



Pre-service Early Childhood Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Views about Family Involvement: A Mixed Method Study

Okul Öncesi Öğretmen Adaylarının Aile Katılımına Yönelik Öz-Yeterlik İnançları ve Görüşleri: Bir Karma Yöntem Araştırması

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Abstract

Family involvement has an important role in the quality of early childhood education. It is essential that teachers be educated and prepared to work with families, as they play a crucial role in fostering family involvement in the process. This study aims to investigate pre-service early childhood teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and views on family involvement using a mixed-methods research design. During data collection, 201 pre-service early childhood teachers completed questionnaires, and interviews were also conducted with 6 of them. Data were collected from three universities in three different regions of Türkiye and analyzed with descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative findings complemented one another regarding pre-service teachers' self-beliefs in planning and practising different types of family involvement activities. However, all pre-service teachers identified barriers and offered suggestions to improve teacher education with respect to family involvement. It was recommended that teacher candidates' theoretical knowledge and practical experience regarding family involvement be enriched by integrating these areas across all courses in the undergraduate preschool teaching program.

Keywords: Early childhood education, teacher education, family involvement, self-efficacy.

Öz

Aile katılımı, nitelikli bir okul öncesi eğitimin sağlanmasında önemli rol oynamaktadır. Ailelerin sürece katılımının sağlanmasında önemli rol oynayan öğretmenlerin, bu konuda eğitim almaları ve hazırlanmaları bir gerekliliktir. Bu çalışma, karma yöntemli bir araştırma deseninde, okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının öz-yeterlik inançlarını ve aile katılımına ilişkin görüşlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Veri toplama aşamasında, 201 üçüncü ve dördüncü sınıf okul öncesi öğretmen adayı anketi doldurmuş ve katılımcılar arasından seçilen altı öğretmen adayı ile ise görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Veriler Türkiye'nin üç farklı bölgesindeki üç üniversiteden toplanmıştır ve tanımlayıcı istatistik ve tematik analiz yöntemleri ile analiz edilmiştir. Nicel ve nitel bulgular, öğretmen adaylarının farklı türdeki aile katılımı etkinliklerini planlama ve uygulama konusunda kendilerine inandıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Fakat öğretmen adaylarının tamamı aile katılımını sağlama konusunda engellerden bahsetmiş ve öğretmen eğitiminin iyileştirilmesine yönelik önerilerde bulunmuştur. Öğretmen adaylarının aile katılımına ilişkin teorik bilgilerinin ve uygulama deneyimlerinin, aile katılımını okul öncesi öğretmenliği lisans programında yer alan tüm derslere entegre edilerek zenginleştirilebileceği önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okul öncesi eğitimi, öğretmen eğitimi, aile katılımı, öz-yeterlik.

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1. Introduction

The home and school are the settings which enable the context for children's learning and also influence their well-being and academic achievement (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). The reciprocal interactions within and between such microsystems of children support child development and learning according to the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Sameroff, 2010). Therefore, a strong relationship with families is an important component of developmentally appropriate practices (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) and also one of the key points of

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early childhood education quality (Cohen & Anders, 2020; Klucznik & Roßbach, 2014; Sağlam & Çalışkan, 2017). To define, family involvement refers to working together with families by means of various activities to promote learning and development of children at home and school (DeMeulenaere, 2015; Iruka et al., 2022). Relationships with families can be established through a variety of family involvement activities, such as parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community, as identified in Epstein's (2001) framework. To explain it, parenting refers to assisting families with parenting and child-rearing skills to support their children's development and learning. Communicating involves establishing effective school-home communication in a variety of ways. Volunteering entails involving families in school activities. Learning at home refers to involving families in their children's learning at home, and decision-making also indicates including families as participants in school decisions. Finally, collaborating with the community covers coordinating resources and services for both the family and the community (Epstein, 2001; Epstein et al., 1997).

