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### Turkish and English Parents' Perspectives on Play: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

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#### ABSTRACT

This cross-cultural study examines perspectives on play (game) among Turkish and English parents, using Social Cultural Theory framework. Participants included ten volunteer mothers, ten volunteer fathers of children aged 2-6 years. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach, collecting data through semi-structured interviews with ten main questions. The results revealed that the participants' definitions of quality play had a common theme of supporting the holistic development of the child, the principle of suitable to the child. However, English mothers valued creative, thought-provoking games that taught social rules, while Turkish mothers emphasized competitive, sharing games that supported physical, spiritual, and communicative development. Both Turkish and English parents identified hide-and-seek and ball games as favourite traditional activities, emphasized the importance of developmentally appropriate, creative, safe, and well-designed toys. Both Turkish and English mothers reported using paper and sewing materials in homemade play materials. Mothers in both cultures found it appropriate for their children to play digital games alone, whereas fathers in both cultures preferred to play digital games with their children. These findings reveal both similarities, differences in how adults in different cultures view play within a child's social environment, highlighting the need for further in-depth investigation to fully understand the cultural nuances.

**Keywords:** Turkish and British, play, parent, child, culture.

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## Introduction

Play (game) is an effective resource that begins at the start of life, develops, varies, and meets different interests and needs since the existence of human (Wing, 1995). A common element in various approaches to play is its role as an indicator of children's development. For example, Montessori viewed play as the child's work and a tool for development. Similarly, Freud, Piaget, Rousseau, and Froebel emphasized the significant impact of play on child's emotional, cognitive, physical, and social development (Aardse, 2014; Brewer, 2012; Garwood, 1982; Lillard, 2013; Provenzo-Jr, 2009). Children make the world meaningful through play; they interact with others, express emotions, improve focus, and become motivated to learn (Howard & McInnes, 2012). In play, children learn to solve cognitive (Ghanamah, 2025), social (Rauf & Bakar, 2019) problems and gain social interaction, problem solving and emotional regulation skills (Moon-Seo & Munsell, 2022).

Central to this developmental process are parents, children's first playmates, who are their closest interactors, providing them with play environments and materials that support learning and development. Particularly in the context of Vygotsky's Social Cultural Theory, this parent-child interaction forms the foundation for learning and cognitive development (Vygotsky, 2016). Parents are the child's first playmates from infancy, and parents can influence children's development as a playmate (Cabrera et al., 2018). Mothers spontaneously engage in play with their children, reinforcing concepts and creating awareness of the child's thoughts. It supports the academic thinking that the child acquires by creating awareness about what the child is thinking about. Play is meaningful and important for young children and is seen as a complementary factor in cross-cultural learning and child development (Roopnarine & Davidson, 2015). Parents, who are part of the child's close environment from the beginning, influence their children's learning and development process by providing play environments and materials to their young children (Naish et al., 2023). Vygotsky argued that it is useful in conceptualising the scaffolding, support and possibilities that children use in play. According to Social Cultural Theory, learning through play occurs when children interact with adults and observe their behaviours (Bodrova & Leong, 2015).

### Child-mother and child-father in play

Decades of research on the games played by mothers and children show that they support the holistic development of the child, strengthen the interaction between mother and child, and increase its quality (Menashe-Grinberg & Atzaba-Poria, 2017; Robinson et al., 2021). However, studies on the effects of the games played by fathers with their children on their potential development (Amodia-Bidakowska et al., 2020), interaction, and the characteristics of the games (Cabrera & Roggman, 2017) are more recent. Studies have identified similarities (Menashe-Grinberg & Atzaba-Poria, 2017) and differences (Cevher Kalburan & İvrendi, 2015; John et al., 2012; Waters et al., 2022) in mother-child and father-child plays. For example, John et al. (2012) found in their observations in their research that while mothers tend to teach, structure, guide and chat in children's plays, fathers play games with physical contact with their children, allow the child to manage the game, act as if they were the child's peers and include challenges in the game. In another study, mothers did not find risky playing habits appropriate compared to fathers (Cevher Kalburan & İvrendi, 2015). Fathers spend most of their time engaging in rough and tumble play that offer their children new experiences and challenges, encouraging endurance and exploration (Stgeorge & Freeman, 2017; Robinson et al., 2021). In contrast, mothers become more warm and sensitive (Schneider et al., 2022) by playing socio-dramatic games with their

children (Steenhoff et al., 2019), which focus on social and emotional support and are quiet and nurture the relationship between mother and child. As mentioned above, there are few studies focusing on the differences and similarities in the play experiences of mothers and fathers with their children. However, there are few studies (Cote & Bornstein, 2009; İşikoğlu Erdoğan et al., 2019; İvreendi et al., 2019) that comparatively investigate the games that mothers and fathers play with their children in different cultures. Play experiences between parents and children from different cultures are important because play is a universal activity that significantly contributes to child development.

