

Research Article**Mindfulness: Views of Turkish Pre-service Early Childhood Teachers***Funda EDA TONGA,¹  Feyza TANTEKİN ERDEN² **Abstract**

The present study investigates the views of 21 pre-service early childhood teachers regarding mindfulness and its practice in early childhood settings. The participants were senior students attending early childhood education programs in Ankara, Turkey. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The students expressed positive views on mindfulness, for instance, that the early childhood teacher being more able to focus on current activities, more aware of themselves, and in control of negative emotions. Reservations included the practice requiring a long process, the risk of teachers becoming non-judgmental, or insufficiently aware of events in the past or the future. Overall, the participants agreed that mindfulness can be readily applied in education and is useful for reaching teachable moments. They also felt that mindfulness practices in the classroom would have a positive impact on children in terms of their future lives, their cognitive development and social-emotional development. Teachers and parents would also benefit personally and professionally, and their family relations would improve. All of the participants in the study indicated that they would like to practice mindfulness in the classroom. However, many had hesitations which were related to implementation and teachers' efficacy.

Keywords: Early childhood education, mindfulness, pre-service early childhood teachers, teacher views

1. INTRODUCTION

Most of us are so busy living our lives that we seem to have difficulty concentrating on the present moment. In a sense, we can find ourselves dwelling in the past or the future instead of the present. When we are so distracted, we can forget about ourselves and neglect our emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Even when we try to understand our emotions, we may find ourselves mostly preoccupied with those that are negative. However, with the aid of the science of psychology, people have been trained to cope with their feelings and negative emotions. Elsewhere, people of the Buddhist tradition have long applied a concept of mindfulness that helps them to feel better by accepting the existence of their negative emotions (Carmody & Baer, 2008). Jon Kabat- Zinn (2003), who first applied mindfulness in psychological therapy describes mindfulness as, "The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (p.144). He aimed to reduce stress levels in patients who suffered from chronic pain (Kabat- Zinn, 2003). Thereafter, the approach has been tried in many other contexts in which people face with stress, and it has been found that those who have met with mindfulness and utilize it in their lives can cope with daily life stress more readily than those who have not (Donald, Atkins, Parker, Christie, & Ryan, 2016).

1.1. Mindfulness in Education

The practice of mindfulness has spread from medicine to other areas such as education (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Students, teachers, and parents also suffer from stress, and mindfulness practices have been observed to both decrease stress levels and to have positive effects on attention,

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¹ Res. Assist., Middle East Technical University, Turkey, edatonga51@gmail.com

² Prof. Dr., Middle East Technical University, Turkey, tfeyza@metu.edu.tr

Corresponding Author e-mail address: edatonga51@gmail.com

regulation of emotions, the invocation of empathy and relaxation. Attention can be enhanced by using mindfulness, the result being that individuals better perform their tasks and responsibilities (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Sedlmeier et al., 2012). Mindfulness is considered to be closely related to emotion regulation, as a brain that is affected by mindfulness undergoes significant changes to activate emotions (Goldin & Gross, 2010; Roemer, Williston & Rollins, 2015). Besides, when people are trained with mindfulness, they also develop their self-compassion skills (Birnie, Speca & Carlson, 2010). Other studies have noted a calming effect of mindfulness that helps subjects to feel more relaxed and to decrease their stress level in difficult situations (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Hoge et al., 2013). Buchanan (2017) contributed to the related literature by finding that mindfulness enhances the relationship between teachers and their students. Importantly, he also stated that a teachable moment is related to the concept of mindfulness. In 2012, Capel emphasized the importance of mindfulness in terms of how it affects the quality of learning. It was found that mindfulness fosters child-centred education by providing teachable moments rather than concentrating on the previously fixed activity plans and the practice of mindfulness enhances the learning experiences of children. All of these studies supported the practice of mindfulness in education by providing details of its benefits.

1.2. Mindfulness Practices in Early Childhood Education

Given the above-mentioned benefits, training in mindfulness has also been applied to early childhood education. Children's learning and well-being were seen to have been enhanced and the practice has given them a powerful start in terms of development (Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). In these sensitive years, mindfulness can be utilized to familiarize children with some positive behaviors such as kindness, tolerance, and peace (Whitehead, 2011).

