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Research Article

Preferences of Preschool Teachers for Music-Related Activities in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the preferences of preschool teachers in Turkey regarding music-related activities. A case study design was used for the research, and the preferences of preschool teachers for music activities, the factors influencing these preferences, and the challenges they face were analyzed in detail. The research sample consists of a total of 18 preschool teachers working in preschool education institutions located in different provinces representing various geographical regions of Turkey during the 2024-2025 academic year. To support the quantitative adequacy of the sample group, the sample size was determined through an a priori power analysis using the G*Power 3.1 program. The interviews were conducted in locations and at times chosen by the participants, ensuring that they were free from distractions and interruptions. A semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used as the data collection tool. The data obtained from the research were analyzed using content analysis, one of the qualitative research methods. During the analysis process, coding and thematic mapping procedures were systematically carried out using the MAXQDA 2022 qualitative data analysis software. The data obtained from the study group revealed that teachers view music activities as a pedagogical tool that supports children's multifaceted development. The participating teachers emphasized the importance of music activities, particularly in language development, the development of a sense of rhythm, social interaction, emotional expression, and the support of cognitive processes. According to the relationship analysis between the codes, a high level of simultaneity was observed between the themes "preferred music activities" and "planning and implementation process." The findings indicate that despite preschool teachers' positive attitudes toward music activities, they need supportive elements during the implementation process. Improvements in this area could positively influence both teacher competency and children's developmental gains.

Keywords: Preschool period, music-related activity, preschool teachers

Conflict of Interest Statement
As the author of the research, I declare that I have no conflict of interest/conflict.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a fundamental developmental stage during which an individual's personality, value judgments, and learning habits are shaped. When a child's interactions with their environment are supported by multiple sensory experiences during this period, learning processes become more lasting and meaningful (Berk, 2018, p. 49). Among the artistic activities implemented in preschool education institutions, music stands out as an important tool that supports both cognitive and emotional development. Through music activities, children are able to express their emotions, develop language skills, and establish social relationships (Isbell & Raines, 2007, p. 81).

Music activities are implemented in various forms, such as singing, keeping rhythm, dancing, listening to music, and familiarizing with instruments. These activities contribute to the child's increase in auditory attention, development of motor coordination, and reinforcement of self-confidence (Campbell & Scott-

Kassner, 2014, p. 101). Teachers' preferences for music activities directly affect the quality of preschool music education (Temel & Yılmaz, 2019). The types of activities, methods of implementation, and pedagogical approaches adopted by teachers are among the most important factors determining the level of children's interaction with music (Custodero, 2005). Therefore, understanding which types of music activities preschool teachers prioritize, how these preferences are shaped, and the factors influencing them is important both for contributing to teacher education and shedding light on the process of music-based program development.

In Turkey, music activities in the preschool education program are defined as an area that supports the individual's multifaceted development; however, the practices in this field largely vary depending on the teacher's individual knowledge and skills (MEB, 2013). Some studies in the literature show that most teachers lack sufficient pedagogical training in music education, and as a result, they implement music activities in a limited manner in the classroom (Bolton, 2019, pp. 48-71; Dinçer & Kul, 2020; Temel & Yılmaz, 2019). Similarly, it is reported that music-related activities are often confined to pre-existing songs, and there is less emphasis on more creative and participatory activities such as improvising music or interacting with instruments (Custodero, 2009; Dinçer & Kul, 2020; Temiz & Gençtanırım, 2020).

Teachers' preferences for music-related activities are shaped not only by their individual competencies but also by environmental factors such as the school's physical resources, time management, access to materials, and administrative support (Akyol, 2021). When examining the music activities implemented in preschool institutions in Turkey, it is observed that teachers primarily focus on pre-existing songs, rhythm exercises, and simple movement games (Gönen & Dalkılıç, 2012; Yılmaz Bolat, 2017; Temel & Yılmaz, 2019; Dinçer & Kul, 2020; Temiz & Gençtanırım, 2020). It is stated that music preferences for children in the preschool period are shaped by various variables, including teachers' personal music experiences, perceptions of professional competence, access to educational materials, and institutional support (Yıldız & Gültekin, 2022). Qualitative studies in this context could help to understand teachers' decision-making processes regarding music activities in more depth. Therefore, qualitative research aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of teachers' approaches to music activities can make significant contributions to bridging the gap between practice and policy. In particular, collecting data based on teachers' perspectives is believed to facilitate the identification of needs and areas for development in this field. In this regard, the aim of this study is to determine the music-related activity preferences of teachers working in preschool institutions in Turkey, to understand the factors influencing these preferences, and to present teachers' experiences in this area from a holistic perspective. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to the development of early childhood music education policies, the enrichment of teacher training programs, and the diversification of classroom practices.

