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AN INVESTIGATION OF PICTURE STORYBOOKS USED IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH TEACHER EVALUATIONS

(Research article)

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the picture storybooks used in public preschool educational institutions in accordance with teacher evaluations. A descriptive survey model was employed using a quantitative approach. The research group consisted of 126 preschool teachers working in public preschools and kindergartens in the city center of Elazığ. The researchers used the Children's Picture Book Evaluation Scale (RECKO) which they developed as a data collection tool within the scope of a master's thesis. The RECKO scale was developed in five-point Likert type and consists of 54 items and 6 variables regarding the demographic information of the teachers. Expert feedback was sought at every stage during the development of this data collection tool. The scale underwent validity and reliability procedures before its implementation in the research. A Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .82 was computed during these procedures. Data gathered was analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-Tests, and one-way analysis of variance. Results showed significant differences in certain items based on teachers' professional seniority, daily working time, age group trained, and graduation type. In this regard, recommendations have been formulated to enhance both the quantitative and qualitative features of picture storybooks employed in preschool educational institutions and thereby elevate their role in promoting early childhood education.

Keywords: Picture storybook; early childhood literature; preschool period; teacher evaluation

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1. Introduction

One of the earliest children books are illustrated storybooks, designed for children up to age seven. They cover a wide range of subjects and prominently feature illustrations throughout. Illustration holds a pivotal role in such books, which may contain many illustrations with minimal accompanying text, or vice versa, and even use single-word illustrations. Illustrated books can sometimes consist solely of pictures, but it is crucial that they always contain pictures and should never be without them (Oğuzkan, 1979; Asher, 1983; Glazer, 1986; Tür & Turla, 1999). This is due to the belief held by young children that pictures convey the narrative more effectively than written text, and that the reader narrates the story by interpreting the pictures while reading the book to them. A quality picture book ought to portray its storyline objectively through the art of illustration (Anderson, 2010).

Preschool-age children who have not yet learned to read are typically exposed to picture books read to them by parents, family members or teachers (Gönen, 1979). In essence, adults are responsible for producing, promoting, purchasing and presenting books for children, dictating the literary materials recommended to children. With this in mind, it is imperative that adults possess sound knowledge and awareness concerning picture storybooks. Specifically, teachers working in early childhood education facilities ought to acquire the appropriate knowledge and resources regarding the picture storybooks employed within their curricula. These books serve as significant educational tools in providing children with their first literary experiences through written and visual products they encounter from birth. It is, thus, essential to adequately enhance their comprehensibility, logical structure, conventional structure, format, language register, and grammatical correctness while avoiding ornamental, ambiguous, or informal language, biased evaluations, and filler words. Additionally, technical terms should be appropriately explained to ensure that they are understood by the target audience. Objective evaluation of their quality is of paramount importance (Tuğrul & Feyman, 2006). As picture storybooks become a ubiquitous part of the preschool environment, they exert a profound impact on all aspects of children's development (Gönen, 1984). If these books are adequately and appropriately prepared, with attention to their internal and external structure, they can make significant contributions to children's development in terms of language acquisition, cognitive abilities, personality, and social skills (Jalongo, 2010; Sever, 2008; Beyazova, 2007; Aslan, 2007). Additionally, illustrated storybooks can provide enjoyment and happiness to children who are read to (Akın, 1998). On the other hand, it is widely acknowledged that children's literature has the potential to instil positive values and attitudes in children, which is why societies

tailor the books they produce to suit the characteristics of the generation they want to raise (Erdal, 2009). Similarly, it is crucial that the picture books utilized in government-affiliated nursery schools in our nation are created in a manner that aids in the growth of children educated in accordance with the objectives and principles of our national education system. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the objective qualities necessary in children's literature to evaluate their appropriateness for preschool children (Çılgin Sinar, 2007). The language should be clear, concise and free of emotional or figurative language. Technical terms must be explained upon first use, while conventional sections and formatting should be followed. Additionally, grammatical correctness and precision in word choice are of utmost importance. Finally, maintaining a formal register, balanced perspectives and logical structure with causal connections will improve the overall academic writing quality. From this standpoint, the standard of picture storybooks read to children by teachers in independent kindergartens linked to the Ministry of National Education and kindergartens within primary schools has sparked interest, prompting the need for this research.

The objective of this research is to investigate picture storybooks' qualities employed in Elazig city center's official, state-aligned kindergartens by analyzing in four dimensions: content, spelling-grammar, form-cover-binding, and illustration, based on the evaluations of teachers. This research is the initial study conducted in Elazig province concerning this phenomenon. At the conclusion of the research, the features of literature employed in the instruction of preschoolers are examined from the vantage point of educators who deliberately select and peruse them. This enables the gathering of data regarding the benchmarks that teachers consider when assessing picture books, as well as the state of libraries within our nurseries. It is intended that this research will contribute to the literature on early childhood education, benefitting preschool educators and administrators, authors of children's books, publishers, and parents. Regarding the research's purpose, this research sought to answer the following questions;

- What is the level of preschool teachers' approval of the picture storybooks used in their classrooms regarding their features in the dimensions of "Content, Spelling-grammar, Form-cover-binding, Illustration"?
- Is there a significant difference between preschool teachers' evaluations about the features of picture storybooks used in their classrooms and the variable of "gender"?
- Is there a significant difference between preschool teachers' evaluations about the features of picture storybooks used in their classrooms and the variable of "professional seniority"?
- Is there a significant difference between preschool teachers' evaluations about the features of picture storybooks used in their classrooms and the variable of "graduation type"?

