



## Review of Classroom Teachers' Standpoints for Elementary Schools in the Context of Schools' Readiness \*

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### Abstract

In this study, our aim is to determine whether elementary schools are ready for children to start school in line with the opinions of the classroom teachers. This research was carried out based on single screening and causal comparison models. The population of the study consisted of 617 classroom teachers, who were selected out of 881 classroom teachers in the city of Çanakkale through stratified sampling method. Data were collected using Elementary Schools' Readiness Assessment Tool (ESRAT), developed by Kartal and Güner (2019), in the 2018-2019 school year. These data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, average, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Tukey's honestly significant difference test. The study found out that the sub-dimensions of the ESRAT with the highest average level of participation from the classroom teachers were respectively *Implementations of transition to school*, *Physical arrangements in common use areas (PACUA)*, *Physical security measures* and *Teachers' preparations*. It also revealed that professional seniority and first-grade teaching experience had an impact on the average scores obtained by the classroom teachers from the dimension of *Teachers' preparations*. In addition, the study determined that there was a significant difference in the average scores of the classroom teachers on the ESRAT according to the level of education in terms of *elementary schools' readiness*, whereas there was no significant difference according to professional seniority, first-grade teaching experience, and the socioeconomic level of the school environment. This research addresses the subject of school readiness, focusing on *schools*, more particularly on the significance of a different dimension of school readiness in the national-scale literature.

### Keywords

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## Introduction

Alterations in concurrence with educational transitions bring about the excitement of new beginnings, expectation of making new friends and new learning opportunities (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). However, transition from pre-school education institutions to elementary schools is a complicated (Fabian, 2002) and a long-term (Rous, Hallam, Harbin, McCormick, & Jung, 2007) process, depending on the time spent in the relevant environment for ensuring active participation. This may be due to discrepancies and discontinuities between pre-schools and elementary schools (Carida, 2011; Chan, 2012). According to Peters (2000), discontinuities between two environments can occur in relation to many points, such as the physical environment, school buildings, the size of the area, the number of children in a school, time spent at school and expectations of curriculum. The lack of continuity between pre-school education institutions and elementary schools is mainly based on the adoption of different models and approaches by the two educational levels (Broström, 2002; Einarsdóttir, 2002, 2006; Margetts, 2002). According to Vedeier (1984), although there is a tendency toward a developmental-interactive model in both educational levels, activities are designed in a mediation model in elementary schools whereas they are designed in a developmental-psychological model in pre-school education institutions. At this point, it is necessary to include applications and researches that promote cooperation and coordination between early childhood programs and the elementary school system (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani, & Shallwani, 2008). In addition, planning the transition to an elementary school should be carried out after the child joins the school, and the team planning this transition to school should continue serving as a resource in the forthcoming days of the school (Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen, & Holburn, 1990).

Transition to school is much easier when the transition environment is similar to the previous one, when a variety of transition practices at school are implemented, and when information is obtained regarding the children going through the transition (Einarsdóttir, 2003). Therefore, the school should develop its practices and should be made ready for children who will start school in order to meet the diverse needs of these children and to facilitate their adaptation to the school (Margetts & Kienig, 2013; Powell, 2010; Suzuki, 2012). In this regard, the understanding that *schools should be ready for children* is gaining importance. The understanding that *schools should be ready for children* was first articulated by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) in 1997. The final report of this panelists the qualifications of schools that are deemed ready for children who start school. Schools with the understanding that *schools should be ready for children* provide a safe and suitable physical environment for children (Cassidy, Mims, Rucker, & Boone, 2003; Shore, 1998) and strive to provide physical continuity with the child's previous environment (Britto, 2012; Burke & Burke, 2005). Further, schools deemed ready and prepared for children consider supportive attitude and preparation of the school personnel for the children starting the school (Early, 2004; Scott-Little & Maxwell, 2000), professional and individual capacity and competency of teachers (Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016; Dockett & Perry, 2009; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), teachers' training based on early childhood period (Britto & Limlingan, 2012), and cooperation between the teachers (Ahtola et al., 2016; Curtis & Simons, 2008; Sink, Edwards, & Weir, 2007) significant. Moreover, the schools that emphasize the understanding that *schools should be ready for children* pay more attention to the role undertaken by teachers in the adaptation process to the school (O'Kane, 2007; Suzuki, 2012; Willer & Bredekamp, 1990). This understanding has been recognized in the literature on both transition to school and readiness (Graue, 2006; Shore, 1998). The schools which embrace this understanding help carrying out the transition activities to the school, which start even before the first day of school and facilitate the child's adaptation to the school in a planned manner with the cooperation of the family and society (Ahtola et al., 2011; Broström, 2005; Early, 2004; Ebbeck, Saidon, nee Rajalachime, & Teo, 2013; Kennedy, Cameron, & Greene, 2012; LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, & Pianta, 2008; Margetts, 1999; Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999a). In the international literature, which includes the understanding that *schools should be ready for children*, the physical structure of the school, the qualifications of the school staff, and the practices of the transition to school are prioritized.

The understanding that *schools should be ready for children* is one of the dimensions in the multidimensional structure of school readiness. In its most recent definition that recognizes the multidimensional structure of *school readiness*, Britto (2012) explains the concept of *school readiness* in three dimensions: *child's readiness for school*, *support of the family for their child who starts school*, and *making school ready for the child*. There are some studies that identify this three-dimensional structure of school readiness in the literature (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani, & Merali, 2007; Bracey, 2005; Emig, 2000). The dimension of *child's readiness for school*, which is the most widely known dimension of school readiness, focuses on the learning and improvement of the children who start school (Britto, 2012). A child's readiness for school is characterized by five domains of development for children. These domains are physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches toward learning, language development and cognition and general knowledge (Arnold et al., 2007; Bracey, 2005; High, 2008; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2015; Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2006; Shore, 1998). In relation to this dimension, the children who can establish good relations with their peers in the environment where transition is made, fulfil the tasks assigned to them and are aware of their responsibilities, are considered ready to start school (Britto, 2012). Another dimension of school readiness, which is about *support of the family for their child who starts school*, focuses on parental and caregiver attitudes in their children's transition to school. It is believed that effective family environments that provide children with positive stimuli and experiences help children in starting school (Britto & Limlingan, 2012). Also, contact of families with school environment prior to the first day of school is of great importance in this dimension (Early, 2004). The dimension of *schools' readiness* is the most recent addition to the conceptual explanations regarding school readiness. This dimension focuses on the school environment which facilitates the child's transition from the previous educational environment to the new one, meets the needs of the child, and takes into consideration the developmental characteristics of the child. Besides, this dimension involves teachers who are prepared to welcome children starting school, and ready educational environments for children, curricula designed appropriately for children starting school. The dimension of *schools' readiness*, which is the most recent dimension of the dimensions of *school readiness*, is rapidly gaining importance today (Britto, 2012). The physical environment, curriculum, learning strategies of the school are flexible enough to take into account the individual differences of children starting school (Cassidy et al., 2003) and the school staff prepared for children starting school Britto, 2012; (Cassidy et al., 2003) are also of importance in this dimension. In addition, this dimension can be associated with the *school microsystem* according to the Ecological Systems Approach of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and with *family-teacher relations* and *family-school interaction* in terms of mesosystems. According to the Ecological Systems Approach, the child's communication with friends and teachers at school, parent-school relations, school-family associations are *school-centered* elements that are effective in being ready for school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Nelson (2005) stated that tendencies to investigate the aspect and dimension of the *schools' readiness* increased after the 1990s, whereas Kagan and Kauerz (2006) suggested that it is too late to conduct research to determine whether schools are ready for children who start school. Even though the approach that suggests that *schools should be ready for children* was introduced back in the 1990s, it is notable that the conceptual studies carried out within the scope and dimension of schools' readiness (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Britto, 2012; Britto & Limlingan, 2012; Curtis & Simon, 2008; Dockett & Perry, 2009; Ebbeck et al., 2013; Golan et al., 2011; Kennedy et al., 2012; Noel, 2010; Powell, 2010; UNICEF, 2012) and studies focusing on the assessment and determination of schools with respect to schools' readiness for children (Brandt & Grace, 2005; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Murphey & Burns, 2002) were conducted later on.

