

Emotion Coaching Practice With the Whole School Approach “Emotionally Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program” Process Analysis

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Abstract

The preschool period must be the starting point for the same attitude among all education stakeholders to achieve sustainable improvement and permanent change. Undoubtedly, a supportive classroom environment with a bond and an emotion-oriented approach contributes to children’s intellectual and personal development. Emotion coaching is a relational behavior management approach that enables people/children to realize the emotions they are experiencing. The whole school approach facilitates the development of a common language between stakeholders. There is a need for studies that address emotion coaching and the whole approach together in early childhood. This study examined stakeholders’ perspectives on implementing the Emotion-Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program (EFKTP), an emotion coaching program based on a whole school approach. Based on the case study method, the study consists of 34 individuals, including all stakeholders. The data were collected through focus group interviews and semistructured interviews with stakeholders regarding the eight stages of the EFKTP program. Descriptive and content analysis methods were used to evaluate the program’s overall impact. The results suggest that school applications of the program enhance children’s emotional repertoire and behavioral control, home activities enhance communication and relationships between children and their families, and emotion coaching training to stakeholders improves self-efficacy perceptions among teachers and parents.

Keywords: early childhood, whole school approach, emotion coaching, sustainable improvement

1. Introduction

In today’s society, rapid advancements in science and technology, coupled with economic factors, directly impact social life. As social structures change, so do expectations from education, and education systems must be constantly adapted to meet these changes. Some of the changes that result from this renewal process require changes in content, while others require changes in methods and techniques. Contemporary education approaches also emphasize the integrity of innovation and change. To achieve sustainable improvement in the education system and permanent change, it is imperative that support is given at all levels, beginning with the preschool years, and that an understanding is disseminated that includes all interested parties.

Early childhood is a period of rapid development. During this period, the quality of preschool education provided, the environment in which the child grows up, and how adults interact with the child leave deep traces on the child. During the preschool education period, which is the first step of the educational process, new methods and approaches need to be used to meet our generation’s needs. Among the most important of these is the creation of a supportive classroom and school environment (Kandemir & Dündar, 2008; Kuru, 2020).

With the arrangement of the classroom environment, it is known that the quality of education increases and children’s behavior changes positively (Özkubat, 2013), but the emotional climate is sometimes overlooked (Evans, Harvey, Buckley, & Yan, 2009). The provision of a supportive, bonding-oriented classroom and school environment, however, increases children’s awareness of emotions and contributes to their attainment of high levels of social-emotional development (Irene & Hendriati, 2017; Kuru, Kesen, & Kesmez, 2021; Shaw, 2018; Ulloa, Evans, & Parkers, 2010). There is evidence that emotional coaching training improves the emotional language repertoire of teachers (Kloes, 2015) and children (Shaw, 2018), as well as the level of emotional expression in the classroom. Studies show that the ability to recognize and interpret emotions, which develops in

this way, has long-term effects on social behavior and academic competence (Izard et al., 2001).

When the behavior management techniques used in early childhood education settings are examined, it is seen that traditional behavioral approaches are primarily used (Abu & Arslan, 2020; Durmaz, Dinçer, & Deniz, 2020; Medikoğlu & Dalaman, 2018; Yağan Güder, Alabay, & Güner, 2018). However, behavioral approaches are far from developing children's self-regulation (Akgün et al., 2011; Öztürk & Gangal, 2016; Phillips et al., 2022) and do not create a permanent and sustainable effect on their behavior (Güven & Cevher, 2005; Kurt & Sığırtaç, 2021; Oliver, Wehby, & Reschly, 2011). Contrary to behavioral approaches, communicative approaches based on establishing positive relationships with the child seem more effective in supporting social-emotional development (Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressley, 2004; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Korpershoek et al., 2016).

2. Emotion Coaching

Emotion coaching is a relational behavior management approach developed by John Gottman and his colleagues to regulate emotions through interpersonal relationships rather than changing behavior (Gottman & DeClaire, 1997). Emotion coaching focuses on the underlying causes of behavior and emotion (Rose, Gilbert, & Richards, 2015). Children recognize and learn as they experience different emotions. Sometimes they encounter challenging emotions that they have difficulty coping with. Emotion coaching guides children to understand how to manage their difficult emotions and find solutions (Rose, Gilbert, & Richards, 2015). The approach includes the stages of noticing, accepting, and defining emotions, setting limits when necessary, and finally, problem solving (Gottman & DeClaire, 1997). Empathy and guidance concepts are essential in emotion coaching. While empathy helps children realize their emotions and develop their self-awareness, children's self-regulation and problem-solving skills are supported by the guidance provided (Rose, Gilbert, & Richards, 2015).

Emotion coaching is a communication approach that helps people realize the emotions they are experiencing, why they arise, and how to manage them. The approach is very effective in both adult-adult communication and adult-child communication. Adults (teachers, parents, school staff) interacting with the child have essential duties in this regard (Loop & Roskam, 2016). These are to introduce emotions to children, teach emotional knowledge, and guide children in the intensely emotional process. Emotion coaching is a natural communication style. Therefore, when child-child communication is observed, it is evident that children are coaching both their own emotions and those of their counterparts. (Gus, Gilbert, & Rose, 2015).