As children's future development is significantly affected by receiving an appropriate education in early childhood, the application of mindfulness is likely to have lasting benefits (Pholpirul, 2017). Children meet with their teachers and begin to interact and socialize with them, carefully observing and embodying their teacher's emotions, language, and behaviors. The benefits of this vital early learning phase depend on the performance of such teachers which can be compromised in various ways. Long working hours have, for example, been reported to decrease their performance, well-being and to affect teachers negatively in terms of increasing their level of stress and burnout (McCallum & Price, 2010). Teachers' well-being has been found to affect their instructional performance and children's motivation (Hooker & Fodor, 2008; McCallum & Price, 2010). In this respect, mindfulness can be a good way to increase teachers' psychological well-being (Meiklejohn, et al., 2012; Whitehead, 2011). By using mindfulness, their physical and mental state is relaxed (Whitehead, 2011). Psychological well-being is one of the significant products of this relaxation and the psychological well-being of early childhood teachers has been observed to affect the quality of education that they provide to children (Hooker & Fodor, 2008). Moreover, the practice of mindfulness helps teachers to arrange appropriate classroom environments and to develop supportive relationships with their students. When teachers become more emotionally and socially competent, they can manage their classrooms better than before (Jennings, 2015).

1.3. Mindfulness in Teacher Training

Although several studies mention many beneficial aspects related to the application of mindfulness in educational settings, only a few are related to teacher training. According to Albrecht et al. (2012), teachers tend to practice mindfulness in their classrooms. However, it was found that teachers would like to embody and practice mindfulness to enhance their self-efficacy toward mindfulness practices before the application of mindfulness with children. This showed that there is a growing need for mindfulness training for teachers. In 2017, Hartigan conducted a study with pre-service teachers whose early childhood special education curriculum included mindfulness practices and found that the mindfulness practices course reduced the stress level of pre-service teachers and

they felt calmer. In another study that aimed to address the high stress-low performance phenomenon known as burnout in teaching, a mindfulness-based program was applied to pre-service teachers and their stress level was seen to have decreased (Miyahara et al., 2017).

In order to contribute to the related literature about mindfulness in education, this study sought to obtain the views of pre-service early childhood teachers regarding mindfulness. Pre-service teachers were selected as participants because they are thought to be more open to new concepts and topical issues than in-service teachers. As expressed by Orakçı (2015), the quality of the education service depends on the quality of teacher training, as the teacher has a critical role in educational quality (Kayange & Msiska, 2016). Teacher training provides readiness for the field by making candidates confront and cope with challenges and problems (Ryan, 2016). Professional programs provide a wide variety of courses that develop pre-service teachers' knowledge. Pre-service teachers also have the opportunity to transform theory to practice when they undergo their practicum. In this way, teacher training both motivates and enables candidates for the profession. As Illingworth (2012) asserts, novice teachers start their work stronger if "they have some theoretical and practical learning before standing in front of a class" (p. 191). Clearly, appropriate training programs are vital to the preparation and on-going professional development of teachers and the quality of the education they provide. It is therefore important to incorporate new concepts and topical issues such as mindfulness into teacher training programs so that teachers can become familiar with them before working with children.

The aim of this study was to investigate the views of pre-service early childhood teachers regarding mindfulness and its practice in early childhood settings. The study sought answers to the following research questions:

- What are the views of pre-service early childhood teachers regarding mindfulness?
- What are the views of pre-service early childhood teachers on mindfulness practice in early childhood education settings?
 - How can mindfulness be practiced in early childhood education to include activities undertaken both in the classroom and at home?
 - What can be the effects of the practice of mindfulness in early childhood education on children?
 - What can be the effects of the practice of mindfulness in early childhood education on teachers?
 - What can be the effects of the practice of mindfulness in early childhood education on parents?
- What do pre-service early childhood teachers think about mindfulness practice in their future teaching practices?

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants and Procedures

In total, 21 female pre-service teachers participated in the study. They were recruited from six universities (two private and four state institutions) that have a department of early childhood education in Ankara, Turkey. There is not any course that addresses mindfulness in these universities. The participants have anonymously ascribed titles from P1 to P21 and their universities U1 to U6. The researchers gathered demographic data about the pre-service early childhood teachers prior to the interview. The age range of the participants was between 20 and 40 years and all were senior students with some teaching practice experience obtained in early childhood education settings. The researchers applied purposive sampling that is generally employed in qualitative research. In this way, the researcher picks people and locates them for study so that they can decisively notify a comprehension of the research problem and essential phenomenon in the research (Creswell, 2007).

