A STUDY OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS*

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyse preschool children's social problem solving skills and the factors influencing those skills. Study sample, designed in survey model, consist of 200 children (103 boys,97 girls) who attend preschools and kindergartens located in Marmaraereglisi district of Tekirdağ province and affiliated with the National Education Ministry. In the study, demographic data of the participants were collected with the General Information Form, and data on children's social problem solving skills were collected with the Wally Social Problem Solving Test. As a result of the research, it was concluded that age and pre-school education had an effect on children's social problem-solving skills, while gender, socio-economic status, education and job of parents, family type and number of children in the family were not.

Keywords: Preschool Education, Social Skills, Social Problem Solving Skills

OKUL ÖNCESİ ÇOCUKLARIN SOSYAL PROBLEM ÇÖZME BECERİLERİNE İLİŞKİN BİR ARAŞTIRMA

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, okul öncesi dönem çocuklarının sosyal problem çözme becerilerini ve bu becerileri etkileyen faktörleri incelemektir. Tarama modelinde tasarlanan araştırmanın örneklemini, Tekirdağ ili Marmaraereğlisi ilçesinde bulunan ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'na bağlı olan bağımsız anaokullarına ve ilkokullara bağlı anasınıflarına devam etmekte olan 200 çocuk (103 erkek, 97 kız) oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada, katılımcılara ait demografik veriler Genel Bilgi Formuyla, çocukların sosyal problem çözme becerilerine ilişkin veriler Wally Sosyal Problem Çözme Testiyle toplanmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda yaş ve okul öncesi eğitim almanın çocukların sosyal problem çözme becerileri üzerinde etkili olduğu, cinsiyet, sosyo-ekonomik durum, anne-baba eğitim durumu ve işi, aile tipi ve ailedeki çocuk sayısının ise etkili olmadığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okul Öncesi Eğitim, Sosyal Beceriler, Sosyal Problem Çözme Becerisi

1. INTRODUCTION

Being in constant interaction with people causes some conflicts and problems from time to time (Yaban &Yukselen, 2007; Terzi, 2003). While the problems in the first years of life are related to basic needs, they may be related to more complex emotional and social problems over time (Aydilek-Ciftci, 2017). Social (interpersonal) problem solving is defined as a cognitive and social process that aims to identify or discover a solution that is acceptable or satisfactory for all parties in conflict (Chang, D'Zurilla & Sanna, 2004).

The problem-solving model was first developed by D'Zurilla and Goldfried, and later revised by D'Zurilla, Nezu, and Maydeu-Olivares (Aydilek-Ciftci 2017; Chang, D'Zurilla & Sanna, 2004; Mc Guire, 2005). In this model, which is frequently used in the literature, there are two sub-dimensions of the problem-solving approach. These are problem orientation and problem solving styles. Although these dimensions are partially independent from each other, they are interrelated.

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Orientation to the problem: It is divided into two as positive and negative orientation. People with a positive orientation have a positive attitude towards the problems they face. He resolutely tries to bring cognitive and emotional solutions to problems. In other words, the individual sees the problem he is experiencing as a natural part of life. The individual is aware that it takes time and effort to solve the problem and trusts himself that he can solve the problem. The attitudes of people with a negative orientation towards the problem are negative. Because the problem experienced creates anxiety or fear in the individual. The individual tends to find non-functional solutions without thinking in order to solve the problem quickly. Often the individual expects the problem to be solved by others. The negative consequences experienced by the individual in solving the problem create emotional problems such as adjustment and depression in everyday life (Anderson, Goddard & Powell, 2011; Bell & D'Zurilla, 2009; Cartilli & Bedel, 2015; D'Zurilla, Chang & Sanna, 2003; Nezu, 2004; Tabitha, 2021;Venkatesh, 2018; Yenice, 2012).

*The problem solving style:*It is divided into three groups as rational/planned, impulsive-careless and avoidant style. In the rational/planned problem solving style, problems are approached in a conscious, planned and systematic way. In this style, individuals have the ability to define their problems correctly, separate all the facts about the problem from their assumptions, set realistic goals, produce many alternative solutions, and evaluate their profits and losses. Individuals' problem solving processes result in positive results (D'Zurilla, Nezu, & Maydeu-Oliveras, 2004). Inattentive-impulsive problem solving style; There is an active attempt at problem solving, but these attempts are hasty, incomplete, impulsive, careless, and limited. Individuals cannot produce alternative solutions to problems, they often try to implement the first solution that comes to mind. People with avoidant problem solving style; They are procrastinating, passive or inactive when solving problems, and are dependent on others' solutions. They avoid facing the problem and taking action for a solution. They prefer problems to be solved by others (Nezu, Nezu & D'Zurilla2013).

