



Investigation of the Opinions of Drama Leaders on Drama Education and Activities

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ABSTRACT

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This study aimed at determining the opinions of drama leaders, who practiced with preschool-age groups in the field of drama, about drama activities and education. In line with this purpose, the opinions of drama leaders on the concept of drama, the learning outcomes of drama activities on children, the approaches of parents to drama, and the problems or difficulties experienced by leaders in drama education were determined. This study was carried out as a case study, one of the qualitative research methods, by taking the opinions of 27 leaders who provided drama education to preschool children within the framework of formal or non-formal education institutions in İstanbul, Turkey. A semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers was used as a data collection tool. As a result of this study, 4 different themes regarding the perspectives of the leaders on the concept of drama, 4 different themes regarding the opinions on drama and education, 4 different themes regarding the learning outcomes that the drama observed by the leaders for the children, 4 different themes regarding the learning outcomes that the drama should provide to the children, 4 different themes regarding the perspectives of parents on the concept of drama, and 5 different themes regarding the difficulties of drama were revealed.

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INTRODUCTION

In the preschool period, one of the important developmental stages of the individual, the quality of the education that children will go through and the healthy design of the stimuli around them are very effective in their learning and development processes (Bulut, 2020; Durmuşoğlu-Saltalı, 2021; Gülay-Ogelman et al., 2021). One of the most effective methods that play a role in the education and training of children, helps them discover their development, and structures their behaviors is drama (Clement, 2021).

Drama is the animations made in play-like processes by making sense of a situation, event, idea, abstract, or concrete concept by using theatrical art techniques such as role-playing, improvisation, and animation (Adıgüzel, 2014). Therefore, drama provides active use of the senses. In other words, the learners learn through dialogue, movement, sound, and sight. Dialogue, role-playing, and kinesthetic movements appeal to verbal-linguistic, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal styles. As there can be children who learn in different ways in the classroom, drama can appeal to all children learning with these different styles (Tate, 2002). Many studies in the field of drama demonstrated that drama had a great effect on developing cognitive skills (Furman, 2000). In addition to this, in a study conducted by Ong et al. (2020) on the learning outcomes of drama on children, it was determined that promising results were achieved in children's social skills, expression, and communication skills, the tendency to teamwork, and critical and creative thinking skills.

Creative drama includes improvisation, movement, and rhythm studies. Considering that drama is not based on written text, its basic technique is improvisation (Sezgin, 2015). It is created spontaneously rather than by rote or script, allowing participants to express themselves as they are. Students in the classroom can act out a story they have learned before, and this improvisation process allows them to further analyze and synthesize the information they have learned. It contributes to their meaningful learning (Arieli, 2007; Guli, 2004). Another technique that exists at the heart of the drama is pretend play. Pretend play is being able to create fiction such as "if there was, if it were me, and as if it were ..." in the animations based on the real world (Körükçü, 2015, p:16).

According to Yavuzer (2003), considering that early childhood education has a long-term effect on individuals, the quality of the education received in this period is important. According to the study findings of Bloom (1964), half of people's mental development occurs between the ages of 0-4 and the remaining half continues up to the age of 17. 33% of all academic success of the child until the age of 18 is associated with success at the age of 0-6 (Fidan and Erden 2002). In addition to academic success, it is known that social-emotional learning outcomes acquired in early childhood also shape beliefs, value judgments, personality structure, habits, and attitudes in adulthood (Oktay, 2003). As a result, it is reported that the early childhood period is extremely important in the development of intelligence, social skills, and personality (Yavuzer, 2003). It is also reported that supporting the child in a healthy and qualified manner suitable for his/her development also has a positive effect on children (Ekinci-Vural and Kocabaş, 2016).

Acquiring some positive learning outcomes is aimed in children receiving drama education. Akyol (2003) expressed some of these achievements as follows: "The ability to work in a group is the development of creative thinking, understanding oneself and others, verbal and physical communication, solidarity, sharing, and problem-solving skills. The development of self-expression skills is being sensitive to the environment, being self-confident, gaining a sense of responsibility, decision-making and encouraging, internal discipline, being tolerant, and democratizing." According to the results of many practices and studies, the use of creative drama in education reveals that it is a more efficient educational process than traditional methods and clearly points out the importance of the contribution of drama to different development areas (Guli et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2013, Toivanen et al., 2012; Walker et al., 2011). It is seen that children are more successful in understanding and conveying what they understand (Aytaş, 2013). In addition to this, studies demonstrate that drama can be effective in eliminating developmental delays in social and language skills (Meyer, 1993). The results of using creative drama in learning environments can be beneficial as students who behave in a shy, quiet, or conscious way usually regain their confidence after learning to use their unlimited imagination (Ulubey and Toraman, 2015). For these reasons, drama emerges as an important element of the educational process.

