Understanding the Effect of Preschool Learning Environments on Children's Well-Being from Teachers' Perspectives: A Case Study

Okul Öncesi Öğrenme Ortamlarının Çocukların İyi Oluşuna Etkisini Öğretmenlerin Bakış Açılarıyla Anlamak: Bir Durum Çalışması

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal and understand the impact of preschool learning environments on children's well-being from the teachers' perspectives. The sub-goals determined within the scope of the research are to reveal teachers' opinions about general well-being and child well-being and the factors affecting children's well-being in the learning environment. The study was conducted using the qualitative research method and the case study design, one of the qualitative research models. The research was conducted with four preschool teachers working in four independent kindergartens in Efeler district of Aydın province, determined by the purposive sampling method. We collected the data using a semi-structured interview form that we prepared specifically for the research, and then we analyzed and interpreted it using the descriptive content analysis method. As a result of the analyses, themes and codes related to these themes were identified. To visualize the themes and codes obtained through the research, they were tabulated and presented in the findings section. According to the findings obtained from the research, teachers generally defined well-being with expressions such as being happy, having holistic health, and being useful to society, and expressed their views on children's well-being as self-expression, holistic development, individual differences, and individual development. Teachers expressed safety and appeal to the child as priority factors in learning environments, while they prioritized peer relationships in social interactions.

Keywords: Well-being, Preschool Period, Learning Environment, Teacher Opinions, Holistic Development

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı okul öncesi öğrenme ortamlarının çocukların iyi oluşuna etkisini öğretmenlerin bakış açılarıyla ortaya koymak ve anlamaktır. Araştırma kapsamında belirlenen alt amaçlar ise öğretmenlerin genel olarak iyi oluş ve çocuğun iyi oluşu hakkındaki görüşlerinin neler olduğu ve çocukların öğrenme ortamında iyi oluşunu etkileyen faktörlerle ilgili düşüncelerini açığa çıkarmaktır. Çalışma nitel araştırma yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilmiş ve nitel araştırma modellerinden durum çalışması deseni kullanılmıştır. Araştırma amaçlı örneklem yöntemiyle belirlenen Aydın iline bağlı Efeler ilçesinde yer alan dört bağımsız anaokulunda görev yapan dört okul öncesi öğretmeni ile yürütülmüştür. Veriler araştırma kapsamında hazırlanan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile elde edilmiş ve betimsel içerik analizi yöntemi ile analiz edilmiş ve yorumlanmıştır. Analizler sonucunda, temalara ve bu temalara ait kodlara ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda ulaşılan tema ve kodların görselleştirilmesi amacıyla tablolaştırılarak bulgular kısmında sunulmuştur. Araştırma sonucunda elde dilen bulgulara göre, öğretmenlerin iyi oluşu genel olarak mutlu olma, bütünsel sağlık ve topluma faydalı olmak gibi ifadelerle tanımladıkları, çocukların iyi oluşunu ise kendini ifade etme, bütünsel gelişim, bireysel farklılıklar ve bireysel gelişim olarak görüşlerini belirtmişlerdir. Öğrenme ortamlarının özellikleri açısından güvenli olması ve çocuğa hitap etmesi öncelikli faktörler olarak ifade edilmiş, sosyal ilişkiler açısından öğretmenlerin daha çok akran ilişkilerine dikkat çektiği gözlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İyi Oluş, Okul Öncesi Dönem, Öğrenme Ortamı, Öğretmen Görüşleri, Bütünsel Gelişim

Introduction

Well-being sheds light on a reality that aims to improve both individual and universal life and realize one's potential at the highest level. Well-being is closely related to positive thinking. Positive thinking points to a perspective that increases the individual's life quality and aims to perceive and evaluate opportunities and constructive solutions in life (Gür, 2022). In this context; the change in the understanding of the healthy individual towards positive development and preventing the negative parallels the emergence of the field of positive psychology (Seligman 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology aims to improve the quality of life and be healthy. It focuses on positive personal experiences and individual characteristics (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Conceptualizations of well-being are generally based on two traditions. The hedonic understanding defines well-being as a result, where a positive effect is defined as the absence of a negative effect. The other is considered eudemonic, psychological well-being (living life satisfactorily, realizing one's potential). It expresses well-being as a process (Deci & Ryan, 2008). This field draws on the idea of self-actualization (Seligman, 2011; Seligman & Parks, 2005). In this perspective, putting people at the center and the importance of experience and self-knowledge are emphasized. The individual is encouraged to use this knowledge to realize his or herself so that he or she can live to his or her full potential.

From a positive psychology perspective, well-being is expressed as a multidimensional structure consisting of positive emotions, participation, relationships, meaning, and success (Seligman, 2011). Again, according to Seligman (2019), physical well-being is related to an individual's health and vitality; it covers aspects such as exercise, nutrition and general body functioning. Emotional well-being involves experiencing positive emotions and effectively managing negative emotions, as well as developing resilience and a sense of contentment. Cognitive health refers to mental abilities such as problem solving, creativity, and critical thinking, as well as a person's intellectual engagement and capacity to learn and develop. Together, these components contribute to the holistic process of development, holistic health, and individuals' ultimate well-being. Positive relationships can be defined as the emergence of interactions between individuals in which they feel loved, supported, and valued by others.

