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Determination of what Game Means from Children's Point of View

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Abstract

Objectives: Aim of this study is identification of what game means from children's point of view. The research is a mixed design research where qualitative and quantitative data are used altogether and the opinions of parents are also received.

Material and methods: Population of the quantitative part of the research is composed of parent of entire third grade students of Ankara University Foundation Private Primary School (n=72), and the sample consists of 35 parents of those students returned within the scope of the surveys. For qualitative data of the research, sampling is composed of 14 people in total, of which 8 people, 2 girls and 2 boys, who can freely play games outside home, and their parents, as well as 6 people, 2 girls and 2 boys playing games at home on the computer without action, and their parents. In collection of quantitative data in the research, providing information to parents and a mini-survey study including 4 questions has been used in the research. With this survey study, it has been asked whether children played games or not, what they played with and where they played. Questionnaires, of which all questions answered, have been considered in the survey. Qualitative data of the research is composed of half-structured interview questions prepared separately for student (11 questions) and parents (6 questions) voluntarily attending to the research and identified according to the views of this questionnaire. Interview questions, we have used in the research, have been formed by considering the studies conducted in this field and taking experts' opinions. Quantitative data have been obtained by half-structured interview method and interviews have been made in a closed room after informing parents and students and making appointments beforehand. Voice recorder is used during interviews. Required permits have been received from the school administration and papers for conducting the study before the survey got started.

Results: According to the quantitative results of this survey; all parents emphasized that their children both played at home or in the garden. They played with toys, tablets, and etc. at home while they played with balls, skip ropes, and etc. in the garden. Their play mates are friends, siblings or their cousins. According to the views of parents; they stated they permitted their children freely and in an active way in their gardens outside their houses, they also brought them to big children's parks, and they encouraged their children to play, they did not have an obstacle for letting them play because they lived in a closed residential area; however, they were not keen to send their children out of their gardens due to traffic and security.

Conclusions: Children stated that games meant "entertainment" for them, they preferred "game groups" as types of games, mostly they played "at school and in the garden of their house", and they played with their friends. Parents stated that playing games made their children happy and helped their children to spend efforts, improve their creativity, and encouraged them to share and ensured socialization.

Keywords: Game; Child; Parent

Introduction

Game (play) is defined as activities, which are performed freely and voluntarily and which constitute a source of happiness, simulate all development aspects of the child, and develop the senses and emotions as much as improving skills [1]. Game is an activity that is useful for and contributes in various ways to the development of the child. Playing games starts with life and differentiates and develops at every stage of life. Under another definition, game is a natural learning instrument, which is a part of the real life and which has an impact on all development areas of the child, in which the child gets involved on a voluntary basis, and which is performed for a certain purpose or without an aim, with or without rules, and with or without the use of tools [2].

Apart from those mentioned above, various other definitions have been made and views have been brought forward about games (play). Some of the views about game are as follows:

Aristoteles: "Children's games should be the mimeses of the serious occupations of later life."

Comenius: "Game is an important instrument of learning and plays an important role in acquiring discipline and order."

Lombroso: "Play is for the child an occupation as serious, as important, as study is for the adult; play is her/his means of development and she/he needs to play."

Montessori: "Play is the work of the child. She/he plays games when s/he cannot find a more appropriate thing to do."

Dewey: "Games are activities, which bring pleasure and joy and which are performed without a purpose to reach a certain goal." [3].

As can be understood from these definitions, games occupy an important place in the lives of children. Children can play games everywhere (at home, at school, in the playground, in the garden, etc.) We see active and free play in terms of allowing children to socialize and do physical activities. If we look at the definition of this concept, active free play is a moderate to vigorous physical activity that develops spontaneously. It takes place outdoors with minimal or no adult control [4].

Active and free play comes to the fore as unstructured physical activity played outdoors in free times. This play affects the daily physical activities performed by children in total. In addition, the time spent outdoors is positively associated with moderate physical activity and adversely connected with obesity. Even though most past researches emphasize the outcomes of fitness and obesity, social and emotional happiness and cognitive functioning that affect the future happiness of children should also be taken into consideration [5].