2.1 Emotion Coaching in School and Home Environment

The positive effects of the emotion coaching approach on a child's well-being are evident in both home and school environments. Studies have shown that emotion coaching, which is used both at home and at school, strengthens the relationship between the child and the adult and supports the child's ability to manage their emotions (Gus, Gilbert, & Rose, 2015; Rose, McGuire-Snieckus, & Gilbert, 2015), helps children recognize their emotions and solves how to deal with these emotions (Wu et al., 2019), and contributes to their social-emotional development (Rose, 2005, Gilbert & Richards, 2015). In addition, positive effects were observed in children's peers (Buckholdt et al., 2016; Gottman & DeClaire, 1997) and sibling relationships (Cindy & Hendriati, 2020; Shortt et al., 2010).

Gottman and DeClaire (1997) found that emotionally coached children performed better academically and were more stable and more robust emotionally. A study conducted in Turkey concluded that parents and teachers receiving emotion coaching training positively impacted their communication with their children as a result of increased awareness of their own and their children's emotions (Kuru, Kesen, & Kesmez, 2021). Similarly, many studies found that families and teachers who received emotion coaching training experienced positive developments in their self-awareness; thus, children's social-emotional skills increased (Ellis & Alisic, 2013; Gilbert, Rose, & McGuire-Snieckus, 2014; Havighurst et al., 2010; Oh, 2016; Parker, Rose, & Gilbert, 2016). It has been determined that there are fewer conflicts and discipline problems in environments where emotions are taken into account and emotion coaching is used (Lauw, Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, & Northam, 2014; Ulloa et al., 2010). Shaw (2018) found that emotion coaching supports children's emotional intelligence and subsequent social skills and improves self-regulation skills.

2.2 Whole School Approach

Ensuring sustainability while creating desired behavioral changes in early childhood is crucial. The relationships entered into by the child's immediate environment and other stakeholders around him (teacher, school staff, school administration) are effective in developing children's feelings of trust (Ural, Güven, Sezer, Azkeskin, & Yılmaz, 2015). It is possible to sustain the child's social and emotional well-being when these relationships are consistent and supportive (Pollard & Lee, 2002; Rees, Goswami, Pople, Bradshaw, & Keung, 2013; Statham &

Chase, 2010). As a result, we need a holistic approach and come across the “whole-school approach,” which aims to support sustainable development in education by engaging all stakeholders (European Commission, 2015).

The whole school approach is based on an eco-holistic model that includes mental, physical, social, emotional, and environmental dimensions of school health and well-being (Parsons, Stears, & Thomas, 1996).

The whole-school approach is used as an effective method for stakeholders to develop a common language (European Commission, 2015); it includes strategies carried out in harmony and cooperation within the school community to support the child and improve conditions (Hamilton & Redmond, 2010; Rogers, 2000). The approach involves concerted, collective, and collaborative action within a strategically constructed school community to improve children’s learning, behavior, and well-being (Hamilton & Redmond, 2010; Rogers, 2000). A review of some large-scale projects in the literature that used a whole-school approach suggests that early intervention programs are prepared at the primary and secondary levels to combat early school departure (European Commission, 2015), promote health in schools (Jensen & Simovska, 2002), and enhance reading achievement (The Curriculum Development Council, 2014). A key theme of the reports prepared as a result of the projects was the importance of acting and collaborating with all stakeholders. Moreover, two studies based on the whole-school approach have been conducted in secondary education institutions on cyberbullying (Altundağ, 2018) and resilience (Aydoğan & Eryiğit-Madzwamuse, 2019). These studies demonstrate that effective programs require the cooperation of all school stakeholders.

The common thread among these studies is that emotional coaching contributes to the child’s development and that a whole-school approach contributes to creating a common language among all stakeholders in education. However, there is a severe lack of studies addressing these two approaches during the preschool period. As a result, there is a need for early childhood studies that integrate emotional coaching and a whole-school approach. Based on this need, this research aims to determine stakeholders’ opinions on the implementation processes and impact of the “Emotion-Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program (EFKTP)” adopting the whole school approach in a kindergarten. In this respect, the research has two main questions:

- 1) What are the stakeholders’ opinions about the work carried out during the EFKTP implementation processes?
- 2) How do stakeholders evaluate the impact of the EFKTP application?

3. Research Methods & Techniques

3.1 Research Design

The research was designed in the case study pattern, one of the qualitative research methods. The case study method involves an in-depth examination of the current operation using various data collection tools to obtain information about how a limited operation, system, program, or similar item functions (Chmiliar, 2010). In a case study, one or more cases are investigated in a detailed, in-depth manner. The current situation is evaluated holistically, and its effects are examined (Creswell, 2019).

3.2 Working Group

The study sample consists of all teachers, administrators, and other staff members of a private kindergarten serving children in the 3–6 age group affiliated with the Ministry of Family and Social Services, as well as parents, selected unbiasedly from the voluntary parents in the school. There are 34 people, including nine teachers, two administrative staff members, four janitors, and 19 parents. Consent forms were obtained from all participants.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants in the study group

			%
Personal Information	Female	34	100
Age	21–30	9	26.4
	31–40	19	55.8
	41–51	6	17.6
Educational Attainment	Primary School	1	2.94
	Secondary school	1	2.94
	High School	4	11.7
	Associate Degree	7	20.5
	Undergraduate	20	58.8
	Graduate	1	2.94
Stakeholder Role in the Institution	Parent	19	55.8
	Teacher	9	26.4
	Administrative Staff	2	5.8
	Other Staff	4	11.7

All of the participants in the study were female (100%). The majority of participants were between the ages of 31 and 40 (55%), 26% were between the ages of 21 and 30, and 14% were between the ages of 41 and 51. The participants were 58% undergraduates, 2% postgraduates, 20% associate graduates, 11% high school graduates, 2% secondary school graduates, and 2% primary school graduates. An examination of stakeholder roles in the institution reveals that most are parents (55%), 26% are teachers, 11% are other staff, and 6% are administrative staff.

