


## Supporting self-regulation in the preschool period: A case study of teachers' practices

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**ABSTRACT** Self-regulation, which is also evaluated as children's ability to direct their attention, emotions, and behaviors towards learning tasks, forms the basis of healthy social and academic development from early ages. This study aims to investigate the attention, emotion, and behavior regulation practices for self-regulation in the preschool period from the perspective of teachers. A qualitative research design employing a case study approach was used. The study included 22 participants. A semi-structured interview form consisting of two sections was used as the data collection tool in the research. In the first part of the research form, demographic questions about participants' age, professional experience, education level, and the type of institution they worked, were included. The second part of the research form included experience-based questions aimed to examine the practices that participants applied for attention regulation, emotion regulation and behavior regulation. The data obtained were gathered under three themes as attention regulation, emotion regulation and behavior regulation. The findings of the study revealed that preschool teachers conducted self-regulation activities in class for attention regulation, emotion regulation and behavior regulation. The preschool teachers mostly carried out classroom activities such as games, drama, stories, free time, and music in the classroom. They used different strategies to enable children to be actively involved, take responsibility in these activities, and carried out practices that would create a positive classroom atmosphere for teacher-child and child-child interaction.

**Keywords:** *Attention regulation, Behavior regulation, Classroom practices, Early childhood, Emotion regulation*

### Okul öncesi dönemde öz düzenlemeyi desteklemek: Öğretmen uygulamalarına ilişkin bir durum çalışması

**ÖZ** Çocukların dikkatlerini, duygularını ve davranışlarını öğrenme görevlerine yönlendirme yeteneği olarak da değerlendirilen öz düzenleme, erken yaşlardan itibaren sağlıklı sosyal ve akademik gelişim için temel sağlar. Bu çalışmada, okul öncesi dönemde öz-düzenlemeye yönelik dikkat düzenleme, duygu düzenleme ve davranış düzenleme uygulamalarının öğretmen bakış açısıyla incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden durum çalışması deseni kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunda 22 katılımcı yer almaktadır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak iki bölümden oluşan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Araştırma formunun birinci bölümde katılımcıların yaş, mesleki kıdem, eğitim durumu ve çalışılan kurum türüne yönelik demografik sorular yer almaktadır. Araştırma formunun ikinci bölümünde okul öncesi dönemde çocukların dikkat düzenleme, duygu düzenleme ve davranış düzenlemelerine yönelik yapılan uygulamalarla ilgili deneyim temelli sorular yer almaktadır. Elde edilen veriler dikkat düzenleme, duygu düzenleme ve davranış düzenleme olarak üç tema altında toplanmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öz düzenlemeye yönelik sınıf içinde dikkat düzenleme, duygu düzenleme ve davranış düzenlemeye yönelik uygulamalar yaptıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin çoğunlukla sınıf içinde oyun, drama, hikâye, serbest zaman, müzik gibi etkinlikler yaptıkları belirlenmiştir. Çocukların bu etkinliklerde aktif olarak yer almalarını ve sorumluluk almalarını sağlamak için farklı stratejiler kullandıkları, öğretmen-çocuk, çocuk-çocuk etkileşimine yönelik olumlu sınıf atmosferi oluşturacak uygulamalar gerçekleştirdikleri ortaya çıkmıştır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Davranış düzenleme, Dikkat düzenleme, Duygu düzenleme, Erken çocukluk, Sınıf içi uygulamalar*

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## INTRODUCTION

Socialization refers to the process by which individuals who make up a society acquire the behavior, skills and values of the society (Chen et al., 2014). The skills of communicating, forming and maintaining relationships, which form the basis of human behavior, develop gradually from an early age (Denham et al., 2012c; Frith & Frith, 2012). Self-regulation refers to an individual's ability to regulate and control their behavior, and it plays a crucial role in personality and social development, as well as being closely associated with emotionality, social competence, and cognitive and academic performance (Eisenberg et al., 2004). Self-regulation in its most general sense; is the capacity of an individual to change self-reactions in order to achieve a desired situation or result (Bauer & Baumeister, 2011). Zimmerman (1989) defined self-regulation as self-generated, systematically directed thoughts, emotions, and actions for achieving one's own objectives. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) stressed that self-regulation has a broad structure that represents skills related to control, management and planning of cognition, emotions, and behaviors. Considering these definitions, the basis of self-regulation is individual control over actions taken for a purpose. In this context, self-regulation can be defined as a set of actions to control and manage attention, emotions, and behaviors.

Self-regulation encompasses a range of voluntary and active skills, including planning and problem-solving, goal-directed behavior, decision making, and logical thinking (Bauer & Baumeister, 2011). It is acquired from early ages, and it is among the recent topics of research. From early ages onwards, increases in children's capacity for planning, thought and action occur through maturation and experience. Children gradually acquire control of their sensorimotor, emotional, and cognitive systems and acquire numerous skills (Santrock, 2011). Children who develop comprehension and expression skills as a result of changes occurring in language and social-cognitive skills together with age, make rapid progress in their interactions with their peers and with adults (Denham, 1998). Therefore, development of self-regulation begins with the emergence of different components, including learning styles, metacognition, and goal-directed behaviors, from an early age onwards (Boekaerts, 1999). According to Kopp (1982), children begin to possess flexibility in regulating themselves or in the control processes that meet changing situational demands.

