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## Child-Friendly Schools: An Assessment of Kindergartens

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**Abstract:** Child Friendly School (CFS) is a democratic environment based on children's rights, where all students are accepted, teaching-learning processes are organized according to children's interest needs, health, safety and protective measures are taken for children and gender-based discrimination is not provided. Preschool education institutions, which are considered to be very effective on the future of the child and the society, should be child friendly in this way. The aim of this study is to identify the teaching-learning environment of independent kindergartens in the context of a child-friendly. The data of the study was obtained from the independent kindergarten in different socioeconomic environments with "CFS Diagnostic Form". According to the results, it was seen that in terms of effectiveness, the physical areas and materials of the schools were sufficient, but the places and qualifications that increase the effectiveness of teaching were insufficient; in terms of inclusiveness, all children attend school without discrimination in terms of inclusiveness, but female students have low access to school; in terms of democratic participation, means are used to ensure communication with the environment, in terms of healthy, safe and protective environment, physical requirements are fulfilled, necessary measures are taken, but ventilation and out-of-school safety measures are not sufficient and in terms of gender sensitivity, there is no discrimination based on gender. It has been concluded that the independent kindergartens are largely child-friendly, despite some inadequacies.

**Keywords:** Child-friendly school, child rights, kindergarten, teaching-learning environment.

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### Introduction

The quality of individuals' lives is related to how well qualified they spend their childhood. Early childhood, which is conceptualized as a child's process from birth to basic education, is the period when children are most vulnerable to external influences. This period is one of the critical periods of the life in which the child needs protection most, and has the fastest development and growth (Güven & Azkeskin, 2016). During this critical period, the environment in which the child grows and the education he / she attends greatly affects his or her later life.

Recent studies (Delalibera & Ferreira, 2019; Garcia, Heckman, Leaf & Prados, 2016) investigating the effects of early childhood have shown that the investment made in this period is critical for the contribution to the national economy as well as the contribution to the development of the individual and society. Education for children is a guarantee for a society to move towards a bright future. Therefore, societies should raise children in healthy settings in order to develop and create safe and peaceful environments. In addition, they should offer them the opportunity to develop by providing the necessary opportunities in line with their abilities (Akyuz, 2010; Kuyucu, Sahin & Kapicioglu, 2013).

UNICEF (2014) states that children need health services, nutritious foods, education to fill their minds with useful information, non-exploitative and non-violent environments, and time and places to play. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to which Turkey is a party, children already have the right to protection, living, development, freedom, participation, education and access to health services. After meeting the basic needs of children in the family, these needs must be met in the educational environments.

#### Child-Friendly Schools

Children's rights include everyone under the age of 18 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) summarizes these rights under four headings (UNICEF, 2007): the right to *life*, including to life and the basic needs for survival;

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children's right to *development*, which they need to achieve their full potential; children's right to *protection* from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation and children's right to *participate*, which enables them to play an active role in society, to express their views and to have a say in matters affecting their lives. Children's rights include the inherent rights of all children by considering legal rules and moral rules (MoNE, 2015). These rights are generally based on protection with positive discrimination and indicate that children are in need of care and that they should be supervised until adulthood (Kaypak & Ucar, 2018).

In societies, it is ensured that children benefit from these rights through rules determined by considering their needs (Akyuz, 2010). Therefore, basically, children's "education practices" are based on the principle that all children benefit from fundamental rights (Aral & Gursoy, 2001). The right to education emphasizes not only access to education, but also the quality of education and learning environments (UNICEF, 2007). The concept of the CFS is based on the CRC and is a comprehensive approach that links all aspects of educational reforms and places the child at the center of attention in all organized and implemented activities (UNICEF, 2009). The basic principle is that school systems should be based on this Convention accepted by the country (Shaeffer, 2013). UNICEF, some of the characteristics of schools to be included in the CFS project is identified as follows (MoNE-UNICEF, 2003):

Table 1. The characteristics of CFS

CFS	
<i>Knows and emphasizes children's rights</i>	Cooperates with other stakeholders at the school to improve and monitor the rights, welfare of all children in society; It protects all children (as a shelter) against all kinds of abuse both inside and outside the school.
<i>Thinks of the child as a whole</i>	It is concerned with what children experience when they return to the system (eg school and life preparation, social and language skills, etc.).
<i>provides accessible education.</i>	It provides economic and accessible education to families, especially by reaching children at risk.
<i>Child-centered.</i>	It supports a structured, child-centered education program and methods appropriate to the developmental level, abilities and learning needs of children. It also considers children's needs at a higher priority than those of other elements.
<i>Does not discriminate against sex</i>	It promotes equality in the participation and success of girls and boys. It reduces barriers to gender equality and eliminates stereotypes in this area. It provides girls with opportunities for educational programs and learning processes.
<i>Promotes quality learning.</i>	In addition to supporting the development of the child's writing, reading, speaking, listening and mathematical skills; It helps to develop general knowledge and skills such as peace, democracy and acceptance of differences.
<i>Benefit from real life in education.</i>	In the establishment of the school program, the general aims of education and the cultural structure of the family and society are handled together to meet the personal learning needs of the child.
<i>Flexible and can meet individual differences.</i>	It meets the needs of children for gender, culture, social class and skill levels.
<i>Respects children and ensures equality.</i>	It does not involve stereotypes and does not discriminate against differences.
<i>Society is based.</i>	Supports school management by leaving centralization aside for a community-based approach. It also invites families, local authorities, community organizations and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to finance management and education.
<i>Improves the teacher.</i>	It increases the teacher's capacity, morale and participation. Provides teachers with adequate pre-service training, in-service support and professional development.
<i>Family oriented</i>	It enables children, parents and teachers to build harmonious and cooperative relationships.
<i>supports the physical and mental development of children.</i>	It provides a hygienic, safe and entertaining environment by providing emotional support to children and supporting healthy behaviors and practices.

