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PROMOTING PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING SKILLS THROUGH CREATIVE DRAMA INTEGRATED MUSIC ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This study investigates the progression of social-emotional learning skills in children by integrating music activities into creative drama. The research was executed employing a pre-and post-test control group research design. The research cohort consisted of 40 five-year-old participants, separated into two groups of 20 each, experimental and control. An 8-week comprehensive music education program was implemented exclusively for the experimental group to enhance their social-emotional proficiencies. A personalized information questionnaire was also employed to gather demographic information about the children and their respective parents. The "Vineland Social-Emotional Early Childhood Scale" (VSEECS) and the "Expression of Emotions Test" (EET) were applied as pre-and post-tests to determine children's social-emotional behaviors. The results of this investigation revealed a statistically significant difference in the EET pre-and post-test scores within the experimental group. Conversely, comparing both study groups, no statistically significant difference in EET scores was observed. The lack of a significant difference could be attributed to social-emotional learning activities in the curriculum that were carried out at school. This result may positively affect the control group's emotional expression and social skills. The analysis revealed that no statistically significant difference was observed in the mean scores of the (VSEECS) between the two groups at both the pre-test and post-test scores. In the context of forthcoming research, it is advisable to procure data through systematic observation, interviews, and the implementation of longitudinal investigations to elucidate the impact of music education on the development of children's social-emotional learning skills.

Keywords: Creative drama, integrated music activities, preschool children, social-emotional learning skills.

INTRODUCTION

Substantial developments and unpredictable changes in the 21st century critically impact the new generation of today's society. With the rise of technological advancements and the challenges in our world, such as climate change and socio-political, economic, and educational divisions, children are increasingly confronted with uncertainties regarding their prospects (Stephenson, 2023). As the social structure and socioeconomic conditions change, the type and number of problems awaiting children in the future also increase. Therefore, nurturing children with social-emotional skills is essential to cope with these challenges (Ozturk, 2017).

The initial six years of early childhood constitute a crucial phase in the holistic development of children. In this period, children acquire experiences that can affect their entire lives. Brown (2017) emphasizes early childhood as "the magic years." Living harmoniously in society as healthy individuals depends on acquiring developmental characteristics and skills during these first 'magical' years of life. In this context, early childhood social-emotional skills development is vital to support children in regulating and managing their social acceptance and emotions in society (Koc, 2022). Social-emotional skills are

capable of being imparted and gained through suitable educational methods. In recent times, educators, policymakers, and researchers have shifted their attention towards facilitating the cultivation of children's social-emotional competencies within the educational setting (Gresham, 2015).

The social-emotional skills that individuals should acquire through their lives are defined as self-control, taking responsibility, perseverance, stress tolerance, emotion control, optimism, being energetic, being social, self-confidence, empathy, adaptability, confidence, curiosity, creativity, flexibility, self-efficacy, and motivation to succeed (OECD, 2019). Acquiring social-emotional skills enables individuals to regulate their emotions, manage stress, and think clearly while facing problems or difficulties through the psychological resilience they have gained from an early age (Kankaraš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019).

Theoretical Background of the Research

The early childhood years assume a pivotal role in cultivating social-emotional learning skills (SEL). During this period, we can observe the emergence of competencies in children's social-emotional development. Deficits in these skills during early childhood can manifest in various challenges later in life, including problem behaviors, feelings of isolation, communication difficulties, and academic struggles among children (Hukkelberg et al., 2019). Social-emotional skills collectively contribute to forming social-emotional competence, a comprehensive assessment of a child's capacity to effectively navigate their environment's social-emotional demands (Low et al., 2015). Social skills encompass comprehending and engaging effectively with others, facilitating successful interaction and performance within specific social settings. These skills are closely linked to educational achievement, psychological adaptation, coping mechanisms, and employment prospects (Padhy & Hariharan, 2023). In a study performed by Leme et al. (2015), it was disclosed that empathy, self-regulation, civility, social adaptability, pragmatic orientation, and evaluations of social support from peers and family members emerged as the foremost predictors of psychological well-being among adolescents.

Emotional skills involve understanding and expressing one's feelings and the ability to grasp the emotions of others and manage external emotional reactions such as anger and fear (Chernyshenko et al., 2018). Recognizing, valuing, and responding appropriately to children's emotions are essential for holistic development, as emotions play a fundamental role in forming social connections and bonds. Hence, social-emotional competencies can be characterized as the cognitive processing of emotional data to augment interpersonal proficiency (Lane & Smith, 2021).

The findings of meta-analysis research show that education programs that focus on developing students' social-emotional skills increase students' academic success and improve their social-emotional competencies (Bahcuvanoglu, 2019; Mahoney et al., 2021). The social-emotional skills lead to many important life outcomes for students. Many studies argue that education does not adequately prepare children for the challenges in life and meet their needs and expectations. Vitally, curriculums are inefficient in preparing children for the future to be competent with life skills (Váradi, 2022). Children face numerous social-emotional challenges that affect their daily functioning. Numerous researchers indicated that after implementing activities in an educational program aimed at improving children's social-emotional skills, the social-emotional skill averages of the experimental group differed positively compared to those who did not receive any education (Kim et al., 2011; Ceylan & Omeroglu, 2012; Pears et al., 2015; Uysal & Kaya Balkan, 2015; Širvinskienė et al., 2022; Ezmeci & Akman, 2023).