Self-regulation in the early childhood period is explained from a theoretical perspective with different approaches, such as psychoanalytic, behavioral, cognitive, social learning and social-cognitive learning approaches. While Freud (2000) focuses on emotions in psychoanalytic theory, he explains the development of self-regulation with the increase in emotional needs. In the behavioral approach, self-regulation is regarded as control of one's own behavior (Bronson, 2000). While Flavell (1979) defines this process as one of the most important signs of cognitive development in early childhood, Vygotsky (1979) stresses the role of the socio-cultural environment in a person's control of his/her attention, thoughts, and actions in self-regulation. According to social learning theory, self-assessment plays a critical role in the development of self-regulation (Bandura & Walters, 1977). From a social-cognitive perspective, however, a person's understanding of himself and those around him is important, and examination of social science in the cognitive process becomes the issue. Therefore, social cognition is related to self-regulation, and in order to achieve the aims, it requires the management and regulation of behaviors with cognitive and emotional systems. In this context, self-regulation has a multi-dimensional structure that includes attention regulation (enabling attention, preventing distraction of attention, and diverting attention), emotion regulation (recognising and expressing emotion) and behavior regulation (behavior control) (Bandura, 1991; Posner & Rothbart, 2000). In this research, self-regulation was examined in a multidimensional structure, starting from the necessity of evaluating children's developmental characteristics at early ages multidimensionally.

Attention regulation, which is the first dimension of self-regulation, involves the ability to focus one's attention on the task in order to control actions (Luszczynska et al., 2004). Attention regulation, which has an important role in an individual's interaction with his/her environment, can be evaluated as the capacity to direct emotions and thoughts in order to choose an action, object or place and to perform the desired action (Rueda et al., 2005). In other words, attention regulation refers to the ability to

target stimuli to create a cognitive and behavioral response to selected stimuli. While attention regulation is an effortful, voluntary strategy seen in young children from the age of 1.5-2, it becomes more sophisticated and complex together with age (Kochanska et al., 2001). Attention regulation, which affects the activities of choosing, deciding and taking action, is a part of the cognitive functions that reflect thoughts and emotions and enable purposeful, focused attention (Bronson, 2000). Moreover, attention regulation skills are associated with the characteristics of cognitive development in the preschool period.

Emotion regulation, which is another dimension of self-regulation, includes the initiation of a new emotional reaction or change in emotional reactions that are in progress (Ochsner & Gross, 2005), and can be defined as the performing or postponement of an action in order to realise another objective (Carver, 2004). In early scientific research studies, the concept of emotion regulation was regarded as the effort made to control and change negative emotions. However, with the increase in the number of studies in this field over time, it came to be understood as the ability to regulate positive emotions as well (Gross, 1999). Accordingly, emotion regulation can be defined as changing subjective experiences of emotions or managing unpleasant emotions in achieving goals (Lawton, 2001). Emotion regulation is also evaluated as strategies used to bring one's emotional state to a comfortable level in order to achieve one's aims (Tortamış Özkaya, 2013). These strategies shape what emotions are experienced, when, and how they are experienced, and how they are expressed. It also includes being aware of abilities related to emotional experiences that affect one's performance (Boekaerts, 2011). In recent years, researchers have focused on children's own emotions and behaviors related to emotion in the emotion regulation process, and also on individual differences in social competence and judgement (Eisenberg, 2006). The ability to control the duration and intensity of emotions in the face of changing situations in early childhood is regarded as one of the most important development skills (Cole et al., 1994).

Behavior regulation, which is the third dimension of self-regulation, is the ability to integrate cognitive skills such as attention, working memory and inhibition in order to select an appropriate behavior (McClelland et al., 2007). Behavior regulation assists children in paying attention, remembering instructions and staying on the task amidst distracting factors in the environment (Blair, 2002; Ponitz et al., 2008). Behaviors such as willingness to accomplish new tasks with effort and self-control and maintaining appropriate behavior with internal motivation can be shown as behavior regulation skills (Rothman et al., 2011). It also includes skills such as following instructions, obeying classroom rules, and preventing inappropriate actions (Fredricks et al., 2004). Directing attention in the classroom environment in acquiring and integrating new information can be possible with a successful behavioral regulation. The behavioural aspects of self-regulation are of critical importance for successful social functioning in early childhood and support children's ability to adapt to social rules (Ponitz et al., 2008).

Self-regulation, which is also evaluated as children's ability to direct their attention, emotions, and behaviors towards learning tasks, forms the basis of healthy social and academic development from early ages (McClelland & Cameron, 2012). Self-regulation is important not only because it is directly correlated with academic success, but also because of social skills such as encouraging children's interaction with others (Montroy et al., 2014). Self-regulation also represents the behaviors necessary for success in social learning environments (McClelland & Cameron, 2012) and places children in a more advantageous position for high-quality social interaction with their teachers and peers (Montroy et al., 2014). While self-regulation supports children's social skills such as sharing and remaining emotionally positive (Denham et al., 2012a; Hubbard & Coie, 1994), it also contributes to their displaying more socially competent behaviors during interaction with their peers (Fabes et al., 1999). Studies carried out on the subject of self-regulation at an early age have also revealed that self-regulation is effective on children's academic and social skills (Blair, 2002; Erol et al., 2022; Holmes et al., 2016). In fact, children whose self-regulation skills are underdeveloped generally tend to display social reticence due to having difficulty with using suitable strategies for beginning interaction (Coplan et al., 2001), and more behavioral problems are seen in these children (Tozduman-Yaralı &

Güngör-Aytar, 2017). For this reason, the inclusion of practices aimed at self-regulation skills in preschool education is significant for fostering these skills in children from early ages onwards.

