



The Plays of Syrian and Turkish Children in Preschool and their Relations in Plays

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Abstract

In the current study, the games of Syrian and Turkish children in a preschool classroom, the relationships they establish in these games, and the factors that play a role in this process are investigated. This study, which was designed as an ethnographic case study, was carried out in a nursery class in Kahramanmaraş with 18 children aged 5-6 and 8 parents. The data were collected over three months using observation notes, interviews, document analysis, and the researcher's diary in one of the researchers' classroom. The data obtained were analyzed by the content analysis method. According to the study results, Turkish and Syrian children improved their relations in the plays they created using body language and accepted a Syrian girl as a leader in the plays. While relations between some Turkish and Syrian children have evolved into a close friendship over time, social exclusion has also occurred among children. The approaches of teachers and families towards children were the factors that shaped the relationships of children in play.

Keywords: Syrian children, preschool education, play, ethnographic research

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Introduction

Refugee children are one of the issues focused on by many countries. Turkey is home to more than one million Syrian refugee children (Ministry of Education, 2018). According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children have fundamental rights, including survival, protection, and development, regardless of religion, language, and race. What is expected from countries is that refugee children, like all other children, should observe their fundamental rights and fulfill their obligations (UNICEF, 2007).

Turkey is continuing its efforts towards Syrian children, whose numbers are increasing day by day, and is taking important steps towards the education of these children (Gencer, 2017). The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) provides Syrian children with educational opportunities through the Temporary Education Centers that it has previously opened, and now continues this education in public schools. On the other hand, the protocol with the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services continues to involve Syrian children in the education process (Tatlıcıoğlu, 2019). These studies have significant, if not sufficient, contributions in bringing refugee children into school. However, deficiencies in the quality and planning of the education provided to Syrian children continue to be a critical issue in this process (Özer, Komşuoğlu & Ateşok, 2016).

Educational institutions have an important role in helping refugee children participate effectively in school and solve the problems they encountered (Kardeş, 2018; Sakız, 2016). Preschool education, the primary stage of education, in particular, serves as a bridge in facilitating refugee children's adaptation to society by contributing to the development of their academic and social skills (Lunneblad, 2017; Prior & Niesz, 2013 & Schachner, 2017). However, lack of an integrated education system in many countries, such as Turkey, that facilitates the adaptation of refugee children to the school (Kağnıcı, 2017; Karakuş, 2019; UNICEF, 2016; Yanık Özger & Akansel, 2019), and lack of teachers' knowledge and equipment for the education of refugee children (Bačáková, 2011; Sağlam & Kanbur, 2017; Shriberg, 2010) eliminates the possibility of refugee children receiving equal and quality education.

Studies on refugee children are mostly one-way psychological studies, such as children's traumatic experiences and mental health (Rutter, 2006; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). From an educational perspective, it is understood that there are few studies on refugee children, and the existing studies were on adolescents or second language acquisition (Alba,

2013). Pinson and Arnot (2007) emphasize that refugees' educational studies are limited by practical advice to young people and their teachers. Mosselson (2006) emphasizes that studies explain refugee children's perceptions in school and how they adapt to school, but without asking children about their opinions. The number of studies to make the voices of young refugee children heard is quite limited (Maurice & Roßbach, 2017; Prior & Niesz, 2013).

Rogoff (2003) points to the theory of culture and human development in understanding children's interaction with differences in race, ethnicity, and language. Adults and children of different cultures develop similar forms and social interaction styles by participating in activities within the same cultural community. According to Rogoff's (2003) theory, the individual's development takes place through the change of the participative role in socio-cultural activities. One of the socio-cultural activities in which children have a high level of interaction and connection is play. The play has an important place in children of different cultures to interact with each other to establish their language, rules, and values (Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012). Playing together helps refugee and host children overcome cultural differences and become part of the group. According to Bjorck-Akesson and Brodin (2005), plays provide convenience for refugee children in adapting to the new culture and language acquisition. The games, which are also used to treat refugee children, are seen as an effective way for children to cope with difficulties (Eslek & Irmak, 2018). Based on this, plays are a fundamental tool in understanding preschool-age refugee children's experiences in Turkey with other children and the social relationships they have.

This study investigates the plays of Syrian and Turkish children in a preschool classroom, their relationships established in these plays, and the factors that play a role in this process. Therefore, children's games were observed over a long period in their natural environment. This research is important in two aspects. The first is using the ethnographic method, which gives us the voices of refugee children directly and shows their change through the sociocultural process. Secondly, the study contributes to the limited literature on refugee children of preschool age in Turkey. In line with this purpose, answers for the following questions were sought:

- What are the plays of Syrian and Turkish children in a preschool class?
- How are the relations between Syrian and Turkish children in a preschool classroom during the plays?

- What factors play a role in the plays of Syrian and Turkish children in a preschool class?