Advances in cognitive development are effective in perceiving the problems faced by the child in the world he lives in and producing solutions. The development of social problem solving skills can be achieved by increasing children's daily social functions and social experiences. Environmental variables such as communication with peers or family affect the development of social problem solving skills (Aydilek-Ciftci 2017; Walker, Degnan, Fox & Henderson, 2013).

The family is the most important factor in the socialization of the child. Many issues from parental attitudes to sociocultural and economic factors, family type and people in the family have an impact on the child. Sociocultural and economic factors consist of parents' educational status, careers, and income, and also determine the position of the family in the society. This indirectly determines the quality of family type and the opportunities they have. The education level of the parents have different effects on their parenting attitudes, communication with children and socialization behaviours towards them. These affects might be positive or negative. In the studies carried out, it was pointed out that the problem solving techniques used by the parents and the activities they do with their children improve their problem solving skills, and it was found that as the educational status of the parents increases, children's social problem solving skills increase, and especially educational status of mothers creates a significant difference on the child's social problem solving skills (Akbas, 2005; Bozkurt Yükcü &Demircioglu, 2017; Cartilli & Bedel, 2015; Hamarta, 2007; Kasik 2011; Yilmaz 2012).

The socioeconomic level of the family determines the quality of life and access to opportunities. It gives parents the opportunity to offer their children opportunities in various fields and to get the support they need when they need it. In the studies in the literature, it is emphasized that the child-rearing attitudes of families

with low socio-economic level can be negative due to the reasons arising from the economic conditions, and they cannot create opportunities to support the academic, physical, psychological and social development of their children. Research results reveal that an increase in children's social problem solving skills depends on the increase in socioeconomic level (Akbas, 2005; Bal &Temel, 2014; Yilmaz, 2012). They observe, model and imitate many people such as parents, other adults, older brother/sister, peers (Trawick-Smith, 2014). Siblings can have both positive and negative feelings towards each other. Siblings are the first friends of the child in the socialization process. Even when they are good friends, they sometimes conflict with each other. These conflicts provide recurring opportunities for children to develop their social problem-solving skills. Children develop and use strategies that prevent or resolve conflicts when these opportunities emerge. These practices result in acceptable and beneficial experiences for the child, for individuals outside the family (Berk, 2013: 375).

Preschool education institutions are also places where the child will be together with adults and other children, where they learn how to solve it in the most appropriate way when their own wishes and the wishes of others conflict. As children interact in schools, the first friendships emerge, offering important contexts for social and emotional development. Although children in this period have not matured their ideas about friendship yet, “friendship” is very special for them. For children between the ages of four and seven, friendship is to play games that make them happy, to share their games and toys. Children in this age group use persuasion and negotiation methods instead of hitting or insisting that other children obey them, they think about alternatives when the strategy they use does not work, and they tend to solve problems without adult intervention (Chen, Hertzog & Park, 2017; Mayeux & Cilessen, 2003). All these experiences contribute to the adaptation of the child to the community he is in and to the communities he will join in the future (Berk, 2013; Kayılı &Arı, 2015). Teachers are the role models of children at school. With their attitudes and behaviours, social skills, classroom management techniques they use, crisis management skills and positive classroom climate, they ensure that positive relationships are built among children. All these factors enable children to feel like a part of the class, express themselves clearly, gain self-confidence, face and solve problems and be successful (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010).

All these experiences not only lay the foundation for the child's social development but also for a healthy society of the future (Ciftci, 2018; Tozduman-Yaralı &Özkan, 2016). The importance of schools, which are institutions that tolerate socioeconomic inequalities among children, in terms of social skills of children, especially during the Covid 19 period, has become more understandable (Moroni, Nicoletti &Tominey, 2020).

Preparing an environment for the development of prosocial behaviours in children and supporting these behaviours in the preschool period, which is of great significance in shaping behaviours, is of great importance for adults with developed social problem-solving skills who can empathize to take place in the society. Thus, the goal of this study is to examine the social problem-solving skills of children attending pre-school education and the factors that are thought to be effective on those skills. Therefore, answers were sought to the following questions:

1- Is there a significant difference between preschool children’s social problem solving skills in the context of their age, gender and whether they received preschool education?

2- Is there a significant difference between preschool children’s social problem solving skills in the context of their parents’ educational status, parents’ jobs and socio-economic status of the family?

3- Is there a significant difference between preschool children's social problem solving skills in the context of family type (nuclear-extended) and the number of children in the family?

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

Survey model is used in this study, which aims to analyse preschool children's social problem solving skills and the factors that affect those skills. The survey model is used to identify a current or past situation as it is. The cases, objects or individuals that are the subject of survey model are described as they are and in their own conditions (Karasar, 2015).

