



The Views of the Parents About Play Participation

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Abstract

This study examined the importance of play and family in child development. Qualitative research method was used in the study. 7 parents of preschool children participated in the study. Data were collected from the participants with an interview form. In the interviews, topics such as the activities parents do with their children, children's playmates, types of games they play, play time and preferred toys were discussed. According to the findings, the games most preferred by children were "coloring activities", and "mother" and "father" were generally prominent as playmates. Parents stated that games increase children's academic success, develop thinking skills, support physical development, strengthen communication skills, provide empathy, teach self-care skills and provide social behaviors. In terms of play resources, factors such as parents guiding their children, teacher support, social media and other parents' posts stand out. As a result, families are aware of the importance of games in child development and think that games have an important place in children's social, cognitive and emotional development. These findings show that families should play more active games with their children and diversify their play environments. In addition, according to the findings obtained because of the research, the concepts of Play, Parent child interaction and Child development were emphasized.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood years are the most important for a child's development. Child development is at the fastest level in these periods. The child's future personality, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs are shaped depending on the interactions and experiences s/he had during this period (Yaşar Ekici, 2013). However, it is impossible to consider the child separately from the environment while doing this shaping. Considering Bronfenbrenner (2005)'s ecological theory, the child's primary environment, such as his family and school, is located in his microsystem. (Paquette, Ryan, 2001). In other words, the experiences the child has with these people have an important place in his/her life. On the other hand, it is known that the child's first and most important social environment is the family. Quality time spent in the family is very important (Özyürek, Gürleyik, 2016). Considering the contributions of play to child development, it is important to equip the interaction at home with play.

Play has been an important endeavor in early childhood education for approximately 150 years (Saracho & Spodek, 1988). That's why many researchers have researched this subject. According to Froebel and Montessori (as cited in Saracho & Spodek, 1988) play is a way to achieve success. Piaget (as cited in Smith, 1966) defined play as the interaction of the physical and social environment with intelligence. According to Vygotsky, play is an activity carried out under the child's direction so that he can learn and postpone his pleasures (Vygotsky, 1933). Play contributes to the child's socio-emotional, physical, and cognitive development. (Saracho, Spodek, 1988). The play reveals children's existing capacities and enables them to develop them further (Fogle, 2003). Play is an integral part of childhood.

Physical activity is also an integral part of the play. Physical activities contribute to the child's physical health as well as their cognitive development (Murata, & Maeda, 2002). Play develops children's creativity and skills; It requires them to try to access information. This directly contributes to children's cognitive development (Fogle, 2003). When we look at it from the field of socio-emotional development, play is a way for children to cope with stress. Children base their play on real-life practices and have the opportunity to experience them many times. They encounter conflicts in their play and find solutions for them. Play is a great resource for maximizing all these developments (Wood, & Attfield, 1996). Recent researches (Holmatov, 2023; Wood, 2022; Wahyuni & Laksito, 2021) show that there is a strong connection between play and learning. Children stay in touch with many of their friends while playing. Therefore, they learn very different experiences from both their friends and the environment. In addition, even if children only observe during play, they gain many experiences. In this way, the play offers them the opportunity to connect their old life experiences they got before with their new experiences (Wood, & Attfield, 1996). In this way, children constitute their learning.

While all these positive developments of play on child development and the importance of family in children's lives are known, many studies (Ginsburg, 2007; Lillard, 2013; Mowder, 2005) have been conducted on this subject. This research, it is aimed to investigate two concepts that are so important for the development of the child and to reveal what kind of interactions parents have with their children while spending time at home. This research has the potential to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of play and family interactions on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Furthermore, it aims to provide deeper insights into the ways in which families guide their children during play, as well as the varied effects these interactions have on children's overall development.

The question of how parents constantly interact with their children is examined. In this direction, the sub-goals were determined as follows:

1. What kind of play and toys do parents and children use when playing?
2. How do they spend time together at home?
3. What is the level of knowledge of parents about the effect of play on child development?

METHOD

The study was conducted with a qualitative research method. The design of the study was determined as a case study. In this study, data was collected using an easily accessible sampling method. The research was conducted with a total of 7 parents whose children were of preschool age and attending preschool education institutions in Antep city center. 4 of the parents in the study group are mothers and 3 are fathers. The age range of mothers in the study group is 27-44, and the age range of fathers is 29-31. Two of the parents in the study group have a primary school degree, four have a bachelor's degree and one has a master's degree.