The preschool years, which cover the ages of 3-6, is a period in which children learn to cope with difficulties by gaining the ability to control and change their emotions and behaviors (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014). Creating environments in which children have many opportunities for acquiring and practicing self-regulation skills during this period is essential for optimising their development in later years (McClelland & Cameron, 2012). Teachers should know that the most important aspect of learning is the development of the child's self-regulation ability and should support children in social and emotional terms in the classroom environment by providing opportunities for rich teacher-child and child-child interaction (Brophy, 1999). Classrooms in which teachers have created a positive classroom atmosphere and offered opportunities for children to express themselves and work independently are classrooms in which there is effective learning and where self-regulation skills can be performed (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Downer et al., 2010). In these classrooms, while teachers guide children's behaviors, they create environments that give children the opportunity to openly reveal their expectations and actively participate in activities. At the same time, they also take care to create activity plans and materials that will be able to respond to children's developmental needs and to minimise long transitions (Anderson et al., 1980). Positive results of educational practices that support self-regulation skills have been demonstrated by various studies (Baron et al., 2017; Çelik & Kamaraj, 2020; Fuhs et al., 2013; Housman et al., 2018). Research reveals the key role of early childhood education quality, classroom environment and teacher in supporting self-regulation (Cadima et al., 2019; Fuhs et al., 2013; Hamre et al., 2014). Although there is a lack of research about the processes that facilitate the development of self-regulation skills of young children in preschool education environments, it is known that children's ability to regulate their own behaviors, emotions and thoughts can change according to existing support in preschool classrooms. Considering the results of the study showing that self-regulation is related to academic skills and social competence (Denham et al., 2012b; Duncan et al., 2018; Fuhs et al., 2013; Li et al., 2017; Lipsey et al., 2017; Penela et al., 2015; Robson et al., 2020; Skibbe et al., 2019; Smith Donald et al., 2007) and emphasizing the role of the teacher in this process (Cadima et al., 2016a; Cadima, et al., 2016b; Ivrendi et al., 2022), it can be said that more research is needed on educational practices that support self-regulation. There are quantitative studies conducted by collecting data with various scales and forms on the self-regulation skills of preschool children in Türkiye (Aydoğdu, 2022; Gözeler & Özbey, 2023; Kazu & Yavuz, 2021; Kurt & Sığirtmaç, 2023; Uyanık et al., 2021). However, it is seen that there is a need for qualitative studies that reveal practices in the field. It is thought that examining the practices for attention, emotion and behavior regulation in the preschool period and determining the quality of the current conditions offered to children for the knowledge and skills they want to gain will contribute to the studies to be carried out in this field. The aim of this study is to examine the practices of self-regulation in the preschool period from the perspective of teachers.

In this direction, the sub-aims of the research were determined as follows:

- (1) Teachers' opinions in the classroom practices aimed at regulating children's attention,
- (2) Teachers' opinions in the classroom practices aimed at regulating children's emotions, and
- (3) Teachers' opinions in the classroom practices aimed at regulating children's behaviors.

## METHOD

In this section of the research paper, the research method, participants, data collection tool, data collection, data analysis and validity-reliability processes are explained in detail.

## Research Method

This study aims to investigate in-class practices for attention, emotion, and behaviour regulation in the preschool period. The study is conducted with qualitative research method. The qualitative research method provides the opportunity for investigation of educational organisations, and the processes in which organisations are involved, in a natural environment (William & Katz, 2001). Because of this reason, this study which aims to investigate the education process from the perspective of the teacher was carried out with the qualitative research method. Descriptive case study design which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the research. Case study is a detailed examination of an individual, group or programme within clearly defined boundaries (Merriam, 1998). In the study, in-class practices for self-regulation was investigated in detail from the perspective of teachers with the qualitative research design. In descriptive case studies, the aim is to describe the cases revealed in previous studies (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). In line with the purpose of the study, in-class practices for attention, emotion and behavior regulation, which are considered as sub-dimensions of self-regulation, were described.

## Participants

The sample of this study consisted of 22 teachers actively working in four different pre-school state education institutions and difference classes. The participants were determined using convenient sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods. Convenient sampling method aims to investigate the most accurate data by selecting the participants with whom productive relationships can be established (Maxwell, 2012). In this study, the study group was selected with the convenient sampling method and the data were collected in depth and in detail. The variables used in the research were determined as participants' age, gender, professional experience, education level, and the type of institution where they worked. Demographic information of the participants is given in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Demographic Information of the Participants*

Variable	Group	f	%
Age	21-30	4	18
	31-40	10	46
	41-50	8	36
Gender	Female	22	100
Educational Level	Graduate level	17	77
	Postgraduate level	5	23
Professional Experience	1-10 years	5	23
	11-20 years	10	45
	21-30 years	7	32
Type of Institution	Kindergarten	13	59
	Nursery class	9	41

According to the age variable, 18% (n=4) of the participants were in the 21-30 age group, 46% (n=10) belonged to the 31-40 age group, and 36% (n=8) were in the 41-50 age group. According to the gender variable, all participants (100%) are women. According to the education level variable, 77% (n=17) of the participants had a graduate-level education, while 23% (n=5) had received postgraduate education. In terms of the professional experience variable, 23% (n=5) of the participants had between 1-10 years, 45% (n=10) had between 11-20 years, and 32% (n=7) had between 21-30 years of professional experience. With regard to the type of institution variable, 59% (n=13) of the participants worked at kindergarten, while 41% (n=9) were employed in nursery class.

## Data Collection Tool

In this study interview technique was used as data collection method and open-ended questions were asked to teachers through a semi-structured interview form. The semi-structured interview form,

which is regarded as a flexible and powerful data collection tool for discovering individuals' backgrounds and experiences (Rabionet, 2011), allows the researcher to direct additional questions on subjects that participants consider important, and to gather detailed data (Longhurst, 2003). A semi-structured interview form consisting of two sections was designed as the data collection tool in the research. In the first part of the research form, demographic questions about participants' age, professional experience, education level, and the type of institution where they worked, were included. The second part of the research form included experience-based questions aimed at examining the practices that participants carried out for attention regulation, emotion regulation and behavior regulation of children in the preschool period. For example, what are the practices you do for attention regulation? The draft form was revised by obtaining the views of two specialists in the field and two linguists, and a pilot study was carried out with two participants. Field specialists and linguists review the interview questions to ensure the validity and reliability of the questions. This review included clarity, comprehensibility, and language of the research questions. According to Glesne (2015), from the pilot application, the participant is expected to provide feedback on questions related to clarity, comprehensibility, and language. Following the pilot study, the semi-structured interview form used in the research was given its final form and the data were collected.

