

## **EXAMINING THE EFFECT OF MERAKLI MINIK ACTIVITIES ON PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SKILLS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to examine the effects of activities in TUBITAK Meraklı Minik Magazine on social skill levels of preschool children (48-60 months). The research was carried out with a total of 40 children; 20 children in experiment, 20 children in control group who were studying in 2 different classes of Bengi Main School in Balıkesir province district. A semi-experimental design with pre-test-post test control groups was used in the research. The social skill assessment scale developed by Avcioglu (2007) used to determine the social skill levels of preschool children. SPSS 20.0 package program was used for data analysis. Mann Whitney U and Wilcoxon test were made to see the difference between the groups. These tests used because the data were not normally distribute. According to the findings; it was observed that the final test scores from the social skill scales of children in experiment group increased significantly compared to the final test scores of children in the control group.

**Keywords:** Merakli Minik Magazine, preschool, social skills

### **INTRODUCTION**

Social emotional development is an important aspect that should be given attention in early childhood development. Many studies had been conducted to prove the existence of a positive relationship between children's socio emotional development at an early age with the establishment of their personality and personal character in the future (Zakaria et al., 2021). If a child's social and emotional development is healthy, he can develop positive social behaviours.

Social skills can be defined as behaviors used in interpersonal relationships. Social skills contribute to the development of established relationships and play an effective role in the development of positive reinforcements as a return. These behaviors occur, can be observed and objectively evaluated in interpersonal relationships. Social skills are behavioral patterns that positively affect social relationships and interactions at any age and environment, regardless of whether they are children or adults. Individuals with high skill

levels develop good relationships with others throughout their lives, can resist in tense environments, cope with negative situations by controlling themselves in difficult conditions (Kelly, 1982; Sevinç, 2005). It has been observed that children who acquire social skills in early childhood and find a field of practice are more successful in initiating and maintaining social relationships. It is predicted that individuals will have high social cohesion and self-expressing personalities in the adulthood period through the social skills gained in childhood (Gülay & ve Akman 2009). Development of social skills should begin at preschool period. Intervention programs that will be implemented during this period contribute to the acquisition and development of communication skills and important behaviors in terms of adaptation to social life. In addition, social skills training plays a major role in eliminating or abandoning inappropriate or negative behaviors in social life (De Haas-Warner, 1991).

It can be said that the fact that as the effective communicative skills of children increase, so do their social acceptance and social independence levels results from the increase in children's starting and maintaining communication (Atabey, 2018).

According to Bakken et al. (2017); social and academic activities provide early intervention and long-term benefits for the minds, bodies, and emotions of preschool children. Also, it has been observed that skills offer long term benefits for young children (Ahi & Tabak, 2020). Meraklı Minik magazine, prepared for preschool children by TÜBİTAK, is also attracted by teachers and the educational community, as well as parents. The activities in the magazine considered to support cognitive, verbal and emotional development, which makes the magazine stand out. In this study, the study of a magazine that attracts great attention and brings expectations from the point of view of the preschool age group will make a great contribution to the literature and many people. In this context, the aim of the research is to examine in depth whether the Meraklı Minik has an impact on social skills of preschool children.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Model

The research was conducted in an experimental model with a control group. Children in the experimental group were given Meraklı Minik activities, including 1 issue every week during the year. In the control group, only the curriculum in accordance with the curriculum of the Ministry of Education was given. Meraklı Minik Magazine includes (Table 1);

