

The Effects of Early Childhood Education on Children's Social Development

Mehmet Kök

Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Atatürk University, Turkey

Abstract: The onset of social developments of a child which is the origin of social attributes is shaped within the early childhood period. Therefore, early childhood (pre-school) education is important for acquiring and developing these attributes. The purpose of this study is to analyze the effects of early childhood education on children's social attributes by comparing efficiency levels before and after the education (pre-test and post-test). Social Development Survey of Pre-school Children which is originally developed by McClellan, Diane, Katz and Lilian (2006) and adapted to Turkish by Bacanlı (1999), consisting of 22 items, was applied as a means of data collection [1,2]. The research group consists of 357 early childhood students in Erzurum province within the 2006-2007 educational year. The study have revealed that the early childhood education has positive effects on child's developing social attributes.

Key words: Early childhood education • Social attributes • Social skills • Social competency • Personal attributes

INTRODUCTION

Pre-school education (early school education) is the most important education stage where children acquire basic behaviours. Scientific studies and implementations in contemporary education field have revealed that education should begin in early stages of childhood in order to have more qualified and healthy generation equipped with desired behaviours [3].

A child comes to world in a certain social environment and becomes a holder of this social and cultural heritage. For a child who is in tight emotional and social relations with his parents, some important needs such as coming together with peers, participating play groups, sharing and striving slowly become evident. An increasing socialization tendency and inclination from playing with toys towards playing games with other children (friends) is observed.

One of the goals of the education and maybe the most important one, is to ensure the social development of the individuals and community and also to realize balanced adaptation to the environment. The realization of this adaptation can only be managed by apprehension of the early childhood period [4]. The games played with the peer groups expand social experiences and thus help the child to get to know himself. He also learns to make himself accepted among the other members of the group, to accept others, to protect his rights and to respect the rules and others' rights.

The studies about child's development, needs, learning, interests etc. have revealed that the difference between pre-school educated and noneducated child is in favour of the pre-school educated one. This obviously prove out the importance of pre-school education [5-9]. The studies have also revealed that a child who has received pre-school education orientates to primary education easier and most probably will accomplish remarkable progress in rest of his life [10].

In the families where the mother doesn't work, parents bring up their children depending previous experiences. However, those experiences can be inefficient compared to the last developments and reforms done within the perception of modern education aspects. Therefore it becomes inevitable to improve and generalize pre-school education from the aspects of providing the children within the early childhood period with promising development opportunities, preparing them to primary education stage and giving the opportunities to develop their potential in general.

Human being is a bio-cultural and social creature [11]. Being a social creature, human being should learn the structure, norms, values etc. of the society in order to be accepted as a member of it. Yet, this is not something can be realized with birth or within babyhood period. Social development is a life-long process for any individual.

Social relations under certain cultural conditions effect the structure of society, culture and the individual [12]. Therefore establishing positive relations with other

people is one of the most important endeavours in our complicated social world. The whole life of an average individual passes with diligences for adapting to the environment and for having social skills that will help him with this adaptation process. However, the possession and competency level of each individual is different.

Trower (1982) defines social skills as “the process of exhibiting clever behaviour towards a certain goal” [13]. Social competence can be considered as the evaluation results obtained from his personal performance’s compliance with certain criteria [2]. In other words, social competence is an evaluation-based term defining basic judgements regarding an individual’s behaving in accordance with determined criteria.

Kelly (1982) defines social competence as the acquired behaviours that provides or maintains positive reinforcer from the environment and used within interpersonal relationships [14]. In this definition social skills are regarded as ;

- a) behaviour causing positive reinforcers,
- b) behaviour exhibited in inter-personal relations and,
- c) identifiable behaviours.

Goldstein Monti, Sardino and Gren (1981) analyzed social skills under six categories [15]:

Preliminary Social Skills: Listening, starting conversations, asking questions, submitting thanks, introducing oneself, introducing other people.

Advanced Social Skills: Asking for help, participating, giving directives, following directives, apologizing, persuading other people.

Emotion Dealing Skills: Being aware of one’s own feelings, expressing one’s feelings, understanding others’ feelings (empathy), coping with others’ aggression, expressing love, coping with fear, rewarding oneself.

