

Full Length Research Paper

The effect of drama activities on five-year-old children's social skills

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The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of drama activities on the social skills of five-year-old children. In this research, experimental design with pre-test/post-test control group was used. The sample group of the study consisted of 32 kindergarten five-year-old children in Fatih, Istanbul, Turkey in 2017-2018 academic year. After a random selection, 16 children (8 girls and 8 boys), were selected as the experimental group while the other 16 children (8 girls and 8 boys) were selected as the control group. In the study, General Information Form and Preschool Social Skills Assessment Scale - PSSAS were used as data collection tools. A total of 24 drama activities were administered to the children in the experimental group three times a week for eight weeks. After the completion of the drama activities, the experimental and control groups were administered the same scale as posttest and four weeks later as a retention test for the experimental group. As a result of the study, a statistically significant difference was found between the pre-test / post-test total scores of social skills of the experimental and the control group in favor of the experimental group ($p < 0.05$).

Key words: Early childhood education, drama, drama activities, social skills.

INTRODUCTION

Social skills are defined as skills that enable individuals to perform their social tasks competently (Cook et al., 2008). In the literature, it is possible to see different definitions of social skills (Bacanlı, 2018: 26). According to Önalan-Akfırat (2006), social skills are defined as the ability of the individual to act in accordance with the social environment in which he/ she is located. According to Mastropieri and Scrugs, (2016), social skills are defined as our behavior to work with other people and to socialize (2016: 190). Scientific findings on the contribution of social skills to school adaptation and academic achievement of children reveal the importance of developing these skills starting from early childhood

(Agostin and Bain, 1997; Alexander et al., 1993; McClelland et al., 2000).

According to parents and teachers of preschool children, the most important function of preschool institutions is the development and socialization of social skills of children (Gamble et al., 2009; Şahin et al., 2013; Vandebroeck et al., 2008). However, it can be said that preschool education is an important tool in the socialization of the child when we consider the definition of preschool education as a process of gaining experience of the children in real life consciousness and structured in a suitable environment (Kuru-Turaşlı, 2014).

Drama is a way of presenting experiences for children

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to perceive the real world in pre-school education. Drama, without the prior written text, is the participants' own creative discoveries, original thoughts, memories and knowledge based on their actions and improvisations (San, 1999). In other words, drama is the response of participants to a stimulating material using their bodies or voices (Ömeroğlu and Yaşar, 1999). According to San (2002), creative drama in education denotes improvisation, role playing, etc. By using theater or drama techniques, in a group work, individuals experience a life, an event, an idea, sometimes a training unit, sometimes an abstract concept or behavior, through the reorganization of old cognitive patterns and observation, experience, meaningful revelation in life processes in which the experiences are reviewed. Children's social-emotional methods in experimental studies using early childhood drama method (Aslan, 2008; Başdaş, 2017; Bayraklı, 2007; Eti, 2010; Gültekin, 2014; Güner, 2008; Güven-Metin, 1999; Kılıç, 2017; Şahan-Aktan, 2018; Uysal, 1996), language (Çakır, 2008; Solmaz, 1997; Uyar, 1995), cognition (Erbay, 2009; Erdoğan, 2006 Kiyaker, 2017; Ölekli, 2009; Sezer, 2008), creativity (Can-Yaşar, 2009; Ömeroğlu, 1990) and the findings about the contribution to school adaptation (Şentürk-Berber, 2015) reveal the importance of introducing drama in the early period.

There are experimental studies investigating the effect of drama method on social skills (Aslan, 2008; Çalışkan - Çoban, 2007; De La Cruz, 1995; Freeman et al., 2003; Guli, 2004; Güner, 2008; Önalan and Akfirat, 2004). Among the studies investigating the impact of the program on children's development, developing social skills programs to improve the social skills of pre-school children, studies focusing on special education are rare (Avcioğlu, 2012; Totan and Kabasakal, 2012) while the majority have focused on children showing normal developmental characteristics (Durualp and Aral, 2010; Ekinci and Gürşimşek, 2009; Özil, 2008). In this study, the effects of drama activities on children's social skills were investigated. This study was carried out on children who were disadvantaged in socio-economic terms and in this sense, it becomes important to examine the effects of drama activities applied to a different sample group. This study, which has similarity with the previous studies, was aimed at adding to the existing literature and thus expanding the knowledge of the effects of drama activities on children.