2.2. Study Group

The research was carried out on 200 children attending kindergartens affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in Marmaraereğlisi region of Tekirdağ. The study group was formed by convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is "sampling made on individuals who are in the immediate vicinity and are easy to reach, readily available and willing to participate in the research" (Erkus, 2021). The demographic features of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Data

Variables		N	%
Gender	Girl	97	48,5
	Boy	103	51,5
Age	36-47months	4	2,0
	48-59 months	45	22,5
	60-72+ months	151	75,5
Did Your Child Previously Receive Preschool Education?	Yes	97	48,5
	No	103	51,5
Mother's Education Status	Primary Education	49	24,5
	Secondary Education	98	49,0
	High Education	53	26,5

	Primary Education	44	22,0
Father's Education Status	Secondary Education	100	50,0
	High Education	56	28,0
Mother's Working Status	Working	51	25,5
	Not Working	149	74,5
Father's Job	Farmer	8	4
	Officer	27	13,5
	Worker	75	37,5
	Merchant	90	45
Family Income Level	Low	25	12,5
	Middle	175	87,5
Family Type	Nuclear	163	81,5
	Large	37	18,5
Number of Children in the Family	1	40	20
	2	106	53
	3	36	18
	4+	18	9
Total		200	100,0

Of the 200 children included in the study; 48.5% are girls and 51.5% are boys. 2% of the children are in the 36-47month group, 22.5% in the 48-59month group and 75.5% in the 60-72 month group. 48.5%of them had received pre-school education before, 51.5% had no pre-school education before.

24.5% of the mothers graduated from primary school, 49% secondary school and 26.5% higher education. 74.5% of mothers do not work and 25.5% of them work. 22% of fathers are primary school graduates, 50% secondary school graduates and 28% higher education graduates. 4% of fathers are farmers, 13.5% are civil servants, 37.5% are workers, and 45% are employers-craftsmen.

12.5% of families have low income and 85.5% have middle income level. 81.5% of the children have a nuclear family and 18.5% have an extended family. 20% of families have singlechild, 53% two, 18% three and 9% four or more children.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

General Data Form: General data form was developed by authors in order to describe the children and families who participated in the study.

Wally Social Problem Solving Test: This test measures social problem solving skills by assisting the assessment of children's reactions to hypothetical conflicts and problem situations they might encounter in interpersonal relations. The scale has two forms, arranged separately for boys and girls. Children are shown 15 coloured pictures describing a problem situation and asked what they would do in each case. Spivak-Shure (1985)'s Preschool Problem-Solving Test and Rubin-Krasnor (1986)'s Child Social Problem-Solving Test were brought together to develop this form. The test was compiled by Carolyn Webster Stratton as part of the project "The Incredible Years". To implement the test,children are shown 15 coloured pictures describing hypothetical problem situations so that they explain what they would do in each situation. The behaviour that the child utters is divided as prosocial and non-prosocial. 1 point is given for each prosocial behaviour and 0 point is given for each non-prosocial behaviour. Wally Social Problem Solving Test consists of separate picture cards for boys and girls. Kr 20 of the Test coefficient of reliability .72 in 3-year-old children .79 in 4-year-old children and .81 in 5-year-old children and the spaced repetition of the test is the correlation coefficient .73. In the test where fifteen questions were collected under one factor, the variance explanation ratio of this single factor related to the scale is 46 % (Büyüköztürk, 2015; Kayılı & Arı, 2015).

2.4. Data Collection

Data collection tools of the study are "Wally Social Problem Solving Test" used to analyse children's social problem solving skills and "General Data Form" used to receive dataof children and families. Study data were collected by the first author. Before data collection, ethic board approval was granted from T.U. Social and Human Sciences Research Ethic Board (doc.no: 29563864-050.99 E. 279918), followed by receiving relevant permissions from Tekirdağ Governorship and Directorate of National Education for data collection.Wally Social Problem Solving Test was administered with children whose parents gave their consent. Data were collected through 5-10 minute interviews in a different classroom during regular class hour. Data were collected by asking the Picture questions of the scale to the children and directly taking notes of their responses. Data collected were transferred to electronic media.