Ryff (1989) defined well-being as the ability to use one's potential at the highest level, individual productivity and well-being. In addition, he stated that it also includes social, emotional, cognitive and physical health. Child well-being is recognized as being of key importance due to the strong link between children's early life experiences and adult health, social well-being and economic outcomes. Childhood is of critical importance in terms of the speed and intensity of development and learning among the stages that a person goes through throughout his life. The underlying reason why this period is described as critical is that progress in all developmental areas is related to well-being. In an environment where the child feels good, his development continues at his own pace without being interrupted. Supporting development in this period means supporting the healthy development of well-being.

Well-being is the child's development of his/her unique potential in relation to himself/herself, others and the environment (Beşpınar & Aybars, 2013). Child well-being is a comprehensive and multifaceted construct that encompasses various interrelated dimensions such as physical, social, emotional and psychological aspects. According to these views, well-being is best seen as a type of development consisting of various internal well-beings achieved through the development and use of unique human capacities (Archard, 2015).

For this development to occur, many interconnected psychological needs must be met. These needs a sense of attachment, belonging, being loved, and security—are considered essential for children's development

and well-being. Numerous studies show that children who receive approval and support from their environment achieve more positive emotional, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). The child's psychological basic needs form the foundation of their well-being, and meeting other needs alone cannot make up for their lack of well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

The socio-ecological approach that Bronfenbrenner developed to understand child development draws attention to various factors that shape children's early experiences and affect their level of well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These are the microsystems (family, school and physical environment) with which the child has face-to-face communication and interaction. School is considered one of the most important environments that encourage positive development and general well-being (Hamre & Cappella, 2015). The teacher is the one who makes the learning environment functional for the benefit of the child. Teachers have a central role in students' development. Its vital importance in the child's development, learning and therefore well-being cannot be ignored. From the perspective of the child's well-being: qualified teachers, healthy child-teacher, peer interaction and communication, number of children in the classroom, a safe, rich stimulating environment, different social activities, initiative, self-regulation, ability to ask for help, emotional control, peer support, optimism, social problem-solving skills, Programs and developmentally appropriate practices that suit children's interests and needs are seen as important (Mother Child Education Foundation, 2009).

Remarkable qualities of childhood lies in their abilities to wonder, research, learn and change and develop under the influence of new experiences (Gopnik, 2010). Children spend most of their time at school, and therefore the experiences they have under the roof of school directly affect their daily lives. From this perspective, the educational programs implemented in schools and the educational environment offered are thought to be important in improving the psychological well-being of children. The level of psychological well-being in children is affected by family, personal characteristics, educational program, school (teacher, learning environment) and the interaction between these environments. For child welfare, teachers are required to create a classroom environment that supports positive development and learning outcomes among children (Falecki & Mann, 2021; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). At the same time, children's psychological well-being is considered an important indicator of the quality of developmental processes and educational practices (Van Sanden & Joly, 2003). From this perspective, well-being, holistic development and holistic health increase the opportunity to participate in education, as well as achieve the highest level of education and training outcomes and enable children to live the lives they value (Spratt, 2016).

According to the literature available in this context, studies on well-being in the field of pre-school education include Atan (2021)'s model proposal for children's psychological well-being, Çelik (2021)'s adaptation of 5–6-year-old children to school, and Aksel (2018), Özdemir (2021), YeniDünya (2020), Özoğul (2022)'s studies. It was determined that it was conducted with relational scanning and mixed research management (Erata & Özbey, 2023) The general trend in the studies is that they are quantitative studies. For this reason, it was decided to conduct a qualitative study to examine teachers' opinions on the relevant subject in depth. It is thought that the study will contribute to teachers' awareness and to the benefit of children. This research was planned to reveal teachers' opinions about the impact of preschool learning environments on children's well-being. In line with this main purpose, answers to the following questions will be sought:

1. What are the opinions of preschool teachers about general well-being and the well-being of the child?

2. What are the opinions of preschool teachers about the factors affecting children's well-being in the

learning environment?

Method

In this study, we employed a qualitative research method. Qualitative research can be used to understand and influence processes of social change. Understanding participants' experiences and views can make a valuable contribution to social policy formulation and implementation processes. For these reasons, qualitative research is widely used in the social sciences and many disciplines to understand human behavior. This research method provides in-depth understanding and directly addresses participants' perspectives and experiences. The research was conducted through the case study design, one of the qualitative research models developed by Creswell (2016). Yin (2004) suggested that a case study can be used to understand the role of any phenomenon within a system. This study was conducted as an instrumental case study to understand the process experienced in the case, the structure of the process and the activities implemented. Within the scope of this research, teachers' opinions about general well-being and the child's well-being were consulted. In addition, the characteristics of the learning environment, social-emotional characteristics, physical equipment, learning activities and opinions about evaluation, which are among the factors affecting the child's well-being, were examined. A case study can be used in research that deals with a current phenomenon within its real-life context (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2012). The study was carried out using a semi-structured interview technique.

