Family Involvement in Preschool Education: Rationale, Problems and Solutions for the Participants

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Abstract

This aim of this study is to examine the views of teachers, administrators and parents about the problems that emerge during family involvement in preschool activities and solutions for these problems. The participants were 10 teachers, 10 parents and 10 administrators from 4 preschools and 6 kindergartens in the Palandöken and Yakutiye districts of Erzurum. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews and analyzed using descriptive and content analysis. The results show that teachers and administrators organize various family involvement activities, and parents participate in one or more of them. Family-involvement activities were found to be affected by factors such as time, cost, interaction, order, sharing, getting familiar with each other, ease of transportation, updated notice boards, technology, school facilities, security, control, requirement, and participation size. The participants mentioned the following among the problems they faced in family-involvement activities: unwillingness; lack of time; fatigue; negative attitudes; the behavior of teachers' spouses, parents, and teachers; irrelevance; low participation; families unable to express themselves; program changes; disinterest; illiteracy among families; ineffective presentations; constant complaints; favoritism; attention deficit in children; difficulty in leaving; conflicts; financial difficulties; unannounced home visits by teachers; gender; and transportation. They were observed to battle these problems by setting aside time, getting help, using effective communication, ensuring high participation, exercising control, updating notice boards, showing guidance and trying to adapt.

Keywords: Preschool • Family involvement • Preschool teacher • Parent • Administrator

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The first place where children reveal their inherent potential and acquire new behaviors is at home. Their social environment which enlarges over time, as well as their educational needs, enable other people to influence children. In the early years of life, preschool education has a critical role not only in meeting children's educational needs but also in supporting their development (Oğuzkan & Oral, 1995; Travick Smith, 2003 as cited in Schunk, 2009; Yılmaz, 1999). Many previous studies have shown that later academic achievement is determined during preschool (Aksu Koç, Bekman, & Erguvanlı Taylan, 2004; Cramer & Browne, 1974; Ferah, 2001; Kağıtçıbaşı, Sunar, Bekman, & Cemalcılar, 2005; Programme for International Student Assessment, 2003; Taner & Başal, 2005). Having a crucial role in aiding early child development, families and preschool institutions need to act together. Family involvement in the educational process will enable children to create positive products (Barnard, 2004; Coutts, Sheridan, Kwon, & Semke, 2012; Domina, 2005; El Nokali, Bachman, & Vortruba Drzal, 2010). Teachers and administrators want to know how to work effectively with families and ensure social involvement in order to increase student success. Similarly, families wish to know how they can contribute to their children's education and communicate effectively with their teachers. Students on the other hand wish to be successful at school and for this they need the encouragement, support and guidance of their parents, teachers and society. Despite the importance of this, many schools fall short of developing comprehensive and effective programs for familial, scholastic and societal cooperation (Epstein et al., 2002).

Based on parents who contribute to their children's developmental and educational processes via various activities in and out of school (Chavkin & Williams, 1985 as cited in Erkan, 2010), family involvement affects children positively and benefits families (Dunlap, 2000; Essa, 2011; Powell & O'Leary, 2009; Ural, 2010). Epstein (2002) stresses that educators need to develop more comprehensive programs which cover the school, families and society. Separating the degree of family involvement in educational processes into 6 categories, parenthood, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and cooperation with society, Epstein included many examples of practices and cooperation for each category in his model. Each family involvement type is considered in an interrelated whole. Epstein (2008 as cited in Ahioğlu Lindberg & Demircan, 2013) states that the biggest

responsibility for ensuring family involvement rests with the teachers. However, activities need to be planned and organized to ensure the cooperation of teachers, families and students. The model also emphasizes that it is important for schools and society in general to work with families, students and teachers in decision and policy-making (Epstein & Jansorn Rodriguez, 2004 as cited in Ahioğlu Lindberg & Demircan, 2013). The positive attitudes and behaviors shown by teachers and administrators play a crucial role in ensuring effective, suitable and active family involvement in preschools. The importance attached to family involvement by teachers and administrators, based on their knowledge and experiences, planning and consistency of behavior, affect the quality of involvement. Similarly, having parents view involvement as a responsibility and getting them to cooperate is also important for family involvement (Avcı, 2013; Aydoğan, 2010).

Functions which involve families in preschool education may be grouped under five headings (Aktaş Arnas, 2011a; Aydoğan, 2010; Cömert & Erdem, 2011; Çağdaş & Şahin Seçer, 2011; Hornby, 2011; Temel, Aksoy, & Kurtulmuş, 2010): (*i*) Family educational activities. These activities include the training given to families to help them meet the developmental and educational needs of their children. (*ii*) Family communication activities. These include communication activities used to establish and maintain communication between families and teachers. (*iii*) Involvement of parents in educational activities. These activities include the processes which are based on parents becoming involved in educational activities in and out of the classroom. (*iv*) Home visits. These include processes based on teachers observing family members, the rules of the home, family structure, and how preschool children relate with their home environment. (*v*) Involvement of parents in administrative and decision-making processes. This type of involvement includes processes based on involving parents in identifying school goals, cooperation between schools and families, and other school-oriented decisions.

It was found that some previous research reviewed within the context of the present study treated family involvement from the perspective of teachers and parents (Abbak, 2008; Ünüvar, 2010), some were based on a survey of relevant literature (Avvisati, Besbas, & Guyon, 2010; Beydoğan, 2006; Çamlıbel Çakmak, 2010; Keçeli Kayısılı, 2008; Tezel Şahin & Ünver, 2005), some studied the opinions on family

involvement from the viewpoint of teachers and administrators (Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010), some were conducted in institutions following special models (Head Start) (Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Perry, 2004), some were focused on parents (Aksoy, 2002; Fasina, 2011; Gürşimşek, 2010), and others studied the effects of parental involvement on student success (Arabacı & Aksoy, 2005; Ekinci Vural, 2006; Hara & Burke, 1998). Different from these studies, the present study considered the views of all parties, i.e. teachers, parents, and administrators, and gathered opinions by using different question types regarding family involvement. The aim of this study was to examine the views of teachers, administrators and parents about activities which involve families in preschool education, the problems faced during this process, and their solutions.

