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PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' OPINIONS ON MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to determine preschool teachers' opinions on movement activities. In line with this general purpose, teachers' opinions on movement activities were examined under the subheadings of awareness and importance; planning and implementation; and finally, evaluation. The research was designed as a phenomenological research, one of the qualitative research models. The study group of the research consists of 107 teachers who actively work as preschool teachers throughout Türkiye. Participation in the research was ensured from 28 provinces in different regions throughout Türkiye. The research data were collected using a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher, consisting of questions in three different dimensions. The interview form included a total of 23 questions, with 5 questions in the awareness/importance dimension, 15 questions in the planning/implementation dimension, and 3 questions in the evaluation dimension. Content analysis methods were used in data analysis. As a result of the research, it was determined that teachers' awareness of movement activity was not very high, and they couldn't adequately express the importance of this type of activity for children. In the planning and implementation stages of activities, it was observed that teachers displayed a more teacher-centered approach rather than a child-centered one. It was observed that they were weak in using appropriate methods in terms of evaluating movement activity and motor development.

Keywords: Movement activity, early childhood education, teachers' opinion.

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1. Introduction

The preschool period, which covers the age range of 0-6 years, is a critical phase for children's development as it is when their growth is most rapid, and all areas of development need to be supported. During this period, the education provided to children contributes to their self-discovery, exploration of their limits and interests through a rich stimulating environment and a wide variety of activities, shaping their personality, forming their values, acquiring fundamental habits, learning social behavior patterns, beginning to grasp cultural values, satisfying, and expanding their curiosity about the world. (Aral, Kandır, & Yaşar, 2002, as cited in Atlı, 2013; Düşek, 2008; Şıvgın, 2005; Vural, 2006; Yavuzer, 2002). Given the critical and essential nature of this preschool period for children, the significance of receiving education during this time becomes apparent. To make a good long-term investment, it is necessary to give utmost care and importance to preschool education. It is known that investments in preschool education yield long-term benefits by enhancing school achievement, promoting healthy behaviors, and ultimately transforming into adult productivity. It is also understood that investments in preschool education can result in economic gains ranging from 7% to 14% annually and contribute to increasing the overall welfare of society (Heckman, 2008; Suskind, 2015/2018). Therefore, planning and investments in countries' education systems should begin with the preschool education period. These educational plans should be tailored to the needs of the country and aligned with the evolving global order, depending on how a nation's future is envisioned.

Education has a significant role in the developmental efforts of countries (Atlı, 2013). Countries invest in their own future through the education systems they establish. These education systems become functional through educational programs (Erden, 1998), as these programs ensure that the children of a nation engage in organized learning activities to achieve the set goals (Anıl, 1999; Doğan, 1997, as cited in Atlı, 2013).

Children's learning activities are carried out through specific activities. Movement activity is also included in the national preschool education curriculum used in Türkiye. This type of movement activity is expected to contribute to children's motor, cognitive, social-emotional, and language development by enhancing their basic motor skills. It aims to help children develop body awareness, spatial awareness, motor skills (strength, coordination, speed, agility), and physical abilities (flexibility, strength, endurance) (MEB [MoNE], 2013). Movement activity is also essential for children's immediate development and for their long-term health and the establishment of necessary exercise habits as they continue in life. Research has shown that motor development and movement positively support children's other developmental areas, help build a positive self-image, and contribute to positive psychological well-being (Aşçı, 2004; Emmanouel, Zervas, & Vegenas, 1992; Özşaker, 2008; Peens, Pienaar, & Nienaber, 2008).

In the literature review conducted, when the studies involving children in the areas of movement development and motor development in Türkiye are examined, it can be observed that the research in this field is gradually increasing (Kılıç, 2018). However, the research studies conducted with both children and teachers regarding movement activities, which are the main supporters of motor development, remain insufficient. While it is possible to find numerous studies that have taken the opinions of teachers about almost all types of activities, identified teachers' levels of awareness towards these activities, the underlying reasons for their positive or negative perspectives on these activities, as well as their needs, desires, and suggestions (Aslan, Şenel-Zor, & Tamkavas-Cicim, 2015; Atan & Dalkıran, 2008; Eray-Alışkan, & Güneyli, 2016; Günay-Bilaloğlu, Aslan, & Aktaş-Arnas, 2008; Karamustafaoğlu & Kandaz, 2006; Özkan & Girgin, 2014; Özkut & Kaya, 2012; Salı, Akkol, & Oğuz, 2013; Uşun & Cömert, 2003; Yazıcı & Demiroğlu, 2013), it has been noticed that such research is extremely limited in terms of movement activities. This deficiency will lead to authorities and experts not having access to sufficient information based on scientific data and results while making decisions, including creating necessary spaces for movement activities in schools, updating preschool curriculum, determining the status of movement development courses currently offered as electives in undergraduate programs, and many other matters. Based on this problem, the aim of this research is to examine the opinions of preschool teachers regarding movement activities. In line with this general purpose, teachers' opinions on movement activities have been investigated under the subheadings of awareness and importance; planning and implementation; and finally, evaluation.

