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THE COMPARISION OF 54-66 MONTHS OLD CHILDREN'S READINESS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL DURING PRESCHOOL PERIOD AND THEIR ADAPTATION TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The preparation process of children for primary school can only be effective by means qualified education in which necessary pre skills in every zone of development are supported. This preparation process also makes children's social adaptation to primary school environment easier. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to compare children's social adaptation when they start primary school by identifying their readiness for primary school. The participants of the study are 54-66 months old 22 students who attended Prof. Dr. Ayla Oktay's Preschool Education Application Unit during 2012-2013 academic year. Children's readiness level for primary school in 2012-2013 academic year was assessed by Marmara Scale of Readiness for Primary School. At the beginning of 2013-2014 academic year, the same students' adaptation levels to the school they attended was measured by School Social Behavior Scale. The data obtained were interpreted by comparison.

Key Words: Preschool education, readiness for primary school, adaptation to primary school, social adaptation.

INTRODUCTION

When an individual starts primary school, an important phase begins for her educational life. One of the most important criteria for a child to improve in this phase is to have the necessary and sufficient readiness level in all development phases for primary school education. Meisels emphasizes that readiness for school must be regarded as "process that occurs over time and is not complete by the first day of Kindergarten". He states that readiness for school is more than a checklist of skills and conceptual knowledge and more than a set of behaviors that are compliant in the classroom. Meisels keynoted that readiness incorporates all aspects of a child's life that affect child's ability to learn and is focused on relations which means relations among children, parents and educators are important during the transition period to school (Dockette & Perry, 2002). Parallel to Meisels, according to Polat readiness for school is the state when children reach to a maturity level in which they can fulfill what is expected from them at primary school by supporting them in each development phase equally throughout the period that the child is continuing pre-school education (Polat, 2010).

What are expected from a child who has just started school different from the child's home environment are to join tasks that are necessities of his first programmed education, to obey the rules within a discipline plan, to follow the instructions of the teacher, to behave in the frame of some basic rules, to leave his/her mother easily, to communicate with his friends, to fulfill his own self-care needs and most importantly to learn subject matters such as reading-writing, arithmetic. (Polat Unutkan,2006). Whereas some children can succeed this transition easily, some of them need more support to achieve. They have difficulties in leaving their mothers on the first day of school, entering classroom and following what is said in the classroom. The children who have trouble in getting used to their friends and teachers need more time, more understanding and help than the others to adapt the school and class atmosphere (Oktay, 2004). Maturity or readiness concept needs to be dealt with caution at this point. However, it is known that the children who received a good pre-school education adapt the school better. The Ministry of National Education describes its one of the basic purposes of pre-school education as preparing a child to primary school; pre-school education programs are prepared in line with this purpose. Preparing children to primary school, creating a common education atmosphere for children who came from unfavorable environment or families, make the children who receive preschool education more advantages in their readiness for primary school (M.E.B.,2013). In other words, a successful pre-school period makes readiness for primary school and academic success and passing primary school easier. (Liubica, Simona & Katia, 2008; Gürkan,1979; Görmez, 2007).

Social skills that are acquired in pre-school education period are important because for children who pass from pre-school to primary school first grade this process necessitates leaving game childhood and becoming a student of an education process with rules and this is highly stressful. Besides behavioral, cognitive, socio-emotional and physical worries, new tasks and a difficult social environment emerge as the factors that complicate this transition. (Fox, Dunlap & Cushing, 2002). Because of these reasons, readiness process require readiness not only for children but also for their parents, schools and the social environment that the child is in. Moreover, primarily basic health controls (physical examination, eye examination etc.) should be held and should be waited until the child reach a certain degree of social, emotional, cognitive, motor and language maturity (Polat, 2010).

In the light of this information the purpose of this study is to compare social adaptation of children who attended Marmara University Prof. Dr. Ayla Oktay's Preschool Education Application Unit during 2012-2013 academic year when they start primary school by identifying their readiness for primary school.

