

Preschool Teachers' Opinions on Guidance Services*

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Abstract

The aim of the current study is to investigate preschool teachers' perspectives on the guidance and counseling activities they implement in the classroom. Within this scope, the study examines the activities carried out with children, the activities conducted with parents, the problems encountered during these activities, and the strategies teachers use to cope with these challenges. Additionally, the study evaluates preschool teachers' cooperation with school management and school counselors, as well as the extent to which they make use of the guidance and counseling program. A qualitative research method was employed to explore the topic in depth. Participants were selected using the snowball sampling method, and 25 female and 4 male preschool teachers from across Turkey volunteered to participate in the study. A demographic form with 9 items and a survey consisting of 9 open-ended questions, developed by the researchers, were used for data collection. The average response time of participants was 18 minutes, and the data was collected over a period of two weeks. Content analysis was applied to analyze the collected data. The results of the study indicate that the majority of preschool teachers use observation as an informal method and technique to evaluate guidance and counseling practices in the classroom. When the activities implemented by teachers were classified based on the competencies in the Preschool Education Guidance and Counseling Program, it was found that most of the activities focused on self-acceptance, followed by interpersonal relationships. The findings also revealed that no activities were conducted targeting competencies in the family and society areas. Teachers reported that their activities were predominantly carried out in the form of play-based learning and Turkish language activities, often incorporating drama techniques. Family involvement emerged as one of the most commonly addressed themes in activities conducted with parents.

Keywords: Preschool guidance and counseling program, preschool teachers, preschool guidance and counseling activities

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Introduction

The preschool period, deemed critical in human development by many theorists, spans from birth to primary school and represents a phase where a holistic developmental approach supports children's social-emotional, cognitive, language, motor, and self-care skills. This period constitutes one of the most significant investments in an individual's development, influencing children's readiness for school (Forget-Dubois et al., 2009) and the relationship between early language development and reading skills in later years (Stevenson and Newman, 1986). Yeşilyaprak (2010) emphasized that 33% of a child's educational success by the age of eighteen is rooted in the 0-6 age period. Children are born with various temperament traits that predispose them to particular behaviors and emotional reactions (Kartika et al., 2023). These traits, along with environmental social and physical opportunities and parental attitudes, significantly influence the foundations of personality development (Chess and Thomas, 2012). Certain temperament traits may increase vulnerability to mood and anxiety disorders, highlighting the importance of understanding these characteristics within the context of parenting (Sibley, 2022). The relationship between temperament and parenting is reciprocal; children's traits can shape parenting approaches, creating a dynamic cycle that influences personality development (Sibley, 2022). A supportive family environment characterized by love and guidance is essential for fostering healthy personality development (Hanifa and Lestari, 2024). Although temperament and parental attitudes play a profound role, broader socialization and environmental factors must also be considered in the multifaceted process of personality development (Wu, 2024). Therefore, guidance services in the preschool period are crucial in shaping children's attitudes toward school life (Akgün, 2010). Assessing children's developmental needs and providing necessary support are among the fundamental responsibilities of preschool teachers (Katz et al., 2001). In this context, preschool guidance services facilitate school adaptation, support holistic development, and enable children to recognize and cultivate their talents (Bilgin, 2010; İlgar and Gazioğlu, 2010). Psychological and educational support helps children reach their developmental potential while fostering conditions for active social participation in preschool institutions (Eurydice, 2023; Unicef, 2022). These services also play a vital role in helping children develop a positive self-concept, understand themselves, and become aware of their emotional, behavioral, and cognitive characteristics (Yeşilyaprak, 2010). Preschool teachers' understanding of guidance should encompass observing and mentoring children, as well as implementing the Classroom Guidance Program (2020), prepared by the Ministry of Education, within the classroom setting. Teachers are expected to understand the structure of the guidance program, apply it effectively, and coordinate with guidance counselors (MEB, 2012). Preschool guidance activities should be designed to help children acquire essential skills, values, and attitudes. Teachers must act as role models and provide appropriate reinforcements, while outside the classroom, collaboration with families should support participation in guidance activities and development monitoring (MEB, 2012).

To equip preschool teachers with the capacity to offer this comprehensive support, enhancing their knowledge of guidance services is essential. This would increase the functionality of the guidance program and foster effective collaboration with guidance counselors (Akgün, 2010). Successfully and systematically implementing guidance services within the program is critically important (Akgün, 2010; Yeşilyaprak, 2010). Guidance services aim to promote individual well-being, self-awareness, and decision-making through a structured, professional process (Hatunoğlu and Hatunoğlu, 2006). These services are integral at all educational levels and are explicitly included in the Ministry of National Education (MEB) Preschool Education Guidance Program (2012). This program became a feature of the preschool education curriculum implemented in 2013 and gained further recognition with the Classroom Guidance Program published in 2020. The Preschool Education Guidance Program (2012) outlines seven competency areas and 83 learning objectives, supported by sample activities to facilitate these objectives. Both school guidance counselors and preschool teachers can implement these activities. Additionally, the program specifies expectations from school principals, guidance counselors, and preschool teachers (MEB, 2012). The Ministry emphasizes that the quality of preschool education directly impacts subsequent educational stages (MEB, 2012, 2024a, 2024b). In preschool, children develop self-confidence, independence, curiosity, and social roles within an enabling environment. The program ensures continuity in guidance services to support uninterrupted development during this critical period (MEB, 2012, 2024a, 2024b). The Classroom Guidance Program (2020), developed in line with the 2023 Vision educational goals, emphasizes fostering problem-solving, emotional

understanding, environmental adaptation, lifelong learning, and basic value acquisition. It adopts a preventive, adequate, and developmental approach, using positive language to focus on career, academic, and social-emotional competencies (MEB, 2020). At the preschool level, the program highlights academic competencies such as "Adaptation to School and School Environment," career competencies like "Career Awareness," and social-emotional competencies such as "Ensuring Personal Safety," "Self-Awareness," "Interpersonal Skills," and "Understanding Emotions" (MEB, 2020). Achieving these goals requires collaboration among families, preschool teachers, school administrators, and guidance counselors (Gibbons, Diambra, and Buchanan, 2010; Güler and Capri, 2019).