- Is there a significant difference between preschool teachers' evaluations about the features of picture storybooks used in their classrooms and the variable of “daily working time”?
- Is there a significant difference between pre-school teachers' evaluations about the features of picture storybooks used in their classrooms and the variable of “taking children's literature course”?
- Is there a significant difference between pre-school teachers' evaluations about the features of picture storybooks used in their classes and the variable of the “age group trained”?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

In this research, descriptive survey, a quantitative method was used. Describing is the initial step in all scientific disciplines, requiring the identification, classification, and documentation of the purpose, research subject, phenomena, and the interconnections among these phenomena (Yıldırım, 2000). The survey model is a research approach based on depicting the existing situation exactly (Karasar, 2013). This methodology is typically employed in studies that aim to describe the characteristics or behaviors of events, objects, assets, institutions, or groups (Kaptan, 1991).

2.2. Participants

The participants were composed of randomly selected 126 preschool teachers in 29 both public kindergartens and primary schools in the Elazığ city center during 2013-2014 school year. Demographic information regarding the teachers, obtained via the Demographic Information Form, is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of teachers in the research group

Variables		n	%
Gender	Male	6	4.8
	Female	120	95.2
Professional seniority	Less than 1 year	11	8.7
	1-3 years	32	25.4
	4-5 years	26	20.6
	6 years and above	57	45.2
Graduation type	Vocational high school	4	3.2
	Associate degree	29	23.0
	Bachelor's degree	86	68.3
	Master's degree	7	5.6
Daily working time	Half time	106	84.1
	Full time	20	15.9
Taking children's literature course	Yes, i did.	107	84.9
	No, i did not.	19	15.1

Age group trained	3-4 age group	16	12.7
	5 age group	47	37.3
	6 age group	63	50
Total		126	100

Table 1 reveals that, within the research group of teachers, a higher proportion of female teachers (95.2%), teachers with six or more years of seniority (45.2%), bachelor's degree graduates (68.3%), Half-time working (84.1%), those who have taken a children's literature course (84.9%), and teachers who teach six-year-old students (50%) were observed.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

A five-point Likert scale, dubbed the Children's Picture Book Evaluation Scale (RECKO), was employed in conjunction with the Demographic Information Form as the data collection tool developed by the researchers for the study.

2.3.1. Children's Picture Book Evaluation Scale (RECKO) and Demographic Information Form

The qualitative and quantitative aspects necessary for picture storybooks used in preschool education were determined through extensive literature review during the development of the measurement tool. These features were combined under four dimensions: Content, Spelling-grammar, Form-cover-binding, and Illustration (Altunya, 2012; Gönen, Katrancı, Uygun, & Uçuş, 2011; Erdal, 2009; Sever, 2007; Yalçın & Aytas, 2003; Alpöge, 2003; Gönen, 1998; Gönen, Uzmen, & Çakmak, 1995). During the preparation of the item pool, a total of 60 items were identified, with 15 items allocated to each dimension. The scale was subsequently reviewed by experts, and 6 items that were deemed unsuitable were removed, resulting in a final item count of 54 for the data collection tool. Throughout the scale development and all other phases of the research, expert opinions were frequently sought and considered. The panel of experts comprised three individuals specializing in preschool education, two in measurement and evaluation, two in Turkish education, and twenty in preschool teacher education. The measurement instrument was employed after ensuring its validity and reliability. Notably, the research exhibited high internal consistency, with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .82. According to the different dimensions assessed, the Cronbach Alpha Coefficients were calculated as follows: for the content dimension .78, for the spelling-grammar dimension .74, for the form-cover-binding dimension .79 and for the illustration dimension .81. It is acceptable to note that according to Özdamar (2013), a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient greater than .60 is considered valid. From this perspective, the Children's Picture Book Evaluation Scale (RECKO) developed as part of the research demonstrates high reliability. The scale is scored as follows: Strongly Disagree (1point), Partially Disagree (2points), Undecided (3points), Partially Agree (4points), and Strongly

Agree (5points). In addition to RECKO, the Demographic Information Form included six variables to collect demographic data from the teachers. These variables include “gender, professional seniority, graduation type, daily working time, taking children's literature course, and age group trained.

2.4. Data Collection

After completing the validity and reliability procedures for the data collection tools, the researchers proceeded with data collection by visiting schools individually. Each preschool teacher in the research group was interviewed and the scale was administered, with an average application time of 20-25 minutes. Prior to administering the scale, school administrators and teachers were informed about the research's purpose and presented with the research application permission document obtained from the Elazig Provincial Directorate of National Education. Subsequently, the scale was applied on a voluntary basis to 150 teachers. However, after the data collection was completed and verified, 24 interview forms were deemed invalid and excluded from the research. The data collected from 126 teachers were validated and analyzed.

2.5. Data Analysis

The research data was analyzed using the SPSS statistical package program to assess the suitability of each sub-problem for parametric tests. The Kolmogorov Smirnov test was applied to evaluate the normality assumption, which is the primary criterion of parametric statistical techniques. Since the variables of the related sub-problems were not significant as a result of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis, it was decided to use parametric techniques. In addition, the homogeneity of variances was first tested by performing Levene's test in the analysis of the data. Levene's test, performed for the comparison of paired groups, showed a normal distribution, so an independent samples t-test is used. One-way analysis of variance, a parametric test, was utilized to compare more than two groups as the Levene's test showed no significance. The items with noteworthy differences were analyzed and presented in the relevant tables while maintaining a significance level of .05. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the means and standard deviations of the items. Since there were no significant differences found from the one-way analysis of variance, an item analysis was conducted on the scale items. The relevant items in the scale were determined using the score ranges outlined in Table 2. as a foundation.

