CREATING SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY BY CULTURAL CODE TRANSFER IN PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract:

Early childhood years are critical in transferring culture to children. Early childhood education institutions have a paramount responsibility in transferring cultural codes to children in this critical period. This study aimed to examine the practices of transferring cultural codes to children in early childhood education institutions and teachers' views regarding this phenomenon. The research was carried out by the qualitative research method and case study design. The study group was formed by the purposeful sampling method and homogeneous sampling technique. 20 preschool teachers working in different early childhood education institutions (nursery class, kindergarten) formed the working group. In addition, the educational environments of four different early childhood education institutions were examined in terms of cultural elements. The research data were collected through an interview form consisting of structured and semi-structured questions prepared by the researcher in line with the relevant literature and expert opinion, and through the educational environment review form. The content analysis method was applied in the analysis of the research data. At the end of the study, it was found that teachers care about the transfer of cultural codes, do not consider themselves competent to teach these codes, do drama activities mostly to teach them, define them as traditions and values, mostly set national heroes as the example in the transmission of cultural codes. In addition, it was revealed that the

teachers thought that cultural education positively affects children's personality development and provides cultural sustainability. As for educational environments, they were found to be insufficient in terms of contributing to the teaching of the cultural elements.

Key Words: *Early childhood education, preschool teacher, sustainability, culture, cultural sustainability.*

Introduction

Society is a living and continuous system. The sustainability of the living society occurs in two ways. The first is that society lives biologically, and this happens thanks to newborn individuals. The second is that society continues to live culturally. This happens through the transfer of the culture and values of the society to the children and the future with them. The concepts learned and the values gained in early childhood form a basis for the future life of the individual and guide his/her life. Early childhood is a critical period in which knowledge, skills, and values that will be used in future life are built for the individual. Early childhood years are the strongest period in introducing new concepts to children (Witt & Kimple, 2008). Concepts are the building blocks of knowledge (Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2016). Children learn in different ways such as experience, behavior, communication, and interaction in their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and reflect the culture of adults just like a mirror (Gorina, Ivanova, & Kravale-Paulina, 2021). Piaget states that children actively construct their learning (Piaget, 1973). Children learn concepts through naturalistic (the child's learning), informal (incidental learning), and structured (planned and instructional) experiences (MEB, 2016).

The skills that children acquire in preschool years are generally the building blocks of their future education (Pagani, Jalbert & Girard, 2005). A quality preschool education program should include goals such as character education, development of social and emotional skills, and social values as well as academic skills (Greenberg et al., 2003). In the transfer of culture that includes values, family comes first and then educational institutions (Aydın & Gürler, 2013). The family is the place where "first

values" are learned in early childhood, and these values are reinforced by culture and life experiences (Briede & Drelinga, 2021).

The aim of education and educational institutions is not only to provide children with knowledge and skills, but also to teach them national, spiritual, cultural, and human values (Sapsağlam, 2016). Schools play a vital role in the transfer of cultural heritage from one generation to another (Çağlayan, 2005). The school's task is not just to teach subjects. The primary subject of the school is culture; the school itself is culture indeed (Bruner, 1996).

According to the Turkish Language Association [TDK], culture is defined as "all the material and spiritual values created in the process of social development and the tools used to create and transmit them to the next generations" (TDK, 2019). According to Tylor (1871), culture is the body of knowledge, art and traditions learned by the human species, and a set of traditional skills, habits, and behaviors. Tural (1988) sees culture as a system composed of values, norms, and social control elements that are passed down from one generation to another through social interaction. The question that comes to mind here is whether the school fulfills the function of transferring culture and value. According to Ogbu (1982), the school is isolated from the cultural system it is intended to serve.

Global changes have significantly transformed the social habits of children and young people. Today's children are quite different in terms of their daily activities, value systems, and life goals (Fedosejeva et al., 2018). The transfer of cultural codes to children is of vital importance for sustainable society life. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defines sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present ones without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations" (WCED, 1987, p.37). Sustainability has three dimensions: protecting nature, protecting economic vitality, and complying with social regulations (Veisson & Kabadayı, 2018). Similarly, Basiago (1999) states that sustainability has three dimensions: environmental, social, and economic. Economic sustainability includes the continuity of capital; social sustainability includes social interaction, communication, and values; and environmental sustainability includes the protection of the environment.

