



The Reflection of The Teacher Support Program for Child-Centered Practices on Preschool Teachers' Practices*

Seda Eskidemir Meral ^{a **}, Fatma Tezel Şahin ^b

^a Akdeniz University, Vocational School of Health Services, Child Development Department, Antalya, Türkiye

^b Gazi University, Gazi Faculty of Education, Preschool Education, Ankara, Türkiye.

Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on preschool teachers' child-centered practices. The mixed-method action research design study group consisted of 8 preschool teachers working in an independent preschool affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in the Konyaaltı district of Antalya province. The data were collected through an interview form, a child-centered education observation form, and a program evaluation form. The content analysis method analyzed the data obtained from the interview and program evaluation forms. Repeated measures ANOVA and Friedman two-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data obtained from the child-centered education observation form. As a result of the findings, it was found that the teacher support program for child-centered practices implemented for 12 weeks positively affected preschool teachers' child-centered practices. In the follow-up measurements made 4 weeks after the implementation, it was seen that the effect of the program continued. Teachers said they implemented the program by organizing learning centers, not using reward, punishment, and praise, and involving children in planning, implementing, evaluating, and managing the classroom. Teachers stated that the program benefited both themselves and the children in their classrooms.

Keywords: Action research; child-centered, child-centered education, preschool period

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** Corresponding author name. ORCID ID.: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3129-4908>
E-mail address: seskidemir@akdeniz.edu.tr

1. Introduction

The philosophical foundations of child-centered education are argued to be the best and most appropriate approach to young children's learning (Ryan, 1998), beginning with Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Israsena, 2007). According to Rousseau (2008), the essence of the child is innately good. The child is important as himself/herself and should be recognized as having an active spirit. Children need to be left free to reveal their talents and become what they want to be. It can be said that these views of Rousseau pioneered the birth of the child-centered approach. It is stated that the term "child-centeredness" was first coined by Friedrich Froebel with the statement, "The child should be at the center of everything that is related to the child and the child's life during childhood" (Chung & Walsh, 2000) because child-centered education starts with the child's interests and needs (Ryan, 1998). In child-centered education, every teaching detail revolves around the child; every arrangement is made according to the child and with the child in a way that the child can realize their learning. The child is given the right and freedom to choose what they want to learn and is allowed to participate in the learning activity with the most appropriate methods (Oktay, 2005). Child-centered education ensures that children learn according to their nature, not what adults want (Gür, 2006). Child-centered education is not only about respecting childhood but also about respecting each child and their differences (Darling, 1988). Each child is unique and has distinctive characteristics. In child-centered education, children's distinctive characteristics and individuality should be considered. These individual differences include their emotional state, learning speed, developmental level, abilities, needs, and academic and non-academic characteristics. For the child to develop and learn, these differences should be considered in education, necessary changes should be made, and options should be offered (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). In child-centered education, the child is responsible for learning and constructing knowledge with the special environmental opportunities provided (Kaya, 2012). The role of the teacher is to prepare the environment for children to explore, to give the children the opportunity to make the highest level of freedom of choice, and not to interfere with children's activities (Winsler & Carlton, 2003).

Alternative approaches such as Montessori, High Scope, Reggio Emilia, and Head Start, where child-centered education is applied, are more effective in children's language development (Kayılı et al., 2009; Kefi, 1999), cognitive development (Hong et al., 2017), motor skills (Beken, 2009), concept acquisition (Aral et al., 2015), social skills (Koçyiğit & Kayılı, 2008; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997; Schweinhart, 2013), and creativity (Akar Gençer & Gönen, 2015; Denervaud et al., 2019) than teacher-centered practices with traditional education. It has been observed that children in early childhood classrooms where child-centered education is implemented have more positive attitudes towards school (Valeski & Stipek, 2001), are more motivated, like school more, worry less about school (Stipek et al., 1995), are more interested in school and learning-related tasks, and

value learning more (Daniels et al., 2001) than children in traditional, didactic and teacher-centered classrooms. It can be said that child-centered education contributes not only to children's development but also to teachers' work atmosphere and work-based well-being. A study conducted by Hur et al. (2016) found that preschool teachers with child-centered beliefs had less job stress, more professional satisfaction, and more solidarity with their colleagues.