Table 2. Item levels and score ranges

Item Levels	Score Ranges
Completely Disagree	1.00-1.80
Partially Disagree	1.81-2.60

Undecided	2.61-3.40
Partially Agree	3.41-4.20
Completely Agree	4.21-5.00

3. Findings

The findings obtained from the data analysis are presented in the same direction and order with the research questions and some comments are made as follows.

1.1. Findings on the Research Group's Level of Approval with the Scale Items:

The research group teacher's level of approval regarding the features in the picture storybooks are presented in Table 3 separately according to all items of the data collection tool (RECKO).

Table 3. Findings on the research group's level of approval with the scale items

Items (RECKO)	□	SS	Items (RECKO)	□	SS
Item 1: The story events are presented in accordance with their occurrence (realization) order.	4.40	.582	Item 28: The book cover is designed according to the story.	4.12	.726
Item 2: Logical connections are established between the introduction, development and conclusion sections.	4.26	.697	Item 29: The book pages are clean and organized.	4.16	.734
Item 3: The book title is compatible with the story.	4.34	.671	Item 30: The words are written in the appropriate font (14-16, lower case) for the age group of the children.	3.88	.931
Item 4: The story is not distracted from the subject.	4.13	.673	Item 31: Text does not overlap the pictures.	3.91	.938
Item 5: A cause-effect relationship is established.	4.14	.667	Item 32: The cover picture is interesting and has vibrant colors.	4.08	.829
Item 6: The heroes in the story are chosen from the living beings that children like.	3.96	.842	Item 33: The cover picture is compatible with the content.	4.19	.657
Item 7: The content of the book supports the developing values of the society.	3.60	.930	Item 34: The book is produced with high print quality and durable material.	3.44	1.092
Item 8: Issues such as religious and racial superiority and fatalism are not covered.	4.09	.950	Item 35: The binding is made by sewing technique.	3.23	1.248
Item 9: Optimistic feelings such as making children love people, animals, nature and life have been tried to be gained.	4.44	.613	Item 36: The weight of the book is suitable for children to carry comfortably.	4.10	.856
Item 10: The subjects and events covered are not so unrealistic or fanciful as to distract the child from real life.	3.85	.909	Item 37: The book pages are made of cleanable material.	3.18	1.222
Item 11: The content of the book can	4.22	.788	Item 38: Top-bottom spaces are	3.80	.918

contribute to the education given in the classroom.			provided on the pages.		
Item 12: Universal values (goodness, tolerance, helpfulness, love, etc.) are included.	4.38	.630	Item 39: Right-left spaces are provided on the pages.	3.88	.960
Item 13: No biased values or ideas are tried to be instilled in the child.	4.11	.887	Item 40: The colors of the book are not dull.	3.88	.812
Item 14: There are enough spaces between words, sentences and lines.	3.98	.903	Item 41: The inner cover of the book is also colored.	3.95	.847
Item 15: Meaningful and regular sentences are formed.	3.98	.848	Item 42: The dimensions of the book are suitable for reading.	3.74	1.057
Item 16: Punctuation marks are used correctly and appropriately in the text.	4.06	.797	Item 43: The number of pictures is sufficient to understand the story.	3.78	.934
Item (RECKO)	<input type="checkbox"/>	SS	Item (RECKO)	<input type="checkbox"/>	SS
Item 17: Spelling rules are followed.	3.97	.814	Item 44: The pictures contain aesthetic-artistic value.	3.75	.891
Item 18: Words are used appropriately and according to their meanings.	4.00	.774	Item 45: The pictures avoid contrived figures and unnecessary details.	3.76	.908
Item 19: Words suitable for children's vocabulary were used.	3.74	.875	Item 46: The pictures have a high power of interpreting the story.	3.76	.907
Item 20: A plain and non-exaggerated language of narration is used.	3.76	.924	Item 47: The pictures are positioned correctly on the page.	3.89	.818
Item 21: The book is illustrated according to the subject of the story.	3.92	.951	Item 48: The pictures and text complement each other.	3.93	.766
Item 22: Significant events are highlighted in different fonts.	3.23	1.160	Item 49: The pictures are interesting for children.	4.01	.726
Item 23: Words difficult for children to learn or inappropriate for their age are not included.	3.53	.993	Item 50: The pictures are colorful.	4.32	.667
Item 24: The name of book is interesting for children.	3.96	.847	Item 51: Important details are drawn in the pictures.	3.84	.950
Item 25: Word divisions have been done at the end of lines.	3.40	1.104	Item 52: The pictures are drawn in according to the subject matter.	3.95	.856
Item 26: Slang words are not included in the texts.	4.21	.796	Item 53: The cover image is also included in the interior of the book.	3.91	.829
Item 27: The texts do not use inverted sentences.	3,57	1.083	Item 54: What is intended to be told in the story can be easily understood from the pictures.	3,92	.831