It is considered that three important elements are fundamental in education. The leader or teacher who will be the source in transmitting the data, the students who will receive the data, and the school serving as a physical environment that enables this transfer to occur. A leader is a competent person with the necessary knowledge and equipment (Genç 2010). In a well-mediated and well-organized drama, adult direction, namely the leader, is indispensable since the natural flow of the play is not disrupted (Furman, 2000). The leader is expected to approach the group sincerely, handle different events and situations in a multi-faceted manner, and activate the participant in line with the goals (Bakan, 2009). Apart from these, it is possible for drama leaders to influence the behavior and attitudes of the group, and to be influenced when affecting the group (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2013). Therefore, the personality (emotional maturity, stress management, and self-confidence), skills (technical and conceptual), and motivation (confidence, demands, and needs) of the leader are important characteristics that affect the quality of being a leader (Wayne and Cecil, 2012). Apart from this, drama leaders have basic duties such as activating the artistic and aesthetic feelings of children, enabling them to produce creative solutions to problem situations, preparing children for different events and situations, helping them to recognize various social roles, and enabling them to find connections between the inner and outer (Jennings, 2017). Drama leaders have a special education for drama, even if they have expertise in different fields, and can make practices in line with goals and objectives (Adıgüzel, 2014). Training or leadership is frequently associated with organizing the activities of participants and guiding the social process enabling them to regulate the way they handle events, goals, choices, individual motivations and abilities, prominent aspects, and common aspects internally and externally (Hoy and Miskel, 2010).

Considering the studies on drama leaders in preschool, it is seen that there are limited studies on drama leaders and leadership in Turkey. Güven (2001) discussed the opinions of parents, teachers, and drama leaders about drama and concluded that the age of the leaders, the number of children in the classroom, the field of education, and the duration of work did not affect their opinions on drama. Koçyiğit (2017) investigated the profiles and opinions of drama leaders in assessment and evaluation and concluded that drama leaders were not sufficient in using assessment tools. In a study conducted by Oğuz (2014), it was concluded that drama leaders should have drama knowledge, be creative, have advanced language and communication skills, empathize, and be tolerant and energetic. Kara (2014) conducted a study on leadership in Turkey and revealed that Turkish teachers were inadequate in functionally using drama. The most recent study including the drama leaders but was not directly focused on drama was conducted by Gök (2021). In her master's thesis, Gök (2021) analyzed learning with voice emotion in drama leaders, hearing-impaired individuals, normal-hearing individuals, and individuals with an autism spectrum disorder. In the international literature on drama leaders, there is a study about a theater professor and drama leader, Philip Michael Taylor (Hatton, 2020). It was considered that there was a need for a study on this subject due to the limited number of studies addressing the perspectives of drama leaders working with preschool children, the development, and achievements of children from their perspective, and the problems they experienced.

In this regard, this study was conducted to determine the opinions of drama leaders on drama education processes and drama activities. The following questions were adopted:

- What are the opinions of drama leaders on the concept of drama?
- What are the opinions of drama leaders on the relationship between drama and education?
- What are the opinions of drama leaders on the drama learning outcomes they observe in children?
- What are the opinions of drama leaders on other learning outcomes that drama is expected to provide to the child?
- According to drama leaders, what are the opinions of parents on drama education?
- What are the opinions of drama leaders on the difficulties they face in the education process?

METHOD

This section includes information on the design of the study, the participants, the data collection tool, the data collection process and analysis.

Research Model

This study was conducted with the case study pattern as it aimed at investigating the opinions of drama leaders on drama education and activities. Considering the studies conducted in Turkey, the case study (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006), also known as ‘case’, and ‘special case’, is a detailed analysis and description of a limited system by using data collection tools such as observation, interview, document, and report (Merriam, 2013).

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 27 drama leaders in the İstanbul province of Turkey. The participants in this study were determined by the criterion-based purposive sampling method. The inclusion criteria were as follows: having worked or working with children in the preschool education period. Depending on the purpose of the study, this method allows in-depth research by selecting information-rich situations (Büyüköztürk, et al. 2012).

The demographic information of the participants was presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *The demographic information of the participants*

CHARACTERISTICS		N	%
Age	31-35 years old	8	29.6
	36-40 years old	7	26
	25-30 years old	5	18.5
	46 years old and above	5	18.5
	41-45 years old	2	7.4
Gender	Female	15	55.6
	Male	12	44.4
Educational Background	Bachelor’s Degree	19	70.4
	Associate degree	4	14.8
	Postgraduate	4	14.8

As seen in Table 1, the entire sample group participating in this study consisted of 27 drama leaders (15 female leaders and 12 male leaders) working in various educational institutions. 8 of the participants were 31-35 years old, 7 of the participants were 36-40 years old, 5 of the participants were 25-30 years old, 5 of the participants were 46 years old and above, and 2 of the participants were 41-45 years old. 19 of the drama leaders had a bachelor’s degree, 4 had an associate degree, and 4 had a postgraduate degree.

