

USING MINDFULNESS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S SOCIAL AND  
EMOTIONAL

LEARNING IN A KINDERGARTEN: A TEACHER’S PERSPECTIVE

HATİCE DOĞAN

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN A KINDERGARTEN:  
A TEACHER’S PERSPECTIVE

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Hatice Doğan

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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Hatice Doğan, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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## ABSTRACT

### Using Mindfulness to Support Children's Social and Emotional Learning in A Kindergarten: A Teacher's Perspective

This study aims to understand how mindfulness practices are used in a kindergarten classroom as a tool to develop Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies of children from the teacher's point of view. Specifically, it is aimed to understand the teacher's perspective on how mindfulness is helpful for children to develop SEL skills, academic skills, and the classroom climate. The study is conducted as an exploratory single case study in a private school's kindergarten classroom in Istanbul. Twelve children who are 5 to 6 years old and their teacher took part in the research. In class observations, semi-structured interviews with the teacher, lesson plans and children's artifacts are used as the data set. The data is analyzed through thematic content analysis. The analysis generated three themes: mindfulness for the teacher, mindfulness for children (SEL) and inhibitory control skills. During the analysis of the data, it continuously surfaced up that the teacher conceptualized mindfulness practices by connecting the benefits not with academic skills but specially to inhibitory control. The results show that the teacher believes that mindfulness is good for herself and for children with regard to their SEL skills, inhibitory control skills as well as the classroom climate. Being one of the first qualitative studies conducted in Turkey about the use of mindfulness to support SEL programs in a kindergarten, the study implies the importance of teacher's motivation of using mindfulness programs and how it is a valuable tool for fostering SEL. It is suggested that more research need to be conducted to better understand how these

two phenomena work together in different programs for teachers and children from various demographic backgrounds in qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

## ÖZET

### Çocuklarda Sosyal Duygusal Öğrenmeyi Desteklemek İçin Bilinçli Farkındalığı

#### Kullanmak: Bir Öğretmenin Bakış Açısı

Bu çalışma, öğretmenin bakış açısından çocukların Sosyal Duygusal Öğrenme (SDÖ) becerilerini geliştirmek için bir anaokulu sınıfında bilinçli farkındalık uygulamalarının nasıl kullanıldığını anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Özellikle, öğretmenin bilinçli farkındalığın çocukların SEL becerilerini, akademik becerilerini ve sınıf ortamını geliştirmelerine ne kadar yardımcı olduğuna ilişkin bakış açısını anlamak amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışma, İstanbul'daki bir özel okulun anaokulu sınıfında tek bir vaka çalışması olarak gerçekleştirildi. Araştırmaya 5-6 yaşları arasındaki 12 çocuk ve öğretmenleri katıldı. Veri seti olarak sınıf gözlemleri, öğretmenle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, ders planları ve çocukların eserleri kullanılmış, ve veri, tematik içerik analizi yoluyla analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda üç tema ortaya çıkmıştır: öğretmen için bilinçli farkındalık, çocuklar için bilinçli farkındalık (SDÖ) ve engelleyici kontrol becerileri. Verilerin analizi sırasında, öğretmenin, bilinçli farkındalık uygulamalarının faydalarını akademik becerilerle değil, özellikle engelleyici kontrole bağlayarak kavramsallaştırdığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Sonuçlar, öğretmenin, bilinçli farkındalığın kendisi için ve çocukların SDÖ becerileri, engelleyici kontrol becerileri ve sınıf iklimi açısından iyi olduğuna inandığını göstermektedir. Türkiye'de bir anaokulunda SDÖ programlarını desteklemek için bilinçli farkındalığın kullanımıyla ilgili yapılan ilk nitel çalışmalardan biri olan bu çalışma, öğretmenin bilinçli farkındalık programlarını kullanma motivasyonunun önemini ve bunun SDÖ'yü teşvik etmek için nasıl değerli bir araç olduğunu ima ediyor. Bu iki olgunun birlikte nasıl çalıştığını daha iyi anlamak için daha fazla nitel

ve nicel metodolojilerde, çeşitli demografik geçmişlere sahip çocuklar için ve farklı programlarda öğretmenlerle araştırmalar yapılması önerilmektedir.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Social and emotional learning (SEL) in early childhood education (ECE) has been getting a lot of attention in the last few decades. As it is shown by research, not only does it help to regulate one's emotions and organizing relationships in their social environment, but also improve academic skills (CASEL, 2013; Durlak et al., 2011). What is more, evidence based SEL programs that are applied at school settings are considered one of the best practices to promote mental health (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001; Pentz, 2003; Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, & Anton, 2005). Currently, SEL based curricula is being used in many districts/schools across the United States of America (USA) and various countries in Europe (Cefai, Bartolo, Cavioni and Downes, 2018). There is an accumulation of quantitative studies that show the effectiveness of SEL programs mostly done in the USA in the last 20 years (e.g., Harlacher & Merrell, 2010; Stillman et al. 2018; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak & Weissberg, 2017). Yet, there is still room for growing the SEL research further. First of all, research constructed in different countries will contribute to our understanding of the cultural contributions of our SEL understandings. Secondly, using different research methodologies such as qualitative and case studies are needed in order to understand the phenomenon better.

Similarly, mindfulness is a trending topic in the world recently. Although mindfulness has roots in Eastern cultural practices stemming from meditation, it has started to be used in Western countries. In addition to the individuals using mindfulness as a concept basing their mental health on mindfulness practices, some big companies such as Google, the USA army as well as schools in the USA have

been suggesting mindfulness practices in the last couple of years to their members (Gutierrez, Krachman & Scherer, 2019). Mindfulness is defined as being aware of the emotions at a given time without judging them (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Being an ancient method for people to connect with their feelings, mindfulness started to appear in medicine, psychology, business and finally education in western cultures (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Moreover, a large scale of randomized trial control experiment has been started in the United Kingdom (UK) to see the effectiveness of different mindfulness programs on the well-being of students in primary and secondary schools (Hayes et al., 2019). Also, research on mindfulness is spreading into other countries of Europe. Thus, it has been started to be explored by academia as well (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2016). As an emerging area, there is a growing amount of research about mindfulness that are mostly designed in quantitative, experimental methods to prove its effectiveness (Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, and Davidson, 2015; Poehlmann-Tynan, Vigna, Weymouth et al., 2016). Thereby, there still much to be done in the sense of methodology as well as context such as different age groups and countries.

While SEL research gained momentum in the last two decades, many areas within SEL such as early childhood years and using different techniques that might support SEL, are still under investigation. Another shortcoming of SEL research is pointed out by two meta-analyses of SEL is that most of the studies use quasi-experimental design (see Corcoran, Cheung, Kim & Xie 2018 and Taylor et al., 2017). Although it is so valuable to show the program effectiveness, in order to understand SEL and mindfulness as well as how they work together in the natural environment, some qualitative methods need to be adapted.

In this research, the main goal is to understand how a kindergarten teacher sees mindfulness providing useful tips and exercises helping her to improve children's SEL skills, and the classroom atmosphere to make teaching more effective in a qualitatively designed case study.

### 1.1 A Personal journey

I had started the graduate program with the purpose of studying curriculum. I have thought that a firm, well developed, age-appropriate curriculum has a major role in education that it creates the base for both teachers and students so that they can flourish. Having said that, social and emotional development of young children always has a special importance to me, probably because during ten years of teaching, I have observed that it somehow affects children in many ways including their academic success. That is, when children are supported socially and emotionally, they become aware of their feelings and can express those feelings; they get more open to new experiences and new ideas as well as differences among each other; be more understanding and empathizing which then help them to be able to solve problems with friends in more peaceful ways.

Through the first year of graduate courses, I have done readings mostly about SEL. Apart from the fact that SEL is a system developed to support children's social and emotional development, it was also shown by many studies that supporting children with SEL also empowers them in their academic development (i.e., Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2004). This comprehensiveness of SEL encouraged me to focus on it as a strong part of any given curriculum to begin with.

When it comes to mindfulness, my first encounter with it was in a yoga class I attended in 2009, in Istanbul. In between the yoga asanas, the instructor was leading

short sessions of meditation and ending the exercises with meditation again. I remember how hard it was to focus on my breathing and on the feelings of my tired body back then. I was so tense. After some years of occasional yoga and meditation practice, and reading about contemplation, I have realized one day that I am in such a mood of focusing my breath and body often. Back then, I was working as a kindergarten teacher and decided to practice meditation in my class with the children in 2012. From the first days of school, I started with a few minutes of breathing and body scans every morning and increased it to around 15 minutes at the end of the year. Observing the children focusing on their breath and body in longer periods everyday was so impressive for me and my colleagues. However, I had not thought of studying mindfulness as an academic subject at the time.

As I continue the graduate courses, at the time of finding myself reading Weissberg's work, especially the definition of SEL skills and the framework of SEL, I connected some of the SEL skills with the practices of mindfulness (Weissberg et al., 2015). For instance, when self-awareness is considered, I thought about becoming more and more aware of how my body works, how using yoga, meditation and mindfulness practices have an enormous effect on my well-being. Similarly, self-management skill of SEL was associated with how I handle my feelings in difficult situations and react reflectively. Relationship wise for instance, SEL also recommends creating healthy relationship with people from different backgrounds, which I thought that it would have a connection with “accepting whatever comes at the moment comes at the moment non-judgmentally” principle of mindfulness. I also found my teaching philosophy has evolved by the research showing how classroom climate is affected by the teacher, children, and the relationships among them.

Eventually, SEL and mindfulness in early childhood settings became my area of interest for this study to explore.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

This study intends to contribute to the literature in two ways; one is methodological, and the other is contextual. Firstly, as mentioned in the introduction part above, most of the research about SEL is done to prove its effects in social, emotional, and academic development of children from different ages and backgrounds. For example, Durlak et al. (2011) meta-analysis shows that there is a significant improvement in children's social emotional development along with an 11 percent of achievement in academic performance. In a later and larger meta-analysis, long term effects of SEL programs in social and emotional skills as well as academic success was shown by Taylor and her colleagues (2017). Moreover, Belfield et al. (2015) added that an average return rate of SEL programs occurs in 11\$ to 1\$.

A similar situation is observed for mindfulness in the literature, too (i.e. Coffey et al., 2010; Huppert, 2010; Metz, 2013). For example, Metz and colleagues measured the effectiveness of Learning to BREATHE (a mindfulness-based program that fosters emotion regulation and attention skills of middle and high school children) by creating one intervention group and one control group. They used pre and post-tests to see the effects of the program (Metz et al., 2013). Likewise, in a recent doctorate thesis, effects of Mini-Mind, a mindfulness based preschool program, on attention, working memory, shifting and inhibition was measured with a randomized controlled study design (Wood, 2019).

As Coffey et al. (2010) suggest, using different definitions of mindfulness makes it hard to conceptualize the concept and its mechanisms. Also, Grossman



(2015) claims that mindfulness awareness is gained through such techniques that require an open-heartedness, curiosity, kindness, patience, perseverance, and acceptance of what unfolds during practice.

Secondly, depending on the fact that there are only a few mindfulness curricula developed for early childhood settings, research about how those programs work is also preliminary. One example is the MindUP curriculum, a mindfulness based SEL curriculum developed for preK-8. There is research showing both its effectiveness and how it works conducted in quantitative and qualitative methods (Maloney, 2016). Another example is the evaluation of OpenMind-Korea (OM-K) program which is also a mindfulness based SEL curriculum for preschoolers, by Kim and colleagues (2020). Results showed that children in the OM-K program had significantly higher rates of emotion regulation, resilience, and prosocial behaviors.

In the case of Turkey, it is observed that studies about SEL are yet primitive stages and they are mostly done in quantitative methods to see the effectiveness of different variables. For instance, Gol-Guven (2017) has done an experimental study to see the effectiveness of Lions Quest Growing Skills program and found that the program positively affects the student's behaviors, conflict resolution skills and classroom climate. Akçaalan (2016) examined the relationship between SEL and formal and informal lifelong learning of university students. In another study, Koruklu, Sağkal, Özdemir and Kuzucu (2017) examined the effects of Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Training Program's on SEL skills of fifth grade students. In the time of writing this thesis, there was no research conducted in the kindergarten level.

Similarly, mindfulness research in educational settings is so limited in Turkey. Although there are a few studies, they are in subjects like mindfulness in

sports, business, or psychological therapies (i.e., Gündoğan, Saltukoğlu & Astar, 2020; Kalafatoğlu & Turgut, 2017; Terzioğlu, Yıldız & Çakır, 2020). Bıyıklı, Işık and Doğan (2020) investigated the effects of mindfulness and attention training on the attention of fourth and fifth grade students in a single group pre-test and post-test experimental design.

In consequence of the fact that although both SEL and mindfulness are emerging concepts in Turkey, both the selected type of methodology and the number of the studies are still limited. Different ways of looking at the issue through multiple methodologies by using different ways of collecting data is needed. Seeing the gap, this study aims to contribute to the literature with qualitative research by exploring one of the pioneer applications of mindfulness in a kindergarten classroom via exploring the homeroom teacher's ideas and practices about mindfulness and SEL in İstanbul, Turkey.

### 1.3 Research questions

1. Why does the teacher use mindfulness practice in her classroom?
2. How does mindfulness help children to develop SEL skills and academic skills (i.e., listening skills, focusing attention) from the perspective of the teacher?
3. How do children benefit from mindfulness practices in the sense of classroom climate from the perspective of the teacher?

In order to understand how teachers perceive mindfulness and use mindful practices in classrooms, qualitative methods would provide more information to our current understanding of the phenomenon. That is why, in the light of the aim of this research and my research questions, this study is designed in a qualitative manner to

explore and understand how these phenomena, SEL and mindfulness, work together, and consequently, make a humble contribution to the literature.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 SEL

##### 2.1.1 History of SEL

SEL related research is rooted back in 1900 to Jane Addams and John Dewey with a reference that they both valued ecology and group experiences as powerful tools to provide a chance for the development of social skills (Osher et.al, 2016). They did not use the term SEL, instead they used terms like “social competence”, “self-directed, socially responsible behavior” and their connection to a “democratic society” (Osher et.al, 2016). Yet, SEL has drastically developed after its first pronouncement in the Fetzer Institute’s conference in which people from various fields such as research, education, and advocacy came together to discuss developmental, psychological, educational, and general health problems of children in 1994 (Elbertson, 2010). SEL framework was characterized as to provide opportunities for children to attain the skills which are necessary for gaining and sustaining personal well-being and positive relationships through their lives (Elbertson, 2010).

In the meantime, Salovey and Mayer (1990, p.189) published their groundbreaking theory of Emotional Intelligence (EI) which is defined as “the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions”. Their work has perceived well because of the overwhelming importance given to the “fixed” intelligence quotient (IQ) which was measuring cognitive abilities such as abstraction, problem solving and reasoning (Schönemann, 1983). On the other hand, EI was claimed to be improvable and fulfilling the gap of a set of necessary skills

which are emotional perception and expression, emotional facilitation of thought, emotional understanding, and emotional management (Salovey, Mayer, & Cruso, 2001). That is, being aware of and expressing one's own emotions as well as others' in various appropriate ways; regulating them for oneself and others; and making the best use of them by creative thinking and problem solving (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Apparently, EI became a valuable theory for SEL to lead on. Derived from the description, expressing the emotions is a crucial part of the emotional intelligence. That is, SEL curriculum might have a critical role in the sense of creating the stage for children to have an opportunity that they may use for verbalizing their emotions in a systematic and a regular manner, meaning, consistency through the situations, contexts and people. Similarly, because EI empowers people so that they can think in a more creative manner, it is also helpful to see the problems in different ways, thus finding more creative solutions (Salovey et al., 2001). In brief, Salovey et al. (2001) summarize that SEL is the umbrella term that is used to develop emotional intelligence of school children.

#### 2.1.2 Work around CASEL

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was founded in Fetzer Institute's conference in 1994 with the aim of "establishing high-quality, evidence based social emotional development, along with academic success" (Weissberg et.al., 2015) as a fundamental part of education from preschool through high school (Elias et al., 1997). CASEL is now the leading association for SEL in the USA and worldwide. CASEL's widely used definition of SEL is as follows:

"Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to

develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.” (CASEL, 2020).

The elementary goals of SEL are a) to foster positive learning environments that are supportive, engaging, and participatory and (b) to promote the development of the five interconnected cognitive, affective, and behavioral competency domains for students (CASEL, 2013). It is claimed that social and emotional competencies are fostered through explicit instruction and student-centered learning as well as positive school/classroom climate (Weissberg et al., 2015). Domains include observable behaviors together with internal processes like beliefs or perceptions. Two of the domains are self-oriented, two are relational and one domain is behavioral (Osher et al., 2016).

SEL competencies are composed of attitudes, skills and values that are supposed to strengthen knowledge, responsibility, and caring in children (Elias et al., 1997). The core areas are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2020).

Self-awareness: Being able to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values as well as their influence on behavior in different contexts. Being able to understand one’s strengths and weaknesses within a well-grounded sense of confidence and a “growth mindset”. Self-awareness includes:

- Integrating personal and social identities
- Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
- Identifying one’s emotions
- Demonstrating honesty and integrity

- Linking feelings, values, and thoughts
- Examining prejudices and biases
- Experiencing self-efficacy
- Having a growth mindset
- Developing interests and a sense of purpose

Self-management: Being able to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in accordance with different situations. Being able to manage stress, control impulses, and motivating one's own along with developing a capacity to delay gratification. Being able to set and pursue personal and collective goals. Self-management includes:

- Managing one's emotions
- Identifying and using stress-management strategies
- Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation
- Setting personal and collective goals
- Using planning and organizational skills
- Showing the courage to take initiative
- Demonstrating personal and collective agency

Social awareness: Being able to take others' perspective and empathize with people from varied backgrounds and cultures; to feel compassion for them, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Social awareness includes:

- Taking others' perspectives
- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others

- Understanding and expressing gratitude
- Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones
- Recognizing situational demands and opportunities
- Understanding the influences of organizations/systems on behavior

Relationship skills: Being able to establish and sustain healthy and rewarding relationships with different individuals and groups. Being able to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, resist inappropriate pressure, negotiate conflict in a constructive way, and ask for help as well as taking the role of leadership when needed. Relationship skills includes:

- Communicating effectively
- Developing positive relationships
- Demonstrating cultural competency
- Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving
- Resolving conflicts constructively
- Resisting negative social pressure
- Showing leadership in groups
- Seeking or offering support and help when needed
- Standing up for the rights of others

Responsible decision making: Being able to define problems, analyze different situations and make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others (CASEL, 2020).

- Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness
- Identifying solutions for personal and social problems



- Learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, facts
- Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions
- Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside & outside of school
- Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being
- Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

### 2.1.3 The research on SEL

In the recent years, teachers experience a challenge of having children from multiple cultures and sometimes multiple languages, as well as different socio-economic status. At the same time, they are expected to teach children how to be active and motivated in their own learning, behave in positive ways, be successful academically, and communicate respectfully with their peers, teachers, and parents (Weissberg et al., 2015). SEL provides a framework for schools, families, and communities to improve schooling (Elias et al., 1997).

In line with the purpose of CASEL to provide evidence-based programming, a big amount of research showing the effectiveness of SEL programs has been done to date. To begin with, Elias (1997) claims that when schools blend the academic, social, and emotional learning all together, they will be the most successful.

Supporting that idea, Zins and his colleagues (2004) state that while SEL contributes non-academic outcomes of children such as health, safety, and citizenship, it also critically fosters academic success and lifelong learning. It is shown by research how powerful and effective SEL is in children's development. For example, Durlak and

his colleagues (2011) conducted a meta-analysis which they examined 213 school based universal SEL programs including 270,034 kindergarten through high school students. The results show that children attended SEL programs have significantly better social emotional skills, attitudes, behavior (i.e., increased prosocial behaviors and decreased conduct problems), and higher academic achievement. What is more, they found that these results are the same for all levels of education that SEL programs implemented, and they could be incorporated into the current educational programs with the current school staff (Durlak et al., 2011). Similarly, Zins and his colleagues (2004) showed that SEL also has good outcomes in the academic domain of the whole child development. When we look at the economical side of the SEL education, we see that in a cost-benefit analysis Belfield and his colleagues (2015) conducted, it is shown that each one dollar invested in SEL programs returns as eleven dollars, which is considered to be a high rate.

Furthermore, Harlacher and Merrell (2010) examined the initial and two months follow up effects of a 12 weeks SEL program named Strong Kids. They argued that it is promising for a relatively short program's effects on children's SEL knowledge, anticipated use of SEL competencies and social functioning. In addition to that, in a meta-analysis conducted by Taylor and colleagues to see the follow-up effects of school-based K-12 SEL programs, it was found that both positive effects (e.g., improving in positive attitudes, academic performance and prosocial behavior) and protective factors against problems such as emotional distress, conduct problems and drug use still existed. Also, they suggested that positive effects of SEL programs last up to 18 years in the form of improvement in the social relationships, higher rates in high school graduation college enrollment as well as reduction in negative outcomes such as being arrested and having clinical disorders (Taylor et.al, 2017).

When it comes to the application of SEL in early childhood, Denham and Brown (2010) discussed that developmental tasks should be assigned according to the age level and in the early years and when it is done, preschool and kindergarten children those who gain SEL competencies engage more in the classroom, acknowledged more by their teachers and friends. Thus, they have more positive attitudes towards school and less risky behavior, and finally better academic outcomes. Denham (2018) also stated what she calls “developmental lens” meaning that developmental tasks must differ for SEL components of a given age group. That is, a 4-year-old preschooler’s SEL needs have to differ from a 16-year-old high schooler. She exemplifies some developmental tasks for a preschool child as follows:

- Begin peer interaction while managing emotional arousal
- Initiate prosocial behaviors and interactions, along with friendships
- Stay connected with adults
- Understand basic emotional expressions, situations, and experiences—and ways to manage them (often with adult assistance), along with early efforts to solve interpersonal problems
- Begin to follow social rules, like taking turns (Denham, 2018).

Effects of SEL programs both in the long and short terms are also shown by studies. For instance, Jones, Greenberg, and Crowley (2015) evaluated a project of intervention programs called “Fast Track” which has outcomes of 13 to 19 years. They concluded that early childhood social competency is highly correlated to better adult well-being, higher education, and employment rates as well as less crime and drug use rates. They also stress that on the economic side, these results are important both for individual and public resources. Moreover, a recent meta-analysis conducted by Yang, Datu, Lin, Lau, and Li (2019) shows that early childhood

curriculum can strengthen social emotional competence for low-income children due to the strong positive impact of the SEL-based curriculum. Yet, they stress the importance of fidelity of the programs. For instance, in their analysis, they included only the research which it was mentioned by the researchers that the program was applied at least one year or more in medium to high fidelity. Fidelity consists of two main elements; dosage, meaning how many times the lessons are delivered, and quality, which is the loyalty to the program objectives and delivery (Dane & Schneider, 1998). While fidelity has started to be discussed more, Greenberg and colleagues (2017) suggest that programs with fidelity and quality will result in better outcomes than those programs lacking these features. Further, Green and colleagues (2019) argue that fidelity is a fundamental element of a program along with adaptation.

In the CASEL's document "Effective Social and Emotional Programs Guide" for preschool and elementary school, it is stated that they had three criteria for inclusion; 1) Well designed classroom based programs which includes the five competency areas of SEL, create and let children practice those skills and be multiyear; 2) Training and other implementation support meaning both the initial training of teachers as well as ongoing training support, 3) Evidence of effectiveness meaning at least one quantitative research that is designed with a control group or in pre-posttest measures. According to these criteria following preschool programs were listed in the guide: Al's Pals, High Scope's Educational Approach for Preschool, I Can Problem Solve, the Incredible Years Series, PATHS, Peace Works: Peacemaking Skills for Little Kids, and Tools of the Mind (CASEL, 2013). That is, a mindfulness based SEL program should be rich in content, supporting teacher's development, and evidence based. According to Dusenbury and her colleagues

(2015) SEL programs use one or more of the following approaches to help their student achieve SEL skills: (a) Free standing lessons that step-by steps of instruction is given to children across the five competency areas, (b) Specific to the preschool, children may get lessons about calming down and problem solving strategies; (c) General teaching practices which teachers use different techniques and ways of interactions according to the age level of their students; (d) Integration of SEL with the academic curriculum; and (e) Facilitating SEL as a school wide initiative via supporting administrators and school leaders by reorganizing the school structure and social, emotional and academic goals. Thus, using developmentally appropriate individual lessons that are designed to teach SEL skills to children, embodying the SEL program to the general curriculum of the school, and making SEL as extensive as possible among different components of a school are suggested.

As mentioned above, Dusenbury et al. (2015) state that lessons teaching how to calm down and problem-solving strategies in preschool are an important part of the implementation of SEL programs, which brings us to the other running theory of this study: mindfulness. In recent years, contemplative practices are seen at schools from kindergarten to universities (Zajonc, 2016). Historically, contemplative education existed both in the western culture as of ancient philosophy, and in eastern culture dating from a few thousand years of Buddhist traditions (Zajonc, 2016). It is not a coincidence that in one of the most contemporary reports of the World Economic Forum about the future of education, it is summed that the transformation of education systems should be under two main headings; technology and human-centric skills in which leadership, social influence and emotional intelligence are listed under the latter heading (WEF, 2020). Mindfulness is one contemplative method that has been used in education in the last decade and is related with SEL

(Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2018) as well as emotional intelligence (Charoensukmongkol, 2014).

## 2.2 Mindfulness

Mindfulness is an ancient practice that roots back to Buddhist, Chinese and Hindu philosophies and started to appear in western cultures around 1970's by the works of Ellen Langer, a social psychologist (e.g., Ngnoumen & Langer, 2014). Empirical definition of mindfulness has been an issue of debate (Chiesa, 2013). However, Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness is widely accepted in academia. He describes mindfulness as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p.145). In Kabat-Zinn's eight-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, mindfulness is practiced through sitting meditation, simple yoga movements (called "asanas") or tai chi and also guided body scans (Santorelli, Kabat-Zinn & Blacker, 2017).

