



Teaching social skills in primary school: an action research *

Çiğdem Kozaner ¹, Sena Ölçer ², Yasemin Erdem ³

Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the social skills that pose challenges for 4th-grade primary school students, implement an intervention program to support the development of these skills, and evaluate its effectiveness. In line with this aim, the research was conducted using an action research design. The study group consisted of fourth-grade students attending a public primary school in Ankara during the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. Among the participants, 11 were girls, 17 were boys, and 1 student was receiving inclusive education support. The classroom teacher possessed 13 years of professional teaching experience. In the study, the "Social Skills Assessment Scale," for children aged 7-12, and a semi-structured interview form were utilized to identify the dimensions of social skills in which students experience difficulties. The Social Skills Assessment Scale was analyzed using frequency analysis, while the interview forms were evaluated through content analysis. The intervention program was designed to address the challenges faced by the students and included activities such as problem-solving wheels, story reading, and creative drama. The findings of the study revealed that the problem-solving wheel was identified as the most effective method among the intervention program activities designed to address the students' challenges related to social skills. The problem-solving wheel was found to contribute to the development of students' social skills in areas such as maintaining relationships, coping with aggressive behaviors, and solving problems. Another method employed in the intervention program, creative drama, was observed to have positive implications in areas related to initiating and maintaining relationships, collaborating and conforming within a group, coping with aggressive behaviors, and emotional skills. Story reading activities were found to contribute to the development of social skills such as coping with teasing, respecting differences, empathy, managing embarrassing situations, raising awareness about peer bullying, understanding others' emotions, dealing with exclusion, coping with group pressure, helping others, and respecting diversity.

Keywords

Social skills teaching
Action research
Problem-solving wheel
Creative drama
Storytelling

Article Info

Received: 03.04.2024
Accepted: 03.20.2025
Published Online: 06.25.2025

DOI: 10.15390/ES.2025.2576

* A part of this study was presented at the EJER Congress held between 8-11 June 2023 as an oral presentation.

¹ Başkent University, Faculty of Education, Department of Basic Education, Türkiye, ckozaner@baskent.edu.tr

² Başkent University, Faculty of Education, Department of Basic Education, Türkiye, senaolcer@baskent.edu.tr

³ Başkent University, Faculty of Education, Department of Basic Education, Türkiye, yaseminerdem@baskent.edu.tr

Introduction

Social skills are one of the basic skills that should be acquired in primary school, which aims to improve children's lives, roles and responsibilities in society by imparting basic skills to them. Social skills are components of behavior that help an individual get along and adapt in a variety of social environments and they are defined as a set of competencies that allow an individual to initiate and maintain positive social relationships, contribute to peer acceptance and satisfactory school adjustment, and enable an individual to cope effectively with the larger social environment (Karataş, 2020). Social skills are skills that make our lives easier since childhood. Therefore, they form the basis of harmonious living in society, and when these skills cannot be developed sufficiently, individuals experience problems while communicating. Although the acquisition of social skills first begins in the family, educators can be very effective in helping children overcome social skill deficiencies that hinder the learning process when families are not available or cannot teach these skills at home. Therefore, schools are extremely important institutions for developing social skills (Karataş, 2020; Whitted, 2011). Data on social skill deficiencies can be collected through a variety of assessment methods, such as interviews, behavioral rating scales and surveys, direct behavioral observation, and sociometric measures that measure social status in comparison to peers (Spence, 2003).

Individuals with inadequate social skills encounter various problems throughout their lives in their interpersonal relationships, academic studies, emotional-behavioral areas and professional lives (Avcıoğlu, 2007). It is important to identify these problems and try to solve them with teaching methods that address social skills. Given that social competence is important, especially in school environments, it is clear that children who exhibit oppositional and antisocial behaviors need effective interventions to address their social skill deficiencies, taking into account their risk of facing educational and psychological difficulties (Gresham, 1998a). Deficiencies in social skills and competencies may be among the underlying causes of affective and behavioral disorders during childhood and adolescence. Therefore, people's ability to perform behaviors that are important for them to achieve social competence depends on their social skills. These skills develop during social interaction with people and include verbal and non-verbal reactions. These skills include a wide range of indicators ranging from individuals' eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and mimics to tone of voice, speaking rate and the impressions left on others (Spence, 2003). Social competence plays an important role in interactions between people and is highly valued in both personal and professional life.

The development of social skills and the use of these skills help people improve their social competence. These micro-level skills can cause macro-level effects on individuals' social lives. The extent to which children can establish, develop, and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships and end harmful relationships with peers and adults is the essence of social competence (Gresham, 1998b). Research on the inadequacy of social skills has formed the basis for the preparation of training programs to develop and support these skills (Elliott et al., 1989; McClelland & Scalzo, 2006).

Literature Review

Social Skills

Social skills are socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable individuals to communicate effectively with others and avoid socially unacceptable behaviors exhibited by others (Gresham, 1998a). Social skills involve the ability to give and receive information, express, and share attitudes, thoughts and feelings. Therefore, an important function of social skills is to serve interpersonal interactions (Lieberman, 1982). Social skills are important to the successful social and academic functioning of all students and play an important role in preventing negative reactions from others. These skills help students focus their attention and participate in classroom activities by interacting with their peers and teachers in a positive manner (Elliott et al., 2001; Lopes & Salovey, 2006). Social skills are a prerequisite for a harmonious existence in a social group and for successful socialization and to act effectively in a social environment (Jurevičienė et al., 2012).

Social skills have been addressed from different perspectives and with different approaches in the literature (Akçamete & Avcıoğlu, 2005; Akkök, 2006; Caldarella & Merrell, 2007; McGuire & Priestley, 1981; Riggio, 1986). In the current study, social skill dimensions defined by Akkök (2006) are used. Akkök (2006) discusses social skills, which are indispensable for an individual to adapt to social life, under six main headings:

1. Skills for Initiating and Maintaining Relationships: Include behaviors such as listening, initiating, and maintaining a conversation, thanking, introducing oneself, complimenting, asking for help, apologizing, giving instructions and persuading.
2. Skills for Conducting Tasks in a Group: Include the behaviors of trying to understand the opinions of others, taking responsibility, and communicating complaints.
3. Skills related to Emotions: Include the behaviors of understanding one's own emotions, expressing one's emotions, understanding the emotions of others, coping with the anger of others, expressing positive emotions and coping with fear.
4. Skills for Coping with Aggressive Behaviors: Include behaviors such as asking permission, sharing, helping others, and expressing or controlling anger.
5. Skills for Coping with Stressful Situations: Include coping with failure, coping with group pressure and coping with being left alone.
6. Planning and Problem-Solving Skills: Include the behaviors of gathering information from the environment, creating goals, and focusing on the task.

Social Skills Training

The origins of social skills training lie in Skinner's (1938) studies focusing on behavior and learning. In addition, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) is the basis of social skills training. In this sense, learning behaviors through observation and modelling are among the primary techniques used in social skills training. The quality of relationships that an individual will establish within the environment that he/she is influenced by throughout his/her life is a good indicator of social skills. While social skills can be learned naturally by children through modelling and imitation, they are also taught in a planned and programmed way within the education system. In the education system, there is a need for social skills training in a completely planned and programmed manner, not in a haphazard manner (Samancı & Uçan, 2017). When the main goals of education are considered, it is clear that the main emphasis should be on the development of social skills to adapt to life.

Bacanlı (2020) stated that social anxiety is based on social skills training studies and that social anxiety is caused by a lack of social skills. Individuals worry about entering social environments as their social skills are inadequate. Therefore, these individuals need to be given social skills training to help them overcome their social anxiety. The goal of social skills training is to enable individuals to adapt to the society they live in, communicate effectively, and enjoy their lives. Children who lack the social skills necessary to initiate and maintain successful peer relationships are at risk of rejection by their peers when they enter primary school, especially when they exhibit problematic behaviors that are not approved by their peers (Spence, 2003). The basic rationale for social skills training is to increase the individual's quality of life and well-being. This healing-oriented mechanism is attempted to be operated through improved social relationships. When this mechanism is successfully operated, the individual can be taught how to interact with other people in a way that will be perceived as pleasant and attractive by these people, to develop relationships with them and to acquire the skills to communicate effectively (Segrin & Givertz, 2003). Social skills training usually involves a structured program with a limited number of sessions. Through such programs, skills such as non-aggressive modes of social perception, interpersonal problem solving, self-control, anger management and interaction skills can be taught (Lösel & Beelmann, 2003).

Many techniques can be used together in social skills training. These techniques include role-playing, children's games, drama, group work, cooperative teaching, active teaching, using stories and storybooks, telling social stories, theatre, travel, and clubs (Akkök, 2006; Bacanlı, 2020; Karataş, 2020). Social skills are tried to be developed through these techniques. It is emphasized that evaluation has a key role at every stage in social skills training (Segrin & Givertz, 2003). Therefore, it is deemed necessary to start social skills training with evaluation to follow a path that meets the needs of individuals. In social skills training, there are systematic instructions that include small group discussions, everyday language, and the effective use of different communicative behaviors. It is also important to discuss behavioral change by justifying it.

Teaching Social Skills in Primary School

Social skills are important skills that help individuals be successful in their social interactions and improve their relationships. Therefore, when the development of the individual is considered, it is possible to say that critical periods are also of critical importance for the development of social skills. Thus, it seems necessary to offer children experiences to develop social skills from an early age. In this way, the development of skills such as self-regulation skills, problem-solving skills and self-confidence can be achieved, and the development of social interactions also comes to the fore.