### **Determining the cultural groups**

For this study, mothers and fathers from two cultural backgrounds who share both similarities and differences in terms of their views on children's play were selected. While England is located in Europe, Türkiye is a transcontinental country with portions in both Europe and Asia. However, English in England and Turkish in Türkiye are official languages. Their language and cultural structures are different, and plays are seen as a cultural heritage (Browne, 2020). England is considered to have a more individualistic culture (Fevre et al., 2020) and parents tend to focus more on their children learning through independent play, either on their own or with friends. In Türkiye, more social culture is dominant (Şanlı & Öztürk, 2015), families play with their children to maintain close family ties (Gülay Ogelman et al., 2019). In addition, in a study conducted with samples from both England and Türkiye, teachers and administrators in Türkiye reported feeling pressure from families regarding outdoor learning activities due to concerns such as children's safety, the risk of illness, and their clothes getting dirty (Öztürk Samur & Luff, 2023). For this reason, both different cultures and mothers' and fathers' opinions and experiences regarding children's plays were investigated. In this way, a better understanding of cross-cultural children's plays from different societies was attempted. One of the theoretical perspectives regarding psychocultural processes in childhood that is useful in examining and interpreting play phenomena in different cultural environments is Vygotsky's social-cultural theory. Parent-child practices emphasize the primary importance of social context and cultural processes in interpreting the meaning of children's social activities and play behaviours (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018). In Vygotsky's social-cultural approach, play helps the child master higher-order mental function skills at an individual level. Play has a central importance in the development of mental functions in the preschool years (Nicolopoulou, 1993). So, do parents' gender and cultural differences lead to differences in the games they play with their children?

### **The Current Study**

Previous studies, when considered from a gender perspective, have shown that mothers tend to engage in unstructured, encouraging, and instructional verbal play (Devlet Memiş & Gürsoy, 2022), while fathers engage in more physical, rule-based, and active play with their children (Karadeniz & Kaya, 2025; Robinson et al. 2021). There is also a study that finds that both parents share a common ground: play is crucial for their children's development (Waters et al., 2022). Cultural differences, however, deepen or alter this gender divide. Current research in this area will more clearly reveal cultural-gender interactions by demonstrating which play types or play purposes predominate at the intersection of parental gender and cultural differences (e.g., differences in play between Turkish fathers and British fathers, and Turkish mothers and British mothers). Such a study is believed to make a practical contribution, particularly in increasing the cultural sensitivity of intercultural parenting programs and early childhood education. So the aim

of this research is to make an intercultural comparison of the game from the perspectives of Turkish and English parents who have children in early childhood. For this purpose, answers were sought for the following sub-objectives.

- 1) What are the views of parents in different cultures regarding children's plays?
- 2) What are the experiences of parents in different cultures regarding play?

## Method

### Research Model

In this study, a phenomenological approach was used to examine the views and experiences of mothers and fathers of 2-6 years old children from two different cultures regarding the play. In the phenomenology approach, the researcher examines and studies the subjective experiences of the participants and tries to reveal the individual's perceptions and the meanings they attribute to the phenomena (Merriam, 2013). The phenomenon of this study is the parents' views and experiences regarding children's play.

### Participants

The study participants were selected using a convenient, purposive sampling method. The participants were parents from the study's immediate community, making it easier to communicate and reach them. The study was conducted with a total of 20 parents (non-couple different parents), five mothers and five fathers each, from Türkiye and England, using homogeneous sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods homogeneous sampling creates a focused subgroup based on the research objectives (Büyüköztürk et al., 2015). The mothers and fathers participating in the study are a homogeneous group who are at least high school graduates and have children between the ages of 2-6. During the interviews, data started to repeat after the third mother in Türkiye and the fourth participant in England, and data collection was terminated with the fifth parent. Demographic information of the study group is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic information of the study group

	Educational status	Parental gender		Number of children		Children's ages	
		3 mothers	3 mothers	1 child	1 mother	2 years	1 child
English mother	High school	3 mothers	3 mothers	2 children	3 mothers	4 years	2 children
	University	2 mothers	2 mothers	3 children	1 mother	5 years	1 child
						6 years	1 child
Turkish mother	High school	3 mothers	3 mothers	1 child	2 mothers	3 years	1 child
				2 children	2 mothers	4 years	2 children
	University	2 mothers	2 mothers	3 children	1 mother	5 years	1 child
						6 years	1 child
English father	High school	2 fathers	4 fathers	1 child	-	3 years	1 child
				2 children	5 fathers	4 years	2 children
	University	3 fathers	1 father	3 children	-	5 years	1 child
						6 years	1 child
Turkish father	High school	1 father	3 fathers	1 child	1 father	4 years	2 children
				2 children	3 fathers	5 years	2 children
	University	4 fathers	2 fathers	3 children	1 fathers	6 years	1 child
Grand total		20 fathers and mothers					

The ages of mothers in England ranged from 32 to 50. One mother has one child, three mothers have two, and one mother has three children. In Türkiye, maternal ages were between 22 and 40 years old. Two mothers have one child, two mothers have two, and one mother has three children. The ages of fathers in England were between 40 and 52, and all fathers had two children. The ages of fathers in Türkiye ranged between 32 and 45. One father has one child, three fathers have two, and another father has three children.