2. Method

2.1. The Research Design

The research was designed as a qualitative research model, specifically a phenomenological study, due to its aim of thoroughly revealing teachers' perspectives on movement activities in three different dimensions. Case studies are studies that aim to present the existing state of a particular situation as it is (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). both conventional and expedient to divide the Method section into labeled subsections.

2.2. Study Group

Upon reviewing the forms filled out by the 108 participants in the study, one participant indicated that he was working in Sydney. As a result, this form was excluded from the evaluation since the research aims to determine the opinions of teachers in Türkiye. Excluding this form, the research has involved a total of 107 teachers, including 96 females and 11 males, who are actively working as pre-school teachers.

While forming the study group of the research, an online form was prepared in consideration of the principle of easy accessibility and this form was shared in the virtual

environment to facilitate the creation of the study group. Thanks to collecting research data online, teachers from all across Türkiye, only those who volunteered participated in the study.

The information regarding the age, type of institution they work at, professional experience, and the provinces they participated in the research from, of the teachers in the study group, is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic information about the study group

	Age Range	***f***	***%***
Age	20-25 years old	20	18,6
	26-30 years old	42	39,2
	31-35 years old	22	20,5
	36-40 years old	15	14
	41-45 years old	4	3,7
	46-50 years old	2	1,8
	50 years old and above	2	1,8
	Total	*107*	*100*
	Year Range	***f***	***%***
Professional Experience	0-5 years	49	46,6
	6-10 years	27	25,7
	11-15 years	22	20,9
	16-20 years	4	3,8
	21 years and above	3	2,8
	Total	*105*	*100*
	Type of Institution	***f***	***%***
Type of Institution	Preschool Attached to Primary School	54	50,4
	Independent Preschool	37	34,5
	Private Preschool	12	11,2
	Application Preschool	2	1,8
	Other	2	1,8
	Total	*107*	*100*

Two of the participating teachers did not provide information about their professional experience. Among the teachers indicated as "Other" in this table, one person each works at a high school's applied preschool and at the Presidency of Religious Affairs preschool.

The research gathered participants from 28 different provinces across Türkiye. One of the teachers participating in the study did not provide information about the province they are working in. The provinces where data for the research was collected are listed in order from the highest to lowest number of participants: İstanbul (41), Diyarbakır (14), Ankara (9), Şanlıurfa (8), Antalya (3), Kocaeli (3), Adıyaman (2), Balıkesir (2), İzmir (2), Kahramanmaraş (2), Konya (2), Sakarya (2), and each with one participant from Kilis, Gaziantep, Sinop, Tekirdağ, Aksaray, Sivas, Denizli, Tokat, Kırşehir, Erzurum, Hatay, Kastamonu, Mardin, Çankırı, Bursa, and Nevşehir.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

A semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used as a data collection tool. The interview form consists of two sections: demographic information and interview questions. The interview questions are further divided into subheadings related to awareness/importance of movement activity, planning/implementation, and evaluation within the context of movement activities.

In the initial version of the interview form, the awareness/importance subsection included 4 questions, the planning/implementation subsection had 11 questions, and the evaluation subsection had 3 questions. Expert opinion was sought to ensure the content validity of the interview form. The first version of the form, comprising a total of 17 questions, was sent to 10 field experts for their opinions. 7 experts provided feedback, and based on their shared suggestions, some questions were modified. These changes involved splitting certain questions into two and making some wording changes. As a result of these adjustments, the number of questions increased to 23, with 5 questions in the awareness/importance dimension, 15 questions in the planning/implementation dimension, and 3 questions in the evaluation dimension, and the form was finalized.

