The Perspective of Children on Childhood

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to determine the perspectives of children on childhood and the reasons that lie behind their desire to grow up. The study was conducted with the phenomenological research design, a qualitative research method. Participants of the study included 18 children in the 10-12 age group selected using snowball sampling. The data were collected by semi-structured interviews conducted with the children. The aim was to use child-specific methods when selecting data collection instruments. Participants were asked to play an icebreaker game adequate for their age group and then to read a story about childhood to understand how they perceive childhood. The data obtained in the interviews were analyzed with "descriptive analysis" under four themes determined in the study. It was observed that there were children who had positive views about childhood, did not grow up and were happy with childhood, while most children wanted to grow up as soon as possible, were "*restricted too much*" by their families, "*wanted to become individuals who gave orders instead of those who received them*" and "*wanted to establish their own rules*".

Introduction

The concept of childhood is a social construct that has been considered with a different approach in every society and has been the subject of several changes through the history (Archard, 2004; Heywood, 2003; James & Prout, 1997; Jenks, 2005; Marshall, 1999; Onur, 2005; Postman, 1995; Sorin, 2005). The way childhood was constructed, it was designed and perceived always reflects a cultural and historical perspective (Elkind, 1999; Jenks, 2005; Marshall, 1999). This changing perspective became an important factor that determines the rights and obligations of the children, the values assigned and the education provided for the children in a society (Tan, 1989, p. 73; Sorin, 2005, p. 12).

Social and cultural problems experienced in the construction of childhood influence the perception of childhood in the society (Woodhead, 1997). In the past, childhood was perceived as a biological process where the children needed adults and had no particular rights (Postman, 1995; Woodhead, 1997). However, the common perspective today is that children are not only biologically but also socially individuals and they have rights to conduct a life that would ensure the physical, mental, moral and social development of all children. It is considered that an appropriate environment that would provide these rights should be established for children (Archard, 2004; Postman, 1995; Sözer, 2003).

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Although childhood concept is in a much better position than the past, it could not be argued that the concept of childhood is at a desired level both in the family and the society (Holt, 2000; Ercan, 2011). This is due to the fact that childhood is generally considered as an age that reflects certain mental and physical deficits when compared to adulthood (İnal, 2007a, p. 19). Thus, children could have access to their rights only through adults (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child [UN CRC], 1995).

In his book "Escape from Childhood," Holt (2000) wrote that adults who consider that they know "what is good, what is right for children, and what they can do for children" attempt to find answers to these questions without consulting the children at all. According to Holt (2000), these questions and concerns of adults about children's lives constitute one of the causes and consequences of contemporary childhood. Since until the concept of childhood emerged, adults did not ask such questions. Naturally, it is not a novelty to consider the well-being of the children, however, as the concept of childhood was introduced in the historical process, it was considered that children should be scrutinized different from the adults (Holt, 2000, p. 21). This is a function of the paternalist system and it is considered as interfering with children's freedom of choice or action on behalf of the children (Franklin, 1993, p. 40). This protectionist approach derives from ignoring the fact that children are prevented from being considered as an individual (Atılgan & Ümit-Atılgan, 2009). Traditional reasons proposed to legitimize paternalism were children's lack of knowledge and experience, and the premise that when they mature, they would understand the wisdom of decisions adult made in their behalf and the fact that they are dependent on adults in several respects (Franklin, 1993, pp. 40-41).

Van den Berg, in his book "Changing Nature of Man" (1961, p. 11), the fact that children are considered as individuals who cannot make decisions by adults led to an extended gap between children and adults. According to Holt (2000), this gap was intentionally created by adults. However, larger-scale studies are required to understand how contemporary childhood was created or "invented" (Tan, 1989). It was argued that the idea of childhood developed without considering the children. From this perspective, the theoretical aspect of childhood could reflect the anxieties, concerns and requirements of adults (Qvortrup, Bardy, Sgritta, & Wintersberger, 1994).

These adult anxieties, concerns and needs could be considered as the cause of creating their ideal childhood in the twentieth century. This ideal resulted in perception of children as molds that need to be *shaped* and does not reflect the needs and tendencies of the children but the desires of the families (Elkind, 1999; İnal, 2007b; Sorin, 2005). Children, who are turned into a source of happiness in the family, who are expected to fulfill the unfulfilled goals of the parents and whose lives are organized within the framework of the plans determined by the parents, became one of the main areas of interest in scientific studies. Scientific branches and studies on children and the best education for children led to a more limited overall perception of childhood (James, 2001; İnal, 2007b). However, children, who were considered as passive subjects and childhood, which became the topic of several studies, were tucked in a culture determined and controlled by adults (Holt, 2000; James & Prout, 1997; İnal, 1999).

In recent times, where the disappearance of childhood is at the fore (Postman, 1995), studies on childhood investigated the temporal, historical and contextual differences in childhood by categorizing the childhood images of adults. For example, in a classification conducted by Sorin (2005), childhood was grouped under the categories of the innocent child, the noble/saviour child, the evil child, the snowballing child, the out-of-control child, the miniature adult, the adult-in-training, the child as commodity, the child as victim and the child as active agent. It was observed that the image of the noble/saviour child was the image of the child responsible for the adult, while the innocent child, the evil child, the adult-in-training and the child as commodity was the images of the child dependent on adults (Sorin, 2005). The child as active agent image was described as the childhood image where the adults and children share the roles and powers. Participant / citizen children are actors involved in education and social life, and play a role that affects change and shares responsibilities (UN CRC, 2009; Hart, 1992; Sorin, 2005).

The child as active agent image should initially develop in the family. In the family environment, the child needs to be informed first about the issues related to him / her. The child should be listened to in the decision-making process, his / her thoughts should be taken into account, and the child should be an active member of the process. However, in this process, the family should take into account the child's developing abilities, age and maturity level and should guide the child accordingly. Thus, instead of being passive practitioners of the family's desires, children might become effective individuals with necessary participation skills (Akyüz, 2012).

Analysis of the current situation in Turkey would demonstrate that children cannot express their views about their own lives for many reasons (UNICEF, 2011). However, the "best interests of the child" principle was emphasized in the CRC. The principle of the best interests of the child is "the right to life and development, and the right of to listen to the views expressed by the child." However, similar to several countries, decisions about children are made not with them, but on their behalf (UN CRC, 1995, 2009; Save the Children [SC], 2010). Thus, the provision of best interests for the child is shaped by the decisions made by the adults, and the children remain as passive individuals.

Patriarchal structures of families and the traditional view that children are raw plates that need to be shaped could be cited as the causes of the abovementioned state of affairs (Locke, 1992). So much so that children could not prevent the impact of their families on career choice, choice of friends or even the choice of spouses. For all these reasons, families in our country may think that the process of obtaining the views of the child is a waste of time and unnecessary. In a previous study, it was determined that children did not have the right to any opinion other than financial demands from their parents (SC, 2010). Children who grow up under these conditions are often unaware of their right to speak.

Children, who have no right to speak and remain passive in their lives, do not perceive their childhood as a positive period. They prefer to be grown up instead of being a child and desire to grow up as soon as possible (Holt, 2000, p. 84). However, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has consistently encouraged the participation of the children in decision-making processes within the family and has acknowledged the obligation to seriously listen to the views of the children when determining the responsibilities of parents and other caregivers in the Article 12 (Akyüz, 2012). Despite all these efforts, it is noteworthy that children still are far from being the subject of their own lives (UN CRC, 2009, 2013).

Childhood; despite the fact that individuals spend this period as objects of their own lives; is a process that every adult envies and wants to go back and experience again (Avcı, Kara, Ayhan, Güngör, & Kayacık, 2014; Güvenç, 1996; James & Prout, 1997; Kunt Bulut & Avcı, 2016). Nevertheless, all children want to grow up as soon as possible and cannot enjoy their childhood. Thus, understanding the views and beliefs of children on childhood and the reasons why they do not desire to grow up would help us observe how children perceive their own lives. The present study is considered significant since it aimed to understand why children regard childhood as a process that needs to be avoided (Holt, 2000). Due to the abovementioned ideas, the present study aimed to understand the perspectives of 10-12 age group children on childhood by responding the questions "What are the thoughts of children about childhood?" and "Why the children want to grow up?".

