this visual". The puppet says, "Look at the children in this picture, they couldn't share their toy and they both feel very sad and angry because they had a fight". Then I say, "let's be those kids now". I divide the class into 2 groups, make 2 pairs, put an object in the class and say, "let's see what happens when we share the toy". I let them play with it for a while. Then I say, "let's see what happens when we don't share it". The students start to fight, it becomes messy. Then I say, "So it's better to share things". Therefore, this is an example of how I teach sharing skills with an activity and using the classroom.

On the other hand, P4 mentioned *"arranging learning centers"*:

> In general, I use learning centers. If there is a flash card or storybook, I display it in the book center and let the children examine it. When I say flash cards, I mean images related to the subject, for example, we can have cards with the right communication words, or there can be images of helping. When we look at social problem solving, we actually have cards about rules. Since obeying the classroom rules is actually effective in problem solving. There may be such cards in order to avoid problems in the classroom. When we hang these in learning centers, we support their learning.

4.3.5.1.2. Out of the class

Few participants (n=3) stated that they use out of class places including other classrooms, drama room, library, play area, and hallways while implementing social skills activities. For example, P6 made a mention of using another classroom by saying:

> Sometimes I go to the next classroom, by saying "let's go to the classroom of Betül teacher, let's see what they think about this situation". We go to the next classroom and various social activities are held in this way.

In a similar vein, P10 stated that she uses the library to support the social skills of children:

> Regarding the learning environment, for example, if we are going to read a book about sharing, the environment needs to be calmer. We have a library at our school, we go there anyway, the children love the library very much, they say, teacher, let's read our story there. Therefore, we read there in a quiet environment.

4.3.5.2.Outdoors

Some participants (n=4) highlighted the importance of outdoor places to improve children's social skills. They stated that they use the "*school yard*" and "*out of school places*" such as supermarkets, shopping centers, or post offices.

4.3.5.2.1. School Yard

Few of the participants (n=3) mentioned that they use the school yard during the process of performing social skills activities. Regarding this issue, P12 gave an example:

> For example, there are goats in our school yard. The goat shed is also there. The children wanted to feed the goats. One of the children wanted to pick pears, but could not reach them, the other found pears on the ground and brought them. They thought goats would eat them. But because they couldn't give the pears directly to the goats, another boy attached sticks to the pears. That is, to extend it to the goat, because the holes in the goat shed were small. I think this is something that cannot be taught in the classroom. So, I think this is a very good example of helping each other.

Besides this, P13 stated:

> There is a forest behind our school. It is not a very big one, but there is nice forest air, pines, acorns. We also use this area while doing social skills activities. For example, we all collect cones together. We bring the cones together. A lot of cones are gathered by helping each other. Then we think about what we can do with these cones. They share their ideas. They make a circle using cones, for example, and ask, what else can we do?… They learn both how to come together by helping each other and what they can do individually with their imaginations.

4.3.5.2.2. Out of school

Only one participant (P11) reflected her experiences about how to use out-of-school learning environments while implementing social skills activities:

> For example, we visit sick people with my students. It's also a form of socialization, isn't it? Apart from that, there are big supermarkets around us,

everything is available in them. We go there with the children, and I teach them how to shop and spend money. Or we take a trip to the post office. ... When we take an envelope to the post office, the children can see their surroundings and discover what is happening around them. They learn how to behave and how to interact with people in these places…

4.3.6. The types of parent involvement

The participants were asked to share their experiences regarding what kind of parent involvement types they use to support children's social skills. The experiences of teachers were divided into five categories, which are *"communicating with families", "providing activities for families to enrich the learning process at home", "involving volunteer families", "educating parents about child development and parenting",* and "*getting support from families in finding resources".* The codes gained from the interview were grouped under these categories. Table 15 shows the categories, and the codes of teachers' experiences related to the parent involvement process in detail.

Table 15 *Parent involvement types used by teachers to support children's social skills*

Themes	Categories	Codes	Participants
The types of parent involvement used to support social skills of children	Communicating with families (N=11)	One-way communication (n=5)	P1, P4, P6, P7, P9
		Two-way communication (n=8)	P1, P2, P3, P6, P10, P11, P12, P13
	Providing activities for families to enrich the learning process at home (N=7)		P1, P2, P4, P6, P8, P9, P12
	Involving volunteer families (N=4)		P2, P5, P11, P12
	Educating parents about child development and parenting (N=3)		P2, P3, P7
	Getting support from families to find resources (N=3)		P5, P7, P11

4.3.6.1. Communicating with families

Among the types of parent involvement that preschool teachers use to support children's social skills, the most frequently mentioned type in this study is "*communicating with families*" (n=11). Regarding this type, the answers of teachers were separated into two codes including "*two-way communication*" and "*one-way communication*".

4.3.6.1.1. Two-way communication

A significant portion of the participants (n=8) stated that they communicate with families in two-way communication about the social skills development of children. They stated that they use various methods like phone calls, WhatsApp groups, breakfast with families, individual parent meetings, and parent meetings. For instance, P1 stated her opinion related to using phone calls as follows:

> I use phone calls to communicate with families, and I say that I am implementing these activities or methods in the classroom. Please try these at home. When the child gets angry, give him time to calm down, tell him to share things with his friends. For example, children often have problems with sharing. That's why I try to inform families as much as possible and include them in my plan.

Regarding individual parent meeting and parent meetings, P10 stated:

> We have a meeting with our parents at the beginning of the semester. Apart from that, I regularly communicate with them individually on this subject. In terms of developing social skills, I definitely talk to the families of my children who are shy. I want the family to cooperate with me on this issue. In fact, I had a student who never raised his hand and remained silent at the beginning of this term, and now, after we cooperated with the father and mother, the child gained a significant amount of self-confidence. The child really makes himself noticed and communicates with his friends.

4.3.6.1.2. One-way communication

Several participants (n=5) mentioned that they communicate with parents in one-way communication by using different methods such as sending them informative brochures and posters, educational bulletins, articles of experts, notes about child development, and informative messages related to classroom activities. For example,

P6 focused on the importance of informative brochures to support the sharing skills of children:

> We sometimes send informative brochures to families. For example, I remember I had a brochure about sharing. This brochure included the features of sharing for children in this age group, what they share or what to do if they do not share.

In addition to this, P4 expressed her experience related to sending informative messages to parents so that children can be supported by their families in the light of the activities carried out at school:

> For example, if there is an activity related to social skills that we practice in the classroom that day, I can send something like a newsletter to encourage families to support it at home. Of course, we use an online communication platform called as WhatsApp. Therefore, I write an informative text through this platform by saying we did such an activity in the classroom to support children's communication skills, please support it at home.

4.3.6.2. Providing activities for families to enrich the learning process at home

The second most preferred type of parent involvement to promote the social skills of children was providing activities for families to enrich the learning process at home (n=7) by teachers. Teachers explained that they send different activity examples and materials like SCAMPER questions, visuals, online version of books related to activities to the parents. In this way, they said that parents can both understand school activities and know how to support the social skills of children at home. Regarding this issue, P8 gave an example of sending activity examples to parents:

> I had a project with the "TEMA foundation" called "the small TEMA". The foundation gave us books, too. I provide activities to parents included in those books. For example, when I send an activity to parents, I say that you can do research with your children about it, the children will then present this topic to their friends in classroom. Children do research together with their parents. Then they present their research to their friends. This affects the child's self-expression, and communication skills in front of an audience.

Furthermore, P6 focused on sending SCAMPER questions to the parents to promote children's social skills. She said:

> I send SCAMPER questions to families. For example, I send a picture. There is a story in the picture. Ali and his mother are going to the market, Ali wants a balloon, his mother buys him one. Later, his mother tells Ali to hold the

> balloon tightly, but when Ali sees the park and starts to run, he misses his balloon. This picture has a small story and asks children to create or continue the story. This is an example of empathy. I want parents to ask questions to their children about the picture. For example, what would you do if you were in Ali's place? How would you feel when the balloon flew off? Apart from that, I send a picture about helping and sharing. This picture is…

4.3.6.3. Involving volunteer families

Some of the participants (n=4) mentioned volunteering parent involvement while practicing social skills activities. They focused on implementing activities with volunteer parents like knitting or pickling in the classroom and going on field-trips with a volunteer parent. They said that this parent involvement type is important to improve children's social skills with the help of parents. P12 expressed her experience related to implementing activities with volunteer parents in the classroom by saying:

> I usually invite parents to the school to implement different activities so that they can closely observe their children's social skills development. For example, someone was pickling very well, or someone was knitting, showing the sweaters she knitted and showing how she knitted. In this way, they could both communicate with children and observe their children.

Also, P11 stated her opinion about going on field-trips with a volunteer parent as follows:

> For example, I go on trips with my volunteer parents. Parents are very helpful to us on field-trips. They also support children by telling them what kind of questions they should ask in the places they go and how they should behave. In fact, they also develop their children's social skills in this process.

4.3.6.4. Educating parents about child development and parenting

"Educating parents about child development and parenting" type is the least preferred parent involvement type (n=3) to promote the social skills of children from the perspectives of preschool teachers. They stated that they provide informative meetings or seminars for parents on child development and especially social development of children with the help of the school counselor. Related to this issue, one of the participants (P7) stated "*we conduct seminars together with our guidance teachers. We inform families about the age, development levels and the social development of children at this age*". Moreover, P2 added the following experience:

> Our families fill out a form at the beginning of the school each year. Together with our guidance teacher, we try to provide training, usually once a month, based on the subjects that they think they lack and want to be educated in. These seminars may be about preparing children for social life or supporting their self-confidence.

4.3.6.5. Getting support from families in finding resources

According to teachers, besides educating parents and parenting type, the other least mentioned parent involvement type is *"getting support from families in finding resources"* (n=3) while improving the social skills of preschool children. They generally mentioned that they ask parents to bring some materials and sources such as books or food for the social skills activities. P7 said the following regarding parents bringing books from home:

> We share resources with our parents. We also organize storybook days that is special for families. Families send books and bring the books they read at home. This improves children's social skills, language skills, and children's protection of each other's belongings. So, this activity has responsibility, sharing, and helping skills.

Moreover, P11 stated:

> For example, I ask families to send something to eat with their children. The child brings enough food for all the children from the house and distributes it. I talk to the parents, I say "look, don't think of it as simply sweetening children's mouths. There is sharing here because your child will share the food with his friends. In this way, the children will be very happy, and your child will say I gave it to my friend, my friend was happy because of this".

4.3.7. The types of assessment

The participants reflected their experiences about the types of assessments they use while assessing the social skills of children in the preschool. The answers were divided into six categories, which are "observation", "*asking questions*", "*portfolios*", *"performance-based assessments", "technology-based assessments",* and *"self-assessments of children".* These categories and the participants that expressed these categories are presented in table 16.

Table 16 *The type of assessments used by teachers to assess children's social skills*

Theme	Categories	Participants
The types of assessments to assess social skills of children	Observation (N=12)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13
	Asking questions (N=6)	P2, P4, P6, P8, P9, P13
	Portfolios (N=3)	P3, P5, P13
	Performance-based assessments (N=2)	P11, P13
	Technology-based assessments (N=2)	P3, P11
	Self-assessments of children (N=1)	P7

4.3.7.1. Observation

Almost every participant (n=12) mentioned that they use the observation technique to assess the social skills of children. The participants stated that they keep anecdotal notes and fill observation forms to get to know the children and assess their social skills. After that, they wrote development reports according to these observation forms they fill. Regarding this issue, P1 stated:

> I observe children and keep anecdotes. Already in preschool, regular anecdotes are kept, as a result of which our development reports are formed. For example, I have a paper in front of me and observe the children…I can see the behavior of each child. I looked at how the child has progressed or regressed. Sometimes I can understand that I am doing something wrong with the help of this technique. Sometimes, I evaluate all children and try to compensate for any loss with extra activities.

Also, P13 described her similar experience as follows:

> If a problem arises between two children, I say, "You can handle it with your friend, you can do it", so that they can solve their problems on their own. Then I watch them from afar, I observe them. I observe how their social skills have developed. If they can't handle a problem, then I try to intervene.

4.3.7.2. Asking questions

Several participants (n=6) focused on assessment with the technique of asking questions. They mentioned that they ask some assessment questions related to the activities to evaluate the social skills development of children. In this context, P4 said:

> In terms of assessment, you know, we have assessment questions at the end of the activity processes. When I do a social skills activity, by asking these assessment questions, it is possible to get answers from the children about the activity and understand whether it achieved the gains in this sense.

Differently, P2 put emphasis on SCAMPER technique regarding asking questions for the assessment of children's social skills by saying:

> For example, I use SCAMPER for assessment. I have some scamper questions that I have been using constantly over the years. These questions usually encourage children to express their opinions about a social situation. For example, in free play time, I ask some questions to children, I show a photograph of an elderly man crossing the street and I ask "If you saw this man, what would you do?" In this way, I try to follow the development process of children.

4.3.7.3. Portfolios

Few of the participants (n=3) mentioned that they use portfolio assessment to see the social skills development of each child from the beginning of the year to the end. To exemplify, P3 said:

> As an assessment, when you come to the end of the year, you can see the development in the social skills of children since the beginning of the year. That's how you see it clearly in the portfolio. For example, if a child draws only her mother and herself in the first picture, while in the last picture she draws all the people in the classroom, this means that she is socializing.

Also, P5 expressed herself in detail as follows:

> The portfolio is very valuable to me because it is something that happens from the beginning to the end of the semester, and I follow it closely. I also explain the importance of the portfolio to the parents, and we make a portfolio presentation to them. In social skills, I mostly take photographs and record the behaviors of children and share it with them. For this reason, I get a consent form at the beginning of the semester before I do that. In this way, we share the development of children's social skills with parents in a concrete way.

4.3.7.4. Performance-based assessment

Very few of the teachers (n=2) concentrate on performance-based assessment like drama or play activities designed by themselves to be able to assess children's social skills. For example, P11 stated:

> For example, I implement a drama activity after the field-trip. It is very effective. I can understand how children communicated with people in the places we visit on a trip, or whether they learn how to communicate with the help of this little drama activity as an assessment.

Also, P13 gave examples regarding this issue:

> We teach the classroom rules, for example, we plan a game about it, to see if they have learned the rules. Or on special days and weeks, for example, we can assess the gains of children such as sharing, helping, and empathy by doing the "Kızılay" drama. This is about what they learned and what they did not learn.

4.3.7.5. Technology-based assessments

Besides the performance-based assessment, technology-based assessment was mentioned by only two participants while they were sharing their experiences in assessing the social skills of children. For example, P11 explained how to use technology-based assessment in the classroom.

> We go on a field-trip for example. Afterwards, if there is a video related to the places we visited, I turn it on and have children watch it. I use technology because I wonder how much is left in the minds of children. So, I play the video on YouTube and ask questions to the children such as "let's see, do you remember this place?" The children remember and they say "teacher, we went to there, did you take a video of that place?"…

Moreover, P3 supported the idea of P11 by stating:

> I use technology very actively in the classroom in terms of assessing social skills and all other developmental areas of children. As children were born into technology, they should not grow up apart from technology.

4.3.7.6. Self-assessment of children

Apart from all these assessment types, the least mentioned assessment type is self-assessment of children. Only P7 stated the significance of this technique by saying:

> I like children's self-evaluation more in this regard. We make such assessments daily by asking questions such as "what made you happy today, is there

anything upsetting you, in this case, how did you solve this problem?" Then they share their opinions about themselves.

4.4. The content of education plans of preschool teachers to support children's social skills

The activity plans of teachers were investigated in terms of five social skills regarding eleven themes of *"general information about social skills activities", "types of social skills", "interval of social skills activities", "gains and indicators", "words and concepts", "types of materials", "types of activities", "organization of learning environment, "instructional approach (child-centered/teacher-centered)", "parent involvement",* and *"assessment of the activities*". In this way, the researcher tried to understand how and to what extent preschool teachers include social skills in their plans. The findings of this research question will be reported in accordance with the themes with the help of graphs and charts.

4.4.1. General information about social skills activities

In the current study, a total of 2,652 activity plans written by the participants in one semester over five months (94 working days) were evaluated to see whether the activities are related to social skills or not. In addition, daily plans and monthly plans of teachers were also reviewed in order to fully evaluate the data. As a result, 384 of the activities were separated from the whole data as they were related to the five identified social skills, which are communication, empathy, social problem solving, sharing, and helping. The researcher used pseudonyms like P3.25, P6.3, P10.18 for these selected social skills activities to analyze the findings with ease and in order not to reveal the identities of the participants.

First of all, the researcher analyzed the data regarding the distribution of social skills activities related to the participants. The findings are presented in figure 2.

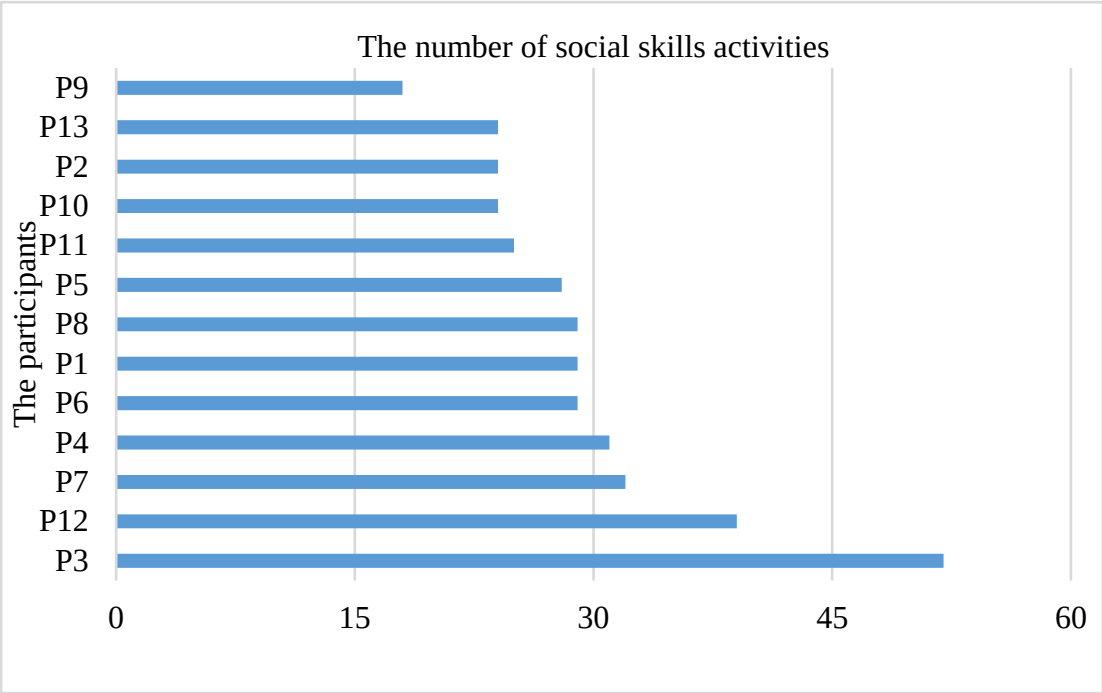

Figure 2 *The distribution of social skills activities related to participants*

As demonstrated in Figure 2, the participant who gave the most place to social skills activities with a total of 52 activities was P3, while the participant who gave the least place was P9 with 18 activities.

4.4.2. The types of social skills in the activities

Secondly, activity plans were examined according to the social skill they were associated with. Detailed information about the distribution of social skills activities among the participants is presented in Figure 3.

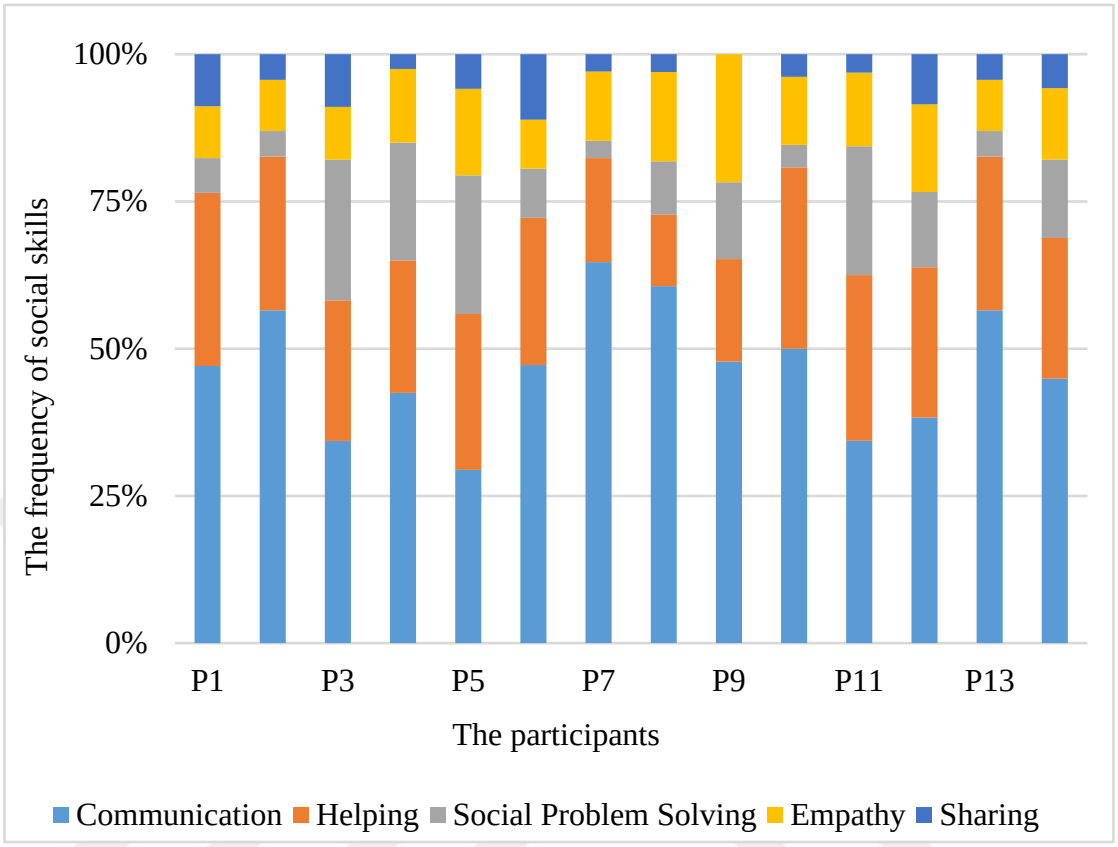

Figure 3 *Distribution of social skills in the activity plans*

As seen in Figure 3, although the distribution of social skills activities varied across different participants, the social skills activities included in the teachers' activity plans were mostly based on communication skills (45%). This was followed by helping skills (23.9%), and social problem-solving skills (13.2%). It can be observed that activities related to empathy (12.1%) and sharing skills (5.8%) were the least included types in activity plans of teachers. In order to be clearer about how activities are coded based on different social skills, two example activities are presented. The first example activity which is related to communication skills can be seen in table 17.

Table 17 *Example social skills activity based on communication skills*

P4.6
Date: 09.09.2021
MAGIC WORDS **Type of activity:** Turkish- Language activity (Large Group Activity) **Age Group**: 5 years old **Gains and indicators:** *(In the example, only related gains and indicators based on social skills are given due to the big number of gains)* **Language Development** **Gain 5:** Use language for the purpose of communication. (**Indicators:** Make eye contact while speaking. Comprehend gesture and facial expressions. Use gesture and facial expressions while speaking. Start the conversation. Continue the conversation. End the conversation. Use courtesy words in speech. Get involved in a conversation. Wait for their turn to speak. State feelings, thoughts, and dreams.) **Gain 8:** Expresses what has been heard / watched in various ways. **(Indicators**: Children ask questions about what they heard and watched. Children answer questions about they heard and watched. They tell what they heard and watched to the others. They depict what they heard and watched by means of drawings, music, drama, poem, stories, etc. **Materials: -** **Words:** Magic words **Concepts: -** **Learning process:** The teacher tells the children to sit at the table for the activity and helps to remember a characters in the story read in the previous activity. The teacher asks the children what happened to Monti, what Monti did to the animals he encountered, or what he forgot to do. Later, the teacher explains “Kids, Monti forgot to smile and say hello, which is the basis of communication, some words are precious to us, they are just like magic words". “Some words can be the beginning of a friendship, and when you say certain words, people's hearts open to you forever,” he adds. He asks children what these magic words can be. Children are given time to think. Magic words are found together by eliciting the ideas of those who want to speak. The teacher tries to get the children to find the magic words one by one. All of the magic words are found through brainstorming, for example, by giving clues about what

Table 17 *Example social skills activity based on communication skills cont'd*

magic word to say to someone who is sick or who has had an accident. The children talk about the importance of magic words and engage in a short role play. For example, a first encounter is enacted and two people communicate with each other by saying hello, how are you. A person who is sick is encountered and is told to get well soon. Finally, magic words banners are prepared together. **Assessment** What are the magic words? Have you used magic words before? Why should we use magic words? **Parent Involvement –** **Adaptation -**

Also, some activities planned by teachers include more than one skill. These kinds of activities were coded separately for more than one skill. For example, if communication, empathy, and sharing skills were included in the same activity, this activity was investigated and coded separately for these three social skills in terms of program-based items. When such activities are considered as separate activities because of focusing on different skills, more than 384 activities can be calculated in some part of the findings such as consistency between gains and indicators and learning process of the activity. On the contrary, such activities were considered as one activity among 384 social skills activities while coding the interval of social skills activities. Another activity example involving more than one social skill is presented in Table 37 (see Appendix H).

Also, all parts (activity type, material, word) of the activity plans were coded exactly as the teachers wrote in their plans. For example, if the teacher did not specify the type of activity as drama but performed a drama activity, the researcher likewise did not code the activity as drama.

4.4.3. The interval of social skills in the activity plans

The sample of this study was coded according to the interval of social skills activities planned by teachers by considering the date of the activities. Table 18

demonstrates the interval of social skills activities across the weeks based on six codes, which are everyday, four times a week, three times a week, twice a week, once a week, and no social skills activity.

Table 18 *The interval of social skills activities*

	The interval of social skills activities					
The weeks	Every day	Four times a week	Three times a week	Twice a week	Once a week	No social skills activity
September 1. week	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13	P7	P9			
September 2. week	P1	P3	P6, P12	P7, P8	P2, P4, P5, P9, P10, P11, P13	
September 3. week		P12	P3, P4, P5, P8, P11	P1, P6, P7	P9	P2, P10, P13
September 4. week		P3	P12	P2, P9, P10, P13	P4, P8	P1, P5, P6, P7, P11
October 1. week		P3	P5, P7, P8, P11, P12	P2, P4, P10, P13		P1, P6, P9
October 2. week			P3	P1, P6, P9	P2, P4, P7, P8, P10, P12, P13	P5, P11
October 3. week			P3	P7	P4, P6	P1, P2, P5, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13
October 4. week				P1	P6, P7	P2, P3, P4, P5, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13
November 1. week		P3	P5, P10, P11, P12, P13	P1, P2, P4, P6, P7	P8	P9
November 2. week			P12	P3, P4, P5	P7, P8, P9	P1, P2, P6, P10, P11, P13

Table 18 *The interval of social skills activities cont'd*

November 4. week				P11		P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13
November 5. week		P4		P2, P3, P6, P7, P10, P12, P13	P1, P8, P9	P5, P11
December 1. week		P4, P5		P2, P3, P6, P9, P10, P11, P13	P1, P7, P2, P12	
December 2. week			P11	P5, P6, P12	P1, P3, P4, P8, P9	P2, P7, P10, P13
December 3. week			P8, P12	P1, P3, P7	P5, P6, P9	P2, P4, P10, P11, P13
December 4. week				P1, P7, P12	P3, P4, P6, P8, P11	P2, P5, P9, P10, P13
December 5. week				P1, P6	P2, P10, P13	P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12
January 1. week				P6, P7, P8	P1, P2, P3, P4, P10, P13	P5, P9, P11, P12
January 2. week					P1, P2, P3, P6, P9, P10, P12, P13	P4, P5, P7, P8, P11
January 3. week	P1	P6		P3	P2, P7, P8, P9, P10, P13	P4, P5, P11, P12

As shown in Table 18, it was discovered that the interval of social skills activities included in teachers' plans is highly irregular. For example, one of the participants (P4) included the social skills activities two times in third week of September, one time in the second week of September, never in the third week of December. Besides, almost all participants included social skills activities every day in the first week of September, which is the month when the school just started. On the contrary, it is seen that social skills activities are not included every day in the activity plans of teachers in all the following weeks, except P1.