There are a variety of reported benefits of family involvement in early childhood education for each stakeholder of the process, including children, parents, teachers, and the program (Carlisle et al., 2006; Keyser, 2006; Sağlam & Çalışkan, 2017). To explain it, it has been reported in a significant number of research studies that family involvement contributes to children's academic achievement and cognitive, social and emotional development (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011; Cohen & Anders, 2020; DeMeulenaere, 2015; McNeal, 2014; Morrison et al., 2015; Pomerantz et al., 2007; Warner, 2010; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). Moreover, it contributes to family well-being (Iruka et al., 2022) by enhancing teacher-child relationships and supporting families to provide a stimulating home environment (Klucznik & Roßbach, 2014). Involved families also have a better understanding of their children's learning (DiNatale, 2002). Thus, the strengths of the home and the expertise of the school converge (Berger, 2008), thereby enhancing the quality of education (Sağlam & Çalışkan, 2017). Teachers play a crucial role in realizing the benefits of the family involvement process, and they have been found to hold positive attitudes toward family involvement (Hakyemez, 2015). There is a growing research literature on teacher education and family engagement, and findings highlight the need to prepare pre-service teachers to work with families. (e.g., Antony-Newman, 2024; Mutton et al., 2018; Unal & Unal, 2014). For instance, the experience of family nights was found to be effective in increasing pre-service teachers' understanding of families and in providing suggestions for engagement (Brannon, 2013). However, there are also a variety of reported barriers regarding family involvement, such as family education level or family unwillingness to be involved (Ekinci-Vural & Doğan-Altun, 2021). There is a need to support pre-service teachers regarding theoretical knowledge and practical experience regarding family involvement to be able to overcome the challenges of the process (Alaçam, 2025). This study aimed to investigate the pre-service teachers' beliefs and views on family involvement to explore the points which need to be supported in teacher education.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

Teachers play a crucial role in involving families in children's education (Nathans & Brown, 2022). It is necessary for them to maintain a strong home-school relationship to establish positive, respectful relationships with families and to collaborate with them in their children's education (Christian, 2006; Olsen & Fuller, 2003). However, newly appointed teachers have difficulty building relationships with families (Lundqvist et al., 2024). In particular, teachers' beliefs about family involvement significantly influence their family involvement practices (Thompson, 2012). To explain, teachers with high self-efficacy for working with families are more likely to involve families in the process (Garcia, 2004). Therefore, teacher self-efficacy is a significant construct which influences teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Pentegast et al., 2011). As being situated in Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy beliefs refer to the judgements made by people about their own capabilities to perform an action and have an impact on their thoughts, feelings, and practices (Bandura, 1982). For instance, those have an impact on how much effort people expend when they face obstacles (Bandura, 1997). However, self-efficacy is not a general trait which can be applied to different aspects of teaching. Therefore, research on self-efficacy focused on different domains like classroom organization, student achievement, and teacher well-being in the related literature (Zee & Koomen, 2016). This study focused on teacher candidates' family involvement-related self-efficacy beliefs.

Pre-service teachers' self-efficacy regarding family involvement is related to their actual abilities in different ways (Jones et al., 2020). To explain, when they feel prepared to work with families, they are more likely to provide family-school collaboration (Uludag, 2008). However, there are contradictory findings in the related literature regarding pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding family involvement. For instance, according to the quantitative study by the Alaçam and Olgan (2017), early childhood teachers hold high self-efficacy beliefs regarding family involvement. Moreover, teachers who had taken a course on family involvement reported a greater variety of family involvement in their practices than those who had not taken a course, according to another study by Zygmunt-Fillwalk (2011). Likewise, Yılmaz (2024) confirmed the high self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers who had taken the family involvement course. Şenol and Ergün (2015) also confirmed that pre-service teachers have higher self-efficacy

