



Ethics in research including young children: Views and experiences of researchers

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Abstract. Involving young children in research is noteworthy since it ensures to understand their world and values their existence through making experiences and views of children evident. Ethical considerations in research including children have some core principles namely justice, beneficence and non-maleficence, and respect. Through putting those principles and guides into the center, current research made effort to determine views and experiences of researchers concerning the ethical issues/dilemmas in research involving preschool aged children. 15 researchers who conducted at least one study with preschool aged children were reached through criterion sampling. Findings revealed some considerations in harms and benefits, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and payment related issues in the research including young children. Although the fact that all research should consider ethical issues as a prerequisite for studying with human subjects, there should be some more considerations to conduct research with young children.

Keywords: Early childhood education, ethical principles, ethical dilemmas, child participation, phenomenology

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INTRODUCTION

Through the years, there is a growing interest in including children in various early childhood researches (Sargeant, & Harcourt, 2012). Including young children in research is also noteworthy since children have some needs to be valued and understood as well as making evident their experiences and views. All young children have the right to be listened related with the issues concerning their needs and factors affecting their well-being (Bourke, Loveridge, O'Neill, Erueti, & Jamieson, 2017). Beside the growing interest in including children in research, with the advancement in the technology, researchers gained awareness in ethical considerations and dilemmas in working with young children (Bourke et al., 2017). Increasing influence of media and usage of various social media technologies created the need for considering various ethical considerations while including children in research (Sargeant, & Harcourt, 2012).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child listed some rights that one of them (Article 12) stressed that, every child should have the right to give their opinion, and for adults to listen and take their opinions seriously (UNCRC, 1989). There are predefined ethical guidelines and codes of ethics suggested by American Educational Research Association (2011) and it also includes research including young children. It is suggested that, if the research including young children has been conducted, consent from parents of legal guardian, agreement of the participant child to be included in research and approval from institutional review boards are needed to be taken. Especially for children who do not have capacity to consent, at first, responsible caregiver should give the consent for the child's participation. However, despite the presence of the parent consent, child still have an opportunity to refuse the participation (Mishna, Antle, & Regehr, 2004; Sargeant, & Harcourt, 2012).

Obtaining children's consent in their own involvement in research has been considered as a challenging issue in the literature (Cousins & Milner, 2007). Emerging views of childhood consider children as capable of deciding on their own participation, can take active part in research and express their ideas to contribute the world around them (Dockett & Perry, 2007). Substituting children's thoughts with parents' ideas considered as an inappropriate way of data collection since it is believed that children should be asked directly as an active agents (Dixon-

Woods, Young, & Heney, 1999). Therefore, children have been taking more active role in research. Parallel with the understanding of children's positioning in research, it is suggested that, ethical considerations should pass beyond harm and consent issues and should focus on the concern on how to establish responsible relationship involving children in research (Palaiologou, 2014). Therefore it is suggested to encourage children to take responsibility and ownership of their own participation in research.

The International Ethical Research Involving Children project or ERIC aims to guarantee the human dignity of children, and protect their rights and well-being in all research, regardless of the context (Graham, Powell, Taylor, Anderson, & Fitzgerald, 2013). The philosophy of ERIC approach based on the notion that, rights of children are respected, well-being of children are protected and children are valued by giving place in research. Researchers who have studies involving children need to be aware of the core ethical principles namely justice, beneficence and non-maleficence, and respect. Researchers, individuals, organizations and other stakeholders need to be aware of the ethics in research since some components may potentially impact on children's lives and well-being.

As Bourke et al. (2017) stressed, there is a gap in the area of making evident ethical issues and practices in research with young children with regard to the assent of familial and social norms. Children do not live in isolation and they cannot be considered as independent agents, rather they are a part of their immediate and extended families, other adults around, peers and the larger community (Bourke et al., 2017). Therefore, ethical considerations need to be elaborated within communal or familial perspectives rather than an individualistic one. Understanding of the research ethics including young children require reflexive and dynamic processed in which social and cultural elements are present.

