



SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: THE PROBLEM OF "CAREGIVER" ATTRIBUTION TO TEACHERS

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Abstract

Although the discussions on the care responsibilities of preschool teachers have been going on for years, it has flared up during the pandemic process. For that reason, the aim of the current study is set to examine in depth the views of preschool teachers and parents of preschool students on the caregiver role of preschool education. This research was designed as phenomenological research, one of the qualitative approaches. The purposeful sampling was used to determine the participants. In the research semi-structured interview form is used for gathering data and the data analyzed by content analysis. As a result, while parents emphasized the need for care for their children, preschool teachers also stated that they were aware of the group they worked with and served for a group in need of care. The point that creates problems about the care situation is that teachers are viewed as caregivers and approached to their work in this way. In the research, it was inferred by the statements of preschool teachers that this is not related to the concept of "caregiver", and that the "caregiver" job is a very difficult, self-sacrificing, and demanding profession, but it is not their only job.

Keywords: Preschool education, preschool teachers, childcare, teacher as a caregiver.

INTRODUCTION

By the spread of Covid-19 pandemic felt by all the assets all over the world has led to dramatic changes in almost all aspects of life. People's daily lives, habits, their common movements and even how they breathe have changed. One of the most striking examples of these changes was seen on attending school, along with going work as a part of daily routine. In some sectors, people started to work at home, or started rotational working hours or days, while some people in other sectors (logistic and security for example) continued to work as usual. On the side of education, many countries all over the world closed the schools and started online education. However, each country has followed different approaches; some fully closed the schools for a long time period (e.g., Austria, Chile, Turkey), some partially closed the schools (e.g., Czech Republic, Finland, Switzerland), some quickly respond the pandemics and students have turned back to schools in a relatively short time (e.g., Japan, New Zealand, Norway, France) (Zhongming, Linong, Xiaona, Wangqiang, & Wei, 2021).

Turkey, on the other hand, used hybrid approach. At the beginning, all the schools closed, however, on later phases schools were reopened. But the fast spread rate of the virus, let the ministry close the schools back with an exception, preschools. The minister of national education, while announcing the fully closing the schools second time on other grades and keeping the preschools open, explained that little children whose parents were to work need "care". This speech has got too much reaction from



teachers, especially from the preschool teachers, and teacher unions. They protested that perspective on news channels, and social media via various platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Ekşisözlük, etc.) by stating that the profession was interpreted or lowered to childcare. Also, even campaigns have been organized on the subject (<https://www.change.org>). As a result, preschools were closed as well.

However, his discourse has revealed a suppressed debate on a hidden function of education, at least perceived by others, “childcare” of working parents which has caused a “heartbreak” on preschool teachers. Hidden functions are the functions of education that are not formally stated. The defined functions of education, in other words expressed as explicit functions are individual functions, social functions, political functions and economic functions (Biesta, 2009; Doğan, 2014; Haimi Adnan & Smith, 2001; Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007; Hoşgörür & Taştan, 2007; Kızılloluk, 2013). The undefined, in other words, hidden functions of education are choosing partner, expanding one's circle and achieving status, the function of babysitting, the function of preventing unemployment, the function of preventing the economic exploitation of the child, and the purifier function (Doğan, 2014; Hoşgörür & Taştan, 2007; Kızılloluk, 2013). In the realization of these functions, each education level is particularly important.

Preschool teachers are expected to fulfill a wide range of duties, from basic care needs one of the hidden functions of education such as hygiene, well-being, meeting the needs and safety of students, to educational needs for socialization, development, and learning (Einarsdóttir, 2003). However, the process and the time the child spends at school can be perceived by some adults and children as care rather than education because of by the ignorance of socialization, development and learning processes. The statements of the participating children in the study of Einarsdóttir (2014), such as "Just read letters and look after us", and the inclusion of caregiver as one of the teacher roles revealed at the end of the study, also provide important data regarding the meaning attributed to preschool teachers.

Although as the first level of all educational life, preschool education whose importance has been scientifically proven in terms of the expansion of children's worldview and world perception (Narimbaeva, 2020). Considering that the 0-6 age group is a critical period for children's cognitive, social-emotional, physical and language development, it is clear to what extent it is necessary to continue this process formally in preschool education institutions for children to spend the process with more positive experiences (Allen, Kelly, & National Research Council, 2015). Besides the children's developmental needs, preschool education supports mothers' professional development (Berlinski & Baliani, 2007) That is, another factor that makes the necessity of preschool education more striking is the increase in female employment (Cassirer & Addati, 2007; Eren, Teloğlu, & İlhan, 2017).

According to The World Bank's 2015 -Supply and Demand State of Childcare Services in Turkey Report labor engagement among women is low, and mothers often leave the workforce never to return. Forty-five per cent of currently unemployed mothers in the household survey sample stated that they had worked before but then decided to leave the workforce. In addition, most of these women (about 71%) specifically cited “childcare responsibilities” as their reason for leaving the workforce (TWB, 2015). Two years later the Education Reform Initiative [in Turkish: Eğitim Reformu Girişimi-ERG] published a report that was parallel to the report of The World Bank. In the Early Childhood Care and Participation in Preschool Education in Turkey Report of ERG it was stated that childcare in Turkey is perceived as a women's issue to a large extent (ERG, 2017).

That is, Turkey has a social structure that burden most of the responsibility of childcaring on mothers (Hüseyinli & Hüseyinli, 2016), so preschool institutions have particular importance for continuity of women in work life (Eroğlu & Şimşek, 2021; Eryılmaz, 2021). For working women, sending their preschool aged children to a kindergarten is accepted as a form of paid care (Kakıcı, Emeç, & Üçdoğruk, 2007). In this sense, the contribution of preschool education to the "childcare function", which is one of the undefined functions of education, becomes concrete, like other levels. Childcare



function includes the treat to the child like a parent, take him/her under the supervision of all stakeholders in the school and gives a controlled environment free from threats (Doğan, 2014; Hoşgörür & Taştan, 2007; Scottish Executive, 2007; Tezcan, 2017). As Oktay (1999) emphasized this function is based on social goals group -one of the three goal groups (social, educational, and developmental) defined by Mialaret (1977). It constitutes the equivalent of the item "taking care of the children of working women" (MEB, 2011).

While the “caregiver” perception has been a serious problem for preschool teachers from past to present, discussions have come to the fore again and more strongly during the Covid-19 pandemic by the disclosure of the minister of education in Turkey. In fact, in ideal conditions, parents and preschool teachers are on the same side and strive for similar purposes. Both want children in the 0-6 age group to develop in the best way in every aspect and strive to support it. For this reason, it is important in terms of mutual understanding and cooperation to put forward different perspectives on the subject with their reasons. So, in this study it is aimed to examine in depth the views of parents of preschool students on the caregiver role of preschool education by analyzing their views on reason for starting preschool education institution, the criteria considered when choosing a preschool institution, preschool education during the pandemic process, sending to preschool institution according to employment status, evaluation of the education received in the preschool education institution, expectations from preschool institutions. In this context, the problem of this study, which was carried out to determine the perception of parents and preschool teachers on the "childcare" function of preschool education, is stated as; "What are the views of preschool teachers and parents about the “childcare role” of preschool education?"

METHOD

Research Design

The aim of the study is to examine in depth the views of preschool teachers and parents of preschool students on the caregiver role of preschool education through their views on reason for starting preschool education institution, the criteria considered when choosing a preschool institution, preschool education during the pandemic process, sending to preschool institution according to employment status, evaluation of the education received in the preschool education institution, expectations from preschool institutions. for that reason, phenomenological research design was preferred since phenomenological investigations are the studies conducted to investigate perceptions or reactions of participants about a particular phenomenon (Fraenkle & Wallen, 2009). In phenomenological research, participants describe the phenomenon in line with their own experiences, and researchers try to reach the essence of the participants’ experiences and define them in this way (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Data was gathered by interviews in which open-ended questions were asked to examine the participants' perceptions of preschool teaching.

Participants

The preschool teachers and parents of preschool students are the participants of this study. Participants were determined through maximum variation sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods to diversify the views about the topic. In purposeful sampling, the participants are deliberately selected due to their qualities and experiences (Tongco, 2007) and the main purpose of maximum variation sampling is to look at a subject from a wide perspective, with all available angles and to reach a deeper and greater understanding (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The researcher determines some criteria to differentiate the participants and selects the participants according to those criteria (Creswell, 2013). To ensure the confidentiality of the participants and protect their privacy, coding and numbering were done based on the identities of the parents or teachers.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics (Parents).