"Culture" is the essence of sustainability from the point of view of sustainable development. The "culture for sustainable development" approach regards culture as

integrated with ecological, social, and economic sustainability (Dessein, Soini, Fairclough, & Horlings, 2015). The main purpose of education for sustainable development is to spread the principles and practices of sustainable development to all levels of education and to encourage individuals to evaluate the future social, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of their actions (Rieckman, 2018). UNESCO (2008) declares that early childhood is a vital period for individuals to acquire the concept of sustainability. UNESCO (2009) proposes that the concept of sustainability be included in all educational levels. Shove (2003) states that the concept of sustainability can be gained through daily life skills in early childhood years. Ülavare and Veisson (2015) express that the shaping of values and attitudes starts in early childhood, so activities carried out in early childhood education centers have a vital role.

Rationale

Citizenship awareness and identity acquisition is an important developmental process for children, and the teaching of cultural codes supports both the citizenship awareness and identification processes of children. Costandineous (2010) states that art helps children create social responsibility and citizenship awareness. Cultural values can affect the prosperity and well-being of current and future generations (Kasser, 2011). Cultural-Historical Theory emphasizes the importance of social interactions and culture in children's learning experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). The environment the child is in is very effective in his cognitive development, language development, and concept learning process; and learning takes place in the socio-cultural environments the child is in (Bodrova, Leong, Güler, & Haktanır, 2010). Similarly, in Ecological Theory, it is stated that children have ecosystems around them and that the social and cultural characteristics of these ecosystems affect the personality traits of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The development and learning of children are directly related to the quality of the environment in which they live. In an environment full of socially, culturally, and morally rich stimuli, children's learning experiences will also be positive.

The studies abound culture and education in general in the review of the relevant literature as follow: The use of art to increase social responsibility and citizenship awareness (Costandius, 2010), sustainability through education: How Latvian heritage survived in exile in Germany (Franzenburg, 2016), defining cultural sustainability in

education (Laine, 2016), a case study on the perception of multicultural education in primary schools in Turkey (Aslan, 2018), an examination of Turkish teaching programs in terms of cultural heritage elements (Gülden, 2019), teachers' attitudes towards cultural education (Karacabey, Özdere & Bozkuş, 2019), and an examination of preschool education programs in terms of national concepts (Sapsağlam, 2020). However, the studies in cultural code transfer in the early childhood period are quite limited as follows; an example study on socio-cultural education in early childhood: Mimar Sinan (Coşkun Keskin & Daysal-Ersoy, 2012), early socio-cultural education in childhood: an action study on some events and phenomena in Turkish history (Kırtel, 2012), the implementation of socio-cultural activities prepared for children aged 60-72 months (Kırtel, 2018), religious and cultural values education in cartoons broadcast on children's channels in Turkey (Demir, 2019). Therefore, the study is thought to be important in that it necessitates valuable findings on the transfer of cultural codes in early childhood, about which the relevant literature rarely includes any study.

This study aims to examine the views and practices of preschool teachers regarding the transfer of cultural codes in early childhood for sustainable community life. It also intends to observe early childhood education environments in terms of the cultural elements they include.

Method

The research is a qualitative study and is planned in a case study design. The case study is a qualitative research approach in which the researcher examines one or a few situations that are limited in time with data collection tools (observations, interviews, audio-visuals, documents, reports) that include multiple sources and identify situations and situational themes (Creswell, 2003). In the study, practices for the transfer of cultural codes to preschool children were determined as a special case, and this case was tried to be evaluated in line with scientific data, including teachers' views and the examinations on educational environments.