In CASEL's 2013 guide many programs for preschool through fifth grade were reviewed to evaluate their usage as SEL programs. Among them, a preK-8 mindfulness program MindUP was in the list, too (CASEL, 2013). Moreover, in a recent report published by CASEL foundation in 2018, mindfulness is mentioned as one of the techniques underneath the big SEL umbrella (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2018).

Described by Bishop and his colleagues (2004), mindfulness works in two main mechanisms: self-regulation of attention and nonjudgmental awareness of experience. While self-regulation of attention includes "sustained attention, attention switching, and the inhibition of elaborative processing"; nonjudgmental awareness of

experience involves relating to one's experiences with "curiosity, openness and acceptance" (Bishop et.al., 2004). Moreno (2017) suggests that mindfulness is an "inside-out" process as opposed to most SEL practices which work in an "outside-in" fashion, which she claims might actually be the key for populations such as children who are considered less experienced in situations that require advanced cognitive skills.

Mindfulness has started to be used first in medicine and then spread to areas such as psychology, neuroscience, healthcare, business, military and eventually in education (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Mindfulness programs generally incorporate direction of attention to a certain focus (i.e., breath, sensation, or a feeling as in the kindness meditation). This is called an "anchor", something that the person uses to come back to the moment when they realize their mind drifts away (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). As Meiklejohn et al. (2012) states, mindfulness practices might be formal and/or informal. While formal practice consists of mindfulness meditation in the form of sitting, standing, laying down or moving; informal practice applies to incorporating mindful awareness into everyday activities such as walking, eating, showering, and executing the relationships.

Another research area of mindfulness is its relation to the cognitive processes. For instance, Bishop and his colleagues (2004) see mindfulness composing of two components; regulation of attention and experiencing awareness which is shaped by curiosity acceptance and openness in the present moment. Mindfulness is also suggested as a means of development of self-regulation (e.g., sitting still and focusing) by Zelazo and Lyons (2012). Also, Teper, Segal and Inzlicht (2013) propose a model that mindfulness improves executive control.

### 2.2.1 Mindfulness in education

Currently, mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) are in great use at schools worldwide, from the USA to Europe and Australia (Weare, 2014). In a review written by Meiklejohn and his colleagues (2012), it is observed that mindfulness intervention programs for K-12 students mostly stem from MBSR and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). Also, Weare (2014) suggests that mindfulness programs for children have fundamentally the same aims as adult mindfulness programs. Moreover, many mindfulness curricula developed for K-12 children are composed of developmentally appropriate mind body practices with the aim of improving focused attention, emotional self-regulation, and social competency. Lessons in these curricula aim awareness of experiences (e.g., focused attention on breath, movement practices, awareness within thoughts and emotions, caring or kindness exercises) (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Jennings, Lantieri, and Roeser (2012) add that mindfulness programs for children foster self-awareness, self-regulation, attention, caring for others so that helps improve healthy environments for both teaching and learning. Further, they indeed list three criteria as the core of good contemplative practice:

- 1) one-pointed concentration on an intentionally chosen object (e.g., the breath, sounds, physical movement) promotes the ability to focus, quiet, and calm the mind and the body.
- 2) open and receptive awareness of whatever arises in the mind, the body, or one's environment promotes the ability to gain insight and clarity into sensory and mental phenomena; and



- 3) attention focused upon particular thoughts and feelings involving expressions of caring for oneself and others promotes empathy and compassion.

The programs usually have the component that require improving focused attention, awareness, and self-regulation. For a comprehensive list of mindfulness programs, see Appendix A.

While there is evidence that MBIs are helpful for psychological well-being and life satisfaction of adults (Maloney, 2016), there is also a growing body of research in mindfulness programs at schools, as well (Zenner et al., 2014). Weare (2013) states that its outcomes for students are promising in a wide range from mental health to well-being of students, better mood, higher self-esteem, self-regulation, and positive behavior as well as higher academic achievement. Moreover, Hart and colleagues show that self-regulation is in the core of different mindfulness approaches (Hart et al., 2013). Furthermore, in a meta-analysis reviewed school-based mindfulness intervention programs conducted with 1348 students with 876 children for the control group, Zenner and colleagues, concluded that mindfulness-based intervention programs have an effect on improving cognitive abilities and resilience to stress (Zenner et al., 2014). In a semi-experimental study that Esmaeillian and colleagues (2018) conducted with 83 children from detached families, it has been concluded that children who attended the 12 weeks Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Children (MBCT-C) had less levels of anxiety, depression, and anger symptoms; yet higher levels of emotional resiliency. Similarly, effects of Inner Resilience Program (IRP) which was developed to support teachers and students after September 9, 2001 events in New York and incorporates SEL competencies with mindfulness exercises was measured through qualitative and

quantitative studies. It is concluded that the IRP program improves children's SEL skills as well as their resiliency (Lantieri et al., 2016). In a meta-analysis conducted by Moltrecht and colleagues to see the effectiveness of current psychological interventions (including mindfulness-based interventions) designed to improve emotion regulation for children and youth, it is concluded that there is small to medium effect to foster emotional regulation of young people irrespective of the intervention program (Moltrecht et al., 2019).

As it is discussed above, SEL has numerous advantages in academic, social, and emotional areas of development for young people. Similarly, mindfulness is a technique and an understanding for individuals to know themselves, be aware of their emotional states, organize their reactions according to the arising feelings as well as to understand others. In line with the purpose of this research, this point might be the place to explore how SEL competencies and mindfulness traits may overlap.

### 2.3 SEL and mindfulness

Plenty of work has been done to make connections between a variety of techniques to develop SEL skills. Among those are active learning strategies like discussion, group work, and role play (Bloom et al., 1956) as well as more explicit instructional lessons which children are given the chance to practice what they have learned (Dusenbury, Domitrovich & Weissberg, 2015). Mindfulness is the one that is frequently mentioned in academia with regards to its usability in SEL programs. For instance, it is claimed by Lantieri and colleagues that integration of SEL and contemplative teaching tools like mindfulness can be a rich source for the field of SEL (Lantieri et al., 2016). Weare (2014) suggests that mindfulness has a potential to intensify the effect of SEL.

There are many mindfulness curricula that are developed for different age groups in the USA and Europe. Some of the preschool and elementary school mindfulness curricula are reviewed by CASEL researchers about their appropriateness to be integrated in SEL programs (CASEL, 2013). As compiled by Gueldner and Feuerborn (2016), SEL and mindfulness-based practices have some similarities. These are:

- 1) occurrence in the classroom and during specific times set aside for instruction and practice,
- 2) options to instruct and practice in non-classroom settings such as on the playground,
- 3) inclusion of supportive materials such as handouts or audio-visual supplements, and
- 4) inclusion of parents to promote practice in non-school settings.

At this point, it would be useful to examine each SEL competency in a manner of how mindfulness practices might deepen them.

Self-Awareness: As mentioned above, self-awareness includes recognizing one's emotions, thoughts, strengths, and weaknesses. Similarly, mindfulness practices always seek answers to the question of "who I am" (Lawlor, 2016) by observing the emotions, motivations, and values. That is, simple contemplation exercises like mindfulness, can help create the necessary base for individuals to do self-exploration, thus, self-awareness (Lawlor, 2016). As stated by Salovey et al. (2001), if people do not pay attention when they have unpleasant feelings, they cannot learn much about the feelings. Using mindfulness and SEL might have great opportunities for self-awareness.

**Self-Management:** Self-management is about regulating emotions, managing stress, and setting goals for oneself. In a mindful state of consciousness, people can be more reflective about their behaviors instead of being reactive, thus, it is easier to manage difficult emotions and focusing on their goals (Lawlor, 2016). Also suggested by Lawlor, a good example is delay of gratification. She says that mindfulness help children to keep the long-term goal in mind and to be able to sit with the temptation (Lawlor, 2016). Moreover, Teper, Segal and Inzlicht (2014) propose that mindfulness improves executive control, as it promotes present-moment awareness, paying close attention to subtle changes in emotional states, including phasic changes in physical sensations and arousal levels. Subsequently, being aware of those sensations has a great importance as it gives people the chance to regulate themselves before blowing out their emotional reactions (Teper, Segal & Inzlicht, 2013).

**Social Awareness:** It includes taking other's perspectives, showing empathy, and understanding their norms and values. Dekeyser, Raes, Leijssen, Leysen, and Dewulf (2008) examined the relationship between mindfulness and interpersonal behaviors and showed that mindfulness is highly associated with expressing oneself in a variety of social situations as well as greater engagement in empathy. Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015) found that a SEL program incorporated with mindfulness resulted with higher empathy and perspective-taking in elementary school children.

**Relationship Skills:** Relationship skills include creating and pursuing positive relationships, working in harmony with others and resolving the problems in a constructivist manner. All of them begin with a good listening, and as Greenberg says: "contemplative practices can help children to learn listening in new ways" (cited in Lawlor, 2016, p.73).

**Responsible Decision Making:** Responsible decision-making is being able to make decisions based on ethical values for oneself and for others. Extracted from the definition of mindfulness, being non-judgmental is cultivated via repeated practices. As Greenberg (2014) suggests, this non-judge mental state of mind helps individuals make more objective and ethical decisions without bias.

See Table 1 for a list of suggested mindfulness practices for each SEL competency.

Table 1. SEL Competencies and Mindfulness Practices

	SEL Competencies	Mindfulness Awareness	Selected Mindfulness Practices
Self-awareness	Identifying emotions	Understanding the nature of mind	Focused mindful breathing
	Accurate self-perception Recognizing strengths Self-confidence Self-efficacy	Emotional awareness	Reflective writing
Self-management	Stress management	Emotion regulation	Focused mindful breathing
	Self-discipline		
	Impulse control Self-motivation	Inhibitory control	Movement (e.g., yoga, tai chi)
Social awareness	Goal setting	Deployment of attention	
	Organizational skill		
	Perspective-taking Empathy Appreciating diversity Respect for others	Showing empathy and compassion for others	Literature Dramatic arts Compassion/loving-kindness meditation
Relationship skills	Social engagement	Mindful listening	Active listening activities
	Relationship-building		
	Communication	Thoughtful dialogue	Cooperative activities
Responsible decision making	Teamwork	Managing conflict	
	Identifying problems Analyzing situations Solving problems Evaluating Reflecting	Stating facts without judgment	Community service learning
	Ethical responsibility	Making ethical choices based in awareness and caring	Active witnessing

Note. Adapted from “Mindfulness and Social Emotional Learning (SEL): A Conceptual Framework”, by Lawlor M.S., in Singh, N.N. (Series Ed.), Schonert-Reichl, K.A. & Roeser, R.W. (Eds.) *Handbook of Mindfulness in Education -Integrating Theory and Research into Practice* (p.69), 2016, New York. Springer, New York, NY.

Although yet limited, there is some research examining the integration of SEL and mindfulness-based practices in educational settings. For instance, in a study examining effects of mindfulness-based “Kindness Curriculum” on prosocial behavior and self-regulatory skills of students in a public school, it is found that children who attend the program show higher progress in social competence (Flook et al., 2015). Moreover, those children received higher grades with regards to learning, health, and social emotional development. Poehlmann-Tynan and her colleagues (2016) also found similar results in their study; thus, children who attended the Kindness Curriculum showed higher self-regulation abilities. In another study, a program for prekindergarten (Settle Your Glitter) was applied in a whole school year with 4-year-old children, and at the end of the study, it was concluded that children in the mindfulness school improved more than the ones in the regular schools (Thierry et al., 2018). Similarly, Gueldner and Feuerborn (2016) conducted a study that they integrated mindfulness into two reviewed SEL programs; Strong Kids (grade 3-5) and Strong Teens (grades 9-12). They concluded that it is a promising way to foster academic development as well as social emotional growth for contemporary youth

While it is getting more attention how to combine SEL and mindfulness together, research showing the effectiveness of this association also emerges recently. For instance, in a 2019 paper, a mindfulness based SEL program for preschool children, OpenMind (OM) was measured in different aspects like feasibility, acceptability and effectiveness. It was concluded that the program was easy for the teachers to implement within their current curriculum and was reported to be helpful with the self-regulation, bodily and emotional awareness, self-calming, empathy and awareness of the other’s feelings for children (Jackman, Nabors,

McPherson, Quaid, & Singh, 2019). Similar results were gained in Korean adaptation of the OM program, OM-K. In Korea, the program was implemented in three preschools, and teachers again found the program easy to use and they said they would recommend it to other teachers because of its positive effects on teachers, children, and general calmness of their classrooms (Kim et al., 2019).

Apart from any program or curricula, there is another component of education which has the biggest effect, teacher. It is the teacher who implements the curricula, and the quality of the implementation deeply changes according to the psychological characteristics and experiences of the teacher (Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009). In the below part, the importance of teacher-student relations and the effect of classroom culture on the well-being of both components will be discussed.

#### 2.4 Classroom climate

As an experienced teacher who has worked in different schools, I observed that when one enters a classroom of any grade, s/he feel the classroom culture from simple clues like how students and teacher talk to or behave each other, how student works are exhibited on the walls, how is the furniture placed in the room...etc. On this culture being created, the teacher's role is undeniably the most significant one. Even if children are active agents of their learning in that classroom, it is because their teachers "let" them be. The researchers who are studying SEL skills for many years stated that SEL of students occurs through teachers (Durlak et al., 2011). Similarly, positive relationships between teacher and students strengthens SEL skills (Elias, 2015). It was known by earlier literature that teachers play a key role in education and how they conduct activities in their classrooms matters (Ransford et al., 2009).

Furthermore, in another study conducted with early childhood educators in Canada, it was found that personality traits are very significant predictors of the classroom management self-efficacy of teachers (Bullock, 2015). Supporting that, Jennings (2015) states that emotional well-being of the teachers helps them to create an optimal classroom environment as well as build relationships with their more challenging students. She mentions mindfulness and social emotional competence of children as a means of professional development. Moreover, in a recent study which examined students' well-being through teachers' social emotional competence found that there is a significant improvement in children's social emotional well-being after the teacher intervention (Lam & Wong, 2017).

Obviously, building a respectful and supportive community at school is one of the first things to do for both students' and teachers' well-being (Roffey, 2012). Similarly, Sabol and Pianta (2012) states that strong child-teacher relationships are expected to help with academic success and social emotional development of children. Furthermore, Weissberg and Cascarino (2013) claim that positive learning environments are important for students to learn and better improve their social-emotional competencies. On the other hand, in a qualitative study conducted in Turkey with primary school teachers to understand the mechanisms affecting their emotions at school, it was found that teachers do not show their real negative emotions in the school environment and this situation makes it even worse as it strengthens their negative emotions like unhappiness, anger, sadness and feeling of worthlessness (Argon, 2015). Thus, teachers showing those feelings have an effect on the classroom environment (Lam & Wong, 2017). Moreover, in Roffey's (2012, p.15) qualitative research about teacher and students' well-being, a primary school teacher's thought is as in the following lines: *"If you have a happy staff, then I think*



*that leads to you being happy in your own classroom, and leads to happy relationships with the children, and the children with each other.*” Further, shown by López-González, Amutio, Oriol and Bisquerra (2016) with a sample composed of secondary and high school students, practicing relaxation and mindfulness either personally, within family or at school has positively related with classroom climate, and in turn academic success. Thus, emotional well-being of children and teachers, as well as the relationship between students and teachers has a critical role in education which might be supported by SEL and mindfulness practices.

Even though teacher’s well-being and their relationship with their students have such an important role in education, teachers’ stress is not limited to completing the *official* curriculum and preparing children for various tests in contemporary times. They have yet another stressor, *the hidden curriculum*. As the world known curriculum theorist George Posner (1992) suggests, there are five levels of *any* kind of curriculum: 1) the official curriculum, 2) the operational curriculum, 3) the hidden curriculum, 4) the null curriculum and 5) the extra curriculum.

That is, teachers have a responsibility to teach norms and values of their society in each time. This is a significant responsibility. However, I think SEL and mindfulness curricula may help teachers in this issue. Frey, Fisher and Smith (2019) claim that SEL has been in the hidden curriculum for so many years, and simple things like “Boys don’t cry” or “Say ‘thank you!’” were evidence of that. Very similarly, Weare (2014) says that “contemplative” teachers have been using mindfulness techniques for a long time “under the radar”. Even some private schools such as Montessori and Waldorf-Steiner have meditation, reflection, and contemplation in their programs (Weare, 2014). Yet, I think, it is not fair to the

teachers to keep SEL and mindfulness in the hidden curriculum because it is such a great burden. Also, it is an important topic to be left only up to the teacher's initiative what to teach, and how much to teach about those competencies. Neither it is fair for children whom they were criticized upon non-objective rules (i.e., Boys do not cry.).

## 2.5 Teachers' perception

Dr. Susanne Denham has a new, developmental perspective on SEL. As the readers of this thesis would be familiar, early stages of life are defined by developmental tasks. If young children achieve the tasks specific to their ages, it contributes to their well-being and feeling of success. Similarly, if they do not, they feel unhappy and have difficulty with later tasks in life (Denham, 2018). At the early years of life, preschool teachers are the ones spent the most time with children among other levels of education (i.e., elementary, or high school). Moreover, as stated by Schonert-Reichl (2017) learning contexts, SEL of children and SEL of teacher are all interrelated, and teacher's SEL has an effect on how SEL programs are infused. While this is the case, it is important to know what teachers feel and believe about SEL programs. As Bailey, Stickle, Brion-Meisels and Jones (2019) revealed, teachers report problems on four things about SEL. Firstly, teachers think SEL programs "feel" not relevant to students' age and daily life. Secondly, it is hard to find time for SEL activities because of the academic burden. Thirdly, teachers feel like they do not get enough support while they carry out SEL curriculum or even to be involved with their self SEL skills.

Ransford and her colleagues (2009) conducted a study to see teachers' perception and implementation of a SEL curriculum, PATH. Eventually, they suggested that teachers who have higher levels of self-efficacy (i.e., teacher's beliefs)

are more likely to implement the different domains of the program. In addition to that, Bierman and Motemadi (2015) claim that teacher support along with a positive classroom management style are critical for improving social and emotional skills. What is more, in a survey study, it was found that preschool through 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers in the US believe that SEL skills are so important for children's success in school, life, and work and they think that those skills are teachable to all students (Bridgeland, Bruce & Hariharan 2013). Also, those teachers believe that SEL implementation helps improve their school's climate.

Furthermore, in a qualitative study, Shewark, Zinsser and Denham (2018) explored the early childhood teachers' perception of their own and children's feelings within the classroom climate. They came up with three themes; teachers view emotions-especially the negative ones- to be managed for a well-managed classroom climate, they think that their emotions have a big impact in the classroom climate, and they feel they are not well prepared to create and preserve a positive classroom. In another study, preschool teachers' perceptions about EI and SEL were examined. It was concluded that teachers' perception of comfort about implementing SEL was associated with their students' behavioral regulations (Poulou, Basset & Denham, 2018). Similarly, Poulou (2017) found that teachers' perception of their own EI and SEL skills can be used to anticipate the quality of student-teacher relationships. Parallel to that, Gol-Guven examined teachers' perspectives who apply a SEL program in their classrooms. They stated three reasons preventing those skills from development. Firstly, they consider that SEL skills are highly connected to the parenting practices of the family and the background. Secondly, the teachers think that all children will get those skills as they get older, thus when they are mature enough. Thirdly, the teachers assume that children generally get accustomed to the

rules and regulations of their schools, thus they show less conduct behaviors towards the end of the academic year (Gol-Guven, 2016).

As suggested by Zinsser, Denham and Curby (2018), SEL skills can be learnt and naturally, can be thought. Teachers do not just teach SEL via curriculum instructions, but also, they model children on how they are emotionally and socially aware, how they regulate their emotions, and make responsible decisions themselves. It is clear that teacher's beliefs are very influential when it comes to creating learning environments, classroom climates and even the fidelity of any programs, but specifically SEL programs (Brackett et al., 2012). As suggested by Low, Smolkowski and Cook (2016), fidelity comes first among four other aspects (which are dosage, quality of delivery, participant responsiveness and program differentiation) of a quality program implementation.

In sum, as Jennings and her colleagues (2012) discuss mindfulness- based education programs lessen stress for teachers and students, and improve classroom climate, thus letting the SEL programs to be delivered in a much more qualitative way. Also, having a SEL and/or mindfulness combined curriculum would empower the teachers in the sense that they know what and how much to teach, thus ease their relationship with children, which in turn means a better classroom climate.

## 2.6 Academic skills

One of the questions of this study is "How does mindfulness help children to develop SEL skills and academic skills (i.e., listening skills, focusing attention) from the perspective of the teacher? As the literature review for SEL is done in the above sections, this is the point where academic skills are placed in the literature as well.

In the mid-1990's Kagan, Moore and Bredekamp published the book named “Reconsidering children's early development and learning: Toward common views and vocabulary”. In that book Kagan and her colleagues proposed five dimensions of school readiness; physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches towards learning, language development, cognition, and general knowledge (Kagan, Moore & Bredekamp, 1995). Among these, it is observed that skills such as sitting still, listening to teacher, and focusing on the task fall under the category of learning approaches. As it was shown by Fantuzzo, Perry and McDermott (2004), emotion regulation and children’s ability to focus and the ability to sustain attention are correlated with each other. With positive learning approaches children can finish the classroom tasks by focusing, planning and persistence (Chen & McNamee, 2011). Briefly, focus, attention and persistence have always been an important topic of early childhood education (Bassok & Latham, 2017).

On the other hand, looking at the SEL competencies which are recently updated, one item underneath the self-management skill seems to cover the academic skills that are discussed here: exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation (CASEL, 2020). Denham and Brown (2010) suggest that working memory, attention, and inhibitory control as non-emotional aspects of self-management which are crucially important for preschool and primary school success. Denham and Brown end up by claiming that different aspects of regulation have effects on the academic success of children.

However, as SEL research cumulates it also diversifies, and new approaches towards it starts to appear. For example, Bailey and her colleagues suggest a new perspective to SEL. After reviewing 25 SEL programs which are widely used, they

realize that there is a “one size fits all” understanding in the SEL framework. Then they propose that SEL programs should be in harmony with the developmental tasks which will be built upon each other as children grow up (Bailey et al., 2019). What is more, they suggest a pyramid model to explain social emotional developmental stages in each grade from kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> grade (Figure 1).

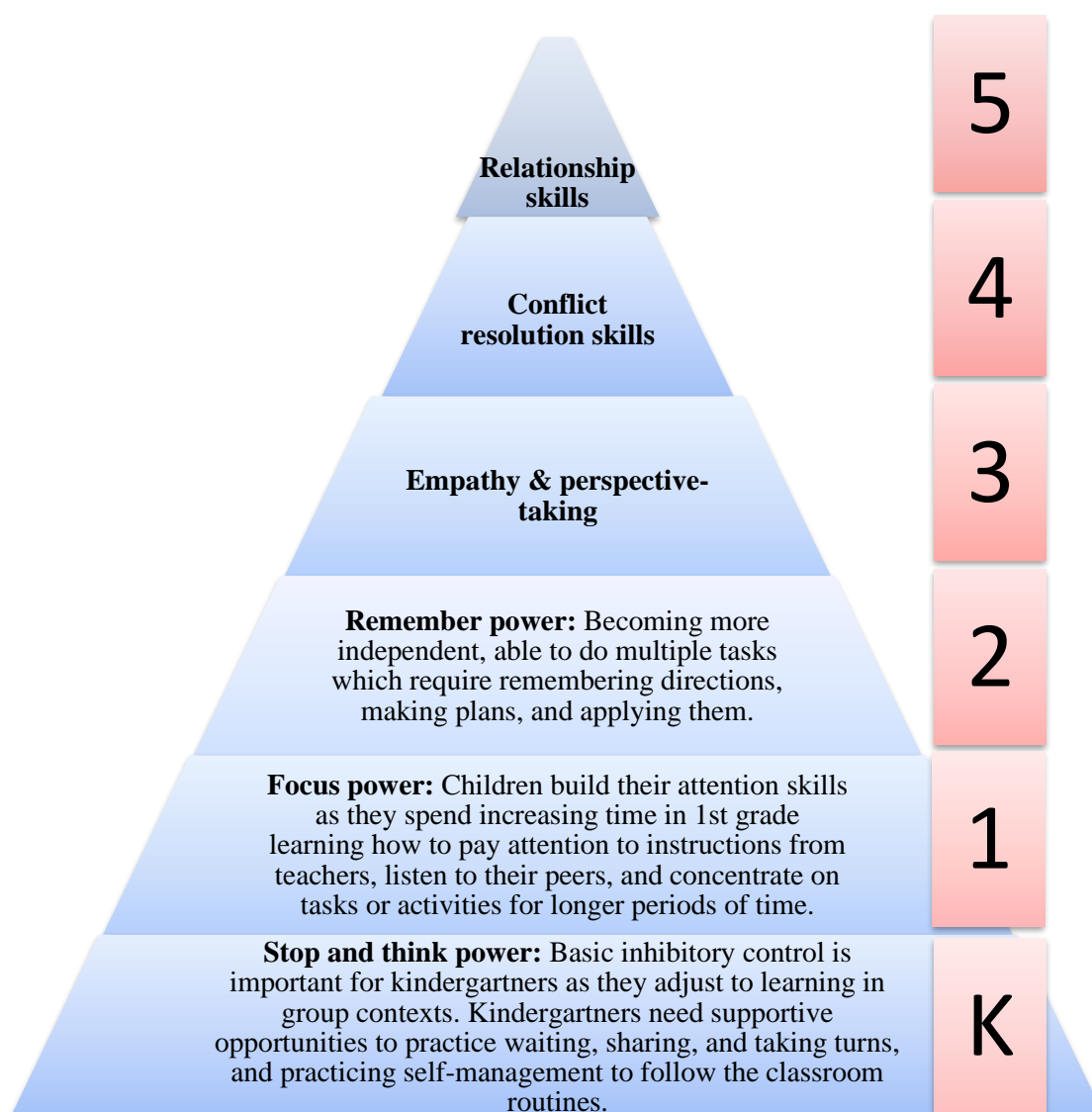


Fig. 1 Bailey and her colleagues’ pyramid model of SEL development

To the bottom of the pyramid where kindergarten stands, they put inhibitory control which is a part of executive function (EF) and they suggest that EF skills start at around age four and develop dramatically through first and second grades. In the second step of the pyramid which stands for first grade of school, it is mentioned that

children's attention skills as well as listening to their teachers and staying focused on a task develop. EF consists of three functions: working memory, inhibitory control, and mental flexibility. It is suggested that EF are the "building blocks" for early cognitive and social development of children. Among them, inhibitory control is the one that enables us to refrain from distractions, temptations and gives us the opportunity to stop and think before we do anything. Instead, inhibitory control functions let us act selectively, be focused, sustain our attention, and prioritize the things we need to do. For children, it means to be able to ignore the distractions around them and stay focused on their tasks at school (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2011).