Working Group

The study group for the research consists of 4 preschool teachers working in 4 different kindergartens in Efeler District of Aydın Province. Within the scope of this study, typical sampling, one of the purposive sampling types, was used to determine the participants in the study group (Merriam, 2013). Purposeful sampling is a carefully selected sample to achieve a specific purpose of a research. Researchers may use purposive sampling when they want to collect data to generalize about a particular population or to test a particular problem or hypothesis. A typical sample is a sample randomly selected to represent the purpose of a study. This sampling method aims to reflect the general characteristics of the population as best as possible (Büyüköztürk et al. 2019).

Table 1. Participant Information

Teachers' Code Names	Institution of Work	Professional experience	Type of Preschool Education Institution
T1	State school	14 Years	Kindergarten
T2	State school	13 Years	Kindergarten
T3	State school	16 Years	Kindergarten
T4	State school	22 Years	Kindergarten

Data Collection Tools

The research's data collection tools are interview forms prepared in line with the research's purpose. Interviews allow researchers to better understand participants' perspectives and gain more in-depth knowledge about a particular topic or phenomenon. Additionally, researchers can empathize with participants by listening directly to their feelings and experiences, which contributes to obtaining more qualified and comprehensive data. We prepared the interview form questions based on information from

national and international literature reviews on well-being. We sent the prepared interview questions for expert opinion and adjusted them based on their feedback.

The interview included ten semi-structured, open-ended questions designed to reveal teachers' thoughts about children's well-being and the effects of learning environment components that affect well-being. We prefer semi-structured questions because they provide a deeper understanding of teachers' opinions and thoughts, aligning with the study's objectives.

Table 2. Interview Questions and Objectives

Purposes	Interview Questions
Understanding teachers' thoughts about general well-being.	What do you think is well-being? Can you explain what well-being means to you?
	Do you think well-being is important? Why?
Understanding teachers' thoughts about children's well-being	What do you think about children's well-being? Can you explain?
	In your opinion, what is the behavior of a child who is in a state of well-being? What might he or she be thinking and feeling? Could you please explain what your thoughts are on this subject?
Understanding teachers' general thoughts about the impact of children's environment on their well-being	What do you think are the factors that affect children's well-being?
Understanding teachers' thoughts about the impact of the learning environment on children's well-being	What do you think about the impact of the learning environment on children's well-being?
	What are the effects of the physical features of the learning environment on well-being? How do you think it affects well-being?
Understanding teachers' thoughts about the impact of learning activities, which are among the components of the learning environment, on the well-being of their children.	What do you pay attention to when planning learning activities? Cause?
	What do you pay attention to when implementing learning activities? Cause?
	In your opinion, what is the relationship between the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of learning activities and well-being?
Understanding teachers' thoughts about the impact of social relationships and interactions in the learning environment on the child's well-being	What do you think about the impact of your relationship with children on their well-being?
	Do children's relationships with each other affect their well-being? What are your views on this subject?
To reveal teachers' suggestions in line with their views on children's well-being	What can be done to contribute to the child's well-being? What are your suggestions on this subject?

Collection of Data

Two experts who were knowledgeable about qualitative research and the study subject provided their opinions before the research began. Based on the feedback, suggested corrections to the interview questions were made and a pilot application was carried out with a volunteer preschool teacher. During the pilot application, the clarity of the questions and the consistency of the answers given were checked. After this stage, the consent of pre-school teachers working in independent kindergartens was obtained regarding their participation. The appropriate place and time for the meeting were determined together

with the teachers. The interview was held in a quiet environment free of distractions. After the interviewer gave descriptive information about the study, interview questions were asked to the participants. During the interview process, attention was paid to open communication and impartiality to ensure the comfort and reliability of the participants. In addition, care was taken to ensure that the questions asked by the researchers to the participants were understandable and could be easily answered by the participants. Each interview lasted approximately 20-25 minutes, and to prevent data loss, the interview data was audio recorded with the consent of the participants and stored as a transcript.

Analysis of Data

In examining the data obtained from teachers regarding well-being the following questions were primarily taken into consideration; Do the data obtained through interview questions contribute to the literature? Do the data obtained from the interviews support the research's purpose?

The data obtained was analyzed with the inductive content analysis method (Merriam, 2013). The data obtained in this research were analyzed and interpreted by coding in accordance with the themes determined based on the problem. The first step in content analysis is to collect relevant data for analysis. These data can be written texts, images, video recordings or other documents (Glesne, 2013). The data collected is coded to identify important concepts and themes. These codes allow the data to be used in the analysis to be categorized. The codes are then grouped and categorized. Similar concepts and themes are brought together to create a more meaningful structure for analysis. In other words, the coded data is carefully examined. In this context, themes, patterns and relationships are identified. Researchers use analytical techniques to extract the in-depth meaning of data. Finally, the findings are interpreted and given meaning. In this stage, researchers relate the information provided by the data to research questions and hypotheses and explain the meaning of their results. The importance of content analysis is that it provides researchers with the ability to systematically examine and make sense of complex data sets. This helps researchers develop in-depth understanding, test theories, and base their findings on a solid foundation (Creswell, 2019).