Method

Research Design

This research was designed in the form of an ethnographic case study. A case study is a detailed description and analysis of time- and space-constrained programs, individuals, or social phenomena (Merriam, 2015). An ethnographic case study is defined as long observations made in its natural environment within a given space and time frame (Erickson, 1984; Yin, 2003). The reason for the preference of the ethnographic status research in this study is the need for natural and long-time observations in understanding the plays and relationships of Syrian and Turkish children in the games. The ethnographic method is important in making young children's perspectives and voices heard (Hoyte, Torr & Degotardi, 2014). This study also focused on the plays that children set up among themselves and their relationships in this process to reveal their perspectives. This study took place in the classroom of one of the researchers, Handenur Kozandağı (teacher in the research). This has enabled researchers to see all the plays and relationships children have over a long period in their natural environment.

Study Group

Participants in the study group were selected according to the purposeful sampling method (Merriam, 2015). Accordingly, the province and schools with an intense population of Syrian refugee children were preferred. The fact that one of the researchers was working at this school was also a determining factor for the study group.

This research was carried out in a kindergarten in a secondary school in one of the central districts of the province of Kahramanmaraş, Turkey. Consisting of a single four-story building and a large garden, the school's preschool classroom is located on the building's ground floor. There are a corridor and children's lavatories in this corridor of the preschool consisting of two classrooms. Children receive education in the morning and the middle of the day.

The school is located in an area where low-wage workers in factories or construction sites live. With the migration, the neighborhood where the school is located has become a habitat for Syrian refugees, and the number of Syrian children in classrooms has increased

day by day. Eighteen five-and six-year-old children and eight families (3 of the families were Syrian and five were Turkish) participated in the study. The following table shows the characteristics of the study group:

According to Table 1, six of the study participants were Syrian, and 12 were Turkish. Of the 6 Syrian children, only 1 was a male, and 5 were girls, while 5 of the Turkish children were boys, and 7 were girls. While none of the Syrian children can speak Turkish, the children arrived in Turkey between 2012 and 2017.

Data Collection Tools and the Process

In this research, interviews, observations, document analysis and audio-visual materials were used as the data collection instruments. Observation involves the researcher keeping field notes on individuals' activities and behaviors (Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2015). In this study, the observation method was used to understand the plays of Syrian and Turkish children and their relationships in these plays. The observations were obtained by keeping unstructured field notes and video recordings during the games. Observations continued for three months from February 2019 to the end of April 2019.

Of the data collection techniques, the interview was conducted in semi-structured and unstructured forms. The questions in the semi-structured interviews were prepared in accordance with the observation data and studies on the plays of refugee children (MacMillan, Ohan, Cherian & Mutch, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were conducted twice by two researchers at different times. The first interview took place in May, with 15 children and 8 families by audio recording. The second interview was conducted two weeks later, with only the children. Unstructured interviews were the dialogs based on conversations during the observations. The reason for performing the semi-structured interview technique two times in this research is to confirm the observations' validity and listen to the children regarding relationships. The interviews with Syrian children and their families were conducted with the translation help of a Syrian teacher who worked at the same school and has a good command in Turkish. These interviews were then checked by a second person who graduated from the Department of Translation and Interpretation in Arabic.

Of the data collection techniques, the document analysis was performed on pictures drawn by children and the researcher's diary, and audio-visual materials included videos and photographs taken during the plays of children.

Table 1. *Characteristics of the Study Group*

Code Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Ability to Speak Turkish	Year of Arrival in Turkey	Number of siblings	Place of Birth
Rand	Female	Syrian	Can't speak	2017	4	Syria
Ayten	Female	Syrian	Can't speak	2012	4	Turkey
Henedi	Female	Syrian	Can't speak	2012	4	Turkey
Fatma	Female	Syrian	Can't speak	2014	3	Syria
Beşşar	Male	Syrian	Can't speak	2012	5	Turkey
Merva	Female	Syrian	Can't speak	2012	4	Turkey
Emir	Male	Turkish	-	-	3	-
Ali	Male	Turkish	-	-	3	-
Mustafa	Male	Turkish	-	-	2	-
Yusuf	Male	Turkish	-	-	2	-
Mevlüt	Male	Turkish	-	-	3	-
Eren	Male	Turkish	-	-	2	-
Oğuz	Male	Turkish	-	-	3	-
Hatice	Female	Turkish	-	-	2	-
Ebrar	Female	Turkish	-	-	3	-
Ela	Female	Turkish	-	-	3	-
Azra	Female	Turkish	-	-	2	-

Nurdan	Female	Turkish	-	-	2	-
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Data Analysis

The data obtained in this research were analyzed by content analysis method. In this data analysis, the steps followed were the data coding, combining the codes, and reducing them to themes (Creswell, 2018). Accordingly, this research's raw data include 30 pages of observation notes, 28 audio recordings, 66 photographs, 10 videos, 55 drawings of children, and 18 pages of the researcher's diary. The first phase of the analysis started with the coding all the data. First, audio recordings and videos from raw data were transcribed, and all data were encoded from beginning to end. As a result of the coding, 198 codes were created. Fourteen categorical codes were obtained by combining these codes in a meaningful and correlational manner. After this process, categorical codes were gathered together, and four themes were obtained under general headings. These themes were called relationship and communication, plays, the teacher's approach, and families. Links between these themes were established and organized under the research questions.