beliefs than preschool teachers, which was interpreted upon their taking the family involvement course in their undergraduate degree. In brief, it was supported that participation in a course contributes to pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward involving families (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2006). On the other hand, various research studies have concluded that pre-service teachers and newly appointed teachers do not feel prepared to communicate or develop a partnership with families (Denessen et al., 2009; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Hornby & Witte, 2010; Saltmarsh et al., 2014; Willemse et al., 2016). Although they recognise the importance of family involvement, they feel only mildly prepared to practice it (Willemse et al., 2017). In line with these, Başkan and Kutluca (2020) examined the self-efficacy beliefs of preschool and pre-service teachers regarding family involvement and found that self-efficacy beliefs were stronger among experienced preschool teachers. In relation to this, it was found that pre-service teachers feel that their education is not sufficiently preparing them to work with families (McFarland & Lord, 2008), and they especially highlighted the lack of practical experience in this topic (Alaçam, 2025). As a possible explanation for this situation, the literature indicates that family involvement is not effectively addressed in teacher education programs across countries (Gomila et al., 2018; Mutton et al., 2018), and pre-service teachers are not provided with opportunities to build parent-teacher relationships (Christian, 2006). Teacher educators also agreed upon the limitation of teacher education curriculum in terms of family involvement (Alaçam, 2025; Antony-Newman, 2024). They emphasized the insufficiency of the teacher education for providing theoretical knowledge and practical experience for the pre-service teachers (Alaçam, 2025).

1.2. Current Study

In the related national literature, the influence of the family-related factors on family involvement was pointed out in a variety of research studies (Ekinci-Vural & Doğan-Altun, 2021). For instance, home-based parent participation decreases with parental age but increases with higher parental socioeconomic status (Arslan et al., 2023). The primary reason for inefficient parental involvement was attributed to parents' unwillingness to participate (Hakyemez, 2015). In addition to the families, teacher-related factors were also explored as significant in the family involvement process. The studies conducted mostly focused on in-service teachers' views or attitudes toward family involvement in early childhood classrooms (e.g., Bayraktar et al., 2016; Toran & Özgen, 2018). It was concluded that early childhood teachers do not have enough knowledge and awareness about family involvement, which indicates the necessity of providing comprehensive education on this issue (Bilaloğlu & Arnas, 2019). Therefore, it is crucially important for teacher educators and policy makers to know how to prepare teachers for the effective family involvement process (Sewell, 2012). They need to be supported with knowledge and skills to work with families (Brown et al., 2014; Rouse, 2012). To this end, it was reported in the related literature that interventions like a course on family involvement, service learning, experiences with families, home-school connection project, or school-based family nights provide improvements in pre-service teachers' self-efficacy (Amaro-Jimenez, 2016; Brannon, 2013; Hampshire et al., 2015; Mancenido & Pello, 2020; Tinajero et al., 2024). However, there is little attention to how pre-service teachers think about their preparation for family involvement, what their understanding and attitudes are, and how this preparation can be enriched (De Bruine et al., 2014; Uludag, 2008). In fact, it is important for pre-service teachers to have time to identify their beliefs related to families and overcome their misconceptions (Amaro-Jimenez, 2016). The view of family involvement is the most effective predictor of perceived self-efficacy (Fisher & Kostelitz, 2015). Therefore, it is important to investigate their views and beliefs together to identify the points that require support, which constituted the basis for the present study. Pre-service teachers' perceived barriers and suggestions were investigated together to provide implications for the teacher education curriculum.

2. Method

This study was conducted using an explanatory mixed-method design to examine teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs and views on family involvement. Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected, analyzed, and compared with each other to see whether findings confirm or disconfirm each other in this research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Thus, the following research questions were focused on in the present study by employing qualitative and quantitative methods together:

- What are the pre-service early childhood teachers' self-efficacy beliefs related to family involvement?
- What are the pre-service early childhood teachers' views related to family involvement?

2.1. Participants

In the quantitative phase, 201 third- and fourth-year pre-service teachers from three randomly selected public universities across three regions of Türkiye participated in the study. The main reason for selecting these grade levels is that teaching practice and family involvement courses were offered beginning in the third year of teacher education. Therefore, these grade levels were purposefully selected to reach detailed information based on their knowledge and experience. Among participants, 94.5% ($n=190$) were women and 5.5% ($n=11$) were men. Moreover, 59.7% ($n=120$) were third-year students, and 40.3% ($n=81$) were fourth-year students. In addition, 80.6% ($n=162$) enrolled in a family involvement course, and 97% ($n=195$) completed teaching practice.

Interview participants were selected from pre-service teachers who completed the survey and agreed to participate in the interview. Purposive sampling was employed, and three third-year and three fourth-year pre-service teachers were randomly selected from the volunteers. At the time of data collection, although fourth-year pre-service teachers had taken the family involvement course, third-year pre-service teachers had not. All interview participants were women and had experience in teaching practice in classroom settings.