METHOD

Research Model

This study is a qualitative research that aims to deeply examine preschool teachers' preferences, experiences, and approaches to music-related activities. Qualitative research involves data collection and analysis processes aimed at understanding individuals' experiences, worldviews, and perspectives on events within their contextual framework (Creswell, 2013). A case study design was used in this research. Case studies aim to explore a specific phenomenon in depth and allow for a holistic examination of the situation within its own context (Glesne, 2012). In this context, the research analyzes in detail preschool teachers' preferences for music activities, the factors influencing these preferences, and the challenges they face.

Study Group

The study group consists of a total of 18 preschool teachers working in both public and private preschool education institutions located in the provinces of Konya, Muğla, Ankara, Istanbul, Erzurum, Samsun, and Malatya during the 2024-2025 academic year, representing different geographical regions of Turkey. Participants were selected using the criterion sampling technique, a purposive sampling method. In this context, teachers with at least two years of experience and who are actively working in preschool education institutions were included in the study. While the participants' ages, years of service, and educational backgrounds varied, this diversity provided an opportunity to evaluate different perspectives in line with the research objectives. To support the quantitative adequacy of the study group, the sample size was determined using an a priori power analysis conducted with the G*Power 3.1 program. In the analysis, a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.30$), a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$), and an 80% test power ($1-\beta = 0.80$) were used to ensure reliable results in the qualitative data analysis through content analysis (Kahraman-Kilbas & Cevahir, 2023). Accordingly, the minimum recommended sample size was calculated to be 16, and to account for a 10% dropout rate, the study was conducted with 18 participants. The inclusion of 18 participants exceeded this threshold, enhancing the internal validity and data diversity of the study. Participants were coded according to the confidentiality principle as K1, K2, K3.... Information regarding participants' age, professional experience, educational background, type of institution, and whether they have received music education is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant Code	Age Range	Years of Service	Educational Background	Type of Institution	Received Music Education
K1	26–30	4	Bachelor's degree	Independent preschool	No
K2	31–35	6	Bachelor's degree	Kindergarten	Yes
K3	26–30	5	Associate degree	Private preschool	No
K4	20–25	2	Bachelor's degree	Independent preschool	No
K5	20–25	3	Bachelor's degree	Kindergarten	Yes
K6	31–35	8	Master's degree	Kindergarten	No
K7	36–40	11	Bachelor's degree	Independent preschool	Yes
K8	26–30	5	Associate degree	Kindergarten	No
K9	31–35	7	Bachelor's degree	Private preschool	No
K10	41–45	15	Bachelor's degree	Independent preschool	Yes
K11	20-25	4	Bachelor's degree	Kindergarten	No
K12	20–25	3	Master's degree	Kindergarten	No
K13	31–35	7	Bachelor's degree	Kindergarten	Yes
K14	36–40	11	Bachelor's degree	Independent preschool	No
K15	20–25	2	Associate degree	Kindergarten	No
K16	31–35	6	Bachelor's degree	Private preschool	No
K17	26–30	7	Bachelor's degree	Independent preschool	Yes
K18	26–30	6	Master's degree	Kindergarten	No

When examining the demographic characteristics of the teachers participating in the study, it was found that their ages range from 20 to 45. The majority of participants were in the 26–30 age range (n=6) and the 31–35 age range (n=5). This suggests that the participant group is predominantly composed of young and middle-aged adults. The participants' professional experience ranges from 2 to 15 years, with seven teachers having 6 or more years of professional experience. This level of experience indicates that the participants possess sufficient knowledge and expertise to evaluate practices in educational settings and express preferences regarding music-based activities. Regarding educational background, the majority of participants hold a bachelor's degree (n=12), while three teachers have an associate degree and three others have a master's degree. This distribution demonstrates that the sample has a homogeneous educational level and offers meaningful diversity in terms of professional competence. In terms of the type of institution, seven participants work at independent preschools, six at elementary school-based kindergartens, and three at private preschools. This diversity enables comparative analyses of the music activity preferences of teachers working in different institutional contexts. Furthermore, when examining whether the participants received music education, it was found that five teachers had received training in this area, while the remaining thirteen had not. This finding suggests that the teachers' approaches to music activities are largely based on experiences outside of formal education.

Data collection process

The data collection process in this study was carried out after obtaining ethical committee approval and the necessary official permissions. The purpose and scope of the research were clearly explained to the participants, and informed consents were obtained from all teachers before the interviews took place. The interviews were conducted in conditions where participants could choose the time and place, ensuring that their attention would not be distracted and that the interview would not be interrupted. Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes, and the responses given by the teachers to open-ended questions were audio-recorded and documented. Audio recordings were made with the participants' permission and were stored following the principle of confidentiality, used solely for this study. The interviews, conducted with a total of 18 preschool teachers, were carried out individually. After the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and the text was prepared for analysis. The interview data were systematically analyzed using the content analysis method, which is commonly used in qualitative research.