2.4. Data collection procedure

Following expert opinions, the finalized data collection tool was ready by March of the 2019-2020 academic year. In the same month, the necessary permissions were obtained by applying to the Ministry of National Education in order to carry out the research throughout Türkiye. Once the permissions were obtained from the ministry, in order to use time more efficiently during the data collection process and to reach a larger number of teachers, both the demographic information form and the interview form containing open-ended questions were transferred to an online platform, Google Forms.

The prepared online form was delivered to graduate student groups with the assistance of academic staff from various universities. By doing so, research information was actively shared with individuals engaged in teaching. Even if the data is in the online environment, due to the possibility of individuals postponing or forgetting to fill out the form, reminders were sent out to teacher groups interested in participating in the research, three times, approximately a week apart, using appropriate platforms. Efforts were made to increase participation by distributing the form and encouraging engagement. With all these preparations and efforts, the data for the research were collected in May of the 2019-2020 academic year. Participation in the study group was entirely voluntary, and before answering the research questions, teachers were required to read the information form and provide consent through a voluntary consent form related to the research.

2.5. Data analysis

Content analysis method was used in the analysis of the data, and categories and themes were developed for each dimension based on teachers' opinions. In this context, to ensure reliability in the data analysis process, all data were coded twice. The initial coding was conducted between July 20-27, 2020. Before the second coding, a two-week break was taken to allow the researcher to forget the data set. After this break, the same data set was reanalyzed between August 14-21, 2020. Thus, it was ensured that there were no overlooked details, and the overlapping categories were checked and the findings of the research were written after the most appropriate categorization was provided.

3. Results

3.1. Results Regarding the Awareness and Importance Dimension

When examining the responses to the question that asked for a brief definition of movement activity, it was observed that some teachers indicated a connection to the motor development domain, encompassed activities related to the body, viewed it as an activity that allows children to expend energy, and considered it as engaging and fun play activities. However, while some teachers expressed a lack of knowledge about this type of activity, it was observed that some teachers did not have a clear knowledge or idea about movement activity.

In this context, as examples of what teachers said, the following statements can be shown:

Teacher 4: *It is a collection of purposeful/unintended, planned/unplanned activities.*

Teacher 5: *I heard it for the first time.*

Teacher 9: *Children's movements that come naturally or structured motions.*

Teacher 29: *Everything.*

Teacher 60: *Any type of activity in which people actively participate using their limbs.*

Teacher 84: *Active activity.*

Teacher 88: *Physical play.*

When the teachers were asked whether they had received training on planning and implementing movement activities, 43 participants (40.1%) indicated that they had not received any training related to this activity. On the other hand, 64 participants (59.8%) stated that they acquired knowledge about movement activities through university education (55 teachers), in-service training (4 teachers), or courses they attended due to their personal interests (5 teachers).

When asked whether the movement activity is important for the teacher, all participating teachers stated that this type of activity is important to them. While explaining the significance of movement activities from a teacher's viewpoint, only a few teachers focused on themselves, while the majority responded in terms of the benefits these activities provide to children. In responses that centered on the teacher, standing out were the answers related to children expending their energy and the facilitation of classroom management. Another significant aspect mentioned was that movement activities assist teachers in maintaining an active-passive balance between different activities.

The final question in the awareness and importance dimension was about whether movement activities are considered important for children. All of the teachers participating in the research expressed that movement activities are indeed important for children. While explaining why this type of activity is important for children, 31 teachers mentioned that movement activities support children's overall development, 21 teachers emphasized that children can release their energy through these activities, 15 teachers pointed out that such activities help children focus and learn while having fun, 8 teachers stated its significance for promoting physical and motor development, and 7 teachers mentioned its importance in contributing to children's overall health. On the other hand, 14 teachers did not provide an explanation regarding why movement activities are important for children.

3.2. Results regarding the planning and implementation dimension

In this dimension, the first question asked to teachers was, "*Do you plan movement activities yourself? If you use resources during the planning process of movement activities, what are those resources?*" In response to this question, 91 teachers (85%) indicated that they plan the activities themselves. However, only 23 of these teachers stated that they create the activities entirely on their own, while the remaining 68 teachers mentioned adapting pre-made activities for their classrooms. 16 teachers stated that they did not do the planning themselves and they used ready-made activities. The Internet (Instagram, Pinterest, teacher sharing sites, etc.) is the primary resource that teachers use during the activity preparation process, while special applications and activity books are used.