Despite the critical importance of guidance services, research shows that they primarily focus on other education levels (Dilek and Talu, 2021; Dursun, 2023; Gürbüz and Özer, 2023; Hatunoğlu and Hatunoğlu, 2006; Karagüven, 2001; Kutlu, 2002; Pişkin, 1989; Temiz, 2017). Studies have also identified gaps in preschool teachers' understanding of child psychology, their knowledge of children, and their ability to conduct guidance services with parents (Aliyev et al., 2007; Büyükgöncü, 2013; Çevik, 2017; Çitak and Birol, 2019; Dilek and Talu, 2021; Dursun and Özer, 2023; Kabi, 2022; Kanak et al., 2013; Kılıçoğlu, 2013; Peker, 2020; Sağlam et al., 2021; Tekin, 2017; Temiz, 2017). Given the limited literature on preschool guidance services, this study seeks to explore preschool teachers' perspectives on guidance services and their needs in collaborating with guidance teachers. The research examines the guidance activities implemented with children and parents, the challenges faced during these activities, and the strategies used to overcome them. Additionally, it evaluates teachers' participation in preschool guidance programs and their cooperation with school administrators and counselors. By analyzing these practices, the study aims to offer insights into improving guidance services and enriching the literature. It focuses on methods preschool teachers use to evaluate their guidance practices, the activities conducted with children and parents, their collaboration processes with school counselors and principals, and the difficulties they encounter, along with their existing knowledge of guidance programs.

Method

The aim of this research is to examine the opinions of preschool teachers regarding the guidance activities they carry out in the classroom environment. A qualitative research method was chosen to evaluate teachers' detailed opinions and practices. The research design follows a *case study* approach, which aims to describe the current situation as it is, without attempting to change or intervene in it (Karasar, 2009; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

Participants

The study group was composed of preschool teachers working across Turkey, determined through the snowball sampling method, which aligns with the principle of voluntary participation. A total of 25 female and 4 male preschool teachers participated in the study. Snowball sampling, a type of purposive sampling (Creswell, 2012; Büyükoztürk et al., 2020), was used to identify participants who met the study's criteria, with the sample size growing incrementally like a snowball. Participants were selected based on two primary criteria: they had to be preschool teachers and work in different cities across Turkey. While the snowball sampling method provides limited representativeness and generalizability of the data, it is valuable for obtaining in-depth, detailed opinions. This methodological limitation was accepted as a necessary trade-off for achieving the study's goal of collecting detailed qualitative insights. The participants included 29 preschool teachers working in various regions of Turkey. Demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

According to Table 1, the teachers participating in the study were mostly female (86.2%), most of them were between the ages of 20-30 (75.9%), the number of teachers working in kindergarten was high (58.6%), the majority had 1-10 years (79.3%) of professional seniority, mostly the class size was 20-25 children (44.8%), the number of non-inclusive students in the classrooms was in the majority (62.1%), the number of children without special needs was high (55.2%). According to the status of visiting the classroom, it is seen that the majority do not have a guidance teacher in their class (27.5%), and those who do tend to visit classrooms at most once a month (24.1%).

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Characteristic	Group	f	%
Gender	Female	25	86.2%
	Male	4	13.8%
Age	20-30	22	75.9%
	31-45	7	24,1%
School Type	Kindergarten	17	58.6%
	Preschool	12	41.4%
Professional Seniority	1-10	23	79.3%
	11-20	6	20.7%
Class Size	8-13	5	17.3%
	14-19	11	37.9%
	20-25	13	44.8%
Special Education Needs	Yes	11	37.9%
	No	18	62.1%
Special Needs Status	Yes	13	44.8%
	No	16	55.2%
Guidance Teacher Visits	No Counsellor	8	27,5%
	Only when needed	4	13.8%
	Once a week	1	3.5%
	Twice in a month	4	13.8%
	Once in a month	7	24.1%
	Once in a semester	4	13.8%
	Never	1	3.5%

Data Collection Tool

For this research, the researchers developed a data collection instrument consisting of two parts: (1) a 9-item demographic information form and (2) a 13-question survey. The survey included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. According to Creswell (2017), combining open-ended and closed-ended questions allows participants to express themselves freely while ensuring structured data collection. Open-ended questions were particularly useful in eliciting detailed and nuanced responses (Büyüköztürk, 2005). The survey questions focused on evaluation methods used in classroom guidance practices, guidance activities conducted with children and parents, collaboration processes with school counselors and school principals, challenges faced during guidance activities and strategies used to overcome them, and participants' existing knowledge about guidance programs. To ensure validity, the form was reviewed by three experts in psychological counseling and guidance and two experts in preschool education. The consensus rate of expert opinions was calculated at 94%.

Data Collection

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Trakya University. The demographic and survey forms were shared with preschool teachers via the Google Forms platform. Participants were recruited through social media platforms such as Twitter, Telegram, Facebook, and Gmail. Teachers who volunteered to participate were informed about the research purpose and process. After obtaining their consent, the data collection link was shared. The entire data collection process, including preliminary interviews, participant communication, and survey completion, was completed within three weeks.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using content analysis. First, the responses of all 29 teachers were reviewed, and initial codes and subcategories were determined by two coders in collaboration with a preschool education expert. Closed coding was employed to systematically analyze teacher responses. The coders independently examined the data and classified responses into relevant themes. Coding disagreements were identified in 11 of the 50 subthemes. Intercoder reliability was calculated using the formula: $\text{Reliability} = \text{Consensus} / (\text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement})$ (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and the

reliability rate for this research was determined to be 78%. The themes where disagreements occurred—such as "providing appropriate guidance to children," "collaborating with the guidance counselor," and "getting ideas from colleagues"—were resolved through discussion and consensus. The final categorization included strategies for supporting developmental areas (e.g., guidance for children, collaboration with guidance counselors) and professional development strategies (e.g., consulting colleagues for ideas). Following these steps, remaining differences between coders were resolved, and all data were analyzed consistently.

Limitations

The research is limited by its qualitative design, which involved a relatively small number of volunteer participants. As such, the findings cannot be generalized to the wider population of preschool teachers. Additionally, the use of a researcher-developed data collection tool, participant interviews, and content analysis presents inherent limitations. These factors should be considered when interpreting the results.