3.3 Data Collection and Tools

Demographic information form

This form has been developed to obtain information from stakeholders (teachers, school administrators, other staff, and parents) on issues such as age, gender, teaching seniority, and the number of children. At the beginning of the research, demographic information was collected from all stakeholders through this form.

Focus Group Interview Form

It was developed to obtain stakeholders' opinions (teachers, school administrators, other staff, parents) about various activities, such as pieces of training, environment arrangements, homework, and mentoring processes carried out during the EFKTP implementation processes. By reviewing the literature, the researcher developed a conceptual framework appropriate for the purposes of the study. Three faculty members from the preschool education department and three preschool teachers working in the field provided expert opinions for the questions on the form. Based on the suggestions of the experts, the final form was created.

A total of four focus group interviews were conducted with each stakeholder group separately in the research. A focus group interview is a technique for collecting data based on a predefined framework. The reason why this technique is preferred and the most significant advantage is that new and different results can emerge because it is spoken in the group (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Interviews were conducted with stakeholders to gain insight into the strengths and areas that need to be strengthened in the first seven stages of the Emotion-Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program. The interviews were conducted online and lasted approximately one hour. Since recording the interview is essential for focus group interviews (Çepni, 2018), all interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and then transcribed by the researcher. The questions to be asked in the focus groups were determined in the focus group interview form.

Semisstructured individual interview form

The researcher created this form in a conceptual framework suitable for the purposes of the research by conducting a literature review to obtain the opinions of the stakeholders (teachers, school administrators, other staff, and parents) about the effects of the EFKTP implementation process on themselves, their children/students and the institution. For the questions in the form, expert opinion was obtained from three faculty members from the preschool education department and three preschool teachers working in the field. Considering the experts' suggestions, the final version of the form was created.

In this study, semistructured interviews were conducted separately with each stakeholder online, and each

interview lasted an average of 30 minutes. During a semistructured interview (Buran, 2021), the researcher can ask both fixed questions and open-ended questions that can be examined in greater depth (Büyüköztürk, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2020). The primary purpose here is to enter the interviewee's inner world, try to understand his point of view, and reveal the person's feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about the subject or phenomenon (Çepni, 2018; Karataş, 2015). In this way, the answers given in the focus group meetings and the results are supported by one-on-one interviews (The interview was recorded with the consent of the participants. A semistructured individual interview form was used in the semistructured interviews).

Emotionally Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program (EFKTP)

The program's main objective is to disseminate the communication approach of emotional coaching in home and school environments during early childhood. The researcher developed this program based on a whole-school approach to ensure sustainability. It consists of eight phases over 32 weeks.

This study includes the analysis of the qualitative part of the evaluation studies conducted with stakeholders in the process evaluation stage, which is the 8th and last stage of the EFKTP application.

Step 1: Why and How to Convert? Awareness-Needs Identification-Information Phase: In the first step of the EFKTP implementation process, awareness and needs assessment activities take place. The program is based on a whole-school approach. To successfully implement this approach, all stakeholders (teachers-administrators, other staff members, parents, and children) must actively participate in the change process. For this reason, awareness and needs determination studies basically have three purposes: attracting the attention of all stakeholders to the subject, recognizing and identifying their needs, and ensuring their volunteering.

Step 2: Transformation Begins—Education Phase. In the second phase of the EFKTP implementation process, "Emotion-Friendly Teaching and Parenting Training," based on the Emotion Coaching approach, was given to the stakeholders. The training lasted five hours and consisted of four modules. Information on the basics of emotion coaching in education, its relationship with neuroscience, its philosophy, steps and application, examples, and application studies compatible with the Turkish preschool education system and family life are presented. The training was supported by scenario studies suitable for child-teacher and child-parent relations in Turkey. In addition, information was provided to teachers and parents on how to recognize children's emotions and how to express them appropriately. The training was given by the researcher, one of the internationally accredited practitioner trainers of Emotion Coaching U.K. Institute.

Step 3: Support Transformation—Starting Mentoring Processes. After the training was completed in the EFKTP implementation process, mentoring support was given to the stakeholders. Zoom meetings were held for one hour with teachers and administrators once a week and with other stakeholders (separately with each group) once a month. These interviews aimed to answer questions about applying the emotion coaching approach to support stakeholders in the process.

Step 4: Traces of Transformation 1—Transformation in Communication. At this stage, stakeholders were encouraged to use emotional coaching both among themselves and in their relationships with children. The researcher conducted school and classroom visits, and they were provided with feedback.

Step 5: Traces of Transformation 2—Transformation in Environments. Some training materials were encouraged to increase emotion coaching practices in classroom environments (The Mood Board study, for example, was designed to assist children in developing emotion regulation skills, which would enable them to observe and express what they felt during the day, to pay attention to their changing emotions throughout the day and to identify relationships between their behaviors and the emotions of their friends).

Step 6: Transformation Reflects on Education—In-Class and In-Home Educational Activities. Starting from the 12th week of the EFKTP implementation process, the teachers implemented "Emotion-friendly training activities" consisting of emotion regulation, self-regulation, social skills, and empathy, lasting half an hour two days a week. In parallel with the activities implemented at school, the families also carried out the activities in the family book sent to them home with their children and made the end-of-activity evaluations.