Active free play contributes to the physical activities of children to a great extent. It is also important for their health and the reduction of potential chronic diseases that develop in childhood [4].

Plays are generally activities that require running, jumping, skipping, climbing, and crawling and they enable the body systems (respiration, circulation, digestion, excretory, etc.) of the child to function regularly. Functioning of particularly growth-related systems as burning of excess fat, strengthening of muscles, and more regular functioning of endocrine glands is enabled with these plays that require the movement of the body.

In terms of social development, on the other hand, the child learns the rules and requirements of the society in the easiest and most harmless manner while playing. She/he learns such behaviors as waiting for her/his turn, sharing, respecting the rights of others and her/his own, looking out for her/his belongings, abiding by rules and restrictions, acquiring cleanliness and orderliness habits, listening to what is said, expressing her/himself, etc. all during the play.

With respect to cognitive development, playing allows the child to explore her/his environment, familiarize with objects, and solve problems. In this manner, the child also learns many concepts as size, form, color, dimension, weight, volume, measuring, counting, time, space, and distance and various mental processes as matching, classifying, sorting, analyzing, synthesizing, and problem solving [3].

Researches made showed that parents classify play in three categories. Where, with what, and with whom? According to parents, children played in special play areas, they played sports and video games, and with their friends [6].

It is stated in researches made with respect to places where children play games that playing in playgrounds increased self-confidence in children, developed language, communication, and social skills besides many physical competences [7,8] and improved sharing and cooperation [8].

Even though play has many benefits, it is possible to talk about various factors that influence the children's playing their games actively and freely. Computer games, which have become indispensable in parallel with advancing technology, are among the factors that come to

mind from the point of view of parents. In addition, not being able to sufficiently encourage their children to play because of such reasons as security conditions such as traffic, insufficient playgrounds, and heavy workload of parents is also among the reasons affecting playing games. Not only active free play but also playing games in general is important in terms of contributing to almost all development areas of the child and the continuity of such development in the best manner as a whole. Within the context of this information, the purpose of this research is to determine what play means from the point of view of children. Within this framework, answers to the following questions were sought.

- What does play mean from the point of view of children?
- Where and with whom do children play games?
- Are there any external threats to children's playing games from the point of view of parents?
- What are the contributions of playing to the child from the point of view of parents?
- What are the contributions of school to children's playing games from the point of view of parents?

Method

This research is a mixed pattern study in which the views of parents were obtained and quantitative and qualitative data were used together.

Research group

The universe of the quantitative section of the research comprised of the parents of all 3rd grade students at the Private Primary School of the Ankara University Development Foundation (n=72) and the sample consisted of 35 student parents, who were contacted following these surveys. The sample for qualitative data of the research, on the other hand, covered a total of 14 persons, 8 of whom comprised of 2 female and 2 male students, who were determined to freely play outside their homes according to the results of the evaluation made on the surveys sent to the parents as well as their parents and 6 people consisting of 2 female and 2 male students, who played stationary computer games at home, and their parents.

The "Criterion Sampling" method from the qualitative sampling methods was used in this research. In Criterion Sampling, the sample is determined according to the previously identified criteria. For instance, our previously determined criteria in this research were the children "who play outdoors" and "who do not play outdoors". Therefore, sample groups in both of the 2 criteria were established by using the criterion sampling method. "Convenience Sampling" was also used in the research. Here, the researcher formed the sample group of the research from a school nearby, which was conveniently accessible.

Data collection tool

In this study, a from containing semi-structured interview questions (11 to children), (6 to parents) was formed by scanning the studies conducted in this field in order to learn what play meant from the point of view of children and to obtain the opinions of parents with respect to children playing actively and freely, obstacles to their playing, and efforts in this regard. A pilot interview was conducted with 3 children and 3 parents outside the research with the aim of determining whether or not the questions were clear and comprehensible. The sound recordings of the research were examined

by 2 experts and it was established that the questions were fit for purpose. The person, who applied the interview questions to the children and parents and the other person who is the researcher in this research, are experienced and knowledgeable in this field.