Method

Study Design

This study was conducted with the qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a method that aims to induce meanings based on the views of the participants using explanatory and induction techniques (Miles & Huberman, 2015). For this purpose, the study was conducted with the phenomenological research method, a qualitative research design. Phenomenological research is a research design where the researcher describes the experiences of the participants about a phenomenon as defined by the participants themselves and based on philosophy and psychology (Creswell, 2014). The researcher attempts to discover how individuals make sense of their experiences and transform these experiences into consciousness both individually and in shared sense phenomenologically (Patton, 2014). These descriptions result in the achievement of the essence of the experiences of individuals who had various experiences about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

Participants

Snowball sampling, a purposive sampling method, were used in the study. The said method involves the inclusion of the participants who easily fit the study criteria. After accessing these participants, they are asked to access other participants to grow the snowball, thus new situations that could provide information emerge (Patton, 2014). Thus, the study was conducted with 18 children, who were 10-12 years old.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Grade
1. İdil	11	Female	6th Grade
2. Ayşenur	12	Female	7th Grade
3. Duygu	11	Female	7th Grade
4. Merve	11	Female	6th Grade
5. Ela	10	Female	5th Grade
6. Mustafa	12	Male	7th Grade
7. Oğuzhan	10	Male	5th Grade
8. Hüseyin	10	Male	5th Grade
9. Erhan	12	Male	6th Grade
10. Süheyla	12	Female	7th Grade
11. Yağız	11	Male	6th Grade
12. Pınar	12	Female	7th Grade
13. İrem	12	Female	6th Grade
14. Fatmanur	10	Female	5th Grade
15. Sedef	11	Female	6th Grade
16. Aleyna	12	Male	7th Grade
17. Metin	12	Male	7th Grade
18. Deniz	10	Male	6th Grade

Ethical Concerns

The approaches adopted in the past that investigated children's experiences were mostly studies on children as opposed to studies with or for children (Darbyshire, 2000; Oakley, 1994). Today, the fact that children could contribute valuable information as basic information providers of their own lives is not sufficiently taken into account (Scott, 2000). In recent years, however, studies in the international literature demonstrated that child-specific studies and methods should be utilized in studies that are conducted with children (Darbyshire, Schiller, & MacDougall, 2005; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010; Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008).

Children may not want to provide information about their lives to a researcher that they do not know. To solve this problem, child-specific methods should be selected as icebreakers before interviewing the children. Child-specific methods would enable children to spend good and interesting time utilizing non-structured processes (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010). Among the methods that are used based on the abilities and interests of children, activities such as picture drawing, sentence completion, keeping a diary, taking pictures, playing games are preferred in the research process (Punch, 2002). Thus, based on the assumption that all children love to play, an icebreaker game was used to increase interaction with children in the present study. This method was selected because when the preliminary interviews were conducted with a few children before the application of the abovementioned method, it was observed that children were reluctant in expressing themselves. It was considered that in order to increase the researcher-child interaction and strengthen the child's participation, strategy games that can attract the attention of the children in the study group should be preferred. The solo test game was preferred since it is easy to share rules and play the game in the short period of time that interaction was established with children. Again, the effort to use child-specific methods was reflected in the selection of data collection instrument and method. Accordingly, to initiate the chat, it was determined that Avcı-Çakman's (2013) story book titled "Laughing Mastic Tree" was relevant to childhood and the author's approval for use was obtained. Before starting to ask the interview questions, the first story in the book titled "Magic Words" was read or volunteering children read the book themselves.

During the interviews, the children were informed about voice recordings and their approval for recording the sessions that included their responses was obtained, and it was stated that if they deny permission, the dialogues could be written down by the interviewer. The responses of the two children who did not allow recording the interviews were transcribed by the interviewer. Based on the "informative" principle of participation, the objective of the study was explained to the children and the study was initiated with the volunteering children. Informed consent that included the principles of child participation (informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, inclusive) was obtained from children. The names of children participating in the study were altered and nicknames were assigned. In the present article, nicknames will be utilized when quoting the views of the children.

Data Collection

Before the study, the researchers introduced themselves to the child, showed the solo test toy, and started playing the game only when the child volunteered. After playing the solo test game, the children were informed that a story about childhood will be read and they will chat about this story. Interviewer asked the children if they wanted to read the story or did they want the interviewer read the story to them.

In the Magic Words story in "Laughing Mastic Tree" book (Avcı-Çakman, 2013), which was used in the data collection process, a project about "What is childhood?" is given to the children by the Turkish teacher and the children could not decide how to explain childhood. According to Arda, the protagonist, "childhood is a difficult thing" and it is very tiresome to constantly study and do homework. When he went on to ask the adults, they said that "childhood is the most beautiful period and childhood means comfort". Then, Arda asks the adults to tell an anecdote about their childhood to obtain their views on childhood. Thus, he would be able to learn the views of adults on childhood.

After reading the story, the interviewer chatted with the children about childhood and semi-structured interview questions were posed. Children were asked why they want to grow up, what would be different in their lives when they grow up, about the problems they experience as children, the advantages of being a child, whether they have the right to speak about themselves, on which issues they could or could not provide their views, whether their opinions were asked, why their opinions were not asked, the things they wanted to change about their lives, the things they can and cannot do as a child, the things that children could do but adults could not.

Interviews were conducted between March 10 and May 18, 2016. Interview questions and digital voice recorders were used during the interviews. The interviews lasted between 20-30 minutes and were conducted by the second author.

Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed by the interviewer without making any changes and by assigning interview numbers in the same order with the interviews. Content analysis was conducted by reading all data after the transcribed lines were numbered and the possible themes, categories, subcategories and codes were obtained. Scientific research are concerned with producing and presenting valid and reliable information within ethical principles. In qualitative research, various approaches are proposed to establish internal validity or credibility (Merriam, 2013). One of these methods is the researcher triangulation (Creswell, 2014). For this purpose, the study themes and categories were determined by two authors and the categories and subcategories were controlled by an independent researcher. Furthermore, the review process for all 18 children was conducted independently by two field specialists. In cases of disagreement, the views of the first author were consulted and a consensus was reached. The results were calculated with the Reliability = Agreement / Agreement + Disagreement formula (Miles & Huberman, 2015). It was determined that the overall reliability coefficient for the study was 94% (Reliability = 95/95 + 6 = 0.94 = 94%). As a result of the reconciliation meeting, 13 categories were determined under four themes. Interview questions are considered as the categories.
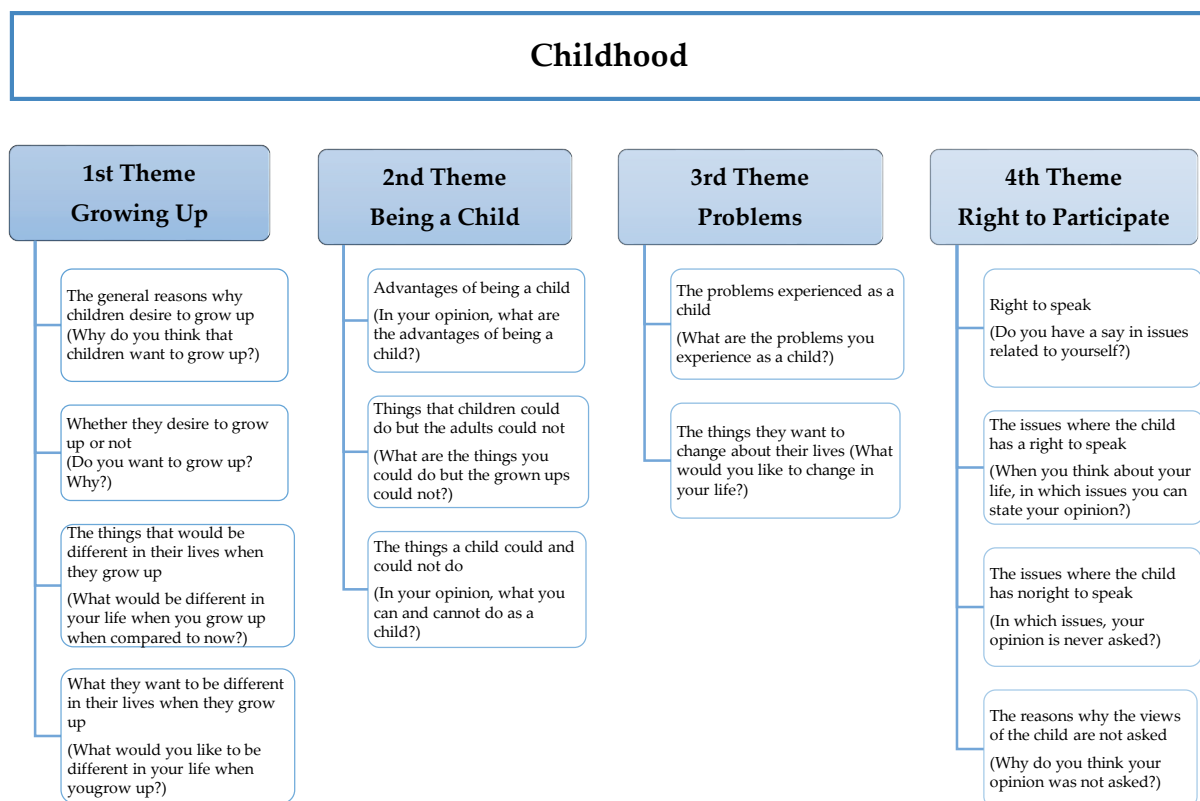

Figure 1. Themes, Categories and Related Questions

The data collected in the interviews were analyzed with "descriptive analysis" based on the four determined themes. In phenomenological studies, the perspectives of individuals on certain phenomena need to be described in depth (Patton, 2014, pp. 104). In in-depth descriptions, details and context are established, going beyond recording the participants' expressions. With the help of the descriptions, the rhetoric, emotions, actions of the individuals and what the individuals mean by their interactions are expressed (Patton, 2014, p. 503). In the present study, direct quotations of the views of the children were included and these quotations were the basis of study findings.