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study were collected by the first author between December 2017 and April 2018, following the approval of the University Research Center for Applied Ethics. The researchers used a semi-structured interview protocol as the instrumentation. The interview questions were developed by the researchers following a review of the literature. The application of the interview with the participants lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. The interview protocol consisted of three sets of questions. The first was designed to gain personal information from the participants and to set the tone for the interview. The second set of questions was developed to collect data about the views of the participants on the concept of mindfulness. The final set of questions was arranged in order to reveal the views of the participants about the concept of mindfulness and its practice in early childhood education (Examples of interview questions can be seen in Appendix A). As mindfulness is a novel term in Turkey, some participants have never heard about the concept. However, few of the participants have some ideas about mindfulness. For this reason, the researchers gave the most popular definition of mindfulness to the participants before the interview questions. And then, the participants were asked to deduce from this definition by considering the questions related to mindfulness and early childhood education. In other words, it can be said that the researchers tried to create awareness toward mindfulness for its practice in the early childhood period by asking the interview questions to the early childhood teachers of the future.

The researchers consulted expert opinion and conducted a pilot study with seven participants prior to administering the interviews. The pilot study enabled the researchers to validate the questions and to determine any amendments thought necessary. In order to provide for the reliability of this current study, the inter-coder agreement was utilized. One of the coders was the first author and the other was a research assistant who was undertaking a master's program at the department of early childhood education. At first, these two coders read the transcripts separately and determined their codes and categories. They then met to share and discuss their codes and categories with the aim of working to achieve a consensus while determining the final codes and categories to be used.

Three steps were utilized which are recommended by Creswell (2007) in order to analyze the data. Firstly, we formed the data by preparing transcripts of the interviews for analysis. Secondly, we classified the data into categories by using codes and abbreviating the codes. The coding was used in order to reach the specific pieces of the broad data set (Merriam, 2009). Lastly, we provided tables and figures in order to express the data.

3. FINDINGS

The results of the study are introduced in the order in which the research questions were asked.

3.1. Views of Pre-service Early Childhood Teachers Regarding Mindfulness

As many of the participants have not had detailed information about mindfulness, the researchers gave the most popular definition of mindfulness to the participants in order to make them more familiar with the concept. Besides, it was thought that this definition can facilitate deducing and interpreting about the practice of mindfulness in early childhood education. The given definition is that "The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat- Zinn, 2003, p.144). With this definition, participants who have heard about mindfulness before can check their previous knowledge and participants who have never heard about mindfulness can have an idea about the term. After they were given this definition, the participants were asked, "What do you think about the concept of mindfulness after considering this definition?" The answers of the participants were labelled in terms of the positive or negative views they expressed (See Table 1).

Table 1. Views of pre-service teachers after the definition of mindfulness was given

Positive views	Negative views
Controlling negative emotions (n=4)	Non-judgmental (n=1)
Living the present moment (n=11)	Lack of thinking about the past or the future (n=2)
Focusing on the present and heightened concentration (n=6)	

3.1.1. Positive views

After hearing its definition, many participants ventured to share their positive views about mindfulness. The definition helped them to reflect on the concept, and they appreciated the opportunity to explore this term during the interview.

3.1.1.1. Controlling negative emotions

Some pre-service early childhood teachers (n=4) felt that people may be able to better control their negative emotions such as sadness or stress through mindfulness.

3.1.1.2. Living in the present

Living in the present, which is also referred to as *carpe diem*, is one of the most pressing issues (n=11). Many participants highlighted the importance of living in the present and appreciating what they have. According to the participants of this study, mindfulness may help individuals to feel more satisfied with their lives.

3.1.1.3. Focusing on the now and increasing concentration

Apart from appreciating the present moment, some participants shed light on the issue of concentration (n=6). They thought that mindfulness can provide individuals with a higher level of concentration.

3.1.2. Negative views

On the other hand, some of the pre-service teachers had negative views and expressed some hesitations in response to the definition.

3.1.2.1. Non-judgmental

One of the participants had negative views about mindfulness because it is non-judgmental. According to this participant, it is impossible to accept everything nonjudgmentally.

3.1.2.2. Not thinking about the past or the future

Some of the participants (n=2) believed that people are unable to focus on the present moment because our past shapes the present and the present shapes the future. Thus, the two cannot be separated.

3.2. Views of Pre-service Early Childhood Teachers on the Practice of Mindfulness in Early Childhood Education Settings

After the researchers asked participants to reveal their general views about the concept of mindfulness, the participants were questioned to investigate their views about how mindfulness can be practiced in early childhood education settings. Table 2 demonstrates teacher views on mindfulness practice in ECE.

