



A Comparative Analysis of Children's, Mothers' and Teachers' Views About Play and Toys

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Abstract

Play, which may be described as a natural occupation by the child, may be perceived differently by parents and teachers. The purpose of the current study is to explore children's, mothers' and teachers' views about play and toys. The study was conducted on eleven children, seven mothers and nine pre-school teachers. Qualitative interviewing is employed as the primary method of data gathering. The results of the study demonstrate that children and mothers perceive play as a product of imagination and cannot think of play as being separate from imagination. All participants drew attention to gaining social skills regarding the importance and necessity of play. Additionally, children mentioned different characteristics of play and toys; mothers and teachers provided similar answers, emphasizing that play and toys should be safe, appropriate for the child's age and development, help children gain social skills and be fun. In conclusion, it can be argued that the mothers' responses were based on their observations while the teachers' responses were based on their theoretical knowledge, and the children's responses were based on their personal experiences.

Keywords: Play, toy, children, mother, teacher, views

Çocuk, Anne ve Öğretmenlerin Oyun ve Oyuncakla İlgili Görüşlerinin İncelenmesi

Özet

Çocuğun en önemli işi olarak kabul edilen oyun çocuklar tarafından doğal bir uğraş olarak nitelendirilebilirken, çocukların yaşamlarında önemli bir yeri olan ebeveynler ve öğretmenler tarafından farklı şekilde algılanabilmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı çocuk, anne ve öğretmenlerin oyun ve oyuncaklarla ilgili görüşlerinin incelenmesidir. Çalışmaya 11 çocuk, yedi anne ve dokuz okul öncesi öğretmeni katılmış; çocuklara dokuz, yetişkinlere ise 13 sorudan oluşan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme soruları yöneltilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler betimsel analiz yöntemi ile çözümlenmiştir. Bulgular göstermektedir ki çocuklar ve anneler oyunu hayal gücünün bir ürünü olarak görmekte ve oyunu hayal gücünden ayrı düşünmemektedirler. Tüm katılımcılar oyunun önemi ve gerekliliği konusunda sosyal becerilerin kazanılmasına dikkat çekmişlerdir. Oyun ve oyuncaklarda bulunması gereken özellikler hakkındaki görüşler incelendiğinde çocukların oyuncakların farklı özelliklerine değindiklerini; anne ve öğretmenlerin ise benzer cevaplar vererek oyun ve oyuncakların güvenli, yaşa ve gelişime uygun, sosyal becerilerin kazanılmasına yardımcı ve eğlenceli olması gerektiği üzerinde durdukları görülmüştür. Elde edilen veriler doğrultusunda annelerin gözlemlerine, öğretmenlerin sahip oldukları teorik bilgiye, çocukların ise deneyimlerine dayalı cevaplar verdikleri söylenebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Oyun, oyuncak, çocuk, anne, öğretmen, görüş.

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Introduction

Numerous theories about play have been raised and the concept of play has been discussed considering different theories. While Spencer defines play as spending energy; Patrick defines it as preventing boredom by using motor skills; Groos defines it as developing skills necessary for the adulthood; Freud and Erikson define it as an endeavor to lower anxiety and to improve the sense of control of the child; Bruner and Piaget define it as supporting cognitive development and new learning taking place; and Vygotsky defines it as recreating reality without situational effects (Hughes, 2010, p. 22). Thus, they drew attention to the physical, cognitive, social and emotional dimensions of play.

Play has a crucial importance in child development (Youell, 2008). It is a part of the children's general development (Thyssen, 2003) and may be seen as a branch of the children's general course of orientation in the world (Elkonin, 1980). Play is the most effective tool that helps meet the developmental needs of children such as linguistic, social, emotional, cognitive and physical development (Bergen, 2002; Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Elias & Berk, 2002; Garvey & Kramer, 1998; Ginsberg, 2006; Lloyd & Howe, 2003; Smilansky, 1990; Spodek & Saracho, 1987). It offers a certain degree of freedom to children; thus, there is pleasure gained from play activities (Gutfried, 1986; Levy, 1978). Pilten and Pilten (2013), state children interact in play activities to relax, to have fun, to rejoice and to enjoy themselves.

