



## The Effect of Respect for Diversity Education Program on Primary School Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effect of the Respect for Diversity Education Program on primary school students' respect for diversity and empathic tendency. The research design of this study is quasi-experimental, with 3x3 pre-tests, post-tests, follow-up tests, and experimental, control, and placebo groups. In the study, the Respect for Diversity Scale and the Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale were used. The research was conducted with a total of 24 third-grade students selected for the experimental group ( $n = 9$ ), the placebo group ( $n = 7$ ), and the control group ( $n = 8$ ). The "Friedman Test" was used to compare the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up tests of the experimental group, and the "Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test" was used to find out whether there was any statistically significant difference between the test scores of each group. According to Friedman Test results, a significant difference was found between the scores of respect for diversity, but there was no significant difference between the scores of empathic tendency. The analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores of the placebo and control groups yielded no significant differences. When the follow-up test scores applied six weeks after the post-test were analyzed, it was seen that the significant difference obtained for the respect for diversity test was preserved in the experimental group. Only the Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests between the pre-test scores and follow-up test scores and the pre-test scores and post-test scores obtained through the Respect for Diversity Scale yielded significant differences. According to the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test conducted to analyze the post-test scores of the experiment, placebo, and control groups, a significant difference was found between the groups. However, according to the Bonferroni-corrected Mann-Whitney U test utilized to determine which binary comparison caused the difference, no significant difference was found.

#### Keywords:

Diversity, respect for diversity, empathy, empathic tendency, primary school students

### 1. Introduction

Diversity in gender, ethnicity, skin color, social class, physical characteristics, disability, and all other characteristics is natural and inevitable and should be considered a source of wealth. However, the existence of generalizations in social life causes people who fall outside these generalizations to become disadvantaged (Wagner, 2017). Tolerance develops when individuals learn to respect themselves and others, empathize, and bend stereotypes. When students are provided with a safe and tolerant educational environment in which they can express themselves from a young age, society can also develop in this direction (Katz, 2008). Today, in social and business life, it is expected that individuals have developed the ability to be together with people of diverse backgrounds and resolve conflicts. Empathy plays an important role in acquiring these skills (Pala, 2008). Related research also stated that the psychoeducational groups improve the empathic skills of the children in the younger age group (Özer, 2016).

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Diversity is used with the senses of "the state of being different, distinctness, diversity," and "the feature that distinguishes every natural, social, and conscious phenomenon from all others" (TDK, 2019). Children who begin to explore physical differences at the age of two need to satisfy their curiosity about this issue when they reach the ages of three and four. At the age of five, they begin to understand their own identity, explore cultural and racial differences, and better understand the reasons for diversity (Stern & Bettmann, 2000). According to Öksüz and Güven (2012), the differences created by individuals are divided into three components. The primary of these components is innate differences; the second comprises those that are acquired later; and the third is organizational differences. In the maintenance of a social order consisting of diversity, the attitude towards differences is very decisive. For this reason, it is important that the concept of respect for diversity be included in all areas of society in order to prevent conflicts that may arise from diversity and to ensure the continuation of social welfare. The concept of respect for diversity, which adopts the philosophy that every individual in society is unique, ensures that individuals are accepted with their differences and live with order, peace, and tolerance in society thanks to this attitude (Öksüz et al., 2017). It is important to see diversity productively, to be aware of it, and to have a positive and accepting perspective. Not only knowing the diversity but also understanding and respecting it can be beneficial (Tudorache & Weidinger, 2000).

According to research on the development of self and attitude, children are able to distinguish differences between individuals, such as gender, physical characteristics, language, and color, by observing and through the messages they receive from those around them at a very early age. Negative attitudes about diversity in society prevent children from communicating effectively with those who are different from themselves (Şentuna, 2011). An important practice to attain an environment of harmony is to provide children with an awareness of sensitivity and tolerance to diversity at an early age (Güven, 2005). Educational institutions should be establishments that value diversity and provide equality to individuals regardless of their language, religion, gender, or ethnicity. School has an important role in instilling common values, tolerance, and respect for diversity in society (Rahmawati et al., 2020). In primary schools, teachers can make connections between diversity, allowing students to recognize similarities with others and appreciate diversity more deeply (Lintner, 2005).

Respect for diversity education supports the development of the skills to think critically, to stand against prejudice and unfair behaviors, and to cooperate. This education contributes to children becoming individuals who can discover themselves, value and respect themselves and those around them, and evaluate situations from different perspectives (Wolpert, 2002). Children who respect others can make friends with individuals with different backgrounds and abilities and value their contributions. Students who are able to respect others can stand against unfair behavior and avoid behaviors that will negatively affect those around them (Katz, 2008).