2.2. Context of the Study

There is a centralized early childhood education curriculum in Türkiye to prepare 36 and 72-month-old children for primary school. It focuses on learning objectives which are reached through planned activities. Early childhood teachers are suggested to plan how to involve families in their activities (MoNE, 2013). However, despite its significance in the early childhood curriculum, family involvement is one of the neglected sides of teacher education in Türkiye, as reported for different contexts (e.g., Alaçam, 2025; Antony-Newman, 2024; Başkan & Kutluca, 2020; Dereli & Türk Kurtça, 2023; Nathans et al., 2022; Yılmaz, 2024). In Türkiye's current early childhood teacher education curriculum, there is only one elective course on family involvement. However, teacher candidates are required to plan family-involvement activities in their teaching practice plans. Given the significance of family involvement in the early childhood education curriculum and the deficiencies in the teacher education process in Türkiye, this study aimed to investigate the topic by including pre-service early childhood teachers.

2.3. Data Collection

Ethical approval was taken from Ethics Committee for Social and Human Sciences Research at Ondokuz Mayıs University, (Date: 29.03.2023, Number: 2023-189). Subsequently, data were collected through two main processes after obtaining informed consent from the volunteers. Firstly, survey data were collected face-to-face by the researcher. The purpose of the study was explained to teacher candidates by inviting them to participate. The Demographic Information Form and the Parent Involvement Self-Efficacy Beliefs Scale were employed for data collection. Parent Involvement Self-Efficacy Beliefs Scale was developed by Stuckey in 2010 and adapted into Turkish by the researcher (Alaçam, 2015; Alaçam & Olgan, 2017; Alaçam & Olgan, 2019). It aims to investigate pre-service teachers' efficacy related to parent involvement. It consists of one factor with 11 items and is designed as a 6-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's Alpha level of the adapted scale was found to be .87. It was also calculated as .88 for the present study. Examples of the sample items are: 'I will be able to involve parents in the classroom' and 'I will be able to effectively engage parents in fostering good studying and learning habits in children.'

Secondly, qualitative data were collected with a semi-structured interview protocol. It consisted of 10 questions and was organized into two parts: views and self-efficacy beliefs on family involvement. For instance, some of the interview questions are: "Do you believe that you can get families to volunteer at school? If yes, in which ways? If no, please explain the reason", "What are your suggestions for the effective implementation of family participation activities?" These questions were developed based on the literature (e.g., Alaçam & Olgan, 2017; Epstein, 2001; Willemse et al., 2017; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). To ensure internal validity, expert opinions were obtained from three university professors in early childhood education. Necessary revisions were conducted based on expert feedback and the findings from pilot interviews with two candidate teachers. Interviews took approximately 30 minutes. The interviews followed the same format and asked the same questions to the participants (Fraenkel et al., 2012). After data collection, each interview was transcribed for analysis by the researcher. To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms (e.g., P1 and P4) were used when reporting the findings.

2.4. Data Analysis

The survey data were entered into IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software and analyzed with descriptive statistics to understand pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs related to family involvement.

Furthermore, thematic analysis was employed for analyzing the interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and significant statements were highlighted. Subsequently, transcripts were classified into codes, categories, and themes after multiple readings. To ensure data reliability, a second coder, a researcher in early childhood education, was included in the data coding process, and 93% agreement on the extracted codes was achieved, which is acceptable according to Miles et al. (2014). In this process, analyzing pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs with both surveys and interviews also enabled triangulation of the findings.

3. Findings

The study findings were reported under two parts, including self-efficacy beliefs and views. Self-efficacy beliefs were presented regarding the first research question by reporting both survey and interview findings and summarized in Table 1 and Table 2. In the interview findings regarding self-efficacy beliefs, responses of the participants were categorized under the family involvement types, including family education activities, communication between home and school, volunteering at school, activities at home, and integrating families into the decision-making process. Moreover, to answer the second research question, pre-service teachers' views on family involvement were also categorized under the family involvement types, benefits, barriers, and suggestions. The interview findings were reported by providing excerpts from pre-service teachers' expressions and summarized in Table 3.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for the assessment of the parent involvement efficacy scale