2.5. Data Analysis

Study data were analysedin the SPSS-25 statistical program. Skewness kurtosis values were looked at for the normal distribution of the groups. This procedure showed that skewness and kurtosis values were between -1.96 and +1.96, which is considered normal distribution (Curran, West & Finch, 1996). For this reason, it has been determined that it is appropriate to use parametric analysis techniques as an analysis method (Pizarro, Guerrero & Galindo, 2002). In addition, t-test was used for two-group variables and analysis of variance for more than two variables was used to determine significance of difference between variables. If the number of participants in the research groups was not equal, Welch ANOVA and independent t-tests were applied (Delacre, Lakens & Leys, 2017). When any difference was found in the analysis of variance, LSD test was carried out toidentify the cause of the difference (Al-Fahham, 2018).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	$\bar{x}$	sd	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Wally Social Problem Solving Test	200	1	15	8,47	3,031	-,096	,172	-,547	,342

3. FINDINGS

Data obtained in this study, which was carried out to analyse social problem solving skills of preschool children, are presented in tables below.

Table 3. T Test Results for Preschool Children's Wally Social Problem Solving Test Scores in Terms of Gender

Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	Sd	t	df	p
Girl	97	8,31	3,177	.704	198	.482
Boy	103	8,61	2,894			

*p<0.05, **p< 0.01; N=200; *$\bar{x}$=8,47; sd=3,031*

According toTable 3, independent sample t-test was carried out for measuringthe changes in the scores of the children with Wally Social Problem Solving Test in terms of gender. Results showed that the scores obtained from the Wally Social Problem Solving Test did not correlate with gender (girls: $\bar{x}$ =8.31, boys: $\bar{x}$ =8.61, t= .704, p> .05).

Table 4. ANOVA Test Results for Preschool Children's Wally Social Problem Solving Test Scores in Terms of Age

Ages	N	x̄	Sd		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Post-Hoc Test
36-47 months (1)	4	4,75	3,862	Between Groups	118,264	2	59,132	6,814	,001	3>1 3>2
48-59 months (2)	45	7,51	3,348	WithinGroups	1709,491	197	8,678			
60-72 months (3)	151	8,85	2,795	Total	1827,755	199				

**p<0.05, **p< 0.01; N=200; x̄=8,47; sd=3,031*

According to Table 4, Wally included in the study of children's social problem-solving test by ANOVA test was used to measure changes in the score of the age groups. Results showed that social problem solving skills of children correlated with age (F= 6,814, p<0,05). ANOVA LSD post-hoc test was used to decipher the difference between groups, coming to the conclusion that social problem solving skills of the 60-72-month-old group were significantly higher than both the 48-59-month-old group and the 36-47-month-old group.

Table 5.ANOVA Test Analysis Resultsfor Preschool Children'sWallySocial Problem Solving Test Scores in Terms of Parents' Educational Status

Mother's educational Status	N	x̄	Sd.		Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p
Primary school	49	8.55	2.566	**Between Groups**	31.823	2	15.911	1.745	.177
Secondary school	98	8.10	3.065	**Within groups**	1795.932	197	9.116		
Higher education	53	9.06	3.307	**Total**	1827.755	199			

Father's educational status	N	x̄	Sd		Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p
Primary school	42	8.10	3.051	**Between groups**	7.760	2	3.880	.419	.658
Secondary school	100	8.46	3.040	**Within group**	1805.013	195	9.256		
Higher education	56	8.66	3.041	**Total**	1812.773	197			

**p<0.05, **p< 0.01; N=200; x̄=8,47; sd=3,031*

According to Table 5, ANOVA test was used to measure the changes in the scores children's Wally Social Problem Solving Test scores in terms of their parents' educational status. Results showed thatthere was no correlation between children's social problem solving skills and parents' educational status (mothers'educational status F= 1.745 p > 0.05; fathers'educational status F=.419, p>.05).

Table 6. T-Test Analysis Results For Comparison Of Preschool Children's Wally Social Problem Solving Test Scores In Terms Of Mother's Employment Status

Working Status	N	x̄	Sd	t	df	p
Is not working	149	8.19	2,995	-2,177	198	,031*
Working/employee	51	9,25	3,026			

**p<0.05, **p< 0.01; N=200; x̄=8,47; sd=3,031*

According to Table 6, the independent sample t-test was used to measure the changes in the scores of the children with Wally Social Problem Solving Test with regards mothers' working status. Results showed thatchildren whose mothers worked scored higher than children whose mothers did not work (children of unemployed mothers: $\bar{x}$ = 8.19, children of employed mothers: $\bar{x}$ = 8.31, t= .2,177, p< .05).

Table 7. ANOVA Test Results for Preschool Children's Wally Social Problem Solving Test Scores of Father's Job

Jobs	N	x̄	Sd		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Post-Hoc Test
Farmer (**1**)	8	9.13	3.044	BetweenGroups	23.615	3	7.872	.855	.465	-

Officer (**2**)	2 7	8. 04	3.032	Within Groups	1804.14 0	19 6	9.205
Labourer(**3**)	7 5	8. 17	2.947	Total	1827.75 5	19 9	
Tradesmen (**4**)	9 0	8. 78	3.104				

**p<0.05, **p< 0.01; N=200; x̄=8,47; sd=3,031*

According to Table 7, it is seen that fathers of all of the children were employed. ANOVA test was used to measure the changes in Wally Social Problem Solving Test scores with regardstheir fathers' jobs. Results showed there was no correlation between children's social problem solving skills andfathers' jobs (F= .855, p>0.05).