Another question posed to teachers regarding planning was, "*How competent do you feel in preparing movement activities?*" In response to this question, 38 teachers (35.5%) considered themselves competent, 61 teachers (57%) rated their competence as moderate, and 8 teachers (7.4%) expressed feeling inadequate in this regard.

Another question regarding the planning stage was, "*What do you pay attention to when planning movement activities?*" In response to this question, 50 teachers (46.7%) mentioned considering the children's developmental level, 15 teachers (14%) noted the children's interests and desires, 10 teachers (9.3%) focused on fundamental motor skills and active muscle groups involved in the activity, 9 teachers (8.4%) emphasized the need for the activity to be enjoyable and gamified, 7 teachers (6.5%) stated they pay attention to the safety of the educational environment and materials used for the children, 14 teachers' (13%) responses did not fit into any specific category, and 1 teacher (0.9%) stated that they don't particularly focus on anything specific while planning activities.

The responses to the question asked about implementation, "*How often do you include movement activities on a weekly basis? Do you think this frequency is sufficient?*" can be summarized as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Frequency values regarding the frequency of conducting weekly movement activities

Code	*f*	Number of Teachers Who Find It Sufficient (*f*)	Number of Teachers Who Find It Insufficient (*f*)
1 day	1	-	1
2 days	14	9	5
3 days	19	13	3
4 days	4	4	-
5 days	63	63	-
Total	101	89	9

101 teachers responded to this question, while 6 teachers did not provide an answer to the question about how many days per week they conducted movement activities.

Another question posed to teachers regarding implementation was, "*What is the duration of the implementation of the movement activities you prepare? Do you think this duration is sufficient?*" The responses to this question are presented Table 3 below:

Table 3. Frequency values regarding the duration of implementation of movement activities

	f	Number of Teachers Who Find It Sufficient (*f*)	Number of Teachers Who Find It Insufficient (*f*)
Less than 20 minutes	29	28	1
21-30 minutes	37	37	-
31-40 minutes	15	14	1
41-50 minutes	9	8	1
51-60 minutes	8	8	-
Total	98	95	3

As can be seen in Table 2, 98 of the teachers participating in the research provided responses regarding the duration of implementing movement activities, while 9 teachers did not answer this question. Teachers also mentioned that the duration of implementing movement activities is influenced by factors such as the age of the children, class size, their desire to conduct other activities, and their personal energy levels.

Regarding the implementation place of movement activities, teachers were asked the question, "*Where do you implement movement activities?"* While 103 teachers responded to this question, 4 teachers did not provide an answer. As a result of the responses provided, six different categories of implementation areas for movement activities emerged. Since teachers mentioned multiple implementation areas in their responses, the numerical value of the implementation areas does not directly match the number of participating teachers. Information about the implementation areas is provided in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Table regarding the implementation areas of movement activities

Theme	Code	*f*
Implementation Area of Movement Activity	Classroom	81
	Schoolyard	77
	Playroom / Multipurpose Hall	20
	Sports Hall	10
	Corridor	7
	Playground	4

According to Table 3, teachers conduct movement activities in various areas, including classrooms, schoolyards, playrooms or multipurpose halls, sports halls, corridors, and playgrounds.

Following the question aimed at learning where teachers implement movement activities, they were asked about the positive and negative features of the areas where movement activities are conducted. In this context, ideas regarding three main implementation areas have come to the forefront.

Table 5. Positive and negative features of movement activity implementation areas

CLASSROOM	Positive Features	The environment being safe, easier activity preparation within the classroom, and facilitating teacher's classroom control.
	Negative Features	Limited space, inadequate ventilation, limited availability of materials that can be used in the classroom, different materials in the classroom distracting children's attention, spending too much time preparing the classroom for the activity.
SCHOOLYARD	Positive Features	Having a spacious area, children being in touch with nature, having oxygen-rich air and no ventilation problems, having different ground features (grass, soil, sand, etc.), and allowing children to move more comfortably in a wide area.
	Negative Features	The difficulty of classroom management, its unsuitability for conducting activities in adverse weather conditions, containing more risk factors in terms of security, lack of maintenance, and ground features (such as asphalt, concrete-like hard surfaces)
MULTIPURPOSE HALL	Positive Features	The abundance and variety of materials, the availability of a spacious area and accordingly the possibility to move comfortably, ground features soft and flexible surfaces that prevent injury).
	Negative Features	Due to intensive use, the halls cannot be used at all times, lack of hygiene, difficulty in adjusting temperature, and different materials that can distract children.