| Items | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|---|----------|-----------|
| I will be able to effectively engage parents in fostering good studying and learning habit in children. | 4.96 | .66 |
| I will be able to get parents to trust my leadership. | 5.12 | .66 |
| I expect to be able to foster parents' participation in school related activities at home. | 5.07 | .66 |
| I will be able to get parents to volunteer at school. | 4.89 | .75 |
| I am confident that I can clearly communicate involvement needs to parents. | 5.34 | .68 |
| I will be able to involve parents in the classroom. | 4.99 | .74 |
| I will be able to build strong rapports with parents that will lead to effective involvement. | 5.10 | .73 |
| I will know how to provide interesting activities for parents. | 4.97 | .82 |
| I feel confident that I will be able to get parents to volunteer in different activities. | 4.88 | .78 |
| I will be able to engage parents to get involved in academic activities, such as reading to children. | 4.97 | .79 |
| I will be successful in engaging parents in educational activities. | 4.91 | .80 |

3.1. Pre-service Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs

According to the descriptive analysis of the scale, teacher candidates reported high levels of self-efficacy beliefs ($M=55.20$, $SD=6.11$). Table 1 shows that they received the highest scores on the items of "I am confident that I can clearly communicate involvement needs to parents" ($M=5.34$, $SD=.68$), and "I will be able to get parents to trust my leadership" ($M=5.12$, $SD=.66$). On the other hand, they less agreed upon the items of "I feel confident that I will be able to get parents to volunteer in different activities." ($M=4.88$, $SD=.78$) and "I will be successful in engaging parents in educational activities" ($M=4.91$, $SD=.80$).

Table 2*Self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers regarding family involvement*

| Theme | Category | Code | Sub-codes |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Self-efficacy beliefs | Family education activities | Yes (n=2) No (n=4) | Seminar (n=1) Brochure (n=1) |
| | Communication between home and school | Yes (n=5) No (n=1) | Face-to-face meeting (n=4) Telephone (n=4) Notes (n=3) Mail (n=2) Sending children's activities to home (n=1) |
| | Volunteering at school | Yes (n=6) | Benefiting from families' expertise (n=3) Integrating into field trips (n=2) Helping teachers during activity process (n=2) Organizing classroom corners and getting their support (n=1) |
| | Activities at home | Yes (n=5) No (n=1) | Giving activities (n=5) Requesting feedback from them (n=3) |
| | Integrating into decision-making process | Yes (n=5) No (n=1) | Getting ideas related to food menus (n=2) Seminar topics (n=3) Field trip places (n=2) Cultural activities (n=1) |
| | | | |

Moreover, pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding different types of family involvement were examined in detail through interviews (Table 2). However, it was found that they (N=4) do not believe in their ability to plan and implement family education activities because they lack sufficient knowledge and experience. Only two of the pre-service teachers who had taken the family involvement course expressed their beliefs in this matter, but they only offered organizing a seminar or preparing a brochure for this purpose. In contrast to the survey findings, the majority of them (N=5) reported being confident in facilitating communication between home and school. Only one of them, who had not taken the family involvement course, did not express self-efficacy about this. The majority of them justified their efficacy by believing in their communication skills. To this end, they offered methods such as face-to-face meeting (N=4), telephone (N=4), notes (N=3), mail (N=2), and sending children's activities to home (N=1). For instance, P5, who had taken the family involvement course, mentioned her observations from the teaching practice and family involvement course: "I learned the method of telephone tree in the course. I can practice it to enable families' connection with each other". In particular, face-to-face meetings were considered effective because they facilitated a stronger emotional connection between the teacher and the family.

Furthermore, all pre-service teachers expressed confidence in their ability to facilitate families' volunteering at school. They mentioned various activities to integrate them, including benefiting from families' expertise (N=3), participating in field trips (N=2), assisting teachers during activities (N=2), and organizing classroom corners and obtaining their support (N=1). For instance, P5, who had taken the family involvement course, mentioned, "I can get their ideas about designing different corners in the classroom and request materials from them" (P5). Moreover, the majority of them (N=5) believed in themselves for providing family involvement by enabling them to conduct activities at home. Only one of them, who had not taken the family involvement, did not express self-efficacy about this. To promote family involvement at home, they highlighted giving activities (N=5), and the pre-service teachers who had taken the family involvement course, in particular, highlighted requesting feedback from families (N=3). For instance, "they might visit a museum related to that week's topic" (P2). "They can look at photo albums and observe the development in process" (P5). It is important to give flexibility in these activities (P3) and "consider family interests while deciding the activities" (P4). It was also suggested that "Requesting feedback contributes to their sharing with the children" (P2) and "also helps for teachers to observe the activity process" (P3).