Aggression Alternating Skills: Asking for permission, sharing, helping others, compromising, controllably using oneself, protecting one’s rights, responding tackling, avoiding conflicts, staying out of fights and troubles.

Stress Coping Skills: Complaining, responding to a complaint, being gentle after each game, coping with timidity, coping with being left alone, protecting a friend, responding to a persuasive speech, reacting to a failure, being ready to talk against something, being ready to talk hard, coping with group pressure.

Planning Skills: Making a decision to do something, deciding on cause of a problem, defining an objective, deciding on one’s talents, information gathering, arranging problems in accordance with their importance, focusing on a definite issue [16].

While children’s rule apprehension is facilitated by the information about the purpose of the rules, There are many and various rules determined considering unsatisfying explanations about rules or especially children’s having difficulties in apprehending them. Some social rules in the schools have concrete effects.

Because of the concrete effect of social rules, internalisation of these rules becomes easier. Notwithstanding, many rules in the schools are ambiguous and arbitrary. They can be named as arbitrary social rules. They may change according to authority, they are set within the direction of one’s preferences and they have no concrete effect. For example; the prohibition of playing a ball-game outside the yellow lines determined [17].

Mize and Abell (2006), identified that socially competent children develop more sophisticated skills, exhibit more positive behaviours, establish better relationship with parents and are less directive their relations with friends [18]. Peer relations in social skills are remarkably important. Children have the opportunity to gain and reinforce social skills from their relations with peers. According to a study implemented by Mize and Abell (2006), socially competent children have less difficulty in the relations with peers [18].

Child needs help to adapt to the environmental conditions beginning from his birth. The ones who provide on time assistance to the child in meeting his physical and mental needs are his parents. Beginning from his birth, the child receives the most significant support from his parents in the process of adapting himself to the environment [19].

Children learn rules first within the family as a result of interaction with the family members. On the other hand, their attendance to a new social environment, such as school, may may effect their apprehension of the rules from different aspects [20]. According to Korkmazlar (1998), school means attending a new and complicated social environment, existence as an individual in the society and breaking into outside world [21].

Social skill is essential throughout one’s life, not only for school life. An individual’s living independently and promoting the quality of his life mostly depend on his establishing personal relations with others through social skills.

Taking children’s social skills or deficiencies and inefficiencies in social skills into consideration within

development period, teachers and parents should assume responsibility. In this sense, social skills education is not only a concern for children. Parents and teachers should cherish children, show patience in everything, set appropriate example (model) and behave elegantly in this period of development. In social skills education, the characteristics of development process should be taken into consideration and the children should be given the opportunity to express themselves.

The more social skill the students have, the more opportunity will they find to realize themselves. The researchers who analyzed the effects of pre-school education on social development appointed that a child having this kind of education will experience more positive improvements in his social attributes. Anti-social behaviours of children become more adaptive as they continue pre-school education [22].

The Purpose of The Study: The purpose of this study is to analyze pre-school education's effects on child's social attributes.

Problem Statement: What are the effects of early childhood education on child's social attributes? Regarding the given main statement following sub-problems are tried to be answered:

1. Is there significant difference between social attributes of a child who receives pre-school education before he receives it and after he's had it?
2. Are there any changes in perception of a child's social attributes before he receives pre-school education and aftermath in accordance with the gender?
3. Are there any changes in perception of a child's social attributes before he receives pre-school education and aftermath in accordance with mother's educational status?
4. Are there any changes in perception of a child's social attributes before he receives pre-school education and aftermath in accordance with father's educational status?
5. Are there any changes in perception of a child's social attributes before he receives pre-school education and aftermath in accordance with number of sisters and brothers?

METHOD

Population and Sampling: The study group of the research consist of 357 randomly chosen students

receiving pre-school education in kindergardens within Erzurum province.