Findings

The present study, which focuses on examining the views of participating preschool teachers regarding guidance activities conducted in the classroom, first addresses the assessment methods employed by these preschool teachers in their in-class guidance practices. Figure 1 presents the assessment methods reported to be used by the preschool teachers in the study group.

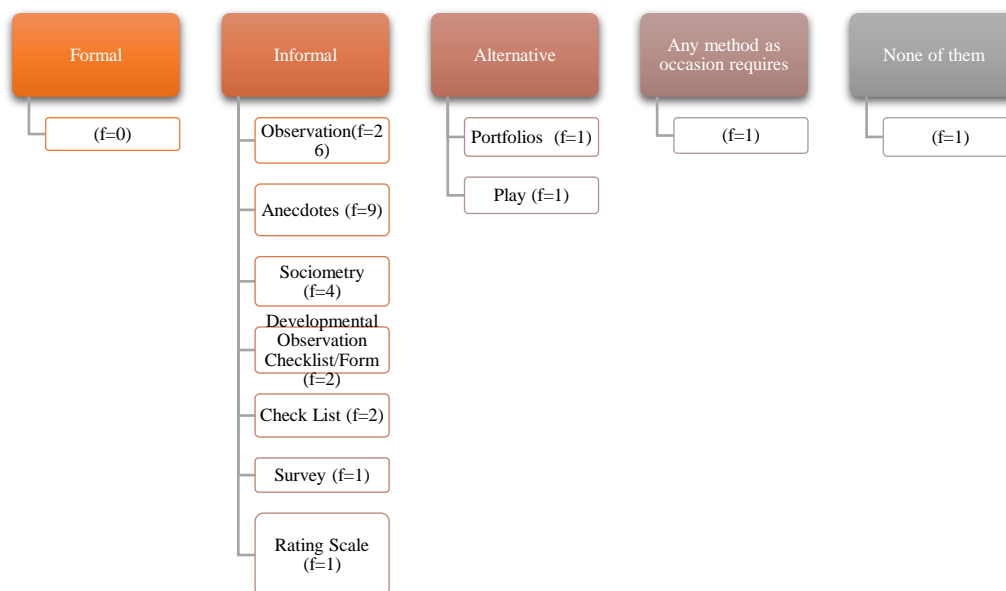


Figure 1. The Assessment Methods Employed By The Preschool Teachers In Their In-Class Guidance Practices

As seen in Figure 1, the majority of preschool teachers in the study group use the observation technique, an informal evaluation method, in their classroom guidance practices. Anecdotal records, another informal evaluation method, were identified as the most frequently used by preschool teachers. According to the teachers' responses, alternative methods are also employed to a limited extent, with one teacher stating that they use any method appropriate to the situation. However, it was determined that some teachers do not use any evaluation methods at all. A striking result is that teachers do not utilize formal evaluation methods. Observation helps teachers assess children's curiosity and engagement, which are vital for cognitive and emotional development (Li, 2023). Regular observations can improve educational practices tailored to children's needs, particularly when structured tools such as observation checklists are employed (Ciolan and Florescu, 2023). This indicates that evaluation through observation facilitates specialized support and differentiated education appropriate to children's needs.

The use of multiple methods and techniques is essential during studies aimed at understanding and evaluating children in early childhood (Zembat and Yılmaz, 2022). Combining formal, informal, and alternative methods provides a comprehensive picture, allows for tailored arrangements to support children, and enhances learning through continuous feedback (Doğan, 2022). This serves sustainable development goals. Therefore, it is noteworthy that the preschool teachers in this research rely primarily on informal methods, with no teachers reporting the use of formal methods. The limited use of alternative methods also stands out. Performance-based alternative methods, such as evaluations through games and portfolios (Arslan-Çiftçi, 2022; Çelik, 2022), are designed to identify and support children's unique abilities (Koç, 2023). The absence of formal assessment tools in practice may suggest a lack of expertise, time constraints, or access to relevant resources. Formal tools often require specialized training and, in some cases, one-on-one application, which may not align with teachers' classroom routines. Moreover, formal tools based solely on teacher or family observations are underutilized, likely due to limited awareness or availability. Recent literature introduces formal tools for assessing developmental areas or specific skills (Beaty, 2024; Blessing, 2019; Zembat and Tunçeli, 2022). However, these advancements do not appear to be widely reflected in practice. Providing preschool teachers with relevant resources and training could address this gap.

Table 2 presents examples of in-class guidance activities conducted by preschool teachers participating in the research.

Table 2.
Classroom Guidance Activities Conducted with Children

Classroom Guidance Competence Areas	Activities Done	f	
Adaptation to School and School Environment	School Adaptation	Familiarization and orientation activities	9
		Activities for learning the rules	1
Educational Planning and Success Interpersonal Skills	Preparation for Primary School	Activities to support preparation for primary school	2
		Using Different Methods	Artistic evaluation
	Interpretation with pictures		1
	Assessment through play		4
	Through question and answer		1
	Project activities		1
	Using technology in different ways		1
	Dramatizations		2
	Individual and Group Work		Serving as a leader in group activities
		Circle activities	2
		Socialization activities	2
	Getting to Know Each Other	Communication, communicating	3
		Conflict problems, activities to address problems when they occur	2
		Expressing one's own ideas and listening to the ideas of peers	2
		Activities to get to know each other	1
Social Skills	Talking about different characteristics, respecting differences	4	
	Social skills activities	1	
Understanding and Managing Emotions	Recognizing Emotions	Activities in which children act out their emotions	1
		Understanding and listening to emotions	2
	Managing Emotions	Emotion management activities	1
		Dealing with difficult emotions	2
Career Awareness	Recognizing professions	1	
Personal Safety	Asking for help in case of danger - protection	2	
	Privacy education and awareness	2	
	Activities to recognize the environment	2	
	Personal space awareness	1	
Self-Awareness	Recognizing interests and talents	1	
	Activities to increase self-confidence	3	
	Self-recognition, self-development activities	2	
	Recognizing their skills	1	
	Self-recognition, activities to create self-awareness	3	
No implementation	Not available at the moment	1	
MoNE Resources	Guidance activities available on the MoNE website	1	

The findings in Table 2 reveal that most classroom guidance activities implemented by preschool teachers focus on interpersonal skills ($f=19$), followed by educational planning and achievement ($f=16$), and school adaptation ($f=12$). Upon closer examination, the activities frequently target school adaptation, with fewer efforts aimed at understanding and managing emotions, career awareness, personal safety, and self-awareness. The emphasis on school adaptation aligns with its importance in ensuring children begin and continue school with positive feelings. However, considering that school adaptation typically occurs during the initial weeks, it is notable that throughout the year, teachers predominantly guide children in interpersonal skills while other areas receive relatively less attention.