As Article 5 in United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child indicated (UNCRC, 1989), parents hold responsibility in providing appropriate guidance to their children for the acknowledgement of their rights and also ensuring that their rights are protected. Therefore, working with parents is an important act for protecting children from harm (Kennan, Fives & Canavan, 2012). However, ethical considerations established for the sake of children's well-being should not be demanding so that more children can participate in research (Valentine, Butler, & Skelton, 2001). It is also discussed in the literature that, although same ethical principles are valid for each child in the research process, different ethical issues may emerge. As Bourke et al. (2017) noted, variations in parents' responses may arise from perceived beliefs or familial dynamics instead of the research agenda. Therefore, parents' responses to the participation of their children in research may vary. For example, there would be some cases in which one family does not agree on their child's participation in research even though the child wants to take part (Bourke et al., 2017; Thomas, & O'Kane, 1998). Conversely, children may choose not to involve in research although researchers believe the research is worth and beneficial for the sake of children (Sargeant, & Harcourt, 2012). These kinds of dilemmas may constitute a demanding research process on the side of the researchers.

Gathering children's consents for their involvement in research is given importance in various researches (Danby & Farrell, 2004; Ebrahim, 2010; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Parsons, Abbott, McKnight & Davies, 2015; Sargeant, & Harcourt, 2012). In order for conducting research with young children, there is a kind of hierarchy that, various effortful consents should be obtained from different responsible adults like parents, teachers and administrators in school-based research (Ridge & Millar, 2000). Without the parent consent, children should be excluded from the research despite of the child's own assent (Goodenough, Williamson, & Ashcroft, 2003). Therefore, these agents can form a kind of hierarchy of gatekeeping in children's involvement in research.

Children have the right to be heard and understood. Additionally, gathering children's perspectives is crucial since educational policies and practices that affect children are formed based on research including children (Bourke et al., 2017; Kennan et al., 2012). Therefore, there is a need to critically analyze the extent to which ethical research with children are dealt with (Pillay, 2014). In the light of the literature investigated on the ethics in research involving children, the aim of the present study is to reveal ethical considerations and experiences of

researchers studied with preschool aged children. Through putting some ethical principles and guides into the center, current research made effort to answer the following research questions;

- What are the views of the researchers about ethical issues including young children?
- What are the experiences of researchers concerning the ethical issues/dilemmas in research conducted with young children?

METHOD

Design of the Study

In the direction of the aim of the study, current study employed a qualitative inquiry and used a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological studies focus on the core experiences of people related with the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2003). Phenomenological studies focus on how people make sense of an experience and convert those experiences into their consciousness (Patton, 2002). It describes different ways in which experiences of individuals were investigated (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Moreover, people's feelings, perceptions, descriptions, judgements, and thoughts are all important in making sense of lived experiences, directly experienced phenomenon and talking with others about their experiences (Patton, 2002). Phenomenological research was found an appropriate strategy to use in the present study since the study aimed to describe participants' views and experiences in the research including young children with the focus of ethics.

Participants

When using qualitative research, selection of individuals or contexts which best in enabling us to discover the central phenomenon, deliver useful information, facilitate for silenced people and understand individuals are paid attention. Participants were determined through criterion sampling, as a form of purposeful random sampling, in which only the cases that met the predetermined criteria were taken into consideration (Creswell, 2008; Patton, 2002). The main ground of purposeful sampling is to gather information purposefully about central phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Similarly, it is pointed that, in order to determine individuals, which are appropriate for the purpose of the study and discover the identification of information-rich cases should be determined in selecting participants in the qualitative study (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). The criterion of determining participants was conducting at least one study with preschool aged children. 15 researchers that were studied with preschool aged children in their research were reached through the use of purposeful sampling as participants of the current study. Participants' age range was 29 to 41 (M=33) and all were females. All have a master (n=5) and doctorate (n=10) education levels. While eleven of the participants are continuing their education in the department of early childhood education, one of them is studying in psychology, one of them is from industrial design and one of them is from department of architecture. Their common point was studying with children in early childhood period. Participants had research experience with children aged 2-8 year-olds. The number of research conducted by participants with young children is between 1- 10 (M=3.06). Participants' researches including children generally conducted through the use of observation, interview, games, implementations, drawings related with specific topics. When subjects of participants' researches including children were investigated, they studied on emotion regulations, attachment, self-regulation, children's rights, child and media, forest school implementations, play therapy, peer relations, assessing development and learning, implementations of educational approaches (project, GEMS, Montessori, etc.), analysis of children's drawings on specific issues, children's health, nutrition, obesity, emergent literacy, school readiness, value education, problem solving skills, science- STEM implementations, effects of informal learning environments, product design for children and children with special needs, education for sustainable development, etc.

Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

Through semi-structured interview, participants were questioned about their views on ethics in research with young children and practices with them, their experiences in means of ethical considerations and some ethical dilemmas. Expert opinions were gathered from two academic member of the university from the early childhood education department, and one from the kindergarten administrator who has a Ph.D. degree from early childhood education area. In the direction of expert opinions and feedbacks, questions were reviewed and the final form was created. Before conducting the study, in order to test whether questions directed to participants are perceived in the way they are intended, a semi-structured interview with 3 participants was conducted. After conducting a semi-structured interview with the pilot participants, regulations for the questions were made. Two questions that seem repetitive were excluded from the list and some questions were decided to be clarified. With these arrangements, in the final version of the interview questions, there are 14 questions directed to participants for understanding their views and experiences about ethical issues in research involving young children. Written informed consent and volunteer participation forms were collected from all of the participants. Participants of the study were informed about anonymity, ensuring them that all of their views and experiences about the issue would be kept confidential.

Interview durations changed between 20 and 35 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded following the verbatim transcriptions of audio-recorded interviews. Intend of the interview was not to compare participants but rather to focus on the commonalities of their views and experiences. Questions were formed by basing on the literature about the components of the present issue. However, neither of the questions was taken or inferred directly from any of the study from the literature.

Data was analyzed inductively and process of open coding was conducted. A computer software program namely "ATLAS.ti 7" was used for assisting the analysis of the study. Specific themes and patterns were extracted from the data and also some categorizations were done following with specific meanings attributed to them. Moreover, in order to emphasize the importance of participants' ideas, besides reporting the themes and codes, in the study, clarifying quotes were directly taken and incorporated into the results in order to enrich the description of the themes (Creswell, 2007).

Trustworthiness

For eliminating investigator bias, consultation was gathered from experienced qualitative researcher studying in the field of early childhood education. This act can be classified as a peer examination and thought to be a kind of strategy to provide validity in the study (Creswell, 2003). In the direction of this validity consideration, findings and interpretations were conducted critically with the presence of the second coder who held similar academic background with the researcher. Recruiting the second coder can help for ensuring the reliability and the validity of the results (Merriam, 2009; Morse, 1998). Codes that the researcher and the second coder could not agree on, which represents 4% of the total codes, were decided not to be used in the study. In addition to the peer examination, non-directional questions were asked participants in order to prevent socially desirable questioning (Creswell, 2008). Moreover, direct quotations were given place for presenting accuracy of data which is called low-inference descriptors (Creswell, 2007). By using rich and thick description (Patton, 2002) in means of quotations, setting, etc., the reader can easily understand what the researcher wants to say and be knowledgeable about shared experiences and the setting. All these can be considered as acts toward assuring trustworthiness and credibility in the current study.

RESULTS

Themes were formed in the framework of ERIC ethical guidelines, namely harms, benefits, privacy – confidentiality, informed consent and payment. Themes and subthemes related with

the views and experiences of participants in the current issue were represented under in the Figure 1.