Table 2. *Information on drama education of drama leaders*

CHARACTERISTICS		N	%
Professional life other than drama teaching	Available	24	89.9
	Unavailable	3	11.1
Years of serving as a drama leader	1-5 years	13	48.1
	6-10 years	9	33.3
	11-30 years	5	18.5
	Available	21	77.8
Receiving a special education in drama training	Unavailable	6	22.2
	Duration of the education received in drama training	15	55.65
Status of obtaining a certificate at the end of the training	1-3 years	8	29.6
	3-5 years	4	14.8
	0-11 months	4	14.8
Qualification for the certificate to become a drama leader	Certificate	16	59.3
	Unavailable	8	29.6
	Certificate of participation	3	11.1
Institutions providing drama education	Adequate	15	55.6
	Inadequate	12	44.4
Institutions providing drama education	Private	15	55.6
	State	9	33.3
	Both	3	11.1

As seen in Table 2, 24 of the participants in the sample group had a profession other than drama teaching while 3 of the participants were only working as drama leaders. Considering the experience of the participants in drama teaching, 13 of the participants served as a drama leader between 1 and 5 years, 9 of the participants served as a drama leader between 6 and 10 years, and 5 of the participants served as a drama leader between 11 and 30 years. While 21 of the participants had a special education in drama teaching, 6 of the participants did not have a special education in drama teaching (as they graduated from the conservatory theater department). They were among the 8 participants who received drama training for 3-5 years and did not receive a certificate or certificate of participation. Although 15 of the participants continued their training for 1 to 3 years and 4 of the participants continued their training for 0-11 months, 16 of the participants received a certificate and 3 of the participants received a certificate of participation. Although 15 of the participants found the training or certificates, they received sufficient, 12 of the participants did not find the training or certificates sufficient. 15 of the participants in the sample group worked in private institutions and 9 of them worked in public institutions. 3 leaders were working in both types of institutions.

Data Collection Tools

The research data were collected with the personal information form and interview form prepared by the researchers. The personal information form included questions about the participant's age, gender, educational status, duration of drama teaching, whether he/she was engaged in any other profession other than drama teaching, the age groups he/she worked for, whether he/she had special training in drama teaching (duration of the training, where it was received, whether it was sufficient, and whether he/she received a certificate or not), and the type of institution he/she was currently working in.

Open-ended questions were included in the form prepared to reveal the opinions of drama leaders on drama education and activities. These questions were used to evaluate what the concept of drama meant for drama leaders, the relationship between drama and education, drama education and activities, the development they observed in children, what else drama could bring to the child, the perspectives of parents on drama, and the difficulties they encountered during the education process. The interview form, which was prepared in line with the aim of the study and included 7 questions, was presented to 3 lecturers (drama education specialists) for their opinions. In light of the feedback from the experts, two questions were removed from the form and the final version of the form consisted of 5 questions and a personal information form. To understand the understandability level of the questions, a pilot study was conducted with 3 drama leaders. As a result of the pilot application, it was concluded that the questionnaire was understandable by the drama leaders and the final form was applied to all participants.

Data Collection and Analysis

A Google form containing the research questions was created by the researchers. The Google questionnaire was presented to the participants online and volunteer drama leaders filled out the form. Therefore, the responses provided by the participants were collected by the researchers in the computer environment. The data were analyzed by content analysis. The analyzed data were read by the researchers and the codes were determined. Then, related codes were brought together, and themes were obtained. Interpretations were made by including the codes and themes reached when presenting the data in tables.

To determine the consistency of the codes created by the researchers, Miles and Huberman's (1994) percentage of consensus calculation was preferred (Reliability formula: Consensus/consensus + division). According to Miles and Huberman, the reliability is expected to be over 80%. It was determined that the percentage of consensus in this study was over 90% for all questions.

In addition to these, the opinions of the participants were presented as direct quotations to support the reliability of the study.

FINDINGS

In this section, the analysis of the responses provided by 27 drama leaders to the questions in categories

such as the concept of drama, the relationship between the concept of drama and education, the observed and expected learning outcomes of drama on children, the perspectives of parents towards drama education, and the difficulties experienced by the leaders were emphasized.

The opinions of the drama leaders participating in this study on the concept of drama were presented in Table 3.

Table 3: *The opinions of the drama leaders on the concept of drama*

Themes	Codes	N
Education and Training Method	Self-confidence and social learning tool (L1), Learning through play (L2, L7, L16), Teaching method (L5, L26), Permanent teaching method (L11), Learning through experience (L13, L22)	9
Life	Making sense of life (L12, L25) Understanding, questioning, and interpreting life (L14), Life itself (L19, L27), Arousing feelings lost in life (L20), Experiencing life (L21, L24)	8
Art and creativity	The art of playing (L3), Animations developing imagination (L4, L17), Creativity and self-confidence (L6, L23), Play-based creativity process (L9, L10), An art form of narrative supporting development (L18)	8
Socialization	Communicating, socializing (L8), Social tool and sharing (L15)	3

9 out of 27 drama leaders participating in this study expressed their opinions about drama as an educational method. These participants reported that there was a play-based (n=3) teaching method (n=2) and that learning was permanent (n=2) as a result of learning through experience (n=2). In addition to this, they reported that it was possible to gain the necessary self-confidence (n=1) to play an active role in education and training life.