Before starting the research, Aydın Adnan Menderes University dated 03.05.2023 and 2023/4. It was found ethically appropriate with the decision numbered XVII taken at the Educational Research Ethics Committee Meeting.

To confirm the validity and reliability of the research, a pilot application was conducted with a volunteer teacher involved in the research and the clarity of the questions was checked. To increase the validity of the research, it was aimed at diversifying the sample and accordingly, the teachers who would participate in the interview were selected from different schools. For the internal validity (credibility) of the research, an interaction was established with the participants before the interview started, and the content of this interaction included the researcher introducing himself, introducing the study, and obtaining consent. For participant confirmation, during the interview, "Did you say these? "Am I understanding correctly?" or after the transcript, confirmation was received regarding the similarity of what was said and what was written. Then, an expert review was conducted, and the opinions of the participants were stated through direct quotations. For the internal reliability (consistency) of the research, the findings were presented without comment and a coding cycle was made by two experts. In the first and second coding cycle, the researchers worked separately, and in the third cycle, they worked together and reached a consensus among the coders (Merriam, 2013; Saldana, 2019). Encoder reliability was calculated with Miles and Huberman's

(2019) reliability formula. Miles and Huberman stated that the coding is reliable if the reliability of the research is above 70%. Consistency between coders in the study was determined to be 90%.

Results

The findings from the research are presented in the tables below.

Table 3. Theme, subtheme and codes for the general meaning of well-being

Theme	Well-being			
Subtheme	General meaning			
			Participants	
Codes	T1	T2	T3	T4
Happiness		+		
Mental health			+	
Physical health			+	
Environmental health			+	
Feel confident		+	+	
To be loved		+		
Achieving the best/Self-actualization	+			
Holistic development and health				+

Teachers provide a broad definition of well-being in Table 3, which includes aspects such as happiness, spiritual health, physical health, environmental health, confidence, love, achieving the highest level of self-realization, and holistic development and health. The statements made by the teachers are as follows:

T1 "… Being able to bring oneself to a better level", T2 "Well-being is the happiness of the individual…", T2 "It is very important for her to know that she/he is loved in the classroom and at home", T3 "… is the state of being mentally, physically and environmentally healthy…", T4 "Self-actualization at the highest level in all areas of social-emotional, mental, physical and development "

Table 4. The meaning of child well-being theme, sub-theme and codes

Theme	Well-being			
Subtheme	The meaning and importance of children's well-being			
			Participant	
Codes	T1	T2	T3	T4
Individual Development	+	+		
Being aware of one's achievements and being proud of them	+			
Be proud of oneself	+			
Positive support	+			
Self-expression		+	+	+
Trusting the environment		+	+	
Participating		+	+	+
Social and emotional well-being			+	
Adapting to the classroom environment				+
Being beneficial to society	+			+

When examined in Table 4, regarding the child's well-being, teachers expressed individual development, being aware of their achievements, being proud of themselves, receiving positive support, being able to express themselves, trusting the environment, ensuring participation, social and emotional well-being, adaptation to the classroom and being useful to society.

T1 "...we can achieve well-being because we pay attention to individual characteristics in the activities organized", T2 "...It is very important that the activity he does in the classroom environment appeals to him...", "Ensuring participation affects his success and increases his happiness", T3 " As an individual,

being beneficial to society and the environment ", T4 "... I think that the welfare of the child will increase in a social and egalitarian environment where everyone can express themselves. The child feels better when he expresses himself".

Table 5. Learning environment characteristics, theme, subtheme and codes

Theme	Factors			
Subtheme	Learning environment characteristics			
		Participant		
Codes	T1	T2	T3	T4
Arousing curiosity, attracting attention	+		+	
Large area	+	+		
Suitable for the child	+	+	+	+
A safe environment		+	+	
Access to materials			+	+
Bright environment	+		+	+
Positive peer communication and interaction				+
Constructivist environment	+			
Activity diversity		+		

In Table 5, teachers describe the characteristics of the learning environment arousing curiosity, attracting attention, having a large space, suitable for the child, a safe environment, access to materials, a bright environment, positive peer communication and interaction, constructivist environment, activity diversity, Teachers' statements regarding the codes in Table III are given below.

T1: "The learning environment is important in terms of arousing curiosity and attracting attention in children...", "....A size suitable for the number of children in the class allows children to move more easily and express themselves more easily.", "Instead of direct explanation in the learning environment, the child should think about this issue, If he is allowed to express his ideas, he will learn how to access information.",T2. "...There are so many personal differences, there should be diversity that appeals to all of them and that all of them can benefit from. If I cannot appeal to everyone in my activities, then the other person will get bored and withdraw, or will not be able to complete their development, or will have to find something according to their current interest." S3. "It is necessary to prepare a safe environment. It is necessary to arrange the materials in a way that children can see and according to their height. A clean, bright environment and activities that arouse curiosity are required. The child's liking, trusting the teacher, and trusting the school will be reflected in the positive classroom climate.", T4 "It should appeal to the child. Suitability for the child should be essential. It must be in a way that meets their physical, emotional and social needs. "Daylight, for example, is an element that greatly affects a person's mental state. It should be arranged in a way that allows them to communicate with their peers, and there should be an environment where they can play both as a group and individually."