Method

This study gathered and analyzed data via qualitative research techniques in order to collect the views of preschool teachers, administrators and parents about family involvement activities.

Participants

The study was conducted in preschool institutions located in the Palandöken and Yakutiye districts (2 preschools and 3 kindergartens from each) in Erzurum. Interviews were held voluntarily with randomly selected administrators from among those working in the institutions (principals or vice principals), teachers from these institutions, and parents whose children were attending these schools. The participants were 10 preschool teachers, 10 administrators and 10 parents. They were selected by using the purposive method of typical sampling. Patton (2002, p. 230) states that purposive sampling "allows an in-depth study to obtain rich information about the phenomenon under study." Similarly, Berg (2009) emphasizes that in purposive sampling, researchers aim to obtain deep information by using the special knowledge or expertise of people in the sample. A typical sample, on the other hand, is used to reflect an ordinary person, situation or phenomenon (Merriam, 2013). This study made use of typical sampling as the aim was to collect opinions from ordinary participants.

All participants were informed about the study. Of the 10 administrators, 4 were female and 6 were male. One administrator had 1-5 years of professional experience, three had 6-10 years,

another three had 11-15 years, one had 16-20 years, and the remaining two had over 20 years of experience. Two of them were two-year college graduates, while the remaining 8 held university degrees. Four were working at preschools, and six in elementary schools. Nine were working as school principals and one as a vice principal. Of the 10 preschool teachers who participated in this study, nine were female and one was male. Four of them had 1-5 years of professional experience, five had 6-10 years and the remaining one had 16-20 years experience. Nine held university degrees and one held a graduate degree. Four were working in preschools, and six were working in the kindergarten class of elementary schools. All 10 parents were women and had children attending preschool institutions. Five were housewives, one was a nurse, and four were teachers. Four were high school graduates, one held a two-year college degree, four held university degrees and one held a graduate degree. Four of them had children in preschool and the other six's children were in kindergarten. The preschool children of the participating parents were between the ages of 4 and 5.

Data Collection Instrument

Semi-structured interview forms were prepared for the administrators, teachers and parents in order to examine their views about the involvement of families in preschool. In this interview style, the researcher prepares the interview questions beforehand and they may be reorganized or discussed during the interviews (Ekiz, 2013). In these interviews, each individual was asked previously prepared questions (Balcı, 2006) in the same order for both fixed option responses and a possible deepening of the discussion (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2012). The relevant literature (Aktaş Arnas, 2011b; Avcı, 2013; Cömert & Erdem, 2011; Çağdaş & Şahin Seçer, 2011; Dinç, 2012; Essa, 2011; Güler, 2007, 2010; Knoche, Cline, & Marvin, 2012; Krauss, 2000; Morgan, 2011; Oktay, 2004; Powell, 2003; Roopnarine & Johson, 1993; Temel, 2010) was surveyed to help with the preparation of the two-stage interview form. The first part involved personal information while the second part included open-ended questions about family education and involvement activities, problems faced in their implementation, and what solutions were used. The questions were based on family educational activities, family communication activities, family involvement in-class and out-of-

class activities, home visits, and the involvement of families during the administrative and decision-making processes. The questions were submitted for review to three field experts from different universities and finalized after their revision. One suggestion from all three experts was to ask the questions according to the type of family involvement activity. Considering this suggestion, five main questions were included based on the type of family involvement and one to find out whether the participants had different views. The form had six open-ended questions accompanied by probing questions to obtain in-depth information.

Data Collection

The administrators were contacted after obtaining the necessary official permits. Participants from each institution were asked separately how they wanted their views recorded. The process was explained to the selected teachers from the previously specified institutions. Both administrators and teachers were asked to specify a time for the interview. Additionally, student lists were obtained for choosing parents. The teachers were then asked to communicate with the parents and introduce the researcher. This study was then explained to the parent as well, and their voluntary participation was asked for. A suitable time was specified with one parent from each school. All participants were informed about the aim and process of the study, their responsibilities, the position of the researcher, and the anonymity of the participants. All participants requested a written recording of the interview. Interviews were held with the administrators, teachers and parents during the previously specified times in rooms chosen by the administrators (administrative offices). The face-to-face interviews were conducted by the researcher. Each question was asked with respect to the participant (teacher, administrator, or parent) and they were asked to explain the problems they faced as well as their solutions. Probing questions were used to obtain more detailed information. Each interview lasted 30 minutes, was recorded in written form by the researcher, and approved by the interviewees at the end of the session. Misunderstandings were corrected in line with the wishes of the respondents.

Data Analysis

Data from the semi structured interviews was entered into a computer. Approximately 45 pages of data was analyzed through the qualitative analytical methods of descriptive and content analyses. "In descriptive analysis, data is examined and interpreted according to previously specified themes. The data may be organized according to the themes revealed by the research questions, or presented by considering the questions used in the interviews or their dimensions," (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2004, p. 171). "Content analysis is a systematic, repeatable technique in which certain words in a text are summarized in smaller content categories by using certain rule-based codes," (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012, p. 240). "The main goal of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can explain the data," (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2004, p. 174). Themes were created according to the questions asked. These were family education activities, family communication activities, family involvement with in-class and out-of-class class activities, home visits, and family involvement in administrative and decision-making processes. These themes were analyzed by looking at the data under each one and connecting them with common concepts and statements. Symbols and numbers were used in data analysis. Preschool teachers were represented by the symbol "T," administrator by "M," and parents by "P." Quotations were used with these symbols and numbers. The data obtained was analyzed by three independent experts and final conclusions were made by examining the similarities and differences that emerged. For consistency between the expert analyses, Miles and Huberman's (1994, p. 64) reliability formula [Reliability = Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement)] was used, and the results showed a reliability rate over 81%.