The Effects of Creative Drama on Social-Emotional Learning Skills

Many children aged 5-7 often grapple with a wide range of emotions and sometimes find it challenging to comprehend and convey these feelings. In order to facilitate the development of emotional recognition, expression, and management in these children, it becomes crucial to create a secure and nurturing environment at home and in the classroom. Such an environment encourages children to explore various emotions and learn strategies to manage them (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016). In this context, creative drama is a safe and effective way to develop social and emotional skills. Studies reveal creative drama's positive effect on children's early childhood social-emotional behaviors (Degirmenci, 2020; Kilic & Namdar, 2021; Gao et al., 2022). Creative drama brings children's life

experiences into the classroom so they can reflect on real-life situations by improvising and role-playing within creating scenes. The important thing is that they gain a dramatic understanding at the end of this learning process. Therefore, creative drama effectively develops children's critical thinking skills in early childhood (Stephenson, 2023). The creative drama opens different and colorful windows for children. By looking through these windows, children can express their imaginations, feelings, and thoughts in a dramatic universe they create in the classroom with the teacher's help. In this way, they discover their potential as well. Creative drama is a powerful teaching method with multidimensional interrogative and problem-solving processes. Social skills such as taking responsibility, cooperation, assertiveness, harmony, self-control, initiating and maintaining a relationship, conducting a task with a group, expressing emotions, planning and problem-solving can be developed through creative drama in early childhood (Ceylan & Omeroglu, 2012). In addition, many skills can be developed, such as sharing, helping others, waiting for one's turn, obeying the rules, establishing friendships, empathy, kindness, and communicating with others. Oztug and Ciner (2017) stated that behavioral rehearsal, one of the methods used in social-skills education, and role-playing is a valuable technique for both the student who plays the role and the students who observe when applied in a group.

The Importance of Creative Drama Integrated Music Teaching and Learning in Promoting SEL

Creative drama integrates theatrical elements to improve students' cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills and education. Furthermore, creative drama encompasses various techniques involving physical movement, vocal expression, musical awareness, and mental focus. In this respect, creative drama is a close correlation with music, dance, and movement (Toivanen et al., 2013). According to Pellitteri (2005), social-emotional learning and music education are naturally complementary. There exist five noteworthy points of compatibility between social-emotional learning and music education. These include: (a) The utilization of music as an emotive catalyst, capable of evoking and modulating emotional responses. (b) The incorporation of music as a vehicle for facilitating aesthetic experiences, engendering appreciation and comprehension of artistic and emotional nuances. (c) Leveraging music for relaxation and mental imagery, harnessing its potential for fostering emotional well-being and visualization. (d) The manifestation of music making as a conduit for individual self-expression, enabling learners to articulate and convey their emotional states and inner experiences. (e) The role of music making as a collective endeavor, fostering group interactions and shared emotional experiences within a social context.

Children can share their feelings and thoughts through music, dance-movement and drama without verbal communication, even using gestures and facial expressions. Moving and dancing with music and play allow the child to gain satisfying social experiences and to relax emotionally. Therefore, teachers should provide children with learning environments, including creative drama-integrated music activities that will support children's social-emotional skills (Altinkaynak et al., 2012). At the same time, creative drama provides endless possibilities for implementing child-centered music activities to develop children's social-emotional competencies and musical knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Moreover, music and musical games serve as conduits through which preschool-aged children acquire cooperative and spontaneous behavioral skills, facilitating social connections with their peers, as evidenced in the study (Jucan & Simion, 2014). However, recently, research on the effects of teaching emotional skills on musical development has not been sufficient (Campayo-Muñoz & Cabedo-Mas, 2017). The importance of teacher competence in addressing students' social-emotional requirements holds substantial implications for music educators. This situation is primarily attributed to the fundamental role teacher-student relationships play in the classroom (Edgar, 2013). Considering teachers' roles in music and drama activities enhances a child's creativity and imagination, allowing them to express themselves and develop versatile thinking. The perspectives and ideas of teachers on this matter become even more significant. One of the issues that preschool and music teachers indicate as a deficiency is the lack of instruction for classroom activities in the music curriculum. Additionally, the most emphasized subject by teachers is the need for more examples of integrated activities for creative and innovative music learning (Sungurtekin, 2021). Nonetheless, various studies propose that conventional school education may not adequately equip children to navigate the challenges they will

encounter in their future endeavors and expectations. Furthermore, the existing curriculum often needs to improve its capacity to cultivate essential life skills that enable students to succeed in adulthood (Fodor & Korényi, 2019; Friedlander et al., 2019; Varadi, 2022).

Kaspar and Massey (2023) identified the favorable outcomes of implementing a social-emotional learning curriculum within elementary schools. The scholars emphasized the importance of equipping children with strategies to effectively manage moments of emotional overwhelm during their studies. Because teachers are confronted with the dynamics of social-emotional interactions within their classrooms, they entail balancing long-term, mandated educational objectives with students' requirements and capabilities (Jennings & Frank, 2015). In this context, creative drama is significant in preparing children for their future lives. Therefore, curriculum development within integrated music activities to support children's social-emotional learning skills and musical knowledge, competencies and attitudes seems evident.