### **Data Collection**

The research data were collected in the spring term during the 2020-2021 academic year by a field specialist researcher using the interview method. In using the interview method, the aim was for the researchers to reveal in-depth views related to the case and to allow them to address additional questions, where required, in line with the aim of the research. In this context, prior to the interviews, an explanation of the aim and confidentiality of the research was given to the participants, and the research questions were directed by distance communication tools. The interviews focused on teachers' self-regulation practices. Participants were asked to give detailed explanations about the questions related to the practices process. The asynchronous interview with each individual participant lasted approximately 30 minutes. In the study, the answers of the participants were recorded by writing the quotations in the form of short notes. According to the participants' responses to the research questions, the themes and codes were created, and the data was transferred to computer environment. In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed (Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University Ethics Committee, 12.01.2021/23).

### **Data Analysis**

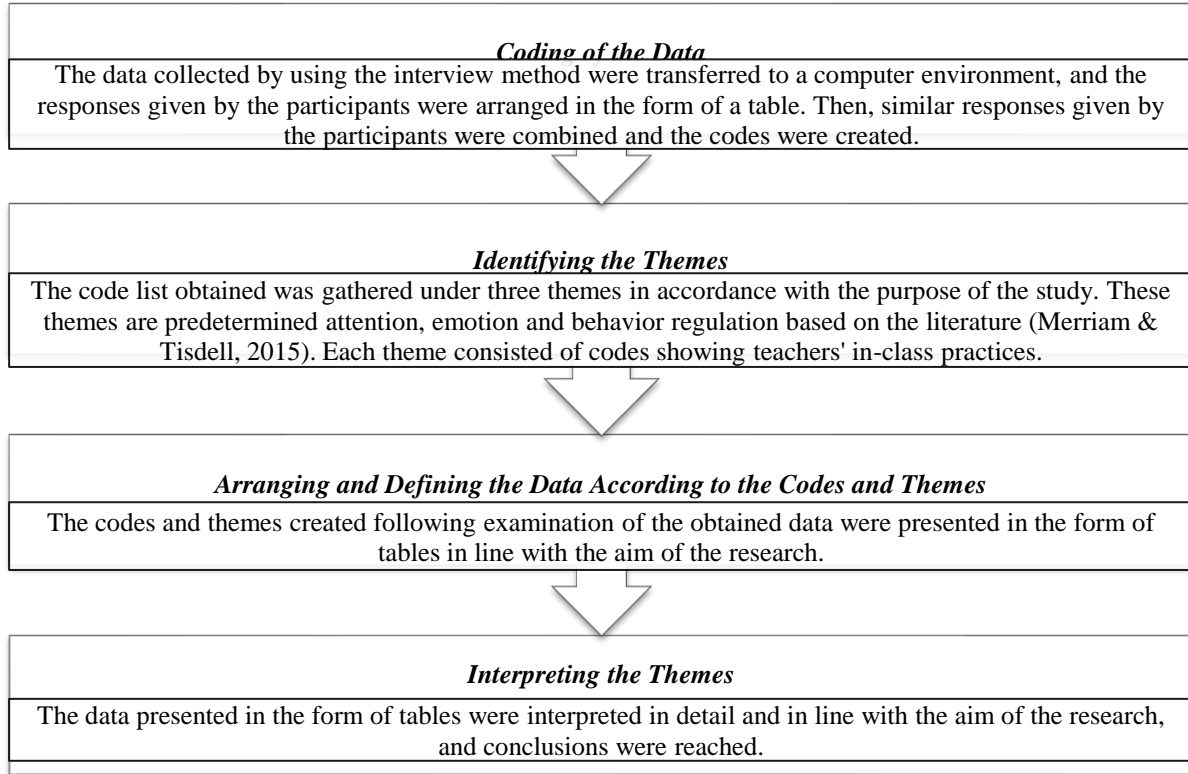
The research was conducted with qualitative research method using a case study design. The data collected in the study were analysed using the content analysis technique (Patton, 2002). Content analysis, which allows qualitative data to be analysed quantitatively (Ryan & Bernard, 2000), is a type of analysis that allows the similar data obtained from the participants to be brought together and interpreted (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). Inductive content analysis is used firstly to create codes, then to reveal the themes from these codes, and finally to reach the research results. Content analysis is performed in four stages (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). These stages are, respectively, coding of the data, identifying the themes, arranging and defining the data according to the codes and themes, and interpreting the findings. Within this context, the stages followed in the analysis of the research data are explained in Figure 1.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure validity and reliability in this study, the concepts of credibility, transferability, and consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were used. To enable credibility in the research, the data were presented to expert review and long-term interaction was ensured with the participants. More than one researcher was included in the analysis process and researcher triangulation was performed. The researcher tried to gain an in-depth understanding of the case by devoting sufficient time to the data

collection process. To enable transferability, detailed descriptions were given, data were analysed objectively, participants were coded as P1, P2, P3... for direct quotations, the research method was explained in detailed and easy-to-understand language was used for readers. Diversity was provided in the selection of participants, and the practices were detailed. For consistency, comparison of the codes was made by the two specialists. USING the formula  $P = [Na / (Na + Nd)] \times 100$  (Miles & Huberman, 1994) an interrater agreement of 89% was found. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there should be at least 80% agreement between researchers for reliability. As a result of the evaluation of validity and reliability, the study can be evaluated as valid and reliable.

**Figure 1.**  
*Stages of Data Analysis*



## RESULTS

In this section of the study, findings related to preschool teachers' practices for attention regulation, emotion regulation and behavior regulation are included. The research findings are illustrated with tables and are explained in detailed by giving direct quotations of participants' views.

