

IMPACT OF SOCIAL SKILL AND PROBLEM BEHAVIOR TRAINING PROGRAM ON CHILDREN ATTENDING PRESCHOOL: A SURVAY

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ABSTRACT

In this research the pretest-posttest design with one group was used since the effects of an instructional program carried out for social skills and problem behaviors were measured. 6-year-old 23 children attending the Application Kindergarten in Gazi Education Faculty of Gazi University constitute the population of the research. In this research, Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scales (PKBS-2) were used as a data collection tool. To test whether there is any difference in pre-training and post-training about social skills and problem behaviors of the children attended this training an associated sample t test was conducted. Also, to test the retention of the training Freadman test was conducted. A training program to increase the social skills and to reduce problem behaviors of the children attending preschool has been applied in this study. It is determined at the end of the study that the trainig program is effective. In other words, it is seen there is an increase in social skills and a decrease in probelm behaviors of the children. When retention tests are examined, it is ascertained that the decrease in children`s problem behaviors on Extrovert, Introvert, Anti-social and Egocentric dimensions continue. In consideration of these results

Keywords: social skill, problem behavior, preschool, education

INTRODUCTION

That the problem behaviors in schools show increase in recent years has revealed the importance of supporting social and emotional development(Gimpel & Holland, 2003:2; Robbins & Merrill, 1998:204; Bierman & Furman, 1984:151). As a result of the researches which were frequent in the years of 1980-1999 and also continue in the following years, it has come out that children may pose a high risk in their ensuing years and in their adulthood about social competence when they could not get it enough till they are 6 years old. Social competence strengthened in childhood years may have an important effect on the development of the children`s social-emotional, cognitive and academic skills in the long term. The detrimental effects of the deficiency of social skills affect both childhood and adulthood stages, and the negative results stem from the deficit of social skills spread on the whole life of the individual (McCellan & Katz, 2001:1; Danielson & Phelps, 2003:219; Choi & Kim, 2003:41).

Social skills training which will be carried out early is essential in the way of preventing problems, which require clinical help, such as depression, social anxiety, becoming isolated and alcoholism which are caused by the deficiency of social skills in the years ahead(Sergin & Givers, 2003: 137-138). However, in the domestic and foreign review of literature about social skills training in preschool period, it has been seen that particularly domestic studies regarding getting social skills in recent years are rare and social skills training programs generally intensify from the period of primary education (Akkok, 1996; Cetin et al. 2003).

On the other side, in the literature review of getting social skills in preschool, it is confirmed that social skills training intensifies on the children who require special education (Davis, 1992; Lin, 1996; Ducharme & Holborn, 1997; Worden, 2002; Bacanlı & Erdogan, 2003:354; Celeste, 2006). Yet, preschool children are important in social development as they are in other development areas as well.

It is an indisputable fact that the children who have no developmental deficiency should have social skills. With the fact that egocentric way of thinking decreases especially in the ages of 5-6, the skills of looking at things from different viewpoints and of trying to understand others` ways of thinking start to progress. Therefore, this study is important to set an example of social skills training for the children who do not need special education.

The children who have social skills deficiency may have a higher risk of developing both extrovert behavior problems (offensiveness, hyperactivity, resistance, etc.) and introvert behavior problems (fear, restlessness, introvert, etc.). When the children are not interfered with the appropriate training programs for social adaptation in the early period, it will become unavoidable for the society to face with social, behavioral and academic problems. It is required to develop social skills primarily in the preschool period to prevent the social and behavioral problems from coming into existence (Merrill, 1995:231; Squires, 2003:3; Roche-Decker, 2004:3; Herrera & Little, 2005:78).

Hong (2005:179) states that being able to develop behaviors pertinent to the moral principles of the society in the adulthood years of the individual may be possible with values training implemented on preschool period. Weakening of social and cultural values, which we had in the past, such as sharing, help, cooperation, and empathy in the living conditions rapidly changing due to globalization gives individualism prominence rather than getting social skills in children. Although the children seem to continue their development in a narrower social environment, it becomes unavoidable for the dramatic and radical changes in the society to reflect on some factors with which the children interact in their environment. The differentiations in the family (increasing divorce rate, one-parent family, nuclear family, increasing rate of women in working life) may weaken the active roles of the families which are the first social environment in which the children open their eyes in getting social skills.