When the characteristics of preschool education programs implemented in Turkey are examined, it is seen that child-centeredness is dominant from the 1994 Preschool Education Program, the first central preschool education program prepared in Turkey, to the 2013 Preschool Education Program, which is currently in use (MoNE, 1994; 2002; 2006; 2013). In our country, child-centered education is also seen in programs in other branches and levels of education, such as preschool education programs. However, it is stated that it is a known fact that education in Turkey has been carried out within the traditional education understanding for many years (Erbil et al., 2003). Although the programs are child-centered, some factors prevent the implementation of child-centered education. One of these factors is that most current teachers are committed to traditional education and the philosophical currents on which it is based and that teachers have taken the current education system they were raised for granted (Öztürk, 2004). Preschool teachers are important in implementing child-centered education (Bulut, 2008). For this reason, it is thought that preschool teachers' knowledge and practices on this subject should be improved to realize child-centered approaches.

Although preschool education programs are child-centered, in studies conducted both in Turkey (Eskidemir & Koçer, 2012; Kaya, 2012; Sak, 2013) and abroad (Kwon, 2004; Lee & Tseng, 2008; Winsler & Carlton, 2003) it has been found that preschool teachers do not have enough knowledge about child-centered education, their practices are not fully child-centered, they offer not having enough knowledge about child-centered education as a reason for not being child-centered (Sak, 2013) and they express that they need training on practical strategies related to child-centered education (An & Reigeluth, 2011). In these studies, it was suggested to provide in-service training on child-centered education (Eskidemir & Koçer, 2012; Sak, 2013) and to conduct action research to improve teachers' child-centered practices (Kaya, 2012) to overcome the problem of teachers' practices which are not child-centered and not having enough knowledge about child-centered education.

As a result, considering the studies revealing the contribution of child-centered education to children's development, their positive perceptions towards school, and preschool teachers' working atmosphere, and the studies showing that preschool teachers' practices are not fully child-centered and that teachers need training in this regard, it was thought necessary to conduct this study.

This study was conducted to examine the effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on preschool teachers' child-centered practices. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

What are the observations and teachers' opinions about the child-centered practices of teachers before and after the teacher support program for child-centered approaches?

What are teachers' opinions about the teacher support program for child-centered practices?

2. Method

2.1. Research design

This study was conducted in a mixed-method action research design. Action research is a research approach that involves systematic data collection and analysis by the practitioner or by an external researcher to uncover problems in practice or to understand and solve a problem that has already emerged (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Mixed-method action research aims to provide more comprehensive answers to research questions by combining quantitative and qualitative methods to examine a topic from different perspectives. While mixed methods offer comprehensive answers to research questions, action research tries to provide more comprehensive solutions to realistic problems (Ivankova, 2022). In this study, it was realized that there was a problem in the realization of child-centered practices, it was determined as a result of interviews with teachers that teachers had problems in planning and implementing child-centered education, and the research was carried out to solve this problem. It was determined that mixed-method action research was the most appropriate design for the research and the nature of the problem.

Research and publication ethics were followed. For this research, the ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Gazi University (Date: 05.07.2022, Number: 2022- 863).

2.2. Participant characteristics

Before implementing the teacher support program for child-centered practices, 100 preschool teachers were interviewed to determine their views on child-centered education, problems, and needs. Then, 22 teachers were interviewed to create the program's content and to determine teachers' problems and needs regarding child-centered education in more detail. Preschool teachers who stated that they had difficulties in implementing child-centered education, that they needed training about it, that they were willing to participate in the training program, and that they would

regularly participate in the training were identified, and the study group in which the training program would be implemented was determined.

The research study group comprises eight preschool teachers working in an independent kindergarten affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in Konyaaltı district. The purposive sampling method is used in action research (Özpınar & Aydoğan Yenmez, 2015). The study group was determined using the homogeneous study group method from purposive study groups. Homogeneous study groups consist of individuals with the same qualifications and have predetermined characteristics by the researcher (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2014). All of the teachers stated that they had problems with implementing child-centered education, wanted to implement child-centered education but could not, and needed training. Two teachers in the study group were 30 or younger; one was 31-35, three were 36-40, and two were 41-45. Three teachers had a professional seniority of 6-10 years, 4 had a professional seniority of 11-15 years, and 1 had a professional seniority of 21 years or more. Children in 2 teachers' classrooms were 36-48 months old, children in 3 teachers' classrooms were 49-60 months old, and children in 3 teachers' classrooms were 61 months or older.

