



The Relationship Between Classroom Management Skills and Playfulness of Preschool Teachers

Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Sınıf Yönetimi Becerileri ile Eğlence Eğilimleri Arasındaki İlişki

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Abstract: This study aims to explore whether there is a relationship between classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers, according to different variables. The data were collected from 200 preschool teachers by using Preschool Teachers' Classroom Management Skills Scale (PTCMSS) and Adult Playfulness Trait Scale (APTS). Results show that preschool teachers have high level of classroom management skills, and they received a medium level score from the Adult Playfulness Trait Scale. There is no significant difference between classroom management skills and gender, age, department of graduation, professional seniority and school type. However, classroom management skills vary depending on the number of children in the class. Similarly, no significant difference was found between playfulness and gender, age, school type, professional seniority and the number of children in the class. Differently, it was found that preschool teachers had higher playfulness scores than teachers who graduated from other departments. Finally, it was found that there was a weak positive relationship between classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers. It is important to employ experts in the field of preschool education. It is recommended that teachers assigned to preschool classes from other fields receive support in play-based education for early childhood.

Key Words: Preschool teacher, classroom management, playfulness tendency

Özet: Bu çalışmanın amacı, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin sınıf yönetimi becerileri ile eğlence eğilimleri arasındaki ilişkinin çeşitli değişkenlere göre incelenmesidir. Veriler, 200 okul öncesi öğretmeninden Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Sınıf Yönetimi Becerileri Ölçeği (OÖÖ-SYBÖ) ve Yetişkin Eğlence Eğilimi Özelliği Ölçeği (YEEÖÖ) kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin yüksek düzeyde sınıf yönetimi becerisine sahip olduklarını ve Yetişkin Eğlence Eğilimi Özelliği Ölçeği'nden orta düzeyde puan aldıklarını göstermiştir. Sınıf yönetimi becerileri ile cinsiyet, yaş, mezun olunan bölüm, mesleki kıdem ve okul türü değişkenleri arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunmamıştır. Ancak sınıf yönetimi becerilerinin sınıftaki çocuk sayısı değişkenine göre farklılaştığı gözlenmiştir. Benzer şekilde, eğlence eğilimi ile cinsiyet, yaş, okul türü, mesleki kıdem ve sınıftaki çocuk sayısı değişkenleri arasında anlamlı fark görülmemiştir. Buna karşın, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin diğer bölümlerden mezun olan öğretmenlere göre eğlence eğilimi puanlarının daha yüksek olduğu saptanmıştır. Son olarak, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin eğlence eğilimi ile sınıf yönetimi becerileri arasında zayıf düzeyde pozitif yönlü bir ilişki olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin bu alanda eğitim alması ve ilgili bölümlerden mezun olması önemlidir. Diğer alanlardan okul öncesi sınıflara yerleştirilen öğretmenlerin erken çocukluk döneminde oyun temelli eğitim konusunda destek almaları önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okul öncesi öğretmeni, sınıf yönetimi, eğlence eğilimi

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Introduction

In its most basic definition, preschool education refers to a structured and systematic process that supports various developmental domains of children from birth until the onset of primary education. This education aims to enhance children's social skills through a play-based approach conducted by specialized preschool teachers, thereby contributing to the development of children's abilities in multiple areas (Koçyiğit, 2016; Kuru Turaşlı, 2014; MEB, 2013 [in English Ministry of National Education-MoNE]; Poyraz & Dere Çiftçi, 2011).

