

Comparison of Pre-service Teachers' Social Skill Levels

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Abstract The aim of this study was to compare the social skill levels of university students from three different teaching departments. Study sample consisted of 100 students (mean age = 21.55 ± 0.165) of physical education and sports teaching (PEST) department, 100 students (mean age = 20.93 ± 0.157) of classroom teaching (CT) department and 100 students (mean age = 21.43 ± 0.189) of music teaching (MT) department. Data were collected using a social skills inventory and a socio-demographic information form. Descriptive statistics, one-way variance analysis, LSD multiple comparison test and independent sample t test were used to analyze the data using the SPSS. The mean scores of PEST, CT and MT students on the Social Skills Inventory were $280.81 (\pm 4.56)$, $281.34 (\pm 5.45)$ and $278.94 (\pm 5.32)$, respectively. There was no statistically significant difference in social skills scores between PEST, CT and MT students while female participants' social skills scores were significantly higher than those of male participants. Social skills scores did not differ significantly by parents' education level while they differed significantly by place of residence (village, district or city). Participants have an average level of social skills with no departmental difference. Female pre-service teachers have a higher level of social skills than male pre-service teachers.

Keywords Social Skills Level, Pre-service Teacher, University Student

1. Introduction

Social skills are important behavioral elements used to initiate and maintain positive interactions with other people. Yüksel [1] defines social skills as learnable, socially acceptable, influential, target-specific, contextual and communication-facilitating behaviors involving observable and unobservable cognitive and affective items that bring about positive reactions and prevent negative reactions. Sorias [2] defines social skills as learned behaviors that enable us to interact with others successfully, express our feelings, defend personal rights, ask for help from others when necessary and refuse requests that are in

conflict with our beliefs, ideals and priorities. Social skills are learned first in the family and then in school. Teachers, therefore, play a critical role in the development of social and communication skills in students. However, it is also of significance that teachers have socially acceptable behaviors that enable interaction with others and the ability to assist and encourage their students to develop these skills. If the teacher is capable of paying attention and responding to students' physical and psychological needs, then students can bond with him or her. The establishment of this bond can help students engage in their own development [3]. Although there are many studies on students' social skills, the number of studies on teachers' social skills is very limited. Yet, social skills are learned through observation and imitation, and reinforced by positive feedback [4]. Capel et al. classifies behaviors expected from teachers into three categories: 1- organization, planning and teaching approach, 2- professionalism and 3- social skills [5]. According to Giblin [6], learning to establish positive relationships with other people makes up 85% of a successful career and 99% of personal happiness.

Good education depends especially on good communication between teachers and students [7]. Almost all research shows that teacher effectiveness is closely related to student success and satisfaction [8]. Sports enable people to participate in dynamic social circles and therefore plays a key role in socialization and development of social skills. Given that sports are often collective activities in modern societies, people interested in sports can engage in social relationships with different groups of people through sporting activities. Sports enable people to look out beyond their own narrow circles and to be in dialogue with other people with different beliefs and thoughts, to influence and be influenced by them. Sports, therefore, enable new friendships and social cohesion [9]. Music requires understanding of others as well as describing events, objects and facts. It can also be a means, purpose and method in the development of emotions and social relations [10]. Music teachers with good communication skills enable students to better express themselves in musical terms and to display their skills freely.

In this respect, determining the level of social skills of university students from different teaching departments will help those students to improve themselves and to be ready and prepared for their future role as teachers. This study aimed to investigate the social skill levels of university students from different departments. The aim of this study is to compare the social skill levels of pre-service teachers from different branches of universities based on different variables.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sampling

The study sample consisted of 100 students of physical education and sports teaching (PEST) department, 100 students of classroom teaching (CT) department and 100 students of music teaching (MT) department of Ordu University.

