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## **Exploring Early Childhood Teachers' Beliefs and Practice on Sexual Education**

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#### **Article Info**

#### ABSTRACT

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# **Keywords:** sexual education, preschool period, teacher's beliefs, teacher's practices.

It is known how important sexual education is in the preschool period. Teachers play a key role in this process. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the views and practices of pre-school teachers about sexual education. The participants of the study, which was designed as a qualitative case study, consisted of 8 female preschool teachers working with pre-school children for 36-72 months. Observation and interview techniques were used to collect data. The data obtained were analyzed in depth with descriptive analysis and evaluated under 7 themes. As a result of the research, it was determined that preschool teachers were partially sufficient in terms of their knowledge about sexual education, the aims of sexual education, and the skills aimed to be gained. It was determined that they applied sexual education in daily life skills rather than the scope of the course. However, it was determined that the teachers of the 3-year-old group had little knowledge about sexual education. In line with these results, suggestions were made that pre-school teachers and our country's parents should be trained in childhood sexual education and that sexual education teacher activity booklets should be created to include more activities related to sexual education.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is the period when the child's interest in sexual matters is intense. This curiosity manifests itself (Deniz & Gözütok, 2017). The child's curiosity about sexual matters is appropriate and natural, like many other topics s/he is curious about (Yavuzer, 2007). Children's questions should be answered convincingly and should not be silenced, otherwise the sense of curiosity will intensify (Deniz & Gözütok, 2017). Especially when children start going to preschools, they would have sources of information about sexuality and they ask many questions about the words that seem taboo (Pandia et al., 2016).

Children's questions about sexual issues may recall the concept of sexual education. Sexual education covers the subjects of interpersonal relations, sexual roles, love, privacy, and reproductive health (Elikucuk & Sonmez, 2011). It aims to help people to understand and develop a positive personality concept and gain a respectful perspective on human sexuality (San Bayhan & Artan, 2004). While giving sexual education, children's age and readiness based on their developmental process should be taken into consideration (Yavuzer, 2007).

Sexuality is a sensitive issue that concerns every individual, has great effects on people in terms of both physical and mental health, can cause social problems that are difficult to solve, and is one of the most fundamental facts of our health (Poroy, 2005). Sexual development emerges as an important discipline in the education of preschool children as a part of social, mental, and emotional development. Sexual development is a lifelong process that occurs with the determination of the baby's gender in the mother's womb (Beyazıt & Ayhan, 2018). In Freud's theory, one of the psychoanalytic development theorists, he mentioned that sexual-based experiences in early childhood affect adult personality. Stating that there are psychosexual dynamics in the development of the individual, he divided the development into periods (Beyazıt & Ayhan, 2018). The preschool period is called the phallic period in Freud's psychoanalytic theory of development. In the phallic period, 'the child's interest and sense of pleasure are directed towards the genitals. Also, the boy is interested in the mother, the girl in the father, and has a sense of competition against the same-sex parent (Haktanır, 2005).

Erikson describes each age as an emotional struggle between a bipolar internal state, one positive and one negative in his theory (Trawick-Smith, 2014). He also states that gender was discovered during this period and that the sense of curiosity was intense. Therefore, children's intense questions about sexuality should be answered by parents and early childhood teachers with sufficient and correct information.

When learning theories are examined, it is seen that the acquisition of gender roles is generally mentioned in this period. For example, according to the operant conditioning theory, sexual role acquisition is gained through reinforcements such as rewards and punishments, the child is rewarded when he shows gender-based behaviors and is not approved when he does not. In social learning theory, it is stated that the child learns through imitation. A girl learns the roles of behavior by observing her mother, a boy by observing his father (Saranlı, 2014).

Cognitive development theory, on the other hand, refers to the concept of gender constancy. In the preschool years, the child gains a full understanding of biological sex, including the awareness that gender remains the same over time, even though hairstyles, clothes and play activities change (Berk, 2018). He then uses this information to guide his behavior (Berk, 2018).

When the studies conducted in Türkiye on the sexual development and education of the child in the pre-school period are examined, it is found that the child starts to ask questions about sexual issues at the age of three. Tuzcuoğlu and Tuzcuoğlu (1996) attribute this to the fact that the three-year-old child is mostly speaking. This period, when children begin to realize their gender, is the period when they begin to ask questions about the child's genitals.