Children encounter diverse individuals in social environments such as school. These dimensions of diversity may consist of various dimensions, such as ethnicity, gender, family and social structure, and disability status. Whether students with ethnic or language diversity are educated together or in separate classes can affect their school performances. While native and immigrant students' studying in different classes allows them to better respond to different needs, this can hinder social interaction between students and negatively impact integration (De Paola & Brunello, 2016). When a child who grew up in an environment where his own mother tongue was used predominantly encounters a different language that is used more dominantly in school, he or she may gradually begin to find his or her own language and family culture worthless. Especially during studies carried out in classrooms, the inclusion of activities, songs, and books in the non-dominant language can help students notice that various languages are valued and accepted (Ensslin & Hensky, 2003).

With the education of respect for diversity provided to create a positive attitude towards gender diversity, it should be emphasized that what determines the gender of a child is not the length of hair, the color of clothes, or the way of expressing emotions; this situation is only related to the anatomy of the child. It should be stressed that cultures are also decisive on gender norms. In addition to these narratives, girls should be made to feel that they can also be successful beyond the roles assigned to them (KEDV, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, children begin to wonder about disability at a young age when they discover diversity (Gramelt, 2010). Empathy games on disability to be played with students and the inclusion of disabled individuals in activities and games are methods that can be effective in reducing discriminatory behaviors

against these individuals (Wolpert, 2002). In the respect for diversity program, the content regarding disability status should emphasize that being disabled can be congenital or later, that people with disabilities should benefit from education and other opportunities, and that there are many skills that disabled people can use as well as those that they cannot (Ekmişoğlu, 2007).

Differences in family structures and social lives in society can also lead to discrimination between individuals, especially among children. Therefore, respect for diversity programs should also include issues regarding different family types (Ekmişoğlu, 2007). Parents have an important influence in determining their children's attitudes towards different races and transferring their own racial prejudices to children (White & Gleitzman, 2006). For this purpose, when designing the activities to be included in the education of respect for diversity, it should be ensured that children understand other family structures in their own society, starting from their own family structures and then extending to other societies that exist in the world (Topcubaşı, 2015).

The respect for diversity education program, whose effectiveness will be tested, includes respect for diversity in the areas of gender, family and social life, disability, and different cultural backgrounds. This program is also expected to contribute to children's empathetic tendencies. With this research, it is aimed at breaking the prejudices of individuals who often encounter different people in their social lives and ensuring that they respect diversity in an empathetic way. The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

- The respect for diversity education program applied in this study will increase the level of respect for diversity and empathetic tendency among primary school students.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Research Model**

This study aimed to examine the effect of the Respect for Diversity Education Program (RDEP) on primary school students' respect for diversity and empathetic tendency. The research was conducted in a  $3 \times 3$  quasi-experimental design. Quasi-experimental designs are designs in which readily existing groups are matched but not assigned randomly. Quasi-experimental designs are preferred in cases where the conditions required by real experimental designs cannot be met (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). The first factor of the design is the experimental, control, and placebo groups. In order to gather more concrete evidence on the effectiveness of the interventions and control any potential placebo effect, a placebo group was added to the program (Boot et al., 2013). The Respect for Diversity Scale (RDS) and the Ka-Si Empathetic Tendency Scale (KASI) also served as tools to measure the effectiveness of the interventions implemented through the program. They were applied to each group as pre-tests, post-tests, and follow-up tests.

### **2.2. Research Sample**

The research was carried out with 24 third-grade students who were studying at a primary school located in a city located in the Central Anatolia Region of Türkiye. In the 2020–2021 academic year, the number of students in the groups was less than the normal class size due to the COVID-19 epidemic measures. The classes continued their educational activities at half capacity, and attendance was not obligatory. Adding the fact that there was also voluntary participation in the research, the study started with 11 participants in the experimental group, but it decreased to 9 with two participants not being able to participate in the remote sessions. The control group consisted of 8 participants, and there were 9 students in the placebo group, but the study was completed with 7 participants in the placebo group due to the loss of two participants. The support of classroom teachers was received to maintain regular participation in the sessions. Teachers sent reminder messages to parents and students before the sessions and conveyed the importance of the study. Moreover, since the school where the study was conducted was the former workplace of the researcher, the students were also more willing to attend the sessions. Information about the experiment, control, and placebo groups participating in the study is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic Information of the Experimental, Control, and Placebo Groups**

		Experimental	Control	Placebo
Gender	Girls	4	5	3
	Boys	5	3	4
Number of Siblings	1-2 Siblings	6	5	4
	3-4 Siblings	3	3	3
Maternal Education Status	Literate	1	0	0
	Primary	4	6	4
	Secondary	1	0	0
	High school	2	1	3
	University	1	1	0
Paternal Education Status	Literate	1	0	0
	Primary	1	6	3
	Secondary	2	0	0
	High school	3	1	2
	University	2	1	2

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools

In the research, the Personal Information Form, Respect for Diversity Scale, and Empathic Tendency Scale were used as data collection tools. Information about the forms and scales used is provided below.