Gresham (1997) distinguishes between deficiencies in the acquisition of social skills and social skill performance. According to this perspective, which clarifies the understanding of social skills, the failure of a child's series of behaviors to correspond to a certain social skill is described as an acquisition-related deficiency, while the failure to demonstrate the skills in one or more social events is described as a performance-related deficiency (Spence, 2003). Considering this information, it is important for the teacher to make this distinction for his/her students in terms of the functionality of the social skills training process in primary school. At the primary school level, children are expected to exhibit new behaviors when they move from the home environment to the school environment. Elementary school is an important setting for children to interact with their peers. Children learn how to ask questions, express themselves and their feelings, listen to others, and deal with challenges (Akkök, 2006). Güner Yıldız (2017) revealed that there is a high level of correlation between teachers' knowledge of social skills and the social skill levels of normally developing students. Thus, teachers' knowledge and practices in this regard are very important in the development of students' social skills. Therefore, it is considered important to improve teachers' knowledge of social skills during their pre-service training (Dobbins et al., 2010). The process followed by teachers in teaching social skills must be carried out in a planned manner. When teachers emphasize social skills in the classroom and encourage cooperation with and respect for others, discipline problems and negative behaviors decrease. When rules of courtesy become an integral part of classroom life, conflicts and discipline problems decrease (Kuykendal, 1993, as cited in McArthur, 2002).

Many techniques are employed to help students acquire social skills. For example, Kaf (2000) examined the effect of the creative drama method to develop social skills in the context of greeting, protecting the environment, sharing and cooperating within the scope of the Life Sciences classes. The results of the study showed that the creative drama method is effective in the development of skills except for environmental protection. At the same time, group work in primary school is a tool that makes the greatest contribution to the development of social skills. Group work not only increases social interaction but also makes positive contributions to other areas of development. Group work provides children with opportunities to share, help each other, solve common problems, and make decisions within the group (Yüksel, 2003).

Experts agree that there are six basic methods for social-emotional evaluation of children and adolescents. These methods are behavioral observation, behavior rating scales, interviewing, self-report instruments, projective-expressive techniques and sociometric techniques (Merrell, 1999). Merrell (2001)

stated that natural behavior observations and rating scales constitute the most basic step in the evaluation of social skills. Interviewing and sociometric measurements should be included in the second step and attempts to evaluate children's social skills should be included in the third step. Social skills programs have many aspects. Teachers should ask the following questions when planning to teach students social skills: What are the deficiencies in social skills? Does the student have sufficient knowledge about the skill? Does the student have sufficient opportunities to use the target skills? Are reinforcement contingencies effectively arranged to promote the response? (Mathur & Rutherford, 1996, as cited in Johns et al., 2005).

The Purpose of Research

The purpose of the current study is to determine the social skills that 4th-grade primary school students have problems with and to implement and evaluate an intervention program that supports the development of social skills. In this research designed with an action research method, the following research questions have been sought:

Does the social skills intervention program prepared for primary school students support the development of social skills?

- Does the problem-solving wheel used in teaching social skills support students' social skill development?
- Does the creative drama workshop used in teaching social skills support students' social skill development?
- Does the storytelling technique used in teaching social skills support students' social skill development?

When considering that pre-intervention training was provided to the classroom teacher on social skills instruction, it is assumed in the study that the classroom teacher possesses a foundational level of knowledge regarding social skills.

Method

The current study was designed and conducted with an application-oriented action research method in which qualitative research methods were used to determine the problems experienced by primary school students in social skills and to improve their social skills. Action research is a process in which practitioners generate new ideas about how to improve practice and present these ideas as theories of practice in order to understand and improve the quality of actions and teaching (Johnson, 2014; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). In the practical action research approach, the researcher and the practitioner come together to identify possible problem areas that arise in practice, possible factors that cause these problems and possible intervention methods (Holter & Schwartz-Barcott, 1993). The main goal of action research is to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge. Information production and use are determined by and dependent on this basic goal (Elliot, 2001). Action research is preferred in the current study, as the research model is oriented towards problem solving (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018), as it aims to help teachers improve their skills in the teaching process and at the same time improve their relationships with their students (Nelson, 2013), and as it aims to eliminate the gaps between theory and practice (Knight et al., 2000).

Role of the Researcher

In action research, researchers need to have certain equipment related to theory and practice appropriate to the research (Ataöv, 2007). In this study, one of the researchers has a bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree in Social Studies Education and teaches social skills teaching at the university level. The other researcher has a bachelor's and master's degree in Primary School Education. In the study, action research was carried out in which the researchers were also practitioners. The researchers took

the participant-observer role in the implementation process of the activities planned during the action process. They undertook the tasks of planning the action process, preparing and organizing the activities and evaluating the data at every stage of the research. The process was carried out in a controlled manner by discussing the action plans with the primary teacher before the implementation weeks and making preliminary preparations, and the teacher was guided during the implementation weeks.

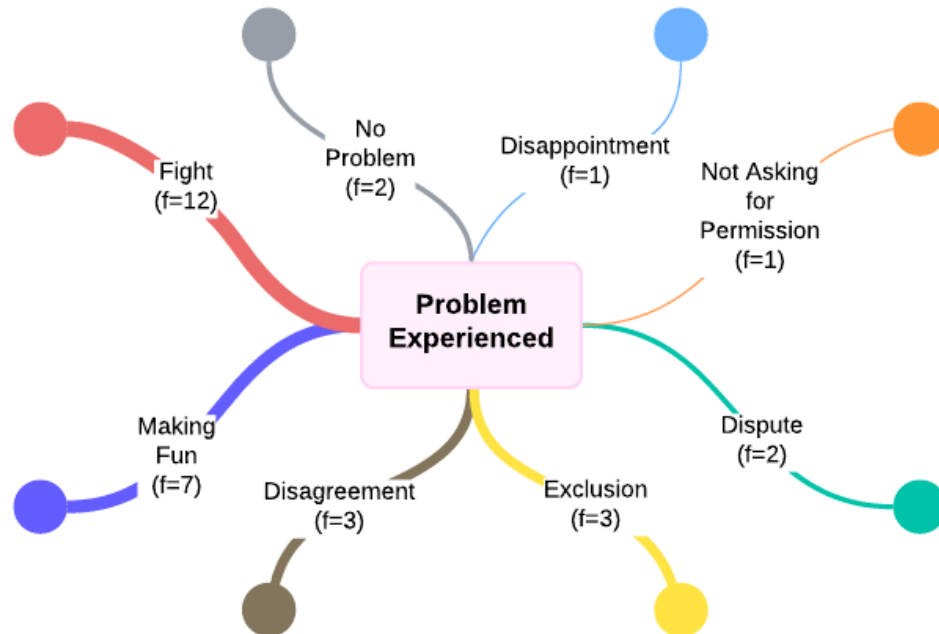
Action Research Process

All the steps followed in action research are followed systematically. As stated by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018), action research consists of the steps of determining the problem, collecting data, data analysis, preparation, and implementation of the action plan, and turning to an alternative or new action plan. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) defined the steps of action research as determining research questions and problem, obtaining, analyzing, and interpreting the information to find answers to the relevant questions and developing an action plan. The steps of action research are similar to each other in the definitions made. Therefore, the current study includes the steps of identifying the problem, gathering data, analyzing the data, creating an action plan, and implementing this action plan. As the current study started by determining the focus of the study, it seems to be compatible with the Mills (2014) action research process. Mills (2014) described action research as the “Dialectical Action Research Spiral”, a process in which the research focus is first determined, and the next steps are carried out in the same way.

Determining the Focus of the Research

The first step of action research includes the process of the researcher identifying a topic in his/her field of expertise that he/she is curious about and wants to create a change in (Costello, 2011). In determining the research focus, Mills (2014) emphasizes clarifying the area of focus through researcher experience and the review of the relevant literature. In this step, it was seen that the primary teacher observed within the scope of the teaching practice course had problems with social skills exhibited by students in his/her class. As a result of the observation, it was decided to hold a preliminary interview with the primary teacher regarding the problems experienced in the classroom. During the preliminary interviews, the primary teacher was asked to fill out the Social Skills Evaluation Scale (7-12 years old) developed by Akçamete and Avcıoğlu (2005) for each student. With the data obtained from this scale, it was determined which social skills were the most problematic in the class. In the pre-test data of the relevant scale, it was determined that 17 students had problems in 10 dimensions of social skills. These dimensions are basic social skills, basic speaking skills, advanced speaking skills, relationship initiation skills, relationship maintenance skills, group work skills, emotional skills, self-control skills, skills to cope with aggressive behaviors, instruction-giving skills, and cognitive skills. In addition, the teacher's observations regarding the social skill problems he/she experienced in the classroom were also asked. In the preliminary interview form, the teacher defined social skills as “*Greeting, saying hello when you see your friends, playing games, speaking in front of the public, using polite expressions, showing respect*”. The primary teacher stated that teaching social skills is important for primary school students, and that when students' social skills do not develop, they experience problems in in-class activities, have problems focusing on the lesson, and their academic success is negatively affected. The teacher also stated that some of the students had problems with their communication skills and that they displayed an accusatory attitude towards others when expressing themselves and therefore could not solve their problems. The teacher stated that students mostly preferred the complaint method to find solutions to the problems they experienced with their peers, and very few students tried to find solutions by talking. The teacher was asked the question, “Do you organize activities for teaching social skills in your classroom?” and she stated that she did activities both within the scope of the counselling classes and individually, that she encouraged students to re-enact the problems they experienced during the break and find solutions, especially through drama and role-play; however, although these drama and role-play activities seemed to work at that moment, students went on exhibiting the same behaviors afterwards. At the end of the interview, the teacher was asked whether she needed an intervention

program to teach social skills. The teacher answered this question: "Yes, because sometimes I cannot find solutions. By using different methods, I can find solutions." Thus, she indicated that she needed an intervention program. Student opinions were also used in determining the research focus. The findings obtained from student opinions are shown in Figure 1.