2.3. Data collection tools

Information about the data collection tools used in this research is given below.

2.3.1. Interview form

The "interview form," created by the researcher to determine the child-centeredness of teachers and edited in line with expert opinion, consists of nineteen open-ended interview questions. The form includes questions to determine what teachers' pay attention to when planning, implementing, and evaluating, how they involve children in these processes, how they see their roles as teachers, their use of rewards and punishments, etc.

2.3.2. Child-centered education observation form

The "child-centered education observation form," created by the researcher to determine the child-centeredness of teachers' practices and edited in line with expert opinion, consists of eight categories and a total of 97 items. The categories are children's needs, independence, participation, teacher's role, arrangement of the educational environment, relationships/communication with children, behavior management, planning and implementation of activities, family involvement, and evaluation. Each item in the form is evaluated as fully realized=4, realized=3, partially realized=2, and not realized=1.

2.3.3. Program evaluation form

The "program evaluation form," designed in line with expert opinion to determine teachers' opinions about the teacher support program for child-centered practices, consists of nine open-ended interview questions. The form includes questions to determine whether the program met the teachers' expectations, how they reflected the knowledge they gained into practice, and the program's benefits for themselves and children.

2.4. Preparation and implementation of the teacher support program for child-centered practices

The teacher support program for child-centered practices was prepared to improve teachers' practices related to child-centered education. The literature on child-centered education and the teachers' opinions in the study group were used to create the program. While creating the program, child participation, child-centered education approaches (High Scope, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf), Vygotsky, NAEYC Program Standards (NAEYC, 2022), Learner-centered education principles (APA, 1993; 1997) and adult learning principles (Knowles, 1996) were used.

Before the program was prepared, a needs analysis was conducted to determine teachers' opinions about child-centered education, their problems, and needs related to the implementation and planning of child-centered education. In order to solve the problems experienced by teachers about implementing child-centered education, the topics that they expressed that they needed support and wanted to be included in the program were included in the program. When the literature and teachers' opinions were examined, it was seen that the training program should be applied. In the first four weeks of the training program, theoretical knowledge was included, and from the 5th week onwards, practices to support the theoretical knowledge were included. The training program includes topics such as the concept of child in child-centered education/definition, principles and importance of child-centered education, child participation, and teacher role in child-centered education. The program was implemented by going to the school where the teachers worked for 12 weeks. Each session lasted 75-90 minutes. During the 12 weeks of the training program, the researcher was present at the school 2.5 days a week and guided the teachers. After the trainer explained the topic of the session on Monday, she guided the teachers in various ways during the week as they practiced the topic of that session. After presenting the session topic on Monday, the educator indicated the activities the teachers wanted them to do in their classrooms related to the sessions during that week. Throughout the week, teachers practiced associated with the topic of that week's session in their classrooms. The trainer guided the teachers in various ways as they practiced that session's topic throughout the week. The trainer was present in the classrooms during the practices,

observed the teachers, and gave feedback. When necessary or requested by the teachers, the trainer met with the teachers in more detail and explained example practices. The trainer ensured that practices supported the theoretical knowledge by giving feedback to teachers, answering their questions, recommending resource books, and actively organizing the classroom.

2.5. Data collection

After determining the school where the teacher support program for child-centered practices would take place, school administrators and teachers were interviewed and informed about the study. It was explained to the teachers in the study group that observations would be made in their classrooms before starting the training program. Each teacher was observed seven times in total, two times in some weeks and three times in some weeks for three weeks. Some observations were made by informing the teachers, and some observations were made deliberately without informing them. Care was taken to ensure that the observations occurred at different times, such as starting the day, activity, evaluation, and feeding times. Each teacher was observed for approximately 18-19 hours. The observations were noted on the interview form. After the observation of each teacher was completed, a mark was made on the child-centered education observation form. In the study, an independent observer and the researcher were present at the school where the implementation was carried out and made observations. After the observations were completed, appointments were made with the teachers for interviews. After the observations and interviews were conducted, a teacher support program for child-centered practices was implemented for 12 weeks. After completing the support program, teachers were observed again using the child-centered education observation form. Then, interviews were conducted using the interview form and program evaluation form. Four weeks after the final measurements were completed, teachers were observed again for follow-up measurements.