Table 8. T-Test Analysis Results For Comparison Of Preschool Children's Wally Social Problem Solving Test Scores In Terms Of Family Income

Family Income	**N**	***x̄***	**Sd**	**t**	**df**	**p**
Low	25	8,84	2,853	.660	198	,510
Middle	175	8,41	3,059			

**p<0.05, **p< 0.01; N=200; x̄=8,47; sd=3,031*

According to Table 8, independent sample t-test was carried out to identify changes in children's Wally Social Problem Solving Test scores with regards family income. According to the analysis results, scores obtained in the Wally Social Problem Solving Test did not correlate with their family income (low: $\bar{x}$ =8.84, middle: $\bar{x}$ =8.41, t= ,660, p>.05).

Table 9. T-Test Analysis Results For Comparison Of Preschool Children's Wally Social Problem Solving Test Scores In Terms Of Family Type

Family type	**N**	***x̄***	**Sd**	**t**	**df**	**p**
Nuclear family	163	8,66	3,039	1.949	198	,053
Extended family	37	7,59	2,872			

**p<0.05, **p< 0.01; N=200; x̄=8,47; sd=3,031*

According to Table 9, independent sample t-test was carried out to identify changes in children's score in Wally Social Problem Solving Test with regards family type. Results showed that there was no correlation between Wally Social Problem Solving Test scores andfamily type (nuclear family: $\bar{x}$ = 8.66, middle: $\bar{x}$ = 7.59, t= ,1.949, p>.05).

Table 10. Anova Test Results of Preschool Children's Wally Social Problem Solving Skills in Terms of the Number of Children in the Family

Number of children in the family	N	x̄	Sd		Sum of squares	Sd	Squares mean	F	P
1	40	8.55	2.900	**BetweenGroups**	36.413	3	12.138	1.328	.266
2	106	8.60	3.082	**Within Groups**	1791.342	196	9.139		
3	36	8.64	3.305	**Total**	1827.755	199			
4 and more	18	7.11	2.220						

**p<0.05, **p< 0.01; N=200; x̄=8,47; sd=3,031*

According to Table 10, ANOVA test was carried out to identify changes in children's scores in Wally Social Problem Solving Test with regards the number of children in families. Results showed that there was no correlation between children's social problem solving skills and number of children in their families (F= 1.328, p>0.05).

Table 11. T test Results for Preschool Children's Wally Social Problem Solving Test Scores in Terms of Previous Preschool Education

Has your child ever received preschool education?	n	x̄	Sd	t	sd	p
Yes	97	9.13	2.960	3.094	198	.002**
No	103	7.83	2.974			

**p<0.05, **p< 0.01; N=200; x̄=8,47; sd=3,031*

According to Table 11, independent sample t-test was carried out to identify changes in the scores of the children from the Wally Social Problem Solving Test according to whether they had received preschool education or not. Results showed that Wally Social Problem Solving Test scores of children who received preschool education were different, it was observed that (previously preschool education field: x̄ = 9.13, the previously preschool education and those who did not receive: x̄ = 7.83, t= ,3.094, p< .05).

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this research, it was seen that the problem solving scores of the sample group were moderate and the gender variable did not have a significant effect on social problem solving skills. This result obtained from the research can be evaluated as an indicator that teachers offer educational practices regardless of gender. Prosocial behavior development is affected by environmental factors such as family, peer relations, educational

environment, culture, etc., as well as biological factors (age, gender, etc.) (Altıntaş & Yıldız Bıçakçı, 2017; Bağcı Çetin, Öztürk Samur, 2018).There are many studies that reveal the positive effects of attending preschool education and encountering different types of activities in educational environments on the prosocial behavior of children (Akar, Yılmaz, Mercan, & Yükselen, 2021; Aydın, 2021; Demir, 2021). In general, preschool teachers give priority to activities where children can interact and share with each other in order to create a positive atmosphere in their classrooms and establish good relations at the beginning of the education period. With these activities, it is aimed to provide children with social skills such as communication with each other, getting along, empathy, being kind, sharing and helping each other. These activities create opportunities for understanding the emerging problems correctly, producing solutions and choosing the appropriate one. The point to be emphasized is that the teacher should take advantage of these opportunities and ensure the improvement of children's problem-solving skills.

