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**Abstract**

With the development of technology, traditional games which had an essential place in the lives of children began to lose their importance and were replaced by computer games. An examination of developed countries shows that their unique traditional games are being protected and, thanks to conscious families are nurtured by national values; thus, they serve an extremely important function in terms of shaping national conscience. The value of traditional children's games can be better understood considering the possibility that especially pre-school children can be affected by the artificial and virtual culture imposed by technological devices. Pre-school period is a period when value education in children begins. Information on values is gained at every stage of life. However, the earliest information is acquired through traditional games in the period when personality begins to develop. In this study, 25 children were presented with Cypriot Turkish children's games such as hide-and-peek, house, blind man's bluff, dodge ball and duck duck goose. Then children were urged to play these games and observations were made which was followed by interviews with children to obtain their opinions on games and game processes. In the study, it was seen that children acquired several values required by social life such as respect, courtesy, helping each other, courage, love, protection, honesty, forgiveness, respect for the environment, patience, and obeying rules

**Resumen**

Con el desarrollo de la tecnología, los juegos tradicionales, que tienen un lugar importante en la vida de los niños, han comenzado a perder su importancia en el proceso y su lugar ha sido reemplazado por juegos de computadora. Cuando se mira a los países desarrollados, se ve que los juegos tradicionales están protegidos, y se ve que estos juegos los juegan los niños a través de familias conscientes y maestros. Dado que los niños en edad preescolar pueden verse influenciados por la cultura artificial-virtual a través de medios tecnológicos de comunicación, el valor de los juegos infantiles tradicionales se comprenderá mejor en este punto. El período preescolar es un período en el que la educación en valores comienza en los niños. Mientras que la información sobre los valores se obtiene en cada período de la vida, la primera información se obtiene mediante los juegos tradicionales en el período en que la personalidad comienza a formarse. En este estudio, a 25 niños se les presentaron juegos de niños turcos chipriotas como escondite, casa, aficionado a ciegos, dodge ball y pato pato ganso. Luego se instó a los niños a jugar estos juegos y se hicieron observaciones, seguidas de entrevistas con niños para obtener sus opiniones sobre los juegos y los procesos de juego. En el estudio, se observó que los niños adquirirían varios valores requeridos por la vida social, como respeto, cortesía, ayuda mutua, valor, amor, protección, honestidad, perdón, respeto por el medio ambiente, paciencia y obediencia a las reglas

**Keywords**

Early childhood; Education; Children's games; Northern Cyprus; Traditional values; Social-cultural

**Palabras clave**

Primera infancia; Educación; Juegos infantiles; Norte de Chipre; Valores tradicionales; Sociocultural

## 1. Introduction

Culture is the sum of all tangible and intangible accumulations created by a nation as a result of its experiences throughout history. Culture implies all elements that occur in the life of a person such as literature, language, music, drawing, dance, architecture, and entertainment. The entertainment culture of Cypriot Turkish community includes traditional games which receive great interest as indispensable elements of the needs of childhood period.

The contribution of games in general and traditional games in particular to the psychological and physical needs of children are non-ignorable needs for educationists. This development is extremely critical for the child in terms of connecting with life in educational and psychological aspects (Girmen, 2012: 273).

Traditional games are one of the most important elements that teach children the realities of life. Children have fun through different games from their early ages, but they also socialize and explore several things which will help them throughout their lives.

*“Game is stronger than other learning techniques in changing students from passive to active state as it is a technique that gives pleasure to the student. With games, students taste the such pleasures as exploring, knowing-recognizing, trying and communication. Even difficult and complicated problems can be simplified using game techniques. Students can be motivated through games and, as they devote their entire attention to the course, teaching even the most difficult and complicated subjects can become easier. Games have important features in turning abstract experiences into concrete. They are also extremely important in ensuring that students put into practice what they learn during class. From these characteristics, it can be understood that usage of this technique will make sure that students learn in a more permanent manner” (Susüzer, 2006: 32).*

Traditional games also include the culture and traditions of the society. With the development of technology, several computer games emerged and, unfortunately, traditional games are losing their importance on a daily basis. At this point, teachers and parents have critical roles to play. Teachers and especially parents must pay attention to ensure that children spend time with traditional games. In this manner, it will be possible to prevent a cultural extinction.

