Abstract
This research has two dimensions: (1) adaptation of the Matson Evaluation of Social Skills With Youngsters (MESSY) to Turkish and, (2) examination of the relationship between social skills, socio-economic status, gender, and age in 12-14 year-old children. The study was carried out on 526 secondary school students in Ankara. Reliability of MESSY was obtained by test-retest and Cronbach Alpha internal consistency methods; validity was determined by applying correlations with the Social Skills Scale and the Teacher Rating Form. In order to examine the relationships between social skills, socio-economic status, gender and age, three separate two-way analysis of variance were applied. The results revealed that the MESSY was valid and reliable to determine 12-14 year-old children’s social skills. The study showed that general social skills levels of children is significantly related to gender [F (1,524) = 5.13; p < .05]. Further, it was observed that while negative social behaviors are significantly related to age [F (2,523) = 3.62; p < .05], gender and socio-economic status have common effect on positive social behaviors [F (2,521) = 3.15; p < .05].

Key Words
MESSY, Social Skills, Secondary School.

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The increasing amount of research on determining social skill development and social skill deficits in children and adolescents, over recent years, demonstrates the increasing degree of importance given to these issues. However, in the review of literature, it is evident that there is still a lack of consensus on the definition and conceptualization of ‘social skills’ (Bacanli, 1999; Gresham, 1986; McFall, 1982; Merrel, 1999).

The definitions of social skills, currently in use, may be grouped under three separate headings. The first of these is the ‘peer acceptance’ definition, which is based on the concept of acceptance and popularity among peers. This definition maintains that children and adolescents who are accepted by their peers and who are popular in their environment have appropriate social skills. The second grouping is based on the ‘behavioral’ concept of social skills. It is assumed that social skills are behaviors that maximize the probability of reinforcement or decrease the likelihood of punishment of one’s social behaviors within a given situation. Lastly, the ‘social validity’ definition acknowledges social skills as behaviors that help a child or adolescent to predict important social outputs in specific situations. These social outputs included (1) peer acceptance or popularity, (2) judgments of significant others (parents, teachers) concerning the child’s social skills, and (3) other skills related to peer acceptance and the opinion of significant others (Gresham, 1986; Gresham & Reschly, 1998; Gresham, 1997).

Since effective social skills enable a child to relate to others in an appropriate and constructive manner, they are among the most critical aspects of a child’s social and psychological development. Children who experience social skill deficits face a variety of negative consequences, which can be both short and long term. These negative consequences are seen as indicators of more severe problems that may be experienced in adolescence and adulthood (Elliot & Gresham, 1987; Merrel, 1999; Segrin, 2001). Unlike children who have appropriate social skills, children lacking in these skills cannot draw upon alternative methods to solving daily interpersonal problems they may face. They generally use inappropriate behaviors to deal with these problems. On the other hand, children who are more competent in social skills are, in turn, more successful in their social relationships (Herbert, 1996).

Research reveals that social skills deficits may result in unwanted social and psychological developments such as shyness, anxiety (Con-

Study 1

In the first part of the study, the self-report form of the Matson Evaluation of Social Skills with Youngsters [MESSY] Matson, Rotatory, & Hessel, 1983 was adapted into Turkish. The subjects of the study consisted of 180 (89 males, 97 females) students enrolled in 6th, 7th and 8th grades in a secondary school in Ankara. The age range of the students was 12-14. In the first study, the Social Skills Scale (Kocayörük, 2000) and the Teacher Rating Form, which was developed for this study, were used to determine the validity of the MESSY.
The MESSY is a 5-point Likert-type scale that assesses social skills of children and adolescents (Matson, Rotatory, & Hessel, 1983). It has both a self-report and a teacher report forms. The self-report form consists of 62 items and the teacher report form consists of 64 items. The MESSY has 5 factors: (1) appropriate social skills, (2) inappropriate assertiveness, (3) impulsive/recalcitrant, (4) overconfident, and (5) jealousy/withdrawal. Each response is rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “not at all” and 5 being “very much”.

In order to obtain validity, correlational analyses were applied between the Social Skills Scale (Kocayörük, 2000), the Teacher Report Form and the MESSY and factor-analytic procedures were conducted. Reliability of the MESSY was obtained by test-retest and Cronbach Alpha internal consistency methods.