On overall analysis of Table 3, it can be observed that teachers who participated in the research responded with 'completely agree' to 8 items, 'agree' to 31 items, and 'undecided' to 15 items. Upon calculation of the teachers' general approval levels ($f=8+31=39$), a high rate of 72% ($39/54$) emerges. The findings suggest that the picture storybooks utilized in the classroom by the teachers in the research group are quite good (sufficient) in terms of Content, Spelling-grammar, Form-cover-binding and Illustration. When Table 3 is analyzed according to each dimension, the subsequent findings and comments can be made;

- Upon analysis of Content Dimension, it can be seen that the teachers evaluated items 1., 2., 3., 9., 11., and 12. as “completely agree”, and items 4., 5., 6., 7., 8., 10., and 13. as “agree”. These findings mean that the features of the picture storybooks used in preschool educational institutions are considered at a very good (sufficient) level in terms of content. From this perspective, it can be said that the subjects covered in the picture storybooks used by the teachers in the classroom are suitable for preschool education and children's development, as well as being selected among useful subjects and well-constructed.
- Upon analysis of Spelling-Grammar Dimension, it can be seen that the teachers evaluated the "26. Item" at the level of "completely agree" and the 14., 15., 16., 17., 18., 19., 20., 21., 21., 23., 24., and 27. items at the level of "agree". These findings mean that the features of the picture storybooks used in preschool educational institutions are considered to be at a very good (sufficient) level in terms of spelling-grammar. From this perspective, it can be said that picture storybooks used by teachers in the classroom are produced in accordance with Turkish spelling and grammar rules, incorporating words and sentences that are easy for teachers to read and for children to understand.
- Upon analysis of Form-Cover-Binding Dimension, it can be seen that the teachers evaluated items 28., 29., 30., 31., 32., 33., 34., 36., 38., 39., 40., 41. and 42. at the level of "agree", while they evaluated items 35., and 37. at the level of "undecided". These findings mean that the features of picture storybooks used in preschool educational institutions are considered to be at a very good (sufficient) level in terms of form-cover-binding. From this perspective, it can be said that picture storybooks used by teachers in the classroom are suitable for children's development, to be useful and to attract children's attention. However, the teachers' indecision regarding the bindings and the suitability for cleaning in the two items may suggest that they overlooked these details. In other words, the binding technique of these books and whether they are made of cleanable materials cannot be easily understood while reading.
- Upon analysis of Illustration Dimension, it is seen that the teachers evaluated the "50. Item" at the level of “completely agree”, and the 43., 44., 45., 46., 47., 48., 49., 51., 52., 53., and 54. items at the level of “agree”. These findings mean that the features of the picture storybooks used in preschool education institutions are considered to be at a very good (sufficient) level in terms of illustration. From this point of view, it can be said that the picture storybooks used by teachers in the classrooms are illustrated in accordance with the children's developmental levels, and the stories in the texts are prepared in a way that children can easily understand by looking at them and in accordance with aesthetic values.

1.2. Findings Regarding the Gender Variable of the Research Group Teachers:

This section analyses whether there is a significant difference between preschool teachers' evaluations of the features of the picture storybooks they use in the classroom and the variable of gender. The results of the t-Test applied for this purpose are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. t-Test results for gender variable

Dimension	Gender	n	\bar{x}	ss	Levene	p	t	p
Content	Female	120	4.15	.493	4.984	.057	-.716	.475
	Male	6	4.01	.225				
Spelling-Grammar	Female	120	3.81	.628	1.881	.173	.131	.896
	Male	6	3.84	.381				
Form-Cover-Binding	Female	120	3.83	.630	1.291	.258	.323	.747
	Male	6	3.92	.462				
Illustration	Female	120	3.90	.631	.529	.469	.168	.867

Upon analysis of Table 4, there is no significant differences in the content ($t = -.716, p > 0.05$), spelling-grammar ($t = .131, p > .05$), form-cover-binding ($t = .323, p > .05$) and illustration ($t = .168, p > .05$) dimensions of picture storybooks according to gender. The higher number of female teachers in the preschools where the research was conducted may account for this finding.

1.3. Findings Regarding the Professional Seniority Variable of the Research Group Teachers:

This section analyses whether there is a significant difference between preschool teachers' evaluations of the features of the picture storybooks they use in the classroom and the variable of professional seniority. The results of one-way analysis of variance applied for this purpose are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. One-way analysis of variance results for professional seniority variable

Dimension	Item	Professional Seniority (in years)								Total	Homogeneity	Variance	Difference							
		less than 1 year (A)		1-3 years (B)		4-5 years (C)		6 years and over (D)						X	Levene	p	F	X ²	p	LSD
		\bar{x}	ss	\bar{x}	ss	\bar{x}	ss	\bar{x}	ss											
Content	Item 12.	4.81	.404	4.31	.535	4.19	.749	4.42	.652	4.38	.630	2.146	.098	2.863	9.002	.040*	A>B,C,D			
Spelling-Grammar	Item 24.	4.63	.504	3.75	.842	4.07	.744	3.91	.892	3.96	.847	.472	.702	3.392	10.268	.020*	A>B,C,D			
	Item 36.	3.54	1.128	4.09	.777	4.42	.577	4.07	.903	4.10	.856	1.800	.151	2.923	8.586	.037*	C>A,B,D			

Upon analysis of Table 5, the following findings and comments have been made;

- In 12. Item of the content dimension (Universal values -goodness, tolerance, helpfulness, love, etc.- were included in the book. / $\chi^2_{(4)} = 9,002, p < 0,005, p = 0,040$), a significant difference was found in favour of teachers who have worked less than 1 year.
- In 24. Item of the spelling-grammar dimension, (the name of book is interesting for children. / $\chi^2_{(24)} = 10,268, p < 0,005, p = 0,0016$), a significant difference was found in favor of teachers who have been working for less than 1 year. Finally, in 36. Item (the weight of the book is suitable for children to carry comfortably. / $\chi^2_{(36)} = 8,586, p < 0,005, p = 0,037$), a significant difference was found in favour of teachers who had been working for 4-5 years.

