

## **Investigation of Teachers' Views on Classroom Practices to Support Children's Self-Regulation Skills**

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### **Abstract**

This research investigates preschool teachers' views on classroom practices to support children's self-regulation skills. The study was conducted with 27 preschool teachers working in the Independent Kindergarten affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in the city center of Bursa in Turkey. Data were obtained from teachers by asking semi-structured questions using the interview technique. Descriptive analysis was used to evaluate the data from the interviews. As a result, the teachers participating in the research stated that self-regulation skills could be gained by teaching children emotion management and self-care skills and supporting their ability to express their feelings and thoughts comfortably and appropriately. In addition, the teachers stated that they mainly included stories, play, and drama activities that support daily life skills in the classroom, and teachers stated that they arranged the materials in the learning centers and other materials in the classroom so children could easily access them.

**Keywords:** Self-Regulation, Early Childhood Teacher, Practices and Strategies

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## INTRODUCTION

Self-regulation is generally defined as the ability to control emotional states, cognitive processes, and behaviors when encountering external pressures or impulses to achieve a desired state or goal (Bauer & Baumeister, 2011; Diamond & Lee, 2011). Therefore, self-regulation can be understood as a useful structure that enables the individual to control his thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Self-regulation enables the individual to have intentional control over his thoughts and feelings (Bauer & Baumeister, 2011).

### **The Development of Self-Regulation in Early Childhood**

According to research, the development of self-regulation skills is linked to activity in the prefrontal cortex (Blair, 2002). The period between the ages of three and six is considered crucial for developing self-regulation due to the rapid growth of the prefrontal cortex (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). At the age of 5, children undergo significant changes related to self-regulation, self-development, theory of mind, and internalization of cultural and moral norms (Carlson, Moses & Breton, 2002). According to several studies, behavioral inhibition typically emerges during the third year of life and shows significant improvement between the ages of 2-3 and 4 (Posner, Rothbart, Sheese, & Tang, 2007). However, a few studies on inhibition control have found that despite being aware of the rules, some three-year-old children fail to comply with them (Russell, Mauthner, Sharpe & Tidswell, 1991; Zelazo, Frye & Rapus, 1996). In contrast, four-year-old children haven't seen to experience such difficulties. According to research by Alloway, Gathercole, Willis & Adams (2004), inhibiting prepotent responses can significantly enhance working memory in children up to 5. Similarly, Tillman, Thorell, Brocki & Bohlin (2008) found that although four-year-old children could experience challenges in stopping their motor responses, they could significantly improve their motor inhibition as measured by the stop signal task.

#### *Why should self-regulation be promoted in early childhood?*

A recent meta-analysis study reported that enhanced self-regulation in childhood plays a vital role in academic performance and in promoting and maintaining physical and mental health in childhood and throughout life. Poor self-regulation skills are associated with risky behaviours (including substance use), psychiatric disorders, crime, and unemployment (Robson, Allen & Howard, 2020). Therefore, self-regulation skills should be evaluated early (Woodward et al., 2017). The early evaluation may provide early intervention for developmental, behavioural, and academic negatives that will occur in the future.

Improving young children's self-regulation skills should be the foundation of early childhood education as it affects all fields of behaviour and development. Because early childhood is critical for developing self-regulation skills, self-regulation skills should be supported in early childhood classes. Supporting these skills can enable children to take full advantage of learning opportunities in the classroom environment. For example, children who develop self-regulation are more likely to follow instructions, wait their turn, and pay attention; and less likely to display aggressive and impulsive behaviour. Children who develop self-regulation skills not only have better relationships with their teachers and peers but also perform better in schoolwork, including literacy and maths (McClelland et al., 2007). Self-regulation is a learning tool that highly predicts academic achievement (Post, Boyer & Brett 2006).

Self-regulation difficulties in early childhood have long-term effects and are associated with emotional and behavioural problems in middle childhood and adolescence (Kochanska, Murray & Harlan, 2000). Children with stronger self-regulation skills are mentally and financially better when they become adults (Moffitt et al., 2011). Students with low self-regulation skills risk developing emotional and behavioural problems and have difficulty building positive relationships with their peers and teachers (Best & Miller, 2010; Eisenet et al., 2010).

