

AN INVESTIGATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S TOY PREFERENCES ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT VARIANTS

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research is to determine the toy preferences in Turkish preschool children according to different variants. 197 children participated in this research which 93 are girls and 104 are boys. The participants of this research, 91 of them are 4 years and 106 of them are 5 years old. Also, all of children are normal developed who study at kindergarten of state primary schools and independent kindergarten classes in Konya provinces of Selcuklu, Karatay and Meram during 2012-2013 school year formed group of the research. Toy preferences questionnaire was used in this research which created by researchers. Research data were analyzed using Chi-Square Test and SPSS 16.0 package program. General result found out at the end of the research is that the gender of the children were revealed to have impacted children's toy preferences and the age and socio-economic level of the children were not revealed to have impacted children's toy preferences.

Keywords: Children's Toy Preferences, Toys, Preschool Children.

1. INTRODUCTION

Toys which are defined as something for children to play and have fun, has an important role in children's lives. Children need real objects or an object that can replace as real objects according to the role in the game while playing the game. Toys are both individual and group materials which brings order to the child's movements, supporting the development in all areas, providing child to act for the purpose. The properties of toys are that those are for children. While playing chess is not considered as strange for a child, playing with trucks or dolls is not expected. Toys are for children, based for children, and suitable to their ergonomics. This has been seen that, children concentrate their attention for a long time to that material or object. Toys are contributors and effective in acquire different skills and abilities to develop them on the basis of features that they have for the children e.g., blocks, play dough, lego, water, open-ended materials such as sand support children gain more skills related to different areas. However, such materials like dolls, robots are thought to be insufficient to gain new skills and supporting versatile development of children (Kim, 2002; Adak Özdemir & Ramazan, 2012).

Many things are available to be used for play for children. Preferences are elements that allow us to gain insight about children e.g., car, battery powered cars, trains, phones, bikes, panzer, remote controlled toys, including toys mechanical parts are materials which direct and stimulate their movement needs and exploring of children. Dramatic toys such as dolls, costumes, playing house materials, medical items, puppets, masks facilitate social learning, extend dream world, allow the creation of imitation games. Those are toys in which deeper and specific expressions are used. Games with rules materials such as chess, cameras, dominoes, bowling, scales, weighing, puzzles, educational toys, musical instruments, making music provides children's attention in work for a long time. Open-ended materials such as play dough, fabric pieces, water, sand, balloons, balls offers unlimited trials to children and even allow them discover new things with adults.

Toys are materials that provide children to play. Children gain important cognitive skills such as decision-making, memory strategies, observation, spatial reasoning, problem solving and creative thinking skills by these materials. Children can create their toys by themselves when

they don't have toys. Sometimes it is known that children don't play the toys which are bought as a gift or a surprise, even they play with only the package or box decorations. Now, adults who are sponsors of toys, are in an effort to be emphatic in selecting toys for children. Children's toy preferences are being more important both parents and educators both in terms of toy manufacturers.

The objectives of this research is to determine the toy preferences in Turkish preschool children according to different variants. The answer the following questions in accordance with this general objective were aimed.

1. Do the toy preferences in Turkish preschool children differ according to variant of age?
2. Do the toy preferences in Turkish preschool children differ according to variant of gender?
3. Do the toy preferences in Turkish preschool children differ according to variant of socio-economic status of the family?

2. METHOD

Research Design

In this research which is conducted in order to examine whether toy preferences of preschool children differ according to different variants, relational survey model-one of general survey models- was used in this model the aim is to present existing situation or situations as they are and give information about the correlation between two or more relations.

Participants

As different variants of preschool children with children's toy preferences would be examined in this research, 197 preschool children were included in this research. Descriptive statistics for children who were included in the research like gender, age and socio-economic status are given in Table 1.

Table 1 - Descriptive statistics for children who were included in the research like gender, age and socio-economic status

Different Variants		Participants	
		n	%
Gender of the child	Female	104	52.8
	Male	93	47.2
	Total	197	100.0
Age of the child	4 years	91	46.2
	5 years	106	53.8
	Total	197	100.0
Socio-economic status	low (0-1000 TL)	83	42.1
	middle (1001-3000 TL)	60	30.5
	high (3001-...TL)	54	27.1
	Total	197	100.0

When Table 1 is examined, 104 (52.8%) of the children have female and 93 (47.2%) of the children have male in the study group. 91 (46.2%) of the children have 4 years old and 106 (53.8%) of the children have 5 years old. When we examined socio-economic status of the participants, 83 (42.1%) of the children have low income, 60 (30.5%) of the children have middle income and 54 (27.1) of the children have high income. All of children are normal developed who study at kindergarten of state primary schools and independent kindergarten classes in Konya provinces of Selcuklu, Karatay and Meram during 2012-2013 school year formed group of the research.

