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Original article

SPORTS ENVIRONMENT PERCEPTIONS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract*

Aim: Perceptions can shape children's feelings and emotions can shape their attitudes. In this respect, determining the perceptions of children on sports has importance in shaping their perspectives for the sports. The aim of the study is to determine the perceptions of the preschool children on the sports through the drawings.

Method: The study group consists of 67 children, 35 males and 32 females, aged between 4-5 years, studying in kindergarten of a school in Yenimahalle District of Ankara in 2015-2016 academic years. Research was designed with phenomenological design from qualitative research approaches. The data were obtained through drawing technique and interview. In the data analysis, content analysis method was used.

Results: According to the findings, in pictures children frequently used the branches of basketball and gymnastics; and they drew mostly the indoor /outdoor areas a sports environment. It was seen that these areas include elements such as sun, cloud, sky, grass. In the pictures, it was determined that all of the children drew themselves, their friends and coach figures as persons playing sports. In addition, in the interviews carried out to make the sense of pictures, children mainly included the male figure for the athlete gender.

Conclusion: In their drawings, children stated that sports give fun/happiness, it develops their body health, it provide them to establish new friendships, and it gives them chances such as being together with friends in unity.

Key Words: perception of sports, preschool children, drawing technique

Introduction

The basic sign of life is movement as it is known, and an important part of the education of the human body is provided by movement (Alpman, 1972). Sports involving the unity of movements is a frequently occurring concept in everyday life (Çelik & Sahin, 2013). Sports, defined as activities that provide a harmonious and balanced development of individuals in terms of physiological and psychological aspects, is a concept that helps the individual to socialize with a personal and social identity, and sense of belonging as well as being a whole of physical activities (Küçük & Koç, 2003).

Sport affects the development of body health and personality structure, especially in the period of 0-6 years. Many studies have revealed that the majority of childhood attitudes and values shape the individual's personality structure, behavior and value judgments in adulthood (Ertas, 2016). Many positive behaviors, attitudes and habits are acquired in the preschool period. The sub-structure of habits of playing sports is established with the activities applied in pre-school education institutions and continues in the later years of life (Şahin & Yüksek, 2016).

The fact that the language development of

preschool children is sometimes inadequate in self-expression is to draw a picture as one of the actions they apply for producing their perceptibly the perceptions of any object or person (Malchiodi, 2005). The child has the opportunity to express his or her images and thoughts in detail in his drawings. They also try to create the most appropriate form to reflect what they see in the figurative thought to describe objects. What is important here is what is expressed visually (Yavuzer, 2009). In general, Levin (1995) claimed that the drawings reflect children's inner emotional worlds (Cited from Backett & McKie, 1999). From this point of view, it can be said that the drawings are important tools for revealing the hidden feelings and thoughts stayed hidden in children's inner world. That is because drawings are also expressed as indicators and reflections of personal identity (Yalçın & Erginer, 2014). Pictures are also an important form of communication with children (Yavuzer, 2009).

There are some studies in the literature about determining children's perceptions on sport (Aydoğan, Özyürek & Gültekin, 2015; Temel & Güllü, 2016; Şahin & Usta, 2016; Yılmaz & Güven, 2015). However, no research was found to directly determine pre-school children's perceptions on the

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sport environment. In the present study, it was aimed to determine the perceptions of children about sports environment and answers for the following questions were sought in this direction.

Methods

Qualitative research approach was used in the research. This approach focuses on how people perceive the world and what they experience in the world (Merriam, 2013; Patton, 2001). This approach focuses on describing events and phenomena in their natural environment, understanding participants' perspectives, and abstractly on a descriptive analysis in an inductive understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Study Group

The study was carried out on a total of 67 preschool children, 35 males and 32 females, in Ankara between the ages of 4 and 5, in the second semester of 2015-2016 academic year. In the selection of the study group, the "criterion sampling" method out of purposeful sampling methods was used which was described by Büyüköztürk et al. (2011) as a method to be used in the request of observation units to be formed by persons, events, objects or situations that have certain qualifications. In the determination of children included in the study, the followings criteria were decided:

- They should have sports experiences,
- They should be in the "Scribble Stage", which is one of the stages of artistic development of the child that Lowenfeld (1971) suggested,
- They should be able to express themselves in terms of language development,
- They should have different genders in terms of social gender roles.

Data Collection

With the fact that the language development of young children has sometimes been inadequate to express themselves, rather than asking children directly the question of "what is sports", in the research data collection tools were preferred in which they can express themselves more easily. A drawing technique was used to determine the children's sports perceptions. Researchers asked the children to go to the schools they study and meet the children, and to

- What are the perceptions of pre-school children on the sports environment?
- Which gender (athlete's gender) is understood when an athlete is called according to pre-school children.

draw a sports environment as an activity. Prior to the activity, children were asked questions about sports (What is sports, Do you like to play sports, What sports do you like?) to gather their attentions. Afterwards, the children were instructed to draw a sporting environment by giving them the guideline "Can you draw a sports environment where people play sports?" In order to make sense of the pictures children made, the ones who completed their pictures were interviewed separately and asked what they wanted to tell in the picture. Negotiations were recorded.