Findings

The findings were presented in five themes based on the activity of family involvement. These were: (*i*) Family educational activities, (*ii*) Family communication activities, (*iii*) Involvement of families in in-class and out-of-class educational activities, (*iv*) Home visits, and (*v*) Involvement of families in administrative and decision-making processes.

Family Education Activities

The views of teachers, administrators and parents about the family education activities at preschools are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Participant Views on Family Education Activities

Categories	Reasons	Teacher	Administrator	Parent
Educational meetings	Time and cost Interaction Order Sharing Getting familiar	T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10	All administrators	P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9
Conferences	Time and cost Interaction Order Sharing	T1, T2, T3, T10	M1, M2, M3, M9, M10	P7, P8, P9, P10
Individual meetings	Private sharing Effective communication	T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10	All administrators	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10
Notice boards	Continuity Updating Time Ease of getting information	T2, T3, T6, T9	M1, M2, M3, M4, M6	P2

The answers in Table 1 which were given for the question *"What type of family educational activities do you organize or participate in?"* show that 9 teachers (T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10) said they organized *educational meetings* on family education, and every administrator said they helped organize *educational meetings* or actively took part in them. Seven parents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9) responded that they had participated in the family educational meetings.

The majority of teachers (8) said that they preferred educational meetings due to *time and cost savings.* For instance, one teacher (T1) stated, *"Educational meetings are activities where the entire family can come together and be informed collectively. Such meetings require less work on the part of teachers and prevents time loss. Therefore, I prefer educational meetings."* The majority of administrators (9 out of 10) stated that they prefer this activity owing to *the time and cost as well as parents can affect each other more easily.* For instance, M1 stated, *"We decide on educational activities depending on our school facilities. At the same time, it's useful to share school needs with parents and let them motivate each other to improve our conditions."* Parents on the other hand prefer educational meetings for *order, sharing and getting to know each other.* P1 said, *"The time and content of educational meetings are announced in advance. This facilitates parents' work. I willingly participate in these orderly and professional educational activities for my child's education and development."* And P2 said, *"Educational meetings give me the opportunity to converse about and discuss issues. I can express my concerns with what has been discussed previously. This educational activity allows parents to meet and get familiar with each other."*

Four teachers (T1, T2, T3, T10) stated that their family educational endeavors included *conferences* as well as educational meetings. Five administrators (M1, M2, M3, M9, M10) said that they organized or helped organize *conferences* in addition to *educational meetings.* Four parents (P7, P8, P9, P10) reported participating in *conferences* as part of family education. Three of these parents (P7, P8, P9) were the same ones that also reported participating in *educational meetings.*

The reasons of teachers for organizing and participating in *conferences* were *time and cost savings*, those of administrators were *time, cost, and interaction,* and those of parents were *order and sharing.* Some sample statements are as follows: *"Conferences are the most effective activities for family education. Their costs are low owing to the fact that they help us save time and this allows for group education (T1). Conferences offer more opportunities than other educational activities (M1). Conferences have advantages relating to both the environment and order. The speech given by an educator and families to the audience prevent chaos (P7)."*

Nine teachers (T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10) stated that they organized *personal meetings* as part of family education. All of these teachers except one (T4) stated that they also organized *educational meetings* (T2, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10) and *conferences* (T2, T3, T10). All administrators reported holding *personal meetings* as part of family education. Nine parents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10) said they attended *personal meetings.* Six (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P9) stated that they also attended *educational meetings* and three (P7, P9, P10) stated they also attended *conferences.*

Teachers stated the following as their reasons for preferring personal meetings for family education:

private sharing and effective communication. One teacher (T4) said, "*Personal meetings are the best way to establish open communication with parents and allows those who have difficulty with self-expression to share their problems.*" Administrators said they preferred personal meetings owing to *effective communication and sharing private problems.* One administrator (M2) said, "*Thanks to personal meetings, we can establish warm, face-to-face communication with parents. This enables them to share their private problems more easily.*" Parents preferred personal meetings mainly for *private sharing.* One parent (P9) said, "*In personal meetings, as opposed to the others, I can obtain information about my own child rather than overall information. Their recommendations pertain to my own child and this is more effective for me.*"

Four teachers (T2, T3, T6, T9), five administrators (M1, M2, M3, M4, M6), and one parent (P2) reported making use of *notice boards* for family education. Their reasons for preferring *notice boards* include *continuity and ability to update.* One teacher (T9) stated, "*Certain pieces of information about student development are interrelated and take time to explain. It is hard to find the time and opportunity to offer this information. Notice boards can be constantly updated so parents can read them.*" Administrators stated that their reason for preferring *notice boards* was *time.* One administrator (M2) said, "*Thanks to notice boards, parents can come to the institution whenever they want and review the information. In addition, this lightens the workload of administrators.*" Only one parent (P2) reported making use of *notice boards* in family education and explained her reason as *reaching information easily.* She stated, "*I can reach information about child development directly.*" The problems encountered during these educational activities and recommendations for their solution are presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2 shows that teachers listed the problems they faced in family educational activities as follows: *parents' unwillingness to participate* (T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7), *time* (T1, T9, T10), *fatigue* (T4), *mismatch between the information offered in education and the traits of children, negative attitudes on part of parents* (T6, T8, T10), *and parents deviating from the subject toward irrelevant topics* (T8, T10). T1 stated, "*Parents reluctantly come to family education activities. This creates a negative atmosphere.*" Administrators listed the following problems with family education activities: *parents dominating the education environment with complaints* (M1, M6), *low participation (*M1, M2, M5, M6, M8, M9, M10), *and parents not being able to openly express their feelings* (M10). M2 thinks, "*Parents do not value family educational activities and they do not participate in them.*" Parents listed their problems as follows: *time* (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10), *constant changes in educational programs* (P4) and *ineffective presentations* (P7, P9). P4 said: "*Educational programs change constantly and we can't keep up with these changes.*"