Procedure

After the necessary permissions were obtained from the Ankara Provincial Directorate of National Education, the principal of the determined school was contacted. Following the approval of the principal, the physical education and class teachers were contacted to provide them with the necessary information about the purpose, contents, and method of the research. Then the surveys were distributed to the third graders, who would be included in this research, through their class teachers. During the next physical education class, the researcher was introduced to the students by their physical education teachers and the necessary information about the research was provided to the students. The contents of the research were explained to the students and their parents before each interview and they were informed of the fact that the findings to be obtained from the research would only be used within the scope of this research. In addition, the students were asked to fill out an Informed Consent Form for their participation in this research.

The validity and reliability of the qualitative research:

- This research is a mixed pattern study in which the views of parents were obtained and quantitative and qualitative data were used together. It includes method diversity since qualitative and quantitative views are used for the same participant.
- While a researcher was assigned for the collection of data in this research, a specialized person was appointed together with the researcher for the assessment and analysis of the data, therefore, researcher diversity was also used.
- The results obtained and the data collected in the research are strongly consistent. The researcher acted consistently with respect to the research pattern and analysis throughout the research.

Collection of data

Information for the parents and a mini survey covering 4 questions were used in collecting quantitative data in the research. In this survey, whether or not the children played games, with what they played, with whom and where they played were asked. The purpose of the research was explained to the children and parents, who participated in the research, and it was stated that participation was on a fully voluntary basis. After the survey forms that were filled in were collected, appointments were asked from 16 children and 14 parents, who agreed to be interviewed.

A sound recording device was used during the interviews and each interview lasted around 15 to 45 minutes. The content analysis method from qualitative analysis methods was used in order for the data obtained from the answers given by participating students and parents during their interviews to be comprehensibly analyzed.

The data obtained was first transformed into plain text in computer environment. Then the data was encoded by the researcher in the form of expressed statements and small sentences. In the findings of the research, student statements regarding the themes were coded as FS1, FS2, MS1, and MS2 and expressions regarding parent views were coded as P1, V2.

Qualitative interview questions

For children:

- What does game mean?
- Why do you play games? What is your reason for playing?
- What kind of games do you play? Can you please give an example, the name of a game?
- Where do you play a game/your games?
- With what do you play games? With/without tools
- Who do you play/prefer to play games with?
- Do you play games at school? During recesses/lunch break
- Do you play games during physical education lessons?
- Do you play with girls or boys? Why?
- Can you please draw a game you imagine?

For parents:

- Where does your child play freely and actively? In the garden/at home
- Would you like your child to play freely and actively outdoors?
- Do you think that there are obstacles preventing your child from playing outside? What are they?
- Do your environmental conditions constitute obstacles for your child in playing outdoors?
- What do you do to help your child to play outside more?
- Do you think that school is an opportunity for your child to play?
- What do you think playing makes your child to acquire?

Validity and reliability

The data diversity method was used at the stage of ensuring the validity and reliability of the research. It is a study, in which the survey and face to face interview techniques were used on the same participant, incident, and fact.

As an internal reliability measure, researcher diversity was used through the assignment of a researcher for the collection of data and the appointment of a specialized person for assessing and analyzing the data together with the researcher. The detailed description method was used in the application of the results.

Validity: Care was taken to ensure that the findings are consistent and meaningful in the research itself. The researcher was consistent throughout the research design and analysis of the data. The findings obtained were observed and ensured to constitute a whole by the researcher and the expert, who realized the coding.

Reliability: The researcher clearly identified the methods and stages of the research. The statements obtained in the research were read one by one and coded by the researcher and the expert instructor, after which the themes were constituted.

Analysis of the data

Descriptive statistics were used in the research for the analysis of the quantitative data and the results were interpreted in tables with frequency percentages and averages. In the qualitative study, content analysis techniques were used for the evaluation of the interview questions. The interviews were first individually coded by the researchers and classified under specific themes.