The current research accentuates the need for innovative, creative teaching and learning in schools through an integrated approach where creative drama meets music. The curriculum of integrating drama into music activities aims to provide students with aesthetic, creative, and imaginative experiences while practicing social-emotional skills. These integrated curricula can direct preschool teachers to introduce social-emotional learning within creative drama-based music activities and consider them valuable educational methods so that preschool children improve their social-emotional competencies in different ways. This research will contribute to the field by providing creative drama-integrated music activities that educators can readily employ within their classroom settings. These activities are designed to facilitate children's acquisition of social-emotional learning skills. Furthermore, there are limited studies on the effectiveness of music activities integrated with creative drama in the field (Kosokabe et al., 2021), and this deficiency may be eliminated with this research.

The current research examines the effects of integrated music activities within "creative drama" on social-emotional skills development in early childhood. For this purpose, the research questions are as follows;

1) Is there a significant difference between the experimental group's emotional expression pre-and post-test scores?

2) Is there a significant difference between the experimental and control group's emotional expression post-test scores?

3) Is there a significant difference between the experimental and control group's social-emotional skills pre-and post-test scores?

4) Is there a significant difference between the experimental and control group's social-emotional skills post-test scores in sub-dimensions of interpersonal relationships, play-leisure time, and adaptability?

METHOD

Research Design

The research was conducted through an experimental design within a pre-post-test and a control group. A control or comparison group design is usually necessary to account for the possible effects on post-test scores (Marsden & Torgerson, 2012). A control group without any intervention was included during the research data collection. The control group received only their teacher's routine music teachings (singing, listening, circle dances). The pre-test procedure (for children and parents) was undertaken before the integrated music education program started. The post-test was applied after eight weeks. The dependent variable in this research design was the "social-emotional behaviors" of five-year-old children attending kindergarten, and the independent variable whose effect on the social-emotional behaviors of the children was integrated music activities within creative drama.

Study Group

The children and parents were selected with the convenient sampling method. In this method, the researcher tries to reach the target sample number starting from the immediate surroundings (Buyukozturk et al., 2008). Therefore, the preschool was one of the teaching practice schools for preschool teacher candidates, and the researchers were this practicum's instructors. The research group consisted of 40 five-year-old children (experimental group: 20, control group: 20) attending a state preschool. The demographic characteristics of children are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of children.

Demographic Characteristics		Experimental Group		Control Group	
		(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
Gender	Girl	11	55	9	45
	Boy	9	45	11	55
	Total	20	100	20	100
Siblings	Single child	4	20	5	25
	2 sister/brother	13	65	14	70
	3 sister/brother	3	15	1	5
	Total	20	100	20	100
Birth Order	First child	10	50	8	40
	Second child	8	40	11	55
	Third child	2	10	1	5
	Total	20	100	20	100
School Experience	Yes	8	40	6	30
	No	12	60	14	70
	Total	20	100	20	100

Table 1 shows eleven children in the experimental group were girls, and nine were boys. Four children had no siblings, most had two siblings, and half of the experimental group was the family's first child. The twelve children had no previous school experience at all. Nine girls and eleven boys were in the control group; most children had two siblings, and eleven were the parents' second children. Likewise, most children in the control group had no previous school experience.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of parents.

Demographic Characteristics		Experimental Group				Control Group			
		Mother		Father		Mother		Father	
		(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
Age (years)	26-29	6	75	1	100	2	25	-	-
	30-34	7	46.7	8	61.5	8	53.3	5	38.5
	35-39	5	50	7	53.8	5	50	6	46.2
	40-45	2	28.6	2	20	5	71.4	8	80
	46- …	-	-	2	66.7	-	-	1	33.3
Graduation	Illiterate	-	-	-	-	2	100	1	100
	Primary school	11	68.8	10	50	5	31.3	10	50
	Secondary school	1	100	-	-	-	-	1	100
	High school	6	37.5	8	47.1	10	62.5	9	52.9
	University	2	100	2	100	3	60	-	-

Table 2 (Continued). Demographic characteristics of parents.

Demographic Characteristics		Experimental Group				Control Group			
		Mother		Father		Mother		Father	
		(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
Occupation	Unemployed	3	60	1	2.5	2	40	1	100
	Worker (Laborer)	-	-	8	50	2	100	8	50
	Officer (public service)	4	66.7	5	71.4	2	33.3	2	28.6
	Self employed	1	33.3	4	57.1	2	66.7	3	42.9
	Other	4	50	3	33.3	4	50	6	66.7
	Housewife	8	50	-	-	8	50	-	-
	Total	**20**	**100**	**20**	**100**	**20**	**100**	**20**	**100**

As is seen in Table 2, most of the mothers were between the ages of 30-39 (62.5%), graduated from high school/university (80%), and most of them were housewives (52.5%). The fathers were between the ages of 30-39 (65%), most graduated from high school/university (92.5%), and 40% were laborers. It was determined that the parents of the children in the control and experimental groups had similar ages, educational status, and professional characteristics.