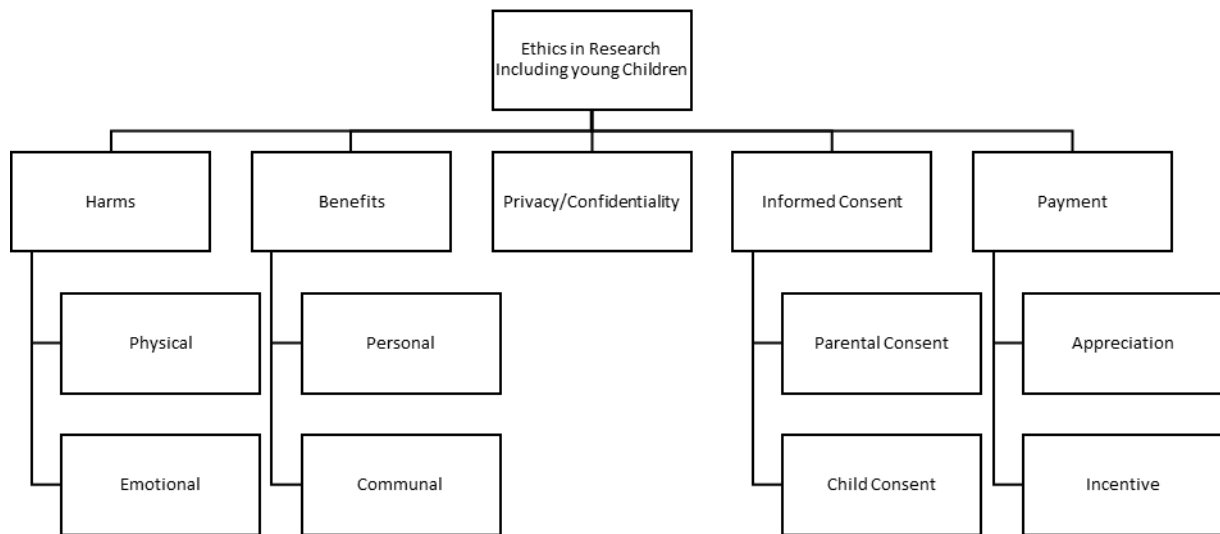


FIGURE 1. Main themes and subthemes related with the views and experiences of participants in ethics in research including young children

Harms:

Participants stressed that, research including children should not cause any harm on children. The content, context, aim, method should be arranged so that children should not feel any disturbing physical and emotional conditions. Under the harms theme, physical and emotional subthemes emerged.

Physical Harms:

Views:

Participants mainly mentioned about possible physical harms in means of providing safe and risk free environment for research conducted with children. One of the participants puts it as; "In order not to cause any physical harm to children, environment should be arranged free of physical harms and also appropriate materials should be provided for children" (P2). Some of the participants (n=7) also mentioned about the research tools and procedures that should be reconsidered for the children's well-being. They stressed that, physical properties of materials or procedures involved should not be exhausting for young children. In addition to those, some of the participants (n=8) pointed out that, use of foods in the form of incentives may harm the well-being of children and their usage should be cautiously implemented.

Experiences:

Most of the participants (n=9) mentioned about the cautions they have taken before the activity or implementation they conducted with the children in the research process. They stressed that, they searched the environment for eliminating dangerous products or properties and preparing the environment ready for the implementation to prevent children from possible injuries. One of the participants puts it as;

Always I control the room that I make my implementation. I investigate the room properties, the walls, sharp corners, desks, chairs, etc. I try to eliminate any possible material or products which hold a potential to create injury. As a researcher I have a responsibility in that sense. We are alone with the child in the room in most of the times. For example, during one of the activity, panel board on the wall felt down suddenly, it did not hurt anyone but I felt guilt and think what if something happened to the child. (P1)

Beside the environmental arrangements some of the participant researchers (n=5) stressed their experiences related with the instrument that they use in the research with children. They stressed that; they considered the properties of the tool they used in the research process in order to prevent children from any harm. One of them said "even the quality of the paint of the ball that children hold in their hand, or the quality of the pen is so crucial if you are studying with children" (P14).

In addition to the instrument considerations, some of the participants stressed their experience with incentives in the form of food (n=4). They expressed their experiences in means of providing candy or food for the participating child as an incentive which hold a potential to create allergic reactions. One of the participants reflected their experience as saying;

I have some alternatives to the food incentives that I distribute at the end of the activity. Even a simple food may create an allergic reaction in children. Therefore, in the last research I conducted, I asked teacher whether there is any child who has such allergy and take along alternatives with me to distribute those children. This is also critical point to consider and become prepared beforehand (P3).

Another participant mentioned about an incentive that she implemented and its' results on the child as;

I am against the food incentives and that's why in one of my research, I drew a star on children's hand to motivate them and also thank to them for involving in my study. However, the face paint I used made red spots on the skin of the child. I got shocked and gathered a good lesson that I need to know every single piece of information related with children's sensitivities.