Collection of Data: Social Development Survey of Pre-school Children that is developed by McClellan, Diane, Katz and Lilian (2006) and adapted to Turkish by Bacanlı (1999) was applied as a means of data collection [1,2]. This survey which is used as social attributes list for pre-school and primary students consists of 22 items, 8 of which regarding personal attributes and the remaining 14 items about social skills attributes. The alfa cronbach coefficient of the scale is found as 93.5. In order to prevent confusion for applying the same test two different times (pre-test and post-test), personal information about participants (i.e.students) such as; their names and last names, gender, mothers' and fathers' educational status, number of sisters and brothers and the birth sequence, were attached at the top of the survey.

Data Analysis: Data is obtained from detached kindergarden and the ones connected to primary schools in Erzurum province within 2006-07 educational year. The pre-test results were obtained in Sept. 2006 in the second week of the education year and the post-test results in May 2007 thank to pre-school teachers giving education in mentioned kindergarden. The same survey was applied in both pre and post-tests. Dependent and independent sampling t-test, one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) and percentage and frequency procedures were applied to the data analyzed with SPSS paackaged software.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The demographic attributes of study group are given at Table 1.

The difference in social attribute scores of pre-school students observed between the beginning of the educational year and 9 months afterwards is analyzed with dependent sampling t-test and the findings are given at the Table 2.

As is seen in Table 2, the results of dependent group t-test applied to determine whether the social attributes differentiate accordingly in pre-test and post-test scores, a statistically significant result obtained in favour of post-test ($t=-9.121$; $p<0.001$). In short, significant rise in post-test social skill scores compared top re-test scores.

The dependent group t-test was applied to determine whether there is difference between pre-test and post-test results related to social attributes considering students' gender. The results are shown at Table 3.

Table 1: Demographic attributes of study group

	f	%
Gender		
Female	166	46.5
Male	191	53.5
Educational background of the mother		
Primary Education	101	28.3
Secondary Education	151	42.3
Undergraduate Education	94	26.3
Graduate-Postgraduate Study	11	3.1
Educational background of the mother		
Primary Education	35	9.8
Secondary Education	123	34.5
Undergraduate Education	156	43.7
Graduate-Postgraduate Study	43	12.0
Number of brother(s) and sister(s)		
None	78	21.8
1	144	40.3
2	88	24.6
3	32	9.0
4	10	2.8
5 and more	5	1.4
Birth sequence		
1st	184	51.5
2nd	122	34.2
3rd	38	10.6
Social 4th	9	2.5
5th and more	4	1.1

As is seen in Table 3, as a result of dependent group t-test applied to determine whether the social attributes differentiate according to gender, there found significant difference between 166 girls and 191 boys considering their pre-test scores ($t=2.570$, $p<0.05$). It can be inferred from this finding that social attributes of schoolgirls are more developed than the schoolboys' before the pre-school education begins. However, no statistically significant difference was found between schoolgirls and schoolboys considering their post-test scores ($t=1.603$, $p>0.05$). According to this finding the average value of girls' scores is $\bar{x}=101.52$ while boys' is $\bar{x}=103.23$. It can be concluded that schoolgirls get into the development process earlier than the boys, but the boys catch up with them with the contribution of pre-school education.

Kruskal Wallis-H Analysis was applied to determine relation of mothers' educational status with the students' social attributes pre-test scores.

As is seen in Table 4, considering the results obtained from Kruskal Wallis- H Analysis that was applied to determine relation of mothers' educational status with the students' social attributes pre-test scores, the difference between groups' arraying average scores was found statistically significant ($X^2 = 19.60$; $p<0.05$). Since there is no definite special method to identify the reasons of these differences, groups were compared in pairs with Mann Whitney-U Analysis method and the findings stated below:

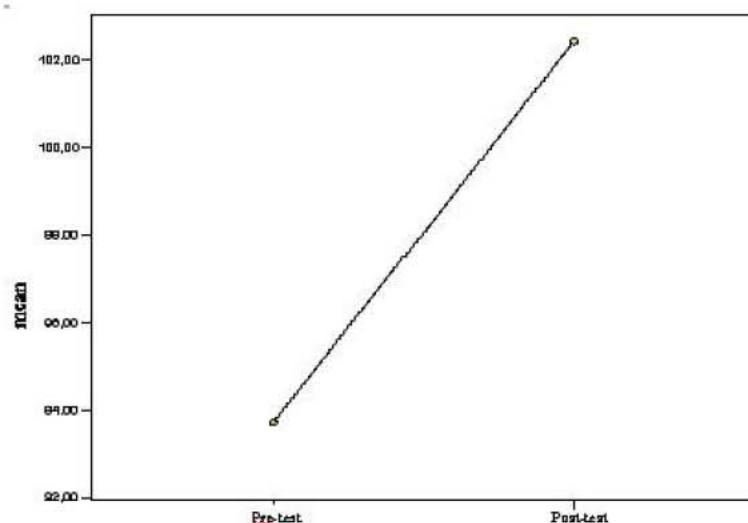


Fig. 1: The comparison of social attributes scores at the beginning of pre-school education with the scores obtained at the end of the education

Table 2: The results of dependent group t-test applied to determine whether the social attribute scores differentiate accordingly in pre-test and post-test scores

Parameters	Descriptive values				t-test		
	N	\bar{x}	sd	sh	t	df	p
Pre-test	357	93.73	15.58	0.82	-9.12	356	0.00
Post-test	357	102.43	10.08	0.53			

Table 3: The results of dependent group t-test applied to determine whether the social attributes differentiate according to gender

Parameters	Gender	Descriptive values				t-test		
		N	\bar{x}	sd	sh	t	df	p
Pre-test	Female	166	95.98	14.21	1.62	2.59	354.98	0.011
	Male	191	91.76	16.47				
Post-test	Female	166	101.52	10.90	1.06	-1.60	355.00	0.110
	Male	191	103.23	9.26				

Table 4: Results of Kruskal Wallis- H analysis applied to determine relation of mothers' educational status with the students' social skill pre-test scores

	Educational status of mothers	N	SO	χ^2	df	p
Social Skills Grades (Pre-test)	Primary Education	101	147.48	19.60	3	0.00
	Secondary Education	151	178.17			
	Undergraduate Education	94	208.56			
	Graduate-Postgraduate Study	11	227.32			
	Total	357				

Table 5: Mann whitney-U test results applied to determine the difference between groups social skill scores considering mothers' educational status

Groups	Primary education	Secondary education	Undergraduate	Graduate-post-graduate
Primary Ed.	$\bar{X}=88.79$	$p<0.05$	$p<0.05$	$p<0.05$
Secondary Ed.	$\bar{X}=93.99$	$p<0.05$	$p>0.05$	
Undergraduate			$\bar{X}=98.25$	$p>0.05$
Graduate Post-graduate				$\bar{X}=96.81$

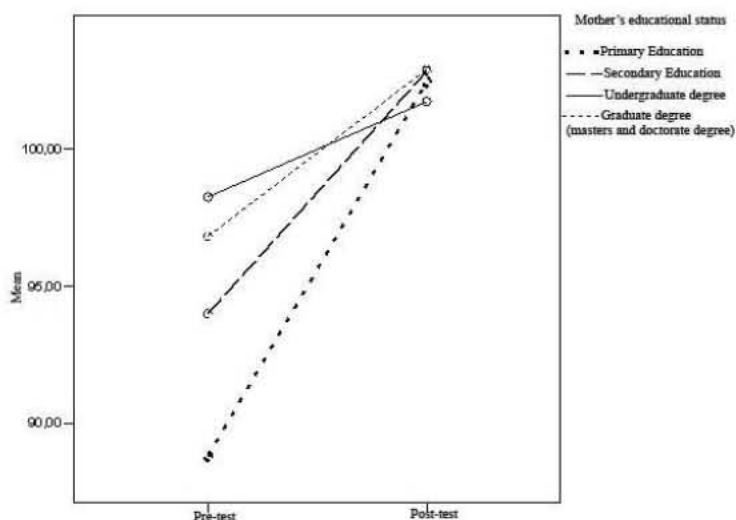


Fig. 2: Social attributes of schoolgirls and schoolboys considering pre-test and post-test scores obtained

Table 6: The results of one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) to determine the difference between pre-test and post-test social attribute scores of students considering fathers' educational status