Data Analysis

Content analysis technique was used for data analysis. Robson (2015) stated that contents analysis are the ways that serve the purpose of defining and explaining worldly concepts and are purified and the common sense coded. The pictures obtained were numbered from F1 to F67. Then, the pictures were examined, and common themes were created and the data were subjected to content analysis. In the drawings, themes were determined such as children's preference for indoor/outdoor area as sports environment, sport branch, gender of persons in drawings, as well as the subjects of sports. Analyzes were carried out by considering these themes. Percentage and frequency values of the obtained codes were also calculated. In order to provide evidence for the validity of the research, children's direct opinions on the pictures were included.

Findings

In this section of research, the findings included in the pictures that participants drew were given. The elements of sports environment that children reflected in their drawings were examined under 5 categories as "Type of sportive activities", "Sports areas", "Gender of athletes in pictures", "Reasons why people in pictures play sports" and "Elements in sports environment". Findings regarding "sportive activities" which is the first one among the categories that children expressed in their pictures are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The sportive activities in children's pictures

Sportive Activities	N	%
Gymnastic	28	41.79
Basketball	21	31.34
Jump Rope	7	10.44
Football	6	8.95
Swimming	4	5.91
Table Tennis	1	1.44
Total	67	100

Table 1 shows the athletic activities obtained in the expressions regarding the pictures children drew. It appears that children have mostly the gymnastics sports in their pictures with 41.79%. Basketball sport is ranked as the second with 31.34%, while the jump rope activity ranks as third with

10.44%. 8.95% of children's drawings are about football sports. They were followed respectively by swimming with 5.91% and table tennis sport with 1.44%. The findings regarding sports areas, the second category, are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Sports areas in children's pictures

Sports Areas	N	%
Indoor Area	31	46.26
Outdoor Area	36	53.74
Total	67	100
Sports Fields		
Sports Hall	36	53.74
Pitch	20	29.85
Playground	5	7.46
Green Pitch (Grass)	3	4.47
Sea	3	4.47
Total	67	100

Table 2 shows the sports environment included in children's drawings. Children drew sports activities as activities carried out as outdoor activities at the rate of 53.74%. The sports hall which represents the indoor area is included in children's pictures at the rate of 46.26%. In general, children included the drawings of sports hall as indoor area

activities with 53.74%, while they drew basketball, volleyball and football fields with 29.85% as outdoor areas. This is followed respectively by playgrounds with 7.46% and green pitch and sea with 4.47%. The persons in the pictures of the children and their genders are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Athletes and their genders in children's pictures

Genders of persons in pictures	N	%
Female	57	36.54
Male	99	63.46
Total	156	100
Persons in Sports Area		
Person	64	41.02
Friend	70	44.81
Trainer	22	14.10
Total	156	100

The instruction of "What is your mind when you are called an athlete?" was given to children before drawing. Thus, cognitive structures regarding the gender of the athletes were also tried to be determined. In the pictures, it was seen that children drew female figures with 35.54% and male figures with 63.46% as athletes. As a person in the sports areas, all children in general drew themselves in the

sports environment. It was also determined that they included their friends and trainer figure respectively at the rates of 44.81% and 14.10% in their drawings. The answers given by children to the questions of "Why do you think sports should be played?" and "How do persons playing sports feel themselves?" are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Opinions of children on their aims of playing sports according to expressions of pictures

Aims of Persons in Pictures regarding Playing Sports	N	%
Fun/Happiness	49	44.14
Having a strong and powerful body	19	17.11
Establishing new friendships	15	13.51
Providing unity with friends	14	12.61
Having a healthy body	10	9.00
Having a aesthetical body	4	3.60
Total	111	100

In Table 4, it appears that the answers given by the children in the pictures regarding the aim of playing sports were collected under 6 categories. When asked about the reasons why the human figures in the pictures play sports, the children gave the response of "fun/happiness" at the rate of 44.11%. Second, the opinion of "strong and strong body" was obtained at the rate of 17.11%. It was figured out that 13.51% of the people in the pictures play

sports to "establish new friendships". It was specified that at the rate of 12.61%, the sports environment gives the opportunity of "Being with friends". In addition, the fact that sports provides an aesthetical body was seen in the opinions of children at the rate of 3.60%. Elements included in children's drawings regarding the sport environment are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Description of the environment included in children's drawings