Data collection tool

In this study, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used as the data collection tool. The interview form was designed to deeply understand preschool teachers' thoughts and experiences regarding music-based activities. During the development process of the form, literature on the subject was reviewed, interview questions from qualitative studies on similar topics were analyzed, and expert opinions

were consulted. The interview form consists of a total of 6 open-ended questions. The questions are aimed at revealing teachers' views on the importance they place on music activities during the preschool period, the types of music they use, the factors they consider when planning activities, the challenges they face, and their personal perceptions of musical competence. This allowed for the evaluation of teachers' preferences for music-based activities both in individual and professional contexts. To ensure the validity of the form, the opinions of two experts in the field were sought, and necessary adjustments were made in terms of content. The interview questions were prepared in a clear, understandable, and non-directive manner, allowing participants to freely express their own experiences and opinions.

Interview form

The teachers in the study group were administered a form prepared by the researchers, consisting of questions on general information (How many years of teaching experience do you have? In which city and type of school (public/private) do you work?); general attitudes towards music activities (What aspects of music activities do you think are important for children during the preschool period? In your opinion, which developmental areas do music activities support for children?); activity preferences (What music-based activities do you most frequently prefer in your classroom? What factors influence your preference for these activities?); the implementation process of activities (What do you pay attention to when planning music activities? How do you ensure children's participation during the activity?); encountered challenges (What challenges do you face when implementing music activities? What strategies have you developed to overcome these challenges?); material and physical conditions (Is there sufficient material and physical environment provided for music activities in your school? What materials do you frequently use for music activities?); training and competence (Have you received in-service training or an academic course on music activities? Do you feel competent in this area, and why?); development suggestions (What do you suggest for more effective implementation of music activities in preschool education? How do you evaluate the current curriculum in terms of music activities?). The questions were structured in an open-ended format to allow teachers to freely express their experiences, perceptions, and suggestions. The interview form supported teachers' natural expressions during the data collection process and enabled the acquisition of in-depth qualitative data on the topic.

Analysis of Data

The data obtained in the study were analyzed using content analysis, one of the qualitative research methods. The goal of this method is to identify recurring themes in the participants' responses and build a meaningful structure based on these themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). The audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and each participant was assigned a code (e.g., K1, K2, K3...) to ensure anonymity. The data analysis process was carried out in four stages: (1) careful reading of the data and conducting preliminary analysis, (2) coding meaningful data fragments, (3) grouping similar codes to form themes, and (4) identifying relationships between themes and interpreting the findings. The coding process was conducted by the researcher, and a consensus on the codes and themes was reached through a comparative analysis with a literature expert. During the analysis process, the MAXQDA 2022 qualitative data analysis software was used to systematically perform the coding and thematic mapping procedures. To increase the reliability of the data, the coded interview transcripts were compared with an external expert, ensuring consistency among the themes. The findings obtained during the research process were supported by direct participant quotes, and references to these quotes were made in the interpretations.

Reliability and validity of the research

The data were structured based on the validity and reliability criteria specific to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) qualitative research principles. In qualitative research, instead of traditional concepts of validity and reliability, criteria such as credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability are used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: pp. 37-69). In this study, these criteria were carefully considered to ensure the scientific rigor and reliability of the research. To ensure credibility, the data were supported by direct participant statements, and suitable environments were created during the interview process to allow participants to freely express their thoughts. Additionally, throughout the process of coding and thematic analysis, the researcher maintained objectivity, and a field expert was included in the process for mutual code verification. In terms of transferability, the context of the study, the participant profile, and the data collection and analysis processes were explained in detail. This allows preschool teachers and researchers working under similar conditions to adapt and evaluate the findings within their own context. To ensure confirmability, interview recordings and written transcripts were systematically archived; decisions made during the coding process, code definitions, and the rationale for theme formation were documented in a research diary. These documents allow for the transparent tracking of the research process. For dependability, the data analysis process was carried out systematically, with similar data being processed with similar codes. Furthermore, the analysis process was reviewed by an external expert. This ensured the internal consistency of the findings.