Step 7: The Transformation Continues Application-Monitoring. This phase of the EFKTP implementation process lasted 12 weeks, and mentoring support continued at this stage.

Step 8: What Happened to Us? Being an Emotion-Friendly Kindergarten—Process evaluation, After the implementation phase, evaluations and reporting of the stakeholders regarding the process were completed.

This study is limited to analyzing the qualitative results of the interviews with the stakeholders in the process evaluation stage, which is the 8th and last stage of the EFKTP application.

3.4 Credibility, Transferability, and Reliability

Transcribing and categorizing the recorded data were performed before conducting the semistructured interviews' content analysis. Another preschool education specialist was then asked to perform the same procedure to perform reliability analysis. Reliability analysis was performed by using the Reliability = Consensus/Consensus + Disagreement formula (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and comparing the coding made by the researchers. Accordingly, the mean of the intercoder reliability ratio is 0.93.

During the analysis of qualitative data obtained from the focus group interviews, listening and transcribing the recordings began one week after the interviews since a rigorous evaluation needs to wait for some time before writing (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). Making such arrangements is said to reduce the rate of errors in the coding process (Baltacı, 2017).

Since people and changing perceptions are involved in research, various rules and principles are involved in the process to ensure reliability (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). To explain the purpose of the research and the expectations of the meeting during the meeting, each volunteer stakeholder was interviewed one-on-one before the research was conducted. Following this, a clarification text containing these explanations was provided to them. Finally, the participants filled in the "Consent Forms" with wet-ink signatures stating that they participated in the process voluntarily. The purpose, process, benefits, time, responsibilities, and rights of the research were described in detail to the participants. The consent form specified the purpose and duration of the study, what information would be collected and how it would be used within the scope of the research, and how the workshop and interview would be conducted online via the Zoom program. The study was conducted following all the rules specified within the scope of the Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive. Uludağ University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee granted ethical permission for the research with the decision dated 27.10.2022 with session number 22/09.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive and content analyses were used to analyze the information obtained in the study. By conducting a content analysis, it is possible to obtain a more detailed analysis of the data obtained and formulate previously vague concepts. The content analysis serves the purpose of gathering interrelated concepts into an understandable denominator and presenting them in an informative and understandable manner for readers. Descriptive analysis is used to make the data more understandable by including quotations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The "Emotion-Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program (EFKTP)" is a new program in Turkey. As a result, descriptive and content analysis are considered appropriate for this study to gain a deeper understanding of the program's philosophy and prevent confusion resulting from the meanings teachers encounter in their job descriptions.

4. Findings

In this part of the study, the findings are presented in tables based on the themes determined under the research questions.

4.1 Findings of the Focus Group Meetings Held to Determine the Views of Stakeholders on the Work Carried Out in the EFKTP Implementation Processes

The data obtained in the context of the research questions posed to the participants were grouped under the headings as opinions on emotion-friendly teaching/parenting education, opinions on the arrangements made in classroom and school environments (centers set up in the classroom, posters), opinions on the impact of weekly mentoring meetings on the process, opinions on the impact of monthly mentoring school visits on the process, and opinions on the effect of in-class training activities and home activities on the process. Then, they were divided into main themes and subthemes and presented in tables.

The distribution of the main themes and subthemes that emerged in accordance with the participants' opinions about the Emotion-Friendly Teaching/Parenting Education provided during the training phase of the study, in accordance with the views of the stakeholders, is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Findings regarding the opinions of the participants on the emotionally friendly teaching/parenting education they have received

Main Theme	Sub Theme	Codes	Stakeholders			
			P.	A.S.	T.	O.S.
Strengths	Emotional Effects	Accepting Negative Emotions	xxxxxxx	xx	xxxxxxx	x
		Understanding and Recognizing Emotions	xxxxxxx	xx		x
		Recognizing the Importance of Empathy	xxxxxxx xxxxxx	xx		
	Effects on Parenting	Being Guiding in Communication	xxxxxxx xxxxx			
	Positive Effects on Children	Ability to Express Emotions	xxxxxx	xx	xxxxxx	xx
Supporting Developing Social Skills		xxxxxxxxxxxxx	x	xxxxxxxxxxxxx		
Aspects to Improve	Increasing Home Activities	Providing more examples of activities to do at home	xxx			

Note. P: Parents A. S: Administrative staff; T: Teacher; O. S: Other Staff.

In Table 2, the opinions of the participants about Emotion-Friendly Teaching/Parenting Education are divided into two main themes as strengths and aspects that need to be improved, and they are grouped under the subthemes of awareness of emotions, positive effects on parenting, positive effects on children, and opinions about its usefulness. Stakeholders participating in the research noted that the training is guiding, supports children in understanding and naming their emotions, provides an opportunity to experience learning different emotions, and contributes to eliminating conflict environments within child-parent relationships. Below is a teacher’s opinion on this topic:

“It has been a very effective training among emotion-friendly children and teachers to understand and respond to children’s emotions much better.” (T1)

All of the teachers expressed their opinions about the positive effects of the education process. Similarly, all parents think the education process is beneficial. A parent who shared the positive aspects of this training expressed her views as follows:

“I find it very useful and necessary for every school. I see it as the most beautiful and effective attempt thus far to raise the children of our future as individuals who can express themselves emotionally and manage their social relations well.” (P9)

These are the words of a parent who stated that this program profoundly affected their lives.

