

Original Paper

An Investigation of Social Emotional Learning Skills in Primary Schools in Terms of Some Variables

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Abstract

In this study, the social-emotional learning skills of the students attending the fourth and fifth grades of primary school were examined in terms of gender, class, parental association, assertiveness, aggression, and submissiveness variables. As a measurement tool in the study, it consists of four dimensions and twenty-one items developed by Baydan (2010). Behavioral Tendency Scale for Children, which was developed by Deluty (1979) and adapted to Turkish by Usakli (2006), was used. The findings of the study revealed that there were significant differences in the social-emotional learning skills of the students attending the fourth and fifth grades in terms of gender, class, parental association, assertiveness, aggression, and submissive variables. In future studies, it may be about giving social emotional learning skills training in different grade levels by associating it with assertiveness training.

Keywords

Social Emotional Learning, Behavioral Tendency, Primary School Students

1. Introduction

1.1 Assertiveness

Assertiveness, which is used in the sense of assertive, coercive, rapid, assist, favor in English, indicates staying away from aggression and submissive as a form of behavior.

Adler (1994), as personality traits of aggressive types; smugness indicates greed, jealousy, stinginess, and hatred. On the other hand, non-aggressive types have restrained instincts that indicate isolation, fear, timidity, and decreased adaptability.

Egan (1976) mentions three dimensions for successful applications of interpersonal communication. The first dimension is awareness or discrimination, which is one of the key factors of social intelligence, the ability to understand what we want in an interpersonal or social situation. The second

is the technology dimension, which includes techniques used in interpersonal situations. The third dimension is assertiveness.

Aggressive, shy, and assertive are among the behavioral tendencies that a child can show in general (Deluty, 2004; Deluty & Usakli, 2009). However, these behavioral tendencies are not separate but overlapping and complementary forms. Translated into Turkish as assertive, confident, the word is used in the sense of “acar who throws himself into danger or difficulties without fear” (TDK, 2005, p. 143). As a terminological definition, an assertive person is the behavior of being egalitarian in his relations, not carrying unnecessary worries, defending himself, expressing his feelings comfortably and protecting his own rights without violating the rights of others (Alberti & Emmons, 1998, p. 41).

Student personality services are of great importance in preparing children for life, especially in their relations with their peers, by displaying assertiveness (acting effectively) skills and establishing more meaningful relationships with them (Korkut, 2007). Guidance and psychological counseling services are of great importance in preparing children for life, “incorporating not only the guidance services but also the programs of some related courses” (Korkut, 2007, p. 138). This type of behavior, supported by academic studies, is the continuation of studies gathered under social skills in our country (Bacanli, 2008, 1997, 1994). As a matter of fact, in the 4+4+4 education system regulated by the new law, the term primary school has been replaced by primary school as in the past and guidance hours have been removed.

The first studies on assertiveness and assertiveness education in our country were initiated by (Voltan, 1980). Studies on this subject in the last ten years have been carried out within the scope of psychoeducation. An assertive person is defined as a person who defends his/her own rights while respecting the rights of others. However, the important thing in defending this right is that both parties can defend the difficulty they face with a “win-win” approach. Since assertiveness is an interpersonal skill, it also includes the ability to solve problems on the axis of this skill.

Defining assertiveness as a right, it has a broad perspective as the right to make mistakes, to be given priority, the rights that are possible for other people’s needs to be valid for the individual as well, the right to demand without feeling guilty and selfish, the individual’s right to take responsibility for the consequences of his own actions and thoughts.

The main points of these three types of behavior that are assertive, aggressive, and shy are stated as follows. In assertive behavior, the person can easily express himself and meet his needs. While doing these, he does not hurt others and feels good. In the form of non-aggressive (shy) behavior, the person may deny their wishes in order to satisfy others. He can sacrifice his own needs to meet the needs of others. In aggressive behavior, the person seeks to dominate by acting as he wishes at the expense of others (Greenberg, 2002, p. 95).

In general, the individual with the assertive behavior style; We can define them as having no difficulty in expressing their beliefs, feelings, and thoughts, more effective in interpersonal relations, but respectful of other people's rights and capable of protecting their own rights.

It is known that shy, aggressive, and assertive behavior patterns are stimulant, behavior and reaction patterns in terms of eye contact, body posture, gestures, facial expression, tone of voice, timing and content (Usakli, 2006). As a matter of fact, Deluty (1985) stated that in the environments of discussion, injustice, praise, provocation, interaction, decision making and criticism; submissive, not being able to say no, not being able to be objective, hypersensitivity, crying out of place, difficulty in expression, indecision. Aggression against this is physical, verbal, gestures, acting on behalf of someone else, using someone else's weakness in discussion, speaking as if giving orders, unnecessary or inappropriate demands, and reacting at inappropriate times.

The assertive child expresses himself clearly and directly, while respecting the rights and feelings of others. For example, the assertive reaction of one child who is being teased to the other child who is being teased, "Please stop making fun of me. You wouldn't like it if I made fun of you too!" may be (Deluty, 2004, p. 32).