The CFS model includes inclusiveness, gender sensitivity, tolerance, empowerment of personality and dignity. A child-friendly school; encourages child-centered education in a safe, healthy and protective environment. CFS generally includes the following dimensions (Clair, Miske & Patel, 2010; Akoto-Senaman, 2015; Cobanoglu, Ayvaz-Tuncel & Ordu, 2018):

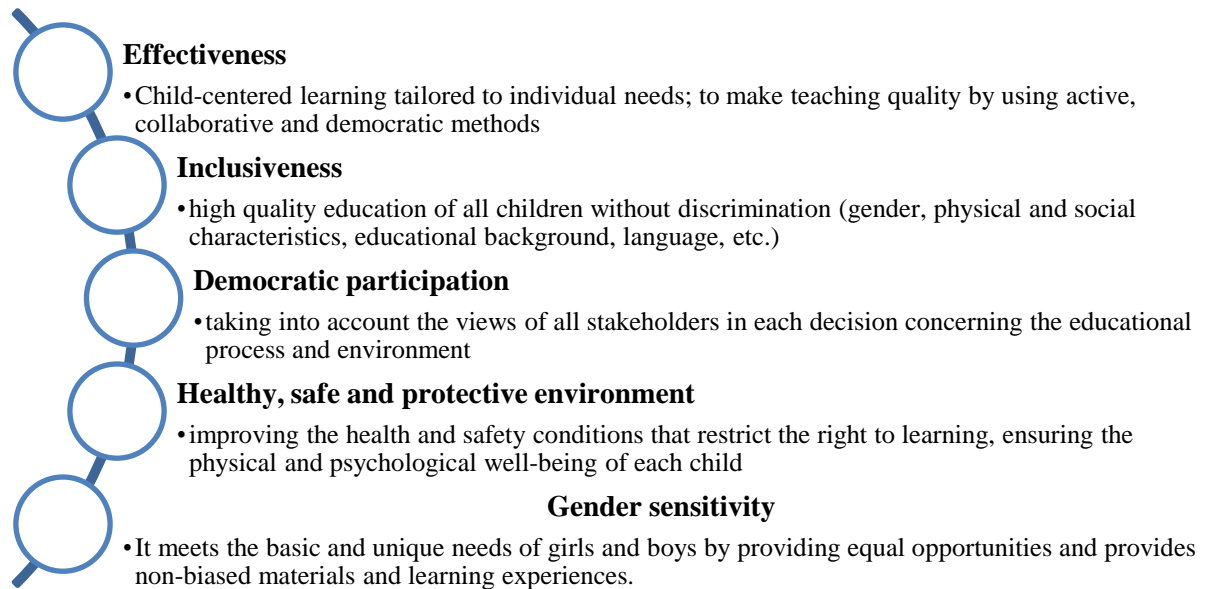


Figure 1. Dimensions of CFS

A school is called CFS when it provides a safe, clean, healthy and protective environment for children, respects children's rights and treats all children equally. CFSs, together with their parents, staff, teachers and administrators, aim to protect the rights of children, improve the learning environment provided to them and educate them by making all kinds of contributions in an effective learning quality. The CFS model has a structure that eliminates the factors that make it difficult for children to enroll in school, accepts the child from the cultural environment in which they live, and establishes a partnership between school and society (Akoto-Senaman, 2015).

#### *Child-friendly preschool education*

Preschool education plays an important role in the development of the child and the benefit of society. Mialaret (as cited in Aktan & Akkutay, 2014) listed its universal goals as follows: *Social Objectives*, to support working mothers and to compensate for the gaps of traditional education in all stages of development of children, taking into account the individual differences of each child. *Educational Objectives*, to develop the child's sensitive behaviors by educating the child's feelings and communicating with the environment. *Developmental Objectives*, to enable the child to develop his / her skills such as controlling and learning his / her own body, language etc.

In order for the child to develop a positive attitude towards healthy growth, an environment in which the child is provided with qualified cognitive stimuli, rich language interactions, positive social-emotional experiences and the child's independence is needed. This is only possible with a healthy family environment and qualified preschool education programs. Preschool education institutions are free, flexible and safe places for children to meet their learning needs, improve communication, expression, thinking, creativity skills, arouse curiosity towards the world around them, support the multi-faceted development of the child, enable them to move freely and to implement educational programs (Ozdemir, Bacanlı & Sozer, 2007; MoNE, 2013). Presidency of preschool institutions and administrators and teachers working in institutions is of great importance for achieving the goal of preschool education and the educational needs of children. Therefore, all preschool institutions are expected to be child friendly. The fact that preschool institutions are child-friendly is of great importance for achieving the goal of preschool education and the educational needs of children. When editing and research all over the world for CFS, it could not be reached in a study conducted in Turkey about the pre-school educational institutions. Therefore, this study is thought to contribute to child-friendly school literature.