RESULTS

In this section, the data obtained from interviews with preschool teachers were analyzed using the content analysis method. Literature reviews reveal that the coding process is the most critical step in qualitative data analysis (Glesne, 2012, p. 141). Accordingly, in the analysis of the data in this study, themes were first examined line by line through open coding using MAXQDA analysis, and then similar codes were grouped together to form themes. The coding was based on both the pre-established conceptual framework and the data-driven emergent codes, as shown in Figure 1, where they were coded to make them meaningful. The content analysis method was adopted, and pre-determined codes or automatic coding were not used. The data were examined within a thematic approach and through an inductive method. The analysis process followed a structure based on themes > sub-themes > codes. Additionally, modeling techniques such as Sub-Code Statistics, Code-Theory Model, Code-Sub Code-Sections Model, and Hierarchical Code-Sub Code Model were applied in this study. The findings are presented under five main themes: (1) Importance of Music Activities, (2) Preferred Music Activities, (3) Planning and Implementation Process, (4) Challenges Encountered, (5) Competency and Development Suggestions. The themes are presented with direct participant quotes to support the findings. Figure 1 presents the data analysis process and themes visualized through MAXQDA 2022.

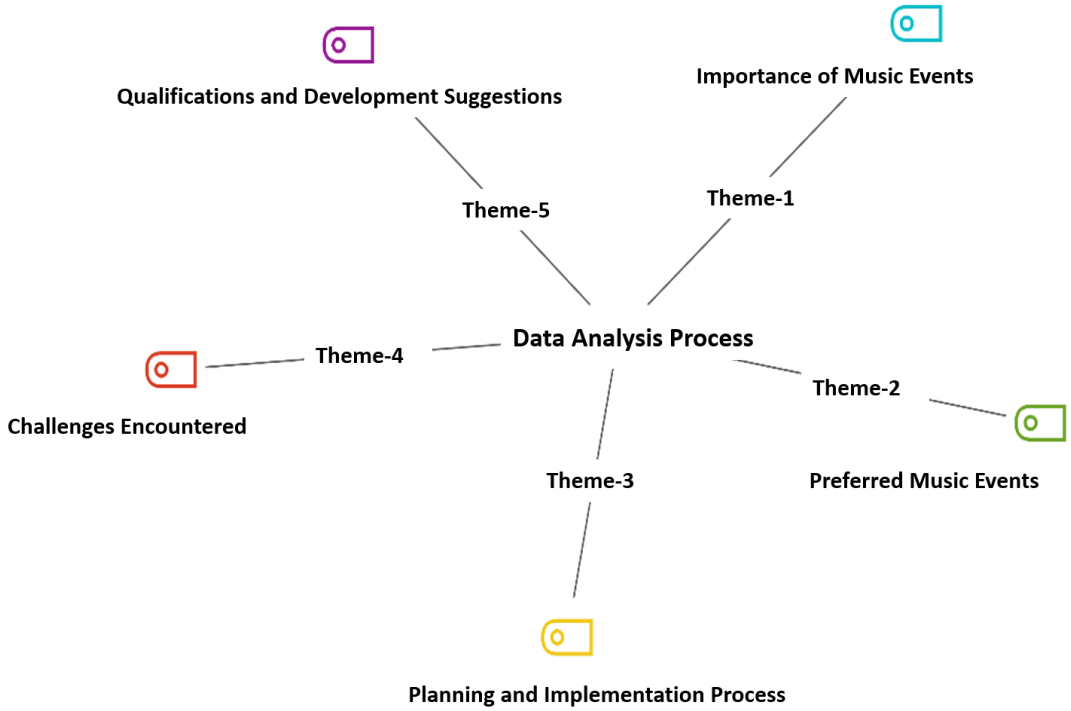

Figure 1. Data analysis process and themes

In the theme of Importance of Music Activities, the majority of participants stated that music activities support the multifaceted development of children. It was emphasized that music activities have a particular impact on language development, sense of rhythm, socio-emotional skills, and creativity.

"Music makes it easier for children to express themselves. Through songs, they develop their vocabulary, and they also become more active in group activities." (K2)

"Especially for shy children, music becomes a tool; I observe that they relax by dancing or singing." (K10)

In the theme of "Preferred Music Activities", teachers stated that they most frequently preferred rhythm exercises, singing songs, and dancing to lively music. Factors such as the children's interest, the feasibility of the activity, and the class size played a role in these preferences.

"We mostly do finger games and rhythm exercises. If we turn the songs into games, there's more participation." (K5)

"Especially lively songs attract the children's attention. They get bored more quickly with seated music activities." (K14)

In the theme of Planning and Implementation Process, the participants stated that they consider the children's age level, interests, and developmental characteristics when planning music activities. During the implementation process, strategies such as gamification and modeling were emphasized to ensure active participation of the children.