### **Data Collection Tool**

In this study, a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers was used as a qualitative data collection instrument. This interview form consists of 10 questions. The first questions are questions to get to know the parents, such as age, educational status, number of children they have, and the ages of their children. In order to determine the opinions of parents about children games, questions were prepared as follows: What does play mean to you? Which games do you play with your child? How and where do you play? What are your favourite games? How do you think games affect the child's development? Could you give examples of traditional games from your country? What do you think are the characteristics of a qualified children game? Can you give an example? Do you prepare play materials with your child? Can you give examples? What do you pay attention to in the toy selection process? Three experts' opinions were obtained on the draft semi-structured interview form. Two of these experts were faculty members working in the field of pre-school education and one was a faculty member working in the field of English education. Pilot interviews were then conducted with two Turkish and English-speaking couple, separate from the main participants, to refine the instrument. The finalized interview form was used in interviews with mothers (n=10) and fathers (n=10) among the participants.

### **Data Collection Process**

The interviews were conducted by the researchers in the cities of Aydin, Izmir, Chelmsford and Nottingham in 2024. Both researchers live in England and Türkiye and they had young children. Interviews were held with mothers and fathers one-on-one, in quiet environments, on previously determined days and times. After obtaining consent from the participants, the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Following the interviews, documents and photographs were collected regarding the statements of the parents. For example, photographs taken by parents about the games they played with their children and documents regarding the game materials they made with their children were requested, analysed and shared in the findings section.

### **Data Analyses**

In the analysis of data, content analysis was used. Content analysis is defined as separating, counting and interpreting recurring topics, problems and concepts from the data obtained (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). By reading the data obtained from the interviews with the mothers and fathers, sections that formed a meaningful whole in themselves were revealed, and they were created by both researchers as categories from repeated codes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 1999). If there was no integrity in the codes, a third expert was consulted. Both researchers coded the interview transcripts of four mothers and four fathers. Coding assessments were calculated using Kendall's Wa coefficient of agreement (Kendall & Smith, 1939). There was no statistically significant difference between Kendall's Wa coder opinions regarding the coding of the interviews (Kendall's W=0.89, p> .05). The data obtained from the interviews were analysed

and transferred to the MS Word program. A document consisting of 82 pages was obtained with the data obtained. To ensure reliability, instead of all names and identifying information, participating Turkish mothers were given codes as TM1, TM2, TM3..., English mothers were given codes as EM1, EM2, EM3..., Turkish fathers were given codes as TF1, TF2..., and English fathers were given codes as EF1, EF2... Then, in order to carry out the exploratory analysis of the qualitative data (Creswell, 2013), all of the participants' statements were read and coded. Table 2 lists the themes, categories and codes regarding the analysis of data obtained from mothers, fathers.

Table 2. Themes, Categories, Codes

Themes	Categories	Codes
The meaning of the play	Develops child	English mothers: prepare the child for social life, facilitate his learning, entertain him, ensure his development, and help him become productive. Turkish mothers: those who make the child have a good time, teach him, support his development, and give him communication skills. English fathers: a way for the child to learn, fun, developing children's skills, helping them learn, supporting children's development, social skills - problem solving - creativity, physical activity, emotional well-being. Turkish fathers: a way for the child to learn, entertaining the child, preparing the child for life, developing the child, teaching the child, turning the child's energy into a positive direction.
	Teaches child	
	Entertains child	
The games played with children	Games played with materials	English mothers: ball games, rubber band jumping, card games, building games, games with vehicles, Lego, puzzles, chess, playing in the park, counting-matching games, tennis. Turkish mothers: Jenga, ball games (dodgeball, football, mutual ball throwing and catching), box games, playing in playgrounds, puzzles, chatting games with babies. English dads: blind cat, Uno card, competitive games, action games (throwing a water bottle into the air so that it falls vertically to the ground), ladder game, board games such as Scrabble, card games such as Go Fish, cycling, chess, table games such as snakes and ladders games, free drawing with paints, playing with letters, talking to babies, Lego, puzzle cards, ball, playing in the park Turkish fathers: ball games, football, sand-truck scoop games, card games, chess, monopoly, Lego, talking games with animal toys, matching with coins, marbles, making babies talk, house games with toy kitchen tools.
	Digital games	English mothers: the child sometimes plays on his own. Turkish mothers: the child himself plays with the phone and tablet. English fathers: video games on PlayStation, games on phones and tablets. Turkish fathers: football on PlayStation, task completion games, fashion games, tablet games, virtual games.
	Socio-dramatic games and other	English mothers: role plays (animals, professions), memory game, hide and seek, role-playing a story, tinkering, housekeeping, role-playing story, shopping list game Turkish mothers: open the door as a shopkeeper, being a housekeeper, being a teacher, mind games, hide and seek, blindfolded, catch, schooling, being a teacher, driving with a steering wheel, playing like shopping at the market. English fathers: hide and seek, catch, guess who, pretend to be my parents, rock-paper-scissors, gymnastics, superhero, pretending Turkish fathers: hide and seek, active games, wrestling, whose hand is on top of each other, pretending to drive a car, pretending to be an animal, being a doctor, teaching.
	Popular games in England	Hide and seek, ball games (volleyball, football, netball), trains, puzzles, pretend games, object search games, playing with dolls and cars, card games, Lego, games with dolls, games in parks, dance games with music, video games.
The most favorite games	Popular games in Türkiye	Hide and seek, football, running around, Jenga, puzzle, Lego, playing games in the park, intelligence games, blind, playing with music, playing with puppets, playing with soda caps, marbles, 7 tiles (throwing a ball to 7 tile pieces on top of each other), super heroism
	Supporting holistic development	English mothers: improving vocabulary, making people think, creative, educational, instructive, and teaching social rules. Turkish mothers: sharing-oriented, competitive, ability to act jointly, educational, supportive of imagination, able to use language, where the child is active, supports physical development, supports spiritual development, uses communication skills. English fathers: support learning, encourage cooperation, teach listening skills, coordination, following instructions, support active learning and development. Turkish fathers: teach values, improve memory, develop personality-character, support cognitive and language development, develop creativity, strengthen the desire to win, strengthen the sense of achievement, support physical-motor development, support social development-communication by playing with a group.