The parameters that determine the quality of early childhood services can be grouped under three main headings. These are the quality of physical characteristics, curriculum, materials and learning and the quality of human resources (Arkan & Ozturk, 2019). With these parameters, in a learning environment that encourages learning, it is necessary to use the area effectively according to the activities, to present the materials to the children regularly and to take all necessary precautions for the safety of the children. In this period, the environment in which children live for education is the most time spent outside their families. The characteristics of the environment have an important effect on the integration of school, teacher, friends and other similar elements. Therefore, the physical equipment of the school where the children receive education is of great importance in terms of the qualities of the educational environment (MoNE, 2013).

Ensuring the effectiveness of preschool period is a multi-dimensional effort. Children are motivated to explore the world around them and preschool education should provide appropriate experiences for all children. Environmental engagement and effects in the early years of child development are important, and the lack of stimuli needed may cause the child's development to not reach its full potential (Torkar & Rejc, 2017). Therefore, it is critically important to determine whether kindergartens that are expected to support children in all respects are child-friendly. Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to draw attention to the child-friendly characteristics of kindergartens where pre-school curriculum is applied and to raise awareness about the concept of child-friendly. Within the scope of this main theme, determining how child friendly they are in terms of physical conditions and the dimensions of CFS (effectiveness, inclusiveness, safe and orderly environment, democratic participation, gender sensitivity) are the sub-objectives of the research. It is thought that the determination of the characteristics of the CFS of the kindergartens will shed light on the practitioners in making the schools child friendly. In addition, it is expected that the research conducted on CFS will contribute to the literature and encourage researchers to study in this case.

## Methodology

### Research Design

In this study, descriptive survey research design was used to identify the teaching-learning environment of independent kindergartens in the context of a child-friendly. This design was preferred because it is aimed to describe the present conditions and characteristics in independent kindergartens as they exist (Karasar, 1999).

### Sample and Data Collection

There are 26 independent kindergartens with different socioeconomic status (SES) in the central districts of Denizli Province. These schools were divided into three groups according to the views of their administrators as "low (8 schools)", "moderate (9 schools)" and "high (9 schools)" SES and all schools were included in the study. In order to determine the teaching-learning environment of independent kindergartens in the context of a child-friendly, "CFS Diagnostic Form" was developed based on *The Regulation on Pre-School and Primary Education Institutions (2018)* and *The Guidebook on Standards for Pre-School Education and Primary Education Institutions (2015)*. The CFS Diagnostic Form consists of two sections: the 47-item school imprint information section and the 57-question CFS characteristics that are answered as yes / no. The form was prepared to cover the literature, experts' opinions were taken, pilot study was completed and finalized. Since the data were collected with objective data based on official documents from schools and the Provincial Directorate of National Education, the diagnostic form provided valid and reliability data.

### Analyzing of Data

In the research, the results of the observation were transferred to the computer for the solution of the problem. In the analysis process, firstly, the code numbers were given to the schools. Then, the data was arranged and defined according to themes (effectiveness, inclusiveness, healthy, safe and protective environment and democratic participation) and the findings were interpreted (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016). Regarding effectiveness, the average number of students, teachers and staff for each socio-economic status, the number of students per teacher and the number of students per staff were calculated and compared with legal regulations. Similarly, the average of the indoors and outdoors areas were calculated and compared. In addition, the frequency and percentages of other observation data according to the socio-economic status of the schools were calculated and presented in tables.

## Findings

### Effectiveness

The data obtained from the CFS Diagnostic Form regarding the effectiveness of the child-friendly school are given in tables with comparisons with the relevant legislation.

Table 2. Findings on number of students per teacher and number of classrooms per staff

SES	Number of schools	Average number of students	Average number of teachers	Average number of students per teacher	Expected number of students per teacher*	Average number of staff	Average number of classrooms per staff	Expected number of classrooms per staff**
Low	8	128,1	6,6	19,4	10-20	2,8	2,1	2
Moderate	9	228,8	10,9	20,6	10-20	5	1,4	2
High	9	354,2	15	23,6	10-20	7,7	1,2	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>241,2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>21,9</b>	<b>10-20</b>	<b>5,2</b>	<b>1,3</b>	<b>2</b>

\* It is essential that the number of children in a group is not less than 10 and not more than 20 (Regulation on Pre-primary and Primary Education Institutions, Article 6).

\*\* One support education staff can be assigned for two groups (Preschool and Primary Education Institutions Regulation, Article 45).

As shown in Table 1, the average number of students per teacher is high according to the related legislation and the average number of classrooms per staff is sufficient when compared with the relevant legislation. However, in terms of SES, both the average number of students per teacher and the average number of classrooms per staff differ. As the SES increased, the average number of students and teachers increased. In addition, as the SES increases, the number of students per teacher increases above the desired level, as well. Fortunately, as the SES increases, the average number of staff increases and schools have fewer problems in support services and the standards are easily met.