When the studies on sexual education are examined, it is seen that pre-school teachers do not know the concept of sexual education, or they define it incorrectly. In the study conducted by Tuğrul and Artan (2001) in which they examined the opinions of preschool teachers about sexual education of children, 395 of 665 preschool teachers answered, "I don't know", 223 of them said "sexual intercourse" and 47 of them stated "knowing one's own body" to the question of what sexual education is. In Ceylan and Çetin's (2015) study, pre-school teachers mostly defined sexual education as gender differences, recognizing the body, being able to answer the questions that the child was interested in, made statements about reproduction, gaining a sexual identity, protection from sexual abuse, sexuality and choosing a toy.

Child's sexual education and development, perceptions of sexual issues have not been sufficiently emphasized and clarified in our country (Ceylan & Çetin, 2015). When we look at the studies, it has been determined that the knowledge and attitudes of teachers who have an explanatory and supportive attitude about sexual education have changed and increased positively (Adogu & Nwafulume, 2015; Martin et al., 2020). When the studies are examined, it is seen that majority studies on sexual education in early childhood are about parents (Eliküçük & Sönmez, 2011; Tuğrul & Artan, 2001). However, there are not sufficient studies conducted with teachers and teacher candidates about children's sexual education.

Therefore, considering that sexual education is affected by the knowledge and approach of the teacher, the purpose of this study is to explore early childhood teachers' knowledge and practices on sexual education and seeking to answer the following questions:

- 1- What early childhood teachers know about sexual education?
- 2- How do early childhood teachers integrate sexual education into their teaching practice?

#### **METHOD**

#### **Research Design**

This study was designed as qualitative research, which was conducted to learn early childhood teachers' knowledge about sexual education and how they integrate their knowledge into their teaching practices. The purpose of the research is taken into consideration because the qualitative research model presents perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic way in the natural environment (Patton, 1990). By examining how people interpret their experiences and the environment around them, qualitative research enables the researcher to comprehend the meaning that people have created. This study was created as qualitative research since it aims to examine teachers' knowledge and practice about sexual education.

#### **Participants and Research Context**

For this study, eight female early childhood teachers were selected in Denizli which is stated on the southwestern part of Türkiye. According to Merriam (2009), a qualitative study's participant selection could be based on either probability or nonprobability sampling. In contrast to these sample techniques, probability sampling allows the researcher to generalize the findings. Purposeful sampling is predicated on the idea that the researcher wants to learn, comprehend, and acquire insight, hence they must choose a sample from which the most may be inferred (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the features of the participants were limited. The requirements of the participants in this study were:

- working at the same kindergarten to prevent a variety of school atmospheres.
- teaching 36-72 months-old children to prevent effects caused by age differences.
- all females to prevent gender effects on sexual education.
- supposed to have a bachelor's degree to prevent educational differences.

#### Table 1. Demographic Information of the participants

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Teacher 1	<ul> <li>has been working as a preschool teacher for five years.</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>has been working at this school for two years.</li> </ul>	
	• was 27 years old and single.	
Teacher 2	<ul> <li>has been working as a preschool teacher for four years.</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>has been working at this school for three years.</li> </ul>	
	• was 29 years old and married.	
Teacher 3	<ul> <li>has been working as a preschool teacher for five years.</li> </ul>	
•	<ul> <li>has been working at this school for three years.</li> </ul>	
	• was 28 years old and single.	
Teacher 4	<ul> <li>has been working as a preschool teacher for eight years.</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>has been working at this school for six years.</li> </ul>	
	• was 30 years old, married with children.	
Teacher 5	<ul> <li>has been working as a preschool teacher for eight years.</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>has been working at this school for three years.</li> </ul>	
	• was 35 years old, married with children.	
Teacher 6	<ul> <li>has been working as a preschool teacher for three years.</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>has been working at this school for three years.</li> </ul>	
	• was 27 years old, and single.	
Teacher 7	<ul> <li>has been working as a preschool teacher for five years.</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>has been working at this school for three years.</li> </ul>	
	• was 30 years old and married.	
Teacher 8	<ul> <li>has been working as a preschool teacher for one year.</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>has been working at this school for one years.</li> </ul>	
	was 30 years old and married.	

