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Investigation of the Relationship Between Mothers' Perceptions of Risky Play and Their Children's Self-Concepts[1]

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between the perceptions of mothers of children attending preschool institutions about risky play and children's self-concept and the relationship between gender. In line with this purpose, it was conducted using the relational survey model, one of the quantitative research methods. The sample of the study was determined using the convenience sampling method. The sample of the study consisted of 257 volunteer children and the mothers of the same children. In the study, a general information form developed by the researcher was used to obtain information about the demographic characteristics of the children and their families. As a data collection tool, "Scale for the Attitudes Towards Risky Play at Early Childhood - Parent Form (SATRPEC-PF)" was used to evaluate mothers' perceptions about risky play, and Perception of Child Self-Concept (PCSC) was used to evaluate children's self-concept. The data obtained from the study were created using Spearman Rank Correlation analysis. When the scores obtained from SATRPEC-PF and PCSC were compared, a positive correlation was found between PCSC scores and Pro-beliefs scores from SATRPEC-PF sub-factors, and a negative correlation was found between Feeling Anxiety. No significant relationship was found between Distinguishing Risky Behaviors, Supporting Children, and Parental Support factors. While there was a significant relationship between girls' PCSC scores and SATRPEC-PF Pro-beliefs sub-factor, Distinguishing Risky Behaviors sub-factor, and Feeling Anxiety sub-factor, no significant relationship was found between the Supporting Children and Parental Support sub-factors. A significant relationship was found only between boys' PCSC scores and the Pro-beliefs sub-factor of SATRPEC-PF. Suggestions were presented in line with the findings obtained from the study.

Keywords: Play, risky play, self, self-concept, preschool.

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Introduction

In general, young children actively seek out risk and challenge during their play, as it is recognized as a crucial avenue for them to explore their bodies, their environment, and their own abilities (Edgington, 2007; Heppel, 2013; Little, 2010; Little & Eager, 2010; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011; Stephenson, 2003; Tovey, 2007). Engaging in risk management strategies, these children develop specific skills and learn to safeguard themselves against potential injuries (Liu & Birkeland, 2022).

Understanding the broader context of risk-taking is crucial when considering its specific application in children's play. The way individuals perceive risk-taking shapes their attitudes towards engaging in such activities, including risky play. Engaging in risk-taking means making choices about actions with uncertain outcomes, possibly involving adverse effects, as noted by Adams (2001), Boyer (2006), and Little (2010). This activity can yield both beneficial and detrimental outcomes. Therefore, in evaluating risks, it's important to weigh the potential dangers and the severity of consequences associated with any given activity, as highlighted by Willoughby (2012). In scholarly research on children's play in early childhood education settings, eight distinct categories of risky play have been systematically identified (Kleppe et al., 2017; Sandsetter, 2007; Sandsetter, 2009). These categories, derived from comprehensive observations and interviews, include activities like engaging in play at significant heights and high speeds, using potentially dangerous tools, playing near hazardous elements, rough-and-tumble interactions, solo exploration adventures, play involving physical impacts, and experiencing vicarious risk through observation of others' risky behaviors. Each category encapsulates a unique aspect of risk that children may encounter in their play environments.

Sandseter (2010) highlights that children's engagement in risky play contributes significantly to various areas of their development. For instance, it promotes psychological growth by enabling children to navigate and balance their emotions of fear and joy (Sandseter, 2010). Through engaging in risky behaviors during play, children also develop coping mechanisms for their fears and gain an understanding of what is safe and unsafe (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). Additionally, risky play presents children with valuable opportunities such as decision-making, self-assessment of abilities and limits, enhancing risk management skills, and learning to protect themselves from injuries (Little & Eager, 2010; Little & Wyver, 2008). Moreover, risky play fosters the development of self-confidence, self-awareness, perseverance, and independence in children (Gill, 2010; Gleave and Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Knight, 2012; Tovey, 2007). In the past few decades, there has been an escalation in scholarly interest regarding children's engagement in risk-taking during play. This burgeoning research area encompasses a variety of topics: defining the nature of risky play (Kleppe et al., 2017; Sandsetter, 2007), evaluating its potential positive or negative consequences on children's development, learning, and health (Brussoni et al., 2015; Sandsetter & Kennair, 2011; Sando et al., 2021), and examining its role in enhancing children's skills in risk assessment and management (Brussoni et al., 2015; Lavrysen et al., 2017). The impetus for this focus in the literature is linked to increasingly stringent standards and regulations that may negatively affect children's play environments (Herrington & Nicholls, 2007; Spiegal et al., 2014), coupled with a heightened societal emphasis on ensuring safety in children's lives and activities (Ball, 2002; Sandsetter et al., 2017; Sandsetter et al., 2020; Tremblay et al., 2015).

