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# **Analysis of the Toys Owned at Home by 4-5 year-old Children and the Toys they Prefer to Play with**

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## Abstract

The purpose of the research is to analyse the toys owned at home by 4-5 year-old children and the toys they prefer to play with. 455 children aged 4-5, going to 8 independent nursery schools operating on the European Side of Istanbul under the Ministry of Education in 2015-2016 Academic Year, and their parents were included in the research. The "Personal Information Form" developed by the researcher and the "Toy Preference Form (TPF)" developed by Onur were used in the research as data collection tools. The toys used in OTF are formed by collecting, under the general headings, those mentioned in the literature and in daily use, serving similar purposes. These titles are classified as babies, miniature objects, manipulative, electronic, handicapped, educational, desktop, musical, moving toys, gaming materials, current heroes, models, war toys and others. Parents filled out their personal information forms and answered the question "What kind of toys do your children have at home?" The answers were then grouped according to the toy classification categorized by Onur. Taking the necessary ethical rules into consideration, the toys that were photographed were placed in a file according to category order. The picture cards with the toys were shown to the children and they were asked which and which ones they wanted to have. Thus, the parents' toys for children were compared with the toys they wanted to own. The data obtained from the research were transferred into a digital format, independent samples were tested using t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). When the findings were analysed, it was observed that; the children mostly preferred to play with miniature objects, heroes of the time and moving toys. 5 year old children were observed to prefer manipulative toys more than the 4 year old children. The girls were observed

to prefer dolls/plush/animals, miniature objects and handmade toys more than the boys; whereas the boys were observed to prefer manipulative toys, electronic toys, desktop toys, musical toys, model toys and war toys more than the girls. Looking at the findings of the toys owned at home, it was found that the children mostly had miniature objects, manipulative toys and dolls/plush/animals at home. 4 year old children were observed to have a greater number of desktop toys compared to 5 year old children. While the girls were observed to have dolls/plush/animals, miniature objects and handmade toys, the boys were observed to mostly have electronic toys, musical toys, game stuff and war toys.

Keywords: Toys, children, child development.

Toys are play tools that stimulate the children's feelings and five senses, enrich their imagination, enhance their evaluation and application skills, support their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development (Arıkan & Karaca, 2004). Toys are play materials that help the child to understand and interpret the world around him/her and to improve the child's natural abilities and thus perform a great educational function (Aynal, 2011, Yavuzer, 2011). Play tools and toys are two different concepts. Play tools, whose meaning and sometimes existence disappear after the game is over, are collective objects that exist only in the game. Toy, on the other hand, is personal and necessitates a settled life order and special places where it can be protected (Onur, 2013). Since the 1880s, there have been great developments in the toy industry, and since the 1990s, "educational toys" have gained importance and have been used as auxiliary materials in developing various concepts (Kim, 2002). Today, toys are extremely diverse, made of different materials with different colours and characteristics. It should be noted, however, that the "best toy" is the one which the child wants to play with over and over again, and gives him/her more play and more pleasure each time. (Galligan, 2000). Toys in the rapidly developing world are representative of the social world. They influence children's gender characteristics, their performances and preferences for various activities. Through gender differences, sexual socialization, interaction with adults and interaction with other children, the child gains a cultural outlook. Recent biological research provides detailed information on this subject. For example, they support the view that gender differences in sensitivity to colours and movements, as well as the choice of play and toys, emerge with the influence of hormones (Goldstein, 2003). Playing with the right toys provides significant benefits and experiences for children of all ages and genders (Seven, 2008). This experience helps the child adapt him/herself to different

situations. For this reason, the selection of toys is so important that it can not be done randomly (Bolişik, Yılmaz, Yavuz & Büyük, 2014).