There are few studies that directly address the dimension of *schools' readiness* in the national literature (Buldu & Er, 2016; Güner & Kartal, 2019; Kartal & Güner, 2018, 2019). The model developed by Buldu and Er (2016) on *school readiness* included the section of Ready schools, which identifies the

elements of *Ready teachers, Transition practices, Physical environment, Materials and resources, Health and safety practices, Support for children, families, and teachers* under the heading of *Ready schools*. The scientific articles on *school readiness* in the national literature were analyzed by Kartal and Güner (2018) based on the conceptual explanations by Britto (2012). This study ascertained that most of the scientific articles examined by the authors were performed in the context of child's readiness for school. Moreover, Elementary Schools' Readiness Assessment Tool (ESRAT) was developed by Kartal and Güner (2019) to examine the readiness of elementary schools for the first-graders. This tool incorporates the dimensions of *Physical arrangements in common use areas (PACUA), Physical security measures, Teachers' preparations* and *Implementations of transition to school*. Based on the interviews with the first-grade teachers on the readiness of elementary school for the first-graders, Güner and Kartal (2019) offered some findings on making schools physically ready for children, teacher readiness for children and implementing transition practices for children who start elementary school. In their study, Güner and Kartal (2019) determined that physical arrangements of classrooms and parents' meeting, which is a transition practice, were notable among the opinions reflected by the teachers. Further, the first-grade teachers interviewed in the study expressed that they rely on their professional experience most in regard to their readiness for children who start school. In light of these findings, Güner and Kartal (2019) linked some practices and statements by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey with the dimensions of *schools' readiness*. The researchers discussed the physical transformations in primary schools through School Development Plans (2012), the statement that pre-school and elementary school programs revised in 2018 are complementary (MoNE, 2018a) and practices for the children who start school (Orientation Week, 2017) based on the dimension of *schools' readiness*. Also, the headings on teachers' readiness for the children who start school were linked to the General Competencies of Teaching Profession (Directorate General for Teacher Training and Improvement [OYGM], 2017). Turkey launched the *Cooperation Protocol on Making Schools and Their Surroundings Safer* (2018) and the project of *Safe School Safe Future*, which aimed to ensure school safety and support schools for landscaping, maintenance and cleaning services. It is remarkable that the physical preparations and arrangements for the children who start school in this project were related to the dimension of *schools' readiness*.

It can be argued that certain studies (Arı, 2014; Bay & Şimşek, 2014; Şahin, Sak, & Tuncer, 2013; Zelyurt & Özel, 2015) in the national literature are relevant to the dimension of *schools' readiness* by considering the explanations and findings they offered, although they were not performed directly in the dimension of *schools' readiness*. The study by Arı (2014) found out that washbasins, desks, blackboards and boards are not suitable for the children starting elementary school and teachers fell short of meeting their affective needs and that curricula for first-grade are not flexible enough to consider different age groups in the same class. Bay and Şimşek (2014) revealed that children starting elementary school were faced with a physical environment, where they were more restricted in their actions compared to pre-school settings, and more authoritarian teacher attitudes. The researchers also concluded that curricula in pre-school education and in first-grade in elementary schools are not complementary. In their study, Şahin et al. (2013) offered some explanations on *schools' physical readiness* for children starting school, paying attention to teacher approaches for children starting school and the harmony of curricula in pre-school settings and elementary schools. Zelyurt and Özel (2015) expressed that small age-groups could not use public areas such as washbasins, canteens and gardens in schools, that first-grade teachers did not consider themselves equipped to manage the classroom and that curricula in first-grade in elementary schools were not appropriate to the readiness levels of first-grade students.

The discontinuities expressed by a large number of studies in the literature, investigating the transition between pre-school education institutions and elementary schools (Broström, 2002; Carida, 2011; Chan, 2012; Einarsdóttir, 2002, 2006; File & Gullo, 2002; Margetts, 2002; Oktay & Unutkan, 2005;

Peters, 2000), increase the need for *school*-oriented research based on transition to elementary school. In addition, young and minor children who are considered to be ready or not ready for school often carry the burden of being ready for school on their own (Cassidy et al., 2003; Suzuki, 2012). According to Cassidy et al. (2003), children are trying to be ready for schools that are not actually ready for them. At this point, it is necessary to question the readiness of the school for the child, instead of determining the child's readiness for school. For that reason, the aim of this research is to examine the readiness of children starting elementary school. In this regard, the analyses on elementary schools in this study are limited to physical arrangements in common use areas (PACUA), physical security measures, teachers' preparations and implementations of transition to school, by considering the data collection tool used. Also, this study was carried out with classroom teachers due to the finding that *teachers* are the focus for the dimension of the *schools' readiness* and teachers play the most important role in the school adaptation process (Suzuki, 2012). In addition, elementary school teachers are one of the factors that determine the schools' readiness (Arnold et al., 2008). Yet, the literature does not offer detailed information on the qualifications (Arnold et al., 2007) and capacities (Arnold et al., 2008; Bartlett, Arnold, Shallwani, & Gowani, 2010; Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016; Dockett & Perry, 2009) of teachers, who are considered important for the dimension of schools' readiness. Certain studies in the national and international literature on schools' readiness notably focused on the professional experience (Einarsdóttir, 2003; Güner & Kartal, 2019) and knowledge level (Arnold et al., 2007; Britto & Limlingan, 2012; Cassidy et al., 2003) of teachers who welcome children starting school. Hence, this study analyzed the level of education, professional seniority and first-grade teaching experience of the teachers. Besides, school qualifications have been brought to the fore in the studies on the dimension of schools' readiness (Nelson, 2005; Shore, 1998). The socioeconomic level of the school environment is the most general and valid qualification for elementary schools to be examined through classroom teachers. Since all the state-owned schools in Turkey are graded according to the socioeconomic level of the school environment (MoNE, 2018b). These being said, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the opinions of the classroom teachers in the context of the *schools' readiness*?
- (2) Do the classroom teachers' views on *Physical arrangements in common use areas (PACUA)*, *Physical security measures*, *Teachers' preparations* and *Implementations of transition to school* in elementary schools in the context of *schools' readiness* vary depending on:
  - (a) their level of education,
  - (b) their professional seniority,
  - (c) their first-grade teaching experiences,
  - (d) the socioeconomic level of the school environment they work in?
- (3) Do the average scores of the classroom teachers on ESRAT in the context of *schools' readiness* vary according to:
  - (a) their level of education,
  - (b) their professional seniority,
  - (c) their first-grade teaching experiences,
  - (d) the socioeconomic level of the school environment they work in?



## Method

### *Research Model*

This research was conducted using a screening model. "Screening models are research approaches whose aim is to describe a case situation that existed in the past or is currently existent in the present" (Karasar, 2007, p. 77). This research was conducted in accordance with the research screening model as its aim was to describe the readiness of elementary schools for children. Single screening and causal comparison models were preferred for general screening models. In the single screening model, the current status of the variables is determined individually in terms of type or quantity (Karasar, 2007). As the first question of the study was taken in line with the single screening model, calculations of frequency, percentage, and average score calculations were made about the degree of participation of teachers in expressions that emphasized the understanding that *schools should be ready for children*. Causal comparison is a type of descriptive research in which the effect of independent variables on dependent variables is examined (Arslan, 2017). In the second and third research questions of the study, the dependent variable, that is, classroom teachers' views on the readiness of elementary schools according to independent variables (level of education, professional seniority, first-grade teaching experience, and socioeconomic level of the school environment), has been examined by the causal comparison model.

