



## The Opinions of Preschool Teachers on Values Education

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### Abstract

Coupled with the changing living conditions, serious problems have been experienced in society in terms of moral and social aspects. Failure to resolve the problems experienced shows that the awareness of the common values of society has not come into existence yet. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to include values education at every level of education system. Preschool period is the period in which the foundation of the child's feelings, thoughts, behaviors and attitudes is laid. The attitudes and behaviors acquired in this period also form the basis of the future life of the child. For this reason, it is important to provide values education to children starting from an early age. In the provision of values education, the content of the program and the competence of teachers are among the effective elements in teaching the targeted skills. In accordance with this information, the aim of the study is to determine the opinions of preschool teachers on values education. The study group of the study consists of 50 preschool teachers working in preschool education institutions in Silopi district of Şırnak province, affiliated to the Ministry of National Education, in the 2018-2019 academic year. The data in the study were collected using an interview form designed by the researchers. The data obtained were analyzed by the methods of descriptive analysis and content analysis. As a result, it was determined that preschool teachers should be supported in terms of the scope of values education and how it should be implemented.

### Key words

Preschool education,  
Values education,  
Teacher's opinion,  
Silopi

### About the Article

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## Introduction

Education is the process of systematically bringing children to the determined goals in order to successfully convey the whole of the beautiful and positive behaviors desired to be realized and to establish relationships (Demirel and Kaya, 2017; Uzun and Köse, 2017). In this process, the child gains knowledge, skills, behaviors and values. These acquired knowledge, skills, behaviors and values were systematically transferred to diversify, change and sociologically improve society (Ergün, 1994). The concept of value can be defined as the message to be given to the thought and emotion system that directs and motivates human behavior and affects the decision-making process (Cihan, 2014). Values education is not only the mechanism that enables us to control our behavior; however, it is the system that allows us to clearly see the good and the bad, the right and the wrong, and increase our awareness, as well (Aydın and Akyol Gürler, 2012). This system comes into prominence day by day and is incorporated in education life. The fact that it is incorporated in education life shows that teachers have an important role in teaching values (Temur and Yuvacı, 2014). Our values, which have many functions, are very important in making sense of our lives and directing our feelings (Okumuş, 2010). Values education, which enables us to have a strong character while guiding, also makes us gain several concepts such as ethics, morality, love, and respect (Howard, Berkowitz and Schaffer, 2004). The formation of this character for an individual takes place in the first years of life. Teachers are the people who support the child in the first years of life besides the family (Balcı and Yelken, 2013). Because of this reason, preschool teachers who are at the first stage of education circle should be well educated and equipped in this regard (Çağlar, 2005). With the education received, transferring values such as morality, accepting the differences and being a society in a systematic and programmed manner is in the interest of society (Uzunkol, 2014).

At the beginning of the 20th century, schools in many countries, particularly in the United States of America, provided education in accordance with their values and designed programs in accordance with this (Uyanık-Balat and Balaban Dağal, 2006). Therefore, the importance of preschool education and teachers of this field in transferring knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes about values education to the child should not be ignored (Uzun and Köse, 2017). There are three dimensions of an individual: mental, social-emotional and behavioral. Qualified education perceives the person as a whole with all dimensions. For this reason, teachers should support the social-emotional and behavioral areas of the child as well as the mental field (İşcan, 2007). Since values education is included in the affective dimension, it is an important factor for the child that both family members and teachers at school know how to present values (Samur-Öztürk and Deniz 2014). Research has also revealed that educational institutions and preschool teachers are effective in teaching values (Erden, 1998; Ogelman and Sarıkaya, 2015). Şen (2012) concluded in his study that the values education given in the preschool period should not only be teacher-centered, and that the inclusion of the child in this process in the classroom environment by living and doing is effective for the child to gain values. On the other hand, in the study they conducted with a program that included values education, Dereli-İman (2014) took children between the ages of 5 and 6 in an experimental study and stated that as a result of the provided education, the problem-solving ability, motor skills and social development of children who received education resulted faster and more positively than those who did not. Similarly, Samur-Öztürk and Deniz (2014) state that the implementation of the values education program is effective in teaching values. This situation shows that preschool education and teachers have an important role in teaching values (Fidan, 2009; Ulusoy and Dilmaç, 2018). In parallel with this information, the purpose of the study is to examine the opinions of preschool teachers about values education. It is thought that the results to be revealed in the research will contribute in terms of guiding teachers and encouraging researchers to make new researches in the field of values education. In this research, answers to the following questions were sought;

1. How do preschool teachers define values education?
2. What are the values (in order of importance) that should be taught in the preschool period according to preschool teachers?
3. According to the opinions of preschool teachers, which issues are faced with difficulties in teaching values education?