There are important features to consider when choosing a toy. First of all, the toy should be suitable for the child's age, level of development and gender. At the same time, the health and safety of the child should also be considered (Cirhinlioğlu, 2010). Parents should be aware of the importance of toys, which are the means for the child to rehearse the real life, and should take their children's interests and desires into account when selecting toys. Knowing the kind and the number of toys that children have is important in terms of determining the socio-cultural context in which children are involved and the play environment and play skills to be presented to them. (Onur & Demir, 2004). Toys that develop the child's selection and evaluation skills allow the child to decide on his/her own (Aynal, 2011, Yavuzer, 2011). However, since the number of studies is limited in terms of the types of toys that children choose for themselves and parents prefer for their children, the understanding of toys preferences has not been widely investigated. Therefore, in this study, the relationship between toy preferences of 4-5 year-old children and the toys preferred by parents for them are discussed.

## Methodology

### Study Group

This is a study that includes qualitative study design and semi-structured interview model in terms of specific characteristics. This research is a descriptive study using the relational screening model. The toy preferences of 4 to 5-year-old children who attended preschool education were determined and the degree of the relationship between the toys they have at home. The study population comprises independent kindergartens affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MNE) operating on the European side of Istanbul. Eight schools voluntarily participated in the research.

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of the Study Group are Listed in

Variable	Answers	N	%
Age	4	212	46.6
	5	243	53.4
Gender	Girl	236	51.9
	Boy	219	48.1
	Total	455	100

When Table 1 is examined, it can be seen that 53.4% (243 persons) of the children in the sample are 5 years old and 46.6% (212 persons) are 4 years old. When the gender status of the children was examined, 51.9% (236) of the children were girls and 48.1% (219) were boys.

### **Measures**

*“Personal Information Form”* and *“Toy Preference Form”* (OTF) used in data collection were developed by the researcher.

1. *Personal Information Form*: The form prepared by the researcher to collect demographic information of children, includes a voluntary participation statement and personal information section. In the Personal Information section are questions about the children’s age and gender status.

2. *Toy Preference Form and Picture Cards*: This form was developed by the researcher to determine the toy selections of children aged 4-5 years. In order to develop the form, a literature review was carried out on toys and toy groups and the classification of toy types developed by Bekir Onur et al. (1997). In addition to this form, photographs of these toys were taken to better determine the children's preferences. The toys, photographed while taking the necessary ethical rules into consideration were placed in a file in accordance with the category order. Later, the children were shown the picture cards with these toys, and then the following two instructions were read:

Instruction 1. Which of the following toys you would like to play with?

Instruction 2. Are there any other toys than these that you would like to specify?

The choices identified after these instructions were recorded on the Toy Preference Form.

### **Data Analysis**

Personal Information Form and Toy Preferences Form used in the study was analysed using SPSS 20 package program. The obtained data were analysed by t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). When interpreting the results, 5% significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) was based in the lowest 95% confidence interval.

## Findings/Results

Findings and discussions about the sub-problems of the study are compiled into two main sections. In the first section “Toy Preferences” are studied and in the second section the “Toys the Children Have in Their Homes”.

### 1. Toy Preferences

**Table 2:** Frequency and Percent Distribution of Toys Children Prefer

Preferred Toy	Prefers	Frequency	Percentage %
Dolls	Yes	368	80.9*
	No	87	19.1
Miniature Objects	Yes	432	94.9*
	No	23	5.1
Manipulative Toys	Yes	353	77.6
	No	102	22.4
Electronic Toys	Yes	359	78.9*
	No	96	21.1
Handicraft Toys	Yes	313	68.8
	No	142	31.2
Educational Toys	Yes	256	56.3
	No	199	43.7
Tabletop Toys	Yes	242	53.2
	No	213	46.8
Musical Toys	Yes	207	45.5
	No	248	54.5
Mobile Toys	Yes	370	81.3*
	No	85	18.7
Play Materials	Yes	145	31
	No	310	69
Current Heroes	Yes	425	93.4*
	No	30	6.6
Models	Yes	217	47.7
	No	238	52.3
War Toys	Yes	289	63.5
	No	166	36.5
Other Toys	Yes	57	12.5
	No	398	87.5
	Total	455	100.0