Classroom management undoubtedly plays a crucial role in achieving the objectives of preschool education for children. The ability of teachers to create engaging, organized, and efficient classroom environments that support children's self-care, language, cognitive, motor, social, and emotional development is considered one of the most important tools of classroom management (Aküzüm & Altunhan, 2017). Effective classroom management in preschool education largely depends on the communication teachers establish with children and the positive teacher-child relationship. Given that children spend most of their day with their teachers, it is imperative that teachers possess classroom management skills (Ekici, Günhan & Anılan, 2017). Expectations for teachers as effective classroom managers include preparing the classroom for education, establishing and gaining acceptance for classroom rules together with the children, organizing and maintaining instruction, and ensuring appropriate behaviors from children. These expectations form the foundation of the teacher's role within the classroom and are of critical importance for creating a successful learning environment (Can & Baksi, 2014). Teaching is a profession that not only involves transferring knowledge and skills but also requires establishing strong relationships with the environment and effectively utilizing personal traits. It is well known that a successful teacher who is appreciated by society exhibits numerous positive behaviors such as patience, love, tolerance, self-confidence, humor, consistency, a sense of justice, honesty, and objectivity. The most influential aspect of a teacher is their personal characteristics. These personal traits help teachers form healthy relationships with children, positively influence the learning environment, and contribute to the development of children (Deniz & Kesicioğlu, 2012).

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The literature includes some studies focusing on the effectiveness of humor (Lomax & Moosavi, 2002; Ulusoy & Bozdağ, 2022; Williams & Clouse, 1991), playfulness, and the tendency towards fun in classroom management (Balkaya & Akküçük, 2021; Strasser et al., 2024). Playfulness is defined as a proclivity to engage in play. In other words, playfulness refers to a child's or an individual's attitude towards a game or activity. Playfulness comprises intrinsic motivation, internal control, and the ability to detach from reality (Kars, 2018). The concept of playfulness is a personality-defining trait used to describe adults' personality characteristics (Yılmaz & Zembat, 2020). Pinchover (2017) defines playfulness as the inclination to participate in play and considers it a lifelong personality trait.

Playfulness provides teachers with a positive state of mind and enhances their motivation. Playful teachers enhance children's motivation, encouraging them to persist and keep going rather than give up. They also stimulate children's desire to learn and creativity, enabling them to become more active and harmonious with their surroundings. Therefore, playfulness of preschool teachers influences classroom management and contributes to the effective management of the educational process (Özdemir & Eker, 2021). It is noted that fun is a genetic reward for learning, and it is stated that the day fun ceases, learning also stops. Therefore, it is emphasized that teachers, in particular, should consider the need for fun in activities they conduct with children (Erden, 2021). Adults with a high tendency toward fun are known to be less stressed than others, enjoy life more, and have high levels of psychological well-being. An individual with a high tendency toward fun is characterized as flexible, capable of thinking differently, and creative. The importance of preschool teachers possessing these traits is highlighted, particularly in the context of incorporating play-based activities into the educational process. Teachers with playfulness support positive teacher-child interaction, facilitating the initiation of an enjoyable learning process (Yılmaz & Zembat, 2020).

For children to receive an education that is both healthy and appropriate to their developmental level and to develop their social skills in a healthy manner, teachers must manage the classroom effectively and implement child-centered practices through careful planning. It is expected that playful teachers will create enjoyable, creative, and flexible environments for children. In this context, it is believed that

teachers with high playfulness will be more effective in classroom management. The existing literature has revealed a limited number of studies related to the classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers. Strasser et al. (2024) states that teachers exhibit more humor during high-playfulness activities, and children are more likely to show high involvement with high-playful than low-playful activities. Moreover, children are more likely to be on-task during high-playfulness activities. Similarly, Sonyel and Şumrut (2023) state that primary school first grade teachers use game-based teaching to make students more active in the lesson and provide effective teaching. Likewise, Şahin and Altunay (2010) think that the warm and friendly climate created in the classroom can directly affect the success of the student. Undoubtedly, games and game-based teaching have an important place in creating a positive classroom climate. While worldwide efforts are made to emphasize preschool education and teacher training, the inadequacy of studies and training in this field in Northern Cyprus is seen as a gap in the literature. Therefore, examining the relationship between classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers is considered valuable as a research topic.

This study aims to explore the relationship between the classroom management skill levels and playfulness of preschool teachers. Additionally, the study will test whether preschool teachers' classroom management skill levels and playfulness vary according to factors such as gender, age, department of graduation, professional seniority, the number of children in the classroom, and the type of school they work at.