Table 4 shows the findings regarding the characteristics of the areas where movement activities were implemented. In this context, the question directed to the teachers was, "*What are the positive and negative characteristics of the areas where movement activities are implemented?*" Responses to this question were generally categorized under 10 codes. Since more than one code in the answers given to this question could appear in the responses, the number of participating teachers and the frequency of code repetitions did not match. Upon examining the responses to this question, the ordering from the most frequently repeated code to the least repeated code was as follows: Creating a safe application environment (42 times), paying attention to the children's developmental level appropriateness (29 times), considering

the children's interests/wishes/needs (15 times), ensuring the children's enjoyment (11 times), paying attention to the alignment with goals and indicators (9 times), adhering to the rules of the activity (6 times), ensuring children's participation (6 times), paying attention to the warming-up and cooling-down stages necessary for movement activities (4 times), demonstrating movements in the correct form (2 times), and responses that were only mentioned once and didn't fall under the specified codes.

Another question asked regarding the implementation of movement activities was, "*What materials do you need to implement movement activities?"* When the responses given to this question were examined, since multiple materials were mentioned, the numbers of teachers and material codings did not directly match. Within this question, it was determined that 5 different materials stand out. These materials were ranked from most frequently mentioned to least: ball (51 times), rope (38 times), hula hoop (28 times), mat (22 times), balance board and colored tape (7 times). A separate code was not determined for the materials that were not expressed at least 5 times and they were gathered under the 'other' code. Among the other materials, ribbon, barrel, boots, blocks, plastic cups, ping pong ball, paper, tennis racket, pilates band, and rods of different lengths were identified. In addition to this information, a response of 'I do not need any special material. Sometimes I don't need or use any material at all' was provided 37 times. Among the other materials, ribbons, pontoons, pins, blocks, pet cups, ping pong ball, paper, tennis racket, pilates tape, sticks of different lengths were determined. Apart from this information, he said 37 times, "I don't need any special material. Sometimes I don't need or use any material".

After determining the materials needed by teachers for implementation, the question was directed towards understanding the material resources available at their institutions. The question asked was, "*Does your school have the materials you need to implement movement activities? If your answer is 'Yes,' are these materials sufficient? If your answer is 'No,' what alternative materials do you use for your activities?*" In response to this question, 62 teachers (57,9%) stated that all the necessary materials for conducting movement activities are available at their institutions, 12 teachers (11,2%) mentioned that there were no materials to meet their needs in the institutions, and 33 teachers (30,8%) indicated that some of the required materials were available at their schools. It was determined that 95 teachers who stated that they had materials to use within the scope of movement activity in the educational institution had two different views on the adequacy of these materials, as the materials were sufficient (36 teachers) and the materials were insufficient (59 teachers). Unfortunately, there was no response available for the question about the alternatives used in place of the materials that were considered missing at the institution.

After obtaining information about the materials teachers used during movement activities, they were asked to list the top three difficulties they encounter while implementing these activities. In this context, the following challenges were identified, along with the number of times they were mentioned: lack of physical space (41 times), inadequate materials (27 times), overcrowded class sizes (23 times), difficulties in classroom management (15 times),

problems related to safety and accidents (15 times), difficulties in managing children's emotions (15 times), inability to capture children's attention and encourage active participation (15 times), and children not adhering to activity rules (13 times). In addition to these responses, 11 teachers stated that they did not experience any difficulties while implementing movement activities.

After determining what teachers did technically during activity preparation and implementation, as well as identifying their needs, the question was directed towards understanding children's engagement in the activities: "*Do all the children in your class participate in the activities you prepare? What/what would you do to involve children who did not participate in the process?"* In response to this question, 43 teachers (40,1%) stated that all the children in their class always participate in the activities, 61 teachers (57%) mentioned that not all children always participate, and 3 teachers (2,8%) stated that the children never participate. The teachers stated that they tried different methods such as encouraging children to be involved in the activities, pairing them with a friend they like, doing the activity together with the teacher, trying to persuade them through conversation, presenting the activity in a differentiated manner, showing them the process of the activity, and allowing them to engage in an entirely different activity if they prefer.