The themes in the research were formed following the interviews as 5 themes for the children and 4 themes for their parents. The texts of the interviews were read line by line and the codes found to be important and interesting within the scope of the research problem were determined by the researchers. Then the interrelated codes were brought together and 5 themes were identified for the children and 4 themes for their parents.

Themes

For children:

- Meaning of play/game
- Type of play/game
- Place of play/game
- Playmates
- School and play/game

For parents:

- Places of play
- External threats/obstacles to playing games
- Benefits of play/game
- Contribution of school to play/game

Coding of data: After the texts of the interviews were read line by line, the codes found to be important by the researcher were underlined.

Finding of themes: Following the completion of the coding process, interrelated codes were brought together to form appropriate themes. Thematic coding is the categorization (themes) of previously determined codes by identifying common aspects.

SAMPLE QUOTATIONS	CODE	THEMES
Student Reflections		
Play means having fun and learning. Playing means entertainment. Generally spending time with my friends to have fun.	Having fun	Meaning of play
Cultural heritage comes to my mind.	Cultural heritage	
Such as traditional children's games.	Traditional children's games	
I like sports related activities more. When you say play, doing sports comes to my mind. I generally like computer games.	Preferred games	Type of play
Both at home and school.		School and play
Schoolyard with my teacher, in the garden of our house.		Place of play
I play with my friends, mother and father. I sometimes play with my younger sister/brother.	People played with	Playmates
Parent Reflections		
Our apartment building has a garden. Our housing estate has a garden.	Places where children can play	Places of play
Our school is extremely beautiful. It offers many opportunities other schools don't. The schoolyard is beautiful.	Suitability of school for playing	
Traffic, street, that is, there is traffic in our street. General social problems, risks associated with children. Intensity of homework. We sometimes think of security. The education system prevents it to some extent because children have homework.	Obstacles to playing	External threats to play
Increases socialization. Develops manual skills. Increases the child's energy.	Benefit acquired by playing	Benefits of play
Her/his playing games is super for us in terms of sharing. It increases socialization and the child's energy.	Importance of school in terms of playing games	Contributions of School to Play

Table 1: Distribution of the Views of Students and Parents according to Theme Codes and Subjects.

Results

Answer	F	%
Yes	35	100
No	0	0
Total	35	100

Table 2: Distribution of Children's Playing Games according to Parents.

All of the children in the research play games according to the views of parents (Table 2).

Answer	F	%
Video games	8	22.9
Toys	10	28.6
Activities/sports	17	48.6
Total	35	100

Table 3: Distribution of Playing Tools according to Parents.

The majority of the parents in the research stated that the types of games mostly played by children were activities and various forms of sports and others stated that they played with toys and video games (Table 3).

Answer	F	%
At home	11	31.4
In the garden	7	20
In playgrounds	5	14.3
At school	7	20
Other	5	14.3
Total	35	100

Table 4: Distribution of places of play according to parents.

The parents in the research stated that the places, where children played games were mostly home, garden, school, and playgrounds (Table 4).

Answer	F	%
Alone	5	14,3
With friends	18	51,4
Younger and older brothers / sisters	6	17,1
Other	6	17,1
Total	35	100,0

Table 5: People children play games with according to parents.

The parents in the research stated that children mostly played with their friends (Table 5).

Qualitative findings of the research

Students	Who Actively Play Games	Who Do Not Play Games
FS1	"Having fun and Learning"	"Did not like playing games"
FS2	"Cultural heritage, having fun"	"Having fun"
MS1	"Doing sports, having fun	"Entertaining activity"
MS2	Sports, football, basketball	More excitement and enthusiasm"

Table 6: Meaning of Play.

According to the findings of the research, the meaning of play for the children playing actively and freely outdoors was having fun, doing sports, and cultural heritage whereas it was excitement and enthusiasm for those, who did not prefer to play outdoors, and they stated that they did not like playing outside (Table 6).

Students	Who Actively Play Games	Who Do Not Play Games
FS1	"Volleyball"	"Tablet, computer"
FS2	"Hopscotch or play house"	"Jumping rope, ball games"
MS1	"Touch, blind man's buff"	"Tag, hide and seek, dodge ball"
MS2	"Football, basketball, tablet"	"Computer games"

Table 7: Type of Play.