Research Instruments and Data Collection

At the beginning of the research, a personal information form was used to obtain socio-demographic data about the children and their parents. The *'Vineland Social-Emotional Early Childhood Scale'* (VSEECS), developed by Sparrow et al. (1998) and adapted to Turkish culture by Ceylan et al. (2019), was applied to the parents as a pre-test in order to determine children's social-emotional behaviors. Accordingly, to determine whether children can express their emotions to related situations, an *'Expression of Emotions Test'* (EET) was applied by individually interviewing the children (both control and experimental groups).

The *Expression of Emotions Test (EET)* was developed by Yildirim-Dogru (1999) and later readapted by Ergin (2003) based on validity and reliability studies. The test was related to four basic emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, and surprise. The test included three items for each emotion and consisted of 12 items. The internal reliability coefficient of the test was found to be .82. All items were asked to the children in person, singly and in a mixed order. The lowest score was calculated as "1", and the highest as "12". It was determined that students who correctly completed eight or more items had a high ability to express their emotions.

The *Vineland Social-Emotional Early Childhood Scale (VSEECS)* was developed by Sparrow et al. (1998) and adapted into Turkish by Ceylan et al. (2019). The scale aims to evaluate children's social and emotional development from birth to 4 years and 11 months (including five years old). The scale consists of three parts (subscales): interpersonal communication skills, play and leisure time, and adaptability. It has 62 items in total, and all items are related to children's daily social-emotional behaviors. The internal consistency coefficients of the scale were found to be .70 in the Interpersonal Relations Subscale, .74 in the Play and Leisure Subscale, and .80 in the Coping Skills Subscale for children aged four and over. The scale is administered individually to the parents, who know the child's behavior well and takes an average of 25-30 minutes. Scoring on the scale is calculated based on how often the child performs the appropriate behavior. In the scale, "usually does" receives 2 points, "sometimes or partially does" receives 1 point, and "never does" receives 0 points.

Research Implementation (Creative Drama Integrated Music Activities)

The researchers conducted integrated music activities within creative drama with the experimental group once a week. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes. According to the curriculum, the kindergarten teacher conducted the music lessons in the control group. The implementation of the research lasted eight weeks. Afterward, VSEECS (for parents) and EET (for children) were applied as post-tests. The sessions of each of the activities are listed below:

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Session 1-Ice-Breaking Games/Warm-Ups: In the first week, some ice-breaking games and warm-up exercises were carried out to get to know each other and develop interaction between the researchers and children. The 'Hello' and 'Good Morning' songs were sung together in a circle. After singing in the circle, the group danced with the 'Seven Steps Music,' aiming to raise awareness and socialization among the children by using body and gestures freely. Introducing oneself accompanied by body percussion and emotional expressions were performed by each child.

Session 2-Emotions and Facial Expressions: Some emojis made from cardboard reflecting different emotions were shown to children. Children were asked to imitate facial expressions of related emotions. Afterwards, discussions were held on which situations in their daily lives might have caused them to feel these feelings. (Figure 1). Then, the children were asked to choose life situations they might encounter to show and animate their facial expressions with the "Emotion Window" game (Figure 2). Songs were performed with body percussion accompanied by different emotions. Evaluation activities were carried out in which children could express their feelings verbally.

Figure 1. Discussion on emotions in daily life.

Figure 2. Playing "Emotion Window" game.

Session 3-Storytelling "A Day with the Pink Rabbit": This workshop was based on a story about a rabbit living in the forest. Children played roles as characters in the story and improvised the scenes encountered by the rabbit and its emotions. The Pink Rabbit song was sung with the Orff Instruments. Afterward, questions were asked, such as 'Which instrument resembled each character and its emotions? Why?', 'How can we express emotions with these instruments? At the end of the session, children draw pictures about the story of the *Pink Rabbit* (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Children's drawings about the "Pink Rabbit Story".

Session 4-The Nutcracker: Children listened to Tchaikovsky's famous "The Nutcracker - March." Then, they were asked about their moods/emotions towards the piece. Some conversations were held about how the music made them feel. Afterward, dances and movements were performed following the

musical phrases of the piece (Figure 4). Children included their ideas using body movements and facial expressions in each phrase. Next, children listened to the story of the Nutcracker, followed by dramatizations. Children worked in groups and created some scenes through role-playing and improvisation about what could happen differently at the end of the story (Figure 5). Later, discussions were made about the different endings they had created, and children were asked about their emotions. Children expressed their emotions verbally.

Figure 4. Dancing with "The Nutcracker-March".

Figure 5. Creating scenes to the related music.

Session 5-The Island of Emotional Statues: After singing the "Heyya Molla" song, an imaginary ship was built in the classroom. The teacher said they would go on a sea voyage with this ship. The whole class dramatized it by singing the song simultaneously (Figure 6). On their journey, improvisation activities were carried out, and a dramatic universe was created where they lived on a deserted island where sculptures suddenly reflected different emotions (Figure 7). Finally, some evaluation activities were carried out to share thoughts and feelings.

Figure 6. Dramatizing a ship journey by singing.

Figure 7. Improvisations about living on island.

Session 6-Storytelling "The Giant Who Understands Politeness": Based on the story, scenes about the rules of politeness and social behaviors in society were created and improvised with Orff Instruments. After dancing to the instrumental piece "Giants and Dwarfs," children worked in groups for songwriting and composing activities resembling the story. Each group performed in front of the class, and some conversations were made to get feedback.