METHOD

Research Design

In this research study, the single screening model, which is a type of general screening model, was applied. Research models conducted for the identification of the variables are called as single screening models. By means of single screening models, temporal developments and changes can also be identified. Such research

studies are called as longitudinal research studies carried out by means of observations and cross-sectional approaches. In observations, the variable, whose temporal development and change is to be specified, is observed focusing on the same elements or units either continuously or at regular intervals starting from a certain point (Karasar, 2005). This study is a longitudinal study aiming to follow the social adaptation process of primary school children in the 2013-2014 academic year after they attended the Marmara University Prof. Dr. Ayla Oktay Pre-school Education Unit in the 2012-2013 academic year.

Population

The population of the study was comprised of children who completed Marmara University Prof. Dr. Ayla Oktay Pre-school Education Unit in the 2012-2013 academic year and started primary school in the 2013-2014 academic year. Among the total number of 21 children, 8 were female (38%) and the remaining 13 were male (62%).

6 of the children (29%) received two years and 15 of them (71%) received 3 years of pre-school education. 6 children who received 2 years of pre-school education were born between January-March 2008; 15 children who received 3 years of pre-school education were born between April- December 2007. 5 of the children (24%) started to kinder garden at their schools, 1 of them (5%) settled in another country, 15 of them (71%) started first grade. The data of 10 of 15 children who started first grade (48%) could be obtained for longitudinal study from their teachers.

Data Collection Instruments

Marmara Primary School Readiness Test (MPRT): The test was developed by Özgül Polat Unutkan in 2003 as a part of her PhD thesis. The scale was designed and standardized specifically for Turkish children so as to reveal to what extent 60-78-month-old children are ready for the primary school in terms of basic skills and each developmental area included in the scale. The Scale includes two forms that are the Application form and the Development form. The item total, item remaining and discriminant analysis of the scale yielded significant results at the level of p<. 001. The confirmatory factor analysis and the validity analysis of the scale were carried out using the data collected from 1002 children. The Cronbach α value of the Development form was found to be .982 while the Cronbach α value of the Application Form was found to be .930. The Application form is comprised of 5 parts as mathematics, science, sound, drawing and the labyrinth and 74 questions. The questions were prepared in line with application areas needed by the children for the preparation for the primary school. The responses given by the children were scored as (1) if they were correct and (0) if they were incorrect. On the other hand, the Development form includes 4 sub-scales that are mind and language development, socio-emotional development, physical development, and self-care skills as well as 175 items. Each item designed to be filled by teachers or parents has four possible responses related to the frequency of the behavior displayed by the child: always (3 points), often (2 points), sometimes (1 point) and never (0 point). (Unutkan Polat, 2003).

School Social Behavior Scales (SSBS): School Social Behavior Scales were developed by Kenneth W. Merrell in 1993 and translated into Turkish by Yüksel (2009). Aiming to evaluate the levels of social skills of pre-school and primary school children, the scales designed in line with the five-point Likert model is comprised of 65 items. As a result of the linguistic equivalence analysis, each item was found to be significantly related to one another at the level of p<.001. The item total, item remaining and discriminant analysis of the scale revealed significant results at the level of p<.001. The confirmatory factor analysis and the validity analysis of the scale were done using the data collected from 467 students and teachers. The Cronbach α value for both sub-scales was found to be .98. School Social Behavior Scales is comprised of two sub-scales that are social competence and negative social behavior. The Social Competence sub-scale includes three sub-dimensions, such as interpersonal relationship, self-control skill and academic skills while the Negative Social Behaviors sub-scale has three sub-dimensions that are assailant-angry, antisocial-aggressive and destructive-demanding.

Application

The data was collected from children attending the Pre-school Education Unit in the 2012-2013 academic year. The social skills of the children were identified through the “School Social Behavior Scales” (SSBS). On the other

hand, "Marmara Primary School Readiness Test" (MPRT) was focused on to assess children's readiness for primary.

The assessment of the children during the pre-school period was carried out in April, 2013 while their social skills at the primary school was investigated by means of the SSBS in the first term of the 2013-2014 academic year. The scales were administered in 6 months intervals. By this means, the changes and developments of the children participating in this study were observed during six months.