Interviewed Parent	Working Status	The Status of Sending to School in the Pandemic
Mother 1 (M1)	Working	Continued to send
Mother 2 (M2)	Working	Not sent
Mother 3 (M3)	Housewife	Continued to send
Mother 4 (M4)	Housewife	Not sent
Father 1 (F1)	Working mother	Continued to send
Father 2 (F2)	Working mother	Not sent
Father 3 (F3)	Housewife	Continued to send
Father 4 (F4)	Housewife	Not sent

As seen at Table 1, for parents of 0-6 age children, working or not working mother and sending or not sending during pandemic were chosen as criteria. For the interviews with mothers, mothers were chosen as working mother (who continues sending her child to school in the pandemic), working mother (not sending her child to school in the pandemic - receiving assistance), unemployed mother (who continues sending her child to school in the pandemic), unemployed mother (not sending her child to school in the pandemic). For the interviews with fathers, fathers were chosen as working wife (who continues sending her child to school in the pandemic), working wife (not sending her child to school in the pandemic - receiving assistance), unemployed wife (who continues sending her child to school in the pandemic), unemployed wife (not sending her child to school in the pandemic).

In this research the criteria for teachers were the type of the school they serve. The preschool teachers were chosen from both public and private schools. Details about teachers can be seen at Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics (Preschool Teachers).

Teacher	Institution	Experience (year)	Working Status
Teacher 1 (T1)	Public school and private sector	36	Retired
Teacher 2 (T2)	Private Sector (College)	3	Working
Teacher 3 (T3)	Independent	2	Working
Teacher 4 (T4)	Public school	5	Working
Teacher 5 (T5)	Private Sector (College)	10	Working
Teacher 6 (T6)	Public school	12	Working

Data Collection Tool and Process

Semi-structured interview form is used for gathering data in this study. The form is constructed by the researchers in line with previous literature. It has two parts: one for the descriptive data of the participants and the other part for the interview questions. During the construction process, five field experts (1 preschool teacher, 3 academics from preschool department and 1 academic from psychology department in faculty of education) were consulted and the general structure of the form was given accordingly their feedback. A pilot interview was held with 1 preschool teacher and 2 parents. After the transcription and analysis of the pilot interviews, the interview questions were reviewed and refined accordingly. After receiving ethics committee approval and permission, interviews were conducted with the participants. Before the interviews they were all informed about the purpose of study and their rights as a participant. Later, they were asked to sign informed consent forms to guarantee the volunteer participation in which protection of participants' personal data and rights is stated. In order to prevent loss of data and time, the interviews were recorded with a tape recorder with the permission of the participants, and then converted into a written text by the researchers.

Data Analysis

The data of this research was analyzed by content analysis. Content analysis is a powerful method that accepts the data as representations of expressions, images and texts, which are formed to be read, seen, or interpreted to understand what they really mean (Krippendorp, 2004). Content analysis can be used for any kind of written material, such as media products or interview transcriptions, by reducing and interrogating texts into summary form with categories and emergent themes (Cohen,



Manion, & Morrison, 2018). In this research the interviews were recorded for not to lose both time and information, with the consent of the participants. Later these records were transcribed by researchers. And then texts were examined for coding by both researchers separately. Then the codes, themes and the categories were formed.

Validity and Reliability

As an outcome goal of research (Creswell, 2013), validity is the level of describing the phenomenon, which is tried to be described, accurately (Bush, 2007). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985 as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018) there are four criteria for validity in qualitative research. These are credibility (the truth value), transferability (generalizability), dependability (consistency) and confirmability (neutrality). In this research to realize credibility some methods were followed such as prolonged interaction with participants, depth-focused data collection, triangulation, and participant confirmation. Researchers tried to extend the interview process as much as possible to increase the interactions with participants to make participants feel more comfortable and share more and detailed information. The interview questions were prepared with the aim of getting in-depth information about the topic and depending on the answers of participants extra questions were asked during the interview. In order to ensure the variation both private and public-school teachers took place in the investigation. Also, parents have chosen according to work status and decisions about sending their children to school. Moreover, after the interviews, interview transcripts shared with the participants to provide conformation. For ensuring transferability, detailed description and purposeful sampling methods were used. The researchers tried to describe all the process in detail. Additionally, participants were chosen – in the line with to the aim of the research on purpose.

Dependability (consistency) is the qualitative form for reliability as quantitative concept (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). In general, reliability is “the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions” (Bell, 2014). For qualitative research, reliability refers to the parallelism and stability of multiple coders responses to the data sets (Creswell, 2013). Codes and themes were created separately by two researchers, ratio of similitude was calculated with the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994), and it has been determined that consensus was at the level of 96%. Also, direct quotations were included, and the consistency level was tried to be increased.

FINDINGS

The findings regarding the data obtained at the end of the interviews are presented below in two parts (interviews with parents – interviews with preschool teachers).

Findings on interviews with parents

The data gathered from the parents categorized as reasons for preschool education institution, the criteria considered when choosing a preschool institution, preschool education during the pandemic process, sending to preschool institution according to employment status, evaluation of the education received in the preschool education institution, expectations from preschool institutions.

The findings regarding the process of starting preschool education

The codes, which are formed according to the answers given by the parents to the questions asked to determine the factors that cause their children to start the preschool institution and to send them to the preschool institution, constitute the theme of reasons as seen at Table 3.

Table 3. Reasons for preschool education institution.

Theme	Code	f
Reasons	Socialization of the child	8
	Obligation – need for care	7
	The need for physical and cognitive development	6
	Getting the child used to school- learning the rules	3

**Table 3** (Continued). Reasons for preschool education institution.

Theme	Code	f
Reasons	Incompetence of parents	3
	Developmental delay	2
	Preparing for primary school	2
	The need for quality time	1
	Sibling's going to school	1
	Total	33

When the Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the children were sent to preschool institutions due to socialization, obligation - need for care, physical and cognitive development needs, getting used to school - learning the rules, incompetence of parents, developmental delay, preparation for primary school, the need to spend quality time and his sibling going to school. Some parent statements about the interview on this theme are as follows;

“...His speech was not at the level we expected, his general development was parallel to his month, but his language development was 4-5 months behind. We thought that he would be happier if his language development accelerated and he made friends, and he was with his peers all day. Afterwards, at the age of 5-6, there is a serious need for us to be working at the forefront, even though we are working at the forefront... We think that it is important for preparation for primary school at the age of 5-6. Things such as learning the rules in every sense, being a part of a social group, developing a sense of belonging, realizing oneself as an individual, fulfilling self-confidence, and forming a perspective on the teacher-student relationship are important. We think that it is necessary for all kinds of development, both physically and psychologically, and it is important in terms of gaining behaviour... (F2)

“What can I say... hmmm about the development of the child, in the same society again... In other words, in order to ensure that he gets used to such a friend environment instead of being alone at home, that is, to enable him to socialize in order to become a member of a society in preschool education....” (M2)

“X spoke late, we had very few words in our speech, he had very little communication with people like this, so we decided that it was right for X to start kindergarten in order to speed up this situation a little more, and we made the right decision. In a short period of maybe 5-6 months, his vocabulary expanded, and his speech increased. His relations with his friends also increased, we started because of the direct talk thing....” (M1)

“My daughter was a very curious child anyway and she was so active, when her mother started to say that I am not enough anymore, I can't keep up, we said it's best to go, at least half a day, half a day in the first semester, then she was crying while she was taking it, no one is going because my friends are left, the second semester gone all day. We sent it to help her academic development and socialization at work and to pass the time to the fullest.” (F3)

“...He was also shy, when we got together with friends, the children of all of them somehow mingled with us, ours would hang out separately from them, we would go to the playground, he would run away from the children again, he never wanted to share his toys. We thought that he needs to learn these and get used to school...” (F4)

“Our caregiver left, so we had to give it. Otherwise, I didn't want to give it, frankly, if Aunt Ayşe had not left us, I had no intention of sending it in any way...” (M2)

“...When he had a sister, I couldn't cope with both. The girl was crying a lot - she was colic, and the boy was also used to the attention, when the attention suddenly split ... I couldn't cope with them, we said, "it will be better sent him and let his energy go." I was already starting to feel inadequate before the birth; it became an excuse also...” (M3)

“Obligation, because we both have to work...” (F1)

“...There was no one in the family to take care of it at that time. ...” (F2)

“His brother was going to school. Then I went back to work completely, we said, let's give it to him. The reason Y started was because of my transition to working full time. ...” (M1)



“...but the child took responsibility, for example, she learned to follow the rules a little more, if I think according to my child's level, I can say that she learned to obey the rules and become a member of the society...” (M2)

“...to get used to school ...” (M1)

“...When her sister was not at home, she was always waiting for attention from me, waiting for me to play with her and spend time with her. I was playing, but he didn't like it most of the time, I can't give the reactions he expects from his peers or at least from someone close to him, I'm always impatient, and I'm a little tired...” (M4)

“...It's classic now, nowadays every child goes before the 1st grade, but most of them start sending their children one year ago, I think my wife wanted to follow the fashion ...” (F4)

The findings regarding the criteria taken into consideration when choosing the preschool institution

The codes formed according to the answers given by the parents to the questions asked to determine the criteria they consider when choosing the preschool institution to which they send their children constitute the criteria theme (Table 4).

Table 4. Criteria considered for preschool institution selection.