Studies conducted in recent years have shown that shy verbal expressions are associated with depression (Osatuke et al., 2007), and that dominant language use characteristics of different genders are determined, especially in early childhood, and primary school years (Bablekou, 2009), and socio-cultural differences between genders in terms of aggression and submissive. There are studies that are related to the structure (Gerber, 2009). In their recent study, Atli, Kaya, and Macit (2010) found that shy behavior in secondary school students varies depending on school type, gender, grade level, achievement, place of residence, economic level, education level of parents, and violence perpetrated by parents.

In order to measure assertiveness in the research, the original name "Children Action Tendency Scale (CATS)" measurement tool developed by Deluty (1979) was adapted into Turkish by Usakli (2006), the first author of these studies. It is a compelling choice measurement tool in which shy, aggressive and assertive behavior pairs are formed in order to question the reaction tendencies of 6-12 age group children in the face of a total of 13 conflicting situations. The Turkish adaptation, expert opinion and similar scales were validated, and the reliability study was conducted with the test repetition method, and it is a very suitable measurement tool that can be used for the sample of this research with its assertiveness, aggression, and submissive dimension (Usakli, 2006, p. 136).

1.2 Social Emotional Learning Skills

In general, SEL describes the individual's dominance over emotions. SEL is about children and young people's ability to successfully fulfill important life tasks. In this sense, IBL is related to comprehensive psychological counseling and guidance services. In terms of IBL, life tasks of individuals are to meet their personal and social needs, to be productive individuals in the society, and to integrate their own thoughts and behaviors. SBL is a kind of development, maturation process for individuals. During this process, some basic skills need to be acquired. It requires managing emotions, establishing healthy relationships, setting positive goals, fulfilling personal and social needs, and taking moral initiative (Usakli, 2017).

Social Emotional Learning basically includes five skills; Self-Awareness (Recognizing your emotions, values and strengths), Self-Management (Managing your emotions and behaviors to reach your goal), Social Awareness (Empathizing with others and showing it), Relationship Skills (Creating positive relationships, working in a team and displaying the ability to work effectively), Responsible Decision Making (Making ethical choices about personal and social behavior). (Usakli, 2017).

2. Method

2.1 Research Pattern

The study was designed as a quantitative research method.

2.2 Sample

The research was carried out with five hundred students from two primary schools and three middle schools located in the city center of Sinop and determined by random sampling.

2.3 Test Apparatus

As a measurement tool in the study, it consists of four dimensions and twenty-one items developed by Baydan (2010). Behavioral Tendency Scale for Children, which was developed by Deluty (1979) and adapted to Turkish by Usakli (2006), was used.

The validity correlation coefficient of the social-emotional skill perception scale ranged between .51 and .78. The reliability correlation coefficient varies between .64 and .84. Cronbach's alpha value for the whole scale is .92 (Baydan 2010).

The validity correlation coefficient of the Child Behavior Tendency scale ranged from .47 to .78. The reliability coefficient varies between .75 and .89 (Usakli, 2006).

3. Results

The findings obtained as a result of examining whether social emotional learning skills differ according to demographic variables such as gender, class level and cohabitation of parents are included in this section. Afterwards, the relationships between IBL skills and submissive, aggression and assertiveness were presented, and then the findings on the effects of IBL skills on assertiveness and aggression were emphasized.

According to the gender variable, students' perceptions of social emotional learning skills include problem solving (t: 2.652, $p < .01$), coping with stress (t: 2.283, $p < .05$); It was found that there was a difference in terms of communication skills (t: 3.062, $p < .01$) and total score (t: 2.771, $p < .01$). According to the findings, the females' problem solving, coping with stress, communication and total scores ($X=16.57$; 16.28; 10.88; 57.40) were higher than those of the boys ($X=16.12$; 15.87; 10.46; 55.91), respectively, in terms of gender variable. There was no significant difference between the groups in terms of skills that increase self-esteem score (t: 1.229, $p > .05$). Problem solving (t: 3.646, $p < .01$), coping with stress (t: 3.545, $p < .01$), communication skills (t: 3.961, $p < .01$) were among the students' perceptions of social-emotional learning skills according to the grade level variable of the study. , self-esteem enhancing skills (t: 3.678, $p < .01$) and total score (t: 4.323, $p < .01$) were found. According to the results, the fourth graders' problem solving, coping with stress, communication, skills that increase self-esteem and total scores ($X=16.58$; 16.30; 10.87; 13.77; 57.51) of the fourth graders in terms of the grade level variable were found in the fifth grade. Higher than the other classes ($X=15.88$; 15.64; 10.28; 13.16; 54.96). When looking at the variable of parents' living together, the students' perceptions of social emotional learning skills include problem solving (t: 2.169, $p < .05$), communication skills (t: 2.083, $p < .05$), skills that increase self-esteem (t: 2.086) , $p < .05$) and total score (t: 2.261, $p < .05$) were found. It was found that there was no difference in coping skills (t: 1.821, $p > .05$). According to the results, the problem solving, communication, skills that increase self-esteem and the total scores of those whose parents live together, respectively, in terms of living together with their parents ($X=16.39$, 10.71, 13.57, 56.78) compared to those whose parents live together ($X=15.34$, 9.93, 12.90, 53.48) is higher.