Table 3. Indoor and Outdoor Areas of Schools

SES	Average Indoor Area(m <sup>2</sup> )	Average indoor Area per Student (m <sup>2</sup> )	Expected Indoor Area per Student (m <sup>2</sup> )	Average outdoor Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Average outdoor Area per Student (m <sup>2</sup> )	Expected Outdoor Area per Student (m <sup>2</sup> )
Low	972,7	7,1	3-4	2712,4	24	7-14
Moderate	1025,8	5,4	3-4	2482,2	18,3	7-14
High	1867,1	5,2	3-4	3290	8,9	7-14
<b>Total</b>	<b>1194,8</b>	<b>5,2</b>	<b>3-4</b>	<b>2833,3</b>	<b>11,9</b>	<b>7-14</b>

Note: Schools with no data were not included.

It is seen that the average indoors area per student is 5 m<sup>2</sup> and the outdoor area is 12 m<sup>2</sup>. When compared with the legislation, it is seen that the indoor area per student is above the standards and the outdoor area is within the standard range. When the situation of the schools in terms of SES is evaluated, it is seen that the average of the internal and external areas per student in lower SES schools is higher than the other SES schools.

Table 4. Findings Regarding the Places Increasing the Effectiveness of Schools

Places Increasing the Effectiveness		SES of School			All Schools
		Low f	Mod. f	High f	%
Music and Drama room	Available	0	1	2	11,5
Library	Available	2	2	4	30,8
Guidance service	Available	1	4	5	38,5
Education Support Room	Available	2	3	6	46,2
Garden	Available	8	9	9	100,0
Practicing Playground	Available	5	7	8	76,9
Sandbox and Green Area	Available	5	9	9	88,5
Playground	Available	6	8	9	65,4
Animal Feeding Area	Available	3	3	5	42,3

Table 4 shows that all of the schools have gardens, more than half have playground, practicing playground, sandbox and green area. But, in especially schools with low and moderate SES, there was not enough education support room and animal feeding area, library and guidance service. Similarly, drama and music rooms are not available in almost all schools.

Table 5. Qualifications that increase the effectiveness of schools

Qualifications		SES of Schools			All Schools
		Low f	Mod. f	High f	%
Color of school building	Well-groomed	4	6	7	65,4
Standardized Learning Center *	Available	8	9	7	92,3
Activity Boards Positioned at Eye Line	Available	4	7	5	61,5
Enough space for 10 students to play in the Sandbox	Available	4	7	5	50
Enough space for each classroom in the practicing garden	Available	5	4	3	46,2

\* In kindergartens, each class has at least 3 learning centers (Pre-School and Primary Education Institutions Standards Guide Book).

When the findings are examined; almost all of the classes have at least three learning centers as stated in the institution standards. In most of the schools, the activity boards are in line with children's eye level and sandbox have enough space for 10 students to play. However, in less than half of schools with practice gardens, especially in high SES, there is sufficient practicing area for each class and school color was observed to be remarkably painted in very few schools.

Table 6. Materials to increase the effectiveness of schools

Material		SES of Schools			All Schools
		Low f	Mod. f	High f	%
Personal Wardrobe	Available	7	7	9	88,5
Training Tools	Sufficient	5	8	8	80,8
Sandbox material	Available	3	6	4	50
Technological hardware and computer	Available	8	9	9	100
Projection	Available	7	9	8	92,3
TV	Available	4	5	6	57,7

Table 6 shows that, materials to increase the effectiveness of schools as children's personal wardrobe, training tools, and other technological equipment are available regardless of the socioeconomic level of schools.

#### Inclusiveness

Findings related to the number of female, male, non-paying student, foreign students and inclusive students are given in Table 6.

Table 7. Number of female, male, free students, foreign students and inclusive students

SES	Female $\bar{X}$	%	Male $\bar{X}$	%	Inclusive $\bar{X}$	%	Non-paying student $\bar{X}$	%	Foreign $\bar{X}$	%
Low	59	46,04	69,13	53,96	4,25	3,57	5,63	4,08	1	1,10
Moderate	109,89	48,60	118,89	51,40	5,11	4,30	3,77	2,74	1	2,60
High	168,78	47,62	185,44	52,38	4,33	3,64	6,55	4,75	1	0,20
<b>Total</b>	<b>2980</b>	<b>47,47</b>	<b>3292</b>	<b>52,53</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>3,85</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>3,85</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1,3</b>

According to Table 7, it is seen that male students more attend to schools than female students. In addition, the majority of schools have inclusive students and non-paying students. Almost half of the schools have foreign students. Considering the SES of the school environment; it is observed that male students more attend to schools at all SES, the number of inclusive students and foreign students are higher in schools with middle SES, and free students attend to schools in the highest SES.

#### Democratic Participation

The website of the schools and information on the number of seminars, courses and projects obtained from the CFS diagnostic forms are provided in tables.