Role of the Researchers

The two researchers' desire to understand children's lives in disadvantaged areas and their problems in education paved the way for this study. This led the two researchers to meet at a school and was instrumental in this research's emergence.

One of the researchers, Handenur Kozandağı, maintained the position of teacher and researcher during the study. The researcher, who has seven years of teaching experience, has been working for years as a preschool teacher in a neighborhood where Syrians live. In this process, she has gained considerable experience with Syrian children and their families. In previous years, the presence of Kurdish children who did not speak Turkish in her classroom was also the supporting factor in this experience. She learned basic Kurdish and Arabic words and has received support from a Syrian teacher who speaks Turkish. She did not interfere much in children's relationships during her teaching period and stayed away from the overly normative teacher profile.

The second researcher, Betül Yanık Özger, focused on children's peer culture during her ten years as a preschool teacher and conducted numerous ethnographic studies. In this

study, she played a role in data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Validity and Reliability

There are criteria to be followed in ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research. The first is the fulfillment of ethical principles related to research (Glesne, 2012). In this study, permissions of the children's parents were obtained, and information was given about the study process. Code names were used instead of real names to protect the privacy of children and families. On the other hand, all legal permits were obtained since the study was carried out in a school setting.

In addition to ethical measures, the validity and reliability of the qualitative research findings are achieved through the application of plausibility, transferability, consistency, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the data's validity and reliability were achieved by making long observations, intensive descriptions, participant confirmation, understandable language use, and triangulation. For the reliability of the data, the consistency between the encoders was checked, and the encodings made by the two researchers were examined. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that the coders' minimum coherence should be .70 for qualitative reliability. The consistency between the two coders in this research was calculated as .90.

Findings

This section presents the research findings. Accordingly, Turkish and Syrian children improved their relations in the plays they created using body language and accepted a Syrian girl as a leader. While some Turkish and Syrian children have evolved into a close friendship over time, social exclusion has also occurred among children. The approaches of teachers and families towards children were the factors that shaped the relationships of children in play.

Turkish and Syrian Children's Plays

In the early days of school, Syrian and Turkish children did not participate in the same play and did not attempt to set up a game. However, towards the end of the first semester, Syrian and Turkish children began to participate in each other's plays, albeit for short periods. This process was further progressed by the second semester, and Syrian and Turkish children began to play with each other more often. Children have used gestures to express their feelings to each other while setting up plays that have simple rules, which can be learned by

watching easily since they do not know each other's language. Plays included laughing by making funny facial expressions, tickling, cuddling and walking, bouncing balloons, doing gymnastic movements, grabbing chairs, singing games, and playing catch. The observation note, describing an example case associated with this, is as follows:

While the other children play camel-dwarf, Hatice and Merva, sitting on the chairs sidelines, are laughing. Hatice, wearing her beret, makes funny faces to Merva: Sticks out her tongue, frowns, makes her eyes squint. Merva makes funny facial expressions in the same way. They're laughing together (Observation, 12.03.2019).

While Syrian and Turkish children set up their plays independently of the teacher, Syrian children taught the plays they knew to Turkish children and accepted them into their plays. In these plays, Turkish children performed the movements that Syrian children had performed, accompanied by an Arabic song, and tried to sing their songs. Observation and interview notes explaining this situation are given below:

The children held hands and circled. Then, the Syrian children started singing in Arabic, and the Turkish children pretended to be singing the same song. The children opened the circle they had built together and shrunk. They clapped their hands and held their noses first, then their ears and their cheeks (Observation, 11.02.2019)

Researcher: How do you understand the rules when you participate in your Syrian friends' plays?

Ela (Turkish Girl): Now they play grabbing chairs, they sing other music. I say what they say. (Interview, 07.05.2019)

Researcher: How does your child get along with Syrian children?

Emir's mother: He plays with hand signs, describing the style of play, for example, with his hand.

Researcher: How, for example?

Emir's mother: He says, let's play ball, for example. "Beşşar ball," he says. And he says, "Yes." I guess he understands somewhat. He didn't understand at first, then later... Or, he shows any toy there. "Let's do it this way," he says and describes it on the floor. As sometimes I see (Interview, 03.05.2019)

As Turkish and Syrian children's communication increased, there was an increase in the number of their plays, and girls and boys began to play different games. Turkish boys play

block games, chasing, flying kick without touching each other, tumbling on the ground with Syrian boys, while girls play singing games, tickling, and mimicry games with each other.

Relations between Turkish and Syrian Children in Plays

Turkish and Syrian children did not mutually communicate much and played in groups in the early years of school. Then, it was observed that children communicate using gestures. Body language increased communication between children and helped them establish a friendship relationship. Related notes about the observations and interviews with children are as follows:

Researcher: How did you become friends with Turkish children?

Henedi: While playing games (Interview, 10.05.2019)

Researcher: Do you have any friends among Syrian children?

