Chapter 4
"Less Stress More Learning":
Views of Teachers and Parents on the Early Humor Education Program

Demet Gültekin
Ministry of Education, Turkey

Ilkay Ulutaş
iD https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2234-0773
Gazi University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

This case study aims to determine the views of teachers and parents about the early humor education program. The program was implemented by a preschool teacher, and the teachers' and parents' opinions were taken after the program. Research findings show that the humor education program provides effective learning for children and contributes to their development of a humorous perspective and abilities in problem-solving, creativity, communication, language, and social skills. The program was also shown to foster positive attitudes towards school and the teacher. He also drew attention to the fact that the program's fun nature reduces stress and provides learning through enjoyment; this appeal ensures the program's sustainability, resulting in the inclusion of humor in preschool education and the spread of the program to all age groups.

INTRODUCTION

Children enjoy laughing, having fun and playing "joking" games. Laughing at the jokes made by others in the beginning turns into a pursuit of entertainment over time, they tend to use humor as a way of expressing themselves rather than participating in humor. Humor, which is one of the ways children express themselves, is one of the important indicators of language, mind, social and emotional development (Stenius et al, 2022). All children have a certain level of humor at birth, and over time they can add or reduce meaning depending on environmental effects (Keskin, 2020; Sanders, 2001; Tucker, 2016).

Humor is defined as the ability to notice, produce, and share funny situations with others (Morreal, 1997; Tanç, 2020). Freud (1990) considered humor as the highest defense mechanism and sees it as a tool to reach the pleasant mood in childhood. Studies conducted in recent years also draw attention to the healing properties of humor (McGhee, 2010; Müller & Ruch, 2011; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Humor creates the most colorful and entertaining power of the personality, providing relaxation and protection (Müller & Ruch, 2011). For example, Salmela et al. (2010), when they examined the coping strategies of preschool children for their fears about the hospital, they revealed that one of the most used coping strategies by children is humor. Additionally, the effects of humor—such as initiating and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, being tolerant and cheerful, providing fusion by softening the atmosphere, presenting individuals with a different perspective, developing a positive outlook, increasing attention by reinforcing focus, and ensuring permanent learning—reveal that children should be fed with humor (Edwards & Martin, 2014; Klein, 1999; Orhon, 2014).

Many humor activities such as stories, cartoons, imitations, humorous games, dramatization, rhymes, puppet shows, pantomime, mimics, shadow plays, riddles, word games, funny pictures and videos—can be included in the early childhood classroom (Balta, 2016; Işık & Kolçak, 1953; Koestler, 1964; Özünlü, 1999; Ramachandran & Blakesle, 2014). Teachers who want to turn children's playful and curious characteristics into learning opportunities can increase students' cognitive development, language development, and creativity by adapting humor to education through planned activities suitable for children's humor characteristics (Işık & Kolçak, 1953; Morreall, 1997). The conscious and systematic use of humor will attract children's motivation, attention, and increase learning, minimize behavior disorders. Thus, making the learning environment and processes more enjoyable with humor also facilitates classroom management (Halimah et al, 2020; Rönkkö & Aerila, 2018; Şahin, 2018). Children should be supported with humor both at home and at school from the early years in terms of both relaxation, well-being and strengthening of learning. Parents and educators should support little humorists in displaying their humor skills in early childhood by providing a learning environment containing fun activities suitable for the development of their humor characteristics, developing educational programs, and giving children the opportunity to use materials that will enable them to reveal their humor characteristics (Bergen, 1992; Burt & Sugawara, 1988; Didin & Akyol, 2017).

Studies on the use of humor in preschool education have focused on various aspects, including: the social dimensions of laughing (Addyman et al., 2018), the sense of humor and irony (Angeleri & Airenti, 2014), the elements of verbal humor (Dirican, Bekir, & Bayraktar, 2020), the cognitive development between humor and culture, the relationship between these factors (Guo, Zhang, Wang, & Xeromeritou, 2011), teacher opinions on humor in preschool education (Gültekin & Ulutaş, 2021), the place of humor in character education (Halimah et al., 2020), early humor production (Hoicka & Ahktar, 2012), cartoon-based applications (Koç-Akran, & Kocaman-Gelir, 2020), visual and verbal humor production (Loizou & Loizou, 2019), understanding and appreciation of humor (Purser et al., 2020), humor-based art education (Rönkkö & Aerila, 2018), using humor as a coping strategy (Salmela et al., 2010), understanding and appreciating the humor in special children (Suits et al., 2012), teacher attitudes towards the use of humor in education (Tezel-Şahin, Eskidemir-Meral, & Tutkun, 2019) exaggeration and humor (Varga, 2009), examining humor in terms of teachers and children (Yılmaz, 2019), and the use of concept cartoons in preschool education (Zoroğlu, 2015). However, no study was found that used a program specifically designed to support children's humor skills. The present study has been conducted to support humor from the early years. Supporting humor in early childhood is a topic that has been discussed in recent years. Examining the evaluation of the effectiveness of the program prepared by considering the humor

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/less-stress-more-learning/311664

Related Content