4.4.4. Gains and indicators

The researcher coded the social skills activities in terms of the consistency between gains and indicators and the learning process of activities under two categories, which are "*there are gains and indicators related to social skills*" and "*there are no gains and indicators related to social skills*". Figure 4 demonstrates the distribution of these categories depending on different participants. It can be seen that there is no consistency between gains and indicators and the learning process of social skills activities in approximately half of the sample (49.8%).

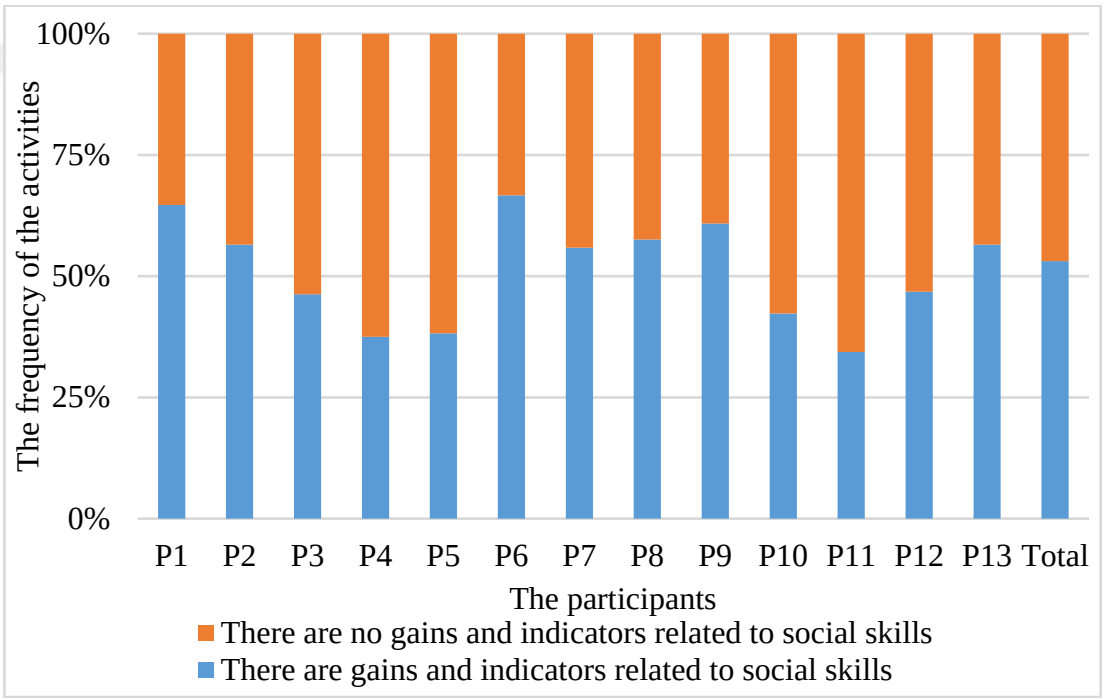

Figure 4 *The distribution of the activities based on the consistency between gains and indicators and the learning process of social skills activities*

Following this result that cannot be ignored, social skills activities were analyzed based on the consistency between gains and indicators and assessment processes in teachers' plans. The researcher coded the activities as "*no consistence between gains and indicators and assessment processes*", if the gains and indicators included in planned activities were not assessed or the gains and indicators were not included even though they were assessed in the activity plans. As presented in Figure 5, the findings demonstrated that there is no consistence between gains and indicators

and the assessment processes (55.1%) in social skills activities planned by most of the participants.

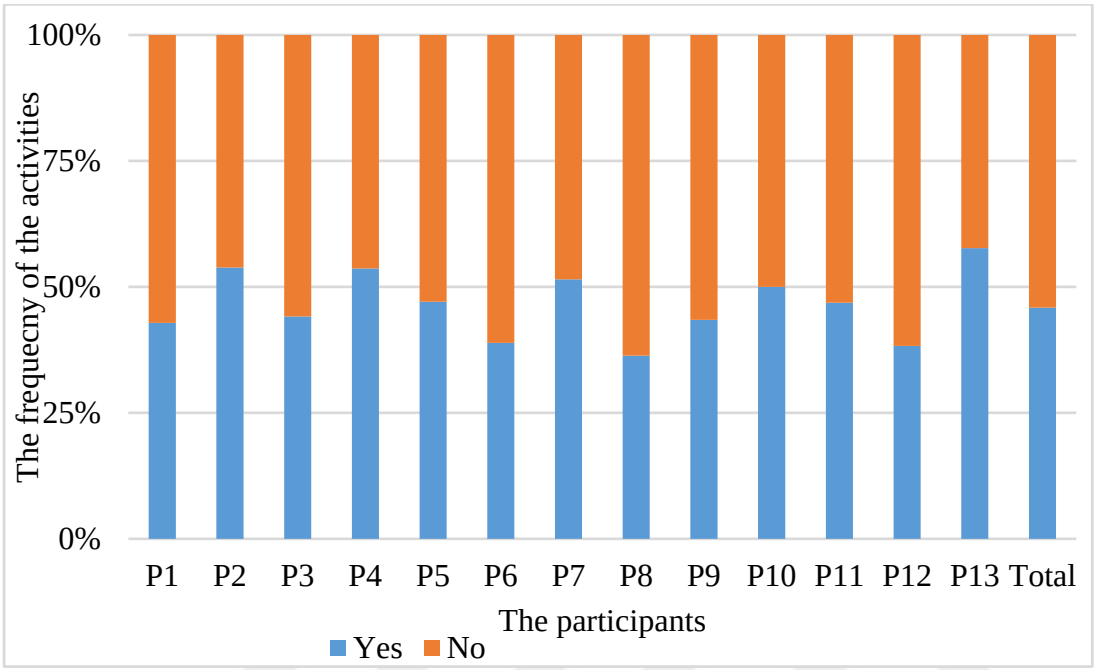

Figure 5 *The distribution of the activities based on the consistency between gains and indicators and the assessment of social skills activities*

To explain in more detailed way, the researcher investigated which type of social skills activities is consistent with the gains and indicators and which social skill is not consistent with them. Figure 6 demonstrates the detailed distribution of data regarding this issue.

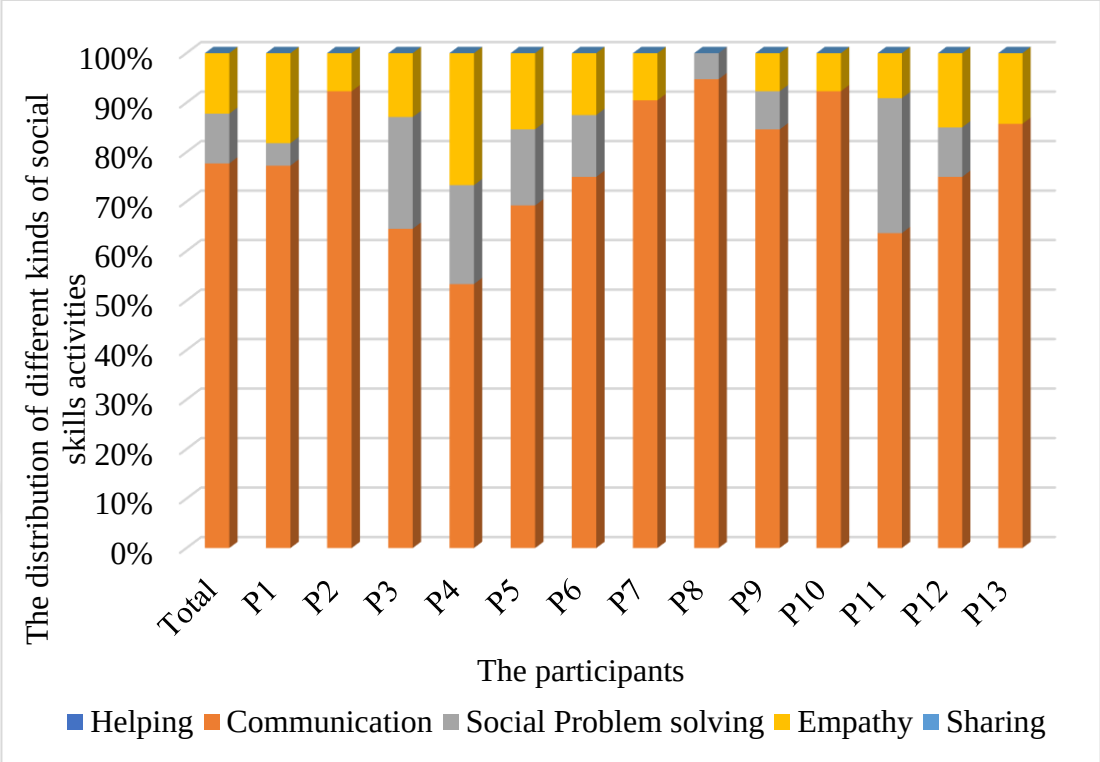

Figure 6 *The distribution of the activities based on the consistency between gains and indicators and the learning processes regarding different types of social skills*

According to the results, there was consistency between the gains and indicators and the learning process in most activities based on communication skills (77.7%). Activities based on empathy was the second type (12.2%), and social problem solving was the third type (10.4%). However, it was found that not all of the participants planned both helping and sharing activities by paying attention to the consistency between gains and indicators and the learning process.

The example activity reflecting the consistency between gains and indicators and the learning process, and assessment will be presented in Table 19. This activity is based on the empathy skill.

Table 19 *Example empathy activity based on the consistency between gains and indicators and the learning process, and assessment*

P7.23

Date: 03.12.2021

EMPATHY

Type of activity: Play integrated with art and Turkish-language activity

Age Group: 5 years old

Gains and indicators: *(In the example, only related gains and indicators based on social skills are given due to the big number of gains)*

Social and Emotional Development:
Gain 4: They express others' feelings about an event or situation. **(Indicators:** They express others' feelings, reasons, and their results)

Language Development
Gain 2: Use their voice properly. (**Indicators:** While speaking/singing, use breath properly. While speaking/singing, arrange the tone of voice. While speaking/singing, arrange the speed of voice. While speaking/singing, arrange the intensity of voice.)

Materials: Blindfold

Words and Concepts: Disability, Disability Day, empathy

Learning process:
Play activity
Children are directed to an empty area. Children are asked to work in pairs. When they are paired, the teacher says, "Whoever I choose, they will close their eyes, those who close their eyes will never open their eyes, your partner will guide you by talking, take you somewhere, tell you something". Also, teacher tells other children that "you will introduce the class to your friend without bumping into your other friends when walking around. You will explain all the centers of the class, the curtain, the toys, the carpet, what color they are, what shape they look like, what is different and similar". After the game finishes, the teacher says "now open your eyes, let your friend close their eyes. Now you walk around the class and explain". The game finishes in this way.
Art activity
Children sit on the floor and take off their socks. The teacher distributes paper and crayons. Ask the children to draw a picture by holding the crayons with their toes. At the end of the activity, they talk about the difficulties and feelings experienced.
Turkish-language activity

Table 19 *Example empathy activity based on the consistency between gains and indicators and the learning process, and assessment cont'd*

The children sit in a half-moon shape and the teacher says to play the "Disabled" finger game. We are disabled (Everybody is shown with hands) Some of us don't hear (Ears are covered) Some of us don't see (Eyes are closed) Some of us can't walk (Trying to stand up) Some of us walk with a stick (Walking with a stick is done) But we are happy (Laughs) We are all one (Everyone is shown) **Assessment** What was the significance of today? How did feel while painting with your toes? Did you like the finger game? **Parent Involvement –** **Adaptation -**

Also, the example activity based on the helping skill can be seen in table 38 (see Appendix H). This activity reflects the inconsistency between gains and indicators, the learning process, and assessment.

4.4.5. Words and Concepts

The consistency between words and concepts and learning process was investigated under two categories, which are "*there is consistency*" and "*there is no consistency*". As shown in Figure 7, the results indicate that there is no consistency between words and concepts and the learning process in the majority of social skills activities (78.1%) included in teachers' activity plans. More than half of the participants did not plan words and concepts related to social skills in more than 3 out of 4 of their activities. Also, none of the teachers planned words and concepts for more than 50 percent of their social skills activities.

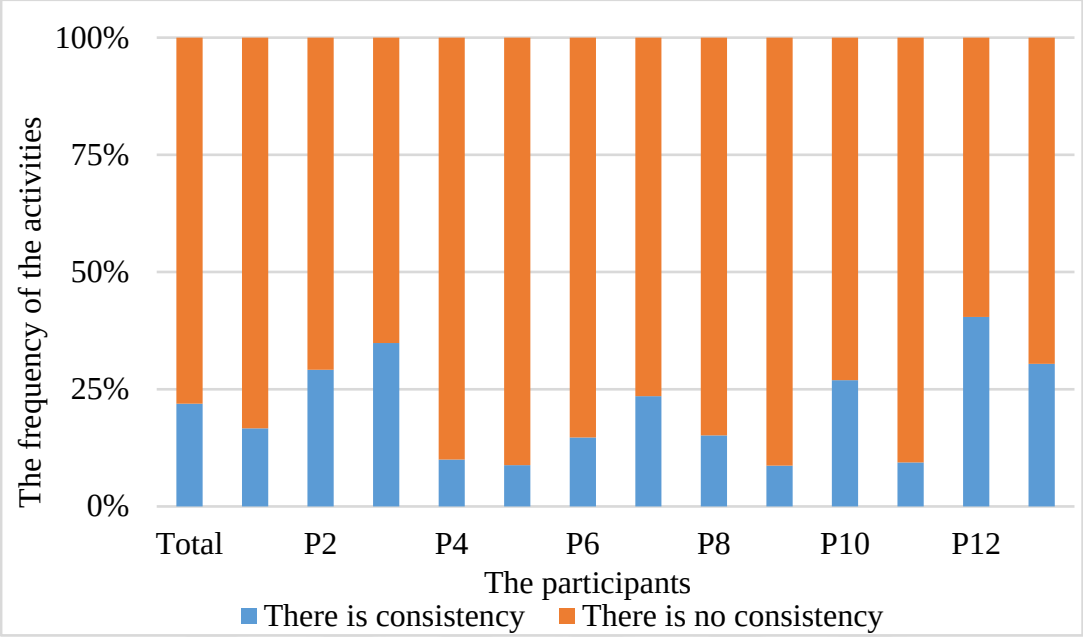

Figure 7 *The distribution of social skills activities based on the consistency between words/concepts and the learning process of the activity*

A communication activity is presented below to illustrate the consistency between words and concepts and the learning process of the activity in Table 20.

Table 20 *Example communication activity based on the consistency between words/concepts and the learning process*

P12.23
Date: 05.11.2021
WHEN SHOULD I APOLOGIZE? **Type of activity:** Language integrated with drama and play activities (Large group activity) **Age Group:** 5 years old **Gains and indicators: (***In the example, only related gains and indicators are given based on social skills)* **Language Development** **Gain 5:** Use language for the purpose of communication. **(Indicators:** Make eye contact while speaking. Comprehend gesture and facial expressions. Use gesture and

Table 20 *Example communication activity based on the consistency between words/concepts and the learning process cont'd*

facial expressions while speaking. Start the conversation. Continue the conversation. End the conversations. Use courtesy words in speech. Get involved in a conversation. Wait for their turn to speak. State feelings, thoughts, and dreams.)

Materials: Objects and toys in the classroom, play doughs, board marker

Words and Concepts: mistake, apologizing

Learning process:
Children sit at the table. The teacher starts the conversation by talking about various situations (the child bumping into someone while running, the ball hitting someone else while playing). The teacher asks "How might these people feel?" to help children to empathize. The teacher says to the children, "Sometimes, we may unintentionally or unconsciously upset the people around us, hurt them, and make mistakes. We can apologize to the people if we upset them in order to correct our unpleasant behavior. By saying that we realize our mistake, we can promise not to do it again. It helps those people forgive us". Then she starts the video named Apologize. Then she sings the poem "Apologize".

APOLOGIZE

It's not right to make mistakes,
The important thing is
understanding your mistake, know that.
if you made a mistake
You should apologize.
You must be forgiven yourself by apologizing.
But don't forget,
Don't make the same mistake again.

The teacher asks the children, "What does it mean to make a mistake? Who makes more mistakes? In what situations do we make mistakes? Sometimes we unconsciously hurt our friends, siblings, or other people around us. So, what can we do in this situation? How should we behave? How can we fix the mistake we made?" Teacher asks these questions to make children think. Then she says "What should we do and say in the following situations?"

– We accidentally dropped our friend's belongings on the floor.
– When we stood in line to wash hands, we stepped on our friend's foot.
– We broke the tip of the pen we borrowed from our friend.
– We accidentally bumped into our friend while running... as an example.

Table 20 *Example communication activity based on the consistency between words/concepts and the learning process cont'd*

Improvisations are made in accordance with the social distance rules regarding these situations. **Assessment** What did we do in our activity today? How did you feel when you put yourself in someone else's shoes? Can you tell me about an unforgettable event that you were very sad / very happy before? Have you ever apologized before? **Parent Involvement** Teacher wants from parents to talk to their children about the importance of apologizing.
Adaptation -

Also, another example of a social problem-solving activity showing the incompatibility between the learning process and the word and concept will be demonstrated in Table 39 (see Appendix H).

4.4.6. The types of materials

The content of teachers' activity plans was examined in terms of the materials they planned to use while planning the social skills activities. The findings will be reported based on twelve categories, which are *"language", "art", "play", "technological", "drama", "recycling materials", "materials created by teachers", "science materials", "materials came from home", "math materials",* and *"materials based on literacy preparation*" and *"no material"*. Figure 8 demonstrates the results depending on the numbers of different materials planned by preschool teachers for use in their social skills activities.

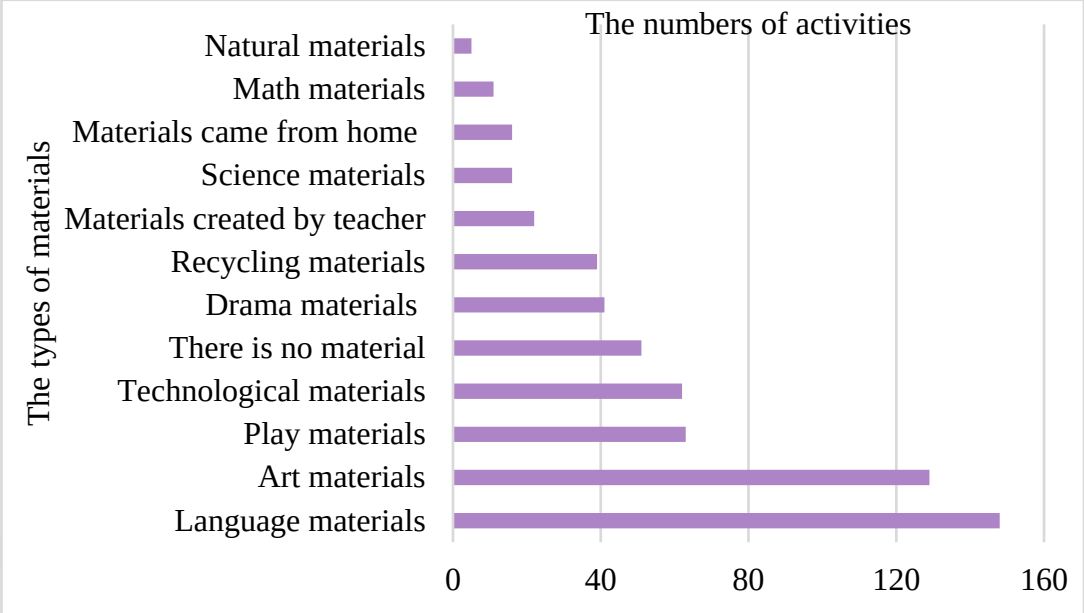

Figure 8 *The types of materials planned by teachers for use in social skills activities*

As shown in Figure 8, the most planned material type in teachers' activity plans related to social skills is language materials with 148 activities. The following material types are art materials (n=129), play materials (n=63), and technological materials (n=62). Also, the researcher determined that the teachers did not plan to use any materials in 51 social skills activities. The least type of materials that teachers planned to use are natural materials (n=5), math materials (n=11), science materials (n=15), materials created by teachers (n=21), recycling materials (n=39), and drama materials (n=41).

4.4.7. The types of activities

In the current study, the researcher coded the data based on the types of activities preferred in teachers' social skills activity plans. The results were divided into twelve categories that are *"language", "art", "play", "drama", "music", "science", "math", "movement", "literacy preparation activities", "special days and weeks", "field-trips",* and *"play time*". Figure 9 presented the findings depending on the activity types planned by teachers in their social skills activity plans.

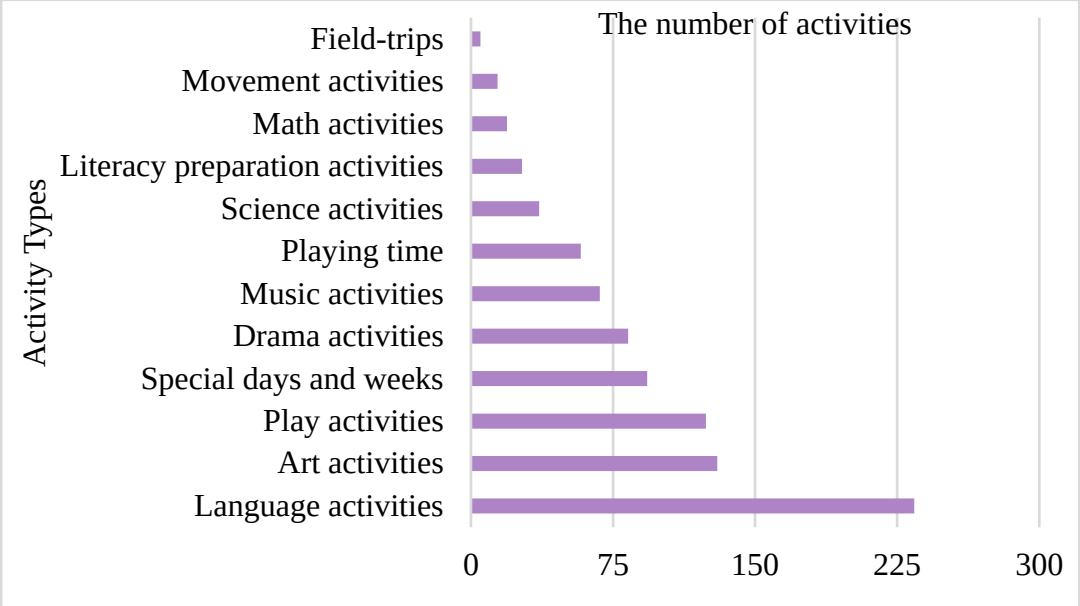

Figure 9 *The activity plans planned by teachers to support social skills of children*

According to Figure 9, an analysis of the activity plans of in-service preschool teachers showed that they mostly planned to use the language activity type in developing social skills with 234 activities. This was followed by art activities (n=130), play activities (n=124), special days and weeks (n=93), drama activities (n=83) respectively. An activity related to communication and social problem solving will be given in Table 40 (see Appendix H) to illustrate the type of language materials and the type of language activity.

On the other hand, the least planned activity types for use in social skills activities are field-trips (n=5), movement activities (n=14), math activities (n=19), literacy preparation activities (n=27), science activities (n=36), play time (n=58), and music activities (n=68). An activity based on social problem solving and sharing skills will be shown in Table 21, coded as math materials and math activity type.

Table 21 *Example activity based on sharing and social problem-solving skills in terms of using math materials and math activity type*

P3.31

Date: 22.10.2021

I KNOW THE NUMBER OF 3 "TRIPLETS" (Problem solving, Sharing)

Type of activity: Drama, play, math activities (Big Group Activity)

Age Group: 5 years old

Gains and indicators: *(Only the related gains and indicators based on social skills are given in this section)*

Cognitive Development
Gain 19: Solve the problems. **(Indicators:** State the problem. Propose various keys of solution. Choose one of the keys of solution. State the reason of choosing that key of solution. Try the chosen key of the solution. On condition that you fail to reach a solution, choose a new key of solution.)

Materials: Types of paints (Pastel, dry, finger), a card showing the number of 3

Words: Problem, solution
Concepts: Count: Numbers 1-20
The education of value: Sharing

Learning process:
The children dance freely to a song for a while. The music is turned off at intervals, and each time it is turned off, the children are given instructions such as "Jump three times, say hello to three friends, say hi to three different friends." In the final instruction, children are asked to form groups of three. Then they are shown the number 3. The instructional video "We are learning the number 3" is watched. It is said that various studies will be done about the number 3 and these studies are placed on the tables. (Works such as drawing with finger paints, line completion, trio grouping). Groups are told that they can work at whichever tables they preferred. With the work of each group, the "Three" board is created. The groups are asked whether they have any problems while doing their work, and they talk about the values of friendship and sharing over the problems that can be experienced in friendship relations and solutions. By establishing a connection with the values, drama is started. Problem situations may arise from the fact that there are three people in the groups (such as the third person wanting to participate in the game for two, the lack of seats for the third person in the cinema where there is an empty place for two, three people hungry and there is only a plate of food). Children are given sufficient time to prepare. When the groups are ready, their improvisations are

Table 21 *Example activity based on sharing and social problem-solving skills in terms of using math materials and math activity type cont'd*

watched and they discuss possible problem situations, how solutions are found, and how people in different roles feel. **Assessment** How many people were in the groups in our activity? Who has three people in his/her family? How many lights are in the traffic light? What kind of problems do you have with your friends? What kind of solutions do you find for the problems you have with your friends? Was the solution you found your common idea? **Parent Involvement** The teacher says families to play games to reinforce the number 3 with their children. **Adaptation -**

4.4.8. Organization of learning environment

When it comes to the organization of learning environment in teachers' social skills activity plans, the sample of the current study was separated into three categories, which are *"organization of indoor learning environment", "organization of outdoor learning environment",* and *"no specified organization in the learning environment".* Figure 10 reflects the numbers of activities related to different learning environments in the activity plans of teachers.