In the figure, the arrows of the codes with higher frequencies are shown as thicker, and the arrows of the codes with lower frequencies are shown as thinner.

Figure 1. Problems Students Experience in Their Friendship Relationships

Of the students who participated in the interviews, 12 stated that they have problems due to "fighting". One of the students (S3) stated, "We are fighting while playing football", while another student (S19) stated, "We are fighting while playing games". Seven of the students stated "making fun" as their problem. One of the students (S23) stated "They make fun of the team I support" while another student (S18) stated "They make fun of me". Three students stated the problem as "disagreement" and 3 students as "exclusion". One of the students (S8) explained his/her problem as "They are excluding me". Two students defined their problem as "dispute" while 1 student explained it as "not asking for permission" and 1 student as "disappointment". When the problems experienced by students are evaluated, it can be seen that they are associated with social skills dimensions such as maintaining relationships, carrying out tasks in a group, coping with aggressive behaviors, coping with stressful situations and problem solving.

By considering the data obtained from the researcher observations, primary teacher observations and student opinions, the focus of the study was determined as skills to initiate and maintain relationships, skills to carry out tasks in a group, skills related to emotions, skills to cope with aggressive behaviors, skills to cope with stressful situations and problem-solving skills.

Developing Action Plans (Make Plans)

Focusing on the problems identified during the application process within the framework of a systematic plan, the researcher takes some measures to minimize or eliminate these problems. In the action plans created in this sense, a path was followed based on the preliminary interviews held with the teacher and the students and the responses given to the scale items by the students. In this direction, a 12-week action plan was created.

Carrying Out the Application (Get into Action)

The research started with a preliminary interview in the first week in order to get to know the class where the application would be conducted and the students and was carried out for 12 weeks in total. Considering that the primary teacher would also take part in the implementation process, the teacher was given training on social skills. Table 1 gives the dates of the activities conducted within the action plan.

Table 1. Action Plan

1st Week 6 February 2023	- Preliminary interview with the teacher (Revealing social skills perceived to be inadequate in students) - Administration of the social skills evaluation scale to the students by the teacher.
2nd Week 9 March 2023	Training given to the teacher on the concept of social skill, teaching and dimensions of social skills was conducted on an online platform.
3rd Week 16 March 2023	- Meeting with the students - The problems most experienced by the students and the solutions to these problems were discussed. - Problem-Solving Wheel preparation process - Problem-Solving Wheel and Activity (Alternative solutions to situations were asked from students in the activity)
4th Week 27 March 2023	- Student opinions were taken on the functionality of the problem-solving wheel. - Books were determined for the storytelling activity, introduced to the teacher, and worksheets were prepared.
5th Week 13 April 2023	17 April -23 April Midterm Break
6th Week 25 April 2023	- Storytelling activity-1 “Bob the Artist” book was read in the class and the activity worksheet prepared for the book was used. - Creative Drama Workshop-1 application was conducted (3 hours - preparation – acting out - evaluation)
7th Week 3 May 2023	

Table 1. Continued

8th Week 10 May 2023	An interim evaluation was made for the problem-solving wheel, storytelling activity and Creative Drama Workshop.
9th Week 18 May 2023	- Storytelling activity 2 - The book "I Walk with Vanessa (silent book)" was read in the class and the activity worksheet prepared for the book was used.
10th Week 22 May 2023	Creative Drama Workshop-2 application was conducted (3 hours - preparation – acting out - evaluation).
	
11th Week 29 May 2023	The social skills evaluation scale was re-administered by the teacher.
12th Week 5 June 2023	- Student interviews - Semi-structured interview form was used. - Teacher evaluation - Process evaluation was carried out.

Observation of the Application (Make Observations)

The studies carried out to observe and evaluate the activities during the action process are given below.

- Field notes were taken by the teacher during the application process.
- Research team meetings were held every week. The process was evaluated in the meetings and the parts deemed necessary were reviewed.
- After each activity, interviews were held with the students to evaluate the activities.
- Activities with the students were audio recorded and these recordings were re-examined after the activity.
- After each activity, interviews were held with the teacher, and they were audio recorded.

Evaluation of the Action Plans (Criticize & Improve)

After each activity, teacher opinions and student opinions about the process and student products were analyzed in terms of the dimensions related to the questions specified below.

- To what extent do the activities support social skills development?
- Are the activities appropriate to the student level?
- What are the strong and weak points of the activities carried out? How can these activities be improved?

During the interviews and meetings, the activities in the action plan were evaluated within the scope of the questions above. As a result of the evaluations, it was determined that the students frequently used the problem-solving wheel. For this reason, it was decided that the problem-solving wheel would be retained and be used in the classroom throughout the term. In addition, in the meeting held in the 7th week, the primary teacher suggested that drama workshops should be given more place in the classroom. In this context, another drama workshop for social skills development was prepared and implemented in the 10th week.

Study Group

The study group consists of fourth-grade students attending a public primary school in the city of Ankara in the spring term of the 2022-2023 school year. Of the students in the study group, 11 are girls and 17 are boys and 1 is an inclusion student. In addition, the primary teacher took part in the study as a participant-observer. The primary teacher (female), graduated from the Department of Primary Teaching, has 13 years of teaching experience. The primary teacher has received training in storytelling, creative drama, and teaching with games. During the application process, she evaluated the practices carried out in the classroom and drama workshop with observation forms and interviews and implemented storytelling activities.

Data Collection Tools

Social Skills Evaluation Scale. Social Skills Evaluation Scale is a scale developed by Akçamete and Avcıoğlu (2005) to be administered to children between the ages of 7 and 12. The validity and reliability of this scale were calculated through an administration to 354 students. The content validity of the scale was ensured by seeking expert opinions. For the construct validity, a factor analysis was conducted on the scale items. In the reliability study of the scale, the lowest Cronbach alpha value was found to be .70 and the highest was found to be .98 in the constructs that make up the scale. The relevant data collection tool revealed with which social skills the participating students in the current action research had problems in the classroom. On the basis of the collected data, the students were found to experience problems with basic social skills, basic speaking skills, advanced speaking skills, relationship initiation skills, relationship maintenance skills, group work skills, emotional skills, skills to cope with aggressive behaviors, instruction giving skills and cognitive skills. In this connection, action plans were started to be prepared.

Semi-Structured Interview Forms (Teacher-Student). In the study, semi-structured interview forms were used to evaluate the opinions of the teacher and students. From these interview forms, the teacher interview form was administered twice, at the beginning and end of the application process. The student interview form was administered at the end of the application process. In addition, interim evaluations were made through the student interview form at the end of each activity in order to improve the activities in the intervention program. The teacher interview form administered at the beginning of the application process consists of seven open-ended questions and six open sentences and determines the current status of the primary teacher regarding social skills and activities. In the teacher interview form administered at the end of the application process, the teacher was asked 4 open-ended questions to evaluate the process. While preparing the interview forms, three faculty members and one primary teacher who were experts in their fields were asked to fill out the expert opinion forms. According to expert opinions, open-ended sentence completion items were edited in the semi-structured teacher interview form.

Researcher Field Notes: Observation enables us to infer information about people and events by observing them in their natural contexts (Koshy, 2005). There are two types of observation: participant observation and non-participant observation. Participant observation is a method where the researcher is directly involved in the situation under study and plays an active role as an observer (Vinten, 1994). Conversely, in non-participant observation, the researcher assumes a more passive role, observing the situation from an external standpoint. This study employed both types of observation. In the problem-solving wheel and creative drama activities, the researcher acted as a participant observer, as they were directly involved in the implementation, while the classroom teacher served as a non-participant observer, not directly interacting with the class during these activities. In the story reading activities, the classroom teacher led the process, thus acting as a participant observer, while the researchers assumed the role of non-participant observers. The researchers experienced the implementation process firsthand using an unstructured observation method and recorded their observations in the researcher field notes by reviewing audio recordings taken during the evaluation phase of the creative drama activity. Conversely, the classroom teacher utilized a structured observation method and documented her observations in her field notes.

Data Analysis

The content analysis method was used in the evaluation of the interview forms and field notes. As a result of the content analysis, sub-themes were created on the basis of having certain similar concepts obtained within the context of the main theme. There is an inference-based approach on the basis of content analysis techniques. It aims to provide an interpretation based on the elements observed and described in the messages. Content analysis is a method that focuses on processing the information contained in a message. The first step of the method is descriptive processing (Bilgin, 2014). In this context, during the analysis process, the data obtained were first coded and themes that could explain the codes in general were determined based on the coded data.

At the beginning of the application, the classroom teacher was asked to fill in the Social Skills Evaluation Scale individually for the students and the pre-test data of the study were formed. In the pretest data, it was determined that 17 students in the class had problems in at least one of the social skills dimensions, and at the end of the application, the class teacher was asked to evaluate these students according to the Social Skills Evaluation Scale. These evaluations at the end of the application constituted the post-test data. The pre-test and post-test data were analyzed by frequency analysis, one of the basic statistical methods.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability must be ensured for the research to be considered valid and reliable (Shenton, 2004). To ensure the credibility of the research, demographic information about the participants was first presented. Then, expert opinions were used in the preparation of the teacher and student interview forms (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), and data sources were diversified by interviewing both the students and the primary teacher during the collection of the data. To ensure the transferability of the study, a purposive sampling method was used during the selection of the sample, the findings were supported with direct quotations from the participants, and the process of the action research was reported in detail. In order to ensure the dependability of the findings obtained in light of qualitative data, the research data were coded by the researchers conducting the research, and the "agreement" and "disagreement" frequencies were calculated for each code determined by the coders, using the Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula ($\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Agreement}}{[\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement}]} \times 100$). The percentage of the agreement between the coders was calculated to be 100%, and since the agreement percentage was above 70%, it was concluded that the research data were reliable (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to examine the confirmability of the study, it is necessary to confirm whether the research results are compatible with the raw data by comparing them (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). After the data of the study were coded, the compatibility of the raw data and codes was confirmed by a third researcher.