On the other hand, cartoons and computer games containing violence and reaching all kinds of information easily may influence negatively the preschool children`s behaviors on respecting others` rights, violence and despising; and families may fail to satisfy in guiding their children properly in this respect. The effect of violence culture increases aggressive behaviors in children, and they may use violence as a method in coping with the difficulties and in getting their ways (The National Television Violence Study, 1996: 54-55; Bingham, 2001:4; McArthur. 2002: 183; Smith et al., 2003:201). At this point, the importance of social skills training which will be given in preschools reveals in getting the preschool children social skills such as social interaction, social independence and social cooperation, and in minimizing problem behaviors(lying, hitting, pushing, being obstinate, grumbling, etc.)

This study is planned with the aim of examining the effect of the training program prepared with the intention of getting social skills and minimizing the problem behaviors of 60 72-month children attending preschool. The training program has been applied as 19 daily plans and 74 activities three days a week.

METHOD

Research Design

In this research the pretest-posttest design with one group was used since the effects of an instructional program carried out for social skills and problem behaviors were measured (Karasar, 2005:96).

Population and Sample

6-year-old 23 children attending the Application Kindergarten in Gazi Education Faculty of Gazi University constitute the population of the research. The whole of the population constitute the sample of the research. There are two types of populations. One of them is the general population, while the other one is the target population. The general population is abstract and it is a whole easy to describe but difficult or even impossible to reach. The target population is concrete due to its feature of being a reachable population. It is a population in which the researcher can express an opinion about it by observing directly or by benefiting from the observations made on a sample set of it. It is unavoidable for the researcher to generalize the results to only this limited target population since the researches are done in this population (Karasar, 2005:110).

Data Collection Tools

In this research, Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scales (PKBS-2) were used as a data collection tool.

Preschool and kindergarten behavior scales (pkbs-2)

Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scale (PKBS-2) was used as a separate data collection tool. Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scale (PKBS-2) was developed by Kenneth W. Merrill in 1994 with the aim of measuring the social skills and problem behaviors of the children who are attending preschool aged 3-6; and the scale was reviewed in 2003 and its norm study was done with 3317 children aged 3-6. The scale comprises of two independent scales as *Social Skills Scale and Problem Behaviors Scale*. The validity and reliability studies of Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scale (PKBS-2) for Turkish children were done by Saide Ozbey within the scope of her doctoral dissertation.

Social Skills Scale

Social skills scale has three sub-categories including 'Social Cooperation, Social Interaction and Social Independence'. There are totally 27 items in Social Skills Scale. Getting a high score in this test is assessed as positive from the point of social skills.

Problem Behaviors Scale

Problem behaviors scale has two sub-scales including 'Introvert Problem Behaviors and Extrovert Problem Behaviors'. There are totally 34 items in Problem Behaviors Scale. Getting a low score in this scale is assessed as positive from the point of problem behaviors.

In Social Skills Scale, it is determined that the Cronbach Alfa value of the first factor is .92, the Cronbach Alfa value of the second factor is .88, the Cronbach Alfa value of the third factor is .88; and the Cronbach Alfa value of Social Skills Scale in all is .94. In Problem Behaviors Scale, it is determined that the Cronbach Alfa value of the first factor is .95, the Cronbach Alfa value of the second factor is .87, the Cronbach Alfa value of the third factor is .81, the Cronbach Alfa value of the fourth factor is .72; and the Cronbach Alfa value of Problem Behaviors Scale in all is .96.

Data Analysis

To test whether there is any difference in pre-training and post-training about social skills and problem behaviors of the children attended this training an associated sample t test was conducted. Also, to test the retention of the training Friedman test was conducted.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

The results of the t test which shows the pre-test and post-test comparison according to the study group's scores gotten from Social Skills Scale are presented in Table 1.

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that a statistically significant difference is found between the experimental group's children's scores in the sub-categories such as Social Cooperation, Social Independence and Acceptance and Social Interaction which comprise Social Skills Scale ($z=3.06$, $p<0.05$) according to their pre-test and post-test situations. It is seen that the difference is in favor of positive scores which are post-test results when the average of the scores is considered.

Ekinci Vural (2006) applied a social skills training program with family involvement including 43 activities to develop social skills in 6-year-old children attending preschool. In the scope of the study, there are 40 children; 20 for experimental group and 20 for control group. Social Skills Assessment Scale was used as a data collection tool. Social Skills Assessment Scale has four sub-categories including Interpersonal Relations, Verbal Explanation Skills, Listening Skills and Self-Control Skills. Some significant differences were found in favor of the training program at the end of the program.