Problem of the research

In this study, the effects of drama activities of the five-year-old children's social skills were investigated. In this study, answers to the following questions were sought:

- 1). Is there any difference between the pretest scores of the social skill levels of the children in the experimental and control groups?

- 2). Is there any difference between the posttest scores of the social skill levels of the children in the experimental and control groups?
- 3). Is there any difference between the posttest-pretest difference scores of the social skill levels of the children in the control group?
- 4). Is there any difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the social skill levels of the children in the experimental group?

METHODOLOGY

In this study, pretest-posttest control group experimental design was used. Experimental methods are classified as real experimental methods and quasi-experimental (biased) methods according to whether the selection of experimental and control groups is neutral or biased (Creswell, 2003). On the other hand, in real experimental designs, subjects are randomly assigned in groups (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018: 212). The research was carried using convenient sampling method (Johnson and Christensen, 2014) by taking into account the ability of the researcher and the application of the program by the institution management. In the selection of the school, the physical facilities of the school, the cooperation of teachers and school management were effective. The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of drama activities on social skills. For this purpose, two groups were determined as experimental and control groups. It was aimed to reveal whether there was any difference in social skill levels according to the control group by implementing drama activities to the children in the experimental group. While drama-based activities constituted an independent variable within the scope of the research, pretest, posttest and retention test scores of social skill levels related to social skills scale and sub-factors constitute the dependent variable. The model, which is designed in the context of the determined purpose, is an experimental design model with pretest-posttest control group (Table 1).

In Table 1, O1 and O2 refers to pretest; O3 and O4 posttest administration while O5 refers only to the retention test given to the experimental group. X1 shows the independent variable (drama activities) applied to the subjects in the experimental group (Büyüköztürk, 2007: 21).

Study group

In the scope of the research, the study group consisted of 32 five-year-old kindergarten children in Fatih / Istanbul - Turkey in 2017-2018 academic year. After a random selection, 16 children (8 girls and 8 boys) were assigned as the experimental group while the other 16 children (8 girls and 8 boys) were determined as the control group. Since the aim is to reveal the effectiveness of the method in the research, it is not necessary to select the sample from the population in experimental design studies (Büyüköztürk et al., 2010).

Data collection process

In this study, experimental design model with pretest-posttest control group was used. First of all, the teachers of the children in the experimental and control groups were asked to fill in the Preschool Social Skills Assessment Scale (PSSAS) for each child in March, 2018. In the experimental group, the third researcher applied the drama activities for three days a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) for eight weeks (March-May, 2018); 24

Table 1. Experimental design model with pretest-posttest control group.

Group	Pretest	Treatment	Posttest	Retention Test
Experiment	O1	X1	O3	O5
Control	O2		O4	---

activities in total. The points considered during the drama-based activities in the experimental group are:

- 1). Before the experimental study, the objectives, content, duration and materials of the creative drama sessions were prepared.
- 2). Educational drama studies were conducted with children for eight weeks. The sessions were held on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays under the leadership of the third researcher, one of the teachers participating in the study. The practicing researcher also took a special drama course as well as the specific course in the undergraduate period.
- 3). The drama activities applied to the experimental group include the formation of a sense of trust within the group of children, the initiation and maintenance of the relationship, the effective listening, the exclusion and ridicule, the recognition of emotions, anger control, empathetic behavior, the use of appropriate problem-solving and communication, some positive thinking, prepared by the researchers for the purpose of improving their behavior.
- 4). In the drama sessions, more warm-up activities were introduced, especially in the first sessions, in order for the group to engage with each other more. In addition, it was aimed that the group members would be less familiar with each other, and that the group would be integrated. In the following sessions, the members of the group formed their own group to know each other better.
- 5). It was ensured that the children were more comfortable in terms of recognizing the environment in which the studies were done in the classroom and left space to act during the drama studies.
- 6). During the activities, care was taken to ensure that the main work and warm-up work were linked, and information and shares were made with the subject matter in the evaluation section.