Early childhood is a critical period for the cultivation of self-confidence, self-awareness, and the self, particularly through interactions with the environment (Li, 2022). The significance of games that involve risk and encompass multiple areas of development cannot be overstated in this context. Risky play, as previously discussed, not only facilitates physical and emotional development but also lays the foundation for the evolving self-concept of a child. The process of self-concept development is intrinsically linked to the experiences and challenges encountered in play. As Erşan (2006), Kandır (2000), and Erden (2001) note, it is through these interactions and opportunities that a child’s self-concept begins to take form, influenced by their environment and the choices they make during play, including risk-taking activities.

Transitioning to the concept of self is understood as the subjective aspect of an individual's personality, encompassing self-perceptions, interpretations, and evaluations of oneself, as defined by Aydın (2005). As children grow, they receive messages from their family and surroundings, and their behaviors start to be evaluated by their environment. This feedback leads to the construction of a mental image or schema of themselves, initiating the process of self-consciousness in the early years.

By the age of four or five, a child develops positive or negative thoughts about themselves, influenced by their experiences, including those in play, as outlined by Cüceloğlu (1997).

The self-concept of children in early childhood is greatly influenced by the attitudes exhibited by their parents, who represent their external world during this developmental stage (Yavuzer, 2007; Cevher & Buluş, 2007). The multitude of experiences and opportunities provided to children during this period significantly impacts their self-concept. A positive self-perception enables a child to develop a sense of self and effectively navigate their life (Bee & Boyd, 2009). It is important to note that the concept of self is not innate but rather constructed through a culmination of various experiences (Cevher & Buluş, 2006).

Risky play, along with the supervision and involvement of parents in playground environments, contributes to enriching children's experiences. By creating appropriate environments that allow their children to take risks without adopting an overprotective stance, parents can support the holistic development of their children (Bulut & Kılıçaslan, 2009). The central thrust of this investigation is to explore the interplay between mothers' perceptions of risky play and the self-concept of children in preschool settings. This inquiry is pivotal as it addresses a notable gap in current scholarly discourse, particularly concerning the intricate relationship between parental attitudes towards risky play and the resultant developmental outcomes in children. By delving into this underexplored area, the study aims to augment existing knowledge and offer nuanced insights into parental education strategies during the formative kindergarten years. Furthermore, the findings of this research could inform social responsibility initiatives and guide policymakers in shaping environments conducive to holistic child development. The study underscores the necessity for parents to balance their protective instincts with the provision of opportunities for their children to engage in risky play. This balance is crucial in fostering children's problem-solving abilities, resilience, and positive self-perception, as evidenced by Banko et al. (2018) and Morali (2019). In contrast, an overprotective approach, as highlighted by Sicim Sevim & Bapoğlu Dümenci (2019), may inadvertently impede the acquisition of these essential skills.

The implications of this research extend beyond the immediate family unit to the broader educational context. It is imperative to consider how children's evolving self-concept, shaped by their experiences in risky play, influences teacher behaviors and classroom dynamics. By providing empirical evidence on these aspects, the study aims to contribute meaningfully to the discourse on child development and education. The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on the perspectives of mothers of preschool children regarding risky play, a facet scarcely examined in prior studies. Thus, this study not only fills a critical gap in the literature but also paves the way for future inquiries into the multifaceted aspects of early childhood development and parental involvement.

In pursuit of the study's aims, The central research question asks: 'Is there a significant relationship between mothers' perceptions of risky play among children attending preschool and the self-concept perception of these children?' Subsequently, the research delves into specific sub-dimensions of mothers' perceptions with the following sub-questions:

- How does the 'Pro Beliefs' sub-dimension relate to children's self-concept?
- What is the relationship between the 'Distinguishing Risky Behaviors' sub-dimension and children's self-concept?
- How does the 'Supporting Children' sub-dimension correlate with the self-concept of children?
- Is there a link between the 'Feeling Anxiety' sub-dimension and children's self-concept?
- Does the 'Parental Support' sub-dimension significantly relate to children's self-concept?
- Finally, is there a gender-based difference in mothers' perceptions of risky play and children's self-concept?"

These questions aim to dissect the multifaceted nature of mothers' perceptions and their impact on the development of self-concept among preschool children.