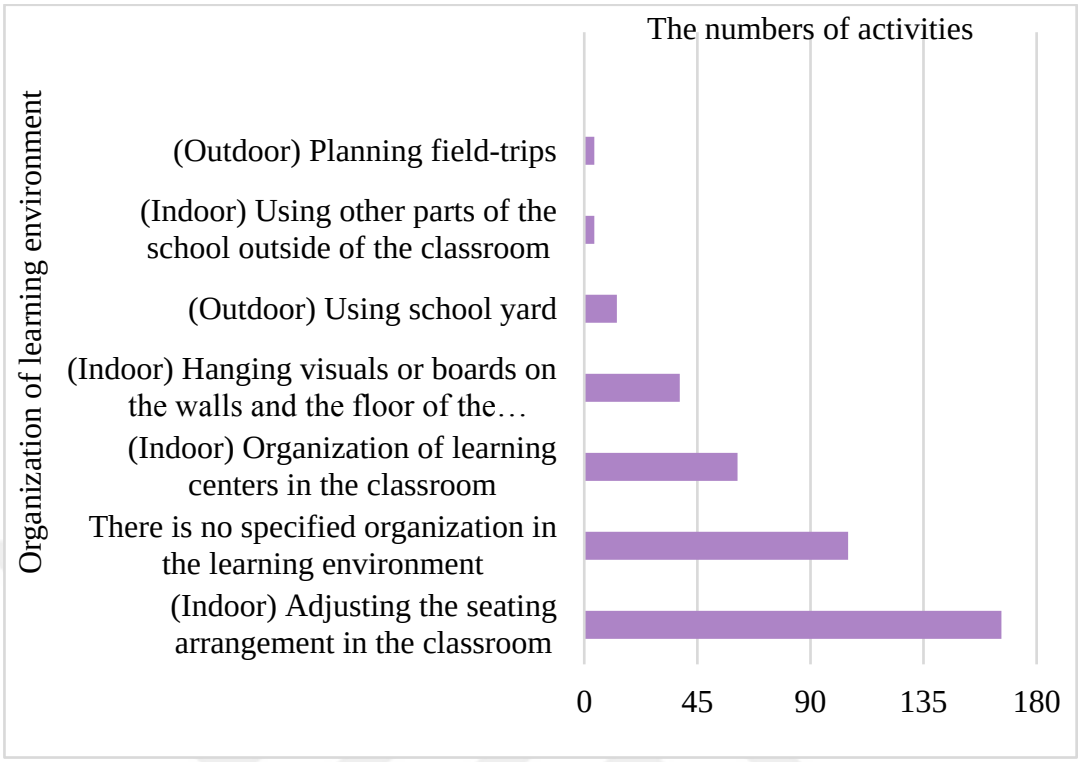

Figure 10 *Learning environments planned by teachers for social skills activities*

According to the findings shown in Figure 10, teachers planned mostly to organize indoor learning environments for their social skills activities in their activity plans. They use different techniques like adjusting the seating arrangement in the classroom in 173 activities, organizing the learning centers in the classroom (n=61), using decorations of the walls and the floor of the classroom (n=38), and using other parts of the school outside of the classroom (n=4). An example activity based on communication skills related to the arrangement of indoor learning environment by decoration of the walls and the floor of the classroom is given in Table 41 (see Appendix H).

Also, it was found that the organization of outside learning environment was planned the least in social skills activities by the participants. They used the school yard in 13 activities and planned field-trips (n=4). Furthermore, the researcher observed that there is no specified organization in the learning environment in social skills activities in a significant part of the data (n=105). An example activity related to

the social problem-solving skill for organizing a field trip (outdoor) will be presented in Table 22.

Table 22 *Example social problem-solving activity in terms of organizing a field-trip*

P3.18
Date: 27.09.2021

VISIT TO FIRE MAN

Type of activity: Art activity

Age Group: 5 years old

Gains and indicators: *(Only the related gains and indicators based on social skills are given in this section)*
-

Materials: Fire pattern, yellow-red finger paint

Words: Fire station **Concepts: colors** (Red, Yellow)

Learning process:
The teacher takes the necessary permissions beforehand and takes the children to the fire department in the city. The environment is examined, and the necessary information is obtained from the firefighters and on-site learning is provided. After returning from the trip, the children are asked what the firefighters do. They are asked what to do if they see a fire or if there is a fire in their home. Then, they are informed about what they should do in these situations and whom they should call, and the children are given the opportunity to express their feelings about this issue. The teacher says, let's focus on this subject today, and for the fire activity, fire patterns and yellow and red finger paints are distributed to the children. Children are allowed to paint the fire patterns with their fingers in such a way that there is no empty space. After this, the edges of the fire patterns may be cut, or they can be displayed on the board in this way. The teacher reminds the children again what to do in risky situations.

Assessment
What do firefighters do?
Which number should we call for firefighters when we see a fire?
What should we do in a fire or other dangerous situations?

Parent Involvement
You can talk about what to do in case of fire and tell your child how to take the necessary precautions in this regard at home.

4.4.9. Instructional Approaches (Child-centered/Teacher-centered)

The researcher examined the content of teachers' social skills activity plans related to their instructional approaches under two categories, which are *"child-centered"* and *"teacher-centered"*. The findings showed that the activities related to social skills were mostly planned as child-centered (70.5%) in the activity plans of participants. The detailed information based on the percentage of instructional approaches in social skills activities with regards to different participants is presented in Figure 11.

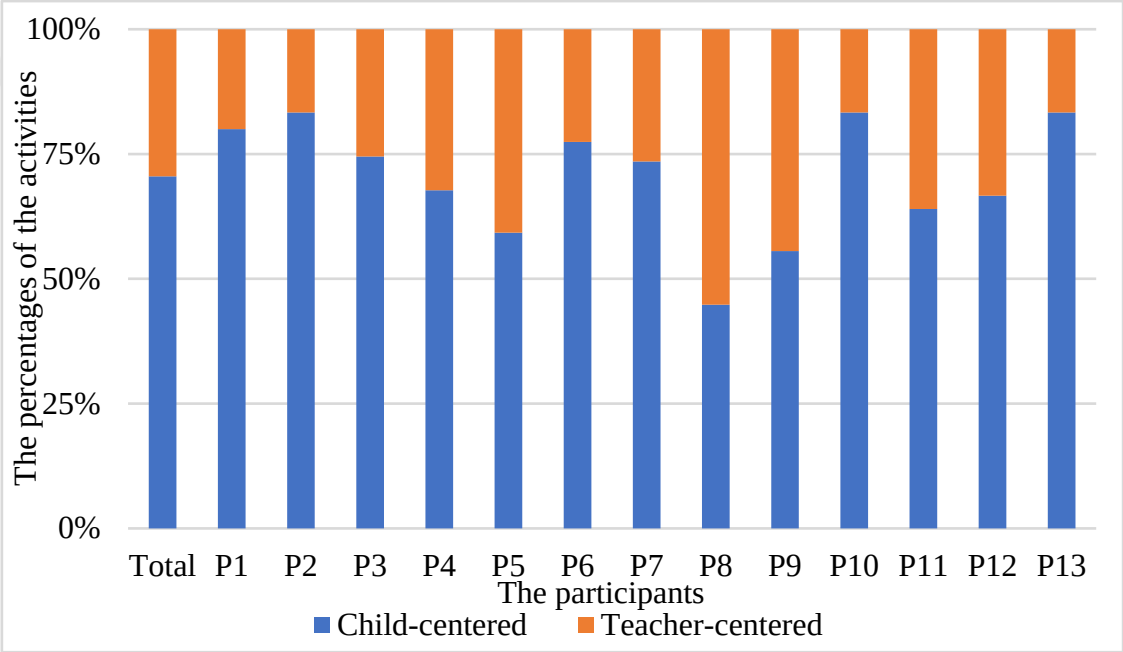

Figure 11 *The distribution of teachers' instructional approaches for social skills activities*

An example of a child-centered activity based on helping skills is demonstrated in Table 23.

Table 23 *Example child-centered activity based on helping skills*

P2.1
Date: 01.11.2021

RED WEEK

Type of activity: Language, Play, and Drama activities (Integrated Large group, and small group activity)

Age Group: 5 years old

Gains and indicators: *(Only the related gains and indicators based on social skills are given in this section)*

-

Materials: A photo taken after an earthquake, emergency kit, instructional video, white cover, whistle

Words and Concepts: Kızılay, help, disaster, natural disaster, tornado, flood, earthquake, fire, nurse, tent

Learning process:

A drama about Kızılay is made with the children. The teacher explains the subject of the drama to the children. Children distribute tasks among themselves. A small toy tent is set up somewhere in the classroom, or they cover one of the tables with a white cloth and make a tent. Then some of the children go to the tables and pretend to study. When the teacher says, "There is an earthquake," the children begin to shake. Then they pretend to be cramped for space between chairs, books, and the furniture. Meanwhile, emergency bags made in the previous activity can be used. Later, children acting as rescuers come and rescue them. Then the child who plays the role of Kızılay officer comes, helps them, and heals the patients. He places them in tents. He gives them food. At the end of the activity, the teacher asks questions about the drama (how did you feel when you were helped? Were you afraid when the earthquake happened?)

Assessment

What kind of an institution is the Kızılay?
What is a natural disaster?
In which situations does the Kızılay Institution help people?
How did you feel during the activities?
What is in the emergency kit?
Why is an emergency kit necessary?
What was your role in the drama?

Parent Involvement –

Adaptation -

4.4.10. The types of parent involvement

In this current study, the researcher analyzed the content of teachers' activity plans related to social skills in terms of a main element of the MoNE preschool education program, which is parent involvement. The parent involvement processes of social skills activities were divided into eight categories, which are "*no parent involvement", "providing activities for families to enrich the learning process at home", "getting support from families in finding resources", "one-way communication with families", "two-way communication with families", "educating parents about child development and parenting", "involving volunteer families in the learning process",* and *"getting support from families in benefiting from community resources and collaborating with the community*". The distribution of each category can be seen in Figure 12.

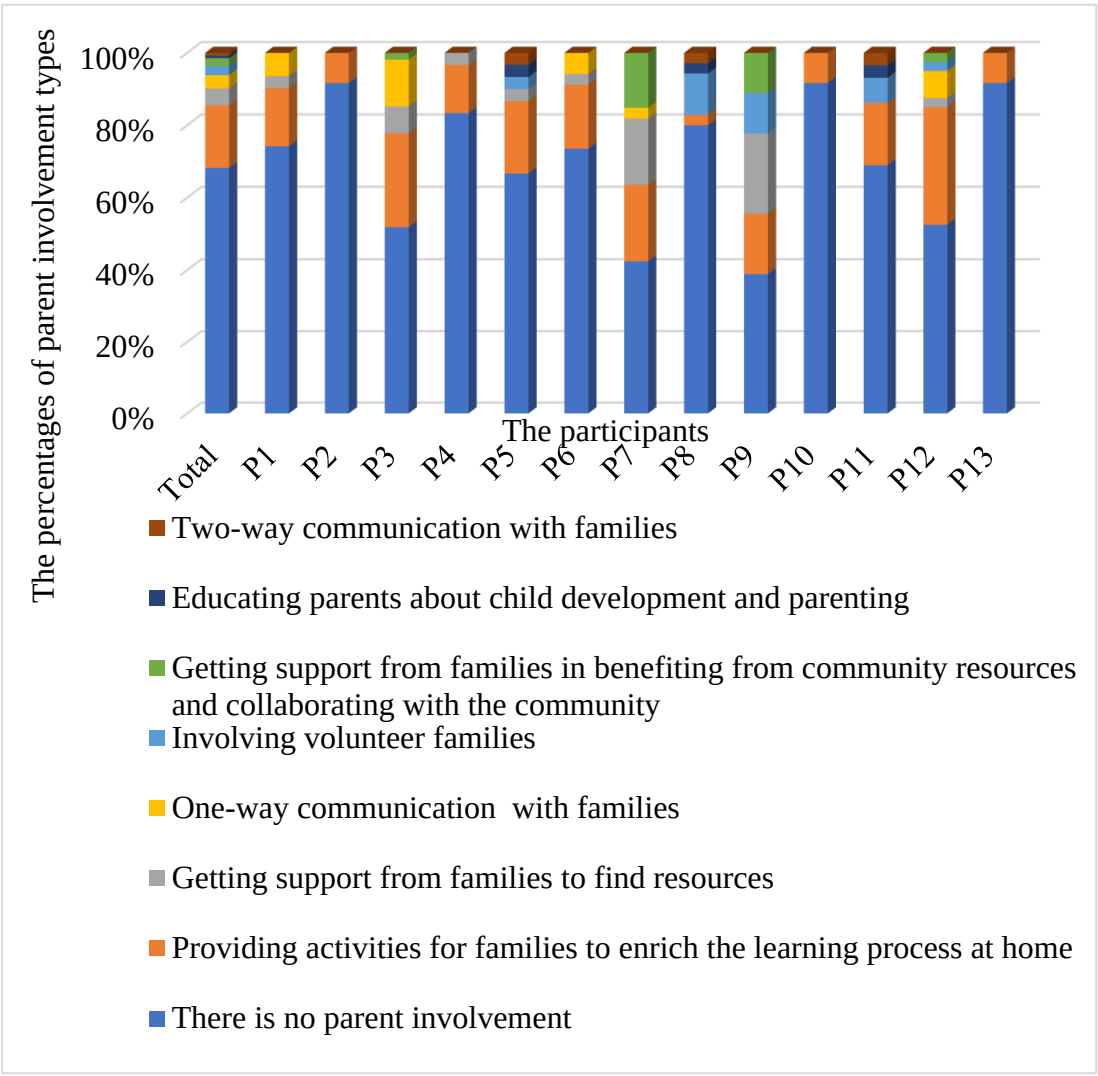

Figure 12 *The distribution of methods used to ensure parent-school cooperation to support social skills*

As presented in Figure 12, almost all teachers mostly did not plan any parent involvement activity related to social skills activities in their activity plans (68.2%). Also, it can be observed that providing activities for families to enrich the learning process at home was the most common planned parent involvement type (17.2%). This is followed by getting support from families in finding resources (4.7%), one-way communication with families (3.7%), and getting support from families in benefiting from community resources and collaborating with the community (2.2%). The least planned parent involvement type is two-way communication with families and

educating parents about child development and parenting with the same percentage of 0.7%. An example activity about the helping skill will be shown in Table 24 to depict the method of providing activities to enrich the learning process at home.

Table 24 *Example helping activity showing the method of providing activities to enrich the learning process at home*

P5.12
Date: 04.10.2021
ANIMALS ARE MY FRIEND **Type of activity:** Art integrated literacy preparation activity (Large Group Activity) **Age Group:** 5 years old **Gains and indicators:** *(Only the related gains and indicators based on social skills are given in this section)* - **Materials:** Paint, paper, cat food, small bags, water can, 2 wooden spoons, bird food **Words:** Responsibility **Concepts:** Hungry-full
Learning process: The teacher directs the children to the tables and asks them to draw a picture about the love of animals. After paper and paint is distributed to everyone, children make a picture and the works are hung on the board. The song "Let's love animals" is played and the children try to learn it by repeating. A coloring page about the animal protection day is distributed to the children and it is completed with the song they have just learned. The teacher asks the children if they would like to feed birds and says let's prepare a nice package for them. After breakfast, leftovers and breadcrumbs spilled on the table are shown to children. They are invited to share ideas about what can be done with these breadcrumbs. There is a discussion on the difficulty birds may have in finding food during cold weather. Teachers asks how can we help the birds in this situation? Leftovers are collected in a bowl and placed in a suitable place in the garden. Then teacher asks the children “How did you feel while helping the birds? What was it like to go through our food scraps? What else can we do to help the birds?” Pre-prepared bird food, water cans and wooden spoons are shown to the children. The teacher talks to the children about what can be done with these materials. As an answer, it is said that a food station may be built for the birds. First,

Table 24 *Example helping activity showing the method of providing activities to enrich the learning process at home cont'd*

the teacher cuts off the parts of the water drum where wooden spoons will be placed. The children put bird food in it. Wooden spoons are placed by the teacher. Finally, the food station is hung on an appropriate tree. **Assessment** What did we do today? What do these animals need? What are animal rights? What are our responsibilities towards animals? How did you feel when you prepared food for stray cats? Why is that? **Parent Involvement** Families are told to talk to their children about stray animals and to place a bowl of water and food outside their door. Families are said to build shelters for animals with their children using leftover materials. **Adaptation -**

An example activity on the method of getting support from families in cooperation with the community can be seen in table 42 (see Appendix H). This example is related to empathy skills.

4.4.11. The types of assessment to assess social skills of children

Assessment processes of social skills activities were investigated as well under the six categories of assessment based on *"questioning", "no assessment", "performance-based assessment", "observation", "portfolios and exhibitions",* and *"technology-based assessment".* The distribution of assessment types for the social skills activities of teachers can be observed in Figure 13.

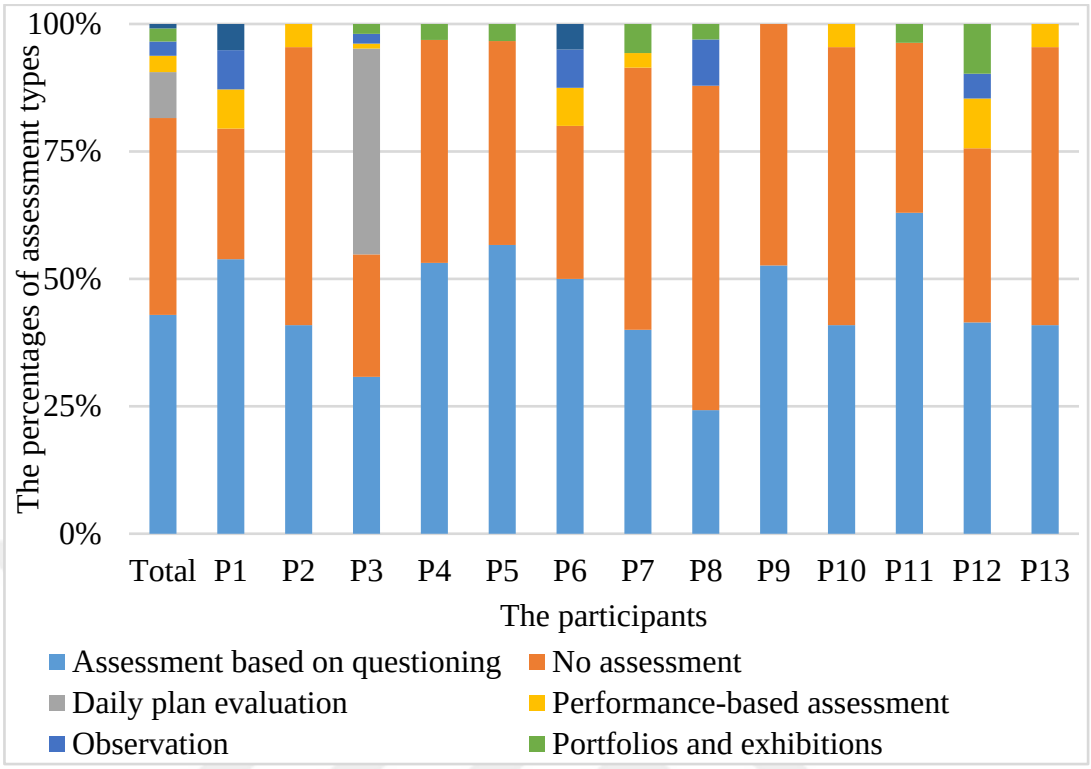

Figure 13 *The distribution of assessment types planned by teachers for social skills activities*

According to the results, the most planned assessment type regarding social skills activities was assessment based on questioning (42.91%). This was followed by the "no assessment" category which means that teachers did not plan any assessment process for social skills activities (38.6%). It is also noteworthy that teachers used the following methods least commonly: daily plan evaluation (9.01%), technology-based assessment (3.21%) which was followed by portfolios and exhibitions (2.78%), observation (2.57%) and technology-based assessment (0.85%). A helping activity coded as assessment based on questioning is presented in Table 43 (see Appendix H).

In addition, an empathy activity that illustrates assessment based on portfolio and exhibitions is given below (see Table 25).

Table 25 *Example empathy activity showing assessment based on portfolio and exhibitions*

P13.19
Date: 03.12.2021
DIFFERENT BUT THE SAME **Type of activity:** Art integrated with language (Large and small group activity) **Age Group:** 5 years old **Gains and indicators:** *(Only the related gains and indicators based on social skills are given in this section)* **Social and Emotional Development** **Gain 4:** They express others' feelings about an event or situation. **(Indicators:** They express others' feelings, reasons, and their results). **Materials:** Drawing paper, coloring pages, crayons, eye patch, storybook **Words and Concepts:** - **Learning process:** The class is divided into two groups. The first group is asked to take off their shoes and socks. Drawing paper is hung on the wall or spread on the floor in suitable positions. The children are asked to draw a picture by holding the crayons with their toes. The eyes of the students in the other group are covered with an eye patch. Various coloring pages are distributed, and they are asked to paint. After the painting activity, they sit in a circle. Children share how they felt during the activity and the difficulties they experienced. **Assessment** Together with the children, banners are created with various slogans for "Disability Day". Banners are decorated and exhibited in various parts of the school. **Parent Involvement -** **Adaptation -**

4.5. Comparison of preschool teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their education plans

The researcher evaluated the self-reported practices of thirteen preschool teachers and the content of their education plans regarding social skills activities together in this section. The findings are compared and tabulated to specify the similarities and differences referring to ten themes which are "*the types of social skills*", "*the interval of social skills activities*", "*gains and indicators*", "*words and concepts*", "*the types of materials*", "*organization of learning environment*", "*the types of activity types*", "*instructional approach (child-centered/teacher-centered)*", "*the types of parent involvement*", and finally "*the types of assessment*".

4.5.1. The type of social skills

Both consistency and inconsistency were encountered between self-reported practices and the activity plans of preschool teachers about including different types of social skills in the educational program. Firstly, there was consistency between self-reported practices and teacher plans about activities addressing different types of social skills when the data was evaluated based on the rate of social skill types. For instance, almost all teachers (n=11) reported that they include activities related to communication skills in the educational program. A review of the contents of all teachers' activity plans showed that they mostly included activities related to communication skills. On the other hand, there was no consistency between self-reported practices and education plans when the data was examined by focusing on each participant. For example, most teachers (n=9) reported to include activities related to sharing skills in the educational program. However, as can be seen in Table 26, only four teachers actually included activities related to sharing skills in their plans. By the same token, although five of the teachers (P2, P4, P5, P10, P11) stated to support the sharing skills of children in their self-reported practices, they did not include any activity related to social skills in their education plans.

Table 26 *The comparison of self-reported practices and the content of the activity plans in terms of social skills activity types*

The type of social skills	Self-reported practices	The content of the activity plans
Communication	P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(N=11)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 (n=13) **Percentage of activities: 45,1%**
Helping	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(N=10)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 (n=13) **Percentage of activities: 23,9%**
Empathy	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P9, P10, P12, P13 **(N=10)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 (n=13) **Percentage of activities: 11,9%**
Social Problem solving	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P8, P10, P12, P13 **(N=9)**	P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P11, P12 (n=8) **Percentage of activities: 13,3%**
Sharing	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P10, P11, P12 **(N=9)**	P1, P3, P6, P12 (n=4) **Percentage of activities: 5,75%**

4.5.2. The interval of social skills activities

There was an inconsistency between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans as demonstrated in Table 27. They were quite different from each other. Although most of the teachers (n=11) reported to include social skills activities constantly and systematically in their educational plan, in reality it was found that social skills activities were planned not systematically in all teachers' educational plans. Moreover, an analysis of the content of activity plans showed that almost every participant (n=11) planned periodically systematic social skills activities, despite only few of the teachers (n=3) specifying this in their self-reported practices.

Table 27 *The comparison of teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of the interval of social skills activities*

The interval of social skills activities	Self-reported practices	The content of the activity plans
constantly systematic	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12 **(n=11)**	-
periodically systematic	P1, P8, P10 **(n=3)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=11)**
Not included systematically	P1, P13 **(n=2)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)**

4.5.3. Gains and indicators

The analysis of data indicates no consistency between self-reported practices of teachers and their activity plans regarding gains and indicators. Only five teachers stated that they pay attention to gains and indicators as a program-based factor while planning social skills activities. However, it was discovered from activity plans that all teachers paid attention to gains and indicators in half of the data. Differently, as Table 28 shows, half of the social skills activities planned by the teachers were not consistent with gains and indicators. None of the teachers mentioned it in their self-reported practices.

Table 28 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of gains and indicators*

Paying attention to gains and indicators while planning social skills activities	Self-reported practices	The content of the activity plans
Yes	P1, P4, P7, P9, P10 **(n=5)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 50,2%**

Table 28 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of gains and indicators cont'd*

No	-	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 49,8%**

4.5.4. Words and concepts

There seems to be a negative consistency between self-reported practices and the content of activity plans about words and concepts. To illustrate, only two participants reported to pay attention to words/concepts as a program-based factor as they planned social skills activities, while the other eleven did not mention anything related to words/concepts in their self-reported practices. Similarly, the analysis of teachers' plans presented in table 29 shows that not all teachers paid attention to words and concepts in their plans as they planned social skills activities.

Table 29 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of words and concepts*

Paying attention to words/concepts while planning social skills activities	Self-reported practices	The content of the activity plans
Yes	P10, P12 (n=2)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 21,9%**
No	-	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 78,1%**

4.5.5. The types of materials

On the one hand, there is apparent inconsistency between self-reported practices and the content of teachers' activity plans regarding the types of materials if the data from the participants is analyzed separately. The findings vary and are

completely different from each other. On the other hand, when the ratio of materials is compared to other materials in general, there is a consistency between self-reported practices and the content of teachers' plan. For example, teachers reported that they mostly use language materials in social skills activities. Parallel to teachers' self-reported practices, it was seen that in most of the social skills activities (n of activities=148), teachers planned language materials to use. Comparative details regarding materials can be observed in Table 30.

Table 30 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of materials*

The types of materials	Self-reported practices	The content of the activity plans
Language materials	P1, P2, P3, P4, P9, P10, P12 **(n=7)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 25,2%**
Art materials	P2 **(n=1)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 21,9%**
Play materials	P2, P7, P13 **(n=3)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=12)** **Percentage of activities: 10,7%**
Technological materials	P4, P10 **(n=2)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=10)** **Percentage of activities: 10,5%**
No material use	P2, P3, P11 **(n=3)**	P2, P3, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=10)** **Percentage of activities: 8,7%**
Drama materials	P3, P10, P13 **(n=3)**	P1, P3, P4, P6, P7, P9, P12 **(n=7)** **Percentage of activities: 7%**
Recycling materials	P8 **(n=1)**	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=10)** **Percentage of activities: 6,6%**

Table 30 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of materials cont'd*

Materials created by the teacher	P2, P4, P10 **(n=3)**	P4, P5, P7, P11 **(n=4)** **Percentage of activities: 3,7%**
Science materials	-	P3, P5, P9, P12 **(n=4)** **Percentage of activities: 2,7%**
Math materials	-	P1, P3, P6 **(n=3)** **Percentage of activities: 1,8%**
Natural materials	P5 **(n=1)**	P1, P5 **(n=2)** **Percentage of activities: 0,8%**

4.5.6. The learning environment

There were some differences and commonalities between self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their activity plans related to the learning environment. For instance, most of the preschool teachers stated that they mostly use indoor learning environments while performing social skills activities (n=10). Similarly, as demonstrated in Table 31, it was observed that teachers planned their activities mostly in an indoor learning environment (n=13 and n of activities=272). However, although not specified by teachers in their self-reported experiences, it was seen through content analysis that there is no specific planning regarding learning environment in a crucial number of social skills activities (n of activities=105).