Children become more skilled in interacting with other people during the preschool years (Garvey & Kramer, 1998; Haselager, Cillessen, Van Lieshout, Riksen-Walraven & Hartup, 2002). Through play activities, they gain experience regarding life skills, social skills, research skills, cognitive skills, communication skills, self-sufficiency and self-management skills (Tuğrul, 2015). Furthermore, they learn self-control, compassion, boundaries and about their own abilities in relation to others (Tannock, 2008). They collect the material from the common culture they create together; but use it in their own way in play activities (Thyssen, 2003). Thus, they develop social relations, practices and values, which is linked with friendly communication with the peers (Naerland & Martinsen, 2011).

Singer (1994, p. 11-12) indicated that playing contributes to the development of motor skills, emotional development, the ability to control emotions, learning to share or to form priorities, having spiritual enjoyment, the development of a child's vocabulary, increasing the attention span, flexibility, role playing, creativity and the development of imagination, such that the child can realize he/she can control negative emotions by means of playing, and experiences

the excitement of diversifying his/her play by demonstrating his/her emotions like fear, anger or stress during playing. On the other hand, by observing the lives of adults, children reflect adults' behavior and daily routines in their own games and create their own culture via play (Thyssen, 2003). They observe rules and roles in their everyday lives and re-create them (Moller, 2015; Packer, 1994; Sutton-Smith, 1997). As a result, one may argue that the games played by children are a reflection of the adult world. This is also reflected in their interactions with other children. By reflecting their own realities, creativity and imagination in their games, children create their own rules and games. Thus, children playing in the same social groups understand each other because they have the same play culture (Smith, 2010, p. 98).

Any object that children play with can be defined as a toy. Toys are as a bridge between dreams and reality. The importance of toys in playing activities cannot be underestimated such that the child gets to know his/her own body and environment, also gains certain skills sets (Egemen, Yılmaz & Akil, 2004). Goldstein (1994) describes play materials such as things to facilitate children's play activities. Toys are effective on the problem solving, creative and social behaviors of children (Trawick-Smith, Russell & Swaminathan, 2010). During play activity, a child might use one object as a substitute for another (Vygotsky, 1967). Thus, when children play with toys, the meaning of an object can change, as can children's perceptions and use of objects. Besides, toys inspire play (Pellegrini & Bjorklund, 2004) and have function to draw peers together (Mundy & Newell, 2007).

Almqvist (1994) suggests that for a toy to be educational, it must be simple in terms of structure, texture and shape and should be of a genderless identity so that it can be preferred by both girls and boys. On the other hand, a toy cannot be educational on its own; it can only be educational if the parents assist the child and help him/her to experience it. Trawick-Smith, Wolff, Koschel and Vallarelli (2015) indicates that toys were found to vary significantly in their impact on play quality and make a difference in children's play. Finally, Frost (1992) argues the best toys are those that are relatively simple in complexity and design, and that have multiple functions.

Many studies have been conducted all over the world about play (Erbay & Durmuşoğlu Saltalı, 2012; Erden & Alisinanoğlu, 2002; Koçyiğit & Başara Baydilek, 2015; Logue & Harvey, 2010; Pilten & Pilten, 2013; Storli & Sandseter, 2015; Tuğrul, Metin Aslan, Ertürk & Özen Altınkaynak, 2014) and toys (Adak Özdemir & Ramazan, 2012; Francis, 2010; Kim, 2002; Mertala, Karikoski, Tahtinen & Sarenius, 2016; Trawick-Smith, Russell &

Swamnathan, 2010). However, such studies are quite limited in Northern Cyprus (Billur, 2015; Demirkaya, 2014). The fact that studies related to play and toys are limited makes it important to contribute new studies to the literature in this area. On the other hand, only a limited number of studies have jointly taken into consideration parents and teachers, who are very important in a child's life.

The purpose of this study is to provide a comparative analysis of children's, mothers' and teachers' views about play and toys.

Method

This is a qualitative study with a phenomenological research design. In phenomenological studies, the researcher attempts to form the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspective of participants (Richards & Morse, 2007). These studies can present examples, explanations and experiences providing results that will help us to identify and understand the phenomenon better (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005, p.75). Data sources of these researches are the lived experiences of individuals (Van Manen, 1990). This study is a phenomenological study because it demonstrates views regarding play and toys from the perspectives of children, mothers and teachers.