2.6. Data analysis

The data from the child-centered education observation form used in the pre-measurements, post-measurements, and follow-up measurements were analyzed with the SPSS 23.0 package program. For the data sets obtained from the pre-measurements, the average of all items and the averages of the eight categories in the observation form were taken separately. Shapiro Wilk's Test was used to analyze the conformity of the variables to normal distribution since the group size was less than 50. Since the data in the categories of 'children's needs, independence, and child participation,' 'teacher's role,' 'arrangement of the educational environment,' 'behavior management,' and 'planning and implementation of activities' were typically distributed, ANOVA for repeated measures was used; since the data in the categories of 'relationships/communication with the child,'

'family involvement' and 'evaluation' were not normally distributed, Friedman two-way ANOVA was used.

The data obtained from the interview and program evaluation forms were analyzed using content analysis. In the first stage, the answers given by the teachers were coded. Categories were created according to the similarities and differences of the codes. The categories were presented by creating tables and converting them into numerical data. Direct quotations were used to support the data and increase the reliability of the study. The data were also coded by an independent researcher. Miles and Huberman's (1994) percentage of agreement formula was used to determine inter-coder agreement. The rate of agreement is obtained by dividing the topics on which there is consensus by the sum of the topics on which there is and is not consensus. The percentage of agreement is expected to be above 70% (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For the data obtained from the interviews, the percentage of agreement between the researcher and the independent coder ranged between 87% and 95%. It can be said that the agreement between the researcher and the independent coder is high.

3. Results

The results of the study are discussed in three parts: observations on teachers' child-centered practices before and after the teacher support program for child-centered practices, teachers' views on child-centered practices before and after the teacher support program for child-centered practices, and teachers' views on the teacher support program for child-centered practices.

3.1. Results regarding observations on teachers' child-centered practices before and after the teacher support program for child-centered practices

The descriptive statistics of the pre-measurement, post-measurement, and follow-up measurements of the child-centered education observation form of the teachers in the study group in the categories of 'children's needs, independence, and child participation,' 'teacher's role,' 'arrangement of the educational environment,' 'behavior management,' 'planning and implementation of activities' are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Arithmetic means and standard deviations of child-centered education observation form pre-measurement, post-measurement, and follow-up measurement

		n	Mean	Sd
Children's needs, independence and child participation	Pre-measurement	8	2,4191	0,35075
	Last measurement	8	3,5588	0,20377
	Follow-up	8	3,5294	0,19382
Teacher's role	Pre-measurement	8	2,2500	0,38735
	Last measurement	8	3,5385	0,27582
	Follow-up	8	3,4712	0,27716
Arrangement of the educational environment	Pre-measurement	8	2,1118	0,08643
	Last measurement	8	2,8684	0,15409
	Follow-up	8	2,8289	0,13996
Behavior management	Pre-measurement	8	1,9167	0,41786
	Last measurement	8	2,8958	0,36664
	Follow-up	8	2,8958	0,37731
Planning and implementation of activities	Pre-measurement	8	2,0446	0,36208
	Last measurement	8	3,5089	0,27648
	Follow-up	8	3,5536	0,16968

Table 1. shows that there were differences between the pre-measurement, post-measurement, and follow-up measurements in the categories of 'children's needs, independence, and child participation,' 'teacher's role,' 'arrangement of the educational environment,' 'behavior management,' 'planning and implementation of activities.' Repeated measures ANOVA analysis was conducted to determine whether the difference between these values was significant. Since the assumption of sphericity was not met due to the sphericity test performed to validate this analysis ($p=0.005$, $p<0.05$), Greenhouse-Geisser values were used. The results of the study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. ANOVA analysis results for repeated measures regarding the comparison of arithmetic averages of child-centered education observation form pre-measurement-post-measurement-follow-up measurement