“The most important aspect for me was accepting that my child’s crying was normal. During this training, I learned that feeling compelled to silence him during a crisis is not beneficial to us both, and waiting and accepting his feelings is more effective than trying to silence him.” (P5)

The distribution of the main themes and subthemes, as determined by the opinions of the participants regarding the effect of the arrangements made in the classroom and school environments (centers established in the classroom, posters) within the scope of the study, according to the views of the stakeholders is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings regarding the effects of the arrangements made in classroom and school environments within the study scope on the process

Main Theme	Sub Theme	Codes	Stakeholders			
			P.	A.S.	T.	O.S.
Strengths	Effectiveness of Boards and Corners	Mood board		xx	xxxxxxx	xx
		Water board				
		Helping them calm down		xx	xxxxx	xx
	Attention-grabbing/enhancing	Supporting the increase of attention and perception	xxxxxxx	xx	xxxxxxxxx	xx
	Positive effects on understanding and conveying the emotions of children	Children's sensitivity to their own and others' feelings	xxxxxxxxx xxxxx	xx	xxxxxxx	x
Aspects to Improve	Home Activities	Providing more examples of activities to do at home	xx			

Table 3 shows that stakeholders have positive opinions regarding the effect of the regulations implemented in the classrooms and schools within the scope of the study. However, some parents believe that it would be better if more examples of activities were provided at home. P1 stated that the arrangements made in the classroom environment had positive effects: “I have a son who knows his feelings, is able to express himself more effectively, and can carry the process that he goes through at school to his home and even to his social life.” Similarly, T7 expressed her views on this topic: “The routines implemented in the classroom became a motivation for the children. Thanks to the emotion-friendly center, the children have been more effective in understanding and conveying their emotions and calming them down.” In addition, T8 indicated that “Emotion-friendly corners contribute positively to the emotion-friendly process as children are able to express themselves freely and their emotions are expressed and responded to concretely.” Administrative staff, another stakeholder, expressed her opinion in the following manner:

“They used the mood board, attendance board, and emotion corner very actively and effectively to increase their attention. Although they sometimes interrupted the use of the water board, they also paid attention to it.” (A.S.2)

The distribution of the main themes and subthemes that emerged regarding the opinions of the research participants about the impact of the weekly mentoring meetings on the process is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Findings regarding opinions on the effect of weekly mentoring meetings on the process

Main Theme	Sub Theme	Stakeholders			
		P.	A.S.	T.	O.S.
Strengths	Increase in experience	xxxxxxx	xx	xxxxx	
	Opportunity to share similar feelings with other families	xxxxxxxxxxxxx			
	Identifying deficiencies and providing opportunities for improvement	xxxxxxxxxxxxx xx	xx	xxxxxxx	xx
Aspects to Improve	Conducting the event face to face	xx		x	

In Table 4, the opinions of the participants about the weekly mentoring meeting process are divided into the main theme of strengths and aspects that need to be improved, and they are organized under the subthemes of “increasing experiences,” “sharing similar feelings with other families,” and “identifying deficiencies and providing improvement.” All participants stated that weekly mentoring meetings were very beneficial for them, and many of them stated that they were happy to feel that they were not alone because other parents/teachers shared the same feelings at these meetings.

Expressing her views on this subject, T4 said, “I find it efficient because even when we follow the steps, sometimes it can be wrong, so it is more efficient for us to analyze it with examples over cases again.” Other parents and teachers expressed their views as follows:

“I was glad that we exchanged ideas in terms of the progress of the process, so I could correct my mistakes.” (T7)

“I think these meetings are very effective. It is good for me to be with families with similar concerns, as I find more examples of what I can do in different situations.” (P1)

“Having meetings every week, sharing experiences, helps us to have information about the situations we will encounter, to gain experience, and to perform the right behavior accordingly.” (T9)

On the theme of aspects that need to be developed, P3 stated, “Although it had been more troublesome and difficult for everyone, it would have been more effective to meet face to face.”

Only the opinions of the school staff were taken into account on the effect of monthly mentoring school visits on the process, and the themes and subthemes that emerged in line with the opinions are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Findings on opinions about the effect of monthly mentoring school visits on the process

Main Theme	Sub Theme	Stakeholders			
		P.	A.S.	T.	O.S.
Strengths	Giving opportunity to see mistakes		xx	xxxxxxxxx	
	Identifying and supporting weaknesses		xx	xxxxxxxxx	
Aspects to Improve	Staying at school longer			xxx	

In Table 5, the opinions of the participants about the monthly mentoring meeting process are divided into the main themes of strengths and aspects that need improvement, and they are grouped under the subthemes of “giving the opportunity to see the mistakes,” “identifying and supporting weaknesses”, and “staying at school longer.” The administrative staff expressed their views on this issue as follows:

“It was very effective. When you pointed out the mistakes I made, I understood them better, and it became more effective. The children began to participate more actively in the activities.” (AS1)

One teacher also shared her views on the subject as follows:

“Since the visits to the school are directly in our education area, we can see what motion-friendly means in more detail, and we can notice our shortcomings.” (T3)

The themes and subthemes that emerged from the stakeholders’ views are presented in Table 6 regarding the impact of the in-class education activities of the Emotionally Friendly School Transformation Program.