In this process, children in the control group followed their daily routines according the Preschool Education Program of the Ministry of National Education without any treatment. After the application of drama activities, Preschool Social Skills Assessment (PSSAS) Scale was completed as a posttest by the teachers of the children in the experimental and control groups. Approximately 3 weeks after the posttest, the children in the experimental group were given a retention test (PSSAS) by the teachers (June 2018).

Data collection tools

In order to determine the social skills of the children in the study group, Preschool Social Skills Assessment Scale (PSSAS) and General Information Form were used as the data collection tools.

General information form

The general information form includes questions about the age, gender, and parents' level of education in the study group. This information is obtained from the institution records with the permission of the families.

Preschool social skills assessment scale (PSSAS)

The Preschool Social Skills Assessment Scale (PSSAS) was

developed in order to determine the competencies of 36-72 month-old children related to their social skills in 2012 within the scope of Preschool Social Skills Support Project (PSSSP) supported by TUBITAK - The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (Ömeroğlu et al., 2015). The scale, which is based on the evaluation of children's social skills by an adult, has a teacher and parent version. The scale consisting of 49 social skill items has a high reliability (teacher form $\alpha = 0.96$; parent form $\alpha = 0.95$). The scale covers four social skills sub-dimensions: initial skills, academic support, friendship, and managing emotions. Initial skills cover basic social skills such as greeting, saying goodbye, asking for permission, apologizing and thanking.

Academic support skills include skills such as following the instructions, asking questions, answering questions, and talking, and expressing thoughts to ensure the adaptation of children to primary school. Friendship skills cover collaborating with friends, queue waiting, sharing, entering the game, including the interaction of children with friends. Skills of managing emotions are about the ability to understand one's emotions and others, to express the causes and consequences of their emotions, and to control emotions. Children's use of social skills is assessed on a five-point Likert, which is graded from 1 to 5 (no good = 1; almost always good = 5). The lowest score a child can get from the scale is 49; the highest score is 245. The higher the child's score, the more advanced his/her social skills are considered.

Data analysis

The data obtained in this study were analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22 package program. Shapiro Wilk's test was used because of the number of units while analyzing the normality. When interpreting the results, 0.05 was used as the level of significance; in the case of $p < 0.05$, the variables were not normally distributed, but in the case of $p > 0.05$, it was stated that the variables were normally distributed. In the Shapiro-Wilk's test, due to the small amount of data, the significance level of the distribution was significant at $p < 0.05$, meaning that the data sets calculated for the experimental and control groups did not show normal distribution. The Mann Whitney U Test was used because the variables were not normally distributed when examining the differences between the groups.

Friedman's Two-way ANOVA was used because more than two dependent variables were normally distributed. In the case of significant differences, variables that differed were determined by using multiple comparison tests. The Wilcoxon test was used because the variables were normally distributed when examining the difference between two dependent variables. When interpreting the results, 0.05 was used as the level of significance; that is, there was a significant difference in the case of $p < 0.05$ and no significant difference in the case of $p > 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First sub-problem

Is there a difference between the pretest scores for the

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U test results for the differences between the sub-factors of the social skills assessment scale of children in the experimental and control groups.