Table 1  
*Meraklı Minik Magazine*

Contents	Aims
Informative articles.	These articles contain information about the topic of that month and questions that will focus children's attention on the relevant topic. These activities are important for children's skills, such as increasing their knowledge of the subject, improving their listening skills, and the ability to express themselves /socialize/gain self-confidence.
Finding a certain number	It is aimed to find the objects contained in the picture belonging

of objects contained in the picture.	to the subject of the relevant month by children.
Sequence determination.	These are activities aimed at finding which objects/images will come to empty places.
Finding a certain number of objects contained in the picture:	It is aimed to find the objects contained in the picture belonging to the subject of the relevant month by children.
Matching events.	These are events that aim to select objects in two or more groups according to their properties.
Labyrinth / path-finding activities.	In a picture with the start and end points specified (related to the subject of the month), children are guided to find the path in a way that supports their skills such as transportation to the destination/hand-eye coordination/attention collection.
“Let's go to the kitchen” activities.	using various vegetables/fruits, children are provided to prepare foods/plates related to the topic of the month. At these events, children were gathered at the class table and children worked jointly (working and collaborating in the form of a team) in the form of a small project. They are therefore important activities for children's social skills.

## Working Group

The research was carried out with a total of 40 children (4-6 years old) who were studying in two different classes of Bengi Main School in Balıkesir province district.

Table 2

*Distribution of children taken into the experimental and control group according to general information.*

	Experimental Group		Control Group		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Girl	12	60.0	10	50.0	22	55.0
Boy	8	40.0	10	50.0	18	45.0
Total	20	100.0	20	100.0	40	100.0

When the table is examined, it is seen that 12 of the children in the experimental group are girls, 8 of them are boys and 10 of the children in the control group are girls and 10 of them are boys.

## Data Collection Tool

The social skills assessment scale (SBDÖ) was used in the research. The sacel administered to children individually by the researcher before and after the application. This scale was developed by Avcioglu (2007) in order to determine the social skill levels of preschool children. There are 62 items on the scale, which are evaluated by the phrases “always does”, “does too often”, “usually does”, “does too little” and “never does”. The internal consistency coefficient for the entire scale was determined as 0.98. The scale includes nine sub-scales (Table 3).

Table 3  
*Subscales of SBDO*

Subscales	Code
Interpersonal skills.	KB
Listening skills.	DB
Verbal disclosure skills.	SAB
Ability to control anger behavior and adapt to changes.	KDKEDUSB
Ability to cope with peer pressure.	ABBÇB
Ability to Self-Control.	KKEB
Skills to complete tasks.	GTB
Ability to accept results.	SKEB
Goal building skills.	AOB

### Analysis of Data

SPSS 20.0 package program was used for data analysis. Mann Whitney U and Wilcoxon test were made to see the difference between the groups. These tests used because the data were not normally distribute.

### RESULTS

When the results in the table were examined (Table 4), it was determined that there were no significant differences between the experimental group and control group in the total scores and nine sub-scales on the Social Skills Assessment Scale of children ( $p>0.05$ ).

Table 4  
*Mann Whitney U results showing the difference between the pre-test scores of social skills of the children in the experimental and control groups.*

Group	Sub-scale	N	Rank Average	Sum of Sequence	U	z	P
Experimental	ABBÇB	20	21.90	438.00	172.000	-.75	.46
Control		20	19.10	382.00			
Experimental	AOB	20	22.83	456.50	153.500	-1.26	.21
Control		20	18.18	363.50			
Experimental	DB	20	19.75	395.00	185.000	-.40	.69
Control		20	21.25	425.00			
Experimental	GTB	20	19.63	392.50	182.500	-.47	.64
Control		20	21.38	427.50			
Experimental	KB	20	20.68	413.50	196.500	-.09	.92
Control		20	20.33	406.50			
Experimental	KDKEDUSB	20	20.93	418.50	191.500	-.23	.82
Control		20	20.08	401.50			
Experimental	KKEB	20	20.55	411.00	199.000	-.02	.98
Control		20	20.45	409.00			
Experimental	SAB	20	20.73	414.50	195.500	-.12	.90

Control		20	20.28	405.50			
Experimental	SKEB	20	22.23	444.50	165.500	-.93	.35
Control		20	18.78	375.50			
Experimental	Total	20	20.98	419.50	190.500	-.25	.79
Control		20	20.03	400.50			

A statistically significant difference was found between the experimental group and the control group scores of the Social Skills Assessment Scale and seven of the nine sub-scales (ABBCHB; AOB; DB; GTB; KDKEDUSB; KKEB; SKEB) in terms of post-test scores ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 5).