**Results**

**Validity of the MESSY**

**Factor Analysis:** Factors of the MESSY were derived through principal component analysis. According to the results of the factor analysis, unlike the original form, items were loaded in 2 factors. Since the negative items of the MESSY were placed in Factor I, it was called as “Negative Social Behaviors”. Factor II was called as “Positive Social Behaviors” because it covered the positive items of the MESSY. To establish factors, item loadings of 0.30 were retained and other items under 0.30 were removed. The final form of the MESSY consisted of 47 items.

**Correlations between Social Skills Scale, Teacher Rating Form and the MESSY:** To determine discriminant validity of the scale, total scores of the MESSY were correlated with the Social Skills Scale (Kocayörük, 2000). The results revealed a moderate correlation between the MESSY and the Social Skills Scale \( r = .32 (p < .01) \). In factors, while the correlation of Factor I (Negative Social Behaviors) and the Social Skills Scale was .16 \( (p < .05) \), the correlation of Factor II (Positive Social Behaviors) and the Social Skills Scale was found .36 \( (p < .01) \).

In subsequent analyses, total scores of the MESSY were correlated with the Teacher Rating Form. The correlation between total scores of the MESSY and the Teacher Rating Form was .27 \( (p < .01) \). The correlation between Factor I and the Teacher Rating Form was .16 \( (p < .05) \), whereas Factor II and the Teacher Rating Form was .28 \( (p < .01) \).

**Reliability of the MESSY**

**Test-Retest Reliability:** The results of 2-week interval test-retest
procedure showed that the correlation for the total scores of the MESSY were .77 ($p < .01$). Correlations on subscales were .70 ($p < .01$) for Factor I and .74 ($p < .01$) for Factor II. These findings show that the test-retest reliability of the MESSY is statistically significant.

**Internal Consistency**

To determine internal consistency of the MESSY, item analysis was applied. Results revealed that the item total correlation of 41 items were higher than .30. Internal consistency of the scale was .85. For Factor I and Factor II Alpha were found .68, and .74, respectively. These results indicate that internal consistency of the MESSY is significant.

**Discussion**

**Validity of the MESSY:** Although the results of the correlation analysis indicated relatively weak correlations between the MESSY and the Social Skills Scale, the correlations reached statistical significance. The relatively low correlations between these two measures are most likely due to the content differences: the MESSY measures both positive and negative social behaviors in children, whereas the Social Skills Scale appears to be measuring only positive behaviors. Furthermore, the MESSY is a comprehensive instrument that measures various verbal and nonverbal, social and aggressive behaviors, and emphasizes children’s effectiveness in interpersonal relationships without harm to others (Raymond & Matson, 1989). On the other hand, the Social Skills Scale determines whether children acquire certain basic social skills or not, these include engaging in eye-contact, greeting, listening, asking question, initiating a conversation, apologizing, and so on. These differences of emphasis in measurement appear to be the cause of the low correlation between the MESSY and the Social Skills Scale.

The research results revealed the correlations between the MESSY and the Teacher Rating Form range from low to moderate. These findings may result from the difference between the children’s and teachers’ perceptions of social skills. The results showed that the teachers’ ratings of the children’s social skills were lower than the children’s reports of their own social skills. In addition, this low correlation may have resulted from the approach of teachers to the evaluation. According to Bacanli (2002), while evaluating children on one characteristic, teachers generally include other traits such as academic achievement. This may cause them to understate or fail to appreciate a child’s actual social skills level.
Reliability of the MESSY
Whereas the overall findings related to validity and reliability analyses of the MESSY are statistically significant, they are below expectation. In addition to the above explanations, this outcome may have resulted due to the homogeneity of the sample group with respect to their socio-economic status. The sample group on which validity and reliability analyses were conducted, consisted of children only from lower socio-economic status. This situation is reminiscent of the previous study indicating that lower socio-economic status children are different from upper socio-economic status children in terms of the environment in which they develop and use of their social skills (Albayrak-Arin, 1999). According to Albayrak-Arin, children of a lower socio-economic status may experience difficulty in relating the items in the scale with their daily lives. In conclusion, the present data suggest that further analyses should be carried out with different measures in heterogeneous socio-economic samples to determine the validity of the MESSY.

Study 2
In the second study, the relationship of social skills, socio-economic status, age and gender of secondary school students were examined. The subjects of the second study consisted of 526 (244 males, 282 females) students randomly selected from 3 separate secondary schools in Ankara. The age of the students ranged from 12 to 14. Social skills of the students were measured by the Matson Evaluation of Social Skills with Youngsters (MESSY). Socio-economic status of the students was obtained through the Socio-economic Status Scale developed by Bacanli (1997). In order to determine the relationship of social skills, socio-economic status, age and gender, three separate two-way analysis of variance were conducted.