"When planning, I pay attention to whether the lyrics of the song are understandable and if the children can participate." (K17)

"I first actively participate myself. They imitate me, and this increases their participation." (K6)

In the theme of "Challenges Encountered," most participants reported facing difficulties in conducting music activities, such as insufficient physical space, lack of materials, and not having a musical background.
"At school, we only have one speaker, and it often breaks down. We can't provide the children with a quality sound environment." (K3)
"I am not someone who has received music education, I rely on hearsay information. Sometimes, I don't feel adequate." (K8)
In the theme of Competence and Development Suggestions, some participants stated that they had previously received academic or in-service training, while the majority indicated that they needed more support and resources for music activities. Additionally, opinions were expressed suggesting that the current preschool program should include more music-related activities.
"At university, we only had one semester of music classes. It was not hands-on. That's why I feel inadequate." (K12)
"Music activities are not included enough in the program. It seems like there is more emphasis on drama and science activities." (K1)
The responses of the teachers in the study group to the questions in the interview form are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Responses of the teachers in the study group to the questions in the interview form

In what ways do you think musical activities are important for children in preschool?	K3: "Music supports both children's language development and sense of rhythm. It also allows them to express their feelings." K11: "I think learning at this age mostly happens through games and music. They understand everything more easily with songs." K6: "Music is not only fun for children; it also provides attention, memory and hearing skills." K14: "I think music supports social development a lot. Children move together, line up and learn to listen." K19: "Frankly, my classroom would be incomplete without music. Music is like the soul of the classroom."
In your opinion, which areas of development do music activities support in children?	K1: "It is especially effective in the areas of language and motor development." K8: "It also contributes greatly to emotional development. Children can express their feelings through songs." K16: "Social development is very important. They learn to act as a group." K9: "I think it even affects the perception of mathematical rhythm."
What are the most frequently used music-based activities in your classroom?	K2: "We usually do singing and rhythm exercises." K10: "They love dancing, especially with upbeat songs." K13: "I like introducing instruments. I especially use Orff instruments a lot." K5: "We tell simple musical stories. It both draws attention and entertains." K18: "We start the day with a song every day. It's like a morning ritual."
What are the reasons behind your preference for these activities?	K9: "The most important factor is that children enjoy themselves. They learn while having fun." K17: "There is not much time in the curriculum, but singing is fast and effective." K4: "Rhythm exercises increase children's coordination, so I do them often." K12: "Some activities seem too complicated to children. That's why I choose simpler and more understandable ones."
What do you pay attention to when planning music events?	K15: "Age group is very important. I can't do the same thing to a 5-year-old as I did to a 3-year-old." K13: "I try to support the child with visual materials that will attract their attention." K6: "I usually find songs that fit the theme. For example, songs about animals during animal week." K3: "The duration of the activity is also important. Their attention is distracted by long songs."
How do you ensure children's participation during the event?	K7: "I give the children roles. For example, one is a drummer, the other a dancer." K13: "Sometimes we make up the lyrics together, they have a lot of fun." K2: "I make them sing along with simple movements. I want them to keep the rhythm with their hands." K11: "I add their names to the song, they get more involved."
What are the difficulties you face	K8: "I think the biggest challenge is the lack of materials. Instruments are very limited." K19: "Not every child has the same interest. Some get bored right away."

when implementing music activities?	K6: "The class is crowded, it is difficult to deal with everyone individually." K13: "The sound system is inadequate, sometimes children have difficulty hearing."
What strategies have you developed to overcome these challenges?	K5: "I have materials that I have prepared. For example, we made maracas with cardboard." K6: "When we add games to the songs, the interest increases and they focus more." K12: "I choose shorter and more repetitive songs. They do not have difficulty." K18: "I divide the class into small groups and work in turns."
Does your school provide adequate materials and physical environment for music activities?	K1: "Unfortunately, it is not enough. There is no variety of instruments." K10: "We have a music room at our school, it is very useful for us." K6: "We create some things with our own efforts." K18: "We have space problems. The classroom is too small for active activities."
Have you received any training or academic lessons regarding music events?	K7: "We took a course at university for a semester, but it was very superficial." K3: "I never received any training. I wish I had." K17: "I attended an in-service seminar last year. It was very useful." K9: "Frankly, I am trying to learn on my own."
Do you feel competent in this area? Why?	K15: "No. Because I didn't receive music education." K20: "I'm not good enough, but I do my best." K2: "I feel good enough because I've been doing similar activities for years." K11: "Since my communication with children is strong, I can make up for the points I'm lacking."
What do you recommend for more effective implementation of music activities in pre-school education?	K13: "Applied music workshops should be organized for teachers." K6: "There should be more examples of music activities in textbooks." K4: "Cooperation with music teachers can be done." K18: "Simple instrument support should be provided to schools."
How do you evaluate the current program in terms of music events?	K1: "The program is generally good, but the music part is very superficial." K8: "It seems to be left alone, there is no detail. There should be more guidance." K13: "It is open to development. Especially the rhythm and movement part can be structured better." K18: "I do not find it sufficient. Application suggestions are lacking."