Elements in Sports Environment	N	%
Basketball Hoop	21	16.8
Basketball	20	16
Cloud	19	15.2
Sun	19	15.2
Sky	11	8.8
Dumbbell	6	4.8
Gymnastic mat	6	4.8
Pull-up	6	4.8
Scoreboard	3	2.4
Grass	3	2.4
Skipping-rope	3	2.4
Balance board	2	1.6
Football/Volleyball	3	2.4
Table Tennis Nets/Racket	2	1.6
Football Goal	1	0.8
Total	125	100

Table 5 shows the distribution of the elements that children included in the sports environment according to their expressions related to the pictures. In the pictures, the children included most the basketball hoop with 16.8%. This is followed by a basketball with 16%. Third, children drew the elements of cloud and sun with a rate of

Conclusion

It was seen that peculiar to the theme of "Sports Activities in Children's Pictures", which is the first finding of research, the children drew mostly the gymnastics and basketball branch in the pictures. Even though football has an important place in popular culture, this sports branch was drawn in children's paintings with a small number. In the study

19%. At the same time, children drew the sky in their pictures with 8.8%. In the pictures, the equipments of the gymnastics branch (gymnastic center, bar, dumbbell) were included with a rate of 4.8%. Also, in the pictures, children drew a scoreboard with 2.4%. In the pictures football pitch was included least with 0.8%.

of YüksekUsta& Tezel Şahin (2016), it was determined that the sports branch which is most frequently used in children's pictures is football. It is expressed as the reason that children are influenced by popular culture and have knowledge about sports branches which are most considered. In the present study, children drew gymnastics and basketball fields.



Picture 1: Gym

The child, who drew the gymnastic sports in the picture, described his picture with this expression: *"This is our gym. We are playing sports here with our friends. When I do gymnastics with them, both I have very fun and my arms are getting stronger (D63, Male, 5 years old)"*. The movements made by the

human figures in the picture correspond to the contents of the gymnastics sport.



Picture 2: Basketball Court

The child, who drew the human figures playing with friends in basketball court in the picture (D25, Male, 4 years old), expressed his picture by



Picture 3: Football Pitch

this: *"These are my friends and me. We're playing basketball. Our team is winning. It is the last few seconds of the match."* In the study conducted by Tezel Şahin&YüksekUsta (2016) on the preschool

children, it was seen that some of the children gave the answer of "Sport is basketball" to the question of "What is sports?" In the other picture, the child who drew football pitch (D19, Male, 5 years old), expressed his picture by this *"I play football here with my friends. My friends support different teams. I support Fenerbahçe. My three other friends support Galatasaray, Beşiktaş and Trabzonspor. I've drawn four big football teams."*



Picture 5: Indoor Area

The child, who play basketball with his girlfriend outdoor (Male, 4 years old) expressed his picture by this: *"It is very sunny, I wanted to play basket with my friend. I'm defeating her. I have the ball and shooting again."* The child, who does gymnastic with his friend and trainer in the indoor

Peculiar to the theme of "Sports Areas in Pictures of Children in Early Childhood", which is the second finding of the research, it was seen that the children drew indoor/outdoor areas in the pictures. In the pictures regarding the outdoor area, the children drew the environments of sports hall, pitch, playground, the green pitch (grass) and sea. All of the children drew the gym as an indoor area.



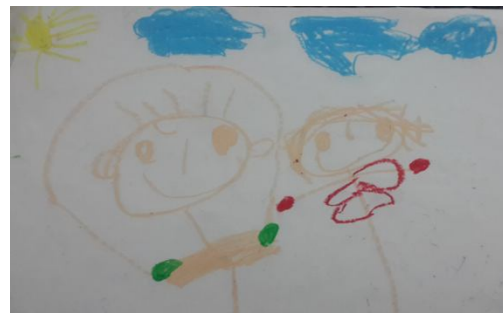
Picture 4: Outdoor Area

sports hall, expressed the picture by this: *"I establish new friendships thanks to the sport I perform. We are all happy. Our bodies are stronger, healthier and stronger thanks to gymnastics."* Children's drawings include the objects such as sun, cloud, grass, playground, sea, etc. peculiar to outdoor.



Picture 7: Sea

The child, who drew a sea (Male, 4 years old) expressed his picture by this; *"I love swimming. Especially I enjoy swimming with my friends."* The child who likes to play sports together with her friends stated that she jumped a rope with her friends in an outdoor playground in her picture (Girl, 5 years old). In the current study, children drew the pictures of sports hall, outdoor area, playground, green area (grass) and sea as an area where sport is played. In the



Picture 8: Outdoor Area (Playground)

study entitled "Sport Perception in Children's Pictures" of YüksekUsta& Tezel Şahin (2016), it was determined that children included the pictures with outdoor area and grass as a sports areas and secondly drawings of sea were included. Children need comfortable areas that allow them to move more so that they can play games with physical activity. Yılmaz & Pala (2017) found that children expressed outdoor areas as an area where games are played in

the study titled "Game Perception of of children in early childhood ". It appeared that children have freedom of movement in outdoor areas and that the objects that limit them are limited. In the study entitled "Examination of the opinions of pre-school children on sports", Aydođan, Özyürek&Gültekin (2015) responded to the question of "Where are sports played?" as sports is played at home and outdoor. Outside there are sports halls, playgrounds, gyms as a sports area. These findings are similar to the present study.