Education is a complex process with many components. In this thesis study, some elements of educational settings are taken into consideration with the aim of understanding how they work with one another. Just as the literature review implies, SEL supports children in various ways such as fostering their social emotional and academic skills along with creating a better classroom climate. Similarly, mindfulness has benefits for children and teachers in that they develop awareness of themselves; their emotions and ideas about the experience in the moment without judging it. The synergy between SEL and mindfulness result in many benefits for children and teachers. For example, they foster classroom climate as an outcome of having calmer and more focused children in the classroom and generating better relationships among children as well as between children and teachers. Or they help children inhibitory skills which are very important for their learning. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that education happens through teachers. It is mostly the teachers' perceptions and attitudes that provides fidelity for any curriculum. Also, teachers are the main creators of the classroom climate. They are the role model for

children when it comes to expressing feelings and ideas, communicating others, and solving problems. As this is the situation, this study aims to understand how SEL and mindfulness may work together towards better social, emotional, and academic skills, and a supporting classroom climate from a teacher's point of view.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

Personally, I believe in a “fixed” measurable world, not more than the “interpreted” world. That is why, the methodological framework of this study leans on interpretivism. In interpretivist point of view, the world is socially constructed, complex and is always changing (Glesne, 2016). In this view, the researcher’s role is described as to understand a social phenomenon, and to interpret other’s actions and intentions (Glesne, 2016).

Grounding on interpretivism, this research is designed as an exploratory case study which will be conducted with a preschool teacher who has a mindfulness certificate and practicing mindfulness for two years in her classroom. Researcher’s aims of collecting data and understanding the data in depth in its real-world context (Yin, 2018) makes this empirical study a case study. Natural setting is the first hallmark in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Willis, Jost & Nilakanta, 2007), thus the researcher goes to the site to collect data and understand the case instead of bringing any participants to a laboratory or sending them forms to fill out (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data will be gathered in a triangulation manner through interviews with the teacher, classroom observations, lesson plans, and children’s artifacts in a period enough to get meaningful data (Yin, 2018). The second hallmark of a qualitative study is the fact that researcher is the main data collection instrument in the field (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). She is the one both collecting and making meaning of the data. Multiple sources of data are another indication of qualitative method as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018). They

also add that it is important to note that these are mostly open-ended forms of data that will be interpreted by the researcher.

### 3.1 Case study

As Yin claims, when the researcher wants to explore a “contemporary” case where the behavioral control over participants is either very limited or non-existing, and the main research questions consist of “why” and “how” questions, case study is a good way to do that research (Yin, 2018). He also points out that case study, by definition, depends on multiple sources of evidence in which data should be brought together with an intent of triangulation. Added by Creswell (2013), it is claimed that collecting data while the case is still happening is crucial to a case study so that there would be no data loss due to time passing.

Another important aspect of case study is the in-depth understanding of the case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Willis, Jost & Nilakanta, 2007). To achieve that, the researcher must collect data from multiple qualitative sources like interviews, observations, documents, audio, and video materials (Creswell, 2013). The connections and the interactions of various variables are important to understand a case.

### 3.2 Defining the case

Schwand, and Gates (2018) stress the importance of the following question: “What is this a case of?” Also, Creswell claims a good definition of the case is a key element of analysis of a case study (Creswell, 2013). In line with these statements, the definition of the case is telling the “history of the case” and mentioning the events in their chronological order day by day. Yin (2018) suggests that the case should be

defined well, and its boundaries should also be set well for a more precise case. That is, I tried to give a detailed description of the case and the research setting in the following paragraphs. To set the limits of the case, I kept my focus on the mindfulness activities, and the events that teacher or the children use of mindfulness towards the situations in which they use or improve SEL skills through the time I was in the classroom.

In this study, the case is a kindergarten classroom teacher and her students at a private school in Istanbul. In the classroom there are two homeroom teachers whose pseudonyms are Derya and Cemre. They both have undergraduate degrees in ECE in addition to having the same mindfulness training, and they share all the responsibilities as partners. They received 16 hours of mindfulness training in two days from a leading institute two years ago, in Istanbul. Although I observed both teachers in the classroom and interviewed both, I used Derya's data mainly and Cemre for triangulation in my analysis. It was because I thought Derya's data was richer and more descriptive in relation to my research questions. One reason for that was probably because Derya was doing most of the mindfulness activities. I even asked about that in a conversation, that if they did any share of duties with Cemre. She said they did not, yet she just "naturally" finds herself doing mindfulness along with circle time in the mornings while Cemre is checking the backpacks and communication books of the children. Also, Derya told me that she was familiar with mindfulness meditation from the times she used to attend yoga classes a few years ago, as well as how much she enjoyed group meditation experience. Additionally, she mentioned in one of our recorded conversations that she thought guided mindfulness meditations were more beneficial for herself.

I searched for finding my site of study thus it would give the richest information about my research questions. As Yin states, case studies are generally concentrating on individual persons (Yin, 2018). In line with this claim, I searched for an informative case. Because mindfulness is a very recent topic in Turkish schools, I came across only a few schools using mindfulness as a means of supporting their students' SEL competencies. One of them applies mindfulness One of them was a big chain private school that has 50 plus campuses in all provinces. This was not the best fit for my purposes because of two reasons. One is they apply mindfulness activities via their psychological counselors once a week or every other week. The other is I wanted to have one to one and in-depth rapport with a teacher who does not simply apply mindfulness as just a regular top-down practice but owns it as a personal preference who believed in it at a certain point, too. Thus, I found a teacher who applies mindfulness in her life and in her classroom with support of her school. This school got all their preschool teachers, primary school teachers and branch teachers received training on mindfulness, as a consequence, using it as a means to support their students' development in the preschool and the primary school for two years.

I consider that, this is an exemplary case because it is not just a teacher applying mindfulness in her classroom, but it is a case of a motivated teacher who practices mindfulness personally in her daily life and is supported by her school administration to do it with her students, too. As far as my research in finding a case show, this is one of the pioneers in Istanbul, Turkey. In that aspect, I have the impression that it will be a meaningful contribution to the literature.

### 3.2.1 About the school and the classroom

The preschool is part of a foundation which also has a primary and a secondary school all located in İstanbul, Ataşehir. While primary and secondary schools share the same building, preschool department is located nearby in an independent building, which there are many other preschools in the whole block. Preschool is a four-floor apartment built as a home, then transformed into a school (which is the case for the other schools around, too). When it comes to the administration, the kindergarten principal is under the general principal hierarchically. The general principal is the person I first contacted, also.

In the preschool, there are two classes of prekindergarten, junior kindergarten, and senior kindergarten (SK) each. All classrooms have two homeroom teachers with a degree in early childhood education. Classroom teachers, branch teachers (i.e., arts, music, physical education, and ecology) and school administration (except for the new preschool principal) got mindfulness training at the school two years ago.

SK class I visit is on the fourth floor beside the room of the school counselor, and the principal's room next to it. It is about 25 square meter, well lighted rectangular shape room.

### 3.2.2 About the teachers and children

Derya has an undergraduate degree in early childhood and has been working with children for 12 years now. Aware of the important role she has in children's lives, she joined many training programs for her professional development including different curricula (e.g., Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia), PASS Theory of Intelligence, and Pikler approach. Among them, she told me that the Pikler approach

touched her the most. She described it as: "In the Pikler approach, the importance of children's readiness according to their own nature and rhythm was emphasized. From childhood, you are not a teacher, not a teacher-mother, but a person who observes, guides, and prepares the environment for children". She summarized her teaching philosophy as respectful towards the children, offering them opportunities as they grow.

Cemre also has an undergraduate degree in ECE from a well-known public university, and a graduate degree in program development from a university in Istanbul. She has been working as a preschool teacher for 14 years. She expressed at one time that "I grow young with every child".

About the children, there were 13 children in the beginning of the study, yet one changed school during the data collection, thus that child is not included in the analysis. By that, there are 12 children consisting of 8 girls and 4 boys who are 5-6 years old. I used pseudonyms for children as I did for teachers. Below is a brief information about the children.

Berk is a 5 year and 2 months old boy. His father is an English teacher. He is an active child compared to the rest of the classroom. As far as I observed, he is least willing to sit quietly during circle times (either as they do mindfulness, fixing the calendar or discussions in the other lessons). He mostly moves around, touching and talking to the friends at those times. On the other hand, a curious boy who likes to know and examine. He was one of the first children who approached me when I started the observations. Also, one time while they were doing mindfulness look at the classroom to become aware of the things they have not before, he chose to examine the mini microscope and drew a detailed picture of it. Derya says he likes to have long and detailed talks about the things he is interested in.

İnci is 5 years and 9 months old. She expresses her thoughts and feelings easily most of the time as I observed. She listens when she is supposed to listen and play and enjoy her time when it is play time. She is interested in mindfulness experiences more than the others and likes to share her thoughts about it. She has an older sister in the primary department and her mother is a physical education teacher in a university. As Derya says, she is a coherent girl and a natural leader who also actively joins the activities within the classroom.

Mert is a 5 years 9 months old boy who has difficulty with regulating his emotions. When he is happy, he jumps around and laughs loudly, while screams and cries in a sharing problem moment with his friends in the play time. His speech might be considered as slow, like almost stuttering. Derya says that Mert has some obsessions and may have difficulty controlling himself from time to time. He is interested in the activities in the classroom; however, his attention might be disrupted quickly.

Arda is a 5 years and 6 months old active boy who likes running around in the classroom. His attention may not be very focused most of the time. He likes playing with many friends in the classroom. Derya adds that he is an adaptable boy who is chosen to be played with by his friends during play times. She also states that Arda is an observer as well as a kind boy. Arda has a twin who has some developmental issues and is in the junior kindergarten class of the school.

Murat is five years and 8 months old. He is a kind boy who generally gets along well with his friends. He does not bother anyone during circle times. Follow the instructions of the teachers most of the time as far as I observed. Derya says his friends like Murat, and he likes to make jokes to get his friends to laugh. He is a

responsible child who likes to add creativity into the games. He has no siblings. His mother works as a training coach at a bank.

Selin is a 5 years 11 months old girl. She is like a little helper for the teachers in the classroom. Her focusing and perception are salient. One can easily see that she totally focusses her attention very easily when she needs to. As Derya adds, she is an attentive child who likes to notice, examine, and express all the details around her. She also likes to make close relationships, Derya says. Selin has a younger sister. Both her parents are lawyers.

Deniz is 5 years and 3 months old. She is a quiet girl who merely speaks. She almost always chooses to play with the same girl (Beren) in the classroom. It got my attention that she generally carries a baby doll in her backpack and brings dolls in toy sharing days, too. As Derya mentions, Beren has obsessions, and she tries hard to control those obsessions so that no one realizes them. Derya adds that Beren always follows the rules in the classroom and is a leader among friends. She has a younger brother.

Sevim is a 5 years and 5 months old quiet girl who is a social one at the same time. She likes playing with girls as well as boys. She occasionally gets warnings from the teachers to listen while they are talking. Derya tells that Sevim is an emotional child who likes to help his friends. She tries to be active in the activities, yet her attention may be distracted quickly.

Ceren is 5 years and 8 months old. She is a talkative, social girl that she speaks to anybody in the classroom. She plays in different play corners with different friends. She seems like a happy child. She is keen to answer questions of teachers as well as commenting on her friends' opinions. Derya says that Ceren likes close



friendships and she gets upset quickly. Ceren has a younger sibling. Her mother does not work at the moment.

Deren is 5 years and 2 months old. She is a calm child according to my observations. She listens to her teachers in the circle discussion times yet sometimes she seems like she is not following what is going on. Derya mentions Deren choosing friends who plays in her style during play times. Also, she may have difficulty expressing herself from time to time.

Zambak is 5 years old. She might be the one with the most self-esteem and independence in the classroom. She can play with anyone in the classroom. I have that memory of her that one day the teachers explained to children that they will choose a representative of the classroom to go to the meetings in the primary with older children to discuss their needs and desires about the school. At that moment, a “lobbying” started among children, there were some candidates and followers already. Zambak wanted to be a candidate but did not ask anyone to vote for her. She took only one vote (which was from herself) at the end, but I did not see any disappointment on her face. It seemed like it was okay. And I really liked that. Derya says Zambak is loved by his friends and can play games with all children. Also, she may be a little embarrassed by adults and may have difficulties from time to time while expressing herself.

Ada is 4 years and 9 months old. She has an older sister. She is a girl who likes talking very much. She does not like physical activities very much. Derya stated that Ada is good at cognitive activities like listening, answering questions, and focusing attention.

### 3.2.3 Initial contacts with the gatekeeper

This school had a system where kindergarten classes share the same building and same administrators with primary school. To meet the principal, I made a telephone call, explained who I am, and asked if she could see me to share my interest to visit the school in March 2019. On the day, I went to visit her. I introduced myself and provided the details of my proposed thesis. I told her I want to make observations, interviews, and audio/video recordings in one of their kindergarten classes. We had a conversation for almost two hours in which we talked about both my thesis, and many other things about education and life. She told me that she cares about the social emotional development of children almost more than their academic achievements as a principal and a mother. At the end of the conversation, she said they would be happy to help me in my research. Then she called a teacher from kindergarten that told me she is the one who is more enthusiastic about mindfulness than other teachers and the coordinator of mindfulness activities at school. I told that teacher also about my research and that I want to visit her class. She said they would be happy to help. So, the first contact was satisfying, and I had thought I could start my data collection soon and finish it at about the end of the school year around June.

However, in the meetings with my advisor, we evaluated that because of the two forthcoming national holidays and end of year shows there would be a lot of mindfulness classes that would be dismissed, thus, if I start data collection in the beginning of the next semester it would be more fertile. I could start visiting the school next September. Also, there were some changes within the school.

Kindergarten classrooms moved to another building with the rest of the preschool and the above-mentioned teacher was moved away. Yet they had two other SK teachers have the same experience and would be willing to have me in their

classrooms. At this point, it was not my call to choose the teacher. My main aim was to do the research with a dedicated teacher in a supportive school, because as literature shows, teachers are more motivated to implement any kind of program when they feel supported by the school administration (Ransford et al., 2009). So, the new preschool principal called Class B's teacher to introduce me. Once again, I told her what I was planning to do, and would be grateful if they let me be in their classroom. She said she knew about me from the last year, the teacher who I initially contacted had talked with her about me, and she was okay about the whole procedure. So, the kindergarten principal told me that they are still working on their weekly schedules, she would let me know of their available times. I said I want to start my observations as soon as possible even if it is a five-minute observation; I would come every day from my house which is 20 km away to give her the message of how committed I am.

Then she called me after two days and told me that they expect me on Friday afternoons for a 30-minute observation. There seemed to have a disagreement. I wanted to go there every day for longer periods of time, and all they gave me was 30 min per week. I took a mindful breath and shared my concerns about not having enough time for the data collection. I asked her if she can re-evaluate this. She called me again like 15 minutes later saying this is what they can arrange this time. Because I did not want to be very demanding, I thanked her and hung up the phone. When I went to the school on Friday, she said I will do my observation in Class A. I did not want to ask her any more with the fear of making her offensive and not to argue. In this way, I started my data collection in September 2019.

It was every Friday afternoon for only 30 minutes. So, I visited the classroom three weeks in this schedule. After three weeks of getting to know each other with

the classroom teachers and the kindergarten principal, I wrote an email to primary school and kindergarten school principals as well as the vice principal (VP) of primary school, who is the mindfulness coordinator, and explained my research procedures again in a written form and asked them to give me the permission for visiting the classroom more often and for longer periods of time along with the lesson plans which the VP prepared. They did not reply. The next time I was going to go to kindergarten, I called the primary school principal's assistant to ask about my email. She said the kindergarten principal would talk to me when I go there. I was a little nervous this time. But she was so polite. She said they can give me three days and asked me for how long I need to stay. I said I want to observe the mindfulness activity and the play time which generally occurs right after mindfulness. She said ok, and that was the agreement. The details about the data collection details might be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Data collection details

First visit	September 27, 2019
Last visit	February 21, 2020
Total numbers of visits to the class	26
Total hours spent in the observation	71 hours
Hours spent on the road	App. 45 hours
Km's made	960 km

### 3.2.4 About the program

Turkish educational system is organized by the Ministry of Education (MoE). A sub department called General Directorate of Primary Education (GDoPE) is responsible

from the kindergartens. The school follows MoE's kindergarten program with little adaptations according to their students' changing needs. The MoE program is a flexible one allowing teachers to do such arrangements. For example, it defines the goals and objectives and let the teacher prepare her own program combining different objectives together in accordance with the themes she decides for her classroom. Similarly, the program allows the teacher to create experiences for children and to choose the learning environment (i.e., classroom or school garden) and materials according to her observations and evaluations of children (GDoPE, 2013). (See Appendix B for a weekly schedule of the class.)

For mindfulness, the vice principal of the schools Ms. Flower, prepares the lesson plans. She told me that she uses the instruction material from their mindfulness training, she searches online to create their own mindfulness program (see Appendix C for an example of a monthly mindfulness program). In the kindergarten classroom, they do mindfulness instruction every morning as part of the circle time in which they do the attendance, calendar, weather check and share the daily tasks, too, as they begin the day. The teachers also use mindfulness throughout the day on different occasions as will be mentioned in the analysis and discussion parts in detail.

### 3.3 Data collection

As Creswell states, one of the big indicators of a good qualitative study is *the in-depth understanding of the case* along with the assumption of being able to witness multiple realities that stems from constructivism (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Thus, to pursue those suggestions, I collected data from various sources. The interview with Derya was the major source of information along with classroom

observations. I also interviewed with Cemre for triangulation purposes, collected mindfulness lesson plans, and photos of children's artwork, as well. See Table 3 for a review of data collection tools regarding each research question.

Table 3. Research questions and data collection tools correspondingly

Research Questions	Data Collection Tools
Why does the teacher use mindfulness practice in her classroom?	Teacher interviews Mindfulness activity observation
How does mindfulness help children to develop SEL skills and academic skills (i.e., listening skills, focusing attention) from the perspective of the teacher?	Work samples Free/play time observations Teacher interviews (with follow up questions)
How children benefit from mindfulness practices in the sense of classroom climate from the perspective of the teacher?	Documentation (Lesson Plans) Teacher interviews (with follow up questions)
Methodological and Triangulation Tools	Interview with the partner teacher Researcher's journal

### 3.3.1 Interview

One of the best and most used ways of naturalistic data collection method is qualitative interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Semi-structured interview method was used in this research. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a specific topic to learn about (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Since my central research question is to understand how a teacher perceives her mindfulness practice, my major data collection technique was interview. Other means of data collection were thought to be supportive techniques. As mentioned by Creswell (2013) questions might be

formed during the process. Accordingly, I prepared some questions before the conversations and generated follow up questions during the session as well as following interviews. Casual conversations and in-passing clarifications; occurs during the observation part of a research. (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

### 3.3.2 Observations

As the case studies occur in the real-world settings (Yin, 2018) this is an opportunity not to be missed to collect data. Observations were made to fully understand the teacher's practices as she based her comments of mindfulness practice. That is, she was referencing the mindfulness practices they do in the circle time as well as other times of the day, and it was highly important to observe those times so that I could fully understand the context. I observed the classroom during their mindfulness activities mostly as a part of circle time that they fix the calendar, check, and record the weather and distribute the daily responsibilities of their classroom (e.g., the leader of the line, leader for recycling, leader for daily routines chart etc.). I was also in the classroom to observe them during free play times, sometimes in their large group discussion times, and sometimes in branch lessons. I had a chance to see different reflections of mindfulness during these times.

When I first started the classroom visits, I took my little notebook with me to take notes. I was only writing down keywords to remember and write the long versions soon after I leave the classroom, in my car (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Yet, I realized that the teachers are not very comfortable with it. Meanwhile, I was observing that they use their smartphones a lot in the classroom, not just for taking activity photos, but also for their personal use (i.e., texting and talking). Then I decided to leave my notebook and use my smartphone instead. Doing that, I felt

more blended, too. These notes included observations along with personal reflections.

### 3.3.3 Documentation - Lesson plans

As Yin (2018) suggests, documentaries would probably be applicable to any kind of case studies. That is, I asked lesson plans from the VP of the school because she was the one preparing them as the mindfulness coordinator. She gave me a monthly activity calendar, explanation of the activities, and evaluation forms they use. See Appendix D for an example of the evaluation form. Teachers sometimes use those plans as they are and sometimes re-arrange according to their classroom's needs. For instance, they choose the ones that are related to their academic themes on the day.

### 3.3.4 Physical artifacts - Work samples

Although they mostly do their mindfulness practices sitting on the carpet, after some of them, the teachers got children to draw their reflections about the activities. To get children evaluate the mindfulness activities after each one is in the lesson plans.

Derya was so attentive about it. Evaluation was often done orally and sometimes by drawing pictures. Because the teachers keep them at school for further evaluation, I photographed their pictures using my phone.

### 3.3.5 Researcher's journal

I kept a journal from the day of initial contact with the gatekeeper through the data analysis and end. I took reflexive notes about the research environment as well as my relationship with the teachers, students, and preschool principal. On these notes, I sometimes wrote how I feel in the classroom, notes for future analysis and even



discussion of the study, and other times questions to be asked in the next interview to the teacher. Here is an excerpt from my notes:

This morning after circle time, children were playing, and Cemre teacher was having a meeting with the principal while I was in the classroom with Derya. There, the desk lady rang the classroom phone to let Derya know that a child just arrived, and her parents asked a word with Derya. So, she hung up the phone and asked me if I can stay with the children for a couple of minutes. I said “Sure!” and she left. This made me so happy as it was a sign of the trust built between us.

### 3.4 Evolvement as a researcher

First, it was the researcher who determined the design of this study, which affected the whole process from data collection tools to analyze them depending on her academic and personal background. I was also aware of the fact that researcher is the main instrument in data collection and her competence and intuition has a great impact on the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Willis, 2007). Thus, there is always the potential of me being biased as a teacher with ten years of practice, as well as feeling incompetent as a new researcher. This is a pretty challenging situation that I had to stay objective as well as non-judgmental as my study topic suggests. Thus, all my readings and observations helped me to be more mindful of my actions and thoughts on the process.

As a novice researcher, I preferred to be an observer researcher instead of having a participatory role in my research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggest that researcher has two roles in a research: one as a researcher and the other is as a learner. As a researcher, one should be aware of that while she is observing the classroom from the corner or having a conversation with the participant. As a learner, she is there not as an authority but as a curious student, thus, she listens more than she talks. In line with the first role, I paid close attention

to the words Derya used not only while interviewing but also drinking coffee in the teachers' lounge as if they are prospective data pieces, and for the second, I tried to talk as less as possible and listen more. As a teacher myself, it was hard not to comment on things going on in the classroom. For instance, at times like when watching two children arguing over a toy or crying for a scratched picture, I asked Derya's opinion on how she interprets the situation and tried to understand her perspective in every aspect.

Another role of myself was being a helper in the classroom. I took photos while they did activities, helped to change children's clothes after a sweaty gym lesson. When I gained both teachers' trust, they were able to leave me with the children in the classroom if they had to rush for a few minutes, or even use the restroom. At those times, I followed whatever was going on in the classroom at that moment; sometimes watched children play, sometimes gathered them in the circle and sang songs together.

Being a novice qualitative researcher, I have to confess that I was very nervous prior to data analysis of this study. Although I was taking notes and trying to see the patterns in my data, it still seemed too big to me. However, I have then realized that my perception and understanding of the studied phenomenon was evolving along the way, especially as I read more articles and book chapters about mindfulness. Mindfulness helped me to stay focused on what I was studying on at that moment. In the beginning of the analysis of the data, I found myself accepting whatever comes out of the data. That is to say, I did not "expect" certain codes from the data, per se, but I just observed what is coming out of it. I also find skills from different competency areas of SEL in my evolving attitude, such as examining prejudices and biases, having a growth mindset, demonstrating empathy and

compassion, learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, facts. As the analysis continued with the discussion part, the need to be critical towards the data sheared me away from being non-judgmental towards data from time to time. Even my advisor wrote down a note beside a claim of mine and said: “Who are we to judge?” Indeed, who am I to judge, to infer? As those questions ascend in my mind, I feel like while doing science, trying to understand, to give a meaning to our surroundings, being humble is one merit which I as a researcher better keep in my mind along the way.

### 3.5 Rigor of the study

As Gibbs (2007) suggests, determining the quality of a research, namely validity, reliability and generalizability, stem from quantitative research. Although qualitative researchers developed some strategies to pursue validity and reliability in a qualitative manner, it is still away from a consensus, even there are contradictions and debates (Gibbs, 2007; Willis, 2007). While qualitative reliability gets a more procedural manner with the aim of a more transparent data collection and analysis, and mentioned as dependability or confirmability, validity takes names as trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Flick, 2008).

#### 3.5.1 Trustworthiness - Credibility

Qualitative validity is the process in which the researcher uses certain procedures to see the accuracy and credibility of the findings, and it happens to take place throughout the many steps of a research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The strategies that I used during data collection are explained below.

Triangulation: The most used method for qualitative authenticity is to triangulate the data source, which means getting data from various sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Golafshani, 2003). In my thesis, I tried to achieve this by conducting interviews with the partner teacher Cemre, classroom observations, lesson plans and children's drawings as means of data source. Triangulation is done not to prove if the participant is lying about the issue, but to show that people do not always behave consistently (Gibbs, 2007).

Member checking: Upon creating the codes and themes I created an Excel sheet showing the themes, sub-themes and individual codes and sent it to Derya and asked her to clarify and correct my interpretations. She said they all look fine.

