

Examining the perceptions of future teachers on the concept of play

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Abstract

Play is an important concept not only for children but for all ages. This study will aim to examine the perceptions of the students of the Faculty of Education about the play. In this study, a quantitative research method was used to reach the research data. The study was conducted with the students of the faculty of education studying at a foundation university in Istanbul. Voluntarily, 114 students were included in the study group. For the research data, the questions were shared with the students via Google form, and the answers were obtained from the students on the internet. The Play Perception Scale developed by Güneş, Tuğrul, and Demir Öztürk was used as a data collection tool in the research. Considering the research findings, making children love the lessons through play from an early age will ensure that more children can solve problems, express themselves, and have strong social relations in the future.

Keywords: Education; learn and play; play perception; pre-service teacher; teaching.

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1. Introduction

Plays are as old as human history, and throughout history, children have often created their plays or played by modifying the plays played by adults. It is reported that many known and played plays were known and played in ancient times, and one of the oldest play tools is stones. "Five Stones" is shown as the oldest stone play and it is seen that such plays were played with different materials, such as knucklebones, instead of stones in different cultures. Ball and rope are among the oldest children's playgrounds. In ancient Turkey, children's plays include plays such as throwing a stone away or hitting another stone with one stone, as well as plays such as running or chasing with balls made of cloth, leather, or leather. In addition, there are ball plays played with sticks, these plays are considered to be the primitive forms of golf and hockey plays that we transferred from the west today (Tuğrul et al., 2014).

Play, which is the most natural and active learning environment, is very important in preparing the child for life. The child who plays learns consciously and unconsciously. Especially, in institutions providing early childhood education, play educates the child, defines it, enables communication, and increases the level of skill and knowledge (Ayan & Memiş, 2012). The play encourages effective learning, supports social and mental development, provides the opportunity to be experienced, contributes to the maturation process of the child, helps to express emotions correctly, brings practicality to the solution of problems, teaches with fun, provides a happy process, and the opportunity to meet and experience social relations for the first time. gives.

Play is an entertaining activity that affects learning processes, encourages social and mental development, provides experience, contributes to the maturation period of children, helps to express emotions correctly, and brings practicality to the solution of problems. This activity affects children's intelligence levels, emotional relationships, and social development, but also includes important elements such as love and attention. The education required by the norms can be learned easily by giving it in childhood. Through play, children can learn to protect other people's rights and defend their rights. It is possible to explain to a child that he should not harm another person and that this may lead to sanctions (Güneş, 2010).

Play in early childhood is related to subjects such as the child's acquisition of knowledge, social and mental development, gaining experience, healthy growth, expressing emotions correctly, giving practicality to the solution of problems, teaching by entertaining, going through a happy process, first meeting and experiencing social relations. Piaget argued that play has different phases and stated that acquiring knowledge and language development are the most basic concepts. These stages are research-oriented play between the ages of 0-2, symbol-focused play between the ages of 2-11, and rule-based play after the age of 12. As the child develops mentally, language development is also exposed to positive effects. Plays support the child's language development and learning a lot from the individuals around him and himself (Aksoy, 2015).

The play is a platform for behavior and a social environment in harmony with the social structure. It is a mechanism by which forces are exercised and aims to address adverse conditions optimistically. It provides the emergence of unusual behaviors and provides the emergence of the self-concept. At the same time, it develops the impulse to connect to social life and it is a period that can be enjoyed from the boring structure of business life. The play is a phenomenon that includes rules and features. These features are important for their interest and importance. The play has a complex structure and is shaped according to impulses. The purpose is more prominent than the process and shows how children do what they do. The important thing is the gains in the process.

Play provides the child with a dynamic, creative, and flexible environment. Anything desired is possible, and there are no fictitious or factual distinctions. Events are not in chronological order. The play is completely at the will of the participants and there can be no outside intervention or direction. There are preset rules and time frames, but these rules can change and are determined by the players.