	Suitable for the child	English mothers: simple rules and instructions, easy to play and understand, attracting attention, visual, exciting, safe Turkish mothers: fun, that the child can love, supports imagination. English fathers: challenge, encourage thought and fun, attract the child's attention, rules are understandable and simple, materials are made of natural materials such as wood, paper, carbon paper fiber, design should be simple, easy to play, safe, quiet, age appropriate, Turkish fathers: preparing for real life, playing in nature, where the child can release his energy, entertaining.
Mothers and fathers' experiences regarding with play	Content of time spent with the child	English mothers: fun, talking, what both parties, mother and children, need Turkish mothers: talking to the child, getting to know the child - an opportunity for the child to get to know his/her parents, tiring, English fathers: the process of understanding the child's wishes, fun. Turkish fathers: understanding the child's needs, play is a reason for the child to be with his/her parent.
	Communication with the child	English mothers: how to communicate effectively, fun, tiring, Turkish mothers: strengthening the bond between mother and child, entertaining and making the mother and child happy, and increasing the conversation through conversation. English fathers: in the game the child never gets tired, it is fun, Turkish fathers: a way to build a secure bond, a happy one

## Results

Results obtained as a result of the content analysis of parents' opinions and experiences regarding children games were shaped around five basic themes. These themes are the meaning of the play, the games played with children, the most favourite games, the characteristics of qualified play, mothers' and fathers' experiences regarding with play. Content analyses regarding these themes are presented below.

### The meaning of the play

The first theme regarding the views of parents in different cultures regarding children's play is the meaning given to play. All Turkish and English parents viewed play as a necessity for a child's learning and development. For example, TF3 said: "...*game is important for the development of the child.... Game is a comprehensive stuff...Play with materials, hide and seek is also a game. How can I say it? Intelligence enhancing questions and riddles are also games...*”, EF2: “*Playing is good, necessary to develop children's skills and helps them learn.*”, EM1: “*Play is crucial for children's development as it helps them learn social skills, problem-solving, and creativity. It also promotes physical activity and emotional well-being.*” and TM4: “*...Play is indispensable for children's development and learning. I can't imagine a child who doesn't play games. They develop their bodies with physical movements at home and in parks, they talk and play with different toys and their languages and minds develop. They play with their friends at school. Their personalities are developing, their social and emotional development is progressing...*”. It becomes clear that all parents see play as an important way to support children's development. Furthermore, all parents also defined play as an activity in which their children have fun and are happy. For example, TF1: "...*I see it as a fun activity where I can have a good time with children and attract children to me.*”, EF3: “*Yes, games...we should buy toys for children to play with. We should buy one and try to play.... Looks like they're a lot of fun.*” TM2: “*I think the game is a fun event for children. Especially children are very happy when they play with their friends...*”, EM3 “*At the same time, play is something that relaxes the child. Children experience good emotions in the game*”, it can be seen from their statements that all parents view play as an important way to support their children's development.