After determining the children's participation in the activities, the question was asked to gain insights into children, particularly those who do not participate: *"What are the reasons for children who do not participate in or do not want to participate in movement activities?"* Within the scope of this question, the most frequently repeated answer by teachers was that children had fears of failure in movement activities (31 times). Following this response, other reasons mentioned include fear of becoming ill (16 times), lack of enjoyment from the activity (14 times), the child's current emotional state influencing their participation preference (11 times), inability to control competitive feelings (6 times), fear of injury and accidents (6 times), and quick fatigue (3 times).

As the final question related to the implementation of movement activities, teachers were asked, "*Do you include family participation activities in movement activities? If yes, how?"* This question aimed to determine what kind of efforts teachers make to support learning at home by participating families. Among the teachers, 43 mentioned (40,1%) that they include family participation in movement activities, 14 teachers (13%) stated they do so occasionally, and 50 teachers (46,7%) mentioned that they do not include family participation. In this context, it is thought that teachers cannot evaluate family participation correctly because most of the teachers perceived family participation activities as parents coming to the classroom and participating in the activity.

3.3. Results regarding the assessment dimension

In the assessment dimension, a total of 3 questions were asked to the teachers, aiming to gather detailed information about how they evaluate movement activities.

Within this dimension, the first question asked to teachers was, "*What is the process of evaluation after the implementation of the movement activities you prepare? What does it entail*?" Unfortunately, the response received for this question indicated that evaluation is carried out solely by 'asking the child questions.

The second question of the assessment dimension was, "*Do you believe that the learning outcomes and indicators stated in the Ministry of National Education's Early Childhood Education framework program are achieved in the movement activities you prepare?*" In response, 89 of the teachers (83,1%) stated that the activities they prepared support the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicators in the motor development domain, 16 teachers (14,9%) mentioned partial support, and 2 teachers (1,8%) indicated that there was no support at all.

The final question in the assessment stage was, "*How do you measure the progress in children's motor skills and motor development to include in the developmental reports?*" While 12 teachers (11,2%) did not provide an answer to this question, other teachers mentioned that they evaluate progress in motor development through observation (62 times), anecdotal records (17 times), and measurement tools/forms (17 times)

4. Discussion

When examining the definitions provided by teachers regarding movement activities, it is evident that the majority had a general idea about this type of activity, but they were not fully familiar with its content. If teachers' lack of in-depth knowledge about the nature of movement activities is considered from various perspectives, it is important to first review their undergraduate education thoroughly. After the responsibility of teacher training was transferred to universities in 1982 (Zelyurt, 2021), the number of universities responsible for training teachers in the field of early childhood education saw a rapid increase. The count of universities in charge of early childhood education teacher training was 0 in the academic year 1983-84, 2 in the academic year 1997-98, 23 in the academic year 1998-99, and 38 in the academic year 2006-2007 (Higher Education Council [HEC], 2007). The rapid increase in the number of these institutions that offer undergraduate education in preschool education raises questions about whether there is a sufficient number of well-trained faculty members in the field. The swift and intensive opening of preschool education undergraduate programs occurred simultaneously with updates to teacher training programs by the Higher Education Council in 1997, 2006, and 2018 (Zelyurt, 2021). As part of these update efforts, within the scope of teacher training programs, education related to the type of activity present in the national preschool education curriculum (MoNE, 2013) was provided through compulsory courses in the undergraduate curriculum. In the 1998-1999 academic year, in the 4th and 5th semesters, the courses 'Physical Education and Game Instruction I-II' were offered, consisting of two hours of theoretical and two hours of practical training each. In the 2006-2007 academic year, this content was covered in the compulsory course 'Physical Education and Game Instruction,' offered only in the 5th semester, with 2 hours of theory and 2 hours of