*The effect of early childhood classroom environment and teacher in promoting self-regulation*

Classroom quality affects teachers' effective classroom management, supports children's behavioral and cognitive self-control, and ensures higher behavioural engagement of children (Rimm-Kaufman, Curby, Grimm, Nathanson & Brock, 2009).

Children with poor self-regulation skills need more support from their teachers to improve their self-regulation. Teachers spend more time helping children with poor self-regulation to comply with classroom rules, and routines and meet classroom expectations (for example, waiting in line, raising hands, participating in structured activities, etc.). Children's self-regulation skills must be promoted in the class environment to enable them to adapt to the classroom environment and socialize (Degol&Bachman,2015). Teachers play an essential role in the development of self-regulation in children. As a result, teachers' beliefs about poor self-regulation (i.e., inattention and impulsivity) and classroom practices to support them should be determined (Burchinal, Feinberg, Bryant & Clifford, 2000; Mashburn et al.,2008). Although most studies examining the relationship between young children's interactions with their teachers and peers and the development of self-regulation report that self-regulation predicts the quality of children's interactions (e.g., Eisenberg, Valiente&Eggum, 2010; Rudasill, 2011), the literature indicates that the classroom context is important to promote the development of children's self-regulation (Eisenhower et al., 2007; Raver et al., 2011).

When teachers establish warm and close relationships with children, children show better emotion regulation skills (Shields et al. 2001), more social competence, and fewer behavioural problems (Mashburn et al. 2008). Teacher-child interactions characterized by negativity, disagreement, and/or conflict are associated with lower levels of children's self-management (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Engaging children with classroom tasks and activities is an aspect of the classroom environment that supports the development of their behavioural regulation (Downer et al., 2010; Fantuzzo, Perry & McDermott, 2004). Children's ability to participate and persist in classroom activities and learning tasks has been linked to the development of school readiness skills (Hughes & Kwok, 2006; McClelland et al., 2007). Studies show that preschool children's positive participation in tasks and activities is associated with better attention and impulse control (Bierman et al., 2009; Chang & Burns, 2005).

Teachers' teaching methods, how they prepare the classroom environment, and their relationship with children play an essential role in developing children's self-regulation (Cameron & Morrison, 2011; Lambert, Cartledge, Heward & Ya-yu Lo, 2006). According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (2009), teachers are responsible for implementing the curriculum that helps children regulate their emotions, manage impulses, and minimize frustration and anxiety(as cited in Webster, 2015). The important role of teachers is to promote children's ability to organize themselves through planning, initiating, and executing tasks (Webster, 2015).

Although studies on supporting self-regulation in the literature report the necessity for teachers to support the development of self-regulation in young children, there is no consensus on the best strategies and practices to support self-regulation in young children (Dignath & Buttner, 2018).

### **Importance of research**

Self-regulation should be promoted and understood by parents and educators in the early periods of a child's life (Connor et al., 2010). The academic success provided by self-regulation continues until the 6th grade, even if it is gained through preschool education (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). Therefore, children must gain self-regulation skills in the preschool period. As far as we know, there are very few studies in the literature on the classroom practices of preschool teachers directly to improve children's self-regulation skills only (For example, Thomas, 2021; Iriogbe-Efionayi, 2018). When the literature is examined, there are observational studies conducted on teachers' implementation of strategies to support their social-emotional development and scale studies examining the opinions of teachers about their applications (For example, Steed & Roach, 2017; Luo

et al., 2021; Rakap et al., 2018; Heo et al., 2014). Moreover, little is known about the specific practices that preschool teachers use in the classroom to support children's self-regulation skills. Teachers need to know how these skills develop and what they need to do to support them to be able to support children's self-regulation in the preschool period. According to Stormont et al. (2011), many teachers lack the necessary skills to support children's social-emotional learning and self-regulation skills.