## The games played with children

The second theme regarding the views of parents in different cultures on children's play is children. When the situations of playing games with their children are examined, it is seen that both English and Turkish parents play games with materials and symbolic games. For example, mothers said, "...we play ball games, card games, games with wooden pieces and role plays" (EM1), "We play Lego, chess, card games, outside games -football, basketball, tennis- etc." (EM3), "... Hide and seek, Jenga, ball, Lego... Since we work during the day, we usually play as a family in the evenings" (TM1), "We play hide and seek, we play ball" (TM2), fathers said, "Barbie, I play one of the Barbies and my daughter plays the other Barbie and makes her talk" (EF3), "We play driving games with my son at home, we even turn the shoe box into a parking lot" (TF3), "We make animals talk, we make dinosaurs fly, we play chess" from the above statements, it can be seen that mothers and fathers mostly play the same games in Turkish and English cultures. TF5 said, "There is a playground in the garden of our house. When the weather is nice we go to the park. As can be seen from the statement. Running, jumping, climbing is good for children", it is understood that while they play with game materials such as balls and ropes, they play games that require more physical movements such as running, jumping and climbing, outdoors, on playgrounds. It was observed that they played building games, blocks and puzzle games in boxes and tables. English mothers stated that they generally play ball games, rubber band jumping, card games etc. with their children. They also stated that they play outside with their children by going to the park. They also preferred active games such as running around. Turkish mothers also play Jenga, ball games mind games with their children, and they also bring active games such as hide and seek, blindfold, and catch to their homes. They stated that they played in nearby children's parks. English parents stated that their house is a single house, they have their own backyard, and they play with their children in the garden. Turkish parents say that they live in an apartment and usually play in the common playgrounds within the complex. From below statements it can be concluded that fathers play digital games with their children; "Also video games like xxx (game name)" (EF2), "My boy prefers video games, xxx (game name)" (EF5), "We used to go more often when they were toddlers. Unfortunately, they are now more into watching TVs and playing computer games" (EF4) "We play football on PlayStation with my son" (TF5), "Even though I don't want to play on the tablet, we play together on the tablet during the day. For example, collecting candy..." (TF4). However, neither Turkish nor English mothers said that they played digital and virtual games together with their children. They stated that the children played on their phones or tablets by themselves while their mothers took care of the housework. Below are photo documents of the games Turkish and English fathers play together.



Turkish mother and daughter are preparing food for the babies. Both sat on the ground. The place is the child's room.



A English mother and her daughter put their babies to sleep. Both sat on the ground. The space is a comfortable area between the living room and the kitchen.



A Turkish father plays patient and doctor at the hospital with his daughter. The teddy bear in the child's hand is sick and the girl in the role of doctor is examining it. They are playing in the living room. Dad is sitting on the ground. The girl turned the coffee table into a doctor's table and is sitting on the couch.



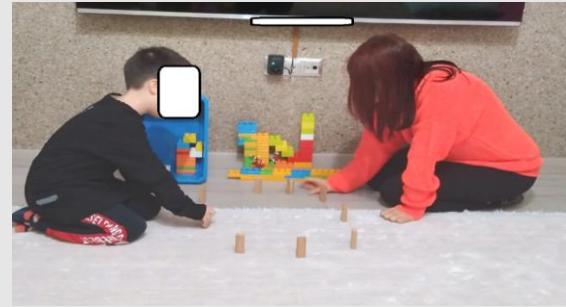
English father and his daughter are playing games on PlayStation. Father and daughter hold a console. The father is sitting on the floor and the daughter is playing games by standing and moving around and asking her father questions and chatting.

### The most favourite games

The third theme regarding the views of parents in different cultures on children games is the most favourite games. When asked about the games their children enjoy, both English and Turkish parents mentioned ball games (such as football and volleyball), running and catching games, active play, and hide-and-seek. For example, one Turkish mother (TM3) shared, “*My daughter mostly likes to play hide and seek; she likes to hide behind the sofas. So, I become the seeker, and my daughter hides, mostly behind the doors or behind the seats.*” Similarly, an English father (EF4) stated, “*My daughter loves hide and seek; we even arranged the furniture in the living room according to this game.*” Secondly, “*My boy's favourite game is building with Lego bricks and any cars. My daughter's love to play card game the most*” (EF1), “*From the expressions “There are football cards. We are playing with them these days”* (TF3), it has been determined that puzzles, jigsaw puzzles, cards and Legos are played in a common way in both cultures. In addition, English parents say that among the games that their children like are trains, colouring and counting games, connecting the dots, looking for insects, being a doctor, schooling, being a superhero, playing as an animal, playing with dolls and castles, monopoly, card games, matching games, peekaboo, cricket, etc. At the same time from the following expressions, it is understood that dramatic games are played at home as well; “*My child likes to use his dreams in games. It is understood from the expressions such as schooling, superhero, playing as an animal...*” (EM3), “*Currently, he likes imaginary games such as being an animal*” (EF5). They also stated that their children enjoy playing active games. Turkish parents stated that their children enjoy playing Jenga, puzzles, Lego, cars and trucks, mind games, blindfold, running games, ball games (football, dodgeball), musical games, drawing and house games. Here are some examples to illustrate that TM2: “*We usually play teachers. He makes us practice what he sees at school. He becomes our teacher. We are also becoming children.*”, TF3 “*My son loves building things with Legos, we also line up trucks and cars and play with them*”, TF5 “*Football is our favourite. The upper floor of the house belongs to us. We will play a match*”. As much as children in both cultures love playing with a game material, they also prefer active games where they can be active outside the home. Below are photos of the process of parents playing the most popular games.



Turkish father and his son are loading the truck. They put the Legos together and fill the back of the truck and carry them from one place to another.



A Turkish mother and her son build a city by combining Legos and wooden toys.