Variable	Group						Mann Whitney U Test		
	n	\bar{x}	Median	Min	Max	sd	Mean Rank	z	P
Initial skills pretest	Experiment	16	41.06	42	29	47	5.11	12.38	-2.493 0.013*
	Control	16	47.38	48.5	32	60	7.68	20.63	
	Total	32	44.22	45	29	60	7.17		
Academic support pretest	Experiment	16	42.25	43.5	34	49	3.77	13.41	-1.871 0.061
	Control	16	45.75	47.5	31	60	7.75	19.59	
	Total	32	44	44	31	60	6.25		
Friendship skills pretest	Experiment	16	45.38	45	40	50	2.99	15.69	-0.492 0.623
	Control	16	46.75	47	33	62	8.93	17.31	
	Total	32	46.06	45.5	33	62	6.58		
Emotions management pretest	Experiment	16	41.31	42	34	45	3.3	19.5	-1.816 0.069
	Control	16	37	36	23	58	10.6	13.5	
	Total	32	39.16	40.5	23	58	8.02		
SS pretest total score	Experiment	16	170	172	145	187	12.66	15.56	-0.565 0.572
	Control	16	176.69	172.5	127	233	28.93	17.44	
	Total	32	173.34	172	127	233	22.23		

*p<0.05.

social skill levels of the children in the experimental and control groups?

Table 2 shows whether there was a difference between the pretest scores of the social skills of the children in the experimental and control groups. It was seen that there was no significant difference between the mean values of social skill levels of the children in the experimental and control groups according to $p = 0.572 > 0.05$. There was no significant difference between the social skill levels of the children in the control group in terms of Academic Support Skills ($p = 0.061 > 0.05$),

Friendship Skills ($p = 0.623 > 0.05$), Emotional Skills ($p = 0.069 > 0.05$). However, it was seen that there was a significant difference between the social skills levels of the children in the experimental and control groups related to the Initial Skills sub-factor according to $p = 0.013 < 0.05$. It was seen that the children in the experimental and control groups are equal in terms of social skill levels related to the overall and sub-factors of the Preschool Social Skills Assessment Scale, in favor of the control group. Since only one sub-dimension was in favor of the control group, there

was no need for re-grouping.

Second sub-problem

Is there a difference between the posttest scores of the social skill levels of the children in the experimental and control groups?

Table 3 shows whether there is a significant difference between the sub-factors and the skill levels of the Preschool Social Skills Assessment Scale for the posttest application of the children in

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U test results for the difference between the sub-factors of the social skills assessment scale of children in the experimental and control groups.

Variable		Group					Mann Whitney U Test			
		n	\bar{x}	Median	Min	Max	sd	Mean Rank	z	P
Initial skills posttest	Experiment	16	56.62	57	50	60	2.9	20.28		
	Control	16	51.06	51	42	60	6.43	12.72	-2.297	0.022*
	Total	32	53.84	56	42	60	5.66			
Academic support posttest	Experiment	16	57.69	58	50	60	2.44	22.94		
	Control	16	50.5	50	41	58	5.59	10.06	-3.905	0.001*
	Total	32	54.09	57	41	60	5.6			
Friendship skills posttest	Experiment	16	61.44	62	57	65	2.13	23.28		
	Control	16	53	51.5	43	65	4.91	9.72	-4.103	0.001*
	Total	32	57.22	58.5	43	65	5.68			
Emotions management posttest	Experiment	16	57.44	58	51	60	2.45	24.03		
	Control	16	45.31	45.5	31	57	6.57	8.97	-4.559	0.001*
	Total	32	51.38	54	31	60	7.86			
SS posttest total score	Experiment	16	233.19	235	210	245	9.03	23.5		
	Control	16	199.88	201	161	237	20.03	9.5	-4.223	0.001*
	Total	32	216.53	221.5	161	245	22.8			

*p<0.05.

the experimental and control groups. It was found out that the mean ranks of the experimental group children were significantly higher than those of the control group children in terms of Preschool Social Skills Assessment Scale total ($p=0.001 < 0.05$) and its sub-factors (Beginner Skills ($p=0.022 < 0.05$), Academic Support Skills ($p=0.001 < 0.05$), Friendship Skills ($p = 0.001 < 0.05$), Emotional Management Skills ($p = 0.001 < 0.05$). In terms of social skill levels, it was concluded that the drama activities applied to the experimental resulted in a significant increase in the social skill levels.