Table 31 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of the learning environment*

Learning environment	Self-reported practices	The content of the activity plans
Indoor • Adjusting the seating arrangement • Organization of learning centers • Decoration of the walls and the floor of the classroom	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P12 **(n=10)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 68,1%**

Table 31 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of the learning environment cont'd*

Indoor • Using other parts of the school outside of the classroom	P6, P7, P10 **(n=3)**	P6, P7, P8, P9 **(n=4)** **Percentage of activities: 1%**
Outdoor • Using the school yard	P7, P12, P13 **(n=3)**	P2, P3, P10, P12, P13 **(n=5)** **Percentage of activities: 3,2%**
Outdoor • Planning field-trips	P11 **(n=1)**	P3, P6, P7 **(n=3)** **Percentage of activities: 1,2%**
There is no specific organization in the learning environment during social skills activities	-	P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=10)** **Percentage of activities: 26,3%**

4.5.7. The types of activities

Although self-reported practices of preschool teachers and the content of their plans about activity types generally differed, there were some similarities. For example, most of the teachers stated that they support children's social skills in most language activities (n=10). Similarly, it was seen that the majority of social skills activities (n of activities=234) was planned as language activities in the plans of teachers. As a difference, only five teachers reported that they use special days and weeks to plan social skills activities, but all teachers included social skills activities in their plans during special days and weeks, as shown in Table 32. This shows that there are inconsistencies specific to single participants.

Table 32 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of activity types*

Activity types	Self-reported practices	The content of the activity plans
Language activities	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P12, P13 **(n=10)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 26,2%**

Table 32 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of activity types cont'd*

Art activities	P2, P3, P11, P12, P13 **(n=5)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 14,6%**
Drama activities	P3, P4, P7, P9, P13 **(n=5)**	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12 **(n=10)** **Percentage of activities: 9,3%**
Play activities	P1, P2, P8, P13 **(n=4)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 13,9%**
Science activities	P12 **(n=1)**	P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P12, P13 **(n=9)** **Percentage of activities: 4%**
Music activities	P3 **(n=1)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 7,6%**
Literacy preparation activities	-	P1, P6, P7, P8 **(n=4)** **Percentage of activities: 3%**
Math activities	P9 **(n=1)**	P3 **(n=1)** **Percentage of activities: 2,1%**
Movement activities	-	P3 **(n=1)** **Percentage of activities: 1,5%**
Free Play time	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10 **(n=8)**	P2, P6, P10, P13 **(n=4)** **Percentage of activities: 6,5%**
Special days and weeks	P1, P4, P6, P10, P12 **(n=5)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 10,4%**
Field-trips	P11 **(n=1)**	P3, P6, P7, P8, P9 **(n=5)** **Percentage of activities: 0,5%**

4.5.8. Instructional approach (Child-centered/Teacher-centered)

There seems to be inconsistency between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their activity plans about instructional approaches. For example, only

one participant (P4) reported that she pays attention to child-centered planning of social skills activities as a program-based factor. However, a completely different finding was found in the content of teachers' plans. As presented in table 33, all teachers mostly paid attention to child-centered planning in social skills activities.

Table 33 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans in terms of instructional approach (child-centered/teacher-centered)*

Instructional Approach	Self-reported practices	The content of the activity plans
Teacher-centered	-	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 (n=13) **Percentage of activities: 29,4%**
Child-centered	P4 (n=1)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 (n=13) **Percentage of activities: 70,6%**

4.5.9. The types of parent involvement

As can be seen in Table 34, the self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their activity plans about parent involvement types are completely different from each other. For example, although none of the participants mentioned not planning parent involvement in social skills activities in their self-reported practices, there was actually no parent involvement activity in most of the social skills activities in their plans.

Table 34 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans regarding the type of parent involvement*

The type of parent involvement	Self-reported practices	The content of the activity plans
No parent involvement activity	-	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 68,7%**

Table 34 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans regarding the type of parent involvement cont'd*

Providing activities for families to enrich the learning process at home	P1, P2, P4, P6, P8, P9, P12 **(n=7)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=12)** **Percentage of activities: 17,3%**
Getting support from families in finding resources	P5, P7, P11 **(n=3)**	P3, P7, P9 **(n=3)** **Percentage of activities: 4,7%**
One-way communication with families	P1, P4, P6, P7, P9 **(n=5)**	P1, P3, P6, P12 **(n=4)** **Percentage of activities: 3,7%**
Involving volunteer families	P2, P5, P11, P12 **(n=4)**	P8, P9, P11 **(n=3)** **Percentage of activities: 2,5%**
Getting support from families in benefiting from community resources and collaborating with the community	-	P7, P9 **(n=2)** **Percentage of activities: 2,2%**
Two-way communication with families	P1, P2, P3, P6, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=8)**	P5, P8, P11 **(n=3)** **Percentage of activities: 0,7%**
Educating parents about child development and parenting	P2, P3, P7 **(n=3)**	-

4.5.10. The types of assessment

Similar to the parent involvement category, there was no apparent consistency between the self-reported practices and the content of teachers' plans about types of assessment. As shown in Table 35, almost all participants reported to use the observation method in the activities to assess the social skills of children. However, only five participants included observation as an assessment method in very few social skills activities (n of activities=13) in their plans. For another example, less than half of the participants (n=6) mentioned that they used assessment based on questioning in social skills activities. On the contrary, it was seen that all participants included this

assessment type in most of the social skills activities (n of the activities=200) in their plans.

Table 35 *The comparison between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans regarding the types of assessment*

The types of assessment	Self-reported activities	The content of the activity plans
Assessment based on questioning	P2, P4, P6, P8, P9, P13 **(n=6)**	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 47,1%**
No assessment	-	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13 **(n=13)** **Percentage of activities: 42,4%**
Performance-based assessment	P11, P13 **(n=2)**	P1, P6, P12 **(n=3)** **Percentage of activities: 3,5%**
Observation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13 **(n=12)**	P1, P3, P6, P8, P12 **(n=5)** **Percentage of activities: 3,0%**
Portfolios and exhibitions	P3, P5, P13 **(n=3)**	P3, P7, P12 **(n=3)** **Percentage of activities: 2,8%**
Technology-based assessment	P3, P11 **(n=2)**	P1, P6 **(n=2)** **Percentage of activities: 0,9%**
Self-assessments of children	P7 **(n=1)**	-

In summary, as shown in table 36, on the one hand, there were consistencies, inconsistencies, and partial consistencies between the self-reported practices and education plans of teachers when the data was interpreted based on the rate of codes. On the other hand, there were generally partial consistency or inconsistency between the two data sets when the data was interpreted on a per participant basis.

Table 36 *The consistency between the self-reported practices and the contents of teachers' education plans*

Consistency between self-reported practices and education plans of teachers		Program-based items
Evaluating data based on the ratio of codes	Consistent	Types of social skills Types of activities Types of materials Words/concepts
	Partial consistent	Learning environment
	Inconsistent	Interval of social skills activities Gains/indicators Instructional approach Parent involvement Assessment
Evaluating the data based on specific to each participant	Consistent	Types of social skills (n=6) Learning environment (n=3)
	Partial consistent	Types of social skills (n=5) Interval of social skills activities (n=4) Types of activities (n=7) Types of materials (n=4) Words/concepts (n=2) Learning environment (n=5) Gains/indicators (n=5) Instructional approach (n=1) Parent involvement (n=4) Assessment (n=6)
	Inconsistent	Types of social skills (n=2) Interval of social skills activities (n=9) Types of activities (n=6) Types of materials (n=9) Words/concepts (n=11) Learning environment (n=5) Gains/indicators (n=8) Instructional approach (n=12) Parent Involvement (n=9) Assessment (n=7)

4.6. Key findings

4.6.1. Views of preschool teachers about supporting children's social skills in the scope of the MoNE program

- Preschool teachers stated that the program is important to support children's social skills.
- Although all participants mentioned the importance of the program in supporting social skills, some of them emphasized the insufficiency of gains and indicators, insufficiency of the program about social skills, and lack of support from stakeholders for social skills activities in the program.
- Most teachers viewed that social skills activities should be integrated into their plans in a constantly systematic way and a periodically systematic way.

4.6.2. Self-reported practices of preschool teachers to support children's social skills based on the MoNE program

- Most participants shared that they pay attention to the gains and indicators, parent involvement, learning environment, materials, the learning process, field-trips, assessment, words/concepts, and the needs and individual differences of children while planning social skills activities in the program.
- According to the self-reported practices of teachers, they try to include social skills activities regularly at different time periods, such as everyday, at least twice a week, at least once a month.
- Teachers shared that they use different activity types like language, art, drama, play, science, music, math, field-trips to promote children's social skills. Also, it was stated by the teachers that they support children's social skills with free play time, special days and weeks, and instantaneous situations in the program.
- According to the self-reported practices of teachers, they mostly support communication skills in the educational program. The least supported social skills in the educational program were sharing and social problem solving.
- The self-reported practices of teachers showed that they use different kinds of materials such as language materials, play materials, drama materials,

materials created by teachers, technological materials while enhancing children's social skills.

- Teachers stated that they generally organize the indoor learning environment to support the social skills of children.
- Teachers reported that different kinds of parent involvement are used in social skills activities. These include communicating with families, providing activities for families to enrich the learning process at home, involving volunteer families, educating parents about child development and parenting, and getting support from families in finding resources.
- Finally, their reports indicated that preschool teachers use observation, asking questions, portfolios, performance-based assessment, technology-based assessment, and self-assessment by children to assess children's social skills in the program.

4.6.3. The content of teachers' activity plans related to social skills

- The content analysis of teachers' plans showed that their social skills activities mostly focused on communication skills. It was also observed that activities related to sharing skills were the least commonly included type in the activity plans.
- It was seen in teachers' plans that the interval of including social skills activities was highly irregular.
- With the help of the content analysis of teachers' plans, it was discovered that there is no consistency between gains and indicators and social skills activities in half of the data.
- It was found that there is no consistency between words and concepts and the learning process in the majority of social skills activities.
- The content of teachers' plan indicated that the most commonly planned materials in social skills activities are language materials, art materials, play materials and technological materials respectively. On the other hand, the least materials that teachers use are natural materials, math materials, science materials, and recycling materials.

- According to the content analysis, teachers planned mostly to organize the indoor learning environment for social skills activities rather than outdoor. Also, no specified organization was found in the learning environment in a significant part of the data.
- The findings show that the activities related to social skills were mostly planned as child-centered.
- The researcher discovered that almost all preschool teachers did not plan parent involvement activities for most of their social skills activities.
- It was seen that the most planned assessment type in social skills activities was assessment based on questioning. On the other hand, the least commonly planned types were technology-based assessment, portfolios and exhibition, and observation.

4.6.4. Comparison of preschool teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their activity plans

- The findings demonstrated consistency between the self-reported practices and activity plans in types of social skills, types of activities, types of materials, and words/concepts.
- It was found that the self-reported practices of thirteen preschool teachers and the content of their plans about the learning environment was partial consistent.
- The researcher found that the interval of social skills activities, gains and indicators, instructional approaches, parent involvement and assessment seemed inconsistent between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their education plans.
- Finally, when the comparison results were evaluated based on each participant separately, partial consistency or inconsistency was found between the self-reported practices and education plans of most of the teachers.

In summary, all these findings provide significant insights into the phenomenon of supporting social skills in the program. The following chapter will continue with a discussion of these findings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussion of the findings, implications that arose with this study, and recommendations for further studies are presented in this chapter. The findings are discussed in four parts in parallel with the research questions. Firstly, the findings related to first research question concerning the views of thirteen preschool teachers about the relevance of the program in terms of supporting social skills are discussed. It is followed by the discussion of the findings related to second and third research questions regarding the self-reported practices and the content of teachers' education plans separately. Finally, the researcher discusses the fourth research question depending on the consistency between teachers' self-reported practices and the content of their plans regarding supporting social skills in the last part.

5.1. The views of preschool teachers related to supporting children's social skills in the MoNE program

The views of in-service preschool teachers about *the importance of program* with regards to promoting the social skills of children are very similar to those found in other studies in the literature (Johnson et al., 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Palmer, 2019; Pekdoğan, 2016; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019). In the present study, preschool teachers stated that the program is significant to support children's social skills by emphasizing the importance of gains and indicators, concepts, activity time, playing time, being flexibility, child-centeredness, and its cyclical nature. Similar to this finding related to activity time, Palmer (2019) stated the importance of the program by saying that children's social skills are built with the help of teachers conducting activities and lessons in the program. Also, like the finding regarding gains and indicators, according to Çimen and Koçyiğit (2010), the activities based on gains and indicators related to social skills in the program are effective to acquire social

skills for preschool children. These similarities with the literature show that teachers seem to understand the importance of the program and program-based items for supporting social skills.

Although all participants mentioned the importance of the program, some also focused on the insufficiencies of the program in terms of supporting the social skills of children. Specifically, teachers emphasized that the program is not sufficient in terms of specifying gains and indicators regarding the age differences of children, the content of the program related to social skills, gains and indicators about those skills, and taking support from stakeholders for social skills activities. These findings are similar to those in previous studies carried out to learn the views of preschool teachers about early childhood education program based on gains and indicators (Özsırkıntı et al., 2014), specifying gains and indicators based on age differences of children, and taking support from stakeholders (Başaran & Ulubey, 2018). In consideration of this similarity, the participants in this study focused on some important and improvable points of the program alike the participants in other studies. For example, the participants in the study conducted by Başaran and Ulubey (2018) stated that if the gains and indicators of the program are organized according to the age differences of children, it can contribute to realizing the full potential of the program.

Concerning the *interval of social skills activities,* numerous researchers highlighted the necessity of teaching social skills to children systematically in the program by stating that social skills should not be done randomly, rather it should be done in a planned and systematic manner starting from childhood (Johnson et al., 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Pekdoğan, 2016; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019; Williams and Reisberg, 2003). In alignment with the literature, the majority of teachers viewed that social skills activities should be integrated into the plans consistently in a systematic way rather than implemented randomly.

Moreover, the participants mentioned some reasons why they integrate such activities into the plans in a consistent and systematic way. The first reason was that the most significant skills are social skills in the early years. This reason coincides with the explanation of Erikson in his theory. According to the Erikson (1998), children begin to interact socially with other children between the age of 3 to 6. This

stage is very significant for supporting interactions of children with each other so that they don't lack self-confidence in social situations (Erikson, 1998). The other reasons were indicated as social life is the most basic situation of human life and the most important goal of early childhood is preparing children for their social environment. This finding is compatible with the literature because according to researchers, social skill acquisition is a critical step in the development of young children with long lasting implications for the quality of social experiences during life (Ferreira et al., 2021; Fieldman & Eidelman, 2009; Özbey & Köyceğiz-Gözeler, 2020). Thus, these similarities show that the views of teachers regarding the inclusion of social skills activities into education plans are consistent with the related literature.

5.2. Self-reported practices of preschool teachers related to supporting children's social skills in the MoNE program

Teachers reported that they consider the content of the program including gains and indicators, parent involvement, learning environment, materials, learning process, and assessment while planning social skills activities, along with their views on these issues. In parallel with these findings, the requirement of paying attention to the learning environment and materials (McGinnis, 2016; Mecha & Ayaga, 2020), gains and indicators (Çimen & Koçyiğit, 2010), different kinds of activities (Deborah, 2008), parent involvement (Adams et al., 2010), and assessment (Johnson et al., 2016) is found in the literature regarding the preparation of social skills activities. Thus, it can be deduced that in-service teachers seem to be aware of the importance of the program and the requirement of program-based items in the process of planning social skills activities. Also, the participants stated they consider the principles of the program like needs, individual differences of children and the characteristics of the family and environment as program-based items while planning social skills activities. Similarly, previous researchers highlighted the importance of paying attention to the needs of children (Khusnidakhon, 2021), the characteristics of the family and environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Katz, 2014). For example, according to Katz (2014), the process must be individualized to meet the unique needs of each child because children

differ from one another in so many ways and the process must be culturally appropriate for each child.

In terms of supporting *different types of social skills*, teachers reported that children's communication skills are supported mostly in the program, in parallel with the result mentioned in the study by Aksoy (2021). The reason for this similarity might be that teachers think that the ability to communicate effectively is the key foundation for the development of other skills. Katz (2014) confirmed this assumption by stating that conflict resolution, including taking turns, sharing, problem solving and negotiating all require the ability to express oneself and listen. Also, Kaffemaniene (2018) stated that communication skills are essential in the structure of social skills. On the contrary, the least supported social skills in the program were expressed as sharing and social problem solving by teachers. The reasoning for this situation, as participants mention, can be that teachers are focusing on these skills if children have difficulty to share or solve their problems rather than planning and implementing specific activities to teach these skills. However, it can be possibly said that preschool teachers should also give importance to sharing and social problem-solving skills and prepare activities for these skills in the program, since deficiencies in sharing and social problem-solving skills were found to be among the most common social skill deficiencies in preschool children (Aksoy, 2021). Also, Leyden and Shale (2012) mentioned that children have difficulty sharing and solving conflicts with others, and they need help to acquire these important skills.

Concerning *the interval of social skills activities*, numerous researchers highlighted the necessity of teaching social skills to children systematically in the program. Similar to the literature, teachers' views related to including social skills activities into their plans regularly were supported also by their self-reported practices. Almost all teachers pointed out that social skills activities are indispensable activities, and they are trying to include them every day, twice a week or once a month in the program regularly. In a similar way, Aksoy (2021) found that preschool teachers include social skills activities in the education mostly every day. Therefore, it seems that teachers value to include social skills activities into the program according to their self-reported practices.

However, few participants pointed out that they are planning social skills activities as periodically systematic based on the periodical needs of children. Periodical needs of children were expressed by the teachers in terms of the idea that children need different social skills at different times. The issue of preparing the activities depending on the needs of children is supported by several researchers (Samancı, 2010; Khusnidakhon, 2021; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008). For example, Khusnidakhon (2021) stated that instruction is more influential when the lessons are implemented according to the skills needed by children. Apart from that, the participants specifically mentioned that they include social skills activities almost every day in the program throughout the first weeks in the beginning of the school. To the knowledge of the researcher, this finding related to including social skills in the program much more often during the first weeks of the school has not been discussed in the literature before. The reason of this new finding might be that children need to get used to the school and to meet their friends in the beginning of the school. For this reason, teachers might try to include social skills activities and games more often in the program in the first few weeks. This argument can be supported with the suggestions of McArthur (2002). As teachers also mentioned to use, McArthur (2002) recommended teachers deploy getting-acquainted games related to social skills including silent greetings, personal interviews, mirror talking so that children can learn each other's names and build a sense of community in the classroom.

About using *different kinds of activities*, it seems that teachers are supporting children's social skills through appropriate activity types in accordance with the literature. It was expressed by the participants that language, art, drama, and play activities are the most used activity types in implementing social skills activities respectively. This is quite similar to findings of other studies conducted with preschool teachers because the participants from other studies mentioned to use play, drama, stories, and art mostly in the activities related to social development (Aksoy, 2021; Kızıltaş et al., 2018; Yapar et al., 2021). The reason why teachers are using mostly these activity types might be explained with the help of different studies in the literature. Regarding language activities, a study conducted by Bonnie et al. (2000) with classroom teachers demonstrated that children's literature increases children's

appropriate usage of social skills including empathy, self-control, responsibility, and conflict resolution. Also, it is recommended that drama can be used to support social skills of children (Ceylan et al., 2019) because such activities influenced the five-year old children's social skills positively. In addition to these, According to Arda (2009), children develop their social skills through establishing new friendships and learning to speak, listen, have empathy, await her/his turn, share, help each other and cooperate during art activities. Lastly, Deborah (2008) stated that social skills games are helpful to promote language skills, listening skills, cooperation skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, understanding concepts of fairness, empathy, tolerance, ability to tolerate waiting and to take turns.

Another of the findings in parallel with previous studies (Aksoy, 2021; Yapar et al., 2021) is that preschool teachers reported that math, science, field-trip, and music activities are given little place in social skills activities. However, there is a great need to use various types of activities in order for learning to be effective for children with different learning potentials and interests. In the limited literature, it is stated that different types of activities can be used as alternatives to support children's social skills. For example, although teachers reported to include very few science activities for social skills activities in this study, it was found that drama-based science activities are effective on the social skills of preschool children (Kara & Aslan, 2018). This finding demonstrated that science activities can be an alternative in the process of developing children's social skills. Moreover, different from the finding of using math activities the least to support social skills of children in this study, Church (2015) stated math activities including sorting, classifying, patterning, seriating, graphing, counting, and measuring build the essential social skills of cooperation, sharing, asking for help, acceptance in the group, and listening. Also, some children are more comfortable expressing themselves through music than through words (Katz, 2014). Therefore, music is another alternative activity type for promoting children's social skills although preschool teachers stated to use music activities the least regarding enhancing children's social skills in the current study. The last but not least finding related to activity types is that teachers did not mention the movement activity type as one they have used to develop children's social skills. Contrary to this finding, Katz (2014)

stated that dance and movement are natural ways for children to express themselves, children can communicate emotions and ideas through movement. Considering the result that teachers give little place to some types of activities and do not give any place to some types to enhance children's social skills, teachers might not know how to integrate social skills into different disciplines like math, movement, science, and music. Thus, it is possibly necessary to support and educate teachers to perform social skills activities integrated with different disciplines.

The results of the study also show that more than half of the teachers are using free play time to enhance children's social skills. The reason for this might be that free play activities contributed more to social and emotional development of children (Meran, 2019). Furthermore, it is an unusual result that special days and weeks were used to perform social skills activities by 38% of the teachers. The first reason why teachers perform social skills activities on special days and weeks may be that the topics of special days and weeks including "animal protection week", "week of disabilities", or "Kızılay week" that are easily adapted to social skills activities especially by including helping and sharing skills. The second reason might be that the specific days and weeks section is especially included in the monthly plan template of the preschool education program in Turkey (MoNE, 2013). Therefore, the fact that the MoNE preschool education program supports special days and weeks is a positive situation in terms of enhancing the social skills of children.

Concerning using *different kinds of materials* in social skills activities, Hollingsworth and Winter (2013) found that preschool teachers stated to use stories, puppets, and games to teach social skills. Similar to the study of Hollingsworth and Winter, in-service teachers in this study shared that they are using mostly materials based on different activity types like language materials, play materials, drama materials and art materials. When it is remembered that teachers mostly use language, art, drama and play activity types in social skills activity, this is an expected result that language, play, drama, and art material types are used the most. The related literature is supporting to use play materials (Mecha & Ayaga, 2020), language materials (Gönen et al., 2012), art materials (Katz, 2014), and drama materials (Wu et al., 2020) to promote social skills of children. However, the result of reporting very little use of

technological materials, natural materials, and materials collected for recycling and no use of math, science, movement, and music materials by teachers is not a negligible result. Since the importance of these activity types such as technological materials (Caballero-Gonzalez et al., 2019; Krach et al., 2021), and math materials (Quesenberry et al., 2016) to support social skills of children is also emphasized in the literature.

Regarding the issue of *organizing the learning environment*, it might be said that preschool teachers are using the indoor learning environment in an appropriate way to promote children's social skills because there was a similarity between the literature and the results of this study. Teachers reported that they generally organize the indoor learning environment by regulating the seating arrangement of the classroom to provide opportunities for children to be able to see and learn from each other. This method is supported by Bandura with social learning theory because he (1977) stated that children learn new behaviors, skills, and information by observing each other in a social context. Moreover, teachers mentioned the decoration of the walls and the floor, arrangement of learning centers, and out of the class places like other classrooms, drama room, or hallway in terms of using the indoor learning environment in the study. All these methods used by teachers are in line with the recommendations in the literature related to social skills (Heyworth, 2013; LeBlanc, 1989; McGinnis, 2016). For example, Heyworth (2013) mentioned that using charts and posters in the classroom supports social learning of children. From a different perspective, McGinnis (2016) stated that it is important to arrange the tables, desks, the place where children can sit cross-legged on the floor in a semi-circle, and the playgrounds and learning centers in the classroom. In addition, alternative school locations like corridors, and playgrounds are suitable places for practicing and teaching social skills (McGinnis, 2016).

However, contrary to the information recommended in the literature (Anggraeni, 2018; Dowdell et al., 2021; Hinkley et al., 2018; Loukatari et al., 2019), only a few participants focused on arranging an outdoor learning environment for social skills activities in this study. This finding is similar to the finding of another study conducted by Sak (2013) with in-service teachers. He found that none of the preschool teachers mentioned outdoor activities during the day. This similarity might be the result of

thinking outdoor activities as only for free play activities and not being aware of the activities that can be planned and carried out in the playground (Sak, 2013). However, several researchers emphasized the importance of creating opportunities that can be provided for children's social skills development in outdoor settings. For instance, Dowdell et al. (2011) stated that outdoor play provides more opportunities to promote the development of social interactions and socialization, as highlighted by a few of the participants in this study. Similarly, Anggraeni (2018) revealed that outdoor activities can strengthen children's social skills including communication, cooperation, and sharing. Since it is a very significant fact that outdoor learning environment should also be used and designed for activities to enhance children's social skills.

In terms of providing *parent-school cooperation* to promote the social skills of children, teachers reported that that different kinds of parent involvement activities are used that are related to social skills activities in the current study. They focused mostly on the types of communicating with families, providing activities for families to enrich the learning process at home, and involving volunteer families to promote children's social skills. These parent involvement types are recommended for use in the literature for enhancing social skills (Adams et al., 2010; Boz et al., 2018; Gözcü Binbir & Ertürk Kara, 2020; Yurtseven & Kurt, 2013). The reason why teachers use mostly communication type might be that open communication between the school and the home would facilitate greater opportunities for both parents and teachers to create clearer understandings of the practices, expectations, and responsibilities related with children's social development (King & Boardman, 2006). Also, Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that the interactions between family and school affect the development of the child.

However, according to the result of this study, some parent involvement types which are "parenting" and "getting support from families in finding resources" were stated least to use in terms of supporting social skills of children. These mentioned types which are parenting (Ölçer & Güngör-Aytar, 2014) and getting support from families in finding resources (Katz & Helm, 2001) are also important for social skills development of children in the literature. The reason why teachers use these types less may be due to the fact that they are not explained in detail neither in "MoNE Preschool

Education Program" nor in the "Family Support Education Guide integrated with MoNE program" [OBADER]. In OBADER, only the types of communicating with families, involving volunteer parents in education, trips to home, making awareness about special needs children and suggesting activities for families are provided for preschool teachers (MoNE, 2013). Hence, it is thought that it would be beneficial to educate teachers on different types of parent involvement especially on "parenting" and "getting support from families in finding resources" and to develop resources on this subject.