Research data were collected through face-to-face interviews with the parents in the study group. An open-ended semi-structured interview form prepared by Özyürek and Gürleyik (2016) was used as a data collection tool. The interviewer schematized the interview flow beforehand (Dursun, 2023). In preparing the interview form used in the research, the researchers examined the relevant literature, and a pilot application was carried out based on expert opinions. After the application, the interview form was given its final form.

Interviews with the study group were recorded with the permission of the participant to prevent data loss. During the interviews, 7 questions were asked of the parents. During the interviews, an attempt was made to provide in-depth information by asking questions according to the answers.

Table 1. Meeting Times with Parents

Parents	The duration of the Interview
P1	27 minutes
P2	21 minutes
P3	34 minutes
P4	30 minutes
P5	25 minutes
P6	20 minutes
P7	44 minutes
Total	201 minutes

As given in Table 1, interviews with parents; 27 minutes with P1; 21 minutes with P2; 34 minutes with P3; 30 minutes with P4; 25 minutes with P5; 20 minutes with P6, and 44 minutes with V7; It took a total of 201 minutes.

Content analysis technique was used to analyze the data obtained in the research. The qualitative data obtained was analyzed through the stages of coding the data, finding themes, arranging the codes and themes, defining and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018).

The coders independently coded the research raw data first. After coding, they created a code list. After coding the collected data and classifying them according to these codes, themes were tried to be found to collect the codes under certain themes. The researchers brought together and examined the codes they obtained. In the final stage, the data was organized according to codes and themes.

The similarity rate between coders is important (Fidan & Öztürk, 2015). Therefore, to ensure inter-coder reliability, the inter-coder agreement, referred to as internal consistency by Miles and Huberman (1994), is expected to be at least 80% (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Table 2. Encoder Reliability Study

Interview Questions	Agreement	Disagreement	Coherence
Question I	21	9	70%
Question II	3	3	100%
Question III	18	4	81%
Question IV	4	1	80%
Question V	16	4	80%
Question VI	13	5	72%

As given in Table 2, The similarity rate among the coders was found; 70% in the first question, 100% in the 2nd question, 81% in the 3rd question, 80% in the 4th question; 80% in the 5th question, 72% in the 6th question, 72% in the 7th question and totally in all questions 74%. When coder reliability was evaluated as the level of agreement between coders, the agreement rate was found to be high.

RESULTS

This section includes the analysis results regarding the research questions that are intended to be answered within the scope of the research.

Findings Related to The Research Question of What Kind of Play and Toys Parents and Children Use When Playing

Regarding this research question, parents were asked what types of games and toys their children preferred while playing and why they preferred these types of games and toys, and codes were obtained from the answers given. The codes obtained are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Play And Toy Preference, Its Reason

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Play and Toy Preference	Doctor set	P1, P7
	Animal identification cards	P2,
	Doll	P1, P3, P7
	Paints	P1, P3, P7
	Pencils	P3, P5
	Existing toys	P1, P2, P3,
Reason	Toys suitable for the children's development	P3, P5
	Toys suitable for physical development	P2, P4, P5, P6
	Toys supporting communication	P4,
	Pattern and shape structure	P4, P5, P6
	Material structure	P3, P4, P6
	According to age and development	P2, P5
	Does not contain harmful content	P3, P5

As given in Table 1 shows the data obtained by asking the participants which type of play and toys they prefer while playing with their children and their reasons for choosing them. Under the theme of "play and toy preference", the codes "doctor set", "animal identification cards", "doll", "paints", "pencils", and "existing toys" were extracted. Under the theme of "reason for play and toy type", "toys suitable for the child's development", "toys suitable for their physical characteristics", "toys supporting communication", "pattern and shape structure", "material structure", "according to age and development characteristics" and "does not contain harmful content" codes have been extracted.

Participants expressed their preference for play and toys and their reasons for choosing them as follows:

P3 S/he expressed his/her opinion as follows: *"S/he mostly prefers to play with dolls. When buying dolls, I make sure that they are made of healthy materials. I want it to have a quality structure that will not harm him/her."*

P2 states that *"S/he uses the existing toys inherited from his/her sibling, and when buying new toys, I choose toys by taking into account age and developmental characteristics"*.