2.2. Data Collection

Developed by Riggio in 1986 [4] and revised to its current form in 1989, the Social Skills Inventory (SSI) is a self-defining test consisting of 90 items. The SSI includes six subscales that measure social communication skills at two levels: emotional (nonverbal communication) and social (verbal communication). The SSI assesses expressive (encoding), sensitivity (decoding) and control (regulatory) skills. Expressive, sensitivity and control skills refer to one's ability to send messages, to interpret received messages and to manage the communicative process in various social situations, respectively. The subscales of the SSI are: emotional expressivity (EE), emotional sensitivity (ES), emotional control (EC), social expressivity (SE), social sensitivity (SS) and social control (SC). The total score ranges from 90 to 450. The SSI was adapted to Turkish language, and its validity and reliability were established by Yüksel [7]. Riggio found the reliability coefficient of the SSI as $r = .94$, while the reliability coefficient of the subscales ranged from $r = .81$ to $r = .96$. Yüksel [7] found the reliability coefficient of the SSI as $r = .92$. Based on the possible range of scores from 90 to 450, social skills scores between 90 and 252 are categorized as low, those between 253 and 311 as average and those between 312 and 450 as high [8]. While the reliability coefficient of the subscales ranged from $r = .81$ to $r = .96$. Yüksel [7] found the reliability coefficient of the SSI as $r = .92$. Based on the possible range of scores from 90 to 450, social skills scores between 90 and 252 are categorized as low, those between 253 and 311 as average and those between 312 and 450 as high [8].

2.3. Personal Information Form

The personal information form developed by the researcher consists of items pertaining to participants' demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level of mother, education level of father and place of residence

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22. Social skills inventory total score and subscale scores were calculated using the calculation method of the inventory itself. Descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, LSD multiple comparison test and independent sample t test were used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in scores between variables at a significance level of 0.05.

3. Findings

Variance analysis results show that participants' total SSI, and EE, ES, EC, SE, SS and SC scores are 0.689, 0.114, 0.207, 0.511, 0.734, 0.911 and 0.989, respectively, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in scores between departments ($P > 0.05$) (Table 2). Pre-service physical education teachers have higher EE, EC and SS mean scores than other pre-service teachers. Pre-service classroom teachers have the highest ES, SE and TOTAL SSI mean scores. Pre-service classroom teachers have the highest mean score on social skill levels while pre-service music teachers have the lowest.

According to the t-test results, there is a statistically significant difference in EE ($p = 0.049$), ES ($p = 0.00$), SE ($p = 0.047$) and SS ($p = 0.013$) subscale scores between male and female participants ($p < 0.05$) while there is no statistically significant difference in EC ($p = 0.40$) and SC ($p = 0.750$) scores between them ($p > 0.05$) (Table 3). Female pre-service teachers have higher mean scores on all subscales than male ones, which means that female pre-service teachers are better than male ones, especially in terms of social and emotional sensitivity scale and total social skill level. These results indicate that female pre-service teachers pay attention to social norms, adapt to the environment, are good listeners and viewers, and can accurately and fully resolve the emotional states of other people.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

	N	Mean± S.dev	Min	Max	
Age	PEST	100	2.55±0.165	19	25
	MT	100	21.43±0.189	19	26
	CT	100	20.93±0.157	18	24

Table 2. Variance Analysis Results of Social Skills Scores by Departments

Variable	N	Mean±Std.dev.	f	p
EE	PEST	100 46.05±4.79	2.185	114
	MT	100 44.65±4.43		
	CT	100 45.31±4.90		
ES	PEST	100 49.77±5.77	1.585	207
	MT	100 49.83±6.77		
	CT	100 51.16±6.03		
EC	PEST	100 46.35±4.60	673	511
	MT	100 45.50±5.34		
	CT	100 46.07±5.75		
SE	PEST	100 46.56±5.31	310	734
	MT	100 47.11±6.11		
	CT	100 47.12±5.79		
SS	PEST	100 46.16±5.64	094	911
	MT	100 45.89±5.53		
	CT	100 45.85±5.39		
SC	PEST	100 45.90±5.50	011	989
	MT	100 45.93±4.73		
	CT	100 45.83±4.66		
Total SSI	PEST	100 280.81±20.34	373	689
	MT	100 278.94±21.50		
	CT	100 281.34±20.44		