Results

Findings obtained in the interviews conducted with children were analyzed based on the themes of growing up, being a child, problems and right to participate.

Theme 1. Growing Up

Under the theme of growing up, there were the categories of why the children desire to grow up, whether they want to grow up or not, what would be different in their lives when they grow up and what they want to be different when they grow up when compared to the present.
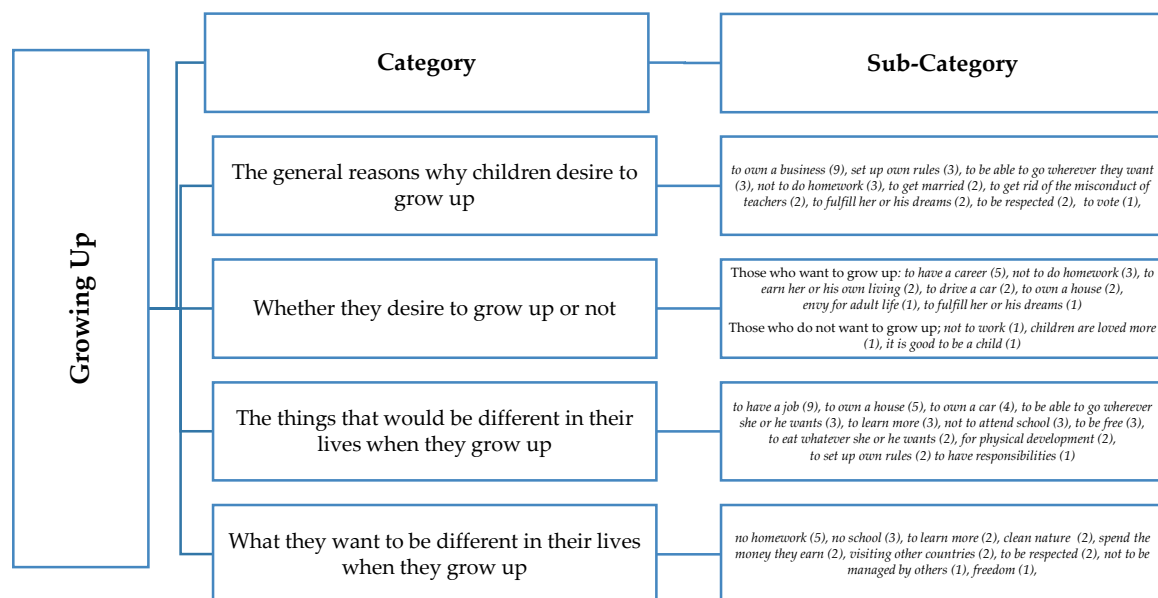

Growing Up	Category	Sub-Category
	The general reasons why children desire to grow up	to own a business (9), set up own rules (3), to be able to go wherever they want (3), not to do homework (3), to get married (2), to get rid of the misconduct of teachers (2), to fulfill her or his dreams (2), to be respected (2), to vote (1),
	Whether they desire to grow up or not	Those who want to grow up: to have a career (5), not to do homework (3), to earn her or his own living (2), to drive a car (2), to own a house (2), envy for adult life (1), to fulfill her or his dreams (1) Those who do not want to grow up; not to work (1), children are loved more (1), it is good to be a child (1)
	The things that would be different in their lives when they grow up	to have a job (9), to own a house (5), to own a car (4), to be able to go wherever she or he wants (3), to learn more (3), not to attend school (3), to be free (3), to eat whatever she or he wants (2), for physical development (2), to set up own rules (2) to have responsibilities (1)
	What they want to be different in their lives when they grow up	no homework (5), no school (3), to learn more (2), clean nature (2), spend the money they earn (2), visiting other countries (2), to be respected (2), not to be managed by others (1), freedom (1),

Figure 2. The Theme of Growing Up

The General Reasons Why Children Desire to Grow Up

The responses of the children to the question "Why children desire to grow up?" were grouped under the sub-categories of "*to own a business (9), to set up own rules (3), to be able to go wherever they want (3), not to do homework (3), to fulfill her or his dreams (2), to be respected (2), to get married (2), to get rid of the misconduct of teachers (2), and to vote (1)*". Idil (age 11), for example, said the following to state that children desire to grow up to be respected and to vote including herself:

> "*Because when one grows up, nobody will interfere. If I want to play games on the phone right now, they would say that I've got homework. Everything could be the way you want when you grow up. You can put up certain rules. When you grow up, they will recognize you. The biggest thing, the thing I envy the most is to vote. Now everyone votes, but I have to wait until I am 18 years old. That's why I want to be 18 years old as soon as possible. I cannot wait to become a doctor when I grow up.*"

Pınar (age 12) said the following to state that children desire to grow up to fulfill their dreams, have fun, do not do homework and to have a career:

"Because they want to be bored less, they do not want to get too much frustrated. They want to fulfill their dreams, for example, some want to visit some places, they do not allow children to go out too much, so they want to grow up and have fun as soon as possible. They want not to do homework. They want to have a job they like."

In her response, İrem (age 12) stated that she wanted to grow up to become a professional and to get rid of her teachers' unbecoming conduct as soon as possible:

"I think that the children want to have a career as soon as possible; to get rid of the wrath of their teachers. Some teachers are extremely nervous and can be very annoying. They do unthinkable things to the students. For example, when one gets a low score on the exam, they emphasize the fact over and over in all classes. They disgrace the students among her friends."

Metin (age 12) stated that children want to grow up to establish their own rules:

"To grow up and establish his own rules, to but whatever he wants, to be respected, so that no one would yell at him, so that he could yell at others, to become the one who gives orders instead of being the one who receives them, to be able to go wherever he wants."

Whether the Children Desire to Grow Up or Not

When the children were asked whether they wanted to grow up or not, it was observed that all children answered this question. There were 13 children who wanted to grow up, one child who both wanted and did not want to grow up, and three children who did not want to grow up. The reasons of the children who wanted to grow up were grouped under eight sub-categories. These subcategories were: "*to have a career (5), not to do homework (3), to earn money (2), to drive a car (2), to own a house (2), to fulfill their dreams (1), and the envy for adult life (1).*" The reasons of the children who did not want to grow up were grouped under three subcategories. These subcategories were: "*not wanting to work (1), children are loved more (1), it is good to be a child (1)*". Although the reasons of the children to want to grow up varied, it is noteworthy that all these reasons included a desire for a living space of their own and independence.

For instance, İdil (age 11) stated she wanted to grow up since the adult life was more interesting and not to do homework:

"I can have a lot of things for myself when I grow up. Phone, tablet. What I feel most comfortable with is that I will not do homework any more. The adults do not do homework now, but they work and they say it is very difficult, but I think it is a pleasure. I want to be in her place when my mother tells me about it. Because their lives are very dramatic (Interviewer's note: by dramatic, the student means entertaining, funny). We just do homework, have recess, and go back in the classroom."

Aleyna (age 12) stated that she wanted to grow up because she wanted to live as she wanted:

"Yes because I want to achieve what I want and I do not want anyone to get involved with my affairs when I grow up. Because we live based on the wishes of our parents when we are children. Not based on our own desires."

Ela (age 10) who replied to the question "Do you want to grow up?" by stating that she both wants to grow up and not said the following:

"I want to grow up and I do not want to grow up. That's why I want it; You can do anything you want, but when you're younger, you get more attention. When you grow up, when you are alone, they are less interested in you."