Theme	Code	f
Criteria	Teacher	10
	Physical structure	5
	Child's happiness	4
	Owner(s) of the institution	3
	Distance	3
	Positive reference	2
	Relationships with friends	1
	Total	28

When the Table 4 is examined, it is seen that parents choose the preschool institution to which they will send their children based on the teacher, the physical structure of the institution, the happiness of the child, the relations with the owner of the institution, the distance, positive references and the relations of the child with the friends in the institution. Some parent statements about the interview on this theme are as follows;

“I think the most important criterion for me is the harmony with the teacher and his friends...” (M2)

“Who are the teachers, what is the teacher's training – we searched one by one...” (F2)

“...Distance was important, we paid attention to things such as the cleanliness of the institution, the education level of the teachers, who the school owners are, the physical capabilities of the building, the garden, whether there is protection on the stairs....” (F4)

“...We searched the teacher. We searched the school owners. We looked at the cleanliness and examined the menus. We talked to a couple of friends who sent their children that school...” (F3)

“...While choosing the institution, I also took the teachers as a base, I paid attention to their meticulousness, of course, that part is a bit of luck, you don't know what's what when choosing a teacher, you step into something new...” (M1)

“The character and discipline of the teacher...” (M2)

“And the staff... We searched for the teacher, who will work that year. ...” (F1)

“...First, it was very important that the physical structure of the building was suitable for children, measures to ensure its safety- is this a building built in that structure? ...” (F2)

“...Let there be a place where children can play comfortably, not an environment like this from the building to the apartment...” (M2)

“...first, we looked at building, is it physically good, is it fit ...” (M4)



“My initial criterion was that the child be happy... he will leave me and spend almost the whole day there. He should not spend his time there worried, or I don't know, tense or sad, he should feel happy to be there while doing something....” (M1)

“...secondly, an environment where my child could be peaceful, what else was there...” (M2)

“...will our child be happy here? That was all we wanted, in the first place, he will stay away from us, and will he be happy almost all day in this institution? ...” (F2)

“We had friendly relations with the school administrators; her sister also was here, I was happy...” (F1)

“...and the distance, of course, I must take her away, at least taking her because my wife can't always go out. ...” (M4)

“...we had acquaintances; they were pleased... a little bit on the recommendation” (M3)

The findings regarding the view on preschool education during the pandemic process

The findings regarding the answers given to the questions on the actions chosen by the parents who continued to send to the institution and chose not to send it during the period when the preschool education institutions were open during the pandemic process are given below with Table 5.

Table 5. Opinions on preschool education during the pandemic process.

Category	Theme	Code	f
The status of sending or not sending to school in the pandemic	No		4
	Yes		4
Opinions on the process of not sending to school in the pandemic	Positive aspect	Health	4
		Layout change – rule bending	5
	Problems	Failure to meet developmental needs (skills–academic)	5
		Inability to meet psychological needs	5
		TV-tablet habit	4
		Failure to meet care needs	2
Total			28

Parents who did not send them to an educational institution during the pandemic were asked what the positive contribution of this could be for the child, they shared the opinion that there is no positive aspect other than protecting their children in terms of health during the epidemic process. During the pandemic process, the parents of the children who did not attend the preschool institution were asked about the problems caused by not sending them, and the sending parents were asked about the reasons that made it necessary to send them to the education institution during the pandemic, and the answers obtained were arranged and given in the Table 5. According to the Table 5, the parents shared answers to the themes of change in order – breaking the rules, not meeting the developmental needs (skills – academics), not meeting the psychological needs, tv-tablet habit, not meeting the work-related care needs. Some parent statements about the interview on this theme are as follows;

“We think it's more health-protected, at least as we've reduced the risk, but there's not much positive about it...” (F2)

“There was no positive aspect, only protection in terms of health ...” (M2)

“...In terms of health, of course, it seems to be better, we are reducing the risk. It's like there's no other...” (M4)

“...As I said, I think the biggest contribution in terms of health is getting sick less. Although friends say that you will experience the same thing when you start the 1st grade, it is logical, but still, we would not be comfortable with such a virus when there was such a virus... other than that... I couldn't find it...” (F4)

“Grandparents show a little more tolerance, they can't help it, it can be a bit of a stretch in terms of rules. Child's behaviour changes ...” (F2)



“It's a difficult process for us anyway and tearing children out of the order they're used to can cause serious changes in their behaviour, which happened when they didn't go for the first time – when the first pandemic started. Later, in that process, he missed his friends, he missed his teacher, and he wanted it to be as he was used to. But as we left space, it started to hang on TV and tablet...” (F3)

“It created very serious problems because at least I will contradict myself a little here again, but before I start school, at least a little bit academically, at least hand dexterity, line work etc. or some mental activities are okay for me, sociability is at the forefront, but of course academic success is also a criterion. I wish my child had taken some studies on this before starting the first year of preschool, but now I think that my child has regressed a lot because he did not take those studies...” (M2)

“Even though we don't have academic concerns, there are things s/he forgot, you can be noticed between speaking ...” (F2)

“My wife continues to work, the school was already taking the necessary precautions, I don't know how other institutions are, but I think it is necessary to educate these children under all circumstances...” (F1)

“It is psychologically necessary, they miss their friends, they miss that environment very much, it is very important for their development. By staying at home, how much I can improve her, how much can I train her ...” (M1)

“She is bored and wants to play games with us all the time... Of course, we can't be like her friends...” (F2)

“...it would be much more difficult for me to linger at home; his sister was also very active; it was necessary for our mood ...” (M3)

“She misses her friends a lot, and her teacher says things like, if we were always at school, we would do this, if we were at school, we would do this, let's do this, let's play like this...” (M4)

“He wants to spend more time on TV and tablet, and we can prevent it up to a point, sometimes there is a serious timeout...” (F2)

“...Since you can't live every moment to the fullest at home like at school, we turn on the TV and watch it when we get stuck, it's not a lie, the day is more unproductive. ...” (M4)

“...the phone does not fall out of hand...” (F4)

The findings regarding the idea of sending to the preschool institution according to the working status

Parents with children who received pre-school education before the pandemic but did or did not attend the institution during the pandemic were asked for their opinions on whether the child should be sent to preschool education, depending on whether the child's mother works or not. The answers were analysed.

Table 6. Sending to preschool institution according to employment status.

Theme	Code	f
Preference	The father would still send it if his wife hadn't worked (apart from the pandemic)	2
	If the mother hadn't worked (apart from the pandemic) she would have sent it anyway	2
	If the mother didn't work, she would send it in the pandemic	1
	If the mother had worked, she still wouldn't have sent it during the pandemic.	1
	The father still wouldn't have sent them in the pandemic if his wife was working.	1
Total		7

According to the Table 6, all the mothers and fathers expressed their opinion that even if the mother is not working, their child should receive preschool education, in cases other than the pandemic. Some parent statements about the interview on this theme are as follows;

“I would definitely send her to preschool, but there is no need before age 5...” (F1)

"He used to go to preschool institution for 5-6 years old, but he started kindergarten early, unfortunately, I'm sure we would feel better if he could finish at least 4 years old" (F2)



“I would send, I would send, yes I would definitely send him for his development, for his happiness and for preparation for a primary school” (M1)

“I would definitely send after the age of 4, even if I don't work, in my mind, after the age of 4, the child should receive preschool education” (M2)

“...I wouldn't have sent him. In terms of his health, I think it is appropriate not to send him to protect him. If I was working, we would have called grandparents, maybe his aunt, I don't know, but I wouldn't have sent him. As I said, even the conditions were normal they are usually very sick at school anyway, and I think that the stress of this illness is not worth it...” (M4)

“Hmmm... I think we would have called her grandmother, and we wouldn't have sent her... We had a lot of health problems when she first started - they said it's at least a year or two for children - she already has allergies, we used too many antibiotics, we thought it was very possible that she would get sick, actually, we were a little scared for her. Somehow, her mother is at home, so we do not think about who will take care of her...” (F4)

The findings regarding the idea for the evaluation of preschool education

The findings regarding the parents' views on the acquisitions their children have gained in the preschool education process are given below at Table 7.

Table 7. Opinions on the education received in the preschool education institution.