Table 5

*Mann Whitney U test results showing the difference between post-test scores of social skills of the children in the experimental and control groups.*

Group	Sub-scale	N	Rank Average	Sum of Sequence	U	z	P
Experimental	ABBÇB	20	26.45	529.00	81.000	-3.226	.001*
Control		20	14.55	291.00			
Experimental	AOB	20	25.43	508.50	101.500	-2.69	.007*
Control		20	15.58	311.50			
Experimental	DB	20	24.45	489.00	121.000	-2.15	.033*
Control		20	16.55	331.00			
Experimental	GTB	20	25.55	511.00	99.000	-2.78	.006*
Control		20	15.45	309.00			
Experimental	KB	20	23.73	474.50	135.500	-1.74	.081
Control		20	17.28	345.50			
Experimental	KDKEDUSB	20	24.63	492.50	117.500	-2.23	.024*
Control		20	16.38	327.50			
Experimental	KKEB	20	24.95	499.00	111.000	-2.44	.015*
Control		20	16.05	321.00			
Experimental	SAB	20	23.85	477.00	133.000	-1.81	.072
Control		20	17.15	343.00			
Experimental	SKEB	20	25.68	513.50	96.500	-2.82	.004*
Control		20	15.33	306.50			
Experimental	Total	20	24.93	498.50	111.500	-2.39	.015
Control		20	16.08	321.50			

When the data in Table 6 were examined, it was determined that the pre-test and post-test results contained statistically significant differences in both the total score for the experimental group and the total scores for the nine subscales ( $p < 0.05$ ). This explains that Merakli Minik activities applied to children in the experimental group contribute positively to children's social skills.

Table 6

*Wilcoxon test results of the difference between the Pre-test and Post- test scores of the Experimental Group for social skill level.*

Sub-scales	Ranks	N	Rank Average	Sum of Sequences	z	P
ABBÇB	Negative	2	4.00	8.00	-3.51	.000*
	Positive	17	10.71	182.00		
	Equal	1				
	Total	20				
AOB	Negative	3	5.00	15.00	-3.11	.002*
	Positive	15	10.40	156.00		
	Equal	2				
	Total	20				
DBS	Negative	1	2.00	2.00	-3.85	.000*
	Positive	19	10.95	208.00		
	Equal	0				
	Total	20				
GTB	Negative	0	0.00	0.00	-3.63	.000*
	Positive	17	9.00	153.00		
	Equal	3				
	Total	20				
KB	Negative	1	1.00	1.00	-3.88	.000*
	Positive	19	11.00	209.00		
	Equal	0				
	Total	20				
KDKEDUSB	Negative	1	1.00	1.00	-3.78	.000*
	Positive	18	10.50	189.00		
	Equal	1				
	Total	20				
KKEB	Negative	3	5.33	16.00	-3.05	.002*
	Positive	15	10.33	155.00		
	Equal	2				
	Total	20				
SAB	Negative	1	1.50	1.50	-3.66	.000*
	Positive	17	9.97	169.50		
	Equal	2				
	Total	20				
SKEB	Negative	4	6.25	25.00	-2.65	.008*
	Positive	14	10.43	146.00		
	Equal	2				
	Total	20				
Total Score	Negative	1	3.00	3.00	-3.80	.000*
	Positive	19	10.89	207.00		
	Equal	0				
	Total	20				

When the results of comparing the pretest and post test scores of the control group in Table 7 were examined, it was determined that there was a significant difference between

pretest and post- test scores only on the KB - interpersonal skills scale from the subscales ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was found that there was no statistically significant difference between pretest and post-test scores for the control group in other subscales and in total scores taken from the social skills assessment scale ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 7