Table 3. Analysis Results of Social Skills Scores by Gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean±Std.dev.	t	p
EE	Male	142	44.73±4.23	-1.974	049*
	Female	158	45.83±5.17		
ES	Male	142	48.44±6.10	-4.755	000*
	Female	158	51.83±6.05		
EC	Male	142	45.73±4.42	-.841	401
	Female	158	46.25±5.92		
SE	Male	142	46.10±5.34	-1.998	047*
	Female	158	47.43±6.02		
SS	Male	142	45.03±5.70	-2.503	013*
	Female	158	46.64±5.29		
SC	Male	142	45.76±4.72	-.319	750
	Female	158	45.94±5.27		
Total SSI	Male	142	275.82±18.89	-3.380	001*
	Female	158	283.96±21.94		

*P<0.05

Participants' social skills scores did not differ significantly by fathers' education level (p > 0.05) (Table 4).

Table 4. Analysis Results of Social Skills Scores by Education Level of Father

Variable	N	Mean±Std.dev.	f	P
EE	Illiterate	17 43.82±3.26	869	483
	Primary School	147 45.47±4.38		
	High School	94 45.62±5.36		
	Bachelor degree	42 44.85±4.93		
ES	Illiterate	17 45.33±4.73	1.905	110
	Primary School	147 46.76±6.19		
	High School	94 50.53±6.36		
	Bachelor degree	42 50.47±6.36		
EC	Illiterate	17 50.41±5.04	414	799
	Primary School	147 50.67±6.22		
	High School	94 45.76±4.32		
	Bachelor degree	42 45.79±5.96		
SE	Illiterate	17 45.93±4.24	1791	131
	Primary School	147 46.85±5.09		
	High School	94 45.97±5.25		
	Bachelor degree	42 45.76±5.08		
SS	Illiterate	17 47.57±5.38	1817	126
	Primary School	147 46.42±6.02		
	High School	94 46.56±6.34		
	Bachelor degree	42 46.93±5.74		
SC	Illiterate	17 43.52±5.90	1069	372
	Primary School	147 46.60±4.64		
	High School	94 45.28±5.65		
	Bachelor degree	42 46.31±7.36		

Participants' ES (p = 0.016) and SE (p = 0.01) scores significantly differed by mothers' education level (p < 0.05) while their EE (p = 0.81), EC (p = 0.64), SS (p = 0.90) and SC (p = 0.42) scores did not (p > 0.05) (Table 5).

Table 5. Analysis Results of Social Skills Scores by Education Level of Mother

	Değişken	N	Mean±std.d	f	Anlamlılık
DA	İlliterate	40	44.82±4.54	.394	.813
	Primary School	188	45.36±4.91		
	High School	55	45.50±4.28		
	Bachelor degree	17	45.87±4.88		
DD	İlliterate	40	45.33±4.73	3.109	.016*
	Primary School	188	49.72±5.18		
	High School	55	51.10±6.61		
	Bachelor degree	17	48.72±5.53		
DK	İlliterate	40	47.43±3.96	.629	.642
	Primary School	188	50.25±6.22		
	High School	55	45.85±4.95		
	Bachelor degree	17	46.29±5.57		
SA	İlliterate	40	45.16±4.28	.4809	.001*
	Primary School	188	45.43±5.34		
	High School	55	45.97±5.25		
	Bachelor degree	17	45.37±4.89		
SD	İlliterate	40	47.93±5.88	.254	.907
	Primary School	188	45.56±5.16		
	High School	55	44.50±5.17		
	Bachelor degree	17	46.93±5.74		
SK	İlliterate	40	45.97±4.70	.966	.427
	Primary School	188	45.95±5.28		
	High School	55	45.72±5.11		
	Bachelor degree	17	47.06±10.1		