About *assessment of children's social skills,* on the one hand, observation and asking question types of assessment are used mostly to assess social skills of children according to the self-reported practices of teachers. This finding is very similar with the literature. The importance of observation is stated in the literature as one of the most useful ways to be aware of young children's social development, individual characteristics, and their developmental milestones (Gresham, 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Merrell, 2001). This might be the reason why teachers are using mostly the observation method to assess the social skills of children. Also, it is thought that the reason why teachers use the questioning method as an assessment in the second place is possibly due to the fact that it is emphasized and exemplified in detail as one of the program requirements in the program (MoNE, 2013).

On the other hand, the other assessment types which are portfolios, performance-based assessments, technology-based assessments, and self-assessments of children were mentioned to be used the least by the participants in their self-reported practices. Different from this finding, the literature gave information about the importance of portfolio and exhibitions (Wortham, 2014; Yus et al., 2017), performance-based assessment (Worham & Hardin, 2020), technology-based assessment (Wortham, 2014), and self-assessment of children (Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Ömeroğlu et al., 2014) to assess social skills of children in early childhood education. In this regard, it seems that teachers don't have much knowledge about different types of assessment to assess the social skills of children. For this reason, teachers might be educated in terms of using several types rather than using limited types to assess social skills of children appropriately.

5.3. The content of teachers' educational plans regarding supporting children's social skills

While discussing the content of teachers' education plans, the MoNE Preschool Education Program of Turkey (MoNE, 2013) was considered as the main source because in-service preschool teachers, working in public preschools in Turkey, apply this program to plan their activities. In addition, several sources from the literature related to supporting social skills and program planning were consulted.

In terms of including different *types of social skills* in the program, the content analysis of teachers' education plans showed that the social skills activities were mostly based on communication skill. Also, it can be observed that activities related to the sharing skill were least included in the activity plans. However, it is significant to include all types of social skills in the program because according to Johnson et al. (2016), all children have different needs. For this reason, instruction is more influential when the lessons are implemented according to the skills needed by children (Khusnidakhon, 2021; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008). Katz (2014) confirmed this by stating that the lesson plans of teachers should include a variety of activities that target the social developmental needs of each child and specific skills such as sharing, problem solving, and cooperation.

Regarding the *interval of social skills activities*, it was seen that the interval of social skills activities included in the plans of teachers is highly irregular. On the one hand, in the beginning of the year, almost all participants included social skills activities into their education plan, mostly every day. On the other hand, they did not include any activity related to social skills in their education plans in some weeks or only one activity was included in some months. Hence it was seen that teachers planned social skills activities randomly in their education plans. However, there is a lot of argument based on the requirement of planning social skills activities systematically rather than randomly in the education plan (Johnson et al., 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Pekdoğan, 2016; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019; Williams and Reisberg, 2003). Based on this difference with the literature, it seems that teachers have deficiencies in regularly planning social skills activities in their education plans.

This finding can be interpreted as teachers have limited planning knowledge to develop children's social skills. However, according to the Directorate General for Teacher Training (2017), the ability of planning education comes first among the professional skills of teachers. Accordingly, the teacher should be able to plan the education processes effectively.

Regarding *the types of materials*, when looked at the literature, it was seen that planning different kinds of materials for social skills in the program for 3- to 5-year-olds have a significant role (Wortham, 2006). It has been found that the needs of children are different from each other, and they express themselves through different materials (Katz, 2014). In the present study, the content of teachers' plans indicated that language materials, play materials, art materials, and drama materials are mostly planned for use in promoting social skills activities, while natural materials, math, science, and recycling materials are planned the least. This finding differs from those reported in the literature and suggests that locally teachers could extend the variety of materials children encounter when learning important social skills.

The program of Turkey is based on *gains and indicators*. Specifically, the aim of the program is to support children by creating different educational processes to achieve various gains and indicators so as to carry them from their level of development to the highest level they can reach (MoNE, 2013). Similarly, the importance of gains and indicators (called as goals and objectives) is specified in other national programs by stating that they guide the learning process (Ministry of Women and Child Development of India, 2012; Teaching Strategies, 2020). Special emphasis is placed on requiring teachers to refer to and incorporate gains and indicators while creating their plans related to social skills. However, in the current study, when the content of teachers' plans was analyzed, it was observed that half of the activity plans made no reference to related gains and indicators for the social skill that was emphasized in the learning process. Not surprisingly, no gains and indicators to fit the assessment of social skills activities could be found in more than half of the data. Detailed analysis demonstrated that related gains and indicators were mentioned mostly in the activities based on communication skills. However, it was found that

there were no related gains and indicators in all plans concerning activities to promote helping and sharing.

There may be several reasons for the omission of appropriate gains and indicators from the teachers' plans relating to social skills activities. First, it might be that teachers select the gains and indicators by looking at the program, where many are already specified for inclusion in terms of all developmental areas included in the program. Where no specific gains and indicators related to the social skill that they want to teach are set out, it might be that teachers try to select the ones they think as most appropriate to her program for the activities, as confirmed in the interviews. The current program does make mention of several gains related to communication skills like "use language on the purpose of the communication", "they express feelings and opinions about event or situation in unique ways", "expresses what has been listened/watched in various ways". Also, there are gains related to empathy like "they express other's feelings about and event or situation", social problem-solving skill like "they solve their problems with others", "solve the problems". However, no gains and indicators related to the skills of sharing and helping are specifically mentioned and this may explain why participants do not include related gains and indicators for such activities in their plans, and why they tend mostly to associate related gains and indicators with communication activities. Earlier studies that were conducted to assess the program also confirm that the program can be developed by adding new gains and indicators related to social development (Başaran & Ulubey, 2018; Özsırkıntı et al., 2014). The present study confirms that the program needs to be augmented to include additional gains and indicators for all social skills so as to encourage teachers to include them in their education plans.

A second reason for why teachers did not include gains and indicators related to social skills may be that they were not sure how to specify them themselves. Guidance for use of the present program states that a gain and/or indicators which are not present in the program can be determined and added to the education plan by the teacher (MoNE, 2013). In this current study, only one participant (P3) added gains and indicators which are not present in the program (see Table 40). It therefore seems that teachers do not fully internalize the content of the program in terms of gains and

indicators, and they have difficulty incorporating them into their planning of social skills activities.

Like gains and indicators, it seems that teachers also face challenges while planning words and concepts associated with social skills activities. No words and concepts related to social skills were specified in most of the teachers' activity plans although becoming familiar with the key words and concepts related to subject is critical for children (Haug & Odegaard, 2014). Moreover, the requirement to specify words and concept is indicated in the program. It is stated in the activity plan template that teachers should identify the words and concepts that will enrich the vocabulary of children in the learning process (MoNE, 2013). As with gains and indicators, it seems likely that teachers did not include related words and concepts about social skills because none appear in the schedule of example words and concepts demonstrated in program. However, it is specified in the program that some of the concepts could also be included by teachers under different categories (MoNE, 2013). Hence, both the teachers and the policy makers preparing the program should take responsibility for not including related words and concepts in the social skills activities of teachers since children use words and concepts as tools for furthering conceptual understanding when they discuss their thoughts (Haug & Odegaard, 2014).

Another aspect is *instructional approach*, where using a child-centered techniques is thought very important in the development of children's social skills (Samancı, 2010). This approach is given prominence and is considered as one of the core features of our program (MoNE, 2013). It can be inferred from this study that teachers adopt a child-centered approach while planning their social skills activities since the findings show that the activities related to social skills were mostly planned as child-centered.

In terms of organizing the *learning environment*, it was found that preschool teachers are mostly organizing indoor learning environment for social skills activities compared to outdoor in education plans of them. Although it is a positive situation to include indoor activities in the plans for teachers, it should be considered that outdoor activities don't take place in most of the social skills activities. The reason for not including outdoor activities in the education plans for social skills activities can be that teachers prefer to take children outside if there is time left after indoor activities.

However, it is known that planning and organizing not only indoor but also outdoor learning environments benefits the social skills development of children (Wortham, 2006). In addition, it is set out that the planning of educational activities should be balanced among basic features of the program (MoNE, 2013). Accordingly, as the program aims to support children in multiple developmental areas, all developmental gains and indicators should be addressed in a balanced manner in education plans. Likewise, it is important to spend time for place of implementation of the activity (indoor and outdoor) in a balanced way (MoNE, 2013). The fact that teachers appear to carry out less activities in the outdoors is an issue that deserves special attention.

Another reason why teachers don't focus on social skills activities in outdoor settings might be that they don't know how to use them for promoting social skills activities, or their administrators and other stakeholders don't support them to arrange activities in outdoor settings. In this regard, it is necessary for preschool teachers, administrators as well as the provincial directorate of national education and other stakeholders undertake the responsibility (Kızıltaş et al., 2018). It has also previously been found that in order to be able to organize outdoor learning environments appropriately, it was recommended that preschool teachers should be educated more to support the social and emotional development of children by using out-of-class activities (Kızıltaş & Sak 2018). In this way, teachers can understand why and how to plan outdoor activities in their education plans to develop children's social skills.

The present study also found a lack of references to specified regulations regarding the learning environment in a significant part of the data in teachers' education plans. Taking into account this finding, it can possibly be inferred that teachers are not paying sufficient attention to planning for the safe and beneficial use of appropriate learning environments for social skills activities while creating their activity plans. MoNE (2013) highlights the importance of this issue by stating that careful and meticulously planned education environments carry great importance for educational curricula to succeed. Also, in Creative Program used around the world, the planning of organizing learning environment is very important for socialization of children (Dodge et al., 2014; Teaching Strategies, 2020). Therefore, it should not be forgotten that teachers

should also pay attention to the learning environment while planning their education programs.

In terms of the *types of activities*, language, art, drama, play activities, and special days and weeks were seen to be used mostly to support the social skills of children. Previous research concerning the promotion of social skills among preschoolers supports types like play activities (Deborah, 2008), art activities (Yazıcı, 2017), language activities (Katz, 2014), or drama activities (Salcedo, 2017). The current research found positive evidence that teachers plan social skill activities appropriately for some activity types, while others such as science, math, movement, literacy preparation activities, and field-trips were used the least according to the content analysis of teachers' education plans. When considered, the balanced feature of the program requires teachers to plan both passive and active activities by being careful about including all kinds of activity types like language, mathematics, and play (MoNE, 2013). The reason for the least planning of these activity types might be that they are not able to find appropriate resources and they do not know how to plan and integrate social skills into these disciplines. In this context, it is known that there are limited resources in the literature (Kara & Aslan, 2018; Quesenberry et al., 2016; Church, 2015; Kızıltaş & Sak, 2018) to guide teachers while planning their social skills activities.

Parent involvement was not included in most of the social skills activities in the plans of teachers. As opposed to this finding, the importance of parent involvement in supporting the social skills development of children is emphasized in the literature (Adams et al., 2010; Bartz & Karnes, 2018; Boz et al., 2018; Connell & Prinz, 2002; Deloatche et al., 2015; King & Boardman, 2006; Yurtseven & Kurt, 2013). Depending on the difference between the finding of this study and the literature, it can be noted that teachers are recommended to specify parent involvement activities in their education plans. Concerning the requirement of including parent involvement activities into the plans, several mainstream and national early childhood education programs (Ministry of Women and Child Development of India, 2012; Katz & Helm, 2001; Teaching Strategies, 2016; HighScope, 2013) which contain a variety of resources for teachers. Besides, In Turkey, the program (MoNE, 2013) was

accompanied by a specific parental involvement program known as OBADER which was prepared as integrated with the program and teachers are advised to use this source as well as the program. However, it was also indicated that there was no need to organize a family engagement activity for every activity in the program of Turkey (MoNE, 2013). This might account for why teachers fail to mention parent involvement activities adequately in their education plans. However, the absence of parent involvement activity from most of the education activities associated with social skills remains a result that cannot be ignored.

Concerning the *assessment* of children's social skills, teachers probably need to understand appropriate planning regarding different kinds of assessment because no method was found to assess social skills in almost half of the data obtained from teachers' activity plans. However, in the literature, the importance of the assessment process about social skills development of children is highlighted by several researchers (Johnson et al., 2016; Luiselli et al., 2005; Merrell, 2001). For instance, Merrell (2001) stated that there is a great requirement to find influential ways for social skills assessment. Also, different from the requirement for the use of different assessment types in the literature (Gresham, 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Merrell, 2001; Wortham, 2014; Yus et al., 2017; Wortham & Hardin, 2020), and our program (MoNE, 2013) teachers planned the least to use observation, portfolios and exhibitions, technology-based assessment, and performance-based assessment. This may be the reason why teachers' plans do not include any kind of assessment in almost half of the data. However, it is important for teachers to include different kinds of assessments into their education plans to be able design future activities depending on the needs of children. Regarding this issue, Yılmaz et al. (2021) stated that the documentation of children's learning experiences guides the further planning of teachers and informs the program through assessment.

The only issue that teachers plan assessment process in accordance with the MoNE program is that the assessment type of asking questions was included in more than half of the social skills activities by all participants. MoNE (2013) stated that the discussion at the end of the activity may be directed through some questions based on descriptive questions, affective questions, questions for gains, and questions related to

daily life. Hence, teachers are aware of planning questions to assess social skills activities as stated in the program.

5.4. The consistency between self-reported practices and the content of teachers' activity plans related to social skills

When the consistency between self-reported practices and the content of teachers' education plans are considered in terms of the ratio of answers and activity plans to the total, there were some consistencies, partial consistencies, and inconsistencies. Firstly, it was established that there is a consistency between the self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their education plans regarding the types of social skills, the types of activities, the types of materials, and words/concepts issues.

The study found that of the *types of social skills* included in the program, most of the social skills activities that teachers planned were focused on communication skills. It was also observed that activities related to sharing were the least included in teachers' activity plans. This result is consistent with the self-reported practices of the study participants. Therefore, finding a consistency between their self-reported practices and the content of their education plans might be thought as a positive issue because this shows that teachers are careful about planning the types of social skills they specify in their self-reported practices. Regarding the importance of planning, Vygotsky (1978) indicates that the content of what is being taught must carefully planned in schools to internalize socially available skills for children.

Regarding *the types of materials,* the current research found a consistency between self-reported practices and the content of teachers' plans. Both the content of teachers' plans, and self-reported practices indicated that the most planned materials to use in social skills activities are based on different activity types like language materials, play materials, art materials, and drama materials. The least planned materials are natural materials, math, science, and recycling materials. However, there is only one difference between two types of data based on using technological materials. Although only two participants reported to use technological materials for social skills activities, considerable technological materials like videos and animations appeared in the plans

of teachers. The reason for these differences might be that teachers plan their activities before implementation, and they may think to be able to easily acquire these materials. However, they may also be experiencing technical difficulties about playing videos and lack suitable materials when implementing their planned activities. The issue of inequalities of materials was discussed by Can and Kılıç (2019) who conducted a study with in-service preschool teachers in Turkey. According to the results of their study, several preschool teachers stated that they have great shortage of materials, and the applicability of the preschool education program depends on the availability of materials and physical conditions.

In terms of the *types of activities*, there was a consistency between self-reported practices and the activity plans of teachers. Most noted in the findings are language, art, drama, play activities, special days and weeks, while science, math, movement, literacy preparation activities, and field-trips were used the least according to both self-reported practices and the education plans of teachers. This consistency probably demonstrates that teachers are paying attention to specify the types of activities while planning their social skills activities, as stated in the program (MoNE, 2013).

Regarding *words and concepts,* most of the teachers probably do not consider the importance of concepts and words while both planning and practicing social skills activities because there is a consistency in a negative way between views, self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their activity plans. Only two participants viewed the words and concepts as important for supporting social skills of children, aside from mentioning words and concepts as program-based factor paid attention through planning in their self-reported practices. Similarly, mostly the teachers' activity plans were devoid of words and concepts related to the social skills they sought to promote in class.

Secondly, the researchers found a partial consistency between the self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their plans about the *learning environment.* The study found preschool teachers mostly organize for an indoor learning environment for social skills activities as opposed to an outdoor one in both their self-reported practices and education plans. This consistency is a positive in the sense that it demonstrates that teachers are implementing their thoughts while planning.

Furthermore, no participants stated that they did not make any changes in the learning environment to promote social skills activities in their self-reported practices. However, no specific mentions of regulations regarding the use of a learning environment are made in the data extracted from teachers' education plans. This difference does not mean that teachers don't organize their learning environments as they report. However, it means that they may not plan how to organize transitions in the learning environment. There might be several possible reasons for this situation. For example, teachers might not have enough time to do plan learning environment in activity plan template, or they might not be aware of the requirement to plan the learning environment, or they may regulate the learning environment instantaneously at the time of learning.

Finally, it was seen that there is an inconsistency between the self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their education plans regarding the interval of social skills, gains and indicators, instructional approaches, parent involvement, and assessment.

Regarding the *interval of social skills activities*, almost all teachers viewed that social skills should be supported systematically in the program and they stated that they are including social skills activities regularly in their plans in their self-reported practices. On the contrary, it was seen that the interval of social skills activities included in the plans of teachers is highly irregular. Therefore, there is an inconsistency between views, self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their education plans. However, the consistency between views, self-reported practices of teachers and their educational plans' content is very important to promote the social skills of children in the light of the knowledge gained from the literature. According to the researchers, to be able to promote the social skills of children, the role of early childhood education program (Johnson et al., 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Pekdoğan, 2016; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019; Williams and Reisberg, 2003) and teachers who plan and implement this program is quite significant (Conroy et al., 2014; Palmer, 2019; Quesenberry et al., 2016). For instance, according to Mclntosh and Mackay (2008), teachers must consider planning while implementing program to improve social skills. Planning and designing the program should be done based on

some criteria like which skills will be taught or how the materials will be used in the learning process. Planning is critical because written plans clarify the thinking of teachers and aid them in articulating their rationale for what they plan to do (Jackman, 2005). Therefore, it is important for teachers to include what they stated in self-reported practices into their plans regarding the interval of social skills activities.

Despite the importance of the consistency between views, self-reported practices, and the written plans, there can be a reason for the opposite finding on this issue. As a few of the participant stated, the reason might be that teachers may be teaching children spontaneously based on some instantaneous situations that emerged in other activities without including specific social skills activities in the plan. For this reason, although teachers said that they implement social skills activities everyday or at least two times in a week, this could not be found in their plans. But even so, teachers should have written these emerging situations in the evaluation of daily plan related to activities at the end of the day. According to MoNE (2013), teachers can add notes to the evaluation part of daily plan if something new is discovered that children need. Hence, while planning the education plan for the following day, a teacher selects the activities considering the evaluation of the previous day as well as the gains and indicators he/she would like to realize. However, no such daily plan evaluation of the education plans was encountered in the data. Only one participant included a daily plan evaluation in their plans, but she wrote down the same evaluation for each day. In this case, it possibly revealed that teachers are not using the daily plan evaluation effectively. In conclusion, it seems that teachers are possibly not planning their self-reported practices appropriately regarding the interval of social skills activities.

Teachers stated to consider *gains and indicators* included in the program while planning social skills activities in their self-reported practices and they viewed gains and indicators as significant for promoting social skills of children. However, when the content of teachers' plans was analyzed, it was seen that there were no related gains and indicators for the social skill that was emphasized in the activity in half of the data. This shows an inconsistency between self-reported practices and the education plans of teachers. However, what is particularly emphasized in the literature is the opposite of this finding (Çimen & Koçyiğit, 2010; Jackman, 2005). For instance, Jackman

(2005) stated that the core of program development is the teacher's capability to integrate the needs, abilities, and interests of young children with their planning to implement goals and objectives. Accordingly, it is important to include gains and indicators in the plans for teachers to develop social skills of children, as specified in the views and self-reported practices.

For *instructional approach*, only one teacher focused on the child-centeredness of the program while specifying the program-based factors that she paid attention to during the planning process of social skills activities in her self-reported practices. Also, only one participant viewed the child-centeredness feature of the program as important to supporting the acquisition of social skills. However, the content analysis findings show that the activities related to social skills were mostly planned as child centered. Thus, there is no consistency between the self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their activity plans regarding instructional approach. Consistency between self-reported practices of teachers and the content of their activity plans is very significant. Elsewhere it is common for preschool teachers to be responsible for writing a daily and monthly curricular program by designing activity plans and implementing learning sessions (Huaranga & Arnaldo, 2021; Jackman, 2005). Moreover, such activities should be planned and implemented as child-centered (MoNE, 2013). As for the possible reasons for inconsistency between self-reported practices and the content of activity plans regarding child-centeredness, it may be that teachers are not aware of the need to include child-centered activities in their plans. As second reason, while teachers may undertake child-centered planning, they may not have been able to implement these plans in their classrooms because of principal's expectations and other limitations which prevented them from being child-centered (Sak, 2013).

In respect to the inclusion of *parent involvement* processes in social skills activities, there was inconsistency between self-reported practices and the education plans of the study participants. For example, no parent involvement activity appeared in the plans for most of the social skills activities they had undertaken, however none of the participants did not mention that they do not plan parent involvement activities for social skills activities in their self-reported practices. Thus, this finding

demonstrated that preschool teachers do not plan which activities to implement for parent involvement. This finding of this current study differs from the findings of another study which was conducted by (Başaran & Ulubey, 2018), where it was found that teachers mostly reached the planning criteria specified in the program regarding parent involvement. The reason for this difference between two studies might be that Başaran and Ulubey (2018) used a survey and interview as data collection sources in their study. However, in the present study, the interview and content analysis methods were used. Therefore, the difference is thought to be due to method differences.

If it is necessary to focus on the reason for a difference between two data types in this current study, there might be several reasons behind this finding. For instance, although teachers reported that they implemented parent involvement activities, they might not plan these activities in their educational plans because of their lack of knowledge to make an appropriate plan based on the region and school, or time limitation. However, it should not be forgotten that teachers should make more efforts to plan their parent involvement processes in their written education plans. This is significant because if teachers cannot come to school due to an emergency, another teacher could come to the class and do the same activity appropriately with the help of these written plans. This argument was supported by Özsırkıntı (2014) by stating that writing the points to be considered in activity plan can be a guide for teachers who will re-apply the activity plan.

The other difference between self-reported practices and the educational plans' content about parent involvement is based on the type of two-way communication with families. While there is almost no type of two-way communication included in the education plans of teachers, they reported to use mostly two-way communication with families to support the social skills of children. Similar to self-reported practices, the importance of two-way communication is emphasized in the literature (Adams et al., 2010). However, the reason for the difference between self-reported practices and the education plans might be that teachers are generally communicate with families and give information to parent about their children spontaneously through using phone calls, communicating groups on various social media platforms, as some participants mentioned. Teachers possibly are not planning these communication types and writing

them in their education plans. However, teachers should note about which topics they communicated with families in the monthly plans to be able to plan future activity plans to develop children's social skills. Since MoNE (2013) stated that the monthly plan should include not only gains and indicators, concepts, field-trips, special days and weeks, assessment but also parent involvement processes to improve the developments of children.

Concerning the *assessment* processes used to monitor the progress of children's social skills, there was no consistency between self-reported practices and the content of teachers' plans. For instance, although all the teachers stated that they used at least one method to assess children's social skills in their self-reported practices, no method was found to assess social skills in almost half of the data extracted from teachers' activity plans. In the literature, the importance of an assessment process was highlighted to develop the social skills of children by several researchers (Johnson et al., 2016; Luiselli et al., 2005; Merrell, 2001). Similar to the literature, it seems that teachers are aware of the importance to assess children's social skills because they viewed that assessment is a program-based factor which should be considered while planning social skills activities. Moreover, similar to the literature, they reported in their self-reported practices to use different assessment techniques like observation (Gresham, 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Merrell, 2001), portfolios and exhibitions (Wortham, 2014; Yus et al., 2017), technology-based assessment (Wortham, 2014), self-assessment of children (Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Ömeroğlu et al., 2014; Wortham, 2014), asking questions (MoNE, 2013).

However, it is important for teachers not only to know the importance of assessment but also to include these assessment methods, which they stated to use, in their education plans to be able design future activities depending on the needs of children. Johnson et al. (2016) confirmed this idea by mentioning that assessment is prioritizing the selection of skills and aiding to design of the program-based on the needs of children. Also, a majority of program models like Montessori (Isaacs, 2015), Waldorf (Şahin-Sak, 2021), and Reggio Emilia (Buldu & Buldu, 2021) emphasized that assessment is one of the cornerstones of the program in order to plan future educational activities much better in the process of supporting children's development.

For example, Şahin-Sak (2021) stated that in Waldorf approach, teachers make daily or weekly evaluations to review their work, taking into account the records they have kept for a specific purpose, as well as planned observations and notes. According to the judgments made as a result of these evaluations, new plans can be made for the whole group, part of the group or individually. Despite the importance of assessment in planning program according to literature, the reason why teachers might not be including an assessment process for social skills activities might be that they mostly use the observation method. Also, they might not record these observation results. However according to MoNE (2013), they should record their observations and they should evaluate the children, the program and himself/herself in the monthly plan evaluation based on the information recorded during that month in the parts for the evaluation of the day and in the child development observation forms. However, no such monthly plan evaluation of the education plans was encountered in the data. This result contradicting MoNE preschool education program possibly shows that teachers do not make appropriate planning regarding assessment and evaluation.

The other difference between self-reported practices and the content of their education plan is based on the assessment type of asking questions. Although the asking question type was included in more than half of the social skills activities by all participants, only six teachers reported that they assess children's social skills through asking questions. This difference might be explained by the fact that teachers write too many questions for an activity in their plans, and they cannot ask all the questions in the learning process and at the end of the activity due to time constraints. Moreover, they might not want to bore the children by asking too many questions. Since they did not ask these questions, all participants may not have talked much about assessment based on questioning in their self reported practices. The main reason why too many questions are written in activity plans may be that teachers include too many learning gains and indicators for an activity. As it can be seen in the example placed in Table 19, only related gains and indicators based on social skill are given due to the large number of gains in the example. Including too many gains and indicators in an activity plan and trying to give children too many gains in a short time may not be suitable for their developmental levels. At the core of the matter, asking the assessment

questions based on too many gains and indicators may also be seen as not suitable for children's ages and development by teachers. However, it is vital that the activities are planned in accordance with the developmental levels and ages of the children (NAEYC, 2020).

Finally, there were some apparent inconsistencies between self-reported practices and the content of teachers' education plans considering each participant in particular based on all codes like parent involvement, assessment, activity types, and others except for a few participants. In other words, most of the participants did not include their practices in their plans although they were mentioned in self-reported practices. Also, they did not mention some practices in their self-reported practices though these are included in the education plans. These findings indicate that teachers are not preparing their plans effectively. As opposed to this implication, it was found that teachers highly reached the planning criteria of the program in Turkey (Başaran & Ulubey, 2018). The difference between this study and this current study may be that Başaran and Ulubey (2018) coded the using ready-made plans under the category of reaching the planning criteria and the frequency of this code is very high in this category. However, this is completely against the principles of the program. In the program, it was stated that the plans should be prepared specially according to the individual needs of children and the conditions of the school and environment (MoNE, 2013). Therefore, not every plan can be applied to every child and every classroom.