Table 2. Views on mindfulness practice in ECE

Categories	Codes
Time awareness	Focusing on the present moment (n=2) No anxiety about future (n=2)
Teachable moment	Semi-structured activities (n=5) Process rather than product (n=3)
Different activity choices	Interesting activities (n=7)

3.2.1. Time awareness

Some of the participants (n=4) mentioned the harmony between a child's nature and mindfulness with respect to time awareness. They stated that mindfulness is suitable for children, as they tend to focus their attention on what they are doing, express less anxiety about the future, and occupy themselves with what they are playing with at the moment.

3.2.1.1. Focusing on the present moment

Several participants (n=2) explained that children focus on the present moment while they are playing or doing something. However, some might need assistance to focus on the current activity through mindfulness. Moreover, they felt that teachers and parents should encourage children to express themselves naturally and that mindfulness can facilitate this.

3.2.1.2. No anxiety about the future

Some of our sample of pre-service early childhood teachers (n=2) believed that children and adults differ in the way in which they experience anxiety. They felt that adults are anxious about their careers, families, or daily lives, while children are not. Therefore, mindfulness is more appropriate for children and can be practiced easily during childhood.

3.2.2. Teachable moments

Almost half the sample (n=8) mentioned the importance of focusing on teachable moments in early childhood education and the impact of this practice on children's long-term learning. These participants felt that, as children's needs and interests can change rapidly, their learning, as well as the learning environment, should be converted to teachable moments whenever possible.

3.2.2.1. Semi-structured activities

Several participants (n=5) argued that early childhood teachers prefer using well-planned activities. However, they also acknowledged that some of these are prepared by experts in publishing companies who do not know your children, their interests, or their ability levels. They supported their opinions by stating that, when children encounter structured activities, many just want to complete them and wait for the next one without having learned anything. In other words, pre-service teachers said that in order to integrate mindfulness into our classrooms, we should not use structured activities.

3.2.2.2. Process rather than product

Several of the pre-service teachers criticized the in-service teachers regarding a product orientation in early childhood education. They shared their views that, in most of the early childhood centres, teachers become anxious about the end-of-year exhibitions of children's work for which they are required to present children's completed art products. Thus, they cannot focus on the process and are likely to miss important developmental details about children. Participants came to this conclusion that with mindfulness, process-oriented education can be realized (n=3).

3.2.3. Different activity choices

In using mindfulness in the classroom or in-home environments, some participants felt that they would mostly apply it to those activities where the teacher needs to attract the attention of the children. Others felt that both teachers and parents can provide various types of activities for children that can help them to meet with mindfulness. These can even be amusing and would make mindfulness more permanent in their lives.

3.2.3.1. Interesting activities

Many of the pre-service teachers (n=7) thought that teachers and parents need to prepare and apply interesting activities for children and these activities can include mindfulness. Besides, children learn by focusing on the present moment while they are performing the activities. Some of the participants explained their ideas by giving examples from their yoga, dance and drama experiences. They also liken these experiences to mindfulness concerning present time awareness. Moreover, a few of the participants also correlate mindfulness practice with art and literature activities.

3.3. Views of Pre-service Early Childhood Teachers on the Effects of Mindfulness Practice in Early Childhood Education Settings

According to the views of participants, the effects of mindfulness practice in early childhood settings can benefit children, teachers, and parents in various ways. (See Table 3)

Table 3. Views on the effects of mindfulness on children, teachers, and parents

On children	
Future life	Learning at an early age (n=3) Getting into the habit (n=3)
Cognitive development	Problem-solving skills (n=4) Better academic skills (n=7)
Social-emotional development	Being aware of own and others' emotions (n=8) Better communication skills (n=5) Self-regulation skills (n=3)
On teachers	
Personal benefits	Dealing with problems in daily life (n=5) Time management (n=4)
Professional benefits	Decreasing the level of stress (n=4) Classroom management (n=11)
On parents	
Personal and professional benefits	Dealing with problems in daily life and work-life (n=5) Time management (n=3)
Relationship in the family	Knowing the child (n=4) Democratic family (n=7) Quality time (n=5)

3.3.1. Views on the effects of mindfulness on children

3.3.1.1. Future life

Many of the pre-service teachers thought that learning in early age plays a vital role in gaining a new lifestyle that can be maintained into the future (n=6). After the change occurs, the individual accepts this new lifestyle as a habit. Participants added that after individuals change their lives with the help of mindfulness, it really affects their future lives. It means that they learn to focus on the present moment and this increases their awareness.