Table 1. t test results showing the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group in Social Skills Scale

		<i>Factors</i>	<i>Test</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{x}	<i>S</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
SOCIAL SKILLS SCALE	Social Cooperation	Pre-test		23	27,09	4,757	44	5.16	.00*
		Post-test		23	32,52	1,675			
	Social Independence and Acceptance	Pre-test		23	16,87	5,021	44	6.26	.00*
		Post-test		23	23,57	1,037			
	Social Interaction	Pre-test		23	9,09	3,147	44	4.19	.00*
		Post-test		23	11,87	,458			
	Total	Pre-test		23	53,04	9,335	44	7.41	.00*
		Post-test		23	67,96	2,421			

* P<0.05

Ergin (2003) applied a training program by developing it to develop the communications skills of the children attending preschool (for 5-year-old children: 6 months; for 6-year-old children: 5 months). In the scope of the study, there are 32 children; 16 for experimental group, and 16 for control group. About communication skills, Recognition of Feelings, Listening Test, Making Eye Contact Test and Expressing Feelings Test were used. It is determined at the end of the training program that there is an important effect of the Communication Skills Program on the children who are in the experimental group about their communication skills.

The results of the t test which shows the pre-test and post-test comparison according to the study group's scores gotten from Problem Behaviors Scale are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. t test results showing the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of the study group in Problem Behavior Scale

		<i>Factors</i>	<i>Test</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{x}	<i>S</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
PROBLEM BEHAVIORS SCALE	Extrovert	Pre-test		23	15,09	11,192	44	5,954	.00*
		Post-test		23	,91	2,255			
	Introvert	Pre-test		23	3,43	4,481	44	3,307	.02*
		Post-test		23	,26	1,054			
	Anti-social	Pre-test		23	1,96	1,718	44	4,717	.00*
		Post-test		23	,17	,576			
	Egocentric	Pre-test		23	3,96	2,602	44	5,995	.001*
		Post-test		23	,43	1,080			
	Total	Pre-test		23	24,43	14,924	44	7,076	.00*
		Post-test		23	1,78	3,605			

* P<0.05

When Table 2 is examine, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the control group children scores gotten from Problem Behaviors Scale and its sub-dimensions as Extrovert, Introvert, Anti-social and Egocentric according to their pre and post situations in Supportive Training Program. It is seen that the difference is in favor of post-test when the averages of the different scores on the

related sub-dimension were considered. It is possible to state that the training program applied is effective according to these results. There are different study results supporting these findings.

Reio et al. (2002:6) compared the conditions of exhibiting anxiety, prosocial and harmful behaviors of the children attending a kindergarten applying a children-centered program and a basic skills program. They found that the rate of exhibiting prosocial behaviors is higher and the children exhibit less problem behaviors in children-centered programs.

Mosley and Thomsan (1992) suggested that focusing on academic skills increases problem behaviors related with anxiety (concern, complaining unnecessarily, sniveling) and these behaviors come up particularly during the game time with big groups and the books or pages studies in the programs applying basic skills training. This situation brings out the success anxiety and leads to the children's unwillingness to taking academic risks and to their independence. It is pointed out that children-centered programs concentrate on developing other development fields in addition to academic skills. It is possible to reduce the problem behaviors when the social developments of children are supported in their learning environments (Reio et al., 2002:6).

Kurt (2007) did a research examining the impact of a project based training program about the social adaptation and skills of the 5 or 6-year-old children attending preschool. There were 69 children in the scope of the research, 23 for experimental group, 23 for control group I, and 23 for control group II. Project based training has been applied to the experimental group for 23 weeks as two hours a week. Social Adaptation and Skills Scale was used as a data collection tool. It is found at the end of the training that there is a significant difference in favor of the children in the experimental group in all factors of the Social Adaptation and Skills Scale. In addition to this, it is seen that it did not occur while expecting to reduce bad behaviors about social compliance after pre-test and post-test results in the experimental group a lot more than the other two control groups. It is commented that negative physical conditions lead to this result.

Denham and Weisberg (2005) pointed out that there is a decrease in offensiveness, anxiety and anti-social behaviors of the children in the training programs in which social and emotional developments are supported according to the research conducted.

Howes (2000) examined the relationship between the social and emotional environment and social competence about teacher-children relations in peer relations in his quadrennial study. Problem behaviors were measured Classroom Behavior Inventory Assessment Scale; and teacher-children relations were measured by Pianta Stuent-Teacher Relationship Scale. Findings indicated that peer relations of the children during the preschool period were related with their social skills and peer relations of the time when they reached second grade in primary school.

Domitrovich (2007) applied a training program with the aim of developing social and emotional competence and reducing problem behaviors in preschool children, which lasted for 9 months. The behaviors of the children were assessed by families and teachers at the end of the training. It is found that the children are in a higher position compared with their peers about social and emotional competence at the end of the training program applied.