	Source of variance	Sum of squares	Sd	Sum of squares	F	p	Multiple comparisons	η^2
Children's needs, independence and child participation	Measurement	6,753	1,090	6,194	45,706	0,000	1-2	0,867
	Error	1,034	7,632	0,136			1-3	
Teacher's Role	Measurement	8,416	1,131	7,441	58,881	0,000	1-2	0,894
	Error	1,000	7,917	0,126			1-3	
Arrangement of the educational environment	Measurement	2,902	2	1,451	221,655	0,000	1-2	0,969
	Error	0,092	14	0,007			1-3	
Behavior management	Measurement	5,113	2	2,557	27,662	0,000	1-2	0,798
	Error	1,294	14	0,092			1-3	
Planning and implementation of activities	Measurement	11,795	2	5,897	84,173	0,000	1-2	0,923
	Error	0,981	14	0,070			1-3	

In Table 2, there is a significant difference between the arithmetic means of the pre-measurement, post-measurement, and follow-up measurements in the categories of 'children's needs, independence, and child participation,' 'teacher's role,' 'arrangement of the educational environment,' 'behavior management,' 'planning and implementation of activities ($p=.000$, $p<0.05$). When the effect size of this significant difference is examined, it is seen that $\eta^2>0.5$ in all categories. According to Field (2009), partial eta values of .10 indicate a low-level effect, .30 indicates a medium-level effect, and .50 or more indicates a high-level effect. In this context, it can be said that the teacher support program for child-centered practices has a high impact on these categories. Teachers' post-measurement and follow-up measurement averages were higher than their pre-measurement averages in all categories.

The results of the Friedman two-way ANOVA test conducted on the pre-measurement, post-measurement, and follow-up measurements of the teachers in the study group in the child-centered education observation form in the categories of 'relationships/communication with the child,' 'family participation,' and 'evaluation' are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Friedman Two-Way ANOVA Test results for the comparison of arithmetic averages of child-centered education observation form pre-measurement-post-measurement-follow-up measurement

		n	Mean	Sd	Rank Mean.	Chi-square	p	Multiple Comparison
Relations with the child/ Communication	Pre-measurement	8	2,89423	,7109	1,13	13,00	0,002	1-2 1-3
	Post-measurement	8	3,72115	,45400	2,25			
	Follow-up	8	3,75	,4555	2,63			
Family participation	Pre-measurement	8	2,563	,4381	1	14,000	0,001	1-2 1-3
	Post-measurement	8	3,484	,4553	2,38			
	Follow-up	8	3,563	,4381	2,63			
Evaluation	Pre-measurement	8	2,018	,5369	1	14,889	0,001	1-2 1-3
	Post-measurement	8	3,286	,3240	2,69			
	Follow-up	8	3,232	,2747	2,31			

In Table 3, there is a significant difference between the arithmetic means of pre-measurement-post-measurement and pre-measurement-follow-up measurement in the categories of 'relationships/communication with the child,' 'family participation' and 'evaluation' in the child-centered education observation form ($p=.002, .0001, .0001$ $p<0.05$). It is seen that post-measurement averages and follow-up measurement averages are higher than pre-measurement averages.

3.2. Results regarding teachers' opinions on child-centered practices before and after the teacher support program for child-centered practices

This section presents the findings obtained from the interviews conducted through the interview form before and after implementing the teacher support program for child-centered practices.

Table 4 presents teachers' opinions about the elements they considered in planning before and after the teacher support program for child-centered practices.

Table 4. Teachers' opinions on the elements they pay attention to in planning before and after the teacher support program for child-centered practices

	Before the program	After the program
	n	n
What is planned to be done during the week/topics covered	4	1
Children's readiness levels/individual differences	4	2
Age and developmental characteristics of children	3	1
Daily training flow/ outcome indicators	3	-
Children's curiosity/ interests and needs	3	4
Flexibility in the daily training flow	3	2
Planning together by including children's ideas	-	6
The children make their own plans.	-	3

Table 4 shows that before the program, four teachers stated that they planned according to what was planned to be done during the week. Four teachers indicated they planned according to children's readiness levels/individual differences. After the program, six teachers stated that they planned together by including children's ideas, and four teachers indicated that they planned according to children's curiosity/interest and needs. Three teachers stated that they planned according to the children's making their plans.