Category	Theme	Code	f
Contribution of education to children	Socially	Behaviour acquisition	8
		Rules	5
	Academically	Foreign language	4
		Maths	2
		Letters and pronunciation	2
Parent's assessment of the process	Satisfied	8	
	Sufficient	8	
Total			37

According to the Table 7, parents stated that their children have both social and academic achievements and that they find these achievements sufficient and are satisfied. Some parent statements about the interview on this theme are as follows;

“... I was pleased because I think this is an educational institution that meets what I want, our teacher was very sweet once, ours is a difficult child, yet she has been nice to him and I think she has changed his behaviour, frankly” (M2)

“At an early age, children grasp everything quickly. The first institution we sent in added a lot in terms of behaviour. He learned the rules. Even though we told him what to do at home, it wasn't as effective as in daycare. Here he is, for example, sneezing, where he immediately placed his arm and mouth easier... He learned general things like that more quickly there. When he moved to the other school, they went more academically. We obviously didn't expect academics, but it helped a lot. English, mathematics, sound studies... he will be 1st grade next year and we feel like he's ready. To act as a community, to manage friend relationships, to use common toilets, to eat in the dining hall... They learned things like that...” (F2)

“... I think he has learned and adopted the code of conduct very well, he is already showing himself when he enters the community ... another point is the foreign language, he knows a lot of English words, for example...” (F3)

“...He learned the rules, he was calmer and kinder when he was talking to us, I don't know, asking for something, and he is thanking us more than before school....” (M4)

“... He had friends, and he learned to share a little... When we got into the crowded environment, we didn't have any problems, he could play games or get involved in the game....” (F4)



“...His behaviour improved quite a bit, even though it took a while, he learned, he was arranged to eat, his sleep settled, he learned to get by with his friends, he started to follow the rules – even at home - for us...” (M3)

“He learned songs, he told us what he did at school, the way he expressed himself and his friends changed for the better... He started learning English, then chess... contributed a lot” (F4)

“They support a child up to a foreign language, they support it up to English, so what more can happen?...” (F1)

“...Here are the colours, the numbers, the mathematical intelligence, and children gradually establish their own concepts after a pattern...” (M1)

“...I think it's enough from the beginning...” (M1)

The findings on parents' views on their expectations from the preschool institution

The views of the parents who send their children to the preschool education institution regarding their expectations from the institution are given in the Table 8.

Table 8. Expectations from preschool institutions.

Theme	Code	f
Expectations	The child's acquisition of social skills	8
	The child's acquisition of physical skills	7
	Meeting the psychological needs of the child	6
	The child's acquisition of cognitive/academic skills	5
	Total	26

When the Table 8 is examined, it is seen that parents have expectations from the preschool institution for the child to acquire social skills, acquire physical skills, meet the psychological needs of the child, and acquire cognitive / academic skills of the child. Some parent statements about the interview on this theme are as follows;

“We expect him to be qualified to manage himself as an individual, to gain the skills to help him go through that process without difficulty when he starts primary school...” (F2)

“...to learn the rules, act according to the rules, discover ways to control energy without harming, know oneself, learn to share...” (M3)

“...to give the child positive energy and confidence, prevent situations that will damage their self-esteem at school and teach them how to protect themselves and protect them in this direction...” (M3)

“We thought that, if the conditions were not like this, he would be ready for primary school and school life in general. They were preparing to read and write....” (F4)

“Let him learn to act harmoniously in the social environment, learn that there are rules everywhere, that it is necessary to act accordingly to them....” (M4)

“Be ready for primary school both psychologically, academically, and physically. Let him get used to school...” (M4)

“...I wish the psychomotor skills were a little more developed, especially in terms of hand coordination because my child's hand coordination is poor ...” (M2)

“The important thing is that the child is happy now and then....” (F2)

“...feel at peace there, feel safe...” (M1)

“Critical thinking skills, problem solving skills are very important, I don't know, getting coding training and making them produce things, robotic coding etc. They were important. I would like him to progress a little more in English, albeit partially.” (M2)

Findings on interviews with teachers

Findings of interviews with teachers are categorized as reasons to choose the profession, knowledge of the job description and requirements when choosing the profession, different aspects of preschool



from other branches, value attributed to the profession by others, different aspects of preschool from other branches in terms of the value given, care and distraction attribution to preschool education, reasons parents send their children to preschool institutions, face-to-face education during the pandemic, continuation of the activities of private preschool institutions during the pandemic process.

The findings on the reasons preschool teachers prefer the profession

Preschool teachers were asked why they chose their professions, and their answers were presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Reasons to choose the profession.

Category	Theme	Code	f
Reasons	Personal reasons	Love children	3
		Desire to be a teacher	2
		University score	2
	Economic reasons	Easy to be nominated	2
		Easy to find a job	1
	Social reasons	Environmental conditions	2
	Total		12

When the answers of preschool teachers to questions about choosing their professions are examined, as they are given in Table 9, it is seen that personal, economic, and social reasons are effective in their choices. Some teacher statements regarding the interview for this theme are as follows;

“Firstly, I love children very much and the best profession I could choose in the circumstances of my family and environment at that time was teaching as a woman, so I chose preschool teaching... The reason it was preschool was because I got along better with little kids, I got down to the level of the kids better, and I had good communication with the kids around me, so I chose preschool.” (T1)

“I thought it was a profession that suited my own life energy. I love kids, I enjoy spending time with them, and I thought I could keep it a profession...” (T3)

“I love kids, I get along so well, it's always been like this with the little ones, especially the 4-5-year-olds...” (T6)

“...The preschool nomination was even better then... I'm convinced there's a job I can do without worrying about work...” (T6)

“I was already at Anatolian teacher high school, and somehow the fact that there were plus points affected my score, so I thought I could choose this profession...” (T3)

“...Of course, one thing the system brings is that when I was in high school, I wanted to teach English, but I went down this path by choosing to study preschool in a better place than study English in a worse place, but I wanted to teach anyway...” (T2)

“...I was thinking of teaching, and when his nomination was very easy, I thought I'd write preschool teaching...” (T4)

“...I didn't get a chance to do anything in my field, so I finished preschool. And then I started... I'd say job opportunities...” (T5)

“...Teaching is seen as a good profession for women, and that's how my family always directed me, and they said you love it...” (T6)

The findings for preschool teachers to be informed about the job description and requirements when choosing the profession

Table 10 provides the answers of teachers to the research question about the level of knowledge of preschool teachers regarding the job description and requirements of preschool teaching when choosing their professions.

**Table 10.** Knowledge of the details of the profession.

Knowledge	f
No	6
Yes	0
Total	6

According to Table 10, any of the teachers had enough information about the job description of their profession and requirements of being a preschool teacher. Some teacher statements regarding the interview for this theme are as follows;

“There wasn't, just because I preferred it over the other branches because I loved children...” (T1)

“...I didn't really know, and I didn't even think I'd like it so quickly, but I think it was more enjoyable for me after I got involved, but of course I didn't know what to do, how the process would go.” (T2)

“... Here's what I knew about the job description and requirements: I had observations, I didn't have a definitive information about it, but I had my own conclusions...” (T3)

“... No, not knowing anything...” (T4)

“...Didn't...” (T5)

“I didn't have any details, no...” (T6)

The findings on teacher opinions on different aspects of preschool from other branches

Table 11 provides the answers of the preschool about the differences of their branches from other branches.

Table 11. Different aspects of preschool from other branches.

Category	Code	f
Different aspects	Importance for the child	8
	Connection with the child	6
	Care	4
	Obligation to teach basic behaviours	4
	Responsibility	4
	Interaction	3
	Difficulty noticing academic achievements	3
	Together all day	3
	Break	2
	Total	37

As seen at Table 11, preschool teachers think their branches has many different aspects when compared to other branches. They stated that they are different from other branches in terms of importance for the child, connection with the child, need of care, obligation to teach basic behaviours, responsibility level, interaction type, difficulty noticing academic achievements, being together all day and having no break. Some teacher statements regarding the interview for this theme are as follows;

“Children learn everything in preschool education institution. socializing with friends, cleaning rules... You know, there are some things they learn at home, but usually mothers do not put up with their children if they start at a younger age. They do everything for their children. Toilet training is generally a little more meticulous, especially about hygiene and they do what needs to be done for the child. Most of the children who come to school do not have toilet training. Here, it is the duty of the teacher to give toilet training. (T1)

“You're their first teacher...” (T2)

“It's very affecting for them to love school for the future, and it's partly your responsibility to make them love the teacher and the school. If we continue our mission with the awareness of this, we will have the opportunity to educate more successful students and better students who love their schools...” (T1)



“...We live with the child every moment at school, we don't have break, we model for children at any time because it's the first time they interact so much with individuals other than parents. They learn with us the basic behaviours and rules of being an individual in society...” (T6)

“Some outputs and some behavioural changes can be noticed more quickly in us, but it takes time to see what we add to them academically. Let him learn, take the exam, and get high grades. Aaaah okay, it's not ours that learned the case. That's why I think parents question the quality and competence of the preschool teachers more. Since the importance of pre-school was only recently understood, it was looked at whether it would happen or not. But the child must learn mathematics, learn English, these were considered success criteria. I think people who were not aware of the contribution of preschool to the future are still not fully aware of it...” (T5)

“...We may not see anything academic clearly in the child, but we give and receive a lot of spiritual things, and I think that's the biggest difference from the child...” (T4)

“...In fact, we make a very serious contribution academically, but it's harder to notice by the parent, education outweighs teaching, and I think we're laying the groundwork for the future, getting the school used to it, loving the school, teaching the basics...” (T6)

“...you start in the class in the morning, you are with the children until the evening without any break, without lunch break... (T1)

“...When we look at other branches, they don't cover the whole day, they're together for a certain period of time, but we have to be in the classroom effectively, even in those branch classes.” (T3)

“I think we're with the children who need care, and not just the education part, we're caring for the children, we're showing compassion, we're giving more love, and we need to make it feel more serious and more intense, I think we're building a more serious and intense connections with children that I don't think it can be restricted just on education...” (T2)