\*\*p<0,01, \*p<0,05

According to Table 2, 94.9% of the children (n=432) prefer miniature objects, 93.4% (n=425) prefer current heroes, the third most preferred toy is the mobile toys with 81.3% (n=370). 80.9% (n=368) prefer dolls and 78.9% (n=359) prefer electronic toys. In addition, 56.3% of the children (n=256) prefer educational toys, 53.2% (n=242) prefer table games, 47.7% (n=217) prefer models and 45.5% (n=207) prefer musical toys. Another important finding in toy preferences is that 63.5% (n=289) of the children prefer war toys to educational, tabletop, model and musical toys. Moreover, other toys and play materials are the least preferred toys with 12% (n=57) and 31% (n=145), respectively. Boyd and Bee (1997) stated that children want to be superheroes in their games and that they love to play with their toys, but teachers

tend to ban them and think that they violent. This view supports the finding that superheroes are among the most preferred toys for children.

**Table 3:** Average Scores, Standard Deviation Values, and T-Test Results for Independent Sampling of the Toys Children Prefer by Their Ages

Preferred Toy	4 Years			5 Years			Result	
	N	$\bar{X}$	S	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	p
Dolls	212	.8066	.3959	243	.8107	.3959	.1110	.912
Miniature Objects	212	.9292	.2570	243	.9671	.1788	1.840	.066
Manipulative Toys	212	.7366	.3844	243	.8208	.4413	-2.153	.032*
Electronic Toys	212	.7830	.4131	243	.7942	.4050	.2920	.770
Handicraft Toys	212	.6981	.4601	243	.6790	.4678	-.4380	.662
Educational Toys	212	.5613	.4974	243	.5638	.4969	.0530	.958
Table games	212	.5236	.5006	243	.5391	.4995	.3300	.742
Musical Toys	212	.4245	.4954	243	.4815	.5006	1.216	.225
Moving Toys	212	.8255	.3804	243	.8025	.3989	-.6270	.531
Play Materials	212	.2877	.4537	243	.3457	.4765	1.323	.187
Current Heroes	212	.9434	.2316	243	.9259	.2624	-.7480	.455
Models	212	.4575	.4993	243	.4938	.5009	.7720	.441
War Toys	212	.5896	.4930	243	.6749	.4693	1.888	.060
Other Toys	212	.1085	.3117	243	.1399	.3476	1.009	.313

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

Table 3 shows that the preference of “manipulative toy” according to children's age shows a statistically significant difference ( $t_{453}=2.153$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). When the average score of children according to age variable is examined, it can be seen that 5-year-old children prefer *manipulative toys* more than 4-year-old children ( $s_{age=5}=.8208 > s_{age=4}=.7366$ ). As children grow older, their interests in manipulative toys increase.

Goodson (1997) states that 4 year old children prefer concepts, letters (ABC) numbers (1-10) and sorting toys in this period in his “Which Toy Which child” book This supports these findings by indicating that natural objects, mechanical devices, Lego, puzzles, plug-in toys and more complex matching toys are preferred with the increasing cognitive level in year five. According to Seven (2008), the child's age is the factor that is primarily considered in the selection of toys. Very young children, like toys that stimulate all their senses like a colourful rattle, and these toys make a significant contribution to the development of their senses. Children, who reach the preschool stage, enjoy playing with objects that support their creative side and making paintings. From this point of view, the child is naturally attracted to toys that, will improve the skills he or she may acquire during his or her life. However, the research results of Yıldız and Kayılı (2014) conclude that the age factor is not effective for the toy preference of the 4 to 5 year old children ( $\chi^2(sd = 4, n = 197) = 3563, p >.05$ ).