### *Population and Sample*

It is believed that it is not possible to generalize the results to be obtained about whether elementary schools are ready for children to start school or not. Therefore, this study determined a target population. The population consisted of a total of 881 classroom teachers who work in public elementary schools affiliated to Çanakkale Provincial Directorate of National Education in the academic year 2018-2019. The validity and reliability of the data collection tool (Kartal & Güner, 2019) used in the study were assessed based on the data obtained from the classroom teachers who work in the province of Balıkesir. This was considered when determining the target population of the study. The population was selected from the classroom teachers in the public schools in Çanakkale since Çanakkale has the same developmental index value (.51) as that of the province of Balıkesir according to the statistical provincial unit classification of the Turkish Ministry of Development (2013) and it is the only province with the same socioeconomic development level as that of province of Balıkesir (TR22). Thus, the data collection tool was applied in a socioeconomic environment similar to an environment where the tool is considered valid and reliable.

The sample of the study was 617 classroom teachers, who were selected through stratified sampling method. In stratified sampling method, the population is categorized into similar sub-groups according to a variable considered important to the study. Then, the number of samples for each sub-group is determined based on the ratio of the sub-group in the population. It is ensured that the sample represents all the sub-groups as well as the population (Karasar, 2007). The elementary schools where the classroom teachers in the sample serve were divided into three different socioeconomic levels, based on the *Chart of Service Areas and Service Scores* (MoNE, 2018b). Since the public schools affiliated to the Turkish Ministry of National Education are classified into six groups according to the geographical location, the level of economic and social development, transportation conditions, and the capability of meeting service requirements, differentiating between the schools with most convenient and advantageous conditions (1<sup>st</sup> service area) and the schools with the least convenient and advantageous conditions (6<sup>th</sup> service area) in the Service Areas and Service Scores Statement (MoNE, 2018b). This study grouped the elementary schools where the classroom teachers in the sample served into three socioeconomic levels as high (the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> service area), medium (the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> service area) and low (the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> service area). Table 1 presents the sample of the study and the distribution of the teachers selected through stratified sampling.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Teachers in Study Population and Sample

Socioeconomic level of the school environment	Study population (N)	Ratio of teachers in study population (%)	Sample (n)
High	495	56.2	347
Medium	330	37.5	231
Low	56	6.3	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>881</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>617</b>

Table 1 shows that there are 495 teachers (56.2%) that serve in a high socioeconomic level, 330 teachers (37.5%) that serve in a medium socioeconomic level and 56 teachers (6.3%) that serve in a low socioeconomic level. Using Table 1, 347 teachers (56.2%) that serve in a high socioeconomic level, 231 teachers (37.5%) in a medium socioeconomic level and 39 teachers (6.3%) in a low socioeconomic level were included in the sample in the same ratio. Based on these data, the sample of this study achieved to represent the population of the study in terms of the socioeconomic level of the school environment. The sample size represents 70% of the population of the study (617/881).

An analysis of the classroom teachers in the population in terms of the graduation degree level demonstrated that 84 teachers (13.6%) have an associate degree, 486 teachers (78.8%) have a bachelor's degree, and 47 teachers (7.6%) have a post-graduate degree. It was determined that 30 (4.9%) teachers in the population had 5 years or less, 52 (8.4%) teachers had 6-10 years, 145 (23.5%) teachers had 11-15 years, 105 (17.0%) teachers had 16-20 years, and 285 (46.2%) teachers had 21 years or more of professional seniority. It was found that while 22 (3.6%) of the teachers in the population had no first-grade teaching experience, 166 (26.9%) had taught a first-grade class for 1-3 times, 273 (44.2%) had taught a first-grade class for 4-6 times, and 156 (25.3%) had taught a first-grade class for 7 times or more before. In the population, 347 (56.2%) teachers were employed in the high-level socioeconomic environment, 231 (37.4%) teachers were employed in the middle-level socioeconomic environment and 39 (6.3%) teachers were employed in the low-level socioeconomic environment.

#### **Data Collection Tools and Process**

The research data were collected by means of the Elementary Schools' Readiness Assessment Tool (ESRAT), developed by Kartal and Güner (2019). Along with the ESRAT, an information form prepared by the researcher and a participation acceptance form was used as data collection tools in the research.

**Information Form:** This form included questions regarding the teachers' educational level, their professional seniority, their first-grade teaching experiences, and the socioeconomic level of the environment of the school where they work.

**Participation Acceptance Form:** This form was prepared with the approval of the research and publication ethics committee. In this form, teachers in the study population stated whether they would like to participate in the research.

**Elementary Schools' Readiness Assessment Tool (ESRAT):** The reliability and validity of the ESRAT was tested through the classroom teachers who served in state elementary schools affiliated to Balıkesir Provincial Directorate of National Education in the 2017-2018 academic year in two groups by Kartal and Güner (2019). The explanatory factor analysis identified four factors and 26 items in the tool. Also, the confirmatory factor analysis confirmed that the 4-factor model of the tool with 24 items achieved acceptable fit values ( $X^2/df=1,829$ ; CFI=.91; IFI=.91; RMSEA=.07; SRMR=.08, PNFI=.71; PGFI=.64). It was found that some values of the tool were below acceptable level (GFI=.79; AGFI=.74). However, it is reported that these two values (GFI, AGFI), which were below acceptable level, could decrease up to .80 in small samples and the values close to .80 could be considered as acceptable (Anderson & Gerbing, 1984; Corral & Calvete, 2000; Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988). Hence, the GFI value of .79 and AGFI value of .74 were considered acceptable for this study. Also, it was concluded that this study reached the highest possible values given the other constructs of this study tested in the

analyses. Besides, the standardized regression weights ( $>.50$ ) and t-values ranging from 5,384 to 13,137 supported the 4-factor model of the tool with 24 items. Expert opinions were taken into consideration to test the face and content validity of the ESRAT.

The ESRAT includes four statements in the factor of *Physical arrangements in common use areas* (PACUA), five in the factor of *Physical security measures*, three in *Teachers' preparations* and 12 in *Implementations of transition to school*. There is no negative statement in this tool. The degree of agreement in the statements of the ESRAT is scored on a five-point Likert scale, varying from 5 (*I strongly agree*) to 1 (*I strongly disagree*). To ensure the reliability of the ESRAT, internal consistency calculations were performed based on 617 data records obtained from the sample and Cronbach's alpha values were calculated. The findings are presented in Table 2, together with the findings obtained from the internal consistency calculations of Kartal and Güner (2019).

**Table 2.** Findings Concerning the Internal Consistency Calculations of the ESRAT

Dimensions	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha (Kartal & Güner, 2019)	Cronbach's alpha (Sample)
PACUA	4	.81	.86
Physical security measures	5	.91	.92
Teachers' preparations	3	.83	.81
Implementations of transition to school	12	.92	.93
Total score of ESRAT	24	.93	.94

The Cronbach's alpha values between .80 and 1.00 obtained in the reliability calculations indicate a high level of internal consistency (Büyükoztürk, 2012; Tavşancıl, 2014). The values of the sub-dimensions and the total score of the tool in Table 2 point to a high internal consistency for the tool in general.

Plans for the transition to school can continue for two to three months after the opening of the schools (Lazzari & Kilgo, 1989, as cited in Kemp, 2003), and the transition implementations in schools can be carried out throughout the year (Conn-Powers et al., 1990). Therefore, it was decided that it is appropriate to gather research data on whether elementary schools are ready for children starting from the end of the first term of the 2018-2019 academic year. Necessary research permission was obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education for the study that will be conducted through the university. The approval of the ethics committee taken from the relevant department of the university and the participation acceptance form prepared by the researcher in this direction were added to the data collection tools to be sent to the Provincial Directorate of National Education before obtaining the necessary permits. The study complied with the ethical principles by taking the consent of the classroom teachers who were administered to data collection tools through participation consent forms. The elementary schools where the classroom teachers in the population served were visited by one of the researchers and the data collection process was carried out by this researcher.