Turkish father and his son are playing ball on the second floor of the house.



An English mother plays card games with her daughter. She introduces the cards and chats with her.



A English father and daughter sit on the couch and move beads together.



An English mother and father were doing a colouring activity with their children. They were all sitting at the table.

### The characteristics of qualified play

The fourth theme regarding the views of parents in different cultures on children's play is characteristics of qualified play. What Turkish and English parents have mentioned about the characteristics of a quality play can be seen below; *"I think children games have to have clear and simple instructions. They should also be visually appealing"* (EM2), *"Qualified... I mean, I want it to be educational for my child. It should also develop my child's imagination and entertain him/her. I especially like puppet play, so we try to play this with my child more. My child dreams about himself/herself, writes scenarios for himself/herself while playing puppets. So, it is nice, he/she has fun, he/she develops his/her imagination"* (TM3), *"I mean, I think the*

*child should be active. Especially if he/she is physically active, it will be healthier for both the physical and mental development of the child" (TM5), "A child's game should be engaging, promote learning, and encourage cooperation. For example, a game like "Simon Says" helps develop listening skills, coordination, and following instructions" (EF1), "Among the features I can count the simplicity of the design, ease of play, and features that enable learning and development" (EF4), "He needs to develop the solution a little bit in the game. It will be challenging...he needs to tire himself mentally. I did the following in an activity. I had previously written puzzles and adventures on cards and put them in different places in the house. My son finds these questions, I read them. He also needs to think about this adventure, find it and do it. I tried to strengthen his thinking in this way" (TF5). Based on the above statements, they listed the features that quality games should have, such as supporting the development of their children (cognitive, language, communication, social, emotional, physical, motor, personality, creativity), being educational, instructive, having simple and clear instructions, and being appropriate for the child's age and development. In addition, from the statements of EF2, "Challenging, stimulate thought and fun", TF4, "Something should be learned and enjoyed while playing. It should be happy", EM1, "It can be fun, it should allow the child to learn and interact with others (children)", and TM4 "Educational, fun, helps develop vocabulary...", was parents emphasized that games should be fun, exciting and enjoyable for the child.*

An interesting finding was that mothers in both cultures agreed that it should not be risky or dangerous. However, fathers in both cultures stated that in order for their personalities to develop, their children need to take risks, learn about competition, danger and defeat, and how to be resilient in the face of failure through play. When the statements of the mothers were examined; "The game should not be dangerous for children to play" (EM2), "It should be creative, safe, interesting and educational" (EM4), "It should not be offensive or hurtful" (TM4), "... secondly, it is very important to play in a safe area, by the way, it should not damage the house." (TM1), it was revealed that the playgrounds and the content of the game should be safe and non-harmful. Fathers' statements, "Of course they are very active and tireless. Of course, a playground that will tire them out a little is good. They run and play, sometimes they fall down and get hurt. But this is life, they have to cope with it" (EF5), "They can't do much physical activity with their mothers. I support them. They play with me. We can play football. We play together, especially with the older boy, every day... We wrestle... We play chess. First of all, I don't lose on purpose. I take it to the last moment so that he can learn from his mistakes and see. I don't want him to win right away because he is a child. But of course, we definitely give him the opportunities to win. In other words, so that he can taste that feeling. I think a good game should prepare the child for life in this way..." (TF2). It can be seen that they have the idea that games should also prepare children against negative emotional states.

In addition, it was stated by English parents that the game should be interesting and attractive, creative, educational, entertaining, help develop vocabulary, teach children to take turns and wait their turn, not be frightening, and help them with logical operations. Turkish parents stated that quality play should have features such as sharing, joint action, developing the world of imagination, and the child being active. In other words, parents in both cultures think that the quality of play determines whether it supports the holistic development of the child and has features that are suitable for the child's developmental characteristics.

## **Mothers' and fathers' experiences regarding with play**

The second sub-purpose, parents' experiences, included themes of the content of time spent with the child and communication with the child. It has been determined that English and Turkish mothers and fathers play with their children inside and outside the home and have different experiences depending on the environment. TM4 said, "We set up games. We draw a driveway and drive. We play zoo with animals. We play different figures with puzzles." EM2 reported that "*Yes as my daughter is an only child, I play a lot with her. We play board games, Lego, play dough, jig-saw puzzles and also hide and seek*". As can be seen from the statements they generally mentioned about the games that played at home. English and Turkish fathers also play outside, as indicated by TF1's statement "*Playing outside is really important. Kuşadası is a completely different beach. There are big waves there, coming towards us. We have fun. We play shadow games... And we just spend hours, literally hours playing, so on an average day in the summer, we can spend six hours at the beach*" and EF3's statement "*Struggle and then they're structured where it's kind of like, OK, we're going to go like last night. We went to the park, let's make a triangle and kick the ball between us, right? That lasted only maybe like I said 2 to 5 minutes' tops. But then it's back to the playground where we're playing. We're having a good a good time there. A lot of kids*". From these statements it can be asserted that they play games outside. Turkish and English mothers also express that they experience difficulties such as fatigue, lack of time and security concerns when it comes to playing with their children because their children are very active and always eager to play. Here are some example statements; "*My child is a boy and he is very active. I can't get out of the game. He always wants to play together. I can't get enough of him. The games never end*" (EM1), "*I get very tired while playing with my daughter. Especially when she is playing with a group of her friends in green areas (parks)*" (EM3), "*It is very difficult for me to find time to come to work, cook, go to work and play with the children* (TM5)". It is also understood from these statements that their children want to play games all the time, they have difficulty finishing the game, and mothers have difficulty finding enough time, feeling inadequate in playing games with their children.