P7 said, *"S/he has an interest in crayons and coloring, which attracts my attention. That's why we usually use crayons. S/he is also very willing to play vocational play. S/he becomes a doctor, and I become a patient. This is how we enter professional roles,"* s/he said.

Regarding the heading of this research question, parents were asked questions such as who determines the duration of plays with their children and how long the playing time takes, and codes for these questions were extracted. The codes obtained are given in Table 2.

Table 2. *Play Duration*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Determining Play Time	Parent determines	P3, P4, P5
	Child determines	P1, P2
Play Time	Parent free time	P3, P4, P5,
	Until the child gets bored	P1, P2, P6, P7

As given in Table 2 shows who determines the play time and how long the play lasts. Under the theme of *"who determines the playtime"*, *"the parent determines"*, and *"the child determines"*. Under the theme of *"play time"*, the codes *"parent free time"* and *"until the child gets bored"* were created. Under the theme of *"determining the playing time"*, it was concluded that the parents mostly determined the playing time. Participant P3 expressed his views on this issue as follows: *"It depends on my free time I determine the duration of the play at the very beginning of the play"*, and P5 expressed his/her views as *"My child always wants to play, but I arrange it according to my own free time."* Under the theme of *"play time"*, it was concluded that play generally continues until the child gets bored. Participant P1 stated that *"S/he determines the play time, and we continue playing until s/he gets bored"* and P2 stated that *"S/he determines the play time him/herself and I respect him/her and we continue until s/he gets bored"*.

Findings Related to The Research Question of How They Spend Time Together at Home

Regarding this research question codes regarding what parents do with their children at home, how they spend time with their children, and what they do together are included under the heading of this research question. The codes obtained are given in Table 3.

Table 3. *Activities That Parents Do with Their Children at Home*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Activity type	Coloring Activity	P1, P4, P6, P7
	Taking lessons	P1, P3
	Helping in routine tasks	P2, P3, P5,
	Watching cartoons	P3, P5,
	Playing	P1, P2, P6,
	Coding activity	P5

As given in Table 3 lists the activities that parents do with their children. Under the activity type theme, there are *"coloring activity"*, *"doing homework"*, *"helping in routine tasks"*, *"watching cartoons"*, *"playing"* and *"coding activity"*. Four parents used the code *"painting activity"* under the theme of *"activity type"*.

Participant P1 said, “We are doing coloring and drawing mostly. Usually, I draw something, and he goes over it. Then we color the drawing we did together.” P4 said: “We try to have fun together. Sometimes we color, I draw, and he colors”, while P6 stated: “We color the worksheet activities together”.

As given in Table 4, under the heading of this research question, parents were asked which of the parents their children played with and spent time with as playmates, and codes for this were extracted.

Table 4. Children's Playmate Preferences

Theme	Codes	Participants
Children's playmate preference	Mother	P1, P3, P6,
	Father	P2, P4, P5
	Mother and father	P7

As given in Table 4, the codes "mother", "father" and "mother and father" were created under the theme of "playmate preference" for the question of whom children prefer as playmates. According to the data obtained from the parents, three children prefer their mothers as their playmates, three children prefer their fathers, and one child prefers both their mother and father. It was concluded that there was equal repetition in the mother and father codes. Participant P1 said: “He generally prefers me as a mother. The father generally does not care about the child”. P5 said: “He usually prefers his father because I don't have much time. He just does our daily home routines with me by seeing them as a play”, while P7 said “s/he prefers both mother and father as playmates. Sometimes s/he insists on playing play together in which we both take part”.

As given in Table 5, under the heading of this research question, parents were asked what kind of play their children wanted to play with their parents, and codes were obtained for these.

Table 5. The Type of Play Chosen by Children

Theme	Code	Participants
The type of play chosen by children	Active play	P1, P3, P6, P7
	Cooking play	P4, P5,
	Car play	P5, P6
	Dramatic play	P3, P6
	Occupation play	P5, P7
	Story activities	P2,
	Repair play	P2, P5,
	Coloring	P3,

As given in Table 5, a question was asked to the parents about what kind of play they played with their parents and under the theme of "the type of play chosen by the children", "active play", "cooking play", "car play", "pretend play", "vocational play", "story activities", "fixing play" and "coloring" codes were created. Among the types of plays chosen by children, the most repeated code which is 4 times is "active play". Participant P1 said, “We usually play hand play, clapping play, that is, we cross each other and hit each other with our hands while singing.” P3 said, “We take care of flowers together, talk to the flowers, and try to show them our love.” P6 said, “We are playing racetrack play. We do competitions together. We play active play such as chase and chase.” P7 expressed his/her views as follows: “We play physical activity play with balloons or light balls”.