Beside those experienced harms, most of the participants reported that, they did not experience any possible physical harm in their research process with children participants. However, they reported that, they consider the possibility of any harm for the well-being of children.

Emotional Harms:

Views:

In addition to physical harms, in terms of emotional aspect, participants reported the risk of making child feel inadequate, unsuccessful or different through inappropriate questioning or implementation. In addition, focusing on the research only and ignoring the child's thoughts and emotions constitute another risk of emotional harm (n=6). One of the participants mentioned about it as;

Researchers should not think their research processes solely. It is also important to make the child feel as a part of the research process, respected and valued. Research should be a kind of relationship formation process between the child and the adult...(P4).

In addition, mentioning some sensitive issues like familial relations, divorce, death, religion and values can be considered as critical issues in research involving children and may harm to them emotionally. Participants reflected that, they way researcher ask questions or what the researcher asked to children are really critical for psychological well-being of children. In addition, forcing children to involve in the research or forcing children to answer the question may constitute another emotional harms for children (n=11).

Experiences:

In terms of emotional harms, most of the participants (n=10) reflected their experiences in means of not involving children whose participation in research was forbidden by their parents in research activity. They stressed that, if those children are not involved in the research, may feel as outsider, worthless and even feel jealous of other children who involved in the research. Therefore; some of the participants gave some examples from their experiences of such cases. For example; one of the participants stated that;

The research should be conducted to make all children get the benefits of the activities. Therefore, I try to include all children in the activities regardless of their parents' consent if they are volunteers to be a part of the activity. But at the end, I don't use the data of those children whose consent are not present (P11).

However, one of the participants added her experience related with the same issue that, sometimes children talk with their parents and explain that he/she engaged in the research which makes family angry. She explained her experience and gave the personal suggestion for the dilemma.

I don't want to separate children from their peers since it can create a kind of emotional burden on their shoulders. Therefore, I include those children in the activity without using data of those children whose parents did not agree on their involvement. But in those times, parents may call you as account of involving their child in research which they did not approve. In those cases, I talk with teacher as a mediator for explaining the reason of this implementation. So I study in collaboration with the teacher in that sense. (P1)

In addition, forcing children to involve in the research or forcing children to answer the question reported only by 4 participants in the current study. 3 of them mentioned about teacher's and parents' force on children to make them involve in the study. And one of them expressed their experience as a second observer in one study. She mentioned about it as;

In my colleagues' study, I witnessed that, she forced children to answer the questions. She had lots of questions that 4 year olds couldn't bear such a long implementation. That's why some of them bored from the procedures and want to leave the room. But she did not let them to go and insistently asked them to reply. This is not an acceptable procedure. (P12)

Beside those experiences, 5 of the participants reported that, they did not experience any possible emotional harm in their research process with children participants. However, they reported that, they consider the possibility of any harm for the well-being of children.

Benefits:

In addition to harms, participants also reported benefits of research involving children. Participants stressed that, results of the research should contribute to the development and well-being of children involved in the research in the long-run through informing parents and children through providing joyful experience to children. Participants expressed that; research should produce benefits for children in both personal and communal levels.

Personal Benefits:

Views:

Participants believe that, research involving children have some benefits for enabling children acquire new abilities, experiences, give families feedback about their children's development, possible ways of contributing to their children's well-being and can make children feel valuable and worth to listened for. One of the participants puts it as;

Researcher may become aware of a specific need of the child involved in the research and may call attention of teachers' and parents' to that concern. This may benefit children by suggesting appropriate intervention programs or special support for the related child (P1).

In addition to potential benefit for the child in need, participants believed that, the study itself will definitely have scientific benefits both in immediate context and in the long run for the family and children. One of the participants mentioned about that benefit as saying; "through conducting some activities, children make use of those resources for the sake of contributing their learning and development. Therefore, the study itself contributes to children's development". (P9)

Besides views on children benefiting through their involvement in the research, some of the participants (n=6) gave their opinions about parents benefiting from research by getting some reports or information related with the research process or their children's level of development in specific areas. They stressed that, research involving children hold a potential to give some opportunities to parents for contributing their children's development and learning by getting information and suggestions on child-rearing and teaching practices.