“... Apart from the teaching role, we also have a care role, for example, a math teacher doesn't have to deal with a child's need to use the toilet or nutrition, but as a kindergarten teacher, I think that as a kindergarten teacher, we have a separate care role and a teaching role where you can measure that child's temperature at work when they are sick when they need to use the toilet and need food...” (T3)

“Besides, we're responsible for everything for the kids, we take care of everything, from eating to the toilet, we're changing their clothes. We're streamlining friend relationships; they learn a lot of what they need to know to be self-sufficient as an individual...” (T5)

“...They go in and out of class, the classroom teachers are a little closer to us again, but I think the responsibility of the other branches is very little, not to say academically, he learned it, he didn't learn it, although it's up to the teacher's conscience...” (T6)

“But I work with a group that needs to be cared. I wipe snot, I clean it if it underneath, I clean it if it vomits, I do everything in the name of care and I do... yes, I may not be a babysitter, but I'm with a group that needs care, so I'm taking care of it...” (T2)

“...we have much, much more responsibility than other teachers” (T1)

“It is very easy to make children happy, you get immediate feedback on what you give, or you can see what you give in a very short time.” (T1)

“...We're building such a more intense connection with the kids; I don't think it can be restricted to just education.” (T2)

“...yes, there's more to it than that, there's no way I can forget after I'm out of class, so I go on with my life with the kids.” (T2)

“...The children are cut off from the mother and come straight away, so they put you in their mother's shoes somewhere, and they connect with love.” (T1)



The findings on the views of preschool teachers regarding the value attributed to the profession by others

The views of preschool teachers regarding the value attributed to the profession by others are given in the Table 12.

Table 12. Value attributed to the profession by others.

Theme	Code	f
No	Prioritizing care rather than academic processes	3
	Ignorance of the importance	3
Now yes		2
Varies by institution		1
Total		9

As given at Table 12, preschool teachers have different answer for the value attributed to their profession by others. Some of the teachers believe that their profession does not value enough because of prioritizing care rather than academic processes and ignorance of the importance of preschool education. Some teacher statements regarding the interview for this theme are as follows;

“I don't think our profession gets the value it deserves. After all, we are at a point where the child's life is shaped, but in many ways, it is more important for parents whether we can meet the biological needs of the child than the education we provide...” (T3)

“...I mean, I certainly don't. Especially during this pandemic period, the issue of caregivers came up and there were huge reactions... So now I'm a caregiver, I can't say anything, but I don't think that should be our only concern and our only mission, in the eyes of people or at work compared to other branches. "Yes, yours, hmm..." we are troubled to hear such sentences begin like that... But the rest of the time, people don't value our teaching very much anyway...” (T4)

“I don't think so... I don't think teaching gets the credit it deserves, but we're being devalued altering. Anyway, the minister said that “...for the working mothers' children...” he put us in the position of caregiver directly... we're so much more than that...” (T5)

“No, especially superficial parents who don't know enough about the subject, and even teachers in other branches, despise our work, some parents just send their children because they have nowhere to leave, and also, they make you feel that way, with their attitude, with their behaviour...” (T6)

“...I was a paid teacher both in a private institution and in a state-affiliated institution. I worked in public schools – independent kindergarten. I think there's more value there. So yes, I had a lot of parents, and my colleagues at the institution I was in were really valued. I could really feel that respect, that love. I've always been able to get feedback that what I've done on your children is so precious. And I was with the parents who made me feel that they trusted me so much that they felt they had enough. Yes, I think they do, so maybe we can't see the values of people who are too irrelevant. I mean, the look of someone who's never been to any preschool institution could be "preschool teacher." But I think the people who are in this and sent their know-it-all child to the preschool institution, or our colleagues, the people we work with, I think they really appreciate it...” (T2)

“... When I first started in the profession, it didn't get the credit it deserved, and frankly, parents understood the importance of that a little bit more now. Our own colleagues didn't understand the importance of preschool at first, our colleagues in primary school, so what we did was very different to them... They probably saw their preschool teachers as babysitters at work because they were probably too young to be in preschool, or because, as I said, they only saw it as a playground...” (T1)

The findings on the opinions of preschool teachers about the different aspects of preschool from other branches in terms of the value given to preschool

Preschool teachers were asked about the different aspects of preschool from other branches in terms of the value given to preschool, and answer are given in the Table 13.

**Table 13.** Different aspects of preschool from other branches in terms of the value given.

Theme	Code	f
Different aspects	The connection and value from being the first teacher	3
	Inability to get financial reward	3
	Total	6

As can be seen at Table 13, pre-school teachers mentioned both positive and negative aspects different from other branches in terms of value of their branche. The connection and value from being the first teacher was the positive aspect but inability to get financial reward was the negative one. Some teacher statements regarding the interview for this theme are as follows;

“...Since I work one-on-one, I can make a distinction, for example, there is a big difference between taking private lessons in the field of mathematics and taking private lessons in the field of pre-school. Because they do not have an academic concern, it may not be necessary for the parents to take private lessons in the pre-school area. it is perceived to use more time. but when we look at mathematics or science, the parent has an academic concern over that child and may give him more priority, can separate a larger part financially. There are such differences...” (T3)

“I said, for example, we don't have break, we work nonstop, so there must be an awareness of that. Other teachers have branch courses in elementary and high school teachers. They have time to rest. In public schools, they can also support the teacher with small breaks so that he can breathe and take a pass.” (T1)

“I'm not that mercenary, don't get me wrong, but I think we've been financially beaten for years. When it's considered working hours, I mean, again, I don't value money, but I don't think its contribution in terms of motivation should be ignored....” (T6)

“So, for one thing, we're actually spending more time with the most precious being for people, what they care about most. And we're their first teachers. That's why I see their view of us is much more positive. We share a lot But I think we're valued both in terms of being the first teacher and in terms of building very long-term connections.” (T2)

“I think there are differences in the way students view us. In other words, I think the value given to us by the student is much higher. They show their love so beautifully in their pure form that I do not believe they have established the same connection, they have established with us, with other branch teachers...” (T5)

“Well, there is that some parents cherish us, and so are the classroom teachers, but when we become the first teacher, some parents look us in the eye, you feel like that, you feel that you are very important to them, there are people who frequently express this in bilateral meetings... students who come out after years they don't forget us easily...” (T6)

The findings on the views of preschool teachers on the responsibility of care and distraction attributed to preschool education by others

The views of preschool teachers on the responsibility of care and distraction attributed to preschool education by others are given in the Table14.

Table 14. Opinions of preschool teachers about care and distraction attribution to preschool education.

Theme	Code	f
No, because	Belief in the importance and sanctity of the profession, respect for the profession	6
	Planned processes	4
	Awareness of the importance of the game	2
Yes, because	Expectations for only basic needs and behaviours	1
	Parent's attitude	1
Total		14

When the answers of the preschool teachers examined for the question whether they feel like they are at school just to care or distracting children, as it can be seen at Table 14, the main reasons of such a



feeling are parent's attitude and expectations for only basic needs and behaviours. Some teacher statements regarding the interview for this theme are as follows;

"It's not because of the communication between me and the child... For example, when mothers pick up the child and ask me what you learned today other than whether the child was eating that day, I want to see the bulletin, what activities were held, parents make me very happy. For example, I'm not just obligated to stall the child. And I'm also a preschool teacher. And someone's asking me if my job has been done, and maybe that's not the right statement, but I'm looking at a parent who's questioning why the kid exists in that class. He wants to know how it went today. Then yes, I feel like I've done my job. But of course, that's just how I feel about the parent who asks if my kid fought or cried or if everything went well. It is entirely due to the gap between the expectation of the parents and the expectation of the teacher... i.e., the parent's approach..." (T4)

"It's not happening, it's not happening. Maybe it's because I believe in how sacred my mission is as soon as I'm inaugurated. That's because I love kids so much. I've always tried to give them the best. So, I didn't see jumping with kids as a distraction even when I was playing with them during free playtime or playing in the garden. because the best education is the education given by play. Maybe I never underestimated my profession because I was aware of it or believed in it. I didn't despise the child because it's my duty. And as I just said, maybe more important education than teaching is giving us good behaviours for children's behaviour... the behaviours we direct, that is, education is much more important to us" (T1)

"Let's just say parents didn't make me feel that way, but I didn't make myself feel that way out of respect for my profession. I've never felt like I've been stalling because I've been trying to spend every moment in time, full of them, and somehow effectively towards the kids. Maybe it was partly about my own schedule, and I didn't feel like I was stalling because it was so full, there wasn't any free time." (T3)

"It doesn't work, although some parents just leave it for care and make it feel like it, I don't care about them and their attitude. I'm trying to get the kid to give me the highest level I can. They learn through the game, which is a method... If anyone doesn't know, that's his problem... We do everything in class, we go through a lot, we educate, we teach, we do it anyway, it doesn't matter to me that others don't realize it, I know what I'm doing, and I make a difference in the lives of these kids after me. That feeling is enough for me..." (T6)