It has been revealed that in both cultures, play time between children and parents is a need of both parents and children, and that they use play as a tool to establish a bond between children and parents. For example, TF5 said, "*The time my child spends most with toys is when I am with him. For example, he has a very big toy with trains and rails. If I had this toy when I was a child, I would play with it for days. However, my child does not stay with the toy for half an hour. When does he stay for a long time? When I make trains crash together with him, when we mount the rails of the trains in different places, when we pass the trains on different rails. When we play together, talking and having fun, we can spend hours together.*" and EF5 "*I think children often want to spend more time with me. Yes, yes, because they usually play with me, that is, they are not interested in toys. Even though we are with the toys, we mostly talk, wrestle and play with me*" it was determined from the statements that fathers see toys as a tool to increase the quality of the time they spend together. The participation of the child and the father in the game was also influential in increasing the playing time.

It has also been revealed that their children play games at home on phones, tablets or PlayStation, that English and Turkish fathers participate in this process, while English and Turkish mothers prefer their children to play alone. "*He plays games on the tablet at home. We downloaded educational games. It is both safer and saves us time*" (EM5), "*There are many games on PlayStation. My son loves it. It is good for him to play under my supervision and at home calmly. While he is playing, I can spend time on other things at home*" (TM4). It is

understood that mother uses that time for their other roles at home. “*We play virtual games. He tries to play on the phone. We have PlayStation games, there is football. We spend more time together. Sometimes the son of the neighbour across the street comes and they both play*” (TF5) and “*The more that I can engage my children with play, the less tendency they have to fall upon technology. I find technology is ubiquitous in children’s lives today, so playing with the cell phone, the iPad, the laptop, it’s too easy*” (EF3). It is seen that fathers also prefer digital games where they can communicate with their children comfortably at home.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study examined the views and experiences of mothers and fathers in England and Türkiye regarding play. Based on the framework of Social Cultural Theory, the views of mothers and fathers on play and the experiences of mothers, fathers and children in play were investigated based on adult support in children’s participation in play. All participants in both cultures stated that they played games with their children. A systematic review of play studies conducted in more than 15 countries found that, despite different parenting styles and practices, many mothers and fathers play with their children (Yaffe, 2023). While English and Turkish mothers focused on ensuring that their children had fun, learned, and supported their creativity and developmental areas while playing, English and Turkish fathers thought that in addition to these, their children should be encouraged to develop emotional regulation skills and psychological resilience during their play. While father-child interactions in play are associated with positive developmental outcomes, particularly in areas such as academic achievement, behavioural regulation, and cognitive development (Robinson et al., 2021), mother-child play tends to involve quieter, nurturing interactions that focus on social and emotional support (Steenhoff et al., 2019). While English mothers stated that they play with their children more at home, in their gardens and in large green parks, Turkish mothers stated that they play less at home and in playgrounds. It is observed that the physical conditions of the environments where families live change the playgrounds and the duration of time they play with their children. In England, urbanization is associated with the rise of homes with gardens, and parents’ willingness to allow children to play safely in these gardens. Outside the home, the most adventurous spaces are seen as green spaces and indoor play centers, and it has been determined that playgrounds and green spaces are where children play most (Dodd et al., 2021). Academic findings in Türkiye, however, indicate that the home is centrally located, often within an apartment building, and play is played in both private and public spaces, culturally structured spaces for development and socialization (Cevher Kalburan, 2014). The reasons why mothers do not play with their children for long periods of time are that they work or start playing when the child wants to participate. In the study by Sobkin and Skobeltsina (2014), the joint activities of parents with their children in their free time were investigated and it was found that 49.9% of the families played games with their children. Reasons for parents not participating in shared play were listed as lack of free time for shared play, the child’s desire to play independently, and parents’ inadequacy in playing with their children. This study also shows that time and place play a decisive role in playing games with the children of English and Turkish families.