**Table 4:** Mean Scores, Standard Deviation Values, and T-Test Results for Independent Sampling of the Toys Children Prefer by Gender

Preferred Toy	Girl			Boy			Result		
	N	$\bar{X}$	S	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	Sd	p
Dolls	236	.9619	.1919	219	.6438	.4799	-9.402	453	.000**
Miniature Objects	236	.9746	.1577	219	.9224	.2681	-2.552	453	.011*
Manipulative Toys	236	.6653	.4729	219	.8950	.3072	6.093	453	.000**
Electronic Toys	236	.6821	.4666	219	.9041	.2951	6.010	453	.000**
Handicraft Toys	236	.7966	.4033	219	.5708	.4961	-5.344	453	.000**
Educational Toys	236	.5254	.5004	219	.6027	.4904	1.663	453	.097
Table games	236	.4746	.5004	219	.5936	.4922	2.555	453	.011*
Musical Toys	236	.3790	.5004	219	.5254	.4862	-3.161	453	.002**
Mobile Toys	236	.7839	.4124	219	.8447	.3629	1.665	453	.097
Play Materials	236	.3051	.4614	219	.3333	.4724	.6450	453	.519
Current Heroes	236	.9364	.2444	219	.9315	.2531	-.2110	453	.833
Models	236	.4280	.4958	219	.5297	.5002	2.177	453	.030*
War Toys	236	.5127	.5009	219	.7671	.4236	5.827	453	.000**
Other Toys	236	.1144	.3189	219	.1370	.3446	.7260	453	.468

\*p&lt;0.05, \*\*p&lt;0.01

In Table 4 it appears that there is a significant difference between the “doll” preference of children and the gender variable ( $t_{453}=-9.402$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Additionally, regarding miniature objects, it was found that there was a significant difference between the preference of such toys and the gender variable ( $t_{453}=-2.552$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Similarly, a significant difference was found between manipulative toys and the gender variable ( $t_{453}=6.093$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), between electronic toys and gender variable ( $t_{453}=-6.010$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), between handicraft toys and gender variable ( $t_{453}=-5.344$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), between table games and gender variable ( $t_{453}=-2.555$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), between musical toys and the gender variable ( $t_{453}=-3.161$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), between model toys and gender variable ( $t_{453}=-2.177$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and between war toys and gender variable ( $t_{453}=-5.827$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). When analysing the mean scores of the genders in order to determine how the difference arose among the genders, it is seen that doll, the animal and the plush toys, miniature objects, and handicraft toys are more preferred by girls than boys. It was found that boys prefer manipulative, electronic, tabletop, musical, model and war toys more than girls.

Similarly, Onur et al. (1997)'s study concluded that boys have fewer handicrafts and baby/animals/soft toys than girls, and nearly all girls (94%) have baby/animals/soft toys. Similar results were obtained through the research by Çiftçi and Özgün (2010) on the “a nalysis of children's toy preferences and peer interaction in the context of perception of parental gender roles”. When the activity averages are examined; girls mainly preferred playing house, plush toys, dancing, chatting with friends, playing Chinese whispers, and boys mainly preferred being cross with a friend, engaging in physical aggression with a friend, playing with big blocks, small Lego blocks and toys, repair tools, cars, buses and similar toys, playing cops



and robbers and driving cars with a wheel. In the study by Pilten and Pilten (2013), they stated that boys and girls toys were specific and that the opposite genders did not play with these toys. In his study, Kuzu (2015) concludes that as children grow up, that is, when they become aware of their gender, they prefer toys suitable for gender roles.

## 2. The Toys Owned at Home

**Table 5:** Frequency and Percent Distribution of Toys Children Owned at Home

Owned Toys	Owned	Frequency	Percentage %
Dolls	Yes	290	63,7***
	No	165	36,3
Miniature Objects	Yes	375	82,4*
	No	80	17,6
Manipulative Toys	Yes	308	67,7**
	No	147	32,3
Electronic Toys	Yes	140	30,8
	No	315	69,2
Handicraft Toys	Yes	181	39,8
	No	274	60,2
Educational Toys	Yes	84	18,5
	No	371	81,5
Table games	Yes	69	15,2
	No	386	84,8
Musical Toys	Yes	55	12,1
	No	400	87,9
Moving Toys	Yes	62	13,6
	No	393	86,4
Play Materials	Yes	121	26,6
	No	334	73,4
Current Heroes	Yes	100	22,0
	No	355	78,0
Models	Yes	88	19,3
	No	367	80,7
War Toys	Yes	31	6,8
	No	424	93,2
Other Toys	Yes	30	6,6
	No	425	93,4
	Total	455	100,0