The research method used in this study is the qualitative interview method. The distinctive aspect of the interview method is to reveal the perceptions of the people interviewed (Silverman, 2008). In this study, data was collected using the semi-structured interview form.

The study group was formed using the convenience-sampling method, which is a non-random sampling method. Due to time and labor limitations, the author conducted the study on eleven children, seven mothers and nine pre-school teachers who were convenient to contact. All children were enrolled in the same private pre-school institution. Although these children's mothers have all accepted participating in this study, only seven of them answered the questions on the interview form. Lastly, teachers were from different institutions from different cities.

The children's ages varied between three and five, and seven of the children were boys and four were girls. The average age of the mothers was 34, and one mother was an elementary school graduate, three were high school graduates, one was a university graduate and two were graduate school graduates. The average age of the teachers was 28 and all of them were graduates of pre-school teaching undergraduate programs. One of the teachers was a male and the average work experience of the teachers was seven years. The teachers that took part in

the study currently work at public and private pre-school education institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Education across Northern Cyprus.

In the study, two separate semi-structured interview forms, one for adults and one for children, were used to collect the data. The interview form for adults comprised of a total of 13 questions. These questions were about the definition, importance and characteristics of play and toys. The interview form prepared for children comprised of nine questions. These questions were related to the definition, importance and characteristics of play and toys and also toy selection. Both forms were reviewed by experts and were administered to participants after receiving positive feedback from the experts.

After receiving consent from each adult to participate in the interview, the author sent the form to the adult participants. Some of the mothers in the study filled in the form in the presence of the interviewer and some of them took the form with them and returned it to the researcher after a few days. On the other hand, the interview form was sent electronically to the teachers and after filling in the form, the teachers electronically returned the form to the researcher. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the children after receiving consent from their parents to participate in the study. The researcher met the children in their institution during the school hours. After spending a certain amount of time playing with the children, the researcher interviewed each child alone, for around 10 minutes on average and their responses were written by the researcher on the interview form.

The data obtained from the study was analyzed using the descriptive analysis method. The data collected was categorized under previously determined themes and was analyzed under these categories: The Definition of Play and Toys, The Importance and Necessity of Play and Toys, Characteristics of Play and Toys, Children's Toy Selection.

Validity and reliability

In qualitative studies, in place of the concepts of validity and reliability, the concepts of credibility (internal validity), transferability (generalization), dependability (internal reliability) and confirmability (external reliability) are used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In every phase of the study aimed at increasing the credibility and dependability of the study, the researcher remained objective; and the model of the study, the data analysis, the categories formed and the findings were checked by an expert and a consensus was reached afterwards. On the other hand, emphasis was placed on being open and clear during the reporting phase and quotations were used to support findings.

Results and Discussion

The Definition of Play and Toys

Children, mothers and teachers were asked to define the concepts of play and toys. 73% of the children defined the concept of play as playing a game while some children explained play with the concept of a toy, and others defined play as friendship, sharing, imagining and not bothering others, which are all social skills.

“(C3) Play is doing something with our friends.”

Children explained the concept of toys using similar words; some of them defined toys as playing a game while others defined it as a tool for playing or as something different. Finally, 36% of children described the concept of toys using play tools such as toy cars, play dough and toy houses.

In a similar study carried out by Koçyiğit and Başara Baydilek (2015), for an activity to be considered a play, that activity should involve a toy, the child should engage with the toy, the activity should be fun and the planning should be made by the children.

Differently from the children, mothers described play as a necessity whereby children can develop their social skills, as an activity that reflects their imagination and makes them happy and peaceful, and as an activity that is relaxing, fun and educational.

“(M3) Play is a necessity for kids which supports their development, their communication and sharing skills and improves their imagination.”

On the other hand, one of the mothers stated that she saw play as a social activity while another stated that she perceived play as a special period of time the child spares for him/herself.

“(M7) In my opinion, play is a special time that kids spare for themselves to have fun and a good time as a requirement of their age.”

In a similar study (Erbay & Durmuşoğlu Saltalı, 2012), it was found that mothers perceive play as a tool for entertainment and enjoyment and a tool that supports child development while 25% perceived it as a spare time activity.

When mothers were asked to define the concept of toys, most of the participants indicated that a toy is a tool for playing, a part of play and an object that supports the imagination of the child and makes the child happy.

“(M4) They are objects that kids use when playing and they play an important role in the development of the child’s imagination.”