Table 6. Findings on opinions about the effect of classroom training activities implemented within the scope of EFKTP on the process

Main Theme	Sub Theme	Stakeholders			
		P.	A.S.	T.	O.S.
Strengths	Being more sensitive to emotions	xxxxxxxxx	xx		
		xxx			
	Being able to solve problems more easily	xxxxx	xx		
	Positive effect of emotional centers	xxxxxxxxx	xx	xx	
		x			
Aspects to Improve	Arrangement of activity times according to age group	xx			

In Table 6, the stakeholders’ opinions about the impact of the in-class training activities implemented within the scope of EFKTP on the process are divided into strengths and aspects that need to be improved. Then, the subthemes of “being more sensitive to emotions, being able to solve problems more easily, a positive effect of emotion-friendly learning centers” and “regulation of activity durations according to age groups” were formed.

As a result of the classroom training activities implemented within the scope of the EFKTP, stakeholders stated that the children became more sensitive and were able to resolve their problems more efficiently as a result of the activities. As an added bonus, the emotional center effectively created a positive classroom environment.

T5 expressed her views on this subject: “As children become aware of their feelings and express themselves in these activities, we can solve problems easily. This reflects in the classroom as peace and happiness.” P6 expressed her happiness by saying, “It is pleasing to see every new information in my child’s words and attitudes.”

A teacher who thought that the duration of the activity should be changed according to the age group expressed her views as follows:

“In some activities, the duration is appropriate, but the prolongation of the activity period in small age groups may cause the children to get bored; maybe an arrangement can be made in this regard.” (T2)

Opinions about the effects of EFKTP home activities applied in the context of the research questions directed to the participants were grouped under the headings, divided into main themes and subthemes, and presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Findings on opinions about the effects of home activities implemented within the scope of EFKTP on the process

Main Theme	Sub Theme	Stakeholders			
		P.	A.S.	T.	O.S.
Strengths	Strengthening Child-Family communication	xxxxxxxxxxxxx	xx	xxxxxxxxx	
	Reinforcement of what has been learned in school	xxxxxx	x	xxxxxxx	
	Awareness raising	xxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxx		xxxxxxxxx	

The stakeholders participating in the research process stated that the home activities implemented within the scope of EFKTP strengthen the child-family communication and relationship and that children transfer the information and emotions they learn at school to their families at home, as well as raising awareness of emotions among the family members.

P10 said, “It strengthens parental relationships and enables the child to convey their feelings to the parent correctly.” P4 expressed her views similarly, saying, “I believe it strengthens communication within the family with the child. They teach us about emotions and make us aware of them.”

4.2 Findings of the Semistructured Interviews Conducted to Determine the Views of the Stakeholders on the Effects of the EFKTP Application

The findings obtained from the semistructured interviews with the participants are divided into main themes and subthemes and presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Findings on the effects of the EFKTP application process

Main Theme	Sub Theme	Stakeholders			
		P.	A.S.	T.	O.S.
Effects on children/students	Their emotional repertory improved.	xxxxxxx xxxxxxx	xx	xxxxxxx	
	They began to recognize their feelings.	xxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxx	xx	xxxxxxx	
	Their awareness of emotions increased.	xxxxxxx xxxxxxx xx	xx	xxxxxxx	
	Their ability to control their behaviors has increased.	xxxxxxxxxxx	xx	xxxxxxx	
	Their undesirable behaviors in the classroom/home have decreased.	xxxxxxxxxxx	xx	xxxxxxx	
	They began to notice each other's/others' feelings.	xxxxxxx xxxxxxx	xx	xxxxxxx	
	Their environmental awareness has increased.	xxxxxxxxxxx	xx	xxxxx	
	Their curiosity to learn increased.	xxxxxxx	xx	xxxxxxx	
Personal Effects	My confidence in the school/institution I work for has increased	xxxxxxxxxxx	x	xxxxx	
	I have increased confidence in my parenting	xxxxxxxxxxx	xx	xxxx	
	The quality of my relationship with my child/student has increased	xxxxxxx xxxxx	x	xxxxx	
Effects on Personal Relationships and Life	Developing empathy skills	xxxxxxxxxxx	x	xxxxxxx xxx	
	Ability to solve problems more quickly	xxxxx	xx	xxxxxxx	
	Overcoming communication barriers	xxxxx	x	xx	
Effects on professional performance	Increasing confidence in teaching	xx	xxxxxxx xx		
	Improving classroom management skills	xx	xxxxx		

As seen in Table 8, in the process after the EFKTP implementation process, the statements of the participants about the reflections of this program on their lives were grouped into four main categories: “effects on children/students,” “personal effects,” “effects on personal relationships and life,” and “effects on professional performance.” The quotations are presented under subheadings so that a comprehensive understanding of these themes may be conveyed.

Findings on the theme of “effects on children/students.”

The effects of the EFKTP application process on children/students are grouped into subthemes as follows: “Their emotional repertory improved”, “They began to recognize their feelings”, “Their awareness of emotions increased”, “Their ability to control their behaviors has increased”, “Their undesirable behaviors in the classroom/home have decreased”, “They began to notice each other’s/others’ feelings”, “Their curiosity to learn increased” and “Their environmental awareness has increased”. As revealed by the research findings, the majority of the participants shared their experiences regarding the importance of children being able to recognize their emotions, increasing their awareness of emotions, and developing their emotional repertoire.