Method

The principal aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between mothers' perceptions of risky play and the self-concept of children attending preschool. This objective is pursued to address a gap in existing literature, offering insights into how parental attitudes towards risk in play environments impact the development of children's self-concept. In this part of the study; the data collection method, population and sample of the study, and data analysis method are given respectively.

Design

This quantitative study employed a relational (correlational) screening model to investigate the relationship between mothers' perceptions of risky play among children attending preschool institutions and children's self-concept. Correlational methods are commonly used to examine the associations and predictive abilities between variables, enabling researchers to gain insights into the relationships between different factors (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018). Unlike experimental studies, correlational methods do not involve manipulating variables; instead, they focus on determining the relationships between scores obtained from individuals using statistical analyses such as correlations and regressions (Creswell, 2005). Therefore, this study aimed to explore the relationship between mothers' perceptions of risky play, children's self-concept, and the gender of children attending preschool institutions.

Data Collection Tools

The data for this study were collected using three main instruments: the General Information Form, the Scale for the Attitudes Towards Risky Play at Early Childhood - Parent Form (SATRPEC-PF), and the Perception of Child Self-Concept (PCSC).

The *General Information Form* was designed by the researcher to gather demographic information about the children, their families, and their mothers. It included items about the child's gender, the number of siblings, the mother's age, and the mother's marital status. The General Information Form was filled out by those parents who consented to participate in behalf of their children.

The *Scale for the Attitudes Towards Risky Play at Early Childhood - Parent Form (SATRPEC-PF)* was developed by Karaca and Uzun (2020). This Likert-type scale consisted of 28 items, and respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a scale from 1 (Disagree) to 5 (Agree). The scale underwent factor analysis, resulting in five factors: Pro-beliefs, Distinguishing Risky Behaviors, Supporting Children, Feeling Anxiety, and Parental Support. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of $\alpha = .919$. The reliability coefficients for the sub-factors were $\alpha = .953$ for Pro-beliefs, $\alpha = .878$ for Distinguishing Risky Behaviors, $\alpha = 1.000$ for Supporting Children, $\alpha = 1.000$ for Feeling Anxiety, and $\alpha = 1.000$ for Parental Support. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the five-factor structure, with goodness-of-fit indices indicating a good fit. The maximum and minimum scores for the Distinguishing Risky Behaviors and Supporting Children factors of SATRPEC-PF were 101 and 25 points, respectively (with reverse scoring applied to question 18), reflecting positive or negative opinions about risky play. The Feeling Anxiety and Parental Support factors had maximum scores of 35 and minimum scores of 7, indicating positive or negative opinions about risky play. Overall, the scale demonstrated good reliability and acceptable psychometric properties. For this study, data were collected from 257 mothers, resulting in an alpha value of .83.

The Perception of Child Self-Concept (PCSC) is a scale developed by Villa and Auzmendi (1992) to assess the self-concept of five- to six-year-old children. Karaca and Aral (2017) adapted the scale into Turkish for this study. The PCSC is a simple and cost-effective tool used to identify children with positive or negative self-concepts. It consists of 34 items, each accompanied by a corresponding picture. The administration of the scale takes approximately 15-20 minutes for each child. To establish the validity and reliability of the PCSC, the study included 170 children attending kindergartens and exhibiting normal development. To ascertain that these children were developing typically, observational developmental records maintained by their teachers were taken into account. Each item in the instrument is scored on a scale from 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating a higher self-concept.

However, in the 13th item, reverse scoring is applied, where 1 point is considered as 4 and 4 points as 1. Expert opinions were sought to assess the content validity of the PCSC application guideline and evaluation criteria in the context of Turkish culture. The content validity index (CVI) was determined to be 0.93, indicating good content validity. Reliability analysis, including item-total correlations and Cronbach's alpha, was conducted for the PCSC assessment criteria (n=170). The overall reliability coefficient was found to be .69, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Most of the item-total correlations were at a sufficient level. The difference in mean scores between the upper 27% and lower 27% groups, formed based on the PCSC scores ($t = -19$, $p < .01$), was found to be significant, suggesting that the PCSC items effectively discriminate between different levels of self-concept. The test-retest reliability coefficients of the PCSC (n=40) indicated a positive, high, and significant relationship between the two test results, demonstrating the scale's stability over time. For this study, data were collected from 257 children, resulting in an alpha value of .82, indicating good internal consistency for the PCSC.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process for this study involved obtaining necessary permissions and approvals, including Ethics Committee Approval (decision no: 2020/277) and permissions from the Directorate of National Education. The researcher initiated the application of the scales at the beginning of the Spring Semester of the 2020-2021 academic year.