The applications throughout the pre-school period were carried out by their classroom teachers while the primary school applications were done by their classroom teachers at the primary school they were attending at that time.

Data Analysis

The data obtained was analyzed using the SPSS 16.0 statistical package program. The relationship between children's level of social behavior at school and their readiness for primary school as well as the relationship between their social skills in pre-school and primary school were investigated by means of the Spearman's Rho Correlation analysis. Simple linear regression analysis was administered to identify the effect of school maturity as an indicator of social adaptation in primary school. The significance of the data gathered for the study was tested at the level of .05 .

FINDINGS

Table 1: Spearman's Rho Correlation Analysis Done to Identify the Relationship between the Scores of Sub-dimensions of the MPRT and Scores of SSBS Applied in Pre-school

Spearman's rho		Pre-school SC	Pre-school SSB Total	Pre-school SSBS Total
Math	R	,286	-,082	,335
	P	,209	,723	,138
	N	21	21	21
Science	R	,141	-,467*	-,099
	P	,542	,033	,669
	N	21	21	21
Vocal	R	,064	-,149	-,015
	P	,782	,518	,950
	N	21	21	21
Drawing	R	**,454***	-,376	,251
	P	**,039**	,093	,273
	N	**21**	21	21
Labyrinth	R	,424	-,305	,272
	P	,056	,179	,232
	N	21	21	21
Implication Cognitive and Lang. Skills	R	,386	-,283	,305
	P	,084	,214	,179
	N	21	21	21
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	N	**21**	21	21
Labyrinth	R	,424	-,305	,272
	P	,056	,179	,232
	N	21	21	21
Implication	R	,386	-,283	,305
	P	,084	,214	,179
	N	21	21	21
Cognitive and Lang. Skills	R	**,563****	-,295	**,519***
	P	**,008**	,193	**,016**
	N	**21**	21	**21**
Socio-Emotional	R	**,590****	-,365	,428
	P	**,005**	,104	,053
	N	**21**	21	21
Physical	r	**,468***	-,222	,411
	P	**,032**	,334	,064
	N	**21**	21	21
Self-Care	r	,402	-,368	,164
	P	,071	,101	,476
	N	21	21	21
Developmental	r	**,573****	-,338	**,481***

	P	**,007**	,134	**,027**
	N	**21**	21	**21**

As can be realized from the table, the relationship between the scores of MPRT's "drawing" and the scores of the "social competence" sub-scale of the SSBS applied in pre-school *(r=,454; p<.05)* was found to be statistically significant at the level of p<.05 and positively meaningful. The same is also true for the relationship between the scores of the MPRTS's Mind and Langeage sub-dimension and the scores obtained from the "social competence" *(r=,563; p<.01)* and for the total score of the SSBS *(r=.519; p<.05).*

The relationship between the scores of MPRT's "socio-emotional" and the scores of the "social competence" sub-scale of the SSBS applied in pre-school *(r=,590; p<.01)* was found to be statistically significant at the level of p<.01 and positively meaningful; between scores of MPRT's "physical" and the scores of the "social competence" sub-scale of the SSBS applied in pre-school *(r=,468; p<.05)* was found to be statistically significant at the level of p<.01 and positively meaningful.

The relationship between the scores of MPRT's "developmental" and the scores of the "social competence" sub-scale of the SSBS applied in pre-school *(r=,573; p<.01)* and for the total score of the SSBS *(r=,481; p<.05).*

Table 2: Spearman's Rho Correlation Analysis Done to Identify the Relationship between the Scores of Sub-dimensions of the MPRT and Scores of SSBS Applied in Primary School

Spearman's rho		Primary School SC	Primary School SSB	Primary School SSBS Total
Math	r	,763*	-,138	,763*
	P	,010	,704	,010
	N	10	10	10
Science	r	,381	-,208	,195
	P	,278	,564	,589
	N	10	10	10
Vocal	r	,379	,094	,429
	P	,280	,796	,216
	N	10	10	10
Drawing	r	,325	-,507	-,033
	P	,359	,135	,929
	N	10	10	10
Labyrinth	r	,580	-,737*	,193
	P	,079	,015	,593
	N	10	10	10