Findings Related to The Research Question of What the Level of Knowledge of Parents About The Effect of Play is On Child Development

As given in Table 6, regarding this research question, parents were asked to evaluate the benefits of playing for their children in terms of cognitive, physical, social-emotional, self-care skills, and language development, and codes were extracted from answers.

Table 6. The Benefits Of The Play

Theme	Code	Participants
Benefits of the play	Improving academic success	P1, P4, P6
	Developing critical thinking skills	P5, P6, P7
	Contribution to physical development	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, VP
	Enhancing communication skills	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
	Developing empathy skills	P2, P3,
	Learning self-care	P1, P3, P6, P7
	Fostering social behavior	P3, P4, P5, P6, P7

Participants' views on the benefits of playing play are given in Table 6. Codes were created under the theme of "benefits of play", including "increasing academic achievement", "developing thinking skills", "contributing to physical development", "improving communication skills", "developing empathy", "learning self-care", and "acquiring social behavior" codes. Among the benefits of the play theme, the code that was repeated the most was the contribution to physical development code. Participant P7 expresses his opinion as "The muscles and skeletal system develop because they are always active and moving during the play", while P6 states "Some plays affect muscle development. I think puzzle and dough plays are quite effective in the development of finger muscles". In the code for improving communication skills, P7 states, "He can express himself through the communication he establishes in the play, and his vocabulary can develop." On the other hand, P5 says, "I make them describe the play while playing. I want them to give information about the play. Linguistically, development increases, and I think he expresses subconscious things through plays. I can see how beneficial plays are for communication here."

As given in Table 7, parents were asked about whether they researched plays to play with their children, where they accessed play resources, and where they found the plays, they will play. Codes have been derived for these questions.

Table 7: Play sources

Theme	Code	Participants
Play sources	Child's guidance	P2, P5
	Teacher support	P3, P5, P6
	Social media	P4, P6
	Support from other parents	P3, P4,
	Playing games they know	P1, P7

As given in Table 7, participants were asked whether they researched the sources and plays they played with their children. Under the theme of "play sources," codes were created for "child's guidance," "teacher support," "social media," "support from other parents," and "playing games they know." Under the theme of play sources, P6 stated, "I try to read child development books for play sources and try to follow educators and current activities on social media." P3, on the other hand, expressed their opinion "I receive support from my teacher regarding plays. I find it difficult to find plays myself because my child is very energetic." P7 stated, "I try to play the games I knew previously with him."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Play is one of the most important tools that support a child's development in all areas. Play not only supports a child's motor, cognitive, and language development but also contributes to their social and emotional development (Erdoğan, 2019). Participation in play, which is crucial in children's lives, is of great importance as well. In this study examining parental play behaviors with their children, it was found that families engage more in tabletop activities with their children at home. When asked about the activities they engage in at home with their children, families mostly mentioned coloring activities. Other responses included studying, watching cartoons, and engaging in coding activities.

Three people mentioned playing games and assisting with routine tasks at home. Seeking assistance with routine tasks at home also helps children develop feelings of autonomy and responsibility (Klein et al., 2009). Contributing to the family increases the child's self-confidence and positively contributes to their development. Additionally, it allows the family and the child to spend enjoyable time together. Berk (2013) also concluded in his study that parents are more conscious of the developmental benefits of children's preference for different types of play.

The question of children preferring either their mother or father as a playmate was asked, and out of 7 respondents, 3 preferred only their mother, 3 preferred only their father, and 1 person mentioned preferring both parents. Some mothers cited the father's lack of involvement as the reason for preferring the mother, while others mentioned their lack of personal time due to household chores as the reason for preferring the father. Children want to interact with their families and be supported by them. Families also support their children by participating in their play activities (Roopnarine and Davidson, 2015).