Prior to the data collection phase, the researcher informed the school principal, teachers, children in the study group, and their mothers about the study. At an information meeting, the mothers were informed that participation in the research was voluntary and that the identities of the participants would be kept confidential. The data collection tools were then administered to the children and mothers who volunteered to participate.

Since the data collection tool specifically targeted preschool children, individual administration was necessary. To establish rapport and trust with the children, the researcher conducted play activities in each class before starting the application process. This allowed the children to become familiar with the researcher and feel more comfortable. Following the play activities, the data collection was carried out in a designated area determined in collaboration with the school administrators. The environment was arranged to ensure that the children could engage with the researcher on a one-on-one basis without distractions.

Population and Sampling

The population of this study consists of children attending preschool institutions affiliated with the Directorate of National Education in the Halfeti district of Şanlıurfa province, as well as their mothers. The sample for the study was determined using the convenience sampling method, which is a non-random sampling technique. It should be noted that convenience sampling is considered a weaker method compared to other sampling techniques in research (Christensen et al., 2015). However, due to limitations such as financial constraints, time constraints, and the ongoing effects of the pandemic during the 2020-2021 academic year, it was necessary to use this sampling method. The convenience sampling method aims to reach a group that is easily accessible and convenient, allowing for efficient data collection in terms of time and resources (Cohen & Manion, 1998). Therefore, in this study, the sample group consisted of 257 children and their mothers, aiming to examine the relationship between the perceptions of mothers of children attending preschool institutions regarding risky play and children's self-concept.

In this study, the data collection tools were administered by the researcher himself. Prior to the implementation, necessary permissions were obtained for the use of the data collection tools. The researcher conducted an informative meeting with the school administrators and teachers where the study would be conducted, explaining the purpose and significance of the research as well as the data collection tools to be used. A pre-application was conducted in the researcher's own school to determine the comprehensibility of the data collection tools. Subsequently, the scales and questionnaires were administered to children in other schools selected by the researcher based on volunteerism and adherence to ethical principles. The personal information of the children and their

mothers included in the study group was examined. Table 1 provides the demographic characteristics of the children included in the study.

Table 1.
Distribution of demographic characteristics of the children included in the study and their mothers

Variables	**Category**	***F***	**%**
Gender of the Child	Girl	139	54.1
	Boy	118	45.9
	Total	257	100
Age of the child	48-60 months	103	40.1
	61-72 months	154	59.9
	Total	257	100
Age of mother	30 Years and under	109	42.4
	31-45 Years	135	52.5
	46 years and over	13	5.1
	Total	257	100
Mother's Level of Education	Primary School	102	39.7
	Middle School	75	29.2
	High School	48	18.7
	University	32	12.5
	Total	257	100
Number of Children in the Family	1 Child	11	4.3
	2 Children	56	21.8
	3 Children	84	32.7
	4 Children	63	24.5
	5 Children and over	43	16.7
	Total	257	100

Table 1 presents the distribution of demographic characteristics among the children included in the study. Of the participants, 54.1% were girls, while 45.9% were boys. In terms of age, 40.1% of the children fell within the range of 48-60 months, while the majority, 59.9%, were between 61-72 months. The number of children per family varied, with 4.3% having one child, 21.8% having two children, 32.7% having three children, 24.5% having four children, and 16.7% having five or more children.

Turning to the demographic characteristics of the participating mothers, it was observed that 42.4% of them were 30 years old or younger, while 52.5% fell within the age range of 31-45 years. A small proportion, 5.1%, were 46 years old or older. In terms of educational background, 39.7% of the mothers had completed primary school, 29.2% had attained a middle school education, 18.7% were high school graduates, and 12.5% held a university degree. Notably, all of the mothers identified themselves as housewives.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the General Information Form, SATRPEC-PF, and PCSC tools were entered into a computer environment and subjected to appropriate statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage distributions, were utilized to examine the demographic characteristics of the children and their families.

Regarding the analysis of the data obtained from SATRPEC-PF and PCSC, the normality of the scores was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) Test. As the obtained values indicated a non-normal distribution (Bütüner, 2008), Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was employed to determine the relationships between variables.

Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was utilized to assess the relationship between the scores obtained from the SATRPEC-PF and PCSC measurement tools. Furthermore, it was employed to explore whether there existed a relationship between SATRPEC-PF scores and PCSC scores based on the gender variable. By calculating Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient, information regarding the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the measured variables was obtained (Alpar, 2012).