Table 3 shows that teachers tried to overcome the problems in the following ways: *speaking of the importance of education for children* (T1, T2, T5), *holding more frequent educational meetings* (T3), *adjusted the time of meetings* (T4, T6, T7, T9), *received help from the school counselors* (T6), *trying to involve all parents in decisions* (T8, T10). T3 said, "*I try to hold more family educational programs to overcome problems.*" Administrators stated the following about the solving problems: *receiving help from school counselors* (M1, M2, M3, M8), *receiving help from parents* (M4, M9), *sharing problems with parents* (M5, M7) and *organizing the time of meetings according to the wishes of parents* (M6, M10). M1 said, "*To solve the problems I face, I receive help from the school counselor.*" Parents, on the other hand, said that they solved the problems they encountered with

Table 2

Participant Views about Problems during Family Education Activities

Categories	Teacher	Administrator	Parent
Unwillingness	T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7		
Time	T1, T9, T10		P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10
Fatigue	T4		
Negative reactions	T6, T8, T10		
Irrelevance	T8, T10		
Complaints		M1, M6	
Inadequate participation		M1, M2, M5, M6, M8, M9, M10	
Failure of self-expression		M10	
Program changes			P4
Ineffective presentations			P7, P9

Table 3
Participant Views about the Solutions of Problems Encountered in Family Education Activities

Categories	Teacher	Administrator	Parent
Speaking	T1, T2, T5		
Offering education more frequently	T3		
Timing	T4, T6, T7, T9	M6, M10	All parents
Receiving help from school counselors	T6	M1, M2, M3, M8	
High participation	T8, T10		
Cooperation between parents		M4, M9	
Sharing		M5, M7	P6, P8, P9, P10

family educational activities by trying to meet the parent demand for *suitable timing*. They also stated that they solved problems by "*sharing their thoughts with teachers and administrators*" (P6, P8, P9, P10). P1 stated, "*When there is a timing problem, I demand that they make it suitable for me. Otherwise, I can't participate in the training.*"

Family Communication Activities

The views of teachers, administrators and parents on family communication activities at preschools are offered in Table 4 under categories. These categories list teacher, administrator and parent views about the family communication activities they used and their reasons for preferring these activities. The problems faced during this process and their solutions are explained as well.

Table 4 shows that teachers, administrators and parents mostly used oral communication styles (parent-teacher meetings, phone conversations, conversations when dropping and picking up children, and school visits). Teachers said they

considered the following as they chose their family communication activities: *suitability* (T1, T3, T4, T6, T7), *time* (T1, T2, T4, T8, T10), *effective communication* (T5) and *technology* (T6, T9). T1 stated, "*The most important factor that determines our communication style with families is suitability for families' time and place. Therefore, as I establish communication with families, I choose suitable ways for all. The best communication way for all families seems to be phone conversations.*" Administrators stated that they considered the following when they selected family communication activities: *suitability* (M1, M2), *school facilities (M3, M4), effective communication* (M5, M7, M8, M9, M10), and *technology* (M6). M1 said, "*Each family has a different socioeconomic condition and work schedule. I consider these when I communicate with them.*" Their reasons for selecting communication activities were as follows: *suitability* (P1, P2, P3), *quick information exchange* (P4, P5, P6, P10), and *benefit* (P7, P8, P9). P1 stated, "*We have many responsibilities in our families. We can't always establish communication with the school. The way we choose to communicate is what's best for our family.*" The problems faced and

Table 4
Participant Views about Family Communication Activities

Categories	Teachers	Administrators	Parents
Phone conversations	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10	M1, M2, M4, M5, M6, M7, M8, M9, M10	P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10
Parent-teacher meetings	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10	M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M7, M8, M9, M10	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Dropping and picking up children	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10	M1, M2, M3, M7, M8, M10	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P10
Notice boards	T2, T3, T5, T6, T9	M1, M4, M5, M6, M8	P7, P8, P9
Newsletters	T4, T5, T10	M2, M3, M4, M5, M7	P4
Portfolios	T2, T6, T10	M6, M10	P7, P9
Correspondence	T1, T5, T6	M6, M8	
School visits	T1, T3, T5	M1, M2, M3, M5, M9	P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9
Photographs	T1, T2, T9	M5	P7
Booklets	T5, T6	M6	P8
Internet	T6, T9	M6	
Journals	T9		
Wish boxes	T6	M4, M6	

Table 5
Participant Views about the Problems Encountered in Family Communication Activities

Categories	Teacher	Administrator	Parent
Feedback	T1, T3, T10		
Time	T2, T3, T5, T7, T8, T9	M1	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8
Disinterest	T2, T6, T10	M4, M5, M7, M8, M9, M10	
Unwillingness		M2, M3	
Illiteracy		M3	
Negative attitude		M5, M10	
Lack of self-expression		M9	
Conflict			P6, P10
Favoritism			P9

their solutions during communication activities are listed in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5 shows that the problems of teachers during family communication activities were as follows: "*no feedback on correspondence*" (T1, T3, T10), "*time problems on the part of parents*" (T2, T3, T5, T7, T8, T9) and "*disinterest*" (T2, T6, T10). T2 stated: "*As they pick up their children, all parents want to come at the same time and they hurry. I therefore can't communicate with them the way I'd like to.*" Administrators listed their problems during family communication activities as follows: *lack of time* (M1), *teacher unwillingness* (M2, M3), *illiterate parents* (M3), *disinterested parents* (M4, M5, M7, M8, M9, M10), *families' negative attitudes towards family involvement* (M5, M10), *and the failure of parents in expressing their wishes and complaints* (M9). M1 said, "*As an administrator, I have time issues hindering my communication with families. All the official work and trying to fix the problems of the school leave me with no time to communicate with families.*" Parents, on the other hand, listed their problems as follows: *time* (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8), *disagreements and conflicts between parents* (P6, P10) *and teacher favoritism* (P9). P9 said, "*Some parents are favored by teachers and their views count more.*"