"... I mean, I don't really think so. But there are people who think that way, who pretend to be caregivers. Or there is also a reaction to the immediate explanation when this statement is made in the first place, there are also articles written under the headings we are teachers, not caregivers... But I work with a group that needs to be looked after. I wipe snot, clean it if it underneath, clean it if it pukes, do everything in the name of care. I'll do it. I mean, because there are teachers who say I wouldn't do that, and I resent that, yes, unfortunately. Because I could be working alone in the East. It's never possible to ask someone to (I mean a class aunt) come and clean it, and it doesn't have to be. Because when we start our careers, there's nothing like that. There's no sign that you'll have an auxiliary staff to work in a kindergarten. It doesn't have to be, but then what am I going to do is keep a kid his wet pants waiting for hours... I can't... I think it's a little bit about the value given to titles in our country. This time we put the babysitter or caregiver down. I mean, that's not possible. For a mother, the caregiver is one of the most precious people she entrusts her child to. It's impossible to underestimate it. I think we're too hung up on these names for titles. I never hang out for myself... I mean, yes, I may not be a babysitter, but I'm with a group that needs care, so I'm taking care of it..." (T2)

"No, I don't feel it. Actually, we already have a plan. We have a process; we have routines to do. I don't feel it when I'm with them. I mean, it doesn't even make you feel like the youngest age group kid because they're canner in that class environment, and they have a certain system. I don't even remember picking it up behind the kid's back. We'd complete what our event was. Then he knew we had to do what we were all doing with our child. That's why I don't think kids make me feel that way. I never felt like I was their babysitter or their staller." (T2)

"It's the kind of thing that looks at us, but I don't think it is – I don't feel it. We do a lot of things. It's not stalling, it's making sure they have quality time. We spend every moment full. That's where some mothers say I can't get enough of my child. And we're oversized, we teach them a lot of things, we



educate them, they make a habit of a lot of things that parents can't do. I mean, we don't do anything that lightly. I don't care who claims otherwise, to be honest, I give it to their ignorance....” (T5)

The findings on preschool teachers' views on why parents send their children to preschool institutions

The views of preschool teachers about the reasons why parents send their children to preschool institutions are given in the Table 15.

Table 15. Reasons parents send their children to preschool institutions.

Theme	Code	f
Reasons	Childcare needs of working mothers	6
	Socialization of the child	5
	Parents' feel inadequate in their child's development	4
	The mother's need to make time for herself	2
	Belief that behavioural disorders will improve	2
	Preparing for primary school	2
	Children spend quality time	1
	Language development	1
	Material shortage at home	1
	Total	24

As seen at Table 15, childcare needs of working mothers, socialization of the child, parents' feel inadequate in their child's development, the mother's need to make time for herself, belief that behavioural disorders will improve, preparing for primary school, children spend quality time, language development and material shortage at home were seen as main reasons of the need of preschool education by the preschool teachers. Some teacher statements regarding the interview for this theme are as follows;

“... Before I go to first grade, everyone goes to kindergarten, everyone goes, I think there's a generalization going on. Secondly, there are a lot of working parents right now, especially when mothers need a care institution when they work. And preschool institutions can do so. That's why I think preschoolers are preferred, so I think they're sending it....” (T2)

“I think the priority is the parents' work situation. Because if the parent is at home and not working, if they can spend enough time with their children, I don't think they prefer it very much. especially in young children. But if the parent is working, preschool institutions are indispensable if they have no one to leave...” (T3)

“...In fact, I think it addresses the need for care and increases women's participation in the workforce. that's why so many people prefer it. I think it has a huge impact, especially in the shrinking age....” (T2)

“...At first, it was usually working parents, so the vast majority were working parents....” (T1)

“I think especially for those who send it privately, as the minister said (!) because he has no one to look after, especially for those who send when they are younger, he does....” (T5)

“...Some people send it because, like I said, there's no one to look after them at home. at least he sends it for school care, especially in younger age groups...” (T6)

“Nowadays, many families have become a little more aware of this issue, socializing children, making friends, etc. have come up. So, I think that's why they sent....” (T3)

“...socialization of child, a little more, at school...” (T1)

“If he's thought to be very antisocial, he'll be at work to socialize, to meet people and make friends.” (T4)

“...at least instead of sitting around the house watching TV, the child will socialize at school... some mothers won't feel enough for their children... ...Mothers and fathers are also inadequate for children somewhere, and because they feel it, I've seen even housewives, who are struggling with their finances, but they sent anyway in recent years....” (T1)



“...What I see as reasons are these, she should have friends, socialize with her peers, get ready for primary school, learn how to hold a pencil, use scissors, learn numbers and letters, learn rules and not be a problem child when she starts primary school... (T6)

“As I mentioned earlier, the mother says that I can't get enough, my child spends most of his time on a TV tablet, he has no order...” (T5)

“...There are also the following, of course, the mother takes care of another sibling at home, or if she is an only child, a mother is not enough, she feels inadequate, she wants the child to develop more, so that's one reason...” (T6)

“...Because mothers didn't feel enough. Because the kids today aren't what they used to be. We used to sit 30 kids down and read a story or hold hands and play a ring game. But you can't just take 10 kids in front of you right now and tell a story. Because now there's TV, there's internet. Children have become much more active; you must tell that story in very different ways. you must play that game a lot differently to get to the kids, in order to play regularly with children, i.e., more mobile, more aware children of course environmental conditions, TV, internet, toys...” (T1)

“Sometimes mothers find it appropriate to send them to create time for themselves...” (T5)

“The housewives also send them to make time for themselves...” (T1)

“... For example, I had a child with a behavioural disorder. And when I talked to his parents, they said maybe sending him to school could be a solution. When he was 4 years old, they send him from the beginning and said they wanted to take care of it.” (T4)

“Some people want their kids ready for elementary school. And especially if they're going to attend this college, he's sending them to kindergarten here so the kid can get used to school and get to know everyone. It's really easier for first graders and the future...” (T5)

“They send their children to develop their religion. sent to learn languages where I'm currently working...” (T4)

“I mean, if the kid doesn't have enough toys at home and he's bored...” (T4)

“...in later years, housewives began to send...” (T1)

The findings on the views of preschool teachers on continuing face-to-face education during the pandemic

The views of preschool teachers on continuing face-to-face education during the pandemic are given in the Table 16.

Table 16. A glance face-to-face education during the pandemic.

Theme	Code	f
It must go on	because the working parent needs	4
	for children to continue their social development	3
	since distance education is not suitable	3
	in order not to adversely affect their academic development,	2
	to provide opportunity equality	1
Total		13

When the Table 16 is examined, all of the preschool teachers believe that preschool education must go on face to face during the pandemic because of many reasons such as the need of working parents, for children to continue their social development, since distance education is not suitable, in order not to adversely affect their academic development, to provide opportunity equality. Some teacher statements regarding the interview for this theme are as follows;

“It must go on because there have been times when working mothers have been in a very difficult situation. Working mothers had nowhere to leave their children. Here they isolated the elderly because of the pandemic. They couldn't leave it with grandma. I mean, they've had a lot of trouble. I think face-to-face training was essential for working families. But housewives who didn't work could



increase the chances of those who left by keeping their children at home. Because the fewer children who left, the less children who left, the more comfortable the environment for the pandemic.” (T1)

“...Let me put it this way, during the pandemic, parents are somehow getting on with their jobs. No one's completely shut down. If parents come out, they're in contact with other people, many of whom use public transport. Most of them work in a public space. it is perfectly normal for children to go to school... So, I think they should go....” (T3)

“...And then there's the situation of the parents... she has to work herself, where she leaves her child, who she leaves her/him to... who should be control of remote education of this child...” (T6)

“...Parents are in a very difficult situation, so there's nowhere for everyone to leave their children....” (T3)

“...it also disrupts children's academic development and social relations ...” (T4)

“...Because the first thing we look at is that when they stayed at home, it caused a serious lack of development socially. the children could not play as they wanted, they could not see their friends...” (T3)

“...it was necessary to ensure that both psychological, social and academic development of children was not disrupted....” (T5)

“...Because distance education is not possible, I think there's a lot of waste in preschool. So, you must keep going face to face... It's not like one-on-one class. We can't do daily routines. It's like giving the child an event, having something done. It's just like teacher doing it, it's like homework. I don't think it's enough in distance education....” (T4)

“It is not something that can be avoided with preschool distance education, TV shows... I don't believe in distance education anyway....” (T5)

“...I don't think distance education is appropriate for our level. Children don't experience enough communication and interaction when they're from afar. It proper to say "stop" or "be quiet up" with limited time, it's all about sharing things... We tell stories and they talk in class all the time, and that's what the kid wants ...” (T6)

“...Unfortunately, it is not possible to achieve equal opportunities in our country. I think that the necessary conditions should be met, and face-to-face training should continue in order not to open that gap...” (T2)

The findings on the views of preschool teachers on the continuation of private preschool institutions' activities during the pandemic process

Table 17 consists of the views of preschool teachers on the continuation of private preschool institutions' activities during the pandemic process.