Studies in the literature regarding the achievement and development of self-regulation skills in young children emphasize that teachers should not leave this process to luck (Moreno, Shwayder & Friedman 2017). Teachers need to be conscious of their strategies and practices to support children's self-regulation skills in the preschool period. Teachers have an essential role in young children's internalization of self-regulation skills (Muenks, Wigfield & Eccles, 2018). Silkenbuemer et al. (2018) suggest that more research should be investigated on strategies and practices implemented to help teachers support the development of self-regulation in children.

When the studies in the national literature are examined, there are studies examining the self-regulation skills of preschool children (e.g., Ertürk, 2013; Yıldız et al., 2014). Studies examining teachers' classroom practices are quite limited (e.g., Kurt & Sığırtmaç, 2021; Aykut, Apaydın, & Çelik, 2018). This research aims to investigate teachers' views about classroom practices to support preschool children's self-regulation skills. It is thought that the findings to be obtained as a result of the research would guide future training and programs to support self-regulation skills and the classroom practices of teachers will be determined with the information received from them and contribute to the literature in this respect. In addition, it is considered essential to determine the deficiencies or weaknesses of teachers in their classroom practices to support children's self-regulation skills and to support their deficiencies and strengthen their weaknesses. In addition, there are no courses called "supporting social and emotional development in the classroom" in preschool education undergraduate programs in Turkey, but it is called social skills training lessons. With the name of supporting social and emotional development, this course is included in the child development and education departments of health sciences faculties of several universities. It is thought that the results of the research will contribute to the inclusion of the courses under the name of "supporting social and emotional development in the classroom" and "supporting self-regulation skills" in the preschool teaching undergraduate program and determining the topics on how to support children's self-regulation skills in the classroom.

### **The aim of this research**

This research aims to investigate preschool teachers' views on classroom practices to support children's self-regulation skills

For this purpose, answers to the following research questions are sought

- What are the teachers' knowledge levels about self-regulation?
- What do teachers do about teaching self-regulation skills in the classroom?
- What do teachers need to know to support children's self-regulation skills?
- What activities do children do in the classroom to support their self-regulation skills?
- How are they spatially organized in the classroom?
- What methods and strategies do they apply? Answers were sought.

## METHOD

### Research Design

The case design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the study, which it was aimed to examine the opinions of teachers about their classroom practices to support preschool children's self-regulation skills. The case study is accepted as a distinctive approach to searching for answers to scientific questions in research (Yin, 2018; Merriam, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The case study is a research design preferred by researchers in addressing the situations encountered in educational organizations or the programs planned to be implemented. This research design can examine the behaviours of school administrators, teachers, and students in schools, informal relations between school stakeholders, school management structure, and many situations related to curriculum implementation. With this approach, the problems experienced by school stakeholders in the education process or their views on the current situation are presented to the reader from the perspective of the researcher (Yeşilbaş Özenç, 2022). It is seen that this method has been preferred in many educational research in recent years, especially because it has a high potential to understand the complexity of the learning-teaching environment and processes and to influence educational theories and practices with the results it reveals (Uçan, 2019). This method was preferred because it would be more functional to determine and interpret the opinions of teachers about their classroom practices to support preschool children's self-regulation skills and provide researchers with the opportunity to obtain more rich data (Yeşilbaş Özenç, 2022; Uçan, 2019).