Experiences:

Most of the participants (n=12) believed that, research they conducted hold a benefit for contributing development and learning of children as a group or individually. In addition, some of the participants (n=5) reported that, they reported the results of their study to the parents. And they reported their belief that this was a crucial attempt for contributing children's development and learning indirectly. One of the participants put it as;

I implemented a kind of a developmental test to children and afterwards I delivered the results to parents in the form of a report. Interestingly, most of the families respond to my letter either by thanking or asking some suggestions for contributing to their children's learning. I gave them my phone number and some of them contacted with me and I gave them some details related with the results, talk about some activity suggestions, etc. I think those attempts really have long-term benefits for families as well as children (P2).

Some of the participants (n=3) reported that, their studies do not have primary or direct benefit for the children in their study. They only mentioned about secondary or indirect benefits which occur in the long run by contributing the related literature.

Communal Benefits:

Views:

Other than those personal benefits, research involving children have some communal benefits. As participants reported, results gathered from research conducted with children can be used for developing some educational materials or policies in the long run for aiming to develop all children other than contributing only individual children involved in the research. One of the participants stressed about both personal and communal benefits of research for children by stating; “Studies including young children definitely enable researchers understand the inner worlds of children better and enable some generation of policies, and providing appropriate educational environments and opportunities specifically for children” (P3). Similarly, some other participants reflected it as; “Results gathered from studies involving children may be used for developing the teaching practices, arranging the educational environment, suggesting some intervention programs, providing some educational opportunities and policies for the sake of development and learning of children” (P6).

Experiences:

Most of the participants reported that their studies have some benefits that can be considered as communal but they reflected that, those benefits can become evident in the long-run by means of contributing to the current issue they are studying on. One of the participants made an emphasis on it by saying;

I designed a teaching program enriched by various activities special for preschool children. At first, I consider my study as being beneficial for children and families since I also heard many appreciations from teachers and families related with my activities. However, beside those benefits, the study will definitely contribute to the field since it is a newly designed program in the area. So it also has some advantages for contributing to the literature (P8).

Privacy/ Confidentiality:

Views:

For the privacy and confidentiality theme, participants reported that, since children lack necessary maturity, they believe that, children need more protection of their privacy and researcher need to be sensitive about keeping personal information and products of children private. Participants of the study stressed that, providing confidentiality is the main responsibility of researchers for respecting children’s right. They mentioned that (n=7), researchers should be respectful in children’s desire for keeping their products or photographs secret and should not force children to share the products of the activities of the study. One of the participants stressed it by saying;

When you ask children to draw something in your research, children sometimes do not want to share their drawing with you. Even when I asked can I take a photo of it, she did not willing to do so. At those times, researcher should not force children to share their products and should respect their privacy. You should not create an obligatory consent condition (P5).

In addition, participants reported that, researchers should keep personal information of children secret (n=12) and should use codes instead of using real names of children (n=4). Moreover, keeping information confidential was also reported by participants as a prerequisite of research involving young children.

Experiences:

Participants of the study reported that, they did not use the real names of the children in their study as an ethical consideration (n=9), instead they used some codes. Moreover, they reported that they paid attention not to use children’s photographs in any published documents (n=4) or take a permission from either children or families to use the products or photographs of children (n=3). One of the participants reflected a different experience in means of the privacy as follows;

Although you are conscious about ethical considerations about privacy, sometimes unexpected situations may emerge. For example, in one of my study, I requested families to fill a form about their practices at home as a piece of data. They contacted with me and told that they did not want me to share their child’s results with the teacher or any other person in school... and consequently I just shared the results with them (P10).