Table 17. Views on the continuation of the activities of private preschool institutions during the pandemic process.

Theme	Code	f
Injustice	For teachers	6
	For parents	3
Deepening inequality of opportunity		5
Economic concerns and favouritism		1
Directing to private		1
Total		16

According to Table 17, preschool teachers think that it is injustice for both teachers and parents and deepening inequality of opportunity, continuation of the activities of private preschool but not state schools in the same way. They also indicated that this situation directs parents to choose private schools. Some teacher statements regarding the interview for this theme are as follows;

“Again, these closings and openings were also made without considering anyone's needs. yes, I don't mind being put in the position of a caregiver because yes, that's what I do. and I think this process



really benefits women and parents. I think that this is not considered for working parents. That's why I think it's the hour of all preschool institutions that should be talked about in the first place....” (T2)

“... I honestly think this inequality is material. it was best to turn them all on when they needed to be opened, to close them all when they needed to be closed... I'd feel bad if I was a teacher at a private school in the process. It's positive that it's open for children. But for teachers, I don't think that should have made a difference... It's exactly like, we're paying for it, and you're providing care for our child...” (T4)

“...Private schools closed at one point. When the privates closed, they focused on online lessons. More parents were interviewed. Preparations were made at home for the online course. So it should not be thought that during the closed period, private teachers sat in their homes. No, there's been a lot of stress. Individual parents were searched. The children were asked about their condition. videos were made or online lessons were made, and children were tried to be served in the same way. But a preschool student can never be taught online. How efficient was that? They just saw their teachers and chatted. But I don't think that's enough. Because a preschool student should be able to see his teacher face-to-face, touch her, feel that way....” (T1)

“...Of course, the teachers who were in private at the time were deeply resentful. You know, they thought public school teachers are teachers, but in private schools, they weren't teachers. There was also a dilemma among teachers ...” (T1)

“For teachers at the private school, it turns out that "we give you your money, you will come, you will continue to work regardless of the circumstances". I'm not the only one thinking like that about it. Many of my friends have I talked to... That's the perception created, and the minister's speeches seemed to support it....” (T5)

“...there was also a serious injustice for the teachers... Most private schools were already paying teachers very, very little. I talked to my friends during this period, and there were people who worked harder during distance education and had their salaries cut, for example....” (T6)

“... inequality of opportunity... There's not much I can say. because preschool education has been made compulsory, but it still does not have the expected importance at the desired level in our country. And in the preschool period, as in many areas, the child of the person with the financial means, was able to continue in some way. But people with financial impossibility have again become victims. I don't think eba etc. is very adequate in this regard. Educational inequality, inequality of opportunity already existed, it just became more pronounced...” (T3)

“There was an injustice here because the children who went to public school also had working mothers. The working mothers of children who attending public schools are in a very difficult situation, where can they leave their children? If you're sending it to private school, so you're lucky if you have money ... because the primary schools continued, the public ones did not...” (T1)

“So, the inequality that already exists has been put in the eyes of more people... parents who sent them to private school continued to live closer to normal lives, parents who sent them to public school were forced to do so.” (T6)

“Then there was inequality for children, some of which continued to progress faster and more effectively, some of them pushing....” (T6)

“...I wish everyone would go on without any distinction between private and state schools. Because other children were deprived again from many things in this process... On the other hand, what is the sin of the children in the state schools... Anyway, even if it's a little bit more, I think, we have better conditions... There's an imbalance that's become even more unstable in the process, which I think was a strange material spiritual process....” (T5)

“The reason the private institution is opening is to send the one who wants it. It works a little differently, and the situation of getting paid to the employees is also different, the fact that the kids don't come to school, schools won't get any money, and I think they're having a lot of trouble with it....” (T4)



“... directing it to the private sector is completely. I mean, I don't think the whole point of preschool here was understood from the very beginning. Because really, yes, I'm an institution that already caters to working women. The fact that I'm closed really upsets all the balances. What we're doing is just people have to go private. But it was the same before. so, a kindergarten was an independent kindergarten, and an elementary school was already open for five hours and did not meet the needs of the mother, the woman, the parent...” (T2)

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

During the period when schools are closed or students go to school just several days in a week and are at home in other times, for parents, especially for mothers, who had to continue their work on site, various problems aroused, such as not being able to accompany the student in need during the online lessons or not being able to find someone to take care of their child. Thereupon, the Ministry of National Education decided that education in preschool institutions should continue by face-to-face, considering the low incidence level of the disease in children and the rate of symptoms. In practice, there were some differences between private preschools and public preschools on procedures taken during this pandemic period. Different practices and some statements disclosed by the ministry caused reactions from preschool teachers. The "caregiver" controversy, which has already been going on for decades, has flared up again.

In this study caregiver role of preschool teachers were examined, by considering the parents' views on reasons for starting preschool education, the criteria no choosing a preschool institution, thoughts on preschool education during the pandemic process, employment status of parents, evaluation of the education received in the preschool education institution, and expectations from preschool institutions.

Findings suggest that parents send their children to preschool education institutions for socialization, obligation - need for care, physical and cognitive development needs, getting used to school - learning the rules, incompetence of parents, developmental delay, preparation for primary school, the need to spend quality time and their sibling going to school. As parallel to findings Diamond, Reagan, and Bandyk (2000) stated that on the one hand, conditions and need for care make it necessary for children to start pre-school education at an early age, on the other hand, some families may base their children's academic readiness on starting preschool.

Another finding of the study is about parents' choice of preschool institution. This category shows that it is important for parents the preschool teacher, the physical structure of the institution, the happiness of the child, the relations with the owner of the institution, the distance, positive references and the relations of the child with the friends in the institution, while they were deciding to the institution. There are studies showing that factors such as hygiene, education quality, security, travel time and institutionalism are effective factors in choosing an institution for parents (Barrett et al., 2015; Dahari & Ya, 2011; Perwita & Widuri, 2023). There are also studies emphasizing that the teacher is an important factor in choosing an institution (Jonathan et al., 2023; Lam, 1999). According to the findings of the Yeşil Dağlı's (2011) research, the order of the reasons for choosing the institution for the parents according to the level of importance is as follows; location, fee, reliability, educational activities, educational materials, availability of their hours, number of children in the group, being clean and tidy, teachers' education, physical characteristics, and positive reference.

A striking result of the research is related to the choice of letting students go to school during the pandemic. When the parents were asked about the preschool education during the pandemic process and effects of not sending the children to school during pandemic, they stated health as a positive aspect; layout change – rule bending, failure to meet developmental needs (skills – academic), inability to meet psychological needs, TV-tablet habit, failure to meet care needs as problems. Supporting the results of the current research, Erol and Erol (2020) emphasized that students who could not communicate with their peers, which have a great importance in the socialization of the



child, turned to digital tools during their stay at home. In this process, it was determined that the students used these tools excessively.

Another remarkable result of the research takes part in the category of sending to preschool institution according to employment status all the mothers and fathers expressed their opinion that even if the mother is not working, their child should receive preschool education, in cases other than the pandemic. They had different approaches about sending during the pandemic. But an important point here is that, in addition to the fact that parents do not send their children to school due to the stress caused by illness during the COVID-19 process, the financial difficulties experienced by some parents also disrupt the care of children (Drane, Vernon, & O'Shea, 2020). So, as supported by İnan (2020) one of the reasons parents don't send their kids to preschool education may be losing a job or getting into financial trouble for some other reason.

Penultimate result for the first part is about the views on benefits of preschool education. When it is asked to parents to evaluate the education received in the preschool education institution, they stated that their children have social (such as behavior acquisition and learning rules) and academic (such as learning foreign language, math and letters and pronunciation) achievements and that they find these achievements sufficient and are satisfied.

As the last finding of the study's first part, category of the parents' responses, expectations from preschool institutions includes the child's acquisition of social, physical and cognitive/academic skills and meeting the psychological needs of the child. Lam (1999) also, have stated in his study that, parents have expectations from preschools to increase the development of children, make children have a positive attitude towards learning, help children to develop self-confidence and self-care, improve their interpersonal communication and prepare them from home to society.

In the second part of the study, it is examined in depth the views of preschool teachers on the caregiver role of preschool education by analyzing their views on reasons to choose the profession, knowledge of the job description and requirements when choosing the profession, different aspects of preschool from other branches, value attributed to the profession by others, different aspects of preschool from other branches in terms of the value given, care and distraction attribution to preschool education, reasons parents send their children to preschool institutions, face-to-face education during the pandemic, continuation of the activities of private preschool institutions during the pandemic process.