These findings indicate that newly qualified teachers perceive picture storybooks to contain universal values with interesting book names for children, but that they do not consider the books to be suitable for carrying. Therefore, it can be inferred that novice teachers approach reading activities involving children's books with greater scrutiny and attention to detail.

1.4. Findings Regarding the Graduation Type Variable of the Research Group Teachers:

This section analyses whether there is a significant difference between preschool teachers' evaluations of the features of the picture storybooks they use in the classroom and the variable of graduation type. The results of one-way analysis of variance applied for this purpose are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. One-way analysis of variance results for graduation type variable

Dimension	Items	Graduation Type	N	\bar{X}	ss	Levene	p	F	p	LSD
Content	Item 7.	Vocational High School	4	4.00	.816	1.749	.161	2.662	.041*	A>B,C,D
		Associate degree	29	3.86	.833					
		Bachelor's degree	86	3.55	.953					
		Master's Degree	7	2.85	.690					
	Item 12.	Vocational High School	4	4.25	.957	2.897	.058	2.641	.042*	B>A,C,D
		Associate degree	29	4.65	.483					
		Bachelor's degree	86	4.31	.655					
		Master's Degree	7	4.14	.377					
Spelling-Grammar	Item 15.	Vocational High School	4	4.75	.500	1.577	.198	3.398	.020*	A>B,C,D
		Associate degree	29	4.24	.689					
		Bachelor's degree	86	3.90	.848					
		Master's Degree	7	3.42	1.133					
	Item 17.	Vocational High School	4	5.00	.000	1.310	.274	3.050	.031*	A>B,C,D
		Associate degree	29	4.13	.789					
		Bachelor's degree	86	3.88	.803					
		Master's Degree	7	3.85	.899					
Illustration	Item 46.	Vocational High School	4	4.25	1.500	2.455	.066	2.584	.046*	A>B,C,D
		Associate degree	29	4.03	.778					
		Bachelor's degree	86	3.69	.882					

	Master's Degree	7	3.14	1.064					
	Vocational High School	4	3.75	1.258					
Item 51.	Associate degree	29	4.31	.806	.374	.772	3.462	.018*	B>A,C,D
	Bachelor's degree	86	3.72	.941					
	Master's Degree	7	3.42	.975					

*p < .05

Upon analysis of Table 6, the subsequent findings and comments can be made;

- In 7. Item of the content dimension (the content of the book supports the developing values of the society./ $\chi^2_{(3)} = 9,192, p < 0,005, p = 0,041$), a significant difference was found in favour of teachers with a vocational high school degree. Likewise, 12. Item (universal values - goodness, tolerance, helpfulness, love, etc.- are included./ $\chi^2_{(3)} = 8,475, p < 0,005, p = 0,042$), shows a significant difference in favor of those with an associate degree.
- Significant differences were found in favor of vocational high school graduates in the 15. Item of the spelling-grammar dimension (meaningful and regular sentences are formed./ $\chi^2_{(3)} = 9,301, p < 0,005, p = 0,020$), as well as in the 17. Item (Spelling rules are followed./ $\chi^2_{(3)} = 11,416, p < 0,005, p = 0,031$).
- There is a significant difference in favor of vocational high school graduates in 46. Item (The pictures have a high power of interpreting the story./ $\chi^2_{(3)} = 8,688, p < 0,005, p = 0,046$). However, in the 51. Item (important details are drawn in the pictures./ $\chi^2_{(3)} = 10,726, p < 0,005, p = 0,018$), there is a significant difference in favour of the graduates of associate degree graduates.

The results indicate that teachers who completed their education at vocational high school tend to evaluate picture storybooks based on their adherence to social values and the rules of the Turkish language more frequently than other teachers. On the other hand, teachers with an associate degree made more judgments that the picture books covered universal values. Vocational high school and associate degree graduates both gave predominantly positive evaluations of the storybook illustrations. According to the findings, teachers with the Bachelor's and Master's degrees have more knowledge about illustrated storybooks and are more critical and selective than teachers with the Vocational High School and Associate's degrees.