In addition, the majority of them ($N=5$) believed they were able to involve families in the decision-making process. Only one of them, who had not taken family involvement, did not express self-efficacy about this. To provide this, they identified ideas related to food menus ($N=2$), seminar topics ($N=3$), field trip locations ($N=2$), and cultural activities ($N=1$). They pointed out “planning family involvement activities by getting their suggestions” (P1). They also advised to learn “which activities they prefer to join or on which topics they need education” (P5). P3 also suggested obtaining their suggestions on cultural activities to integrate them into the curriculum. As another example, P6 mentioned organizing surveys to reach decisions about some topics. However, only one participant, who had not taken the family involvement course, did not feel confident about this, attributing it to their belief that families were unwilling to be involved (P2). These are summarized in Table 2.

Table 3

Views of pre-service teachers regarding family involvement

| Theme | Category | Code |
|-------|--------------------------|---|
| Views | Family involvement types | Parenting ($n=4$) |
| | | Communicating ($n=3$) |
| | | Volunteering ($n=6$) |
| | | Learning at home ($n=5$) |
| | | Decision making ($n=3$) |
| | | Collaborating with community ($n=3$) |
| | | Home visiting ($n=1$) |
| | Benefits | Communication with family and children ($n=4$) |
| | | Supporting teachers($n=3$) |
| | | Making the classroom management easy ($n=3$) |
| | Barriers | Teacher’s lack of education ($n=6$) |
| | | Negative attitudes ($n=6$) |
| | | Disregarding family views ($n=2$) |
| | Suggestions | Implementing family involvement activities during teaching practice ($n=5$) |
| | | Integrating theory and practice into family involvement courses ($n=3$) |
| | | Integrating family involvement into the different courses ($n=2$) |

3.2. Pre-service Teachers’ Views

The participants were asked about their views on the types of family involvement, their benefits and challenges, and suggestions for the family involvement process (Table 3). Regarding types of family involvement, there is a clear distinction between fourth-year teacher candidates who had taken the family involvement course and third-year candidates who had not. All the fourth-year pre-service teachers explained Epstein’s six types of family involvement strategies. They highlighted their learning of these methods as part of the family involvement course and exemplified them through various activities. On the other hand, third-year pre-service teachers who had not taken the family involvement course reported learning only about at-home activities ($N=2$), families’ volunteering in the school ($N=3$), seminars ($N=1$), and home visiting ($N=1$). They explained these by providing examples drawn from their teaching practice. For instance, it was stated that “One of the children’s grandmothers was a painter and they visited her studio” (P2).

All the pre-service teachers viewed family involvement as beneficial. Three of them who had taken the family involvement course and one of them who had not taken it agreed that it contributes to the teachers’ communication with family and children ($N=4$) because it helps teachers “know families and children better” (P2) and “solve the problems easily” (P5). Pre-service teachers who had taken the family involvement course also reported that it provides support for teachers from families ($N=3$) and makes classroom management easier ($N=3$). For instance, P3 shared her observation in her teaching practice that “Family involvement in field trips makes the process easy for teachers by getting their support in classroom management”. On the other hand, they identified teachers’ lack of education ($N=6$), negative attitudes ($N=6$), and disregard for family views ($N=2$) as barriers to the family involvement process. They explained that “If teachers do not get enough education about family involvement, they most probably do not want to

include families into the process" (P1). Moreover, "If school does not give importance to family views in any decisions, this might also create a barrier for the process" (P5).