Informed Consent:

Parental and Child Consent:

Views:

In terms of informed consent, participants reflected their perspectives on the importance of the delivering the aim of the study, informing parents and children about the way findings will be used, and implications of the findings in detail. They also stressed that informing parents about the study should not be adequate in getting the permission of involving children in research but also children should be asked about their voluntariness about being a part of the study. According to the participants of the study, gaining consent from parents and children is considered as a necessary procedure which contributes to the feeling of dignity and give them a right for withdrawal. One of the participants put it as; "Researchers believe mistakenly that, when you gather permission from family, institution or ethical committee, you can conduct research with children and gather data on them. However, we look down children's capacity to decide on their own involvement..." (P7). In addition, participants also noted that, if researcher will use any form of video or audio recorder, this should also be asked both to family and the child himself/herself.

Experiences:

When participants asked for their experiences in means of gathering inform consent of children's participation all of them stressed that, they gather a consent form from the parents' of the children. Except for one participant, all of them reported that, they also requested consent from the children themselves for their participation verbally. Among them, 6 of them reported that, they explained children that this will be a game, and they will play with them instead of making emphasis on the research implementation. In addition, 4 of them reported that, they stressed the process of activity-implementation in detail and explained children's right for withdrawal while 4 of them reported that they just told that researcher is wondering the experiences or ideas of children. One of the participants put it as;

I wrote on the parents' consent form that beside their voluntariness, their children's voluntariness is also important and I informed them about the process that I will go through; asking their child's voluntariness also. In the process, I explained children the process of data collection, why I am there, who I am and show them the materials I brought for them. Then, I told them that I will ask them some questions. And I also added that, if they bother from the process, they can leave the activity. My experiences show that, most of the children wonder about the things that you brought, so they are mostly motivated to attend the research (P1).

Payment:

Appreciation & Incentives:

Finally, participants of the study have different and controversial opinions about the payment issue in research conducted with children. Two types of payments have been identified by the participants of the study; appreciation in means of certificates or verbal reinforce and incentives in means of small gifts for children.

Views:

Some of the participants (n=9) support the notion of payment and reported their belief on the motivating role of it (incentives like stickers, sweets, small gifts, etc. vs. some appreciation certificates). Among those participants, six of them believe that, the gift should be given at the end of the activity-implementation process for preventing children to focus only on the gift while three of them reported their view that, gift can also be given during the implementation phase to arouse children's interest or attract attention.

Other than agreeing on the payment issue, some researchers (n=6) believe that, using some compensation practices are inappropriate and against the principle of voluntariness. Some of them added that, there would be some children who decide to engage in the study just because the gift. Therefore, they believe that, these payment tools may affect willingness of the child. One of the participants put it as; "We are mentioning about voluntariness and then we manipulatively suggest some rewards for children's participation in research. I am really confused about it" (P5).

Experiences:

Participants (n=6) who reported their belief that, usage of any incentive may contradict the voluntariness principle also reported that they did not use any payment tools in their research conducted with children. Besides those, two of the participants reported that, the study itself and also the results of the study constitute a kind of reward for the child in means of engaging in some educational practices and the parents in means of gathering results of the research activity. Those participants mentioned about teachers' and parents' positive views, experiences and gains about their research processes. Besides those experiences, some of the participants expressed their experiences of presenting some appreciations or incentives for children's participation in their research for the aim of thanking, motivating and reinforcing children.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Current study revealed that, ethical issues were considered important for most of the participants in the research processes. The nature of the study conducted with children can only change the ethical principles that they implemented in their own studies. Literature also indicates that, there is a need for all research to be underpinned by ethical commitments (Palaiologou, 2014). Core ethical principles are keys in educational research for ensuring that children feel safe, assured and implicitly aware of the process they are involved in (Bourke & Loveridge, 2014). Although gathering permission from ethical boards represents a prerequisite for conducting research with human subjects, it should not be enough to conduct research with young children. As Punch (2002) indicated, there is a difference between adults and children in means of ethical issues. There should be distinctive ethical guidelines designed for protecting children's well-being during research process other than the standard procedures applied for adult subjects. In addition, as participants reflected their perspectives on the importance of the informed consents, when children's views are listened and involved in research, both their informed consent and dissent should be vitally gathered to prevent unauthorized violation of children's rights (Bourke & Loveridge, 2014).