Results

1. Teacher Opinions on the Contribution of the Activities Conducted during the Action Process to the Development of Social Skills Field Notes and Social Skills Evaluation Scale

At the end of the action research process, two interviews were held with the primary teacher to evaluate the process. During the interviews, first, the following question was asked: "Do you think there are students with social skill deficiencies in your class?" What social skills do you think are inadequate?" The teacher's answer to this question is given below.

"I had students with social skill deficiencies in my class. I have students who cannot say no, who have problems communicating with their friends, who turn it into an argument while initiating communication. For example, my student S5 cannot say no, he/she cannot say no to anyone. Another student of mine constantly experiences conflict while talking with his/her friends. He/she cannot bring the conflict to a conclusion. Another student of mine cannot join any group; he/she is always alone, alone and does not take part in any group. Children behave like this; each has different characteristics."

As a result of the pre-implementation observations, it was noted that there were frequent arguments among the students in the classroom, and that the students were unable to resolve these conflicts independently, often seeking the teacher's intervention. Additionally, significant groupings between girls and boys were observed during breaks. These field notes corroborated the teacher's perspective that issues of grouping, conflict, and relationship initiation were present in the classroom.

Secondly, the primary teacher was asked how the activities carried out throughout the process made a difference in these students. As a result of the data obtained, it was determined that a few students in the class improved in their ability to initiate and maintain relationships. The primary teacher explained these developments as follows: *"While S5 couldn't say no at first, I think these activities contributed a lot. S5 has now become a student who can say no. He/she has started to express his/her feelings to his/her own teachers by stating, 'I do not want to do this', 'I do not want to be a part of this group of students', 'the teacher is not suitable for me.', which I found very surprising and told to his/her family. I liked it very much. S5 gained self-confidence and this had very positive reflections in terms of communication", and "I think the activities we did were very effective for S2. He/she is now more outgoing. He/she had only one friend to play with, now he/she has started to communicate more with his/her other friends. It had a great effect on S2."* In the pre-test data of S5's Social Skills Assessment Scale, it was determined that the student infrequently exhibited the behavior of "saying no when asked to do something he/she does not want to do." However, the post-test data collected at the end of the intervention indicated an increased frequency of this behavior. There is consistency between the data obtained from S5's Social Skills Assessment Scale and the teacher interviews. According to the pre-test data of S2's Social Skills Assessment Scale, the student, who the class teacher noted became more extroverted by the end of the intervention, initially exhibited hesitance regarding relationship initiation and group work skills. However, post-test results showed that the student demonstrated behaviors supporting these skills more frequently by the end of the intervention.

During the interviews, it was determined that problem-solving wheel activity also contributed to the development of social skills to cope with aggressive behaviors. The teacher expressed her opinions as follows: *"My other student, S9, was fighting a lot and coming to me with a complaint every break. After the problem-solving wheel activity, they stopped coming to me for their problems. While S9 used to come to me 5 times a day, he/she started to come to me every 2 days, especially for problems he/she could not solve. Apart from this, S9 never comes to me to complain anymore. I heard them talking "Let's go to the wheel, let's not go to the teacher, let's solve this. I really liked this problem wheel, it was great."* When the pre-test and post-test data of S9's Social Skills Assessment Scale were examined, it was found that the student's tendency to perform behaviors related to self-control skills, such as "solving problems with others without harming them," increased after the intervention program. In addition, it was determined that not only the problem-solving wheel, but also other activities improved the ability to cope with aggressive behaviors. The teacher explained her opinions in this regard as follows: *"S4's behaviors were really problematic. Because she/he was a little bigger than his/her peers, he/she could not hold back in aggressive behaviors. I can say that S4 has almost never come to me to complain about the activities we did throughout this period. They were truly incredibly effective on S4. These activities were especially effective for children whose problems I could not overcome. S4 now comes to me and makes promises and does not take part in any fights. Negative things used to be said about S4 in every class. Now, for example, if I enter the classroom and something negative happens, his/her name would be the first to be mentioned, but it has never been mentioned this term. I was really surprised. It was so nice."* In the pre-test data of S4's Social Skills Evaluation Scale, an increase in the frequency of the behavior "associates with friends who are different from themselves" was observed, and it was concluded that the problem-solving wheel contributed to this increase, according to the teacher's views. Another finding supporting the teacher's statements about the problem-solving wheel was noted in the field observations. In the field notes taken by the researchers during the creative drama activities, it was recorded that during the warm-up activity, students referred to the problem-solving wheel to address the problems they experienced that week.

It has been determined that creative drama activities have contributed to students who experience problems in many areas of social skills. For example, the change in S10's social skills is clearly seen in the pre-test and post-test data of the Social Skills Evaluation Scale. While S10 experienced difficulties in nine different types of skills, including basic social skills, basic communication skills,

initiating relationships, and maintaining relationships, before the intervention, it was found that he showed a tendency to perform behaviors related to these skills after the intervention. The classroom teacher, who believes that drama activities played a significant role in this change in S10, expressed her thoughts with these words: *"For instance, my other student, who is usually alone and has a special condition but no official report, S10. This student was often not included in the group. But through these drama activities, he was especially included in the same group with others. By being in the same group with other classmates, the children got to know each other. Instead of always being in the same group, they had the chance to be in different groups and get to know each other. In this respect, drama was very effective."* In addition, the teacher explained her opinions about the drama workshop as follows: *"My other student S10, for example, is a student who is alone, has special conditions but does not have any diagnosis. They didn't accept this student of mine into many groups. But with these drama activities, they especially wanted to be in the same group with him/her. By being in the same group with other friends, the children got to know each other. Instead of always being in the same group, they had the chance to get to know each other by being in different groups. In this respect, the drama was very effective."* These explanations show that drama activities are effective in the social skills of doing and carrying out a task with a group. In addition, the teacher explained that the drama workshops made positive contributions to the development of initiating and maintaining relationships by saying, *"S24 is trying to put himself/herself at the forefront in the drama activity. For example, he/she became a more talkative child as a result of these activities. He/she used to keep silent but now has become a talkative child."* Upon examining the audio recordings taken during the creative drama workshop, it was found that the teacher stated, *"I wish these activities were implemented more often."* This finding supports the data obtained from the teacher interviews.

2. Student Opinions on the Contribution of the Activities Conducted during the Action Process to the Development of Social Skills

During the action process, a total of four different activities were conducted: the problem-solving wheel, storytelling activity of "Bob the Artist" book, storytelling activity of "I Walk with Vanessa" book and the creative drama workshop. The students were asked which of these activities contributed to the development of their social skills. Student opinions on the effect of these activities on the development of social skills are shown in Figure 2.

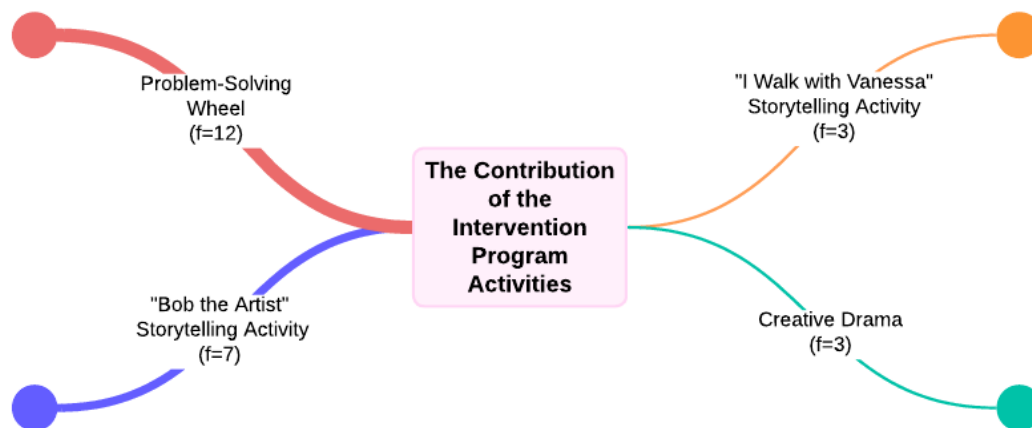


Figure 2. Student Opinions on the Contribution of the Activities Conducted during the Process

When Figure 2 is examined, it is seen that of the participating students, 12 students stated that the problem-solving wheel made contributions, 7 students stated that storytelling activity of "Bob the Artist" book made contributions, 3 students stated that the storytelling activity of "I Walk with Vanessa" book made contributions and 3 students stated that the creative drama workshop made contributions to the development of their social skills. It is thought that the fact that 12 students from the study group mentioned the problem-solving wheel is because this activity continued throughout the semester, and they used the problem-solving wheel constantly.

3. Findings on the Effect of the Problem-Solving Wheel on the Development of Social Skills

The study group was asked how the problem-solving wheel contributed to solving the problems they had with their peers. Findings from the students' answers are shown in Figure 3. In the figure, the arrows of the codes with higher frequencies are shown as thicker, and the arrows of the codes with lower frequencies are shown as thinner.