According to the findings of the research, the type of play for the children playing actively and freely outdoors was volleyball, hopscotch, play house, and hide and seek while those, who did not prefer to play outdoors, stated that it was tablet, computer games, tag, dodge ball (Table 7).

Students	Who Actively Play Games	Who Do Not Play Games
FS1	"Garden of the house and school"	"At home, at school"
FS2	"In the garden, at home, and at school"	"In the garden, at home, during physical education class"
MS1	"In the garden"	"At school, at home"
MS2	"In the garden"	"At home, at the schoolyard"

Table 8: Place of Play.

While the children playing actively and freely outdoors stated that the place of play for them was the garden of the house and school, it was the garden, home, and physical education class for those, who did not prefer to play outdoors (Table 8).

While playmates in the research were friends in the neighborhood and schoolmates, cousins, and mother and father for the children playing actively and freely outdoors, those, who did not prefer to play outdoors stated that they played with older brothers, younger sisters/ brothers, friends, and alone by themselves (Table 9).

Students	Who Actively Play Games	Who Do Not Play Games
FS1	"With my friends in the neighborhood and schoolmates"	"With my friends in the neighborhood and schoolmates"
FS2	"With my cousins and friends"	"With my older brothers"
MS1	"With my friends in the neighborhood"	"With my younger sister/brother or alone"
MS2	"With my friends, mother, and father"	"With my friends"

Table 9: Playmates.

Students	Who Actively Play Games	Who Do Not Play Games
FS1	"Recess, lunch break, and physical education class"	"Does not play at school"
FS2	"Recess and physical education class"	"Physical education class"
MS1	"Physical education class"	"During recess and physical education class"
MS2	"Physical education class"	"During physical education class"

Table 10: School and Play.

According to the research, the playing time at school for the children playing actively and freely outdoors was during recess, lunch break, and physical education class, while those, who did not prefer to play outdoors, stated that they did not play at school and they played during the physical education class or recesses (Table 10).

According to the views of the parents participating in the research

Places of play: The parents stated that their children played at home and outdoors and other than these, they took their children to playgrounds.

"*Our apartment building has a garden. She/he plays there with her/his female and male friends*" (P1).

"*I could say at home and outdoors. In the garden of the housing estate outside*" (P2).

"*She/he plays at home and in the garden with her/his friends. We take her/him to playgrounds with her/his playmates*" (P3).

"*If the weather allows it, s/he plays in the backyard, we have a very suitable area, s/he generally plays together with her/his friends out in the open*" (P4).

"*She/he generally plays in the backyard, we have a very suitable area*" (P5).

"*She/he plays at home, s/he used to like reading books and playing with her/his Legos. There were no children at her/his age in the housing estate but now she/he plays a lot. Alone at home, with her/his toys, such as cutting and sticking things*" (P6).

External Threats/Obstacles to playing: The parents stated that the garden was a safe and appropriate environment because they lived in a housing estate and they did not permit their children to go to other places because of such reasons as traffic, theft, etc.

"*There is some traffic in our street. The bicycle of one of her/his friends was stolen last year. About those migrant, they are in our neighborhood, too, therefore we do not want the children to go out of the apartment playing areas. Therefore it is a safe area, there is no such thing as playing outside, friendships in the neighborhood as in our childhood*" (P1).

"*We have not encountered any external threats; she/he plays inside the housing estate. Because of that she/he is not faced with the danger of traffic much*" (P2).

"*It would be more difficult to send her/him outside if our house was in a garden or if we were living inside the city. But now, I can send her/him easily, blindfolded. There is also security, the garden is closed anyway*" (P3).

"*There is no obstacle other than the weather conditions. For the time being, s/he is in quite a suitable environment*" (P4).

"*In fact, we had a normal house outside the housing estate and we moved in this apartment inside a housing estate just to make sure that she/he plays outdoors. There are playgrounds surrounding our house, but s/he doesn't go out. She/he doesn't like it. She/he also has friends of her/his age but she/he does not prefer to go out*" (P5).