Score	f, \bar{x} , ss values					ANOVA values				
	Group	N	\bar{x}	Sd	SqoV	SoSq	Df	AoSq	F	p
Social skill (Pre-test)	Primary Ed.	35	88.65	18.22400	Intergroups	3483.89	3	1161.29	4.938	0.002
	Secondary Ed.	123	90.75	18.22400	Ingroup	83020.29	253	235.18		
	Undergraduate	156	96.34	13.39603	Total	86504.18	256			
	Graduate	43	96.88	15.21154						
	Total	357	93.73	15.58811						

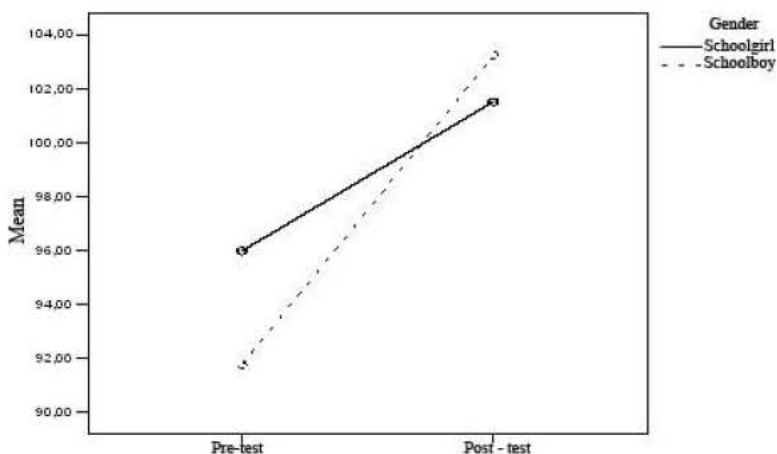


Fig. 3: Social attribute observed at the beginning of pre-school education process considering mothers' educational status

According to the Table 5, statistically significant difference was found at the level of $p < 0.05$ in favour of children whose mothers were secondary school graduated considering the relation between social skill scores of children whose mothers were primary school graduated and whose mothers were secondary school graduated; statistically significant difference was found at the level of $p < 0.05$ in favour of children whose mothers had undergraduate degree considering the relation between social skill scores of children whose mothers were primary school graduated and whose mothers had undergraduate degree; statistically significant difference was found at the level of $p < 0.05$ in favour of children whose mothers had graduate (masters and doctorate) degree considering the relation between social skill scores of children whose mothers were primary school graduated and whose mothers had graduate (masters and doctorate) degree, statistically significant difference was found at the level of $p < 0.05$ in favour of children whose mothers had undergraduate degree considering the relation between social skill scores of children whose mothers were secondary school graduated and whose mothers had

undergraduate degree, statistically significant difference was found at the level of $p < 0.05$ in favour of children whose mothers had graduate (masters) degree considering the relation between social skill scores of children whose mothers were secondary school graduated and whose mothers had graduate (masters and doctorate) degree, statistically significant difference was found at the level of $p < 0.05$ in favour of children whose mothers had undergraduate degree considering the relation between social skill scores of children whose mothers had undergraduate degree and whose mothers had graduate (masters and doctorate) degree. There was no significant difference found between the average scores of other groups ($p > 0.05$).

One-way variance analysis (ANOVA) was applied to determine the difference between pre-test and post-test social attribute scores of students considering fathers' educational status.

Scrutinizing Table 6, statistically significant difference is observed from the results of one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) applied to determine the difference between pre-test and post-test social attribute

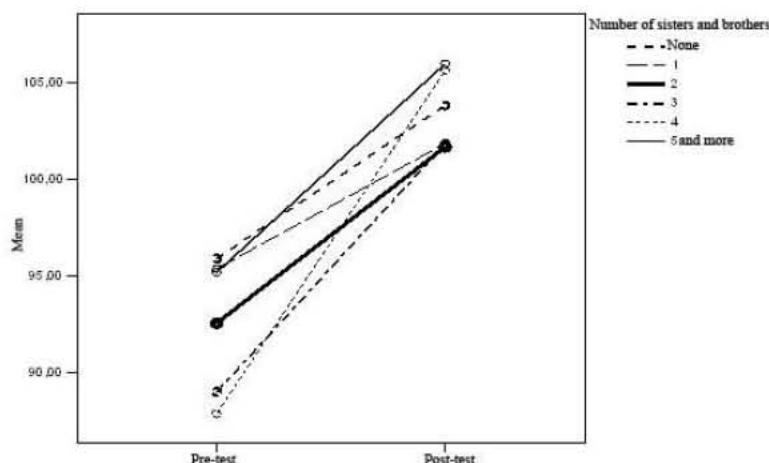


Fig. 4: Social attributes observed at the beginning of the pre-school education process and at the end of it considering number of sisters and brothers of the children