Session 7-Vivaldi, 'Four Seasons': Children listened to some parts of Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons.' Accordingly, creative dance and improvisation activities were performed together to express their feelings during the music. Children were asked what impressed them the most about the music and their improvisations/performances.

Session 8-Narrative, 'The Unhappy King without Dreams': The teacher (researcher) told the narrative. Based on this narrative, discussions were made about how the story's music would sound (how can unhappiness be reflected in the music?), talking about the elements in music (rhythm, beat-sound, dynamics, speed). Simple composing activities were created with the Orff Instruments. The reasons for being "unhappy" were discussed using the character 'The Unhappy King.' Each character in the narrative was analyzed, and the fiction was improvised with Orff Instruments according to the

little pieces they created. Some children improvised through a dance drama with the help of the teacher. In the end, children were asked to draw pictures related to the narrative (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Children's drawings about the "The Unhappy King without Dreams".

Data Analysis

Normality tests were employed to assess the congruence of the data under examination with a Gaussian distribution. Among the array of methodologies frequently employed to gauge the extent of departure from normality in the data, the Kolmogorov Smirnov (KS) test, elucidated by Drezner et al. (2010), is particularly prominent. The KS test is a pivotal tool for ascertaining whether a given sample can be inferred to have emanated from a population adhering to a predefined continuous distribution. As delineated by Drezner et al. (2010), in instances where the KS test, applied under the specified parameters, still exhibits significant deviations from the normal distribution, the inference is drawn that the data in question is likely to have been drawn from a distribution that deviates from the Gaussian. Consequently, normality tests were employed to elucidate the dataset's presence or absence of typical distribution characteristics. The normality test for *the Expression of Emotions Test (EET)* is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Normality test for the *EET*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (a.)			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
Pre-test Total	.209	40	<.001	.928	40	.014
Post-test Total	.243	40	<.001	.838	40	<.001

a.Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 3 presents compelling evidence indicating a non-normal distribution of the data under consideration. Consequently, non-parametric statistical tests were judiciously employed to rigorously assess the presence of a statistically significant disparity among the mean values. The normality assessment on the "Vineland Social-Emotional Early Childhood Scale" (VSEECS) is meticulously presented in Table 4 for a comprehensive reference.

Table 4. Normality test for *VSEECS*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (a.)			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre- test						
Sub-scale dimensions						
Interpersonal relations	.111	40	.200	.955	40	.114
Play and leisure time	.094	40	.200	.958	40	.139
Adaptation	.103	40	.200	.970	40	.367
Post- test						
Sub-scale dimensions						
Interpersonal relations	.126	40	.111	.966	40	.264
Play and leisure time	.128	40	.097	.959	40	.158
Adaptation	.088	40	.200	.972	40	.426

a.Lilliefors Significance Correction

The normality tests in Table 4 show a normal distribution. Therefore, parametric tests were utilized to determine whether the mean values of the data showed statistically significant differences. For demographic characteristics, descriptive statistics were included as frequency and percentage values. For the statistics of the mean scores, t-tests for independent samples and dependent sample t-tests were performed. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank and Mann-Whitney U tests were employed as statistical methodologies for analyzing non-parametric data distributions.

RESULTS

In the study, the Expression of Emotions Test (EET) and Vineland Social-Emotional Early Childhood Scale (VSEECS) were applied as pretest-posttest to examine the effect of creative drama-integrated music activities on students' social-emotional skills. The lowest and highest values of the children from these tests are given in Table 5.

Table 5. The minimum and maximum values of the experimental and control group's pre-and post-test results.

Sub-Scale Dimensions	N	Group	Minimum	Maximum
EET Pre-test	20	Experimental	6.00	12.00
	20	Control	3.00	12.00
EET Post-test	20	Experimental	6.00	12.00
	20	Control	4.00	12.00
VSEECS Pre-test	20	Experimental	61.00	123.00
	20	Control	66.00	114.00
VSEECS Post-test	20	Experimental	71.00	118.00
	20	Control	61.00	116.00

When Table 5 is analyzed, according to the pre-test score results of the EET test, the experimental group had the lowest 6, the highest 12, while the control group had the lowest 3, the highest 12 scores. The EET test post-test scores were the lowest 6, highest 12 values in the experimental group, and the lowest 4, highest 12 scores in the control group. In addition, when the VSEECS test pre-test scores were analyzed, it was found that the experimental group had the lowest 61, the highest 118 scores, while the control group had the lowest 66, the highest 114 scores. When VSEECS test post-test scores were analyzed, it was found that the experimental group had the lowest 71, the highest 123 scores, while the control group had the lowest 61, the highest 116 scores.

The *Expression of Emotions Test* was applied as a pre-and post-test to see the effect of the creative drama and music-integrated education program, which aimed to support social-emotional development in the experimental group. Due to the non-parametric nature of the data, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was administered to ascertain the presence of a statistically significant disparity between the pre-test and

post-test values observed within the experimental group. The outcomes of this analytical procedure are shown in detail in Table 6.