Making a rich and thick definition of the data: Using the observation notes, the interviews and the researcher's journal, I tried to give as much as a thick definition of the context mindfulness was happening in relation with SEL competencies.

Clarifying the bias: The researcher bias is mentioned under the heading "Researcher's role" in this thesis. Briefly, I was in the site mainly as an observer and in cases of necessity, I helped the teachers and the children.

Presenting negative information: During the analysis, some negative codes that I was not expecting emerged and I included them in the findings section. An example to that is the fact that Derya was not as open as I thought towards "negative" situations or feelings. She continuously said that she pushes "negative thoughts" away, which totally contradicts with the "accepting without judgment" philosophy of mindfulness.

Spending enough time in the field: I have paid 26 visits to the classroom which makes 69 hours there. Also, visited the gatekeeper twice for the initial contacts and permission, and the VP twice for lesson plans. Eventually, I have decided to

leave the field with lots of experiences, repeated events, and classroom practices that would give me a vivid understanding of what is happening in the classroom with regard to mindfulness and SEL

Peer debriefing: A master's student of Department of Early Childhood Education from Boğaziçi University attended as a peer reviewer. For the whole process we discussed on the phone. I showed and told her about my themes and the codes that go under them. We discussed the interpretation of themes as well as if they make sense with reference to my research questions.

### 3.5.2 Dependability

Reliability is the degree to how consistent is the researcher within their work (Gibbs, 2007). Gibbs suggests some strategies for qualitative reliability. Checking transcriptions to make sure there are no obvious mistakes and making sure that there is no definitional drift in codes are the ones that can be listed for lone researchers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gibbs, 2007). To ensure the first criteria, I read all the transcribed data for any possible wording mistakes and run "spell checking" on the word processor. For the latter, I defined the codes as I create or re-organize them. I combined the redundant codes and re-define the new codes accordingly. Besides, as noted before, Anfora, Brown and Mangione (2002) consider triangulation as an element both for credibility and dependability of a qualitative study.

### 3.6 Review of possible ethical issues

To begin the research, I applied to Boğaziçi University Ethics Committee with a form summarizing the details of the research along with samples of teacher (Appendix E for English and Appendix F for Turkish) and parent consent forms

(Appendix G for English and Appendix H for Turkish) and a rough form of questions that I would be asking to the teacher in the interviews (Appendix I). Meanwhile, I contacted the research school, provided them with the goals and objectives of the study first orally, then in a written form via email. I started classroom observations after the official approval from the Ethics Committee arrived (Appendix J). When I first visited the classroom, Cemre introduced me to the children first, and I also told them that I go to university and am here for my homework.

However, as it is mentioned in the data gathering procedures by Creswell (2013) I had some field issues during my research. In our first meetings with the preschool principal before classroom visits, I asked her how she would like me to inform the parents, if they can arrange a meeting so that I can introduce myself and explain the research procedures and answer any possible questions. She said she would like to handle it by herself, and I started visiting the classroom. After a couple of visits to the classroom, I told the principal that I need the written consent forms from the parents, and they sent the letters home in children's bags that day. In the consent letter, permissions to interview and videotape the children during mindfulness activities and interviews were asked. When I went to the school the other day, I learned that some parents did not want their children to be interviewed or videotaped but can be observed by the researcher. Therefore, the preschool principal asked me to communicate with children as less as possible. Consequently, I was in the classroom as an observer. I did not initiate conversations with children yet helped them when they asked me for it as in, they were putting their art crafts into their school bags but could not fit them in or needed help to hang their coats on a shared hook. As it was mentioned before, it is in the nature of qualitative research that the research questions might be generated during data collection or the questions set in

the beginning of the study may change as the study continues. Thus, I changed one of my research questions that was leading me to interview the children and focused more on the teacher's perception and practices. Constant informed consents of the teachers were taken along the process. Prior to the interviews I explained the content of the questions I was going to ask on the current day, even showed them the questions if they asked to see.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

As “in-depth understanding” of the case is a defining feature for qualitative case studies (Creswell, 2013). To be able to pursue this suggestion, I collected data from various sources such as observations, interviews, lesson plans and children’s art in my research. Likewise, for a good analysis, a thorough definition of the case is made (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018), so that it would be easier to see the “themes or issues or specific situations” (Creswell, 2013). As in the nature of the qualitative studies, I was always very close to the data. I transcribed interviews and checked my notes before each observation, shaped my questions accordingly and determined the focus of the observations. Yet, after the data collection was terminated, more focused and iterative processes of data analysis started. Meanwhile, I printed out the research questions of the study and kept them available, which helped me be focused during the process. Forasmuch, analysis mainly stand on the clarity of purpose (Patton, 2015). Moreover, by winnowing the data the researcher takes out extra information that would not address the research questions directly (Creswell, 2013).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) claim that the general intention of a researcher in a qualitative study is to make meaning out of multiple sources such as text or image. However, it should be kept in mind that the researcher tries to understand the meaning that the participants make out of their situation about the case. So, it is the participant’s meaning about the case, not the researchers and that is why we do member check (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Another aspect of analysis is simultaneous procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018); while data collection is going on, the researcher may start analyzing the data,



write memos on the transcribed interview notes, and start organizing the final report. That is, while I was transcribing the recorded interviews, I was highlighting, underlining, and taking notes beside the text. I paid extra attention to look for similarities and differences in the data and at the same time the contradictions to my interpretations to double-check how my inferences are realistic and reflect what data actually tells.

Qualitative analysis is an iterative practice where the researcher divides the data into small pieces, categorizes them into codes by adapting a constant comparison, and then gathers them around in a coding hierarchy (Gibs, 2007). In the constant comparison, code is compared with previous codes, data with code, and data with data to be able to find similarities and differences within the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1968). I coded the data in various forms as appropriate. Namely I applied thematic analysis to the text data and content analysis to the visual data.

Coding is described as how you define the data you are working with by pointing passages of different lengths and parts or the whole of images collected (Gibbs, 2007). A qualitative data analysis is generally done via inductive and deductive data analysis methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While this process starts with induction; thus, creating patterns, themes, and categories from the ground first, it then transforms into deduction that the researcher goes back and checks their data to get any available data that would support each theme.

I started analyzing the data with Creswell and Creswell's (2018) proposition of 5 sequential stages for researchers for analysis. These are:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis
2. Read or look at all the data
3. Start coding all of the data

4. Generate a description and themes
5. Representing the description and themes

In the coding process, only the data collected for this study was used. The data collection procedure was based on the research questions and the literature review (Yin, 2018). Data analysis was finished through organization and transcription of interviews and other documents, coding all of them and creating the themes. Specifically, content analysis is used as a method of analyzing. Content analysis allows the researcher to analyze the observation, interviews, and media to work out what is significant in the data (Patton, 2015). Within the content analysis, thematic analysis is chosen to be able to see the patterns or themes in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 20016).

#### 4.1 Transcription and translation

I took observation and journal notes on an online note application that would allow me to display it on my other devices, that is, they were automatically transcribed. I audio recorded the conversations with the teachers and transcribed them entirely and kept the data in an online storage box.

The teachers and I talked in Turkish during the conversations, as such the transcriptions. I named codes and themes in English, but excerpts were still in Turkish in the beginning of the analysis. As I started to write down the report, I translated the data into English.

#### 4.2 Data analysis

I used several techniques in the analysis. The analysis was mainly driven by the research questions of the study with an aim of explanation building (Yin, 2018). As

explained by Yin, explanation building is the technique that the researcher analyzes the data to develop an explanation about the case. For the textual data, I applied thematic analysis which I searched for themes and categories, while adapting content analysis for the visual data. In the content analysis of the children's artifacts, my aim was not assessing the developmental levels of children in a projective manner but to explore the content in a qualitative curiosity to understand them (Merriman & Guerin, 2006). I started analyzing the data while I was transcribing my observation notes and interviews during the data collection on the Microsoft Word program. I underlined phrases and put comments beside transcribed data. When data collection was ended, a more intense and focused time of analysis started. I started using computer software for qualitative analysis, namely Atlas.ti for the analysis. Qualitative data analysis is an iterative process that the researcher goes through the phases, from coding to writing the results, several times. Using a software made the coding process much easier to highlight, name, rename and put codes into different themes many times as the analysis went on (Appendix K Atlas.ti colored codes). I used several techniques like analytic induction and deduction. In the analytic induction phase, I first read all the text data to get a sense of the story data was telling me, then started coding them. After initial coding was done, and themes started to emerge, I read the codes repeatedly, re-defined some of them to eradicate the overlaps between them. Eventually, I moved them into other themes and sub-themes that I thought would make more sense, which in this case means answering my research questions (see Appendix L for the themes and subthemes) (Merriam, 2009). I wrote memos for some of the quotations that I thought I may use at the final version of the thesis. It was the time of deduction when I went back to the raw data to see if there were any additional phrases to support my themes. In the meantime, I

“played” with the data as I created visual figures and hierarchical trees to see different relations among the themes (Yin, 2018).

#### 4.2.1 Thematic analysis

There are many methods for qualitative data analysis which thematic analysis (TA) is one of the most preferred one within content analysis. Thematic analysis is a commonly used method to “identify, analyze and report patterns (themes)” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It gives the novice researcher flexibility to work on the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

To the analysis process, I started with “open coding”, meaning I coded every piece of data that I thought would be related to the research questions of the study (Merriam, 2009). Then I read the data several times, coding, re-coding, merging some codes and splitting when necessary. Using the TA, I started to see the patterns, so that I created the first overarching themes. Then went back to the data to look for other codes and to reorganize the existing ones into different categories.

#### 4.2 Making connections

In the beginning of the analysis, I took a “generous” manner to code the phrases and parts of the data that would be related to my research questions. While I create codes, I defined each of them and then applied it to all the other pages of data to see if the same codes are applicable to the other times or events. As the coding continues through pages, first ideas of themes about why the teacher uses mindfulness and how it is useful in the classroom culture, per se, started to spring in my mind. Whilst I read the codes and the transcribed data again and again, the story of the classroom started to make sense.

During the analysis, I did classification and categorization several times in order to strengthen the emerging themes, thus, to find more data to support them. I deleted some codes and combined some others. At the end, I created a codebook that I applied to the whole data.

#### 4.3 Transforming the data

As Willis, Jost and Nilakanta (2007) suggests, making meaning out of data is an emergent process in qualitative research. Thus, it evolves and emerges throughout the study. There is not a recommended route to follow. Rather, the meaning emerges from the researcher's exploration of the data and is built in the study's context. In the first step, I read all the written data and tried to understand what it is about. I directed my attention to the parts that I thought would be helpful to answer my research questions and coded them. Secondly, I attempted to determine the main elements and spectacle the connections among them. As I started writing up the findings, I adopted a more critical and systematic approach towards the data. In the third phase, I interpreted the data which I went beyond description and tried to understand the teacher's feelings and thoughts from within the data with an empathetic manner.

#### 4.4 Interpretation

Interpretation refers to the process of interpreting the findings and trying to explain the "what does it mean" question. In other words, it is the attempt of making sense of the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). It is the researcher's inferences of what is important in the data and where the attention should be focused (Willig, 2014). Alternatively, as Spivak (1997, p. xxiii) puts it, interpretation is the "introduction of the meaning". It begins even before leaving the field as the researcher takes notes on

her transcriptions (Patton, 2015). In the empathic interpretation which I have adopted in my analysis, the aim is to amplify the meaning rather than explaining “what is it really about” (Willig, 2014). In line with that, I tried to make meaning of the data by trying to elucidate it with a manner of answering the question “what does that mean for my research questions”. Also, I realized that as I continue writing the analysis section, my ideas about the data have evolved to its latest version.

#### 4.5 Reflexivity

Qualitative research is a circular and blurred method that the purpose or the tools may evolve throughout the study. This evolution, together with the frameworks of analysis, highly depends on the researcher. This dependency causes a major principle in qualitative design; reflexivity (Willis, Jost & Nilakanta, 2007). Reflexivity refers to the relations between the researcher and the participant and how that dialectical process affects the research context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It is the process that the researcher critically reflects on herself (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The qualitative researcher has to pay ongoing attention to understand the research context as well as making up several decisions rather than following prescribed steps to implement. This continues improvisation, problem framing, and implementation construct the reflective research (Willis, Jost & Nilakanta, 2007).

From the first day of field work to the last, I was very careful about being reflexive when it comes to my presence in the classroom. Also, I kept a reflexive researcher’s journal that I wrote down my reflexive notes and my feelings in the classroom. I always tried to be critical about how the relationship between me and the teacher influenced the interviews and observations. Furthermore, “Personal journey” and “Researcher’s role” parts of this thesis were written with an attempt of

demonstrating my reflexivity efforts. I am aware of the fact that qualitative research is a subjective one. That is why the researcher has to be aware of and constantly remind herself her cultural, social, political, and ideological perspectives she holds during the fieldwork (Patton, 2015).

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS

In my thesis, I observed a classroom during their routine mindfulness times, circle times and play times as well as occasional branch lessons. I did interviews with the classroom teachers, collected lesson plans and some of children's artwork. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) claim that the themes should be in line with the goal of the research so that they become the answers to our research questions. Upon analyzing the data set, I concluded with four themes: Mindfulness for the Teacher, Mindfulness for Children (SEL) and Mindfulness for Academic Learning. (See Figure 2). The Turkish scripts of the data excerpts which I have used below are given in the Appendix M.

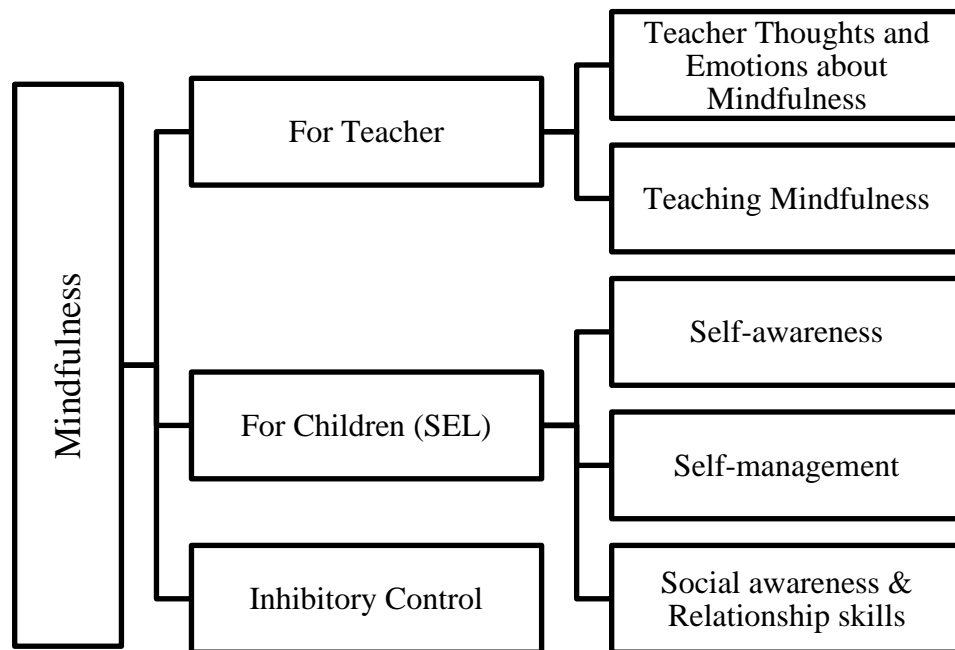


Fig. 2 Themes and sub-themes emerged from the data analysis



### 5.1 An example mindfulness lesson in the classroom

During my visits to the classroom, mindfulness lessons were done in the mornings almost always. If I need to start from the beginning, children and teachers were meeting in the school cafeteria as children arrive and join the breakfast, that was also the time I would come to the school, too. After the breakfast, they would come upstairs where their classroom was with their coats and backpacks and change shoes and hang their coats and bags. When they came into the classroom, they would directly sit at the carpet as a circle which they do their morning circle time in which they fix the calendar, the weather graph, and share the duties of the classroom. Just after, they would start the mindfulness practice.

Generally, formal mindfulness practices would last for 5-10 minutes or sometimes longer. The teacher starts the mindfulness practice by asking children to sit in a comfortable position without bothering any friends. Upon children's settling, she gets them to take two or three deep breaths, then ask them to close their eyes if they are okay with it. Later, she generally does a body scan which starts from the toes and goes up to head. In body scans, she sometimes let children touch their body parts as she names them and other times, she would ask them to squeeze those parts and then release them so that it would be easier for children to feel their bodies. Another activity example is mindful walking. In that, after a short breathing session, the teacher tells children that they will go on a mindful walk in the classroom. During the walk, there should be no talking but lots of looking. Looking around the classroom with an open mind, like they have never seen the classroom before. After a few rounds in the classroom, they sit in the circle and share what they have seen that they have not realized before. After each practice, Derya asks children how the children felt during the activity to foster their awareness about themselves.

Apart from the formal instruction times in the morning routine, both Derya and Cemre used lots of opportunities to use mindful practices for themselves and the children during the day. For example, in the times children had difficulty following the instructions after a busy gym class and voices were getting louder, I saw Derya was breathing deeply as if she is trying to calm herself down. More examples of informal mindful times are from while children do table activities like drawing pictures or working on their pre-literacy lines. At those times, the teachers reminded children to focus on their breaths as they work. (In our conversations, both teachers mentioned that this keeps them focused and prevents them from distracting themselves or friends.) Another opportunity that teachers use mindful practices is when children have problems during play times, and they need to calm down because they are playing roughly with their friends or they are disappointed because of a missing toy of themselves.

## 5.2 Teacher thoughts and emotions about mindfulness

Analyzing the data, it came out that the teacher expressed that mindfulness is good for herself and she believes that applying mindfulness in her classroom has certain advantages for children as well. Thus, this theme consists of two sub-themes: Teacher's experience of mindfulness and teaching mindfulness. In the first sub-theme, I included the codes that show Derya's understanding of mindfulness, examples of her self-practices as well as the moments she believes with some aspects of mindfulness such as being non-judgmental. In the second sub-theme there are codes that are related to Derya's experiences of teaching mindfulness, her goals about mindfulness as well as her underestimation of children as she suggests that children are "too young" for practicing mindfulness.

### 5.2.1 Teacher's experience of mindfulness

In this sub-theme, I included codes that Derya describes as her self-practices, her understanding of mindfulness as being in the moment, her thoughts about how mindfulness is important for herself, as well the points that she falls into contradiction with the common definition of mindfulness.

During the conversations with Derya, she was so eager to tell me that she practices mindfulness in her daily life a lot. She mentioned the times she used to practice yoga and that she has been using mindfulness since then. She mentioned things that she appreciates like the water pouring into her body in the shower or a safe job that she goes every day. As will be seen in the following excerpt, when I asked her how she liked the mindfulness training they got in the school, she implied that practicing mindfulness was already a natural part of her life that she had even got bored during the training.

There was already something coming from inside me like this, I was doing it before. For example, there is this activity called 'liked and disliked moments. I do that. The things I like, I try to increase them. I think about them. I am a person who makes time for that. That is why I got bored by that training.

In our conversations, Derya mentioned that before mindfulness, she was having difficulty focusing in the moment but wandering around the past and the future, which then, according to her accounts, she used to experience a lot of stress. On the other hand, she now reports that by practicing mindfulness she is more in the present moment with an awareness of herself and surrounding. When I asked her, what is mindfulness meant to her, she says:

To keep it in balance... Because I was dwelling on the future all the time. 'I shall do that after this, this and that...'. Doing that, I was missing the moment. Then I cannot catch it and get stressed out, I cannot do that. That way I cannot sustain some things. But when you stay in the moment your mind is at peace. Whatever future is going to bring to you, it brings anyway.

One thing that got my attention while she was talking about her perception of mindfulness was that she relates mostly the positive moments to it. So, for a better and deeper understanding I asked her if mindfulness is seeing everything in a good way or else what is it. She replies:

To notice that you are living. To be aware that I am living. That a flying bird is passing there, a sound is coming from back there... but sometimes not thinking about any of it either. And sometimes... I am not hearing those sounds now, I am not seeing that bird, I am focusing on myself now. I am living in this world. That I have to inhale. And if there are other thoughts, slowing them down.

Conversations like that led me to create another code in the analysis, contradiction with the definition. It seems to me that she sometimes is at variance with the definition of mindfulness both in her own practices and with children especially in challenging situations. That is, in the definition of mindfulness, there are two main things: “being in the moment, non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p.145). However, although she gives importance to the first part of the definition, she confesses that she is having difficulty being non-judgmental to her emotions such as anger as she describes below.

Everybody has a sensitive point. When I am done unfairness, I lose myself, I turn into a total stranger. I mean, at that moment no mindfulness is left. There I would like to use it. I cannot use it. I want to use it too but... it is very hard. I understand the children as well. That you have had such tantrums. Or if we tell a child who has had a temper tantrum ‘use this’, s/he cannot use. You get lost there. Even I, as an adult, do not remember such ‘I need to stay at this moment’, ‘I should not think’, ‘Let me count till 10 in my mind’, ‘let me do this and that’, ‘let me breathe’ etc. I mean, at that moment I want to call every name in the book. It is very hard to control. Maybe one has to work a lot.

Similarly, if she has a thought that she does not like very much in her mind, she either “postpones it” or “pushes it away”. She does not want to pay attention to it. Obviously, she finds it difficult to be non-judgmental towards that thought. The below excerpt is an example of it.

I can postpone that thought with mindfulness. I mean, I push it. Saying ‘I do not want to think of you’, you send that thought off. You push it. It gets off your mind. I mean, it is like, like I am doing that in my mind: I say, ‘I do not want to think of it at this moment’ and then I push it.

Teacher’s own experiences of mindfulness was one of the most frequently mentioned topics of our conversations with Derya. She claims that she has been practicing mindfulness even before she has got the formal education at the school she works, and she enjoys it. Both her account and my observations show that her definition of mindfulness revolves around the concept of “being in the moment” while she has some problems being non-judgmental and accepting the challenging moments.

Regarding the first sub-theme of mindfulness for teacher, it is seen that mindfulness is mostly about being in the moment for Derya, and although she is struggling with accepting whatever comes in a non-judgmental manner in the moment, she still values mindfulness a lot that she keeps practicing.

### 5.2.2 Teaching mindfulness

The second sub-theme that emerged from the data is teaching mindfulness. This sub-theme brings together Derya’s thoughts about teaching mindfulness in her classroom and her experiences on that, her goals, and objectives about mindfulness, and some of her thoughts on children being too young for mindfulness.

As presented in the first sub-theme, Derya practices mindfulness in her civil life, and anticipates that this is a prerequisite for a teacher to do it in her classroom. In our conversations, she repeatedly said that “success” of the mindfulness program is deeply related to the teacher’s attitude. That is, Derya considers that whether a teacher likes mindfulness or not, uses mindfulness for herself or not, or if she believes in it or not makes a difference. I asked her why? Can not a teacher use

something in her classroom that she does not necessarily do in her life? Because, as teachers, we do not always do the things that we exclusively experience in our personal lives. For example, even a teacher who is not a good reader will read to her students in the classroom often and she would still encourage them to read by themselves in the classroom. The dialog between herself and me explains this code better:

Me: Do you think that the teacher should be using mindfulness in her/ his personal/daily life for its practice to be successful?

Derya: I think s/he should.

Ben: Why? Can you not do something which you do not practice?

Derya: You can... [She thinks.]

Me: But you say that s/he should be practicing in this...?

Derya: You cannot. Or ... I mean... Now, I am thinking about it. Nope, s/he cannot anyway. That teacher would do it only for the sake of doing it. Yes. If s/he is not practicing it, if it does not exist in her/his life, s/he is not doing it. I mean, if s/he is not embracing this idea, if the idea (and) activities of mindfulness are not feeling good to her/him... If s/he is saying that it has no use... Because if s/he thinks that it has benefits, then s/he would use it in her/his life too. If it is not feeling good, then s/he will be doing it in the classroom just for the sake of doing it. Will it be effective then? Or s/he will not want to do it. I think like that.

Another important aspect of Derya's teaching experience is her goals and objectives about mindfulness. She puts her objective as improving the awareness of children via mindfulness as well as using it as much as possible during the day. In a conversation, I asked her what her goal of mindfulness is. She answered as:

To develop their awareness. Their awareness of the whole world. Because sometimes they are very straight, they cannot see those differences, or they cannot feel them. For them to feel their awareness in terms of feelings, too. I think these should be our primary goals with mindfulness.

The other goal of her about mindfulness is to use it in every chance during the daily routines and activities. She points out that planning should be done in a way

that they do not have only a morning session of mindfulness, instead, they should incorporate mindfulness into the other learning areas (for example, Turkish language class).

For instance, during the book activity. Book... ‘What sort of a texture does it have? Does it have a scent? What does it make you feel when you touch it? Does it remind you of something?’ etc. Such awareness... The awareness of the materials and provisions, etc.

Despite her own positive experiences and the fact that she wants to use mindfulness with children in every possible situation, Derya sounds like she underestimates children about mindfulness somehow. She expressed her beliefs that kindergarteners are too young for such an experience. For example, in a conversation, she first talked about her goals about mindfulness that she would like to achieve with her class, then she appreciated children’s imagination, and then while she was talking about children including mindfulness in their daily lives, she said “when they grow up”. Not now.

Similarly, one day they did “calm and quiet place” practice during mindfulness time. In this activity children were asked to close their eyes, dream a favorite place for themselves so that they could “go” and feel safe there in the future challenging times. It seemed to me that concepts and wording were too abstract for children at this age so that they could not get the idea very well. For instance, she did not explain how children are supposed to “go” to their safe place in the future. What does it mean to go to a place in one’s mind? Later that day, during our conversation with Derya, I asked her opinion about today’s activity, how was it developmentally appropriate. I thought the presentation of the activity was problematic rather than the content. But she did not consider if they could have done it differently. Instead, she claimed that children were too young for this experience. She said maybe this was too abstract for children, they need to get older to comprehend such an experience:

I mean, a quiet and calm place...within themselves... they need to stay there. I mean... This is something abstract. How do they generally get relaxed? Playing, drawing.... (But) this is rather abstract. Maybe they should grow up a bit for it. But they shall be aware of it too. Maybe in the future when they grow up...