*“Today in many countries new toys are being developed based on technology; at the same time old toys and thus old games are taken under protection. Thus, games and toys which are unique to that culture are transferred from one generation to another and non-tangible heritage is being protected. In this manner, child culture researchers, pedagogues and academicians will benefit from this accumulation in their childhood history studies” (Başal, 2010: 13).*

Social and ethical values which will shape the lives of children begin to develop in the first years of their lives. The games that children play since early ages have an important role in ensuring the sustainability of social values and their transfer between generations. Since the first years of their lives, children learn how to maintain their lives particularly through imitation. From the moment they put into practice what they learn, they pay attention to avoid contrasting with their society. A child who begins to socialize from early ages has to pay attention to certain values in the society. To cite Mustafa Aydın on values:

*“Here values are all kinds of tangible or non-tangible, positive or negative things such as objectives and targets, interests and benefits, passions, ideals, all kinds of power factors, greed for fame and glory, praise and criticism, respect and disrespect, belief and non-belief, keeping or not keeping promises, honesty or dishonesty, love and hate, which are adopted and effective in a person’s life” (Aydın, 2011: s.39).*

Everything that people do are related to one value or another. Thus, values are principles that determine and direct everything that people do (Uysal, 2003: 51).

It is known that traditional games, which play an essential role in the lives of children, are ways of informal learning. While children are playing games, they gain some acquisitions especially related to social life by means of communicating with their peers. In addition to several acquisitions, games are critical in gaining some values such as respect, love, greeting, positive attitudes, tolerance and trust (Sevinç, 2009: 19).

*“In short, games are activities which make positive contribution to the physical, mental and psychological development of children and improve such skills as self-confidence, adaptation and observation. These activities are also closely related to the socialization education of individuals. They improve the sensitiveness of children towards their environment and develop ways to think using voice of self-conscious and sense of feeling” (Kara, 2010: 410).*

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research pattern**

In the study, action research, which is a qualitative research pattern, has been used. Action research is a kind of research which is directed by expert researchers. The parties of the problem are also included in the study and the existing application is criticized and measures are determined to improve the existing situation (Karasar, 1999: 27; cited in Aksoy, 2003: 477). Action research is a study conducted in a systematic and continuous manner in order to improve the applications of educationists and inform them (Calhoun, 2002; cited in Aksoy, 2003: 477). Researchers also participated in this study urging children to play games. Then they asked questions to children, observed them and, when necessary, they provided some guidance.

### **2.2. Study group**

This study was conducted with 25 pre-school students (13 boys and 12 girls) at 6 age group in Northern Cyprus in 2018-2019 academic year. While choosing the students, attention was paid to ensure concordance in terms of socio-economic status and education status of parents. The research was conducted with 5 traditional games which were first presented to the children. Then, the children were encouraged to play the games they watched. These traditional games are as follows: blind man's buff, dodge ball, hide-and-peek, duck duck goose, house. The mentioned traditional games were examined by the researchers in advance and it was found out that these games included several socio-cultural values in their construct.

### **2.3. Collection and analysis of data**

In this study, data were collected by interviews and observations with children after they watched and played traditional games. During the interview, small questions were directed to children when necessary and directions were made. The questions were prepared after having received expert opinion. Experts were lecturers who studied on pre-school education. The 8 questions prepared for the interview were reduced to 5 after receiving expert opinions. Because the students were small-aged children, necessary explanations related to the study were made to the students in detail. The questions directed towards students are as follows: 1- Since when and how often do you play these games? 2- Did you like the games you watched and played? 3- Which points will you observe while playing with your friends? 4- How was the communication between children during the game? 5- What did you learn from the game?

Descriptive analysis method was used in analyzing the data. In descriptive analysis, direct citations are included in order to reflect the opinions of the interviewed children. The objective in the study is to organize the obtained findings and present them in a consistent manner.