Oğuz: Beşşar.

Researcher: How did you become friends with Beşşar?

Oğuz: While playing catch. We became friends during the play. (Interview, 07.05.2019)

Beşşar and Emir played for about an hour without getting bored. They stacked cards with pictures on them, and they took turns performing all of them. When they created the picture, they reacted with 'Oleeey,' 'We did it again!', 'Aaaaaa!', laughing and going on with their play. Other than that, there was not much conversation between them. (Observation, 18.03.2019)

Among the Syrian children, Rand took the lead in the game, while Syrian and Turkish children improved their relations by using their body language. Rand has directed other children in plays played by Turkish and Syrian children together and directed the plays. Most of the time, she was the one who started and finished the play. Turkish and Syrian children received permission from Rand to participate in the play and waited for her to accept them into the play. The observation and interview notes describing an example case associated with this are as follows:

The children started to line up chairs and play the game of grabbing chairs. Of the Turkish children, Azra wanted to join the play, went to Rand, and "I want to play too!" she said. Rand pointed her finger to the empty chair, asking her to sit down.

When the song was finished, Rand intervened while Henedi would sit in an empty chair, allowing Nurdan, one of the Turkish children, to sit there instead (Observation, 04.02.2019).

Syrian children Ayten, Beşşar, Fatma and Rand, and Turkish children Ela, Ebrar, and Hatice played camel-dwarf again today. Ayten sat in the chair, giving the children instructions for the 'Camel-Dwarf' play. However, Rand lifted her out of the chair and began to instruct by sitting down. Rand said, 'Aaaa!' to the kids that were out from the play, pointing her finger at them, and asking them to stop playing. (Observation, 15.03.2019)

Researcher: How do you understand the rules in your Syrian friends' plays?

Hatice: I don't understand anything.

Researcher: Do you want permission to participate in their plays?

Hatice: Yes.

Researcher: Who do you ask it for?

Hatice: Merve, Rand. (Interview, 07.05.2019)

This authority, established by Rand on her friends in the play, was not accepted by Ali, one of the Turkish children. Sometimes, Ali did not want to accept her leadership by not participating in Rand's play. Instead, he set up a play similar to Rand's and wanted to attract other children into his play. The observation note describing an example case associated with this is as follows:

Rand was playing and directing the play 'Ah Benim Turnam' (dancing in circles together and responding to the song's words, through respective movements) with her friends. Ali started a very similar game, unwilling to join Rand's game. Holding Turkish boys' hands, he formed a circle and began to sing the rhyme "Terazi lastik jimnastik" (Observation, 11.02.2019).

Although Ali did not accept Rand's dominance in the play, other Turkish children in the class accepted this situation. The Turkish children expressed their complaints in the play to the Rand, instead of the teacher, who did not speak Arabic and asked Rand to solve the problem they had experienced in the play. As with Turkish children, Syrian children also said their complaints to Rand. Rand listened to the children, comforted them, and guided them with hand gestures, even though he did not speak Turkish. Sometimes he tried to

explain the complaints to the teacher by acting as a spokesperson. When Rand was asked about this relationship with her friends, "I love helping my friends. So, they come to me," she said. The observation notes describing an example case associated with this are as follows:

Syrian Fatma and Merva were playing with play-dough. Fatma had taken Merva's dough without permission. Merva got angry and said, "Raaaand! Raaaand!", she called Rand. Rand immediately went to the girls. Merva made a complaint about Fatma to Rand in an angry and loud tone in Arabic. Rand calmly warned Fatma after listening to Merva. Fatma returned the dough of Merva (Observation, 25.04.2019).

The Turkish children Ebrar and Azra were sitting in chairs. At that time, Ebrar's hand touched Azra's eye. Azra shared this situation with Rand by holding her eye with her hand. Rand put her hand on Azra's shoulder and listened to her. Then, Rand went to the teacher and tried to explain in body language that Ebrar had damaged Azra's eye (Observation, 04.02.2019).

Rand's close relationship with Turkish children was also established by Beşşar, the only Syrian boy in the class. Beşşar, who spent time with Syrian girls in the early days of school, has managed to get close to Turkish children with his teacher's help. This friendship developed further over time, and Beşşar was accepted among Turkish boys. With only one of the Turkish children, his company led other children to become friends with him. The related notes of the interview with the Turkish boys are as follows:

Researcher: Do you have any friends among Syrian children?

Ali: Yes, Beşşar.

Researcher: How did you become friends with Beşşar?

Ali: When we went out to the schoolyard, he said "Okey," and I said OK. We ran and enjoyed it.

Researcher: What do you do when you don't understand him?

Ali: When I don't understand, I do this! (He opens his hands on the sides, purses his lip)

Researcher: How did you decide to become friends with Beşşar?

Ali: Emir started to be a friend, and then I said: Then, I said: "Let's be buddies."