#### **Research Instruments and Processes**

Observation and interview were used to collect data in this study. Interview, which is used as a research method, is a form of systematic verbal communication between the researcher and the researched person (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The researchers aimed to explain the feelings and thoughts of the interviewee by asking questions to the other party in line with the questions he has prepared beforehand about the work he is doing. The questions prepared by the researchers were finalized by taking the opinions of 2 experts in the field. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews lasting 40-45 minutes were conducted with preschool teachers in a quiet and appropriate environment. In addition, to deepen the answers of the participants, they will be asked to give examples during the interviews or by asking additional questions such as why and how, the answers of the participants were enriched. The interview data were recorded on audio cassettes and videos and then converted into written format.

#### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive analysis was used in the analysis of the data. Descriptive analysis method is used in studies where the conceptual and theoretical structure of the research is clearly determined beforehand. In this analysis, the data is organized and interpreted according to pre-arranged codes and themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). This research was carried out by making use of the descriptive analysis of qualitative data.

The interview data will be recorded on audio tapes and then converted into written format. The interviews with the teachers were converted into written format, descriptive analyzes were made with the data obtained, and their opinions and practices were determined.

In the interviews examined within the scope of the study, the general opinions of the preschool teachers about sexual education were determined. Codes were created in line with the interviews, and themes were determined by evaluating the codes.

The concept of sexual education was examined under 7 themes, namely, sexual education information, family attitudes in sex education, behaviors encountered in sexual education, reactions to behaviors, sexual education practices, and teacher competencies. Table 1 includes categories and subcategories.

**Table 2.** Themes and Codes

Theme	Codes
Sexual Education Concept	Those who define it as body awareness.
	Being aware of your body
	• Recognition of the body
	Recognition of private zones
	Knowing bodily limits
	• Those who define it as sexual information.
	<ul> <li>Knowledge about sexuality</li> </ul>
	•Learning information about people's sexuality
	<ul> <li>Those who define it as gender discrimination</li> </ul>
Sexual Education Information	<ul> <li>Information about sexual education</li> </ul>
	•Knowledge about the aims of sexual education
	• Information about the skills targeted in sexual education
Family Attitudes in Sexual Education	<ul> <li>How family attitudes are</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>How family attitudes should be</li> </ul>
Behaviors Encountered in Sexual	<ul> <li>Sexual questions encountered</li> </ul>
Education	<ul> <li>Encountered sexually explicit behaviors</li> </ul>
Reactions to Sexual Behaviors	<ul> <li>Answers to sexual questions</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Reactions to sexual behavior</li> </ul>
Sexual Education Applications	<ul><li>In-class applications (activities)</li></ul>
	•Daily practices (routine)
Teacher Competencies	●Teachers' Knowledge
	• Teachers' Experiences

#### Validity and Reliability

Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008) recommended taking expert opinion to ensure reliability in qualitative research. In this study, to ensure reliability, the three researchers who conducted the research received two different expert opinions, who were not involved in the study, after preparing the interview questions. Creswell (2013) stated participant confirmation would be useful to increase internal validity. For this reason, after the data was transcribed, participants received the transcripts and were asked if they want to add or remove any information they gave. After that, the necessary changes

were done based on their responses. To increase external validity, purposive sampling method was used as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1982) and inclusion/exclusion criteria were included.

#### **Ethic**

All the rules stated in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were complied with in the whole process from the planning of this research to its implementation, from data collection to data analysis. None of the actions specified under the title of "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, were not carried out. Scientific, ethical and citation rules were followed in the writing process of this study; No falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication medium for evaluation. To conduct this study, ethical permission was obtained from Non-interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee at the Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University with the number 2022/996.

#### **FINDINGS**

Considering that there is an in-depth description in qualitative research (Bengtsson, 2016; Seidman, 2006), the characteristics of the teachers participating in the study are explained as follows in line with the codes given to the teachers. Below, the findings obtained during the research process are presented in the form of the answers and opinions of 8 teachers by coding the names of the teachers in line with the themes of the research.

#### The Term of Sexual Education

It was observed that teachers defined sexual education as body awareness. They reported that the individual should know his body and be aware of his private parts.

"I can say that sexual education is the child's self-knowledge, knowing his body, knowing his differences physically, and knowing his bodily limits" (Teacher-3).