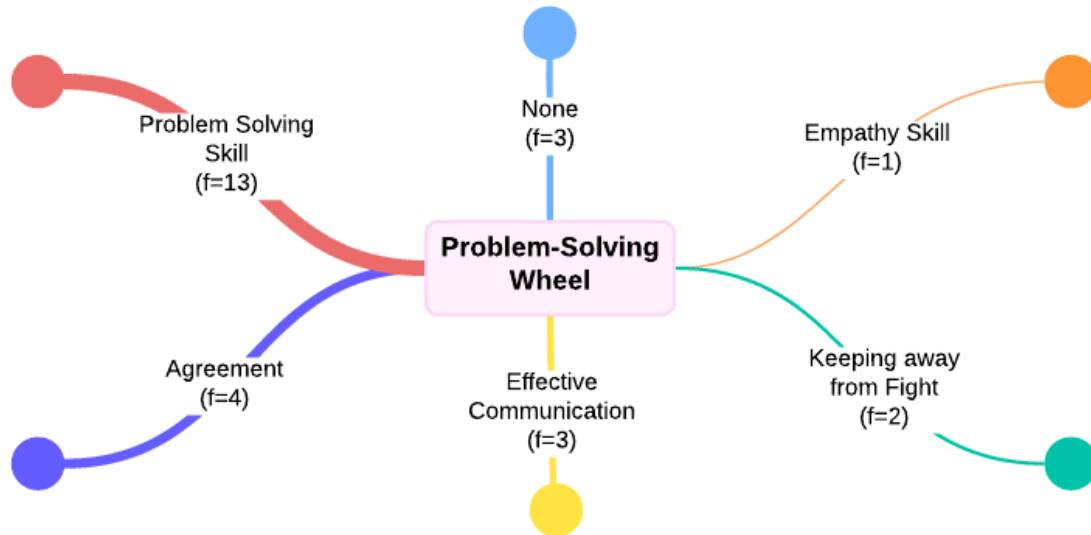


Figure 3. Student Opinions on the Effect of the Problem-Solving Wheel Activity on Solving the Problems Encountered

When Figure 3 is examined, it is seen that 13 students mentioned the contributions of the problem-solving wheel to problem-solving skills. S5 stated, *"It helped me solve problems better with my friends."* Four students stated that the problem-solving wheel contributed to their skill of agreeing. S13 stated, *"It helped me reach an agreement with my friends."* Three students mentioned the contribution of the activity to effective communication. One of the students (S3) stated, *"it helped us reach an agreement by talking to my friends and listening to them."* In addition, 2 students mentioned the contribution of the activity to the skill of keeping away from fights, and 1 student stated that it contributed to the ability to empathize. On the other hand, 3 students stated that the problem-solving wheel did not make any contributions to their social skills. It was seen that the problem-solving wheel contributed to the development of students' social skills such as maintaining relationships, coping with aggressive behaviors and problem solving.

After the problem-solving wheel activity, students were encouraged to use the wheel to address issues they encountered with their peers throughout the term. They were asked to place a sticker on the corresponding section of the wheel each time they utilized it for a specific action. According to the researchers' field notes, the number of stickers on the problem-solving wheel increased each week. The field notes also highlighted that girl students, in particular, experienced issues due to group dynamics during recess and frequently turned to the problem-solving wheel for resolution. When analyzing audio recordings from a creative drama activity, it was found that students were asked, *"How do you resolve issues with your friends?"* and they responded, *"We go to the problem-solving wheel."*

4. Findings on the Effect of Creative Drama on the Development of Social Skills

Opinions of the students were received on the effect of creative drama activity on the development of social skills. The answers given by the students are presented in Figure 4. In the figure, the arrows of the codes with higher frequencies are shown as thicker, and the arrows of the codes with lower frequencies are shown as thinner.

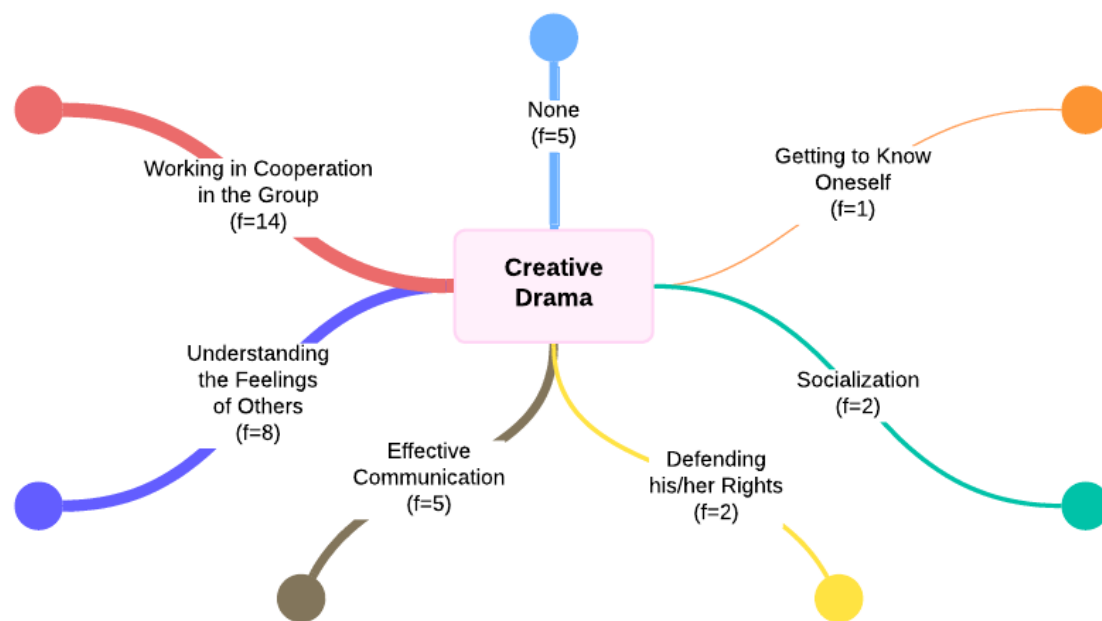


Figure 4. Student Opinions on the Effect of the Creative Drama Workshop Activity on Solving the Problems Encountered

Of the participating students, 14 stated that the creative drama workshop activity contributed to their ability to work in cooperation in the group. S15 expressed this effect as follows: *"We worked in harmony with my friends."* On the basis of the opinions expressed by the students, one of the biggest benefits of creative drama was determined to be understanding the emotions of others. One of the students (S26) stated, *"I understood my friends' feelings. We learned to say no."* Another contribution of the creative drama workshop is related to effective communication. S5 explained his/her opinions as follows: *"It affected our social skills; we became closer to each other, our communication improved."* In addition, 2 of the students mentioned the sub-theme of protecting and defending rights, 2 students mentioned the sub-theme of socialization and 1 student mentioned the sub-theme of getting to know oneself. On the other hand, 5 students stated that the creative workshop activity had no contribution. When the opinions expressed by the students about the creative drama workshop are evaluated, it is seen that the creative drama workshop has an effect on the development of students' social skills such as initiating and maintaining relationships, working in cooperation in the group, emotional skills, and coping with aggressive behaviors.

In the first activity of the creative drama workshop, students were asked to form a circle by holding the hand of any friend. According to the researchers' field notes, students mostly chose friends with whom they did not have conflicts. In subsequent workshop sessions, students were asked to think about something they might want to say to a friend they had a conflict with, while music played. The field notes noted that when the music stopped, most students approached the friends they had conflicts with. Analysis of audio recordings from the creative drama activity revealed that one student acknowledged a misunderstanding with a friend and resolved the issue during this activity.

Groups were formed under the guidance of the classroom teacher for dramatizing scenario cards during the creative drama activities. Special attention was given to ensure that students who had conflicts were placed in the same groups. According to the researchers' field notes, the interactions between conflicting students were observed during the dramatization stage. Field notes on the group activity with the problem-solving wheel indicated that although students with conflicts experienced issues during the activity, they successfully completed the dramatization of the scenario cards without problems.

5. Findings Regarding the Effect of Storytelling Technique on the Development of Social Skills

During the action process, the students were involved in two storytelling activities of two different books called "Bob the Artist" and "I Walk with Vanessa". At the end of the process, the students were asked how these activities contributed to the development of their social skills. Opinions expressed by the students on the storytelling activity of "Bob the Artist" book are shown in Figure 5. In the figure, the arrows of the codes with higher frequencies are shown as thicker, and the arrows of the codes with lower frequencies are shown as thinner.

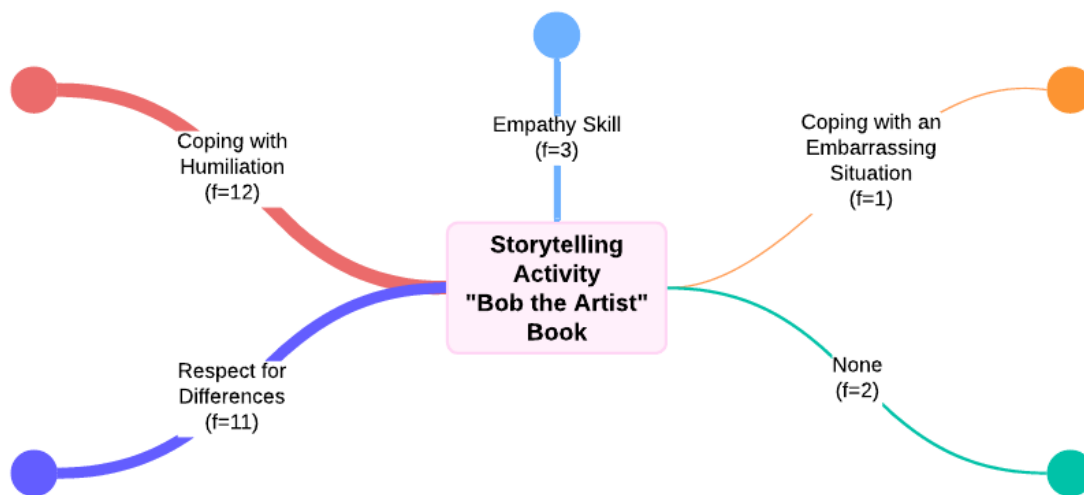


Figure 5. Student Opinions on the Effect of Storytelling Activity of "Bob the Artist" Book on Solving the Problems Encountered

When Figure 5 is examined, it is seen that the storytelling activity of "Bob the Artist" book contributed the most to the skill to cope with humiliation. One of the students (S16) stated, "*I realized that we should not be humiliated.*" Another contribution of this activity is to foster respect for differences. S14 stated, "we learned not to make fun of anyone". In addition, 3 students mentioned the contribution of the activity to the development of empathy skills and 1 student stated that the activity helped them to cope with an embarrassing situation. Although most students thought that the activity made important contributions, 2 students stated that the storytelling activity did not make any contributions. Based on the opinions expressed by the students, it was determined that storytelling activity of "Bob the Artist" book contributed to the development of students' social skills such as coping with aggressive behaviors, coping with stressful situations, and respecting differences.