*P<0.05

According to the LSD test results, there is a statistically significant difference in ES subscale scores between participants whose mothers have a primary school degree and those whose mothers have a high school degree ($p = 0.012$), and between those whose mothers have a primary school degree and those whose mothers have a bachelor's degree ($p = 0.011$). There is a statistically significant difference in SE subscale scores between participants whose mothers have a primary school degree and those whose mothers are illiterate ($p = 0.009$), and between those whose mothers have a high school degree and those whose mothers have a bachelor's degree ($p = 0.006$) ($p < 0.05$). The results show that participants whose mothers

have a high level of education have better social skills than those whose mothers have a low level of education, indicating that the former are better at sensing the emotional states of other people and acting accordingly, and using social and verbal speech communication skills in practice than the latter (Table 6).

Table 6. LSD Test Results of Social Skills Scores by Education Level of Mother

Variable	i	j	Mean differencek(t-j)	Std. err.	p
ES	Primary school	İlliterate	1.37606	1.06925	.199
		High school	2.37379	.94138	.012*
		Bachelor degree	3.98342	1.55523	.011*
SE	Primary school	İlliterate	2.56117	.97738	.009*
		High school	2.37253	.86049	.006*
		Bachelor degree	3.93617	1.42160	.006*

*P<0.05

According to the variance analysis results, participants' ES ($p = 0.014$) and SC ($p = 0.037$) subscale scores differed significantly by place of residence ($p < 0.05$) while their EE ($p = 0.190$), EC ($p = 0.159$), SE ($p = 0.276$) and SS ($p = 0.937$) subscale scores did not ($p > 0.05$) (Table 7).

Table 7. Analysis Results of Social Skills Scores by Place of Residence

Variable	N	Mean±Std.dev.	f	p	
EE	City	154	45.02±4.46	1.688	.190
	Town	129	45.85±5.10		
	Village	17	44.11±3.91		
ES	City	154	50.57±5.24	4.320	.014*
	Town	129	50.43±7.06		
	Village	17	46.00±6.44		
EC	City	154	46.53±5.21	1.849	.159
	Town	129	45.39±5.15		
	Village	17	45.23±5.96		
SA	City	154	47.06±6.03	1.291	.276
	Town	129	47.06±5.46		
	Village	17	44.76±4.91		
SS	City	154	46.03±5.42	.065	.937
	Town	129	45.94±5.60		
	Village	17	45.52±5.33		
SC	City	154	45.45±4.59	3.321	.037*
	Town	129	46.65±4.59		
	Village	17	44.05±5.35		

*P<0.05

The mean ES subscale score of participants living in villages is statistically significantly lower than that of participants living in districts ($p = 0.006$) and cities ($p = 0.004$). The mean SC subscale score of participants living in districts is statistically significantly higher than those of participants living in villages ($p = 0.042$) and cities ($p = 0.043$) ($P < 0.05$). The results indicate that participants

living in villages have more difficulty understanding other people’s emotional states and are more reserved in social interactions (Table 8).

Table 8. Post-hoc Test Results of Subscale Scores by Place of Residence

Variable	i	j	Mean difference	Std.Dev.	p
ES	Town	City	-4.57792	1.57470	.004*
		Town	-4.43411	1.58980	.006*
SC	Town	City	1.19662	.58751	.043*
		Village	2.59234	1.27010	.042*

*P<0.05

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The Social Skills Inventory (SSI) was applied to 300 students from PEST, CT and MT departments of Ordu University. Participants’ total SSI score and subscale mean scores were calculated using Riggio and Carney’s [9] scoring technique. The results show that participants have an average level of social skills. These results are similar to those reported by Avşar and Kuter [10], Avşar [11], Akpınar et al. [12], Dalkıran et al. [13], Şenol and Türkçapar [14] and Gezer et al. [15].