As shown in Table 6, teachers said that they solved problems about family communication activities by *making phone calls* (T1), *establishing comfortable environments for easy communication* (T2, T5, T7), *choosing a suitable way of communication for each parent* (T3, T4, T10), and *trying to spend a weekend with families* (T6, T8, T9). T2 said, "*I try to establish psychologically and physically comfortable environments to ease communication with parents.*" Administrators stated the following about the solution to these problems: *allotting more time for family communication activities* (M1, M2, M3, M4, M9, M10), *controlling teachers frequently* (M2, M6, M7), *putting up interesting pictures around notice boards* (M3, M8) *and getting help from the parent-teacher association* (M5). M2 said, "*I try to observe and control teacher relations with parents.*" All parents seem to try solving their problems *when they drop off or pick up their children.* P1 said, "*I try to talk with teachers as much as possible when I go to the school.*"

Family Involvement In-Class and Out-of-Class Education Activities

The views of teachers, administrators and parents about in-class and out-of-class activities in preschools are given below (Table 7). The categories in the table show the reasons why teachers and

Table 6
Participant Views about the Solutions of Problems Encountered in Family Communication Activities

Categories	Teacher	Administrator	Parent
Telephone	T1		
Effective communication	T2, T5, T7		
Suitable communication	T3, T4, T10		
Weekend communication	T6, T8, T9		
Time		M1, M2, M3, M4, M9, M10	All parents
Control		M2, M6, M7	
Updating notice boards		M3, M8	
Receiving help from the parent-teacher association		M5	

their solutions during communication activities are

Table 7
Participant Views about the Problems Encountered during In-class and Out-of-Class Educational Activities

Categories	Teachers	Administrators	Parents
Field trips	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T9, T10	M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M7, M8, M9, M10	P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P10
Plays	T1, T5, T7, T8, T10	M1, M4, M5, M8, M10	P7, P8, P9, P10
Art	T3, T5, T6, T8	M1, M5, M6, M9	P2, P6, P8, P10
Turkish	T2, T3, T7, T10	M2, M3, M7, M10	P9
Music	T1, T5	M1, M4, M5, M8, M10	P1, P3
Preparation for literacy	T2, T8	M1	
Science	T5, T9	M1	
Drama	T1	M1, M4	
Mathematics	T8	M1, M5	
Movement	T4		

administrators involve parents in activities, as well as the reasons why parents become involved.

Teachers, administrators and parents stated that the activities with the highest participation were *field trips*. When asked the reason for this, teachers, administrators and families responded by saying *safety and control*. For instance, T1 said, "*In field trips, we worry about child safety. Outside the classroom, children are more mobile and curious. It becomes very hard to control them. Parent involvement in these activities reduces our worries.*" M2 said, "*As an administrator I can't attend field trips most of the time, but family involvement reduces our worries and facilitates things for teachers.*" P3 said, "*Outside of the school teachers have a very hard job. The children are very energetic and curious. I worry all the time about my child's safety. My child loves these activities and as I don't want to stop him, I also attend these activities.*" Tables 8 and 9 present the views about the problems seen during these activities and their proposed solutions.

Table 8 shows that teachers listed the following problems when families become involved in in-class and out-of-class activities: *parents' unwillingness* (T1, T2, T4, T5, T7), *attention deficit when children see their parents* (T3, T5, T6, T8), and *parents' negative behaviors* (T9, T10). T1 said, "*Parents do not wish to get involved in activities in or out of the classroom. They see all educational work as the teacher's job and show their reluctance.*"

Administrators listed these problems as follows: *parents' unwillingness* (M1, M2, M5, M6) *and parents' favoritism towards their own children* (M3, M4, M7, M8, M9, M10). M3 said, "*Parents in the activities are only interested in their own children and this affects other children negatively.*" Parents listed the following problems: *children's attention deficit* (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7), *the reluctance of children to leave their parents at the end of the activity* (P3, P4, P10) and *the cost of field trips* (P8, P9, P10). P3 said, "*Everything's fine when I'm with my child but when it's time to leave, my child becomes upset.*"

Table 9 reveals that as parents became involved in in-class and out-of-class activities, teachers solved the problems they encountered by *encouraging voluntary parents to model for others to overcome the problem of reluctance* (T1, T2, T3, T10) and *explaining the importance of parent involvement in child development* (T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9). T4 said, "*I take every opportunity to explain the benefits of family involvement for children.*" All administrators tried to solve these problems through *informational meetings*. M4 stated, "*I organize occasional informational meetings for parents to explain why they should attend in-class and out-of-class activities, what they should do during participation and how to solve problems.*" All parents viewed the problems they encountered during involvement from the children's perspective and thought about the solution along the same lines as well. They stated that the solution

Table 8
Participant Views about the Problems Encountered during In-class and Out-of-class Educational Activities

Categories	Teacher	Administrator	Parent
Unwillingness	T1, T2, T4, T5, T7	M1, M2, M5, M6	
Attention deficit	T3, T5, T6, T8		P1, P2, P5, P6, P7
Negative behaviors	T9, T10		
Favoritism		M3, M4, M7, M8, M9, M10	
Separation			P3, P4, P10
Costs			P8, P9, P10

Table 9
Participant Views about the Solution of Problems for In-class and Out-of-Class Educational Activities

Categories	Teacher	Administrator	Parent
Getting help	T1, T2, T3, T10		
Conversation	T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9		
Meetings		All administrators	
Psychological support			All parents
Active participation			P8, P9, P10

is to *prepare children psychologically in advance.* P2 stated, "*I talk to my child before I attend activities to prepare him to focus on and overcome the problem of separation at the end.*" Thinking there is no solution to the problem of cost, parents stated that *they overcome problems by trying to be with their children* (P8, P9, P10). P9 said: "*I attend field trips by pushing myself to my limits.*"