The relationship between SBL skills and submissive, aggression and assertiveness was examined with the correlation coefficient. The results obtained are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Relationships between Social Emotional Learning Skills and Submissive, Aggression and Assertiveness

	Submissive	Aggressive	Assertive	Behavioral Tendency Total	\bar{X}	SD
Problem Solving	.09	-.32*	.30**	-.04	16.32	1.92
Coping Stress	.10*	-.29**	.25**	-.05	16.06	2.00
Communication Skills	.08	-.30**	.28**	-.04	10.65	1.54
Rising Self-esteem Skills	.02	-.21**	.22**	-.03	13.55	1.70
Social Emotional Learning Skills Total	.09	-.33**	.31**	-.05	56.59	6.00
\bar{X}	12.07	5.92	20.37	38.36		
SD	3.32	4.81	3.90	2.27		

Note. *P<0.05. **P<0.01.

As it can be seen in Table 1, it was found that all of the relationships between the total score of IBL skills and the four sub-skills and aggression were negative. The correlation coefficients range from -.21 to -.33. The relationship between assertiveness and SEL skills is positive and the coefficients vary between .22 and .31. It was found that the total scores of submissive and behavioral tendency and IBL skills were not high and not significant. Based on the significant relationships between the variables, the effect of SBL skills on aggression and assertiveness was examined with Multiple Linear Regression. The results regarding the effect of IBL skills on aggression are given in Table 2.

Table 2. The Effect of Social Emotional Learning Skills on Aggression

	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Fixed	20.503	1.981		10.351	.000
Problem Solving	-.227	.271	-.091	-.836	.403
Relation Skills	-.254	.275	-.082	-.925	.355
Rising Self-esteem Skills	.223	.238	.078	.937	.349
Social Emotional Learning Total	-.198	.155	-.247	-1.279	.202
	R=.346	R ² =.119			
	F=16.285	p=.000			

According to the results of the multiple regression analysis performed to determine the effect of social emotional learning skills consisting of problem solving, communication skills, coping with stress and self-esteem on aggression, problem solving, communication, skills that increase self-esteem, and SDS total skills score are significantly correlated with assertiveness (R).=.346, R^2 =.119) ($F(4-480)$)=16.285, $p < 0.01$). Together, these variables explain approximately 12% of the variation in aggression scores. According to the standardized regression coefficients, the relative importance of the predictive variables on assertiveness was SDS total score (β =-0.247), problem solving (β =-0.091), communication skills (β =-0.082), and skills that increase self-esteem (β =0.078). Considering the significance tests of the regression coefficients, it is seen that the predictive variables are not significant predictors of assertiveness. The findings obtained as a result of examining the effect of SBL skills on assertiveness with multiple regression are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The Effect of Social Emotional Learning Skills on Assertiveness

	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Fixed	9.188	1.621		5.667	.000
Problem Solving	.305	.222	.150	1.371	.171
Relation Skills	.323	.225	.128	1.436	.152
Rising Self-Esteem Skills	.069	.195	.030	.354	.724
Social Emotional Learning Total	.032	.127	.050	.256	.798
R=.320		R ² =.102			
F=13.685		p=.000			

According to the results of the multiple regression analysis performed to determine the effect of social emotional learning skills, consisting of problem solving, communication skills, coping with stress and skills that increase self-esteem, on assertiveness, there is a significant relationship between problem solving, communication, skills that increase self-esteem, and SDS total skills score (R) = .320, R^2 = .102 ($F(4-480) = 13.685$, $p < 0.01$). Together, these variables explain 10% of the change in assertiveness scores. According to the standardized regression coefficients, the relative importance of the predictive variables on assertiveness was problem solving ($\beta = 0.150$), communication skills ($\beta = 0.128$), SDS total score ($\beta = 0.050$), and skills that increase self-esteem ($\beta = 0.354$). Considering the significance tests of the regression coefficients, it is seen that the predictive variables are not significant predictors of assertiveness.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Social emotional learning should be the ultimate goal of education and all schools should open their doors to it (Elias, 2019). It is seen that these findings obtained in the research are consistent with some studies conducted in Turkey and abroad (Asher & Williams, 1987). Interventions with a combination of various methods are very effective especially for rejected, unwanted and aggressive children (Coie & Krehbiel Koepl, 1990, p. 333). As a result, it can be said that friendship education, which is systematically given through drama (activities), has positive effects and contributions in the development of friendship relations of students.

It is known that the main goal in assertiveness is to find the best solution for all people. At the end of this study, some skills were taught to increase the assertiveness of the students. The skills of making a request to enter the game, assertively defending one's right without showing fight and flight reactions, saying no when necessary, asking for help when needed, helping those in need are the skills that were tried to be given to the students within the scope of the study.

There is a need for in-class activities to support students' social and emotional learning processes. These activities can be done with techniques and methods such as drama, circle time, role playing, group counseling.

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