Third sub-problem

Is there a difference between the posttest-pretest difference scores of the social skill levels of the children in the control group?

Table 4 presents whether there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the children in the control group and the sub-factors of the Preschool Social Skills Assessment Scale and their overall skill levels. It was found out that the mean ranks (5.17 and 8.14) of the control groups' pretest and posttest

mean scores ($\bar{X}_{\text{pretest}} = 47.38$ and $\bar{X}_{\text{posttest}} = 51.06$) were significantly higher in terms of Initial Skills sub-factor ($p=0.02 < 0.05$). It was seen that mean ranks (47.5 and 50) of the control group children's pretest and posttest mean scores ($\bar{X}_{\text{pretest}} = 45.75$ and $\bar{X}_{\text{posttest}} = 50.5$) were significantly higher in terms of Academic Support Skills sub-factor ($p=0.001 < 0.05$). Similarly, mean ranks (5.83 and 9.12) of the control group children's pretest and posttest mean scores ($\bar{X}_{\text{pretest}} = 46.75$ and $\bar{X}_{\text{posttest}} = 53$) were significantly higher in terms of Friendship Skills sub-factor ($p=0.009 < 0.05$). It was

Table 4. Wilcoxon signed ranks test results for differences between pretest and posttest scores of children in the control group.

Variable	n	\bar{x}	Med	Min	Max	sd	Wilcoxon Test		
							Mean Rank	z	p
Initial skills pretest	16	47.38	48.5	32	60	7.68	5.17	-2.327	0.02*
Initial skills posttest	16	51.06	51	42	60	6.43	8.14		
Academic support pretest	16	45.75	47.5	31	60	7.75	3.75	-2.56	0.01*
Academic support posttest	16	50.5	50	41	58	5.59	9.55		
Friendship skills pretest	16	46.75	47	33	62	8.93	5.83	-2.614	0.009*
Friendship skills posttest	16	53	51.5	43	65	4.91	9.12		
Emotions management pretest	16	37	36	23	58	10.6	5	-3.128	0.002*
Emotions management posttest	16	45.31	45.5	31	57	6.57	8.21		
SS total score pretest	16	176.69	172.5	127	233	28.93	2.67	-3.104	0.002*
SS total score posttest	16	199.88	201	161	237	20.03	9.85		

*p<0.05.

found out that mean ranks (5 and 8.21) of the control group children's pretest and posttest mean scores ($\bar{X}_{\text{pretest}} = 37$ and $\bar{X}_{\text{posttest}} = 45.31$) were significantly higher in terms of Emotions Management sub-factor ($p=0.002 < .05$). Again, it was revealed that mean ranks (2.67 and 9.85) of the control group children's pretest and posttest mean scores ($\bar{X}_{\text{pretest}} = 176.69$ and $\bar{X}_{\text{posttest}} = 199.88$) were significantly higher in terms of Preschool Social Skills Assessment Scale total sub-factor ($p=.002 < .05$). Accordingly, there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores in terms of Preschool Social Skills Assessment Scale total and its sub-factors.

Fourth sub-problem

Is there a difference between the pretest and

posttest scores of the social skill levels of the children in the experimental group?

Table 5 shows whether the social skills pretest scores (before the treatment), the social skills posttest scores (just after the treatment) and social skills retention scores (after a certain time) of the children in the experimental group differ. It was found out that there was a significant difference between the experimental group children's social skills pretest and posttest mean scores and means ranks of posttest and retention test mean scores ($p=0.001 < .05$). It was concluded that there was a significant difference between the pretest, posttest and retention test scores of the children in the experimental group in terms of social skill levels; that is, the children in the treatment group increased their social skills levels over time according to the measurement at certain intervals.