To sum up the second theme, there are three aspects of teaching experience according to the data analysis. First, Derya believes that for mindfulness practice to be successful, the teacher should apply it in her personal life prior to teaching in the classroom. Secondly, she has two goals about mindfulness: improving awareness of children via mindfulness and incorporating mindfulness into other learning areas and routines of the classroom. Thirdly, Derya happens to be underestimating children as she stated that they are “too young” for mindfulness practice.

### 5.3 Mindfulness for children (SEL)

The second theme developed out of the data is Mindfulness for children. In this theme, I collected the codes about SEL. The general idea of this theme is that the teacher expressed that practicing mindfulness is useful for children regarding their SEL skills. Derya had a lot to say about how mindfulness helps children to improve their SEL skills. She pointed out that mindfulness help children to develop self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and developmental skills that help academic learning. Thus, the theme consists of four sub-themes: self-awareness; self-management; and social awareness and relationship skills.

Below, an observation note from a morning mindfulness activity of the teacher with children is added.

After the morning routine of calendar and weather checks, Derya told children that it is mindfulness time and asked them to close their eyes and relax. Many of them did. She got them to take three deep breaths from their nose and



exhale through their mouths. Then she said, “I invite you to this moment. Be where your body is.” After a minute, she said they could open their eyes, and asked them how they felt. Answers included “happy”, “joyful”. After that, she went on asking more questions: “Ok, what do you do when you feel unhappy?” Children replied, “I draw pictures.”, “I play.” After listening to all the answers, Derya told the children that another way to feel better when they are unhappy is practicing mindfulness, what they had just done altogether.

### 5.3.1 Self-awareness

Self-awareness is one of the five skills of SEL. It is about being able to identify emotions and how they have an impact on behaviors. As it is mentioned in the first theme, Derya gives a lot of importance to self-awareness of children. My observations also show that she has done many discussions with children about emotions in the classroom. For example, prior to the activity of “calm and quiet place”, Derya asked children: “What do you do when you are unhappy?” Children replied, “I draw pictures.”, “I play.” Then, Derya told them her own unhappiness that morning. She was driving to school with her infant son and a car behind them was annoying her by beeping constantly. She said, she got really angry but as soon as she realized that emotion, she took a few deep breaths and decided not to pay attention to that car anymore. After that, she taught children about the calm and quiet place inside them that they may visit in their hard times.

During a conversation, I was asking her opinion on how children experience mindfulness, and her reply reflects the importance that she gives to the self-awareness of them:

For instance, İnci. Stopping, for instance, I am thinking, 'I can do this at the moment, I should stay silent, I am sad now, but my sadness can pass in a while, I was too sad for this' etc.

In another conversation, we were talking about how they conclude their activities. Derya tells they do an evaluation part to talk about the awareness that cultivated from that activity:

After each practice, 'How did it feel? How are you feeling?' Because after each practice a new awareness can form in children. In us, too.

Another aspect of the self-awareness stemmed from the data is body awareness. As it is known, there are many activities about body awareness in the mindfulness programs. For instance, one day, they did an activity that Derya called "My beloved body." It was a kind of traditional body scan which is used in many meditation and mindfulness programs with the difference of they were sending their love to the body parts. As she was beginning with "feel your feet", she then continued with "my beloved feet" and so on. She shared her ideas about body awareness as well:

What matters in mindfulness, what I aim in this group, is that they focus on their bodies at that moment, breath, control their bodies, be aware that they can manage their bodies.

Similarly, in line with her goal of using mindfulness as much as possible, while children were sitting around the table and doing a coloring page, Derya was guiding them to pay attention to their breaths and relax their bodies. She was saying: "Let us focus on our breath when we are painting. Let us relax our bodies."

In this sub-theme, it is an attempt to show the teacher's thoughts and accounts about self-awareness of children. According to her, self-awareness is being aware of one's emotions as well as their body and how those affect their behaviors. She implies that helping children improve their awareness is an important facet of mindfulness practice.

### 5.3.2 Self-management

Self-management is about being able to regulate our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors according to the different situations. I had a chance to attend a nice lesson about regulating emotions. In a lesson I was observing, Cemre was leading the mindfulness lesson. She talked about the ‘negative’ emotions with a metaphor of soap bubbles. She asked children to think about a negative emotion they had that day or the day before and put it into the bubble. Now blow your bubble (children pretended that they do), then let it flow in the air. Watch it flow for a while and then see what happens. It pops. She then summarized that our negative emotions are like bubbles too; they appear, get bigger and bigger, stay with us for a while, then they disappear.

According to both my observations and Derya’s accounts, mindfulness is mostly used as a stress-management tool in the classroom in so many cases. As she reports, they use mindfulness in that sense mostly when children have emotions like anger or rage by focusing on their breaths or bodies. I asked with which children they use it most, she said Berk and Mert. As Derya describes, focusing on their bodies is a good way to calm down instead of traditional “time out” in which children are usually asked to sit in a specified corner of the classroom and “think about” their behavior that caused a trouble:

Berk. Very often. Because he is a child that suddenly snaps, and suddenly calms down as well. But there should be something that steps in immediately at that moment for him. We use it (mindfulness) as a tool. ‘Calm down a little. Think now’. For instance, there is a break-time system, there are break times. Children experience an issue of situation and there ‘come sit down a bit. think’. We a lot... because thinking is so abstract. At least they shall focus on their bodies, on themselves. They shall stop at that moment; their nerves shall calm down entirely. They are calmer when we talk after that.

For Mert, she reports that he is an emotional child who experiences his emotions in a higher intensity most of the time. Thus, using mindfulness as a self-

management strategy by focusing on his breath helps him calm down in those emotional moments.

There is Mert. He lives his fears, joys, and sorrows in a very high intensity. For example, we do this [mindfulness] with him; ‘Breathe a little now, calm down.’ He is using it. The family also supports this, it is something he does at home. We are trying a little way to calm him down. So, stay in the moment, be quiet... Because it goes to other concerns. It grows bigger and bigger... Mert uses it, for example.

Indeed, I had a chance to observe Mert in a dramatic moment during a play time, too. It was a toy day that children brought a toy from home to share with their friends and Mert had brought a miniature bowling set with the pins and the ball. As they played bowling with two friends, Mert thought that some pins were missing, and he started crying dramatically and went to inform the teacher. In the meanwhile, the other two counted the pins and figured out there are no missing pins. At the same time, Derya was asking him to inhale and exhale, and think about his “calm and quiet” place to calm down. A few minutes later, he was calm enough to go back to the game.

Briefing on the sub-theme of self-management, both the teacher’s accounts and my observations pointed out the often use of mindfulness as a self-management tool within the classroom. It is used mostly when children need to deal with their challenging emotions such as anger or rage.

### 5.3.3 Social awareness and relationship skills

Derya reported that they made least use of mindfulness for two SEL competencies, social awareness, and relationship skills. Briefly, social awareness is about being able to take others’ perspective and to empathize with people from different backgrounds and cultures; to feel compassion for them. Derya shared social

awareness instances mainly in the form of perspective taking as in understanding that different people may have different emotions:

It is good in the sense of them listening to each other, understanding each other's emotions, and that everybody lives differently.

Similarly, while talking about an activity that children said good things about their friends, Cemre said:

We generally are better at finding negative or missing things about each other. Yet we find it difficult to see the positive things. It is the same for children. This exercise [Say something nice about your friends] was one that would foster this awareness. I think those kinds of practices will develop their awareness about themselves, about each other, and about communication.

Relationship skills are about being able to create and sustain healthy and rewarding relationships with different individuals and groups. For the relationship skills the teacher mentioned the activities where children give feedback to each other about their personal attributes and express their good will towards their friends, which are about creating and sustaining healthy relations. Below are two examples of relationship skills activities that both Derya shared and I observed in the classroom. First is the teacher's account, and second is children's drawing that they make good wishes for other children.

This is an activity that will strengthen friendships. Regardless, whatever happens in between, you have a very good trait. Being able to say that to your friend. Now, jealousy and ambitions have started within themselves, these conflicts are also in our class at this age. This is the time we need it. We have such an event in mindfulness. A friend's good feature. We will say something that will make our friends happy at today's activity. I think it will really strengthen their friendships and approach each other with good intentions. This is a nice thing, for example. So, would it come to our mind if it were not for mindfulness? "Say something that will make your friend happy." It would not. It was something we would not take into our plans.

Derya instructed the activity as in the following and asked children to draw their "good wishes." There are two examples of those pictures that children made good wishes for their friends and other children in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Imagine a little child in front of your eyes. Make good wishes to him/her. Now imagine someone you love. Make good wishes to him/her. Now imagine someone you do not like very much. Make good wishes to him/her (Derya gives examples such as I wish your health, I wish you happiness). Think about yourself now, make good wishes to yourself. You can wish your beautiful wishes to everyone around you, to your school, to your surroundings. You can wish everyone to be safe and happy. Let us open our eyes now. Let us picture our best wishes.

Further, Cemre shared her ideas about how mindfulness help children to develop relationship skills as in following sentences:

As their awareness increases, it reflects on their communication styles, on the way they talk. When there are things like his/her friend does not like, they are more able to stop themselves from doing these things. If they do not like certain things, they do not do it to their friends either. That is, their empathy skills are developing in general.



Fig. 3 Drawing of Berk

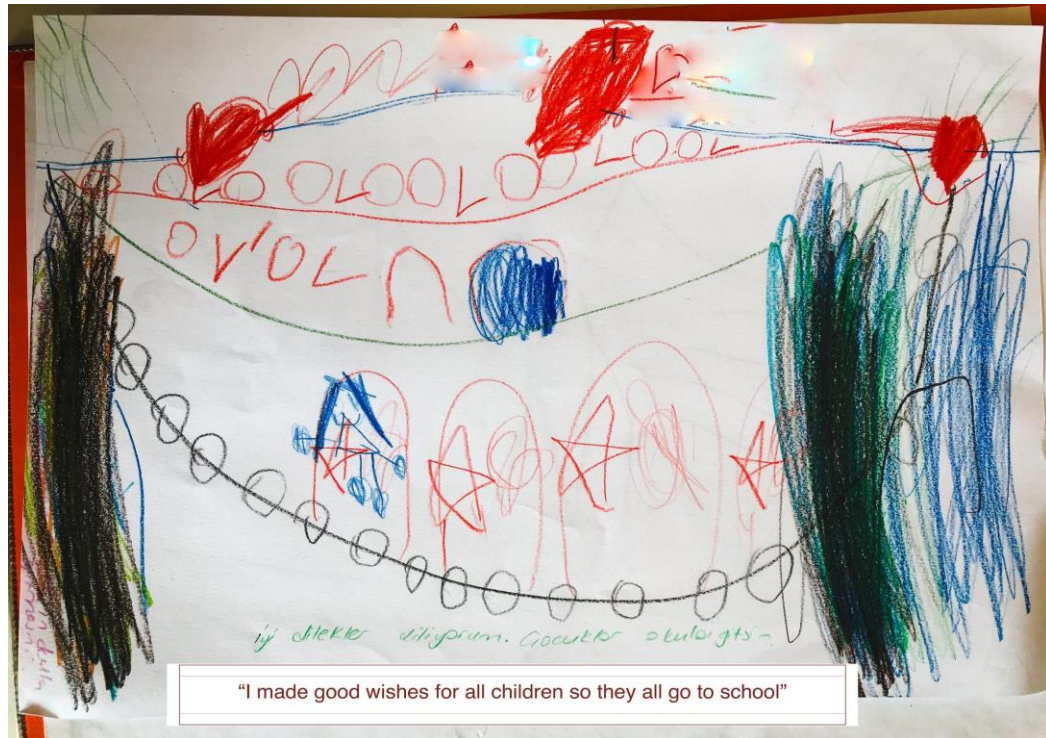


Fig. 4 Drawing of Inci

In this sub-theme, I included codes related to social awareness as well as relationship skills of SEL competencies. As it is seen, social awareness is about understanding the other as such they may experience different emotions at different times. Besides, relationship skills refer to giving feedback and expressing kindness towards the others.

#### 5.4 Inhibitory control

According to the analysis of the data, mindfulness has much of a use when it comes to the executive function skills, namely inhibitory control of children from the point of the teacher. In this sub-theme, I gathered the codes that are related to the inhibitory control skills such as sitting still without bothering themselves or others, focusing on a task to finish, and listening to their teacher and friends during the lessons. To begin with, Derya articulated that to get children sitting still is one of her primary goals.

Our first goal is for them to be able to stay still and quiet without moving their bodies. Because these children could not do that. You have seen it when they first arrived, they were more active, they could not sit still during a circle time. Especially Berk, he is fidgety. But it is our first goal to just stay still there calmly.

Secondly, in our conversations with Derya, she mentioned that to get children to be able to stay focused for longer periods is a significant goal of herself. She explained that this is something that they can definitely make use of in any activities in the classroom. Wondering if she observes any changes in children within focusing, I asked her in our last conversation, and she said she does:

I think their attention span is longer. When we start with breathing, the concentration really increases.

Children's listening to the teacher and each other came up as the third code in this sub-theme. Derya's accounts show that listening to the teacher is a desired activity for all the learning moments independent from the subject.

Listening to each other is better, to listen to the teacher is one click better. Because at that moment we are sitting, and they know what to do while sitting. There is also a mindfulness routine, and we do it there. We need to listen to each other when we chat while sitting at the Turkish language event [too].

In this sub-theme, I put together the data that are related to the inhibitory control skills such as being able to sit still and listen to the teacher during the lessons and focusing for longer times to finish a given task, which in turn help them do better in learning environments.



## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

In this research, my aim was to understand how mindfulness practices are used in a kindergarten class to support children's social and emotional needs as well as its usage for academic development and the classroom climate from a teacher's eyes. Qualitative analysis led the data set into two themes: Mindfulness for teachers, and mindfulness for children (SEL). Below, I will try to answer the research questions of the study with the help of the themes emerged from the data analysis accompanied by the previous research.

Previous research showed that practicing mindfulness has benefits both teachers and children in different aspects such as personal gratitude, SEL skills of children including executive functioning and eventually classroom climate (Jennings, 2015). The discussion will be built by addressing the important findings and providing the links with the current literature.

#### 6.1 Why does the teacher use mindfulness practice in her classroom?

From the analysis of interviews, observations, and documentation two means of motivation culminated. First, the teacher practices mindfulness and expresses her beliefs it is good for her, second, she appreciates the value of practicing it in the classroom.

About the teacher's personal experience, following topics will be discussed in the following sections: Self-practice and being in the moment, importance of mindfulness, contradiction with the definition of mindfulness.

#### 6.1.1 Self-practice and being in the moment

Teachers often carry a significant amount of burden on their shoulders as they are expected to keep up with the official curriculum while teaching lots of rules and routines about the school procedures. Simultaneously, they are supposed to be role models for the students when it comes to social emotional competencies. Eventually, all those responsibilities cause them to experience an ongoing stress and even burnout (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). Conversely but not surprisingly, it is shown by numerous research that teacher well-being plays a major role both for teacher's social emotional competencies and the interactions of teachers with children (Lawlor, 2016). Jennings (2015) suggests that emotional well-being of the teacher is crucial for classroom environment and building relationships with children. Also, Meiklejohn (2012) suggests, mindfulness programs are beneficial for teacher's resilience and social and emotional competencies. Conforming that, the current study showed that the teacher considers that mindfulness is a good practice for her own well-being (Hwang et al., 2017). The teacher described her experience as being less stressed due to being more in the moment instead of wandering between the past and the future. This is similar to how Young (2016) describes being non-present; it involves thoughts like either remembering (which stems from the past) or planning, rehearsing, and fantasizing (which belong to the future).

#### 6.1.2 Importance of mindfulness

As suggested by Jennings (2015) mindfulness as well as self-compassion of the teacher have a positive effect on the teacher's social and emotional competence, which in turn affects the classroom quality. As the data analysis of the current study revealed, the teacher values mindfulness a lot as a result of her personal practice of it.

Considering the fact that teacher's perception has an impact on the success of any curricula, it would be suggested that teacher's self-practice of mindfulness has benefits for the mindfulness program for children to be applied in a more regular and qualified basis as well (Durlak et al., 2011).

### 6.1.3 Contradiction with the definition of mindfulness

Mindfulness consists of two components; being aware of the present moment and accepting whatever the feelings and thoughts bring without judging them (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Although the teacher often shared positive experiences about mindfulness, according to the analysis of interviews and my observations, the teacher has some problems with the "being non-judgmental, accepting whatever comes at the moment" part of mindfulness. As far as I understand and as she articulated, mindfulness for the teacher is like being grateful. During our conversations, I realized that Derya identifies mindfulness with positive moments most of the time. When it comes to difficult emotions like anger for instance, there seems to be two different situations: in-class and out-of-class. According to the analysis of both my observations and the interviews with her, she stated that she can practice mindfulness in stressful moments in the classroom. However, she also pointed out that she tries to use mindfulness out-of-classroom, yet not to be successful all the time. She explains this difference with being a teacher. She says that, as a teacher, she has to control her behaviors in the classroom anyways, whether she practices mindfulness or not. Then she adds with a smile, maybe teaching is a mindful job already.

Lawlor (2016) explains the mindful state of mind by not to aim to avoid, change or push away difficult emotions. Lawlor claims that it is a state of acting more reflectively instead of reactively. Similarly, Bishop and his colleagues (2004)

emphasizes that mindfulness is not suppressing thoughts and emotions as if they are distractions but observing them as objects for observation. Derya seems to contradict with that feature of mindfulness. What I understand from the above quote is that she has a partial awareness of her inability to practice mindfulness in its full potential. She realizes that she cannot use mindfulness in challenging moments, she cannot calm herself down, especially in out of classroom situations. It seems to me that she rather over-identifies with her emotions at that moment which prevents her from acting reflectively (Bishop et al.,2004). And yet, she seems to assume that mindfulness is supposed to help her not to think; “I should not think” she says. Looking at the literature, instead of not thinking, Shinzen Young (2016, p.33) suggests “to turn toward the judgment and deconstruct it.” He explains that by using mindfulness, the judgment might be broken into its components (emotional body sensations, mental talk, and mental image) and sort it out. Then, you observe each part in detail that eventually the judgment melts away.

## 6.2 Teaching mindfulness

The other sub-theme emerged from the data to explain the teacher’s motivation is the teacher’s thoughts and beliefs about teaching mindfulness. Derya considers that mindfulness is good for children as it is for herself. There are three important findings emerged when it comes to teacher’s ideas of teaching mindfulness. One is that Derya stated her strong beliefs about the tight connection between believing in mindfulness and teaching it. The second is her planning and goals about mindfulness. And the last finding covers her conflict about the theory of mindfulness and her application with young children.

### 6.2.1 “You cannot teach if you do not believe it”

To begin with, Derya believes that to apply mindfulness in the classroom, a teacher should be practicing it in her personal life first. This is a perfect match with Shapiro, Rechtschaffen and de Sousa (2016), who argue that to teach mindfulness in the classroom, teachers should practice it before as a prerequisite. This is what Jennings and her colleagues (2012) suggest as well. They propose that teaching contemplative practices (i.e., mindfulness) to teachers first may get them ready to use those practices with their students either in the form of formal instructions or by mindful teaching. Similarly, Moreno (2017) claims that a teacher's practice of mindfulness would bring authenticity and expertise to her teaching it in the classroom. What is more, another study shows that mindfulness conducted by the classroom teacher is more beneficial for academic development (Diekstra, 2008). On the other hand, Weare (2014) claims that although teacher incorporation is vital, it is not the end of the story. Then she points to the need of a mindfulness curriculum.

### 6.2.2 Planning and goals

Secondly, Derya pointed out that mindfulness is a helpful tool to develop awareness in children. She tries to create as many opportunities as possible for children to practice it throughout the daily routines and activities. As Moreno (2017) reveals when teachers and the school team have a goal of personal growth for their students, a mindfulness approach would ethically manifest. Moreover, the teacher's tendency of using mindfulness in every chance has a place in the mindfulness literature. For example, it is suggested that the person who practices mindfulness is better to do it as much as possible throughout the day other than the formal practice time (Bishop et al., 2004; Lawlor, 2016). Meiklejohn et al. (2012) also emphasize the repetitive

practice of mindfulness to see its effectiveness in children's developmental skills. Furthermore, it is shown that integrating mindfulness to the overall school curriculum is more beneficial compared to stand alone lessons (Battistich, 2008; Weare, 2004).

### 6.2.3 "They are too young" or being in the moment vs not now

Lastly, similar to the finding that the teacher contradicts the second aspect of mindfulness (being non-judgmental), she has a belief that kindergarten children are "too young" for mindfulness practice as well. As far as I understand, she perceives her role as an "introducer" of mindfulness right now. Many times, in our conversations, she used the phrase "when they grow up", not now. It might be speculated that this time she seems to contradict with the first part of the mindfulness (being in the moment). That is, it seems like she perceives mindfulness as an experience-based activity for children that they can follow the instructions about physical parts of it like breathing or body scans, yet not able to fully comprehend the cognitive aspects as in creating a safe space within themselves. In our conversations with the teacher about why children "could not understand" that exact activity, she reported that the activity was too abstract for the children. She explained that children tend to understand and express themselves through physical experiences such as drawing or playing. Thus, asking them to imagine a place within their body was too much for them. Although this might be the case, I think there was still something to be done to support children's practice. As I saw during my observations, the program they were using would hardly be considered as developmentally appropriate or child friendly. The teacher used only verbal instructions and did not use any tools or prompts (except from one time when they

did mindful eating exercise with raisins). I would speculate that using as varied materials as possible such as sensory experiences, bodily movements, games, images, music, video clips, and stories would make the experience more concrete for different types of learners (Jennings et al., 2012). For example, in the mindfulness-based social emotional curriculum of OM-K, the researchers used age-related materials and activities with 3-year-old children, and they accumulated significant improvements in variables such as emotion regulation, resilience together with prosocial behaviors (Kim et al., 2020).

Still, this entire study shows her perception about how mindfulness is beneficial for children. As also was shown by Flook et al. (2015) that a 12-week mindfulness-based intervention program with children of 4 -5 years old results with a higher teacher reported social emotional development along with higher learning rates. In another study conducted with kindergarten children, it was shown that the children in a mindfulness based SEL program had more benefits from the control group children even after six months follow up such as fewer externalizing problems (i.e., aggressiveness and hyperactive behavior), less anxiety and internalizing problems, less academic problems (i.e., attention deficits) (Moreno- Gómez & Cejudo, 2019). Similarly, as Crooks, Bax, Delaney, Kim and Shokoohi (2020) suggested, kindergarten children who joined the MindUp program showed decrease in behavioral problems, and development in the social and study skills, along with a decrease in executive functioning skills. That is, research shows that even the youngest ages of children seem to benefit from mindfulness.

When it comes to the teacher's contradiction between the theory and practice, I assume that this points to the importance of the firm understanding of the theoretical foundations and definitions of mindfulness by teachers (Feuerborn &

Gueldner, 2019). Another explanation would be that it points to the discrepancies between knowledge and practice which brings us to another important factor of any program, following up. That is to say, although getting trained the teachers and starting to use the program is important, teachers could make a lot of use from follow up meetings, observations, and feedback. Whether Derya has the knowledge but does not give enough importance to turn the knowledge into practice or she does not have the core knowledge is left unanswered.

### 6.3 How does mindfulness help children to develop SEL from the perspective of the teacher?

Results of the current study align with the research findings that are discussed in the literature review that suggest mindfulness may have a use when it comes to develop SEL skills of children (Lawlor, 2016; Maloney et al., 2016). In this study, the aim was to understand this process from the point of the classroom teacher.

Reviewing the literature, it might be observed that the relation between mindfulness and SEL is an emergent area of education in the last few years. For example, Lawlor (2016) has discussed this issue by examining each five SEL competencies and how mindfulness can support them. Below is the SEL and mindfulness discussion of the current study and its relation to the related literature.

Self-awareness: Self-awareness is described as being aware of one's thoughts and emotions and adjusting them when necessary (Denham & Brown, 2010; Gayl, 2017). According to Lawlor (2016), mindfulness can allow one to explore his inner states, let them see the underlying emotions, motivations, and values which eventually transforms to self-awareness. In this study, the analysis of the teacher interviews, classroom observations and documentations suggest that self-awareness



occurs as emotional awareness as well as body awareness. What the teacher often shared was that self-awareness of children is so important to her, that she explained her efforts to include an evaluation part after each activity because of its help in self-awareness. This result aligns with what Jackman and her colleagues found. In a study they conducted to see the effectiveness of a mindfulness based SEL curriculum (OM) they concluded that the program improves children's bodily and emotional awareness (Jackman et al., 2019).

Self-management: According to a review that is conducted by Feuerborn and Gueldner (2019), self-management is the most represented competency of CASEL in SEL curricula. Feuerborn and Gueldner argue the reason behind that might be self-management being the most needed competency in schools. Similar to that, this study shows that self-management is used mostly as a calming strategy in challenging and stressful times for children and teachers in the kindergarten. While the teacher interview analysis showed that she uses mindfulness to calm children down when they are angry or upset throughout the day, analysis of my observations revealed that the teacher uses mindfulness to calm herself down in stressful times for herself as well. Self-management is claimed to be developing through mindful breathing and mindful movement (e.g., mindful walking, yoga, tai chi) (Lawlor, 2016). In line with that, analysis of the observations revealed that mindful breathing was done almost every day, with fewer number of mindful activities in the course of the research.

Social awareness and relationship skills: Results of the study shows that social awareness and relationship skill competencies were the least mentioned areas of SEL by the teacher. Comparably, social awareness was found to be the smallest presented construct among the other SEL competencies in SEL curricula in a review

study (Feuerborn & Gueldner, 2019). One reason for that might be the lack of variances in the mindfulness activities of the observed classroom. As Lawlor (2016) suggests, activities such as compassion practices (i.e., loving kindness meditation), storytelling, literature and dramatic arts are good ways to support social awareness. However, during the time of my research, I witnessed only two or three such activities in the classroom. Considering the fact that mindful observation is associated with more empathy, it would be suggested to increase those types of experiences in mindfulness programs to further develop social awareness (Dekeyser et al., 2008).