3.3.1.1.1. Learning at an early age

As the participants were pre-service early childhood teachers, they knew the importance of children's development between the ages of 0 and 6. Some of them shared their opinions regarding the issue and emphasized the function of teaching mindfulness to children in early childhood (n=3). They asserted that children are open to learning new things in this period. Therefore, teachers have a vital role. If they can teach mindfulness to children at their early age, they can easily absorb and integrate it with their lives. In addition, this early learning can be more permanent and be transferred to their future lives. In short, teaching mindfulness to a 4-year-old child and a 30-year-old person is very different.

3.3.1.1.2. Getting into the habit

Several participants explained that it is very difficult to make people gain new habits or change previous habits (n=3). They added that if children learn mindfulness in their pre-primary education, they learn to concentrate on the present moment from the beginning of their educational

lives and they can do everything with more awareness. Children can maintain it throughout their lives and it can become a habit for them.

3.3.1.2. Cognitive development

According to the participants (n=11), children's whole development is very important, and each developmental area is concentric to each other. Mindfulness affects children's cognitive development. The participants established a connection between children's minds and cognitive development. They added that mindfulness can contribute to children's cognitive development in terms of both enhanced and assimilation learning and an increase in learning quality.

3.3.1.2.1. Problem-solving skills

According to several participants, children are faced with various problems, and they try to deal with them by searching for solutions and trying them out (n=4). In this way, they find new ways to solve problems. Thus, the skills that are required for problem-solving can be enhanced via mindfulness.

3.3.1.2.2. Better academic skills

Under the title of cognitive development, the most repeated code is better academic skills (n=7). Children can learn rational thinking, and they can establish a logical connection between ideas when they practice mindfulness in their own lives. While a child is focused on a situation, they think deeply. Participants added that when children start to think critically and solve problems easily, their academic skills are enhanced because they are more able to conduct self- assessments.

3.3.1.3. Social-emotional development

Most of the study participants stated that children's social and emotional development is as important as cognitive development (n=16). If children are supported socially, their other developmental areas can be positively affected. Participants especially emphasized that children meeting with mindfulness are more aware of their own and others' emotions. With this awareness, they can have better communication skills. In this way, their social-emotional development is affected positively by mindfulness.

3.3.1.3.1. Being aware of own and others' emotions

Some of the participants asserted that because mindfulness is related to focusing on the present moment, people also learn to focus on their and others' emotions in this present time (n=8). The important point is to be aware of whether the emotions are positive or negative. For instance, happiness, sadness, stress, anxiety or wonder can be some of the examples and all of these emotions are normal. In addition, it is vital to learn that emotions are visitors that come and go. In early childhood classrooms, children might have some problems understanding their peers because of egocentrism, which makes them tend to think about themselves only. For this reason, mindfulness can be beneficial to their social emotional development by increasing their awareness of others' emotions.

3.3.1.3.2. Better communication skills

Five of the participants in the study mentioned that better communication is provided with a better understanding. If people learn to be aware of their own and others' emotions, they easily understand each other. It increases the level of empathy. People can express themselves and the relationship between people is also enhanced. Early childhood education is a critical period to gain social skills. If we can prepare children for understanding others with mindfulness, it also affects society positively. People start to communicate better and live in a peaceful environment.

3.3.1.3.3. Self-regulation skills

Participants (n=3) mentioned that self-regulation is the controlling of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. This skill is related to behaving with mindfulness because thoughts and emotions are affected by each other.

3.3.2. Views on the effects of mindfulness on teachers

3.3.2.1. Personal benefits

Some of the participants (n=9) associated mindfulness with the personal benefits of teachers. They thought that if children meet with mindfulness, they can transfer it to their own life and personal benefits occur. They are able to cope with daily life problems easily. They can arrange their time and it prevents time being wasted.

3.3.2.1.1. Dealing with problems in daily life

Participants (n=5) mentioned that teachers have a lot of problems in their lives like other people and they have difficulty in coping with these problems. Mindfulness teaches those teachers to focus on these problems and their reasons. In this way, teachers might deal with difficulties by considering their causes and their life quality can be improved.

3.3.2.1.2. Time management

Some participants (n=4) mentioned teachers need to manage their time well in order to be efficient.

3.3.2.2. Professional benefits

Apart from personal benefits, many of the participants thought that mindfulness should bring professional benefits to teaching (n=15). Teachers' work life is affected positively when they apply mindfulness. They tend to have a good working environment, know their children well and have enhanced classroom management skills. Also, thanks to mindfulness, such teachers have less stress.