In this study, participants’ social skills scores did not differ by department. Girgin et al. [16] reported statistically significant differences in EE, EC, SS and SC subscale scores among students from different departments. Şenol and Türkçapar [14] conducted a study on pre-service teachers from PEST and CT departments, and reported a statistically significant difference in ES, EC, SE and SS subscale scores between the two departments. Özcep and Mirzeoğlu [17] conducted a study on physical education and sports and classroom teachers’ social skills, and reported a statistically significant difference in favor of the former. Avşar and Kuter [10] found no meaningful relationship between university students’ departments and social skills scores. Although this result is similar to our finding, some of the results of this study are not consistent with those of previous studies. Research on social skills mostly focus on preschool and primary school students. Although the number of studies on teachers and pre-service teachers is limited, their results vary significantly. Therefore, further research is warranted to better understand the factors contributing to the development of teachers’ and pre-service teachers’ social skills.

Girgin et al. [16] compared men's and women's social skills, and found that men’s EC subscale scores were significantly higher than those of women. Şenol and Türkçapar [14] reported that female pre-service teachers’ ES subscale scores were significantly higher than those of male pre-service teachers while the EC subscale scores of the latter were significantly higher than those of the former. Aktı [18], Dicle [19], Kalafat [20], Jamyang-Tshering [21], Kazdin (1985) [22], Raine, (1993)

[23] and Avşar and Kuter [10] argue that gender has a significant effect on social skills scores and that women have a higher level of social skills than men.

The results of this study show that female participants have significantly higher total score and subscale scores (except for EC and SC subscales) than male participants. These results are consistent with the literature. We can therefore conclude that male participants have better control-related social skills while female participants have better expressivity- and sensitivity-related social skills. However, Avşar [11], Tekin et al. (2006) [24] and Özcep and Mirzeoğlu [17] came to the conclusion that gender has no significant effect on social skills.

There is also a statistically significant in ES and SE subscale scores between participants whose mothers have a primary school degree and those whose mothers have a high school degree or bachelor’s degree. Girgin et al. [16] report that pre-service teachers whose mothers have a bachelor’s degree have higher SE subscale scores than those whose mothers have a primary school degree while Avşar and Kuter [10] and Erdoğan et al. [25] report no relationship between students’ social skills scores and their mothers’ education level. The difference in results reported by these studies warrant further research on this topic.

The results of this study show no evidence for an effect of fathers’ education level on participants’ social skills scores, which is similar to the findings reported by Girgin et al. [16], Avşar and Kuter [10] and Erdoğan et al. [25]. Therefore, whether parents’ education level has an effect on students’ social skills levels is a moot point.

Participants’ ES and SC subscale scores significantly differed by place of residence. The mean ES and SC subscale scores of participants living in villages were significantly lower than those of participants living in districts and cities. Avşar and Kuter [10] also reported that students living in villages had lower ES and SC subscale scores than those living in districts and cities.

All in all, the results show that participants have an average level of social skills with no departmental difference and that female pre-service teachers have a higher level of social skills than male pre-service teachers. The literature contains conflicting results concerning the effect of parents’ education level on students’ social skills levels. The results also suggest that place of residence has an effect on students’ social skills levels, indicating that those living in villages have lower control-related social skills than those living in districts and cities. Teachers should develop social skills to be able to improve their students' knowledge and skills, and to communicate emotionally and socially with them in a healthy way in the process of education. For successful education, teachers should be able to send messages through effective use of body language, analyze students' messages accurately and quickly, communicate easily with students through oral communication, and receive and analyze students'

feedback quickly and correctly. Successful education depends on the effective use of communication skills by teachers and students. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that lesson plans focusing on the development of social skills be included in the curricula of higher education institutions for teachers to be successful in their profession.

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