The students were asked how the storytelling activity of "I Walk with Vanessa" book contributed to the solution of the problems they had with their friends. Opinions of the students regarding the effect of this activity on the development of their social skills are presented in Figure 6. In the figure, the arrows of codes with higher frequencies are shown as thicker, and the arrows of codes with lower frequencies are shown as thinner.

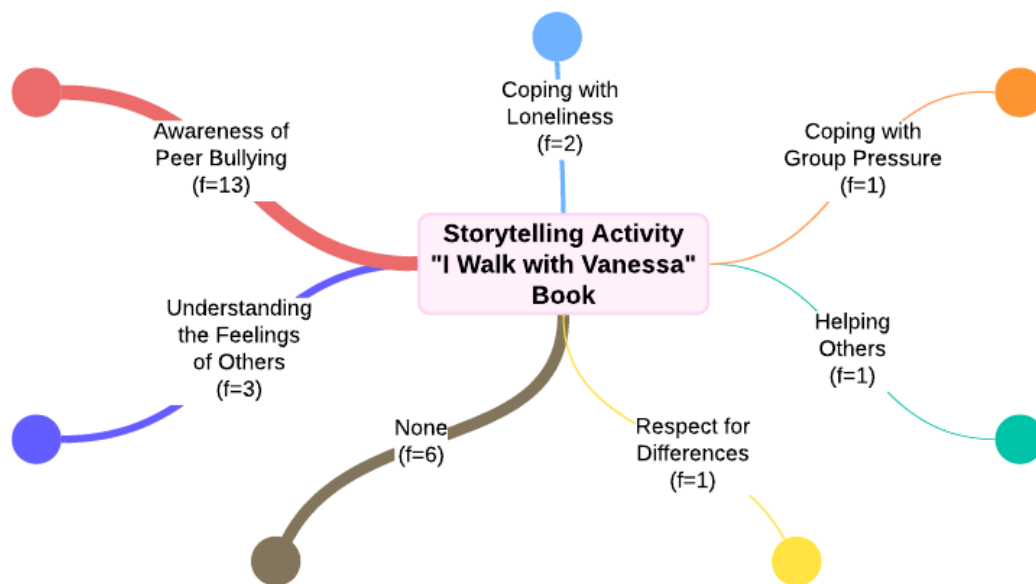


Figure 6. Student Opinions on the Effect of Storytelling Activity of "I Walk with Vanessa" Book on Solving the Problems Encountered

When Figure 6 is examined, it can be seen that the storytelling activity of "I Walk with Vanessa" book contributed the most to the sub-theme of awareness of peer bullying. One of the students (S14) stated, *"We should not bully anyone. We must help the person who is being bullied."* Three students mentioned the sub-theme of understanding the feelings of others. S8 expressed his/her views on the subject by saying, *"We need to support our friends by understanding what they feel."* In addition, the sub-theme of coping with loneliness was mentioned by 2 students, the sub-theme of coping with group pressure by 1 student, the sub-theme of helping others by 1 student and the sub-theme of respect for differences by 1 student. On the other hand, 6 students stated that the storytelling of "I Walk with Vanessa" book did not make any contributions.

In the field notes of the classroom teacher in the story reading activity, it was stated that the students discussed how they would react to the situations they encountered in the books. It was determined that the majority of the class answered the book evaluation questions. It was noted that the students stated that bullying is a bad thing and that we need to empathize. The findings of the field notes in the story reading activity coincide with the findings obtained from the students' interviews.

6. Social Skills Assessment Scale Findings

At the beginning of the implementation, the Social Skills Assessment Scale was applied by the classroom teacher for each student in order to evaluate the social skills problems in the classroom and pre-test data were created. As a result of this scale, it was determined that 17 students had problems in some social skills areas. At the end of the intervention process, the class teacher was asked to evaluate the students again according to this scale and post-test data were obtained. It was accepted that students who tended not to do at least one of the behaviors in the social skills sub-dimensions at all or to do less were considered to have problems in the relevant social skills area. The evaluation data of the classroom teacher at the beginning and at the end of the implementation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Social Skills Assessment Scale Pre-Test and Post-Test Data

Social Skills Dimension	Frequency of Students Having Problems in Pre-Test	Frequency of Students Having Problems with Post- Test
	Data (f)	Data (f)
Basic Social Skills	10	2
Basic Speaking Skills	2	0
Advanced Speaking Skills	3	0
Relationship Initiation Skills	4	0
Relationship Maintenance Skills	2	0
Group Work Skills	3	0
Emotional Skills	4	0
Self-Control Skills	3	0
Skills to Cope with Aggressive Behaviors	3	0
Instruction-Giving Skills	5	0
Cognitive Skills	8	1

In Table 2, the data of the social skills assessment scale before and after the intervention were compared and a significant improvement was observed in the problems experienced by the students in the social skills areas. While the number of students who had problems in basic social skills was 10 before the intervention, this number decreased to 2 after the intervention. Similarly, there was a significant decrease in the frequency of students' problems in the areas of basic speaking skills, advanced speaking skills, relationship initiation and maintenance skills, group work skills, emotional skills, self-control skills, coping with aggressive behaviors, giving instructions and cognitive skills. These results show that the intervention was effective in improving students' social skills and provided significant improvements in the social skills areas.

Discussion and Results

In the current study, it was aimed to determine the social skills that 4th grade primary school students have problems with, to implement an intervention program that supports the development of social skills and to evaluate the functionality of the intervention program. In this connection, the action research process lasted 12 weeks, and during this process, the opinions of the students and the primary teacher on the problem-solving wheel, interactive storytelling and creative drama techniques used in the intervention program were revealed. In the current study, the problem-solving wheel used to help students solve their social problems, creative drama activities in which they collaborated with the group members, and two story books and reading techniques were used to develop social skills such as coping with stressful situations and coping with loneliness.

As a result of the study, it was concluded that the problem-solving wheel, which is one of the activities in the intervention program applied during the action research process, was the activity that contributed the most to the solution of the problems experienced by the students regarding social skills. Teacher and student opinions about the problem-solving wheel are that it contributes to the development of social skills such as maintaining relationships, coping with aggressive behaviors and problem solving. Acquiring social problem-solving skills is of critical importance during childhood, as is the acquisition of many skills. Experiences lived during childhood form the basis of the child's social development (Uzunkol & Özdemir Yılmaz, 2018). Students in primary school begin to accelerate their personal and social progress by leaving anthropocentrism behind in this period. This period is a sensitive process for developing communication skills, adapting to social order, leading, adapting to social order and interacting with others (Kam, 2019). In parallel with this view, Ayvaz Tuncel and Demirel (2010) revealed that social problems among students are mostly caused by lack of communication. According to the Social Skills Assessment Scale pre-test data of the study, one of the most common problems encountered in primary school students is deficiencies in communication skills.

People need problem-solving skills to successfully overcome the social problems they encounter in their daily lives. Those who can use this skill naturally can handle any scenario with ease, while for others each step may be fraught with difficulties and these individuals may need direct training. Engaging in social interaction can be particularly challenging for individuals with communication disorders, which can interfere with their attempts to communicate effectively with others. Moreover, according to Pringle (2017), the lack of an effective problem-solving process can also cause difficulties in making friends and maintaining friendships. Within the scope of this study, it was determined that students' not solving the problems they experienced with their friends affected their relationships with their friends. The problem-solving wheel, which is used in the classroom to solve social problems and through which students express the problems they experience with their peers in the school environment, has many options from which the student can choose. For example, apologizing, calming down, being respectful, using "I" language. Having this wheel in the classroom throughout the semester helped minimize problems such as fights, arguments, and complaints.

When the opinions of the teacher and students on the contribution of the creative drama method used in the intervention program to the development of students' social skills were evaluated, themes associated with social skills such as initiating and maintaining relationships, carrying out tasks in a group, emotional skills and coping with aggressive behaviors were elicited. The creative drama workshop gave students the opportunity to establish new friendships by taking part in activities with different groups. On the other hand, some students had the opportunity to change their perceptions of their friends in the group. Drama makes a positive contribution to the social development of the individual by first allowing the individual to understand his/her own inner world and then to understand and cooperate with other people. Drama activities provide emotional relief and the opportunity to develop social skills, especially when they take place in a safe environment (Mantaş, 2014). There are many studies in the literature investigating the effect of the creative drama method on social skills (Abacı et al., 2015; Kara & Çam, 2007; Önalın-Akfırat, 2006). Sayim (2021) examined the effect of creative drama activities on social skills and empathic education of 4th-grade primary school students and found that creative drama activities are effective in improving social skills. Saygın and Karakaş (2021), in their study investigating the impact of social skills-based activities on the critical thinking and empathic tendencies of primary school students, emphasized the importance of these skills in terms of effective communication, adapting to society, demonstrating sensitivity to events and situations, and managing negative emotions as social skills. Similarly, during the action research period, it was determined that one of the most effective areas of creative drama activities was the development of students' empathy feelings. Also, Freeman et al. (2003) stated that the creative drama method improved self-concept, reduced problematic behaviors, and improved social skills in third and fourth-grade students. Abacı et al. (2015) investigated the effect of creative drama education on the social skills of adolescents and concluded that it was effective on the skills of doing and carrying out a task in a group, initiating and maintaining a relationship and self-control. Kara and Çam (2007) investigated the effect of the creative drama method on the social skills of pre-service teachers and found that it was similarly effective on their ability to do and carry out a task in a group, their ability to initiate and maintain relationships and their self-control. Similarly, Çalışkan Çoban (2007) used creative drama method in social skills training and according to teacher observation, improvement was observed in skills such as sensitivity, co-operation, self-control, social maturity in students' relationships with their friends. Arslan and Zengin (2016) investigated the effect of cooperative learning on scientific and social skills and found that cooperative learning had positive effects on social skills. Student opinions about the creative drama activities in the action research also support the findings of this study.