*Personal Information Form.* A 10-item form containing demographic information about the participants and their families was prepared by the researcher. The content of the form included questions about the gender, number of siblings, and education status of the mother and father of the students in the study group.

*Respect for Diversity Scale.* The Respect for Diversity Scale was developed by Ekmişoğlu (2007) for children. The scale consists of four dimensions (gender, family and social life, disability status, and different cultural backgrounds) and thirty items. The scale consists of items related to gender (5 items), dimensions of family and social life (9 items), disability (8 items), and different cultural backgrounds (8 items). The lowest score that can be obtained from the Respect for Diversity Scale is 30, while the highest score is 90. High scores on the scale indicate a high level of respect for diversity. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .69 in the original study. The scale has a three-point Likert scale: (1) disagree, (2) slightly agree, and (3) agree (Ekmişoğlu, 2007). Eren and Erkan (2016) calculated the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the respect for diversity scale in their study, and it was found to be .81. In order to ensure the validity of the content, expert opinions were obtained, and necessary corrections were made. In the analysis of the scale, three separate item analysis techniques were used: item total value, item residual value, and item discrimination indices. Statistically, no item was removed because it was sufficient for each item to be meaningful in one of the techniques. It can be said that the scale can be used in studies since it meets the validity and reliability criteria.

*Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale Child Form.* Kaya and Siyez (2010) developed the Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale in two different forms for children and adolescents. The child form consists of two sub-scales and 13 items, which are 7 items in the emotional empathy sub-scale and 6 items in the cognitive empathy sub-scale. The scale consists of four-point Likert-type items (1: Not suitable for me at all; 4: Totally suitable for me). High scores on the scale indicate that the level of empathic tendency is high. The internal consistency coefficient of Ka-Si for the entire scale was found to be .92, for the emotional empathy sub-scale it was .89, and for the cognitive empathy sub-scale it was .84. The results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed that the factor loads of the items in the emotional empathy sub-scale ranged from .60 to .67, their correlation with the total scores of the sub-scale to which they belonged ranged from .61 to .74, and their correlation with the scores obtained from the whole scale ranged from .55 to .70. The factor loads of the items in the cognitive empathy sub-scale ranged from .54 to .73, their correlations with the total scores of the sub-scale to which they belonged ranged from .59 to .72, and their correlations with the scores obtained from the entire scale ranged from .46 to .61. The scale explains 44.31% of the total variance. Of the total variance explained, 34.46% belongs to the emotional empathy sub-scale, and 9.85% belongs to the cognitive empathy sub-scale.

## 2.4. Procedure

### *Development of the Respect for Diversity Program*

The program applied in the research was developed based on a constructivist approach. The constructivist approach is a theory of learning that believes the learner constructs their ideas rather than getting them fully and accurately from a teacher or source of authority. In the Respect for Diversity Program implemented within the scope of the research, a student-centered program was prepared by including activities that would enable students to take an active role, and technology was used a lot. The information to be gained was presented with examples based on existing learning, and activities that appeal to many senses were created considering individual learning differences.

While developing the program, titles were decided considering the effectiveness of programs on similar subjects and the sub-dimensions of the scale of respect for differences. Activities were created and divided into sessions under the titles of gender, family and social life, disability, diversity in cultural backgrounds, and empathy. Several books were used for the development of the program. A Colorful World (Rengârenk Bir Dünya), A Guide to Developing Empathy in Schools (Okullarda Empatiyi Geliştirmek İçin Bir Rehber), I Learn to Live With Those Who Are Different From Me (Benden Farklı Olanla Yaşamayı Öğreniyorum), Communication Skills with Emotions for Children (Çocuklar İçin Duygularla İletişim Becerileri), Creative Coping Skills for Children (Çocuklar İçin Yaratıcı Baş Etme Becerileri), Different But Same (Farklı Ama Aynı), Pink Crow (Pembe Karga), There is a Wall in the Middle of This Book (Bu Kitabın Ortasında Duvar Var), Kaşal, My World (Benim Dünyam), My Brothers (Kardeşim Benim) were examined, and some adaptations were made to the activities, and some of them were included in the program. After the completion of the program, the expert opinion of the advisor was sought, and necessary changes were made. During the preparation of the program, the number and duration of the sessions were decided by looking at the programs that had been effective before. The program was prepared as 8 sessions, and the duration of the sessions was determined as 40 minutes, taking into account the course hours in schools and the attention span of the students. During the implementation, due to pandemic regulations, some of the sessions and activities were held online. Web2 tools were used in the online sessions, enabling the participants to be active and interact. The activities created with WordWall, Kahoot, Canva, InShot, Quik, and iMovie Web2 tools included video preparation, storytelling, competition, and illustrated activities. With these activities, it is aimed at giving students the opportunity to watch videos about people different from themselves, accompany their dances, and express their ideas.