"*Security comes to mind sometimes, that is, when we send her/him to play in the park. The park is outside our housing estate but we send her/him because there are a lot of children. It is a crowded place; there must be around 40 to 50 children. There are also adults. There is a basketball court. We are concerned because of that. It is at a distance we cannot see*" (P6).

Benefits of play: The parents stated that playing was important for the social, emotional, and psychomotor development of their children and that their leadership and communication skills improved besides becoming socialized while playing games.

"*It changes depending on different games. Her/his manual skills and psychomotor actions develop with games that include manual skills. Her/his socialization increases and she/he becomes more sociable with her/his friends through social games. She/he can exceed her/his own limits with these activities in the form of games. Therefore, I think she/he develops both in the sense of intelligence and in physical and social terms with games. Certain reflexes accelerate, this and that, with computer games too, but I do not like them much*" (P1).

"*Since she/he is an only child, playing games is super for her/him in terms of sharing*" (P2).

"*She/he can express her/himself better. She/he becomes more socialized. Sometimes she/he tries to take the lead, I observe her/him. It has great contributions. Her/his energy increases, and she/he comes home tired*" (P3).

"*Ebru is a very personal child, she can be shy to go and be with her friends sometimes. I try to increase her communication with her friends, to form groups and bind them somehow. While she may initially act more personal and prefer to play with the soil and prepare food, then, a few days later, she may start to play ball with them. She has gradually started to share her toys with people*" (P4).

"*İlayda does not prefer to go outside and play. Her father and I force her to go out. She prefers to be at home, to play with her toys at home, and of course such things as the tablet, etc. She continuously creates*

new things with the games at home, she has a vivid imagination. Her social power. She plays with Barbie dolls and her ready-made clothes, etc. We have some difficulties about movement" (P5).

"We may think that playing with people helps her/him acquire social characteristics. But I have no such information that she/he became more social because she/he played this or that. I haven't seen anything definite. She/he is very strong in social terms because she/he started to go to the kindergarten at the age of one. She/he became a little shy like this afterwards" (P6).

Contributions of school to play: In the research, parents stated that school constituted a good opportunity for playing games and children particularly played during the lunch break and recesses and in physical education classes.

"I think school is a good area but of course there are some risks. They fall down on concrete floor at times, things like that perhaps. I would prefer the ground of the garden to consist of grass instead of pebble stones. The gardens at schools are generally asphalt, there are basketball hoops, goalposts but I am not sure how good a playground it is" (P1).

"We think that her/his playing both at school and outside is super in terms of sharing, the games at school are educational" (P2).

"School is definitely a good opportunity for playing games" (P3).

"She/he comes from school with joy. S/he talks about recesses in this sense. Since she/he talks about them in terms of playing, they should be meeting this need to a certain extent even though it is not one hundred percent" (P4).

"The schoolyard is beautiful. We are very lucky in this respect. It is good and large. But still, İlayda is a bit different from other children of her age I think. She does not go out to play during recesses, either. She prefers to draw pictures or do handcraft type of things in the classroom" (P5).

"I am not informed enough to make an evaluation. This campus is beautiful anyway. That is, for the children to play. However, the education system prevents it a bit, because there is homework. Kemal does his homework in the service bus. I am quite sure that they play during recesses and lunch breaks, she comes home sweaty every day" (P6).

Discussion and Conclusion

Play is a means of entertainment for the child, she/he uses it as a source of learning and play is a serious activity for her/him. While playing is having fun, learning, doing sports, and a cultural heritage for the children, who are more willing to play, according to the results of this research, [1,9,10], stated in their studies that students played games to have fun. Playing also means entertainment for the children, who do not prefer to play outside; however, they also stated that they did not prefer to play much despite its implication of entertainment. Based on this result, we may conclude that the interest of some children in playing has decreased. We may explain this situation with such causes as the narrowing of playing areas, health concerns preventing tiring and wearing games, etc.