Participants

The study group consisted of 20 preschool teachers working in different early childhood education institutions. The homogeneous sampling technique, which is a type

of purposeful sampling method, was used in the formation of the study group. Homogenous sampling is the creation of the sample from a homogenous subgroup or case in the universe related to the research problem (Büyüköztürk et al. 2012). Information on the demographic features of the participants in the study group is included in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Female	20	100
	Male	-	-
Age	21-30	13	65
	31-40	7	35
Education	Undergraduate	15	75
	Graduate	5	25
Teaching Experience	1-10 Years	13	65
	11-20 Years	7	35
Institution	Kindergarten	9	45
	Nursery Class	11	55

The information in Table 1 shows that all of the participants (n = 20; 100%) are female; 13 participants (65%) are between 21-30 years old while the age of 7 of them (35%) are between 31-40; while 15 participants (75%) have an undergraduate degree, 5 participants (55%) have a graduate degree; 13 participants (65%) have 1-10 years, and 7 of them (35%) have 11-20 years teaching experience; and while 11 participants (55%) work in nursery class, 9 participants (45%) work in kindergarten schools.

Data collection tools

The research data were collected through the interview form prepared by the researcher and the educational environment examination form. First, the relevant literature was examined in the preparation of the interview form. Then, research questions were created and opinions were taken from three experts and two teachers who had knowledge and experience on the issue under investigation. After the expert opinion, the data collection tools were finalized; and the construct validity of the data collection tools was checked by interviewing two teachers. The data collection tools included factual questions, knowledge questions, attitude-behavior questions, and belief and opinion

questions. In addition, the educational environment of four different educational institutions was examined in terms of elements for the transmission of cultural codes.

Data collection

Interview form and educational environment examination form were used to collect the data. Data collection was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, the teachers in the study group were contacted where they were provided with information about the purpose of the study, the data collection tools, and participant privacy; and voluntary approval was obtained from the participants here. Then the voluntary participants were asked to fill in the interview form which was delivered to them through email and to submit it to the researcher electronically again due to the coronavirus pandemic. In the second stage, two nursery classes and two preschool teachers each working in four different institutions were asked to provide photographs of their classes without children. The photographs related to the educational environments were examined by the researcher in terms of cultural elements, and the data obtained were recorded in the educational environment examination form.

Data analysis

The content analysis method was used in the analysis of the research data. The basic process in content analysis is to gather similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes and to interpret them by organizing (Creswell, 2003; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

Validity and reliability are very important for all studies. There are different methods and techniques used in securing the validity and reliability of the studies. The study adopted the triangulation technique to ensure validity and reliability. There are four types of triangulation techniques which are method triangulation, source triangulation, analyzer triangulation, and theory/perspective triangulation (Patton, 2014). The current study applied data source triangulation and analyzer triangulation techniques.

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that there are three basic stages in the qualitative data analysis process: organizing or reducing the data, displaying the data, and depicting and verifying the results (Cresswell, 2003). In the process of analyzing the research da-

ta, categories and codes were created by the researcher. The data was coded separately by the researcher and an independent expert based on the created categories and codes, and the consistency between the coders was calculated. The reliability of the data analysis was tested by using the formula of Miles and Huberman (1994): 'Percentage of Agreement = [Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement) X 100]. Accordingly, the agreement rate between coders was determined as 92%.

Findings

The findings obtained are given in the form of tables, figures, and their comments. Participants' views on "Teaching Cultural Codes" are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Preschool Teachers' Answers Regarding the Teaching of Cultural Codes

Question	Category	f	%
Should children be given cultural education in preschool education institutions?	Yes	20	100
	No	-	-
Do you include cultural activities in your education program?	Yes	20	100
	No	-	-
Have you received a request from the parents of your students for training/activities for the transfer of cultural codes?	Yes	1	5
	No	19	95
In your opinion, whose duty is to give cultural education to children first?	Teacher	1	5
	Family	9	45
	Both	10	50

Table 2 shows that all preschool teachers (n = 20; 100%) think that cultural education should be given to the students; and all of them (n = 20; 100%) state that they include cultural activities in their curriculum. While only one teacher (5%) told that she received a request from parents to provide cultural education; 19 teachers did not receive any requests from parents to provide cultural education (95%). Table 2 displays that one teacher (5%) believes that providing cultural education to children is primarily the teacher's duty, 9 of them (45%) think that it is the family's duty, and 10 teachers (50%) think that it is the duty of the teacher and the family together.