Participants should participate actively both physically and mentally (Günes, 2010). Play, which is an important part of children's lives, contributes positively to their mental, physical, social, and emotional development. Thanks to this effect, children grow up healthier and faster and get to know themselves better. Play also reduces the physical and mental problems of children and gives them a healthy structure. In particular, the use of play in education has a positive effect and enables children's psychomotor development, social and emotional development to reach the optimum level and move cognitive development to the required level (Ozkan et al., 2015; Smith, 2021). Play also helps the development of children's self-care skills (Davies, 2022). Play is a tool that plays an important role in education. A savvy adult chooses to teach a child many values through play. If the child enjoys playing plays, it means that he has learned a lot by experiencing (Aksoy, 2015; Potier Watkins & Dehaene, 2023).

The first social communication stage of children becomes play and teaches ways to communicate with people healthily (DeLuca et al., 2020). Children can effectively learn the rules, appropriate behavior, and norms of society through play (Bontchev, Terzieva & Paunova-Hubenova, 2021; Christie, 2022). While playing, children move away from the egocentric approach and learn to think about the word we. Although the second most important element that is best for children's souls is love, play is important to them (Can and Günadı, 2019). Play is two important sources of interaction between children for social development. These interactions are the plays children play with each other and their communication with other children. Those who play together among children acquire many skills in real life. For example, behaviors such as learning the feeling of sharing, waiting in line, and cooperation can be easily gained through play (Acibal, 2020). In early childhood, any method aimed at learning promotes early learning. Thanks to play, children can establish regular and healthy communication with other people and show rapid development in terms of psycho-social skills. In addition, play helps children discover the world (Aksoy, 2015; Chen, Houston & Yu, 2021).

1.1. Purpose of study

Giving and gamifying education with plays will increase the permanence of knowledge. Gamified education will enable people to be active while learning. The information received in active learning is much more efficient than in normal learning. Since the students of the education faculty will be the teachers of the future, the qualifications of their education are very important. Adding plays and gamification to their education will further increase the quality of quality education for future teachers. This study will aim to examine the perceptions of the students of the Faculty of Education about the play.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Model of the Research

A relational screening model was used in this study to measure pre-service teachers' play perceptions. T-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used.

2.2. Participants

The State of the Republic of Turkey consists of Classroom Teachers, Turkish Language Teachers, and Elementary Mathematics Teachers at the education faculty of Istanbul Aydın University, a foundation university located in Istanbul. Participation in the research was completely voluntary. Primary Mathematics Teaching Students 40 people (35.4%), Classroom Teaching Students 46 people (40.7%), Turkish Language Teaching Students 28 people (23.9%).

2.3. Data Collection Tools

The five-point Likert -type scale consisting of 20 items was developed by Güneş et al. (2020). It has been determined that it has a three-dimensional structure: "the function of the play and interest/curiosity/exploration in the play", "the originality and purpose of the play" and "the nature

and source of the play". It was determined that the item-total correlation coefficients ranged between $.157 \leq r \leq .656$ and Cronbach the alpha value was also calculated as 0.728.

2.4. Ethics

Before the research, permission was obtained from the author, who created the scale, via e-mail regarding the use and application of the "Play Perception Scale" tool.

2.5. Analysis of Data

The SPSS program was used to analyze the data obtained in the study. For each variable, the analysis was made according to the faculty departments of the students. T-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to determine the differences in the play perception scale according to the faculty and department variables of the students.

3. RESULTS

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SS</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Play Perception Scale	Female	86	4.1965	,19445	112	-1,777	,078
	Male	28	4.2786	,26049			

Table 1

T-Test Results Regarding the Gender Variable of the Play Perception Scale Scores of the Teacher Candidates

* $p < 0.05$

As can be seen in Table 1 above, there is no significant difference in the play perception scale score according to the gender of the teacher candidates as a result of the t-test. ($p > 0.05$).