Ostrov et al. (2009) applied a training program with the aim of reducing offensiveness and unfair behaviors in peer relations of the children and increasing their prosocial behaviors, which lasted for 6 weeks. At the end of the training, it is ascertained that there is a decrease in children's offensive behaviors and there is an increase in their prosocial behaviors.

Friedman Test results showing a comparison of retention test, pre-test and post-test according to the results of the study group in Social Skills Scale are presented in Table 3.

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the average scores of the study group in Social Skills Scale retention test and post test are pretty close to one another while the retention test is a little lower than the post-test. According to this, it is clear that the children ensure the scores they got in Social Skills Scale and its sub-dimensions. It is possible to state that the impact of the training program applied continue even after the program is over.

Table 3. Friedman Test results about retention test, pre-test and post-test according to the children's scores in Social Skills Scale and its sub-dimensions

SOCIAL SKILLS SCALE	Factors	Test	n	sd	Sıra Ort.	X ²	P
	Social Cooperation	Pre-test	23	2	17,52	31.53	.000*
		Post-test	23		44,91		
		Retention	22		41,36		
Social Independence and Acceptance	Pre-test	23	2	14,89	45.14	.002*	
	Post-test	23		42,96			
	Retention	22		46,16			
Social Interaction	Pre-test	23	2	20,76	27.92	.004*	
	Post-test	23		40,98			
	Retention	22		42,09			
Total	Pre-test	23	2	14,07	42.45	.000*	
	Post-test	23		45,24			
	Retention	22		44,64			

* P<0.05

Friedman Test results showing a comparison of retention test, pre-test and post-test according to the results of the study group in Problem Behaviors Scale are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Friedman Test results about retention test, pre-test and post-test according to the children's scores in Problem Behaviors Scale and its sub-dimensions

PROBLEM BEHAVIORS SCALE	Factors	Test	n	sd	Sıra Ort.	X ²	p
	Dimensions Extrovert	Pre-test	23	2	54,43	40.26	.22
		Post-test	23		22,70		
		Retention	22		26,00		
Introvert	Pre-test	23	2	48,37	29.97	.13	
	Post-test	23		28,76			
	Retention	22		26,00			
Anti-social	Pre-test	23	2	49,22	30.96	.032*	
	Post-test	23		27,74			
	Retention	22		26,18			
Egocentric	Pre-test	23	2	52,50	36.25	.001*	
	Post-test	23		25,63			
	Retention	22		24,95			
Total	Pre-test	23	2	55,28	41.41	.001*	
	Post-test	23		23,09			
	Retention	22		24,70			

* P<0.05

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that study group is really close to each other in post-test and retention test in total Problem Behaviors Scale; and the problem behaviors of the children in Extrovert, Introvert, Anti-social and Egocentric dimenions continue reducing in addition to the fact that the children ensure the score they got in Problem Behaviors Scale.

RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

A training program to increase the social skills and to reduce problem behaviors of the children attending preschool has been applied in this study. It is determined at the end of the study that the trainig program is effective. In other words, it is seen there is an increase in social skills and a decrease in probelm behaviors of the children. When retention tests are examined, it is ascertained that the decrease in children's problem behaviors on Extrovert, Introvert, Anti-social and Egocentric dimensions continue. In consideration of these results, the followings can be suggested:

- a. Preschool period can shape the whole life of the child. Social skills that have been developed during this period are too important in preventing problem behaviors that can emerge during the adulthood years. Academic success is not enough for an individual to succeed in life. Thus, training programs about getting social skills to children in preschool should be given the same importance as academic programs.
- b. School and family cooperation in coping with problem behaviors is very crucial. It is not possible for the teacher by himself/herself to cope with the problem behaviors which the family did not accept. The school should support the family in problem behaviors that the family observed, and should guide the family for the solutions. Different activities in school and family environments can push the children to different behavioral patterns. The training programs in schools should be supported by the family.
- c. Coping with problem behaviors requires a good team work. It is important to receive expert support if needed in addition to family and teacher support. In this context, the presence of persons such as a psychologist or a social service expert in preschools is needed to look at the problems from a proper aspect. This support will also contribute to reducing the teacher's responsibility in classrooms.
- d. The teachers can remain in capable in coping with problem behaviors. At this point, the teachers should be supported by in-service training. In addition to this, the family can also be needed to take educational support. Family training programs with special contents including problem behaviors can play an efficient role in providing the above-mentioned support.
- e. Crowded classes, poor physical conditions and the lack of assistant teachers have a negative influence on developing problem behaviors in addition to hindering training programs in preschools. In this context, it is thought that enhancing the above-mentioned conditions in preschools will be beneficial.

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