Children were asked about their preferred plays to play with their families, and codes were created for active plays, cooking plays, car plays, playing house, role-playing games, storytelling activities, repair plays, and coloring. It was found that activities such as baking cookies together and helping with cooking were carried out with the mother under the codes of playing house and cooking plays. Under the categories of car plays and active plays, which included activities like hide and seek, tag, and physical activities, it was observed that children preferred to play more with their fathers. In the repair plays mentioned in two interviews, it was also noted that children preferred their fathers. It is also observed that societal gender roles and stereotypes are reflected in children's plays (Aksoy and Baran, 2017).

Children prefer to playhouse-related plays with their mothers, while they prefer to engage in active plays more with their fathers. It was mentioned that children prefer both their mothers and fathers for storytelling and coloring activities. This finding is consistent with the literature. Another study conducted by Işıkoğlu and İvrendi (2008) also reached similar conclusions. It is observed that mothers and fathers play different types of play with their children.

Responses to the question regarding who determines the duration of the plays played by parents have been categorized into four codes: parent determines, child determines, parent decides based on free time, and until the child gets bored. Four parents answered that they play until the child gets bored. Although families generally mention playing games with their children until they get bored, one parent expressed that the child always wants to play but occasionally mentions ending the play themselves. Three parents stated that the parent determines and based on free time. Only two parents mentioned that the child determines the duration.

Families were asked questions regarding their toy selection, and it was observed that toys such as doctor sets and dolls, commonly used in dramatic play, were preferred. Paints and pencils also followed this trend. Additionally, the responses obtained from the question about preferred plays are consistent with the chosen toys. Families select toys based on the play they prefer to play. It was concluded that families act consciously when selecting toys. Families generally expressed their desire to choose supportive toys for their children. It was mentioned that they select toys appropriate for age and developmental level.

Selecting toys appropriate for children's developmental level contributes positively to their development. Toy selection is a significant activity (Bolişik et al., 2014). Strengthening communication between parents and children is possible through play. Children develop their social skills through play and become more open to communication (Pai, 2020). Developing social skills is crucial for children's adaptation to society and is an important step in making them functioning members of society (Gür Dörtok, 2022). One of the interviewed families also emphasized this point by mentioning that they chose toys to enhance communication skills. Material, design, and shape structure are among the other features considered.

Responses to the question posed to parents about the benefits of play for their children have been categorized into codes such as increasing academic success, developing thinking skills, contributing to physical development, enhancing communication skills, fostering empathy, learning self-care, and promoting social behavior. The code that received the most responses was contributing to physical development. Through play, children can engage their large and small muscle systems (Özer, 2006). Following this, enhancing communication skills and promoting social behavior come next. Research has shown that play enhances children's creativity, teaches them social rules, fosters empathy, and enriches their vocabulary (Bekmezci and Özkan, 2015). Considering all these factors, it can be concluded that play significantly contributes to children's physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and language development. From the results obtained, it can also be inferred that parents are aware of these effects of play and have expressed them. Ginsburg (2007) found important findings in her study about what parents think about games and their effects on their children. Parents stated that games play a critical role in children's social, emotional and cognitive development. Whitebread et al. (2017) found that among the sources parents use when researching games, they can play with their children are recommendations from schools and suggestions from teachers. In addition, some parents turn to traditional children's games, cultural games, and game guides. It has been found that parents mostly look for games that are safe, educational, and have developmental content when choosing games for their children.

In interviews with families, a question was asked about how they select the plays they will play with their children. Families were also asked whether they researched the plays they would play. Families generally expressed that they seek support from their children's teachers when selecting plays. They also mentioned receiving support from other families around them. Some families stated that they play plays based on their child's guidance. Other responses included social media and plays they already know. Another study on plays also found that parents utilize teachers as a source of learning about plays, followed by internet websites, social media, and people in their surroundings (Mart and Kesicioğlu, 2020). The findings from this study are consistent with the relevant literature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Examining parents' views on games more comprehensively can provide in-depth understanding instead of just superficial views. In-depth interviews can be conducted for this purpose. Parents' perceptions of children's gaming experiences may differ depending on the age of their children, so age-specific analyses can be conducted to determine how parents' views change.

Comparisons can be made between parents' views on games from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Investigating parents' perspectives on digital games and technology can help better understand how children develop through digital games, especially in contemporary society.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

- First author has made substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data. The data are recoded by author.
- Second author has been involved in data acquisition and recoded, analysis and interpretation process.