## Methodology

### *Research Model*

In this study, which aims to determine the opinions of preschool teachers related to values education, semi-structured interview technique, one of the qualitative research techniques, was used and face-to-face interviews were made with the participants. The interview took place at the time when the participants were available and made an appointment. The interview was transcribed and lasted an average of 15-20 minutes. In the interview technique, it was aimed to reveal the experiences of the individuals with respect to the subject being investigated and how they make sense of these experiences (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak Kılıç, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2015).

### *Study group*

In the selection of the participant group, teachers working in preschool education institutions affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in the province of Silopi in the 2018-2019 academic year were reached with the maximum sampling method from the purposeful sampling method. The study group consists of 50 preschool teachers, 48 of whom are female and 2 of whom are male, who voluntarily agree to participate in the research. Participants are in the age range of 20-25 (f =28), 26-30 (f =14), 31-35 (f =4), 36-40 (f =2), 41 and over (f =2). Participants received associate degree (f =25), undergraduate (f =24) and graduate (f =1) education. The professional experience of the participants is 0-3 years (f=37), 4-6 years (f =8), 7-10 years (f =4), and 11-more (f=1) years.

### *Data Collection Tool*

In order to collect data in the study, firstly the literature on the research subject was searched in depth. Afterwards the questions raised were presented to a field expert and the final version of the interview form was designed. The interview form included four questions on demographic characteristics and three questions on values education. A pilot study was conducted with 10 preschool teachers before the data collection process. After the application, it was determined that the questions were understandable and no changes were made. The final version of the interview form was applied to preschool teachers after obtaining necessary permissions. During the interviews, the names of the preschool teachers were expressed as T1, T2, and T3 as required by ethical rules.

### *Data Analysis*

The data obtained in the study were analyzed by the descriptive analysis method and the content analysis method. In the descriptive analysis method, the data are presented within the scope of predetermined questions or themes. In addition, direct quotations of the participants are included in the study to effectively reflect the opinions of participants (Büyüköztürk et al., 2015; Merriam, 2013). In this respect, the subject of researching through the descriptive analysis technique was accepted as the theme. Content analysis is the association, grouping and interpretation of the data obtained (Büyüköztürk et al., 2015). In the research, themes were determined based on the interview questions. Codes, on the other hand, were determined as a result of the analysis of the participants' opinions on the research questions using the content analysis method. Within the scope of the research, the data were examined by the researchers and codes were created by bringing together similar opinions. In order to determine the reliability of the determined codes, another field expert independent of the researchers examined the data and determined the codes. In order to determine the consistency between the codes determined by the researchers and the codes determined by the field experts, the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) [Reliability = Consensus (21) / (Consensus (21) + Disagreement (4))] was used. It has been determined that there is .84 consistency between the codes. Within the scope of the reliability formula, a ratio of .70 and above shows that codes are reliable. In this context, it can be mentioned that the codes determined in the study are reliable. The determined theme and the codes are shown in the tables and their frequencies are specified. Some sentences summarizing the opinions of the participants are presented with direct quotations.

## Results

In this section the determined themes and codes are expressed in frequency (f).

### **Theme 1: The Definition of Values Education**

In the research teachers' opinions on the question "How would you define the values education?" were collected under this heading. The codes for this theme are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Findings regarding the definition of values education

	Frequency (f)
Bringing children social values	26
Bringing children positive behavior (affection, respect, cooperation, etc.)	17
Getting to know different cultures and societies	8

Teachers define values education as bringing children social values (f =26), bringing children positive behaviors such as affection, respect and helping each other (f =17) and getting to know different cultures and societies (f =8). Some of the teachers' opinions on the subject are as follows:

"...It is the universal values education required for a better livable future." (T2)

"...Values education is to bring children the facts such as love, respect, cleanliness, responsibility, patriotism, benevolence, honesty and morality during activities." (T9)

"...Values education is the education given to raise individuals who are sensitive and know social and cultural values." (T17)

### **Theme 2: Values Targeted to Teach**

In the research teachers' opinions on the question "What do you think are the values (in order of importance) that should be given to children in preschool period?" were collected under this heading. The codes for this theme are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Findings regarding the importance order of values

	Frequency (f)
Respect	39
Affection	38
Toleration	25
Helpfulness	24
Taking responsibility	18
Honesty	17
Patriotism	12
Justice	9
Empathy	7
Mercy	6
Patience	4
Friendship	2
Hospitality	2
Peace	1
Protecting nature and living things	1
Kindness	1

According to the teachers, respect (f =39), love (f =38), tolerance (f =25), helpfulness (f =24), taking responsibility (f =18), honesty (f =17), patriotism (f = 12), justice (f =9), empathy (f =7), mercy (f =6), patience (f = 4), friendship (f =2), hospitality (f =2), peace (f =1 ), protecting nature and living things (f =1) and kindness (f =1) values should be taught. Some of the teachers' opinions on the subject are as follows:

"... I think the values that should be given to the child at an early age are moral values (love, respect, cooperation)." (T3)

"... I try to give the value of love first. Unless love is on the basis of everything, nothing can be succeeded. But kids have difficulty understanding me. Love is a well-known value, but since the

*children here do not receive much love from their families, it is very difficult for them even to perceive love." (T37)*

*"... Children do not realize that there are other people and other creatures. We raise selfish kids who lack empathy. First of all, it is necessary to help children acquire to protect nature, other living beings and to live with them in peace" (T41)*

### **Theme 3: Difficulties Encountered in the Implementation of Values Education**

In the research teachers' opinions on the question *"Are there any difficulties in applying values education? If so, what are they?"* were collected under this heading. The codes for this theme are given in Table 3.

**Table3.** Findings on the reasons for the difficulties encountered in the implementation of values education

	<b>Frequency (f)</b>
Values taught are not supported in practice	17
Limited activities	10
Values remaining abstract	8
Children's knowing very little Turkish	8
Families' not being supportive	7
Failure to provide classroom management	2

According to the teachers, providing values education is getting difficult due to the following reasons: values taught are not supported in practice (f =17), limited activities (f =10), values remaining abstract (f =8), children's knowing very little Turkish (f =8), families' not being supportive (f =7) and failure to provide classroom management (f =2).

Some of the teachers' opinions on the subject are as follows:

*"...When trying to explain values, I have difficulty in explaining values because they are abstract." (T5)*

*"...Yes there is. Since the children do not know Turkish, I cannot get feedback even though I explain the importance of the issue. I try to give it with drama and story." (T13)*

*"...Values remain very abstract. I find it difficult to embody the values while telling children about them. If there were suggestions for activities, maybe I could convey them more easily." (T21)*

*"...We say respect, love, but when children go home, nothing is left. They come back to class as if we had never told them about those values. If they received support from their families at home, their learning would be more permanent. When there are many children, parents don't want to take care of their children. Families do not know Turkish well, and that prevents them. This process is not a process that teachers can do alone, families should definitely participate in the process." (T44)*

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions**

In this study, which was conducted to determine the opinions of preschool teachers about values education, providing children social values has been the most stated definition of values education. On the other hand, the limited number of opinions they stated such as helping children gain positive behavior (love, respect, etc.) and get to know different cultures and societies suggests that it would be beneficial to support them in terms of values education. Within the scope of values education, the concepts of gaining positive behavior, recognizing differences and adapting to social processes are emphasized. This situation makes us think that values education remains only at the knowledge level and values are not transferred to practice. Erden (1998) stated that educational institutions and teachers have an important role in systematically teaching children the values, attitudes and behaviors accepted by the society. According to Şen (2012), while teaching values to children in the preschool period, attention should be paid to the developmental characteristics of the child and it should be aimed to support all developmental areas. Presenting values education to

children in this way is considered important in terms of children's easy understanding, internalization and interpretation of values.

When the opinions of preschool teachers about the values aimed to teach and the order of importance of the values are examined, it has been observed that teachers prioritize the value of respect and love the most. However, it has been determined that preschool teachers do not prioritize values such as kindness, protecting nature and living things. Erkuş (2012) stated in his research that preschool teachers primarily teach the values of love and respect; however, they also think that values such as tolerance, cooperation, sharing and kindness should be taught. Türk (2009), on the other hand, stated in his research that teachers attach more importance to the value of respect, and that it is not enough to teach this value alone. When the studies conducted were examined, it was determined that values such as respect, love, tolerance and helpfulness were mentioned first within the scope of values education, but values such as kindness, protecting nature and living things were stated after many values and by a small number of participants.

When the opinions of preschool teachers about the difficulties they face in the application of values education are examined, it has been determined that there are many situations arising from teachers, family and environmental conditions. Difficulties in delivering values education are defined as values' not being supported in practice, failure to provide classroom management, limited activities, lack of support from families and children's knowing little Turkish. Yuvacı, Şafak, and Şirin (2013) stated that values education in the preschool period should be supported in the family and that including values in daily life would be effective in internalizing values. Similarly, Thonberg and Oğuz (2013) stated that teachers should combine values with practices in life and when examined from this aspect, it is stated that teachers do not have enough knowledge about values education and practices. These studies support the research findings.

As a result, it was determined that preschool teachers in the study should be supported about the scope of values education, how it should be implemented and with which activities it should be presented.

In parallel with this information, recommendations are listed as follows.

- The number of in-service trainings given to preschool teachers on value education can be increased.
- In order for the values to be permanent and intertwined with daily life, it can be ensured that families take an active role in the values education program.
- Preschool education program activity book can include comprehensive activity suggestions for values education.

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