Conclusion

In this study, it was investigated by using experimental design whether the drama activities affect the social skills of the preschoolers showing normal developmental characteristics. Experimental and control groups were determined as a result of the random assignment of children to the experimental group and drama activities were applied to the experimental group for eight weeks. The control group continued the Preschool Education Program of the Ministry of National Education. At the end of eight weeks, the social skills of the groups were re-evaluated. The most important result of the study was that drama activities contribute to the social development of children. According to the data of the research; it was found that the total scores of the social skills scale of the children in the experimental group

Table 5. Friedman's two-way ANOVA test results and multiple comparisons of the differences between pretest and posttest scores and retention scores for children in the experimental group.

	N	\bar{x}	Med.	Min.	Max	sd	Friedman's Two Way ANOVA			Multiple Comparison
							Mean rank	Chi-square	p	
Initial skills pretest	16	41.06	42	29	47	5.11	1			
Initial skills posttest	16	56.62	57	50	60	2.9	2.59	24.667	0.001*	1-3 1-2
Initial skills retention test	16	57.19	57	55	60	1.52	2.41			
Academic support pretest	16	42.25	43.5	34	49	3.77	1			
Academic support posttest	16	57.69	58	50	60	2.44	2.5	24.774	0.001*	1-3 1-2
Academic support retention test	16	57.81	58	56	60	1.05	2.5			
Friendship skills pretest	16	45.38	45	40	50	2.99	1			
Friendship skills posttest	16	61.44	62	57	65	2.13	2.59	24.667	0.001*	1-3 1-2
Friendship skills retention test	16	61.69	62	59	64	1.62	2.41			
Emotions management pretest	16	41.31	42	34	45	3.3	1			
Emotions management posttest	16	57.44	58	51	60	2.45	2.5	24.774	0.001*	1-3 1-2
Emotions management retention test	16	57.75	58	54	60	1.69	2.5			
SS total pretest	16	170	172	145	187	12.66	1			
SS total posttest	16	233.19	235	210	245	9.03	2.66	25.175	0.001*	1-3 1-2
SS total retention test	16	234.44	235.5	226	242	4.07	2.34			

*p<0.05.

and their scores in the sub-factors were significantly higher in the posttest and retention tests than the children in the control group. In addition, the retention test showed that the difference between groups persisted. These findings are consistent with research conducted in Turkey reporting that drama activities support social skills (Boz et al., 2018; Durualp and Aral, 2010; Ekinci and Gürşimşek, 2009; Göktaş and Ogelman, 2016; Özil, 2008; Pekdoğan, 2016).

One of the findings of this kind of studies is that the social skills posttest scores of the children in the control group are higher than the pretest scores, although the drama activities are not applied. In the control group, the social skills posttest scores of the children in the control group are higher than the pretest scores; this could be justified as the normal preschool program also contains the gains and indicators related to drama. In addition, the findings that support the development of social skills depending on age and time are present in the literature (Kapıkıran et al., 2006). A similar result to the findings of the study was revealed by the study conducted by Ekinci and Gürşimşek, (2009). In the related study, it was found that the posttest scores of the children in the control group were higher than the pretest scores of the interpersonal skills and self-control skills sub-dimensions.

This research has some limitations. The limitation of this study is the five-year-old children who are in kindergarten. Although the true experimental design is

tried to be applied in social sciences, there is no complete laboratory environment. For this reason, factors related to children, teachers, families and learning environments may have an impact on the results. For this reason, it should be shown as a limitation of the research that there is no possibility to eliminate the factors that will affect the results of the research.

With this study, once again the role of drama in the development comes to the fore. Therefore, it is recommended that drama be used as a method in working with children. Application of such treatment to children with special needs may shed light on other studies. In addition, it can be applied in preschool education institutions where children of different socio-cultural levels attend, and comparisons can be made with the obtained data. In addition, the validity of the treatment prepared in the field of social skills development can be carried out by comparing with placebo groups or other educational programs.

Notes: A part of this study was presented at "5th International Symposium on Social Humanities and Administrative Sciences", as an oral presentation in on October, 25-27, 2018, Istanbul, Turkey.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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