#### **Data Analysis**

Data were transferred to an electronic environment and analyzed using a statistic program. The level of opinion of the classroom teachers for elementary schools in terms of *schools' readiness* was determined based on the single screening model. Accordingly, the average scores of the teachers' participation in the expressions in the ESRAT were calculated for each dimension and the entire tool. The obtained average scores were interpreted in terms of the degree of agreement and ranges as follows: *I strongly agree* ( $4.21 \leq \bar{X} \leq 5.00$ ), *I agree* ( $3.41 \leq \bar{X} \leq 4.20$ ), *I partially agree* ( $2.61 \leq \bar{X} \leq 3.40$ ), *I do not agree* ( $1.81 \leq \bar{X} \leq 2.60$ ), and *I strongly disagree* ( $1.00 \leq \bar{X} \leq 1.80$ ). Analyses of the causal comparison model and whether the classroom teachers' opinions on the readiness of elementary schools differ according to independent variables were made. These analyses determined whether the data showed a normal distribution. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistical values for the data set.



**Table 3.** Findings Regarding the Descriptive Statistics of the Data Set

Tool and dimension	Kurtosis value	Skewness value
ESRAT	-.521	-.151
Dimension I: PACUA	-.685	-.022
Dimension II: Physical security measures	-.547	-.307
Dimension III: Teachers' preparations	-.486	-.511
Dimension IV: Implementations of transition to school	-.575	-.215

The skewness and kurtosis values between +2.0 and -2.0 indicate that the data is normally distributed and that parametric tests must be performed in the data analysis (George & Mallery, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). According to Huck (2012) and Kim (2013), the kurtosis and skewness values between +1.0 and -1.0 indicate that the data show a normal distribution. The kurtosis and skewness values in Table 3 show that the data obtained by the sub-dimensions and from the entire tool were suitable for normal distribution. For this reason, whether the teachers' opinions differed according to the independent variables was determined by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), which is one of the parametric tests. Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test was used to determine the source of the difference. The analyses were performed at a .95 confidence interval and .05 significance level.

### Results

The findings obtained through the data are presented in the order of the research questions. The findings are grouped into three headings considering the research questions.

#### *Findings from the Analysis of the Classroom Teachers' Participation Degree to the ESRAT and its Sub-dimensions*

Table 4 shows the average and standard deviation (SD) values of the classroom teachers' participation levels in the ESRAT and its sub-dimensions.

**Table 4.** Average and SD Values of Classroom Teachers' Participation Levels in the ESRAT and Sub-dimensions

Tool and dimensions	N	Average	SD
Dimension I: PACUA	617	3.84	.94
Dimension II: Physical security measures	617	3.75	.94
Dimension III: Teachers' preparations	617	3.73	.96
Dimension IV: Implementations of transition to school	617	4.04	.70
ESRAT	617	3.84	.71

Examining the averages of the classroom teachers' participation level in the ESRAT in terms of sub-dimensions, the highest participation average was found in the dimension of *school transition implementations* ( $\bar{X} = 4.04$ ); and the lowest participation average was found for the dimension of *teachers' preparations* ( $\bar{X} = 3.73$ ). These findings show that the opinions of the classroom teachers in terms of the ESRAT and its sub-dimensions are consistent with the level of *I agree* ( $3.41 \leq \bar{X} \leq 4.20$ ). These results revealed that the classroom teachers considered the elementary schools in the target population of the study as ready for the children who start school. The results obtained from the analysis of the participation of the classroom teachers in each statement in the ESRAT in terms of their degree of participation and agreement are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Distribution of Classroom Teachers According to their Degree of Participation in Statements in the ESRAT

Statements	Participation Degree				
	I strongly agree	I agree	I partially agree	I do not agree	I strongly disagree
(1) The physical development characteristics of the first-grade students are considered when organizing the school library.	f 266	202	91	37	21
	% 43.1	32.7	14.7	6.0	3.4
(2) The physical development characteristics of the first-grade students are considered when arranging the areas used in the school as a gym or gym.	f 199	150	154	79	35
	% 32.3	24.3	25.0	12.8	5.7
(3) The physical development characteristics of the first-grade students are considered when organizing the school's playground.	f 220	196	134	44	23
	% 35.7	31.8	21.7	7.1	3.7
(4) The physical development characteristics of the first-grade students are considered when organizing the school's canteen.	f 206	188	140	60	23
	% 33.4	30.5	22.7	9.7	3.7
(5) In our school, the necessary precautions are taken for earthquake disasters, considering children belonging to the small age group.	f 228	232	99	48	10
	% 37.0	37.6	16.0	7.8	1.6
(6) In the first-grade classrooms of our school, different security measures are taken against falling and impacts from the classrooms of other class levels.	f 174	216	127	80	20
	% 28.2	35.0	20.6	13.0	3.2
(7) In our school, precautions and measures are taken against the risk of flood disasters, considering children belonging to the small age group.	f 155	226	120	95	21
	% 25.1	36.6	19.4	15.5	3.4
(8) In the corridors where the first-grade classrooms of our school are located, unlike in the corridors where other class levels are located, different security precautions and measures are taken against incidents of falling and impacts.	f 151	193	148	106	19
	% 24.5	31.3	24.0	17.2	3.1
(9) In our school, children belonging to the small age group are taken into consideration when considering contingent fire incidents.	f 190	231	121	63	12
	% 30.8	37.4	19.6	10.2	1.9
(10) The first-grade teachers of our school meet the new students before the school starts.	f 242	185	102	61	27
	% 39.2	30.0	16.5	9.9	4.4
(11) The first-grade teachers of our school meet the families of the new students before the school starts.	f 179	159	143	108	28
	% 29.0	25.8	23.2	17.5	4.5
(12) The first-grade teachers of our school examine the pre-school development reports of first-grade students who received pre-school education.	f 160	235	136	72	14
	% 25.9	38.1	22.0	11.7	2.3
(13) Coordination between our school and pre-school education institutions is ensured.	f 210	231	130	41	5
	% 34.0	37.4	21.1	6.6	.8
(14) In our school, the participation of the family/parents is provided in preparation and transition activities for children starting elementary school.	f 247	236	106	26	2
	% 40.0	38.2	17.2	4.2	.3
(15) Children who are to start elementary school are given the opportunity to visit our school together with their families before the school starts.	f 293	234	70	15	5
	% 47.5	37.9	11.3	2.4	.8
(16) Preparation and activities designed for children who are to start elementary school are planned before the school starts.	f 312	229	58	16	2
	% 50.6	37.1	9.4	2.6	.3

Table 5. Continued

Statements	Participation Degree					
	I strongly agree	I agree	I partially agree	I do not agree	I strongly disagree	
(17) In our school, it is considered important that first-grade teachers, students, and parents come together before the school officially starts.	f 231	191	124	54	17	
	% 37.4	31.0	20.1	8.8	2.8	
(18) Our school is successful in ensuring continuity between early care and educational programs and elementary school.	f 206	233	142	31	5	
	% 33.4	37.8	23.0	5.0	.8	
(19) In our school, importance is attached to students who received pre-school education visiting the first-grade classrooms in the elementary school.	f 218	238	108	43	10	
	% 35.3	38.6	17.5	7.0	1.6	
(20) In our school, the school adaptation week program oriented for first-grade students reaches its goal.	f 353	207	45	11	1	
	% 57.2	33.5	7.3	1.8	.2	
(21) Our school facilitates the transition process from home to elementary school.	f 271	252	76	15	3	
	% 43.9	40.8	12.3	2.4	.5	
(22) Our school takes the support of the local tradesmen, civil society organizations and the community in the immediate vicinity for the transition activities organized for children who start elementary school.	f 158	211	163	66	19	
	% 25.6	34.2	26.4	10.7	3.1	
(23) The transition activities organized for children who are to start elementary school take place in a festive atmosphere in our school.	f 188	203	171	48	7	
	% 30.5	32.9	27.7	7.8	1.1	
(24) Class visits between first-grade teachers and pre-school teachers are important in our school.	f 164	207	151	74	21	
	% 26.6	33.5	24.5	12.0	3.4	

The analysis of the data revealed that more than three-quarters of the classroom teachers either *agree with* or *strongly agree with* the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> statements in the ESRAT. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the elementary schools in the study universe are ready for children to start in terms of the listed school transition activities. On the other hand, it was observed that a little more than a quarter of the classroom teachers *partially agree with* the cases mentioned in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup> statements. Based on these results, it can be deduced that children are not fairly and properly ready to start school in terms of making physical arrangements in the sports areas of elementary schools, receiving community support on school transition activities, and carrying out school transition activities in a more enthusiastic way. Apart from these implications, only one-fifth of the teachers who participated in the study were determined to either *disagree with* or *strongly disagree with* the cases mentioned in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> statements of the ESRAT. These results indicate that classroom teachers think that in the corridors of elementary schools within the target population, physical safety measures should be taken for first-grade students and that schools should be supported in the establishment of family-teacher communication before the school starts.