Oğuzhan (age 10), who was among the children who did not want to grow up, stated that he does not want to grow up because he does not want to be a professional:

"I do not want to be a professional. I was working during the summer, so I came home so late, I could not play in the outdoors. I worked at my brother's computer repair shop. I want to stay as a child. My mother mostly buys whatever I want. I would have to buy them when I grow up. That's why I do not want to grow up."

The Things That Would be Different in Their Lives When They Grow Up

The responses of the children to the question "What will be different in your life when you grow up?" were collected under ten subcategories. These subcategories were *"to have a job (9), to own a house (5), to own a car (4), to be able to go wherever she or he wants (3), not to attend school (3), to learn more (3), to be free (3), to eat whatever she or he wants (2), for physical development (2), to set up own rules (2), to have responsibilities (1),* ". For example, Duygu (age 11) stated the following as to the changes that would happen in her life when she grows up:

"I will be away from my family, this is both a good and a bad thing. It is good, because they would not frustrate me too much, they would not tell me to study harder. They would not tell me not to play on the computer. We would be able to do whatever we want, we would not be constantly dependent on them, for example, we would not have to eat whatever they want to eat, but it would be bad because we would be away from them. We would be able to get out more. We would not need their permission. We could spend as much time as we want with our friends, there would be no one to tell us 'do this' and 'do that'."

Yağız (age 11) stated the following on what would be different in their lives when they grow up:

"We will make money when we grow up. We will go to work, we will work, we will pay for the food, we will buy merchandise, we will buy a house, we will do a lot of stuff. We will pay the bills, maybe we will not have any money. "

Aleyna (age 12) stated the following on what would be different in their lives when they grow up:

"I want to grow up to be able to buy whatever I want, because I will be free. Most of what I want now is forbidden. I cannot watch TV, computer as much as I want. I have obligations such as studying, tidying up my room. We live based on the wishes of our parents. Not according to our own wishes. Then we will live according to our own wishes."

Metin (age 12) stated the following on what would be different in their lives when they grow up:

"The most different thing would be to establish my own rules, I would live more comfortably, I would be able to go out as much as I want. I'm going to have a little good time. I will be more comfortable."

The Things They Want to be Different in Their Lives When They Grow Up

The responses of children to the question "What do you want to be different in your life when you grow up?" were grouped under ten subcategories. These subcategories were "*no homework (5), no school (3), to learn more (2), clean nature (2), spend the money they earn (2), visiting other countries (2), to be respected (2), not to be managed by others (1), freedom (1)* ". For example, Ayşenur (age 12) stated the following about the things they want to be different from their present life when they grow up:

"There will be no homework, I will have my own phone. I will be able to drive. I will be free, I will not be forced to go anywhere. For example, visiting my parents' friends, a wedding or something."

İdil (age 11) stated that when he grew up, the only thing in her life that she wanted to be different from the present was homework.

Oğuzhan (age 10) reemphasized that he did not want to grow up: "*I would like all of my friends not to grow up and remain at the same age*".

İrem (age 12) stated that she wanted not to be managed by others when she grew up:

"I want that no one would be able to rule me. I think our parents, our teachers, our friends should not tell us to go somewhere, do something, sit down or stand up. They order us around. Everybody has her own desires and will. For example, some of our friends would put pressure on us. I mean, it could happen when you grow up, too, but then I can suggest them to read personal development books. My brother also puts too much pressure on me. He does wrong, but they get mad at me because I'm older. As a result, I am in an unfair situation and I cannot stand unfairness at all. My brother is eight years younger than me now, now he may not understand me, but when he grows up, it would be better if he tried to understand me a bit more. At home, they always tell me to do my homework and tidy up my room. It will not be like that when I grow up."

Aleyna (age 12) stated that she wanted people to treat her more equally and seriously when she grew up: "*that I am treated more seriously, and equal to everyone else.*"

Metin (age 12) responded that the thing he wanted to be different when he grew up was to be respected and to be able to do the things he wanted to do: "*I would like to buy the things I wanted, to go out with my friends whenever I wanted, to eat whatever I wanted. I would like to be respected the most.*"

Theme 2: Being a Child

Under the theme "*Being a child*", the categories of the advantages of being a child, the things that children can do but the adults cannot and what they cannot do as children were discussed.
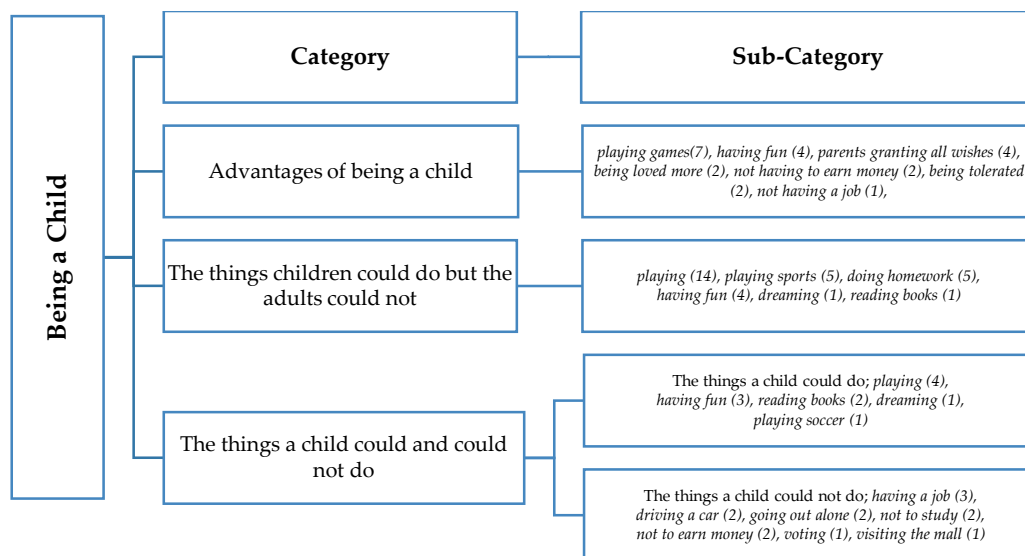

Figure 3. Being a Child

The Advantages of Being A Child

The responses of the children in this category were grouped under seven subcategories. It was observed that the children mostly responded the question with the answer of "playing games" and this was considered as an advantage by the children. Having fun and parents granting all wishes were among the advantages considered by the children. For example, Ela (age 10) expressed the advantages of being a child as follows:

"…when you are a child, they do almost whatever you want. In fact, not almost, but they do whatever we want not to offend the child. As narrated in the story, we live on the fat of the land. I think that is a bit so; it is like that until the child is nine years old, but then they tell you eat if you want, do not eat if you do not want to. It is then the opposite of living on the fat of the land. We make the decisions a little bit more, and our parents help us."

Oğuzhan (age 10) stated the advantages of being a child as "*not having a job and playing games*".

Süheyla (age 12) stated the advantages of being a child as follows: "*You receive more love, you experience more happiness. The adults are also loved, but the children are loved more because they are cuter.*"

Pınar (age 12) said: "*We can have fun while we are children. Maybe we will have a lot of work when we grow up and we will not have fun.*"

Yağız (age 11) exhibited a different perspective in addition to similar reasons to other children:

"*They always do whatever you want. Everyone is interested in you. It is a great feeling to be a child. When you grow up, you're closer to death. Adults are a little closer to death, or rather, older ones.*"

The Things Children Could Do but The Adults Could Not

The category of the things children could do, while the adults could not, included six sub-categories. In the statements of 14 children, playing games was the prominent response. For example, Süheyla (age 12) stated that she could play games as a child, she could have a good time with her friends, in short, she has a lot of fun. She stated that the things she could not do were having a job, becoming a doctor, things that were specific to adulthood.

Ela (age 10) stated that children can play sports but not adults.

Sedef (age 11) stated that children can play games but adults cannot.

On the subject, İrem (age 12) stated that "*For example, they cannot ride the slide when they go to the park. They cannot ride on the swing, I think they miss a lot...*"

Aleyna (age 12) mentioned playing games, studying and reading books among the things children could do and adults could not.