According to the results of this research, the type of play for the children playing actively and freely outdoors was such team sports as volleyball, basketball as well as hopscotch, play house, and hide and seek while those, who did not prefer to play outdoors, stated that

playing with the tablet, computer games were more entertaining. Similar answers were also obtained in the study conducted by Glenn et al., (2012) and it was stated that games were categorized as sport and video games from the point of view of children [6]. Yavuzer stated in his research that the nature and contents of some games changed with the media and the changing society and the street games in which children could communicate face to face with their friends diminished particularly because of the screen dependency of children, computer games, and homework [11]. It was stated that consequently a gradual degeneration took place in children's games, group games became fewer while games played alone increased, and that this was not good for children. Similar results were found as a result of the research carried out by Onur et al. in the province of Bursa and it was stated that the number of games played by children, types of games and group games decreased every day; game materials differentiated from natural materials towards fabrication materials, games increasingly became more individualized, and traditional games gradually disappeared [12]. Pilten et al. on the other hand, categorized types of play according to gender and stated that girls preferred play house and playing with dolls while boys preferred games like football [1].

While playmates were friends in the neighborhood and schoolmates, cousins, and mother and father for the children playing actively and freely outdoors, those, who did not prefer to play outdoors stated that they played with older brothers, younger sisters / brothers, friends, and alone by themselves. The relationships established during the social development process provide the individual with many opportunities to be able to acquire social skills. Researches made in this field demonstrated that developing positive relationships with peers, being able to control emotions during interactions, and having social expectations form individuals other than parents were among the development duties of the childhood. According to Gülay and Akman, intense relationships experienced with the peers during the development process offer the child many opportunities to be able to display sufficient social adaptation and acquire the required social skills [13]. Children gain significant experience regarding social relationships through their peers during the first years of their lives. As a result of works performed in groups, children learn such social skills as sharing materials, listening to others, waiting for their turns, studying by themselves, undertaking responsibilities, and respecting the rights of other [14]. When the results of the studies conducted are examined, it is seen that the children with social skills become more successful compared to other children of their age, who do not sufficiently possess these skills [15,16].

In this research, while the children playing actively and freely outdoors stated that the place of play for them was the garden of the house and school, it was the garden, home, and physical education class for those, who did not prefer to play outdoors. Games played in playgrounds support the creativity and independence of children. These areas allow for various activities as running, skipping, jumping, throwing, swinging, climbing, digging, mounting, sliding, and catching and children acquire concepts and skills arising from movement. The games played in these areas enable the children to help each other and share while playing altogether and allow for their social, emotional, and cognitive development as well [7,17]. Playgrounds develop the children's ability to control their aggressive instincts, enable the accumulated surplus energy in the child to be discharged, develop positive ego, and enable the child to discover her/his skills, to get familiar with her/his body, and to acquire the perception of distance and a sense of direction [17].

According to the research, the playing time at school for the children playing actively and freely outdoors was during recess, lunch break, and physical education class, while those, who did not prefer to play outdoors, stated that they did not play at school and they played during the physical education class or recesses. As can also be understood from this result, children, who like to play and who are active, can use any time for playing. On the other hand, children, who do not prefer to play, spend their time playing during recesses and lunch breaks just because it is required during class or for the sake of not being bored and not having wasted time.

In the research, parents also stated that school constituted a good opportunity for playing games and children particularly played during the lunch break and recesses and in physical education classes. Schoolyards have a significant potential in terms of meeting the playing and activity needs of children. However, schoolyards should be organized as social areas offering means for physical activity and games, because children use schoolyards as playgrounds during recesses, physical education classes, and on every occasion [18,19], on the other hand, stated that most of the schoolyards in Turkey had concrete and asphalt surfaces and given the fact that the children spent most of their time at school, it was extremely important for schoolyards to be active and creative playgrounds. Schoolyards have a significant potential in terms of enabling children to acquire physical activity and playing habits.

Parents stated in the research that they allowed their children to play actively and freely in the gardens of their homes, they also took them to large parks and encouraged them to play, there were no obstacles because they lived in housing estates, however, they did not like sending them outside the housing estate because of traffic and security concerns, and that playing made their children happy and contributed to them in discharging their energies, developing their creativity, and sharing and socializing.