Method

The study was conducted using a correlational survey model, one of the general survey methods, to examine the relationship between classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers. According to Creswell (2014), correlational research aims to determine the degree of relationship between two or more variables using statistical methods.

Sample

The sample of the study includes 200 preschool teachers who are working in state and private schools in Northern Cyprus. The snowball sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling techniques, was used for gathering data. Purposive sampling, also referred to as criterion sampling in some sources, is defined as the process of conducting an in-depth study in situations that are believed to possess rich information (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, p. 107). Participants who met the predetermined criteria were recruited and asked to refer other individuals who met similar criteria for inclusion in the study. In this way, the sample expanded exponentially, resembling a snowball effect, and the data collection process was concluded once 200 participants were reached.

As shown in Table 1, 183 female and 17 male preschool teachers participated in the study. Among them, 52% are aged 21–30 years, 31% are aged 31–40 years, 11% are aged 41–50 years, and 6% are 51 years or older. Regarding the department of graduation, 140 teachers graduated from preschool education, 24 from primary education, and 36 from other fields. In terms of professional seniority, 44% of the teachers have 0-5 years of experience, 15.5% have 6-10 years, 22.5% have 11-15 years, 5.5% have 16-20 years, and 12.5% have more than 21 years of experience. In terms of the number of students in their classrooms, 43 teachers work in classes with 5-10 students, 67 teachers work with 11-15 students, 66 teachers work with 16-20 students, and 24 teachers work with more than 21 students. Finally, it is seen that 100 teachers work in state schools and 100 in private schools.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage values of participants' demographic information

		<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Female	183	91.5
	Male	17	8.5
Age	21-30	104	52.0
	31-40	62	31.0
	41-50	22	11.0
	51 and older	12	6.0
Education Level	Bachelor's degree	166	83.0
	Master's degree	30	15.0
	Doctorate	4	2.0
Department of Graduation	Preschool education	140	70.0
	Primary education	24	12.0
	Other	36	18.0
Professional Seniority	0-5	88	44.0
	6-10	31	15.5
	11-15	45	22.5
	16-20	11	5.5
	21 and above	25	12.5
Number of Students in Class	5-10	43	21.5
	11-15	67	33.5
	16-20	66	33.0
	21 and above	24	12.0
School Type	State	100	50.0
	Private	100	50.0
Total		200	100.0

Instruments

The data collection tools used in this study are the Personal Information Form developed by the researchers, the Preschool Teachers' Classroom Management Skills Scale (PTCMSS) developed by Kaplan and İlgar (2018), and the Adult Playfulness Trait Scale (APTS) adapted to Turkish by Yurt, Keleş, and Koğar (2016).

Personal Information Form

To receive information about participants' gender, age, department of graduation, professional seniority, and the total number of children in their classroom, The Personal Information Form was used.

Preschool Teachers' Classroom Management Skills Scale (PTCMSS)

PTCMSS is a Likert-type scale designed to measure preschool teachers' classroom management skills. It consists of 49 items, each scored between 1 and 5 (5=very good, 4=good, 3=moderate, 2=weak, 1=very weak). The scale is divided into four dimensions: 'physical arrangements in the classroom,' 'planning and program activities,' 'communication and behavior arrangements,' and 'time management' (Kaplan & İlgar, 2018). Initially, a measurement tool containing 64 items was developed. The content validity of the tool was evaluated by consulting five experts, and changes were made to some items based on their feedback. Additionally, two more items were added, resulting in a total of 66 items. The revised tool was then administered to 557 preschool teachers. Based on the results of factor analysis, 17 items were removed, establishing a 49-item scale with a four-factor structure. Tests such as Cronbach's Alpha, factor discrimination, item-total correlations, test-retest, and permanence analyses were conducted to calculate general and sub-scores. As a result of these tests, a valid and reliable Likert-type scale with 49 items and four dimensions was developed (Kaplan and İlgar, 2018).