scores of students considering fathers' educational status ($F=4.938$; $p<0.01$). This result demonstrates that there is significant difference between social attributes level of the students before they'd begun to receive pre-school education and after they received it considering fathers' educational status. Post-hoc correlation analysis was done in order to identify the source group of the difference. First, homogeneity of the variance was checked in order to determine which correlation technique to be decided and then Tamhane's test was preferred after reaching the result that variance was not homogen ($L=4.09$; $p<0.05$). The results obtained are given in Table 7.

As is seen in Table 7, statistically significant difference was determined at the level of $p<0.05$ in favour of undergraduate degree groups considering the relation between secondary school graduated group and whose undergraduate degree group. There was no significant difference found between the average scores of other groups ($p>0.05$).

Variance analysis was applied in order to determine the existence of significant difference between pre-test social skill scores and post-test social skill scores of children considering educational status of mothers and fathers together and it was found out that there was no significant difference ($F=0.240$, $p>0.05$; $F=1.203$ $p>0.05$). It can be interpreted from this finding that early school education clears away the effects of fathers' and mothers' educational status which have undeniable effects on students' social attributes before the pre-school education process begins.

One-way variance analysis (ANOVA) was applied to analyze whether there was significant difference between

Table 7: Post-Hoc tamhane's test results demonstrating the source group of the difference in social skill scores considering fathers' educational status

	BABE(I)	BABE(J)	(I-J)	SH	p
Group Primary Ed.		Secondary Ed.	-2.09	3.43	0.99
		Undergraduate	-7.68	3.26	0.13
		Graduate	-8.22	3.85	0.20
Secondary Ed.		Undergraduate	-5.59	1.85	0.01
		Graduate	-6.12	2.76	0.16
Undergraduate		Graduate	-0.537	2.55	1.00

pre-test social skill scores and post-test social skill scores of children considering the number of sisters and brothers and no statistically significant difference was found ($F=2.046$, $p>0.05$; $F=0.620$ $p>0.05$). It can be inferred that the number of sisters and brothers make no difference in social.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of today's knowledge emphasizing early childhood education's cannot be neglected ever, pre-school education is obviously and increasingly becoming important in any field including social attributes. Social relations the child establishes in school, that is the first stage other than the family to get to know them (social relations), gives him the chance to develop his social skills. According to the findings of the study, remarkable difference and development can be observed for the same student between his social skills before the pre-school education and his social skills within the process of the pre-school education.

At the beginning of the early childhood education (according to pre-test results) there found significant difference between social attributes of children considering educational status of their mothers and fathers and gender factor, whereas no difference found after the pre-school education process was finished (according to post-test results). By all means family's demographic characteristics and personal diversity have great effects on child's developing social skills. However, it can be concluded from the study that early school education clears away, to a certain extent, the predecessor characteristics which have undeniable effects on students' social attributes before the pre-school education process begins.

In the light of the above mentioned findings, following recommendations could be made:

1. Positive effects of promoting education level of family (especially parents), where social attributes are shaped and many social skills are acquired, on the development of children's social attributes exhibit the importance of education. It might be impossible to promote parents' education level. But still it can be effective to perform seminars, conferences etc. that presents efficient information regarding development period of children. Teachers who are teaching in early childhood education institutions (nursery classes or kindergarden and nursery schools) can appreciate every meeting with parents in this sense.
2. Families and teachers teaching in further education stages should be sensitive in maintaining the continuity of social attributes.
3. Early childhood education institutions should arrange different activities so that the children would get the opportunity to exhibit basic social behaviours and attributes outside the school as well.
4. Population and sampling of the research can be expanded so that correlation with different regions could be possible.
5. It is a fact that early childhood education's effects on social attributes come out with development. In order to make more distinctive analysis, the survey applied in this study (at the beginning and at the end of the pre-school education process), can be applied periodically to the children who are not yet at the pre-school age and then differences can be observed accordingly.