1.5. Findings Regarding the Daily Working Time Variable of the Research Group Teachers:

This section analyses whether there is a significant difference between preschool teachers' evaluations of the features of the picture storybooks they use in the classroom and the variable of daily working time. The results of t-Test applied for this purpose are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. t-Test results for the daily working time variable

Dimension	Items	Daily working time	N	\bar{X}	ss	Levene	p	t	p
Content	Item 12.	Half-time	106	4.32	.640	2.236	.137	-	.013*
		Full-time	20	4.70	.470			2.519	
Spelling-grammar	Item 25.	Half-time	106	3.28	1.084	1999	.160	-	.004*
		Full-time	20	4.05	.998			2.935	
	Item 27.	Half-time	106	3.47	1.079	2.958	.088	-	.010*
		Full-time	20	4.15	.933			2.628	
Form-cover-binding	Item 34.	Half-time	106	3.35	1.097	2.220	.139	-	.041*
		Full-time	20	3.90	.967			2.060	
	Item 35.	Half-time	106	3.11	1.197	.571	.451	-	.009*
		Full-time	20	3.90	1.333			2.646	
	Item 42.	Half-time	106	3.64	1.070	2.477	.118	-	.010*
		Full-time	20	4.30	.801			2.612	

*p< .05

Upon analysis of Table 7, the subsequent findings and comments can be made;

- In 12. Item of the content dimension (Universal values -goodness, tolerance, helpfulness, love, etc.- are included./ $t=-2.519$, $p< .05$) a significant difference was found in favor of full-time teachers.
- It is apparent that there is a significant difference in favour of full-time teachers in 25. Item of the spelling-grammar dimension (Word divisions have been done at the end of lines./ $t=-2.935$, $p< .05$). Similarly, item 27 showed a significant difference in favour of full-time teachers.
- In the dimension of form-cover-binding, full-time teachers exhibited a significant difference in 34. Item (the book is produced with high print quality and durable material./ $t=-2.060$, $p< .05$), item 36 (the weight of the book is suitable for children to carry comfortably./ $t=-2.646$, $p< .05$), and item 42 (the dimensions of the book are suitable for reading. / $t=-2.612$, $p< .05$).

The findings indicate that full-time teachers were more likely than part-time teachers to believe that picture storybooks contain universal values, are prepared according to Turkish language rules, and are suitable for use by children. Consequently, full-time teachers may have benefited more from storybooks by spending more time with children and having more opportunities to observe during reading activities.

1.6. Findings Regarding the Taking Children's Literature Course Variable of the Research Group Teachers:

This section analyses whether there is a significant difference between preschool teachers' evaluations of the features of the picture storybooks they use in the classroom and the variable of taking children's literature course. The results of t-Test applied for this purpose are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. t-Test results for the taking children's literature course variable

Dimension	taking children's literature course	N	X	ss	Levene	p	t	p
Content	Yes, I did.	107	4.16	.46	5.509	.021	.685	.494
	No, I did not.	19	4.08	.60				
Spelling-grammar	Yes, I did.	107	3.82	.60	1.400	.239	.639	.524
	No, I did not.	19	3.72	.70				
Form-cover-binding	Yes, I did.	107	3.84	.63	.478	.491	.343	.732
	No, I did not.	19	3.79	.54				
Illustration	Yes, I did.	107	3.90	.61	.279	.598	.027	.979
	No, I did not.	19	3.90	.65				

Upon analysis of Table 8, it becomes apparent that there is no significant difference between teachers' evaluations of the features of picture storybooks based on whether they have completed children's literature courses previously. This lack of difference is observed across all dimensions measured (Content $t = .685$, $p > .05$; Spelling-grammar $t = .639$, $p > .05$; Form-cover-binding $t = .343$, $p > .05$; Illustration $t = .027$, $p > .05$). This finding can be interpreted as meaning that the knowledge acquired in children's literature courses given in child development or preschool education programs is forgotten over time, or that the theoretical and practical hours of the courses are insufficient.

Findings Regarding the Age Group Trained Variable of the Research Group Teachers:

This section analyses whether there is a significant difference between preschool teachers' evaluations of the features of the picture storybooks they use in the classroom and the variable of age group trained. The results of one-way analysis of variance applied for this purpose are presented in Table 9.

Table 9 One-way analysis of variance results for the variable of age group trained

Dimension	Item	Age group trained	N	\bar{x}	ss	Levene	p	F	p	LSD
Content	Item 2.	3-4 (A)	16	4.43	.512	.162	.850	5.078	.008*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	4.02	.820					
		6 (C)	63	4.41	.585					
	Item 19.	3-4 (A)	16	4.12	.619	2.228	.112	3.598	.030*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	3.51	.905					
		6 (C)	63	3.82	.871					
	Item 20.	3-4 (A)	16	4.18	.655	1.917	.151	2.916	.048*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	3.57	.902					
		6 (C)	63	3.79	.969					
	Item 21.	3-4 (A)	16	4.35	.704	2.199	.116	4.042	.020*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	3.63	1.071					
		6 (C)	63	4.03	.860					
	Item 30.	3-4 (A)	16	3.93	.928	.151	.860	2.916	.048*	C>A,B
		5 (B)	47	3.63	.942					
		6 (C)	63	4.06	.895					
Spelling-grammar	Item 31.	3-4 (A)	16	4.31	.704	.483	.618	3.577	.031*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	3.65	.915					
		6 (C)	63	4.00	.967					
	Item 32.	3-4 (A)	16	4.50	.632	.423	.656	2.918	.048*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	3.91	.802					
		6 (C)	63	4.11	.863					
	Item 33.	3-4 (A)	16	4.56	.512	1.123	.329	3.270	.041*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	4.08	.653					
		6 (C)	63	4.19	.662					
	Item 35.	3-4 (A)	16	4.00	.96	2.392	.096	5.840	.004*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	2.85	1.196					
		6 (C)	63	3.33	1.191					
	Item 36.	3-4 (A)	16	4.56	.512	.168	.845	2.788	.049*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	4.00	.884					
		6 (C)	63	4.06	.877					
	Item 39.	3-4 (A)	16	4.31	.704	1.659	.195	3.419	.036*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	3.63	1.009					
		6 (C)	63	3.95	.940					
Illustration	Item 43.	3-4 (A)	16	4.12	.885	.718	.490	2.666	.047*	A>B,C
		5 (B)	47	3.55	.951					
		6 (C)	63	3.87	.906					

Upon analysis of Table 9, the subsequent findings and comments can be made;

- In the 2. Item of the content dimension (logical connections are established between the introduction, development and conclusion sections./ $\chi^2_{(2)} = 7,325, p < 0,005, p = 0,008$), a significant difference was found in favor of teachers who teach the age group 3-4.