Home Visits

About the home visits, teachers and administrators stated that they only did it because *it is compulsory.* The problems regarding home visits and their solutions are given in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10 shows that teachers listed their home visit problems as follows: *families having negative attitudes about home visits* (T1, T2, T4), *lack of time* (T3, T5), *financial costs for families* (T6, T7), *the gender of male teachers* (T8) *and teacher's spouses causing problems* (T9, T10). T5 stated, "*Home visits require time other than what we spend on education and instruction. However, we also have families and private lives, children and responsibilities.*" Administrators saw the following as the main problems when they had home visits with teachers: *families have negative attitudes* (M1, M2, M3, M4, M6, M9, M10), *transportation problems* (M5, M7, M8) *and teacher are unwilling* (M10). M1 said, "*Even though we plan home visits with each family for the sake of fairness, in practice we can't visit every family. Families mostly don't want us to visit because they see this about control or that it reveals negative situations.*" Parents listed the problems during

home visits as follows: *unannounced visits* (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8) *and teacher unwillingness* (P9, P10). P2 said, "*Teachers come to our home unannounced. Regardless of the state of my home, I feel compelled to invite the teachers in. However, it would be better if they came announced.*"

Table 11 shows that teachers attempted to solve the problems encountered during home visits in the following ways: *convincing parents* (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T8), *convincing spouses* (T9, T10) *and talking with families about not needing to prepare* (T6, T7). T9 said: "*I try to explain the need for home visits to my spouse. When he disagrees, I invite him along as well.*" Administrators said that they tried to solve their problems by *talking to parents prior to visits in order to convince them* (M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M9), *convincing teachers* (M10) *and solving transportation problems by using the school shuttle bus* (M5, M7, M8). M10 stated, "*I believe in the importance of home visits and I convince teachers.*" Parents developed the following solutions: *looking for a common solution with teachers* (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8) *and asking them to announce their visit beforehand* (P9, P10). P1 said, "*I talk to the teacher whenever there's a problem. I openly share my suggestions. I try to reach a joint solution with the teacher.*"

Family Involvement in Administrative and Decision-Making Processes

Teachers, administrators and parents considered the reasons why parents should become involved in administrative and decision-making processes

Table 10
Participant Views about the Problems Encountered during Home Visits

Categories	Teachers	Administrators	Parents
Negative attitudes	T1, T2, T4	M1, M2, M3, M4, M6, M9, M10	
Time	T3, T5		
Finances	T6, T7		
Gender	T8		
Spouse	T9, T10		
Transportation		M5, M7, M8	
Reluctance		M10	P9, P10
Unannounced visits			P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8

Table 11
Participant Views about the Solutions of the Problems Encountered during Home Visits

Categories	Teachers	Administrators	Parents
Convincing	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T8, T9, T10	M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M9, M10	
Talking	T6, T7		P9, P10
Using the school shuttle bus		M5, M7, M8	
Joint solution			P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8

from the perspective of high participation. The views of teachers, administrators, and parents are given in Table 12.

As displayed in Table 12, teachers said they involved parents in administrative and decision-making processes when *deciding on in-class and out-of-class activities* (T1, T2, T4, T7, T8, T9) and *play materials*

As stated in Table 13, teachers stated that they observed *parental shyness* (T1, T2) and *difficulties and conflicts in making joint decisions* (T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10) when involving parents in administrative and decision-making processes. T2 said, "*Some parents are too shy to voice an opinion regarding administrative and decision-*

Table 12
Participant Views about Family Involvement in Administrative and Decision-making Processes

Category	Teachers	Administrators	Parents
Activities	T1, T2, T4, T7, T8, T9	M3, M4, M5, M6, M7	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8
Purchase of materials	T3, T5, T6, T10	M3, M4, M6, M8, M10	
Outfit selection		M1, M2, M9	
Parent teacher cooperation			P7, P9, P10

(T3, T5, T6, T10). T7 stated, "*When deciding in-class and out-of-class activities with children, I involve families at the beginning of the year.*" Administrators stated that they involved parents in administrative and decision making processes in the *selection of ceremonial clothes* (M1, M2, M9), *in-class and out-of-class activities* (M3, M4, M5, M6, M7) and *materials* (M3, M4, M6, M8, M10). M9 said, "*I ensure family involvement in selecting clothes for the end-of-year activities for children.*" Parents stated that they became involved in these processes by participating in *social activity decisions* (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8) and *parent/teacher cooperation activities* (P7, P9, P10). P6 said, "*When deciding on social activities in school I meet with teachers and administrators.*" Teachers, administrators and parents all agreed on *high participation in administrative and decision-making processes* on the part of the parents. The problems faced when involving parents in these processes and their solutions are displayed in Tables 13 and 14.

making processes." Administrators stated that they experienced the following problems in this process: *each parent has different wishes which conflict with the others* (M1, M5, M6), *disinterest* (M3) and *financial worries* (M2, M4, M7, M8, M9, M10). M3 stated, "*There are parents that never show interest in attending decision-making meetings.*" Parents listed the following as the problems they faced when getting involved in administrative and decision-making processes: *disagreement and conflict* (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), *financial difficulties* (P6, P7, P8, P10), and *unfair attitudes* (P9). P7 said, "*Most meetings I attended ended by asking for my financial contribution. This makes me reluctant to attend meetings.*"

Table 14 shows that teachers said the problems encountered during family involvement in administrative and decision-making processes can be solved by *guiding them towards a joint decision* (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10). T2 said, "*When families disagree, I help them meet at a point that benefits both the children and the school.*"

Table 13
Participant Views about the Problems Encountered during Family Involvement in Administrative and Decision-making Processes

Categories	Teachers	Administrators	Parents
Shyness	T1, T2		
Conflict	T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10	M1, M5, M6	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
Disinterest		M3	
Financial issues		M2, M4, M7, M8, M9, M10	P6, P7, P8, P10
Fairness			P9

Table 14
Participant Views about the Solutions of the Problems Encountered during Involving Families in Administrative and Decision-making Processes