Lots of different studies supporting the results of this study were found after the literature review. For example, Izzaty (2020) stated that the gender of 4-6 year-old children did not have a significant impact in social problem solving strategies, Dereli-Iman (2013) stated that gender did not affect preschool children with regards social problem-solving skills, Ozyurek, Cetin, Sahin, Yıldırım & Evirgen (2018) stated that the problem-solving skills of 5-6 year old children did not change with gender, Yılmaz & Tepeli (2013) and Uzunkol &Yılmaz (2018) found that the social problem-solving skills of primary school students were not affected by the gender variable. Walker, Irving & Berthelsen (2002) found that preschool children's provocation, acceptance to peer group, sharing and social problem solving skills in subjects such as queue waiting were evaluated. As a result of the research, the researchers concluded that the social problem-solving skills of the girls were better than the boys, and that the girls used methods such as retaliation, verbal or physical aggression less.

Although it was concluded in the studies conducted on preschool children that gender did not affect social problem-solving skills, in studies conducted with school-aged (7-11 years) children, the gender variable made a significant difference on social problem-solving skills, and that girls had more advanced problem solving skills compared to boys. In other words, it was concluded that girls were more successful than boys in solving social problems (Arı &Yaban, 2012; Hamarta, 2007; Yaban &Yükselen, 2007). Jamyang-Tshering (2004), on the other hand, pointed out that gender has an effect on social skills, and found that girls exhibit more social skills behaviours than boys, boys show more problem behaviours than girls and face social problems.

Table 4 shows that children's social problem solving skills change with age, and social problem solving skills of children aged 60 to 72 months ($\bar{x}$=8.85) differ between 36-47 months ($\bar{x}$=4.75) and 48-59 months ($\bar{x}$= It was found to be higher than the children between 7,51).

Social problem solving involves solving problems encountered in daily life. Learning develops with experience, maturation and success. It is a significant aspect in adaptation of individuals to their future lives. Increasing experience improves the process that allows the individual to solve the problem by contributing to the flow of information and deciding what the problem is about in later years (Chen, Hertzog & Park, 2017) helps them reach an agreement. When evaluated in terms of the developmental characteristics of the children aged 60-72 months in the sample group; It is an expected result that children in other age groups are ahead of children in terms of both their cognitive, social and language skills, and their experiences, approaches to events and interpretations.

Conflicts, arguments and disagreements in relationships with adults and peers contribute to the understanding that other people have different perspectives, thoughts, feelings, motives and needs, helping children to move away from egocentrism. These social conflicts also offer children opportunities to learn social problem solving (Dereli-Iman 2013). Studies emphasize that the age of five or six is a critical period in social development, improving social skills as well asproblem-solving skills (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura & Zimbardo, 2000; Lynch &Simpson, 2010). Similar results were obtained in studies on the subject. Bal &Temel

(2014) stated that as children's age increases, their social problem solving skill scores increase. In his study examining the effects of understanding emotions on social problem solving skills, Yilmaz (2012) determined that these skills of children aged 67-72 months were better than children aged 60-66 months, and the age variable made a significant difference on social problem solving. Bozkurt-Yukcu & Demircioglu (2012) also reported that social problem solving skills increase as age increases in pre-school children. Arı &Yaban (2012) observed that tsocial problem-solving skills of 10 and 11-year-old children differed positively compared to 9-year-old children. In summary, it is seen that there are many studies in the literature that include a common view that the age variable in the preschool period causes a significant difference in the social problem-solving skills of children, and that social problem-solving skills develop as age increases, especially in the future.

Contrary to many studies, Yilmaz-Bolat & Kahveci (2016) stated that the social skill levels of children aged 4-6 do not differ according to age level. Ozyurek et al. (2018), on the other hand, reported that the problem-solving skills of five-year-olds are better than six-year-olds. Considering that prosocial behaviors begin to emerge at an early age and that children's display of these behaviors is shaped by the experiences presented to them, it is possible to say that the developmental characteristics and experiences of children may be more effective in displaying prosocial behaviors rather than the age variable (Aydın, 2021).

Findings obtained from Table 5, Table 6, Table 7 and Table 8 showed thatparents' educational status, fathers' employment status, family socioeconomic level did not cause a significant impacton social problem solving skills. Social problem-solving skills of children of employed mothers were better than children of unemployed mothers. Sample group family showsthat approximately 50% of parents are secondary school graduates, 25% primary school graduates, 25% higher education graduates, 87.5% are at a middle socioeconomic level, and all of the children's fathers are working; It was determined that most of them were tradesmen (45%) and workers (37.5%), while only 25.5% of the mothers were working. When all these data are evaluated together, it can be said that the education levels of the mothers and fathers are similar, mostfamilies have a moderate income, all fathers are working, nearly half of them are tradesmen, one third of them are workers, and ¾ of the mothers are not working.