Table 3 outlines the activities conducted by preschool teachers with parents as part of in-class guidance practices.

Table 3.
In-Class Guidance Activities Conducted with Parents

In-Class Guidance Competency Areas	Activities Done	f
Interpersonal Skills	Communication	1
	Communication with the child	1
	Activities that increase parent-child interaction	3
Educational Planning and Success	Family involvement	10
	Research homework	1
	Project studies	1
	School-family cooperation	2
	Home visits	1
	Observation of the child	2
	Informative activities about children's developmental characteristics	2
	Seminars, educational guidance events	2
	Event sharing	1
	Parent meetings	1
	Activities to develop children's personal characteristics	1
	Activities to get to know and understand the child	2
Career Awareness	Vocational guidance	1
	Career goals development	1
	Job presentation	1
Emotion-Focused Studies	Duygularını anlamaya ve başa çıkmaya yönelik etkinlikler	1
	Activities to understand and cope with emotions	
	Providing an activity environment for different families to share problems and feelings	1
I don't do any activities		3

Table 3 shows that preschool teachers primarily focus on educational planning and achievement when working with parents. Limited attention is given to areas such as interpersonal skills, career awareness, and emotion-based studies, which involve supporting communication, understanding emotions, and nurturing children's abilities. The limited cooperation between teachers and families in fostering basic life skills, such as emotional competence and communication, is considered a disadvantage. Upon analyzing the details of these activities, the most common approach used was family participation studies ($f=10$).

The areas in which preschool teachers collaborate with school counselors for in-class guidance activities are presented in Figure 2.

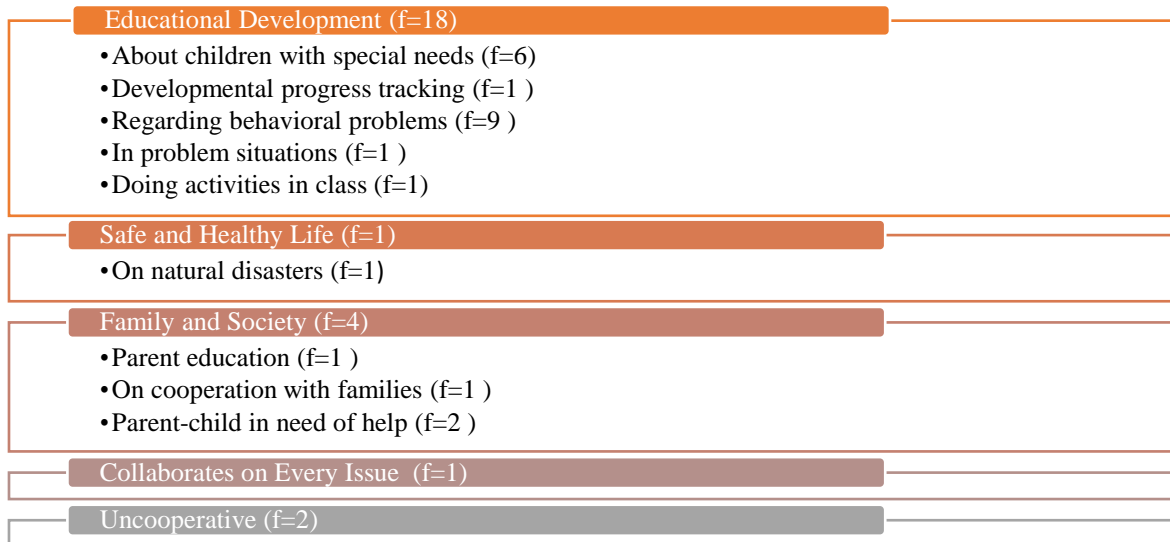


Figure 2. Topics and Areas Where Preschool Teachers Collaborate with School Counselors

Figure 2 highlights that most preschool teachers collaborate with school counselors, particularly regarding behavioral problems and children with special needs. Sample teacher responses include:

"The classroom guidance teacher carries out activities on the subject determined in the guidance meeting." (OOÖ5)

"I work in a preschool within a high school. The counselor has not even visited to work with the children." (OOÖ13)

The topics and areas in which preschool teachers collaborate with school principals for in-class guidance activities are shown in Figure 3.