Participants also noted that children’s environmental awareness and interest in learning had increased. A unanimous consensus was reached by all stakeholders participating in the research process that the EFKTP implementation process had a positive effect on children/students.

P3 reported her feelings: “I observe that he is beginning to recognize and accept his own feelings. From my perspective, I do not wish for him to be a child who lacks humanity but who is well-positioned in his career. Having built his foundation here will have an impact on his entire life.” Regarding the decrease in unwanted behaviors at home, P7 expressed her views: “I observe that he can empathize unexpectedly, and the times of crisis and arguments at home are shorter.”

4.3 Findings on the Theme of “Personal Effects”

The personal effects of the EFKTP implementation process on the participants were gathered under the headings of “My confidence in the school/institution I work for has increased,” “My confidence in my parenting increased,” and “The quality of my relationship with my child/student increased.” All the teachers and administrative staff who participated in the research process stated that the “Emotion-Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program” had personal positive effects. As a result of the data collected, it can be concluded that the participants found the program helpful personally.

Regarding the subtheme of increasing confidence in the school/institution, P3 expressed the following sentiment: “I think they care about how my child feels at school, so my confidence has increased because I feel my child’s feelings are given importance.” Similar to P5, P4 stated, “Thanks to the activities at school, I was able to see different and beautiful aspects of my child.” As a parent, I was pleased to see that I was raising a fair and considerate child. Our school holds excellent trust in my child’s future, as he also learns to be a good person capable of managing his emotions while at school.”

In addition, participants expressed that their confidence in their parenting increased after the EFKTP application process. Participants reported that the program helped them communicate more effectively with their children and provided them with guidelines for behaving when they were in a dilemma situation.

4.4 Findings Regarding the Theme “Impacts on Personal Relationships and Life”

The effects of the EFKTP application process on the personal relationships and lives of the participants were grouped under three separate subthemes: “Developing empathy skills,” “Ability to solve problems more quickly,” and “Overcoming communication barriers.” Teachers and administrative staff members who participated in the research process stated that the application process positively affected their personal relationships and lives. Many participants reported that their empathy skills improved after participating in this program and that they could solve problems they encountered more effectively. Additionally, they noted that they now recognize the rights of others, which has resulted in many communication problems disappearing. A parent expressed her ideas on this subject with the following sentences:

“I try to use emotional language when talking to children and a friend of mine. My goal is to demonstrate that I am able to understand her. By providing her with spiritual and sensual contact, I relieve her stress. We are looking for solutions to her problems, and we can find common solutions; I can touch her life.” (P2)

4.5 Findings Regarding the Theme “Effects on Professional Performance”

The effects of the EFKTP implementation process on professional performance were discussed with the subthemes of “Increasing confidence in teaching.” and “Improving classroom management skills.” There was a unanimous consensus among all the teachers and administrators who participated in the research process that the EFKTP application process positively affected their professional performance.

The teachers who participated in the study reported feeling more confident in their teaching, being more active in classroom management, and finding solutions to conflict situations more easily and quickly. T8 used the following statements for increasing classroom management skills: “Professionally, there was a strong connection between my students and our emotions. They are happier because my approach to things is exactly what they want, and so is our classroom environment, which is something great as a teacher. There are very few problems experienced, or the problem is resolved immediately”. In relation to her increased confidence in her teaching, T7 stated, “I feel like I can communicate effectively with my students as we care about each other’s feelings, and I have confidence in myself.”

5. Discussion

The data obtained as a result of the focus group interviews were collected and interpreted under the main themes and subthemes: opinions on emotion-friendly teaching/parenting education, opinions on the arrangements made in classroom and school environments (centers set up in the classroom, posters), opinions on the impact of weekly mentoring meetings on the process, opinions on the impact of monthly mentoring and school visits on the process, opinions on the effect of the Emotion Friendly School Transformation Program (EFKTP) implementation process, in-class education activities and home activities on the process, and opinions on the general effects of the EFKTP implementation process obtained as a result of individual interviews. In this section, the findings are discussed concerning the studies in the literature.

In the educational phase of the EFKTP application process, the participants who received “Emotional-Friendly Teaching/Parenting Training” stated that the education guided their communication with the child and reduced

conflict situations with the child. Similarly, Kuru, Kesen, and Kesmez obtained similar results in 2021, with participants reporting that education increased their awareness and strengthened their communication with children. Furthermore, the participants' opinions, who stated that they improved their ability to understand and recognize and accept negative emotions, show parallels with previous studies. The literature indicates that parents who receive emotion coaching training are more sensitive to their children's emotions and act more controllably in the face of circumstances (Rose, McGuire-Snieckus, & Gilbert, 2015; Qui & Shum, 2022). Additionally, it has been determined that conflict is less likely to occur, and healthier relationships are established in environments that consider children's emotions and employ more sensitive strategies such as emotion coaching (Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002; Ulloa et al., 2010). Despite the positive effects of the arrangements made in the classroom and school environments on the children, the participants suggested that providing more examples of activities to be done at home would be more effective. Considering that family involvement improves children's language and social-emotional skills (Cohen & Anders, 2020), this part can be considered an aspect that needs improvement.