Metin (age 12) stated his views as follows: "*Sports, playing games. There are special rides, for example, in amusement parks, they could not ride them, they could not stroll with their friends. They cannot ride a bike, skateboard. So, they cannot do the things that are considered cool by the kids. They cannot stay at home, work for life, always go to work, they cannot have fun. Adults do not have much free time.*"

The Things the Children Could or Could Not Do

In this category, it was determined that children could do five things, while they could not do seven things. Süheyla (age 12), for example, stated what she could and could not do as a child as follows:

"*I can play games, I can have a good time with my friends that I love. I can do such fun and nice things. Things I cannot do are things that older people can do. For example, I cannot work on my feet now. I cannot be a doctor now. Like this…*"

Similar to Süheyla, Metin (age 12) stated the things he could do as "*playing games and having fun with my friends*", while stating the things he could not do as "*traveling, buying something, staying somewhere.*"

Ela (age 10) mentioned the things she could do as "*One can play as many games as one likes. You can make people do whatever you want.*" She stated the things she could not do as having to study, she has to tidy her bed and emphasized that she would prefer not to study and to leave the bed untidy.

On the things that she could and could not do as a child, İrem (age 12) stated the following: "*I can do many things, for example, I can read the book I want, I can eat the food I want, but there are restrictions in certain things. They protect me from the things that would hurt me. For example, I love cats and dogs, but when I pet the stray dogs, my mother says that their vaccinations are not complete and I could get sick.*"

Theme 3: Problems

Under the theme of problems, questions about the problems they experienced as children and the things they want to change about their lives were asked.
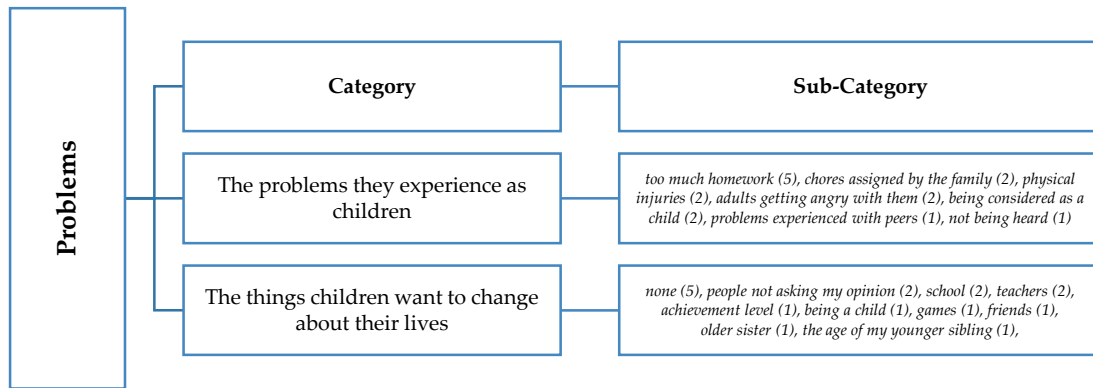

	Category	Sub-Category
Problems	The problems they experience as children	*too much homework (5), chores assigned by the family (2), physical injuries (2), adults getting angry with them (2), being considered as a child (2), problems experienced with peers (1), not being heard (1)*
	The things children want to change about their lives	*none (5), people not asking my opinion (2), school (2), teachers (2), achievement level (1), being a child (1), games (1), friends (1), older sister (1), the age of my younger sibling (1),*

Figure 4. The Theme of Problems

The Problems They Experience as Children

The responses of the children in the category of problems they experience as children were grouped under seven subcategories. Five children emphasized the problem of having too much homework. For example, İdil (11), Ayşenur (12), Merve (11), Pınar (12) and Sedef (11) stated that having too much homework was a problem.

Ela (age 10) stated the problems she experienced as a child as follows:

"... not to be able to explain something to somebody. Because the children say things with a mind of a child. The grown ups do not understand. "

Süheyla (age 12) stated that she did not experience a problem, but she knew that other children had problems. Pınar (age 12) complained about too much homework and not being able to go out whenever she likes and Fatmanur (age 10) complained about being yelled at when she got poor grades, while Aleyna (age 12) complained about the fact that several issues were determined by her mother.

Metin (age 12) stated the problems he experienced as a child as follows: "*Standing alone in the first place. I was the only one at home because my mom worked. Not earning my own money, not being able to buy the things I want. I cannot go out whenever I want, I cannot go wherever I want. I once asked my mother to listen to my problems.*"

The Things Children Want to Change About Their Lives

In the category of the things children want to change about their lives, the responses were grouped under 10 subcategories. For example, Mustafa (age 12) stated the things he wanted to change about his life as follows: "*I want to change my childhood. I want to be a grown up. For example, the dream of every man is to drive a car. That's why I do not want to be a child.*"

Ayşenur (age 12) explained the things she would change as follows: "I would like certain things not to be banned at school. To bring things like phone, tablet to school. Sometimes teachers do not let us go out when it's snowing. Things like that."

Süheyla (age 12) stated that she did not want teachers and other adults to become angry with her. Fatmanur (age 10) and Deniz (age 10) stated that they wanted their opinion to be asked.

Metin (age 12) stated the things that he wanted to change about his life as to buy the things he wanted and to go to places he desired:

"I just would like to buy the I wanted with my own money, and also I would like go anywhere I wanted."

Theme 4: Right to Participate

Under the right to participate theme, the children were asked whether they had the right to speak, the issues where they had and did not have the right to speak, and the reasons why their opinions were not asked.
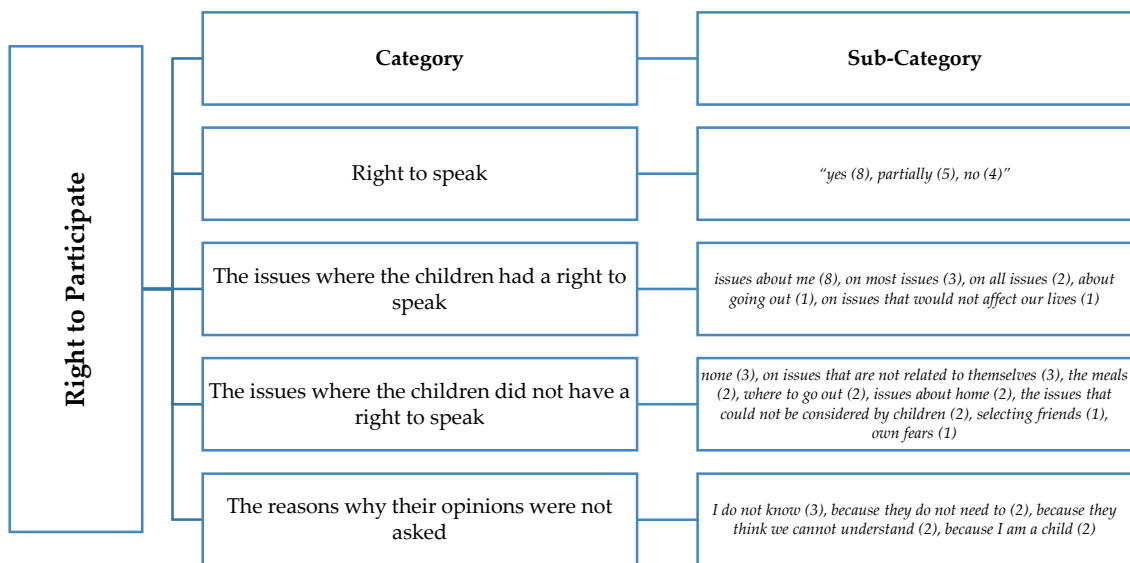
Right to Participate	Category	Sub-Category
	Right to speak	*"yes (8), partially (5), no (4)"*
	The issues where the children had a right to speak	*issues about me (8), on most issues (3), on all issues (2), about going out (1), on issues that would not affect our lives (1)*
	The issues where the children did not have a right to speak	*none (3), on issues that are not related to themselves (3), the meals (2), where to go out (2), issues about home (2), the issues that could not be considered by children (2), selecting friends (1), own fears (1)*
	The reasons why their opinions were not asked	*I do not know (3), because they do not need to (2), because they think we cannot understand (2), because I am a child (2)*

Figure 5. Right to Participate Theme

Right to Speak

Participants replied to the questions in this category by stating "yes," "no," and "partially." Children who think that they had partial right to speak stated that usually their opinion about their own clothing was asked.

The Issues Where the Children Had A Right to Speak

Five sub-categories were formed under this category. Responses such as on every issue, mostly, and on issues related to me, as well as on issues that would not affect our lives were prominent. For example, Metin (age 12) stated that he can say his opinion on what to watch or what to play.

"Like what should I watch or play with. The things that would not affect my life or their lives that much."

When he thought about his life, Mustafa (age 12) stated the issues that he could say his views about as follows:

"Such as 'what kind of clothes you want', 'how do you want to decorate your room?' Such as the sports I want to play."