*“In this type of analysis researcher can include frequent citations with the purpose of reflecting the opinions of interviewees or observees in a striking manner. The basic objective of this kind of analysis is to present the obtained findings in a summarized and interpreted manner” (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2003).*

The names and playing styles of the games used in the research are as follows:

*Dodge ball:*

In this game, a mother is chosen with a rhyme and a hole is dug for each player at certain distance from the centre in which the ball could fit. The mother slowly rolls the ball from the centre to the holes. The child whose hole is filled with the ball takes the ball and throws it to others. The child who is hit by the ball becomes the mother. The former mother participates in the game. The mother does not change until he/she hits another child with ball. The game ends when the children get bored. It can be believed that the rhyme used in choosing mother in this game (Ana mana/ Porto kala/ Dimamina puf/ Bende rega ruf/ Ga lan puf) is unique to this culture (Yorgancıoğlu, 1997: 255).

*House game:*

*“For the playing field, stones in similar sizes are collected and a house plan divided in rooms is drawn. When girls play alone, they imitate all actions of women. When girls and boys play together, they act husband and wife. Other children act according to the orders of the parents” (Yorgancıoğlu, 1997: 91).*

It is known that house game is played in various cultures. But naturally house game played in every culture is based on the imitation of the parents of children, which is also an imitation of the social and cultural structure of the country. For example, a girl who plays this game in Cypriot Turkish community will imitate her mother and act as performing a traditional handcraft or cooking a traditional food. On the other hand, a boy can play a traditional game (backgammon) or play a traditional musical instrument (saz, darbuka) or sing a traditional folk song (Dillirga) while imitating his father.

*Hide-and-seek:*

*“This game is based on hiding and finding the children who are hiding. It can be said that the rhymes (counting-out rhyme) cited while choosing a mother are unique to Cyprus. Hide-and-seek is known as Linda in Karpaz region of Cyprus” (Yorgancıoğlu, 1980: 154).*

Hide-and-seek is a game which is found in several cultures of the world. It can be said that the general structure and playing style of the game is similar to its counterparts. However, it can be said that the rhyme (counting-out rhyme) used in choosing mother in this game (Ana mana/ Porto kala/ Dimamina puf/ Bende dega ruf) is unique to Cypriot Turkish culture.

*Duck duck goose:*

Duck duck goose is a game played by girls and boys together. Before starting the game, a mother is chosen. The players sit on the ground facing towards each other in the form of a circle and cross their legs. The mother knots an end of a handkerchief and, hiding it in his/her back, turns around the circle. At the same time, he/she cites the rhyme which gives the game its name or another rhyme that he/she knows. The sitting players repeat the rhyme cited by the mother. The mother takes a few tours around the players while citing the rhyme. Other players do not tell even if they see that the mother drops the handkerchief. However, they begin to cite the rhyme faster. If the player at the back of whom the handkerchief is dropped notices the situation, he/she takes the handkerchief and begins to chase the mother. If the mother manages to sit at the place of the chasing child without being caught, the child who holds the chief becomes the mother. But if the chasing child catches the mother and hits him/her with the chief, the game continues with the former mother. If the child at the back of whom the handkerchief is dropped does not notice it, the mother begins to hit at the back of the child when he/she

completes the tour and comes to the child again. The other child starts to run and sits at his/her place again. In the meantime, the mother who is chasing him/her hits at his/her back without hurting him/her. If the child runs faster, he/she avoids being hit but he/she becomes the mother in any case (Gökşen, 2014: 248).

*Blind man's buff:*

Blind man's buff is a game based on the principle that a mother who is blindfolded tries to catch the other players. This game can also be played with girls and boys together. A mother is chosen before the game begins. The mother is blindfolded with a piece of cloth and turned a few times so that he/she gets confused with direction. Then players run here and there. At the same time, they try to misguide the mother by calling him/her. The mother finds his/her direction using the voices. These calls are in the form of "I am here" or calling the mother's name. When the mother holds a child, he/she becomes the mother and the game goes on (Gökşen,2014: 244). The rhymes and some childrens songs used in choosing the other localize this game.

### 3. Findings

In the table below, frequencies and percentages are provided according to gender (8 girl-boy).