#### *Findings from the Analysis of the Average Scores of the Classroom Teachers on the Sub-dimensions of the ESRAT in terms of Independent Variables*

Table 6 presents the results of the one-way ANOVA test, which was performed to analyze the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Physical arrangements in common use areas* (PACUA) in terms level of the variables of education, seniority, first-grade teaching experience and socioeconomic level of the school environment.

**Table 6.** Results of One-way ANOVA Test on Average Scores of Classroom Teachers on Dimension of *PACUA* in Terms of Independent Variables

Independent variable	Variance source	Sum of squares	df	Average of squares	F	p
Level of Education	Intergroup	13.651	2	6.826	7.789	.000*
	In groups	538.055	614	.876		
	Total	551.706	616			
Professional seniority	Intergroup	13.871	4	3.468	3.946	.004*
	In groups	537.835	612	.879		
	Total	551.706	616			
First-grade teaching experience	Intergroup	16.005	3	5.335	6.105	.000*
	In groups	535.702	613	.874		
	Total	551.706	616			
Socioeconomic Level of the School Environment	Intergroup	1.487	2	.744	.830	.437
	In groups	550.219	614	.896		
	Total	551.706	616			

\* $p < .05$ 

The results of the one-way ANOVA test presented in Table 6 indicated that the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *PACUA* statistically varied according to the variables of level of education, professional seniority, first-grade teaching experience and socioeconomic level of the school environment. Tukey's HSD test was carried out to identify the source of these differences. The results of this test demonstrated that:

- In regard to the variable of level of education, the average scores of the classroom teachers with an associate degree on the dimension of *PACUA* ( $\bar{X} = 4.1667$ ) were significantly higher than that of those with a bachelor's degree ( $\bar{X} = 3.5266$ ) and those with a postgraduate degree ( $\bar{X} = 3.8246$ ),
- In regard to the variable of seniority, the average scores of the classroom teachers with 21 years of seniority or more ( $\bar{X} = 4.0009$ ) on the dimension of *PACUA* were significantly higher than that of those with 6 to 10 years of seniority ( $\bar{X} = 3.5962$ ) and that of those with 11 to 15 years of seniority ( $\bar{X} = 3.7000$ ),
- In regard to the first-grade teaching experience, the average scores of the classroom teachers who have taught a first-grade class for 7 times or more before ( $\bar{X} = 4.0881$ ) on the dimension of *PACUA* were significantly higher than those who have not taught a first-grade class before ( $\bar{X} = 3.5000$ ) and those who have taught a first-grade class for 1-3 times ( $\bar{X} = 3.6867$ ) and those who have taught a first-grade class for 4-6 times ( $\bar{X} = 3.8379$ ).

On the other hand, the average scores of the teachers on the dimension of *PACUA* were not statistically significant in terms of the variable of the socioeconomic level of the school environment ( $F = .830$ ;  $p > .05$ ). This finding showed that the socioeconomic level of the school environment did not have an impact on the participation of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *PACUA*. Table 7 presents the results of the one-way ANOVA test, which was performed to analyze the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Physical security measures* in terms level of the variables of education, seniority, first-grade teaching experience and socioeconomic level of the school environment.

**Table 7.** Results of One-way ANOVA Test on Average Scores of Classroom Teachers on Dimension of *Physical Security Measures* in Terms of Independent Variables

Independent variable	Variance source	Sum of squares	df	Average of squares	F	p
Level of Education	Intergroup	4.758	2	2.379	2.662	.071
	In groups	548.626	614	.894		
	Total	553.384	616			
Professional seniority	Intergroup	13.723	4	3.431	3.891	.004*
	In groups	539.661	612	.882		
	Total	553.384	616			
First-grade teaching experience	Intergroup	6.301	3	2.100	2.354	.071
	In groups	547.083	613	.892		
	Total	553.384	616			
Socioeconomic Level of the School Environment	Intergroup	6.344	2	3.172	3.560	.029*
	In groups	547.040	614	.891		
	Total	553.384	616			

\* $p < .05$ 

The results of the one-way ANOVA test presented in Table 6 indicated that the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Physical security measures* did not vary according to the variables of level of education ( $F = 2.662$ ;  $p > .05$ ) and first-grade teaching experience ( $F = 2.354$ ;  $p > .05$ ). These findings indicated that the variables of level of education and first-grade teaching experience did not affect the opinions of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Physical security measures*. Nevertheless, the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Physical security measures* significantly varied according to the variables of seniority ( $F = 3.891$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and the socioeconomic level of the school environment ( $F = 3.560$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Indeed, the average scores of the teachers with 21 years of seniority or more on the dimension of *Physical security measures* ( $\bar{X} = 3.9032$ ) were significantly higher than the averages scores of those with 6 to 10 years of seniority ( $\bar{X} = 3.4615$ ) and those with 11 to 15 years of seniority ( $\bar{X} = 3.6166$ ). Secondly, the average scores of the teachers who served in a medium socioeconomic level on the dimension of *Physical security measures* ( $\bar{X} = 3.8797$ ) were significantly ( $F = 3.560$ ;  $p < .05$ ) higher than the averages scores of those who served in a low socioeconomic level ( $\bar{X} = 3.5436$ ).

Table 8 presents the results of the one-way ANOVA test, which was performed to analyze the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations* in terms level of the variables of education, seniority, first-grade teaching experience and socioeconomic level of the school environment.

**Table 8.** Results of One-way ANOVA Test on Average Scores of Classroom Teachers on Dimension of *Teachers' Preparations* in Terms of Independent Variables

Independent variable	Variance source	Sum of squares	df	Average of squares	F	p
Level of Education	Intergroup	1.987	2	.993	1.057	.348
	In groups	577.063	614	.940		
	Total	579.050	616			
Professional seniority	Intergroup	10.747	4	2.687	2.893	.022*
	In groups	568.303	612	.929		
	Total	579.050	616			
First-grade teaching experience	Intergroup	11.113	3	3.704	3.998	.008*
	In groups	567.936	613	.926		
	Total	579.050	616			
Socioeconomic Level of the School Environment	Intergroup	3.273	2	1.636	1.745	.176
	In groups	575.777	614	.938		
	Total	579.050	616			

\* $p < .05$



The results of the one-way ANOVA test presented in Table 6 indicated that the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations* did not significantly vary according to the variables of level of education ( $F= 1.057; p>.05$ ) and socioeconomic level of the school environment ( $F= 1.745; p>.05$ ). These findings indicated that the variables of level of education and socioeconomic level of the school environment did not affect the opinions of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations*. Nevertheless, the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations* significantly varied according to the variables of seniority ( $F= 2.893; p<.05$ ). The results of the Tukey's HSD test showed that this difference resulted from the fact that the average scores of the teachers with 5 years of seniority or less on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations* ( $\bar{X}= 4.1222$ ) were higher than that of those with 21 years of seniority and more ( $\bar{X}= 3.6725$ ) and that of those with 16-20 years of seniority ( $\bar{X}= 3.6032$ ). Further, regarding professional seniority, the average scores of the teachers with 6-10 years of seniority on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations* ( $\bar{X}= 3.9679$ ) were higher than that of those with 21 years of seniority or more ( $\bar{X}= 3.6725$ ) and those with 16-20 years of seniority ( $\bar{X}= 3.6032$ ) on this dimension. Also, the average scores of the teachers on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations* significantly varied according to the variable of first-grade teaching experience ( $F= 3.998; p<.05$ ). The results of the Tukey's HSD test showed that this difference resulted from the fact that the average scores of those who had taught a first-grade class for 7 times or more before on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations* ( $\bar{X}= 3.5812$ ) were lower than that of those who had taught a first-grade class for 1-3 times ( $\bar{X}= 3.9096$ ) and those who had taught a first-grade class for 1-3 times ( $\bar{X}= 4.0303$ ).