Implication	r	,854**	-,286	,738*
	P	,002	,423	,015
	N	10	10	10
Cognitive and Lang. Skills	r	,651*	-,215	,563
	P	,041	,550	,090
	N	10	10	10
Socio-Emotional	r	,673*	-,414	,456
	P	,033	,234	,186
	N	10	10	10
Physical	r	,682*	-,563	,391
	P	,030	,090	,263
	N	10	10	10
Self-Care	r	,511	-,488	,429
	P	,131	,152	,216
	N	10	10	10
Developmental	r	,704*	-,306	,595
	P	,023	,390	,070
	N	10	10	10

As can be understood from the table, the relationship between the scores of MPRT's "Math" and the scores of the "social competence" sub-scale of the SSBS applied at the primary school was found to be statistically significant at the level of p<.01 and positively meaningful *(r=,763; p<.01).* The same case also applies the relationship between the scores of the MPRTS's math sub-dimension and the scores obtained from the total score of the SSBS *(r=,763; p<.01)*.

The same is also true for the relationship between the scores of the MPRTS's Implication Dimension and the scores obtained from the "social competence" *(r=,854; p<.01)* and for the total score of the SSBS *(r=,738; p<.01).*

The relationships between the scores of the "social competence" sub-scale of the SSBS applied at the primary school and the scores of MPRT's "Mind and Languages" *(r=,651; p<.05);* "Physical" *(r=,682; p<.05);* "Developmental" *(r=,704; p<.05)* were found to be statistically significant at the level of p<.05 and positively meaningful.

Table 3: Spearman's Rho Correlation Analysis Done to Identify the Relationship of the Scores of the SSBS and its Sub-tests Applied in Pre-school with the Scores of the SBSS and its Sub-tests Applied at Primary School

Spearman's rho		Pre-school SC	Pre-school SSB	Pre-school SSBS Total	Primary School SC	Primary School SSB	Primary School SSBS Total
Pre-School SC	R	1,000	-,434*	,894**	,892**	-,545	,702*
	P	.	,049	,000	,001	,103	,024
	N	21	21	21	10	10	10
Pre-School SSB	R	-,434*	1,000	-,126	-,201	,732*	,142
	P	,049	.	,588	,577	,016	,696
	N	21	21	21	10	10	10
Pre-school SSBS Total	R	,894**	-,126	1,000	,720*	-,276	,683*
	P	,000	,588	.	,019	,440	,029
	N	21	21	21	10	10	10
Primary School SC	R	,892**	-,201	,720*	1,000	-,394	,881**
	P	,001	,577	,019	.	,260	,001
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
Primary School SSB	R	-,545	,732*	-,276	-,394	1,000	,013
	P	,103	,016	,440	,260	.	,972
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10
Primary School SSBS Total	R	,702*	,142	,683*	,881**	,013	1,000
	P	,024	,696	,029	,001	,972	.
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10

The table above shows that there is a positively meaningful and a statistically significant relationship at the level of p<.05and negatively meaningful between the scores of the SSBS's "social competence" sub-scale applied in pre-school and the "negative social behaviors" sub-scale *(r=-,434; p<.05).* The scores of the SSBS's "social competence" sub-scale was also found to be significantly and positively related to the total scores of the SSBS *(r=,894; p<.01);* to the "social competence" scores of the SSBS applied at primary school *(r=,892; p<.01);* and to the total scores of the SSBS *(r=,702; p<.05).*

The scores obtained from the SSBS's "negative social behaviors" sub-scale applied in pre-school were found to be statistically (p<.05) and positively related to the scores obtained from the "negative social behaviors" sub-scale *(r=,732; p<.05)*.