About the relationship skills, the results of this study suggest that mindfulness helps children with expressing their appreciation towards others as well as giving positive feedback to friends. Much of the studies examining the relation between mindfulness and relationship skills focused on adult populations, in particular on romantic relations or medical environments such as patient care (Lawlor, 2016). For example, in an adult study, it was found that trait mindfulness is associated with relatedness, openness, and interpersonal closeness (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Responsible decision making: The results of the study did not find any significant data about children's responsible decision-making skill of SEL from the perspective of the teacher. Although the analysis of the observations showed that mindfulness is used in times of crises, and even the teacher mentioned the use of mindfulness in the events of disagreements among children, she described that usage of mindfulness as a tool to help children to calm down, to cope with the stress that is being experienced at the given time, that is, as more of a self-management skill. Actually, this finding is similar to what Feuerborn and Gueldner showed in a review study. They analyzed 40 studies about mindfulness and SEL and they concluded that

self-management is the most represented SEL skill among other four competency areas (Feuerborn & Gueldner, 2019). I consider that this result should not be interpreted as mindfulness does not have a use in responsible decision-making. Instead, it should be remembered that the aim of this study is to understand one teacher's perspective of using mindfulness and SEL.

6.4 How does mindfulness help children to develop inhibitory control skills (i.e., sitting still, listening skills, focusing attention) from the perspective of the teacher? In this section, the relation of SEL skills and trait mindfulness to inhibitory control skills such as sitting still, listening, and focusing will be discussed. As it is known, early childhood years, namely preschool and kindergarten years are the times that children are supposed to sit still, follow directions, attend to discussions and focusing attention (Denham & Brown, 2010; Bailey, Stickle, Brion-Meisels & Jones, 2019). It was already shown by earlier research that SEL improves academic skills of children by creating safe, caring, well-managed and cooperative environments (Denham & Brown, 2010; Jennings et al., 2012; Zins et al., 2004). Likewise, Fantuzzo and his colleagues (2004) showed that there is a correlation between children's focusing ability and their self-regulation skills, along with the ability of staying focused and positive peer relations. In other words, many learning tasks in the classroom will be facilitated easily if the child understands himself and others, can correctly absorb social information to make correct decisions, interact well and regulate his/her behavior (Denham & Brown, 2010).

One challenge of this thesis study has been that although one of the research questions were asked as 'how mindfulness support children's academic skills from the point of the teacher', as literature review and data analysis were going on, it has

been come to my attention that the skills I wanted to understand (i.e., sitting still, listening, focusing attention) have been discussed in different names in the research history. As included in the literature review part of the thesis, those skills were mentioned as learning approaches in mid 1990s, then discussed within the SEL framework under the competency of self-management as a ‘non-emotional’ aspect of it in 2010 (Kagan, Moore & Bredekamp, 1995; Denham & Brown, 2010). Yet, more recently, it has been encountered that those skills are discussed more separately, namely as inhibitory control skills within the executive function (EF) (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2011). EF refers to a group of skills that help children and adults to focus on multiple sources of information in a given time, observe mistakes, make decisions according to the current information, re-evaluate the plans when necessary, and stand up to the urge to let frustration show the way to hurried actions (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2011). EF skills are working memory, inhibitory control, and mental or cognitive flexibility. Working memory is the skill which let us keep and manipulate information in our minds in a short time (Bailey & Jones, 2019). It is the ability that makes children to be able to follow multiple step instructions at school and planning. IC refers to the skills that enable children to filter and master their thoughts and impetus. IC helps children to select and focus sustain their attention as well as to resist distractions (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2011). And the last EF component is cognitive flexibility. Cognitive flexibility is the ability to change one’s perspective, the way of thinking and adjusting to changing situations (Diamond, 2013).

Apart from the fact that SEL programs create a better learning environment for everybody, there is another and deeper way to look at the SEL framework

nowadays. At this point, Bailey and her colleagues (2019) propose a new approach to SEL. Instead of a “one-size-fits-all” model, they suggest that SEL should respond to developmental needs. According to that model, EF skills appear around the age of four, and they are essential for self-regulation, adaptation to school and also play the role of a building block for other SEL skills. Within the EF, inhibitory control is the one function that covers the skills like sitting still, listening to the teacher, and focusing on a given task to finish it (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2011). Similarly, Teper, Segal and Inzlicht (2014) put forward that mindfulness improves executive control. Even further, Lawlor (2016) suggests that mindfulness helps children to be able to sit still in the tempting situations. In accordance with that, the results of the current study shows that mindfulness supports children with their inhibitory skills such as sitting still, focusing the attention on a task, and being able to listen to the teacher and friends while they talk. Considering the research indicates that supporting children in preschool and kindergarten is crucial as developmental stages occur with the principle of stage salience, the tasks specific to one stage have to be comprehended before moving onto the next. That is, it would be claimed that the value of using mindfulness incorporated with SEL should be recognized better when it comes to supporting children’s development (Bailey & Jones, 2019).

6.5 How do children benefit from mindfulness in the sense of classroom climate from the perspective of the teacher?

Building a respectful and supportive community is in the heart of a nourishing climate in the classrooms. Achieving that requires many components. Previous research shows that classroom climate is created mostly by the teacher (McBer,

2001). Also, it is proven that teacher's well-being and the quality of teacher-student relationship improves the classroom climate (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Moreover, Durlak et al. (2011) claims that SEL occurs through teachers. According to the analysis of the current research, mindfulness may contribute to the classroom climate in several ways. Before moving on, we need to remember that there are two sides in a classroom: children and the teacher. As shown by a group of scientists from Yale University, a social emotional well-being program has benefits to improve classroom climate for both actors (Bradley et al., 2018).

First of all, as discussed above, the teacher shares her ideas as that by practicing mindfulness, she feels more "in the moment" as well as develops her self-awareness (i.e., awareness of the thoughts and emotions and their influence on the behavior). Being aware of the situation is the first step before any reaction. As argued by Salovey et al. (2001), the first step of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is to recognize and express the feelings. Although the teacher articulated that she has difficulty using mindfulness in times of crises especially with adults, analysis of the observations showed that she actually uses it to calm herself down when children did not behave accordingly (e.g., not following the instructions) throughout the day. That, in turn, affects her relationship with the children. This aligns with previous research. Meiklejohn et al. (2012) suggests that mindfulness improves teachers' well-being, their classroom management abilities, and creates and pursues supportive relationships with their students. Moreover, it was also revealed by research that teachers' well-being has a positive effect on the relationships they have with the students, thus in the classroom climate (Jennings, 2015; Lam & Wong, 2017). A calm teacher, a better classroom climate.

In the second place, a similar situation is valid for children as well. As the results show and discussion is made in the above sections of this chapter, mindfulness is beneficial for children to improve many of their SEL skills, namely: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills. What is more, it is shown that SEL skills contribute to the quality of the relationships around children (Elias et al.,1997). López-González et al. (2016), states that individual benefits of mindfulness for teachers and students positively influence their relationships among each other in the classroom, as follows the classroom climate, and eventually academic performance of children. Similarly, another research shows that a mindfulness-based program improves school adaptation, behavioral problems within the school, and self-knowledge and autonomy of kindergarten children (Moreno-Gómez, Luna & Cejudo, 2020).

In sum, it is argued that practicing mindfulness along with SEL would contribute to the classroom climate by assuring teacher well-being, supporting relationships among the actors of the classroom, and improving SEL of children. That is, SEL and mindfulness intervene on both sides (i.e., children and teacher) of the relations in a positive way which then create a positive classroom climate.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS

In this study, my aim was to understand a kindergarten teacher's perceptions about mindfulness and SEL in several ways such as her motivation to apply mindfulness, her perception of how children benefit from mindfulness regarding their SEL and academic skills, and her perception of how using mindfulness help them creating the classroom climate. In this chapter, I bring together the contributions of the current study, acknowledging the limitations and make recommendations for future research as well as schools and educational policy with respect to mindfulness-based school programs.

#### 7.1 Conclusions

Although this qualitative case study does not aim to generalize the results to the entire educational community, there sure are lessons to learn from it. The results give us a framework to understand a teacher's perception of how mindfulness helps herself, her students, and the classroom climate.

One of the conclusions of this study is that the teacher likes to practice mindfulness. This positive look is a must for any program. The research shows that for good quality applications and for the fidelity purposes, teachers need to believe in the benefits of the program (Brackett et al., 2012). From the beginning to the end of the field work of this study, the teacher mentioned how much she enjoys and benefits from mindfulness individually, with regard to focus into the moment, not to wander around the past and the future and frees from anxiety stemming from that practice.



Along with herself, the teacher takes it seriously to apply mindfulness in the classroom with the children. She mentions her major goals as developing awareness and improving focus in children. However, although she seems enthusiastic about using mindfulness, there is obviously a problem with the understanding of mindfulness. One of the explanations could be that even though she seemed to complete the required courses and received the well-structured training, there seems to be a gap between what she has gained in that training and her practices in the classroom. She might choose the best-fit practices of her and her students' needs as well. Another explanation could be that the theoretical structure that leads to a well-understanding was not comprehensively built in the training. As stated by Feuerborn and Gueldner (2019) it is crucial to make sure that the mindfulness leader gets the definition as well as theoretical backgrounds of mindfulness well. Along with an absolute teacher training, it is crucial to have a well-organized and developmentally appropriate curriculum of mindfulness. Set regular, short periods of time every morning, create lots of opportunities for children to practice throughout the day, and use child friendly, quality materials incorporating various learning styles. Buying an already existing mindfulness based SEL curricula (e.g., AI's Pals, High Scope's Educational Approach for Preschool, I Can Problem Solve, the Incredible Years Series, PATHS and so on) that CASEL has reviewed might be another option for schools (CASEL, 2013).

Another inference of the study is related to children's SEL skills. It seems that mindfulness has much of a use in that sense. As the results show, the teacher observes that children benefit from mindfulness. Although she has not expressed a good balance among them, she explicitly mentioned the four competency areas of SEL such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship

skills. Moreover, SEL skills along with inhibitory control functions (as in to be able to sit in one's spot, focus on a given task, and listen to the one speaking) that are developed through mindfulness practice, seem to be helpful for academic learning of children, as well. In fact, having a mindful teacher and children, competent children regarding their SEL skills, and positive relationships among the teacher and children contributes to a warm and supporting environment in the classroom. This positive classroom climate probably makes both mindfulness and SEL exercise easier to conduct as well as academic studies which include discussion sessions, listening carefully and focusing attention on a given task in the classroom. Thus, I would suggest that developing programs that incorporate mindfulness and SEL for early years may be very advantageous to support teachers and children as well as schools as a whole.

In sum, using mindfulness seems to have many advantages for the teacher, children, classroom climate and academic development. Using mindfulness to improve the teacher's well-being and support children in their SEL and academic skills as well as a nourishing classroom climate is worth considering.

## 7.2 Significance and implications

I consider that this study has several contributions to the ECE literature of Turkey both conceptually and methodologically. First of all, this qualitative study which combines mindfulness and SEL is among the firsts conducted in a Turkish setting. Mindfulness, along with SEL are relatively new areas in Turkey, so that the research about them is also yet limited. It is my expectation to get some attention to the subject to be further explored by ECE researchers. Moreover, choosing a qualitative exploratory case study design was an intentional move. My intention was to

understand the phenomenon of how a teacher perceives mindfulness regarding herself, her students, and the classroom climate. I think, understanding the phenomenon as well as proving its effectiveness in some quantitative ways are or should be equally important in academia.

When it comes to the findings, I think that trying to see the phenomenon of mindfulness as a supporting tool for SEL skills from a teacher's eyes is valuable in many ways. As indicated by the results, the teacher cares about this phenomenon which is a great start for any program to be successful. Secondly, she enjoys mindfulness to be more focused in the moment and be less stressed, which in turn has an effect on her relationships with her students. That is, even if she did not practice mindfulness in the classroom with the children, it would still make a difference. Thirdly, it is important that she states that using such a tool has many benefits for her students and for the overall classroom climate. I consider that having the teacher think that mindfulness is a useful tool to support SEL skills of children is hopeful in a way of creating more programs that combines contemplative practices and SEL curricula to support children (and teachers).

I assume that, instead of coming to a certain conclusion, this thesis research has potential to help stating the situation in Turkey and make recommendations for the future. Both existence and the results of this study were believed to be inspirational for researchers, school leaders and teachers to investigate and use mindfulness along with SEL programs more.

### 7.3 Limitations of the study

Working as a preschool teacher for 10 years, I know that having a “foreigner” in the classroom is not the most comfortable situation. Although I tried very hard to break

that ice (I did chit-chats, drank coffee in the teacher's hall, brought little presents for the new year etc.) I never felt welcome in the classroom. During the recorded conversations, I felt like the teacher was not willing to share details especially regarding the evaluation of the mindfulness program or school policies and I had to insist politely to get a detailed answer. One reason to that might be the parents' attitudes towards a researcher in the classroom. Despite a few supporters, many parents did not allow me to engage with their children, to interview or videotape them. That effected my research in a fundamental way. That is, I was planning to do my research not just with the teacher but also with the children. My earlier intention was to videotape the mindfulness lessons as well as interviewing children in order to include their perspectives in the study, too. However, when many of the parents were hesitant to such an idea, I had to change the study by omitting some parts along the research questions, literature review, and data collection tools. Nevertheless, one might ask why was I that persistent to stay at this school in spite of all these limitations. One argument to that is that there was not indeed another school that met my criteria. My aim was to understand how mindfulness helps children to develop skills as in SEL and inhibitory control, as well as understanding how the classroom climate is affected from all that form the point of a classroom teacher. As mentioned in the methods section of the thesis, other schools I have encountered during my search of the field that apply mindfulness were doing them through psychological counselors generally on a weekly basis. To be able to reach my aim, I needed a classroom teacher who practices mindfulness with her students as part of their daily routine and throughout the day, if possible.

Another limitation that I observed is related to the training of the teacher and lack of a well-structured and developmentally appropriate program of mindfulness.

Regarding the teacher, as discussed in the results and discussion, there seems a gap between the foundations and mechanisms of mindfulness and practice of the teacher. Program wise, developmental needs of the children were not considered, goals and objectives were not clear and there was not an evaluation procedure. Lack of an absolute training of the teacher and a well-defined program may cause a problem with the fidelity of the program. Hence it was all up to the teacher's initiative to decide how often and how long to implement the mindfulness practice, it would eventually lessen the impact of the program (Greenberg et al, 2018).

#### 7.4 Recommendations

##### 7.4.1 For researchers

This research may guide future research in many ways. To begin with, the researchers in Turkey must be aware of the constraints of conducting research in a private school. That is to say, as they decide to enter the field, they should make sure that there will be no problems with their participation in their data collection. As it is the case in my research, even though the gatekeeper gives the permission, power of the parents should be well evaluated, and plans should be done accordingly.

Personally, I could have been more prepared for such a situation by organizing a meeting with the parents that I would introduce myself face to face and explain to them what the data collection process would look like along with answering any questions that they may have. An alternative to a physical meeting (because it was hard to find a common time for all the parents) would have been recording a video by myself with the same content mentioned for a physical meeting and send it out to the parents before I walked into the classroom. By this way, I assume that it would have been more assuring for them.

Secondly, to better understand and be able to come to a precise conclusion, mindfulness training of the teacher, and program structure should be well examined prior to beginning the study. Thus, the researcher should make sure that the program features correspond to the ground for their research aim. So, the results would be more dependent on the variables in the study. Another way to expand the research would be to study with teachers who are active participants of the mindfulness planning.

This study was designed as a single case study which is conducted with a kindergarten teacher and her students in her classroom at a private school in Istanbul. More research should be conducted to understand the teacher's perception of how mindfulness could be used within SEL programs in different age groups, different types of school (i.e., public schools) and with children from different socio-economic groups. Another consideration of area might be designing long term studies which include schools that implement SEL and mindfulness for longer times.

Lastly, as this study suggests that mindfulness has numerous positive outcomes both for children and teachers, more research could be done including children and the school faculty as well as parents. As mentioned in the limitations section, my aim was to include the children in my study and try to understand their perspective along with the teacher's. This could be done in future research, so that seeing the truth from multiple perspectives would be more of a possibility.

#### 7.4.2 For policy makers and schools

In the light of this research, there are some recommendations to be done for the policy makers and the schools in the field of early childhood education (ECE).

Firstly, it would be suggested to include mindfulness and or SEL framework in the

teacher training departments of the universities. So that, those teachers will begin the profession with the research-based tools that are helpful for their own wellbeing as well as their student's social, emotional, and academic success. Secondly, it would be suggested to have as many ECE teachers as possible to get mindfulness based SEL programs as an in-service training. And lastly, it would be suggested to the ECE schools to either buy pre-made mindfulness based SEL programs or create their own, according to the developmental needs of their students. That way, mindfulness-based programs would reach to as many teachers and students as possible.

## APPENDIX A

### MINDFULNESS PROGRAMS

Program	Country	Age Group	Number of years in use	Program principals, methods, length, and supporting
Inner Kids Program  www.susankaisergreenland.com	United States	Pre-K-8	11	<p>The New ABCs—Attention, Balance and Compassion—are taught through games, activities, instruction and sharing to develop: (1) Awareness of inner experience (thoughts, emotions, and physical) sensations); (2) awareness of outer experience (people, places and things); (3) awareness of both together without blending the two.</p> <p>Program length and frequency varies depending on students' ages and the needs of the facility. In general, young children meet twice a week for 30-min sessions for 8 weeks. Older children meet once a week for approx. 45 min for 10–12 weeks.</p> <p>A general formula is used of play, followed by introspection, and then sharing to help children to: better understand their introspective experience; relate it to their daily lives; and understand the importance of helping within both their families and their communities.</p>
				<p>Peer-reviewed research to date:</p> <p>Flook, et al. (2010). Effects of mindful awareness practices on executive functions in elementary school children. <i>Journal of Applied School Psychology</i>, 26(1), 70–95. doi:10.1080/15377900903379125</p>
Inner Resilience Program (IRP)	United States	K-8, teachers, parents, and administrators	9	<p>The Inner Resilience Program's mission is to cultivate the inner lives of students, teachers, and schools by integrating social and emotional learning with contemplative practice. The mindfulness-based approaches used in IRP help create healthy environments for teaching and learning by assisting both teachers and students to hone the skills of self-regulation, attention, and caring for others. The underlying principle of teaching specific skills to teachers and students through sustained practice and the development of a mindful classroom environment may provide value-added benefits because of the emphasis on repeated practice of skills over time in the context of a caring learning community. The implementation of IRP includes weekend residential retreats for school staff, professional development workshops, individual stress reduction sessions, and parent workshops at school sites. IRP has also developed a K-8 curriculum: Building Resilience from the Inside Out. The curriculum involves a 10-h training and follow-up staff development visits to each individual classroom of the teachers trained. The IRP framework has the following essential ingredients: regular classroom instruction to develop students' social, emotional and inner life skills; a more mindful approach to behavior and classroom management aligned with Inner Resilience</p>



				<p>methods; a safe, orderly and peaceful classroom climate which values reflection; mindfulness-based practices integrated throughout the curriculum; Inner Resilience workshops that inform and engage parents; professional development for staff on their personal learning of these skills as well as support for implementing this work in the classroom. The focus of mindfulness educational practices is grounded in contemplative neuroscience including the concept of neuroplasticity—the notion that the brain is the key organ in the body that is designed to change in response to experience and training of various kinds. Marrying the idea of neuroplasticity with the kinds of mental training offered by contemplative practices, educators are learning just how much we can train the mind and change our brains/bodies in the directions of greater attentional focus, emotional calm, awareness, and insight, and caring for others.</p>
				<p>Peer-reviewed research to date:</p> <p>Metis Associates. (2011). Building inner resilience in teachers and their students: results of the inner resilience pilot program. Available at Inner Resilience Program web site: <a href="http://innerresilience.org/documents/IRP_Pilot_Program_Results_AERA2011_updated_6.9.pdf">http://innerresilience.org/documents/IRP_Pilot_Program_Results_AERA2011_updated_6.9.pdf</a></p>
<p>Learning to BREATHE</p> <p><a href="http://learning2breathe.org">http://learning2breathe.org</a></p>	United States	Adolescents	4	<p>Learning to BREATHE is a universal school-based prevention program for adolescents which integrates principles of social and emotional learning with mindfulness components of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990). It offers students a way to empower themselves as they grapple with the psychological tasks of adolescence. The program also rests on theoretical developments from therapies that focus on emotion regulation skills, notably acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes et al. 1999) mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT; Segal, Williams and Teasdale 2002), and dialectic behavior therapy (DBT; Linehan 1993).</p> <p>Program goals:</p> <p>(1) To provide universal, developmentally appropriate mindfulness instruction that fosters mental health and wellness</p> <p>(2) To enhance capacity for emotion regulation</p> <p>(3) To strengthen attention</p> <p>(4) To expand the repertoire of skills for stress management</p> <p>(5) To help students integrate mindfulness into everyday life</p> <p>Six lessons are built around the BREATHE acronym, and each lesson has a core theme. The six themes include body awareness, understanding and working with thoughts, understanding, and working with feelings, integrating awareness of thoughts feelings and bodily sensations, reducing harmful judgments, and integrating mindful awareness into daily life. The program includes six</p>

				structured class sessions, which may be adapted for different groups and ages. The lessons are structured to take approximately 30–45 min each but may be adapted to accommodate space and time limitations.
				Peer-reviewed research to date:  Broderick and Metz (2009). Learning to BREATHE: A pilot trial of a mindfulness curriculum for adolescents. <i>Advances in School Mental Health Promotion</i> , 2, 35–46.
Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) <a href="http://www.mindfulnessinschools.org">www.mindfulnessinschools.org</a>	England	Age 14–18 years	3	The backbone of this curriculum is a 9-week course. Core MBSR/MBCT teachings are distilled and made accessible for an adolescent audience. Teachings include mindfulness of breath, body scan, mindful eating, mindful movement, mindfulness of thought and sound, several variations on the 3 min silence, and mindful texting. The program is offered during normal school lessons.
				Research to date:  Huppert and Johnson (2010). A controlled trial of mindfulness training in schools: The importance of practice for an impact on well-being. <i>Journal of Positive Psychology</i> , 5, 264–274. doi:10.1080/17439761003794148  See the MiSP website for internal research that as yet is not peer-reviewed.
Mindful Schools <a href="http://www.mindfulschools.org">www.mindfulschools.org</a>	United States	K-12	5	The mission of Mindful Schools, located in Oakland, California, is to integrate mindfulness into education. The program involves direct teaching to students in K-12 schools and through trainings for educators. In its first 5 years,  Mindful Schools has brought an in-class program to over 11,000 children in 41 schools, 71% of which serve low-income students. The 15-session program delivered over 8 weeks engages children through lessons including mindfulness of sound, breath, body, emotions, test taking, generosity, appreciation, kindness and caring, and others. They offer parent classes at the schools where they teach and in the coming year will provide a mindfulness manual for parents. They have trained 1,500 educators through a Mindfulness Fundamentals Course, a Curriculum Course, and conferences.
				Research to date:  Liehr and Diaz (2010). A pilot study examining the effect of mindfulness on depression and anxiety for minority children. <i>Archives of Psychiatric Nursing</i> , 24, 69–71. doi:10.1016/j.apnu.2009.10.001  See the Mindful Schools website for internal research that as yet is not peer-reviewed.
MindUP <a href="http://www.thehaw_n_foundation.org">www.thehaw_n_foundation.org</a>	United States	Pre-K-8	8	MindUP is a classroom-tested, evidence-based curriculum framed around 15 easily implemented lessons that foster social and emotional awareness, enhance psychological well-being, and promote academic success. MindUP pursues objectives roughly parallel to those of the five-point framework of competencies laid out in the work of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The core practice of MindUP is

				<p>mindful breathing which is ideally done three times a day (for a few minutes each time) at intervals reflective of classroom culture and needs. The program is currently being used in about 250 schools throughout North America.</p> <p>Research may be found at the MindUP website.</p>
				<p>Peer-reviewed research to date:</p> <p>The following study is on an earlier and different version of MindUp, called Mindfulness Education. See the MindUp website for research on the current version that as yet is not peer-reviewed.</p> <p>Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor (2010). The effects of a mindfulness-based education program on pre- and early adolescents' well-being and social and emotional competence. <i>Mindfulness</i>, 1, 137–151.</p>
Sfat Hakeshev (The Mindfulness Language)	Israel	Ages 6–13 years, parents and teachers	18	Goals include mindful learning (experiential awareness and mind–body practices) as a way to develop cognitive and emotional skills; guide students to “stop”, “tune in”, “pay attention to what’s inside”; and teach constructive rest as a useful catalyst in cognitive learning. Methods include mindfulness of breath, body boundaries, body sensations, postures and movements, sounds, emotions and imagery processes.
				Research to date: not available
Still Quiet Place  www.stillquietplace.com/	United States	Pre-K-12, parents and teachers	10	This program offers age-appropriate mindfulness and inquiry-based practices for school age children. It focuses on developing mindful awareness to support participants in responding rather than reacting to difficult situations, and in cultivating peace and happiness. A typical session consists of a mindfulness practice, discussion of the practice, a wiggle or stretch, discussion of the application of mindfulness in responding to upset, and cultivating joy, and review of home practice. Mindfulness practices taught include awareness of: Breath, Body, Thoughts, Feelings, Loving Kindness, and Walking, as well as Yoga, Mindfulness in Daily life, and Responding vs. Reacting. Sessions are 45 min to 1½ h every week for 8 weeks depending on the setting.
				<p>Peer-reviewed research to date:</p> <p>Saltzman and Goldin (2008). Mindfulness based stress reduction for school-age children. In: S.C. Hayes and L.A. Greco (eds.), <i>Acceptance and mindfulness interventions for children, adolescents, and families</i> (pp.139–161). Oakland: Context Press/New Harbinger</p>
Stressed Teens  www.stressedteens.com	United States	Ages 13–18 years	7	Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens (MBSR-T) is closely related to the traditional MBSR program created by Jon Kabat-Zinn and colleagues at the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester, MA. The primary focus is on formal and informal mindfulness practices. Specific mindfulness practices taught include: Body scan, walking meditation, sitting meditation, sitting meditation with heartfulness, Yoga, Mindful stopping, Mindful homework/test taking.