Table 8. The website of the schools and information on the number of seminars, courses and projects

		SES of Schools			All Schools
		Low f	Mod. f	High f	%
Website	Up-to-date	7	8	8	88,5
Courses	Available	4	4	4	46,2
Seminars	Available	8	9	9	100
Project not supported by Ministry of Education	Available	7	7	7	80,8
Parent interview room	Available	1	0	3	15,4
Multi-Purpose Hall and waiting rooms	Available	6	3	6	57,7

According to Table 8, different seminars and voluntary projects were done in all schools and the majority of their website was up-to-date. In addition, they have multi-purpose halls and waiting rooms and they open environment-oriented courses. However, very few of them have an interview room for parents.

#### Healthy, Safe and Protective Environment

The findings obtained from the CFS diagnostic forms regarding the health, cleanliness and safety of schools are given in tables.

Table 9. The Health Dimension of Schools

Health		SES of Schools			All Schools
		Low f	Mod. f	High f	%
Well-maintained, Painted Classes and Exterior	Yes	8	9	9	100
Noise	No	6	7	5	30,8
Seating Area in garden	Available	7	9	9	96,2
Pergola / Canopy	Available	3	9	9	80,8
Sun Blinds on Windows	Available	4	9	6	73,1
Refectory	Available	8	9	9	100
Ventilation in the refectory	Available	7	9	9	96,2
Food Preparation and Cooking Area	Available	8	9	9	96,2
Food Preservation and Refrigerator	Available	7	8	9	92,3
Potable Water	Network water	1	1	3	19,2
	Purified water	7	8	6	80,8
Health and Hygiene Warnings	Available	8	9	9	100
Infirmery	Available	2	2	3	26,9
Medicine / First Aid Cabinet	Available	6	4	5	57,7
Resting room	Available	1	0	1	7,7
Ventilation in Toilets	Available	4	4	5	50
Ventilation in Classes	Available	3	4	2	34,6
Teacher Accompanying Breakfast	Available	8	9	9	100
Teaching Type	Double-shift Education	8	8	8	92,3
	One shift Education	0	1	1	7,7

According to Table 9, it is observed that all schools and classrooms are well-painted and most of them have no noise. Most of them have comfortable seating area in the garden for children. It is seen that in all the schools there is a refectory and a teacher accompanying the children at the breakfast, and almost all of the meals are prepared and maintained under hygienic conditions and used purified water as potable water. All schools have health and hygiene warnings. However, although more than half had pharmacy / first aid cabinets in the classes, very few had infirmaries and rest rooms regardless of the socioeconomic level of schools. Similarly, ventilation in schools and classrooms is inadequate.

Table 10. The Cleanliness Dimension of Schools

Cleanliness		SES of Schools			All Schools
		Low f	Mod. f	High f	%
Clean Classes and Toilets	Available	8	9	9	100,0
Easy to Clean Material on the Floor	Available	7	9	9	96,2
	Carpet	1	0	0	3,8
Ground Material	Parquet flooring	2	1	0	7,7
	Carpet and parquet	5	8	9	88,5
Personnel Using Hygienic Materials	Available	8	9	9	100,0
Smell at school	No	8	9	9	0,0
Garbage Bins *	Available	6	7	9	84,6
Toilet Paper, Hand Soap, Paper Towel	Available	8	9	9	100,0

\* at least one garbage bin should be in all classes, at each floor and in the garden (MoNe School Health Guide).

According to Table 10, it is seen that all schools have clean classrooms and toilets, staff working in schools use hygienic materials, all toilets have toilet paper, hand soap and paper towels, and there is no smell in schools. Nearly all the school floor is easy to clean material (parquet). Most schools have standards-compliant garbage bins.

Table 111. The Security Dimension of Schools

Security		SES of Schools			All Schools
		Low f	Mod. f	High f	%
Anti-Injury Garden Floor	Available	4	5	9	69,2
Safe And Robust Garden Playground	Available	6	8	8	84,6
Secure Garden Wall	Available	6	8	9	88,5
Vehicle Entrance to the Garden Area	Available	7	7	8	15,4
Security camera	Available	7	9	9	96,2
Security guard	Available	2	0	6	30,8
Regulations for Students with Disabilities (Ramp, Handle, etc.)	Available	7	8	9	92,3
Railing on Stairs and Windows	Available	6	9	8	88,5
Safety Notices	Available	7	8	7	88,5
Alignment Signs Positioned at Eye Line	Available	4	3	1	30,8
Wall Mounted Cabinets	Available	8	8	9	96,2
Soft Material on the Playground Floor	Available	3	5	4	46,2
Nails Concealed Hardware and Protected Sockets	Available	8	9	7	92,3
Oval Cornered Hardware Materials	Available	7	6	7	73,1
Concealed Cables	Available	7	8	7	84,6
Shelter and Power Failure Lighting	Available	2	4	6	46,2
Emergency Exit Evacuation Plan	Available	8	9	8	96,2
Location far from the main road	Available	3	5	5	50,0
Barrier that prevents uncontrolled exit from school	Available	1	1	5	26,9
Crosswalk	Available	3	2	4	34,6
Traffic Light Or Sign	Available	2	2	1	23,1
Speed bumps in front of the school	Available	3	4	3	38,5
Bright Entrance	Available	8	9	9	100
Bright Stairs And Classes	Available	7	9	8	92,3