As the first result of second part, reasons to choose being a preschool teacher is put forward. According to results, personal (such as loving children, desire to be a teacher and university score), economic (easy to be nominated and find a job) and social (environmental conditions) reasons are effective in profession choices of preschool teachers. Similarly, in the study of Kızıldağ, Halmatov, and Sarıçam (2012) preschool teacher candidates stated reasons for choosing this profession such as loving children, job security etc. According to TÜİK Gender Statistics (2020), there were 5,910 males while there were 92,915 female teachers working in the 2019-2020 academic year as preschool teacher. Which suggest that the number of female preschool teachers is approximately 16 times the number of male teachers. It is possible to say that gender roles influence the difference being so large. Being a teacher is very much ascribed to women in Turkish society, and teaching is among the most suitable professions for women. The fact that they play with babies from a young age, so to say prepare for motherhood, so they tend to love children and therefore see teaching as suitable for themselves can be accepted because of their gender roles. And, in Turkey, even if one cannot be appointed to a public school, the possibility of working in private schools can make teaching attractive, considering the abundance of private schools. So that being a teacher may reduce employment and economic concerns to some extent.

Second result is about the process of choosing the profession. As the knowledge of the job description and requirements when choosing the profession category shows that any of the teachers had enough information about the job description of their profession and requirements of being a preschool



teacher. Considering the diversity of professional experience of the participants in the research, it can be concluded that career development and guidance studies for students are not sufficient in the past as in the recent past. In their study, Atli and Gür (2019) revealed that factors such as high income, convenience, and comfort, working hours, reputation, and job guarantee are effective in the career choice of high school students. Also, Atli, and Gür (2019) emphasize that although students indicate that they are the most important decision makers in their career choices, they seem to be constrained by job security and economic income values rather than their own interests, abilities and personality traits. That is even they do not know the requirements and detailed description of the profession, students may choose a career, as mentioned in the current study.

Another result of the study is about the perceptions on differences of preschool teaching from the other branches. When the teachers were asked about the different aspects of preschool from other branches, they stated that they are different from other branches in terms of importance for the child, connection with the child, need of care, obligation to teach basic behaviors, responsibility level, interaction type, difficulty noticing academic achievements, being together all day and having no break. Education is a process in which the product can be observed in the long term. Even student development revealed through exam grades, etc. at other levels of education does not actually represent a certainty; the performance of children in their future lives is more evidence of this progress. So, this is more difficult for preschool level, even parents see the improvement in their children's behaviors, most of them may expect a concrete document to see that. But, in Turkey with the new application of Ministry of Education in 2023 September, all the written exams were abolished until the end of the 4th grade of primary school. It is hoped that this application will change the perspective of parents who are obsessed with evaluating success, even in preschool. In addition, when the situations revealed by the lack of recess in preschool, unlike other levels, are examined, in their studies, Sabancı, Altun, and Uçar Altun (2018), and Can and Kılıç (2019) found that the lack of break periods and uninterrupted education strain preschool teachers physically and psychologically and affect their communication with their colleagues. and reveal that it negatively affects their relationships.

The value attributed to the profession by others is another result of the research. In the category of value attributed to the profession by others, preschool teachers have different answers for the value attributed to their profession by others. Some of the teachers believe that their profession is not valued enough because of prioritizing care rather than academic processes and ignorance of the importance of preschool education. They also stated that it wasn't valued in the past but now this is changing. Also, there is a belief that it can be changed according to the type of institution.

Another finding is that the teachers to specify different aspects of preschool from other branches in terms of the value given. Pre-school teachers mentioned both positive and negative aspects different from other branches in terms of value of their branches. The connection and value from being the first teacher was the positive aspect, on the other hand, inability to get financial reward was the negative.

In the study it was also examined the care and distraction attribution by others to preschool education and whether they feel so. Result shows that in this category preschool teachers stated that the main reasons of such a feeling are parent's attitude and expectations for only basic needs and behaviors. They accept that they serve for a group of students, have need of care. But they all see their profession much more than this. In the research by Uysal, Özen Altinkaynak, Taşkın, Akman, and Dinçer (2016), in which they examined preschool teacher candidates' metaphorical perceptions of preschool education program, the fact that the most repeated metaphor is "mother" may support that there is a general tendency in a part of society, even between preschool teachers themselves, to identify preschool teach with the mother. So, these people have some expectations from preschool teachers about "care" like mothers.

Another important result of the study stated with the category of the reasons parents send their children to preschool institutions. Teachers shared their opinions as the as the closest witnesses of the



process. According to their answers childcare needs of working mothers, socialization of the child, parents' feel inadequate in their child's development, the mother's need to make time for herself, belief that behavioral disorders will improve, preparing for primary school, children spend quality time, language development and material shortage at home were main reasons of the need of preschool education.

In the face-to-face education during the pandemic category, all the preschool teachers stated that preschool education must go on face to face during the pandemic because of many reasons such as the need of working parents, for children to continue their social development, since distance education is not suitable, in order not to adversely affect their academic development, to provide opportunity equality. According to results of Yıldırım (2021) preschool teachers stated Covid-19 Pandemic had some negative effects on preschool education in terms of teaching basic concepts, social, mental, and emotional development of children, teacher-student interaction, school adaptation. But also, they stated increase in Parent-student interaction and parental interaction as positive effects. Additionally, Yıldırım (2021) also states that teachers emphasize the importance of face-to face education for preschool. According to Lee and Bierman (2015), classroom lives are very important for students. Especially emotional support is one of the indicators of student's performance and adaptation to the school. Unfortunately, students could not feel that support from their teacher during that pandemic, as much as they feel in normal educational life.

As the last result of the second part of the study consists of the preschool teachers views about the continuation of the activities of private preschool institutions during the pandemic process. Preschool teachers think that it is injustice for both teachers and parents and deepening inequality of opportunity, continuation of the activities of private preschool but not state schools in the same way. They also indicated that this situation directs parents to choose private schools.

In summary, findings show that parents prefer preschool education for their children due to their cognitive, affective, social development and care needs. When they choose the school they consider the teacher, the institution (institutional and physical), the child's psychological well-being. When evaluated in terms of the pandemic process, it has been revealed that there are as many people who send to school due to work reasons as there are those who do not send it to school due to health concerns. It also seen that expectations of parents from preschool institutions are parallel to the reasons why they send their children to school. In the second part, findings show that even if they had no idea about the detail requirements of the profession, participant have chosen their career for personal, economic, and social reasons. The participants put forward the view that preschool education differs from other branches in the context of experiences, process, and relations with the child, differs from the value it sees, and differs in terms of the value given based on the connection and value from being the first teacher, Inability to get financial reward. Preschool teachers also stated that there is an inequality and injustice between both preschool and other levels and public and private sector.

All in all, according to results of this research, while parents emphasized the need for care for their children, preschool teachers stated that they were aware of the group they worked with and served for a group in need of care. The point that creates problems about the care situation is that teachers are viewed as "just" caregivers and approached to their work in this way. In the research, it was stated by the preschool teachers that this is not related to the concept of "caregiver", and that the "caregiver" job is a very difficult, self-sacrificing, and demanding profession, but it is not their sole aspect of their job.

Education, which is a fundamental activity of humanity (Kaplan, 2013) and includes all social processes that prepare individuals for cultural life, shapes and organizes individual and social life (Gutek, 2014, p.5). Education, which has the power to create deep transformation effects both individually and socially (Wantchekon, Klačnja, & Novta, 2014), derives this power from its defined and undefined functions. There are many studies that reveal the importance of preschool education as



discussed before. As a result of Kılıç's (2008) research, which is one of these studies, compared to whether they received pre-school education the first-year primary school students are different in terms of literacy, mathematics and self-care skills, motor, social, emotional and language development, and these differences are in favor of the students who receive preschool education. National Education Statistics Formal Education 2020/21 Report shows that 3-5 age group schooling rate is 28.35%, 4-5 age group schooling rate is 36.79% and 5 age schooling rate is 56.89% (MEB, 2021). Additionally, Ministry of Education states that the relative to increase at the schooling rate of 5 age, the schooling rate of 3-5 age group increased to 48%; moreover, by the end of 2022, the schooling rate target for the 3-5 age group is 76%.

It is obvious that the importance given to preschool education by the government in Turkey is increasing day by day. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the increase in the values and importance of preschool teachers, who are the most important actors of preschool education, in parallel with the education given to preschool education, and to increase awareness on the subject.

Recommendations for researchers

To carry out such an important level of education effectively and efficiently, the current situation and improvement suggestions can be put forward by examining the professional problems experienced by preschool teachers in more depth.

International research on the subject (if any) can be systematically examined and common and different aspects, applications, necessary adaptations and suggestions can be presented.

Recommendations for practitioners

Considering the situation where parents prefer and/or are forced to choose private schools, improvements and regulations should be made in public schools in order to offer equal education rights to every child.

In-service training/courses/informative conferences on communication and problem-solving skills should be organized for preschool teachers and parents.

Institutions should have detailed precautions and action plans developed for different possible disaster situations, possible psychological conditions in the processes should be taken into account more, and practices should be implemented to ensure justice regardless of the conditions.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

During the research process, all instructions stated within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed. In this study, the actions stated under the heading "Actions against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics" were carefully avoided and no actions stated as contrary were carried out. This research has an Ethics Permit from Süleyman Demirel University Social and Humanities Ethics Committee with decision dated 15.04.2021 and numbered 106/38. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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