Some of the expressions of the drama leaders associating the concept of drama with education were as follows:

L7: *“It is an educational model that provides the flow of information by children’s making drama (animation) while playing, accompanied by a leader...”*

L2: *“Drama is learning through play. I observed that individuals who continued their drama education continuously were more productive when they taught in other fields.”*

L16: *“Drama is one of the training based on learning through play and plays the most important role in recognizing oneself against the memorization system”*

As seen in Table 3, some of the drama leaders explained drama by associating it with life (n=8). It was determined that the number of leaders defining the concept of drama as life itself (n=2), making sense of life (n=2), experiencing (n=2), understanding, questioning, and interpreting life (n=1), and arousing feelings lost in life (n=1) were higher compared to the total number of participants.

Some of the expressions of the drama leaders who reported that the drama was life itself were as follows:

L14: *“It is perceiving life, learning, surviving, interpreting and questioning...”*

L20: *“It can be said that drama is one of how the human community, who has partially lost the instinct to feel, regains this ability.”*

L12: *“Making sense of life and making it understandable and expressing it by thinking and assimilating*

both individually and as a group.”

The number of expressions including “creativity and art theme” was also quite high compared to the total number of participants (n=8). In addition to the drama leaders who reported that drama developed play-based (n=2) creativity and self-confidence (n=2) by supporting imagination (n=2), there were drama leaders who reported that drama was an art of playing (n=1) and a narrative art played only by professional actors (n=1). In this regard, some of the expressions were as follows:

L6: “Courage to create, self-confidence, self-discovery, and intellectual equipment...”

L10: “Drama is playtime. It is the whole of actions where children or adults enjoy playing, discover different ways of expressing themselves and their feelings, and experience the courage and enthusiasm of creating...”

L18: “Drama is a type of narrative played by actors and supports both mental and physical development.”

Besides the themes of education, creativity, and life, there were also drama leaders regarding drama as a means of socialization and development of social skills (n=2). Some of the expressions of the drama leaders were as follows:

L8: “It is a tool that enables children to establish a comfortable relationship through various plays and to be a group without losing their characteristics.”

L15: “It is a tool that improves the socialization of people of all ages, the development of perception, and the ability to do shared work together by using the tools of theater education.”

The titles containing the opinions of the drama leaders regarding the relationship between the concept of drama and education were presented in Table 4.

Table 4: *The opinions of drama leaders on the relationship between drama and education*

Themes	Codes	N
Collaborative and hands-on learning	Learning through sharing and socializing (L1, L6, L15, L17), Learning through hands-on and experience (L3, L13, L14, L19, L20, L21, L22, L24, L25, L27)	14
Permanency in learning	Efficient and effective learning (L2, L4, L8, L11, L16), Permanence of learned concepts or behaviors (L9, L10, L22, L23)	9
Education and training method (tool)	Teaching method (L5, L26), Access to information (L7), The basis of education (L12)	4

As seen in Table 4, all the drama leaders participating in this study reported their opinions on the relationship between the concept of drama and education in a positive way. The participants expressed their opinions by considering the relationship between drama and education from three different perspectives as collaborative and learning through experience (n=14), permanence in learning (n=9), and education-training tools. Considering collaborative and hands-on learning, the expressions advocating learning by socializing and sharing (n=4), and hands-on learning and learning through experience (n=10) were in the majority. The opinions on the collaborative and learning through experience theme of drama were as follows:

L1: “I think it is an educational process that develops self-confidence and adapts to a social environment.”

L25: “...When drama is used in education, we can say that students gain experience on a fictional plane before going into real life and become more ready for life. When real life becomes familiar, individuals who are more self-confident and able to find solutions to the problems they encounter will be raised.”

Another emerging theme regarding the relationship between drama and education was permanence in learning. Some of the opinions expressed in the direction that the education provided with the drama method prepared a more effective and productive learning environment (n=5) and ensured the permanence of the learned concepts and/or behaviors (n=4) were as follows:

L9: “Drama is a play-based creativity journey where children gain experience through hands-on activities. I think teaching with the drama method serves as a tool that makes the things learned more permanent and enjoyable.”

L11: “The relationship between education and drama is to create a more effective way of learning through hands-on learning and to build a solid bridge between...”

L22 argued that drama was a collaborative and hands-on learning process and explained the permanence of learning as a result as follows: “Drama helps permanent learning as it provides learning through experience.”

As seen in Table 2, some of the drama leaders (n=4) regarded drama as a method (tool) of direct education. Some of the expressions associated with the teaching method (n=2), means of accessing information (n=1), and the basis of education (n=1) were as follows:

L5: “Creative drama is a teaching method.”

L7: “It is an educational model that provides the transfer of information by children’s making drama (animation) while playing, accompanied by a leader...”

L26: “I use it as a method.”

Based on the learning permanence effect of drama, there were also opinions arguing that it was an educational method (tool). In this regard, L23 expressed his/her opinions as follows: “Drama is a method that creates opportunities for participants to learn through hands-on activities and experiencing by using all kinds of educational/training materials, leaves permanent traces through experiences and animations, and develops individual’s self-confidence, creativity, responsibility, cooperation, and communication skills.”

The opinions of drama leaders on the drama learning outcomes they observed in children were presented in Table 5.