Adult Playfulness Trait Scale (APTS)

The original APTS, developed by Shen, Chick, and Zinn (2014), which is a 7-point Likert type (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree) scale. During the adaptation process to Turkish, the scale was converted from a 7-point rating system to a 5-point Likert type (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) due to the common feedback that the 7-point system impeded the differentiation of responses. Accordingly, the items are scored between 1 and 5, with the total score ranging from 19 to 95. The scale

consists of 19 items and three sub-dimensions: motivation for seeking fun (9 items, comprising sub-dimensions of fun belief, initiative, and reactivity), uninhibitedness (5 items), and spontaneity (5 items). The Cronbach's Alpha value for the fun-seeking sub-dimension was .84, for the uninhibitedness sub-dimension was .58, and for the spontaneity sub-dimension was .73. Overall, the Cronbach's Alpha value for the scale was calculated as .85 (Yurt, Keleş & Koğar, 2016).

Procedure

Once the ethical approval was granted, the scales were distributed to preschool teachers working in both state and private institutions by hand. Since the snowball sampling method was used, names of other teachers who could participate in the study were obtained from the teachers already reached, and scales were administered to those teachers at a predetermined time and place. It took approximately 15 minutes for each teacher to complete the scales. Conducted based on the principles of voluntariness and confidentiality, the data for the research were collected over approximately three months, from March to May 2024, across 35 different preschool institutions.

Ethics Committee Approval

Before starting the study, permission was obtained for the scales to be used within the scope of the study. Then, the research proposal was presented to the University Ethics Committee and accepted after review. With the permission of the ethics committee, an application was made to the Ministry of National Education in order to collect data in schools, and with the approval received from there, communication was established with teachers working in preschool institutions. A brief summary of the study topic and a consent form were sent to the teachers, and they were asked whether they wanted to participate in the study and their approval was obtained. Data was collected on a voluntary basis from teachers who agreed to participate in the study, and teachers were informed about the confidentiality of the collected data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using the SPSS statistical software package. To determine which analysis techniques (parametric or non-parametric) would be applied, the One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test was performed.

Table 2. One sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test

	\bar{X}	Sd	Test statistics	<i>p</i>
PTCMSS	4.62	.38	.163	.000
APTS	3.57	.54	.055	.200

The results of the normality test indicated that the data met the assumptions of normality, and it was decided to use parametric tests. To explore the relationship between classroom management and playfulness across various variables, descriptive statistics and parametric tests, such as the independent sample t-test, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Tukey test, were used. The relationship between classroom management skills and playfulness was examined using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis technique. Furthermore, the reliability analysis of the scales was interpreted based on the Cronbach's Alpha (α) value. The reliability coefficient calculated based on the responses from the PTCMSS was found to be .981; and the APTS was found to be .862. This indicates that the scales can be reliably used, and their results are trustworthy. Bademci (2011) suggests that a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .80 and above indicates a highly reliable structure.

Results

This section presents the results. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics on classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers

	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Min.	Max.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Error	Statistic	Error
PTCMSS	200	4.62	.38	3.85	5.00	-.799	.191	-.727	.380
APTS	200	3.57	.54	1.59	5.00	-.071	.191	.937	.380
Total	200								

The mean score for the PTCMSS is 4.62, with a standard deviation of 0.38. The scores obtained from the PTCMSS ranged between 3.85 and 5.00, suggesting that teachers' general classroom management skill levels are high. According to Table 3, the mean score for the APTS is 3.57, with a standard deviation of 0.54. The lowest score on the scale is 1.59, and the highest is 5.00. Kurtosis and skewness values are in the range of -1.96 to +1.96. Based on this mean score, it can be stated that some teachers have very low, while others have high levels of playfulness. Generally, it is observed that the scores preschool teachers obtained from the APTS are above average.

To test the relationship between classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis was conducted.