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SS</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
The function of the Play and Interest/Curiosity/Discovery in the Play	Female	86	4,409	,272	112	,206	,837
	Male	28	4,396	,330			
Play Authenticity and Purpose	Female	86	4,023	,302	112	-2,595	,011
	Male	28	4,190	,274			
The Nature and Origin of Play	Female	86	3,924	,448	112	-2,128	,036
	Male	28	4,116	,276			

Table 2

T-Test Results Regarding the Gender Variable of Pre-Service Teachers' Scores of the Play Perception Scale Sub-Dimensions

* $p < 0.05$

As can be seen in Table 2 above, as a result of the t-test, there is no significant difference according to gender in the play function of the play perception scale and the discovery of interest/curiosity in the play ($p > 0.05$). However, a significant difference was found in favor of male teacher candidates in terms of the originality and purpose of the play and the nature and source of the play ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3

ANOVA Test Results for Pre-service Teachers' Play Perception Scale Sub-Dimensions and Teacher Branches

	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SS</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
The function of the Play and Interest/Curiosity/Discovery in the Play	Elementary	40	4,370	,287	111	1,200	,305
	Mathematics Teaching						
	Turkish Language Teaching	28	4,375	,281			
Play Authenticity and Purpose	Classroom teaching	46	4,756	,287	111	,439	,645
	Elementary	40	4,079	,308			
	Mathematics Teaching	28	4,095	,302			
The Nature and Origin of Play	Turkish Language Teaching	28	4,032	,303	111	,044	,957
	Classroom teaching	46	3,987	,452			
	Elementary	40	3,964	,465			
	Classroom teaching	46	3,962	,368			

* $p < 0.05$

As can be seen in Table 3 above, as a result of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), there is no significant difference in terms of play originality and purpose, nature, and source of the play in terms of the pre-service teachers' branch. ($p > 0.05$).

However, a significant difference was found in favor of primary school teacher candidates in the function of the play and the sub-dimensions of interest/curiosity/exploration in the play perception scale ($p < .05$).

Table 4

ANOVA Test Results Regarding Teachers' Play Perception Scale Sub -Dimensions and Class Levels

	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SS</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
The function of the Play and Interest/Curiosity/Discovery in the Play	1st grade	2	4,4500	,07071	110	2,054	,110
	2nd grade	99	4.4040	,28711			
	3rd grade	8	4.2625	,26693			
	4th Grade	5	4,6600	,21909			
Play Authenticity and Purpose	1st grade	2	4,2500	,11785	110	2,088	,106
	2nd grade	99	4.0455	,29911			
	3rd grade	8	4.0625	,28084			
	4th Grade	5	4.3667	,36132			
The Nature and Origin of Play	1st grade	2	4,2500	,35355	110	,549	,650
	2nd grade	99	3.9545	,44373			
	3rd grade	8	4.0313	,08839			
	4th Grade	5	4,1000	,22361			

* $p < 0.05$

As can be seen in Table 4 above, as a result of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), there is no significant difference in the dimensions of play originality and purpose, nature and source of the play according to the grade level of the play perception scale ($p > 0.05$).

However, a significant difference was found in favor of 4th-grade teacher candidates in the function of the play and the interest/curiosity/exploration sub-dimension of the play perception scale ($p < .05$).

4. Discussion

When the research findings are examined; There was a significant difference in favor of male students in the sub-dimension of the nature and source of the play. It can be observed that this difference is due to the small number of male students in the study. It can also be observed that male teacher candidates have a more positive perception in terms of the nature and formation of the play.

A positive difference was observed in favor of primary school teacher candidates in the function of the play and the sub-dimension of interest/curiosity/exploration in the play perception scale. This difference is thought to be because primary school teacher candidates encounter more gamification and gamified education model during their education. Turkish language teacher candidates and primary school mathematics teacher candidates receive more theory-oriented education. Since it focuses on knowledge, the time to be devoted to plays and gamification during education can be reduced.