Peculiar to the theme of "Elements in the sports environment" which is another finding of research, children drew equipments pertain to branch, sun, cloud and sky. In general, children included a basketball hoop and basketball in the pictures in which they drew the sports environment.

When examined the Picture 9, it appears that the child, who included basketball sport in his drawing, expressed his picture by this; *"I have drawn myself. I play basketball in the outdoor house garden. There's a basketball hoop and a ball here. It is sunny. I like to play in the sunny weather. My arms are getting stronger. My body is getting strong and healthy"*, with which he emphasized that in sunny weather he likes to play the sport he loves. In none of the outdoor area drawings, children drew the cold and cloudy weather, such as rain or snow. A similar finding exists in the study of Temel & Güllü (2016) titled "Drawing a physical education lesson". The study included objects such as sun, cloud, bird, tree, and butterfly. In the study of Usta & Şahin (2016), children drew pictures of sunny weather, sky, bird, and butterfly as a description of children's sports environment. Birds drawn with sunny, outdoor, light-colored clouds, flowers and trees symbolize happiness and joy of life (Savaş, 2014). In the light of this information, it can be said that the children are in a positive feelings towards the sports.

Children drew themselves in a sports environment, peculiar to the theme of *"Persons and*



Picture 9: Basketball

their genders in the pictures of children", which is another finding of the research. 43 (33.59%) of them stated that they played sports with their friends. As an athlete, they generally drew a male figure. Considered that sport is an area where children can express gender roles (Lines and Stidder, 2013), it was seen that the athlete perception of the children in the study group is expressed by the male athlete. In the study of Temel & Güllü (2016), it was determined that children drew mainly male figures in physical education lessons. In the study of Aydođan, Özyürek & Gültekin (2015), interviews with children revealed that as a respond to the question of *"Who play sports?"* the majority of children associated sports to adults and stated that this is performed by *"my parents"*.

In research, majority of children mentioned the necessity of playing sports to *"enjoy and be happy"*, peculiar to the theme of *"The reason why people in the pictures play sports"*. This is followed by the category of *"strong and powerful body"*.



Picture 10: Fun/Happiness



Picture 11: Happiness



In Picture 10, the child (female, 4 years old), who drew children jumping rope in the outdoor area, expressed her picture by this; *"I am very happy to jump rope with my friends. By this means, my body will be stronger and better."* In the picture, the fact that they have fun is understood from the smiles on their faces. In Picture 11, the girl plays volleyball with her boyfriend. Their facial expressions show that they have fun while playing sports. Children also specified that they like to play sports with their friends, they establish new friendships through the sport and it offers socialization opportunities. In the study of Tezel Şahin&YüksekUsta (2016), it was seen that the majority of the children gave the answer of *"to develop muscle and be strong"* for the question of *"why is sports necessary"*.

Considered the research findings, children stated that they prefer outdoor areas as a sports environment rather than indoor areas and the function of the sports is to have fun, to develop body health, to establish new friendships, to have an aesthetic body. Children generally stated male figure when they were told about athlete. It can be said that the athlete's gender is male according to them. It was concluded that when children play sports, they prefer to do sport together with their friends rather than being individual. Considered these findings, it can be said that sports areas or sports activities that can be performed in outdoor areas can have influence on giving children the habit of playing sports. When the athlete was said, it was revealed that the children generally included the male figure. Given that children are actively playing sports, it can be said that they match their gender with the athlete's gender. According to Koca&Bulgu (2005), the definition of sport as a biologically based male's area can be decisive especially in the identification of males themselves and development of their identities. In their study, when primary school students from different classes were asked to introduce themselves, it was seen that while the male students introduced themselves to the work or sports they were playing, the females who were athletes introduced themselves to the athlete identity. In the current study, it is seen that females drew mainly the gymnastics sports, which is a branch; and males included generally the basketball sports in their drawings. According to Bourdieu (1978), seeing sports as a man-specific activity by integrating it with the athletic structure of man is a product of patriarchal understanding that considers man as the sovereign in society, and there is a close relationship between the gender roles that this understanding gives to man and woman, and participation of man and woman in sports and their

sports experiences. Therefore, it is important to provide both males and females the same conditions for the participation in the sport.

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