One teacher's statement after the program is as follows:

...We usually plan together with the children. What do they want that day? What are their needs? For example, the weekend was very boring, and the child had to spend it at home. He wants the open air. We go outdoors etc. So, in short, we plan the whole day with them...(T1)

Table 5 presents the teachers' opinions on the elements they noticed before and after the teacher support program for child-centered practices.

Table 5. Teachers' opinions on the elements they pay attention to in practice before and after the teacher support program for child-centered practices

	Before the program	After the program
	n	n
The environment is not dangerous	4	-
Children's liking/boring status of the activity	3	2
Children's ages	3	1
Readiness/development levels of children	3	1
Being flexible	3	-
Individual characteristics/differences of children	2	1
Developing their creativity	2	-
Children's interests and needs	-	3
Children's wishes/curiosities/ideas	-	4
Children make their planning/ applications/ evaluations.	-	4

Table 5 shows that before the program, four teachers stated that they paid attention to the environment not being dangerous, and three teachers paid attention to children's liking/boredom with the activities. Three teachers paid attention to the children's ages. After the program, four teachers paid attention to children's wishes/curiosity/ideas; 4 teachers paid attention to children's planning/implementation/evaluation; 3 teachers paid attention to children's interests and needs.

One teacher's statement before the program is as follows:

The most important thing for me during the implementation is danger. If there is any danger related to that material, the most important thing is to eliminate the danger. (T3)

One teacher's statement after the program is as follows:

I tried to do what everyone wanted. I included every child's request. (T7)

3.3. Results regarding teachers' views on teacher support program for child-centered practices

This section presents the findings obtained from the interviews conducted with teachers after the program was implemented through the program evaluation form. The teachers' opinions on how they reflected what they learned in the program into practice are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Teachers' opinions on how they reflect what they have learned into practice

	n
Not giving place to reward/praise and punishment	6
Creating learning centers/organizing the classroom	6
Involving children in planning, implementing, evaluating the day, organizing the classroom	4
Not keeping children in line	2

Table 6 shows that six teachers stated that they did not include reward/praise and punishment, six teachers indicated that they created learning centers/organized the classroom, four teachers included children in planning, implementing, evaluating, and organizing the classroom, and two teachers did not put children in line.

One teacher's statement is as follows:

First, we organized the classroom. Before that, I already tried to provide self-control regarding rewards and punishments. You know, things like well done, applause, etc. Then we moved on to the classroom center arrangement. Afterward, we established the gathering and evaluation processes... We eliminated the desk. (T4)

Teachers' opinions on what they gained from the program are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Teachers' opinions on what they gained from the program

	n
Reducing adult supervision/leaving children free/giving children a voice	4
Refreshing/remembers knowledge	3
Reflection on home-social life	3
Seeing shortcomings/errors	2
Learning about different educational approaches	2
Learning about family participation/child participation	1

Table 7 shows that four teachers stated reducing adult supervision/leaving children free/giving children a voice, three teachers stated refreshing/remembers their knowledge, and three teachers stated reflection on home-social life.

One teacher's statement is as follows:

When I left the children in the classroom, I saw they could do anything without adult supervision. This was reflected in all activities, of course. (T5)

Teachers' opinions on what children gain from the program are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Teachers' opinions on what children gain from the program

	n
Self-confidence/self-expression	4
Increase in intrinsic motivation	3
Being independent	3
Making their own planning/evaluation	2
Being happy / coming to school with pleasure	2
Being active	2

Table 8 shows four teachers stated gaining self-confidence/self-expression, three stated an increase in intrinsic motivation, and three stated being independent.

One teacher's statement is as follows:

It was beneficial. As I said, they realized they were working teacher-centered, not child-centered. They gained more self-confidence in all activities and started to plan activities by talking about how to improve them without thinking about getting someone's approval, without getting the approval of an adult, just by getting the opinion of friends, you know, they don't get approval from their friends. (T5)

4. Conclusion and Discussion

This study was conducted to examine the effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on preschool teachers' child-centered practices. As a result of the analysis of the observations made through the child-centered education observation form before and after the program to determine the effect of the program on teachers' child-centered practices, it was found that the post-measurements and follow-up measurements in all categories in the form were significantly higher than the pre-measurements. This finding shows that the teacher support program for child-centered practices was effective. Follow-up measurements also show that the effect of the program continues. The findings were analyzed through observation before and after the program, and the findings analyzed through interviews were found to support each other.