When the situations in which parents play with their children are examined, it has been determined that parents prefer hide-and-seek, ball games, and games played with toys with their children. In the home environment, the most popular games in both cultures are those played with small-pieced play materials (puzzles, etc.) that the child can build himself. In a study comparing Turkish and British children, sports games (football, cricket, etc.) were preferred more by British children, while action games (dodgeball, catch, etc.) were preferred more by

Turkish children (Yılmaz et al, 2022). Gülen and Barış's (2021) study investigating the top 20 games that parents most prefer to play with their children, it was found that the top three games were playing with toys (29.46%), playing football (23.64%), and playing hide and seek (22.87%). Parents mostly state that they prefer games that require physical activity. This situation is consistent with the research finding that the child often prefers to play outdoors, in environments that allow for physical movement. Games chosen by parents (such as hide and seek, ball games, or toy based activities) are not only for entertainment; they also serve as ways to scaffold, a concept central to Vygotsky's theory, through which children gain cognitive, social, and physical skills. The preference for games that involve physical activity (such as playing soccer or hide and seek) is linked to Vygotsky's belief that development is not only cognitive but also social and physical (Vygotsky, 2016). Games favoured by parents and children, such as puzzles, ball games, and soccer, are cultural tools that help children develop specific skills such as problem solving, physical coordination, and social cooperation. According to Vygotsky, the types of play preferred across cultures (for example, sports like football in England and action games like dodgeball in Türkiye) reflect cultural values and how they shape the types of activities considered important for children's development. These games that parents choose to play with their children are culture specific tools that mediate learning in ways that align with societal norms and expectations. From a Vygotskian perspective, children's play is shaped by sociocultural factors such as cultural norms, values, and practices (Vygotsky, 2016). While British children may gravitate toward sports like football and cricket because they are culturally significant and offer specific avenues for developing social and physical skills, Turkish children have been shown to prefer games that involve more action and direct physical interaction, reflecting the local cultural context.

In many cultures, games have entertaining features that develop skills and intelligence, have certain rules, and help you have a good time (Vygotsky, 2016). In this study, it was determined that parents see games that support the child's development, are fun and interesting, and have rules suitable for the child as quality children games. This finding is consistent with the finding of the comparative study conducted by İvreendi et al., (2019), in which Norwegian and Turkish mothers and teachers expressed the fun nature of the game in their definition. It is important for the child to have fun and experience positive emotions while playing. This reflects Vygotsky's argument that play elicits positive affect, increases motivation, and that children learn best when they are emotionally engaged (Vygotsky, 2016).

In conclusion, there were differences and similarities in the views of Turkish and English parents. One of the differences was that English mothers stated that they did not have to work and played more with their children. They also said that they play more in their own gardens, green areas and parks. On the other hand, some of the Turkish mothers stated that they work and usually play with their children at home or in the playground in the common areas of their apartments. British mothers generally stayed home and had access to gardens and parks. Turkish mothers generally worked and played with their children mostly indoors or in shared play areas. These differences were related to Vygotsky's understanding that play opportunities are shaped by cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions, and the physical environment (Vygotsky, 2016). The similarities are that all mothers and fathers think that play should be fun, educational and support children's developmental areas. In addition, all mothers and fathers stated that their children play digital games. Parents' shared beliefs about the purpose of play illustrate how cultural values, a core concept in sociocultural theory, guide children's learning experiences (Singh et al., 2022). In one study, the views of mothers in the USA, Türkiye, China and South

Korea regarding digital games were examined (İşikoğlu, et al., 2019). Parents cited the benefits of digital games as supporting learning, gaining technological skills for the future, and entertainment. All of them noted that digital games have educational benefits, such as learning basic math and reading skills and seeing many social and physical facts about the world. These findings are similar to the idea that children in this study thought that digital games were allowed by their parents, that they played together, and that it provided educational support. Whether parents and children play together in a physical or digital environment, parental support helps the child acquire skills within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 2016). Cultural norms and opportunities determine what types of play are encouraged by the physical and social environment, such as whether adults direct academic study rather than play and whether children have freedom to explore (Edwards, 2000). It is important for adults to be motivated to practice their roles through play and for the environment to provide easy access to play, and for the richness of models and materials for creative and constructive play to establish play between adults and children. The emphasis on adult participation and material provision is related to Vygotsky's idea that play flourishes when adults create supportive and resource-rich learning environments (Vygotsky, 2016). In this context, the following suggestions are presented.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

A limitation of this study was that only English and Turkish mothers and fathers participated in order to reveal their perspectives on play. Teachers and children can also be included among the participants and in-depth research can be conducted. In addition, there were participants from two cultures in this study. In future studies, having participants from different continents may contribute to revealing the views of culture on the game. In this study, only interviews were conducted and documented photographs were collected to reveal the understanding of play. A more in-depth study can be designed using observations of parent-child playtimes in different environments to investigate the experiences and practices of mothers and fathers regarding play. Additionally, online or face-to-face educational activities on children games and game materials can be offered so that parents can be more effective in playing with their children. A better understanding of mothers' and fathers' views on children's play across cultures may help develop more influential programs to support children's play experiences. Despite these limitations, this study was important in revealing the similar and different views of mothers and fathers on play in both England and Türkiye. The similarities and differences in play that emerged in these two different cultures provide further evidence of how mothers and fathers living in different cultures perceive play.

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### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

### **Ethics**

Approval for this study was obtained from Aydin Adnan Menderes University, Educational Research Ethics Committee on May 5, 2024 (No: E-84982664-050.04-506468).

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