When the difference between the two data types in this study are considered, it is thought that the reason might be that teachers may be using ready-made plans as stated in previous studies (Başaran & Ulubey, 2018; Sak, 2013). Therefore, the issue of teachers' planning should be discussed more seriously, since preschool teachers play a critical role in developing social skills of children as program planners and appliers through implementing different kinds of activities, maintaining good parent-school relationships, and assessing children's social skills (Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008). Also, more efforts are made throughout the undergraduate years of preschool teachers so that they learn theoretical and practical skills to prepare and implement their own activities (Duman, 2013). The reason behind this is that the success of early childhood education is directly connected to the quality of the prepared educational

activities (Koçak, 2018). For this reason, it should be investigated the reasons why teachers are not doing effective planning and these reasons should be eliminated.

5.5. Implications

The researcher revealed a significant number of findings with this qualitative study. Through the findings, several educational implications for teachers, school administrators, teacher education programs, researchers, and Ministry of National Education (MoNE) are discussed below.

Firstly, preschool teachers specified the importance of social skills in the early years in this study by stating that social life is the most basic fact of human, and the most significant skills are social skills in the early years. Moreover, according to them, early childhood education program is very significant to improve social skills of children. In addition, they highlighted the requirement of systematically teaching social skills in the program. Hence, the views of teachers are appropriate to be able to support social skills of children. However, only thinking about the importance of program may not be sufficient for children's social skills development, also teachers should be aware of their responsibility about planning, implementing, and assessing these thoughts effectively.

From a different perspective, it was found that teachers mentioned some insufficiencies of the program like insufficiencies of gains and indicators related to social skills, insufficiency of the program's content about social skills, and lack of support for social skills activities from stakeholders. Regarding these insufficiencies related to the program, all stakeholders including the Ministry of National Education, administrators, parents, and teachers should take responsibility for addressing these inequalities together.

Secondly, it was found that preschool teachers are mostly focusing on ways to promote the communication skills of children. Whereas this is a positive method to promote communication skills of children, they are not supporting children's sharing, and social problem-solving skills in the program adequately and properly. Hence, teachers can participate in some conferences and attend several in-service training programs so that they can obtain valuable knowledge to create developmentally

appropriate practices related to all social skills of children. Moreover, they can share their ideas and practices with other teachers in their school to improve their practices, expand their knowledge related to supporting social skills of children, and find ways to solve problems regarding materials, and physical environment. Also, the findings of this study offer much practical information and activity examples that may be helpful to plan and prepare social skills activities for both pre-service and in-service preschool teachers.

Another finding is that the activities reported by teachers and included in their plans were very limited in terms of some program-based items like types of activities, types of materials, learning environment, parent involvement and assessment. It is thought that teachers have a lack of knowledge on how to create different kinds of social skills activities depending on these program-based items. In order to improve teachers in this respect, the Ministry of National Education can organize several in-service trainings, workshops, seminars, and projects for teachers' professional development.

Moreover, teacher training programs can also provide solutions to the possible reasons that prevent teachers from preparing social skills activities effectively. Since well-trained preschool teachers have a critical role in providing quality early childhood education for children (Mbugua, 2009). With the help of effective preparation of pre-service teachers, they can both have theoretical but also practical knowledge regarding using different kind of activities, materials, learning environment, parent involvement, and assessment for social skills activities. Therefore, it might be possible that teachers can be assisted to apply such theoretical and practical knowledge in their future practices. For example, opportunities can be afforded to pre-service teachers to search and discuss about different social skills practices in some courses like "Social and Emotional Development", "Supporting Social Skills of Children in the Early Years".

One of the most important conclusions drawn from this study is that teachers perform their social skills activities mostly in the indoor learning environment rather than outdoors. Preschool teachers and other practitioners should be aware of providing more opportunities to promote socializations of children through organizing outdoor settings. For example, they can plan social skills activities in a way that they can be

implemented in outdoor environments like public places where children can interact with the community. In this context, school administrators as well as the provincial directorate of national education and other stakeholders undertake the responsibility (Kızıltaş et al., 2018). Hence, they should encourage teachers to use the outdoor environment and organize field-trips to be able to promote children's socialization specifically social skills.

This study shows the deficiencies of teachers about planning assessment processes to develop social skills of children. In order to deal with these deficiencies, MoNE can prepare detailed examples in the early childhood education program to guide teachers how to use different assessment types to develop social skills and how to plan assessment processes effectively. For example, it can prepare an additional assessment booklet including different types of examples for assessment similar to the OBADER booklet prepared specifically for parent involvement.

As for the issue of gains and indicators, though teachers are known to regard them as significant to support the social skills of children, this study found many deficiencies regarding gains and indicators in their education plans. This finding makes it possible to make educational implications for both policy makers who develop and update the program and teachers. On the one hand, policy makers can add gains and indicators related to different social skills like sharing, helping and they can elaborate the gains and indicators already included in the program related to different social skills like communication, empathy, social problem solving, and other skills. On the other hand, teachers should be aware of having a chance to write additional gains and indicators if they do not find related gains and indicators in the program.

The last but by no means the least important implication is that there were serious differences and inconsistencies between each teacher's self-reported practices and education plans. It can be inferred that teachers are not planning their social skills activities effectively according to the expectations of MoNE preschool education program and related literature. It is thought that this may be due to the fact that not most of the teachers prepare their own plans, instead they seek ready-made plans from the internet or someone else, or don't know how to plan effectively. In this regard, the first task belongs to the researchers. They should investigate the underlying causes for

this situation and learn suggestions from teachers on how planning issues can be improved because according to the NAEYC (2020), planning is the heart of the program.

5.6. Recommendations for Further Studies

In this study, the program-based views, and experiences of teachers regarding promoting social skills of children were investigated. It is thought that this study might possibly make useful contributions to the literature, educators, and teachers education programs about supporting the social skills of children. In the light of this study, several recommendations for further studies are presented in this section in order to contribute more to the literature.

Firstly, this study focused on teachers' experiences, but did not explore the underlying causes of their experiences. Accordingly, it is recommended that further studies can explore the reasons that led to teachers' program-based experiences related to promoting the social skills of children. Specifically, it is suggested that researchers need to obtain the views of teachers about why they are not planning their social skills activities effectively, why they are not planning parent involvement processes, assessment processes of social skills activities effectively, or why they are not planning social skills in outdoor settings.

Furthermore, in this study, the adaptation part of the program could not be focused on because of the lack of related data. Herewith, the researcher is strongly recommended to repeat this study with different teachers who have children with special needs in their classrooms to be able to reveal the adaptation practices for these children.

From a different perspective, it can be also useful to undertake studies to increase awareness of teachers about how social skills activities can be planned and implemented for refugee children and their families. One of the participants focused on refugee children by mentioning their need to pay attention to the region of origin of refugee families and the types of families while planning social skills activities.

Also, in this study, the experiences of teachers were compiled only in terms of five of the social skills, namely communication, empathy, social problem solving,

sharing, and helping skills were examined. However, the experiences of teachers also require them to address other social skills like respecting the differences of others or defending their own right, and these can be studied with different participants. In this way, the findings of further studies and this study can be compared.

Moreover, when looked at the literature, to date mostly experimental and correlational studies have been undertaken regarding the phenomenon of supporting children's social skills. However, as mentioned in the introduction part of the study, there are only a limited number of studies based on the views, experiences, and practices of teachers on this phenomenon. Specifically, the researcher found very few qualitative studies related to social skills in terms of program. For this reason, it is recommended to elaborate this current study by studying on each item of the program separately regarding this phenomenon through learning the views, experiences, and practices of teachers.

Lastly, it is recommended to study on the theoretical and practical knowledge of pre-service preschool teachers in terms of supporting children's social skills and it can be understood whether teacher candidates need theoretical or practical knowledge on this subject.

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APPENDICES

A. INVITATION TEXT

Merhaba Değerli Öğretmenlerimiz, ben ODTÜ okul öncesi eğitimi bölümünde araştırma görevlisi ve aynı zamanda yüksek lisans öğrencisi olan Zeliha Demirci. ODTÜ Öğretim Üyelerinden Prof. Dr. Feyza Tantekin Erden danışmanlığında yürütüyor olduğum yüksek lisans tezim kapsamında 'Anaokulu çocuklarının sosyal becerilerini desteklemek için öğretmenlerin programa dayalı deneyimlerinin incelenmesine' ne yönelik bir çalışma gerçekleştirmekteyim. Bu çalışma kapsamında telefon ya da Zoom aracılığı ile 9 soruluk bir mülakat gerçekleştirmek isterim. Ek olarak çalışmam için eğitim planlarınızı incelemem için benimle paylaşabilir misiniz? Planlarınızın ve görüşmelerinizin içeriği ve kişisel bilgileriniz kimse ile paylaşılmayacak olup yalnızca araştırmacılar tarafından değerlendirilip, bilimsel çalışmalarda kullanılacaktır. Bu zorlu Pandemi sürecinde destek olursanız çok mutlu olurum.

B. ARAŞTIRMAYA GÖNÜLLÜ KATILIM FORMU

Bu araştırma, ODTÜ Temel Eğitim Bölümü Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı Öğretim Üyesi Prof. Dr. Feyza Tantekin Erden'in danışmanlığında yürütülen 'Anaokulu çocuklarının sosyal becerilerini desteklemek için öğretmenlerin programa dayalı görüşlerinin ve deneyimlerinin incelenmesi' konulu bir araştırmaya bilgi toplamak amacıyla hazırlanmıştır.

Çalışmanın Amacı Nedir?

Araştırmanın amacı, çocukların sosyal becerilerini geliştirmek için okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin programa dayalı görüşlerinin, deneyimlerinin ve program kapsamında yazdıkları planların incelenmesidir.

Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz?

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, sizden beklenen, Online platform/yüz yüze gerçekleştirilecek olan mülakat süresince sorulan soruları yanıtlamanız ve mülakat sonrasında yıl içerisinde yazmış ve uygulamış olduğunuz günlük planları bizimle paylaşmanızdır. Mülakat süresi yaklaşık olarak 25-30 dakika arasıdır ve mülakat süresince söylediklerinizi ses kaydına alınacaktır.

Sizden Topladığımız Bilgileri Nasıl Kullanacağız?

Araştırmaya katılımınız tamamen gönüllülük temelinde olmalıdır. Cevaplarınız tamamıyla gizli tutulacak, sadece araştırmacılar tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Katılımcılardan elde edilecek bilgiler toplu halde değerlendirilecek ve bilimsel yayınlarda kullanılacaktır.

Katılımınızla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler:

Mülakat, genel olarak kişisel rahatsızlık verecek sorular içermemektedir. Ancak, katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz cevaplama işini yarıda bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda mülakatı uygulayan kişiye, mülakatı tamamlamadığınızı söylemek yeterli olacaktır.

Araştırmayla ilgili daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz:

Katılım sonunda, bu çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız cevaplanacaktır. Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz. Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için ODTÜ Temel Eğitim Bölümü araştırma görevlilerinden Zeliha Demirci Ünal ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayınlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.

İsim Soyad Tarih İmza

C. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Kişisel ve Mesleki Bilgilere Yönelik Sorular

1. Yaşınız, cinsiyetiniz nedir?
2. Çalıştığınız okul tipi nedir? Özel okul/devlet okulu
3. Eğitim durumunuz nedir?
4. Kaç yıllık öğretmenlik deneyiminiz var?
5. Şu an da hangi yaş grubunun öğretmenliğini yapıyorsunuz?

Sosyal beceri eğitimi ile ilgili sorular

(Sosyal beceriler; iletişim, empati, sosyal problem çözme, paylaşma ve yardımlaşma becerileri olarak ele alınacaktır. **Sorularınızı cevaplarken lütfen bu cümleyi göz önünde bulundurunuz.)**

1. Uyguladığınız okul öncesi eğitim programının sosyal becerileri destekleme konusundaki önemi hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
2. Eğitim planlarınız içerisinde sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin ve kazanımlarının sistemli bir şekilde yer alması gerektiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Neden?
3. Siz ne kadar sıklıkla bu sosyal becerilere yönelik etkinlikler gerçekleştiriyorsunuz?
4. Sınıfınızda program kapsamında etkinliklerle hangi sosyal becerileri destekliyorsunuz? Nasıl?
5. Sosyal beceri ile ilgili bir etkinlik planı hazırlarken programda yer alan hangi etmenlere dikkat ediyorsunuz?
6. Sosyal beceri etkinliklerini uygularken ne tür materyaller kullanıyorsunuz? Biraz açıklar mısınız?
7. Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinizi uygularken öğrenme ortamını nasıl kullanıyorsunuz?
8. Sosyal becerileri desteklemek amacıyla ailelerle ne gibi çalışmalar yapıyorsunuz?
9. Çocukların sosyal becerilerini değerlendirme anlamında neler yapıyorsunuz?

D. CODEBOOK FOR DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

1. **ETKİNLİKLER**
    - 1.1.Etkinlik planlarında odaklanılan sosyal becerinin/lerin, kaç kez ve ne kadar sıklıkla yer aldığı
        - 1.1.1. İletişim,
        - 1.1.2. Empati,
        - 1.1.3. Sosyal problem çözme,
        - 1.1.4. Paylaşma ve
        - 1.1.5. Yardımlaşma
    - 1.2. Kazanım ve göstergelerin sosyal becerilere uygun planlanması
        - 1.2.1. Evet
        - 1.2.2. Hayır
    - 1.3. Kavramların/kelimelerin sosyal beceriler ile ilgili planlanması
        - 1.3.1. Evet
        - 1.3.2. Hayır
    - 1.4. Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinde kullanılan materyaller
        - 1.4.1. Teknolojik materyaller
        - 1.4.2. Artık materyaller
        - 1.4.3. Öğretmenin oluşturduğu materyaller
        - 1.4.4. Oyun Materyalleri
        - 1.4.5. Drama materyalleri
        - 1.4.6. Sanat materyalleri
        - 1.4.7. Matematik materyalleri
        - 1.4.8. Fen materyalleri
        - 1.4.9. Türkçe-Dil materyalleri (kitap, kukla)
        - 1.4.10. Müzik materyalleri
        - 1.4.11. Okuma yazmaya hazırlık materyalleri
        - 1.4.12. Doğal Materyaller
        - 1.4.13. Evden getirilen materyaller
        - 1.4.14. Materyal yok
        - 1.4.15. Hareket materyalleri
    - 1.5. Öğrenme ortamının etkinliğe yönelik planlanması
        - 1.5.1. İç Mekan
            - 1.5.1.1. Sınıf içi
                - 1.5.1.1.1 Oturma düzeninin ayarlanması
                - 1.5.1.1.2. Sınıf duvarlarının ve zemininin dekorasyonu
                - 1.5.1.1.3. Öğrenme merkezlerinin düzenlenmesi
            - 1.5.1.2. Sınıf dışı
                - 1.5.1.2.1. Okulun bölümleri
                - 1.5.1.2.2. Diğer sınıflar
        - 1.5.2. Dış Mekan
            - 1.5.2.1. Okul bahçesi
            - 1.5.2.2. Alan gezisi
        - 1.5.3. Belirtilmemiş
    - 1.6. Sosyal beceri gelişimi için özel gereksinimi veya yeteneği olan çocuklar için uyarlama yapılması
        - 1.6.1. Evet
            - 1.6.1.1. Zihinsel yetersizlik
            - 1.6.1.2. Dil ve konuşma bozukluğu
            - 1.6.1.3. Otizm spektrum bozukluğu
            - 1.6.1.4. Ortopedik yetersizlik
            - 1.6.1.5. İşitme yetersizliği
            - 1.6.1.6. Görme yetersizliği
            - 1.6.1.7. Üstün yetenekli
            - 1.6.1.8. Dikkat eksikliği ve hiperaktivite
        - 1.6.2. Hayır
    - 1.7. Sosyal beceri etkinliğinde odaklanılan etkinlik çeşidi/çeşitleri (Drama, fen, ...)
        - 1.7.1. Drama

D. CODEBOOK FOR DOCUMENT ANALYSIS CONT'D

1.7.2. Fen
1.7.3. Matematik
1.7.4. Türkçe
1.7.5. Sanat
1.7.6. Hareket
1.7.7. Müzik
1.7.8. Oyun
1.7.9. Okuma yazmaya hazırlık
1.7.10. Alan gezisi
1.7.11. Belirtilmemiş

1.8. Sosyal beceri etkinliğinin çocuk merkezli/öğretmen merkezli olması
1.8.1. Çocuk merkezli
1.8.2. Öğretmen merkezli

1.9. Belirli gün ve haftalar
1.9.1. Evet
1.9.2. Hayır

2. AİLE KATILIMI

2.1. Aile katılımı çalışmalarında odaklanılan sosyal becerinin/lerin çeşidi
2.1.1. İletişim,
2.1.2. Empati,
2.1.3. Sosyal problem çözme,
2.1.4. Paylaşma
2.1.5. Yardımlaşma

2.2. Sosyal becerileri destekleme sürecinde okul-aile iş birliğini oluşturmak için kullanılan yöntemler
2.2.1. Aile katılımı yok
2.2.2. Çocuk gelişimi ve ebeveynlik ile ilgili aile eğitimi (seminerler) verme
2.2.3. Ailelerle iletişim kurma
2.2.3.1. Tek yönlü iletişim kurma (notlar, mektuplar, okul gazetesi vb.)
2.2.3.2. Çift yönlü iletişim kurma (e-mail, telefon görüşmeleri, sınıf ziyaretleri, toplantı, kahvaltı vb.)
2.2.4. Gönüllü aileleri dahil etme (kitap okuma, meslek tanıtımı vb.)
2.2.5. Evde öğrenme sürecini zenginleştirmek için ailelere etkinlik sağlama
2.2.6. Aileleri karar verme sürecine dahil etme
2.2.7. Kaynak bulma konusunda ailelerden destek alma (kitap, dergi, materyal vb.)
2.2.8. Toplum kaynaklarından yararlanma ve toplumla iş-birliği yapma konusunda ailelerden destek alma (Uzmanları veya iş-merkezlerini ziyaret etme gibi geziler)

3. DEĞERLENDİRME

3.1. Değerlendirme çalışmalarında odaklanılan sosyal beceri/becerilerin türü
3.1.1. İletişim,
3.1.2. Empati,
3.1.3. Sosyal problem çözme,
3.1.4. Paylaşma
3.1.5. Yardımlaşma

3.2. Sosyal becerilerin değerlendirilmesi için kullanılan yöntemler;
3.2.1. Değerlendirme yok
3.2.2. Gözlem (Anekdot kaydı, sürekli kayıt, video, ses kaydı)
3.2.3. Soru sorma (Betimleyici Sorular, Duyuşsal Sorular, Kazanımlara Yönelik Sorular, Yaşamla İlişkilendirme Soruları)
3.2.4. Portfolyo, sergiler
3.2.5. Değerlendirme etkinlikleri ya da oyunlar
3.2.6. Teknoloji odaklı değerlendirme
3.2.7. Çocukların öz-değerlendirmeleri
3.2.8. Akran değerlendirmesi

E. MoNE MONTHLY PLAN TEMPLATE

Annex 3.

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CURRİCULUM
MONTHLY EDUCATION PLAN TEMPLATE

Name of the School : ……...
Date : …./…./…..
Age Group (Month) : ……
Name of the Teacher : ……

<table>
<tr><td>MONTHS</td><td colspan="3">GAINS AND INDICATORS
The gains and indicators that are expected to be reached within a month, considering the developmental characteristics of children, are selected within each developmental area and recorded openly with the name of the developmental area specified in the education Curriculum.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3"></td><td colspan="3">CONCEPTS
The concepts to be associated with the prospective gains of a specific month are identified and indicated.
When required, new concepts are included in the list of concepts.</td></tr>
<tr><td>SPECIAL DAYS AND WEEKS</td><td>FIELD VISITS</td><td>FAMILY PARTICIPATION</td></tr>
<tr><td>Special days and weeks that will be celebrated within a specific month are identified and indicated.</td><td>The observation activities that will be organized in line with the gains identified for a specific month, are indicated.</td><td>The activities that will be made at school or home with families, in line with the gains identified for a specific month, are indicated.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">EVALUATION
The monthly evaluations are conducted on child, Curriculum and teacher levels on a general basis, taking the daily evaluations into consideration.
Children; are evaluated considering the observations recorded in "Development Observation Form".
The Curriculum; is evaluated considering gains and indicators, concepts, field trips, family participation, materials and adaptation levels.
Teacher; evaluates his/her performance considering all the aspects of the education Curriculum that he/she prepares for a specific month.

As a result of these evaluations, the gains and indicators of the following month are identified and indicated in the respective plan.</td></tr>
</table>

*"Forms Included in the File of School Orientation and Parent Meeting", "Need Identification Form for Parenting Education" and "Family Participation Preference Form" are filled in September. During the education year, a "Development Observation Form" is filled for every child. At the end of each term, a "Development Report" is prepared for every child.

Signature of the Teacher: **Signature of the Principal:**

F. MoNE DAILY PLAN TEMPLATE

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CURRİCULUM

SAMPLE for HALF DAY EDUCATION CURRİCULUM

Name of the School :
Date :
Age Group (Month) :
Name of the Teacher :

Time to Start the Day

Playtime
Playing in the open air

Breakfast, Cleaning

Activity Time
Integrated activity for preparation to reading-writing in Turkish, named "Guess Which Ball"

Daily Evaluation Time

Time to Return Home

General Evaluation:

G. MoNE ACTIVITY PLAN TEMPLATE

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CURRİCULUM

ACTIVITY PLAN TEMPLATE

(Name of the Activity)

Type of the Activity : ..... **(Manner of Implementation)**

Age group : ..... **Month/s**

GAINS AND INDICATORS

The gains and indicators that are selected among the ones identified considering the developmental characteristics of children and expected to be reached in a specific month, are recorded openly with the name of the developmental area specified in the education Curriculum.

LEARNING PROCESS

While making an explanation regarding the gains as per the learning process;

- It is explained how the educational environment will be arranged.
- It is explained how children will be guided.
- It is indicated how the materials will be used.
- The roles of the teacher and the child in this process are identified.

MATERIALS

The materials that will be used in the learning process are indicated.

WORDS

New words that will enrich the vocabulary of children in the learning process are identified.

CONCEPTS

New concepts to be studied during the learning process are identified, indicating their categories.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION (*)

Proposals about supportive activities that families could do, are indicated.

(*) It might not be necessary to encourage family participation for every activity.

EVALUATION

At the end of the activity, children are asked questions similar to the ones given below;

- Questions that ensure the revision of the activity as a process (Descriptive Questions).
- Children are encouraged to share their experiences and emotions. (Emotional Questions).
- Open-ended questions related to the gains and indicators obtained on that specific day, are asked. (Questions about Gains).
- Children are asked questions that help them to make a connection between their experiences in these activities and their normal lives in order to ensure the permanence of learning. (Questions Related to Daily Life).

Evaluation could be conducted in various ways, such as;

- Preparing worksheets/memory cards
- Drawing pictures, preparing posters, examining the photographs taken during the activities with children,
- Children talk about the activities and make presentation about them to each other,
- Organizing exhibitions.

ADAPTATION

If there is a child with special needs (diagnosed) in the classroom, the necessary actions that should be exercised during the material/method development and learning process, are indicated.

Ministry of National Education Pre-School Education Curriculum - 2013

H. EXAMPLE ACTIVITY PLANS

Table 37 *Example social skills activity based on sharing, empathy, and social problem-solving*

P3.14
Date: 20.09.2021

I AM SHARING MY TOY

Type of the activity: Drama, preparation to literacy, play, music activities

Age Group: 5-6 years old

Gains and indicators: *(In the example, only related gains and indicators based on social skill are given due to a lot of number of gains)*

Cognitive Development:
Gain 19: Solve the problems. (**Indicators:** State the problem. Propose various keys of the solution. Choose of the keys of the solution. State the reason of choosing that key of solution. Try the chosen key of the solution. On the condition of failing to reach a solution, choose a new key of solution.)
Gain added by teacher: He can ask questions about the subjects he wants to be informed about. **(Indicators:** He turns to the person to whom he will ask a question. He uses a question expression regarding the information he wants to reach. He asks a question with the appropriate tone of voice. After asking a question, he listens to the answer.)
Gain added by teacher: He can understand the feelings of others. (**Indicators:** He shows that he understands the emotions with gestures and facial expressions. He tells the feelings of another by looking at his facial expression. He tells the feelings of another by looking at his body posture).

Social and Emotional Development:
Gain 4: They express other's feelings about an event or situation. **(Indicators:** They express other's feelings, reasons and results of them).
Gain 17: They solve their problems with others. **(Indicators:** They solve problems with others by speaking with them. When they cannot solve problems with their friends, they ask for help of adults).

Language development
Gain added by teacher: He can speak in an understandable tone of voice. (Indicators: Uses a tone that another person can hear. Speaks at a speed that the other person can understand.)
Gain added by teacher: He can take the floor when he wants to talk. (Indicators: He raises his hand to indicate that he wants to talk. He uses facial expressions to indicate that he wants to talk. He says that he wants to talk with a kind expression.)

Table 37 *Example social skills activity based on sharing, empathy, and social problem-solving cont'd*

Materials: Sharing image on a card, toys in the classroom, images showing what to do with hands, happy and sad hand puppet, scissors, glue, crayons, finger paint

Words: Sharing, helpful, kind, harmful, hurt

Concepts: Opposite: True-False, Education of Value: Sharing

Learning process:
Children take a toy from the class and form a circle. A music is played, and children are asked to dance with their toys. When the music stops, each child shares the toy with their chosen friend and continues the dance. Make sure that all children change their toys. After the game, the children are asked to take the toys they chose at first and sit in a semi-circle. A conversation about "I share my toy" is started. Children are asked questions about why it is necessary to share and what the other person might feel if we do not share. Two pictures of children who cannot share their toy are shown and the children are asked to describe what they see in the picture. Ask what the problem situation is in the picture based on why they could not share the toy, what the child might have felt when the toy was taken away. Then, the children are guided to find solutions for how they could share the toy. They are then told to "pretend" to act out two children who are not sharing the toy. Two volunteer children are selected, one of the children is given a toy, and the other child takes the role of forcibly taking the toy from his friend's hand. Then, improvisations are evaluated based on "How did you feel when your friend took your toy away? What else do you think your friend could have done instead of forcibly taking the toy? What can you do when you don't have a toy?" children are discussing about sharing, problem solving and friendship. Then, the pictures of children sharing their toys are examined, and a conversation is made about how the children can feel while sharing. Then, by going to the tables, a literacy worksheet about sharing is made. Then the story about "Sharing" is played on the computer. Then the song "I Love Sharing" is played. Then, teacher discusses with the children that it is possible to discuss to share not only toys but also emotions.

Assessment
What does the sharing mean?, Why is sharing important?
What solutions can be produced so that both children can play with the toy?
How did you feel when your friend got the toy?
How did you feel when you saw that your friend was upset?
What do you share with your family? What does your family share with you?

Parent Involvement
• Families are asked to send a toy they chose with their children to the class so that their children can share it with their friends.
• Families are asked to talk to their children about right and wrong behavior.