Table 3. Findings Regarding Preschool Teachers' Competencies to Provide Cultural Education

Question	Category	f	%
Did you take a cultural education course during your undergraduate studies?	Yes	4	20
	No	16	80
Have you attended any seminars, courses, congresses, or scientific events for cultural education?	Yes	4	20
	No	16	80
Do you consider yourself competent to provide training for the teaching of cultural codes?	Yes	6	30
	No	14	70

Regarding the answers given by preschool teachers to the questions about their competencies in providing cultural education, Table 3 shows that four preschool teachers took a course for cultural education during undergraduate education (20%) while 16 of them did not take such a course during undergraduate education (80%). Besides, 4 teachers attended seminars, courses, congresses, or scientific events for cultural education (20%) whereas 16 teachers did not attend any events (80%); 6 teachers find themselves as competent for teaching cultural codes (30%), while 14 teachers do not think that they have adequate qualifications of teaching cultural codes (70%).

Table 4. Teachers' Views Regarding the Contribution of the Transfer of Cultural Codes to the Child

Responses	f	%
It improves citizenship awareness	17	85
It supports social-emotional development	16	80
It supports moral development	11	55
It supports language development	10	50
It increases academic success	2	10

Looking at the responses of preschool teachers in Table 4 regarding the contribution of the transfer of cultural codes to children, it can be seen that preschool teachers think that introducing cultural codes to children will improve children's awareness of citizenship (n = 17; 85%), support their social-emotional development (n = 16; 80%), moral development (n = 11; 55%), and language development (n = 10; 50%); and it will increase their academic achievement (n = 2; 10%).

Table 5. Preschool Teachers' Preferences for the Activity Type in which Cultural Codes are Included

Responses	f	%
Drama	10	50
Art	9	45
Game	7	35
Story	7	35
Music	7	35
Turkish language	5	25

Regarding the types of activities in which the teachers include cultural codes, Table 5 shows that the participant teachers include activities of drama (n=10; % 50), art (n=9; % 45), game (n=7; % 35), story (n=7; % 35), music (n=7; % 35), and Turkish language (n=5; % 25) respectively.

Table 6. Preschool Teachers' Activity Preferences Regarding the Transfer of Cultural Codes

Responses	f	%
I introduced national heroes	15	75
I organized an event to celebrate national days	14	70
I did a drama activity with cultural elements	11	55
I did a chat event with cultural elements	11	55
I did a musical event with cultural elements	11	55
I played traditional children's games	10	50
I told a story with cultural elements	9	45
I did an art event with cultural elements	9	45
I organized an event promoting our country/region	7	35
I did a project activity involving cultural elements	3	15
I made material design with cultural elements	2	10
I introduced traditional crafts	1	5

When the responses of the preschool teachers regarding the activities of the very last week for the transfer of cultural codes, which are in Table 6, are examined, the following can be observed: Teachers mostly introduce national heroes (n = 15; 75%), organize activities to celebrate national days (n = 14; 70%), engage in drama activities containing cultural elements (n = 11; 55%), carry out chat activities containing cultural elements (n = 11; 55%), get the children to play traditional games (n = 10; 50%), tell stories with cultural elements (n = 9; 45%), perform art activities with cultural elements (n = 9;

45%), organize activities promoting their country / region (n = 7; 35%), do projects involving cultural elements (n = 3; 15%), design materials containing cultural elements (n = 2; 10%), and introduce traditional handicrafts (n = 1; 5%). Findings reflecting the preschool teachers' views on the question "What are the cultural codes?" are included in Figure 1.
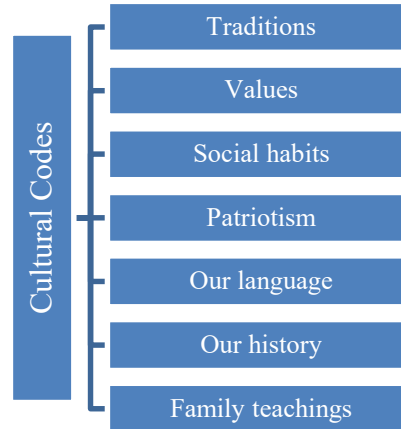

Figure 1. Themes for Comprehensive Definition of What Are the Cultural Codes?