### Study Group

This research was carried out with 30 preschool teachers working in official preschool education institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Provincial Education in the district of Bursa in the 2021-2022 academic year. The study group for the research was selected using the criterion sampling method, considered one of the purposeful sampling methods. The purposeful sampling model provides in-depth information about the person, event, or situation that is the subject of the research in line with a specific purpose (Ozdemir, 2010, as cited in Maxwell). The criterion sampling method is used to study situations that meet predetermined criteria. The criteria can also be determined by the researchers (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The criterion in the research is that the teachers have worked in independent kindergartens in a district of Bursa for at least five years, have at least a bachelor's degree, and are willing to participate in the research. 30 preschool teachers who met the criteria were interviewed. There are several reasons for determining these criteria. First, more in-depth and functional information could be obtained if the teachers had at least five years of teaching experience rather than those with little experience. The second criterion is that they have a bachelor's degree. This is because associate degree child development graduates could work in preschool institutions in Turkey Training about the program, teaching methods and techniques, and teaching practice are included in undergraduate education. There is no pedagogical content knowledge in the associate degree child development program. As part of the study group, 27 out of the 30 teachers were able to define self-regulation in response to the first question. The remaining three teachers were not included in the study group due to their inability to description a self-regulation definition. All of the teachers participating in the research have a bachelor's degree. All the teachers are women. 25% are between the ages of 29-35, and 75% are between 36-44. In addition, most teachers (93%) have a professional seniority of 5-11 years, and 7% of them 12-14 years. All of the teachers are teaching 5-6-year-old children. It was determined that 81% of the teachers had 15-20 children in their class, and 19% had 10-15 children.

### Data Collection

A semi-structured interview form was used to collect the data for the study. To prepare the interview questions in the form, the researchers conducted a detailed literature review. The final form was formed by taking expert opinions for the prepared interview forms. There are six questions in the interview form; Expert opinions were obtained from three academics who are faculty members in the

child development department on whether the questions were appropriate, clear, and understandable. As a result of the experts' evaluation, necessary corrections were made, and the interview form was finalized. Then, a pilot study was conducted to test the functionality of the questions. As a result of the pilot interviews, the interview forms were converted into individual interview forms suitable for the participants in their final form and applied individually. 27 preschool teachers were included in the analysis using the interview technique is widely used in qualitative research (Brinkmann, 2013). Teachers were interviewed face-to-face at the appropriate place and time, and the data were recorded with a voice recorder. Interviews lasted an average of 30-40 minutes.

### **Data Collection Process**

The researcher, who did a literature reading on early childhood self-regulation skills, determined that it is essential to teach children self-regulation skills starting from early childhood. As a result of the current situation, what kind of teachers' knowledge about self-regulation in preschool education institutions? Teachers, how practice to promote self-regulation in their classrooms. Such a research idea occurred to examine what kind of practice they do. Data from the teachers were taken face-to-face in their school environment. Before the start of data collection, the teachers in the study group were informed about the subject of the study, and the consent form was read. In the meantime, it was emphasized to the teachers that they could express their thoughts most simply without any worries and concerns and that the data obtained would be kept strictly confidential and would not be shared with any other institution or person. In the interviews conducted to determine the teachers' opinions about "promoting children's self-regulation skills" in the classroom, the interviews were only audio-recorded since most teachers did not allow video recording. Interview questions were asked of each preschool teacher in the same order, and care was taken to provide a flexible interview environment. Teachers were asked to answer the questions with clear and accurate expressions regarding their classroom practices.

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained within the scope of this research were analyzed by using descriptive analysis and content analysis, which are among the qualitative data analysis methods, together. Descriptive analysis is a type of analysis based on the interpretation of data provided by data collection tools according to themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018) Descriptive analysis was used to evaluate the data from the interviews. Descriptive analysis provides a summary and interpretation of the data obtained in the research according to predetermined themes. However, it presents the findings in a way that the reader can understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The answers given by the teachers to each question were grouped and interpreted in terms of their similarities. Some of the teachers' answers were directly conveyed. To ensure the reliability of the research, the answers of the teachers were coded and analyzed separately by three different experts from the field of child development and preschool. In the analysis of the data, more than one researcher needs to calculate the reliability of the coding after coding independently (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this study, the agreement percentage formula of Miles & Huberman (1994) ( $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{consensus}}{\text{agreement} + \text{disagreement}} \times 100$ ) was employed for reliability analysis. Reliability between the coders was calculated as 90%. According to Miles & Huberman (1994), the reliability between expert's and researcher's evaluations must be 90% and above. Considering the confidentiality of the research, the information about the participants was not included; instead, "Teacher 1; Teacher 2 (T1; T2) coding was used. Then, the data were interpreted by presenting in the tables as frequency (f) and percentage (%).