Table 5: The opinions of drama leaders on the drama learning outcomes they observed in children

Themes	Codes	N
Social and Emotional Development	Self-confidence development (L1, L4, L6, L7, L11, L15, L16, L22, L26, L27), Socialization (L4, L9, L12, L16, L19, L24) Cooperation and adapting to the team (L16, L23, L25, L26), Empathy, tolerance, and sharing (L8, L9, L22, L23) Happiness (L10, L19, L20), Problem-solving skill (L11, L12)	19
Language and Communication Skills	Verbal expression skills (L2, L4, L6, L8, L11, L17, L22, L23, L24, L25, L27), Communication (L4, L7, L8, L9, L12, L15, L19) Articulation (L2)	16
Cognitive development	Creativity and imagination (L3, L12, L13, L17, L18, L22, L27), Inquiry, observation, and inference (L7, L9), Quick and permanent learning (L5, L8), Learning with fun (L14, L21)	13
Physical development	Physical development and awareness (L7, L13, L18)	3

Considering the effect of drama on children in Table 5, most of the drama leaders observed and reported

that learning outcomes were achieved in the field of social and emotional development (n=19). Some of the drama leaders participating in this study reported that children developed to be self-confident (n=10), more extroverted and sociable (n=6), collaborative and adaptable within a group (n=4), empathetic, tolerant, and sharing (n=4). In addition to these, some of the drama leaders reported that drama made children happy (n=3) and increased problem-solving skills (n=2).

L9: "I observed an introverted child become an extrovert. I realized that socialization, sharing, and communication channels were opened more."

L10: "Based on what I observed during my teaching career, I can say that all children love drama. During my 10 years of experience, the number of children who say "I don't like this course" is one or two. That's why drama is a lesson where children are always happy, excited, and feel good. Another characteristic drawing my attention is that the children are very happy to be rewarded for what they do there at that moment."

L11: "They can develop thoughts and reflexes against different problem situations. I observed an increase in their self-expression skills and self-confidence. For example, I observed that one of my students clearly demonstrated improvement in terms of self-confidence, improvisation skills, problem-solving skills, and creativity for 4 years."

Another observed effect theme of drama on children was the development of language and communication. Drama leaders reported that when children received drama education, their verbal expressions became clearer and more understandable (n=11), and their communication with peers and adults improved (n=7). In addition to these, there was also a drama leader who observed improvement in articulation (n=1). Some of the expressions of drama leaders observing developments in language and communication were as follows:

L2: "Better expression and better articulation..."

L17: "They express themselves better and understand the other better."

L24: "... I can say that it contributes to the individual in self-expression."

Almost half of the drama leaders (n=13) participating in this study observed that many cognitive learning outcomes were achieved in children receiving drama education. According to drama leaders, drama education had the most effect on children's creativity and imagination (n=7). In addition to these, observing, questioning, and making inferences (n=2), learning the concept or behavior to be acquired quickly and learning permanently (n=2), and learning with fun (n=2) were reported as the other effects of drama on cognitive processes. Some of the expressions were as follows:

L3: "Their imaginations are getting stronger."

L5: "Children can learn what they need to learn better, faster, and with pleasure through the creative drama method. In this case, children do not forget what they learn better, and they become more successful."

L7: "...It has a positive effect on the personal development process, such as making observations and making inferences."

L27: "Drama education enables children to reveal their creative potentials."

Some of the drama leaders (n=3) emphasized physical development. One of the leaders expressed his/her opinions on the learning outcomes in the field of physical development observed in children receiving drama education as follows:

L13: "It improves mobility both quantitatively and qualitatively."

The opinions of drama leaders on the other learning outcomes that drama was expected to provide to the child were presented in Table 6.

Table 6: *The opinions of drama leaders on the other learning outcomes that drama was expected to provide to the child*

Themes	Codes	N
Social and Emotional Development	Self-awareness (L3, L4, L14, L16, L17, L22, L23, L26), Social awareness (L6, L8, L10, L12, L22, L25), Being self-confident (L3, L5, L14, L16, L21, L24), Social relations and skills (L9, L10, L20, L21, L26), Empathy, respect, and feeling of love (L8, L10, L12, L15)	18
Cognitive development	Observing-listening-understanding/comprehension (L2, L7, L10, L11, L18), Academic success (L5, L9, L24), Creative thinking skill (L10, L18)	8
Language and Communication Skills	Verbal communication and expressiveness (L1, L10, L24, L26)	4
Holistic development	All development areas (L13, L19, L27)	3

As seen in Table 6, drama leaders expressed their opinions mostly in the field of social-emotional development about the expected learning outcomes of drama (n=18). The other learning outcomes that drama was expected to provide to the child were the development of self-awareness towards emotions, body, and skills, which was considered to offer important benefits in the way of being an individual (n=8), acquiring values with social awareness towards social events and situations (n=6), the increase in self-confidence (n=6), the improvement/development of social relations (n=5), and the increase in actions such as empathy, respect, love, and sharing (n=4). In this regard, some of the opinions of the drama leaders were as follows:

L4: "It can reveal characteristics in children that they and their parents are not even aware of."