### *Experimental Process*

During the program's implementation, due to COVID-19 regulations, the class size was halved, and education continued with some restrictions. For this reason, 11 students were included in the experimental group, 8 students in the control group, and 9 students in the placebo group. However, since two students from the experimental and placebo groups did not attend the sessions during the weeks when the program continued through distance or online education, their data were not included in the study. However, nine students from the experimental group and seven students from the placebo group participated in the study. Considering the COVID-19 regulations, students from different classes were not brought together, and face-to-face sessions were held in each group's own classrooms. Each session lasted 40 minutes and followed a similar routine. The counselor started the session with a warm-up exercise and/or a brainstorming question to introduce the topic. Then the planned activities were held, considering each student's participation in the activity and discussion. At the end each session is summarized by the counselor.

Respect for Diversity Program, which was prepared for eight weeks, started to be applied to the experimental group. The placebo group came together without applying any program, and no intervention was made in the control group. Some measures were taken to increase the internal and external validity of the study. Internal validity refers to whether the findings obtained from the studies reflect the purpose of the research and the social realities of the participants (Daymon & Holloway, 2003). There are different factors that affect internal validity. These are factors such as the characteristics of the participants, the loss of participants, the conditions of the place where the research took place, and the data collection tools (Bedir Erişti et al., 2013). In this study, the data were collected by the researcher in order to increase the internal validity, and explanations were made for the correct understanding of the items. In order to prevent the loss of subjects, parents and students were

informed before the experimental procedure, and the support of the classroom teacher was received during the experimental procedure. Information was also provided to the parents. Activities were prepared taking into account the age and developmental characteristics of the participants, and activities and digital web tools were used to help them embody the subjects. External validity is affected by factors such as independent variable interactions and biased selection (Karasar, 1999). The researcher explained the stages of the experimental process in detail to increase external validity. In collaboration with the classroom teacher, the researcher made it clear that the topics were not covered in other classes.

#### *Session 1: Program Purpose and Rules*

The first session was held face-to-face, with information given about the purpose of the program and what to do in this process in order to enable the students to understand the process. The rules to be followed throughout the study were carried out with the "We Have Rules" activity, and the determined rules were hung in a corner of the classroom.

#### *Session 2: Similarities and Differences*

In the second week, the session was implemented through the Zoom program after the schools switched to distance education due to COVID-19. In this session, activities were carried out to enable students to discover their similar and different characteristics and to raise awareness of individuals who are different from themselves. The "People are Colorful" form was projected onto the screen, and the participants drew and painted them in their notebooks. "Will You Play With It?" was prepared using the WordWall Web2 tool. The activity page was projected onto the screen, and the participants were asked to choose one of the numbered cards, in which each box contains photographs of children with different features. The characteristics of the child whose photograph is taken and which games he can play with him are discussed.

#### *Session 3: Gender Differences*

In the third week, activities were carried out in order to make the students aware of gender roles and to approach the existing stereotypes with a critical perspective. At the beginning of the lesson, the video "Rainbow School" was shown to the students. The opinions of the participants about the video were taken and discussed. For example, a few pictures from the "Street Playing Cards" activity were shown to the students, and their ideas were taken. With the question-and-answer activity prepared with the Kahoot Web2 tool, it was tried to change the existing misinformation about gender roles.

#### *Session 4: Cultural Differences*

In this session, activities were carried out for students to get to know different cultures and realize that having different cultural characteristics enriches the world. Using the InShot Web2 tool, the "Colorful World Tale" activity, whose pictures were used and voiced by the researcher, was shown to the students. The "Different Cultures" event, which introduced the dishes and clothes of different cultures prepared with WordWall, was held with the active participation of the participants, and then the "Dance Time" event, in which the participants were asked to imitate these dances, was held by showing the students a video recognizing the dances of different countries.