Table 6. Wilcoxon signed rank test results of pre-and post-test of the experimental group on the *EET.*

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Pre-test	Negative Ranks	0[a]	.00	.00	-3.400[b]	.001*
Post-test	Positive Ranks	14[b]	7.50	105.00		
	Ties	6[c]				
	Total	20				

*p<.05

Table 6 shows a statistically significant distinction within the pre-and post-test values of the experimental group (p = .001, p<.05), wherein positive test scores exhibited a marked superiority over negative ones. Particularly noteworthy was the observation that post-test scores surpassed their corresponding pre-test counterparts. In essence, the interventions employed in this study fostered the enhancement of emotional expression skills within the experimental group. Subsequently, the Mann-Whitney U test was harnessed to rigorously scrutinize whether a notable divergence existed between the experimental and control groups' post-test scores of the *Expression of Emotions Test* (EET), with comprehensive results documented in Table 7.

Table 7. Mann Whitney U test results of EET post-test in the experimental and control groups.

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Post-test	Experimental	20	23.43	468.50	141.500	.104
	Control	20	17.58	351.50		
	Total	40				

*p<.05

Table 7 reveals no statistically significant disparity between the post-test values of both groups, specifically in the *Expression of Emotions Test* (EET) context. It was noteworthy that while statistical significance was not achieved, the mean value within the experimental group (Mean = 23.43) exhibited a notably higher value than the mean score within the control group (Mean = 17.58). The comparative analysis of pre-and post-test values within the context of the *Expression of Emotions Test* for both the experimental and control groups is graphically depicted in Figure 9.

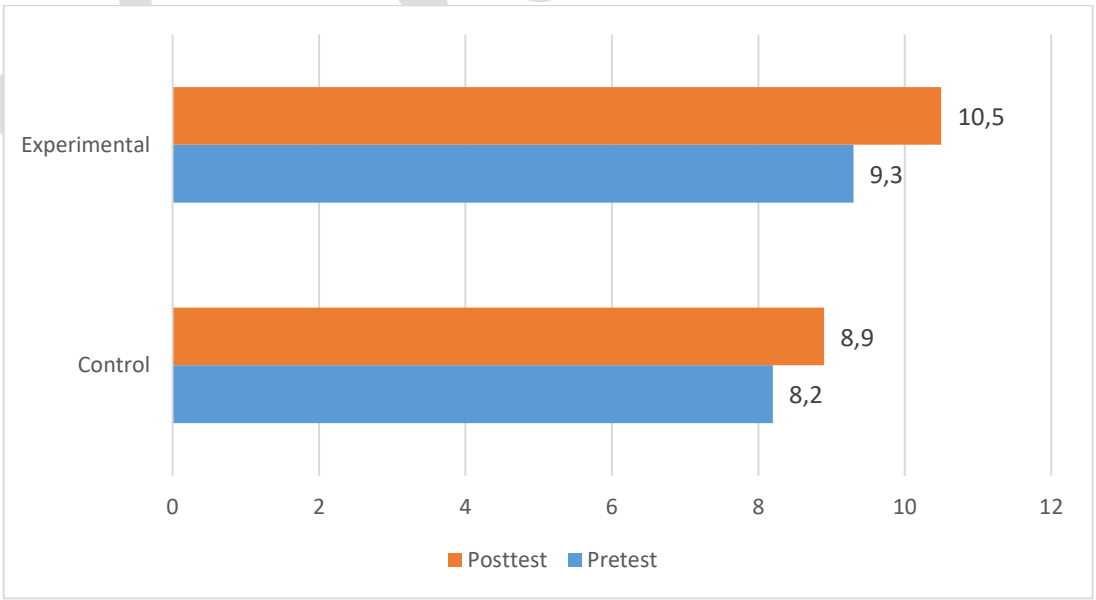

Figure 9. Comparison of the averages of the pre-and post-test *(EET)* of the experimental and control groups.

Figure 9 visually represents the augmentation observed in children's social-emotional development within both research groups. Nevertheless, it was discernible that the experimental group, which underwent the prescribed training regimen, achieved higher scores on the assessment. This outcome led to a plausible inference that the integrated music activities contributed to a discernible enhancement in the social-emotional aptitude of the experimental group.

To rigorously evaluate the significance of the observed changes, a Paired Samples t-test was performed, comparing the pre-and post-test values of the Vineland Social-Emotional Early Childhood Scale (VSEECS) between the children in the experimental and control groups. The comprehensive results of this analysis are meticulously documented in Table 8.

Table 8. Paired samples t-test results of experimental and control group's VSEECS scores.

Group	Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Experimental	Pre-test	20	94.10	17.87	19	-.762	.455
	Post-test	20	96.00	13.91			
Control	Pre-test	20	90.05	12.91	19	-.392	.699
	Post-test	20	91.30	14.70			

*$p<.05$

In Table 8, it is evident that no statistically significant difference ($p = .455$, $p< .05$) was discernible when comparing the pre-and post-test values of the experimental group despite the observed positive increment. Similarly, the analysis for the control group revealed no statistically significant difference ($p = .699$, $p<.05$) between their pre-and post-test values. These results highlighted the stability of scores within both groups over the evaluation period.

The distribution of the sub-scale dimensions and the overall total values of the Vineland Social-Emotional Early Childhood Scale (VSEECS) are presented in Table 9. Notably, these scores were derived from responses provided by participating families.

Table 9. Distribution of experimental group's *VSEECS* scores by sub-scale dimensions.