In addition to these, it has been determined that they consider knowing about sexuality and giving information about this subject in the concept of sexual education.

"Sex education is learning information about people's sexuality" (Teacher-1).

"It is giving information about sexuality" (Teacher-4).

It was determined that the concept of sexual education was defined differently by the teachers according to their experience and the age group they actively teach. It was observed that the teachers of the three-years-old group expressed sexual education as only knowing the gender difference of the child.

"To be able to distinguish between sexes, what it means to be a girl, to be a boy, is to be able to distinguish this. That's all we know in this age group" (Teacher-8).

#### **Sexual Education Information**

The answers given by the teachers show that they have a general knowledge about sexual education.

"Sex education covers the person's emotional relationships, responsibilities, self-understanding, general information about sexual life" (Teacher-1).

Looking at the knowledge of the teachers about sexual education, they reported that the aim was to make the child aware of his body, that others should not touch our bodies unintentionally, and to provide information about sexuality. In this context, they stated that the correct information can be given to the child by the teachers.

"The child is curious about a subject, but when he learns about it from his family or teachers, he becomes healthier. If he tries to learn from somewhere else, that child may learn wrong things" (Teacher-1).

Considering the skills that should be gained in sexual education, it has been determined that there are views on the protection of private parts of the child, such as ensuring that the child can dress himself, going to the toilet alone, and keeping children away from inappropriate behaviors.

"They should learn to be careful while dressing, they should learn that no one should touch their private parts" (Teacher-3).

The observations made and the answers given by the teachers agree. Girls and boys are dressed individually in separate places. Again, when one of the children touches the other's private area, my teacher can express himself as X touched my private area.

However, they stated that children's ability to express themselves is the most important skill to be acquired.

"I think it is most important for children to be able to explain this situation when they encounter a situation" (Teacher-6).

"They should be able to express this situation when others do not want it, they already learn, when their private parts are touched, they come and tell me immediately. This is very important for me" (Teacher-6).

In line with the answers given, it has been observed that the aims and skills that the younger age group teachers should gain are limited to the gender of the child.

"Girls and boys need to learn their gender and act accordingly" (Teacher-8).

It is necessary to give information to the child within the scope of sexual education: "When they reach the age of six, children realize their differences. There are children who do not know this, so children should be educated. We should train him so that he can recognize when there are different kinds of approaches and touches outside. Teacher-3 said, "But they stated that more of this information caused different stimuli in the child".

"They should know the points that should not be touched, but they should not know those words and sexual expressions that they have never used before. Or they should not yet know that kissing involves different feelings. I think this scope should be separated" (Teacher-7).

#### **Family Attitudes in Sex Education**

In line with the discourses given, it was seen that teachers gave answers as to how family attitudes towards sexual education are and how they should be. They reported that their current parents are open-minded about sexual education and support their children and themselves in this regard.

"As our parents, they are very open-minded and learn new things with their children" (Teacher-6).

Again, they said that the parents in their own schools could have a positive attitude towards the education that could be given on sexual education.

"The families realize this with the trainings given. We are getting more positive feedback. They say that my child is aware of everything, and they are satisfied with these" (Teacher-3).

On the other hand, they stated that the families in our society are closed to sexual education and remain unconscious due to utterances such as shame and sin.

"Families do not feel the need to explain the shameful thing under the assumption that their

children are small, that they cannot understand this situation, they gloss over it, they cover it up" (Teacher-2).

It has been determined that they think that this situation should be differentiated and that it is important to educate them in their families.

"Most families in our society do not know, for example, children can masturbate. They don't know this. Parents need to be educated on this issue before the child is born. Because if the family is not educated, the education of the child does not mean much" (Teacher-1).

"But they should totally talk to their children and inform them about this issue. It is important that they do this, especially when the child starts school" (Teacher-6).

However, in the answers given, it was stated that family attitudes in sexual education differ from culture to culture.

"I come from Izmir. While the children here (Denizli) react by saying 'ah', how would it be, even if they kiss on the cheek, it is considered normal for children to date in primary school in İzmir" (Teacher-5).

#### **Behaviors Encountered in Sexual Education**

It was determined that the most common sexual behavior teachers encountered was masturbation or touching their private parts, and this was more common in boys. It was determined that this behavior attracted attention by other children.

"It may be that they are playing with their private parts, I see this behavior especially in boys" (Teacher-7).