**Table 1.**

Values identified at the end of the games watched and played by children

Values	Girls	Boys	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<i>Respect</i>	10	11	21	84
<i>Honesty</i>	4	4	8	32
<i>Helping each other</i>	6	5	11	44
<i>Love</i>	5	3	8	32
<i>Protection</i>	5	3	8	32
<i>Courage</i>	3	6	9	36
<i>Courtesy</i>	8	6	14	56
<i>Forgiveness</i>	4	4	8	32
<i>Respect for the environment</i>	3	4	7	28
<i>Obeying rules</i>	2	2	4	16
<i>Goodness</i>	6	4	10	40
<i>Patience</i>	3	2	5	20

As a result of the questions asked to the children at the end of the games watched and played by children, the 13 values listed above were obtained. It is seen that both girls and boys strongly emphasized the value of "respect". The children used such expressions as "I try to show respect to my peers while playing", "I play without yelling at my peers" to emphasize the value of "respect" in games. Ten girls emphasized the value of respect in games while the number for boys was 11. Another value underlined by children as a result of the questions they were asked was "courtesy" (8 girls - 6 boys). The children used such expressions as "we should not upset our friends", "we should not push them while playing", "we should not push our friends" to underline the importance of courtesy while playing (8 girls - 6 boys). Helping each other is an indispensable element in social life. Children acquire the value of helping each other by means of the games they play since small ages. In this study, children underlined the importance of the value of helping each other in games with such statements as "I include my friend to the game if I gain a right at dodgeball game" and "while playing house, if my friend loses her doll, I find it and give it to her". Another value emphasized by children while playing is goodness. Such expressions as "I treat my friends during the game fairly", "I get my friends up when they fall" are directly related to the emphasis on the value of goodness (6 girls - 4 boys). As presented in the table, other values acquired by children while playing games are courage (9), love (8), protection (8), honesty (8), forgiveness (8), respect for the environment (7), patience (5) and obeying the rules (4).

Observations conducted during when the children were playing traditional games showed that they were happy, respectful towards each other's rights, following the rules of the game and in effective communication with their peers. The data obtained based on brief interviews conducted with their teachers at school revealed that even children who did not communicate within the classroom talked to and even helped each other while playing games. Thus, especially traditional games play an extremely important role in terms of socialization of children. For this reason, in the mentioned games responsibilities should be given to children who have communication problems to ensure that they become socialized. One study conducted by Türk, Kartal and Aslan (2018: 840) concluded that *"teachers believed that assigning tasks and responsibilities to children would be effective in terms of ensuring their socialization and activation during games; in addition, they should be supported with tangible and intangible reinforcers for this purpose"*.

Traditional games in which children feel happy to do things together and share are extremely effective elements in preparing them for life. Observations made during when children play games showed that they insisted and succeeded in including a friend of their who had special needs, that in-house game they reinforced their personalities with their imitations, and that they developed their psycho-motor skills with hide-and-seek game.

It has been found out that children paid attention to be respectful towards the environment with their friends while they were playing traditional games. Especially in dodgeball game, it was observed that when the ball was thrown to the grass, the children tried to take the ball by minimizing their steps on the grass. In addition, it was observed that they tried to bring back to life a flower that was hit and uprooted by the ball. When they were asked about the incident after the game, children emphasized that damaging the grass and uprooting flowers was wrong. Below are the sentences which show that children acquired the value of respecting the environment (S is stand for student):

- S1: *"We should not uproot flowers from their branches"*.
- S2: *"If we step on the grass, they cannot grow"*.
- S3: *"We should not make too much noise while playing"*.
- S4: *"We should not drop litter while playing"*.

These sentences used by the children are generally related to the respect they showed to the environment. It is extremely important for their future lives that the value is acquired at such early ages. Acquiring this value is also important in terms of adapting to social life.

Inasmuch as the respect shown to environment, respect for a person is also essential in sustaining social life. As a result of the games that children watched and played, it was observed that the most important value gained by children through traditional games was respect for people. Below are the sentences which show that children acquired the value of respect for people in this study:

- S1: *"I never yelled at my friends"*.
- S2: *"I never fought with my friends"*.
- S3: *"I did not claim the turn of my friends"*.
- S4: *"I was upset when my friend hit his foot"*.
- S5: *"I showed respect to my friends"*.

Respect for a person is one of the most important elements that shape the future lives of children. A child who has this value knows that he/she is an independent individual and that the other person is a different individual. As a result, he/she sees that there can be social and cultural differences and respects them.