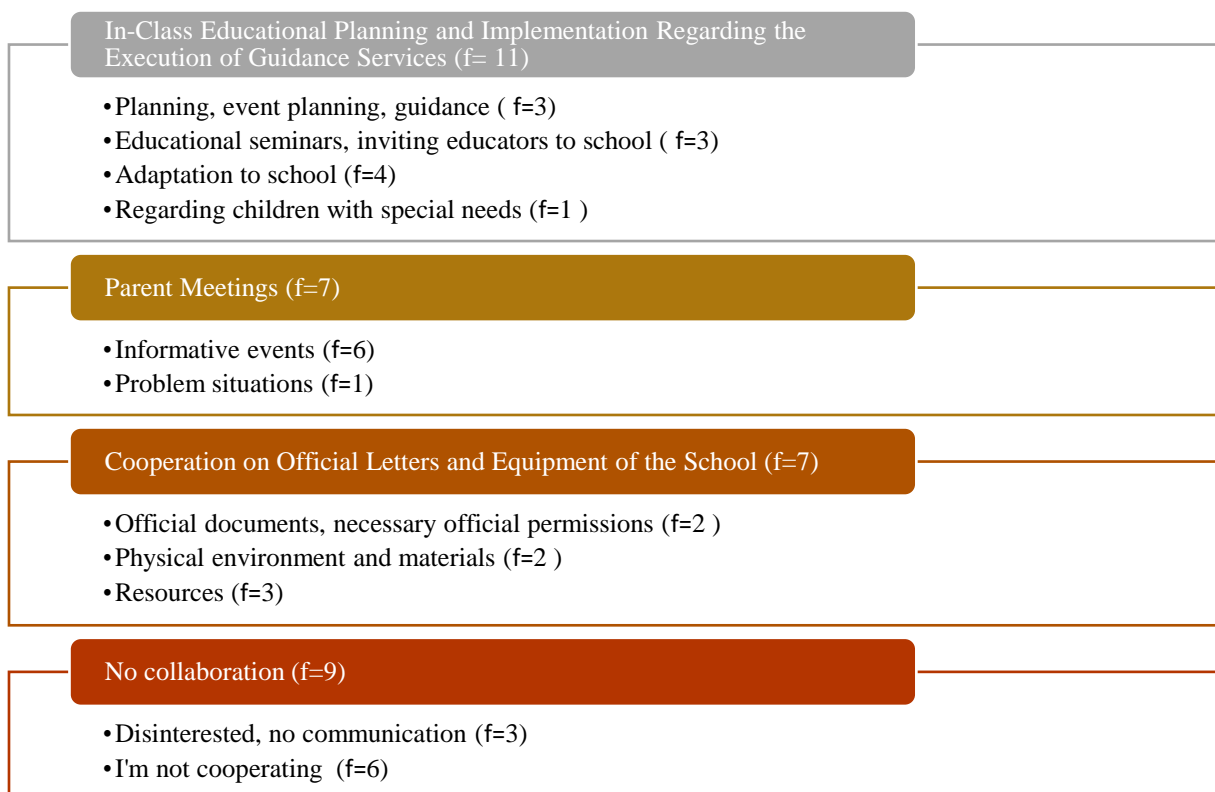


Figure 3. Subjects and Areas of Collaboration with School Principals

According to Figure 3, preschool teachers primarily collaborate with school principals on educational planning and implementation (f=11). Informative activities during parent meetings were also noted (f=6). However, a significant number of teachers (f=6) reported no cooperation at all. One teacher remarked: *"I explain the activities I will do and implement them myself."*(OOÖ21)

Figure 4 presents the problems experienced by preschool teachers while implementing in-class guidance activities.

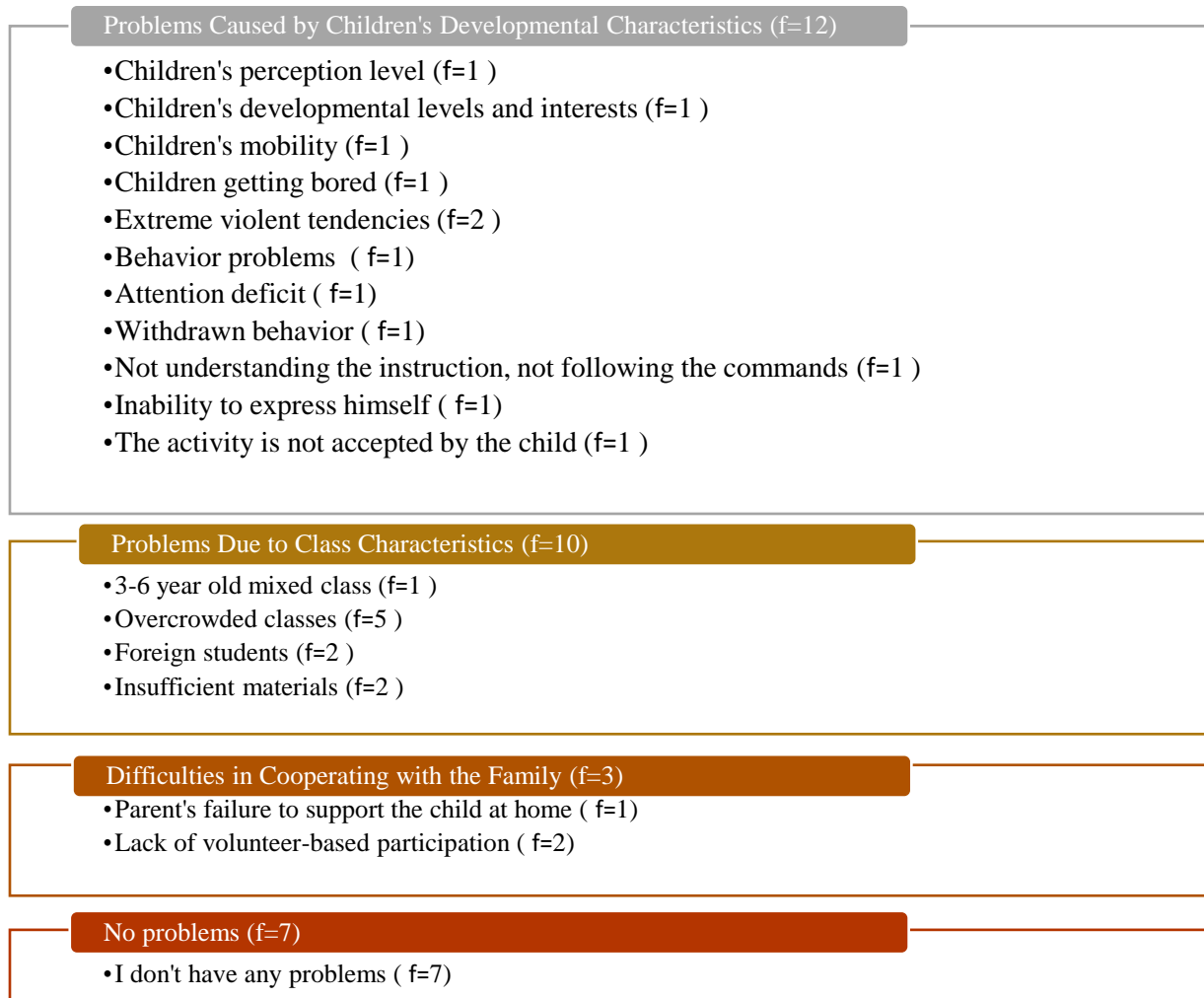


Figure 4. Problems Encountered While Implementing In-Class Guidance Activities

Figure 4 shows that the most commonly reported problems relate to children's developmental characteristics (f=12). Other challenges included behavioral difficulties (e.g., violence and hyperactivity), cognitive issues (e.g., attention span and following instructions), and social-emotional concerns (e.g., boredom, reluctance, and self-expression difficulties). Language development challenges were also noted. These issues may stem from various factors, including temperament, parental attitudes, environmental influences, and technology use. The Covid-19 pandemic, which led to prolonged home isolation, may have exacerbated these challenges. Classroom-related factors, such as overcrowded classes and the In addition to the teachers who reported experiencing the problems mentioned above, some preschool teachers in the study group stated that they did not encounter any issues while carrying out in-class guidance activities. The strategies employed by these teachers have been analyzed and are presented in Figure 5.