Categories	Teachers	Administrators	Parents
Guidance	All teachers		
Effective listening		M1, M4, M7	
Voting decisions		M2, M3, M5, M6, M8, M9, M10	
Adaptation			P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
Talking			P6, P7, P8, P10
Warning			P9

Administrators said they overcame these problems by *listening to and valuing people's wishes* (M1, M4, M7) and *voting on the decisions* (M2, M3, M5, M6, M8, M9, M10). M4 stated, "*I value each parent's wishes and listen carefully. This stops parents from perceiving themselves negatively.*" Parents stated that they tried to overcome the problems of getting involved in administrative and decision-making processes by *making joint decisions* (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), *emphasizing that decisions should be made by considering financial possibilities* (P6, P7, P8, P10) and *warning the teacher* (P9). P5 said, "*I try to agree with others where the benefit of our children is concerned.*"

Discussion

This study examined family involvement under the following headings: family educational activities, family communication activities, family involvement in in-class and out-of-class activities, home visits, and family involvement in administrative and decision-making processes. It was found that teachers and administrators organized educational meetings, conferences, personal meetings and notice boards within the context of family educational activities, and parents attended one or more of these. In order to attain short and long term goals in preschool institutions, families need to be involved in educational activities as well (Aksoy, Temel, & Baykan, 1995). Previous research states that families reported a need for education to be able to contribute to their children's development and education (Abbak, 2008; Aral et al., 2006; Atakan, 2010; Canpolat, 2001; Kaya, 2002; Laloumi Vidali, 1997). The majority of the parents interviewed by Kaya (2002) and Özışıklı (2008) stated that teachers organized activities to inform them about child development and education. The views obtained in this study that various group and individual family education activities should be organized and attended are a positive development for preschool education. Teachers mentioned *time* and *cost* as their reason for preferring educational meetings and conferences while administrators

mentioned *interaction* as another important factor other than *time* and *cost*. Parents listed *order, sharing* and *getting to know others* as their reasons for participating in meetings and *order and sharing* as their reasons for participating in conferences. Teachers and administrators preferred personal meetings for family education owing to *private sharing* and *effective communication*, while parents mentioned *private sharing* as their reason. Yazıcı, Begümhan, and Güzeller (2005) studied family views and expectations about family involvement work at preschools, a corroborating finding for the present study. Yazıcı et al. (2005) concluded that the most popular activity among families was personal meetings. The present study also found that teachers who use notice boards as part of family education listed *continuity* and *the ability of updating* as their reasons while administrators listed *time*. Only one parent stated that she made use of notice boards and her reason was *being able to obtain information easily*. Featured in almost all family involvement studies as an essential factor for families and teachers, t*ime* was the most striking finding in family education in this study, too.

Teachers stated that they faced the following problems during family educational activities: *the reluctance of families to become involved in education, limited teacher time, fatigue on the part of teachers and parents, negative reactions by parents during education,* and *parents not sticking to the topic of education.* Administrator problems included *parent complaints how to educate, inadequate involvement,* and *parents' failure to express themselves correctly.* Parents, on the other hand, thought of t*ime restrictions, misinformation following frequent preschool curricula changes,* and *the ineffective presentations of educators* as problems. Similar findings have been obtained in previous research (Abbak, 2008; Argon & Kıyıcı, 2012; Aslanargun, 2007; Hoover Dempsey & Walker, 2002). The common conclusion for all these studies has been that, despite positive views about family education, stakeholders attribute low

participation to workload, time restrictions, or fatigue as well as certain persons (teachers attribute it to families, and vice versa, etc.).

Teachers solved the problems that appeared during family education by *talking to parents, offering more frequent education, adjusting the time of education, obtaining help from the school counselor* and *ensuring parent participation in decisions*. Administrators solve them by *adjusting the time of education, obtaining help from the school counselor or other parents,* and *sharing the problems with all parents*. Parents, on the other hand, solve problems by *demanding a certain time for education* and *sharing their views about their problems with administrators and teachers*. Having a prominent role here, the factor of *time* can become a solution. Argon and Kıyıcı (2012) concluded in their study that teachers organized conferences and seminars, meetings, parent-teacher meetings, home visits, educational and social activities, cooperation with visual and print media, and phone calls in order to increase the involvement of families in the educational process.

The present study has revealed that teachers, administrators and parents mostly preferred verbal communication in family communication activities, while teachers used almost all available methods. Effective communication is a prime component of healthy family involvement in preschool institutions and must be built jointly by teachers, administrators and families. Otherwise, involvement does not occur at the expected level. Gökçe (2000) states that teachers, administrators and parents are in agreement about the need for continuous cooperation and interaction. Similarly, Atakan (2010) found in his study that assigning home activities and written communication methods such as notice boards are among the most popular family involvement activities and Abbak (2008) concluded that parents often prefer to meet teachers face-to-face, or use correspondence when it comes to worksheets and daily information notes.

In this study, teachers stated that when they chose their way of communication, they considered *suitability, the best use of time, effective communication* and *making use of technological facilities*. Administrators said they considered *suitability, school facilities, effective communication* and *making use of technological facilities*. Parents preferred ways of communication that *are best-suited to themselves, enable quick exchange of information* and *are most efficient*. It is a noteworthy finding that all parties in educational environments aim to establish communication in suitable and effective ways. Endsley, Minish, and Zhou (1993) corroborated this finding by stating that when school personnel attach value to communicating with parents and do this through formal ways, families also respond with a high level of communication.

The present study showed that teachers experienced the following problems in family communication activities: *no feedback from correspondence* and *lack of time or interest on parents' part. A*dministrators listed *lack of time, teacher reluctance, illiterate parents, disinterested parents, negative attitudes of parents towards family involvement,* and *parents' inability to express their thoughts*. Finally, parents listed *lack of time, disagreements with other parents, conflict* and *teacher bias* as their problems. Koçak (1991) studied school-family communication barriers and found that administrators and teachers delayed in communicating information about the school and students to their parents, classroom sizes were big, parents had too much to do, they did not want to hear negative things about their children, information about the school was being communicated to parents via children, and administrators and teachers did not know the parents. Koçak also stated that the barriers visible to parents in school-family communication and those visible to administrators and teachers were similar but that parents were less uncomfortable with these barriers than administrators or teachers.