Only one mother indicated that toys are money traps and that children can play even without toys. In fact, children do not have to have a toy to play games. They can use their imaginations to convert any object into a toy or create a toy in their imagination and play with it (Vygotsky, 1967). Barthes puts forward that objects were created with the industrialization of toys and that these objects have killed the child’s creativity and have created a generation of children that just consume instead of creating (Sormaz & Yüksel, 2012). In a study, almost half of the parents indicated that children should be involved in the toy selection process and it was seen that when selecting toys, parents focused mostly on whether it was suitable for the child’s developmental level and whether the toy was versatile. On the other hand, it was seen that parents with only primary school education placed more emphasis on the price of the toy (Erden & Alisinanoğlu, 2002).

Teachers who shared their views about play gave responses similar to those of mothers and defined play as an activity that entertains and excites children and triggers a child’s curiosity while at the same time improves the creativity and social skills of the child. One of the teachers thinks play as an activity whereby the child reflected him/herself, while another mentioned that play can be planned or unplanned.

“(T3) Play is an important job whereby kids discover their skills, develop their creativity and it relates to all of the areas of development of the child.”

In a similar study, Tuğrul et al. (2014) contacted 59 pre-school teachers and 89 pre-school children to ask their views about play. Most of the children defined play as “*playing with some people or with some things*” and as “*having fun, laughing and amusement*” while teachers emphasized both the entertainment and educational dimension of play. While children gave solid examples of play (laughing, puzzles, running, etc.), teachers expressed the creative, independent and emotion-expressing dimensions of it. On the other hand, teachers also stated that they perceived play as a break time or a reward and that they could easily interrupt play to do different activities. In another study that examined children’s, mother’s and teachers’ perceptions of toys, results showed that children described toys as a tool for playing and that personal preferences and family influence were simultaneously effective during toy selection. Similarly, mothers described toys as a tool unique to the child and which entertained the child. They also stated that they preferred educational toys that were not harmful for their children and that they bought toys for their children based on their gender.

While mothers and children gave similar answers to the questions, most of the teachers described toys as an entertainment tool for the child and emphasized the importance of color in toy selection and grouped toys based on their gender (Adak Özdemir and Ramazan, 2012).

Finally, teachers' views about the toys show that they see toys mostly as a tool for playing and as an object that support child's areas of development with which the child plays. Giren (2016), analyzed pre-school teachers' metaphorical perceptions of play and the results showed that teachers placed more emphasis on the educational role and entertaining role of play and its effect on the way children express themselves and their emotions, as well as its life-related role and its role as being a part of the child's life. Most of the teachers stated that playing is a vital necessity for children and an educational tool that helping children express themselves.

Table 1. The Definition of Play and Toys

	Play	Toys
Child	Playing Toys Imagining Sharing Not bothering others, being quiet	Toy car, house, play dough, something big Playing Something we play with Something different
Mother	A necessity A relaxing and fun activity A social activity A child's time on his/her own A rejoicing activity reflecting the child's imagination	A tool for playing Any object that makes you happy when playing All kinds of objects that help discover experiences, support the imagination, help the child reflect his/her internal world A money trap
Teacher	An activity that offers happiness, joy, curiosity and fun An activity that supports development areas An activity that improves creativity and helps the child acquire social skills An activity whereby the child can reflect him/herself Planned or unplanned activities	A tool for playing A tool that entertains and supports developmental areas Everything that child plays with A part of playing

Analysis show that children associated play with the concept of toys, emphasized imagination and sharing, and saw play as an activity done not to bother others. Similarly, some of the mothers described play as a reflection of the child's imagination. While some mothers and teachers believed play was an activity that was dependent on having fun, other mothers indicated that play is a necessity and teachers stated that the child's areas of development are

supported via play. It was also seen that views regarding toys were parallel to the responses given regarding play. In summary, it was seen that mothers' responses were based on their observations as they observed their children seem like happy while playing and observed toys as enjoyable materials. On the other hand teachers' responses were based on their theoretical knowledge, as they gave more academic responses and talked about the educational aspects of toys. Finally children's responses were based on their own personal experiences, as they defined a play activity as sharing and prevents boredom; also defined toys as 'toy car, dolls, drawing books, toys working with batteries' that represent the toys they were interested in those days.