\*\*\*p<0,01, \*\*p<0,05

When the conclusion table 5 is studied, it is seen that 375 people of the 455 children who participated in the survey had *miniature objects as the most owned toy type*. This result corresponds to the result in the toys preference frequency distribution table. Previously, miniature objects were identified as the toy type 432 that children prefer the most. However, *manipulative toys* seem to be the second most popular toy type (308 people). The third most popular toy is the *dolls* with a rate of 290 people. In contrast, the least popular toys are war toys with a rate of 30 persons, except the "other toys" variable. At the same time, mobile toys (13.6% – 62 people),

musical toys (12,1% – 55 people), desktop toys (15.2% – 69 people) and educational toys (18.5% – 84 people) are also seen as types of toys with a ratio below 20%.

**Table 6:** Average Scores, Standard Deviation Values, and T-Test Results for Independent Sampling of the Toys Children Owned at Home by Their Ages

Owned Toys	4 Years			5 Years			Result		
	N	$\bar{X}$	S	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	Sd	p
Dolls	212	,3726	,4846	243	,3539	,4791	,414	453	,679
Miniature Objects	212	,1698	,3763	243	,1811	,3858	-,314	453	,754
Manipulative Toys	212	,2830	,4515	243	,3580	,4804	-1,708	453	,088
Electronic Toys	212	,7028	,4580	243	,6831	,4662	,453	453	,651
Handicraft Toys	212	,5566	,4979	243	,6420	,4804	-1,859	453	,064
Educational Toys	212	,8113	,3921	243	,8189	,3858	-,208	453	,835
Table games	212	,8868	,3176	243	,8148	,3892	2,141	453	,033**
Musical Toys	212	,8868	,3176	243	,8724	,3343	,468	453	,640
Mobile Toys	212	,8679	,3393	243	,8601	,3476	,243	453	,808
Play Materials	212	,7264	,4468	243	,7407	,4391	-,344	453	,731
Current Heroes	212	,8019	,3995	243	,7613	,4271	1,041	453	,298
Models	212	,8255	,3804	243	,7901	,4080	,951	453	,342
War Toys	212	,9245	,2647	243	,9383	,2411	-,579	453	,563
Other Toys	212	,9198	,2722	243	,9465	,2254	-1,144	453	,253

\*\*p<0,01, \*p<0,05

According to the table, there is a meaningful relationship between children having “desktop games” and age variation. ( $t_{453}=2.141$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). When we look at the average attitudes throughout age variable regarding the ownership of the desktop toys, it is seen that the 4-years-old children have more of the desktop games than the 5-years-old children. (4 years old= .8868 > 5 years= .8148). Apart from the desktop games, there is no significant relationship between the ownership of other toy types and age variation.

**Table 7:** Average Scores, Standard Deviation Values, and T-Test Results for Independent Sampling of the Toys Children Owned at Home by Their Gender

Owned Toys	Girl			Boy			Result		
	N	$\bar{X}$	S	N	$\bar{X}$	S	t	Sd	p
Dolls	236	,0720	,2590	219	,6758	,4691	-17,152	453	,000**
Miniature Objects	236	,2246	,4181	219	,1233	,3295	2,855	453	,005**
Manipulative Toys	236	,3475	,4771	219	,2968	,4579	1,154	453	,249
Electronic Toys	236	,7458	,4363	219	,6347	,4826	2,578	453	,010**
Handicraft Toys	236	,5297	,5001	219	,6804	,4674	-3,314	453	,001**
Educational Toys	236	,8008	,4002	219	,8311	,3755	-,828	453	,408
Table games	236	,8432	,3643	219	,8539	,3540	-,316	453	,752
Musical Toys	236	,8475	,3603	219	,9132	,2821	-2,157	453	,032*
Mobile Toys	236	,8644	,3430	219	,8630	,3446	,043	453	,966
Play Materials	236	,7797	,4153	219	,6849	,4656	2,293	453	,022*
Current Heroes	236	,7966	,4033	219	,7626	,4264	,875	453	,382
Models	236	,8008	,4002	219	,8128	,3909	-,321	453	,748
War Toys	236	,9915	,0918	219	,8676	,3397	5,397	453	,000**
Other Toys	236	,9492	,2201	219	,9178	,2752	1,346	453	,179