## **FINDINGS**

The findings obtained in this part of the research are presented in 6 categories, considering the research questions. These are; Teachers' knowledge about self-regulation, Their views on teaching self-regulation in the early childhood classroom, activities that they primarily practice in the classroom to increase self-regulation skills and how they implement them, What they can do spatially in the

classroom to support self-regulation skills, Strategies-methods which they apply to support self-regulation skills.

The Frequency and Percentage values of the teachers' knowledge about self-regulation are shown in Table 1. Table 1

**Table 1 Teachers' knowledge of self-regulation**

	<i>f</i>	%
Managing and controlling emotions, thoughts and behaviors	15	%55
Making decisions about behaviors	3	%11
The child's self-acceptance, self-knowledge-awareness	3	%11
Organizing and transferring knowledge and skills as perceived by the child	2	%7
Able to perform self-care skills independently	8	%29
Fulfilling responsibilities	7	%25

n:27

Teachers participating in the research defined "self-regulation" mostly as "managing and controlling emotions, thoughts, and behaviours (55%) and self-care skills (29%). Some participant views on the definition of self-regulation skills are as follows;

*T.1. "Self-regulation is the ability of children to regulate their own feelings and thoughts and to decide on this while doing their behaviours. Deciding while performing a behaviour."*

*T.5. Self-regulation can be a way of managing children's emotions and behaviours. I think it's very important.*

*T.9. "I definitely think of self-regulation as self-management. I think that it is to be able to manage all his actions, attitudes, emotions, thoughts, his own intelligence. It is also important in childhood."*

*T.14. "I think self-regulation is the child's ability to do their own self-care skills comfortably. For example, if I give an example the simplest example is going to the toilet, picking up his pants, washing his hands when he comes out of the sink, and drying them with a napkin. Ability to perform self-care skills without being dependent on the teacher."*

*T.26. "When I think of self-regulation, I think of self-care skills. Self-care skills in children are very important in terms of taking responsibility."*

The Frequency and Percentage values of Teaching self-regulation skills in the early childhood classroom are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Teaching self-regulation skills in the early childhood classroom**

	<i>f</i>	%
It is taught by providing emotion management skill achievement.	16	%59
it is taught by promoting self-care skills	13	%48
it is taught as being a role model	5	%18
it is taught by creating classroom rules and making them obey	5	%18
It is taught by practicing self-recognition exercises for the child.	4	%14
It is taught to give responsibility to children	4	%14
It is taught by respecting the child, letting him/her express his/her feelings and thoughts, and caring.	10	%37

n:27

The teachers who participated in the research stated that the acquisition of self-regulation skills in early childhood classrooms could mostly be achieved by teaching self-care skills (48%), expressing feelings and thoughts (37%), and with respect to the child (37%). Some of the participant's views on the acquisition of self-regulation skills are as follows;

T5.” *During this period, I usually focus on the emotional behaviour of children. So I let them express themselves.*”

T13. *“By giving importance to all children's feelings, thoughts, and statements.”*

T14 *“By enabling children to do their own self-care skills without our intervention.”*

T15 *“I try to remain calm in case of stubbornness in children as much as possible. Because I know that he/she is obstinate. This age group tends to be obstinate. I sit down as calmly as possible and ask the child why we are in this situation.”*

T26 *“Every child should put on and take off his shoes and clothes and coat himself, especially in my class. Every child has a box. They get their own belongings and paints, leave them on their own, and organize their own cabinets. The child realizes his responsibilities.”*

The Frequency and Percentage values of What Should Preschool Teachers Know About Self-Regulation are shown in Table 3

**Table 3 What Should Preschool Teachers Know About Self-Regulation?**

	f	%
Getting to know the child-recognizing age and developmental characteristics	10	37
Teaching the skill of empathy	3	11
Effective Communication skills	4	14
Teaching self-care skills	12	44
Teaching emotion control skills	14	51
Behavior management	11	40
Classroom management	5	18

n:27

Preschool teachers stated that teachers should mostly have knowledge about “teaching emotion control skills (51%), teaching self-care skills (44%) and behavior management (40%). Some participant opinions are as follows;