Similar to Mustafa's statements, Erhan (age 12) stated that he could speak about the selection of his clothes.

İrem (age 12) stated the issues she could have an opinion about as follows:

"For example, if there is a family issue, I think everyone should talk about it and that is what happens in our home. Everyone takes a turn and talks, and if I make sense, that is implemented."

The Issues Where the Children Did Not Have A Right to Speak

In this category, responses of the participants formed eight subcategories. For instance, Duygu (age 11) listed the following issues where their opinion was not asked at all:

"For example, when buying a TV. They buy the TV, but do not question, for instance, its color. They buy it and ask me if I liked it ad I say I did."

Ayşenur (age 12) stated the following on issues related to her but she did not have a say about:

"For example, my dad says 'Do not barge in grown up issues' even though it is about me. Which school I would attend, would I quit this school…"

Aleyna (age 12) stated that she thought her opinion was never asked about selecting friends:

"My opinion is never asked about my friend circle. I mean, I cannot even choose my friends. And things like home decoration. I learned that my friends' families were not suitable for me, we have learned that, so my mother said to find a friend suitable for myself. She would not tell me why they were not suitable, she told me that I would understand when I grow up. Now, I could not speak to that friend of mine as much as I used to."

Metin (age 12) stated that their opinion was not asked when buying a house or something else:

"When buying a house or something else. They do not even ask when buying clothes. When they buy something for the house."

Fatmanur (age 10) stated that everyone's opinion should be taken in democracies, but her and her sibling's views were never asked:

"No. For example, as per democracy, everybody's opinion should be taken in the family, but me and my younger brother's views are never taken. I cannot go where I want, when my mom says go to bed, I have to go to my room and sleep. For example, I say we should go to my uncle's, but they say you have homework and we would not go. They disappoint me."

Hüseyin (age 10) stated that when they wanted to go out, they would never asked him and he had to go wherever they went.

Pınar (age 12) stated that she thought her opinion was never asked when her family decided to go out:

"They do not ask my opinion on things that would not be bought for me. For example, when we would go out, they decide first and they tell us where we are going. They do not ask when selecting the destination."

Sedef (age 11) stated that "*I have no say on issues that children could not recognize.*"

The Reasons Why the Children's Opinions Were Not Asked

In this category, four sub-categories were formed based on the responses of the participants. It was significant that children thought the adults did not asked their opinion because the adults would not be able to understand them. Merve (age 11) said "*I guess they do not really think that I would understand. It is difficult to understand grown ups as well.*" Duygu (age 11) used the expression "*Because they do not need to*". Sedef (age11) implied that it was OK not to ask her opinion and said, "*I may not able to consider these issues, because I am a child.*"

Metin (age 12) said the adults do not ask the opinion of the children, because they think that children could not know:

"Because they think I do not know. But most of the time I am justified in these issues. For example, they did not ask me when they bought the TV, and then they were never satisfied with that TV."

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The child and the approach to childhood varies based on the approaches of the society, the families and the place as the time goes by, and the features of the environment in which the childhood is spent mold the perspective about the childhood (Onur, 2005; Jenks, 2005). Punch (2002) stated that the publications on childhood reflect the childhood from the perspective of adults and all adults consider that they know childhood because they experienced it and they recognize the from an adult's perspective that they have in their minds today. But to understand the views of children on childhood, to know how they perceive it and understand the children's perspectives, we need the ideas of children about childhood. If we start thinking about childhood in depth based on the views of children, we would observe that this universal and simple condition includes complexities and it is not a golden age at all as perceived by the adults (Gopnik, 2015, p. 12). Thus, the present study was conducted to understand children's views on childhood. The data collected in the study were addressed under the four themes of "*growing up, being a child, problems and right to participate*".

The statements of children in the theme of "Growing up" demonstrated that there were children who had positive views on childhood, who did not want to grow up and were happy to be a child, but there were also children who want to grow up as soon as possible and who were "*frustrated by their families and want to become individuals who order around instead of being the ones who are ordered around.*" The children responded to the question "*Why do children want to grow up?*" were "*to establish their own rules, to go wherever they want, to vote, to have a job, to realize their dreams, to be respected, not to do homework, to get married, to get rid of the bad behavior of teachers*". The children responded with similar answers to the questions "*Why do children want to grow up?*" and "*Do you want to grow up?*" However, in general, some of the answers on the reasons why children want to grow up were different from the reasons why participants themselves wanted to grow up. For example, "to get married" was among the participants' responses to the question why children want to grow up, however, they did not use the same reason when answering the question why they wanted to grow up. Participants who did not want to grow up generally responded to the question why children want to grow up by stating that they want to grow up "*not to do homework, not to attend school and to have a job.*" Although there were children who provided different answers to these questions, the majority of children gave similar answers. The responses were mainly "*not to do homework, to establish their own rules, to go where they want, to have a job, and to vote*".

According to Franklin (1993), children are excluded from the voting process continuously and arbitrarily only because they are children. This exclusion is based on the assumption of paternalism that "they could not look after themselves." Accordingly, adults should make the decisions since the children are not mature enough to make their own choices. However, children have to be subject to the laws, which they play no role in the enactment of, although they are excluded totally from the voting process (Franklin, 1993). But the responses of the children in the present study demonstrated that contemporary children are uncomfortable with this fact. The statements of the children that they could not buy what they want even with their own money and could not go to sleep at the time they want could be attributed to the principle of inability to look after themselves in paternalistic adult mentality. This could be fed by a similar source with the paternalistic approach that was mentioned in voting. The approach that these types of decisions are left to the preferences of mature adults (!) is consistent with Franklin's (1993) belief. In the literature, it was often stated that children expect to have a say in the decision-making process, rather than having their own right to speak in family decisions (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015). There are also children who think that they have the right to speak about their own life, and it is quite gratifying when the children who state that they have no right to speak at all are considered. All the statements of the children, who stated that all decisions in their family are made anonymously, on the theme of right to participate supported each other.

The fact that children want to grow up or become adults for reasons such as "to be respected, to get rid of teachers' bad behavior, to become individuals who order instead of ones that are ordered around, to be the boss, to be interfered by no one, to live on one's own will, to go anywhere one wants" suggested that their present conditions are perceived as inadequate, unfulfilled and insufficient by the

adults. These findings indicated that adults perceive within Sorin's (2005) category of "the adult-in-training". Children in this category are considered as totally passive individuals and childhood is perceived as a period of practice for adulthood (Postman, 1995, p. 28; Woodrow, 1999, p. 10). Also, the abovementioned responses of the children suggested that childhood is experienced within the boundaries set by adults, and that growth meant to get rid of these boundaries. The statements of children that indicated these borders hinted that they were considered seen as passive and obeying individuals in their lives and that they did not possess these characteristics at the moment. Children were aware that they could only become independent individuals when they grow up. The fact that the most frequently cited response in the growing up theme was the desire to grow up to have a job could be attributed to their awareness that they needed money to gain their independence and realize their dreams. It could be considered that they stressed earning money and having a job with the awareness that they could get rid of the passive status and become independent as a result of economic freedom. In a study conducted by Madge (2006), children stated that they thought they could gain their independence, which they did not possess as children, when they become adults by having a career and earning their living.

The children, who did not want to grow up, stated that their parents asked their opinion on decisions related to their lives, it was good to be a child, everyone in their circle showed affection because they were children and tried to do everything the wanted. It could be argued that children, who think they have the right to speak about their own lives, had a more positive attitude towards childhood. However, it was determined that children who exhibited impatience for growing up, concurrently thought that they do not have a right to speak on issues that are related to them. The reasons for wanting to grow up could be attributed to overly authoritarian parenting attitudes as they originate from the desire to be independent and to do what they want. Because parents' attitudes shape the child's perceptions about her or his own life (Hamachek, 1995).