*Wilcoxon test results of the difference between the Pre-test and Post- test scores of the Control Group for social skill level.*

Sub-scales	Ranks	N	Rank Average	Sum of Sequences	Z	P
ABBÇB	Negative	7	5.36	37.50	-1.85	.064
	Positive	10	11.55	115.50		
	Equal	3				
	Total	20				
AOB	Negative	5	5.10	25.50	-1.71	.087
	Positive	9	8.83	79.50		
	Equal	6				
	Total	20				
DBS	Negative	7	5.36	37.50	-1.30	.193
	Positive	8	10.31	82.50		
	Equal	5				
	Total	20				
GTB	Negative	8	8.94	71.50	-.61	.537
	Positive	10	9.95	99.50		
	Equal	2				
	Total	20				
KB	Negative	4	10.13	40.50	1.96	.050*
	Positive	14	9.32	130.50		
	Equal	2				
	Total	20				
KDKEDUSB	Negative	5	7.10	35.50	-1.94	.052
	Positive	12	9.79	117.50		
	Equal	3				
	Total	20				
KKEB	Negative	8	7.44	59.50	-.029	.977
	Positive	7	8.64	60.50		
	Equal	5				
	Total	20				
SAB	Negative	7	8.79	61.50	-.71	.476
	Positive	10	9.15	91.50		
	Equal	3				
	Total	20				
SKEB	Negative	7	6.71	47.00	-1.09	.274
	Positive	9	9.89	89.00		
	Equal	4				
	Total	20				
Total Score	Negative	7	5.86	41.00	-1.68	.093
	Positive	10	11.20	112.00		
	Equal	3				
	Total	20				

## **DISCUSSION**

There is no significant difference in the social skill levels of children in the experimental and control group when looking at the pre-test results. This indicates that children are at a close level in terms of their social skills. Activities in Merakli Minik were carried out weekly to the experimental group. Social skill levels in the experiment and control group were compared with post-test conducted at the end of the year. A significant difference was found in favor of the experimental group in seven of the nine sub-scales and between the overall scale scores. Dereli (2008) applied a Social Skills Training Program to those in the experimental group in a study conducted with the participation of 81 children in preschool. As a result of the research, there was an increase in the frequency of children receiving education using social behavior in solving social problems. This results are similiar to our research.

Compared to the pretest and posttest score averages of the control group, there is only a significant difference in the lower size of interpersonal skills, and there is no significant difference between the overall score averages of other sizes and scales. Durualp (2009) observed significant increases in social adaptation and social skills scores in children in his study, in which he conducted eight weeks of social skills training with 96 pre-school students. The results, are important to show that the education given to children is successful. In his study with 34 children, Aslan (2008) applied drama-based social skills training consisting of 40 activities for 12 weeks to 6-year-olds in the experimental group. As a result of the application, a significant difference was found in the scores of children's social relations and cooperation behavior in favor of the experimental group. In another research, (Loukatari et al., 2019), applied "Structured Playfulness" program to 5-6 years old children, results demonstrated that there was statistically significant difference between the degree of development in students' social skills during breaks and their participation in a structured programme of playful activities in the schoolyard. The acquisition of social skills at preschool period and the different educational programs applied for it seem to have positive effects on social skills.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the research, no significant difference was found between the social skill levels of children in the experimental and control group at the pre-test results. This indicates that children are at a close level in terms of their social skills. Activities in Merakli Minik Magazine were carried out weekly to the experimental group. Social skill levels in the experiment and control group were compared with post-test at the end of the year. A significant difference was found in favor of the experimental group in seven of the nine sub-scales and between the overall scale scores. It can be said that, Merakli Minik is an effective child magazine that develops social skillsnand the program applied to the experimental group, is effective in developing children's social skills. Social skills are important and must be gained in preschool period, researhers should prepare education programmes for preschool children that improve social skills. Educators are recommended to use childrens' magazines in classroom activities.



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