Table 9 presents the results of the one-way ANOVA test, which was performed to analyze the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Implementations of Transition to School* in terms level of the variables of education, seniority, first-grade teaching experience and socioeconomic level of the school environment.

**Table 9.** Results of One-way ANOVA Test on Average Scores of Classroom Teachers on Dimension of *Implementations of Transition to School* in Terms of Independent Variables

Independent variable	Variance source	Sum of squares	df	Average of squares	F	p
Level of Education	Intergroup	3.527	2	1.763	3.556	.029*
	In groups	304.467	614	.496		
	Total	307.993	616			
Professional seniority	Intergroup	2.616	4	.654	1.311	.265
	In groups	305.377	612	.499		
	Total	307.993	616			
First-grade teaching experience	Intergroup	1.029	3	.343	.685	.561
	In groups	306.964	613	.501		
	Total	307.993	616			
Socioeconomic Level of the School Environment	Intergroup	2.506	2	1.253	2.518	.081
	In groups	305.487	614	.498		
	Total	307.993	616			

\* $p<.05$

The results of the one-way ANOVA test presented in Table 9 indicated that the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Implementations of Transition to School* significantly varied only depending on the variable of level of education ( $F=3.556; p<.05$ ). The results of the Tukey's HSD test performed to identify the groups that differed showed that the average scores of the classroom teachers with an associate degree on the dimension of *Implementations of Transition to School* ( $\bar{X}= 4.1647$ ) were significantly higher than that of those with a bachelor's degree ( $\bar{X}= 4.0463$ ) and of those with a postgraduate degree ( $\bar{X}= 3.8227$ ). On the other hand, the results pointed out that the average scores of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Implementations of Transition to School* did not significantly vary depending on the variables of seniority ( $F= 1.311; p>.05$ ), first-grade teaching experience ( $F= .685; p>.05$ ) and the socioeconomic level of the school environment ( $F= 2.518; p>.05$ ). In other words, while

the variable of level of education had an impact on the opinions of the classroom teachers on implementations of transition to school, the variables of first-grade teaching experience and the socioeconomic level of the school environment were not the reasons for the difference in the opinions of the classroom teachers on implementations of transition to school.

*Findings from the Analysis of the Average Scores of Classroom Teachers on ESRAT in terms of the Variables of Level of Education, Professional Seniority and First-grade Teaching Experience*

Table 10 shows the average scores and standard deviation values obtained by the classroom teachers on ESRAT according to the variables of level of education, professional seniority and first-grade teaching experience.

**Table 10.** Average Scores of Classroom Teachers on ESRAT

Independent variable	Group	N	Average	SD
Level of education	Associate degree	84	4.0106	.62224
	Bachelor's degree	486	3.8422	.70131
	Postgraduate degree	47	3.6029	.91858
Professional seniority	5 years or less	30	3.9218	.43573
	6-10 years	52	3.7748	.75817
	11-15 years	145	3.7661	.69431
	16-20 years	105	3.7756	.76662
	21 years or more	285	3.9195	.71643
First-grade teaching experience	No	22	3.8371	.55128
	1-3 times	166	3.8368	.70488
	4-6 times	273	3.8098	.73318
	7 times or more	156	3.9238	.71236
Socioeconomic Level of the School Environment	High	347	3.8128	.72111
	Medium	231	3.9019	.67513
	Low	39	3.8245	.86865

The findings on the level of education in Table 10 indicated that the higher the level of education of the classroom teachers were, the less they agreed with the statements on the ESRAT. The findings obtained in terms of professional seniority showed that the teachers with 5 years of seniority or less and those with 21 years of seniority or more had higher average scores from the ESRAT compared to the teachers in the other three professional seniority groups. On the other hand, the score averages taken from the ESRAT by teachers who had taught a first-grade class for 7 times or more before are slightly higher than the score averages taken from the ESRAT by the teachers who had no first-grade teaching experience, those who had taught a first-grade class for 1-3 times, and those who had taught a first-grade class for 4-6 times. Table 11 presents the results of one-way ANOVA conducted to examine the average scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of the level of education, professional seniority and first-grade teaching experience.

**Table 11.** Results of One-Way ANOVA for the Evaluation of the Average Scores of the Classroom Teachers on the ESRAT in Terms of the Level of Education, Professional Seniority and First-grade Teaching Experience

Independent variable	Variance source	Sum of squares	df	Average of squares	F	p
Level of Education	Intergroup	5.060	2	2.530	5.019	.007*
	In groups	309.491	614	.504		
	Total	314.551	616			
Professional seniority	Intergroup	3.421	4	.855	1.683	.152
	In groups	311.130	612	.508		
	Total	314.551	616			
First-grade teaching experience	Intergroup	1.316	3	.439	.859	.462
	In groups	313.235	613	.511		
	Total	314.551	616			
Socioeconomic Level of the School Environment	Intergroup	1.123	2	.562	1.100	.334
	In groups	313.428	614	.510		
	Total	314.551	616			

\* $p < .05$ 

According to the results of the one-way ANOVA in Table 11, the average scores of the classroom teachers on the ESRAT statistically varied only depending on the variable of the level of education ( $F = 5.019$ ;  $p < .05$ ). The Tukey's HSD test was performed to determine between which groups the difference existed. In line with the results of the Tukey's HSD test, the average scores of the classroom teachers with an associate degree ( $\bar{X} = 4.0106$ ) on the ESRAT were significantly higher than that of the classroom teachers with a post-graduate degree ( $\bar{X} = 3.6029$ ). On the other hand, there was no statistically significant difference between the average scores of the classroom teachers on the ESRAT in terms of seniority ( $F = 1.683$ ;  $p > .05$ ), first-grade teaching experience ( $F = .859$ ;  $p > .05$ ) and the socioeconomic level of the school environment ( $F = 1.100$ ;  $p > .05$ ). In light of these findings, these variables did not have an impact on the participation of the classroom teachers in the statements in the ESRAT. Moreover, it can be argued that the schools in different service areas were in a province that mostly covers the first service area.

### Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The aim of this research is to examine the readiness of children starting elementary school, based on the data obtained from the classroom teachers. The results of the analysis on the elementary schools in the study population in terms of the *dimension of schools' readiness* are discussed below in light of the literature.

It was concluded that the classroom teachers within the scope of this particular study *agreed with* the statements in the ESRAT; the teachers believed that the elementary schools are ready for children to start. Golan et al. (2011) concluded that, by means of creating qualified educational environments with the help of a program implemented in Miami-Dade, providing access to health services, determining the needs and requirements in advance, and presenting participation opportunities to families of concern, schools are made ready for children's education with success. In this study, the average scores of the classroom teachers regarding the sub-dimensions of the ESRAT showed that the elementary school students in the target population of the study were ready to start school in terms of *PACUA*, *physical security measures*, *teachers' preparation*, and *implementations of transition to school*. The results obtained from the study conducted by Brandt and Grace (2005) in Hawaii and another study conducted by Ebbeck et al. (2013) in Singapore are different from the results of this particular study. Brandt and Grace (2005) concluded that four in five out of 148 elementary schools in Hawaii are not ready for children to start school. Ebbeck et al. (2013) stated that, in order to minimize the problems of young children during the school transition phase, more changes needed to be implemented in schools in Singapore. The studies that directly address the dimension of schools'

readiness in the national literature (Buldu & Er, 2016; Kartal & Güner, 2018) offer some conceptual explanations and emphasize the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of *school readiness*. Unlike these studies, the study by Güner and Kartal (2019) found out that arranging first-grade classrooms, including more parents' meetings in transition to school process and making some preparations based on prior experiences are the foci of the process of making elementary schools ready for the children.