Table 4. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient results for the relationship between classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers

Variables	N	r	p
Classroom management playfulness	200	.151	.033*

(*p<.05)

The results show that there is a low-level, positive significant relationship between classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers ($p<.05$, $r=.151$). According to Köklü, Büyükoztürk, and Bökeoğlu (2006: 94), a correlation coefficient ranging from 0.01 to 0.29 indicates a low-level relationship, 0.30 to 0.70 indicates a moderate-level relationship, 0.71 to 0.99 indicates a high-level relationship, and 1.00 indicates a perfect relationship. Therefore, it can be suggested that as preschool teachers' tendency toward fun increases, their classroom management skills also increase at a low level.

Table 5. The relationship between gender, classroom management skills and playfulness of preschool teachers

	Gender	N	\bar{X}	Ss	t	df	p
PTCMSS	Female	183	4.635	.380	1.449	18.596	.164
	Male	17	4.484	.414			
APTS	Female	183	3.591	.550	1.905	20.923	.071
	Male	17	3.373	.441			

(*p<.05)

Table 5 presents the results based on gender. According to the analysis, the average classroom management skills of female teachers ($\bar{X}=4.635$) were higher than those of male teachers ($\bar{X}=4.484$), and the scores for both groups were similarly distributed. However, the difference between the groups was found to be not very large ($t=1.449$). The analysis concluded that there is no significant difference between genders in classroom management ($p>.05$). Similarly, while the average playfulness for female teachers ($\bar{X}=3.591$) was higher than that of male teachers ($\bar{X}=3.373$), there is no significant difference between gender and playfulness ($p>.05$).

Table 6. ANOVA results for classroom management skills based on age, department of graduation, professional seniority, number of students in class, and school type

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Age	Between groups	.597	3	.199	1.354	.258
	Within groups	28.834	196	.147		
	Total	29.432	199			
Department of graduation	Between groups	.527	2	.263	1.794	.169
	Within groups	28.905	197	.147		
	Total	29.432	199			
Professional seniority	Between groups	1.010	4	.253	1.733	.144
	Within groups	28.422	195	.146		
	Total	29.432	199			
Number of students in class	Between groups	1.638	3	.546	3.851	.010*
	Within groups	27.794	196	.142		
	Total	29.432	199			
School type	Between groups	.379	1	.379	2.580	.110
	Within groups	29.053	198	.147		
	Total	29.432	199			

(*p<.05)

Table 6 shows the ANOVA results for classroom management skills based on age, department of graduation, professional seniority, number of students in class, and school type. The analysis revealed no significant differences in classroom management skills based on age, field of graduation, professional experience, or type of school ($p>.05$). However, a significant difference was observed according to the number of students in class ($p<.05$). A Tukey test was performed for further investigation.

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Table 7. Tukey test results for classroom management skills based on the number of students in class

(I)	(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Ss	p	95% Confidence Interval	
Number of Students	Number of Students				Min.	Max.
5-10	11-15	.04279	.07358	.938	-.1479	.2335
	16-20	-.04415	.07380	.932	-.2354	.1471
	21 and above	.25598*	.09595	.041*	.0074	.5046
11-15	5-10	-.04279	.07358	.938	-.2335	.1479
	16-20	-.08694	.06531	.544	-.2562	.0823
	21 and above	.21319	.08958	.084	-.0189	.4453
16-20	5-10	.04415	.07380	.932	-.1471	.2354
	11-15	.08694	.06531	.544	-.0823	.2562
	21 and above	.30013*	.08976	.005*	.0675	.5327
21 and above	5-10	-.25598*	.09595	.041*	-.5046	-.0074
	11-15	-.21319	.08958	.084	-.4453	.0189
	16-20	-.30013*	.08976	.005*	-.5327	-.0675

(*p<.05)

According to the Tukey test results, significant differences in classroom management skills are observed only between certain groups according to the number of students. Specifically, a significant difference was observed between classes with 21 and more students compared to other class groups (5-10 vs. 21 and above, 16-20 vs. 21 and above) ($p<.05$). This finding indicates that teachers in classes with 21 or more students have lower classroom management skills than other groups.

One-Way ANOVA was conducted to explore the relationship between playfulness of preschool teachers and age, department of graduation, professional seniority, number of students in class, and school type.