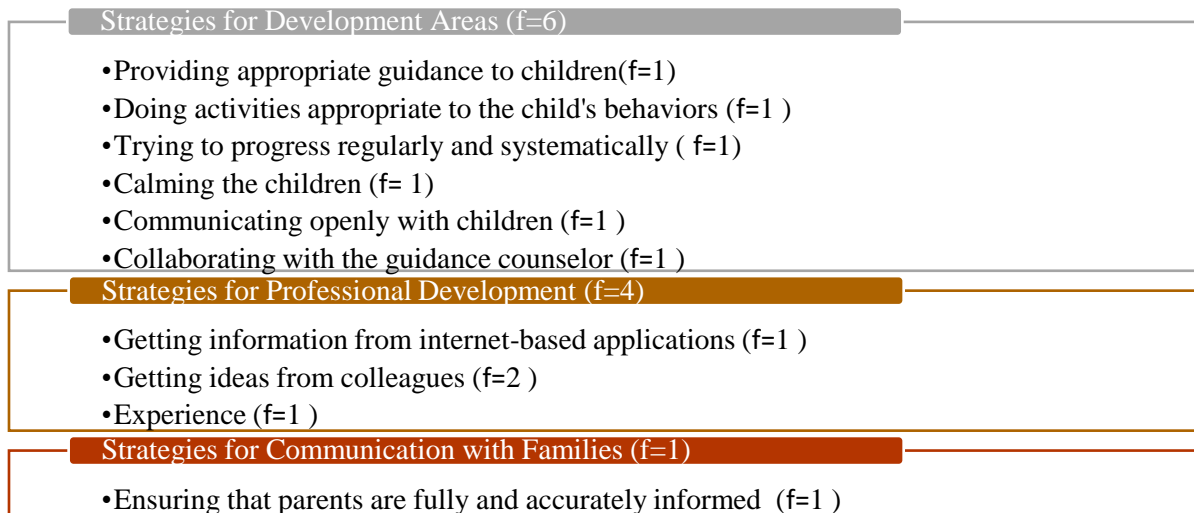


Figure 5. Strategies Used by Teachers Who Encounter No Problems

Approximately one-quarter of the preschool teachers managed classroom guidance activities effectively. Seeking advice from colleagues was the most commonly mentioned professional development strategy. Figure illustrates the frequency with which preschool teachers benefit from the Classroom Guidance Program. The data regarding the engagement of preschool teachers in the guidance program is illustrated in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Frequency of Teachers Benefiting from the Classroom Guidance Program

As shown in Figure 6, 59% of the preschool teachers occasionally use the Classroom Guidance Program, while 41% consistently benefit from it. Figure 7 details the specific areas where teachers find the program beneficial.

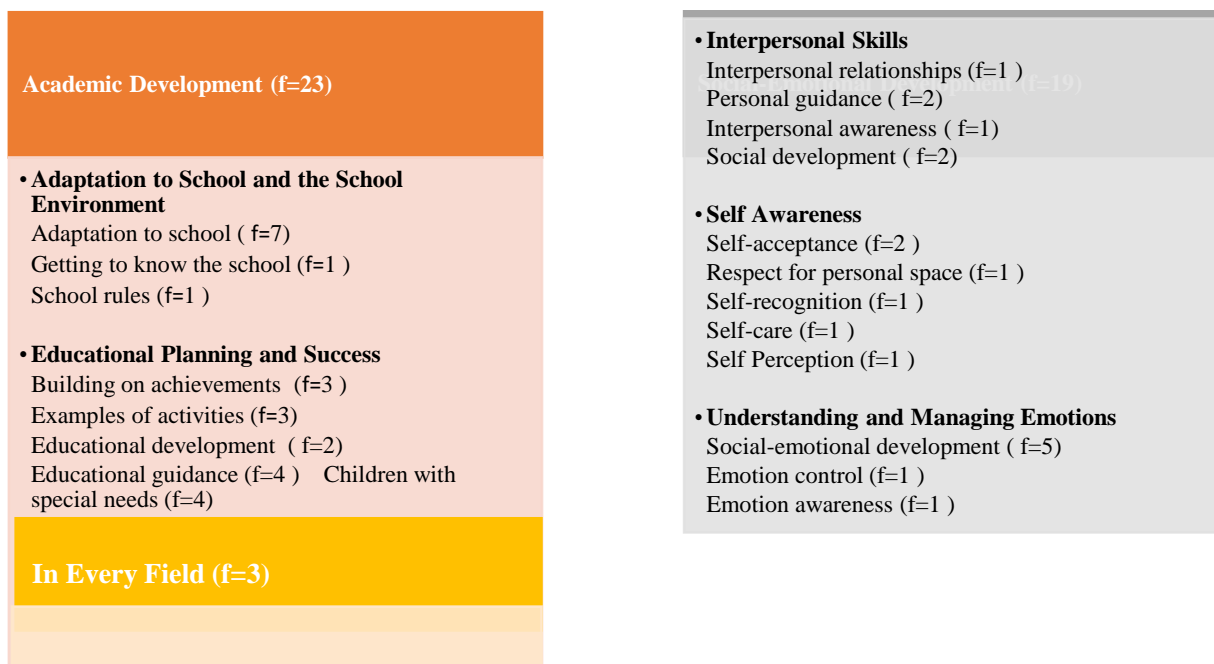


Figure 7. Areas Where Preschool Teachers Benefit from the Classroom Guidance Program

The program is most valued for supporting academic progress (f=23) and school adjustment (f=7). Activities related to self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, and emotional development were also noted, albeit to a lesser extent. Given the importance of social-emotional development in early childhood, these efforts may be relatively insufficient. The opinions of preschool teachers regarding the Classroom Guidance Program are presented in Figure 8.