To highlight the family involvement in early childhood teacher education, three pre-service teachers who had taken the family involvement course, and two who had not, suggested implementing family involvement activities during their teaching practice ($N=5$). The pre-service teachers who had taken the family involvement course also recommended integrating theory and practice in these courses ($N=3$). Moreover, one pre-service teacher who had taken the family involvement course and one of them who had not taken it mentioned integrating family involvement into the different courses ($N=2$). For instance, they highlighted that "Family involvement course should be given before the teaching practice" (P1). "It is important to provide examples from daily life in addition to theoretical knowledge in the course" (P4). "Practices should be integrated into both family involvement courses and also teaching practice experiences" (P6). P5 highlighted that "We can practice at least five family involvement activities during our teaching practice to see the response from families". P6 also stated that "I do not know how to talk with a family. Education related to family communication should be given". In particular, it was highlighted that teacher internalization of the significance of the family involvement is the key point for the success of this process (P3). Table 3 provides a summary of these findings.

4. Discussion

In this mixed-methods study, quantitative and qualitative findings complemented one another regarding pre-service teachers' self-beliefs in planning and implementing various types of family involvement activities. Similarly, teacher candidates' high self-efficacy beliefs to enable family involvement were confirmed in different research studies (e.g., Alaçam & Olgan, 2017; Jones et al., 2020). In particular, it has been shown that taking a course significantly improves the quality of practices, such as reporting creative approaches to family involvement (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). Consistent with this, in the present study, fourth-year pre-service teachers, who had taken a course on family involvement, provided a wider range of family involvement activities than third-year pre-service teachers, who had not taken such a course. This might be interpreted as meaning that these educations provide new ways of thinking about family involvement (Nathans et al., 2022). Likewise, pre-service teachers were found to have high self-efficacy regarding family involvement in Şenol and Ergün's (2015) study, which was interpreted as reflecting their enrollment in the family involvement course. Yılmaz also (2024) confirmed that pre-service teachers who had taken the family involvement course had higher self-efficacy beliefs regarding family involvement than teachers who had not taken it (Yılmaz, 2024). All of these indicate the significance of education for family involvement during the pre-service period. More inclusive and contextually relevant conceptualizations of parent involvement should be highlighted in this education process (Gedik, 2025).

Pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs were investigated regarding different types of family involvement activities. It was found that although they believed in several family-involved methods, they did not report efficacy in organizing family education in the present study. Similarly, Willemse et al. (2017) found that pre-service teachers do not feel sufficiently trained about training families in parenting skills. The likely reason is that they lack experience with it, although they plan other family-involvement activities in their teaching practice plans. Supporting this, experienced preschool teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding family involvement were higher than those of less experienced teachers and pre-service teachers (Başkan & Kutluca, 2020). In this regard, Bandura (1997) and Woolfolk Hoy and Burke Spero (2005) described mastery experiences as significant sources of self-efficacy beliefs. Multiple studies have also supported the contribution of mastery experiences to pre-service teachers' self-efficacy (Cantrell et al., 2003; Clark & Newberry, 2019). In this respect, pre-service teachers' teaching practice experiences may contribute to their self-efficacy beliefs regarding these deficient areas by providing hands-on experience (Brown et al., 2015). However, participant pre-service teachers highlighted the lack of practical experiences in teacher education and suggested integrating them into the curriculum. Both theoretical knowledge and hands-on experiences are necessary for educators (Hampshire et al., 2015; O'Connor et al., 2018) because practical experience with families in a classroom environment will enable them to explore how to reach out to parents and which methods work for them (Amaro-Jimenez, 2016). For instance, service learning and projects have been found to be effective for learning to work with families (Amaro-Jimenez, 2016; Hampshire et al., 2015). Engaging in service-learning projects, such as family nights, and observing family involvement can also contribute to their self-efficacy beliefs (Alaçam, 2025; Brannon, 2013; Jones et al., 2020). In brief, teaching practice experiences and experiences with families significantly contribute to pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, enabling family involvement and extending the vision of the learning environment from school to home (Brown et al., 2021; Tinajero et al., 2024). Therefore, it is suggested to provide practical experiences for teacher candidates during teacher training. Integrating practical experiences into course content will enhance the effectiveness of courses for pre-service teachers (Alaçam, 2025).