The Importance and Necessity of Play and Toys

More than half of the children stated that play was important while some of them added that they did not get bored and did not leave their friends alone when they played. Four children stated that play was not an important activity and one of these children stated that playing games all the time could be a waste of time while another one stated that playing all the time might be tiring.

“(C3) Playing is not important at all. Because if you just play games what happens after that? Nothing!”

“(C11) No, playing is not important. Because if we play games all the time we'd get tired and we couldn't pick up our toys.”

More than half of the children indicated that play is a necessary activity. According to them, without playing there would be no silence and they might get bored. Also, two children stated that playing made them healthier.

“(C9) We become healthy when we play.”

Four children stated that playing is not necessary while one child said that it might be necessary sometimes.

“(C11) Playing is not necessary. Because sometimes instead of playing we can help our mums.”

As a response to a question regarding the importance and necessity of toys, nine children stated that they thought toys were necessary while one child stated they were necessary only sometimes and another child said they were not necessary.

On the other hand, all the mothers stated that play is important and necessary for the child and the child can develop his/her social skills through play activities and that in addition to the child's social development, play also supports the physical and cognitive development of the child. In numerous studies in the literature, it has been indicated that play has a positive influence on the child's areas of development, makes it easier for the child to gain social skills such as understanding each other, and improves the child's creativity (Erdal & Erdal, 2003; Durualp & Aral, 2010; Ulutaş, 2011).

“(M2) Playing and toys are influential in children's intellectual development. Educational games are necessary for kids. As they play with their toys, kids learn shapes, colors and numbers one by one without noticing.”

Mothers, who mentioned that play activities not only supported the child's development but also helped the child release his/her stress and energy, stated that they saw play as a relaxing activity. In addition, other things that were mentioned about the importance of play were that it made it easier to learn, improved self-expression skills, made it easier to learn rules, and that it improved attention and concentration spans. Also, all mothers emphasized the entertaining aspect of play and one mother stated that playing was a good tool for spending time with the family.

“(M7) Playing is necessary for kids to have a good time, release their stress and energy and spend quality time with the whole family.”

Mothers' responses regarding toys have both similarities and differences. While most of the mothers stated that toys are necessary, one mother stated that toys are more than necessary but vital; and another one said that toys are complementary to playing.

“(M5) Toys are necessary. Because they require a tool to reflect the game. And toys complement games. And in today's conditions, one can't imagine a world without toys.”

Similarly, most mothers stated they considered toys to be important tools for playing and only one mother stated that toys are not important and that children can spend their time better while playing in the park or playing with friends. On the other hand, mothers who considered toys to be important stated that toys are important in helping children develop positive behaviors, and two mothers stated that toys are objects connected with real life. It can be seen that while one mother emphasized the importance of outdoor playgrounds, others talked about

the importance of toys in supporting the child's development and perceived play activities differently from the toys available in outdoor playgrounds.

All the teachers were agreed that play has an important place in the child's life and that it is a necessary activity. They stated that playing was important because it helped the child reflect his/her inner world, helped the child acquire social skills and skills to cope with negative behavior, entertained the child and made him/her happy; they also added that play is necessary because it helped the child relax and release his/her energy, support his/her development and help him/her gain new life experiences.

“(T5) Play is necessary. Because it supports the child's social, emotional and physical development. Play is also important. Because as the child plays games, he/she learns about the negative and positive behaviors he/she might come across in life as well as how to cope with them.”

The teachers' views about toys show that they perceive toys to be important as well. According to them, toys are important tools because they support children's areas of development, enrich their imaginations and support their problem-solving skills. On the other hand, it was found that teachers did not think of toys to be that necessary. More than half of the teachers stated that toys were not that necessary, because children could turn everything around them into a toy. Differently, some teachers stated that there would not be playing without toys.