When the responses of the study group were evaluated using MAXQDA, teachers such as K13, K18, and K6 were heavily coded under multiple themes in the Code Matrix. When the Code-Connection Network was evaluated, a 78% overlap was observed between the codes "preferred music activities" and "planning and implementation process." When the Code Relationship Matrix (Heatmap) was created, a high level of correlation was observed between the codes "importance of music activities," "preferred music activities," and "challenges encountered." Figure 2 shows the code relationship matrix.

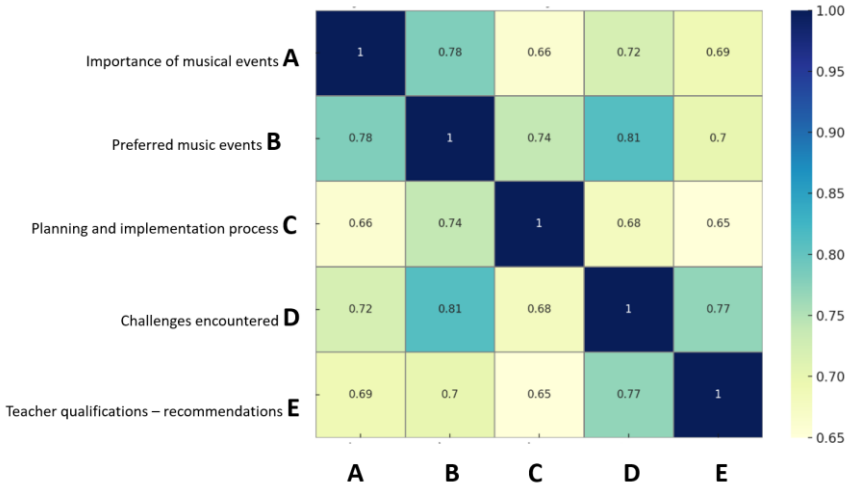

Figure 2. Heat map of the relationship matrix between codes

The heatmap in Figure 2 visually presents the levels of simultaneity of the codes based on teacher responses across the five main themes identified in the study. The color intensities on the map represent the degree of relationship between the themes. Light colors represent low-level relationships, while dark colors indicate high-level relationships.

As a result of the analysis, a 74% high level of simultaneity was observed between the themes "Preferred Music Activities" and "Planning and Implementation Process," and an 81% high level of simultaneity was observed between "Preferred Music Activities" and "Challenges Encountered." This finding suggests that the challenges teachers face when implementing their preferred music activities are directly connected to the planning process.

Similarly, a significant relationship was found between the theme "Importance of Music Activities" and both "Challenges Encountered" (72%) and "Teacher Competence and Suggestions" (69%). This indicates that teachers' awareness of the educational importance of music is closely related to the obstacles they encounter in practice and how competent they feel in this area.

Overall, it can be concluded that there is no very low-level relationship between the themes; rather, the contents meaningfully complement each other, and a holistic structure emerged in the teachers' responses across the themes. This suggests that the codes are not merely grouped under isolated headings, but that teachers possess a multidimensional perspective on music activities.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the preferences and experiences of preschool teachers working in different regions of Turkey regarding music-related activities were examined through qualitative data. Teachers' perspectives revealed that music activities are viewed as a tool to support children's multidimensional development. This finding aligns with studies by Hallam (2010) and Custodero (2009), which highlight the effects of music education on cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills.

It was observed that teachers prioritize rhythm exercises, lively songs, and play-based music activities that encourage children's active participation. These preferences can be considered in harmony with the developmental characteristics of preschool children. Particularly, the short attention spans of younger children make interactive and dynamic activities more engaging (Morin, 2015). This suggests that teachers' pedagogical choices are consistent with the developmental needs of children.

The responses provided reveal teachers' views on music activities, the types of activities they prefer, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use to overcome these challenges. According to the analysis of the Code Matrix, it is evident that there is a high correlation between teachers' preferences and their implementation processes. Additionally, there is a strong consensus regarding the importance of music activities for children.