Beşşar has become reluctant to play with Syrian girls after being friends with Turkish boys. He played with Turkish children, such as playing dough, building towers, racing cars, and chasing each other. During the lunch, he preferred to sit next to his Turkish friends and at the table, and he continued his play of the fastest drinking the Ayran. Turkish boys accepted Beşşar among them and invited him to participate in their plays. Turkish boys have also started to use the word "ede", which is used in the sense of "friend" in the native culture, for the Syrian Beşşar. They invited Beşşar to the plays with this word, not his name. After a while, Beşşar called out to Turkish boys in this way. After being included in the Turkish boys' group, Beşşar began using words and simple sentences in Turkish as "No, look, one minute, give it to me, when will we go to the schoolyard." The observation and interview notes describing an example situation associated with Beşşar are as follows:

Turkish boys were building towers, houses, and farms with wooden blocks. Emir invited Beşşar among them, calling out, "Ede, come on." Beşşar was playing with the dough; he immediately put it away and went to them. He tried to do the same by taking blocks and looking at them. Emir, on the other hand, started driving his car through the blocks where Beşşar was playing. After doing this, they were laughing with Beşşar. (Observation, 02.04.2019)

Researcher: What does Beşşar call you?

Emir: He says my name. He says 'ede' as well.

Researcher: What does 'ede' mean?

Emir: My friend

Researcher: Who taught Beşşar to say ede?

Emir: Ali (Interview, 03.05.2019)

Below are the drawings showing the close relations of Beşşar with Turkish boys:

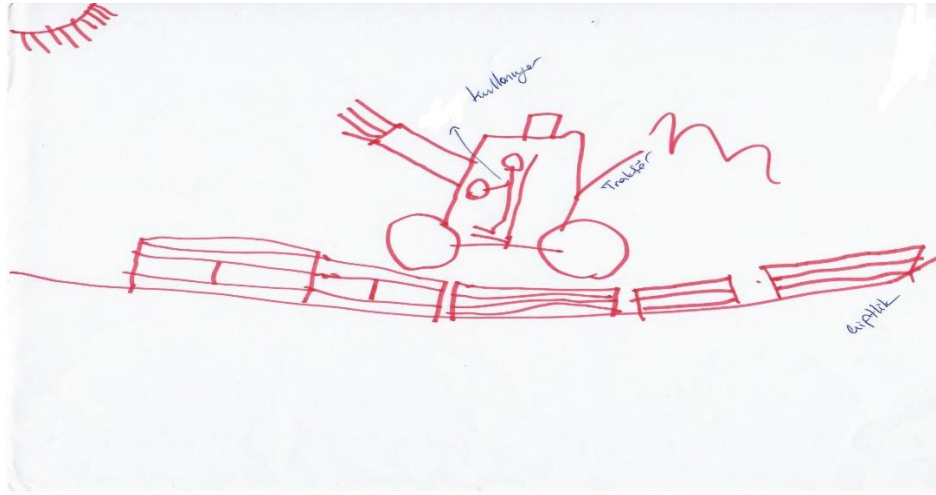


Figure 1. *Beşşar drives a tractor at the farm (drawing by Emir)*



Figure 2. *A lion drew for Beşşar (drawing by Mustafa)*

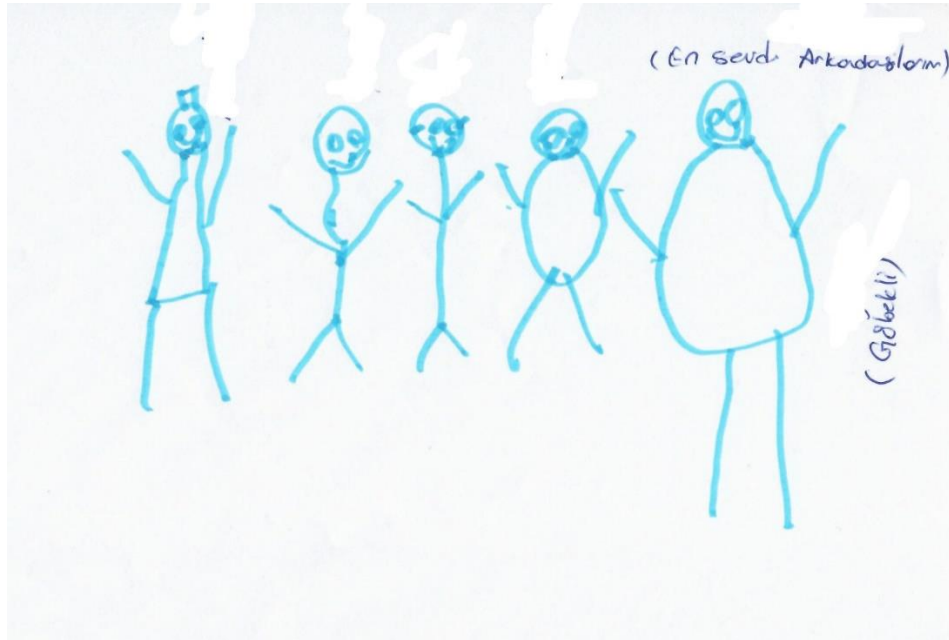


Figure 3. *Close friends of Beşşar (Mustafa, Yusuf, Eren, Fatma, Oğuz)*

It has not always been possible for Turkish and Syrian children in the class to form close relationships and participate in each other's plays. Some Turkish children did not accept Syrian children to their plays and rejected them by saying, "You don't play!". In interviews with Turkish children, when asked why they did not play with Syrian children, they expressed that they did not invite them to the plays since they did not understand them. Sample interview notes are given below in this regard:

Researcher: Who wouldn't be involved if you set up a play?