T8. *“Definitely empathy. Teachers should know how to teach emotion-behavior control skills and children’s developmental characteristics.”*

T18.” *She/he needs to know how to teach any skill such as hand washing, especially for younger age groups. She/he needs to know how to teach children how to control their emotions, thoughts, and anger.”*

T22.” *We need to learn more about what we can do for children, what more can be done to help them control their emotions and behaviors.”*

The Frequency and Percentage values of Activities applied to promote children’s self-regulation skills in the classroom, and the way they are applied are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4 Activities applied to promote children’s self-regulation skills in the classroom and the way they are applied**

	f	%
Playing activity	14	51
Music activity	2	7
Story activity	5	18
Circle time	4	14
Drama	11	40
Daily life skills	10	37
Leisure time activity	3	11
Science education activity(Observation-animal feeding-plant growing)	3	11

n:27

Expressions of the teachers who participated in the research about the activities they practice in the class and how they practice them are as follows; mostly playing activities, drama (%40), and activities that support daily life skills (37%). Some participant opinions are as follows;

*T1 “I practice Playing activities. Because children can express themselves better through games.”*

*T3 “I practice Movement and Playing activities. Song, story, and playing activities for social-emotional development. “*

*T5 “I prefer drama the most. Because in this way, I think that the child can express himself more easily.” There, the child can easily express his/her concerns, fears, or good feelings. There are physical activities that we do every morning as playing activities. We do sports activities every morning. The children are bored of sitting. They start to get nervous. They become happier when they start the day with such activities.”*

The Frequency and Percentage values of Spatial arrangements in the classroom are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5 Spatial arrangements in the classroom**

	f	%
Arranging materials so that children can easily access	11	40
Preparing a board with visual materials	3	11
Organizing learning centers according to children's interests	10	37
Creating a Free Playing area	10	37
Preparing drama environment and materials	6	22

n:27

The teachers participating in the research stated that they mostly "arrange the materials in a way that children can reach easily (40%), prepare the learning centers according to the interests of the children (37%), and create free and accessible playground (37%) in the classroom. Some participant opinions are as follows;

*T5 “ I prepare learning centers according to their interests. I organize all the materials in the classroom in a way that children can reach.”*

*T9 “My classroom is divided into learning centers, and centers have specific tasks. Every child should have easy access to the materials in the center. Let me give an example. After playing with kinetic sand in the science education center, the child is completely responsible for cleaning the center and how it should be played.”*

*T14.* "Spatially, we have kitchen corners. There, children cook, set the table, call us, and take napkins from the cupboard, in other words, they support their own self-care skills. They realize that when our mouths become dirty, we will wipe them with a napkin."

*T19.* "In all learning centers, I ensure that each material is suitable for children's age group in a way they can easily reach. I enable them to discover features such as shape, texture, color, taste, and rhythm to create their own areas of interest and to discover their own emotions and thoughts."

The Frequency and Percentage values of Practiced Strategies-methods are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6 Practiced Strategies-methods**

	f	%
Being a role model	5	18
Positive communication methods	8	29
Problem-solving	5	18
Play and movement	12	44

n:27

Teachers who participated in the study stated that they applied play-based teaching (44%) and positive communication methods (29%); moreover, they were suitable role models and used problem-solving methods. Some participant opinions are as follows;

*T24* "Communication between teacher and child is very important. I use positive communication methods with the child to gain self-regulation skills."

*T22* "I try to empathize with the child. I make applications to support increasing the communication of children."

*T21* "I talk to the child at eye level, and I make explanations. For example, when a child cries, I say that he/she can explain why he/she is crying by talking, not by crying... I communicate. I provide more opportunities for free play and action."

*T12* "I use the play method more. Children can regulate themselves more during the play."

*T8* "I use more play and movement-based methods where children can behave freely and regulate their behaviours."