A positive difference was observed in favor of 4th-grade teacher candidates in the function of the play and the interest/curiosity/exploration sub-dimension of the play perception scale. The most important reason for this difference is thought to be the gamified training that the pre-service teacher received from the 1st to the 4th grade. The low number of 4th-grade teacher candidates' group in the study can also be shown as the reason for this significant difference. Although the low number in the group is not among the main reasons for the difference, it is thought to have affected the difference. The increase in gamification in education will undoubtedly increase the quality of education. It is thought that the more students encounter gamified applications during the education period, the more their perception of the play will improve and the quality of education will increase.

When we look at the play perception scale, except for the sub-dimensions, no significant difference was found in terms of gender. An equal result leads to the thought that the opinions of female and male teacher candidates about the play are similar. In the studies, plays are important as a learning tool for children, children express themselves through plays and plays provide important contributions to social, psychological, and motor development. Plays are activities that are found in every period of life and that reflect the life and have needs and happiness-giving features. It has been understood that the plays have different importance in each age group and the point of view has changed.

5. Conclusion

The main purpose of examining the perceptions of teacher candidates towards plays will be to increase the quality of the education they will give to the children they will reach. The play is important for all age categories. So why is it important for children? Play for children Facilitates learning and increases motivation. Develops social, emotional, and cognitive skills. It encourages creativity and imagination. It provides problem-solving and thinking skills. Develops self-learning skills. In short, play is the child's unique development environment.

When we examine the concept of play in terms of pre-service teachers, we both observe the qualified education of the pre-service teachers for the children they will reach in the future, and we can examine the quality of the pre-service teachers' education. Technology is constantly evolving, and as technology evolves, updates are coming to the concept of the play. The important thing for teachers and teacher candidates can be defined as being able to adapt to these updates and not forgetting the traditional play concept. Teacher candidates should be open to all kinds of plays and should be able to gamify their education. Gamification of education will prevent students from getting bored. It will increase the rate of transfer of knowledge to students. Student interest in education will increase. The rate of memorization increases much more with gamified lessons.

The importance of pre-service teachers receiving gamified education can be explained as follows:

1. Increasing students' attention and motivation.
2. Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of learning.

3. Developing students' social, emotional, and cognitive skills.
4. Encourage creativity, imagination, and problem-solving skills.
5. Allowing teacher candidates to differentiate by changing their education methods.
6. Supporting students' self-learning process.
7. Students make education more enjoyable.

When the research findings are examined, more positive inferences can be made in the function of the play and interest/curiosity/exploration in the play sub-dimension of the pre-service primary school teacher's play perception scale compared to the Turkish language and primary school mathematics teacher candidates. As the duration of the training increases, the opinions on the concept of play become positive. According to the results to be drawn from here, it was observed that the gamified training that the pre-service teachers received during the education also positively affected their perceptions of the play. It is an inevitable fact that the qualified education that the teacher candidate receives through the play will affect the education he will give to his students after he becomes a teacher.

However, when the results were examined, it was seen that the perceptions of the pre-service teachers about the concept of play should be examined positively in general. Training should be gamified and the quality of the training content should be increased with plays.

5.1. Implications

Play-based education methods should be included in the curriculum in a way that students can learn with pleasure. In this way, the rate of learning knowledge of teacher candidates will increase. It will lead to positive feedback in terms of the quality of education. Courses such as "Play Analysis and Evaluation in Education" should be given to teacher candidates to understand the importance of the play in terms of its parts. It will provide important results in terms of researching the play and realizing the importance of the play in education.

Play development and design laboratories should be established within universities. These laboratories are important for pre-service teachers to have access to all kinds of opportunities while doing gamification. Of course, plays can be developed without materials. But sometimes materials can support creativity. Education faculties and play experts can cooperate and organize joint studies. Pre-service teachers who play plays at certain intervals will look at the play more positively and their perception of the play will improve.

Play-based project competitions should be organized among teacher candidates and these competitions should be supported. Pre-service teachers who share information will improve both themselves and their environment.

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