Results
Results revealed no significant relationships between students’ general social skills and age \( F(2,523) = 2.20; p > .05 \), and between general social skills and socio-economic status \( F(2,523) = 2.56; p > .05 \). In addition, it was found that gender and age \( F(2,521) = .99; p > .05 \), and gender and socio-economic status \( F(2,521) = 2.67 p > .05 \) do not have an interactional effect on children’s social skills. However, findings showed that gender has a major affect on general social skills of children \( F(1,524) = 5.13; p < .05 \). The mean scores indicate that girls \( [x = 201 \ (SD = 43.1)] \) are higher than boys \( [x=193 \ (SD = 20.05)] \) on general social skills.
The present data showed that age has a significant effect on Factor I \( F(2,523) = 3.62; p < .05 \), whereas gender \( F(1,524) = 3.34; p > .05 \) and socio-economic status \( F(2,523) = 1.34; p > .05 \) do not. On the other hand, gender and age \( F(2,521) = .86; p > .05 \), gender and socio-economic status \( F(2,521) =1.26; p > .05 \) and, age and socio-economic status \( F(4,520) = 1.04; p > .05 \) do not have an interactional affect on Factor I. Scheffe post-hoc test showed a significant difference between 12 and 14 year old children on Factor I \( p < .05 \). According to the mean of scores on Factor I, 12 year olds (\( x = 104; SD = 48.5 \)) have the highest scores. This group was followed by 13 (\( x = 99; SD =12.06 \)) and 14 (\( x = 934; SD =14.7 \)) year olds, respectively.

Results revealed no relationships between Factor II and gender \( F(1,524) =2.97; p > .05 \), age \( F(2,523) = .32; p > .05 \) and socio-economic status \( F(2,523) = 2.35; p > .05 \). On the other hand, gender and socio-economic status \( F(2,521) = 3.15; p < .05 \) have an interaction affect on Factor II. The mean scores indicate that males of lower (\( x = 97; SD =13.04 \)), middle (\( X = 97, SD =12.3 \)) and upper (\( x = 97; SD = 11.5 \)) socio-economic status have similar scores on Factor II. On the other hand, girls from an upper socio-economic status have higher scores (\( x = 103, SD = 9.8 \)) than the lower socio-economic status girls (\( x = 98, SD =14.3 \)) on Factor II.

**Discussion**

The findings of the study showed that gender has a main effect on general social skills of children. These findings are similar to previous studies related to social skills and socio-economic status (Ford, 1982; Kazdin, Matson & Esveldt-Dawson, 1984; Pellegrini, 1985; Sarason et al., 1985; Matson et al. 1986; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Murphy, 1996; Meijer et al., 2000). This gender difference results from different gender role expectations that males and females face during their socialization period. These expectations shape different behavioral patterns for males and females: while girls are expected to be passive and obedient, boys are expected to be more aggressive and assertive (Serbin, 1983; Dusek, 1987). As a result, it is inevitable that the social skills of males and females differentiate during the socialization process. Supporting this view, findings of earlier studies demonstrated that males showed more aggressive behavior in comparison to females, and females were more effective in their social relationships than boys (Vaughn & Langlois, 1983; Sarason et al., 1985; Allen, Weisberg & Hawkins, 1989).
In the present study, it was found that children’s negative social behaviors decrease by age. This view is supported by the study carried out by Matson, Rotatory, and Hessel during the development of the MESSY (1983). This result was also confirmed by the study of Renshaw and Brown (1993), which revealed that older children behaved more friendly than younger ones. On the other hand, they found that younger children showed more aggressive behaviors than older children.

Finally, the results indicate that socio-economic status has an important role on development of positive social behaviors for female students. However the results of the present study revealed that socio-economic status does not have a significant effect on general social skills of children. This result is consistent with Mott and Krane’s (1994) findings suggesting that there was no difference in children’s social competence related to socio-economic status.

The present study only addresses the relationship between social skills, age, gender and socio-economic status, but other socio-demographic variables need to be investigated. In this way, various variables that affect children’s social skills in our society will be described more clearly, and in turn the effectiveness of social skills trainings will be enhanced.
Kaynakça/References


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