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Self-regulation is the ability to control emotions, cognitive processes, and behaviors when faced with external pressures or urges to achieve a desired state or goal. Self-regulation enables the individual to control her/his own thoughts and feelings (Bauer & Baumeister, 2011). The teachers who participated in the research defined self-regulation according to the literature definition. They defined it as "managing and controlling emotions, thoughts, behaviors and performing self-care skills independently." There are different results in the literature from the current study's findings. For example, the study of Willis, Dinehart, and Bliss (2014) found that 63% of the teachers participating in the research were not familiar with the term "self-regulation." Another study concluded that more than half of the teachers were unfamiliar with "self-regulation." In the study, although the teachers reported that they spent most of their time working on classroom management and children's behaviors, they reported that they defined the characteristics of self-regulation skills without using the term "self-regulation" (as cited in Willis, Dinehart & Bliss, 2014). In the present study, most teachers clearly stated which skills and behaviors comprise self-regulation.

Most teachers who participated in the research agreed that self-regulation skills could be gained by children. They stated that it could be promoted by teaching emotion management and self-

care skills, allowing them to express their feelings and thoughts, and respecting the child. Thomas (2021) stated that teachers should give direct instructions repetitively to the children, support them, and be role models for the behaviors they expect from them to promote their self-regulation skills. Thomas (2021) also emphasized the importance of teachers supporting children's intrinsic motivation and establishing positive student/teacher relationships. Early childhood teachers can help children regulate their emotions as role models for self-regulation behaviors (Zembylas, Charalambous & Charalambous, 2014). In the present study, According to the information received from the teachers themselves, it may be concluded that teachers do effective practices to support self-regulation skills. In early childhood classrooms, teachers' support for understanding and appropriately expressing emotions is important for developing children's self-regulation skills.

Most of the teachers stated that "they should know the teaching of emotion control skills and behavior management in children" regarding what preschool teachers need to know in order for children to gain self-regulation skills. Teaching emotion management skills is necessary to support self-regulation in children. Because self-regulation involves emotional self-regulation. (McClelland, Ponitz, Messersmith & Tominey, 2010; Ursache, Blair & Raver, 2012). In addition, teachers also need to know effective behavior and classroom management. Classroom management is important in promoting the development of children's self-regulation (Eisenhower, Baker, & Blacher, 2007; Raver et al., 2011). Studies show that young children's self-regulation skills improve when teachers establish positive, affectionate teacher-child relationships and use behavior management strategies that rely less on punishment and criticism (Jones, Bub & Raver, 2013; Raver et al., 2011; Webster-Stratton, Jamila Reid & Stoolmiller, 2008).

It was concluded that the teachers participating in the research mainly included "play, drama, stories, and activities that support daily life skills" in the classroom. It can be stated that teachers do effective practices in the classroom in line with the literature to support children's self-regulation skills. It has been stated in the literature that play is an effective method and activity in supporting children's self-regulation skills. Becker, McClelland, Loprinzi, and Trost (2014) found that active play is associated with better self-regulation skills. Researchers have pointed out the benefits of active play to improve self-regulation in children (Becker, McClelland, Loprinzi & Trost, 2014). When children engage in play, they practice and develop skills essential for self-regulation (Hawes, Gibson, Mir & Pelletier, 2012). While play provides children with the opportunity for flexible thinking, target-specific acting, negotiating, and cooperating with their peers, it also enables them to focus on a specific task, essential for developing self-regulation (Baumeister & Vohs, 2011). In the study of Sylva Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart (2010), children up to 11 years of age were observed. The programs, including play, predicted the children's self-regulation.