Table 8. ANOVA results for playfulness based on age, department of graduation, professional seniority, number of students in class, and school type

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Age	Between groups	2.045	3	.682	2.347	.074
	Within groups	56.938	196	.290		
	Total	58.983	199			
Department of graduation	Between groups	2.193	2	1.096	3.849	.023*
	Within groups	45.007	158	.285		
	Total	47.200	160			
Professional seniority	Between groups	2.022	4	.506	1.731	.145
	Within groups	56.961	195	.292		
	Total	58.983	199			
Number of students in class	Between groups	.595	3	.198	.665	.574
	Within groups	58.388	196	.298		
	Total	58.983	199			
School type	Between groups	.162	1	.162	.547	.461
	Within groups	47.038	159	.296		
	Total	47.200	160			

(*p<.05)

The findings indicate no significant differences in playfulness of preschool teachers based on age, professional seniority, number of students in class, and school type ($p>0.05$). However, a significant difference was found based on the field of graduation ($p<0.05$). As seen on Table 9, the Tukey test results show that statistically significant differences exist only between preschool education and other fields, with no significant differences among the other variables ($p<0.05$). This result indicates that graduates of preschool education are more playful compared to graduates from other fields.

Table 9. Tukey test results for playfulness based on the field of graduation

(I) Field of Graduation	(J) Field of Graduation	Mean Difference (I-J)	Ss	p	95% Confidence Interval Min. Max.	
Preschool Education	Primary Education	.09556	.12710	.733	-.2052	.3963
	Other	.30383*	.10993	.017*	.0437	.5639
Primary Education	Preschool Education	-.09556	.12710	.733	-.3963	.2052
	Other	.20827	.15185	.358	-.1510	.5676
Other	Preschool Education	-.30383*	.10993	.017*	-.5639	-.0437
	Primary Education	-.20827	.15185	.358	-.5676	.1510

(*p<.05)

Discussion

Preschool teachers participating in this study exhibited similar classroom management skills, with high scores obtained from the relevant scale. Numerous studies in the literature that assess preschool teachers' classroom management skills have similarly found these skills to be adequate and high (Güven & Cevher, 2005; Semerci & Balat, 2018; Yaman, 2019; Bulut, 2020). Classroom management forms the fundamental step in educational management. Teachers who possess effective classroom management are expected to be more successful in classroom activities and teaching-learning processes.

In the study, the average level of playfulness of preschool teachers was found to be 3.57, indicating a moderate level of playfulness. Similar studies conducted with preschool teachers have also found a high tendency toward playfulness (Yılmaz & Zembat, 2020; Özdemir & Eker, 2021). Play is an effective method for enhancing learning performance in preschool-aged children. Grounding activities in play facilitates easier and more lasting learning. Therefore, it is crucial for preschool teachers to be able to use play as a tool and exhibit playful behaviors themselves. Hazar (2018) noted that while teachers have

a good knowledge of educational games, they do not sufficiently use these games during lessons and lack proficiency in this teaching technique. However, using play in activities enhances academic achievement and makes learning more permanent (Şentürk, 2020; Uslu, 2022), supporting various developmental areas (Civelek, 2022). The high tendency toward fun and the playful behavior traits of the participating teachers are thought to yield positive outcomes for children.

According to the results, there is a positive but weak relationship between playfulness and classroom management skills of preschool teachers. As the playful behaviors of teachers increase, a slight improvement in classroom management skills is observed. In a study conducted by Strasser et al. (2024), it was observed that children were more engaged in preschool classes where play and quality interactive activities were used, and they were more willing to take on their roles in these activities. Teachers were noted to incorporate more humor in such activities. It is acknowledged that teachers' personal inclinations and competencies vary. While some teachers may be more playful and creative, others may differ. It is suggested that teachers' individual differences might either strengthen or weaken the relationship between their tendency toward fun and classroom management skills. Teachers' levels of creativity, temperament, in-service training they receive, technology use skills, and most importantly, their personal characteristics are thought to affect their tendency toward fun and classroom management skills in different ways. Although limited in the literature, there are studies investigating the contribution of playfulness to classroom climate. Chang et al. (2011) state that games and entertainment activities in the classroom environment positively affect the classroom climate. This can also be the key to effective classroom management. Similarly, Mundiri et al. (2022) state that the presence of entertainment in the classroom environment can be effective in managing children's behavior.