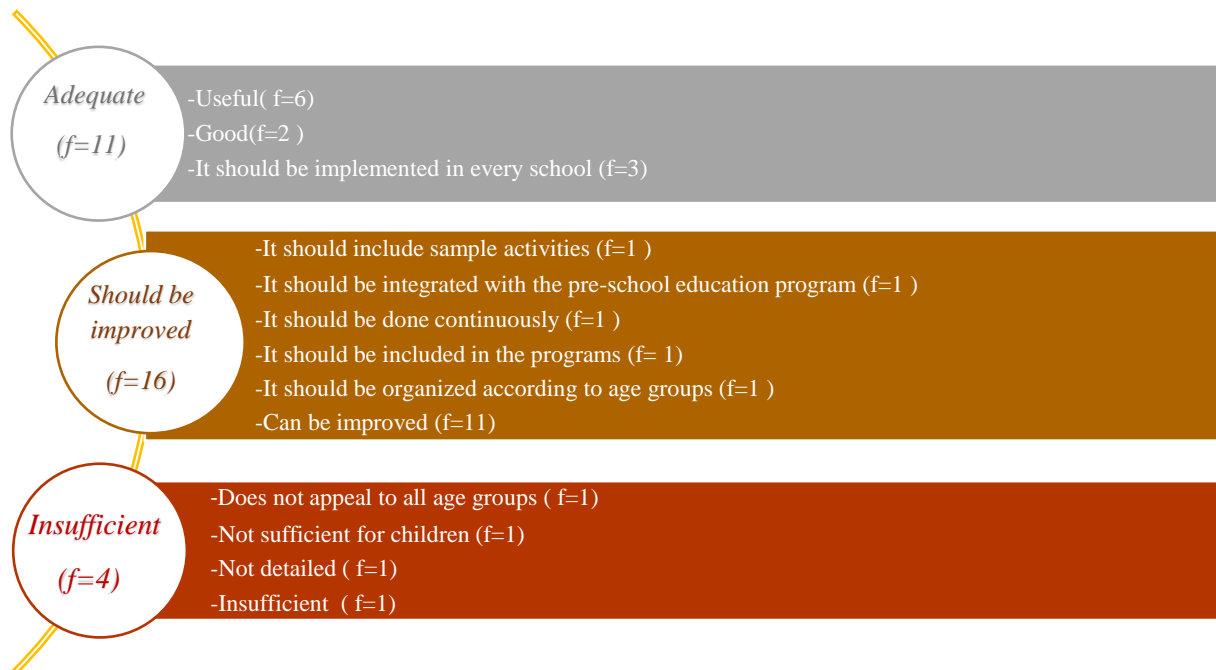


Figure 8. Preschool Teachers' Opinions About the Classroom Guidance Program

The findings show that most preschool teachers describe the Classroom Guidance Program as either satisfactory or needing improvement. While a small number (f=4) find it inadequate, teachers who suggest improvements do not specify areas requiring change. A teacher remarked:

"Practical training for preschool teachers is essential to fully utilize the program, as we currently have limited knowledge of its content, despite its significance similar to the preschool education program." (PT10)

Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

In this study, the opinions of preschool teachers regarding the guidance activities they carry out in the classroom environment were examined, and their responses were evaluated using content analysis. Within the scope of the research, several aspects were addressed: the guidance activities teachers implemented with children in the classroom, their work with parents, the challenges they encountered during guidance activities, and their coping strategies. Additionally, the extent to which preschool teachers benefited from the preschool guidance program in collaboration with school administration and guidance counselors was analyzed, and their opinions about the program were documented.

The results indicate that teachers predominantly prefer informal assessment methods, particularly observation techniques, when evaluating children in classroom guidance activities. Formal evaluation tools were reported as not being used by the participating teachers. Observation has been highlighted as an effective evaluation method for early childhood educators (Stritzel-Rencken, 1996; Turupcu, 2014), and its significance is further emphasized in the Ministry of National Education Preschool Education Program (2013; 2024a; 2024b), which advocates for observation as part of a multifaceted evaluation approach.

Observation enables teachers to assess children's curiosity, engagement, and overall development, which are critical for cognitive and emotional growth (Li, 2023). Regular and structured observation, as

supported by tools like observation rubrics (Florescu & Ciolan, 2023), can help identify children's specific needs and facilitate targeted, differentiated educational practices.

It is widely recognized that the use of various evaluation methods—formal, informal, and alternative—is essential for accurately assessing young children (Zembat & Yılmaz, 2022). Combining these approaches, providing consistent feedback, and tailoring support based on the obtained results contribute significantly to sustainable development (Doğan, 2022). However, a notable finding in the current study is that none of the participating teachers reported using formal methods, and only a small number mentioned alternative methods.

The absence of formal assessment methods raises the question of whether teachers lack knowledge, training, or access to formal tools. Prior studies have suggested that formal tools are often avoided due to unclear scoring and procedural requirements (Demirel, 2010; Yazgünoğlu & Demirel, 2012) and the time-intensive nature of one-on-one implementation. Recent resources, such as publications on formal assessment tools (Beaty, 2024; Blessing, 2019; Zembat & Tunçeli, 2022), highlight their availability, yet their limited use in practice suggests a gap in awareness or training among teachers. Addressing this gap through resource sharing and training opportunities is essential, as integrating formal and informal assessments can yield more comprehensive evaluations (Langston, 2019; NAEYC, 2023). Aligning with the Ministry of National Education Preschool Education Program (2024a; 2024b), it is critical to promote versatility and diversity in assessment methods and provide teachers with the necessary resources and professional development to effectively implement formal methods.

The findings also show that preschool teachers actively participate in guidance programs primarily focused on educational planning, school and environmental adaptation, and interpersonal relationships. These areas align with prior research (Beesley, 2004; Bilgin, 2019; Arslan, 2013), which found that teachers seek support from school counselors for educational planning and relationship-building activities. Collaboration with guidance counselors has been emphasized as particularly valuable in areas where teachers feel less competent (Khansa, 2015). Strengthening such collaborations enhances the effectiveness of guidance activities, benefiting both teachers and children. To further support teachers, practical activity examples from the Classroom Guidance Program(2020) could be integrated into professional development sessions, fostering closer cooperation between teachers and guidance staff. Similarly, increasing the emphasis on guidance activities in pre-service teacher education programs would help address competency gaps.