Consistent with the responses of the children who were considered to be dependent, passive and obedient, in a study conducted by Oktay and Kumbaroğlu (2011), it was observed that one of the most important rights in the domestic environment for children was "to be respected" and the least observed right in the domestic environment was their right to have an impact on the decisions about themselves. In a study conducted by Pople (2008) children stated that they desired to be respected like adults in the family environment. In a study conducted with children in the UK by Burke (2010), it was observed that the vast majority of children considered that their ideas were not sufficiently respected during the decision-making processes that affected them. Similar to these findings, studies conducted with large sample groups also revealed that almost half of children considered that adults do not show sufficient respect for them (Children's Commissioner, 2006; Madge, 2006). In a study conducted by Mamur-Işıkçı (2013), it was observed that children needed to be respected, but considered that they were not respected. However, according to UN CRC (2009) General Comment No.12, children's views should be respected as subjects of their own lives. In traditional cultures, however, the expectation of an "amenable child" and a "child who obeys the parents" is predominant. In the Value of the Child Survey, where the childrearing attitudes were examined, it was stated that 60% of the Turkish mothers preferred children who "obeyed their parents" and only 18% preferred "independent and self-confident" children (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982). The statements of the children in the present study suggested that, despite several years have passed since Kağıtçıbaşı authored the abovementioned study, parents still have the same kind of expectations. Holt (2000) stated that the children actually expect to be treated as individuals by the adults, not as children. The children's statements about 'not being respected', 'maltreatment by teachers' and 'not living according to their own desires supported the abovementioned view by Holt (2000). It could be stated that several children did not have positive views about their own childhood, and as Holt (2000) indicated, "they preferred to be adults instead of being children." These statements also indicated that the status of children at school and home were in non-participation levels of the ladder of participation that were determined by Hart (1992). At non-participation levels, children's thoughts are not important and they have no right to speak (Hart, 1992).

The responses of children associated with why they would like to grow up and with the things they thought would be different when they grow up were similar. In both categories children largely focused on the framework of independence and economic freedom. In this context, statements such as "to be able to have a house, a car, a job, to do whatever she or he wants whenever she or he wants, to go wherever she or he wants, to establish her or his own rules, to be respected, and to be free" emphasized the desires for independence and economic freedom. This could be explained by Holt's (2000) prison metaphor. Holt (2000) described childhood in his book titled The Escape from Childhood with a prison metaphor, and stated that children are considered as small and weak by adults, and that childhood is considered as a space where the children are protected from the ruthlessness of the world until they would be old enough to cope with the toughness in the world. Many children live their childhood as if they were in prison. It was considered that the children who stated that they could be free, go wherever they want and establish their own rules when they grow up could have perceived childhood as a prison as mentioned by Holt (2000). The escape from the prison or serving the sentence (Holt emphasizes this with the phrase 'escape from childhood') means growing up. It can be considered that the limited life the children experience during childhood could be an indicator of the fact that they wait for the day when they would be adults and their excitement about the independent life they would lead in adulthood with the expectation that economic freedom would result in all other kinds of freedoms.

In the "being a child" theme, it was attempted to describe the advantages of being a child and the things that the children could do but the adults could not do based on the perspective of the children. Children stated the advantages of being a child as "*playing games, having fun, doing whatever they want, being loved more, not going to work, not having to earn money, and to be excused*". In the UN CRC Article 31, spare time activities and the right to play was addressed (UN CRC, 1995) and children considered that the greatest advantage of being a child is playing. Furthermore, it was observed that children mentioned playing the most in the category of the things that the children could do but the adults could not do. In the study conducted by Madge (2006), children also stated that the greatest thing about childhood was to play and have fun. Similarly, Bellamy (2005) conceived childhood as an environment where games could be played and different than the adult environment in that respect. Although playing games is considered as the advantage of childhood and a difference from the adulthood, the problems that were stressed by the children such as the fact that the school takes too much time, that they have a lot of homework and that the parents do not let them to go out, suggested that they could not use these rights as they desired. In a study conducted by Oktay and Kumbaroğlu (2011), it was demonstrated that the children considered one of the rights that merely existed in home and school environment was the right to play. In the study conducted by Ersoy (2011), children stated that they experienced problems about games and entertainment the most. In a study conducted by Serbest (2015), children stated that they could participate in their game and entertainment activities if they have spare time after school and homework. Although the children that participated in the present study associated the advantages of being a child with playing games and having fun, the view of Elkind (1999) that children do not have enough time for extracurricular activities was supported by the findings of the present study.

In the present study, some children considered that they would be loved more and their mistakes would be forgiven more easily since they were children. As children also emphasized, adults consider children more charming, cute, and approach them with love. Among the adjectives that adults attributed to childhood, adorable and cute adjectives were prominent in previously conducted studies (Kunt-Bulut, 2015). The children's responses suggested that children were aware of the way they were perceived by adults and considered it an advantage.

When children were asked what they could and could not do, they stated that could not "vote, go to the mall, drive a car, go out alone, go to work, not study, make money and read books" as a child. The responses of the children that participated in the study to the query about the things they could not do as children and to the question about the things they wanted to be different in their lives when they grow up were similar. This could be due to the fact that the children hoped to do the things they could not do as children when they grow up. The children in the study by Madge (2006) also stated that the

worst part of being a child was not being able to go out, to study, not having a job, and they considered that they could achieve these goals when they grow up to become adults, consistent with the findings in the present study.

Children, who were asked about the problems they experienced as children in the "problems" theme, stated the following problems: "*Too much homework, domestic chores, physical injuries, adults' anger, problems experienced with friends, being considered as a child, and not being listened to*". The answers in this category were consistent with the children's reasons for wanting to grow up and the things they want to change in their lives. The responses such as "to have a job, to be considered as a child, to be listened to, not to be able to go out, to have a lot of homework" were stated in both the theme of growing up and problems. These common answers suggested that children wanted to grow up due to the problems they thought they experienced.

Similar to the finding that the children complained about too many homework assignments, a study by Serbest (2015) also demonstrated that children were uncomfortable with the large number of homework assignments. In the present study, certain children emphasized that, given the opportunity, they would like to change their school, teacher and success levels, and that their opinions were not asked. As could be observed, the children's responses about the things they wanted to change in their lives were parallel to their responses about the problems they experienced as children. The children's responses were consistent with Holt's (2000) idea that 'children actually want to be treated by the adults as individuals, not as children'. In a study by Mamur-Işıkçı (2013), the children stated that their presence was neglected because of their age, they were disturbed by the behavior of their teachers and their ideas were not appreciated. However, limitations and constant enforcement of obedience in environments such as schools lead to dependent children (Erikson; as cited in Hart, 2016, p. 29). According to Gopnik (2015, p. 21), who concurred with Erikson, adults are the final products of their childhood.

The right of the child to participate aims to ensure that the child is actively involved in the family and the society, and was included in Articles 12, 13, 14 and 15 of the CRC. Based on these articles, The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child proposed to the state parties that they should make every effort to ensure that children participate actively in the affairs of their family, school and social environment and in decisions that affect them, and to take all necessary measures to enact related laws and enforce these laws (Hodgkin & Newell, 2002; UN CRC, 2009). However, when the 'right to participate theme' was examined, it was observed that although there were children who considered that they had the right to participate in all spheres of life, certain children thought that they did not have the right to participate even in matters related to their own lives. Some children stated that they did not have the right to speak on issues related to them. Consistent with this data, in a study conducted by Oktay and Kumbaroğlu (2011), children gave the lowest scores to the presence of right to participate at home and at school. In a study by Dönertaş and Aksel (2011), 1.3% of the children responded to the question on the individual who makes the decisions about them by stating that they make these decisions and 23.8% stated that their parents make these decisions. In a study by Mamur-Işıkçı (2013), children stated that their right to participate in the decisions about the issues that concern them was not respected. In a study by Butler, Robinson, and Scanlan (2005), children also stated that they wanted to have more say about their own issues. This suggested that children's right to participate in their own lives was at the step of "tokenism" according to the participation ladder as defined by Hart (1992). This level of participation remains as a token and in reality, the children's thoughts or ideas are insignificant. Not asking the decisions of children or recognizing the views of children only on harmless (!) topic related to the children's own lives demonstrate that the child is far from being the subject of her or his own life (UN CRC, 2009). The reason for the obstacle to children's participation in their lives is the adult perception that they are not mature enough, do not know what is right for them, and cannot correctly perceive and assess the conditions (Edwards, 1996). This perception, which considers children as inadequate, leads to the perception that those who could decide on the best interests of the child were only adults. Especially when the significance of the topic rises, adults avoid asking the child. However, while the best interests of the child are regarded, his / her views should be respected and his role in

his / her life and free expression of his / her views should be supported (UN CRC, 2013). Ozansoy (1999) emphasized that children, who are not allowed to take an active part in their own lives, could be considered as "objects searching for their subject" and children could not be the subject of their own lives. For example, in a study by Davey (2008), it was found that children were passive in decisions that were related with their lives when their opinions were asked and their right to speak was limited to trivial issues such as what to eat and which TV show to watch. Consistent with the findings by Davey (2008), children in the present study stated that the decisions they made were on topics that would not affect their lives such as the selection of clothes. Furthermore, sadly, there were children who were not even allowed to pick their clothes.