L8: "It increases the ability to empathize. Understanding one's own value in the community of which he/she is a part and continuing as a part of this community without losing that value."

L14: "The fact of being an individual. Most importantly, it increases self-confidence."

L10: "... establishing cooperation, developing different perspectives, listening-understanding... etc. should be acquired."

L12: "Social awareness and empathy skill."

Beyond the observations of the drama leaders participating in this study, the participants believed drama education could also contribute to cognitive development. Considering cognitive development, drama leaders reported that observing, comprehending what one observed, understanding, and listening (n=5), academic success (n=3), and creative thinking skills (n=2) improved. Some of the opinions of the drama leaders expressing the expected contributions of drama in cognitive development were presented below.

L7: "Inference and observation are very important because if the child has fun just by playing, the knowledge remains passive. Knowledge alone does not mean anything. The inference and observation arising from the combination of the two will contribute to the child's mental world and thinking, and the first step of the individual process will be comprehension, understanding, listening, and thinking."

L9: "I think that drama will affect not only the social skills of children but also their educational life positively."

L18: "...it has a positive effect on their cognitive development by helping them beat their brains out."

Considering the language and communication skills in Table 4, it was argued that drama training (n=4) also contributed to verbal expression power and communication skills.

In this regard, L1 explained his/her opinions as follows: *"I think his/her ability to express himself/herself improves."* There were also drama leaders (n=3) arguing that drama provided children with a learning outcome in every field. L27: *"Actually, all desired learning outcomes can be acquired through drama. It is important to set the target correctly."*

The opinions of parents on drama education according to drama leaders were presented in Table 7.

Table 7: *The opinions of parents on drama education according to drama leaders*

Theme	Code	N
Developmental support	Effective and necessary in every way (L4, L5, L10, L14, L15, L18, L19, L21, L23, L26, L27) Social development (L6, L11, L25) Academic success (L6, L10) Considering it is necessary after the training (L2, L11, L24) Talent development (L16)	17
Method of passing time	Demonstration (L9, L22, L23) Entertainment and leisure time (L1, L20)	5
Unconscious	Completely unconscious about drama (L7, L8, L12, L13)	4
Unnecessary	Considering drama unnecessary (L3, L17)	2

As seen in Table 7, the opinions of the parents on drama education were gathered under 4 themes according to the drama leaders. It was determined that there were parents thinking drama education provided developmental support to their children (n=17), some of the parents were aware of the necessity of drama education even though they were not interested in the content and learning outcomes (n=5), some of the parents were unconscious about the content and necessity of drama education (n=4), and some of the parents considered drama unnecessary (n=2).

Based on the knowledge and observations of the drama leaders participating in this study, most of the parents (n=11) whose children received drama education believed that their children had developed and/or would develop in every aspect and considered it necessary because they knew that drama education was effective. According to the drama leaders, in addition to the parents who considered drama education necessary for reasons such as socialization, widening the social environment (n=3), and affecting academic success (n=2), some parents who considered drama education unnecessary at the beginning but understood its necessity with the emergence of its effects and the achievement of the learning outcomes. In this regard, some of the expressions of the drama leaders were as follows:

L18: "I think that parents' thoughts about children's drama education are positive as it contributes to their socialization, cognitive development, and physical development."

L25: "Parents often say they want drama training for their socialization."

L10: "...Parents know and care about how beneficial drama education is for the development of their children and how beneficial it is to the academic process."

L2: "It was observed that parents considered drama education unnecessary at the beginning and encouraged the student after the education."

According to the drama leaders, there were parents (n=4) who confused drama education with theater and expected a show as well as parents (n=2) considering that drama was important in terms of creating a fun environment for children and spending their leisure time. The drama leaders used the following expressions about the theme of the drama's method of spending time:

L23: "We observe that parents are generally unaware of but have positive ideas about drama. Drama is often confused with theater."

L20: "Based on my observations, many parents may think that drama is a fun time for their children to spend because they consider drama education only as a means of entertainment and play."

According to drama leaders, some parents had no idea about drama education, its activities, and the effect and learning outcomes of drama (n=4). In this regard, some of the expressions of drama leaders were as follows:

L13: "Parents do not know these things, and they do not want to learn..."

L17: "Most of the parents do not see it necessary..." The drama leaders also reported that there were parents who considered drama education unnecessary and negative (n=2).

The opinions of drama leaders about the difficulties they faced in the education process were presented in Table 8.

Table 8: *The opinions of drama leaders about the difficulties they faced in the education process*

Themes	Codes	N
Educational institution	The perspective of the educational institution administration on the drama lesson (L10, L12, L21, L25, L27), Physical conditions of the educational institution (L12, L23, L24)	8
Parents	Expectations of parents (L4, L6, L13), The perspective of parents on the drama lesson (L10, L15, L21)	7
Child	Communication with the child (L6, L8, L16, L18, L19), Child's attitude towards the lesson (L11, L14, L22)	7
None	Drama leaders who do not experience any problems (L1, L3, L5, L7, L9)	5
Other difficulties	Lack of personal knowledge and equipment (L26), Unfavorable economic conditions (L20), Insufficient leader training (L2)	3

As seen in Table 8, three themes emerged regarding the problems faced by the drama leaders: the educational institutions where drama lessons were provided (n=8), the parents of the children (n=7), and the children themselves (n=7). There were also drama leaders (n=5) who reported that they did not encounter any problems while providing drama education. It was reported that the problems faced by the drama leaders were due to their own lack of knowledge (n=1), poor economic conditions (n=1), and the lack of adequate congresses, seminars, and training of leaders in the field (n=1).