The teachers who participated in the research stated that they mostly arranged the classroom materials so children could easily reach them, organized the learning centers according to their interests, and created an accessible playground in the classroom. Self-regulation develops from the outside to the inside through internalizing the child's environment (Barkley, 2012). Therefore, organizing the classroom environment is important in promoting self-regulation. It is seen that teachers provide children with an opportunity to act and make choices independently. The practices for in-class spatial arrangement support self-regulation skills). Children's easy access to materials enables them to participate in classroom activities. In addition, preparing learning centers for children's interests and needs increases children's participation in classroom activities. According to Downer et al. (2010), children's participation in classroom tasks and activities supports the development of their behavior regulation skills. Studies show preschool children's participation in tasks and activities is associated with better attention and impulse control (Bierman et al., 2009; Chang & Burns, 2005). Studies have shown that classroom environments that support self-regulation are more child-centered, children initiate activities, and independent activities are supported. In this context, the teacher has a primary role in organizing the learning environment and teaching-learning processes (as cited in Saraç & Tarhan, 2020). For this reason, for teachers to support children's self-regulation skills, classroom environments should be organized in a child-centered manner to ensure the active participation of children.

The teachers who participated in the research stated that they mostly use positive communication methods and play and movement-based teaching methods as a strategy and method. Additionally, they stated to be appropriate models for problem-solving methods. Early childhood teachers support young children in regulating emotions as appropriate role models in emotion regulation (Iriogbe-Efionayi, 2018). In addition, applying positive and appropriate communication methods ensures the formation of warm –supportive, positive relations between the teacher and the child. The formation of this type of relationship supports children's self-regulation skills. Positive and close relationships develop using appropriate communication methods. In particular, the close relationship between the teacher and the child positively affects self-regulation. For example, Cadima, Verschueren, and Guedes (2016) found that teacher-child closeness predicts improvements in children's self-regulation skills, and children's self-regulation skills improve. Teachers must develop positive relationships with their students in the early years. The early relationships with the teacher determine whether the children can self-regulate (Macklem, 2010). For young children to gain self-regulation skills, the teacher should be a role model for children with their behavior and emotion regulation behaviors (TPlay-based). Play-based teaching is one of the effective ways to support self-regulation skills in early childhood. Play-based learning opportunities in early childhood education and kindergarten settings improve young children's self-regulation skills (McCain, Mustard & McCuaig, 2011). In the literature, research findings based on supporting children's self-regulation skills in the classroom environment based on play and movement were found (Becker, McClelland, Loprinzi & Trost, 2014; Savina, 2014). Various studies have shown the benefits of movement and music for self-regulation. For example, it was found that Head Start preschool children who participated in creative dance activities improved their social competencies and showed fewer behavioral problems (Lobo & Winsler, 2006). Movement activities can increase attention. Incorporating 10-15 minutes of movement exercises into classroom routines increases children's arousal, attention levels, and stability to keep on task (Howie, Beets, & Pate, 2014; Janssen et al., 2014). The play stage is an appropriate intervention to improve self-regulation in preschool and primary school children (Savina, 2014). Based on these findings, it can be said that teachers use effective strategies and methods to support children's self-regulation skills.

## SUGGESTIONS

The results of this qualitative research helped to define the perspectives of preschool teachers regarding their in-class practices and strategies to support their self-regulation skills and to determine what they can do. In the research, the data about what teachers have done and applied to support children's self-regulation skills were obtained by qualitative research methods. It was concluded that the teachers participating in the research supported children's self-regulation skills in accordance with the literature. By using multiple qualitative research methods (e.g., observation) and scales and questionnaires, detailed information about preschool teachers' classroom practices may be obtained.

## LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations. Data for the current study were collected in preschool classrooms in a city, so the results may not be representative of preschool classrooms across the country. This study is limited to teachers' qualitative data sources to measure their answers to open-ended semi-structured questions. The researcher assumed that the participants answered the questions with understanding and accuracy. This study used a single type of measurement tool, aiming only to get opinions from the teachers themselves. The opinions of teachers about in-class practices were obtained through semi-structured open-ended questions. In future research, in-class observations can be made together with semi-structured interviews on the subject, and quantitative data can be collected from a vast sample with a scale, or mixed-method research can be preferred. The rich and descriptive quantitative and qualitative research techniques will provide more in-depth information on teachers' knowledge, current practices, and views on self-regulation supports.

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