During their study on emotion coaching by preschool teachers, Irene and Hendriate (2017) interviewed three female and two male teachers and found that preschool teachers noticed emotions in their practices and could accept and name emotions, but they were unable to limit their behaviors, and they were unable to provide advice.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that weekly and monthly mentoring meetings prevented such a deficiency from occurring. In different studies, it has been concluded that mentoring support given to teachers supports teachers in implementing strategies effectively (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018), improves their professional knowledge and skills (Erdoğan, Haktanı, Kuru, Parpucu, & Koç-Tüylü, 2021), and helps to regulate children's negative behaviors (Ünlü & Pekkan, 2019). These results support the findings of the study. The stakeholders indicated that they were aware of their shortcomings and mistakes in these meetings and had the opportunity to correct them. Additionally, these meetings have allowed stakeholders to understand their mistakes better and increase their experience.

Teachers establish strong bonds with their students, and their educational support contributes to their emotional development and creates a healthy classroom environment (Harvey, 2004). Participants stated that the EFKTP process contributed to the growth of a positive learning environment. It has also been observed that teachers who implement emotion coaching in their classrooms increase positive relationships with their students by creating a more empathic environment (Gus et al., 2017). A positive classroom atmosphere and in-class training activities are believed to contribute to teachers solving problems more quickly. Öğretmenin eğitim etkinliklerinin etkililiğini arttırmada ve istedik davranışları güçlendirmek konusunda kendi rollerinin farkına varmaları sağlanmalıdır.

Among the findings related to the effects of home activities in the EFKTP implementation process, which is another dimension of the research findings, it was found that parents strengthened communication between the child and family and supported the reinforcement of information presented in the classroom. In a study by Bølstad et al. (2001), an emotion-focused parenting program was used. It has been concluded that the program significantly improved parental emotional coaching, managing unwanted child behaviors, and developing self-regulation and emotional control among children. The results of another study showed that parents providing emotion coaching to their children were less likely to reject their children's emotions, and the children had positive development as a consequence (Havighurst et al., 2013). Based on these results, which are consistent with the research findings, the approach appears to increase parents' sensitivity in their relationships with their children. This finding indicates that the active involvement of parents in the process is fundamental; it has a positive effect on children, and this approach supports strengthening the bond between parent and child. Additionally, parents who practice emotion coaching are aware of the negative emotions that children experience, are sensitive to these emotional situations that children face, respect their emotions, and complete these emotional situations constructively (Wandansari, 2020).

In addition to the general effect of the implementation process of the Emotion-Friendly School Transformation Program, stakeholder opinions show that the program has positive effects in a wide array of areas of life. A finding supporting this was also obtained in the study of Kuru, Kesen and Kesmez (2021). According to the study, participants who received Emotion-Friendly Teaching-Parenting training reported positive effects on their educational, professional, and personal identities as parents. Regarding the effect on children, the opinions mainly focus on the development of the ability to recognize and express emotions as well as the increase in the emotional repertoire. It has been demonstrated in other studies that emotion coaching improves the language used to express emotions and facilitates more emotional expression (Kloes, 2015; Shaw, 2018).

6. Conclusion

Effective methods by teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in the child's life are considered essential for

supporting children's social and emotional skills and helping them express their feelings more effectively. The Emotion-Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program (EFKTP), one of these methods, can be used by parents and teachers as a tool to support children's social and emotional development.

The results draw attention to the importance of the bond that teachers establish with children. To support the development of these skills, teachers can conduct various activities in their classrooms, create a space for children to share their feelings at the beginning of the day/circle time, and set up a center that encourages emotional development. Nevertheless, teachers need support in this regard. In this framework, teachers must be made aware of their role in building a strong emotional connection with their students, increasing the quality of their education, and enhancing desired behaviors. This awareness can be developed through a variety of training programs. Teachers can benefit from practical training that helps them realize the importance of their roles within the subject area and what they can do to enhance their abilities.

Since emotion coaching is a relatively new concept for preschool educators in Turkey, it is considered important for teachers to participate in emotion-friendly teaching/parenting training and organized seminars. In addition to preschool education teachers, primary school teachers, psychological counselors, school counselors, and other branch teachers can easily use EFKTP in their classroom practices. Meanwhile, parents are encouraged to adopt this approach so that their children receive holistic education. Consequently, it may be recommended to expand the use of emotion coaching in both school and home settings. The emotion coaching approach can be included in teacher and parent training for this purpose. This training can be offered in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education and universities. Training on emotion coaching for teachers and parents should provide theoretical information and practice sessions that demonstrate how this approach can be applied to relationships with children at home and school using case studies and scenarios.

The results indicate that the emotion coaching approach has positive effects on children, such as increasing their emotional repertoire and recognizing and expressing emotions. A study of the long-term and short-term effects of emotion coaching training for teachers and parents can be conducted.

This study was conducted using four focus groups and semistructured individual interviews to determine stakeholder opinions about the Emotion-Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program implementation process and impact. It is possible to compare the results of similar studies conducted in different provinces and at different levels of education during the preschool period.

A study using a quantitative or mixed methodology and a larger study group can be conducted to evaluate the contribution of the application process to preschool children's social and emotional skill development. It is possible to conduct research on the positive effects that preschool teachers have on this process.

In addition, a scale can be designed to measure children's social and emotional development. Activities that promote social skills and cover children's social emotions should be included in preschool programs to enrich preschool education programs in this direction. In preschool education institutions, social skills can be promoted through activities based on EFKTP principles.

Furthermore, the study found that mentoring teachers and parents as part of the EFKTP program positively contributed to stakeholders' emotional coaching practices. Mentoring activities can be included in schools to increase positive practices. Through collaboration with universities, the Ministry of Education can develop an effective policy to promote teacher and parent mentoring in schools.

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