practical training. In the updated teacher training program in 2018, this content is covered as an elective field course named 'Child's Movement Development and Education,' consisting of a 2-hour theoretical class, offered to preschool teacher candidates (HEC, 2007, 2018). In the changes that have occurred over the years, it is observed that changes in the curriculum of preschool teacher training programs have maintained a parallelism between the names of the courses and the types of activities expected to be implemented within the scope of the national preschool education program. However, there has been a significant reduction in the theoretical and practical course hours dedicated to movement activities, which are essentially about educating the body and enhancing motor skills. By 2018, this course transformed from a compulsory course to an elective one, with no practical application included in the curriculum. This change poses a disadvantage in terms of teachers' competence in this area. At this point, teachers may make the mistake of seeing each physical activity of children as a movement activity. As an example, teachers' definitions of movement activities can be illustrated by the statements of Teacher 17: "*The times when children are not engaged in educational activities while sitting at a desk*"; Teacher 96: "*Being able to go everywhere freely*"; Teacher 101: "*Any kind of activity that makes our body move*"; and the commonly mentioned term "*play*" by many teachers. However, movement activities are a type of activity that supports the anatomical and physiological development of the child during the growth and development process (Kılıç, 2020a). It involves working with children from easy to more challenging tasks, following a sequence in the development of movement skills, and requiring specialized and planned efforts (Kılıç, 2020b). The tendency of many teachers to define movement activities as "play" is believed to be associated with their graduation from teaching degree programs before the year 2018. This is because, before the year 2018, the course that teacher candidates took during their undergraduate education was named "Physical Education and Game Instruction." In addition, prior to the 2013 update, the national preschool education curriculum also referred to movement activities as 'physical education and game activities' (MoNE, 2006). At this point, it is believed that teachers are not fully familiar with the updated national preschool education program and they make mistakes in the use of terms. Because 43 of the teachers. mentioned that they have not received any education on what movement education is, how it is planned, and how it is implemented during their education life. Additionally, 9 of them indicated that they gained knowledge about this subject either due to their personal interest or through in-service training after graduating from the teaching degree program.

When the teachers were asked about the significance of including movement activities in their daily educational routines, all teachers in the study group expressed that movement activities were important for them. Within this context, the most prominent importance highlighted was that movement activities primarily facilitate teachers' classroom management. In this context, it can be observed that teachers pay attention to the active-passive balance recommended in the national preschool curriculum in their daily activity sequencing (MoNE, 2013). The observance of the active-passive balance, as expressed by many teachers, provides children with time and opportunity to release their accumulated energy during active activities.

This situation aligns with the perspective of classic play theorists like Spencer's "Discharge of Surplus Energy Theory" and Lazarus's "Relaxation Theory of Play."

In Spencer's theory, surplus energy is released through play, while Lazarus suggests that energy is accumulated through play (Sevinç, 2004). In this context, teachers perceive active plays as activities where children are engaged and active. For instance, Teacher 12 states, "*It's important for children to release their energy*."; Teacher 14 mentions, "*After restful activities, there should be active ones. Since children's needs are oriented towards releasing their energy, activities that expend physical energy should be included.*"; Teacher 15 emphasizes, "*Yes, children need to release their energy*."; and Teacher 26 highlights, "*The balance between active and passive activities and allowing children to release their energy are crucial*." These statements indicate that teachers consciously utilize movement activities to manage children's energy levels. As a result of their research, Can and Günadı (2019) stated that teachers predominantly view plays as rule-based and active activities, considering play as an effective element in managing children's energy. Teachers' planning, organizing activities and time prevents a chaotic classroom environment (Kaf, 2018). Proper planning ensures the determination of activity sequences and clarifies how time will be organized throughout the day for both children and teachers (Bulut-Özsezer, 2018).

It is not appropriate for teachers to use ready-made activity plans when planning movement activities because such a planning process suggests that the needs and movement skills of children are not taken into account. Purtaş and Duman (2017) also found in their research that teachers use ready-made plans when planning movement activities. However, when examining the national preschool curriculum (MoNE, 2013), it is evident that all activities should be child-centered and developmentally based. In this context, as mentioned by Kılıç (2020a), ready-made activity plans should not be used when preparing activity plans. Movement activities should also be planned considering children's anatomical, physiological conditions, and motor development, progressing from easy to more complex activities.

When examining the reasons behind teachers' preference for using ready-made plans, it is evident that this preference stems from their lack of confidence in this type of activity. Research shows that teachers tend to implement activities they don't feel competent in or don't like less frequently in their classrooms (Kılıç, Tunçeli, & Ünsal, 2020) or they prefer using ready-made plans for these types of activities (Purtaş & Duman, 2017). This situation may create a disadvantage in terms of supporting the development of children and gaining sports habits. Teachers may choose not to implement activities they don't feel confident in, and children might miss out on movement activity as a result. As Taşkın and Şahin Özdemir (2018) highlighted, regular movement activities have a positive impact on children's health both in childhood and later years. According to the findings of the mentioned research, in the preschool years, improperly planned, developmentally appropriate, and regular physical activities led by teachers could potentially hinder children's overall health.