It was observed that the children, who participated in the present study and stated that "in democracy, everybody's opinions should be taken into consideration, but our opinions were neglected," were aware of their rights, but were unable to use these rights and remained passive. The fact that the children faced the reaction of adults even on issues such as school selection ("do not mind the affairs of adults") suggested that they were totally passive in issues related to their own lives. However, the first environment where children learn to be active participants in society is the family environment. Communication and interaction in the family determine the child's status in the family environment and the rights of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1961). Children who do not grow up in a communicative and good living environment would grow up to be individuals who are passive reflectors of the wishes of their families (Akyüz, 2012).

Children stated the issues where they could speak their views as "*matters related to me, on most issues, on all issues, about going out, in matters that will not affect our lives*". CRC Article 12 provides children the right to freely express their views and to be heard in all matters concerning them. It was noteworthy that there were children who could express their views freely on every issue, however also the fact that only a few among the interviewed children stated that they could express their views freely was striking. The fact that certain children indicated that they had a right to speak about choices that would not affect their or their families' lives significantly could mean that the child's right to be heard was not granted. In a study conducted by Akyol (2011), it was determined that children increasingly tend to be active in the decision-making process about matters related to them, but the traditionalist approach prevails and as a result, the views of the children views are not taken into account sufficiently. According to Johnny (2006), the reason for this was the traces of the past approach where the child is considered defenseless, innocent and dependent which still prevails. Although this image of the child has improved throughout the history, the practices related to the childhood still emphasize the image of the innocent and weak children and prevent today's children from being considered as "participating citizens" (Johnny, 2006; Stasiulis, 2002).

The children stated the issues that their views were never asked as follows: "*issues that were not related to them, what to cook, places to visit, topics related to the house, choice of friends, issues that children could not recognize*". The fact that two children in this age group, where they are expected to have a high level of self-confidence, considered that there were " issues that children could not recognize" might indicate their misbelief about their abilities. This could be attributed to the culture of submissiveness of the authoritarian parents, a traditional childrearing practice. An overall look at the issues that the views of the children were not asked, it could be observed that the children were far from being the subjects of their lives. The experiences of the child should include the requirement of transparency and informative, voluntary, respectful, affective and child friendly (UN CRC, 2009). However, the fact that children's views were not asked and considered means a violation of the majority of these qualities. The children stated that the adults made decisions without asking them and superficially asked for the views of the children after they already made a decision. This suggested that children's participation in their lives was at the level of tokenism. Children stated the reasons why their opinions were not asked as follows: "*Because they do not need to, because they think we cannot understand, because we are children*". These children statements suggested that children were in a passive status and they perceived themselves as inadequate. The reasons for not asking the children's opinions suggested that the adults considered

childhood similar to Sorin's (2005) categories of the "the innocent child" and "the adult-in-treaning". In this approach, the child is considered as inadequate, in need of protection, dependent, and as an empty vessel waiting to be filled by adults, and childhood is considered as a stage that needs to be experienced to reach the stage of "adulthood". It is expected of the adults with this approach to consider that the children cannot understand "because they are children" and that they do not need the opinion of the children.

The involvement of parents in the selection of friends was expressed by a single child in the present study. However, the intervention in the selection of friends, which should be considered as one of the rare topics that are directly related to the child, may indicate that the child was far from the right of self-determination. In similar studies, it was observed that the parents were involved in the selection of the friends of their children and their children were not aware of their right to speak (Dönertaş & Aksel, 2011; SC, 2010; Spielhofer et al., 2010). Decisions about children were taken not with them but on their behalf. However, in matters related to children, the child should be consulted while regarding the highest benefit of the child, and the views of the child should be respected (UN CRC, 2013). The fact that children thought that their opinions were not asked because "it was not needed" indicated that children were kept away from the processes related to them. As a result of this situation that arose due to the Paternalistic approach, while decisions are made by adults on behalf of children, children would feel silenced and ignored (James, 2007). According to Ozansoy (1999), this situation would result in the child spending a submissive life.

According to James, Jenks, and Prout (1998), with the "new childhood studies" in sociology, the "child" is no longer a being that responds passively to the expectations and demands of the adults, but is perceived as a "social actor" who has rights and independent contributions to social life. However, children's responses demonstrated that the traces of the past image of dependent and vulnerable children still affects the lives of the children. Children under these influences are beings that are far from being social actors in their own lives, who obey the decisions by remaining in a passive status in their lives, hoping to be an independent individual in the future. However, while children are considered as the future of society, one should be aware of the danger contained in Freire's (2016) words that "oppressed becomes the oppressors". Preventing the participation of children, who are the citizens of the future, in their lives, is the biggest obstacle that would prevent them from being an independent individual, and how the children of today would treat future generations could be related to how they are treated today. This cycle, which is referred to as internal working models in psychology, involves the individuals' own childhood experiences (Berk, 2016, p. 272). The way we perceive our own childhood is very effective on how we raise our children (Main, 2000). Thus, active involvement of the children in all matters related to them should be ensured and they should be supported to become self-confident individuals who could make their own decisions in all processes in their lives. While adults support their children's ability to act on their own, they should not forget that they need to make more decisions on their own to become mature adults in the future (Hart, 2016, p. 16).

It will not be possible to understand the "childhood" period that was conceived as the "golden age" based on the perception of adults and the children who are supposed to be the "future (!)" without discovering the children's expectations and their perspectives on childhood. Pavese (2012, p. 364), who had negative views about the life of children, stated that "*there is no positive thing about being a child; it is only good to remember the days of our childhood when we are old*". The only individual who had negative views on childhood was not Pavese. According to Firestone (1979), childhood "*is a hell that is bound by physical and economic bondages on the one hand, and darkened by sexual, educational and familial pressures on the other.*" As adults, it is only possible to recognize whether we would remember the childhood as a "golden age" or we should consider childhood as a negative experience like Holt, Pavese and Firestone, by understanding the experiences of the children. The responses of the children who participated in the present study emphasized that childhood was not a golden age based on the behavior patterns of adults. Although childhood was not considered to be a period without any good aspects like Pavese (2012), the findings suggested that children remained as "objects in search of their subject" (Ozansoy, 1999) in

their lives. Children who want to be the boss when they grow up and establish their own rules wait to become active citizens whose rights to participate are not violated. However, without changing the perceptions of the adults with paternalistic approach or the image of the innocent child, it would not be possible for the children to reach the level of the participatory child.

Evolution of our understanding of childhood towards the approach of the participatory child would only be possible by addressing the childhood context called the "childhood geographies" in the literature (family, school, culture, climate and all other conditions-the context of the child) (Elsley, 2004; McKendrick, 2000; Morrow, 2011). This approach also emphasizes that the present life of the child is as significant as her or his life in the future (Elsley, 2004).

Considering all categories and themes, it will be possible to reach a common idea when "the general reasons why the children desire to grow up," "whether the child wants to grow up or not" in the growing up category, "the problems they experience as a child" and "the things they want to change about their lives" categories in the theme of problems and all categories in the participation theme are considered together. In all these themes and categories, it was observed that the children stated that their views were not taken into account in general and they were not respected as children. As mentioned in General Comment No. 12, the fact that adults, who were obstacles to children's right to participate, kept the children in a passive status could be considered to represent the traditional view that children could not have an opinion about their lives and adults were the right individuals who can make the right decisions on their behalf as individuals who were capable of thinking. These problems are similarly expressed in the general comments of the committee regarding the best interests of the child. The statements of the children such as "*adults consider that I cannot think because I am a child*" demonstrated both the attitudes of the adults and the fact that that children were aware of these attitudes.

Suggestions

The most realistic source of data on childhood is the children themselves. Thus, it is suggested that future researchers should conduct interviews with children and obtain the information from the first source in studies on childhood sociology. However, similar to all studies conducted with children, child-specific methods should be selected and children should be respected as individuals throughout the research process.

It is necessary to develop children's participation experiences, which means that children should be the subject of their own lives within the family, the school and in all settings. In research on children and service models that are required to be developed for children, the active participation of children should be ensured, and children should be considered as individuals with unique interests, thoughts and opinions.

All professional staff, parents and all related individuals that work with children should be supported with in-service training programs and family training programs to establish the participating child approach to childhood. To transfer the limited public view that children are innocent and would be adults when they grow up into one of the participating child, work that would raise the public awareness such as public spots needed to be conducted. Focus should be on the cycle of parents influencing the parenting behavior of their children, and awareness-raising activities should be conducted to make parents aware of the inner patterns of their children.

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