\*\*p<0,01, \*p<0,05

According to the table, there is a meaningful relationship between children having “dolls” and gender variable ( $t_{453}=17.152$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). However, when miniature objects were studied, it was found that there was a meaningful relationship between children's toy ownership and gender variable. ( $t_{453}=2.855$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Likewise, there is a meaningful relationship between toy ownership and gender variable ( $t_{453}=2.578$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), handmade toy ownership and gender variable ( $t_{453}=-3.314$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), musical toy ownership and gender variable ( $t_{453}=-2.157$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), toy materials ownership and gender variable ( $t_{453}=-2,293$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and war toy ownership and gender variable ( $t_{453}=-5.397$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

When the average values for gender are studied in order to determine how the difference occurs among genders, it is seen that the ownership of dolls is more common in girls than in boys. (Girls= .6758 > Boys= .0720). Likewise, it is found that girls have more miniature objects than boys do. (Girls= .2246 > Boys= .1233). The girls have more toy materials than boys do. (Girls= .7797 > Boys= .6849). Boys have more music toys than girls do. (Boys= .9132 > Girls= .8475). In addition, boys have more handmade toys than girls do. (Boys= .6804 > Girls= .5297). Likewise, when the electronic toys are studied, it is found that boys have more electronic toys than girls do. (Boys= .7458 > Girls= .6347). Boys also have more war toys than girls do. (Boys= .9915 > Girls= .8676).

## Discussion

This study, which was conducted to investigate the toy preferences of 4 to 5 year old children and their game skill levels, and the correlation between these two, was performed with 4 to 5 year old children attending the independent kindergartens on the European side of Istanbul province between 2015-2016, and their parents. In the study, in order to learn the children's age and gender and the age and gender status of the parents, the Personal Information Form was used; The Toy Preference Form (TPF) was used to determine children's toy preferences. It is seen that 46.6% (212 persons) of the children in the sample are 4 years old and 53.4% (243 people) are 5 years old. When the gender of the children in the research was examined, it is seen that 51.9% of the children (236 persons) are girls and 48.1% (219 persons) are the boys.

As a result; it is seen that the three toy varieties preferred by children aged 4-5 are miniature objects, current heroes, and mobile toys. According to the age results of the children, 5-year-old children prefer manipulative toys more compared to 4-year-old children. In the results by gender; there is a statistically significant difference between the gender variable and dolls/plush/animals, miniature objects,

manipulative toys, electronic toys, handmade toys, desktop toys, musical toys, replicas, and war toy preference. Girls prefer dolls/plush/animals, miniature objects and handmade toys more than boys while boys prefer manipulative toys, electronic toys, desktop toys, musical toys, model toys and war toys more than girls.

According to the results of toys children have in their homes, it is seen that 82.4% (375 people) of the 455 children participating in the survey had the most toys as miniature objects, manipulative toys and dolls. According to age variables, 4 years old children have more handmade toys than 5 years old. When results are examined gender; girls have more miniature objects, dolls and toy materials than boys. Boys have more musical toys, handmade toys, electronic toys and war toys than girls.

### **Suggestion**

In choosing toys for children, gender should not be seen as the most important factor. For example, miniature toys are seen as more suitable for girls and preferred by parents, but boys prefer to play with miniature toys as much as girls. Likewise, it is found that girls want to play with handmade toys as much as boys even though they have fewer toys than boys do. According to these conclusions, parents should buy educational and entertaining toys for their children, or toys appropriate to their genders, and take into account the wishes and interests of their children. Parents can be informed about toys that can be bought for children according to their age. Toy producers and sellers may consider the interests, needs and wishes of children, except for war toys. Finally, preventive work can be done with interdisciplinary cooperation to prevent war toys from becoming too popular. The content of the cartoons, and the TV series and other media elements that contain excessive warfare and competition should be strictly controlled in terms of children's accessibility. They should not encourage violence.

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