On the other hand, the total scores obtained from the SSBS administered in primary school were found to be statistically (p<.01) and positively related to "social competence" sub-scale administered at pre school *(r=,892; p<.01);* to to the total scores of SSBS *(r=,720; p<.05)* and to the total scores of SSBS administerede at primary school *(r=,881; p<.01).*

Table 4: The Results of the Regression Analysis Showing Whether the School Readiness for Mathematics Levels of Children who Received Pre-school Education Predict Their Levels of School Social Behavior at Primary School

		β	t	p	R^2	F	P
Modal 1	Regression	126,530	8,846	,000	,563	10,318	,012
	Math	,751	3,212	,012			

As can be realized in Table 4, as a result of the regression analysis applied to identify the extent to which the MPRT Math Sub-Scale can justify the total score of the SSBS *(F=10,318; p<,01)*, the model was found to be significant. Thus, the predictive power of MPRT Math Sub-Scale predicting the "the total scores of the SSBS (R^2*=,563; p<.01)* was found to be significant. School readiness for Math justifies around 56% of the social competence levels of the children who started primary school after receiving pre-school education.

Table 5: The Results of the Regression Analysis Showing Whether the School Readiness for Implication Levels of Children who Received Pre-school Education Predict Their Levels of School Social Behavior at Primary School (PS)

		β	t	p	R^2	F	P
Modal 1	Regression	119,345	6,857	,000	,535	9,220	,016
	Implication	,732	3,036	,016			

As can be realized in Table 5, as a result of the regression analysis applied to identify the extent to which the MPRT Implication Scale can justify the total score of the SSBS *(F=9,220; p<,05)*, the model was found to be significant. Thus, the predictive power of MPRT Implication Scale predicting the "the total scores of the SSBS (R^2*=,535; p<.01)* was found to be significant. School readiness for Implıcations justifies around 53% of the social competence levels of the children who started primary school after receiving pre-school education.

Table 6: The Results of the Regression Analysis Showing Whether the School Readiness for Mind and Language Levels of Children who Received Pre-school Education Predict Their Levels of School Social Behavior at Primary School

		β	t	p	R^2	F	P
Modal l 1	Regression	-16,970	-,229	,824	,447	6,457	,035
	Mind and language	,668	2,541	,035			

As can be realized in Table 6, as a result of the regression analysis applied to identify the extent to which the MPRT Mind and Language sub-scale can justify the total score of the SSBS *(F=6,457; p<,05)*, the model was found to be significant. Thus, the predictive power of MPRT Mind and Language predicting the "the total scores of the SSBS (R^2*=,447; p<.01)* was found to be significant. School readiness for Implıcations justifies around 45% of the social competence levels of the children who started primary school after receiving pre-school education.

Table 7: The Results of the Regression Analysis Showing Whether the School Readiness Levels of Children who Received Pre-school Education Predict Their Levels of School Social Behavior at Primary School

		β	t	p	R^2	F	P
Modal 1	Regression	41,937	,760	,469	,407	5,494	,047
	Developmental	,638	2,344	,047			

As can be realized in Table 7, as a result of the regression analysis applied to identify the extent to which the MPRT Developmental Scale can justify the total score of the SSBS *(F=5,494; p<,05)*, the model was found to be significant. Thus, the predictive power of MPRT Developmental Scale predicting the "the total scores of the SSBS (R^2*=,407; p<.05)* was found to be significant. School readiness for Implıcations justifies around 40% of the social competence levels of the children who started primary school after receiving pre-school education.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to compare children's social adaptation when they start primary school by identifying their readiness for primary school. The findings are discussed below in the research questions order. The results of the statistical analysis yielded that readiness for school of 54-66 months old children is an effective factor in primary school social adaptation. A significant correlation was observed between School Social Adaptation scores in pre-school and primary school and social competence, negative social behaviors and SSBS total scores. Besides, having a higher readiness level to primary school in pre-school period affects primary school social skills positively and consequently these children adapt primary school quicker.