### Practices Related to Attention Regulation

The first sub-problem of the research aimed to determine preschool teachers' practices towards attention regulation in the classroom. Information related to practices towards attention regulation in the classroom is given in Table 2.

When Table 2 is examined, preschool teachers mostly stated that they did activities (47%) related to attention regulation. They attempted to attract children's attention and to focus their attention by means of exercises during activities. They used different materials (23%) to draw children's attention in the classroom. Furthermore, it was revealed that for attention regulation, they gave importance to

in-class interaction (12%), guided children towards taking responsibility (9%) in the classroom and prepared the classroom layout (9%) in accordance with children's development characteristics and needs. These practices aimed to guide children's emotions and thoughts in choosing, making decisions, and taking actions, which can contribute to attention regulation.

**Table 2.**  
*Attention Regulation Practices*

Theme	Codes	Participant Views
Attention Regulation	Activity (n=20)	'I use visual presentations and technologies. I hide the objects, jigsaw pieces, pictures, etc. that I am to use to introduce the subject, in the classroom and ask my students to find them. I do attention activities with Orff and rhythm exercises. I do attention development and perception awareness activities with questions like "What could be behind the wall?", and "Can you tell us what there is in the kitchen or in other parts of your home?" (P.18)
	Material (n=10)	'Different lesson materials are used to attract the children's interest, such as an illuminated table, costumes, experiment materials, etc. Moreover, lessons are taught in different ways and routine is avoided in order to attract the children's interest. For example, drama, inquiry, learning by doing, experiments, etc.' (P.3)
	Interaction (n=5)	'In order to regulate the attention of children in the classroom, it is very important for the first interaction for the teacher to make friendly and sincere eye contact. Mutual trust is established with these behaviors. Desired gains and indicators are achieved in the classroom with confidence.' (P.19)
	Responsibility (n=4)	'When one of my students becomes distracted, I help him to maintain his attention by giving him little responsibilities. During long activities, I prevent them from getting bored and try to keep their easily distracted attention alive by including finger games and songs at intervals.' (P.14)
	Classroom arrangement (n=4)	'The classroom arrangement is changed every 2-3 weeks according to the topic to be taught. Information boards and learning corners are set up and organised according to topics. Arrangements are made in the classroom by selecting materials suitable for the age, development, height and needs of the children. (P.4)

### Practices Related to Emotion Regulation

The second sub-problem of the research aimed to determine preschool teachers' practices towards emotion regulation in the classroom. Information related to practices towards emotion regulation in the classroom is given in Table 3.

**Table 3.**  
*Emotion Regulation Practices*

Theme	Codes	Participant views
Emotion Regulation	Activity (n=18)	'Emotions emerge with the drama method. Since it is impromptu, the child proceeds as he wishes. At the same time, a child's emotional states are also observed in individual or large group games.' (P.1)
	Communication (n=7)	'Emotion control is very difficult especially in the 4-5 age group. If we consider ordinary emotions and extraordinary moods, calm and discreet eye-level communication is always useful. I would like to encourage these age groups to express themselves instead of suppressing their emotions. Listening to the child at that moment and passing it on to him is half the job. Emotions flow like the seasons are important!' (P.2)
	Brainstorming (n=7)	'We do brainstorming regarding what children can do in relation to scenario situations and possible events. For example, I ask questions like "How would you feel if your friend broke your toy while he was playing with it? What would you do?" Sometimes, I also ask them to draw pictures related to possible situations.' (P.6)
	Emotion panel (n=5)	'We play games with materials such as an emotion panel, emotion cards and emotion dice. We do drama exercises. I frequently include the "What would you do if it was you?" game and question.' (P.7)

When Table 3 is examined, it was revealed that preschool teachers mostly stated that they did activities (49%) related to emotion regulation. With the activities that teachers apply in class, they gave children the opportunity to encounter different emotional states and to express their emotions. Teachers gave importance to communication with children (19%) and stressed the importance of



communication in emotion regulation. Moreover, it was observed that with the brainstorming technique (19%), teachers addressed various questions related to emotions to the children and attempted to reveal what they felt in different situations. Furthermore, it was revealed that emotion panel materials (13%) related to emotions were used in the classroom. These practices, which focus on children's own emotions and emotion-related behaviors, as well as individual differences in social competence and judgment, can contribute to emotion regulation.

### Practices Related to Behavior Regulation

The third sub-problem of the research aimed to determine preschool teachers' practices towards behavior regulation in the classroom. Information related to practices towards behavior regulation in the classroom is given in Table 4.

**Table 4.**  
*Behavior Regulation Practices*

Theme	Codes	Participant views
Behaviour Regulation	Obeying rules (n=10)	'I set rules that do not include negative statements. I frequently remind students of the rules at the beginning of term. I do not generally give rewards or punishments. I try to talk about negative situations.' (P.6).
	Activity (n=9)	'With the treasure hunt game, we play a game that enables us to follow the instructions and reach the treasure. By conducting design-based projects, I observe that the children are learning within the process. By giving class monitoring duty, I offer each of my students the opportunity for experiences such as leading the ranks and being in the ranks. By frequently doing brainstorming, I increase in-class interaction with group chats. Moreover, I use various drama techniques (freeze frames, photo frames, role-plays, improvisations, etc.).' (P.18)
	Responsibility (n=6)	'Children are given responsibilities such as animal feeding, plant care, sharing friendships, choosing activities that will develop cooperation skills.' (P.4)
	Reward (n=5)	'Practices that are intangible and honor the child, such as a behavior board.' (P.15)
	Interaction (n=4)	'I use a calm tone of voice. I make eye contact using few words. I am working on courtesy sentences. I'm talking about the importance of waiting and listening. I do not compare children among themselves.' (P.8)
	Warning (n=4)	'First of all, I draw the boundaries from the first day onwards and explain the rules by putting them into practice, and during the process, I also reward those who display correct behavior with various small prizes. I also support the others with verbal warnings and stickers expressing emotions. Over time, I give them examples of what has been fostered in them by positive behaviors. Once the general rules have been systematically laid down, I conduct the process of transition to the sub-headings productively.' (P.2)