In the current study, students' opinions about the storytelling technique, which is another of the activities in the intervention program implemented during the action research process, are that it contributes to the development of social skills. The students participating in the study stated that story-reading activities contributed to the development of social skills such as coping with humiliation, respect for differences, empathy skills, coping with an embarrassing situation, awareness of peer bullying, understanding the feelings of others, coping with loneliness, coping with group pressure, helping others and respect for differences. Since a series of processes such as listening, thinking, asking questions, answering questions, and generating ideas come into play in story-reading activities, it is possible for students to gain new skills and activate different areas of development (Aksoy, 2014). Worksheets were prepared for the stories used in the study and questions were asked about the events and behaviors of the characters in the book. In the storytelling technique, the content of the stories read with children emphasizes the traits of the characters that solve problems effectively, behave positively and are helpful and sharing. Children are given the opportunity to share their feelings and thoughts, based on the problems experienced by the characters in the story, such as not being included in the game by their friends, wanting to be helped, helping others and coping with difficulties. No matter which story is used in the story-reading technique, the most important thing in the process is that the teacher takes every opportunity to encourage and reinforce the learning of social skills (Aksoy & Baran, 2020; Zhang, 2011). Aksoy and Baran (2020) concluded in their study that storytelling-based social skills training was significantly effective in the dimensions of communication and prosocial behaviors. Social stories emphasize cognitive development, social skills, emotional capacity, and self-regulation (O'Hara, 2010). Therefore, using the story-reading technique in the classroom also increases children's social competence. Social skills are fundamental competencies that facilitate individuals' lives and enable them to coexist harmoniously within society, starting from childhood. These skills are essential for individuals to navigate social interactions effectively within a community. Those with underdeveloped or inadequate social skills may face difficulties in maintaining societal harmony, potentially leading to communication breakdowns. Although the acquisition of social skills begins within the family, schools play a pivotal role in fostering and enhancing these skills (Karataş, 2020). Schools offer ideal settings for the acquisition and reinforcement of social skills. In this regard, the role of teachers is critically important. By designing programs and activities aimed at developing social skills, teachers can significantly contribute to students' adaptation to social life.

The findings of the study indicate that the intervention program implemented to enhance social skills was effective. Among the activities included in the program, the problem-solving wheel contributed the most to students' social skills, particularly in maintaining relationships, coping with aggressive behaviors, and solving problems. Creative drama activities showed positive effects on skills such as initiating and maintaining relationships, collaborating and conforming within a group, coping with aggressive behaviors, and emotional skills. Story reading activities were found to contribute to social skills such as coping with teasing, respecting differences, developing empathy, managing embarrassing situations, raising awareness about peer bullying, dealing with exclusion, coping with group pressure, and helping others. These findings highlight the significance and effectiveness of social skills education in the individual and social development of students. In conclusion, the intervention program developed in this study was found to contribute to addressing the social skill challenges faced by 4th-grade primary school students. It was also determined to be effective in improving students' communication, problem-solving, empathy, and emotional expression skills.

Suggestions

As a result of the research, the following recommendations have been presented to researchers and practitioners.

- In the final interviews with the teacher, it was stated that teaching social skills should start in the first grade. Considering that this study was conducted only with 4th-grade students, it is recommended that a similar study be conducted with 1st-grade primary school students as well
- According to the research findings, students used the problem-solving wheel when they experienced social problems throughout the term. According to the teacher, the application that contributed the most to the development of social skills was the problem-solving wheel. In this context, it is recommended that primary teachers use the problem-solving wheel starting from the 1st grade to support the development of students' social skills.
- The activity in which the inclusion student participated the most throughout the process is the creative drama activity. During this activity, it was observed that the student was involved in the process in harmony with his/her friends. The effect of creative drama on the development of social skills of inclusion students can be addressed as a separate study.
- The findings of the study are based on the opinions of the primary teacher and students. In future research, parents' opinions can be consulted to examine students' social skill development in environments outside the school.

References

- Abacı, S., Tepeli, K., & Erbay, F. (2015). Yaratıcı drama eğitiminin ergenlerin sosyal becerilerine etkisi. *Yaratıcı Drama Dergisi*, 10(2), 191-200. <https://doi.org/10.21612/yader.2015.016>
- Akçamete, G., & Avcıoğlu, H. (2005). Sosyal becerileri değerlendirme ölçeğinin (7-12 yaş) geçerlik ve güvenirlik çalışması. *Abant İzzet Baysal Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 5(2), 61-77.
- Akkök, F. (2006). *İlköğretimde sosyal becerilerin geliştirilmesi-öğretmen el kitabı*. Özgür Yayınları.
- Aksoy, P. (2014). *Hikâye anlatma temelli ve oyun temelli sosyal beceri eğitiminin anasınıfına devam eden çocukların sosyal becerilerine etkisinin incelenmesi* (Thesis No. 386364) [Doctoral dissertation, Ankara University]. Council of Higher Education National Thesis Center.
- Aksoy, P., & Baran, G. (2020). Hikâye anlatma temelli ve oyun temelli sosyal beceri eğitiminin anasınıfı çocuklarının sosyal becerilerine etkisi: Deneysel bir çalışma. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, 45(204), 157-183. <https://doi.org/10.15390/EB.2020.8670>
- Arslan, A., & Zengin, R. (2016). İşbirlikli öğrenme yönteminin bilimsel ve sosyal beceriler üzerindeki etkisi. *Adıyaman Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 6(1), 23-45. <https://doi.org/10.17984/adyuebd.18078>
- Ataöv, A. (2007). Planlamada sosyal bilimcinin değişen rolü: Toplumdan biri olmak. *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 24(1), 139-152.
- Avcıoğlu, H. (2007). Sosyal becerileri değerlendirme ölçeği (4-6 yaş) geçerlilik, güvenirlik çalışması. *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 7(2), 87-101.
- Ayvaz Tuncel, Z., & Demirel, M. (2010). İlköğretim öğrencilerinin sosyal sorun çözme becerilerinin geliştirilmesine ilişkin bir çalışma. *Toplum ve Sosyal Hizmet*, 21(1), 25-44.
- Bacanlı, H. (2020). *Sosyal beceri eğitimi* (9th ed.). Pegem Yayıncılık. <https://doi.org/10.14527/9786053643739>
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood cliffs. Prentice Hall.
- Bilgin, N. (2014). *Sosyal bilimlerde içerik analizi: Teknikler ve örnek çalışmalar* (3rd ed.). Siyasal Kitabevi.
- Caldarella, P., & Merrell, K. (2007). Common dimensions of social skills of children and adolescents. *Journal of School Psychology*, 2(26), 264-278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.1997.12085865>
- Costello, P. J. M. (2011). *Effective action research: Developing reflective thinking and practice*. Continuum International Publishing.
- Çalışkan Çoban, E. (2007). *Sosyal beceri sorunu olan öğrenciler ve annelerine uygulanan yaratıcı drama etkinlikleri programının öğrencilerin sosyal beceri düzeylerinin gelişimi üzerindeki etkisi* (Thesis No. 211616) [Master's thesis, Dokuz Eylül University]. Council of Higher Education National Thesis Center.
- Dobbins, N., Higgins, K., Pierce, T., Tandy, R. D., & Tincani, M. (2010). An analysis of social skills instruction provided in teacher education and in-service training programs for general and special educators. *Remedial and Special Education*, 31(5), 358-367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932509338363>
- Elliot, J. (2001). *Action research for educational change*. Open University Press.
- Elliott, S. N., Malecki, C. K., & Demaray, M. K. (2001). New directions in social skills assessment and intervention for elementary and middle school students. *Exceptionality*, 9(1-2), 19-32. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327035EX091&2_3
- Elliott, S. N., Sheridan, S. M., & Gresham, F. M. (1989). Assessing and treating social skills deficits: A case study for the scientist-practitioner. *Journal of School Psychology*, 27, 197-222. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-4405\(89\)90007-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-4405(89)90007-1)
- Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2006). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