#### *Session 5: Differences in Disability and Family Structures*

In the fifth session, it was aimed for the participants to realize the difficulties experienced by disabled people, to be able to empathize, and to have an idea about how they can help these individuals. At the same time, there are activities that will enable them to understand that not every family consists of a mother, father, and child and that there may be different family structures. The session was started by watching the video "Respect for Differences with Fidget and Slip" in order to draw attention. With the "I Can Understand You" activity, the students tried to draw the words shown with their eyes closed and tried to explain them to a selected student by closing their voices. With this activity, it is aimed at understanding the difficulties experienced by people with visual, hearing, and speech impairments. "Family Pictures Activity" was held to enable them to learn about different family structures. In this activity, different types of family pictures were turned into videos, and the students watched and shared their thoughts on the pictures.

#### *Session 6: Empathy and Helping Skills*

The sixth session was held face-to-face due to the resumption of face-to-face education in schools. In this session, activities were carried out to enable the participants to empathize with people with differences and to understand that they have different options to help. In order to draw attention to the lesson, a short animated film on the theme of "Empathy" was watched, and the opinions of the participants about the film were taken. With the "Empathy Steps" activity, active participation of the participants was ensured, and it was ensured that they tried to understand the feelings of people who had difficult situations due to their diversity.

#### *Session 7: Developing Empathy and Helping Skills*

In the seventh session, face-to-face activities aimed at improving the empathy and helping skills of the participants were included. The story "Different But Same" was read by the researcher by reflecting its pictures on the board in video form. The opinions of the participants about the events in the story were taken into account. "If Not Me, Who?" effectiveness has been applied. In this activity, sample scenarios were read, and the students were asked to show their cards with the words "I would oppose", "I would like help" and "I am not sure". Volunteer participants were allowed to express their opinions about why they chose the card.

#### *Session 8: Summary of Sessions*

In the final session, the activities done so far were presented to the students as a slide show. Participants were provided with the opportunity to share what they remembered about the activities. In order to ensure that the participants leave with good feelings, the "Rain of Compliments" event was held, considering the contributions they made during the sessions.

### **2.5. Data Analysis**

The experimental, control, and placebo groups consisting of the third-grade students who participated in the study were given the personal information form, and the Respect for Diversity Scale and the Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale were given as pre-test, post-test, and follow-up tests. The data were analyzed with the SPSS 26.0 Statistical Package Program. Of the students in the research group, 9 were assigned to the experimental group, 7 were determined to be the placebo group, and 8 constituted the control group. The total number of students was 24 ( $n < 30$ ). In cases where the participants are less than 30, the analysis should be made with non-parametric tests (Ross, 2009). For this reason, the "Friedman Test" was used to compare the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up tests of the experimental group, and the "Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test" was used to find out which groups caused the difference in cases where the difference was statistically significant. The "Kruskal-Wallis H Test" was performed to analyze the difference in the post-test scores of the experimental, control, and placebo groups, and the "Mann-Whitney U Test" was utilized to find out which groups caused the difference in cases where there was a significant difference.

### **2.6. Ethical**

This study was received from Akdeniz University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee on 9.03.2020 with the application number "72".

### **3. Findings**

In this section, the comments and findings evaluating the levels of respect for diversity and empathic tendencies of the experimental group, placebo group, and control group are presented. In the analysis of the data, the Friedman Test was used to evaluate the difference between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test scores of each group, and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was applied to determine the groups with significant differences. The Kruskal-Wallis H Test was used to assess whether there was a significant difference between the experimental, control, and placebo groups, and Mann-Whitney U tests were applied to determine the groups with significant differences.

**Table 2.** The Results of Friedman Test Analysis for the Significance of the Difference Between Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Follow-Up Test Scores

Scale	Score	N	M.R.	Sd	$\chi^2$	p
Respect for Diversity Scale Experimental Group	Pre-Test	9	1.00			
	Post-Test	9	2.22	2	15.765	.000
	Follow-Up Test	9	2.78			
Respect for Diversity Scale Placebo Group	Pre-Test	7	1.43			
	Post-Test	7	1.86	2	6.000	.050
	Follow-Up Test	7	2.71			
Respect for Diversity Scale Control Group	Pre-Test	8	1.63			
	Post-Test	8	2.00	2	2.250	.325
	Follow-Up Test	8	2.38			
Empathic Tendency Scale Experimental Group	Pre-Test	9	1.67			
	Post-Test	9	2.17	2	1.742	.419
	Follow-Up Test	9	2.17			
Empathic Tendency Scale Placebo Group	Pre-Test	7	2.64			
	Post-Test	7	1.57	2	4.667	.097
	Follow-Up Test	7	1.79			
Empathic Tendency Scale Control Group	Pre-Test	8	2.13			
	Post-Test	8	1.75	2	.800	.670
	Follow-Up Test	8	2.13			

\*\* $p < .05$

According to Table 2, the difference between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test scores of the experimental group was found to be statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 15.765, p = .000$ ) as a result of the Friedman Test, which was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test scores of the experimental group from the Respect for Diversity Scale. In other words, the applied program created a significant change in the level of respect for diversity among the students in the experimental group. As a result of the Friedman Test, which was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test scores of the placebo and control groups from the Respect for Diversity Scale, the difference between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test scores of the placebo ( $\chi^2 = 6.000, p = .05$ ) and control ( $\chi^2 = 2.250, p = .325$ ) groups was not statistically significant. In other words, there was no change in the level of respect for diversity among the students in the placebo and control groups throughout the process.