Limitations

This research, while comprehensive in its approach, is subject to several limitations which need to be acknowledged. First, the use of a correlational study design precludes the establishment of causal relationships between mothers' perceptions of risky play and children's self-concept. As the study does not involve the manipulation of variables, it can only indicate associations rather than causation. Secondly, the convenience sampling method, though necessary due to constraints such as financial limitations, time, and the pandemic, is a non-random technique. This approach may limit the generalizability of the findings. The sample, drawn from a specific geographical area and demographic, might not reflect the broader population's perspectives and experiences. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data, particularly from the Scale for the Attitudes Towards Risky Play at Early Childhood - Parent Form (SATRPEC-PF) and the Perception of Child Self-Concept (PCSC), may introduce bias. The mothers' perceptions and responses might be influenced by social desirability or personal beliefs, which could affect the accuracy of the data. The study's determination of children's 'normal development' based on observational developmental records maintained by teachers also presents a limitation. These records are subjective and may not comprehensively capture the nuances of each child's developmental status. Moreover, the absence of a standardized, objective measure to confirm typical development means that this aspect relies heavily on teachers' subjective evaluations. Finally, the internal consistency of the PCSC, with a reliability coefficient of .69, while acceptable, indicates that there may be room for improvement in the instrument's reliability. This factor should be considered when interpreting the results and their implications. These limitations, inherent in the study's design and methodology, suggest that while the findings contribute valuable insights, they should be interpreted with an understanding of the aforementioned constraints. Future research could address these limitations by employing different study designs, broader and more diverse samples, and more objective measures of child development.

Findings

This section presents the results of the relationship between SATRPEC-PF and PCSC and the relationship between gender variables.

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics of SATRPEC-PF scores

Scale	N	Mean	Lowest	Highest	SD	Level
SATRPEC-PF	257	78.84	30	121	17.913	2.81 Medium level

Table 2 in the study details the descriptive statistics for the SATRPEC-PF scores among 257 participants. The mean score is 78.84, with scores ranging from 30 to 121. The standard deviation is 17.913. This mean score, positioned roughly at the midpoint of the scale's potential range, is considered to represent a 'medium level' of attitudes towards risky play. This categorization is based on the standard practice in scale analysis where the mean score's position relative to the total possible range helps classify the collective attitude level. In this case, the mean score aligns closely with the middle of the SATRPEC-PF's scoring range, hence the classification as medium.

Table 3.
Descriptive statistics of PCSC scores

	N	*M*	Lowest	Highest	sd	Level
PCSC	257	111.02	69	132	11.781	3.26 Medium level

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the PCSC scores. The analysis included a sample size (N) of 257 participants. The mean score for the PCSC was 111.02, with the lowest score being 69 and the highest score being 132. The standard deviation (SD) was calculated as 11.781. Based on these statistics, the overall level of children's self-concept, as measured by the PCSC, can be classified as medium.

Table 4.
Spearman correlation values between SATRPEC-PF and PCSC total scores

	SATRPEC-PF	PCSC	
SATRPEC-PF	r =1	r =.119 *	p= .058
PCSC	R =.119 * p=.058	r =1	

*p<.05

Table 4 displays the Spearman correlation values between SATRPEC-PF and PCSC total scores. The correlation coefficient between SATRPEC-PF and PCSC total scores was found to be r = 0.119 with a p-value of p = 0.058. There was a positive but non-significant relationship between the two variables. The correlation coefficient for PCSC and SATRPEC-PF scores was also r = 0.119 with a p-value of p = 0.058. The results indicate a similar positive but non-significant correlation. It should be noted that p-values are close to the significance level ($p < 0.05$), suggesting a marginal association between the two variables. Further research with a larger sample size may provide additional insights into the relationship between risky play perceptions and children's self-concept.

Table 5.
Spearman correlation analysis results for the relationship between SATRPEC-PF Sub-factors and PCSC scores

Scale	SATRPEC-PF Sub-Factors	N	r	p
PCSC	Pro Beliefs	257	.143	.022*
	Distinguish Risky Behaviors	257	.069	.272
	Supporting Children	257	.071	.254
	Feeling Anxiety	257	-.135	.030*
	Parental Support	257	.009	.885

*p<.05

The results of the Spearman correlation analysis, presented in Table 5, revealed the relationships between the SATRPEC-PF sub-factors and PCSC scores. Among the sub-factors of SATRPEC-PF, a significant positive correlation was found between Pro Beliefs and children's self-concept scores ($r = 0.143$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that mothers' positive beliefs about risky play were associated with higher self-concept scores in children. However, no significant correlations were observed between Distinguishing Risky Behaviors, Supporting Children, and Parental Support sub-factors of SATRPEC-PF and children's self-concept scores ($r = 0.069$, $p > 0.05$; $r = 0.071$, $p > 0.05$; $r = 0.009$, $p > 0.05$, respectively). Interestingly, the Feeling Anxiety sub-factor exhibited a significant negative correlation with children's self-concept scores ($r = -0.135$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that higher levels of maternal anxiety were associated with lower self-concept scores in children. These findings suggest that mothers' beliefs and anxiety related to risky play may play a role in shaping children's self-concept during the preschool years.