Another important value gained by children during traditional games is courtesy. Courtesy is one of the most important values that children can gain at pre-school period. It is clear that children who learn to show respect to themselves and others will always be more successful in life. Lacking courtesy always creates hatred and hate and these phenomena are extremely

dangerous for the sustainability of social life. Courtesy rules acquired by children at early ages contribute to the development of his/her self-respect and sense of belonging. In this study, the statements which show that children learned courtesy rules are as follows:

- S1: "When my friend brought the ball, I thanked her".
- S2: "I treated my friends fairly while playing".
- S3: "I said "please" while asking something from my friends".
- S4: "I listened to my friend while he was talking".
- S5: "I never made my friends upset".

Helping each other is one of the most important subjects of character education. In short, helpfulness is using one's opportunities for the goodness of others. In order to obtain social development, sensitive children have to be raised. For this reason, the value of helpfulness has to be earned at early ages. In the study, 11 children emphasized the importance of the value of helpfulness with their answers and behaviors they displayed during the games:

- S1: "When my friend fell to the ground, I tried to help him".
- S2: "I found my friend's doll and took it to her".
- S3: "While playing dodgeball, I took my friend when I earned a right".
- S4: "When my friend was thirsty, I gave her water".
- S5: "When the ball went away, I ran and took it".

#### 4. Conclusion, discussion and recommendations

Traditional games play an extremely essential role in transferring national culture future generations and imposing certain values, which are requirements of a social life, to the children at early ages.

This study aimed at determining the values acquired by pre-school children through traditional children's games and interesting results were obtained.

In our age, games are defined by pedagogues as an art of learning and are effective tools in the adapting of children to social life; in short, their socialization. The child learns not to revolt and respect others, which is very important in his/her life and is learned inside the game (Hazar, 2000: 14; cited in Katlav, 2014: 256).

*"The selection of games and toys suitable for the child's age made by teachers in cooperation with families at school will contribute to the child's development of positive behavior in the future, and therefore the child will show adaptive social behavior by learning to follow societal rules" (Yeniasır, Gökbulut, Yaraşır, 2017: 2).*

In this study, as a result of the observations conducted during when the children played games and the questions asked to them after the game showed that they acquired or reinforced through traditional games such values as respect, helping each other, courtesy, goodness, courage, love, protection, honesty, forgiveness, respect for the environment, patience, and obeying rules. In their article titled "*The Importance of Traditional Child Games in terms of the Value Education of Children*", Sümbüllü and Altınışık reached a parallel conclusion: "*Game is the place where societies' lifestyles and moral norms are preserved. In addition to preparing children for the future, the game is the place where social values are given in the easiest and safest way*" (Sümbüllü and Altınışık, 2016: 83). In his study titled "*Pedagogical Values of Traditional Child Games and Ahıska Games which at the Brink of Being Forgotten*", Esen also stated that play is extremely important in children's lives and especially play and imagination and imitation games make important contributions to the child in terms of social development. However, the child while playing games with other people to communicate, share, emphasized that cooperation and cooperation (Esen, 2008: 358).



One of the most important findings obtained in the interviews held with children is that they stated that today they played the examined traditional games less. Children stated in these interviews that computer/tablet games were highly popular now and they spent too much time playing these virtual games as a result of which they did not spare sufficient time to traditional games. In his study titled “Usage of Traditional Child Games in Modern Education”, Pektaş underlined the same problem and emphasized that the games played in the streets, gardens and parks are gradually forgotten due to computer games, and that the digital development constitutes an obstacle for children to learn traditional games (Pektaş, 2017: 478). At this point teachers and parents have serious responsibilities. Especially with the development of technology, virtual games imposed isolation on individuals and occupied an important place in the lives of children. As a result, traditional games which taught the necessary rules of social life at early ages are virtually forgotten. Parents and teachers must pay more attention to make sure that children spend less time with computer/phone/tablet games and direct them to traditional games which have more didactic aspects. In this way, they will lay the foundations of happier lives for their children in the future and prevent cultural destruction at the same time. As non-tangible cultural heritage elements of the society, traditional games ensure cultural transition and preserve and sustain local-national cultures (Öğüt, 2010).

In this study, it has been observed that traditional games are extremely important in imposing certain values to children at early ages. It is a well-known fact that the foundations of values education have to be laid in pre-school period. In this context, it is crystal clear that traditional games have to be used to equip children with the necessary values.

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