According to the results of the Friedman Test, which was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test scores of the experiment, placebo, and control groups from the Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale, the difference between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test scores of the experimental ( $\chi^2 = 1.742, p = .419$ ), placebo ( $\chi^2 = 4.667, p = .097$ ), and control ( $\chi^2 = .800, p = .670$ ) groups was not statistically significant. In other words, the program did not make any significant difference in the empathetic tendency levels of the students in the experimental, placebo, and control groups.

In order to evaluate whether there was any significant deviation in the binary comparisons between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up scores of each group evaluated through the Respect for Diversity Scale, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was also conducted, and the results revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group ( $z = -2.668, p = .008$ ) with a large effect size ( $r = 2.60$ ) and between the pre-test and follow-up test scores of the experimental group ( $z = -2.666, p = .008$ ) with a large effect size ( $r = 2.37$ ). On the other hand, a statistically insignificant difference has been found between the follow-up and post-test scores of the experimental group ( $z = -1.706, p = .088$ ).

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test results also revealed statistically insignificant differences between the pre-test and follow-up test results ( $z = -1.620, p = .105$ ), between the pre-test and post-test results ( $z = -1.620, p = .105$ ), and between the follow-up and post-test results ( $z = -0.983, p = .326$ ) of the control group. Moreover, statistically insignificant differences were found between the pre-test and post-test results ( $z = -0.931, p = .352$ ) and between the follow-up and post-test results ( $z = -1.014, p = .310$ ) of the placebo group. Although a significant difference was found between the pre-test and follow-up test results of the placebo group ( $z = -2.371, p = .018$ ), Bonferroni

Correction calculation was conducted to adjust the confidence intervals, and the  $p$  value was obtained as .009. Therefore, the hypothesis according to which there is a significant difference between the pre-test and follow-up test results of the placebo group can be rejected. Accordingly, it was observed that there was a significant increase in the level of respect for diversity in the experimental group at the end of the experimental process, and this increase was maintained according to the results of the follow-up test applied six weeks following the completion of the process.

Similarly, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was conducted to evaluate whether there was any significant deviation in the binary comparisons between the pre-test, follow-up, and post-test scores of each group evaluated through the Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale, and the results have revealed a statistically insignificant difference between the pre-test and follow-up test scores ( $z = 1.476, p = .140$ ), between the pre-test and post-test results ( $z = -0.916, p = .360$ ), and between the follow-up and post-test results ( $z = -0.258, p = .796$ ) of the experimental group. The results have also revealed a statistically insignificant difference between the pre-test and follow-up test scores ( $z = 0.422, p = .673$ ) between the pre-test and post-test results ( $z = -0.986, p = .324$ ), and between the follow-up and post-test results ( $z = -0.631, p = .528$ ) of the control group. Likewise, for the placebo group, the results have revealed a statistically insignificant difference between the pre-test and follow up test scores ( $z = 0.946, p = .344$ ), between the pre-test and post-test results ( $z = -1.693, p = .090$ ), and between the follow-up and post-test results ( $z = -0.676, p = .499$ ) of the placebo group.

The findings of the Respect for Diversity Education Program, demonstrating whether there is a significant difference between the post-test and follow-up test scores of the Respect for Diversity Scale and the Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale, are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3** Kruskal-Wallis H Test Results of the Respect for Diversity Scale and Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale Post-Test and Follow-Up Test Scores

	Groups	N	M.R.	Sd	$\chi^2$	p
Respect for Diversity Scale Post-Test	Experimental	9	17.33	2	6.743	.034
	Control	8	9.50			
	Placebo Total	7	9.71			
Respect for Diversity Scale Follow-Up Test	Experimental	9	15.89	2	3.823	.148
	Control	8	9.25			
	Placebo Total	7	11.86			
Empathic Tendency Scale Post-Test	Experimental	9	16.22	2	4.226	.121
	Control	8	11.06			
	Placebo Total	7	9.36			
Empathic Tendency Scale Follow-Up Test	Experimental	9	16.00	2	3.571	.168
	Control	8	10.25			
	Placebo Total	7	10.57			