It can be concluded from the recent study that, children should be treated as active agents of the research process rather than the passive information provider. Therefore, participants reported that they respected the presence of children and followed some ethical procedures that put the child at the center of the hierarchy. In a similar vein, the literature supported the view that children should be given the right to decide their own participation in research (Dixon-Woods, et al., 1999; Dockett & Perry, 2007; Harcourt & Conroy, 2005).

As reflected in the literature, there is a hierarchy of gatekeeping and various agents are consulted for children's participation in research namely child, parents, institutions/teachers, approval from Human Subjects Review Boards, etc. (Ridge, & Millar, 2000). While these attempts aimed to protect children from harm, they may constitute a barrier for the participation of child in research (Hood, Kelley, & Mayall, 1996; Masson, 2004; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Powell & Smith, 2009 as cited in Graham, Powell, & Taylor, 2015). Although the child is at the center of the research, their consent is obtained at the end of the process of the hierarchy. Therefore, this hierarchical procedure may prevent researchers from conducting studies with children subjects.

In addition, some ethical dilemmas were mentioned by some participants that most of them are familial focused. They reflected their experiences on parents' prejudices about research and researchers and the belief that their children will become an experimental subject. They reflected that, these judgements limit the studies involving children, lower the number of children participating in research, and harm the researchers' motivation of conducting research involving children. In a similar vein, as Stalker, Carpenter, Connors and Phillips (2004) noted, difficult and sustained consent processes may harm the data collection process and also may affect the quality of the research negatively.

Furthermore, some of the participants mentioned about one of the dilemmas that, despite the motivation and voluntariness of the child, due to the parent's objection to the participation of their child, researchers couldn't include those children in their research. This

creates a frequent dilemma of including vs. excluding child from the research. Literature also indicates parallel concerns related with the current dilemma. Skelton (2008) raised a serious concern that there are some children who are volunteer to participate but their attendance are prevented by their parents' rejection. Although participants reported some personal solutions regarding this problem (such as including the child in the process but excluding data from the parts of the data set), ethical committee boards should draw some ways for researchers to deal with this frequent gatekeeping events. As suggested by Sargeant and Harcourt (2012), if researchers face with ethical dilemmas in research with children, they should have a plan ahead, decide, take some consistent actions and respond appropriately. While deciding on the ethical dilemma, researchers are suggested to articulate reasons for the conduct. Whatever the decision they agreed on, they should have a justification that the actions they are engaging is ethically the right thing to do (Sargeant, & Harcourt, 2012).

Based on the findings of the current study, as an educational implication, it could be suggested that, a specialized ethical committee should be responsible for reviewing studies including young children. As participants of the study reflected, despite ethical concern for conducting research almost the same for adults and children, much more considerations are waiting to be followed. Therefore, the members of the ethical committee review boards should also be knowledgeable about the considerations regarding studies involving children.

In addition, child and parent consents may have taken at the same time by using two consent forms which would prevents underestimation of the child's autonomy and help researchers to resolve the experienced dilemma of including in vs. excluding children from the research. This brings the issue that, written consent forms needed to be obtained from children. However, the experiences of participants revealed that children were given limited information about the research and their consent was obtained verbally. Research process is explained to children as; "We will play a game with you", "I am wondering your opinions about....", etc. the written child consent should be simple and understandable, should include the aims and benefits of the study for the child and should be supported with appropriate visuals to attract children's attention. It may also include, questions of "Who am I?, What will you do in the project/study? Who else will I tell about what you say? Do you want to take part or not? - YOU DECIDE! Why do I need to record?" kind of questions. As Harcourt and Conroy (2005) noted, due to the children's young age, researchers never be sure about whether children completely understood the procedures of the research or requests. Therefore, researcher should enable children to reflect their worlds through various means like drawing, dance, etc.

It is a known fact that, through direct involvement in children through research, educational policies, legislations, services and practices can be created (Bourke et al., 2017; Kennan et al., 2012). Therefore, by following ethical considerations strictly and after dealing with ethical dilemmas in the research processes, further studies involving young children should be conducted. Moreover, selecting participants from various populations (medicine, engineering, arts and science, etc.) who have the potential to study with children in early childhood period will enlarge the scope of the further studies. Correspondingly, further studies can explore the perspectives and experiences of various researchers from different areas.

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