Considering the problems arising from the administration of the institution where drama education was provided, one of the problems experienced by the drama leaders was regarding drama education as "entertainment and show" and having expectations in this direction (n=5). In addition to these, physical conditions such as not allocating a special area for drama education, not providing the necessary equipment for the lesson, and the excess number of students (n=3) were among the other problems experienced within the institution. Some of the expressions related to the educational institution theme were as follows:

L21: "The institution that I am working with deems my profession as the art of theater and considers the drama lesson as a means of entertainment."

L12: "...I can do my lessons as I wish, but some made-to-order shows sometimes challenge the children and me. I also think that I am incomplete due to schools avoiding expenses in terms of using materials. More importantly, it bothers me to work in the same classroom environment rather than in a space designed for drama."

Another source of problems experienced by drama leaders was parents (n=7). The expectations of parents (n=4) such as wanting to see rapid development in their children after the drama lesson, expecting special treatment for their children, and wanting their children to be at the forefront of the shows (n=4) were among the problems experienced by the drama leaders. There were also parents such as institution administrators or teachers, who mistook drama for theater and regarded it as a means of play, entertainment, and leisure (n=3). Some of the opinions of drama leaders on the problems arising from the parents were as follows:

L4: "We often face difficulties from parents. They have different expectations because they do not know the difference between self-confidence and being spoiled, and they act hastily regarding the development of children."

L15: "Parents think that drama is just a game or entertainment and regard it as a means of getting rid of their children, even for a short time..."

As seen in Table 6, another problem theme reported by the drama leaders participating in this study was the children they provided drama education for (n=7). The process of active participation with children in the lesson, difficulty in orientation, the child's introversion, the child's mobility, and communication problems due to

not getting along with young people (n=4) as well as the necessity of academic success imposed on children, rote learning children who were focused on the result rather than the process and who cannot use their imagination (n=4) were other problems that made the drama education difficult. In this regard, some of the opinions of the drama leaders were as follows:

L11: "In some cases, I saw children who stopped daydreaming at an early age, and this disappointed me. I think that children should not try to approach drama with a rote learning perspective while still in kindergarten. This is both very upsetting and thought-provoking..."

L19: "Sometimes, students who can't concentrate on the lessons in younger age groups can be the children with whom I have communication difficulties."

One of the drama leaders, who mentioned he/she faced problems caused by children, expressed his/her opinions as follows: *L18: "I had a hyperactive student years ago. He/she was tiring me out. When I was confused about how to communicate, I learned how to use my energy correctly because of being hyperactive myself and being noticed by an instructor in time, and being directed to the theater. I approached him/her with all my empathy. Now, he/she is a drama leader."*

Some of the expressions of the drama leaders who reported that they did not have any problems with the education institution, parent, child, etc. in the drama lessons were as follows:

L3: "I did not encounter any problems. I don't have any problems; we are based on volunteering..."

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, the opinions of drama leaders working with preschool children on the concept of drama, the relationship between drama and education, the observed and possible learning outcomes of drama, the opinions of parents on drama education from the eyes of drama leaders, and the difficulties experienced by drama leaders, if any, were determined. It was determined that drama leaders defined drama under the titles of education and teaching method, lifestyle, art and creativity, and socialization. In parallel with this study, there were other studies and definitions of researchers about drama in the related literature. Ülker-Erdem et al. (2017) determined that preschool teachers and teacher candidates defined drama as a method-technical drama, drama as a means of expression, drama as an opportunity for hands-on learning, drama as a type of activity, drama as a creative production process, and drama as a play. Similarly, Hornbrook (1998) concluded that drama formed a simple part of what we encountered in life. Based on hands-on learning, Chen (1997) reported that drama was the opposite of traditional education understanding and did not allow children to learn passively but required active participation in their own education. Chukwu-Okoronkwo (2011), on the other hand, emphasized that drama was "the process of developing and acquiring artistic skills" as an educational tool and asserted that "creative drama was a learning process". Lin (2010) and Tam (2016) reported that drama was one of the activities that children needed for creativity, and that the primary goal of drama was to develop creativity in children.

Another result that emerged in this study was that the participants established the relationship between drama and education as collaborative and hands-on learning, providing permanent learning, and being an education-teaching method. Aydın-Şengül (2016) reported that creative drama activities supported hands-on learning instead of rote learning, and Tombak (2014) reported that it was the most effective education and training method for the health of children involved in the process. McNaughton (2004) reported that the use of drama in education encouraged learning by rebuilding knowledge and facilitated learning and, therefore, emphasized the importance of drama in education for sustainability in education through experiential learning and imagination. As seen, drama leaders defined drama by making explanations in line with the theoretical knowledge studies in the literature and revealed the relationship between drama and education.