The themes related to the comprehensive definition of "What Are Cultural Codes?" are shown in Figure 1. Preschool teachers in the study group had cultural codes, traditions (n = 7), values (n = 6), social habits (n = 5), patriotism (n = 3), our language (n = 2), our history (n = 2), and family teachings (n = 2). Some examples of participant views that make up the relevant themes are given below.

"[It is] the language, history, traditions, and customs of the society" (T4).

"All values such as respect, love, and helpfulness constitute our cultural codes" (T2).

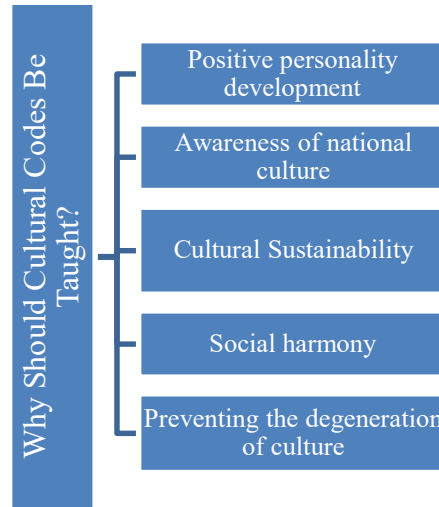*"It is the education the family gives to the child" (T9).*

Figure 2. Themes for Comprehensive Definition Regarding Why Should Cultural Codes Be Taught?

The themes related to the comprehensive description of "What Are Cultural Codes?" are included in Figure 2. Preschool teachers in the study group defined that the reasons for teaching cultural codes as positive personality development of children (n = 5), national culture awareness (n = 5), cultural sustainability (n = 4), social cohesion (n = 4) and preventing degeneration of culture (n = 2). Some examples of participant views that form the relevant themes are given below.

"It helps new generations to become individuals with unique personalities" (T3).

"Children learn the history and traditions of the country, thereby forming the future of the country" (T6).

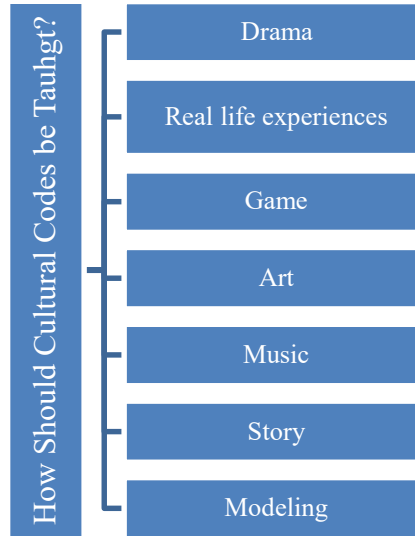*"It is important for the continuation of cultural characteristics of societies" (T7).*

Figure 3. Themes for Comprehensive Definition Regarding How Should Cultural Codes Be Taught?

The themes related to the comprehensive description of " How Should Cultural Codes Be Taught? " are included in Figure 3. Preschool teachers suggested such methods for teaching cultural codes as drama (n = 11), real-life experiences (n = 7), game (n = 6), art (n = 6), music (n = 4), story (n = 4), and modeling (n = 1). Some examples of participant views that form the relevant themes are given below.

"We can teach easily through drama" (T13).

"By doing and living. This is how it settles in the mind of the child "(T9).