When Table 4 is examined, it was determined that with regard to behavior regulation, preschool teachers mostly stressed the importance of obeying classroom rules (26%). It was revealed that teachers set the class rules together with the children at the beginning of term, and that they reached consensus on the rules by talking to the children. For establishing order in the classroom and creating a democratic classroom environment, teachers gave more importance to rules, and they considered that the rules would be of benefit to behavior regulation. Teachers carried out various activities (24%) related to behavior regulation in class and they assisted children's behaviour regulation by giving them responsibility (15%). Furthermore, it was revealed that teachers used the reward method (13%) for behavior regulation, that they gave importance to interaction with children (11%), and that they gave warnings (11%) related to behavior regulation in the classroom. These practices can help children to remember instructions, stay on duty and maintain appropriate behavior for behavior regulation.

### DISCUSSION

The quality of education can be increased, and more qualified education practices can be realized by

in-class practices that support self-regulation in the pre-school period. This study has focused on attention, emotion, and behavior regulation practices for self-regulation in preschool period.

The first sub-problem of the research aimed to determine preschool teachers' practices towards attention regulation in the classroom. When the findings regarding the first sub-problem of the study were examined, it was determined that the teachers did activities such as games, dramas and stories in the classroom. Planning and implementing these activities that enable children to reflect their thoughts and feelings in a way that helps children focus their attention can support attention regulation. In-class fun activities and the interaction that takes place during these activities affect self-regulation in a positive way (Timmons et al., 2016; Williams, 2018). It is observed that the teachers started their classroom activities by drawing attention to different materials. The fact that the materials used in the classroom are appropriate for the developmental characteristics of the children means that it can support children's choosing and decision-making skills. Enriched materials in preschool practices contribute to self-regulation skills (Dickinson et al., 2019). It is observed that teachers emphasize the importance of interaction in order to express children's feelings and thoughts and try to interact positively with children. In classes in which a positive classroom atmosphere is created, it is seen that teachers ask questions requiring children to think so as to facilitate their participation and encourage them to learn. They provide feedback in the learning process, pay attention to time management, and make it possible for the learned knowledge to be applied to new situations in daily life (La Paro et al., 2004). Studies revealed that teacher-child interaction supports self-regulation skills positively (Cadima et al., 2016a; Vandembroucke et al., 2018). Responsibilities assigned to children support focusing their attention to act purposefully and take action. When similar studies are examined, it was revealed that a positive relationship between children and the teacher, and children's active participation in tasks given to them in class, had a positive effect on outcomes related to self-regulation, and that a positive classroom atmosphere supported attention skills related to task orientation and enabled irregularities to be reduced (Williford et al., 2013). Studies in the literature support the findings obtained in this research. It can be said that teachers make the necessary arrangements in order to avoid distractions in the classroom environment and not to distract children when they focus on a study. In the preschool period, behavioral interventions including arrangement of the classroom environment, teaching strategies, movement, attention and games can be used to support self-regulation (Savina, 2021). The social environments of children is very important for the development of their self-regulation skills (Montroy et al., 2016), and the self-regulation acquired in childhood is directly associated with interpersonal relations and a healthy life in later periods (Robson et al., 2020). Also, the fact that teachers give importance to interaction in the classroom, and guided children towards taking responsibility can be evaluated as positive practices related to attention regulation.

The second sub-problem of the research aimed to determine preschool teachers' practices towards emotion regulation in the classroom. When the findings related to the second sub-problem of the study are examined, it was revealed that preschool teachers mostly carried out classroom activities such as games, drama, stories, free time and music in relation to emotion regulation. It can be said that with these activities, teachers try to make children focus on their own emotions and behaviors related to emotion. It was revealed that in the preschool period, games activities played an important role in emotion regulation (Aksoy & Yaralı, 2017) and self-regulation (DeLuca et al., 2020). It was determined that teachers adopted positive communication methods in order for children to express their emotions more easily. Positive communication can help focus and control positive emotions. Children develop skills in self-regulation when they experience close teacher-child relationships (Cadima et al., 2016b). When similar studies were examined, it was determined that emotion regulation was very important for academic success, motivation and a positive teacher-child relationship (Graziano et al., 2007); on the other hand, negative situations such as loneliness and social dissatisfaction were seen more frequently in children whose self-regulation skills were not developed (Emre et al., 2020), and that preschool teachers were in need of support with regard to emotion regulation (Yılmaz Bursa & Dinç, 2020). Teachers' use of play in emotion regulation and giving importance to communication with children are consistent with other research results. It was seen that teachers used different methods and techniques during activities to enable children to recognise their

emotions, express their emotions and cope with negative emotions. One of them is brainstorming. Children try to reveal their emotional reactions with the brainstorming technique. Respecting the child's views and ideas, providing them autonomy, and supporting their interests can help to support self-regulation skills (Cadima et al., 2019). In addition, it was revealed that emotion panels related to emotions, and various emotion cards placed on these boards, were used in the classroom. It can be said that with these materials included in the classroom environment, teachers carried out various practices related to emotions during the day. Researches reveal that practices such as classroom context (quality, management) program and emotion coaching are important in promoting the development of self-regulation (Eisenhower et al., 2007; Rimm Kaufman et al., 2009; Rudasill, 2011; Silkenbeumer et al., 2018).