The study was carried out in a small town with a population of approximately 25000. Besides, lack of job opportunities and the lack of occupational diversity limit the economic and social opportunities of the district. The fact that the income of the family mostly depends on the economic resource provided by the father limits the opportunities offered to the child.

Socioeconomic status (SES) shows the status of individuals or groups in society. Indicators such as income level, occupation, education level, social class, age, gender, race, religion, living conditions, job, working status, home ownership and physical conditions in the residence are used to define the socioeconomic level. They affect child development and success. Income brought by job, education level it requires, status that jop provides in the society and the degree of respect it provides to people also affect the situation of the family and children. When these factors are combined, they can make the life of the individual and his family easier or more difficult. Dervisoglu (2007) pointed out that as the income level of the families decreases, the social skill levels of the children decrease. Terzi (2003) also reports that the interpersonal problem-solving skills perceptions of the sixth grade primary school students vary with socioeconomic level, students in upper socioeconomic level havebetterproblem-solving perceptionsthan those from lower and middle socioeconomic levels. Seven (2007), on the other hand, in his study examining the behaviour problems of children aged six, emphasizes that the income status of the family has an effect on behaviour problems. Families belonging to the upper social class can offer better opportunities for their children's development in terms of academic, social and physical aspects. These opportunities manifest themselves in many areas from the way children dress to the environment, from future hopes to world perspectives, interpersonal relations to social acceptance and positively affect children's skills such as success, self-confidence, leadership, positive interaction and problem solving (Burger 2010; Cheung,

Dulay & Mc Bride, 2020; Galobardes, Lynch & Davey-Smith, 2007; Yilmaz 2012; Bozkurt-Yukcu & Demircioglu, 2017).

However, in this study, it was found that education of parents, socioeconomic level of family and father's employment did not affect their social problem solving skills. Yilmaz (2012), Bozkurt Yukçu & Demircioglu (2017), Karakus (2017) and Ciftci (2018) reported that parental employment status and monthly income had no effect on preschool children's social problem solving skills.

Heidrich and Denney emphasized that the variable that predicts social problem solving performance including interpersonal conflicts is education level, and individuals with better education tend to have higher social problem solving scores (Soylu & Pala 2018). Burton, Strauss, Hultsch & Hunter (2006) stated that individuals with more than 12 years of education performed better than individuals with less education. In his study, Akbas (2005) determined that as socioeconomic level of children and educational status of mothers increased, their social problem-solving skills also increased. While mother's education level affected children's social problem solving skills, socioeconomic level of the family did not affect the father's education level on social problem solving skills. Aksoy & Ozkan (2015) found that educational status of mothers made a significant difference on the social problem solving skills of preschool children. Karaca, Gunduz &Aral (2011) reported that the level of parental education has an impact on the prosocial behavior of preschool children. In a longitudinal study of 12-year-old children on social problem-solving skills, Kasik (2014) found that both parents affect children's social problem-solving skills. Arslan (2009) found that as the education level of the parents increased, the problem solving skills of high school students also increased.

In our study, parents' education level was not effective on social problem solving. Similarly, studies have found that parents' educational status is not effective on preschool children's social problem-solving skills (Bozkurt Yukçu &Demircioglu, 2017; Ozyurek et.al. 2018). Karakus (2017) also reported a difference between social problem solving skill scores of children of primary school and university graduate mothers, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Unlike literature, in this study problem solving skills of children of employed mothers were better than the children of unemployed mothers. It is possible for parents to provide rich models in terms of social skills only if they are equipped with social skills. It is reported that children whose parents possess rich social skills develop a more positive outlook on life and build more favourable social interactions (Ozabacı, 2006; Bozkurt-Yukçu 2017). Family structure and child's position in this structure in preschool period, family interactions (parent-child and child-child) and problem-solving strategies modelled by parent affect child's social problem-solving skills. For example, if parents' problem-solving attitudes are solution-oriented, children's problem-solving skills with peers and adults are also solution-oriented. It is stated that children of families with positive social problem-solving skills also have positive social skills (Pakaslahti, Karjalainen & Keltikangas-Järvinen 2002; Raikes & Thompson, 2008). Kasik & Gal (2016) emphasized that mothers' positive or negative orientation to problems predicts emotions and behaviours of children aged 4-6 years, such as prosocial behaviours, adjustment problems, attention and cognitive difficulties, oppositional problems, anxiety and emotional indecision.