The study also highlights the significant role of family participation in preschool guidance activities. Teachers frequently included family engagement in their sessions, reflecting its recognized importance in early childhood education. The Family Support Education Guide(OBADER) (MEB, 2013) underscores the benefits of family involvement, a view supported by Gürşimşek (2013), who emphasized its positive impact on children's learning and parental attitudes toward school. However, other studies (Demirel & Yazgünoğlu, 2013) have noted that family participation often falls short of expectations, necessitating diversified strategies to encourage active involvement (ECLKC, 2023; Stefanski, Valli & Jacobson, 2016). While organized activities remain one avenue, fostering greater collaboration with families through alternative guidance methods is essential for more effective engagement.

Collaboration with school counselors, especially regarding behavioral challenges and special needs, emerged as a key theme. Previous research (Öztabak, 2018; Memduhoğlu & Dalçıçek, 2016) has shown that preschool teachers view counselors as problem solvers, particularly in addressing behavioral and developmental challenges. Teachers' involvement in individualized education programs (IEPs) further underscores the importance of collaboration (MEB, 2019). However, the limited availability of school counselors in Turkey remains a challenge. Increasing the number of counselors and promoting collaboration through guidance research centers would enhance support for both teachers and children.

The study also revealed a lack of collaboration between teachers and school principals, with nearly one-third of participants reporting no cooperation. Principals play a crucial role in fostering a collaborative school culture that positively impacts teacher-counselor relationships and overall student success (Yıldız, 2021; Chata & Loesch, 2007; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Research has shown that effective

collaboration requires strong institutional support (Pérusse, Goodnough & Bouknight, 2007). Implementing models like the Professional Development School (PDS) (Foust & Goslee, 2014) and leveraging social capital theory (Boyland et al., 2019) could strengthen collaboration networks.

A significant portion of teachers reported challenges related to children's developmental characteristics, particularly in social-emotional and cognitive domains. These difficulties may be linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had documented impacts on young children's social-emotional development (Gülay-Ogelman, Erten-Sarıkaya & Güngör, 2022; Opperman et al., 2024). Additionally, inappropriate technology use has been associated with developmental delays (Massaroni et al., 2024; Mustafaoğlu et al., 2018). Addressing these issues requires a broader focus on supporting children's overall development through targeted interventions.

Conversely, some teachers reported no difficulties in implementing guidance activities, attributing their success to the use of strategies aligned with children's developmental characteristics. This finding reflects the importance of integrating developmental principles into teaching practices (Başal, 2005; MEB, 2013; Rubtsov & Yudina, 2010). However, previous studies have highlighted the need for additional training to address teacher-reported challenges, such as parental indifference and perceived inadequacies in guidance practices (Bilgin, 2017; Büyükgöncü, 2013; Stefanski et al., 2016).

The study concludes that preschool teachers benefit from classroom guidance programs, particularly in areas like school adaptation, academic planning, and social-emotional development. These findings reinforce the importance of guidance activities in supporting children's long-term success (Shah et al., 2021). Collaboration among teachers, counselors, administrators, and families remains vital for delivering comprehensive guidance services that address children's educational environments holistically (Gencoğlu et al., 2019; Nasır & Nasır, 2015).

Finally, the study highlights the need to improve the classroom guidance program. While most teachers advocated for improvements, few specified areas for enhancement. Suggestions included integrating the program with preschool education, adapting it for different age groups, and incorporating sample activities into a continuous structure. Despite its limitations—such as the small sample size of 29 volunteer teachers—this study offers valuable recommendations for teachers, researchers, and policymakers to improve guidance practices in preschool education.

Suggestions for teachers:

- 1) To gain expertise in the use of various evaluation methods, especially formal evaluation, in assessing children's development.
- 2) To engage in activities that can enhance their professional development in order to increase their self-confidence in carrying out in-class guidance activities.
- 3) To include practices and methods that support cooperation with families and serve family and community collaboration by diversifying guidance activities beyond family participation.
- 4) To cooperate with school counselors and go beyond addressing behavioral problems and situations of children with special needs, obtaining opinions on the general development of all children to contribute to the effective realization of their potential.

Suggestions for researchers:

- 1) It is recommended that the methods frequently preferred by preschool teachers for recognizing and evaluating children should be examined with larger study groups.
- 2) It is necessary to conduct various training and supportive studies on the subject so that preschool teachers can benefit more from formal evaluation methods within the scope of recognition and evaluation.
- 3) It is recommended to examine the problem scenarios and suggested solutions in the guidance studies implemented at school and in the classroom with the participation of a larger group of teachers and to diversify the research model by including case studies.

- 4) In order to improve teachers' abilities to facilitate classroom guidance, it is recommended to organize dissemination training throughout the country, create training materials containing various practical examples, and ensure their effective use.
- 5) It is of great importance to evaluate and increase the role of school principals in shaping the school atmosphere and interaction network, as they make significant contributions to the social field by collaborating with teachers, guidance counselors, families, and society as a whole.
- 6) It is important to prepare school guidance action plans and implement plans aimed at increasing cooperation between school principals, guidance counselors, teachers, and families.
- 7) To develop models that broaden teachers' perspectives on guidance services, including aspects beyond school adaptation, and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration.
- 8) It is recommended to carry out in-service training programs to ensure that teachers can use the classroom guidance program effectively in all guidance dimensions.
- 9) Presenting concrete examples and practices regarding regulations aimed at improving family and social integration in the work of preschool education teachers.

Recommendations for policymakers:

- 1) Recognizing the important role of school principals in strengthening the school climate and relationships between students, teachers, and society, interventions that will support their efforts in this direction need to be integrated.
- 2) By considering schools within a learning ecosystem, education programs and guidance programs should be harmonized to create structures that take into account the individual differences of children and support them in line with their abilities.
- 3) Increasing the number of counselors working in the provinces and decreasing the number of children per counselor working in schools; it is necessary to support counselors' collaborative work with children, families, and all teachers.
- 4) It would be useful to organize in-service and pre-service trainings to increase the competencies of preschool educators in classroom guidance practices.
- 5) Expanding the scope and details of guidance studies in line with the understanding of strengthening the infrastructure of preschool education institutions will make a significant contribution to their relations with family and society throughout the preschool program and guidance activities.

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