3.3.2.2.1. Decreasing the level of stress

According to four of the participants, society places significant responsibility on the shoulders of teachers. For this reason, teaching can be a very stressful occupation involving families, curriculum, activities, and children. Practicing mindfulness reduces stress in their lives and at work.

3.3.2.2.2. Classroom management

Eleven of the participants expressed their opinions that mindfulness has a huge impact on teachers' classroom management skills. Many of the teachers might have difficulty in managing classrooms in early childhood education because children face with rules and authority that differ from the ones they are familiar within their home environment. In addition, children are obliged to share everything with other children in the classroom. Some can find the environment in a classroom makes them uncomfortable and they want to leave it. Teachers must learn to deal with such classroom management problems, especially in their first years of teaching experience. Pre-service teachers in the study claimed that mindfulness enhances the classroom management skills of teachers. They mentioned various aspects such as knowing children well, focusing on calm children, child-directed activities, a teachable moment, rules, assessment, and problem-solving.

3.3.3. Views on the effects of mindfulness on parents

3.3.3.1. Personal and professional benefits

According to participants, the practice of mindfulness also affects parents and their personal and work life (n=8). Parents tend to learn from their children and they transfer this learning to their lives. They believe that if children acquire information about mindfulness at school and they transmit the knowledge to their parents, these parents have a chance to understand mindfulness. In this way, they are able to deal with daily life problems, succeed in work and manage their time.

3.3.3.1.1. Dealing with problems in daily life and work life

Problem-solving skills are important characteristics of individuals. Five of the participants mentioned that mindfulness helps parents to enhance their problem-solving skills by focusing on the problem. They learn to look for different viewpoints and try to find various solutions, they are more able to resolve their difficulties. In addition, people need to see the reasons for a problem in order to

solve it. All the steps of this process require present time awareness which is a component of mindfulness.

3.3.3.1.2. Time management

Three of the participants mentioned the effects of mindfulness on time management at home and work. With the help of present time awareness, people grasp the idea that using their existing time to full potential is vital. The participants added that if individuals learn to utilize the present time with their full potential, they are able to arrange their time more successfully because they start to spare necessary time to a specific work with full focus rather than giving much time to many works at the same time without focusing to each of it.

3.3.3.2. Relationship in the family

Sixteen of the pre-service teachers in the study mentioned that mindfulness affects relationships in the family. This includes the bond between all family members rather than just the one between a child and its parents. According to participants, when parents know their children well, their relationship can be stronger, family members can express their opinions freely and children feel that they are independent people. Present time awareness brought by mindfulness is seen to help families to make the best use of their time and this helps them to increase the quality of their time together.

3.3.3.2.1. Knowing the child

Participants (n=4) emphasized the importance of knowing the child when they mentioned the relationship between child and parents. Children's academic skills, cognitive development, interests, and potential are affected by such knowledge. According to pre-service teachers', every parent should be able to say what their child can do and what they have difficulty with. With this knowledge, parents can arrange their learning environment. Moreover, when parents know their children well, they can decrease the number of problems which can occur among them and make the relationship stronger.

3.3.3.2.2. Democratic family

Seven of the participants emphasized that mindfulness affects relationships in the family by providing a democratic environment. With mindfulness, family members learn to place emphasis on all members' ideas equally and they try to understand each other respectfully. Such emotional awareness reduces criticism between family members as they tend to try and find mutual ground when giving their thoughts. In addition, according to participants, democratic families help children to become more independent. They thought that unfortunately, "helicopter parenting" is a common problem among mothers who follow their children's progress too intently and, in this way, deny their children's opportunities to do things independently and learn from making mistakes. This restriction affects children's development negatively. Participants believe that mindfulness might help parents to realize that their children can do things independently and their children also have emotions, ideas, needs, and interests like adults. They thought that the relationship in the family can be enhanced when children have more freedom and are less dependent on their parents.

3.3.3.2.3. Quality time

Five of the participants thought that mindfulness increases the quality of time that parents and children have together and this makes their relationship stronger. They believe that in today's world, most mothers and fathers are working and have only 2 or 3 hours with their children when they come home from work. Many parents do not spend quality time with their children and their relationship is impacted negatively. If they practice mindfulness at home, they learn to focus on the present moment. This provides that parents start to use the limited time which they have with their children more efficiently.