Ela: Syrians.

Researcher: Why?

Ela: I don't like Syrians.

Researcher: Why don't you like it?

Ela: That's because they can't speak Turkish. I can't understand them.

Researcher: Would you want to be friends if you understood them?

Ela: Yes. (Interview, 07.05.2019)

Researcher: Who wouldn't be involved if you set up a play?

Hatice: Syrians.

Researcher: Why?

Hatice: Well, I don't understand them.

Researcher: Would you want to be friends if you understood them?

Hatice: Yes, with Merva. (Interview, 07.05.2019)

These exclusions among children have not occurred exclusively towards Syrian children. Some Turkish and Syrian children have excluded some children of the same ethnicity and have not accepted them into their plays. Excluded from the plays, these children participated in the plays of other groups where they did not speak the same language. Accordingly, it was observed that Syrian children who were excluded from the play by their Syrian peers participated in the plays of Turkish children, while Turkish children who were excluded from the plays by their Turkish friends participated in the plays of Syrian children. Of the Turkish children, Azra, Nurdan, Oguz, and Ela communicated with the Syrian children more than any other child, while Merva played games with the Turkish children. When the children were asked about their friends they played with, the Turkish children gave the names of Merva among the Syrian children, and the Syrian children gave the names of Azra and Nurdan of the Turkish children. Sample interview notes are given below in this regard:

Researcher: Who would be involved if you set up a play?

Fatma: Rand, Merva, Henedi, Nurdan (Turkish), Ayten.

Researcher: Do you have any Turkish friends you play with?

Fatma: Nurdan, Azra. (Interview, 10.05.2019)

Researcher: Who would be involved if you set up a play?

Henedi: Beşşar, Ayten, Rand, Fatma, Nurdan, Merva. (Interview, 10.05.2019)

Factors that have a Role in Turkish and Syrian Children's Relations during a Play

The teacher and families' approaches towards Syrian children were the factors that shaped the relationships of Turkish and Syrian children in play. While the teacher's integrative activities in the classroom increased the relationship between Turkish and Syrian children in plays, the negative views of some of the Turkish families about playing with Syrian children weakened the children's relations in plays.

The teacher's moderate and compassionate approach to Syrian children; her planned plays to bring children together in classroom activities played a role in establishing positive

relationships. While the teacher maintained close relations with Syrian children, she also ensured the children come together in their free plays. Figure 4 below shows the drawing in which the Syrian Rand portrays her teacher as a fish and expresses her love:



Figure 4. *Rand and her teacher*

The teacher has made efforts to improve her own relations and improve the communication of Turkish and Syrian children. She made positive statements about Syrian children and wanted Turkish children to think in this direction. On the other hand, she planned group events so that they could get together. The best example of this is the story of Beşşar, the only Syrian boy in the class. Beşşar, who does not speak Turkish, has participated in Syrian girls' domestic plays since the first day of school and has not attempted to play with Turkish boys in the class. Beşşar's choice of pink as the color in the activities and his preference for dolls at plays have attracted the teacher's attention. The observation notes showed that Beşşar did not prefer to participate in the activities of Turkish boys. The observation note explaining a related case is given below:

Today, Turkish boys played mimicking wolves among themselves. They howled like a pack of wolves. Beşşar did not participate in this play, and he chose to play with the Barbie doll instead (Observation, 07.03.2019).

The preferences of Syrian Başşar and his relationship in plays in the classroom were debated between the two researchers. Discussions and observations during the research have raised the possibility that Başşar being the only male Syrian in the class, played a role in shaping his relations in plays. Accordingly, structured activities were organized in the classroom that brought the Syrian Başşar together with the Turkish boys. The teacher played a role in the communication between Başşar and Turkish boys by making group activities in the classroom. An observation note describing an example situation associated with this is given below:

When I came to class, Başşar and Emir were playing the tower building with Legos. The game's goal was to put the Lego pieces on top of each other to make the tallest tower. After they finished the tower together, they came and showed it to me, and Emir said 'Teacher, look, we did it together.' (Observation, 19.03.2019).

After his relationship with Emir, Başşar began to be involved in Turkish boys' plays by playing less with Syrian girls. As the process progressed, Turkish children accepted and invited Başşar to their plays. Başşar selected Emir, one of the Turkish children, as a close friend, and they started calling each other with the word "ede", which means 'friend'. The teacher's positive approach to Syrian children has also changed children's play relationships.