- Furthermore, in Item 19 ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 6,957, p < 0,005, p = 0,020$), Item 20 ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 5,408, p < 0,005, p = 0,048$), Item 21 ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 6,662, p < 0,005, p = 0,020$), Item 31 ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 7,505, p < 0,005, p = 0,031$), Item 32 ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 7,354, p < 0,005, p = 0,048$), Item 33 ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 7,795, p < 0,005, p = 0,041$), Item 35 ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 10,550, p < 0,005, p = 0,004$), Item 36 ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 5,595, p < 0,005, p = 0,049$), Item 39 ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 6,639, p < 0,005, p = 0,036$) in the spelling-grammar dimension, there was also significant differences in favor of the teachers who teach the 3-4 age group. In Item 30 ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 5,843, p < 0,005, p = 0,048$) there appears to be a notable discrepancy in favor of teachers training 6-year-olds.
- Additionally, in 43. Item 43 in the dimension of illustration (the number of pictures is sufficient to understand the story./ $\chi^2_{(2)} = 5,439, p < 0,005, p = 0,047$), there was found a significant difference in favor of teachers training 3-4-year-olds.

The results indicate that storybooks evaluated by the teachers who teach younger age groups (3-4 years) are more positive in terms of spelling and grammar rules. This is potentially due to the shorter length of the storybooks read to younger children that contain fewer sentences; furthermore, narrative content holds greater significance than spelling. Teachers who instruct 3-4-year-old children may prioritize the coherence of meaning between the texts in books. Furthermore, it was noted that pictures in books read to this age group were not dull at all, i.e. they had brighter and more varied colors. Based on these findings, it is possible to say that the features of picture storybooks prepared for different preschool age groups and the details that teachers pay attention to when using them may differ.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this research is to investigate the features of picture storybooks used in public preschool education institutions according to teachers' evaluations. To achieve this goal, a group of 126 preschool teachers working in 29 different schools in the city center of Elazığ formed the research sample. In the course of the data collection process, the researchers employed the Children's Picture Book Evaluation Scale (RECKO) alongside a Demographic Information Form during interviews with the teachers. The RECKO scale comprises four different dimensions (content, spelling-grammar, form-cover-binding, illustration) and 54 items and was developed with the help of experts to ensure its validity and reliability. With a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .82, the scale shows a high degree of validity. The analysis of the data yielded that the teachers in the research group viewed the features of the picture storybooks used in their classrooms as quite good (sufficient) in all dimensions (content, spelling-grammar, form-cover-binding, illustration) (Table 3). Similarly, a study by Demircan (2006) involved the analysis of

children's books from TUBITAK (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) and found that the books generally met the criteria.

Upon analysing the data collection tool, it was discovered that the picture storybooks, according to the teachers, fulfil the content dimension to a great extent. Consequently, it can be inferred that these books, which are employed in kindergartens, are beneficial in instructing preschool children as they deal with relevant subjects, highlight universal and social values, support the teacher's educational work in the classroom, and, at the same time, contain content that attracts children's attention. Gönen, Katrancı, Uygun, and Uçuş (2011) purport that children's books covering diverse subjects instill a passion for reading and literature, nurture a sense of curiosity and exploration, and underscore the relevance of translating theoretical knowledge into real-life scenarios. Findings from the study indicate that picture storybooks substantially conform to norms in the domain of spelling and grammar. These books are appropriate for enhancing children's Turkish language abilities as they aid in improving their skills such as correctly understanding what they hear, establishing cause-and-effect relationships, and expressing themselves. In fact, Senemoğlu (2012) emphasizes the significance of language development during the preschool period. Sever (2007) emphasized that language development is a crucial process in a child's overall development. Children's books play a vital role in creating an enriched language environment during the preschool period. The study findings indicate that the picture storybooks were, according to the teachers, quite well prepared in terms of form-cover-binding features. This outcome may allow children to enjoy and utilise books while fostering a positive connection with them. Books that are ideally structured to resist tearing, comprise quality materials, sport a cover that piques children's curiosity, and feature images and text appropriately arranged are highly impactful and essential for preschool-aged children. When examining the dimension of illustration in the study, the teachers offered very favorable evaluations of picture books. As a result, the images found in these books, which are utilized by teachers in their classrooms, are appealing, with vivid colors and captivating content. Furthermore, these images possess a strong ability to assist in the interpretation of the text. This outcome aligns with the findings of Kutlu's (2011) investigation, which assessed the appropriateness of illustrations in children's literature in the context of teachers' views. The majority of participants suggested that these books should feature lifelike, colorful, and upbeat illustrations with soothing yet engaging colors, and the majority of teachers in Kutlu's study group agreed that the pictures in these books should be natural, vivid, bright, and cheerful. Brookshire, Scharff, and Moses (2002) found that children showed greater engagement with books with realistic and vivid pictures, that these pictures engaged them with the book, and that books which were well balanced between picture and text helped comprehension.