Moreover, in the related literature, although volunteering was the most commonly practised form of parent involvement, collaborating with the community and including parents in the decision-making process were the least common (Ekinci-Vural & Doğan-Altun, 2021). In another study, learning at home was found to be a commonly practiced family involvement type, and decision making was found to be the lowest rated one (Ihmeideh et al., 2020). All of these indicate the necessity of fostering awareness and providing support for the variety of forms of family involvement. However, it was found that teacher candidates are not satisfied with the training they received on family involvement in Türkiye in line with the research studies in different countries (e.g., De Bruine et al., 2014; McFarland & Lord, 2008; Unal & Unal, 2014; Willemse et al., 2017). It was argued that, because family involvement is not effectively addressed in teacher education programs (Antony-Newman, 2024; Gomila et al., 2018; Mutton et al., 2018), teacher candidates are poorly prepared to implement family involvement (Hornby & Witte, 2011; Sewell, 2012). It is recommended that educators receive education and training to improve their confidence in working with families (Murphy et al., 2021; Epstein & Sanders, 2006). However, to support and sustain self-efficacy beliefs across different types of family involvement, comprehensive programs are needed (Nathans & Brown, 2022). For instance, pre-service teachers suggested integrating family involvement into the entire teacher education program and providing concrete examples in family involvement courses. Integrating family involvement into instruction and activities helps teacher candidates better prepare and develop positive attitudes toward family involvement (Uludag, 2008), as it contributes to knowledge gains and positive attitudes among pre-service teachers (Brown et al., 2014). Therefore, it is recommended that family involvement be integrated into the entire teacher education program (Winship et al., 2021; Yılmaz, 2024). It is also advisable to provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to plan family involvement activities and implement them under the guidance of a mentor teacher (Alaçam, 2025). Moreover, Cheung and Kam (2019) found that pre-service teachers' relationships with their families may influence their attitudes toward family involvement and suggested that these relationships should be considered when preparing them for the family involvement process.

In the present study, although teacher candidates reported different benefits of family involvement, consistent with the literature, they were also aware of barriers to family involvement, similar to those reported in the literature (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Sağlam & Çalışkan, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to prepare teacher candidates to overcome such challenges as a part of their courses. To this end, participant pre-service teachers offered several suggestions to improve the family involvement process. For instance, as they suggest, families will be eager to be involved when family ideas are valued in decision-making (Andrade-Guirguis & Plotka, 2019). At this point, teacher attitudes are significant factors affecting family involvement. It is important for teachers to raise awareness among families about the significance of family involvement and to encourage their engagement in the educational process to enable effective family involvement (Sağlam & Çalışkan, 2017). In this process, it is important to provide flexible opportunities for their involvement at multiple times and to offer community service projects (Newman et al., 2019). However, it was found that parents experience communication difficulties when interacting with teachers and school management regarding family involvement (Günay Bilaloğlu & Aktaş Arnas, 2019). Family-related factors also significantly influence the family involvement process (Arslan et al., 2023). It is essential for teachers to develop effective communication strategies to enable family involvement (Ekinci-Vural & Doğan-Altun, 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to support teacher candidates in developing communication and collaboration skills. As highlighted by one of the participant teacher candidates, communication skills with families may be emphasized as part of the courses.

5. Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations

Pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and views regarding family involvement were examined in this study. However, the findings are limited to participant settings and to self-reported data from teacher candidates. Therefore, it cannot be generalized to large settings, and social desirability might also be a factor in the responses. To reduce social desirability bias, survey data were collected anonymously, and participants were reminded of this prior to the interview. In future studies, repeating this study with different populations can provide a useful comparison and implications for the teacher education curriculum. Increasing the sample size might also enhance generalizability. Moreover, teacher education might be designed based on the findings to investigate its effectiveness on increasing the pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs.

To conclude, both qualitative and quantitative findings complemented each other regarding teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs for planning and practicing various family involvement types. Qualitative findings, in particular, confirmed the positive effects of the family involvement course on teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs and positive views of family involvement in early childhood education. Moreover, pre-service teachers reported barriers related to family involvement and offered suggestions for preparing for it. These findings highlight the need to improve the teacher education curriculum's emphasis on family involvement to maintain and support teachers' self-efficacy beliefs.

6. Contribution Declaration

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7. Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

8. Supporter and Grant Declaration (If exists)

No.

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