"Other friends ask questions such as, 'Why does my teacher always touch his private parts?" (Teacher-4).

In the questions asked, whether the teachers were also mothers or not, showed differentiation in the answers given. Although the teachers do not encounter many questions, it is seen that the participant, who is both a mother and a teacher, who has a child attending pre-school, faced more questions.

"Why isn't yours swollen when you take a shower (showing your private area) or why does your mom have big breasts and why doesn't dad have too? These inquiries happen" (Teacher-5).

In addition, they stated that they were showing their private parts to each other and looking at each other's private parts.

"The sexual behavior I encounter very often is looking at each other's private parts. Come on, open it too. I was witnessing their laughter saying show us. This was very funny to the kids. For them, it's like a forbidden game that should be laughed at" (Teacher-4).

#### **Reactions to Sexual Behaviors**

It was determined that the teachers first tried to find the cause of the sexual behaviors seen in children and followed how long they had been doing.

"First of all, we examine, how often he does it, when he does it, how he does it when he feels himself, we try to see it first" (Teacher-7).

They stated that after finding the reason for the sexual behavior, they tried to attract the attention of the child in different directions in the classroom environment.

"These situations are usually made in places that are not visible to the naked eye. Calling the child slowly, it's very hot, isn't it? By saying that because the child was sweating at that time, it was too

hot, saying that it would be better if we changed our clothes, I try to change the atmosphere by washing the child's hands and changing his clothes, and if we are in a classroom environment, I try to cool the class a little bit" (Teacher-5).

"I'm not saying get your hand out of there, I'm drawing his attention in another direction" (Teacher-3).

It has been observed that the child learns by experiencing that distracting the attention of the child has a greater effect than other stimuli.

I could be shocked at first, and that's why I was giving big reactions, but that was wrong. Then it attracts more children's attention. The child is paying attention to what I'm doing. Instead, I learned that it is necessary to divert the child's attention and find out what is causing it (Teacher-2).

#### **Sexual Education Practices**

They stated that activities related to sexual education should be given considering the age and development of children.

"Because children's curiosity increases at this age, it should be given in a language they can understand" (Teacher-2).

It was determined that special regions were explained to children within the scope of the guidance lesson at the school and activities related to this were carried out. In addition, it was determined that activities such as storytelling and drama were included.

"I am reading stories. Especially for those who have a new sibling or whose mother is pregnant, there are many questions about how I was born. for him" (Teacher-1).

They stated that together with the narration and activities, children learn by taking role models, imitating, and experiencing, so sexual education is a part of life.

"When the child enters the room, parents should enter by knocking on the door. While getting dressed, the child should be aware that no one should be with him" (Teacher-3).

"I make sure that children dress in different places while dressing" (Teacher-3).

"We also have older sisters who are housekeepers at the school, but they allow the child to go to the toilet by himself or herself. I can't touch it, it's your private area" (Teacher-4). In the observations made, it was observed that the children entered different toilets without anyone's instructions, and that the children's friends who accidentally entered another toilet were warned that it is not the girls'/boys' toilet.

#### **Teacher Competencies**

They reported that the knowledge of teachers about sexual education was limited to what they learned at the undergraduate level and that they did not have enough information on this subject. They said that sexual education was not on the agenda so much in their time, therefore, they should be more conscious about this topic while teaching.

"This is not something that has been around since I was a child, this is sexual education, I would be more conscious" (Teacher-2).

Teachers said that the importance of sexual education is increasing day by day and that children can now access more and faster information. It has been determined that teacher competencies will increase by recommending books, giving seminars for teachers, and sharing information with other teachers.

#### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, in which the views and practices of pre-school teachers about sexual education were examined by using in-depth interview technique, preschool teachers were asked what the definition of sexual education meant to them. All the participants defined sexual education as 'the child's knowing his body' and 'having knowledge about sexuality'. In Balter et al.'s (2016) study, early childhood teachers also determined sexual education as 'knowledge about self'. Kardeş and Kahraman (2018) found out early childhood teachers are wise about sexual education. Gökdeniz (2008) stressed teachers know what they supposed about sexual education, and they are eager to talk about with their students.