There is no significant difference between classroom management skills and gender of preschool teachers. Thus, both male and female preschool teachers perceive themselves as equally competent in classroom management skills. The literature supports this finding (Korkut & Babaoğlu, 2010; Yılmaz & Aydın, 2015; Yaman, 2019). Preschool teaching is a profession predominantly preferred by women, and many studies involving preschool teachers have observed a higher number of female participants. In this study, the majority of the participants were female, suggesting a lack of gender balance that could potentially influence the results.

The research also revealed no significant difference between classroom management skills and the age of preschool teachers. Although older and more experienced teachers might be expected to be more competent in classroom management, studies indicate that age does not affect classroom management (Yılmaz & Aydın, 2015; Ekici, Günhan & Anılan, 2017; Yıldız & Üzüm, 2018).

The participating preschool teachers graduated from preschool education, primary education, and other fields. Findings showed no significant difference in classroom management skills based on the department of graduation. Despite graduating from different fields, the overall classroom management skill levels of the participants were found to be high. Various studies evaluating classroom management skills in the literature have also indicated no significant difference based on the department of graduation (Zengin Bağcı, 2010; Özgan, Yiğit, Aydın & Küllük, 2011). These studies support the findings of the present research.

There is no significant difference between classroom management skills and professional seniority of preschool teachers. Similarly, Adıgüzel (2016) found no relationship between professional seniority and classroom management skills in this study. However, Toran and Gençgel Akkuş (2015) indicated a significant relationship between classroom management skills and professional experience, and Ekici, Günhan and Anılan (2017) noted that preschool teachers with over 10 years of seniority demonstrated higher classroom management skills than those with less seniority. The varying results in the literature are likely related to differences in the sample groups studied.

It was observed that there is no significant difference between classroom management skills and the school type in which preschool teachers work. Similarly, Zembat, Tuñçeli and Yavuz (2017) and Ekici, Günhan and Anılan (2017) reported no differences in classroom management skills according to school type. However, Semerci (2015) and Yaman (2019) found that teachers working in private schools had higher classroom management skills than those in public schools. This study included an equal number of preschool teachers from both state and private institutions. Teachers working in state schools in

Northern Cyprus typically graduate from a single teacher training institution with similar standards, while those in private institutions may undergo additional training based on the needs of their workplaces. Additionally, the sufficient and high level of classroom management skills in both groups could explain the lack of differences by institution type. It is also worth noting that many preschool institutions in Northern Cyprus employ assistant teachers, which could impact classroom management skills.

Briefly, there is no significant difference between classroom management skills and gender, age, department of graduation, professional seniority, and school type. Thus, all these variables do not affect preschool teachers' classroom management skills. However, a significant difference was found between classroom management skills and the number of children in the classroom. This difference was found between classes with 21 or more children and other groups (5-10 vs. 21 and above, 16-20 vs. 21 and above). Studies supporting this finding are present in the literature (Dinçer & Akgün, 2015; Zembat & Küsmüş, 2020). Bulut (2020) noted that teachers managing classes with 10-15 children exhibited higher classroom management skills than those handling larger class sizes. In preschool education, activities conducted with children can be individual, small group, or large group activities. Considering the developmental characteristics of preschool children and their individual needs for attention due to their age, it can be suggested that the number of children in a class may impact classroom management.

Regarding the playfulness of preschool teachers, no significant difference was observed based on gender. This lack of difference suggests that playfulness of preschool teachers does not vary according to their gender, indicating that male and female teachers show similar characteristics in their tendency toward fun. Similarly, in a study conducted by Canaslan (2018), no difference was found between the playfulness scores of males and females. In contrast, Özdemir and Eker (2021) found a statistically significant difference between male and female preschool teachers in their overall scores for playfulness. Since play has a critical role in early childhood development, it is expected that individuals who choose the preschool teaching profession naturally possess a tendency toward play. In addition, the number of women included in the sample in studies conducted with preschool teachers has always been higher. The primary reason for this is that the profession of preschool teaching is more commonly chosen by women. The small number of men may lead to biased evaluations when considering gender.