Table 6.
Spearman correlation analysis results for the relationship between SATRPEC-PF Pro-beliefs sub-factor and PCSC scores by gender variable

Scale	Gender	Pro-beliefs	
PCSC	Girl	r	.180
		p	.034*
		N	139
	Boy	r	.107
		p	.249
		N	118

*p<.05

Table 6 presents the results of the Spearman correlation analysis examining the relationship between the SATRPEC-PF Pro-beliefs sub-factor and PCSC scores based on the gender variable. Among girls, a significant positive correlation was found between Pro-beliefs and PCSC scores ($r = 0.180$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that higher levels of positive beliefs about risky play in mothers were associated with higher self-concept scores in girls. However, for boys, no significant correlation was observed between Pro-beliefs and PCSC scores ($r = 0.107$, $p > 0.05$), suggesting that the relationship between maternal beliefs and children's self-concept may differ based on gender. The findings highlight the potential gender-specific influence of maternal beliefs on children's self-concept in the context of risky play.

Table 7.
Spearman correlation analysis results for the relationships between the Distinguishing Risky Behaviors sub-factor of SATRPEC-PF and PCSC scores by gender variable

Scale	Gender	Distinguishing Risky Behaviors	
PCSC	Girl	r	.198
		p	.019*
		N	139
	Boy	r	-.062
		p	.506
		N	118

*p<.05

Table 7 displays the results of the Spearman correlation analysis examining the relationships between the Distinguishing Risky Behaviors sub-factor of SATRPEC-PF and PCSC scores based on the gender variable. Among girls, a significant positive correlation was found between Distinguishing Risky Behaviors and PCSC scores ($r = 0.198$, $p < .05$), indicating that a greater ability to differentiate risky behaviors in mothers was associated with higher self-concept scores in girls. However, for boys, no significant correlation was observed between Distinguishing Risky Behaviors and PCSC scores ($r = -0.062$, $p > .05$), suggesting that the association between maternal ability to distinguish risky behaviors and children's self-concept may differ based on gender. These findings suggest a potential gender-specific influence of maternal perceptions of risky behaviors on children's self-concept.

Table 8.
Spearman correlation analysis results for the relationship between SATRPEC-PF Supporting Children sub-factor and PCSC scores by gender variable

Scale	Gender	Supporting Children	
PCSC	Girl	r	.035
		p	.679
		N	139
	Boy	r	.117
		p	.206
		N	118

*p<.05

Table 8 presents the results of the Spearman correlation analysis examining the relationship between the Supporting Children sub-factor of SATRPEC-PF and PCSC scores based on the gender variable. The analysis revealed that there was no significant correlation between Supporting Children and PCSC scores for both girls ($r = 0.035$, $p > .05$) and boys ($r = 0.117$, $p > .05$). These findings suggest that the extent of maternal support for children's engagement in risky play does not appear to have a significant association with their self-concept, regardless of gender. Therefore, in this study, the perceived support from mothers regarding risky play did not show a strong relationship with children's self-concept scores.

Table 9.
Spearman correlation analysis results for the relationships between SATRPEC-PF Feeling Anxiety Sub-factor and PCSC scores by gender variable

Scale	Gender	Feeling Anxiety	
PCSC	Girl	r	-.241
		p	.004*
		N	139
	Boy	r	-.025
		p	.790
		N	118

*p<.05

Table 9 displays the results of the Spearman correlation analysis investigating the relationship between the Feeling Anxiety sub-factor of SATRPEC-PF and PCSC scores based on the gender variable. The analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between Feeling Anxiety and PCSC scores among girls ($r = -0.241$, $p < .05$), indicating that higher levels of maternal anxiety about risky play were associated with lower self-concept scores in girls. However, for boys, there was no significant correlation between Feeling Anxiety and PCSC scores ($r = -0.025$, $p > .05$). These findings suggest that maternal anxiety regarding risky play might have a more pronounced impact on the self-concept of girls compared to boys. It implies that higher levels of maternal anxiety about risky play may contribute to lower self-concept scores in girls, highlighting the importance of addressing parental anxiety in relation to children's engagement in risky play.