3.4. Views of Pre-service Early Childhood Teachers on Practice of Mindfulness in Their Future Teaching Practices

After the general question about the practice of mindfulness and its effects on children, teachers, and parents, the researcher asked the pre-service teachers to express their views about

practicing mindfulness in the future. All of them indicated that they would like to practice mindfulness in the classroom. However, many had hesitations which were related to implementation and teachers' efficacy (See Table 4).

Table 4. Views about mindfulness practice in the future

Categories	Codes
Concerns in implementation	Appropriateness for national ECE curriculum (n=3) Permission from the school administrators (n=2)
Teachers' efficacy	Knowledge of mindfulness and its implementation (n=18) Internalizing mindfulness (n=3)

3.4.1. Concerns in implementation

According to participants in the study (n=5), they would hesitate to use mindfulness because some problems may arise in the application. They mentioned that new things cannot be adopted and applied easily. For this reason, inevitable problems can occur when somebody tries to implement mindfulness.

3.4.1.1. Appropriateness for national ECE curriculum

According to several pre-service teachers (n=3), the ECE curriculum applied in Turkey may not be suitable. While it provides a flexible framework for teachers, the participants emphasized they were unaware of the application of mindfulness in any program related to teacher training or delivery of the national ECE curriculum.

3.4.1.2. Permission from school administrators

Participants (n=2) mentioned that in order to implement mindfulness practices in class, they would need to obtain permission from school administrators. Even if the early childhood education curriculum was determined by the Ministry of National Education, administrators are the control mechanisms of teachers' practices whether they are in line with daily, and monthly activity plans or not. For this reason, the participants came to this conclusion that teachers might find it difficult to integrate mindfulness with the rigid implementation of pre-planned activities.

3.4.2. Teachers' efficacy

All of the pre-service teachers in the study criticize teachers' efficacy (n=21). They mentioned that mindfulness can be used but the most important point is teachers' knowledge, implementation, and internalization of mindfulness. They added that teachers cannot teach something if they do not have any information about it or any experience of it. Even if teachers gain knowledge about mindfulness and its implementation, they should also internalize it within their own lives before applying it with children.

3.4.2.1. Knowledge of mindfulness and its implementation

Most (n=18) of the participants emphasized the importance of having knowledge about mindfulness and its implementation before they use it with their children. They mentioned that even if individuals have enough information about something, they might need additional assistance to apply it because early childhood teachers touch children's lives and they need to do so with care. Teachers can enhance their knowledge with courses, education, seminars or social media, but they also need to have some implementation knowledge.

3.4.2.2. Internalizing mindfulness

Three of the participants mentioned that they wanted to use mindfulness but teachers should internalize it and apply it in their own lives before they do so with children. According to these

participants, teachers are role models for children and children focus on all the behaviors of their teachers. In this way, teachers can transmit their behaviors or thoughts to children unconsciously. Therefore, teachers need to apply mindfulness to their life and then they can practice it in the classroom.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Participants expressed views on mindfulness such as it requires a non-judgmental attitude. This finding echoes previous definitions such as those of Kabat-Zinn (1990) who defined mindfulness as “paying attention to the present moment non-judgmentally” or Davis and Hayes (2011) who defined mindfulness as “a moment-to-moment awareness of one’s experience without judgement”. Some participants may not have understood what these definitions seek to express or what being non-judgmental means in this context.

The participants thought that mindfulness can be practiced in early childhood settings, school, and home environments. A few studies have found that mindfulness practices can be applicable and integrated into early childhood classroom settings successfully and with positive effects on children (Devcich, Rix, Bernay, & Graham, 2017). Similar to the literature, the participants in the current study thought that mindfulness would positively impact 3-6-year-old children’s social-emotional development, well-being and various skills such as self-regulation or gaining pro-social behavior (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, & Davidson, 2015). It is known that children can be aware of their emotions with the help of mindfulness and they can also realize, understand and describe these emotions (Davis & Hayes, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Saltzman & Goldin, 2008; Whitehead, 2011).

Participants also emphasized the importance of mindfulness on cognitive development. Their views mirror those of previous studies that have examined the effect of mindfulness on cognitive development. Mindfulness provides better academic skills by enhancing executive functioning, remembering, information processing (Lu, Huang, & Rios, 2017), capacities in attention (Corcoran, Farb, Anderson, & Segal, 2010), information processing speed (Moore & Malinowski, 2009), focusing on one task, and by decreasing the effort required to complete a task (Lutz et al., 2009). In terms of effects on social-emotional development, the views of participants are consistent with the findings of previous studies. Participants asserted that mindfulness can affect teachers in terms of personal and professional benefits. In accordance with the present findings, previous studies have demonstrated that in daily life and work life, mindfulness improves the way we cope with stressful situations and problems (Treadway & Lazar, 2009). This affects the classroom environment. Teachers can create a calm classroom climate and prepare activities that accord to the needs and interests of children (Mazza- Davies, 2015). Elsewhere, Jennings (2014) found that teachers’ social and emotional competencies can be enhanced with mindfulness and an emotionally supportive classroom can be created with these competencies. Thus, teachers with high social and emotional competence can manage their classrooms better.