Research Instrument

Toy preferences questionnaire is a form of an open-ended interview. The questionnaire was developed by researchers. The data are taken from child, parents and teacher. “What is your favorite toy?” are asked to the participants. Then the parents and the teachers’ opinions are taken. The answers given by looking at the code list is divided into categories. Expert opinion was received while creating the categories and code ruler. Eight independent referees who are the child development and education expert studied the categories and code ruler. Intra-class correlation coefficients among referees are recorded as .80. This value shows high consistency among independent referees.

Data Collection and Data Analyses

In this research, Toy preferences questionnaire, which was used to detect preschool children’s toy preferences was implemented to each child, child’s family and child’s teacher by researchers. Demographic information about the study group was gathered by a demographic information form filled out by their families.

While studying preschool children’s toy preferences according to different variants, SPSS 16.0 data analysis program for social sciences was used and Chi-Square Test processes were applied and the significance level of the difference between the average scores was found .01.

3. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The findings of the study which examined whether the toy preferences of preschool children differ according to different variants are presented below in tables. In Table 2 preschool children’s toy preferences according to age variables are given.

Table 2 - Preschool children’s toy preferences according to age variables – Chi-Square Test

Age		Toy preferences					Total
		Dramatic materials	Mechanical toys	Open-ended play materials	Regular play materials	Others	
4 years old	n	44	15	23	6	3	91
	%	48.4	16.5	25.3	6.6	3.3	100.0
5 years old	n	42	29	26	6	3	106
	%	39.6	27.4	24.5	5.7	2.8	100.0
Total	n	86	44	49	12	6	197
	%	43.7	22.3	24.9	6.1	3.0	100.0
$X^2=3.563$ sd=4 p=.468							

When table 2 is examined, it is seen that children of four years who participated in the study, 44 (48.4%) of dramatic materials, 15 (16.5%) of mechanical toys, 23 (25.3%) of open-ended play materials, 6 (6.6%) of regular play materials and 3 (3.3%) of other play materials were selected as the toy preferences. It is seen that children of five years who participated in the study, 42 (39.6%) of dramatic materials, 29 (27.4%) of mechanical toys, 26 (24.5%) of open-ended play materials, 6 (5.7%) of regular play materials and 3 (2.8%) of other play materials were selected as the toy preferences. This findings show that the variant of age isn’t effective on the toy preferences of the children [χ^2 (sd=4, n=197)=3.563, $p>.05$]. In Table 3 preschool children’s toy preferences according to gender variables are given.

When table 3 is examined, it is seen that children of girls who participated in the study, 68 (65.4%) of dramatic materials, 4 (3.8%) of mechanical toys, 21 (20.2%) of open-ended play materials, 5 (4.8%) of regular play materials and 6 (5.8%) of other play materials were selected as the toy preferences. It is seen that children of boys who participated in the study,

Table 3 - Preschool children's toy preferences according to gender variables – Chi-Square Test

Gender		Toy preferences					Total
		Dramatic materials	Mechanical toys	Open-ended play materials	Regular play materials	Others	
Girls	n	68	4	21	5	6	104
	%	65.4	3.8	20.2	4.8	5.8	100.0
Boys	n	18	40	28	7	0	93
	%	19.4	43.0	30.1	7.5	.0	100.0
Total	n	86	44	49	12	6	197
	%	43.7	22.3	24.9	6.1	3.0	100.0
$X^2=65.447$ sd=4 p=.000							

18 (19.4%) of dramatic materials, 40 (43.0%) of mechanical toys, 28 (30.1%) of open-ended play materials, 7 (7.5%) of regular play materials and nobody (.0%) of other play materials were selected as the toy preferences. According to the data obtained, pre-school children's toy preferences are statistically significant difference according to the gender variant [x^2 (sd=4, n=197)=65.447, $p<.05$]. Especially, girls who participated in the study were selected dramatic materials and open-ended play materials, boys who participated in the study were selected mechanical toys and open-ended play materials. In Table 4 preschool children's toy preferences according to socio-economic level variables are given.