\*\* $p < .05$

The Kruskal-Wallis H Test was performed to determine whether the post-test scores from the Respect for Diversity Scale demonstrate significant differences among the experimental, control, and placebo groups. According to the results, a significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 6.743, p = .034$ ) was found between the scores of the groups in the Respect for Diversity Scale post-test. On the other hand, the results of the analysis conducted to determine whether there were significant differences among the follow-up test scores of the experimental, control, and placebo groups yielded no significant differences among the Respect for Diversity Scale follow-up test scores ( $\chi^2 = 3.823, p = .148$ ) of the groups. When the rank means of the groups were examined, it was found that the experimental group (15.89) had the highest level of respect for diversity, followed by the placebo (11.86) and the control (9.25) groups.

The Kruskal-Wallis H Test was performed to determine whether the participants' post-test scores from the Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale differed significantly among the experimental, control, and placebo groups. The results of the analysis demonstrated that there were no significant differences among the Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale post-test scores of the groups ( $\chi^2 = 4.226, p = .121$ ). Thus, it can be said that there are no significant differences among the empathic tendency levels of the experimental, control, and placebo groups

after the implementation of the Respect for Diversity Education Program. The examination of the rank means of the groups has revealed that the group with the highest mean scores concerning the level of empathic tendency was the experimental group (16.22), followed by the control (11.06) and the placebo (9.36) groups. According to the results of the analysis conducted to determine whether the follow-up test scores differed significantly between the experimental, control, and placebo groups, there was no significant difference between the Ka-Si Empathic Tendency Scale follow-up test scores ( $\chi^2 = 3.571, p = .168$ ) of the groups. Regarding the rank means of the groups, the group with the highest mean score concerning the level of empathic tendency was the experimental group (16.00), followed by the placebo group (10.57) and the control group (10.25) with very close mean scores.

The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to determine which groups caused the significant difference in the post-test scores of the Respect for Diversity Scale of the experimental, control, and placebo groups. The binary comparison table of the post-test scores of the Respect for Diversity Scale is given in Table 4.

**Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Test Results for Binary Comparisons of Respect for Diversity Scale Post-Test Scores**

Binary Comparisons	N	M.R.	U	p
Control Group	8	7.75	26.00	.867
Placebo Group	7	8.29		
Experimental Group	9	1.43	14.00	.036
Control Group	8	1.86		
Experimental Group	9	10.89	10.00	.023
Placebo Group	7	5.43		

\*\* $p < .017$

When the bilateral comparisons of the post-test scores of the Respect for Diversity Scale were examined, no significant differences ( $U = 26.00, p = .867$ ) were found between the control group and the placebo group (Table 5). However, in the comparisons between the experimental group and the control group ( $U = 14.00, p = .036$ ) and the experimental group and the placebo group ( $U = 10.00, p = .023$ ), significant differences were found at the .05 level. Nevertheless, regarding the Bonferroni correction, the  $p$  value was calculated as .017. Hence, there was no statistically significant difference found in the binary comparisons between the groups.

#### 4. Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

In this chapter, the findings about the effectiveness of the Respect for Diversity Education Program on primary school students' levels of respect for diversity and empathic tendencies were discussed, and suggestions were made.

The results have revealed that the respect for diversity in the experimental group increased significantly compared to the post-test results, which were taken immediately after the intervention, but the difference was not significant of the follow-up test taken one month after the termination of the program. Moreover, the level of empathic tendency did not show any significant increase at any of the time points. Similar results have been achieved in previous research. For instance, Spyropoulou et al.'s (2020) study, which aimed to adapt the Friendship Project, a school-based multicultural and anti-racist program, to the Greek context, evaluated its effectiveness on three hundred fourteen students who are in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. According to the results of the research, the program had a positive effect on xenophobia and intolerant attitudes, but did not have any effect on participants' altruism.

When the rank mean points of the students in the research groups are examined, it is concluded that the students in the experimental group have higher respect for differences mean scores and the level of empathic tendency are higher than the other two groups; however, such a difference did not prove to be statistically significant. This result shows that the Respect for Diversity Education Program, which was developed for primary school students and applied through hybrid teaching, was not effective in developing empathic tendencies. Although it caused an increase in the experimental group's respect for diversity, this increase was not at a sufficient level.