It has been reported by many researchers that receiving education to develop social skills during pre-school period affects social emotional development and readiness for school positively (Powless & Eliot, 2002 Metin, 1999; Ayhan, 1998; Unutkan, 2003; Boz, 2004; Atılgan, 2001; Başal, 1998). Bracken, Stacey and Storch (2007), examined the readiness for school of children with social skills and behavior problems. Social skills of children who has received pre-school education as from four years old and have social skills and behavioral problems have improved during pre-school education. It has been stated that linguistic and mathematics skills also have developed and became ready for school. Yüksel et all (2013) indicate that social skills and abilities are effective in children to start school. Uğur (1998) found out that the children who joined kinder garden in private and state schools have higher socialization grades compared to children who didn't receive any pre-school education. . Gürkan (1979), Yazıcı (2002) and Balat Uyanık (2003),indicated that in first grade children who received pre-school education were in better condition in terms of mental, social, emotional development, skills and interests, physical development and health and were adaptive and successful with regards to social behaviors compared to children who didn't get any pre-school education. According to Özbek (2003) study results, there is a significant relationship between first graders who received pre-school education and first graders who didn't in terms of social skills that are need to be gained in primary school which are initiating a relationship and sustaining it, working in groups, skills related to emotions, skills to handle stressful events, planning, problem solving skills, managing self-control in favor of pre-school education group. In addition, it has been proven by several researches that emotional maturity of a child, language improving acvities at home and school, cognitive activities are important for a successful school start (Unutkan, 2003).

This study's other findings; MPRT Math sub-scale, Implication Scale, Mind Langduages Sub-scales and Developmental Scale justifies the social competence levels of the children who started primary school after receiving pre-school education. Akşin (2013) investigated the relation between children's sense of self and their readiness for primary school; the results of the study yielded a positive correlation between children's self-confidence and since of self, and their success in mathematical studies. To put it in a different way, it was observed that the higher a child has a self-confidence and total sense of self scores, the better he becomes at mathematical studies. Wang and Lin (2008) also compared sense of self of children who studies in China and the United States of America and their mathematical success, and found out that ,in both countries a positive relation was obtained between sense of self and mathematical success as a result of anaysis conducted in these countries. Adıbelli (2011) stated that in the report that was prepared together with 52 teachers who were teaching first graders in Merzifon District by Merzifon District National Education Directorate it is reported that common traits of the children who didn't receive pre-school educaiton are having poor skills in expressing themselves, adapting school environment late, underdeveloped hand skills, undeveloped communicaiton skills, having problems with self-confidecne, over dependent to their familaies and shy, having difficultires in understaning concepts, having problems with their self care. Yenilmez and Kakmacı (2008) suggest that individuals with higher reaidness levels understand concept quicker and can comment on the subject matter. Since the individual learns the subject and concepts related to that subject can do homework easily, since he learns the previour subject well he can become ready for the next subject matter. For this reason, an individual's physical needs should be catered and the love and attention that an indivual needs amotionally should be given so that he can have a higher level of readiness (Akt:Harman ve Çelikler; 2011).

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SUGGESTIONS

The suggestions proposed based on the reserah findings;

- Pre-school education is an important process that need to be supported since it affects children's social, cognitive, emotional, physical and self-care skills positively. It is important that pre-school education especially in rural areas and areas in which socioeconomically low-income families live should be extended so that the inequalities in term of readiness for school throughout turkey can be destroyed.
- Instead of using the chronologic age as the only criteria to start primary school, children should take a nationalized and compulsory readiness tests in our country. Children's readiness level to primary school can be identified and children who aren't ready should be supported in terms of the specific fields of development they have not fully developed and it should be determined whether they need to have one or more year of preschool education.
- To raise awareness by preparing seminars, radio and TV broadcasts, families can be made aware of the fact that what is important is children should start school when they are ready, not as soon as possible.
- In pre-school education facilities, the activities that support social skills such as cooperating, controlling themselves, enterprise, problem solving, empathy and activities that support the relationship between the same age groups should be integrated.
- In pre-school period, the activities related to readiness should be inserted as classroom activities.

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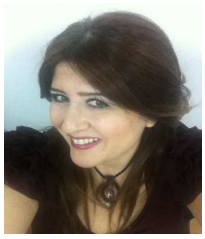

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