Upon analysis of the research findings based on demographic variables, it was determined that there were no significant differences found in variables related to gender

or the attending a children's literature course (Tables 4, 8), whereas significant differences were found in variables related to professional seniority, type of degree, daily working time, and age group trained (Tables 5, 6, 7, 9). It was found that as teachers' professional seniority, graduation type, daily working time and age group of training increased, their approach to picture storybooks became generally more critical and selective. Conversely, teachers who were new to the profession, working half-time or teaching younger children were found to have more positive attitudes towards these books. Although gender was not found to be a significant factor in the evaluation of picture storybooks, it is important to bear in mind that the research group consisted mostly of women. This could potentially have had an impact on the results and suggests the need for a separate study to properly examine the effects of gender. Regarding the status of taking a course in children's literature, the fact that this variable does not make a significant difference can be attributed to the fact that the gains made in the course are not permanent and that the theoretical and practical hours and/or credits in the curriculum are insufficient. It is imperative for teachers to engage in a practical-based approach when taking the children's literature course to establish permanent knowledge of picture storybooks. In light of the findings from the research, the subsequent recommendations were formulated.

- Before purchasing picture storybooks for preschool institutions, school administrators should benefit from the opinions and experiences of teachers, and the recommendations of more senior teachers should be considered.
- Book selection should also account for the varying age groups within preschool educational institutions, and should be based on the primary needs of teachers who teach children in this age group.
- School administrators and teachers should cooperate with provincial directorates of national education and universities' preschool education and child development programs to organize various scientific activities on topics such as children's literature or picture storybooks. This will augment the proficiency and resources of preschool teachers with regard to these books.
- The weekly hours and accreditation of early childhood literature/children's literature courses offered in preschool education or child development programs should be increased.
- School administrators must regularly scrutinize the picture storybooks in kindergartens' bookshelves, removing those with subpar quality, objectionable content or uselessness, and substituting them with high-quality books prepared by successful authors, illustrators and publishers.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix: Children's Picture Book Evaluation Scale (RECKO)

RECKO ITEMS:	Completely Disagree	Partially Disagree	Undecided	Partially Agree	Completely Agree
	5points	4points	3points	2points	1point
CONTENT DIMENSION					
Item 1: The story events are presented in accordance with their occurrence (realization) order.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 2: Logical connections are established between the introduction, development and conclusion sections.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 3: The book title is compatible with the story.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 4: The story is not distracted from the subject.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 5: A cause-effect relationship is established.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 6: The heroes in the story are chosen from the living beings that children like.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 7: The content of the book supports the developing values of the society.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 8: Issues such as religious and racial superiority and fatalism are not covered.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 9: Optimistic feelings such as making children love people, animals, nature and life have been tried to be gained.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 10: The subjects and events covered are not so unrealistic or fanciful as to distract the child from real life.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 11: The content of the book can contribute to the education given in the classroom.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 12: Universal values (goodness, tolerance, helpfulness, love, etc.) are included.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 13: No biased values or ideas are tried to be instilled in the child.	()	()	()	()	()
SPELLING-GRAMMAR DIMENSION					
Item 14: There are enough spaces between words, sentences and lines.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 15: Meaningful and regular sentences are formed.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 16: Punctuation marks are used correctly and appropriately in the text.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 17: Spelling rules are followed.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 18: Words are used appropriately and according to their meanings.	()	()	()	()	()

Item 19: Words suitable for children's vocabulary were used.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 20: A plain and non-exaggerated language of narration is used.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 21: The book is illustrated according to the subject of the story.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 22: Significant events are highlighted in different fonts.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 23: Words difficult for children to learn or inappropriate for their age are not included.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 24: The name of book is interesting for children.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 25: Word divisions have been done at the end of lines.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 26: Slang words are not included in the texts.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 27: The texts do not use inverted sentences.	()	()	()	()	()
FORM-COVER-BINDING DIMENSION					
Item 28: The book cover is designed according to the story.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 29: The book pages are clean and organized.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 30: The words are written in the appropriate font (14-16, lower case) for the age group of the children.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 31: Text does not overlap the pictures.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 32: The cover picture is interesting and has vibrant colors.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 33: The cover picture is compatible with the content.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 34: The book is produced with high print quality and durable material.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 35: The binding is made by sewing technique.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 36: The weight of the book is suitable for children to carry comfortably.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 37: The book pages are made of cleanable material.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 38: Top-bottom spaces are provided on the pages.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 39: Right-left spaces are provided on the pages.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 40: The colors of the book are not dull.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 41: The inner cover of the book is also colored.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 42: The dimensions of the book are suitable for reading.	()	()	()	()	()
ILLUSTRATION DIMENSION					
Item 43: The number of pictures is sufficient to understand the story.	()	()	()	()	()

Item 44: The pictures contain aesthetic-artistic value.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 45: The pictures avoid contrived figures and unnecessary details.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 46: The pictures have a high power of interpreting the story.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 47: The pictures are positioned correctly on the page.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 48: The pictures and text complement each other.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 49: The pictures are interesting for children.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 50: The pictures are colorful.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 51: Important details are drawn in the pictures.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 52: The pictures are drawn in according to the subject matter.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 53: The cover image is also included in the interior of the book.	()	()	()	()	()
Item 54: What is intended to be told in the story can be easily understood from the pictures.	()	()	()	()	()

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