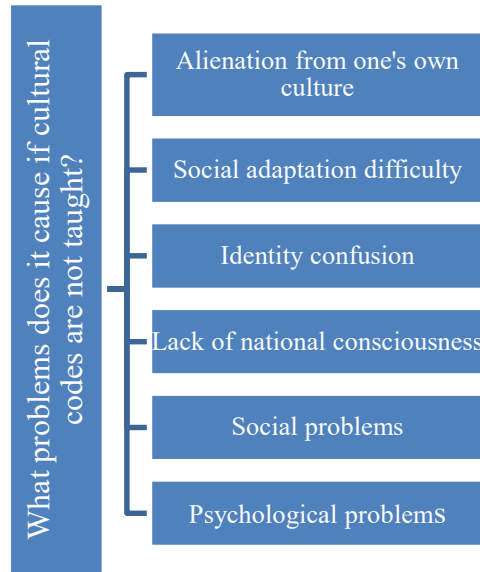*"Cultural codes should be taught with play and drama" (T4).*

Figure 4. Themes Related to the Problems of Not Teaching Cultural Codes

Figure 4 includes the themes related to the comprehensive description of the question "What Problems Does It Cause If Cultural Codes are Not Taught to?". It was observed that preschool teachers' views on the problems caused by not teaching cultural codes were gathered under the themes of alienation from their own culture (n = 7), social adaptation difficulties (n = 4), identity confusion (n = 3), lack of national consciousness (n = 3), social problems (n = 7). = 2) and psychological problems (n = 1).

"It causes the child to become alienated from his / her own culture" (T1).

"A child who has not met cultural elements means an adult disconnected from his own society" (T16).

"I think it will create a psychological gap" (T7)

Findings Concerning the Examination of Educational Environments in Terms of Cultural Elements

Findings regarding the examination of preschool education environments in terms of the cultural elements they contain are given in Figure 3. Here, four different educational environments were examined concerning "elements for the transmission of cultural codes".

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	Photo 1: The educational environment in Picture 1 was examined in terms of its features for the transmission of cultural codes; and it was observed that there was one visual material showing the flag of the country, two visual materials introducing the national heroes, and one visual material on which is the national anthem.
	Photo 2: The educational environment seen in Picture 2 was examined concerning its features for the transmission of cultural codes. It was seen that there was one visual material showing the flag of the country, one visual material introducing the national heroes, and one visual material with the national anthem.
	Photo 3: The educational environment shown in Figure 3 was examined regarding its features for the transmission of cultural codes. In this educational environment, it was observed that there was one visual material showing the flag of the country, five visual materials introducing national and internationally known artists, one visual material promoting national heroes, and one visual material with the national anthem.

Photo 4: The educational environment seen in Picture 4 was examined in terms of its features for the transmission of cultural codes. It is seen that there was one visual material showing the flag of the country, one visual material introducing the national heroes, and one visual material with the national anthem in this educational environment.
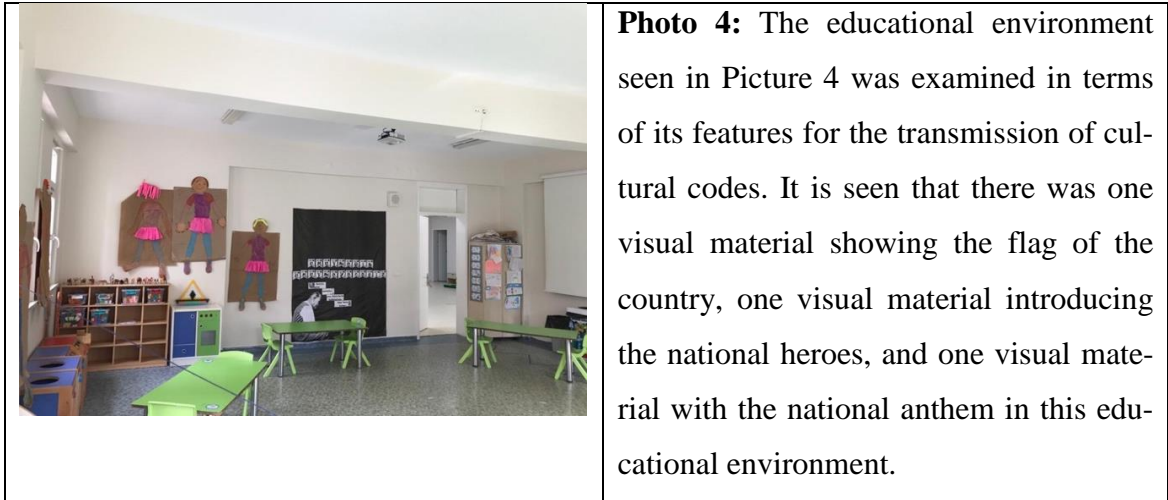
Figure 5. Sample of Photos Showing the Characteristics of Educational Environments Regarding Cultural Codes

Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to examine the practices carried out in early childhood education institutions to transfer cultural codes to children and the views of preschool teachers. As a complementary dimension, educational environments were examined in terms of their characteristics regarding cultural codes. The research was carried out following the qualitative research method and case study design. The following conclusions were reached in the study.

According to the findings of the research, it was found that all preschool teachers thought that children should be given cultural education; and they included cultural activities in their education programs. It was determined that only one teacher received a request from parents to provide cultural education for the children. It was also observed that there is one teacher who thinks that providing cultural education is primarily the duty of the teacher; nine teachers believe this duty belongs to the family, and 10 teachers express that this duty should be carried out by the teacher and the family together. Similar to the findings of the study, Kafol, Denac, and Znidarsic (2015) observed in their study on teaching culture to children that preschool teachers care about cultural education. In the National Education Basic Law (MEB, 1973), the general purpose of education is defined as "raising individuals who adopt, protect, and develop the national, moral, humanitarian, spiritual, and cultural values of the Turkish nation".

Therefore, it is a legal obligation for teachers to include activities for the teaching of national culture to children. It is thought that the main reason why the preschool teachers participating in the study receive very low demand from parents for teaching cultural codes to children is related to the different expectations of parents from preschool education and preschool teachers. In the study conducted by Erşan (2019), it was revealed that the primary expectations of parents from preschool education and preschool teachers were to prepare children for basic education. Logvinova (2016) states that preschool teachers are transmitters of cultural norms, values , and behaviors. The involvement of the family in the preschool education process reduces the problem behaviors of children and supports their social development (El Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). Therefore, the teacher and the family should work in cooperation in the process of transferring cultural codes to children.

It was revealed that the majority of preschool teachers did not take any courses on teaching culture to students during their undergraduate education and did not consider themselves competent to teach cultural codes. The preschool teachers participating in the study were teachers who were educated under the preschool teaching undergraduate program prepared by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and entered into force in 2007. It was observed that there is no compulsory course for teaching cultural codes to children in the related program (YÖK, 2007). However, in the new undergraduate program updated in 2018, there are elective courses such as "Culture and Language", "Family and Children in Turkish Culture" (YÖK, 2018). Teachers' capacity and competencies are the most important factors affecting the school success of children (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). Ladson-Billings (1995, 2001, 2009) states that teachers' abilities and experiences are important factors in their potential to be successful, but they are meaningless if their cultural competencies are lacking (Ukpokodu, 2011 as cited in Ladson and Billings). In the educational context, cultural competence includes an educator's sincere belief in the centrality of culture in teaching and learning, the ability to create a strong cultural identity, and positive inclinations towards diversity (Ukpokodu, 2011). As a social institution, the school is not only an element that provides academic knowledge and skills, but also an educational organization that transmits the culture and values of the society to future generations. The ability of the school

to fulfill this function depends on the competence of teachers in being a culture and value teacher. Supporting teachers at this point will enable the school and the teacher to fulfill their role of the cultural transmitter in a healthier way.

It was detected that preschool teachers think that introducing cultural codes to children will improve children's awareness of citizenship, support their social, emotional, moral, and language development, and increase their academic success.