The third sub-problem of the research aimed to determine preschool teachers' practices towards behavior regulation in the classroom. It can be said that teachers think that obeying rules is important for behavior regulation. Having clear rules can help children direct their behavior correctly. As children explore self-regulation strategies, they may feel more comfortable in supportive environments where they receive more positive feedback from teachers (Fuhs et al., 2013). It was revealed that teachers also performed various activities related to behavior regulation in class, and that they expected that children would control their behaviors. These activities can help children remember instructions and stay on task. Teachers' supportive practices are effective in regulating behavior (Camodeca & Coppola, 2019; McClelland et al., 2007). It was seen that preschool teachers assisted children in regulating their behaviours by giving them responsibility in class. Responsibilities given to children can be expected to develop their self-control by providing them with intrinsic motivation. In line with this, it is important for children to gain autonomy at an early age in terms of self-regulation skills (Meuwissen & Carlson, 2019). In order for children to adapt to social rules from an early age, that teacher interacted with children and tried to support them to control their behaviors through interaction. When similar studies are examined, it was revealed that taking responsibility and in-class interaction supported positive social behaviors (Pakarinen et al., 2020), and that emotional, cognitive learning environment, teacher instructions and self-regulation skills were correlated with behavior regulation (Fuhs et al., 2013). Teachers' practices regarding behavior regulation, such as classroom management and interaction, are consistent with other research results. It was discovered that teachers used the warning method to remind children about correct behavior. Behavior regulation can help children to focus their attention, remember instructions and stay on task. Children with inadequate self-regulation in preschool period may experience behavioral problems in the following years (Lonigan et al., 2017). Warnings about behavioral expectations encourage children to find solutions to problems by making them think about behavior can be said.

## CONCLUSION

When the research findings are examined, it can be seen that preschool teachers performed activities aimed at attention regulation, emotion regulation and behavior regulation in the classroom, that they used various strategies to enable children to play an active part in these activities and to take responsibility, and that they carried out practices that would create a positive classroom atmosphere for teacher-child and child-child interaction. The daily flow in preschool education institutions includes various situations that elicit emotional and behavioral reactions. Therefore, self-regulation, which is the ability to cognitively control attention, emotions, and behavior supports reaching higher-level long-term goals. Children can be supported socially, emotionally, and academically with the right self-regulation practices in the classroom. In the study, there are implications for preschool teachers' practices that support self-regulation in classroom practices. This research is limited to the data obtained from pre-school teachers with at least a graduate-level degree and actively working in a public school. Other limitations of the study are that all of the participants were women, and the interviews were conducted online. In the study, practices for regulating attention, emotion and behavior have been discussed from the perspective of teachers. Based on the results of this qualitative

study, which took place in a small sample and was based on the perspective of preschool teachers, comprehensive conclusions cannot be drawn about general practices.

## IMPLICATIONS

Considering the role of the teacher in the development of self-regulation skills, it can be said that teachers should be supported professionally on how to support children's self-regulation skills in the learning environment. In this direction, in order to support preschool children's cognitive, social and emotional development and to foster good habits in them, enrichment of classroom practices aimed at attention regulation, emotion regulation and behavior regulation within the scope of self-regulation can be enabled. For emotion regulation, preschool teachers can support children in their relationships with their peers and teachers by creating a positive classroom atmosphere. In order to regulate attention and behavior, children can be supported to work independently and take more responsibilities in the classroom environment. In future research, the scope of the research can be expanded with experimental studies on attention, emotion and behavior regulation.

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## TÜRKÇE GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

3-6 yaş arası kapsayan okul öncesi yılları, çocukların duyu ve davranışlarını kontrol etme ve değiştirebilme yeteneği kazanarak zorluklarla baş etmeyi öğrendikleri bir dönemdir (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014). Çocukların öz düzenleme becerilerini kazanmak ve uygulamak için pek çok fırsata sahip olduğu ortamlar yaratmak, ilerleyen yıllarda gelişimlerini optimize etmede kritik bir öneme sahiptir (McClelland & Cameron, 2012). Öğretmenlerin olumlu sınıf atmosferi oluşturdukları, çocuklara kendilerini ifade etme ve bağımsız çalışma fırsatları sundukları sınıflar etkin öğrenmenin olduğu, öz düzenleme becerilerinin gerçekleşebileceği sınıflardır (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Downer vd., 2010). Söz konusu bu sınıflarda, öğretmenler çocukların davranışlarına rehberlik ederken, çocukların beklentilerini açıkça göstermelerine ve etkinliklere aktif olarak katılmalarına imkan verecek ortamlar oluştururlar. Aynı zamanda etkinlik planlarını ve materyalleri çocukların gelişim ihtiyaçlarına cevap verecek nitelikte oluşturmaya ve uzun geçişleri en aza indirmeye dikkat ederler (Anderson vd.,1980). Çeşitli araştırmalarla öz düzenleme becerilerini destekleyen eğitim uygulamalarının olumlu sonuçları ortaya konulmuştur (Baron vd., 2017; Çelik & Kamaraj, 2020; Fuhs vd., 2013; Housman vd., 2018). Yapılan araştırmada öz düzenlemenin desteklenmesinde erken çocukluk eğitim kalitesi, sınıf ortamı ve öğretmenin kilit rolü vurgulanmıştır (Cadima vd., 2019; Fuhs vd., 2013; Hamre vd., 2014). Okul öncesi eğitim ortamlarında küçük çocukların öz-düzenleme becerilerinin gelişimini kolaylaştıran süreçler hakkında yeterli araştırma olmamakla birlikte, çocukların kendi davranışlarını, duygularını ve düşüncelerini düzenleme yetenekleri, okul öncesi sınıflarındaki mevcut desteklere göre değişebileceği bilinmektedir. Öz düzenlemenin akademik beceriler ve sosyal yeterlilik ile bağlantılı olduğunu gösteren (Denham vd., 2012b; Duncan vd.,2018; Fuhs vd., 2013; Li vd.,2017; Lipsey e vd.,2017; Penela vd., 2015; Housman vd., 2020; Skibbe vd.,2019; Smith Donald vd., 2007) ve bu süreçte öğretmenin rolüne vurgu yapan çalışma sonuçları (Cadima vd., 2016a; Cadima vd., 2016b; Ivrendi et al, 2022) dikkate alındığında öz düzenlemeyi destekleyen eğitim uygulamaları ile ilgili daha fazla araştırmanın gerekli olduğu söylenebilir. Türkiye’de okul öncesi dönemde çocukların öz düzenleme becerilerine yönelik çeşitli ölçek ve formlarla veri toplanarak yapılmış nicel çalışmalar yer almaktadır (Aydoğdu, 2022; Gözeler & Özbey 2023; Kazu & Yavuz, 2021; Kurt & Sığırtaç, 2023). Bununla birlikte alanda uygulamaları ortaya koyan nitel çalışmalara ihtiyaç olduğu görülmektedir. Okul öncesi dönemde, dikkat, duyu ve davranış düzenlemeye yönelik yapılan uygulamaların incelenerek, çocuklara kazandırılmak istenen bilgi ve beceriler için onlara sunulan mevcut şartların niteliğinin belirlenmesinin bu alanda gerçekleştirilecek çalışmalara katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, okul öncesi dönemde öz düzenlemeye yönelik sınıf içi uygulamaların öğretmen bakış açısıyla incelenmesidir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda araştırmanın alt amaçları:

- (1) Sınıf içinde çocukların dikkatlerini düzenlemesine yönelik uygulamalarla ilgili öğretmen görüşleri,
- (2) Sınıf içinde çocukların duygularını düzenlemesine yönelik uygulamalarla ilgili öğretmen görüşleri,
- (3) Sınıf içinde çocukların davranışlarını düzenlemesine yönelik uygulamalarla ilgili öğretmen görüşlerinin incelenmesi olarak belirlenmiştir.

Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Nitel araştırma yöntemi eğitim örgütlerinin ve örgütlerin içinde bulunduğu süreçleri doğal ortamında araştırılmasına olanak tanıyan araştırma yöntemidir (William & Katz, 2001). Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan betimleyici durum çalışması deseni kullanılmıştır. Durum çalışması birey, grup ya da programın belirlenmiş sınırlar içinde detaylı ve derinlemesine incelenmesidir (Merriam, 1998). Betimleyici durum çalışmalarında daha önce yapılan çalışmalarda ortaya konan olguları tanımlamak amaçlanır (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2013). Araştırmanın çalışma grubunda dört farklı okul öncesi eğitim kurumu ve anasınıfında aktif olarak görev yapan 22 katılımcı yer almıştır. Katılımcılar amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden uygun örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak belirlenmiştir. Uygun örnekleme yöntemi verimli ilişkilerin kurulabileceği katılımcıların seçilerek en doğru veriye ulaşmayı amaçlayan örnekleme yöntemidir (Maxwell, 2012). Bu araştırmada uygun örnekleme yöntemi ile çalışma grubu seçilerek veriler derinlemesine ve detaylı olarak toplanmıştır. Araştırmada kullanılan değişkenler yaş, mesleki kıdem, eğitim durumu ve çalışılan kurum türü olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırmanın veri toplama

aracı olarak tasarlanan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu iki bölümden oluşmaktadır. Bireylerin yaşantılarını ve tecrübelerini keşfedebilmesinde esnek ve güçlü bir veri toplama aracı (Rabionet, 2011) olarak kabul edilen yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu katılımcıların önemli gördüğü konularda araştırmacıya ek sorular yönlendirme ve detaylı veri toplama olanağı sağlar (Longhurst, 2003). Araştırma formunun birinci bölümde katılımcıların yaş, mesleki kıdem, eğitim durumu ve çalışılan kurum türüne yönelik demografik sorular yer almaktadır. Araştırma formunun ikinci bölümünde okul öncesi dönemde çocukların dikkat düzenleme, duygu düzenleme ve davranış düzenlemelerine yönelik yapılan uygulamalarla ilgili betimleyici sorular yer almaktadır. Araştırma verileri görüşme yöntemi kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Yapılan görüşmeler 30 dakika sürmüştür ve toplanan veriler bilgisayar ortamına aktarılarak tema ve kodlar oluşturulmuştur. Araştırmada toplanan veriler içerik analizi tekniği ile çözümlenmiştir (Patton, 2002). Bu araştırmada geçerlik ve güvenilirliğin sağlanabilmesi için inandırıcılık, aktarılabilirlik ve tutarlılık (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) kavramları kullanılmıştır.

Araştırma sonuçları incelendiğinde, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin sınıf içinde dikkat düzenleme, duygu düzenleme ve davranış düzenlemeye yönelik etkinlikler yaptıkları, çocukların bu etkinliklerde aktif olarak yer almalarını ve sorumluluk almalarını sağlamak için farklı stratejiler kullandıkları, öğretmen-çocuk, çocuk-çocuk etkileşimi için olumlu sınıf atmosferi oluşturacak uygulamalar gerçekleştirdikleri belirlenmiştir. Öz düzenleme becerilerinin gelişiminde öğretmenin rolü dikkate alındığında öğretmenlerin öğrenme çevresinde çocukların öz düzenleme becerilerini nasıl destekleyecekleri konusunda profesyonel olarak desteklenmeleri gerektiği söylenebilir. Bu doğrultuda okul öncesi dönemde çocukların bilişsel, sosyal ve duygusal gelişimlerini desteklemek ve onlara iyi alışkanlıklar kazandırmak için, öz düzenleme kapsamında dikkat düzenleme, duygu düzenleme ve davranış düzenlemeye yönelik sınıf içi uygulamaların zenginleştirilmesi sağlanabilir.