According to Table 11, most of the schools had a garden floor with an injury prevention system and a secure and robust garden playground. In most of the schools the garden walls of the school are safe and vehicles are not allowed in the garden area. Similarly, in almost all schools there are security cameras, while the schools with low and moderate SES have not security guards. Nearly all schools have ramps, handles, etc. for disabled students. Most of the schools have staircases that meet the standards and have windows with handrails. While safety warnings were found, in a few of these schools the warnings were positioned in accordance with the eye level of children. In almost all schools' cabinets were fixed to the wall, nails were concealed, materials were cornered, sockets were also kept, and cables were placed in the canal. In most of the school playgrounds, the floor was covered with soft material. Nearly half of the schools have automatic lighting that can be used in emergencies and in case of power failure. While the entrances are bright in all schools, it is seen that in the majority the classes and stairs are bright, as well. Almost all schools have an emergency exit evacuation plan. When we look at the environment of schools; half of it was built away from the main road. But, nearly all schools with low and moderate SES have not barrier that prevents uncontrolled exit from school and a few had crosswalk, a traffic light and speed bumps in front of the school regardless of the socioeconomic level of them.

#### Gender Sensitivity

The findings obtained from the CFS diagnostic form regarding the condition of the toilets are given in.

Table 12. The condition of the toilets

		SES of Schools			All Schools
		Low f	Mod. f	High f	%
Located Separately as girls and boys	Yes	7	9	9	96,2
	No	1	0	0	3,8

According to Table 12, in almost all schools' toilets are located separately as boys and girls regardless of the socioeconomic level of them.

### Results, Conclusion and Implication

Preschool learning and learning environments are where children discover, talk, ask questions, build information, and perform creative activities individually or as a group. In this study, it was concluded that the independent



kindergartens were sufficient in terms of the physical fields and materials that affect the teaching-learning process. But, unfortunately, the spaces and qualifications that increase the effectiveness of the process are insufficient.

When the outdoor and indoor areas of the schools are examined, it is concluded that the ratio of school outdoors areas per student is above the standards and the ratio of school indoors areas per student is within the desired standards. On the other hand, these rates differ according to the SES of the school; It is concluded that the average of indoors and outdoors areas per student of the schools in low SES is higher than the others. This can be explained by the fewer students in these schools. Baran, Yilmaz and Yildirim (2007) stated that there are multiple standards related to school gardens. However, they added that the average width of classes should be planned by calculating 3-4 m<sup>2</sup> per child and that the garden areas should be thought to be between 7-14 m<sup>2</sup>. The Turkish Standards Institute (TSE) states that the usage area of school gardens should not be less than 400 m<sup>2</sup> (as cited in Onder & Akay, 2017). However, all schools have gardens and playgrounds. Demiriz, Karadag and Ulutas (2003) stated that outdoor activities are very important for the development of children and they activate children both physically and mentally. Dymont (2005) stated that outdoor education motivates and encourages students for students who cannot perform well in the classroom environment and offers unlimited opportunities on the level of education.

Although the average of indoor and outdoor area per student is at the desired level, it is concluded that the number of students per teacher is higher than the related legislation. According to Ozoglu, Yildiz and Canbolat (2013), the increase in the number of students decreases the effectiveness of education because the time of quality the teacher allocates for each student decreases. Unfortunately, Kazu and Yilmaz (2018) also stated that compared with OECD and EU countries, the number of students per teacher should be reduced in general. Furthermore, despite the increase in the number of teachers as the SES of the school, the number of students per teacher increased above the desired level. This can be explained by the increases in schooling of the age population and the awareness of parents about preschool education as the SES of the school environment. In a study conducted by the ERG (Education Reform Initiative) and ACEV (Mother Child Education Foundation) in 2017, the enrollment rate in pre-primary education was lower in poorer regions. In addition, children of wealthy and educated families attend pre-school education, while children of disadvantaged families are more likely to enroll directly in primary school.

However, it was concluded that most of the schools do not have a support training room and guidance service, although the education staff made efforts towards these children. According to the related legislation (MoNE, 2015), it is seen that there are schools which are not yet open to support education rooms. Although most schools have inclusive students, the lack of proper attention to the support education room may be due to the fact that preschool teachers are not given additional fees for support education and that teachers are reluctant to do so. The absence of guidance services can be explained by the constant change in the legislation on the appointment of guidance teachers in independent kindergartens. However, the guidance service is very important for the development of all children as well as providing the necessary support for the mainstreaming students. As a matter of fact, Akgun (2010) states that guidance services are very important as it will play a role in the formation of positive / negative attitudes of the child to school and transferring these attitudes to future learning.

It is observed that there are at least three learning centers (MoNE, 2013) that should be established according to the MoNE Preschool Program. The availability of learning centers in these schools is pleasing in terms of effectiveness. Because these centers enable children to learn at their own pace, in the activity they choose, in the way they want, and to best meet their learning needs (Kostelnik, Soderman, Whiren & Rupiper, 2015). In addition, it was observed that the activity boards were at eye level of the children and that the children had personal lockers in the classrooms. As a matter of fact, Ozkubat (2013) states that in order to ensure the correct transmission of information in preschool, the boards should be kept in view of children and Aksoy (2009) points out that there are cupboards and drawers in the classroom. In addition to all these elements, it has been concluded that schools are technologically sufficient.