The research found no significant difference between playfulness and age of preschool teachers. Another study aiming to determine the playfulness of preschool teachers reported similar results (Canaslan-Aktar & Sevimli-Çelik, 2021). However, Piştav Akmeşe and Kayhan (2015) found that preschool teachers aged 25 and below scored higher in self-efficacy related to teaching play than those in the 26-30 and 31-35 age groups, indicating a significant difference between ages. Preschool teachers undergo similar professional training processes, which may explain the similarity in their playfulness tendencies, regardless of age.

No significant difference was seen between playfulness and professional seniority of preschool teachers. This finding is consistent with the study by Canaslan-Akyar and Sevimli-Çelik (2021). However, Dilekmen and Bozan Tüzün (2018) found significant differences in professional seniority regarding teaching, developing, and implementing play. The study showed that this difference favored teachers with 1-5 years of service and those with over 21 years of experience. This result indicates that the years of professional service variable have a significant differentiating effect on teaching play. The differing results in similar studies may be attributed to differences in the sample groups.

Similarly, no significant difference was found between playfulness and the number of children in the classrooms. Although it might be assumed that preschool teachers' attitudes toward fun activities would be affected by the number of children in the class, other studies show different results (Aslan, 2019; Kaçar & Beycioğlu, 2017).

It was observed that there is no significant difference between playfulness and the school type. Gemici (2023) has also reached a similar conclusion. It is thought that preschool teachers' playfulness tendencies are less influenced by the school's specific conditions or structural aspects and are more related to their individual characteristics and personal inclinations.

In summary, there are no significant differences between playfulness and gender, age, professional seniority, number of children in the class, and school type. Therefore, none of these variables appear to

affect the playfulness of preschool teachers. However, a significant difference was found between playfulness and department of graduation. This difference indicates that graduates of preschool education exhibit more playfulness than graduates from other fields. It is thought that the curricula or educational approaches of different departments may influence playfulness. Moreover, individuals who choose the profession of preschool teaching are expected to have a higher desire to be with and play with children compared to others.

The results indicate that the classroom management skills of preschool teachers are negatively affected by having a large number of children in the classroom. Due to the significant differences observed in the number of children variable, it is recommended that the number of children not exceed 16 and that teachers work with an assistant teacher in the classroom environment. Additionally, preschool teachers' tendency toward fun varies according to their field of graduation; preschool education graduates exhibit more playful behaviors than graduates from primary education and other fields. It is recommended that only teachers specifically trained for this profession work in preschool education. In cases of staffing shortages, teachers from other fields should receive training in play-based education for early childhood settings. Although the relationship is weak, preschool teachers' classroom management skills are influenced by their playful behaviors. It is suggested that preschool teachers receive in-service training on play and play-based education at regular intervals.

One of the strongest aspects of this research is that the importance of play-based education in the preschool period is known, and the study was conducted based on the arguments in the literature that playfulness will be a strong factor in classroom management. There are a total of 256 preschool teachers working in state institutions in Northern Cyprus. Almost half of the teachers working in state institutions were reached within the scope of the study. In order to make a comparison between teachers working in state and private institutions, a large portion of preschool teachers working in private institutions were also reached. In this context, the research has one of the most comprehensive samples conducted with preschool teachers in Northern Cyprus. In addition, it has been one of the only studies examining the relationship between classroom management and playfulness in both the Northern Cyprus and Turkish literature and the world literature; in this context, it is thought to have made an important contribution to the local literature in particular. On the other hand, the fact that the study was not supported by qualitative findings, and especially that the views of children were not included, is seen as a limitation and weakness of the study. Therefore, it is recommended that qualitative data, particularly including the views of children, be collected in future studies.

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