Sub-Scale Dimensions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre- test					
Interpersonal relations	20	16.00	35.00	27.25	5.81
Play and leisure time	20	12.00	26.00	18.65	4.46
Adaptation	20	33.00	62.00	47.85	9.05
Post- test					
Interpersonal relations	20	18.00	38.00	28.65	4.76
Play and leisure time	20	14.00	26.00	19.00	3.75
Adaptation	20	31.00	60.00	48.70	8.59
Total	20	71.00	116.00	96.00	13.91

*$p<.05$

As seen in Table 9, the lowest score was reached in the pre-and post-test in the "play and leisure" sub-scale dimension (Mean =18.65; Mean=19.00), and the highest score in the "adaptation" (Mean=47,85; Mean=48,70) sub-scale dimension.

The statistical analysis employed the t-test for independent samples as a means to investigate the presence of a statistically significant distinction among the post-test values obtained from the *Vineland Social-Emotional Early Childhood Scale* (VSEECS) instrument across its sub-dimensions encompassing interpersonal relationships, play and leisure, as well as adaptation. The relevant findings are given in Table 10.

Table 10. Independent samples t-test results according to the VSEECS post-test scores (experimental-control groups)

Sub Dimensions Post test	Group	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	df	t	p
Interpersonal relations	Experimental	20	28.65	4.76	38	1.08	.320
	Control	20	27.20	4.32			
Play and leisure time	Experimental	20	18.80	3.75	38	-0.11	.907
	Control	20	18.65	4.31			
Adaptation	Experimental	20	48.70	8.59	38	1.18	.243
	Control	20	45.30	9.51			
Total	Experimental	20	96.00	13.91	38	1.03	.306
	Control	20	91,30	14.70			

*$p<.05$

As indicated in Table 10, it is evident that while the experimental group exhibited higher post-test mean values relative to the control group, a statistical examination did not reveal any statistically significant difference between these two groups ($p>.05$).

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted within the pre-and post-test control group research design scope. The findings indicated a significant difference between the *Expression of Emotions Test* pre-and post-test values in the experimental group participating in creative drama-integrated music activities. It may be construed that children's (experimental group) ability to express their feelings has improved at the end of the training. Moreover, children learned different forms of expression by playing roles and improvising during the animations, and they became more comfortable with improvisations as time progresses. In addition, the application of creative drama-integrated music activities given to the experimental group also led the children to develop spontaneous behaviors. This finding echoed Kirschner and Tomasello's (2010) statements that preschool children develop cooperative and spontaneous behaviors that enable them to establish social relations with their peers through creative drama-based music activities and musical games. During the implementation of the music activities, children showed actions such as clapping, dancing, walking, and singing with music played in the background and while singing songs. This spontaneity can arouse different emotions, which was evident in the classroom. Interestingly, some children were in a different mood than the week before. The reasons for these emotional changes were unclear and were not examined in this research. Besides, emotions evoked by music may also depend on the context in which the person (child) is at that moment (Jucan & Simion, 2015). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that children must engage in systematic practice and educational activities to develop the capacity for transmitting and receiving emotional signals that are advantageous to their well-being and that of others (Gao et al., 2022). According to this aspect, it is possible that children in the experimental group quickly expressed their feelings to the questions asked about their role-plays and after the songs and music pieces. These actions reflected positively on the *Expression of Emotions Test*, which was applied as a post-test and parallels Koelsch's (2014) argument that indicates music's social and emotional power. Koelsch claims that musical activity (such as singing) represents a multifaceted field of experiences. This is aligned with the current research's implementation, where children experienced and expressed various emotions. Furthermore, this finding is similar to Gao et al. (2022) research results indicating that creative drama may improve social-emotional learning competencies in preschool classroom settings with children from different cultural backgrounds. In line with that, the activities in this current research were carried out with children from different socio-economic and cultural demographic characteristics (see Table 2). Besides, one child's parents had hearing impairments and one's father was in jail. However, according to the normality tests, the study group of parents showed normal distribution.