However, in addition to the material, it was concluded that there are inadequacies about special places (drama, music room, library, animal feeding area, sand pond, application garden) and qualities (sufficient space in sand pond and application garden, etc.) that increase the effectiveness of teaching. In fact, the ordinary activities of the child, such as running, climbing, jumping, walking, playing with water, sand, soil, support the physical development of the children and enable them to recognize their body and realize their abilities (Marcus and Francis 1998). This can be explained by the lack of space due to the large number of students. In this regard, Aksoy (2009) also states that the rapid expansion of preschool education causes quality problems and therefore, the education environment of these schools should be emphasized. A library designed to be easily accessible to children to increase children's interest and awareness of the book (Teale, 1999); a specially arranged drama room (Gungor & Ates, 2019) and an animal feeding area in terms of enabling them to be more affectionate, more sensitive and more attentive to other creatures, to help them focus and conduct research, and to improve their communication skills will contribute to the effectiveness of schools.

The number of classrooms per staff that contribute directly and directly to pre-school institutions (Kose, Uzun and Ozaşlan, 2018) is found to be sufficient according to the legislation (MoNE, 2013). In addition, as the SES increases, it is concluded that the shortage of personnel decreases and the standards are easily met. This advantage can be considered as the fact that schools have independent budgets, increased school fees in proportion to the number of students and

more budget for staff. It is the responsibility of the personnel to ensure that the physical spaces in preschool institutions are healthy and clean, and that they are checked and prepared for education. Therefore, Ada and Kucukali (2011), Sisman and Tasdemir (2008) state that the lack of one of the personnel working in educational environments will adversely affect the education process.

When independent kindergartens are evaluated in terms of the inclusiveness dimension of the child-friendly school; It is concluded that the schools accept all students without discrimination, provide support and convenience for them to come to the school and register, but the school enrollment rates of girls are lower.

When the inclusiveness of schools was evaluated in terms of gender, it was concluded that female students were less covered. Yildirim, Beltekin and Oral (2018) state that although girls 'access to school increases day by day, girls' access to education for various reasons is more disadvantageous than boys. The Ministry of National Education (2015) emphasizes that although there are studies aimed at getting girls to go to school, there is a problem of school attendance among girls who have reached school age. When the comprehensiveness of the schools was examined in terms of students with special educational needs and economic disabilities, it was concluded that appropriate physical conditions were provided for the schools and necessary studies were made in accessing the school. When ethnicity, which is another element of inclusiveness, is examined in terms of different students, it is seen that similar practices are applied. Pre-school education is important in terms of providing equal opportunities at an early age and therefore, the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) states that free and inclusive education should be provided in most countries (OECD, 2016). Heckman (2008) states that meeting the needs of disadvantaged children fully improves children's cognitive and social-affective skills and thus enhances economic efficiency by strengthening the human capital of the country. Education is an important tool for migrants to adapt to new environments and living conditions and to escape from negative past experiences (Eren, 2019). Mialaret, rich, poor, developed or undeveloped children of all peers of race, nationality, religion, social class, without the privilege of joy and friendship gathered in each preschool education should be made equal in the development opportunities of each child (as cited in Gurkan, 1978).

When independent kindergartens were evaluated in terms of democratic participation, it was concluded that activities encourage the participation of the community such as seminars, courses were conducted in all schools and the opportunities facilitate communication with parents such as website of the schools, multi-purpose hall and waiting room is available. Research (Gokce, 2000) also suggests that it is important to organize courses, seminars, etc. in schools that will improve cooperation with families. In addition, the websites of schools are an important element because they are one of the main communication tools between the school, parents and those who want to have information and it enables the scientific, cultural and artistic activities to be announced to the environment and to make their research and development more effective (Kurtdele Fidan, 2006). An interesting detail of the study is that the rate of opening courses and project studies for the environment in the schools with low SES is higher than the schools in the other neighborhood. It can be said that the SES of the environment needs more vocational training, reading-writing, etc. courses and awareness raising seminars. However, the absence of an interview room, which is expected to increase the quality of communication with parents, is another striking result of the study. Similarly, Demir Yildiz and Donmez (2017) state that interview rooms are not designed in schools. Dudek (2007) states that in all kindergartens parents should have an interview room and there should be clearly differentiated units where children, teachers and parents may feel "separate". However, it is emphasized that these rooms should be connected to other units or closed in the form of glass etc. in order to make the room users feel more comfortable.