Another factor that directly or indirectly shaped the thoughts of Turkish children was the families. Some of the Turkish families have been prejudiced against Syrian children. In the early years of school, one of the Turkish families found the number of Syrian children in the class high and enrolled their child in another school. Notes on this interview with a Turkish father are as follows:

Researcher: Did you have any hesitation in sending her to school?

Azra's father: I didn't have any doubts, but her mother did.

Researcher: What was it like?

Azra's father: Because of the cultural difference, We're so different; their culture is different, ours is different. They're not the same as us. They have different lifestyles. (Interview, 03.05.2019).

Children of Turkish families who were prejudiced against Syrian children also exhibited rejecting behavior against them in the classroom. They did not want to play games with Syrian children or had no contact with them at all. The teacher has always made

positive statements about Syrian children to eliminate this in the classroom. This attitude of the teacher played a role in changing the behavior of Turkish children towards Syrian children. Ali, one of the Turkish children, preferred to play only with Turkish children in the early days of school and did not mention the Syrian children's names in the class. The observation and interview notes describing an example case associated with this are as follows:

Yesterday Ali left his play and came to me and complained about Ayten, one of the Syrian children, "Teacher, the Syrians are ruining our play!" he said. So I told him that his friend has a name and should use it when talking about her. I asked him how he would feel if someone treated him that way (Observation, 06.03.2019)

Researcher: How is Ali's relationship with Syrian children?

Ali's mother: My boy does not play with them much. Simply, he can't get along with them.

Researcher: So why he can't get along?

Ali's mother: I don't know. My father-in-law and my husband talks at home about Syrians, by expressing that the war is over, the Syrians should go to their country. Since there's not much [positive opinions] in the family, I guess the kids don't want to play with the Syrians (Interview, 03.05.2019).

When Eren and Ali were playing together, they had conversations like this:

Eren: I will be a soldier when I grow up. Because I'll go to Syria and; fight the enemies there.

Ali: I will fight against the terrorists. That's because they're reducing our money! I'll shoot terrorists with sniper weapons (Observation, 20.02.2019).

Ali's drawing, shown in Figure 5 below, does not feature Syrian children:

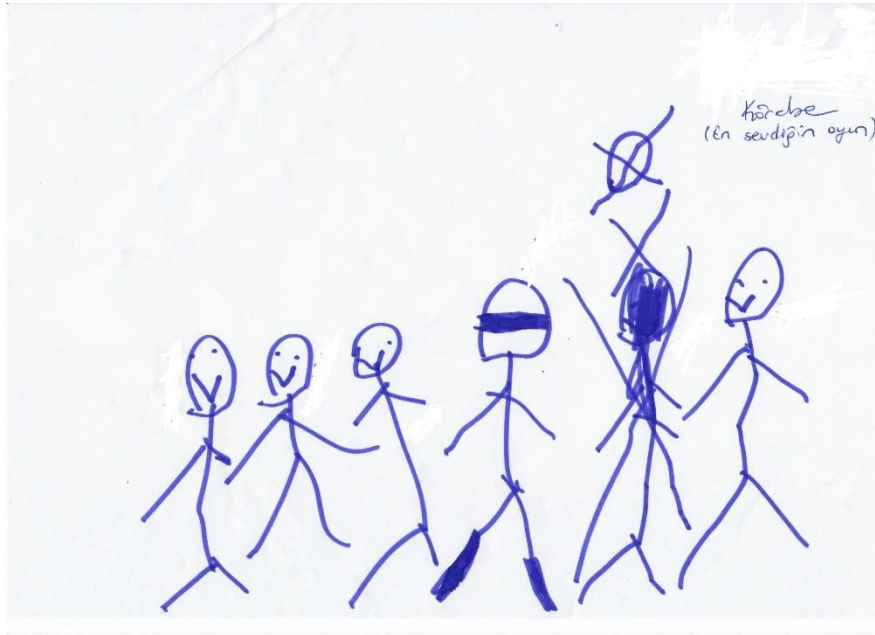


Figure 5. *The blind man's buff play (Mustafa, Emir, Mevlüt, Nurdan, Oğuz, Yusuf)*

Ali started to treat Syrian children well after a while to avoid damaging his relationship with his teacher and demonstrated this attitude. One day, when other children made fun of the Syrian Rand, he told his teacher, "Teacher, they make fun of Rand. I don't want to be made fun of others!" he said, and then established a friendship playing with Beşşar. Ali and some of the class children never mentioned their relationship with their Syrian peers to their families or defended their friendship. Interview notes related to this are as follows:

Researcher: Does he ever talk about Syrian children at home?

Ali's mother: Ali never mentions about them at home. He does not talk about them as he does not have much dialog with them (Interview, 03.05.2019)

Researcher: Are negative comments made about Syrian children at home?

Mustafa's mother: I do not say, but he hears it from his grandmother.

Researcher: How does Mustafa react to these conversations?