In the current study, pre-service teachers’ views about the effects of mindfulness on parents were divided into two categories: personal and professional benefits and relationship in the family. They accord with earlier studies, which showed that parents can easily cope with daily life or work-life problems due to the fact that mindfulness practice helps to reduce parental stress (Bogels & Restifo, 2014; Whitehead, 2011). It was also shown that parents can manage their time at work and home with the help of mindfulness because it develops parents’ self-regulation skills (Treadway & Lazar, 2009). In terms of the effects on relationships in the family, participant views relating to the benefits of mindfulness to relationships in the family mirror those of previous studies that have examined the effects of mindfulness on parents. According to Whitehead (2011), and Treadway and Lazar (2009), children’s interests, needs, ideas, feelings or potentials can be realized by parents with

the help of mindfulness because they learn to be aware of these issues by focusing on their children from a wide-angle.

All of the pre-service teachers mentioned that mindfulness can be seen as a new and effective technique in early childhood education and they were likely to use it in their teaching in the future. However, they had some concerns about implementation which may be explained by these pre-service teachers feeling that they would not be free to apply such concepts in their classrooms. They also queried the efficacy of existing teachers who probably have little to no knowledge of mindfulness. This finding parallels previous recommendations by Hooker and Fodor (2008) that before teachers start to teach mindfulness to children, they need to learn what mindfulness is, where it comes from and what benefits it can bring. Our participants also emphasized the importance of teachers gaining knowledge on mindfulness implementation. This concern is consistent with other studies which concluded that teachers should learn how to teach mindfulness to young children (Albrecht et al., 2012; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Participants also mentioned that teachers need to use appropriate language for the children's developmental stage and apply appropriate activities. They felt that internalizing mindfulness in teachers' own lives before applying it with children is important because they are being role models for children in their classrooms and for this reason they should realize the benefits of mindfulness in their own lives. These sentiments accord with earlier findings, which showed that teachers' personal practice and experience make mindfulness more useful because they can appreciate the differences in their well-being before and after mindfulness (Whitehead, 2011).

To conclude, participants generally thought that mindfulness practices can be utilized in education because the concept of mindfulness is effective for experiences of teachable moments. In addition, they felt that if mindfulness can be applied in education, there would be various benefits of it on children, teachers, and parents. According to participants' views, mindfulness positively affects children's future lives, their cognitive and social-emotional development. Teachers and parents would also benefit personally and professionally, and their family relations would enhance. Apart from the effects of mindfulness, participants were also asked about their future preference related with the practice of mindfulness. All of the participants in the study indicated that they would like to practice mindfulness in the classroom. However, many had hesitations which were related to implementation and teachers' efficacy.

The current study has some limitations which are mainly associated with its participants. The first limitation is the homogeneity of the participants in terms of gender. No male senior students could be reached by the researchers for interviews. If there were some male participants, the views of both genders could be presented equally. Another limitation is that only the views of pre-service teachers were collected. In-service early childhood teachers could enrich the findings because they are more experienced and more knowledgeable than pre-service teachers. In addition, they could contribute to the current study by explaining their experiences in the classroom rather than relying solely on theoretical knowledge. Another limitation is the sample size of the study (N=21) and the place where the data was gathered. A more representative sampling of trainee teachers from a wider range of institutions would have enhanced the quality of the data collected. For these reasons the current findings cannot be generalized or assumed relevant across Turkey.

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Appendix A

Examples of Interview Questions

Main Issues	Example Questions
Demographic Information	Which university are you enrolled at? How old are you? How many times have you undertaken teaching practice?
Views about Mindfulness	Have you ever attended any course, seminar or training about mindfulness? Have you ever heard the concept of mindfulness? What does mindfulness evoke for you?
Views about Practice of Mindfulness	How can mindfulness be practiced in early childhood education both in the classroom and at home? What can be the effects of the practice of mindfulness in early childhood education on teachers? Would you like to practice mindfulness in your future teaching practice?