Table 10.
Spearman correlation analysis results for the relationship between SATRPEC-PF Parental Support Sub-factor and PCSC scores by gender variable

Scale	**Gender**	**Parental Support**	
PCSC	Girl	r	,000
		p	,999
		N	139
	Boy	r	,015
		p	,873
		N	118

*p<.05

Table 10 presents the results of the Spearman correlation analysis examining the relationship between the Parental Support sub-factor of SATRPEC-PF and PCSC scores based on the gender variable. The analysis revealed that there was no significant correlation between Parental Support and PCSC scores for both girls ($r = 0.000$, $p > .05$) and boys ($r = 0.015$, $p > .05$). These findings indicate that the level of parental support in relation to risky play did not show a significant association with children's self-concept scores, regardless of their gender. It suggests that other factors beyond parental support might be more influential in shaping children's self-concept. Further research is needed to explore additional variables that may contribute to children's self-concept in the context of risky play.

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

This study builds upon foundational theories of child development by Piaget (1962), Erikson (1985), Rubin et al. (1983), Oktay (1999), Hampton et al. (1999), and Gagnon and Nagle (2004), affirming the significant impact of play on cognitive, language, social-emotional, and motor skills development. It

introduces a nuanced exploration of risky play, an evolving concept in developmental psychology (Güler & Demir, 2016). Characterized by activities like climbing, jumping, and navigating uneven terrains, risky play is essential for children's holistic growth. It echoes the insights of Greenfield (2004) and Little (2006) on the critical role of environmental exploration in nurturing child development, suggesting that engaging in calculated risks is indispensable for fostering resilience, problem-solving skills, and adaptive behaviors in children. This study thereby extends traditional understandings of play, positioning risky play as an integral component of a child's developmental journey.

In the face of declining opportunities for outdoor play due to changing social and environmental conditions (Karaca & Uzun, 2020; Bundy et al., 2009), the importance of risky play has been underscored. Research has revealed a significant correlation between risky play and the development of self-awareness, self-confidence, and positive self-perception in children. This finding presents a contrast to the apprehensions regarding outdoor play identified in the studies by Erbay and Saltalı (2012) and Cevher-Kalburan and Yurt (2011). It highlights a discrepancy between parental perceptions and the actual benefits of risky play, suggesting a need for a more informed parental understanding of the developmental importance of such activities.

As a result of the study, when the scores obtained from SATRPEC-PF and PCSC were compared, a significant positive relationship was found between PCSC scores and Pro-beliefs, one of the sub-factors of SATRPEC-PF. The reason for this situation is that children's social skills, problem-solving situations, and emotions that they can control during risky play moments increase their self-confidence and courage. This will contribute to the child's self-concept and affect self-development positively. Early childhood is an important point in terms of self-concept. The risky playgrounds offered to the child not only develop the child's personality development and imagination but also allow the child to produce solutions to many problem situations encountered in daily life. As a result, the child's perceptions of desires, abilities, and self-concept will also develop positively (Baran, 1999; Demoulin, 2000). When the scores obtained from SATRPEC-PF and PCSC were compared, a significant negative correlation was found between PCSC scores and Feeling Anxiety, a sub-factor of SATRPEC-PF. This may be due to parents' overprotective attitudes and worries about their children's risky play. In addition, parents who have disagreements with their spouses and are afraid of being characterized as bad parents by the environment also keep their children away from risky playgrounds. In this direction, it can be said that when the child is not provided with opportunities and possibilities to manage risks and when the level of anxiety and fear is high, the child's self-development will also progress negatively (Alisinanoğlu, 2003; Sicim Sevim & Bapoğlu Dümenci, 2019). No significant relationship was found between PCSC scores and SATRPEC-PF sub-factors Distinguishing Risky Behaviors, Supporting Children, and Parental Support. From this point of view, it can be said that as the PCSC scores of children attending preschool education institutions increase, the Pro-beliefs scores of the SATRPEC-PF sub-factors increase, but the Feeling Anxiety sub-factor scores decrease while Distinguishing Risky Behaviors, Supporting Children, and Parental Support factors are not affected.