Music helps children create their own emotions, but it can also enable them to communicate their and others' emotions. Children can communicate with music pieces that evoke different emotions and these emotions felt in the inner world are expressed in the outer world with gestures and different bodily movements. Furthermore, they can reflect different content and styles, and in this way, their emotional world can be enriched (Liu, 2015). According to this, in the current study, it was observed that children were comfortable reflecting the characters' emotions in the dramatic fiction of Tschaikowsky's Nutcracker ballet suite by dancing and moving with the music. Because the musical activities were carried out with creative drama in this research, children experienced verbal and bodily expression possibilities in a dramatic universe. In the evaluation phase of the creative drama process, the children were allowed to express their feelings verbally. In line with the statement mentioned earlier by Liu (2015), during the creative drama-integrated music activity adapted for the piece "The Nutcracker Ballet", the children in the experimental group gained several experiences of understanding the piece by improvising and role-playing and feeling the piece musically. With similar experiences, children can learn famous musical pieces in a dramatic learning environment, shaping their musicality; as Otacioglu (2008) stated, this would encourage children to express themselves musically and will lead them to strengthen their capability as musicians and future. However, there was no statistical difference in the EET values between both groups; the average values of the experimental group were higher than the control group, although not at a 'significant level'. The lack of a significant difference may be because the social-emotional learning activities included in the preschool core curriculum were carried out at school. Teachers may include various SEL activities in the classroom, positively affecting children's emotional expression skills in the control group. However, as teachers stated, their SEL activities in the classroom were not integrated with music and creative drama. No statistically significant difference was found in comparing the control and experimental groups' pre-and post-test mean values of the *VSEECS.* However, the experimental group's scores of the "adaptation" sub-scale dimension were high. A long-term study must be conducted to examine and understand the phenomenon in the context of integrated music teaching and learning that can support the growth of dramatic experiences. Along with this, creative drama not only improves the child's ability to communicate socially but also enables them to learn about the world and their place, sometimes through informal learning in the classroom. Integrating creative drama in the music lessons would give music-making opportunities rooted in creative choices and personal expression, a type of informal music learning (Derges, 2022). The fact that these two disciplines were applied with an integrated approach through activities was observed to be effective in children's adaptation skills. In this respect, it paralleled Ceylan's (2009) research findings. Ceylan's study indicated a significant difference between the post-test average values according to the experimental and control groups' Adaptation Sub-Scale dimension pre-test average values. Eventually, the creative drama-integrated music activities carried out with the experimental group were adequate. Although the general sub-scale dimensions post-test scores (interpersonal relationships, play and leisure time and adaptation) of the experimental and control groups were higher for the benefit of the experimental group, no statistically significant difference was found.

This research's creative drama-integrated music activities positively impacted preschool children's social interaction and self-expression in the classroom. This finding echoes Jones and Bouffard's (2012) description: social-emotional learning is recognizing and managing emotions, showing empathy for others, and building and maintaining functioning social relationships. Learning environments that create positive emotions should be prepared in schools because positive emotions keep students open and creative. Moreover, positive emotions and social behaviors encourage students to explore while learning and help them overcome difficulties. Thus, positive emotions are produced due to the success experienced and music education aims to ensure the personality development of individuals through emotional sensitivity and to enrich them as much as possible (Varadi, 2022). Therefore, it can be argued that creative drama-integrated music activities within the focus of SEL can improve musical skills early. For instance, awareness of emotions in listening, performing, and improvising might improve future musicianship and social interaction in orchestra/ensemble playing (Edgar, 2013). Therefore, including specific and explicit music activities integrated with creative drama in the music curriculum may help

teachers implement good classroom practices. A recent consensus report issued by the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development in the United States has delineated a set of recommendations concerning incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) within educational contexts. One such proposal entails the adoption of an evidence-based SEL curriculum for the explicit instruction of social-emotional competencies (Thierry et al., 2022).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This research was conducted with 40 preschool children aged five and their parents. The same study can be applied with a larger sample group. Another limitation was that the school was located in a high socio-economic neighborhood. For further studies, it is recommended to collect data from children and parents of rural areas with middle/low socio-economic demographics. In this context, the essence of the research questions would be how these children from different backgrounds, ages and class levels (pre-primary) express their emotions, respect others' emotions and interact with peers and groups in the music learning process. Therefore, collecting data through observation and interviews with children, parents, and teachers is essential for further mixed-methods research.

Additionally, to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, longitudinal studies with qualitative design should be conducted to determine the effects of creative drama-integrated music activities to promote children's social-emotional learning and skills development. Another limitation was that, although the EET test was applied to children individually, the VSEECS scale was applied only to families. Parents rated how often the child performed the appropriate behaviors using this scale. Nevertheless, developing semi-structured observation forms might be more effective in determining children's social-emotional competencies.

Music teachers must know students' social-emotional needs and be well-prepared to cope with social-emotional challenges (Edgar, 2013). Therefore, there is a substantial need for classes in higher teacher education prepared with quality content that can establish connections between SEL, music education and creative drama. Within the creative integrated music courses offered in educational faculties, preschool and music pre-service teachers are expected to specialize in field knowledge/experience that can improve their students' social-emotional skills in the future. Studying music curriculum development within an integrated approach for SEL in music teaching and learning is recommended for further research. Pre-service music and preschool teachers need to be competent in music pedagogy at a level where they can integrate music and creative drama into their classrooms by addressing SEL. Thus, social-emotional skills development in all life periods seems critical for academic and life success, including well-being. Future researchers could delve deeper into designing interdisciplinary music activities for developing children's social-emotional skills through systematic assessments.

Despite all these limitations, the current research will give educators, researchers, and curriculum designers a different perspective on innovative and creative teaching and learning through an integrated approach where music meets creative drama. Working with drama techniques using high-quality children's books and stories in the music lessons will enable an emotional stimulus that leads to an aesthetic experience and a form of self-expression.

In conclusion, this research articulates examples of meaningful music education where students can create an imaginative environment to make their own stories, pieces of music and more. These illustrations show the benefits of promoting student's social-emotional learning skills in preschool.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

Before conducting the applications, participants were duly apprised of the research's objectives and scope, with an explicit declaration of adherence to ethical standards. Consequently, the Bursa Uludag University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for this study, as per Decision No. 2022/02, dated February 25, 2022. All requisite research ethics guidelines were meticulously followed during the study's execution. Furthermore, the authors affirm that no conflicts of interest exist among them about this article's research, publication or authorship.

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