In other words, in this experimental study, which was conducted through a hybrid practice of compulsory education due to the pandemic regulations, the level of respect for diversity in the experimental group was significantly promoted. Regarding the improvement in respect for diversity, many research in the literature

support the findings of this study. For instance, Katz (2008) tested the effectiveness of the Respecting Diversity program, which is a social emotional learning intervention for 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> graders, and found that, compared to the control group, The program positively affected the students' characteristics such as being aware of others and respecting others and yourselves. In line with this, Berger et al. (2016) tested the effectiveness of a program to reduce prejudiced attitudes among 322 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades in Israeli-Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian schools in Jaffa. Results indicated that the stereotypic and discriminatory tendencies of the students in the experimental group decreased while their positive feelings towards different groups and their level of social relations increased. Moreover, the results revealed the program's benefit in reducing prejudice continued after 15 months. Fearon and Mearns (2012) tested the effectiveness of a comprehensive respect for diversity education program on 868 parents, 232 practitioners, and 1,181 children. Results indicated that the Respect for Diversity program increased the attitudes of the participants towards diversity. In another study, Topçubaşı (2015) tested the effectiveness of the respect for diversity education program, which was developed according to the learning outcomes of the Life Science course, on third-graders and found that the respect for diversity education positively affected the students in terms of their respect for diversity attitudes. Likewise, Özkarabak Yıldız (2018) investigated the effect of the respect for diversity program with family participation on 5- to 6-year-old children, and results revealed that, compared to children in the control group, the respect for diversity of the children in the experimental group increased. Similarly, Yıldız (2019) found out that the respect for diversity education delivered through the drama method increased the respect for diversity levels of 5- to 6-year-old children in all sub-dimensions. Lastly, Turan (2018) evaluated the effectiveness of an empathy education program for fourth grade students and found that the program positively affected attitudes towards inclusion. As mentioned earlier, the results of the current study revealed that the respect for diversity program had no effect on the empathetic tendency levels of the participants. Considering related literature, there are controversial findings regarding this finding. For example, Diker (2019) tested the effectiveness of a multicultural psychoeducation program on the intercultural sensitivity and empathy skill scores of 18 primary school students, and the results yielded no increase in the participants intercultural sensitivity and empathy skill scores. However, programs aimed at developing empathy have achieved some promising results. For instance, Yılmaz Bingöl and Uysal's (2015) empathy development group guidance program increased the empathy levels of primary school second-grade students. Likewise, Özer (2016) revealed that through an empathy education program, there were positive developments in the empathy and prosocial skills of kindergarten students.

The results of the current study stating the respect for diversity program had limited effectiveness on respect for diversity and had no effect on empathetic tendency should be considered regarding the fact that these variables are related to feelings and thoughts, and attitude change on this issue will take a long time (Dimici, 2021). According to Banks (2014), in addition to the studies on multiculturalism, the school culture and the fact that all the staff in the school take care of this issue will positively affect the learning of respect for different cultures. When this is not achieved, cultural programs will be insufficient, and individuals will not be able to transfer respect for different cultures into their lives. In addition to individual efforts, the contribution of other factors in the educational environment is required for the positive development of students' attitudes towards subjects such as multiculturalism through the education programs provided (Gay, 2014). In this research, only the classes where the program was applied were studied, and no studies were conducted for other areas of the educational institution. Since part of the respect for diversity program created for the research was delivered online due to the pandemic conditions, this may have had an impact on the inadequacy of distance education to increase students' respect and empathy for diversity. In a study in which Başaran et al. (2020) investigated the effectiveness of distance education, it was concluded that the physical separation of students and teachers affects communication and interaction. The spirit of education, which cannot be fully transferred in the virtual environment, has also made it difficult for the teachers to convey their feelings. In distance education, the inability to get instant feedback from students in the courses, individual differences remaining largely in the background, and the restriction of active participation adversely affect learning and behavior gains. According to Akyürek (2020), it has been seen that the applied courses in distance education have less effect on the students compared to the theoretical courses. In addition, it can be said that it is more difficult for students to gain skills and attitudes in distance education. Moreover, from an ethical point of view, the sample of the study consisted of children whose parents gave permission. In this case, it can be thought that

the students in the sample have parents who have a positive attitude towards differences. The results of the study can be evaluated in line with this factor. For this reason, it can be claimed that parents who gave consent have low levels of negative attitudes towards diversity. Since the attitudes of parents towards diversity affect the attitudes of their children, it can be concluded that the group in the study had positive perceptions about diversity even before the research (Pirchio et al., 2018).

As a result, several suggestions can be made. To begin with, since the current program is predominantly delivered through hybrid teaching due to pandemic restrictions, it can be applied face-to-face. Secondly, the effectiveness of the program can be tested with different groups, and the program can be delivered by adding a family participation program. The program did not make any changes to the empathetic tendency scores of the research group, so empathy activities can be changed or increased in the program. School counselors and class guidance teachers can use the activities and digital tools that were developed for the current study on diversity (disability, family and social structure, gender, and different cultures) both during face-to-face and distance education.

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