All participants stated that masturbation is the most common behavior related to sexuality in early childhood settings. Artan's (2001) research included sexual questions, sexual games, and masturbation in parallel with the study of common behaviors in sexual development. Similarly, Balter et al. (2016) concluded their study while saying the most sexual behavior exhibited by preschool children is masturbation. It has been determined that preschool teachers use solutions to these behaviors, such as attracting the attention of the child, learning the causes of the behavior, and producing solutions accordingly. Furthermore, Counterman and Kirkwood (2013) asked early childhood teachers to answer 15-question survey, which includes a question as 'I believe masturbation is normal in young children'. 10 out of 15 teachers were agree with this idea while four of them disagree and one of them was not sure. All of these articles supported the result saying masturbation is the most common behavior and teachers are aware of them. Finally, Bulut (1998) stated that masturbation in early ages are often seen and parents should not be worried about it.

As a result of this research, it was determined that the teachers used story-reading and drama methods in the activity dimension in sexual education practices. Along with the activity, it was determined that she mostly included sexual education practices in daily life. Also, children have sexual education in their daily life skills because they learn by doing and experiencing. Other than that, Acar and Temizyürek (2014) stressed that children should be careful about what they watch since they spend much time while watching screen and they could learn harmful contents about sexuality via cartoons.

When the attitudes of their families towards sexual education were examined in line with the opinions of the teachers, they reported that their parents exhibited open-minded and positive attitudes, but when they evaluated the families in our country, sexual education was seen as an issue that should not be talked about. Parental education about sexuality is crucial, and parents are the main source of information for children, as noted by Sieswerda and Blekkenhorst (2006). Parents must also have an open mind regarding these matters and teach their children sexual education. According to Bulut Beduk (2016), the fact that families confuse sexual education with adult sexuality and that sexual education is evaluated with the concept of shame within the cultural structure explains this situation. Prior research indicates that a mother's understanding of sexual education may be influenced by her cultural, educational, and socioeconomic background (Visi, 2014). On the other hand, in the preschool period, children are very curious about their own and others' bodies (Deniz, 2012), and ignoring, shaming, or silencing children's curiosity about this issue causes children to have negative feelings, to fear about this issue, and to feel their curiosity about the wrong person. It has also been determined that families should be made aware of this issue, and they should guide their children in a healthy way, since they can learn through roads (San Bayhan & Artan, 2004). Finally, according to the results of the study conducted by İşler and Gürşimşek in 2018, it is seen that parents need education on sexual development and sexual education of children.

The last but not least finding in this study is teacher competencies. Teachers mentioned that they were not prepared to teach sexual education, which was not on the agenda during their undergraduate education. They said they should be more careful while teaching. Eventhough there is a misconception, which is giving sexual education in early ages is very early, it is crucial and appropriate for a child's age level must be provided as early as feasible (Pandia et al., 2016). Also, Martin et al., (2020) claimed consistent with other research, the findings showed that the educational intervention enhanced teachers'

understanding. Therefore, they emphasized the necessity of providing educational programs, seminars, and courses.

In summary, it has been determined that the preschool teachers within the scope of the research are partially sufficient in terms of their knowledge about sexual education, the aims of sexual education, and the skills aimed to be gained. It was determined that they applied sexual education in daily life skills rather than the scope of the course. However, it was determined that the teachers of the 3-year-old group had little knowledge about sexual education. This situation reveals that children's sexual curiosity begins around the age of five or six, and because of the questions they ask and the differentiation of their behaviors, teachers make more efforts to improve themselves and increase their knowledge. Çalışandemir et al., (2010) suggested that a definition about sexual education should be determined for children in our country first. Then, the aims of sexual education should be created and taught. Finally, there must be an assessment tool to measure if children can learn the aims of sexual education to ensure sexual education in early childhood period in Türkiye.

Based on the research results, it is recommended to prepare pre-service early childhood teachers to teach sexual education and give periodic seminars on sexual education to in-service early childhood teachers. Training programs on this subject can be prepared and their effectiveness can be examined to ensure what they learn and what they do about sexual education. In addition, sexual education teacher activity booklets can be created to include more activities related to sexual education. It would be useful for future research to examine the effect of teachers' competence with a larger group in sexual education practices in detail. Finally, parents should be taught about sexual education by teachers. Since when parents are not knowledgeable about sexual education they may not behave appropriately to their children. This could cause various problems in their children's life.

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