Table 38 *Example helping activity based on the inconsistency between gains and indicators and learning process, and assessment*

P11.13

Date: 08.10.2021

WE ARE BEAUTIFUL TOGETHER

Type of the activity: Art activity

Age Group: 5 years old

Gains and indicators: (*In the example, only related gains and indicators are given based on social skill)*

-

Materials: puzzle sheets, crayons, glue

Words and Concepts: puzzle

Learning process:

The teacher says the names of all children who is in the class. After the names are counted one by one, a beautiful feature or skill of each child is explained. For example, Ayşe paints very well, Ömer can make beautiful shapes with Lego, Özlem sings very well. Attention is drawn to the different characteristics of each child. The teacher then said that "we live together in this class, we learn something together in this class, and we all have different characteristics. But it is our differences that make us special and beautiful, and we are very strong together". Each child is asked to hug each other by saying that we are beautiful together. Then the teacher shows the puzzle pages and asks, "Do you know what a puzzle is?" After the answers of children, the teacher says, "Now you will create a picture based on friendship on these puzzle pages, then we will combine these pictures to create a great work" and distributes pages to the children. All children are guided to make their pictures, and after they are finished, these pages are combined to complete the puzzle, emphasizing how well they can work together thanks to cooperation and helping.

Assessment

Have you done any activity related to puzzle?
Why is it important to be together?
Why is it good to be different?
Why is helping important?
What did you say about your picture?
Why did you choose to paint this picture?

Parent Involvement –

Adaptation -

Table 39 *Example social problem-solving activity based on inconsistency between words/concepts and learning process*

P12.9

Date: 16.09.2021

DOES BEING OFFENDED WORK?

Type of the activity: Drama integrated with play and music activities

Age Group: 5 years old

Gains and indicators: *(Only the related gains and indicators based on social skill are given in this section)*
-

Materials: Scarf for blindfold

Words and Concepts: Crow

Learning process:
The teacher opens a song called as "on the way to school one day". While listening to the song for the second time, parts of the song are dramatized with the children. At the end of the song, it is mentioned that we come to school for 5 days in a week and spend a long time at school. It is said that children may have problems at home as well as at school. The conversation is started by asking the children the question "What do we do in the face of problems?" After listening to the children's answers, the educational video called "Learning not to be offended" is watched and discussed about the video. At the end of the conversation, the teacher tells the children that they will play the game "my crowing bird". One of the children is chosen and his eyes are closed. Another child comes to the blindfolded child. The blindfolded child says to the other child “crow my bird, crow”. The other child only makes a 'cik-cik' sound. The child opens her eyes, and this child tries to find his friend who sings 'cik-cik”. This game continues until all children take charge.

Assessment
Do you think it's okay to be offended?
How can we solve our problems without getting offended?
Did you like the game, was it easy to recognize your friend with your eyes closed?

Parent Involvement –

Adaptation -

Table 40 *Example activity based on communication and social problem-solving skills in terms of using language materials and language activity type*

P3.8

Date: 08.09.2021

LOOK AT THE BEHAVIOR IN MY CLASS

Type of the activity: Turkish-Language activity

Age Group: 5 years old

Gains and indicators: *(Only the related gains and indicators based on social skill are given in this section)*

Social and emotional development:
Gain added by teacher: He can listen to other people **(Indicators:** Makes eye contact with the person he is talking to. He listens without interrupting the person speaking. He waits his turn to speak. He uses gestures and facial expressions to indicate that he is listening to the speaker.)

Language development
Gain 5: Use language on the purpose of the communication. (Indicators: Make eye contact while speaking. Comprehend gesture and facial expressions. Use gesture and facial expressions while speaking. Start the conversation. Continue the conversation. End the conversations. Use courtesy words in speech. Get involved in a conversation. Wait for their turn to speak. State feelings, thoughts, and dreams.)
Gain added by teacher: He can answer the question asked to him. (Indicators: Responds in a tone that the other person can hear.)
Gain added by teacher: Can speak in an understandable tone of voice. (Indicators: Uses a tone that another person can hear. Speaks at a speed that the other person can understand.)
Gain added by teacher: He can take the floor when he wants to talk. (Indicators: He raises his hand to indicate that he wants to speak. Uses facial expressions to indicate that he wants to speak. Says with a kind expression that he wants to speak.)

Materials: Puppetry, images related to "5 things to do when your friend bothers you", pencil

Words: Breathing, distancing, asking for help
Concept:
Emotion: Sad, Angry
Opposite: True-False

Learning process:
"Puppet time, puppet time. What the puppet is telling us, sit quietly and listen" and the children are asked to sit in a semi-circle. Talking with the children is accompanied by puppets. The puppet named 'Dordor' introduces himself. She says

Table 40 *Example activity based on communication and social problem-solving skills in terms of using language materials and language activity type cont'd*

that she is very sad and angry, she doesn't know what to do, a friend hit her while she was playing and forcibly took her toy from her. Then the children are asked questions about this situation. "Why do you think his friend might have hit him? How "Dordor" might have felt when his friend hit him?" such questions are asked to children. Children are given the opportunity to think about how they feel when they are disturbed and how they can deal with this situation. In order to cope with the problem situations that children experience with each other, the visual called "5 things to do when your friend bothers you" brought by the teacher is examined. Ask what each image might represent. Then the images are explained.

In image 1, Take a deep breath
In image 2, Tell your friend to stop
In image 3, Kindly say how you feel 'it makes me sad / angry if you do it'
In image 4, Distance from the environment
In image 5, Ask your teacher for help.

Teacher emphasizes the importance of children's self-confidence in overcoming the problems they experience with their friends. Children are divided into five groups. Groups are given pictures showing the steps in the image. Going through the pictures with the groups, conversations are made about when and how to behave, by asking the ideas of the children. Attention is paid to the fact that other groups listen respectfully to the speaking group.

1. When my friend bothers me, I first take a deep breath and calm down.
2. I tell my friend who hurt me to stop.
3. I say how I feel (sad/angry) when my friend bothers me.
4. If my friend continues to harm me, I stay away from the environment.
5. I ask my teacher for help.

"Children, let's get these steps in the right order. What were we doing first when our friend bothered us?" The groups are guided to sort the images correctly. The listed images are pasted on a cardboard and hung in a place where everyone can see them in the classroom.

Assessment

What does disturb mean?
What are the things you should do when your friend treats you in a way you don't want? How would you feel if your friend hurt you?
Which behaviors of your friend you do not like while playing games? Why is that?
How did you feel when you saw that your friend was upset?

Parent Involvement - **Adaptation -**

Table 41 *Example communication activity showing the organization of indoor learning environment*

P1.6

Date: 15.09.2021

HERE IS MY FAMILY

Type of the activity: Language, Music, Math, and Art activities (Integrated Large and Small Group Activity

Age Group: 5 years old

Gains and indicators: *(Only the related gains and indicators based on social skill are given in this section)*

Social and emotional development:
Gain 2: They recognize features of their families. (Indicators: They tell mother's and father's name, last name, occupation etc. They tell their physical features such as skin color, hair color, length, eye color. They tell name of close relatives such as aunt and uncle. They tell telephone number and home address)

Materials: Family photos, clipboard, cardboard/poster paper

Words:
Family, occupation, society, physical feature, gender, graphic

Concepts:
Same-Similar-Different
Before-Now-After
Old-Young

Learning process:
The teacher draws the children's attention by showing the photo of himself and his family. He also shows his own baby photo to the children, if any, and asks them to guess who this person is. He then says that this photo belongs to me and talks about some memories of his infancy. Children are asked some family-themed riddles.

The pillar of the warm house,
Makes the heart pound.
Efforts work
brings home the bread
(Father)

Warm wraps,
Hugs with love.
is always with us,
There is no one like him.

Table 41 *Example communication activity showing the organization of indoor learning environment cont'd*

(Mother)

chirping joy,
Makes everyone laugh.
little in house,
The one and only of the parents.
(Child)

mother, father, children,
They live in happiness.
(Family)

After the riddles, the child who wants to introduce his family in the "I'm introducing my family" activity, introduces his family to his friends, gives information about his life at home with the help of the board with pictures taken with their families.
They share information about their family, siblings, grandparents, other relatives, home life, pets, if any. A conversation is made about the responsibilities of family members towards their families and society. The song "My Family" is sung with children.

My family
mom dad brother
i love my home
We all live together
We share together.

I also have a cat,
I love him too
We all live together
We share together.

Assessment
During or at the end of the activity, the following questions can be asked to the children;

• Why isn't everyone's eyes and hair the same color?
• Do your parents and siblings look alike?
• What are our responsibilities in our society?
• How do we express our feelings to our family members?
• What differences do you see between your infancy and your current state?

Parent Involvement

Table 41 *Example communication activity showing the organization of indoor learning environment cont'd*

The family is said to prepare a cardboard including the pictures of their children taken together from the infancy to today and send them to school. Families are said to prepare for the presentation of their children about the photos and objects used in the period of infancy. **Adaptation -**

Table 42 *Example empathy activity based on the parent involvement type of getting support from families in cooperation with the community*

P7.8
Date: 24.09.2021
FIREFIGHTING WEEK **Type of the activity:** Language integrated with art, drama, literacy preparation activity **Age Group:** 5 years old **Gains and indicators:** *(Only the related gains and indicators based on social skill are given in this section)* **-** **Materials:** Red cardboards **Words and Concepts:** Firefighter, 110, fire, fire station, flood, rescue **Learning process:** Turkish and Art The teacher asks the children to sit in the shape of a half moon. Then teacher asks that what does the firefighters do, have you ever seen a firefighter? In this way the conversation starts. After conversation, the fireman's poem is read. FIREMAN Bracing every danger Extinguish fires Hero firefighters. Disregarding your own life Saves lives in fire Hero Firefighters

Table 42 *Example empathy activity based on the parent involvement type of getting support from families in cooperation with the community cont'd*

After the poem is read, the teacher tells the children that they are going to call the fire station and learn the number of the fire department. He gives the cardboards to the children to create a firefighter hat and costume. In this process, children are encouraged to produce original products by being guided. After everyone completes their own firefighter, they complete the activity by sticking the 110-firefighter number on their chest. Children are informed that they can reach the fire station with 110. Drama The teacher tells the children that they will have a little conversation by sitting them in a half-moon shape. They are asked whether they have ever seen a fire station before, what does the fire station do, in which cases the fire statiton is called, and children's estimates are listened. It is said that we will be firefighters and we will save a cat that is stuck in a tree, we pass together in a distance and go from one corner of the classroom to the other corner of the classroom, making a sound like the siren of the fire truck. It is asked how we can save the cat is stuck in the tree, and ideas are listened. The drama is continued with the guidance of the children. Literacy Preparation The teacher takes the children to the tables and asks what numbers to call if we need to call the fire department. It is repeated loudly, "one one zero". Then the relevant coloring page is given, and the fire department number is learned. **Assessment** When should the fire department be called? What is the fire department number? **Parent Involvement** Families communicated with people working in fire station and organized a trip to go to there with children. **Adaptation -**

Table 43 *Example helping activity demonstrating assessment based on questioning*

P11.17

Date: 09.11.2021

HELPING GAME

Type of the activity: Play activity

Age Group: 5 years old

Gains and indicators: *(Only the related gains and indicators based on social skill are given in this section)*
-

Materials: cardboard cups, sticks, glue gun, balls, legos

Words and Concepts: Helping

Learning process:

The teacher takes the children to the playground and says we will play a nice game today. The teacher brings the colored balls in the classroom to the playground and asks them to separate these balls according to their colors. Then, he brings colored background cardboards and asks them to group the balls according to these colored background cardboards. After these short games, the teacher creates two square areas from the Lego in the classroom. She puts equal number of balls in two squares. The teacher says we have to get the balls out of this square we made with Legos with this glass. But it is a little difficult to get the ball out without any help. The teacher asks the children how they can overcome this problem and asks them to suggest solutions. Solutions are discussed and tried. Later, they decide that they can do this by helping each other. Then two children standing opposite each other grasp the ball together with the glasses in their hands and take the balls out of the Legos. The game can be played again according to the interest of the children. Finally, teacher talks about why it is important to help each other.

Assessment
Why couldn't we play our game alone?
How did we find a solution to our game?
How did you feel while playing together?
Why is helping important?
What would happen if we didn't help each other?

Parent Involvement
The families are said that you can visit the families and the people who need help and talk with your child about this issue.

Adaptation -

I. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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15 NİSAN 2021

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Feyza Tantekin ERDEN

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Zeliha DEMİRCİ'nin "Anaokulu çocuklarının sosyal becerilerini desteklemek için kullanılan programa dayalı stratejilerin öğretmenlerin bakış açılarından incelenmesi" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **155-ODTU-2021** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

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J. PERMISSION FROM MoNE

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Üniversiteniz Temel Eğitim Anabilim Dalı Okul Öncesi Eğitimi yüksek lisans programı öğrencisi Zeliha DEMİRCİ ÜNAL'ın **"Anaokulu Çocuklarının Sosyal Becerilerini Desteklemek İçin Kullanılan Programa Dayalı Stratejilerinin Öğretmenlerinin Bakış Açılarından İncelenmesi"** konulu çalışması kapsamında İlimize bağlı anaokulu ve anasınıflarında uygulama yapma talebi ilgi (a) Genelge çerçevesinde incelenmiştir.

Yapılan inceleme sonucunda, söz konusu araştırmanın Müdürlüğümüzde muhafaza edilen ölçme araçlarının; Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, Milli Eğitim Temel Kanunu ile Türk Milli Eğitiminin genel amaçlarına uygun olarak, ilgili yasal düzenlemelerde belirtilen ilke, esas ve amaçlara aykırılık teşkil etmeyecek, eğitim-öğretim faaliyetlerini aksatmayacak şekilde okul ve kurum yöneticilerinin sorumluluğunda, gönüllülük esasına göre uygulanması Müdürlüğümüzce uygun görülmüştür.

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

Harun FATSA
Vali a.
Milli Eğitim Müdürü

K. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

OKUL ÖNCESİ ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ÇOCUKLARIN SOSYAL BECERİLERİNİ DESTEKLEMEYE YÖNELİK PROGRAMA DAYALI DENEYİMLERİNİN İNCELENMESİ

BÖLÜM 1

Giriş

Sosyal beceriler, sosyal ilişkileri başlatan, sürdüren ve sorunların çözümünü kolaylaştıran sözlü veya sözsüz davranışlar olarak ifade edilmektedir (Gülay & Akman, 2009). Erken çocukluk eğitiminde sosyal beceri kazanımı, çocukların gelişiminde önemli bir adım olup onlara yaşam boyu kullanabilecekleri kaliteli sosyal deneyimler sağlar (Danielson & Phelps, 2003; Quesenberry vd., 2016). Ayrıca erken yaşlarda edinilen sosyal beceriler, çocukların ilerideki sosyal ve akademik başarısını da artırır (Salcedo, 2017).

Okul öncesinde sosyal becerileri geliştirmenin en önemli yollarından biri iyi planlanan ve uygulanan eğitim programıdır (Church, 2015; NAEYC, 2011). Erken çocukluk eğitiminde program, öğretmenler tarafından hazırlanır ve çocukların gelişimsel olarak uygun öğrenmelerini sağlar (Krogh & Slentz, 2008). Dünya genelinde birçok ulusal ve uluslararası erken çocukluk eğitimine yönelik eğitim programları bulunmaktadır (Finlandiya Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2018; Gülçiçek vd., 2019). Türkiye'de ise hizmet içi okul öncesi öğretmenleri, 2013 yılında Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından geliştirilen ulusal okul öncesi eğitimi programını kullanmaktadırlar (MEB, 2013). Bu program kapsamında öğretmenler tarafından, çocukların bütün gelişim alanları gibi sosyal becerilerini de desteklemek adına etkinlik planları, günlük planlar ve aylık planlar hazırlanmaktadır. Etkinlik planları hazırlanırken programda yer alan kazanım gösterge, etkinlik çeşitleri, kelime ve kavramlar, materyal, öğrenme ortamı, aile katılımı, değerlendirme ve uyarlama gibi birçok faktör göz önünde bulundurulmaktadır (MEB, 2013). Ulusal okul öncesi eğitim

programının sosyal beceriler ile olan ilişkisine gelindiğinde ise, programda sosyal becerilerin desteklenmesi için de birçok kazanım ve gösterge yer aldığı görülmektedir. Bu kazanımlara örnek olarak; "dili iletişim amacıyla kullanır", "bir olay veya durumla ilgili olarak başkalarının duygularını açıklar", "başkalarıyla sorunlarını çözer" verilebilir.

Ulusal okul öncesi eğitim programımızda üzerinde durulduğu gibi, araştırmacılar da sosyal becerilerin desteklenmesi için eğitim programının çok önemli olduğunu ve bu becerilerin geliştirilmesine yönelik etkinliklere programda sıkça yer verilmesi gerektiğini vurgulamışlardır (Johnson et al., 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019). Sosyal becerilerin desteklenmesi ile ilgili eğitim programından bahsederken, program planlayıcısı ve uygulayıcısı olarak öğretmenlerin öneminden de bahsetmek gerekmektedir (Lynch & Simpson, 2010). Çünkü okul öncesi eğitimin kalitesi hazırlanan eğitim planlarının içeriği ile doğru olantılıdır (Koçak, 2018). Bu durumda okul öncesi öğretmenleri programın planlanması, uygulanması, program ile ilgili aileler ile işbirliği yapması ve programın değerlendirilmesi aşamasında çok büyük bir öneme sahiptir (Ömeroğlu vd., 2014). Yani program kapsamında çocukların sosyal becerilerinin desteklenmesi öğretmenlerin sorumluluğundadır.

Problem Durumu

Erken çocukluk eğitiminde sosyal becerilerin desteklenmesi konusunda eğitim programının (Johnson et al., 2016; Williams and Reisberg, 2003) ve bu eğitim programının planlayıcısı ve uygulayıcısı olarak öğretmenin (Conroy et al., 2014; Palmer, 2019; Quesenberry et al., 2016) önemi büyüktür. Fakat, Aksoy (2021)'e göre, sosyal becerilerin bireyin yaşamında ilk yıllardan itibaren önemli olmasına rağmen çoğu öğretmen bu becerileri günlük etkileşimler ve anlık olaylar yoluyla desteklemektedir. Bu durumun sebeplerinden birisi çocukların gelişiminde farklı alanlara öncelik verilerek sosyal beceri gelişiminin göz ardı edilmesidir (Bierman et al., 2016; Gallegos, 2014). Ancak, sosyal becerilere eğitim programında rastgele değil, planlı ve sistemli olarak yer verilmesi gerekmektedir (Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008). Bu

nedenle hem okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin görüşleri, hem uygulamaları hem de eğitim planlarının içeriğinin bu açıdan incelenmesi çok önemlidir.

Çalışmanın önemi

Bu çalışmanın önemi farklı açılardan ele alınabilir. İlk olarak, öğretmen görüşlerinin incelenmesi çok önemlidir çünkü öğretmenlerin bir konudaki görüşleri onların sınıftaki uygulamalarını etkilemektedir (Viitaniemi, 2020). Ayrıca, öğretmen görüşlerini incelemek araştırmacıların eğitim uygulamalarında çalışan ve çalışmayan boyutları kavramalarına ve eğitim sistemindeki tüm paydaşların yararına olacak şekilde etkili çözümler bulmalarına yardımcı olur. Fakat sadece öğretmenlerin görüşleri değil aynı zamanda onların uygulamalarının araştırılması da çok önemlidir (Avvisati, 2018). Buna göre öğretmenlerin programa dayalı deneyimlerini etkili bir şekilde anlamak için hem öğretmenlerin görüşlerinin hem de sosyal becerilere ilişkin onların kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamalarının öğrenilmesi gerekir. Zaten literatürde, çocukların sosyal becerilerine ilişkin öğretmenlerin beklentilerine, deneyimlerine ve uygulamalarına odaklanan sınırlı sayıda araştırma olduğu belirtilmektedir (Ferreira vd., 2021; Gallegos, 2014; Lane vd., 2007).

Ayrıca literatürde öğretmenlerin çocukların sosyal becerilerini desteklemek için kullanacakları pratik bilgilerin ve stratejilerin de yetersiz olduğu belirtilmiştir (Ferreira vd., 2021). Buna karşın Katz (2014), eğitimciler için çocukların sosyal becerilerini geliştirebilmek adına pratiğe dayalı stratejilerini içeren bir arşivin zorunlu olduğundan bahsetmiştir. Bu çalışma öğretmenlerin bu konuda deneyimlerine ve uygulamalarına odaklanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmanın gelecekte hem öğretmenlere hem de öğretmen adaylarına çocukların sosyal becerilerini destekleyebilmeleri için pratik bilgi anlamında katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

Son olarak, bu çalışmada öğretmenlerin sosyal beceriye dayalı etkinliklerinin içeriği incelenmiş ve daha sonrasında öğretmenlerin kendi söylemlerine dayalı uygulamaları ile bu içerik analizi arasındaki uyum ve uyumsuzluklara bakılmıştır. Planlama okul öncesi eğitiminde oldukça önemlidir (Jackman, 2005; NAEYC, 2020). Planlama sırasında öğretmenlerin kazanım gösterge, değerlendirme, öğrenme sürecinin içeriği, materyaller gibi programa dayalı faktörleri göz önünde bulundurması

ve yazılı hale getirmesi eğitim sürecini daha etkili hale getirir (Krogh & Slentz, 2008). Bu bağlamda eğitim kalitesinin belirlenebilmesi için okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin planlarının içeriğinin incelenmesi önerilmektedir (Koçak, 2018). Bu nedenle bu çalışmanın aynı zamanda okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin planlama deneyimleri ile ilgili literatürdeki boşluğu dolduracağı düşünülmekte ve ileride programın hazırlanma ve güncellenme aşamasında yetkililere yol göstereceği öngörülmektedir.

BÖLÜM 2

Yöntem

Çalışmanın Amacı

Bu çalışmanın amacı, çocukların iletişim, empati, sosyal problem çözme, paylaşma ve yardımlaşma olmak üzere beş sosyal becerisini desteklemek için okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin programa dayalı görüş ve deneyimlerini incelemektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda bu çalışmada, aşağıda bulunan araştırma sorularına cevap aranacaktır.

1. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin çocukların sosyal becerilerini destekleme açısından MEB okul öncesi eğitim programı hakkında görüşleri nelerdir?
2. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin çocukların sosyal becerilerileri desteklemeye yönelik MEB programı kapsamında kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamaları nelerdir?
3. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin eğitim planlarında yer alan sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin içeriği nasıldır?
4. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin çocukların sosyal becerilerini desteklemeye yönelik program kapsamında kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamaları ile planlarının içeriği uyumlu mudur?

Araştırmanın modeli

Bu çalışmada araştırmacının amacı, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin program kapsamında çocukların sosyal becerilerinin desteklenmesine yönelik görüş ve uygulamalarını araştırmak olduğu için nitel araştırma türlerinden fenomenolojik araştırma deseni kullanılacaktır.

Katılımcılar

Bu çalışma Ankara ilinin Çankaya, Yenimahalle, Etimesgut, Altındağ, Elmadağ, Gölbaşı ve Sincan ilçelerindeki devlet anaokullarında ve ilkokula bağlı anasınıflarında öğretmenlik yapan 13 okul öncesi öğretmeni ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Öğretmenler amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak seçilmiştir. Bu nedenle öğretmenlerin seçiminde; bütün öğretmenlerin okul öncesi öğretmenliği bölümünden lisans mezunu olması ve 5-6 yaş öğrencilerin öğretmenliğini yapıyor olması; bütün katılımcıların araştırmaya istekli ve gönüllü olarak katılıyor olmaları; bütün katılımcıların eğitim planlarını içeren dosyaları araştırmacının incelemesi için paylaşıyor olmaları ve katılımcıların 5 ile 25 yıl arasında öğretmenlik deneyimine sahip olmaları gibi bazı kriterler kullanılmıştır.

Veri toplama araçları

Bu araştırmada üçgenleme kullanılmıştır. Bu kapsamda öğretmenlerle görüşmeler gerçekleştirmek için yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat soruları (Ek C) ve aynı zamanda öğretmenlerin eğitim planlarını incelemek için bir değerlendirme kontrol listesi (Ek D) kullanılmıştır. Bu iki ölçme aracı hem sosyal beceri literatüründen hem de farklı okul öncesi eğitimi yaklaşımı ve programlarından faydalanılarak araştırmacı tarafından oluşturulmuştur. Aynı zamanda bu yaklaşım ve programlar, veri toplama araçlarında yer alan kazanım ve göstergeler, kavramlar, öğrenme süreci, aile katılımı, değerlendirme, materyaller ve öğrenme ortamı dahil olmak üzere programa dayalı öğelerin boyutlarını oluşturmak için de kullanılmıştır. Bu maddeler, bu çalışma kapsamında hem görüşme sorularına hem de belge analizi kontrol listesine dahil edilmiştir. Araştırmacı aynı araştırma olgusunu araştıracağından bu iki veri toplama aracının içeriği birbiri ile ilişkilidir. Dolayısıyla bu araçlar birbirlerinin sonuçlarını destekleyecektir.

Araştırmacı, veri toplama araçlarını oluşturduktan sonra, bu araçların anlaşılırlığını ve uygunluğunu değerlendirmek için üç farklı uzman fikirlerini araştırmacı ile paylaşmıştır. Uzman görüşleri alınıp ölçme araçları buna göre yenilendikten sonra hem görüşme sorularının hem de doküman analizi kontrol listesinin etkinliği ve uygunluğu konusunda görüş sahibi olmak amacıyla bir pilot

çalışma yapılmıştır. Pilot çalışmanın ardından bu veri toplama araçları tekrar düzenlenmiştir.

Verilerin toplanması

Çalışmaya dahil olmak isteyen gönüllü katılımcılar çalışmanın hem görüşme hem de belge inceleme prosedürüne dahil edilmiştir. Her görüşmeden önce, araştırmacı çalışmasının amacını ve detaylarını açıklamış ve her katılımcıya onam formunu sunmuştur (Ek B). Araştırmacı ayrıca tüm katılımcıları çalışma boyunca gizliliğin korunması hakkında bilgilendirmiştir. Görüşmeler yapıldıktan sonra araştırmanın ikinci kısmı için öğretmenler, belgelerini e-posta aracılığıyla araştırmacı ile paylaşmıştır. Bu süreçten sonra araştırmacı öğretmenlerin eğitim planlarını incelemeye başlamıştır. Belgelerin içeriğinin araştırılması sürecinde araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan belge analizi kontrol listesi kullanılmıştır.

Verilerin Analizi

Veri analizi sürecinde araştırmacı, araştırma kitaplarında nitel araştırmalar için bahsedilen genel süreci ve adımları kullanılmıştır (Creswell, 2007). İlk olarak görüşmelerin yazı dökümleri hazırlanmış ve önemli ifadeler içeren cümleler vurgulanmıştır. İkinci olarak, bu ifadeler kodlar kullanılarak farklı kategorilere göre sınıflandırılmıştır. Tüm bu adımlar iki farklı kodlayıcının bakış açısından gerçekleştirmiş ve daha sonra bu iki araştırmacı bir araya gelerek transkriptler, kategoriler ve kodlar üzerinden bakış açılarını tartışmışlardır. Ayrıca, bu benzer adımlar belge incelemesi için de gerçekleştirilmiştir. Böylece araştırmacı, öğretmenlerin program kapsamında çocukların sosyal becerilerini desteklemek için yaşadığı deneyimlere dayalı kendi söylemleri ile etkinlik planlarında rapor ettikleri uygulamalar arasındaki tutarlılığı anlayabilmiştir.