Another finding of the study was that the relationship between PCSC scores and SATRPEC-PF sub-factors varied in terms of gender. While there was a significant relationship between girls' self-concept and SATRPEC-PF's Pro-beliefs sub-factor, Distinguishing the Risky Behaviors sub-factor and the Feeling Anxiety sub-factor, no significant relationship was found between Supporting Children and Parental Support sub-factors. In boys, no significant relationship was found in all sub-factors. The main reason why there is a significant difference between PCSC scores and SATRPEC-PF Pro-beliefs, Distinguishing Risky Behaviors, and Feeling Anxiety sub-factors for girls but not for boys may be the differences in society's approaches to boys and girls. In some societies, due to the patriarchal understanding, most of the boys have freedom in line with their wishes, while girls are thought to be less likely to be allowed by their parents because they grow up in an environment where they are overprotective and their wishes are met at a lower level than boys (Bahtiyar Saygan & Pekel Uludağlı, 2021; Uğurlu, 2022). At the same time, boys are more willing to take risks than girls (Ginsburg & Miller, 1982), and girls prefer to play with the guidance of their parents (Morrongiello & Lasenby, 2011). Sandseter, 2007; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011), and that girls prefer to play with the guidance of their parents (Morrongiello & Lasenby-Lessard, 2007). Girls raised in families that provide equal

opportunities and support to both male and female children tend to exhibit more positive development in their self-identity. This balanced approach, eschewing traditional gender biases, fosters an environment where girls are encouraged to explore their capabilities and interests freely. Such family dynamics contribute significantly to the nurturing of a well-rounded self-concept in girls, enabling them to cultivate their self-esteem and personal identity in a manner uninhibited by gender stereotypes (Li et al., 2022). However, since the number of such families is small, significant differences may emerge among girls (Kanyılmaz, 2016). According to the studies conducted by Bencik, 2006; Bosacki, 2007; Marsh et al., 2002; Wilgenbusch & Merrell, 1999, it is seen that children's self-perceptions differ in favor of girls according to gender, while there is no differentiation in boys. According to the result of the related study, the assumption that the attitudes of the parents in the region where the studies were conducted according to the meaning they attribute to male and female gender may be effective on children's self-perception is similar to the result of this study. Yukay Yüksel and Yıldırım Kurtuluş (2016), Algünerhan (2017), and Evirgen Geniş (2017) found that gender did not make a significant difference in self-concept in their studies. In their studies on the subject, Şeremet (2006) and Körükçü (2004) found that children's self-concept scores did not change significantly according to gender. Karaca and Aral (2017), as a result of their research, stated that children's self-concept did not differ according to gender. Again, Türkmen and Özbey (2018) revealed in their study that children's self-perceptions did not differ according to gender variable. The results of the related studies are similar to some of the findings in this study. However, it was concluded that there were significant differences in favor of girls in terms of gender in SATRPEC-PF Pro-beliefs, Distinguishing Risky Behaviors, and Feeling Anxiety sub-factors.

It is obvious that play is an important factor for all developmental areas of the child. It is an undeniable fact that games that contain risk at a level that does not cause security concerns can contribute positively to the child's feelings of curiosity, discovery, and self-confidence. As a result of the contributions provided by risky games, a positive self-concept will develop in the child. In this case, the role of parents is of great importance. Parents should provide the necessary opportunities and facilities to encourage risky play by aiming to develop a positive self-concept in their children (Cevher Kalburan, 2014).

Based on the study's findings, which explore the relationship between children's perceptions of risky play (SATRPEC-PF) and their self-concept (PCSC), along with gender considerations, several recommendations emerge. These include organizing educational initiatives like TV programs and courses to raise awareness among parents and teachers about the nuances of risky play. It's crucial to inform them about both the advantages and potential drawbacks of such activities to foster positive development in children. Moreover, the research indicates a need to explore further the impact of parental attitudes on children's self-concept, particularly in relation to risky play. This could involve a deeper investigation into how mothers' perceptions, especially their anxieties and beliefs about risky play, influence children's self-esteem and self-awareness. The study highlights that maternal anxiety about risky play significantly affects girls' self-concept, pointing to the importance of addressing parental concerns to support healthy child development. In light of the study's insights on children's perceptions of risky play, their self-concept, and gender dynamics, future research can delve into several key areas. This includes exploring how different cultural and socioeconomic contexts influence children’s attitudes toward risky play and their self-development. A longitudinal approach to studying the lasting effects of parental attitudes and support on children’s growth would be valuable. Further, examining the role of educational environments in shaping these perceptions and investigating gender-specific strategies to enhance children's self-concept in relation to risky play could offer critical insights for educators and policymakers.

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Ethics statement: In this study, we declare that the rules stated in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" are complied with and that we do not take any of the actions based on "Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics". At the same time, we declare that there is no conflict of interest between the authors, which all authors contribute to the study, and that all the responsibility belongs to the article authors in case of all ethical violations.

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