Successful implementation of in-service training programs depends on teachers' in-service training needs and opinions (Gökdere & Küçük, 2003). Studies have found that teachers want their opinions to be taken before the training is given to them (Akçadağ, 2012; Günbayı & Taşdoğan, 2012; Karadağ, 2015). In the in-service training program prepared for preschool teachers by the action research method by Nouri et al. (2021), it was emphasized that teachers should be seen as active participants and that the education should be adjusted according to their needs and wishes. In this study, it is thought that taking teachers' opinions before creating the support program for child-

centered practices and creating the training program accordingly contributed to the program's effectiveness.

The effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on the category of "children's needs, independence, and child participation" was found to be significantly high. Child-centered education is based on the idea that children have a voice in their own learning and find their own learning methods (Du, 2012). The ability of children to express their opinions freely in educational environments, to have their views taken seriously, and to participate in decision-making processes that directly affect them is not only a fundamental right but also a process that positively transforms educational processes and environments. In this study, findings from observations and interviews show that the program increased child participation, contributing to children becoming more independent and teachers becoming more sensitive to children's needs. Pekince (2022) and Koran (2017) also concluded that the support training provided to children and teachers supported teachers' understanding of child participation.

The effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on the "teacher's role" category of the child-centered education observation form was found to be significantly high. Teachers who adopt child-centered education are knowledgeable about child development, support children in all areas of development, listen carefully to children, ask questions to expand children's thinking, design learning environments, offer a variety of experiences according to children's abilities, interests, and needs, and encourage children to learn through their own experiences (Moyer, 2001). It can be said that the training program contributed to teachers' adoption of child-centered teacher roles. In this study, the role of the teacher in child-centered education in the training program's content and the teacher's role in High Scope, Montessori, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia education approaches, which are child-centered, were included. At the beginning of the session in which the role of the teacher was explained, the teachers wrote the first things that came to their minds when they thought of "teacher" on small pieces of paper. The teachers read the writings and were allowed to discuss and question the teacher's perceptions in their minds. Teacher roles were explained with example situations, and a board game was played in the evaluation part to reinforce what was learned. Therefore, it can be said that teachers started to acquire the roles of child-centered teachers, offered children choices, allowed children to realize their learning, did not intervene unnecessarily, and began to be open to learning with children.

It was found that the effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on the "arrangement of the educational environment" category of the child-centered education observation form was significantly high. Child-centered educational environments are environments that respond to the child's age, developmental characteristics, interests, and needs (Bika, 1996). Studies have revealed that the physical environment, materials, and learning centers in preschool education institutions are not

at a sufficient level and that educational settings in schools should be improved and materials should be enriched (Baran et al., 2007; Güleş, 2013; Kandır & Çaltık, 2006). Considering that the teacher has an important role in organizing the classroom (Henniger, 2005), it can be said that teachers should be supported in developing educational environments. In this study, it is thought that including the characteristics of a child-centered educational environment in the content of the curriculum, children and teachers coming together to determine and realize the arrangements to be made in their classrooms, creating learning centers, and diversifying the materials in the classroom contribute to increasing the quality of the educational environment.

It was found that the effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on the "behavior management" category of the child-centered education observation form was significantly high. In child-centered education, practices such as reward and punishment are not included, and relationships based on non-competitive solidarity are emphasized (Erdal Erkiş, 2019). It is easier for children to be motivated in child-centered education because internal motivation is prioritized without needing an external reward system. The important thing is that children learn according to their potential interests and individual differences (Hunkins, 1980). Nakamichi et al. (2022) found that child-centered teaching attitudes play a vital role in children's socio-emotional development and contribute to reducing children's problem behaviors. In this study, it can be said that the guidance of the educator to the teachers according to the needs of the teachers, supporting the teachers in finding solutions to the behavioral problems in their classrooms, mentioning the importance of intrinsic motivation in child-centered education in the content of the training program, and including strategies that should be used instead of reward/praise and punishment were effective in raising teachers' awareness about reward, punishment, and praise.

The effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on the "planning and implementation of activities" category of the child-centered education observation form was found to be significantly high. Child-centered education accepts the role of the child at the center of teaching and learning. It is argued that learning takes place best when the child has a say in their learning and feels responsible for their knowledge (Fung, 2015). In child-centered education, predetermined goals are rejected, and the learner's goals are used to manage the learning process. The program has no predetermined outcomes for all children (Mac Donald Ross, 1973). Studies have found that teachers cannot do child-centered practices even if they try to do so, they cannot give up control over children's learning, and they feel safe when they shape children's learning (Fung & Cheng, 2011; Li, 2003). In this study, how to make child-centered planning and practices in the education program's content was explained, the importance of determining children's interests and curiosities in child-centered education was emphasized, and teachers were supported to make planning and practices together with children.

It was found that the effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on the "relationships and communication with children" category of the child-centered education observation form was significantly high. In child-centered education, it is necessary to create a classroom atmosphere to meet children's sense of love, respect, and social needs (Linh, 2021). In this study, the emotional needs of children and communication with children were included in the training program's content. The effect of teachers seeing children as individuals, acting respectfully and warmly while communicating with them, establishing positive relationships by being sensitive to children's needs, increasing the positive communication between the teacher and the child, and creating a positive classroom atmosphere was emphasized. Therefore, the training program is considered to be effective.

It was found that the effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on the "family participation" category of the child-centered education observation form was significantly high. To implement child-centered education, families should be made aware that they should respect children's differences and needs and that each child learns in different ways. Cooperation should be established with families to recognize children and ensure continuity in education (Linh, 2021). The training program emphasized the importance of family involvement in child-centered education, and information on different family participation activities was included. Under the guidance of the researcher, teachers prepared educational boards and brochures to inform families about child-centered education.

The effect of the teacher support program for child-centered practices on the evaluation category of the child-centered education observation form was found to be significantly high. Children should always be part of the evaluation process. Children's self-evaluation is a step towards self-management and is the basis of independent behavior (Tuğrul, 2003). Dereli's (2013) study observed that teachers became closer to democratic, participatory, process-oriented, and child-centered practices after the documentation training given to preschool teachers.

As a result of the research, it was observed that after the program, teachers paid the most attention to planning together by including children's ideas. This finding can indicate that teachers started to include children in the planning process after the program was implemented. NAEYC (2022) states that young children should be allowed to plan and make choices. Studies have shown that children allowed to make plans scored higher in language and literacy, social skills, intellectual development, and general development (Epstein, 1993; Sylva, 1992). In this study, the fact that the teachers paid attention to planning together by including children's ideas after the program can indicate that children started to be included in the planning processes and that the program was effective.

After the program, it was determined that the teachers paid the most attention to children's wishes, curiosity, ideas, implementation, and evaluation of their plans, interests, and needs. In Sak's (2013) study, similar to the findings of this study, it was found that the teachers mentioned children's needs, interests, wishes and characteristics, freedom, and decision-making while implementing child-centered practices. Children making their own plans, implementing them, and evaluating their implementation is one of the most critical points of child-centered education.

As a result of the research, it was determined that most of the teachers reflected the information in the program into practice. Teachers said they put the program into practice by organizing learning centers, not using reward, punishment, and praise, and involving children in planning, implementing, evaluating, and managing the classroom. Preschool teachers are the key to improving and sustaining the quality of the learning environment (Ramazan et al., 2018). However, studies have shown that teachers lack knowledge about the organization and use of learning centers and cannot organize learning centers in accordance with their purpose (Aktın & Aşçı, 2021; Metin, 2017) and cannot make the necessary changes in learning centers (Erşan, 2011). These studies show that teachers need support in organizing learning centers. In this study, it can be said that the training program applied to teachers meets these needs of teachers.

Based on the results of the research, the following suggestions can be made:

- Training programs can be prepared to improve the child-centered practices of teachers in different branches, and research can be conducted in this direction.
- Research can be conducted to examine the effects of teacher support programs on child-centered practices.
- Since teachers and families need to cooperate in implementing child-centered education, family education programs that include child participation and child-centered education can be prepared and implemented.
- Longitudinal studies can be conducted to investigate the effect of the teacher support program on child-centered practices.

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