Table 6. Theme, subtheme and codes for planning learning activities

Theme	Factors			
Subtheme	Learning activities			
Codes		Participant		
	T1	T2	T3	T4
Suitability for developmental levels	+		+	+
Individual differences		+		
Arouse curiosity	+	+		

Codes				
Prompting research		+		
Children's interests and needs	+		+	+
Active-passive balance			+	
Attracting the child's attention	+	+	+	+
Equality of opportunity	+			+
Child-centered		+	+	+
Achieving gains	+	+	+	+
Teacher awareness			+	+
Values	+			
Supporting the child's strengths		+		
Peer relationships		+	+	
Learning through play			+	
Making observations and evaluations		+	+	+

When the table is examined, the codes related to planning learning activities are; suitability for developmental levels, individual differences, arousing curiosity, doing research, children's interests and needs, active-passive balance, attracting the child's attention, equality of opportunity, child-centered, achieving goals, teacher awareness, values, supporting the child's strengths, peer relations, and play. They expressed it as learning, observation, and evaluation. Quotations from teachers' statements regarding the codes specified in Table IV are as follows:

T1: "…We consider each child's own development level; we think about each child individually. We organize activities in a way that can contribute to the development of each child, considering the behaviors, concepts, and values we want to impart…", T2. "It is important for me to encourage children to be curious about their individual differences and to have activities where they can do research." S3: "I prepare activities in line with the interests of the children. If it is active, then I include more passive activities. Since they learn by playing, I try to teach them more through play, and I make sure that the activities are child centered.", T IV. "…. I primarily consider the gains. I do not approve of competition. We do every activity with play to make them feel good. I make sure that it is child-centered, appropriate to the level of the children, and suitable for the material and classroom environment..."

Table 7. Theme, sub-theme and codes regarding things to consider when implementing activities in terms of well-being

Theme	Factors			
Subtheme	Implementing Learning activities			
	Participant			
Codes	T1	T2	T3	T4
Give opportunity	+			
Child centered	+			
Attracting attention and interest	+			
Presenting a variety of materials	+			
Learning by doing and experiencing	+			
Listening, making eye contact	+			
Using tone of voice and facial expressions		+		
Being fair and equal				+

When Table 7 is examined, teachers, in the process of implementing activities, give opportunities to the

child, be child-centered, attract their attention, present different materials, learn by doing, listen, make eye contact, use tone of voice and facial expressions, be fair and egalitarian. They stated that they took these components into account.

Quotations from teacher statements, T1. "Giving opportunities to the child, being student-centered, the student must be actively involved, attracting children's interest and attention, and ensuring that they focus completely. "We use different materials while applying, provide opportunities for them to learn by doing, and we especially focus on listening. I make sure they make eye contact with me while listening." T2. "The teacher should convey his excitement through his tone of voice and facial expressions." T4. "...I think most of all that there should be fairness in the well-being of children, there should be equality. "Everyone should be equal, there should be no injustice while practicing, these affect well-being."

Table 8. Theme, sub-theme and codes according to teachers' opinions about the relationship between evaluating learning activities and the child's well-being

Theme	Factors			
Subtheme	Evaluating Learning activities			
			Participant	
Codes	T1	T2	T3	T4
Identifying children's situations and needs	+			
Guiding what we want to gain	+	+		
Track gains		+		+
Monitoring development and learning		+		
Writing a development report		+		+
Source for parent meetings		+		
Identifying children's strengths		+		+
directions that need support	+			
Communication with family			+	
Suitability for student level			+	+
Guidance in planning			+	+

As seen in Table 8**,** teachers are responsible for identifying children's situations and needs, guiding the goals we want to achieve, following the goals, monitoring development and learning, writing development reports, being a source for parent-teacher talks, determining children's strengths and areas that need support, communicating with the family, being suitable for the student level, and providing guidance in planning. Shared their views that evaluation has a relationship with the child's well-being. Quotations from teachers' opinions are as follows:

T1. "It will shed light on what we want to give to children. Changes and additions can be made according to the children's conditions and needs." T2. "You don't have to worry about determining whether the goals have been achieved or writing a progress report and meeting with the parents. The best thing about the child is that you don't miss any points. "It allows us to support the child's stronger side." T3. "...To evaluate and present what points are missing, knowing which gains should be given in the future." T4. "Is it appropriate for my student's level? isn't it? Where is my class in this achievement, how much have I achieved, how much have I not achieved, what can I do for this? "I use previous evaluations in subsequent planning."