Table 4 - Preschool children's toy preferences according to socio-economic status variables – Chi-Square Test

Socio-economic status		Toy preferences					Total
		Dramatic materials	Mechanical toys	Open-ended play materials	Regular play materials	Others	
Low income	n	40	19	18	4	2	83
	%	48.2	22.9	21.7	4.8	2.4	100.0
Middle Income	n	18	15	19	5	3	60
	%	30.0	25.0	31.7	8.3	5.0	100.0
High Income	n	28	10	12	3	1	54
	%	51.9	18.5	22.2	5.6	1.9	100.0
Total	n	89	44	49	12	6	197
	%	43.7	22.3	24.9	6.1	3.0	100.0
$X^2=7.801$ sd=8 p=.453							

When the values of table 4 were analyzed, children in low socio-economic status who participated in the study 40 (48.2%) of dramatic materials, 19 (22.9%) of mechanical toys, 18 (21.7%) of open-ended play materials, 4 (4.8%) of regular play materials and 2 (2.4%) of other play materials were selected as the toy preferences. Children in middle socio-economic status who participated in the study 18 (30.0%) of dramatic materials, 15 (25.0%) of mechanical toys, 19 (31.7%) of open-ended play materials, 5 (8.3%) of regular play materials and 3 (5.0%) of other play materials were selected as the toy preferences. Children in high socio-economic status who participated in the study 28 (51.9%) of dramatic materials, 10 (18.5%) of mechanical toys, 12 (22.2%) of open-ended play materials, 3 (5.6%) of regular play materials and 1 (1.9%) of other play materials were selected as the toy preferences. This

findings show that the variant of socio-economic status isn't statistically differ on the toy preferences of the children [$\chi^2(sd=8, n=197)=7.801, p>.05$].

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study make us think that the gender of children is more effective in toy preferences of children. This result shows the parallelism some research in the literature (Aksoy, Baykoç & Çelikoğlu, 1990; Alexander & Hines 2002; Alexander, 2003; Alexander, 2006). Researchs for the last 50 years concerning "the children's choice for toys" reveals child's gender as an important factor which effects his or her preferences. (Aksoy, Baykoç & Çelikoğlu, 1990; Carter & Levy, 1988; Onur, Çelen, Çok, Artar & Demir, 1997). Another study for kindergarten children in Turkey shows that mothers and teachers have selected cars for boys and babies for girls. (Adak Özdemir & Ramazan, 2012). Toys choice studies on diffent kinds of monkeys show that males selected toys like balls and cars whereas feminines selected toys like babies. (Alexander & Hines, 2002; Hasset, Siebert & Wallen, 2008). Children begin to select toys when they become around 18 months based upon their genders (Caldera, Huston & O'Brien, 1989). It is concerned with biological and environmental factors (Cherney & Dempsey, 2010).

Our study shows that gender effects the choice of toy. According to the data obtained, pre-school children's toy preferences are statistically significant difference according to the gender variant. Especially, girls who participated in the study were selected dramatic materials and open-ended play materials, boys who participated in the study were selected mechanical toys and open-ended play materials.

A research is carried out which is based on the opinions of parents of 0-6 years old children about their games and toys in Turkey. The question; "what is playing?" has been asked to parents in that research. 94,4% of the mothers and 88% of the fathers answered as "Playing is an important factor in children's development" (Tezel Şahin, 1993). When they have been asked to put the playing, sleeping, eating and roaming into order according to their importance, both fathers and mothers put the eating at first order, sleeping the second, playing the third, in the same research (Poyraz, 2003).

Toy preferences vary from culture to culture. Families of European origin prefer toys that are small copies of things which are used by adults (Hale Benson, 1986). Families of African origin define it as less object-oriented but more human-oriented. Games include more physical interaction between coevals, siblings and family. They believe that toys interfere with the playing styles of these families. According to Hale Benson (1986) and Trawick (2013) "African children do not play with rag dolls, they play with their mothers' babies".

A research is carried out by Cinel (2006), economical conditions of a family in Turkey effects the choice for toys. Cinel (2006)'s research show that the parents of lower social economic level prefer to buy toys economic, durable and proper to child's gender while the parents of higher social economic level prefer to buy toys suitable to child's age, improvement level of their interest, educative, entertaining. Our study shows that the variant of socio-economic status isn't statistically differ on the toy preferences of the children. The research has been performed on 197 children through "toy choice questionnaire" in order to find out if the child's age, gender and his or her family's economic level effects their toy preference or not. As a general result, it has been explored that their gender effects the choice of toy but being at the age of 4 or 5 never effects it. Cinel (2006)'s research in Turkey, find out that socio economic level is effective when preferring toys. However, our study in Konya proved that the socio economic level is not effective in making choice for toys. It is advisable to perform more detailed studies regarding this subject.

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