In terms of their healthy, safe and protective environment; It is seen that schools provide the necessary physical conditions, take precautions and are conscious about these issues. However, it was concluded that the schools were not adequately ventilated, that warning boards were not at eye level of children and that security measures were not sufficient in the exterior of the schools. It has been also observed that health projects are carried out in all of the schools, importance is given to the awareness of everyone on this subject, necessary care is given to school hygiene, healthy foods and drinks are prepared and maintained for children. This situation is very important for preschool education and it is among the priorities of the institution to provide education for children in hygienic, healthy and sheltered environments (Gules, 2013). In spite of all these precautions, it was observed that schools do not have infirmaries and rest rooms. Demiriz et al. (2003) stated that the health status of children in schools were monitored and first aid applications were made in case of an accident, but the person in charge of the infirmary should be a doctor or nurse and that the necessary medical equipment should be available in the room. The lack of infirmary and infirmary staff in schools will delay the emergency response of children to illness and emergency situations. In all schools, the appearance and classrooms were well-painted for the health of children, but less than half of the schools were noticeably painted. Ozturk (1999) explains the Gestalt theory that the characteristics of the feature that is desired to be drawn attention in education, such as color, brightness and violence should be emphasized on the shape and that the desired feature to be perceived is emphasized. Aksoy (2009) states that the colors of preschool education institutions affect children significantly and therefore the colors to be preferred in these institutions should be in a way that the children will like and should be remarkable. It was concluded that almost all schools had dual education. It can be said that the high rate of dual education is due to the high number of children in the age population in the districts where

the research is conducted. The fact that dual education reduces the quality of teaching also affects the health of children negatively. According to research, children spend most of their time indoors and are exposed to high levels of indoor pollutants. Therefore, all learning and teaching processes are undermined by shortening the focus time for students and teachers. This situation also varies according to the amount of pollutants in the air left by kids taking morning training in case of double-shift education (Ozturk & Duzovali, 2011). In addition to the negative effects of dual education, it is concluded that there is not enough ventilation system in the classrooms and toilets of the schools. Ventilation in preschool education institutions is important both for the health of children and employees and for the efficiency of the day. Because children breathe the same air, it is necessary to ventilate the sections (such as kitchen, toilet, rest room) before and after the activities such as food, art and play (Aksoy, 2009).

It has been concluded that children are provided with an environment in which they can feel safe and that all precautions are taken to prevent accidents in schools. In schools, electrical cables should be concealed, ramps should be designed for students with disabilities, stairs should be light and wide enough for descent and climbing, and the handrails on the sides should be durable. Similarly, Aksoy (2009) recommends that electrical outlets should be placed out of the reach of children, shelves, wardrobes and drawers should not have sharp or damaging spikes or corners and that hazardous materials should not be used. However, all schools had emergency-exit evacuation plans, but less than half of them had automatic lighting in case of power failure and shelter. But, although necessary precautions were taken by the administrators, teachers and staff in terms of security in and around the school, adequate precautions were not taken outside the school. In the selection of spaces for preschool institutions, attention should be paid not to open the entrance and exit of the school to the main road (Aksoy, 2009). The understanding of the CFS is responsible for the safety of the child's arrival and departure with the school (Shirley & Miske, 2010).

In this study, there was no evidence of discrimination in schools, but the necessary sensitivity is shown for the sexual identity of the age group. In preschool children, the desire to learn their own bodies and sexual differences occurs. Therefore, the duty of preschool institutions is to ensure that this period progresses in healthy conditions, that the child recognizes his / her gender and makes sense of the environment correctly (Donmezer, 2004). However, it is seen that social perception of gender is effective in children's play, playmate and toy preferences (Yagan Guder & Alabay, 2016). Therefore, when the development goals of the countries are examined, it is seen that gender equality should be ensured within the framework of health, education, employment, economic activities and decision-making mechanisms at all levels. First of all, it is necessary to change the social attitudes positively and this is only possible with the schools which are the most effective institutions in the society (MoNE, 2015). Unlu (2012) stated that preschool period is a critical period in terms of recognizing the sexual identity of children and gaining the role of gender, and those children try to gain this role through socialization processes with their friends in their school or through their teachers. Shirley and Miske (2010) state that male and female students have the right to participate safely and equally in the CFS. Tuncer and Gezer Sen (2018) state that it is necessary to carry out studies on the development of gender perception in preschool period, and to create practices and educational environments containing different needs of girls and boys in line with children's rights.

Based on these results, in order to ensure that preschool education has more child-friendly features, the following can be recommended: (1) In order to increase the effectiveness, the number of students per teacher can be reduced and new schools in line with the Preschool Education Program and CFS characteristics can be set up to enable children to receive education in healthier environments. (2) It may be recommended to carry out studies to increase the school access rates of all children, especially girls, in socioeconomically low environments. (3) Care should be taken to create places that increase effectiveness such as library, music, drama, sandbox, animal feeding area and application garden. (4) It may be recommended to establish a standard for the provision of a staff and infirmary to take care of children's health, to establish ventilation systems in classrooms and toilets, and to cooperate with relevant institutions to ensure safety in and out of school.

### Limitations

In this study, since it is aimed to raise awareness of preschool education to be child-friendly, the subject is addressed directly through observation data without making any generalizations. In this case, it can be considered a limitation of the study, but the increase of such studies can enrich the educational systems of developing countries such as Turkey. However, another limitation of this study is that there is not much data on gender sensitivity. Therefore, physical opportunities, materials, attitudes and behaviors of teachers and administrators can be examined in terms of sexist characteristics. It may also be recommended to observe the learning and teaching environments in the process in order to make more in-depth analyzes of the kindergartens' child-friendly school characteristics.

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