Table 9. Theme, subtheme and codes for social-emotional relationships

Theme	Factors			
Subtheme	Social-emotional relationships			
		Participant		
Codes	T1	T2	T3	T4
Seeing value	+		+	
Creating love in the environment			+	
Gaining experience in the social environment	+			
Learning from peers	+			
Sharing	+		+	
Solidarity	+			
Collaboration	+		+	
Positive peer communication/relationships	+			+
Be accepted		+		
Bond of trust				+
Teacher support		+		
Positive classroom climate			+	
Seeing as an individual			+	

When we look at the codes belonging to the social-emotional relationships sub-theme in line with the teachers' statements in Table 9, they define it as being valued, creating love in the environment, gaining experience in the social environment, learning from peers, sharing, friendly, fraternal, cooperation, positive peer communication/relationships, being accepted, a bond of trust, teacher support, a positive classroom climate, and seeing yourself as an individual. Quotations from teachers' opinions are as follows:

T1 "...they gain opportunities by gaining experience in the social environment, and peer learning affects their well-being in the things they learn from each other. Like helping, sharing, cooperating...", T2 "...It is very important for it to be accepted. It is necessary to show that the child exists by making his friends feel his stronger aspects, rather than his weaknesses. To prepare the environment for children's relationships with each other. Showing love by touching" T3. "If you create an atmosphere by sharing in a friendly and brotherly way in cooperation, there will be no bullying and a state of well-being will occur. And this is reflected in education." T4. "Positive peer relationships positively affect well-being. Achieving peer communication significantly affects children's well-being. Positive teacher attitude is important. The child then accepts discipline. "The bond of trust is developing." T1. "The most basic need is to be valued, they want to feel that they are a valuable individual. Children who feel valued love the school and the teacher and come to school with pleasure. "It provides ease and comfort in communications." T3. "I see them as individuals. "Because they know that I see them as individuals, they feel valued and behave accordingly."

Table 10. Theme, sub-theme and codes for teacher suggestions for child well-being

Theme	Factors			
Subtheme	Suggestions			
Codes		Participant		
	T1	T2	T3	T4
Giving opportunity to social relationships	+			
Being a guide	+			
Kid-appropriate goals	+			
Observation	+		+	
Communicate and interact	+			
Creating a safe environment		+		

Family support	+		
School-family communication and cooperation	+	+	
Training qualified teachers			+

In Table 10, the codes under the sub-theme of suggestions for the child's well-being are shown. These are: giving opportunity to social relationships, being a guide, appropriate goals for the child, observation, communication and interaction, creating a safe environment, family support, school-family communication and cooperation, training qualified teachers.

T1 "...You need to be a guide, not a teacher. Setting appropriate goals for each child. Talking to children, communicating is important...", T2. "It is important for them to be in a safe environment where they can love each other or the adults here, and the child feels the cooperation of the school and the family. He comes to school more positive and motivated. T3 "...Observation and evaluation are very important... communication with the family is very important...it is important to include the family in the school...", T4 "Qualified teachers affect the child's well-being..."

Discussion

The research's first sub-purpose is to reveal teachers' awareness of well-being. According to the teachers' answers to the interview questions: Under the theme of well-being, codes were created according to sub-themes such as the general meaning of well-being and the well-being of children. The meaning of well-being for teachers; They defined it as being happy, mental health, physical health, environmental health, feeling confident, being loved, achieving the best self-realization and holistic development. The field of positive psychology is based on individuals and the idea of individuals' self-actualization. It supports the individual's efforts to realize the self, which is based on experience and self-knowledge, so that he can live his full potential (Schunk, 2012; Seligman, 2011; Seligman & Parks, 2005). In this context, according to the definition of the World Health Organization (WHO), health is defined as the absence of disease and disability only. Lee (2008) defined well-being as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. According to Ryff (1989) well-being is being happy. Ryff (1989) expressed it as being healthy in all areas of development. It can be said that in this study, teachers' definitions of general well-being are supported by the literature.

Codes created for teachers' thoughts on the sub-theme of the meaning and importance of child well-being; They expressed this as individual development, being aware of one's achievements and feeling proud, being proud of oneself, positive support, expressing oneself, trusting the environment, ensuring participation, social and emotional well-being, adapting to the classroom environment and being useful to society. According to teachers, the meaning of child well-being can be said to be compatible with Seligman's PERMA model. The framework of positive emotion, participation, relationships, meaning and success can be considered a valid model for children's well-being (Cann, 2019; Holweek, 2019). The presence of well-being in children indicates their ability to interact positively and safely with their environment, benefit from learning opportunities (Marbina et al., 2015) and individual development. Seligman (2012) defines positive relationships as the emergence of interactions between individuals that foster feelings of love, support, and value from others. It is emphasized that having these relationships forms the basis of positive psychological growth and development (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan 1985).