The comparison of the average scores on the sub-dimensions of the ESRAT pointed out that the classroom teachers believed that elementary schools were most effective in the dimension of *implementations of transition to school*. The study found that the average scores on the sub-dimension of *teachers' preparations* were lower than the average scores on the other dimensions on the part of classroom teachers. Murphey and Burns (2002) yielded similar results in their study, which was conducted in Vermont, USA, where they discussed the multi-faceted nature of readiness for pre-schooling. The survey revealed that more than four out of five schools in the state of Vermont were successful in terms of transition to school. In the same study, the lowest average score was obtained for compliance with the criteria in terms of the dimension of the schools related to personnel development. Similarly, a study conducted by Buldu and Er (2016) in Ankara on 268 teachers and 400 family members concluded that some of the teachers did not feel ready to teach first-grade students. Another study conducted by Ünver, Dikbayır, and Yurdakul (2015) in İzmir, where the obtained results differed considerably, found that the parents find the teachers skillful and ready to teach first-grade students. Considering the current research results and the related literature, it can be argued that school staffs in elementary schools should be supported in terms of early childhood education. It can be said that such support to be provided at the national level in the context of the readiness of the schools will contribute both to teacher qualifications and to the facilitation of the transition to school for children who are to start school.

Based on the opinions of the classroom teachers in the target population of the study, it was found that elementary schools were open to family visits before the school started. Congruently, Einarsdóttir (2003) reported that the most commonly used practice in Iceland by both pre-elementary and elementary school teachers was school visits organized for pre-school education teachers and children who would start elementary school prior to the start date of the schools. In Broström's (2002) study focusing on transition to school implementations in Denmark, it was stated that inviting the children for school visits prior to the school year indeed a good idea, as expressed by pre-school education and classroom teachers. In his study, Chan (2010) concluded that school visits to elementary schools are a common practice in Hong Kong. Einarsdóttir, Perry, and Dockett (2008) compared elementary school transition practices in Iceland and Australia, and found that in both countries, visiting elementary schools before the school started is one of the most common school transition practices.

The average scores for the transition to school on the study point out that school transition activities in elementary schools are carried out in a planned manner, and that the adaptation week program in elementary schools has reached its goal in terms of the concerned elementary school students and that schools generally facilitate transition to elementary school. Similarly, in a study conducted by Başaran, Gökmen, and Akdağ (2014), it was revealed that pre-school education teachers expressed positive views on the adaptation week program for kindergarten students. However, Yıldırım Hacıbrahimoğlu (2017) argued that adaptation week activities cannot be accepted as a systematic transition program and that adaptation week activities can be accomplished through a transition plan and cooperation between the transition team and the institution. In this study, it can be said that if the positive teacher evaluations for elementary schools are taken into consideration, especially in the ESRAT's dimension of *implementations of transition to school*, the elementary schools in the target population of the study can be considered successful in terms of transition to school.

It was determined that there are deficiencies in elementary schools in the target population of this study in terms of making physical arrangements for first-year students, receiving community support on elementary school transition activities and carrying out elementary school transition

activities in a festive atmosphere. Some studies reported that the school yards and playgrounds failed to meet the needs of the first-grade students in elementary schools, that these areas did not have appropriate physical characteristics for young children (Zelyurt & Özel, 2015), and that there were no suitable areas where first-grade students can play and take part in physical activity courses (Işıkoğlu Erdoğan & Şimşek, 2014). As for the findings of this study on the exterior of the schools, it can be claimed that increasing urban population has a negative impact on urbanization and therefore on school architecture. In fact, today, school yards are not greened up and their floors are generally made of concrete (Akbaba & Turhan, 2016; Aksu & Demirel, 2011; Özdemir, 2011; Şişman & Gültürk, 2011) and the size of the open space per student in schools has been decreasing (Aksu & Demirel, 2011; Şişman & Gültürk, 2011). The study by Koçyiğit (2014) on elementary schools reported that the children studying in independent kindergartens drew elementary schools mostly as multi-storey buildings and the word most frequently used by the children while describing elementary schools is *large*. Based on the research study and the results in the literature, the physical arrangements to be made for outdoor activities in elementary schools in Turkey must consider the needs of particularly the first-grade students of elementary schools and their developmental characteristics. In addition, the classroom teachers who participated in the study stated that no physical security measures were taken in the corridors of the elementary schools. In a study conducted by Arı (2014), it was determined that first-grade students could climb up the stairs with the help of a teacher. It was seen that family-teacher communication cannot be established prior to the school year. In another study in which pre-education schools across the United States were examined to determine whether they are ready for children to start to school (Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999b), it was determined that there was no relational connection established between the school and the home before the school started. Similarly, in a study on the implementation of transition to school, conducted in Portugal by Correia and Marques-Pinto (2016), the findings revealed the need to adopt new strategies for a qualified family-school partnership. In contradistinction to the results obtained in the research conducted by Einarsdóttir et al. (2008), it was found that first-grade teachers in Australia get in contact with the families before the school starts, and that family meetings are one of the common practices of transition to school in Iceland and Australia. In Iceland (Einarsdóttir, 2003) and Hong Kong (Chan, 2010), on the other hand, it was revealed that families and elementary school teachers communicate with each other prior to the first day of the school.

This study concluded that the level of education, seniority and first-grade teaching experiences of the classroom teachers shaped their opinions on the dimension of *Physical arrangements in common use areas (PACUA)*.

- The teachers with an associate degree expressed more positive opinions on the physical arrangements made for the children who start school in common use areas, than other teachers. This finding can be explained by the fact that the classroom teachers with a bachelor's degree and post-graduate degree developed a more critical perspective towards the common use areas in elementary schools resulting from the content and period of the education they received, compared to the teachers with an associate degree.
- The classroom teachers with more professional seniority and more first-grade teaching experience expressed more positive opinions on the physical arrangements made for the children who start school in common use areas, than other teachers. This may result from the fact that these classroom teachers, who have been working for long years and with various first-grade students due to their seniority, considered the physical arrangements made with today's technology adequate.

The study determined that the socioeconomic level of the school environment did not affect the opinions of the teachers on the dimension of PACUA. The finding that the opinions of the classroom teachers working in the school environments with different socioeconomic levels were similar in nature can be explained by the fact that the physical transformations have been carried out with School Development Plans (2012) in the schools in the study population at a similar level regardless of the socioeconomic levels of these school environments. On other hand, there are some studies in the



literature (Arı, 2014; Güner & Kartal, 2019; Zelyurt & Özel, 2015) that indicate the need for arrangements in common use areas such as toilets, school yards and playgrounds for first-graders in elementary schools. Bay and Şimşek (2014) reported that first-graders are receiving education and spending time in the physical settings that restrict their actions compared to pre-school settings.

The study revealed that the variables of level of education and first-grade teaching experience did not have an impact on the opinions of the teachers on the dimension of PACUA. However, regarding this dimension, there were some differences between the teachers in terms of seniority and the socioeconomic level of the school environment.