SONUÇ VE TARTIŞMA

Bu bölümde çalışmanın sonuçları ve sonuçlara dayalı tartışma, her araştırma sorusu özelinde sunulmuştur. Bulgular rapor edilirken daha anlaşılır olabilmek için bazı bölümlerde tablolar kullanılmıştır.

Öğretmenlerin çocukların sosyal becerilerini desteklemek için okul öncesi eğitim programı hakkındaki görüşleri

Bu çalışmada, öğretmenlerin tamamı okul öncesi eğitim programının sosyal becerileri desteleme açısından önemli olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Bu sonuç literatürle benzerlik göstermektedir (Johnson et al., 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Palmer, 2019; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019). Ayrıca öğretmenler tarafından, programın içeriğinin (günlük eğitim akışı, kazanımlar ve kavramlar) ve özelliklerinin (çocuk merkezli, esnek ve sarmal olması) bu açıdan önemli ve yeterli olduğu da vurgulanmıştır. Bu durumda öğretmenlerin okul öncesi eğitim programının sosyal becerileri destekleme açısından önemini kavradıkları söylenebilir.

Diğer bir taraftan katılımcıların bazıları, okul öncesi eğitim programının kazanım göstergeler, programın içeriği ve eğitim paydaşları tarafından destek verilmesi açısından programın sosyal becerileri desteklemekte eksik kaldığını söylemişlerdir. Benzer sonuçlar farklı araştırmalarda da bulunmuştur (Başaran & Ulubey, 2018; Özsırkıntı vd., 2014). Bu durumda katılımcılar, diğer araştırmalarda olduğu gibi programın bazı önemli ve geliştirilebilir noktalarına da odaklanmışlardır.

Bunun yanında, sosyal beceri etkinliklerine eğitim planlarında düzenli olarak yer verilmesi konusunda öğretmenlerin çoğu *"kesinlikle yer almalı"* diye cevap verirken; diğerleri *"düzenli olarak yer almasına gerek yok"* diye görüşlerini belirtmişlerdir. Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin programda sistemli olarak yer alması gerektiği literatürde birçok farklı araştırmacı tarafından vurgulanmıştır (Akbaş, 2019; Johnson et al., 2016; Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Pekdoğan, 2016; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019). Bu durumda çalışmadaki öğretmenlerin çoğu literature uygun şekilde, sosyal beceri etkinliklerini rastgele uygulamak yerine sürekli sistematik bir şekilde planlara entegre etmek gerektiğini düşünmüşlerdir.

Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin sosyal becerileri desteklemeye yönelik olarak program kapsamında kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamaları

- **Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin planlanması ve programa dahil edilmesi**

Öğretmenler genel olarak, sosyal beceri etkinliklerini planlarken programda bulunan kazanım gösterge, aile katılımı, öğrenme ortamı ve materyaller, öğrenme süreci, kelime ve kavramlar ve değerlendirme gibi faktörlere dikkat ettiklerini söylemişlerdir. Ayrıca katılımcıların yarısından fazlası, planlama yaparken programın ilkeleri arasında yer alan "öğrencilerin ihtiyaçları ve bireysel farklılıkları" ve "programın hazırlandığı eğitim çevresi ve ailenin özellikleri" ne dikkat ederek planlama yaptıklarından söz etmişlerdir. Bu durumda, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin sosyal beceri etkinliklerini hazırlarken programa dayalı birçok faktörü göz önünde bulundurmaları gerektiğinin farkında oldukları görülmüştür.

Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin programa dahil edilmesi ve uygulanması konusunda ise; öğretmenlerin neredeyse hepsi, sistemli bir şekilde hatta hergün olacak şekilde bu etkinliklere yer verdiklerini söylemişlerdir. Bu sonuç, Aksoy (2021)'in çalışmasındaki bulgular ile paralellik göstermektedir. Bu benzerlikten yola çıkarak, bu çalışmada öğretmenlerin neredeyse hepsinin, sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin düzenli olarak programa dahil edilmesi gerektiğini bildikleri ve uyguladıkları söylenebilir. Ek olarak katılımcıların çok azı, sosyal beceri etkinliklerini çocukların ihtiyaçlarına göre periodik olarak düzenli ele aldıklarını vurgulamıştır. Bu konuda katılımcılar, okulun ilk başladığı zamanlarda çocukların okula alışabilmeleri ve birbirleriyle iletişim kurabilmeleri için sosyal beceri etkinliklerine sıkça yer verildiğinden bahsetmişlerdir.

- **Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin öğrenme süreci**

Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin cevaplarına bakıldığında, program kapsamında en çok iletişim becerisinin desteklendiğini, sosyal problem çözme ve paylaşma becerilerinin ise daha az desteklendiği görülmüştür. Bunun sebebi olarak, iletişim becerilerinin diğer sosyal becerilerin temeli olduğu düşünülebilir (Kaffemaniene, 2018). Fakat bu konuda bütün öğrencilerin ihtiyaçları farklı olduğu için bütün sosyal becerilere dengeli olarak yer verilmesi gerektiği düşünülmektedir.

Tablo 1 *Sosyal becerileri geliştirmeye yönelik kullanılan etkinlik türleri ve rutinler*

Kategoriler	Katılımcılar
Dil etkinlikleri (N=10)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P12, P13
Sanat etkinlikleri (N=5)	P2, P3, P11, P12, P13
Drama etkinlikleri (N=5)	P3, P4, P7, P9, P13
Oyun etkinlikleri (N=4)	P1, P2, P8, P13
Fen etkinlikleri (N=1)	P12
Müzik etkinlikleri (N=1)	P3
Matematik etkinlikleri (N=1)	P9
Serbest oyun zamanları (N=8)	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10
Alan gezileri (N=2)	P11, P12
Anlık durumlar (N=6)	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P12
Özel günler ve haftalar (N=5)	P1, P4, P6, P10, P12

Katılımcıların çoğu sosyal beceri etkinliklerini gerçekleştirirken etkinlik türü olarak daha çok Türkçe-dil, sanat, drama ve oyun etkinliklerini kullandıklarından söz etmişlerdir. Buna ek olarak katılımcıların bazıları serbest oyun zamanını, özel gün ve haftaları ve anlık gelişen olayları çocukların sosyal becerilerini desteklemek için kullandıklarından bahsetmişlerdir. Öğretmenlerin cevapları diğer bir bakış açısından değerlendirildiğinde ise matematik, fen, alan gezisi ve müzik gibi etkinlik türlerinin çok az kullanıldığı görülmüştür. Bazı etkinlik türlerinin daha az bazı etkinlik türlerinin ise daha çok ele alınması yapılan diğer çalışmalar ile paralellik göstermektedir (Aksoy, 2021; Yapar vd., 2021). Bu durumun sebebi, öğretmenlerin bazı disiplinleri sosyal beceri etkinliklerine nasıl dahil edeceklerini bilememelerinden kaynaklanıyor olabilir. Fakat bütün disiplinlerin sosyal beceri eğitimi açısından önemli olduğu düşünüldüğünde (Church, 2015; Kara and Aslan, 2018; Katz, 2014) okul öncesi öğretmenlerine bu disiplinleri sosyal beceri etkinliklerine nasıl entegre edebilecekleri üzerine eğitimler verilmesi önerilmektedir.

Etkinlik türlerine benzer bir şekilde, öğretmenlerin sosyal beceri etkinliklerinde daha çok dil, oyun, drama ve sanat materyallerini kullandıkları, doğal

materyaller, teknolojik materyaller, kendi tarafından oluşturulan materyalleri veya geri dönüşüm materyallerini ise daha az kullandıkları tespit edilmiştir.

Son olarak araştırmacı, katılımcıların sosyal beceri etkinliklerinde öğrenme ortamını nasıl düzenlediklerine yönelik deneyimlerini paylaşmaları istemiştir. Buna yönelik öğretmenlerin cevapları Tablo 1'de gösterilmiştir.

Tablo 2 *Sosyal beceri etkinliklerine yönelik olarak öğrenme ortamının düzenlenmesi*

Kategoriler	Kodlar	Katılımcılar
İç mekan (N=11)	Sınıf içi (n=10) (Sınıf zemininin ve duvarların dekore edilmesi, öğrenme merkezlerinin düzenlenmesi, oturma düzeninin etkinlik türüne göre ayarlanması)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P12
	Sınıf dışı (n=3) (Drama sınıfı, kütüphane, oyun alanı, koridor, diğer sınıflar)	P6, P7, P10
Dış mekan (N=4)	Okul bahçesi (n=3)	P7, P12, P13
	Okul dışı (n=1)	P11

Katılımcıların sosyal beceri etkinliklerine yönelik öğrenme ortamlarını düzenlemeleri konusunda neredeyse bütün öğretmenler "iç mekân" ı ve özellikle "sınıf içi"ni kullandıkları yönünde uygulamalarını paylaşmışlardır. Ama "dış mekân" kullanımına bakıldığında katılımcıların çok azının buna odaklandığı göze çarpmaktadır. Bu sonuçtan hareketle öğretmenlerin iç mekân düzenlemesine dikkat ettikleri fakat dış mekân kullanımı ve düzenlenmesine yeterince odaklanmadıkları görülmüştür. Öğretmenlerin iç mekânı kullanması ama dış mekânı kullanmaması başka bir çalışmadaki bulgular ile oldukça benzerdir (Sak, 2013). Buradan hareketle, öğretmenlere dış mekânı etkinliklerinde nasıl etkin bir şekilde kullanabilecekleri konusunda yol göstermek gereklilik olarak görülmektedir.

- **Sosyal beceri etkinliklerine yönelik gerçekleştirilen aile katılımı ve değerlendirme çeşitleri**

Tablo 3 *Sosyal beceri etkinlikleri ile ilişkili olarak gerçekleştirilen aile katılımı çeşitleri*

Kategoriler	Kodlar	Katılımcılar
Ailelerle iletişim kurma (N=11)	Tek yönlü iletişim (n=5)	P1, P4, P6, P7, P9
	Çift yönlü iletişim (n=8)	P1, P2, P3, P6, P10, P11, P12, P13
Evde öğrenme sürecini zenginleştirmek için ailelere etkinlik sağlama (N=7)		P1, P2, P4, P6, P8, P9, P12
Gönüllü aileleri dahil etme (N=4)		P2, P5, P11, P12
Çocuk gelişimi ve ebeveynlik ile ilgili ailelere eğitim verme (N=3)		P2, P3, P7
Kaynak bulma konusunda ailelerden destek alma (N=3)		P5, P7, P11

Tablo 3'teki sonuçlara göre, öğretmenlerin sosyal beceri etkinlikleri ile alakalı olarak kullandıklarını belirttikleri aile katılımı türleri literatür tarafından desteklenmektedir (Adams et al., 2010; Boz et al., 2018; Gözcü Binbir & Ertürk Kara, 2020; Yurtseven & Kurt, 2013). Fakat öğretmenler aile katılımı türlerinden iletişim kurma yöntemini en fazla kullandıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Fakat öğretmenlerin bütün aile katılımı türleri hakkında yeterince bilgi sahibi olması ve kullanabilmesi için eğitim almaları ve buna dayalı kaynakların geliştirilmesi gerekmektedir.

Tablo 4 *Sosyal beceri etkinlikleri ile ilişkili olarak gerçekleştirilen değerlendirme çeşitleri*

Categories	Participants
Gözlem (N=12)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13
Soru sorma (N=6)	P2, P4, P6, P8, P9, P13
Portfolyo ve sergiler (N=3)	P3, P5, P13

Tablo 4 *Sosyal beceri etkinlikleri ile ilişkili olarak gerçekleştirilen değerlendirme çeşitleri devamı*

Değerlendirme etkinlikleri ve oyunlar (N=2)	P11, P13
Teknolojiye dayalı değerlendirme (N=2)	P3, P11
Öğrencilerin öz değerlendirmesi (N=1)	P7

Çocukların sosyal becerilerinin değerlendirilmesine bakıldığında ise, öğretmenlerin çoğunlukla gözlem yöntemini kullandıkları görülmektedir. Fakat literatürden farklı bir şekilde özellikle portfolyo (Wortham, 2014; Yus et al., 2017), değerlendirme etkinlikleri (Worham & Hardin, 2020), teknolojiye dayalı değerlendirme (Wortham, 2014) ve öğrencilerin öz değerlendirmesi (Mclntosh & Mackay, 2008; Ömeroğlu et al., 2014) yöntemlerin çok az kullanıldığı göze çarpmaktadır. Bu kapsamda, öğretmenlerin yalnızca kısıtlı değerlendirme yöntemlerini kullanmaları yerine daha çeşitli değerlendirme yöntemleri kullanabilmeleri için bilgiye ihtiyaç duydukları düşünülmektedir.

Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin eğitim planlarında yer alan sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin içeriğinin incelenmesi

- **Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin genel özellikleri**

Bu çalışma kapsamında öğretmenlerin eğitim planlarının birinci dönemine ait (eylül, ekim, kasım, aralık, ocak) toplamda 2652 etkinlik planı incelenmiş ve sosyal beceri ile ilgili olan 384 etkinlik planı daha detaylı olarak analiz edilmiştir. Ek olarak öğretmenlerin ulaştırmış oldukları günlük ve aylık planlar da datanın etkili yorumlanabilmesi için incelenmiştir. Eğitim planlarına dayalı bulgulardan hareketle, öğretmenlerin sosyal beceri etkinliklerinde en fazla iletişim becerisine yer verdikleri ve en az empati ve paylaşma becerilerine yer verdikleri görülmüştür. Fakat bu aşamada bütün sosyal becerilere dengeli bir şekilde yer vermenin çok önemli olduğu

vurgulanmalıdır çünkü Johnson vd. (2016)'ya göre; bütün çocukların farklı ihtiyaçları birbirinden farklıdır.

Bunun yanında sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin öğretmenlerin eğitim planlarında yer alma sıklığına bakıldığında ise son derece düzensiz olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Fakat literature bakıldığında bu durumun tam tersi yönünde, sosyal becerilerin eğitim planlarında düzenli bir şekilde yer alması gerektiğinden bahsedilmiştir (2016; Rebaque-Gomez et al., 2019; Williams and Reisberg, 2003). Literatür ve bulgular arasında oluşan bu farklılıktan yola çıkarak, öğretmenlerin sosyal beceri etkinliklerini eğitim planlarında planlama konusunda eksiklik yaşadığı düşünülebilir.

- **Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin öğrenme süreçlerinin incelenmesi**

Bu araştırma sorusu kazanım gösterge ve etkinlik süreci arasında uyum, kavramlar ve etkinlik süreci arasındaki uyum, materyaller, etkinlik çeşitleri, öğrenme ortamı ve öğretimsel yaklaşım başlıklarına dayalı olarak açıklanmıştır.

İlk olarak sosyal beceri etkinliklerinde yer alan kazanım göstergelere bakıldığında, öğrenme süreçleri ile (49.8%) oranında ve değerlendirme süreçleri ile (55.1%) oranında uyumsuz olduğu görülmüştür. Daha detaylı bir inceleme yapıldığında ise kazanım göstergeler ile öğrenme süreci arasındaki uyum en fazla iletişim becerisinde (77.7%) görülmüş, paylaşma ve yardımlaşma becerisine dayalı etkinliklerin hiçbirinde herhangi bir uyum görülememiştir. Ulusal okul öncesi eğitim programına (MoNE, 2013) bakıldığında kazanım ve göstergelerin eğitimi planlama noktasında çok önemli olduğu görülmektedir. Buna rağmen öğretmenlerin sosyal beceri etkinliklerine uygun kazanım gösterge eklememelerinin sebebi, bazı öğretmenlerin de belirttiği gibi program içerisinde halihazırda yer alan kazanımların bu anlamda yeterli bulunmaması olabilir.

Kavramlar ile etkinlik süreci arasındaki uyuma bakıldığında etkinliklerin büyük bir kesiminde uyumsuzluk olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bu bulguya göre katılımcıların hepsinin etkinliklerinin çoğunda kelime ve kavramları uygun seçmedikleri sonucuna ulaşılabilir.

Bunun yanında araştırmacı tarafından sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin içerisinde hangi etkinlik türlerinin yer aldığı da araştırılmıştır. Bu analizin sonuçlarına göre

türkçe-dil, sanat, oyun, özel gün ve haftalar ve drama etkinliklerine daha çok yerildiği ama alan gezileri, hareket, matematik, fen gibi etkinlik türlerine daha az yer verildiği görülmüştür. MoNE (2013) eğitim planlarında etkinlik çeşitlerine dengeli bir şekilde yer verilmesi gerektiğini belirtmiştir. Buna ragmen öğretmenlerin bazı etkinlik çeşitlerini az kullanıyor olmalarının sebebi bunları nasıl kullanacaklarını ve planlayacaklarını bilmemelerinden kaynaklanıyor olabilir. Buna yönelik çeşitli kaynakların geliştirilmesi gerektiği düşünülmektedir.

Etkinlik çeşitlerine ek olarak, sosyal beceri etkinliklerinde hangi materyaller üzerine planlama yapıldığı da analiz edilmiştir. Etkinlik planlarının içeriğine bakıldığında, öğretmenlerin daha çok türkçe dil, sanat, oyun materyalleri, teknolojik materyaller ve drama materyalleri kullandıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Diğer bir taraftan doğal materyaller, matematik, fen, geri dönüşüm materyalleri eğitim planlarına en az eklenen materyaller olmuştur.

Öğrenme ortamı ile ilgili yapılan inceleme sonuçlarında, öğretmenlerin daha çok iç mekana yönelik planlama ve hazırlık yaptıkları ve dış mekana yönelik neredeyse hiç planlama yapmadıkları görülmüştür. Bunun yanında öğretmenlerin etkinliklerinin önemli bir bölümünde öğrenme ortamına yönelik bir planlama yapılmadığı görülmektedir. Bu durumda neden planlama yapılmadığına dair araştırma yapılmalı ve bu sebeplerin ortadan kaldırılarak öğretmenlerin öğrenme ortamını planlamaları desteklenmelidir.

Son olarak öğretmenlerin eğitim planları öğretimsel yaklaşım açısından da incelenmiştir. Sonuçlara göre; okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin sosyal beceri etkinliklerini genel olarak çocuk merkezli bir şekilde planladıkları tespit edilmiştir. Çocuk merkezli yaklaşımın çocukların sosyal beceri gelişimleri için ne kadar önemli olduğu literatürde de vurgulanmıştır (Samancı, 2010). Bu yüzden öğretmenlerin planlarında daha çok çocuk merkezli yaklaşımın yer alıyor olması pozitif bir durum olarak yorumlanmaktadır.

- **Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin aile katılımı ve değerlendirme süreçlerinin incelenmesi**

Bu bölümde öğretmenlerin çoğunun aile katılımına dair bir planlama yapmadıkları görülmüştür. Fakat hem ulusal hem uluslararası eğitim programlarına bakıldığında aile katılımının planlanması gerektiği belirtilmiştir (Ministry of Women and Child Development of India, 2012; MoNE, 2013; Katz & Helm, 2001; Teaching Strategies, 2016; HighScope, 2013). Buna rağmen, etkinliklerin çoğunda aile katılımı ile ilgili planlama yapılmaması konusu göz ardı edilmemeli ve sebepleri araştırılmalıdır. Bunun yanında öğretmenler tarafından en çok kullanılan aile katılımı türü ise "evde öğrenme sürecini desteklemek için aielelere etkinlik sağlama" olmuştur. Diğer bir taraftan öğretmenlerin en az "ailelerle çift yönlü iletişim kurma" ve "çocuk gelişimi ve ebeveynlik ile ilgili ailelere eğitim verme" türlerine eğitim planlarında yer verdikleri tespit edilmiştir.

Değerlendirme konusunda, öğretmenlerin etkinlik planlarında en fazla soru sormaya dayalı değerlendirme türüne en az ise teknolojiye dayalı değerlendirme türüne yer verdikleri sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bunun yanında etkinliklerin neredeyse yarısında sosyal becerilere dayalı değerlendirme yapılması konusunda herhangi bir planlama yapılmadığı görülmüştür. Fakat Yılmaz (2021)'e göre çocukların öğrenme deneyimlerini belgelendirme yoluyla değerlendirme yapılması hem öğretmenlerin gelecekte yapacakları planları hakkında rehberlik etmekte hem de programı bilgilendirmektedir. Bu nedenle, öğretmenlerin farklı değerlendirme türlerini anlaması ve planlaması gerekmektedir.

Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin çocukların sosyal becerilerini desteklemeye yönelik program kapsamında kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamaları ile eğitim planlarının uyumu

- **Genel özellikleri açısından uyumu**

Sosyal becerilerin türü ile ilgili öğretmenlerin kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamaları ile içerik analizi arasında uyumdan söz etmek mümkündür. Çünkü her iki veri türünde de iletişim becerilerine en çok, paylaşma becerilerine en az yer

verilmiştir. Bu durumda, sosyal beceri etkinlik türü ile ilgili öğretmenlerin söyledikleri uygulamalar ile ilgili planlama yapmaya özen gösterdikleri söylenebilir.

Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinin sıklığı ile ilgili, öğretmenlerin görüşleri ve kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamaları ile içerik analizi arasında uyumsuzluk bulunmaktadır. İçerik analizine bakıldığında etkinliklerin sıklığı konusunda açık bir şekilde düzensizlik görülürken, öğretmenler tam tersi yönde çok sık ve düzenli olarak sosyal beceri etkinliklerine yer verdiklerini rapor etmişlerdir.

- **Öğrenme süreci açısından uyumu**

Kelime ve kavramlar açısından bakıldığında olumsuz yönde bir uyumdan söz etmek mümkündür. Kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamalarında, yalnızca 2 öğretmen sosyal beceri etkinliklerini planlarken kelime ve kavramlara dikkat ettiğini belirtmiştir. Eğitim planlarının içeriğinde ise yine etkinliklerin çok az bir kısmında kelime ve kavramlara dikkat edildiği, çok büyük bir kısmında ise dikkat edilmediği tespit edilmiştir.

Öğretimsel yaklaşım açısından değerlendirildiğinde, yalnızca 1 öğretmen *"sosyal beceri etkinliklerini planlarken programın çocuk merkezli olmasını göz önünde bulunduruyorum"* demesine ragmen, eğitim planlarının içeriğine bakıldığında öğretmenlerin hepsinin çocuk merkezli yaklaşıma uygun olarak etkinliklerinin planladığı görülmüştür. Bu durumda iki veri türü arasında çok açık bir şekilde uyumsuzluk olduğu söylenebilir.

Buna ek olarak araştırmacı, kazanım gösterge açısından da iki veri türü arasında karşılaştırma yapmıştır. Eğitim planlarının neredeyse yarısında kazanım göstergeler sosyal beceri etkinlikleri ile alakasız bir şekilde yer almıştır. Ama öğretmenler, kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamalarında sosyal beceri etkinliklerini hazırlarken kazanım göstergelere dikkat ettiklerini söylemişlerdir. Bu sonuçlara bakıldığında öğretmenlerin kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamaları ile eğitim planlarının içeriği arasında ciddi bir şekilde uyumsuzluk vardır.

Sosyal beceri etkinliklerinde kullanılan materyal çeşitleri, bütün materyallere oranlandığında öğretmenlerin kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamaları ile içerik analizi arasında belli bir uyumdan söz edilebilir. Çünkü her iki veri türüne bakıldığında

öğretmenlerin en çok türkçe-dil, sanat, oyun, drama gibi materyalleri, en az ise matematik, fen, alan gezisi gibi materyalleri kullandıkları görülmektedir. Materyal çeşitlerine benzer bir şekilde etkinlik türleri açısından da içerik analizi ile öğretmenlerin kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamaları benzerdir.

Ek olarak eğitim ortamı açısından hem öğretmenlerin kendi belirttikleri uygulamaları hem de eğitim planlarının içeriği karşılaştırıldığında, hem uyumdan hem de uyumsuzluktan söz etmek mümkündür. İçerik analizinde öğretmenlerin genel olarak sosyal beceri etkinliklerini iç mekana yönelik planladıkları bulunmuştur. Benzer şekilde, öğretmenler sosyal beceri etkinliklerini daha çok iç mekanda gerçekleştirdiklerini kendileri de belirtmişlerdir. Uyumsuzluğa gelindiğinde ise; içerik analizinde, öğretmenlerin kendi rapor ettikleri uygulamalarından farklı olarak, eğitim planlarının önemli bir bölümünde öğrenme ortamına dair herhangi bir planlamadan söz edilmediği görülmüştür.

- **Aile katılımı ve değerlendirme açısından uyumu**

Aile katılımı konusunda sosyal beceri etkinlik planlarının içeriği analiz edildiğinde, öğretmenlerin kendi rapor ettikleri uygulamaları ile tamamen farklı sonuçlar elde edilmiştir. Çünkü öğretmenlerin hepsi sosyal beceri etkinliklerinde mutlaka bir aile katılımı türünü gerçekleştirdiğinden bahsetmişken, içerik analizinde eğitim planlarının büyük çoğunluğunda aile katılımı etkinliğine rastlanamamıştır. Ayrıca öğretmenler en çok ailelerle çift yönlü iletişim kurma yöntemini kullandıklarını kendileri söylemişken, eğitim planlarında ailelerle çift yönlü iletişim kurma yöntemi en az yer verilen yöntem olmuştur.

Değerlendirme açısından iki veri türü karşılaştırıldığında, yine uyumdan söz edilememektedir. Çünkü bütün öğretmenler sosyal beceri etkinliklerinde mutlaka değerlendirme yaptıklarından bahsetmişken, eğitim planlarında yer alan sosyal beceri etkinlik planlarının neredeyse yarısında sosyal becerilerin değerlendirilmesine ilişkin planlama yapılmadığı görülmüştür. Buna ek olarak soru sormaya dayalı değerlendirme yöntemi içerik analizinde en sık rastlanan tür olmasına karşın, öğretmenlerin yarısından azı soru sormaya dayalı değerlendirme kullandığını rapor etmiştir.

Sonuç olarak iki veri türü arasında bazı uyumsuzluklar görülmüştür. Bunun yanında birkaç katılımcı dışında her bir öğretmen özelinde düşünüldüğünde, etkinlik planlarının içeriği ve kendi söylemlerine dayanan uygulamaları arasında oldukça fazla uyumsuzluk söz konusudur. Diğer bir deyişle katılımcıların çoğunun, görüşme sırasında gerçekleştirdiklerini ya da planladıklarını söyledikleri uygulamaları etkinlik planlarına dahil etmedikleri görülmektedir. Bu bulgular öğretmenlerin planlarını etkili bir şekilde hazırlamadıklarını göstermektedir. Bunun sebebi olarak da öğretmenlerin planlarını kendilerinin hazırlamaları yerine hazır planları kullanmaları olabilir (Başaran & Ulubey, 2018; Sak, 2013). Fakat okul öncesi eğitim programında eğitim planlarının sınıftaki çocukların ihtiyaçlarına, ilgisine ve onların büyüdüğü çevreye uygun şekilde hazırlanması gerektiği özellikle belirtilmektedir (MoNE, 2013). Ayrıca okul öncesi öğretmenleri lisans öğrenimleri boyunca nasıl plan hazırlamaları gerektiği ile ilgili hem teori hem de pratiğe dayalı dersler almaktadırlar. Buna rağmen öğretmenlerin planlarını uygun ve etkili bir şekilde hazırlamıyor oluşları ciddi bir şekilde araştırılması ve tartışılması gereken bir konudur.

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