The second sub-purpose of the research is to reveal teachers' opinions about the impact of the learning environment on children's well-being. The themes and sub-themes that emerged regarding this sub-purpose are under the main theme of factors, there are sub-themes such as learning environment features, planning to learn activities, implementing learning activities, evaluating learning activities, social and emotional

relationships, and teacher suggestions. In this context, the codes for the learning environment characteristics sub-theme are given in Table 5; They expressed opinions such as arousing curiosity, attracting attention, large space, suitability for the child, safe environment, access to materials, bright environment, positive peer communication and interaction, constructivist environment, and diversity of activities. (Güleş, 2013; Ministry of National Education, 2013; MEB, 2024).As stated, for healthy holistic development in preschool children, a rich and encouraging environment, safe learning opportunities, a suitable physical environment, the child's choices, The emphasis on the importance of environmental features that will stimulate the child's curiosity and desire to explore their environment, use of educational materials and relationships with others, supports the views of teachers. As stated, for healthy holistic development in preschool children, a rich and encouraging environment, safe learning opportunities, a suitable physical environment, the child's choices, The emphasis on the importance of environmental features that will stimulate the child's curiosity and desire to explore their environment, use of educational materials and relationships with others, supports the views of teachers.

As shown in Table 6, the codes under the second sub-theme are suitability for developmental levels, individual differences, arousing curiosity, prompting research, children's interests and needs, active-passive balance, attracting the child's attention, equal opportunity, child-centered, achieving achievements, teacher awareness, values, supporting the child's strengths, peer relations, observation and expressing them in the form of evaluation. When the basic features of the preschool education program are considered, it is child-centered, considers individual differences, where children are active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of information, includes achievements appropriate to their interests, needs, competencies and characteristics, allows the use of different methods and techniques, and provides the teacher with a guiding role. The program fosters an understanding of a democratic education environment that fosters learning. In addition, the basic elements of daily plans, it can be said that the inclusion of achievements, concepts and values in teachers' opinions coincides with the pre-school education program (MEB- Pre-School Education Program, 2024).

Codes formed under the sub-theme of implementing learning activities, related to the things to be considered when applying activities for the well-being of children; they stated that they took into consideration elements such as giving opportunities to the child, being child-centered, attracting attention and interest, presenting different materials, learning by doing, listening, making eye contact, using tone of voice and facial expressions, being fair and egalitarian. In the comparison of the role of the teacher in different educational approaches by Ekici (2015), the basic role of the teacher is, it can be said that the roles of guiding the child's learning, being seen as an active learner and communicator, a careful observer and planner-environment organizer, revealing the true love of learning in every child, guiding the child according to the pace of development and learning, and being an observation expert support the views of teachers.

As can be seen in Table 8, the codes belong to the sub-theme of evaluating learning activities, which were formed as a result of teachers' opinions about the effects of evaluating learning activities on children's well-being; It is important to evaluate the child's situation and needs in terms of determining the situation and needs of the children, guiding towards what we want to gain, tracking the achievements, monitoring development and learning, writing a development report, being a source for parent-teacher talks, determining the children's strengths and areas that need support, communication with the family, suitability for the student level, and providing guidance in planning. They shared their views that it has a relationship with well-being. In the OECD (2021) report, one of the five basic components to improve quality in early childhood education are stated as research, observation and evaluation (Taguma & Makowiecki, 2012). Evaluation is a prerequisite for quality education and training. It is both a conclusion and a beginning to review what has been done. It provides guidance to the educator on what to do in subsequent activity planning (Demirel, 2023). As stated in the basic principles of pre-school education, it is recommended

that the evaluation results be used effectively for the development of children, teachers and the pre-school education program (MEB, 2024). It can be said that teachers' opinions are parallel to the content of the institutions directing pre-school education.

When Table 9 is examined, the codes formed under social-emotional relationship are: to be valued, creating love in the environment, gaining experience in the social environment, learning from peers, sharing, friendly, fraternal, cooperation, positive peer communication/relationships, be accepted, and bond of trust, receiving teacher support, having positive classroom climate, and being seen as an individual. Children's well-being is also considered an important indicator of the quality of developmental processes and educational practices (Van Sanden & Joly, 2003). It is known that well-being is necessary for the healthy development of children. Accordingly, the children most likely to experience school success are those with strong social and emotional foundations (Rock & Pollack, 2002; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Well-being and social-emotional competence depend on a complex set of skills and dispositions that develop in early childhood. From the first days of life, babies begin to rapidly develop their reactions to their environment and those around them (parents, teachers and peers) to make sense of the world (Lally & Mangione, 2006). The foundation of well-being lies in the development of strong foundations on which secure attachment and loving relationships can develop. It contributes to a range of long-term well-being competencies, including secure attachment, love of learning, and the ability to regulate emotions and social interactions (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2011). In this context, teachers' views on the elements of social-emotional relationships that shape well-being overlap with the literature.