This study showed us that teachers fixed the problems in family communication activities by *using phone communication more often, looking for ways of effective communication, selecting a suitable communication method for each parent,* and *contacting the parents on weekends*. Administrators solved them by s*etting more time aside for family communication activities, controlling teachers often, making notice boards more interesting,* and *getting help from the parent-teacher association*. Parents, on the other hand, solved these problems by *communicating with teachers as they drop off and pick up their children*.

This study showed that teachers and administrators mostly tried to ensure involvement in in-class and out-of-class activities, and that parents mostly wanted to get involved in *field trips*. Even though participation is welcomed in in-class activities as well, safety and control are more important in field trips. Akkaya (2007) stated that even though teachers thought parents benefited more from in-class family involvement work, parents themselves

preferred to attend out-of-class activities such as cinema, theater, trips, and tree planting. This study mirrors Akkaya's findings that parents prefer out-of-class activities.

Teachers listed the following as problems in making families participate in in-class and out-of-class activities: *reluctance, attention deficit on children's part and negative behavior of parents towards children during the activity*. A similar finding was obtained by Atakan (2010). Atakan studied teacher and parent views about family involvement in preschool education and asked teachers what problems they face in family involvement. In response, 45% stated that *children misbehave when their parents are present and disrupt class discipline*. In this study, administrators stated that *parent reluctance and discrimination* may be a problem while parents stated that *children's attention issues, their refusal to let their parents go at the end of the activity and fees paid at different venues* were problematic. Different previous research (Zembat & Polat Unutkan, 1999) showed that families thought the negative attitudes of administrators and teachers, lack of time, economic issues, and communication problems were barriers before family involvement. The present study is parallel to Zembat and Polat Unutkan's (1999) findings that parents see monetary problems as a barrier to family involvement.

This study showed that teachers solved the problems families had in getting involved with in-class and out-of class activities by *getting help from other parents* and *emphasizing the importance of involvement for children*. Administrators fixed these problems by *organizing information meetings*, and parents by *psychologically supporting their children who have difficulties separating with them* and *attending field trips at all costs*.

One of the main themes of this study, home visits were seen positively by teachers, administrators and parents, albeit as *a legal requirement*. Regarding home visits, teachers viewed *the negative attitudes of families, time restrictions, financial load to families, teachers being male* and *the attitude of teachers' spouses* as problematic. Administrators found *the negative attitudes of families, transportation issues* and *teacher reluctance* problematic. Parents, on the other hand, stated that *unannounced home visits* and *the reluctance of teachers* were problematic. Güven (2011) examined the effects of family educational and family involvement programs based on different models on the practices of preschool teachers and views of parents, and concluded that

parent reluctance for family involvement, their excuses, their education level and lack of materials made involvement difficult. In this study, problems experienced by male teachers during home visits and the negative views of the spouses of female teachers were noteworthy findings. Teachers reported solving these problems by *convincing parents and their spouses* and *by asking parents not to prepare for home visits*. Administrators *tried to convince parents and teachers to use shuttle buses during home visits* to solve these problems, and parents *tried to solve problems together with teachers* and *warned teachers to announce home visits*. This finding is parallel to the findings obtained by Yazıcı et al. (2005). Both studies found that even though parents have a positive view of home visits, they experience problems with the way these are made.

Another main theme of the study was family involvement in administrative and decision-making processes. Teachers stated that they involved families when *identifying in-class and out-of-class activities* and *deciding on classroom materials*. Administrators involved families in *choosing festival clothing, choosing in-class and out-of-class activities,* and *choosing classroom materials*. Parents, on the other hand, stated that they participated in *deciding on social activities* and *parent-teacher association activities*. All three parties listed their reason for participating in these activities as *ensuring high participation*. Aksu Koç, Erguvanlı Taylan, and Bekman (2001) found in their study that the majority of teachers met with parents 1-2 or 3-4 times, and cooperated on material needs and children's education.

Teachers perceived *shy parents, disagreements* s *conflict between them* as problems in getting involved with administrative and decision-making processes, while administrators saw *parent disagreements, conflicts,* and *absence due to worries about financial load* as problems. Parents listed *disagreements and conflict, financial load* and *parent favoritism when decision-making* as problematic. Atakan (2010) identified the following as the three most serious problems faced by preschool teachers during family involvement: *low family education, problems in making joint decision,* and *inadequate classroom facilities for family involvement work*. The common point in the present study and that of Atakan is that disagreements tend to turn into deeper conflict when making decisions.

Teachers reported tackling the problems in involving parents with administrative and decision-making processes by *guiding families towards common*

decisions, while administrators solved them by *valuing and listening to demands* and *voting on decisions.* Parents said they *made an effort to make common decisions, stated their preference for considering financial costs when making decisions,* and *warned teachers to not engage in favoritism.* Arslan and Nural's (2004) finding is similar to the finding in the present study. Arslan and Nural stated that the majority of families are ready to cooperate with the school, but need guidance about what may be done to start and maintain this cooperation. An important leg of preschool education, family involvement activities need the cooperation of teachers, administrators and parents to be successful. The following recommendations may be made in light of the findings. It is a negative finding that home visits are made out of requirement. The reasons for family

involvement activities should be understood by teachers, administrators and parents. Additionally, teachers, administrators and parents mention time as both a problem and a solution in all activities. This shows that family involvement activities are not well planned. Teachers and administrators should work on organizing family involvement activities and share these with families. Teacher favoritism and bias distance families from school and involvement practices. Teachers should therefore be careful to not discriminate between families. School administrators should gather both teachers and families at the beginning of the school year to explain involvement studies. This may emphasize cooperation and minimize potential problems in the future. New studies that use different measurement tools and larger sample size are needed.

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