When the games played by children in past years are examined, it is seen that most children generally played outside on the streets or in vacant fields. There were more vacant fields, where children could play in settlement areas at least twenty to thirty years ago, however, the increase of such factors as congested settlement, traffic, etc. as a result of rapid urbanization, the decrease of vacant fields and number of houses with gardens have caused the games that could be played by children on the street, in large gardens, or vacant fields to decrease as well. Furthermore, another reason for the higher number of games played outside the house in the old days was the trust of the people living in the same settlement area in each other and the warm and reassuring relationship among people. In our day, people are becoming more alienated from each other every passing day and their sense of trust in each other is decreasing. This situation has caused parents to limit the desires of children to play outside the house [20]. Such reasons as kidnapping, the increase of immigration from foreign countries, and the problem of traffic constitute the main causes of these limitations and these conclusions are consistent with the answers received from the parents during interviews.

The parents stated in this research that playing was important for the social, emotional, and psychomotor development of their children and that their leadership, communication, and social skills improved while playing games. Driscoll et al. (2002) stated that children encountered social environments while playing games and they learned to cooperate, help each other, share, and solve social problems through appropriate means in these environments, and this was important in terms of the social development of children [8]. In addition, playing environment is a free environment for the child. In a group, the child finds the opportunity to compare her/his own philosophy and views with other children, discusses them in detail, and to corrects them [21].

During the research, some children stated that they played games even though they did not, however, it was observed from the answers they gave later on during the interview that they were in fact not very willing with respect to playing games. Playing, from the point of view of children is having fun and games are played for this purpose. However, we can understand from the interview questions and observations made that playing games at home in front of the computer is preferred to a considerable extent rather than playing actively and freely outside.

In conclusion, habits of doing physical activity are gradually decreasing because of ever decreasing playgrounds, advancing technology, etc. and this can change the preferences of children regarding games. This situation can also change the definition, understanding, and point of view of children about playing games.

This research, on the other hand, may be considered as an original study, since the opinions of both the children and the parents were obtained and different methods were used together. Regarding the studies conducted in this field abroad, Lee et al. used a group-oriented method in their research. Glenn et al. examined such questions as what the factors for playing were or if there were any obstacles to playing from the point of view of the parents by using the technique of interviewing the children and the parents. Similarly, Nelly et al. conducted interviews with grandparents, parents, and children (between the ages of 5 and 12), who lived in rural and urban communities, and obtained their opinions about such matters as their playing experiences and the factors that make playing games more difficult for today's children. The studies conducted in Turkey regarding the children's games have generally examined the children's playgrounds, playing tools, and the types of games played by children in determined places and on the street based on observation.

This research of ours contains some limitations. The first is our organization of the sample group of the research at a private school in Ankara. However, our research group bears similar characteristics (socio-economic level and the opportunities provided by the parents for their children). The second, as also seen in the results of the interviews, was the limitation we encountered while choosing the children, who played actively and freely outdoors. We tried to overcome this limitation based on the observations of the physical education teachers during recesses and physical education classes at school and those of the parents at home. Our third limitation was that only six of the parents, who had stated that they would have voluntarily participated in the research, could keep their appointments. Despite these limitations in the research, the use of qualitative and quantitative views together in addition to the views of the parents was very important for us in terms of reaching the accurate data.

Recommendations

- Natural and large areas, where children can play freely, actively, and safely should be created instead of limited areas for the children who want to play games.
- Safe schoolyards, where children can even play during recesses, develop various motor skills as hanging, swinging, climbing, balance and strength, and discharge their energies, should be

planned and constructed at schools for different age groups, according to the physical resources of every school.

- Physical education teachers should use and organize games, in which children can truly have fun, for training purposes by primarily reviewing the entertainment understanding of the region they are working in.

- It is important that Physical Education and Sports teachers seriously and importantly get the children apply these subjects included in the curriculum as traditional children's games and street games in their lessons.

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