REFERENCES

1. McClellan, D.E. and L.G. Katz, 2006. Young Children's Social Development: A Checklist. <http://ericae.net/edo/ed356100.htm>.
2. Bacanlı, H., 1999. Sosyal Beceri Eğitimi, Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, Ankara.
3. Tekiner, Ö., 1996. Okul Öncesi Eğitimin Önemi ve Çocuğa Kazandırdıkları. Milli Eğitim Dergisi, sayı: 132, Ankara.
4. 14. Milli Eğitim Şurası, 1993. Okul Öncesi Eğitimin Önemi ve Yaygınlaştırılması. Milli Eğitim Basımevi, Eylül, İstanbul, pp: 27-29.
5. Kök, M., M. Tuğluk and E. Bay, 2005. Okul Öncesi Eğitimin Öğrencilerin Gelişim Özellikleri Üzerindeki Etkisinin İncelenmesi. A.Ü. Kazım Karabekir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, Sayı. Erzurum, 11: 294-303.
6. Ahn, J.H., 2005. Child Care Teacher's Strategies in Children's Socialization of Emotion. Early Child Development and Care. January, 2005, 175(1): 49-61.
7. Choi, H.D. and J. Kim, 2003. Practicing Social Skills Training For Young Children With Low Peer Acceptances A Cognitive-Social Learning Model. Early Childhood Edu. J. Vol. 31, No. 1.
8. Lawhon, T. and C.D. Lawhon, 2000. Promoting Social Skills in Young Children. Early Childhood Edu. J., Vol. 28, No. 2.
9. Yılmaz, N., 1999. Anaokulu Öğretmeninin Rehber Kitabı, YA-PA Yayınları, İstanbul.
10. Cramer, J.F. and G.S. Browne, 1974. Çağdaş Eğitim Milli Eğitim Sistemleri Üzerine Mukayeseli Bir İnceleme, (Çev: Ferhan Oğuzkan) Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul.
11. Ertürk, S., 1994. Eğitimde Program Geliştirme, Meteksan A.Ş., Ankara.
12. Yavuzer, H., 1992. Çocuk Psikolojisi, 8.Baskı, Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul.
13. Trower, P., 1982. Toward a generative model of social skills: A critique and synthesis. In: Social Skills training: A practical handbook for assesment and treatment, J. P. Curan and P. M. Monti (Eds.). N.Y.: The Guilford Press, pp: 399-428.
14. Kelly, J., 1982. A Social-Skills Training: A Practical Guide For Interventions Springer Publishing, Company Inc. Newyork.
15. Goldstein, A.P., P.J. Monti, T.J. Sardino and D. Gren, 1981. Skill streaming the adolescent: A structured learning approach to teaching prosocial skills, Champaing, IL: Research Press.

16. Cartledge, G. and J.F. Milburn, 1983. Social skills assesment and teaching in the schools. In: Advences in School Psychology, T.R. Kratochwill (Ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Ass, London, 3: 175-235.
17. Buchanan-Barrow, E. and M. Barrett, 1998a. Children's rule discrimination within the context of the school. British J. Develop. Psychol., 16: 539-551.
18. Mize, J. and E. Abell, 2006. Teaching Social Skills To Kids Who Don't Have Them. Retrieved February 18.10.2007. from <http://www.behavioradvisor.com/Socialskills.html>.
19. Smetana, J.G., 1981. Preschool children's conceptions of moral and social rules, Child Develop., 52: 1333-1336.
20. Dunn, J. and P. Munn, 1985. Becoming a family member: Family conflict and the development of social understanding in the second year. Child Develop., 56: 480-492.
21. Korkmazlar, Ü., 1998. Son Çocukluk Dönemi. Ana-Baba Okulu, Remzi Kitabevi, Istanbul.
22. Gürkan, T., 1982. Neden Okul Öncesi Eğitim. Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi, Ankara, 15(2): 215-219.