Considering the areas and durations in which movement activities are implemented, it is evident that these activities are most commonly conducted in the classroom and the schoolyard. In terms of duration, the majority of activities last either less than 20 minutes or between 20 and 30 minutes. While the preschool curriculum emphasizes that movement activities should ideally last around 30 minutes (MoNE, 2013), international standards suggest that this duration is insufficient, and children should engage in at least 60 minutes of planned and regular physical activity (Derscheid, 2010; Kerkez, 2012; Taşkın & Şahin-Özdemir, 2018). The responsible person for determining the implementation place for movement activities is the teacher, and the choice of implementation places can be influenced by the teacher's knowledge and interest in the subject (Copeland et al., 2012; Kılıç, Tunçeli, & Ünsal, 2020). Exactly at this point, when looking at the positive and negative characteristics of the implementation areas that were asked to the teachers, it is seen that the indoor classroom environment is preferred due to its facilitation of classroom control and a perception of greater safety. Despite the positive aspects of schoolyards being more conducive to physiological and developmental factors and being expressed by teachers, the potential risks associated with these areas, the difficulty in maintaining classroom control, and adverse weather conditions contribute to the less frequent preference for outdoor areas. However, the preschool curriculum explicitly states that children should spend time outdoors every day (MoNE, 2013). In this context, as emphasized by Derscheid et al. (2010), the teacher's understanding of the importance of physical activity, in-depth knowledge of the subject, and making informed decisions are crucial.

As a result of this research, it has been determined that not all children in the classroom always participate in the movement activities prepared by teachers. This situation could be related to children perceiving their movement skills as insufficient and having low self-confidence (Gallahue, Ozmun, & Goodway, 2012/2014). Apart from this, as stated in the introduction of the discussion section, the lessons and practices taken within the scope of the teaching undergraduate program are insufficient, and the activity contents prepared by the teacher may not be interesting and enjoyable enough for the child. Considering these possibilities, as suggested by Obeng (2009), it is possible to make movement activity implementations more engaging for children through practices such as inviting subject experts to the classroom, showing videos of activities, or conducting activities outside the classroom. With the use of these methods, it can be expected that children's participation in the activity will increase. Another strategy that teachers could consider at this point is participating families in the process. However, the research results indicate that the majority of teachers do not incorporate family participation into movement activities. In such cases, unless families have a special interest, they may not realize the importance of movement activities or physical activity levels and might not encourage their children in this regard. Research shows that the awareness of families about the topic also affects the physical activity levels of children (Dwyer et al., 2008).

It can be concluded from the conducted research that teachers are not equipped enough in evaluating the planned movement activities and tracking children's motor development. Movement activity is a type of activity in which basic movement skills are actively used and physically active (MoNE, 2013). At the end of such activities, the evaluation should involve teachers observing children's motor skills, thereby requiring practical assessment. Unfortunately, it was indicated that this evaluation was only conducted through asking questions, as stated by the teachers. To objectively interpret the progress in motor development and motor skills, practical assessments should be conducted, and after each assessment, notes for each child should be taken and compared.

5. Conclusions

The research findings indicate that

- There are gaps in teachers' knowledge regarding movement activities, and they do not possess a profound understanding of the importance of this type of activity.
- They tend to use ready-made activity plans instead of considering the grade level and needs when planning movement activities.
- They often perceive themselves as insufficient in planning movement activities.
- They include movement activities in their plans every day, but the duration of the implementation of these activities is much shorter than what is necessary.
- They utilize both indoor and outdoor places while implementing movement activities and try to select suitable physical environments.
- They mostly find the necessary materials for implementing movement activities available in schools.
- Many teachers cannot involve children in movement activities at all times, but they use various methods to engage them.
- Most teachers do not mention family participation in enhancing movement skills and are unable to provide suggestions that support these activities at home.
- They lack the necessary equipment for assessing movement activities and evaluating children's motor development.

Considering all these results, the following suggestions can be made:

- Movement education courses should be compulsory in teacher training degree programs, and both theoretical and practical course hours should be increased.
- The needs of in-service teachers in terms of planning and implementing movement activities should be identified, and in-service training should be provided by subject experts.
- In future research, instead of using interview questions, the movement activity plans prepared by teachers can be examined directly, and the implementation process can be observed.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests and Ethics

The author acted in accordance with ethical rules in this study. In addition, the author did not declare any conflict of interest in this study.

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