- Freeman, G., Sullivan, K., & Fulton, C. R. (2003). Effect of creative drama on self-concept, social skills, and problem behavior. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 96(3), 131-138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670309598801>
- Gresham, F. M. (1997). Social competence and students with behavior disorders: Where we've been, where we are, and where we should go. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 20(3), 233-249.
- Gresham, F. M. (1998a). Social skills training: Should we raze, remodel or rebuild?. *Behavioral Disorders*, 24(1), 19-25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019874299802400103>
- Gresham, F. M. (1998b). Social skills training with children. In T. S. Watson & F. M. Gresham (Eds.), *Handbook of child behavior therapy* (pp. 475-497). Plenum Press. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-5323-6_24
- Güner Yıldız, N. (2017). Öğretmenlerin sosyal beceri öğretimine yönelik bilgi düzeyleri ile öğrencilerin sosyal becerileri arasındaki ilişki. *İlköğretim Online*, 16(3), 1275-1286. <https://doi.org/10.17051/ilkonline.2017.330257>
- Holter, I. M., & Schwartz-Barcott, D. (1993). Action research: What is it? How has it been used and how can it be used in nursing?. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 128, 298-304. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.1993.18020298.x>
- Johns, B. H., Crowley, E. P., & Guetzloe, E. (2005). The central role of teaching social skills. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 37(8), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.17161/fec.v37i8.6813>
- Johnson, A. P. (2014). *Eylem araştırması el kitabı* (Y. Uzuner, & M. Anay, Ed. & Trans.) Anı Yayıncılık.
- Jurevičienė, M., Kaffemanienė, I., & Ruškus, J. (2012). Concept and structural components of social skills. *Baltic Journal of Sport Health Sciences*, 3(86), 42-52. <https://doi.org/10.33607/bjshs.v3i86.266>
- Kaf, Ö. (2000). Hayat bilgisi dersinde bazı sosyal becerilerin kazandırılmasında yaratıcı drama yönteminin etkisi. *Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 6(6), 173-184.
- Kam, E. (2019). *The effect of the social skill training program on social skill levels of the 3rd grade students* (Thesis No. 592248) [Master's thesis, Yeditepe University]. Council of Higher Education National Thesis Center.
- Karataş, Z. (2020). Sosyal beceriye giriş. In M. Engin Deniz & A. Eryılmaz (Eds.), *Sosyal beceri eğitimi* (pp. 2-27). Pegem Yayıncılık. <https://doi.org/10.14527/9786052419915.01>
- Kara, Y., & Çam, F. (2007). Yaratıcı drama yönteminin bazı sosyal becerilerin kazandırılmasında etkisi. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 32, 144-155.
- Knight, S. L., Wiseman, D. L., & Cooner, D. (2000). Using collaborative teacher research to determine the impact of professional development school activities on elementary students' math and writing outcomes. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(1), 26-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002248710005100104>
- Koshy, V. (2005). *Action research for improving practice: A practical guide*. Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Liberman, R. P. (1982). Assessment of social skills. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 8(1), 62-84. <https://doi.org/10.1093/schbul/8.1.62>
- Lopes, P. N., & Salovey, P. (2006). Toward a broader education: Social emotional, and practical skills. In J. E. Zins, R. P. Weissberg, M. C. Wang, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* (pp. 76-93). Teachers College Press.
- Lösel, F., & Beelmann, A. (2003). Effects of child skills training in preventing antisocial behavior: A systematic review of randomized evaluations. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 587(1), 84-109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716202250793>
- Mantaş, S. (2014). *Drama etkinliklerinin ilköğretim 4. sınıf öğrencilerinin sosyal beceri gelişimi ve işbirliği davranışlarına etkisi* (Thesis No. 381613) [Master's thesis, Atatürk University]. Council of Higher Education National Thesis Center.
- McArthur, J. R. (2002). The why, what, and how of teaching children social skills. *The Social Studies*, 93(4), 183-185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00377990209599907>

- McClelland, M. M., & Scalzo, C. (2006). Social skills deficit. In M. Hersen (Ed.), *Clinician's handbook of child behavioural assessment* (pp. 313-335). Elsevier Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012343014-4/50014-9>
- McGuire, J., & Priestly, P. (1981). *Life after school: A social schools curriculum*. Pergamon Press
- McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2006). *All you need to know about action research*. SAGE Publications.
- Merrell, K. W. (1999). *Behavioral, social, and emotional assessment of children and adolescents*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Merrell, K. W. (2001). Assessment of children's social skills: Recent developments, best practices, and new directions. *Exceptionality*, 9(1-2), 3-18. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327035EX091&2_2
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage publications.
- Mills, G. E. (2014). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (5th ed.). Pearson.
- Nelson, D. (2013). Action research: An appropriate research paradigm for practitioners. *Language in India*, 13(10), 183-196.
- O'Hara, M. (2010). *Using social stories to teach social skills: A professional's guide*. University of Pittsburgh. https://www.sbbh.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/using_social_stories_to_teach_social_skills.pdf
- Önalan-Akfiat, F. (2006). Sosyal yeterlilik, sosyal beceri ve yaratıcı drama. *Yaratıcı Drama Dergisi*, 1(1), 39-58. <https://doi.org/10.21612/yader.2006.004>
- Pringle, K. C. (2017). *An exploratory investigation of the effects of power- solving, a social problem solving method, on students with communication impairments* (Publication No. 2395) [Master's thesis, Rowan University]. Rowan Digital Works. <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2395/>
- Riggio, R. E. (1986). Assessment of basic social skills. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(3), 649-660. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.3.649>
- Samancı, O., & Uçan, Z. (2017). Çocuklarda sosyal beceri öğretimi. *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 21(1), 281-288.
- Saygın, M., & Karakaş, H. (2021). The effect of social skills- based activities on primary school students' critical thinking and empathic tendencies. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 13(3), 2789-2812.
- Sayim, M. (2021). *Yaratıcı drama etkinliklerinin empatik eğilim ve sosyal beceri düzeyine etkisi* (Thesis No. 669224) [Master's thesis, Bartın University]. Council of Higher Education National Thesis Center.
- Segrin, C., & Givertz, M. (2003). Methods of social skills training and developments. In J. O. Grene & B. R. Burleson (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and social interaction skills* (pp. 135-176). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75. <https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201>
- Skinner, B. F. (1938). *The behavior of organisms*. Appleton-Century.
- Spence, S. H. (2003). Social skills training with children and young people: Theory, evidence and practice. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 8(2), 84-96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-3588.00051>
- Uzunkol, E., & Özdemir Yılmaz, E. (2018). İlkokul öğrencilerinin sosyal problem çözme becerilerinin çeşitli değişkenler açısından incelenmesi. *Sakarya University Journal of Education*, 8(4), 351-363. <https://doi.org/10.19126/suje.449597>
- Vinten, G. (1994). Participant observation: A model for organizational investigation?. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 9, 30-38. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683949410059299>
- Whitted, K. S. (2011). Understanding how social and emotional skill deficits contribute to school failure. *Preventing School Failure*, 55(1), 10-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10459880903286755>

- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2018). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri* (11th ed.). Seçkin Yayıncılık.
- Yüksel, A. Y. (2003). *Empati eğitim programının ilköğretim öğrencilerinin empatik becerilerine etkisi* (Thesis No. 127623) [Doctoral dissertation, Ankara University]. Council of Higher Education National Thesis Center.
- Zhang, K. C. (2011). Let's have fun! Teaching social skills through stories, telecommunications and activities. *International Journal of Special Education*, 26(2), 70-78.

Appendices

Appendices 1. Student Final Interview Form

Name Surname:

Thinking about the problems you have experienced with your classmates in class, could you explain step by step the contributions of the activities we have done throughout the semester to your friendships?"

1. STEP: What was your problem? Write it down below. <u>LIVED ISSUE:</u>	2. STEP: Which friend or friends did you have this problem with? Write the names of the friends you have problems with below <u>NAME/ NAMES:</u>	3. STEP Think about the activities we have done throughout the semester below. (He names of the activities are listed below) *Classroom problem Wheel *Bob the Artist Book Story *I Walk with Vanessa: A Picture Book Story *Creative Drama Activities (Have the activities above contributed to your experience of the problem? Circle the activities you think had an impact.	4. STEP: How did the activities you marked contribute to solving the problem you experienced? <u>Can you explain</u> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>The names of the activities</th> <th>Its Contribution to me</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Its contribution to my friends:</th> <th>What kind of contribution do you think you have made? Write Below.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Write your friends' names below</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	The names of the activities	Its Contribution to me									Its contribution to my friends:	What kind of contribution do you think you have made? Write Below.	Write your friends' names below	
The names of the activities	Its Contribution to me																
Its contribution to my friends:	What kind of contribution do you think you have made? Write Below.																
Write your friends' names below																	

Appendices 2. Storytelling Activity of “I Walk with Vanessa” the Silent Book Worksheet

Name-Surname: _____

Name of the Book: I Walk with Vanessa

Questions

1. You've read the book “I Walk with Vanessa”. How do you think Vanessa felt in her first days at school? Please explain.

2. After school, you saw a student bullying Vanessa, who was new to the class, and upsetting her, have you ever experienced a similar situation in your school or elsewhere? Please tell us about it.

3. In the book you read, you saw a student who bullied, excluded, and hurt Vanessa, who was new to the class. You also saw a student who saw this situation and felt sorry for Vanessa.

What would you do if you saw someone else being bullied? Please tell us about it.



**4. You have seen other children trying to support Vanessa by not being bystanders to her situation, how do you think this happened?
(How do you think this act of kindness started?)**

Appendices 2. Continuous of Storytelling Activity of “I Walk with Vanessa” the Silent Book Worksheet

5. To behave aggressively towards another person, to make fun of them, to call them names, to put them in a difficult situation, to hurt them, to hurt them, all of these are called bullying.

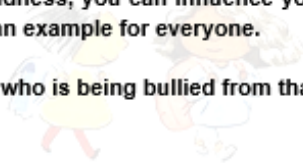
Did you know that when you see someone being bullied, you can affect your other friends in the class or even other students at school with a single action?

6. Do you feel courageous about this? Ignoring someone who is being bullied or supporting them in a courageous way? Which do you think? Tick one of the following options.

- I ignore it.
- I would be brave and support someone who is being bullied.

7. When you see someone who is being bullied/hurt in the classroom, in the park, in your neighborhood or elsewhere, it may seem a simple act to act closer to them than usual, to put yourself in their shoes. However, did you realize how important it is for that person? By starting this act of kindness, you can influence your classmates and other students in your school and set an example for everyone.

List what you can do to save someone who is being bullied from that situation.



by Kerascoët