In families where both parents work, the responsibilities of mothers increase considerably. Relationships with family members in family life, meeting the needs of family members, maintaining daily routine work and relations in the immediate environment, etc. Tasks are situations that mothers frequently encounter and that require problem solving. Similar responsibilities emerge in different ways in the working life of mothers. Therefore, working mothers have different experiences in problem solving. As a fact of their lives, they have to find a rational solution and adopt it. Considering that mothers who think and act in this way are role models for their children, it seems likely that their children's problem-solving skills will develop.

When Table 9. is examined, family type has no impact on children's social problem-solving skills. 81.5% of the children in the sample group come from nuclear families, 18.5% from extended families. It is thought that

the possibility of parents adopting the parenting styles they see from their own families and continuing on their children is effective in this result. Many parents learn about parenting the way their parents practice and unconsciously apply it to their children. This affects their approach to the problems they experience with their children (Martin, Stack, Serbin, & Schwartzman, 2012).

Literature reviews shows studies supporting this study. Karakus (2017) found that family structure (nuclear family-extended family) did not have a significant effect on children's social problem-solving skills. Ozyurek & Bedge (2016), studying the relationship between social problem-solving skills of children attending preschool education and attitudes of parents and teachers, suggested that there was no significant difference between family structure variable and social problem solving.

Table 10. Family environment and family members are the first and most important elements in a child's life that enable learning. The foundations of the skills that prepare the child for the next life are laid in the family. It was determined that approximately 80% of the families in the study group had two or more children. This means that the majority of the children in the sample group have at least one older brother/sister or sibling. For pre-school children, having an older or younger sibling is both having friends and being a role model outside of their parents. First relationships, conflicts and problems begin and are resolved in the family environment. However, contrary to expectations, in this study, it was determined that the number of children in the family did not have any effect on social problem-solving skills.

There are different research findings in the literature on the subject. Ozyurek et.al. (2018), in their study with preschool children, stated that the problem-solving skills of children with three or more siblings are higher than those of only children. Yilmaz &Tepeli (2013) also states that the number of siblings has a significant effect on the social problem-solving skills of 60-72 months old children. Eroğlu (2001) states that the number of children in the family is highly effective on problem solving skills in his study on 4th and 5th grade students' problem solving skills. On the contrary, Terzi (2003), Bozkurt-Yukcu &Demircioglu (2017) stated that the number of siblings did not significantly affect child's social problem solving skills.

Table 11 shows that that 48.5% of sample group children received pre-school education. Children's social problem-solving skills differed depending on their previous pre-school education and preschool education improved their social problem-solving skills in a positive way. In literature, it is emphasized that children who receive preschool education are individuals who can act individually, are self-confident, can establish successful social relationships, can express themselves and empathize, and are successful in academic skills. Preschool children are in constant interaction with their peers through group games or various activities. During this period, they may experience various disagreements and conflicts as well as getting along with their friends. The way children handle conflict can be destructive or damaging, or it can be a self-developing process. Group games and various activities are an opportunity for children to develop and use their effective social problem solving skills (Pickover, 2006). Teachers are both role models and guides in the development of these skills. Considering the studies emphasizing similar results; In the study of Dincer & Göktas (2019), in which they examined the interpersonal problem solving skills of 4-6 year old children with and without pre-school education, it was determined that interpersonal problem solving skills of children who received preschool education were higher than those who did not receive preschool education. Yilmaz &Tepeli (2013), in their study examining the relationship between 60-72 month-old children's social problem solving and emotional understanding skills, found that children with more than two years of pre-school education had higher social problem skill scores than children who attended pre-school education for one year. Guldu (2020) examined the correlation between preschool children's social behaviours and problem-solving skills, observing significant difference in problem-solving skills of children who attended nursery school previously. In summary, many studies in the literature emphasize that preschool education has positive impact on children's social development and social skills.

Considering the findings obtained from the research, it is important to expand the pre-school education so that all children can benefit from its developing and supportive structure. It is thought that conducting the research in a small residential area with homogeneous characteristics has an impact on the results of the research. It is important that future studies are carried out in cosmopolitan settlements with different socio-cultural economic structures. In the study, the data were obtained from children by quantitative method. It is thought that the results obtained from studies in which qualitative and quantitative data can be used together will enrich the research results and contribute more to the field.

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Çatışma Beyanı: Bu araştırma ile taraf olabilecek herhangi bir kişi ya da kurum arasında finansal ilişki bulunmamakta, dolayısıyla herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.
Destek ve Teşekkür: Araştırmada herhangi bir kurum ya da kuruluştan destek alınmamıştır.
Etik Kurul Kararı: Araştırmanın etik kurul onayı Trakya Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'ndan '29563864-050.99-E. 279918' numarasıyla alınmıştır.
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