				This is an 8-week program for 1.5–2 h per week.
				Peer-reviewed research to date:  Biegel et al. (2009). Mindfulness-based stress reduction for the treatment of adolescent psychiatric outpatients: a randomized clinical trial. <i>Journal of Clinical and Consulting Psychology</i> , 77, 855–866.
Wellness Works in Schools™  www.wellnessworksinschools.com	United States	Ages 3–18 years	11	Wellness Works in Schools™ is a health and wellness program based on mindful awareness principles and practices. The program responds to contemporary educational challenges by helping students develop the needed skills to address important issues like stress, mental health, emotional balance, behavior, and learning readiness. Wellness Works embraces a whole person/whole child perspective and is grounded on universal health and wellness principles, validated by contemporary medical and science-based research. Wellness Works in the classroom is generally presented in a series of 8–15 sessions, 45–50 min each, with sequenced lessons (according to grade level and readiness). Students explore emotions, intentions, goals, resilience, and problem-solving skills. An integral part of our program is our Wellness Works: Classroom Integration Teacher Training™ (CITT). The training is conducted in a series of sessions, approximately 8–12 h, to assist teachers in strengthening their mindfulness skills and, with practice, more fully integrating mindful awareness approaches in their classrooms for both themselves and their students.
				Research to date:  See the website of Wellness Works in Schools™ for internal research that is not as yet peer reviewed.

Note: Reprinted from Meiklejohn, J., Phillips, C., Freedman, M. L., Griffin, M. L., Biegel, G., Roach, A., ... & Isberg, R. (2012). Integrating mindfulness training into K-12 education: Fostering the resilience of teachers and students. *Mindfulness*, 3(4), 291-307.

## APPENDIX B

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF THE CLASSROOM

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-9:35	BREAKFAST				
1 <sup>st</sup> lesson	Cognitive	Cognitive	Movement	Cognitive	Cognitive
2 <sup>nd</sup> lesson	Chess	Cognitive	Production & Design	English	Cognitive
3 <sup>rd</sup> lesson	Cognitive	Movement	Folklore	English	Cognitive
4 <sup>th</sup> lesson	Cognitive	Creative Dance	Movement	Movement	Gym
5 <sup>th</sup> lesson	Music	Ecology	Drama	Drama	Gym
12:30-13:10	LUNCH				
6 <sup>th</sup> lesson	Music	SOBE	Visual Arts	Movement	English
7 <sup>th</sup> lesson	English	English	Cognitive	Cognitive	English
8 <sup>th</sup> lesson	English	English	English	Movement	Cognitive
9 <sup>th</sup> lesson	Movement	Club Time	English	Movement	Movement
15:30-15:55	SNACK				
15:55-16:20	DEPARTURE				

APPENDIX C

MONTHLY MINDFULNESS CALENDAR

(FOR OCTOBER 2019)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Breathing exercise	Body scan	Weather exercise	“I like” jar & “I don’t like” balloon
Mindful walking	5 New things on the way to school	Mindful listening (sounds)	Mindful listening (music)	“I like” jar & “I don’t like” balloon
Body tightening	Body map	Mindful playdough	Yoga poses	“I like” jar & “I don’t like” balloon
Bubble foam	Don’t think the pink elephant!	It’s OK to feel...	Express yourself with colors	“I like” jar & “I don’t like” balloon
Detailing a picture	Journaling	Detailing the journal	Detailing the journal	

# APPENDIX D

## MINDFULNESS EVALUATION FORM

		Adı Soyadı:						
		Ay:						
		Uygulan an Sınıf	Kolaylaştırıcı farklı ise Adı - Soyadı	Uygulanan Etkinlik	Etkinlik Süresi	Belirtmek istediğiniz zorluk	Katılmak İstemeyen çocuk(lar)	Gözleminiz / Düşünceniz
16 - 20 Eyl ül 20 19	Pazartesi							
	Salı							
	Çarşamba							
	Perşembe							
	Cuma							
23 - 27 Eyl ül 20 19	Pazartesi							
	Salı							
	Çarşamba							
	Perşembe							
	Cuma							
30 Eyl ül - 4 Ekim 20 19	Pazartesi							
	Salı							
	Çarşamba							
	Perşembe							
	Cuma							

APPENDIX E  
TEACHER CONSENT FORM  
(ENGLISH)

**PARTICIPANT (TEACHER) INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**

**Title of the research:** Using mindfulness to support children's social and emotional learning in a kindergarten: a teacher's perspective

**The institute that supports the research:** Boğaziçi University

**Project manager:** Assoc. Prof. Mine Göl-Güven

**E-mail address:** [mine.golguven@boun.edu.tr](mailto:mine.golguven@boun.edu.tr)

**Office phone:** +90 212 359 7313

**The researcher:** Hatice Doğan

**E-mail address:** [hatice.dogan@boun.edu.tr](mailto:hatice.dogan@boun.edu.tr)

**Phone number:** +90 555 --- -- --

**Project Topic:**

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a field that has started to emerge in the United States since the 1990s. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) foundation, which leads studies in this field, defines SEL as understanding and regulating emotions of children and adults; setting positive goals and achieving them; feeling and showing empathy for others; the ability to build and maintain positive relationships. CASEL defines skills in five main areas to develop SEL. These are self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship building skills, and responsible decision making.

Similarly, mindfulness is a concept that has been included in the literature in recent years. According to the most widely accepted definition, mindfulness is to pay attention to what is happening in the present moment with a special intention, without judgment. Mindfulness was mentioned as one of the concepts under the large SEL umbrella in a recently published CASEL report.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how applied mindfulness exercise and SEL skills work together in a kindergarten in Turkey. For this, classroom observations and interviews will be held at KALEV Private Kindergarten.



**Consent:**

My name is Hatice Doğan, I am a student of Boğaziçi University- Institute of Social Sciences- Early Childhood Education programme. I invite you to participate in this thesis study.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or stop working without any sanction or punishment. If there are questions that you do not want to answer during the research, you can easily tell me.

In this study, the mindfulness activities that you conduct with children in the classroom will be observed. While you do these activities with their children, as a researcher, I will observe and take notes from a quiet corner of the classroom. Meanwhile, a camera will record a video of mindfulness exercises. We will be able to follow these recordings later and have conversations with your child about the attitudes and experiences of mindfulness in general. These records will be taken to help us remember the mindfulness activities of both you and me more comfortably. In addition, I will examine your students' products (paintings, sculptures, stories, etc.) related to mindfulness and their performances in the classroom in this context. Then we will be able to chat about these products and performances.

**Privacy:**

Data collected from research participants will be kept strictly confidential, data and identity information will not be matched in any way. The names of the participants will be collected in an independent list. In addition, only researchers will be able to access the collected data. The results of this research can be used in scientific and professional publications or for educational purposes, but the identity of the participants will be kept confidential.

**Possible Risks:**

In order to relieve any possible discomfort that you may feel from the presence of an unfamiliar adult in your classroom, the first days I come to your class I will not collect data, I will give you and your students the opportunity to get to know me.

**Possible Benefits:**

It is not possible to tell in advance whether this work will benefit you and your child, and we cannot promise you this. It is likely that the research will provide information to teachers and specialists working with children about mindfulness practises. Our research findings are expected to inform policies and practices in the field of early childhood education and applied mindfulness.

**Withdrawal from the Research:**

You can refuse to participate in the study at any time, as long as it is before the data analysis begins. In this case, the information I have received from you will be destroyed.

**For your Questions:**

Before you sign this form, please ask if you have any questions about the study. Then, if you have any questions, you can ask the project manager Mine Göl-Güven (Office Phone: +90 212 359 7313). You can also consult your local ethics

committees about your rights related to the research: Boğaziçi University Human Research Ethical Sub-Committee (INAREK).

E-mail: sbinarek@boun.edu.tr

If your address and phone number change, we ask that you notify us.

I understood what was told to me and what was written above. I have / do not want to get a copy of this form (in this case the researcher will keep this copy).

Participant's Name-Surname: .....

Signature: .....

Date (day / month / year): ..... / ..... / .....

Researcher's Name-Surname: Hatice Doğan

Signature:

Date (day / month / year): .....

## APPENDIX F

### TEACHER CONSENT FORM

(TURKISH)

#### KATILIMCI (ÖĞRETMEN) BİLGİ ve ONAM FORMU

**Araştırmanın Adı:** Okul öncesinde Mindfulness ve Sosyal Duygusal Öğrenme Uygulamaları

**Araştırmayı Destekleyen Kurum:** Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

**Proje Yürütücüsü:** Mine Göl-Güven

**E-mail Adresi:** mine.golguven@boun.edu.tr

**Telefonu:** +90 212 359 7313

**Araştırmacının Adı:** Hatice Doğan

**E-mail Adresi:** haticekilavuz@gmail.com

**Telefonu:** +90 555 .....

**Proje Konusu:** Sosyal Duygusal Öğrenme (SDÖ) Amerika’da 1990’lardan itibaren yayılmaya başlamış bir alandır. Bu alanla ilgili çalışmalara liderlik eden the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) vakfı SDÖ’yü çocuk ve yetişkinlerin duyguları anlama ve düzenleme; olumlu hedefler koyma ve bunlara ulaşma; başkaları için empati hissetme ve bunu gösterebilme; olumlu ilişkiler kurup devam ettirebilme; ve sorumlu kararlar verebilme için gerekli bilgi ve becerileri edinip uygulamak olarak tanımlar. CASEL, SDÖ’yü geliştirmek için beş ana başlıkta beceriler tanımlar. Bunlar, öz farkındalık, sosyal farkındalık, öz-yönetim, ilişki kurma beceriler, ve sorumlu karar vermedir.

Benzer şekilde, mindfulness (bilinçli farkındalık) da son yıllarda alan yazında yer bulan bir kavramdır ve en çok kabul gören tanıma göre bilinçli farkındalık “şimdiki anda gerçekleşenlere özel bir niyetle, yargılamadan dikkatini vermek”tir. Yakın zamanda yayınlanan bir CASEL raporunda mindfulness büyük SDÖ şemsiyesi altındaki kavramlardan biri olarak bahsedilmiştir.

Bu tez çalışmasının amacı, Türkiye’de okul öncesi dönemde uygulanan mindfulness egzersizlerinin Sosyal Duygusal Öğrenme becerileri açısından açıklanmasıdır. Bunun için KALEV Özel Anaokulunda sınıf gözlemleri ve görüşmeler gerçekleştirilecektir.

**Onam:**

Sayın Öğretmen,

Ben Hatice Doğan, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi yüksek lisans öğrencisiyim. Sizi bu tez çalışmasına katılmaya davet ediyorum.

Bu çalışmaya katılmak tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Herhangi bir yaptırıma veya cezaya maruz kalmadan çalışmaya katılmayı reddedebilir veya çalışmayı bırakabilirsiniz. Araştırma esnasında cevap vermek istemediğiniz sorular olursa bunu bana rahatlıkla söyleyebilirsiniz.

Bu çalışmada sınıfınızdaki mindfulness faaliyetleri gözlemlenecektir. Siz öğrencilerle bu çalışmaları yaparken araştırmacı olarak ben gözlem yapıp not alacağım. Bu esnada bir kamera mindfulness egzersizlerinin video kaydını yapacak. Bu kayıtları daha sonra izleyip, sizinle kayıtlarda gördüğüm tepkileri, paylaşımları ve genel olarak mindfulness hakkında sohbet etmek isteyeceğim. Bu kayıtlar hem sizin hem de benim mindfulness aktivitelerini daha rahat hatırlamamızı sağlamak için alınacak. Ayrıca öğrencilere sınıf içerisinde mindfulness ile ilgili yaptırdığınız ürünler (resim, heykel, öykü vb.) ile sınıf içerisinde sergiledikleri performansları da bu bağlamında inceleyeceğim. Sonrasında bu ürünler ve performanslar hakkında sizinle sohbet edeceğiz.

**Gizlilik:**

Araştırmaya katılanlardan toplanan veriler tamamen gizli tutulacak, veriler ve kimlik bilgileri herhangi bir şekilde eşleştirilmeyecektir. Katılımcıların isimleri bağımsız bir listede toplanacaktır. Ayrıca toplanan verilere sadece araştırmacılar ulaşabilecektir. Bu araştırmanın sonuçları bilimsel ve profesyonel yayınlarda veya eğitim amaçlı kullanılabilir, fakat katılımcıların kimliği gizli tutulacaktır.

**Olası Riskler:**

Tanımadığınız bir yetişkinin sınıfınızdaki varlığından duyabileceğiniz olası rahatsızlık duygularını gidermek için, sınıfınıza geldiğim ilk günler veri toplamayacak, sizin ve öğrencilerinizin beni tanımanıza fırsat vereceğim.

**Olası Yararlar:**

Bu çalışmanın size bir yarar getirip getirmeyeceğini şimdiden söylemek mümkün değildir ve size bu konuda söz veremeyiz. Araştırmanın ileride öğretmenlere ve çocuklarla çalışan uzmanlara okulda mindfulness egzersizleri uygulama konusunda bilgi vermesi muhtemeldir. Araştırma bulgularımızın erken çocukluk eğitimi alanındaki politikalarına ve sınıf uygulamalarına katkıda bulunması beklenmektedir.

**Çalışmadan Çekilme:**

Verinin analizi başlamadan önce olmak şartıyla, istediğiniz zaman çalışmaya katılmaktan vazgeçebilirsiniz. Bu durumda sizden almış olduğum bilgiler imha edilecektir.

**Sorularınız İçin:**

Bu formu imzalamadan önce, çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız varsa lütfen sorun. Daha sonra sorunuz olursa, proje yürütücüsü Mine Göl-Güven'e (Tel: +90 212 359 7313) sorabilirsiniz. Araştırmayla ilgili haklarınız konusunda yerel etik kurullarına da danışabilirsiniz:

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Tezleri Etik İnceleme Komisyonu

Email: sbinarek@boun.edu.tr

Adres ve telefon numaranız değişirse, bize haber vermenizi rica ederiz.

-----  
Bana anlatılanları ve yukarıda yazılanları anladım. Bu formun bir örneğini aldım / almak istemiyorum (bu durumda araştırmacı bu kopyayı saklar).

**Katılımcının...**

Adı-Soyadı: .....

İmzası: .....

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl): ...../...../.....

**Araştırmacının...**

Adı-Soyadı: Hatice Doğan

İmzası:

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl): ...../...../.....

APPENDIX G  
PARENT CONSENT FORM  
(ENGLISH)

**Title of the research:** Using mindfulness to support children's social and emotional learning in a kindergarten: a teacher's perspective

**The institute that supports the research:** Boğaziçi University

**Project manager:** Assoc. Prof. Mine Göl-Güven

**E-mail address:** mine.golguven@boun.edu.tr

**Office phone:** +90 212 359 -- --

**The researcher:** Hatice Doğan

**E-mail address:** hatice.dogan@boun.edu.tr

**Phone number:** +90 555 --- -- --

**Project Topic:**

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a field that has started to emerge in the United States since the 1990s. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) foundation, which leads studies in this field, defines SEL as understanding and regulating emotions of children and adults; setting positive goals and achieving them; feeling and showing empathy for others; the ability to build and maintain positive relationships. CASEL defines skills in five main areas to develop SEL. These are self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship building skills, and responsible decision making.

Similarly, mindfulness is a concept that has been included in the literature in recent years. According to the most widely accepted definition, mindfulness is to pay attention to what is happening in the present moment with a special intention, without judgment. Mindfulness was mentioned as one of the concepts under the large SEL umbrella in a recently published CASEL report.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how applied mindfulness exercise and SEL skills work together in a kindergarten in Turkey. For this, classroom observations and interviews will be held at KALEV Private Kindergarten.

**Consent:**

My name is Hatice Doğan, I am a student of Boğaziçi University- Institute of Social Sciences- Early Childhood Education programme. I invite you to participate in this thesis study. With your consent and assent from your child, I will conduct a study in your child's classroom. The assent of the children will be taken verbally throughout the study, in addition to the written consent and assent forms sent to you. The child who does not want to participate in any step of the research will not be included in the research. The daily activities of the child who is not included in the study will not be affected by this situation. If the child wishes, the researcher will still be able to interact with the child, participate in the game and chat with the child. The child who has not participated in the study will not face any negative reaction.

In this study, the mindfulness activities of the children in the classroom will be observed. While the children do these studies with their teachers, as a researcher, I will observe and take notes from a quiet corner of the classroom. Meanwhile, a camera will record a video of mindfulness exercises. We will be able to follow these

recordings later and have conversations with your child about the attitudes and experiences of mindfulness in general. These records will be taken to help us remember the mindfulness activities of both your child and me more comfortably. In addition, I will examine your child's products (paintings, sculptures, stories, etc.) related to mindfulness and their performances in the classroom in this context. Then we will be able to chat about these products and performances.

One interview is targeted with each child. Interviews will take place when children are willing to speak and want to chat with the researcher. The researcher or children will be able to start the conversations. In cases where the child does not want to participate in the interview, the researcher will not insist. The researcher will be able to repeat another time her interview invitation. As the conversations can proceed with the guidance of the child, they will also be shaped by the open-ended questions that the researcher determines; or from the questions based on observation notes, videotapes, photographs, or children's products. (I see you doing.... in this photo, would you like to tell me about it? How do you feel about today's mindfulness practices? Would you like to do a similar activity again?) Conversations will be held and recorded in the classroom, while other children continue their activities.

You may not want your child to participate in the video shooting and just giving consent to be in the study. In such a case, the video of the interview with your child will not be recorded, only audio will be recorded. If your child enters the screen during interviews with other children, your child's face will be censored on the screen.

During and at the end of the study, you will not be informed about your child's progress in the classroom. This study is to make a general sense of mindfulness practice.

### **Privacy:**

Your child's identity information will be kept confidential. As a researcher, I will know your child. But when I publish my study results, I will give all children a pseudonym. I will not share any special information that will cause children to be recognized.

Opinions about mindfulness that are taken from your child can be used in publications other than this thesis, without giving name, place, or identity information.

### **Possible Risks:**

In order to eliminate the feelings of possible discomfort that children may feel from the presence of an adult they do not know in their class, the researcher will not collect data in the first week and will create opportunities for children to get to know her in the first days with the support of the teacher. During the process, the researcher will participate in a child's activities only when the child invites. In the research, children will be observed in natural school and classroom settings without intervention. The study (interview) with the child will be stopped either when the child states her/his discomfort verbally or when the researcher notices that the child avoids the researcher, that they stay away from the researcher or looks not interested. In cases where the child does not want to participate in the interview, the researcher will not insist. The researcher will be able to repeat another time her interview invitation. Daily activities of children who do not want to participate in the study will not be adversely affected in any way. The researcher will be able to chat and play with the child when the child wishes.

**Possible Benefits:**

It is not possible to tell in advance whether this work will benefit you and your child, and we cannot promise you this. It is likely that the research will provide information to teachers and specialists working with children about mindfulness practises. Our research findings are expected to inform policies and practices in the field of early childhood education and applied mindfulness.

**Withdrawal from the Research:**

You and your child may stop participating in the study at any time, if it happens before the start of the data analysis. In this case, the information received from your child will be destroyed. Your child will be reminded that no negative reaction will happen to him/her upon her/his withdrawal from the study and that this situation is very natural.

**For your Questions:**

Before you sign this form, please ask if you have any questions about the study. Then, if you have any questions, you can ask the project manager Mine Göl-Güven (Office Phone: +90 212 359 7313). You can also consult your local ethics committees about your rights related to the research: Boğaziçi University Human Research Ethical Sub-Committee (INAREK).

E-mail: sbinarek@boun.edu.tr

If your address and phone number change, we ask that you notify us.

I understood what was told to me and what was written above. I have / do not want to get a copy of this form (in this case the researcher will keep this copy).

IN CASE THERE IS A PARTICIPANT BELOW AGE 18:

Child's Name and Surname: .....

Parent's Name-Surname: .....

I approve of my child's participation in the research: ☐

I consent to the image (photo & video) of my child being taken for research: ☐

Signature:

Date (day / month / year): ..... / ..... / .....

Researcher's Name-Surname: Hatice Doğan

Signature:

Date (day / month / year): ..... / ..... / .....



## APPENDIX H

### PARENT CONSENT FORM

(TURKISH)

Tarih: ..... / ..... / ...

#### KATILIMCI (VELİ) BİLGİ ve ONAM FORMU

**Araştırmanın Adı:** Okul öncesinde Mindfulness ve Sosyal Duygusal Öğrenme Uygulamaları

**Araştırmayı Destekleyen Kurum:** Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

**Proje Yürütücüsü:** Mine Göl-Güven

**E-mail Adresi:** mine.golguven@boun.edu.tr

**Telefonu:** +90 212 359 7313

**Araştırmacının Adı:** Hatice Doğan

**E-mail Adresi:** haticekilavuz@gmail.com

**Telefonu:** +90 555 ....

**Proje Konusu:** Sosyal Duygusal Öğrenme (SDÖ) Amerika’da 1990’lardan itibaren yayılmaya başlamış bir alandır. Bu alanla ilgili çalışmalara liderlik eden the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) vakfı SDÖ’yü çocuk ve yetişkinlerin duyguları anlama ve düzenleme; olumlu hedefler koyma ve bunlara ulaşma; başkaları için empati hissetme ve bunu gösterebilme; olumlu ilişkiler kurup devam ettirebilme; ve sorumlu kararlar verebilme için gerekli bilgi ve becerileri edinip uygulamak olarak tanımlar. CASEL, SDÖ’yü geliştirmek için beş ana başlıkta beceriler tanımlar. Bunlar, öz farkındalık, sosyal farkındalık, öz-yönetim, ilişki kurma beceriler, ve sorumlu karar vermedir.

Benzer şekilde, mindfulness (bilinçli farkındalık) da son yıllarda alan yazında yer bulan bir kavramdır ve en çok kabul gören tanıma göre bilinçli farkındalık “şimdiki anda gerçekleşenlere özel bir niyetle, yargılamadan dikkatini vermek”tir. Yakın zamanda yayınlanan bir CASEL raporunda mindfulness büyük SDÖ şemsiyesi altındaki kavramlardan biri olarak bahsedilmiştir.

Bu tez çalışmasının amacı, Türkiye’de okul öncesi dönemde uygulanan mindfulness egzersizlerinin Sosyal Duygusal Öğrenme becerileri açısından açıklanmasıdır. Bunun için KALEV Özel Anaokulunda sınıf gözlemleri ve görüşmeler gerçekleştirilecektir.

**Onam:**

Sayın Veli,

Ben Hatice Doğan, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi yüksek lisans öğrencisiyim. Sizi bu tez çalışmasına katılmaya davet ediyorum. Sizin onayınız ve çocuğunuzdan süreç boyunca alınacak onamı ile, çocuğunuzun bulunduğu sınıfta bir çalışma gerçekleştireceğim. Çocukların onamı ise sizlere iletilen bir yazılı onam ile birlikte çalışma süresince sözel olarak alınacaktır. Araştırmamın herhangi bir basamağına katılmak istemeyen çocuk araştırmaya dahil olmayacaktır. Çalışmaya dahil olmayan çocuğun günlük aktiviteleri bu durumdan etkilenmeyecektir. Çocuğun istemesi durumunda araştırmacı yine de çocukla ilgilenebilecek, ve çocukla sohbet edebilecektir. Çalışmaya katılmayan çocuk herhangi bir olumsuz tutum ile karşılaşmayacaktır.

Bu çalışmada çocukların sınıftaki mindfulness faaliyetleri gözlemlenecektir. Çocuklar öğretmenleriyle bu çalışmaları yaparken araştırmacı olarak ben sınıfın sakin bir köşesinden gözlem yapıp not alacağım. Bu esnada bir kamera mindfulness egzersizlerinin video kaydını yapacak. Bu kayıtları daha sonra izleyip, çocuğunuzla kayıtlarda gördüğüm tutumları, paylaşımları ve genel olarak mindfulness deneyimlerine dair sohbetler yapabileceğiz. Bu kayıtlar hem çocuğunuzun hem de benim mindfulness aktivitelerini daha rahat hatırlamamızı sağlamak için alınacak. Ayrıca çocuğunuzun sınıf içerisinde mindfulness ile ilgili ürettikleri ürünler (resim, heykel, öykü vb.) ile sınıf içerisinde sergiledikleri performansları da bu bağlamında inceleyeceğim. Sonrasında bu ürünler ve performanslar hakkında sohbet edebileceğiz. Çocuğunuzla 1 (bir) görüşme yapılması hedeflenmekte olup, görüşmeler, çocukların kendilerinin konuşmaya istekli oldukları ve araştırmacı ile sohbet etmek istedikleri zamanlarda olacaktır. Görüşmeyi araştırmacı ya da çocuklar başlatabilecektir. Bu görüşmeler bir sohbet gibi ya da önceden hazırladığım bir duysal sanat oyun/çalışmasını yaparken olabilir. Çocuğun görüşmeye katılmak istemediği durumlarda araştırmacı ısrarcı olmayacaktır. Araştırmacı başka bir zaman görüşme davetini yineleyebilecektir. Sohbetler çocuğun yönlendirmesiyle ilerleyebileceği gibi, araştırmacının genel olarak belirlediği sorular ile gözlem notları, video kaydı, çekilen fotoğraflar ya da çocuklarına ürünlerinden yola çıkılarak oluşturulan sorular da sorulacaktır (Seni bu fotoğrafta... yaparken görüyorum, bana bunu biraz anlatır mısın? Ya da, Bugünkü mindfulness egzersizi sırasında nasıl hissettin? Bir daha böyle bir egzersiz yapmak ister misin?). Görüşmeler sınıfta, diğer çocuklar aktivitelerine devam ederken, gerçekleştirilecektir ve ses kaydı alınacaktır.

Çocuğunuzun çalışmaya katılımına onay verip video çekimine dahil olmasını istemeyebilirsiniz. Böyle bir durumda çocuğunuzla yapılan görüşmenin video kaydı alınmayacak, sadece ses kaydı alınacaktır. Diğer çocuklarla görüşmeler sırasında sizin çocuğunuzun ekrana girmesi durumunda ise çocuğunuzun yüzü ekranda sansürlenecektir.