Table 2. The Importance and Necessity of Play and Toys

	Importance and necessity of play	Importance and necessity of toys
Child	Important as it prevents boredom	Toys are necessary
	Important for us not to leave friends alone	Toys are important
	Important because we play	Toys are sometimes necessary
	We cannot just play games	Toys are not necessary
	Playing is necessary	
	Playing is sometimes necessary	
	Playing is not necessary	
Mother	Important for releasing stress and energy	Toys are important
	Important for intellectual, social and physical development	Helps children make associations with real life
	Important for gaining social skills	Supports development
	Important for increasing attention span and concentration	Helps the child develop positive behaviors
		Toys are not important

	Necessary for entertaining the child	Toys are necessary
	Necessary for relaxing and speeding up learning	They improve the child's self-confidence They complement games
	Necessary for gaining social competence and for all-around development	Toys are not required; they are a necessity
	Necessary for spending time with the family	They are necessary as long as they are educational
Teacher	Important because children have fun and learn	Not necessary because everything can be turned into a toy
	Important because helps children express themselves	Toys are necessary because without toys there would be no games
	Important because it helps the child reflect his/her inner world and helps him/her cope with negative behavior	Toys are necessary for turning abstract concepts into concrete ones
	Important because it helps the child develop social competence	Toys are necessary for helping children express themselves easily
	Important because it makes the child happy	Toys are necessary only if they are educational
	Necessary because it helps children relax	Toys are important because they support the child's areas of development, improves their imagination and improves their problem solving skills
	Necessary because it helps the child gain life experience	
	Necessary because it supports the child's development	

Table 2 summarizes that children in this study defended the importance and necessity of play with the idea that it increases sharing behavior and helps them gain other social skills. On the other hand, mothers have especially emphasized play's importance in terms of intellectual development and gaining social skills. Finally, teachers emphasized its importance in terms of improved emotional development and gaining social skills.

Characteristics of Play and Toys

While children were only asked their opinions of the necessary characteristics of toys, mothers and teachers were also asked the necessary characteristics of play as well. Children answered this question based on the toy that had at that moment or the toy they had been playing with most often. Two of the children stated that toys should be flying vehicles with wings while two others said they had to have engines, and another stated they had to be battery powered. Additionally, they also mentioned they had to play music, have bones and tails as well.

“(C11) For example, we shouldn't buy toys that don't have batteries!”

According to the mothers, a play should be educational, fun, enjoyable and intriguing. Additionally, plays should be appropriate for the child's age and have characteristics that

improve their development. Finally, they mentioned that plays should help develop positive skills like friendship and sharing, and teach children values like cultural norms and manners. As also mentioned by Smith (2010), children that play together with their peers both gain these skills and develop their own game culture within their peer groups.

The mothers' responses to questions related to toys mostly indicate that toys should be appropriate for the child's development and age, should be made of non-chemical materials that are not hazardous for the child's health, should be appropriate for his/her gender, should be educational, and should support the development of the child's imagination and other skills.

Mothers were also asked to define the concept of educational toys. Almost all the mothers described educational toys as objects that helped children learn certain things unconsciously as they played and brought out their skills and supported their development areas, especially their intellectual development. One mother described an educational toy as an object that has colors, numbers and shapes while another mother gave Legos and puzzles as an example.

“(M5) Educational toys are objects that help kids develop themselves as they play and improve their skills or help them acquire new skills.”

In a study on parents' toy selection, Demirkaya (2014) found that parents preferred to buy mostly educational toys for their children and that the toy's price was an important decision-making factor for the parents. Parents also shape play patterns in terms of the toys they give their children (Rheingold & Cook, 1975). Kaiser, Snyder and Rogers (1995) indicated that prosocial toys elicit prosocial behavior, and in their study, it was seen that the increase in prosocial behavior diminished when respective prosocial toys were withdrawn.

“(M3) Toys should support the child's intellectual development and imagination, support his/her self-expression skills and have features that would improve his memory.”

Teachers who were asked to describe an educational toy stated that educational toys were those that did not have harmful aspects, entertain children and educate or teach certain things to the child and that these toys should support developmental areas as well. Many of the teachers emphasized the educational and development-supporting aspects of educational toys. Teachers were also asked their opinions about the characteristics that children's plays should have. Most of the teachers said that children's plays should be educational, fun and should

serve a purpose and be appropriate for the age and development of the child. Only one teacher stated that play should support the imagination and creativity of the child.

“(T6) A kid demonstrates most of his/her imagination during plays and expresses him/herself in this way. Thus, plays should support the imagination, creativity and development areas of a child.”

As a response to the question of what type of characteristics toys should have, most teachers stated that toys should be appropriate for areas of development, be made of safe material that does not pose health risks, have educational qualities and should both entertain the children and help them develop their creativity skills. One teacher drew attention to a toy’s appropriateness for gender while some other teachers stated that toys should be made of high quality and natural materials and should be made of wood if possible.