Table 10, codes related to the sub-theme of teacher suggestions for the child's well-being; teachers; It is seen that they also make suggestions such as giving opportunity to social relations, being a guide, appropriate goals for the child, observation, communication and interaction, creating a safe environment, family support, teacher-family communication and cooperation, and training qualified teachers. When we look at the suggestions offered by teachers regarding the child's well-being, it can be said that they are parallel to both the aims and principles of the Preschool Education Program (MEB, 2013) (equality of opportunity, compatibility with the child) and the child well-being criteria of the OECD (2021). According to OECD (2021) data, being child-centered, setting child-appropriate goals, being sensitive to age and stage, capturing inequalities and turning them into opportunities are in line with the findings of the research.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research was conducted to understand the impact of preschool learning environments on children's well-being from teachers' perspectives. In line with this purpose, there are two sub-objectives: 1. What are the opinions of preschool teachers about general well-being and child well-being? 2. What are the opinions of preschool teachers about the factors affecting children's well-being in the learning environment? An interview form was prepared to reveal teachers' opinions on this issue. Within the scope of the interview questions, for the first sub-goal, questions were asked to the teachers about general well-being and children's well-being. For the second sub-goal, questions were included to reveal the physical and human effects of the learning environment on children's well-being. These questions are about learning environment characteristics, planning, implementation and evaluation of educational activities, such as teacher and peer relations. Inductive content analysis was conducted based on the answers given by the teachers. As a result of the analysis, the main theme that emerged for the first sub-goal was well-being and sub-themes are the general meaning of well-being and the meaning of children's well-being. The main theme that emerged for the second sub-goal was factors. Sub-themes are learning environment features, planning to learn activities, implementing learning activities, evaluating learning activities and teacher suggestions.

The results obtained from the study are presented according to sub-objectives. According to the first sub-goal, codes belonging to the theme of well-being and the sub-theme of the general meaning of well-being are being happy, spiritual health, physical health, environmental health, feeling confident, being loved, achieving the best - self-realization and holistic development and health.

Codes belonging to the sub-theme of the meaning of children's well-being; individual development, being aware and proud of one's achievements, being proud of oneself, positive support, self-expression, trusting the environment, participation, social and emotional well-being, adaptation to the classroom environment and being useful to society.

According to the second sub-goal; codes according to the factors theme and learning environment characteristics sub-theme; Arousing curiosity, attracting attention, large space, suitable for the child, a safe environment, access to materials, a bright environment, positive peer communication and interaction, a constructivist environment, The and a variety of activities.

Codes for learning activities according to the planning sub-theme; suitability for developmental levels, individual differences, arousing curiosity, encouraging research, children's interests and needs, active-passive balance, attracting the child's attention, equality of opportunity, child-centered, achieving goals, teacher awareness, values, supporting the child's strengths, peer relations, play-based learning, observation and evaluation.

Codes learning activities according to the application sub-theme; giving opportunities, being child-centered, attracting attention and interest, presenting different materials, learning by doing, listening, making eye contact, using tone of voice and facial expressions, being fair and egalitarian.

Codes belonging to the sub-theme of evaluating learning activities include: identifying children's situations and needs, guidance on what we want children to acquire, tracking gains, monitoring development and learning, writing development reports, being a source for parent-teacher talks, determining children's strengths and areas that need support, communication with the family, suitability for student level, and guidance in planning.

Codes belonging to the social-emotional relationships sub-theme; being valued, creating love in the environment, gaining experience in the social environment, learning from peers, sharing, friendly, fraternal, cooperation, positive peer communication/interaction, being accepted, bond of trust, teacher support, positive classroom climate, being seen as an individual.

Codes belonging to the teacher suggestion's sub-theme: giving opportunity to social relationships, being a guide, appropriate goals for the child, observation, communication and interaction, creating a safe environment, family support, teacher-family communication and cooperation, and training qualified teachers.

The inference that can be made from the results of the study is that teachers have high theoretical awareness about general well-being, child well-being, the learning environment and the effects of the elements that make up the environment on the child's well-being. The limitation of this study is that it did not include questions that would reveal teachers' views on practice. The study was conducted with four preschool teachers from different schools. Not including the opinions of a larger number of teachers and conducting the study only with the interview method can be seen as lack of data diversication and triangulation which can be considered as limitations. (Merriam, 2013).

This study, which was conducted to learn the effect of learning environments in line with teachers' opinions on the child's well-being, can be repeated with a larger number of samples. In the interviews with teachers, it was observed that the well-being of teachers should also be emphasized. In this regard, a study can be conducted to examine the well-being of teachers. Seminars on well-being can be organized to inform teachers more about well-being and to raise awareness about this subject. Teachers' awareness of activities and practices that can be carried out (in-school and out-of-school) for the well-being of children can be examined. For teachers to provide guidance to families on this issue, teachers' opinions can be examined regarding the effects of families on children's well-being and the practices that should be followed. In the same context, parent training and participation studies can be carried out to raise awareness of the effects of families on children's well-being and what can be done in the home environment. Regarding the effects of the learning environment on children's well-being, activity plans such as document analysis can be examined. In terms of well-being, checklists can be prepared for the characteristics of the learning environment and the situation can be determined. One of the results obtained in line with teachers' self-reports is that teacher qualifications affect the child's well-being. For this reason, it has been recommended to train qualified teachers. For this purpose, it may be recommended to evaluate the suitability of the content of the preschool teacher education program in training qualified teachers. The child's opinions about the effects of the educational environment on the child's well-being can be learned. It can be revealed whether the teacher's opinions and the child's expectations are in line with each other. In this study, teachers' opinions are included. In future studies, it is recommended to diversify the data through observations, interviews and document review regarding the practices related to well-being in the learning environment.

Declarations

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