It was determined that preschool teachers mostly used the cultural codes in drama, art, and play activities, and the top activities in the last week were the introduction of national heroes and the celebration of national days and traditional children's games. Art, music, and drama are an essential part of the culture (Irugalbandara & Campbell, 2020). Preschool teachers especially use drama (Duran, 2020), music (Gül, Mintaş, & Engür, 2020), play, and art (Sapsağlam & Ömeroğlu, 2015) activities in the process of value education. Early childhood education teachers consider that there is a natural link between play and learning; and that learning occurs during play (Bubikova-Moan, Næss Hjetland, & Wollscheid, 2019). In the research conducted by Yukay-Yüksel (2020), it was observed that drama and art activities improve children's awareness of their cultural characteristics, increase their expression skills, and support them to act in groups and cooperation. Sapsağlam (2020) examined the Turkish national preschool education program in terms of national concepts and found that there were objectives and outputs for the introduction of national heroes in the program. It is thought that the reason why preschool teachers frequently include drama and play activities in the processes of cultural transfer is related to the fact that these activities do not require any costs and support children's imagination and development, and offer children the opportunity to learn by having fun. At the same time, more frequent activities aimed at promoting national heroes and celebrating national days are related to the necessity of doing such activities in national education programs. Countries give some mandatory duties to teachers to teach and introduce national heroes and national days to children. This is seen as an effective way of transferring culture.

It was observed that preschool teachers define cultural codes as traditions, values , and social habits, and explain that teaching cultural codes are necessary since these codes affect children's personality development positively, ensure cultural sustainabil-

ity, and prevent deterioration of culture. Preschool teachers expressed the problems caused by not teaching cultural codes to children as alienation from children's own culture, social adaptation difficulties, and social problems. In the process of children's personality development, the social environment and the relationships within this environment, social and cultural factors, family, teachers, and other adults are influential (Erikson, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). According to Schwartz, culture and cultural characteristics constitute values (Scwartz, 1992). Teaching social, political, cultural, and aesthetic values to children constitutes the education of values (Veugelers & Vedder, 2003). Teaching social and cultural values to children positively affects children's academic achievement (Singh, 2011), reduces problem behaviors, facilitates their social and societal adaptation, and protects them from harmful habits (Schaafer, 2012). Sustainable community life can only be possible by transferring culture and values to future generations (Sapsağlam, 2016). Postmodernism has significantly changed social life and culture (Burke, 2014). In the rapidly globalizing world, for countries that gradually lose their local and cultural characteristics, teaching culture to children is perhaps the last opportunity at the point of social sustainability because when the link between culture and children is broken, a sustainable community life will not be in question. It is children who keep the culture alive and carry it into the future.

When examined in terms of environmental and material features for the transmission of cultural codes, it was seen that educational environments had visual materials promoting the national flag, national anthem, national heroes, and artists with national and international recognition. The characteristics of educational environments can be considered in two dimensions as physical and psychological. The current research study examined educational environments in terms of their physical characteristics. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines quality preschool education environments with indoor and outdoor spaces as places that are safe, healthy, and have materials and equipment to support the child's learning and development (NAEYC, 2018). The task of the preschool teacher is to motivate and prepare the child for social and cultural activities in the environment prepared for the child by giving the children the opportunity to use their potential (Morrison, 2007). Maria Montessori states that structured educational environments are effective on children's learning;

and learning takes place only in a rich and stimulating environment (Montessori, 1982). Research results show that quality early childhood education environments increase children's social competence (Schmitt et al., 2018) and academic achievement (Keys et al., 2013). Children are affected by the physical, social, and cultural characteristics of their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Physical characteristics of educational environments are a critical factor affecting children's development and learning. When preschool teachers prepare culturally rich educational environments, children's knowledge and awareness of their own and other cultures will increase.

Limitations and suggestions

Just like people, societies live and die. The history of civilizations is full of countless examples of this. Culture plays a vital role in sustainable community life. The survival of the culture is possible by passing it on to future generations. Family and school stand out as two important institutions in the process of transferring culture to future generations. The main limitation of this study is that it does not include the role of the family in the process of transferring culture to children and parental practices at this point.

In line with the research findings and limitations, it is suggested that

- Preschool teachers' qualifications to provide cultural education should be supported
- Educational environments should be enriched in terms of cultural elements/materials.
- Parental competencies, attitudes, and behaviors in the process of transferring cultural codes to children should be investigated.
- The practices in different cultures/countries to transfer cultural codes to children should be examined.
- The mediating role of media in the transfer of culture should be investigated.

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