According to the drama leaders, the most observed learning outcomes in children were in the areas of social-emotional, language and communication, and cognitive and physical development, respectively. In addition to these, drama leaders expected the drama to provide children with learning outcomes in social-emotional areas, followed by language and communication, cognitive areas, and all development areas. Aydın-

Şengül (2016) emphasized the contribution of drama to emotional development and reported that the students who participated in the plays in which negative emotions such as anger, fear, and jealousy were involved learned where and how these emotions should be expressed correctly. Chukwu-Okoronkwo (2011), pointed out that children achieved similar learning outcomes through drama. The child can find himself/herself and explore his/her personality, potential and limitations, capacities for movement and language, and special interests through drama. He/she develops the ability to control her emotions, ideas, and thoughts, and learns to express and communicate his/her ideas orally, spontaneously, quickly, and adequately. According to Nurhasanah (2022), children's cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving and social skills such as communication with cooperation were supported by drama education. Çulha (2020) described the learning outcomes of drama in children as contributing to the development of creativity and imagination, contributing to the concept of 'self', independent thinking and decision making, awareness and expression of emotions, positive contribution to communication skills and language development, social sensitivity, and cooperation and working together. Drama leaders also reported that they observed the possible outcomes of drama in children in line with their own practices. This result can be interpreted as drama leaders making practices to support all developmental areas of children.

According to the drama leaders, parents mostly provided their children with drama education as it supported their development. However, according to drama leaders, some parents provided their children with drama education because it helped their children to make use of their spare time. In addition to this, there were unconscious parents who received drama education but were not aware of the contribution of drama to their children. Some of the parents, although only a few, considered drama education unnecessary even if their children received drama education. In a drama-based study conducted by Tan (2020) with mothers and their children, some of the mothers reported that drama supported the development of children in many areas in relation to socialization and increasing self-confidence. Lindberg (2015), who considered that the parents regarded drama as spending spare time or not necessary did not recognize the concept of drama or did not have a good understanding of it, expressed this situation as one of the obstacles to drama education.

The last result of this study was that drama leaders reported the difficulties they experienced in the education process as difficulties arising from the educational institution, parents, and the child, respectively. In addition to this, issues such as lack of sufficient knowledge, education and experience in drama, and wages were the difficulties experienced by drama leaders. Güngör and Ateş (2019) reported that children who initially exhibited an introverted and abstaining attitude and, therefore, had difficulty in communicating, demonstrated positive developments thanks to drama education. In this regard, the results of this study were in parallel. Kulik (2004) conducted a study and determined that children who received drama education made friends more easily over time, expressed their feelings more easily, and therefore, there was an improvement in the difficulties arising from communication problems. Another difficulty reported by the drama leaders was the lack of special spaces needed for drama education. Bütün et al. (2015) reported that they had difficulty with physical space, time, and the school administration's negative attitude towards drama-oriented studies. Selvi (1999) reported that the most basic problems in drama education in schools were resistance to drama education due to the insufficient knowledge of the school administration, overcrowded classes, insufficient skills and knowledge of the drama leaders, and the conditions of the physical space. Lindberg (2015), who conducted a learning-focused study with the preschool drama curriculum, suggested that apart from parents, school administration and teachers were not familiar with the concept of drama and, therefore, drama leaders, teachers, school administrators, and parents should be educated about the use of theatrical methods by providing training sessions. In addition to these, although the drama leaders reported the difficulty of the number of children receiving drama education, the physical facilities of the place, and the duration of the education, Güven (2001) revealed that these difficult conditions did not affect the perspective and attitude towards drama on both the drama leaders, the children, and the parents. It was determined that there was not much differentiation in the factors that compel the drama process for leaders in different studies conducted in different years.

This study had some limitations. Only drama leaders working in the İstanbul province of Turkey were included in this study. There is a need for studies involving drama leaders working with different age groups in

different provinces. Therefore, it can be suggested that similar studies can be designed and applied in different provinces. Accordingly, obtained results can be compared. Considering the learning outcomes of drama education in preschool children, it is considered important to increase preschool teachers' competencies in drama planning, implementation, and evaluation. In this regard, it can be ensured that the classes in the undergraduate programs are conducted by drama experts as much as possible, and teachers can be supported on drama through in-service training. According to the result that about half of the drama leaders received drama education for the preschool period and most of them were engaged in other professions, it can be suggested that the education of leaders should be increased, and drama education should be provided by the drama leaders. To reduce the obstacles experienced by drama leaders due to parents and school administration, drama programs can be prepared and applied with the participation of parents and administrators. This way, a considerable amount of contribution can be made to increase the awareness of parents and administrators about the importance and necessity of drama. Based on the limitations of the studies conducted with drama leaders in the literature review, it is recommended to conduct studies on the competence of drama leaders and their education, increase the number of projects related to drama education, and integrate qualitative, quantitative, mixed, and meta-studies in all these studies and projects.

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