The teachers in the study group emphasize that music supports various areas of children's development, including language development, rhythm sense, emotional expression, and social skills. These findings are consistent with the literature on the role of music education in children's development (Uçan, 2001: pp. 36-58; Hallam, 2010; Bayhan & Artan, 2015; Öztürk Samur, 2019). Singing, rhythm exercises, dancing, and instrument introductions are listed as the most frequently preferred methods by the teachers. Teachers are careful when selecting materials and adjusting song durations to suit the age groups of the children. These preferences should be supported by strategies to enhance children's participation (Lowe, 2002). Teachers face challenges such as a lack of materials, overcrowded classrooms, and children losing interest during music activities. However, it has been noted that they manage to overcome these challenges by preparing their own materials, incorporating games, and using group work. This suggests that teachers need to adopt an approach that requires creativity and flexibility (Dönmez & Tuncer, 2022). In light of these findings, it is recommended that practical music workshops, material support, and more comprehensive music programs be provided for teachers to implement music activities more effectively in early childhood education. These suggestions indicate that teachers can make music activities more efficient and offer stronger contributions to children's development.

Some teachers in the study group have stated that music activities can be integrated with other disciplines (e.g., science, mathematics, language), reflecting an increasing awareness of the integration of interdisciplinary learning approaches into early childhood education (Bresler, 2002; Barrett et al., 2019: pp. 45-66). In addition to supporting language development, music also contributes to the development of higher-level skills such as creative thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork (Lowe, 2002). However, it is noteworthy that some teachers expressed limited personal competence in music-related areas. This suggests the need for a restructuring of music education in teacher training programs, particularly in terms of duration, content, and practical opportunities. Studies conducted in Turkey have also highlighted the need for more systematic support programs to enhance preschool teachers' musical knowledge, skills, and self-confidence (Gönen & Dalkılıç, 2012; Temiz & Gençtanırım, 2020).

One of the key findings of the research is that some teachers adopted a "theme-based" approach in planning music activities, while others made flexible plans based on the children's interests. This diversity highlights the importance of individualized and flexible teaching approaches in early childhood education (Bodrova & Leong, 2007: pp. 29-41). A large majority of the participants believe that the musical activity outcomes in the preschool

education program are insufficient. These criticisms suggest that the program should be reviewed in terms of music education. Indeed, the preschool education program implemented in Turkey gives limited attention to music activities, which are generally confined to rhythm or melody-related activities (MEB, 2024). The majority of teachers in the study have stated that music activities contribute to various developmental areas, especially language, rhythm, attention, memory, and social skills. These views align with Gardner's (1993: pp. 57-96) emphasis on the impact of music on learning within the framework of the theory of multiple intelligences. Similarly, a study by Koç and Yurtseven (2021) highlights that music activities carried out in the preschool period directly contribute to children's socio-emotional and language development. Teachers' statements that music helps children "adapt to the classroom atmosphere" further strengthen the role of music in fostering classroom motivation and maintaining order.

Among the music activities most preferred by teachers, singing, rhythm exercises, dancing, instrument introduction, and music-based storytelling are commonly mentioned. This finding points to the flexible structure of music activities, which can be implemented both individually and in groups. Similarly, Koç and Yurtseven (2021) reported that preschool teachers frequently prefer rhythm and singing activities. The emphasis on the use of Orff instruments reflects the growing interest in structured music education (Çevik, 2007).

Participants noted that in the planning process for music activities, they pay attention to the age group characteristics, engaging content, and thematic harmony. This underscores the necessity of structuring effective music education according to the child's developmental level (MENC- Music Educators National Conference, 2003). During the implementation process, methods such as assigning roles, adding names to songs, and physical participation are preferred to ensure active engagement. These strategies indicate that the active learning approach is also embraced in music education (Adamek & Darrow, 2010: pp. 104-128).

Participants emphasized the importance of considering factors such as age group characteristics, thematic coherence, and attention spans for the effective execution of music activities. Similarly, the literature highlights that the planning of music activities in the preschool period should take into account the developmental characteristics and individual differences of children (Bayhan & Artan, 2015: pp. 57-138). The appropriateness of planning, adequate time allocation, and the presence of strategies that enhance children's active participation directly impact the effectiveness of the activities (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2013: p. 94). During the implementation, assigning roles to children demonstrates how music activities are blended with multi-sensory learning, thereby increasing participation.

According to the study findings, the most common difficulties faced by teachers include a lack of materials, overcrowded classrooms, and managing individual differences. This finding indicates that music education should be supported not only by pedagogical knowledge but also by structural and resource adequacy. Dönmez and Tuncer (2022) emphasize that most of the difficulties encountered by teachers during music activities stem from a lack of resources. Teachers' development of solution-focused strategies—such as dividing the class into smaller groups or creating instruments from recycled materials—demonstrates flexibility in practice (Öztürk Samur, 2019).