Çalışma süresince ve sonunda size çocuğunuzun sınıf içindeki gelişimi ilgili bilgi verilmeyecektir. Bu çalışma mindfulness uygulamasıyla ilgili genel bir anlam çıkartmak içindir.

**Gizlilik:**

Çocuğunuzun kimlik bilgileri gizli tutulacaktır. Ben araştırmacı olarak çocuğunuzu tanıyor olacağım. Fakat çalışma sonuçlarımı yayınlarken bütün çocuklara birer takma isim vereceğim. Çocukların tanınmalarına sebep olacak herhangi özel bir bilgiyi paylaşmayacağım.

Çocuğunuzdan mindfulness'a dair alınan görüşler isim, yer ya da kimlik bilgisi verilmeksizin, bu tez çalışmasının dışında çıkacak yayınlarda kullanılabilecektir.

**Olası Riskler:**

Çocukların tanımadıkları bir yetişkinin sınıflarındaki varlığından duyabilecekleri olası rahatsızlık duygularını gidermek için, araştırmacı gittiği ilk günler veri toplamayacak, öğretmenin desteğiyle ilk günlerde çocukların kendisini tanımasına fırsatlar yaratacaktır. Araştırmacı süreç boyunca, çocuk aktivitelerine ancak çocuk davet ettiğinde katılacaktır. Araştırmada çocuklar doğal okul ve sınıf ortamlarında müdahale edilmeksizin gözlemlenecektir. Çocukların araştırmacıdan uzak durdukları, araştırmacıdan kaçındıklarının ve rahatsız hissettiklerinin gözlemlendiği durumlarda ya da sözel olarak katılmak istemediklerini belirtmeleri durumunda, çocukla olan çalışma durdurulacaktır. Çocuğun görüşmeye katılmak istemediği durumlarda araştırmacı ısrarcı olmayacaktır. Araştırmacı başka bir zaman görüşme davetini yineleyebilecektir. Çalışmaya katılmak istemeyen çocukların günlük aktiviteleri hiçbir şekilde olumsuz olarak etkilenmeyecektir. Araştırmacı, çocuğun istediği durumlarda, çocukla sohbet edebilecek ve oyun oynayabilecektir.

**Olası Yararlar:**

Bu çalışmanın size ve çocuğunuza bir yarar getirip getirmeyeceğini şimdiden söylemek mümkün değildir ve size bu konuda söz veremeyiz. Araştırmanın ileride öğretmenlere ve çocuklarla çalışan uzmanlara okulda mindfulness egzersizleri uygulama konusunda bilgi vermesi muhtemeldir. Araştırma bulgularımızın erken çocukluk eğitimi alanındaki politikalara ve mindfulness sınıf uygulamalarına katkıda bulunması beklenmektedir.

**Çalışmadan Ayrılma:**

Siz ve çocuğunuz, verinin analizi başlamadan önce olmak şartıyla, istediğiniz zaman çalışmaya katılmaktan vazgeçebilirsiniz. Bu durumda çocuğunuzdan almış olduğumuz bilgiler imha edilecektir. Çocuğunuza, çalışmadan ayrıldığı için herhangi bir olumsuz tutumla karşılaşmayacağı ve bu durumun çok doğal olduğu hatırlatılacaktır.

**Sorularınız İçin:**

Bu formu imzalamadan önce, çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız varsa lütfen sorun.

Telefon numaram: 0555 .....

Daha sonra sorunuz olursa, proje yürütücüsü Mine Göl-Güven'e (+90 212 359 7313) sorabilirsiniz. Araştırmayla ilgili haklarınız konusunda yerel etik kurullarına da danışabilirsiniz:

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Tezleri  
Etik İnceleme Komisyonu

Email: sbinarek@boun.edu.tr

Adres ve telefon numaranız değişirse, bize haber vermenizi rica ederiz.

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Bana anlatılanları ve yukarıda yazılanları anladım. Bu formun bir örneğini aldım /  
almak istemiyorum (bu durumda araştırmacı bu kopyayı saklar).

18 YAŞ ALTI KATILIMCI VARSA:

Çocuğun Adı Soyadı: .....

Velisinin Adı-Soyadı: .....

Çocuğumun araştırmaya katılımını onaylıyorum: ☐

Araştırma için çocuğumun görüntüsünün (fotoğraf & video) alınmasını onaylıyorum: ☐

İmzası:

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl): ...../...../.....

Araştırmacının Adı-Soyadı: Hatice Doğan

İmzası:

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl): ...../...../.....

## APPENDIX I

### SAMPLE TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Öğretmen İçin Olası Sorular

1. Mindfulness eğitimi aldınız mı? Kimden/Hangi kurumdan?
2. Şu anda mindfulness için takip ettiğiniz bir program var mı?
3. Bu etkinlikleri ne sıklıkta uyguluyorsunuz?
4. Mindfulness etkinliklerine başlayalı ne kadar zaman oldu?
5. Mindfulness uygulamaya nasıl karar verdiniz?
6. Mindfulness uygulamasına başlamadan önceki ve sonraki sınıf kültürünü/ortamını karşılaştırabilir misiniz?
7. Sizce mindfulness çocuklarda nasıl etkiler yaratıyor?
8. Sizce mindfulness öğrencilerin duygusal gelişimini etkiliyor mu? Nasıl?
9. Sizce mindfulness öğrencilerin öz farkındalıklarını (Kendi duygularını ve düşüncelerini ve davranış üzerindeki etkisini doğru bir şekilde tanıyabilme) geliştiriyor mu? Nasıl?
10. Sizce mindfulness öğrencilerin sosyal farkındalık (Başkalarının bakış açılarından bakabilip çeşitli geçmişlerden ve kültürlerden insanlarla empati kurabilmek, davranış için sosyal ve etik normları anlamak ve aile, okul ve topluluk kaynaklarını ve desteklerini tanıma) becerilerini geliştiriyor mu? Nasıl?
11. Sizce mindfulness öğrencilerin öz yönetim (Kendi duygularını, düşüncelerini ve davranışlarını farklı durumlara göre düzenleyebilme) geliştiriyor mu? Nasıl?
12. Mindfulness egzersizlerine başladığınızdan beri öğrencilerinizin öğrenmelerinde bir değişiklik oldu mu? Nasıl?
13. Mindfulness egzersizlerine başladığınızdan beri öğrencilerinizin davranışlarında bir değişiklik oldu mu? Nasıl?

APPENDIX J

APPROVAL OF THE ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES,

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

T.C.  
**BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ**  
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Tezleri Etik İnceleme Komisyonu


Sayı: 2019-57

30 Mayıs 2019

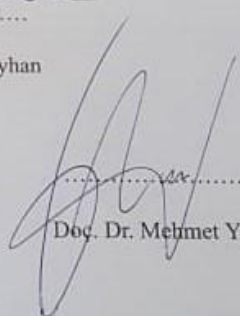
Hatice Doğan  
Temel Eğitim Bölümü

Sayın Araştırmacı,


"Okul öncesinde Bilinçli Farkındalık ve Sosyal Duygusal Öğrenme Uygulamaları" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığımız SBB-EAK 2019/47 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 30 Mayıs 2019 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

  
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi İnci Ayhan

İZİMLİ  
Prof. Dr. Feyza Çorapçı

  
Doç. Dr. Mehmet Yiğit Gürdal

RAPORLU  
Doç. Dr. Ebru Kaya

  
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şebnem Yalçın

## APPENDIX K

### SAMPLE OF COLORED CODING ON ATLAS.TI8 SOFTWARE

thesisA - ATLAS.ti - Trial Version

File Home Search Project Analyze Import & Export Tools & Support

Documents Codes Project Explorer Edit Comment Project

Documents Quotations Codes Memos Networks Links Explorer

Manage Groups Code Groups

Code Group Manager

Search

Name	Size	Modified by	Created	Modified
ACADEMIC	3	htc	22/07/2020 16:38	22/07/2020 16:38
SEL	6	htc	22/07/2020 16:39	22/07/2020 16:39
TEACHER-SELF	4	htc	22/07/2020 16:39	22/07/2020 16:39
TEACHER-TEACHING MINDFULNESS	3	htc	22/07/2020 16:41	22/07/2020 16:41

Codes in group:

- CH\_Relationship Skills~
- CH\_Self Awareness~
- CH\_Self management-Calming~
- CH\_Social awareness~
- CH\_Self Awareness-Body
- CH-Self-Management-Breathing(stress...~

Codes not in group:

- ACA\_Focus~
- ACA\_Listen to the Teacher and Eachother~
- ACA\_Sit Still
- Children Experience~
- TC\_Being in the moment~
- TC\_Contradiction with the Definition of...~
- TC\_definition\_balancing

Comment:

Activate Windows  
Go to Settings to activate Windows.

4 code groups 6 codes in group 15 not in group

SAMPLE OF CODE AND THEME DEVELOPMENT ON AN EXCEL SHEET

EXPORTED FROM ATLAS.TI SOFTWARE

133



APPENDIX M

INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

(TURKISH AND ENGLISH)

Page 72

ENG: There was already something coming from inside me like this, I was doing it before. For example, there is this activity called ‘liked and disliked moments. I do that. The things I like, I try to increase them. I think about them. I am a person who makes time for that. That is why I got bored by that training.

TR: Böyle zaten benim içimden gelen bir şey vardı bunu yapıyordum daha öncesinden. örneğin bu hoşta giden anlar gitmeyen anlar diye bir çalışma var. Onu yaparım. Neler benim hoşuma gidiyor onları daha çok arttırmaya çalışırım, düşünürüm, buna vakit ayıran bir insanım zaten o yüzden birazcık sıkılmıştım o eğitimden.

Page 72

ENG: To keep it in balance... Because I was dwelling on the future all the time. ‘I shall do that after this, this and that...’. Doing that, I was missing the moment. Then I cannot catch it and get stressed out, I cannot do that. That way I cannot sustain some things. But when you stay in the moment your mind is at peace. Whatever future is going to bring to you, it brings anyway.

TR: Dengede tutmak... Hep geleceği düşünüyordum çünkü. Bundan sonra şu planları yapayım, şunları şunları yapayım.. Onları yapmaktan buradaki anı kaçıyorum. Sonra yakalayamıyorum strese giriyorum, onu yapamıyorum. Bu sefer bir şeyleri tutturamıyorum. Ama anda gidince gerçekten kafan rahat. Gelecek gerçekten ne geliyorsa getiriyor sana.

Page 73

ENG: To notice that you are living. To be aware that I am living. That a flying bird is passing there, a sound is coming from back there... but sometimes not thinking about any of it either. And sometimes... I am not hearing those sounds now, I am not seeing that bird, I am focusing on myself now. I am living in this world. That I have to inhale. And if there are other thoughts, slowing them down.

TR: Yaşadığını fark etmek. Yaşadığının farkında olmak. Şuradan uçan kuşun geçtiğini, şuradan arkadan bir sesin geldiğini... Ama bazen de hiç birini düşünmemek bence. Onların yeri gelince de şu anda o sesleri duymuyorum, oradaki kuşu görmüyorum. şu anda kendime odaklanıyorum. Ben bu

dünyada yaşıyorum. İşte nefes almam gerekiyor ve başka düşünceler varsa biraz daha yavaşlatmak da.

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ENG: Everybody has a sensitive point. When I am done unfairness, I lose myself, I turn into a total stranger. I mean, at that moment no mindfulness is left. There I would like to use it. I cannot use it. I want to use it too but... it is very hard. I understand the children as well. That you have had such tantrums. Or if we tell a child who has had a temper tantrum 'use this', s/he cannot use. You get lost there. Even I, as an adult, do not remember such 'I need to stay at this moment', 'I should not think', 'Let me count till 10 in my mind', 'let me do this and that', 'let me breathe' etc. I mean, at that moment I want to call every name in the book. It is very hard to control. Maybe one has to work a lot.

TR: Herkesin bir ince noktası oluyor. Haksızlığa uğradığımda ben benden geçiyorum, bambaşka biri oluyorum. O anda mindfulness filan hiçbir şey kalmıyor yani. Orada örneğin kullanmak isterim. Kullanamıyorum. Ben de kullanmak isterim ama... O çok zor bir şey. Çocukları da anlıyorum. O kadar öfke krizi geçirdin, ya da takıntılı bir çocukta bunu kullan dediğimizde kullanamaz yani. Orada kopuyorsun. Ben yetişkin olarak bile şu anda anda kalmalıyım düşünmemeliyim sayayım içimden 10'a kadar onu yapayım bunu yapayım, nefes alayım filan... onlar gelmiyor aklıma. O anda ağzıma geleni ben saymak istiyorum yani, kontrolü çok zor bir şey. Çok çalışmak gerekiyor belki de.

Page 74

ENG: I can postpone that thought with mindfulness. I mean, I push it. Saying 'I do not want to think of you', you send that thought off. You push it. It gets off your mind. I mean, it is like, like I am doing that in my mind: I say, 'I do not want to think of it at this moment' and then I push it.

TR: Mindfulness'la o düşünceyi erteleyebiliyorum. İttiriyorum yani. Ben seni düşünmek istemiyorum. Diye o düşünceyi yolluyorsun. İttiriyorsun. Aklından çıkıyor. Yani şey gibi, ben beynimde öyle yapıyorum yani; şu anda bunu düşünmek istemiyorum diyorum ve ittiriyorum.

Page 75

Me: Do you think that the teacher should be using mindfulness in her/ his personal/daily life for its practice to be successful?

Ben: Sence Mindfulness, uygulamanın etkin olması için öğretmenin kişisel hayatında da uygulaması gereken bir şey mi?

Derya: I think s/he should.

Bence öyle.

Me: Why? Can you not do something which you do not practice?

Ben: Neden? Kendi uygulamadığın bir şeyi yapamaz mısın?

Derya: You can... [She thinks.]  
Yapabilirsin... [Düşünüyor.]

Me: But you say that s/he should be practicing in this...?

Ben: Ama bunda uygulamalı diyorsun...?

ENG: Derya: You cannot. Or ... I mean... Now, I am thinking about it. Nope, s/he cannot anyway. That teacher would do it only for the sake of doing it. Yes. If s/he is not practicing it, if it does not exist in her/his life, s/he is not doing it. I mean, if s/he is not embracing this idea, if the idea (and) activities of mindfulness is not feeling good to her/him... If s/he is saying that it has no use... Because if s/he thinks that it has benefits, then s/he would use it in her/his life too. If it is not feeling good, then s/he will be doing it in the classroom just for the sake of doing it. Will it be effective then? Or s/he will not want to do it. I think like that.

TR: Yapamazsın ya da yani... Şimdi, düşünüyorum. Yok ya, yapamaz zaten. O öğretmen yapmış olmak için yapar. Evet. Yapmıyorsa, kendi hayatında yoksa, yapmıyordur. Yani bu fikri benimsemiyorsa, iyi gelmiyorsa ona mindfulness düşüncesi, etkinlikleri, bunun bir yararı olmayacak diyorsa.. O çünkü yararı olsa (diye düşünse) normal hayatında da kullanır bunu. İyi gelmiyorsa, etkinlikte de yapmış olmak için yapacak. O zaman da bir etkisi olacak mı? Ya da yapmak istemeyecek yani. Öyle düşünüyorum.

#### Page 75

ENG: To develop their awareness. Their awareness of the whole world. Because sometimes they are very straight, they cannot see those differences, or they cannot feel them. For them to feel their awareness in terms of feelings, too. I think these should be our primary goals with mindfulness.

TR: Farkındalıklarını geliştirmek. Tüm dünyayla ilgili farkındalıklarını. Çünkü bazen çok düz oluyorlar, göremiyorlar o farklı şeyleri. Ya da hissedemiyorlar. Duygu olarak da farkındalıklarını hissetmeleri. Bence mindfulness'la ilgili ilk hedefimiz bunlar olmalı.

#### Page 76

ENG: For instance, during the book activity. Book... 'What sort of a texture does it have? Does it have a scent? What does it make you feel when you touch it? Does it remind you of something?' etc. Such awareness... The awareness of the materials and provisions, etc.

TR: Örneğin kitap çalışmasının içinde. Kitap.. nasıl bir dokusu var? Kokusu var mı? Size ne hissettiriyor dokunduğunuzda? Bir şey anımsatıyor mu? Gibi.Onunla ilgili bir farkındalık. Materyallerin, malzemelerin farkındalığı filan.

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ENG: I mean, a quiet and calm place...within themselves... they need to stay there. I mean... This is something abstract. How do they generally get relaxed? Playing, drawing.... (But) this is rather abstract. Maybe they should grow up a bit for it. But they shall be aware of it too. Maybe in the future when they grow up...

TR: Yani sessiz sakin bir yer... içinde. orada doğru durmaları gerektiğini... Genelde onlar çünkü şöyle bir şey, bu soyut bir şey olduğu için... genelde onlar nasıl rahatlıyorlar? oynamak, resim yapmak... bu birazcık daha soyut kalıyor.. biraz daha büyümeleri gerekiyor bunun için belki. Bunun da farkında olsunlar ama... büyüyünce belki ilerde...

Page 79

ENG: For instance, İnci. Stopping, for instance, I am thinking, ‘I can do this at the moment, I should stay silent, I am sad now, but my sadness can pass in a while, I was too sad for this’ etc.

TR: İnci örneğin... Durup da örneğin, ben düşünüyorum, şu anda bunu yapabilirim, sessiz kalmalıyım şu anda üzgünüm ama birazdan üzümlüğüm geçebilir, çok fazla buna üzölmüşüm diye.

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ENG: After each practice, ‘How did it feel? How are you feeling?’. Because after each practice a new awareness can form in children. In us, too.

TR: Her etkinlikten sonra bu size nasıl geldi, nasıl hissediyorsunuz kendinizi? Çünkü her bir uygulamadan sonra yeni bir farkındalık oluşabiliyor çocuklarda. Bizde de öyle.

Page 79

ENG: What matters in mindfulness, what I aim for in this group, that they focus on their bodies at that moment, breath, control their bodies, be aware that they can manage their bodies.

TR: Önemli olan işte mindfulness'da... Benim bu grupta hedeflediğim... O anda vücutlarına odaklanmaları, nefes almaları, vücutlarını kontrol edebilmeleri, onları yönetebildiklerini farketmeleri.

Page 79

ENG: Let us focus on our breath when we are painting. Let us relax our bodies.

TR: Boyama yaparken nefesimize odaklanalım. Vücudumuzu rahatlatalım.

ENG: Berk. Very often. Because he is a child that suddenly snaps, and suddenly calms down as well. But there should be something that steps in immediately at that moment for him. We use it (mindfulness) as a tool. ‘Calm down a little. Think now’. For instance, there is a break-time system, there are break times. Children experience an issue of situation and there ‘come sit down a bit. think’. We a lot... because thinking is so abstract. At least they shall focus on their bodies, on themselves. They shall stop at that moment; their nerves shall calm down entirely. They are calmer when we talk after that.

TR: Berk. Çok sık. Çünkü çok birden parlayan bir çocuk, birden sönen bir çocuk da. Ama orada hemen bir şeyin devreye girmesi gerekiyor onun için. Onu (mindfulness) araç olarak kullanıyoruz. Biraz sakin ol, şu an düşün.. Örneğin mola sistemi diye bir şey var, hani o aralar veriliyor ya çocuklar bir konu, bir durum yaşıyorlar ve orada işte “gel birazcık otur, düşün”. Biz çok fazla... çünkü düşünme çok soyut.. En azından vücuduna, kendilerine odaklansınlar. O anda bir dursunlar, insin tüm o sinirleri. Sonradan konuştuğumuzda daha sakin oluyor.

ENG: There is Mert. He lives his fears, joys and sorrows in a very high intensity. For example, we do this [mindfulness] with him; ‘Breathe a little now, calm down.’ He is using it. The family also supports this, it is something he does at home. We are trying a little way to calm him down. So, stay in the moment, be quiet... Because it goes to other concerns. It grows bigger and bigger... Mert uses it, for example.

TR: Mert var, çok yüksek yaşıyor korkularını, sevinçlerini, üzüntülerini. Onunla örneğin yapıyoruz bunu; şimdi birazcık nefes al, Sakin ol. O, onu kullanıyor. Aile de bunu destekliyor evde yaptığı bir şeymiş. Birazcık sakinleştirme yolunu deniyoruz onda İşte birazcık anda kal, sessiz ol... Çünkü başka kaygılara gidiyor. Büyüyor büyüyor, büyüyor... Mert onu kullanıyor örneğin.

ENG: It is good in the sense of them listening to each other, understanding each other’s emotions, and that everybody lives differently.

TR: Birbirlerini dinlemeleri, duygularını anlamaları, herkesin farklı şeyleri yaşadığını farketmeleri açısından çok iyi oluyor.

ENG: We generally are better at finding negative or missing things about each other. Yet we find it difficult to see the positive things. It is the same for children. This exercise [Say something nice about your friends] was one that would foster this awareness. I think those kinds of practices will develop their awareness about themselves, about each other, and about communication.

TR: Negatif şeyleri söylerken genelde kolayca söyleyebiliyoruz, eksiklikleri farkedebiliyoruz ama artı şeyleri söylerken zorlanıyoruz. Bu çocuklarda da böyle. Biraz bu farkındalığı geliştirecek bir çalışma oldu. Bu tarz çalışmalar birbirleri hakkında, iletişim hakkında, kendisi hakkında farkındalıklarını daha çok geliştirecek çalışmalar.

Page 82

ENG: This is an activity that will strengthen friendships. Regardless, whatever happens in between, you have a very good trait. Being able to say that to your friend. Now, jealousy and ambitions have started within themselves, these conflicts are also in our class at this age. This is the time we need it. We have such an event in mindfulness. A friend's good feature. We will say something that will make our friends happy at today's activity. I think it will really strengthen their friendships and approach each other with good intentions. This is a nice thing, for example. So, would it come to our mind if it were not for mindfulness? Say something that will make your friend happy. It would not. It was something we would not take into our plans.

TR: Bu biraz daha arkadaş ilişkilerini kuvvetlendirecek çalışma. Ne olursa olsun, aranızda ne yaşanırsa yaşansın senin çok iyi bir özelliğin var. Bunu arkadaşına söyleyebilme. Şimdi biraz daha kendi içlerinde kıskançlık, hırslar başladı bu çatışmalar bu yaşlarda bizim sınıfta da. Tam ihtiyacımız olduğu bir dönem. Böyle de bir etkinliğimiz var mindfulness'ta. Onun iyi özelliği, onu mutlu edecek bir şey söyleyeceğiz bugünkü etkinlikte. O onları gerçekten arkadaş ilişkilerini kuvvetlendirecek, birbirlerine daha böyle iyi niyetle yaklaşacaklarını düşünüyorum. Bu örneğin, güzel bir şey. Yani bu mindfulness olmasaydı aklımıza gelir miydi...: arkadaşını mutlu edecek bir şey söyle. Gelmezdi. Etkinlik içine almayacağımız bir şeydi.

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ENG: Imagine a little child in front of your eyes. Make good wishes to him/her. Now imagine someone you love. Make good wishes to him/her. Now imagine someone you do not like very much. Make good wishes to him/her (Derya gives examples such as I wish your health, I wish you happiness). Think about yourself now, make good wishes to yourself. You can wish your beautiful wishes to everyone around you, to your school, to your surroundings. You can wish everyone to be safe and happy. Let us open our eyes now. Let us picture our best wishes.

TR: Gözünün önünde küçük bir çocuk hayal et. Ona güzel dileklerde bulun. Şimdi sevdiğin birini hayal et. Ona iyi dileklerde bulun. Şimdi çok da sevmediğin birini hayal et. Ona da iyi dileklerde bulun (sağlıklı olmanı diliyorum, mutlu olmanı diliyorum gibi örnekler veriyor öğretmen) Şimdi kendini düşün, kendine iyi dileklerde bulun. Güzel dileklerini etrafındaki herkese, okuluna çevrene dileyebilirsin. Herkesin güvende olmasını, mutlu olmasını dileyebilirsin. Şimdi gözlerimizi açalım. İyi dileklerimizi resimleyelim.

ENG: As their awareness increases, it reflects on their communication styles, on the way they talk. When there are things like his/her friend does not like, they are more able to stop themselves from doing these things. If they do not like certain things, they do not do it to their friends either. That is, their empathy skills are developing in general.

TR: Farkındalıkları arttığı için arkadaşının keyif aldığı şeyler de çocuklar iletişim şekillerine, konuşmalarına yansıyor. Olumsuz olan bir şeyde, yapmaması gereken bir şeyde kendini de durdurabiliyor, arkadaşının hoşlanmadığı şeylerde. Kendisinin hoşlanmadığı şeyi başkasına yapmak istememe... Empatisini de yani genel olarak geliştiriyor.

ENG: Our first goal is for them to be able to stay still and quiet without moving their bodies. Because these children could not do that. You have seen it when they first arrived, they were more active, they could not sit still during a circle time. Especially Berk, he is fidgety. But it is our first goal to just stay still there calmly.

TR: Bizim ilk hedefimiz aslında sessiz ve sakin bedenlerini kıpırdatmadan durabilmeleri. Onu yapamıyordu çünkü bu çocuklar. İlk geldiklerinde sen de görmüştündür, daha hareketlilerdi, bir çember saatinde duramıyorlardı devamlı özellikle Berk işte, kıpır kıpırdır. Ama orada o şekilde sakin bir şekilde durmaları bile bizim ilk hedefimiz.

ENG: I think their attention span is longer. When we start with breathing, the concentration really increases.

TR: Dikkat süreleri bence biraz daha uzun... Nefesle başladığımız zaman gerçekten konsantrasyon da çok artıyor.

ENG: Listening to each other is better, to listen to the teacher is one click better. Because at that moment we are sitting, and they know what to do while sitting. There is also a mindfulness routine, and we do it there. We need to listen to each other when we chat while sitting at the Turkish language event [too].

TR: Birbirlerini dinlemeleri daha iyi, öğretmeni dinlemeleri de bir tık daha iyi. Çünkü o anda oturuyoruz, ve otururken ne yapmaları gerektiğini biliyorlar artık. Mindfulness rutini de var zaten, orda da onu yapıyoruz. Türkçe dil etkinliğinde oturduğumuzda sohbet ettiğimizde birbirimizi dinlememiz gerekiyor.

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