Mustafa's mother: For example, when one says 'filthy' about something Syrians, "No it is not! Beşşar is my friend," says Mustafa (Interview, 03.05.2019)

Discussion

This study investigated the plays and relationships between Turkish and Syrian children in a

preschool classroom. The findings showed that while refugee children spent time with their groups in the early years of school, they were involved in the plays of Turkish children later, and they were able to play together and become close friends. According to Rogoff's (2003; 1990) theory of culture and human development, it is understood that children show a developmental process. Rogoff (2003; 1990) emphasizes that the individual's development occurs through the change of his/her participative role in socio-cultural activities. Therefore, the relationships and activities established in the cultural process are important (Rogoff, Baker- Sennett, Lacasa & Goldsmith, 1995). In this study, changes in Turkish and Syrian children's roles in the play, a socio-cultural activity, were observed. The fact that Turkish and Syrian children started to play together, that Syrian Rand was accepted as the leader by other children in the plays, and that Syrian Beşşar was included in the Turkish boys' group shows this shift in roles.

Turkish and Syrian children in this research have improved their relationship in plays with simple rules in using body language. A study stated that refugee children come together with Turkish children during the playtime (Çakan, Mercan & Uzun, 2018). Rutter (2006) emphasizes the importance of refugee children's environment where there is no racism, but the psychosocial needs are met. In this research, the plays paved the way for forming a friendly environment for refugee children. Games help children to interact with their peers, increase communication skills, and provide emotional support (Cross, 2011). In this study, an increase in the Turkish vocabulary of the Syrian Beşşar was observed after his involvement in Turkish children.

Peer relations between Syrian and Turkish children led to the competition for status and hierarchy after a while. Corsaro (2015) reports that children constantly compete and try to establish control over others using their social and personal skills. In this study, Rand, one of the Syrian children, managed the plays by establishing control over the other children and entering the leadership race with Ali, one Turkish child.

In addition to the classroom's leadership race, low-status children have also come to the forefront in this research process. Low-status children are considered the children rejected by their peers by not accepting them into the group or the play (Ramsey, 1991). Abandoned children present in two forms: aggressive or withdrawn. In this study, there were Syrian children rejected and not allowed to participate in Turkish children's plays. Studies show that refugee children are more exposed to social exclusion and discrimination than other children (Berry, 1997; Guo, Maitra & Guo, 2019; Kağnıcı, 2017; McBrien, 2005,

Yanık Özger & Akansel, 2019). The language problem is among the factors causing refugee children to be excluded and left alone in plays (Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Peterson, Meehan, Ali & Durrant, 2017; Troesch, Keller & Grob, 2016; Uzun & Bütün, 2016). In this study, the language barrier of Syrian children restricted the content of plays with Turkish children. While some children prefer the plays that they use body language more often, some Turkish children did not want Syrian children in their plays because they did not understand their language. Children in this situation confront or withdraw from other children to communicate (Rubin, Bukowski & Parker, 2006). In this study, the alienated children withdrew themselves and joined the group of Syrian or Turkish children with whom they did not know their language.

Turkish and Syrian children who came together in the plays structured their relations and plays around cultural elements. In their study of preschool children, Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) have observed that children use ethnic and racial signs to interact and play with each other. In this study, it was observed that Turkish children sang Arabic songs in their plays, and Syrian children used the word "ede", which means friends in the local language.

The relationship with the teacher is also important in the interaction of children with their peers. Children that feel safe and have a positive relationship with the teacher can be less aggressive and social children, whereas a confrontational relationship can cause a distancing between the peers (Howes, Guerra, Fuligni, Zucker, Lee, Obregon & Spivak, 2011; Howes & Spieker, 2008). Szente, Hoot, and Taylor (2006) have emphasized that it is important for refugee children to have a teacher with a positive body language. The studies show that the attitudes of preschool teachers towards multicultural education are positive (Danacı, Nuray, Çetin, Pınarcık & Bahtiyar, 2016; Taştekin, Yükçü, İzoglu, Güngör, Uslu & Demircioğlu, 2016). In this study, the teacher's positive thinking towards the multicultural class and close relations with refugee children reduced Turkish children's exclusionary behavior.

The teacher's approach to refugee children and the attitude of families were decisive in multicultural classrooms. Studies have shown that local families have an exclusionary and discriminatory attitude towards refugee children in the classroom (Uzun & Bütün, 2016; Yanık Özger & Akansel, 2019). Families chose to send their children to different schools by not wanting them to be in the same class as refugee children (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003). In this study, some Turkish families were prejudiced against Syrian children and played a

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, Syrian and Turkish children developed friendship relationships by playing together. As a result of the progress in relationships, social exclusions, and leadership races have come to the fore. The factors that play a role in children's play relationships were the teachers' and families' approaches. These results from the research were obtained with the participation of 8 families and 18 children in a preschool class. The fact that only one of the researchers knew the basic words in Arabic was one of this research's limitations. According to the results of the research, the recommendations of the study are as follows:

- For developing positive relationships in the classroom, teachers should approach refugee children modestly and affectionately.
- Teachers should listen to Turkish families and address their current concerns before school starts.
- The number of ethnographic studies on preschool refugee children should be increased.

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