The adequacy of the physical environment and the diversity of materials directly affect the quality of music activities. Some participants expressed that they lacked a music room or suitable spaces, while others mentioned that they create materials on their own. Similarly, studies conducted in our country have found that the physical infrastructure necessary for music activities in preschool institutions is often inadequate (Uçan, 2001: p. 61; Yıldız & Arslan, 2014). Material variety enhances children's sensory experiences and makes learning more concrete (Çevik, 2007). Therefore, supporting teachers in this area is considered important.

The majority of participants stated that they did not have sufficient academic or in-service training in music education, and they made personal efforts to compensate for their inadequacies in this field. It is a common finding in the literature that preschool teachers do not feel competent in music education (Tarman & Tarman, 2020; Koç & Yurtseven, 2021). However, most participants suggested that the number of practical music workshops should be increased. These suggestions indicate the necessity of integrating theoretical knowledge with practice. In light of these findings, it is concluded that music activities should not only be seen as a tool for having fun but should be restructured as a multifaceted learning environment where children can express their emotions, increase their cultural awareness, and support their creative thinking.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, the preferences of preschool teachers working in early childhood education institutions regarding music-based activities, the reasons underlying these preferences, the challenges encountered during the planning and implementation processes, and the strategies employed to overcome these challenges were examined using a qualitative research method. The data obtained from the study group revealed that teachers view music activities as a pedagogical tool that supports the multidimensional development of children.

The participating teachers stated that music activities are particularly important for language development, the development of rhythm sense, social interaction, emotional expression, and supporting cognitive processes. The most frequently preferred music-related activities included singing, rhythm exercises, dance, the use of Orff instruments, and musical storytelling. These preferences are shaped both by the children's level of interest and the applicability within the classroom.

When planning activities, pedagogical factors such as age group characteristics, thematic coherence, children's interest, and activity duration are considered. During the implementation process, it was determined that teachers use various methods and techniques (such as role distribution, movement songs, and creating lyrics) to increase children's participation. However, challenges such as material shortages, spatial limitations, large class sizes, and lack of technical equipment were frequently encountered by teachers. This situation negatively impacts the continuity and quality of music activities.

According to the analysis of the relationships between codes, a high level of synchronization was observed between the theme of "preferred music activities" and the theme of "planning and implementation process." Similarly, strong connections were found between the theme of "importance of music activities" and both the themes of "encountered challenges" and "teacher competency and recommendations." This suggests that teachers' pedagogical approaches to music directly influence their practices, and the challenges faced during implementation are closely related to their perceptions of professional competence.

The findings indicate that despite preschool teachers' positive attitudes toward music activities, they require supportive elements during the implementation process. These improvements in the field can positively impact both teacher competence and children's developmental outcomes.

Based on the findings obtained from this research, several recommendations have been developed to ensure the more effective and efficient implementation of music activities in preschool education institutions. A significant number of teachers reported feeling inadequate in terms of their musical knowledge and skills. In light of this, practical workshop sessions, seminars, and certified in-service training programs should be organized to improve teachers' musical knowledge and competencies.

One of the most frequently encountered problems by teachers is the lack of materials and physical resources. Therefore, preschool institutions should be equipped with appropriate instruments, sound systems, and spacious areas to facilitate music activities. The current preschool education program was found to present a superficial treatment of music activities. The curriculum should be enriched with detailed and applicable examples that include rhythm, movement, singing, and creative music activities. If schools lack music teachers, collaboration between preschool teachers and experts in the field of music should be encouraged, allowing children to access diverse musical experiences.

Music education courses in faculties of education for preschool teacher candidates should be reviewed in terms of content, focusing on practical application, creativity, and child-appropriate pedagogical approaches. Teachers' creative methods used to engage children in activities should be supported, and good practices should be widely shared. Especially, child-centered, participatory music activities should be developed. Classrooms should be adjusted to be more suitable for active music activities, and problems arising from space limitations should be reduced. When necessary, shared spaces should be reconfigured for music activities.

Collaboration with families in implementing music activities could also extend children's musical interactions into the home environment. Family-involved music days, performances, or shared singing hours are recommended as part of this initiative.

Limitations and Strengths

This study was conducted using a qualitative design with a limited number of participants. Therefore, the findings are restricted in terms of generalizability. Since the perspectives of the participating teachers are confined to a specific geographic region and institutional context, the experiences of teachers working in different regions were not evaluated within this study. Additionally, since the study focused solely on teachers' views, the perspectives of families and children were not included.

One of the strengths of this research is its in-depth exploration of preschool teachers' experiences with music activities. The study provides a comprehensive account of teachers' practices, the challenges they face, and their strategies for overcoming these challenges, based on original data gathered from the field. Moreover, the systematic analysis of the data using MAXQDA software is another factor that enhances the validity and reliability of the findings.

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