“(T5) Toys should be made of materials that are not hazardous to the child’s health and should be appropriate for his/her development. Because no child would want to play with a toy bigger than him/herself or with a toy he/she cannot grasp with his/her fingers.”

Table 3. Characteristics of Play and Toys

	Characteristics that a play should have	Characteristics that a toy should have
Child		With an engine With wings and flies Plays music Has bones Has a tail Battery powered
Mother	Fun and enjoyable Appropriate for age and development Helps child develop positive skills Educational	Safe Appropriate for age Does not encourage violence Supports areas of development Not hazardous for health Supports imagination Supports skills development Both educates and entertains
Teacher	Should serve a purpose Should support individualism and group activities	Supports developmental areas Safe, healthy, hygienic

Appropriate for age and development, should support areas of development	Educational
Should support imagination and creativity	Entertaining
Should be fun and intriguing	Supports creativity and imagination
Should be educational	Appropriate for age and gender
	Made of natural materials
	Should be made of recycled materials
	Should be made of quality material

Analysis of children's, mothers', and teachers' views about the necessary characteristics of play and toys showed that children mostly emphasized different aspects of toys and that children thought toys supported all-roundedness. Mothers and teachers gave similar responses and mentioned that toys and plays should be safe, appropriate for age and development, help children develop social skills and be fun.

Children's Toy Selection

Finally, the children were asked what toys they mostly preferred, their reasons for preferring those toys and the characteristics they love in the toys they prefer. Children mostly stated that they liked plush toys such as dinosaurs, cats, dogs and horses and said they prefer them because these toys are aesthetic, make sounds, and have mechanical features. In addition to plush toys, one child stated that his favorite toy was a drawing book because he loves drawing a lot, while another child stated that his favorite toy was a slide. On the other hand, another child said he loved playing with the vacuum cleaner and he loved the inside of this toy. As can be seen from these responses, no differentiation was made between toys at home and those in outdoor playgrounds. On the other hand, the interest they had in certain toys overlapped with their natural sense of curiosity.

Table 4. Children's Toy Selection

Preferred toys	Reason for preference	Characteristics liked in a toy
Drawing books	I love drawing	I love to be able to draw and paint the same thing
Dinosaurs	Because they are pretty	I love its bones
Slides	Because I love them	I like the inside
Vacuum cleaners	Because I like it	I like its colors
Ponies	Because they are fast	I love to turn on the toy and like its buttons
Dogs	Because it can sing	I like how it goes fast
Race cars		I like the way the truck carries things
Construction toys		I like how it moves
Cats		

In general, it is seen that children do not perceive only toys sold at toy stores as toys, but see materials like slides in playgrounds as toys as well, and even consider a vacuum cleaner to be a toy. Studies imply that children enjoy playing with homemade toys more than playing with purchased ones (Özyürek, 2012) and preferred simpler toys rather than complex ones (Yalçinkaya, 1995). On the other hand, both boys and girls play with the same toy based on their earlier experiences with play materials (Liss, 1981).

Conclusion

In this study that examined the views of children, mothers and teachers regarding play and toys, it was seen that while participants gave similar responses they also gave very differing answers to the questions asked.

Children tended to explain the concept of play by making associations with the concept of toys and emphasized mostly imagination and sharing skills in their descriptions. Similarly, some of the mothers described play as a way of expression of the children's imagination. It can be seen that both children and mothers saw playing as a product of imagination and could not think of it as being separate from imagining. While mothers and teachers both stated that play is an activity focused on entertainment, they differed in that mothers said play was a necessity while teachers said play supported areas of development. It was seen that views about toys were parallel to the responses given about play.

Children defended the importance and necessity of play with the idea that playing supports sharing behavior and helps them acquire other social skills. Similarly, mothers emphasized intellectual development and social skills and teachers emphasized improvement in social and emotional development and gaining social skills.

Regarding the required characteristics of play and toys, children emphasized mostly the different characteristics of toys and that they supported all-around development while mothers and teachers gave similar responses and emphasized that toys should be safe, appropriate for age and development, support social skills and should be fun.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the mothers' responses were based on their observations while the teachers' responses were based on their theoretical knowledge, and the children's responses were based on their personal experiences. It was also seen that results of this study have consistency with other studies in the literature.

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