- The teachers who worked in the elementary schools at a medium socioeconomic level expressed more positive opinions on the physical security measures taken for the children who start school, than those who worked in the schools at a low socioeconomic level did. This finding may result from the fact that the elementary schools at a low socioeconomic level spent their resources on the physical arrangements in common use areas rather than on the physical security measures. Indeed, this is supported by the opinions that did not differ according to the socioeconomic level of the environment of the relevant school in terms of the physical arrangements in common use areas for the children who start school. A similar difference was not notable between the opinions of the teachers in a high socioeconomic level and that of the teachers at other levels; the reason may be that the teachers at a high socioeconomic level consider the physical security measures taken at their schools as usual measures. Since the schools at a high socioeconomic level are mostly located at the provincial and district centers (MoNE, 2018b) and different practices such as hiring a private security guard are performed in these schools as part of the project *Safe School Safe Future*. Based on these results, it can be inferred that the project *Safe School Safe Future* was less effective in terms of the physical security measures taken for the children who start elementary school at a low socioeconomic level, compared to those at a medium level.
- The classroom teachers with more seniority expressed more positive opinions on the physical security measures taken for the children who start elementary school. The reason may be the fact that the teachers with more seniority found the physical security measures taken in the elementary schools adequate, resulting from their opinions on the physical arrangements in common use areas for the children who start school.

The opinions of the classroom teachers in the sample of the study on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations* did not differ depending on the socioeconomic level of the school environment. Yet, it was noted that seniority and first-grade teaching experience affected their opinions on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations*.

- The teachers with less seniority expressed more positive opinions on the preparations made by first-grade teachers for the children who start school.
- The teachers who had taught a first-grade class for 7 times or more before found the preparations made by first-grade teachers less adequate than those with less or no first-grade teaching experience.

These two findings mentioned above can be explained with the contribution of a long-term professional life and various first-grade teaching experiences to individuals on the profession of teaching, thus, on the teachers' readiness for the children who start school. Due to this contribution, the teachers with high professional seniority and more first-grade teaching experience may not consider the preparations made by first-grade teachers in their schools adequate. The study by Güner and Kartal (2019) reported that the first-grade teachers highlighted the concept of *experience* most on the readiness of on the children who start school is *experience*. On the other hand, Einarsdóttir (2003) stated that the teachers with lower professional seniority were more active in transition from kindergarten to elementary school than those with higher professional seniority.

The findings of this study on implementations of transition to school indicated that there was a difference between the teachers only in terms of level of education. That is, the classroom teachers with an associate degree considered the implementations of transition to school for the children who start school more effective than the teachers with a bachelor's degree and with a post-graduate degree did. The reason may be that the classroom teachers with a bachelor's degree and with a post-graduate degree had a better knowledge of the literature on the implementations of transition to school and thus they believed that the elementary schools could carry out more practices in greater diversity. The study further concluded that there was no difference between the opinions of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Implementations of transition to school* in terms of first-grade teaching experience and the socioeconomic level of the school environment. The study by Einarsdóttir (2003) identified a difference between the teachers in terms of seniority and reported that Icelandic elementary school teachers with less professional seniority performed implementations of transition to school more frequently than those with more vocational and professional qualifications. In regard to this dimension, the finding that there was not a difference between the teachers in terms of socioeconomic level is congruent with the finding of another study (La Paro, Pianta, & Cox, 2000) that the opinions of kindergarten teachers on implementations of transition to school did not vary according to the socioeconomic level of the school and the region they worked in.

As the level of education of the classroom teachers in the study increased, their level of participation in the statements of the ESRAT decreased. Besides, the mean score of the classroom teachers with an associate degree on the ESRAT was significantly higher than that of those with a bachelor's degree. It can be claimed that this significant difference resulted from the diversity and variance in the duration and content of education between the programs for a bachelor's degree and associate degree. A decrease in the levels of participation in the statements on the ESRAT with the increase of the level of education can be explained by the critical thinking skills acquired through education. As a matter of course, all teachers are expected to be qualified regardless of their levels of education at the national level. Therefore, it was expected in this study that teachers' views on elementary schools in the dimension of the *schools' readiness* were similar to their views on level of education. However, the mean score of the teachers in the study on the ESRAT decreased as the educational levels of the classroom teachers increased. The study emphasized that the variables of seniority, first-grade teaching experience and the socioeconomic level of the school environment did not affect the participation of the classroom teachers in the ESRAT.

- As a result, it was concluded that professional seniority was not an effective factor in the participation of the classroom teachers in the ESRAT. This can be explained by the fact that the dimension of the *schools' readiness*, which emerged in the 1990s and has been studied in the international literature since then, could not be addressed yet in the national literature.
- It was observed that the first-grade teaching experience was not a determining factor in the participation of the classroom teachers in this study to the ESRAT. This result may be due to the fact that the teachers with no first-grade teaching experience and with different experiences in first-grade teaching focus on the capacities of the children in readiness for school. Indeed, some studies (Harman & Çelikler, 2012; Kartal & Güner, 2018) in the national literature mentioned that the focus is on children's readiness to attend school.
- The opinions of the elementary school classroom teachers in the target population of the study about whether the elementary schools are ready for children to start school were similar in terms of the socioeconomic level of the school environment. La Paro et al. (2000) collected data on transition to elementary school through a national sample of pre-education school teachers working 3,595 public schools and 176 private schools in the United States. The researchers determined that the opinions of the kindergarten teachers regarding schools in the context of transition practices did not differ according to the socioeconomic status of the school and the region. The results obtained in terms of the socioeconomic status in the study differ from the statements of Ackerman and Barnett (2005) that each school's criteria for school readiness are

different and that schools' and teachers' perceptions of school readiness in the same region may change. The finding of this study that the socioeconomic level of the school environment was not regarded as an effective factor based on the opinions of the classroom teachers on whether elementary schools are ready for the children who start school may result from the positive impacts of the activities performed at the national level as part of orientation week. However, the physical condition of the school is expected to reflect the socioeconomic level of the school environment. Therefore, considering the physical arrangements, family- and community-supported transition practices, the opinions of the teachers on the ESRAT differed depending on the socioeconomic level of the school. Yet, the results of the study on the socioeconomic level of the school were different from what was expected; the opinions of the classroom teachers who worked in different socioeconomic levels on whether elementary schools were ready for the children who start school were similar in nature.

Analysis of the total scores on the ESRAT showed that having a post-graduate degree is an important qualification for the classroom teachers on the dimension of *schools' readiness*. In fact, this can be explained by the finding that the dimension of schools' readiness has been attracted attention only in the recent years (Nelson, 2005). Since the classroom teachers with a post-graduate degree, not surprisingly, had the chance to follow the recent literature. Yet, given that the average score of the classroom teachers on the dimension of *Teachers' preparations* differed depending on professional seniority and first-grade teaching experience, these two variables appear to be important for teachers' preparations for the children who start elementary school. It should be noted that a child, who has a school-ready family and is also considered to be ready for elementary school in terms of developmental characteristics, encounters problems in adapting to school when faced with the school environment and school staff that are not ready for him/her. Based on its findings, this study suggests the following:

- (a) Making physical arrangements for first-grade students in the sports fields of the elementary schools in the population,
- (b) Changing the size of the sports fields in the elementary schools by considering that the number of students in the schools and the students in the small age group are also in the age of play,
- (c) Taking physical security measures in the elementary schools for children in the small age group, such as moving first-grade classrooms to the ground floor,
- (d) Aligning family-school interaction with school-based systems, which are effective in school readiness, such as school-family unions, parent-school relations, school-family associations, based on the Ecological Systems Approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), in relation to the finding that family-teacher interactions were not found sufficient in the elementary schools in this study,
- (e) Carrying a future support program, which will be prepared considering the dimension of *Schools' readiness*, in accordance with a pre-determined schedule by a transition team to be established in schools,
- (f) Providing in-service trainings to first-grade teachers on the subjects of their choice given that the average score on the dimension of *Teachers' preparation* was lower compared to other dimensions in this study,
- (g) Informing all staff in elementary schools of transition to school process prior to the first day of school and thus minimizing potential discontinuities and negativities caused by the staff who can be considered intermediary between pre-school and elementary school settings,
- (h) Performing such research in the provinces in different service areas other than the first service area and comparing the results.

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