



INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF PARENTAL SUPPORTED PRIMARY SCHOOL PREPARATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to evaluate the effects of the "Parental Supported Primary School Preparation" program, which is designed to increase the school adaptation levels of foreign children. The sample consists of foreign children aged 5-6 who attend preschool education in official independent kindergartens and kindergartens in the central districts of Samsun province and are expected to start primary school the following year. A total of 49 foreign children participated in the study. Parents and teachers of the participating children were also included in the research process. As part of the study, the researcher implemented the "Parental Supported Primary School Preparation" program consisting of 28 activities, delivered two days a week for nine weeks, to the foreign children in the experimental group. The children's parents also received training once a week. Peabody Picture and Vocabulary Test, Child Peer Relations Teacher Evaluation Scale, Social Skills Evaluation Scale, Developmental Primary School Readiness Scale, Primary School Readiness Scale, and School Adjustment Teacher Evaluation Scale were used to collect data in the study. At the same time, interviews were held with the parents and teachers who participated in the training program. The data were analyzed using the SPSS 21.0 package program. It was found that the "Parental Supported Primary School Preparation" program, designed to increase children's school readiness and adaptation levels, significantly improves children's primary school readiness levels. It was also concluded that the program has a positive effect on children's language skills.

Keywords: Adaptation, primary school, foreign nationality, parental support.

INTRODUCTION

Migration which has now reached global dimensions, is one of the most pressing issues affecting societies worldwide. While some instinctive drives such as the pursuit of improved living conditions and security are among reasons that trigger migration, one of the most fundamental motivating factors is the search for better economic conditions. Economic hardships can compel individuals to regions or countries with greater stability and prosperity. In addition to economic factors, other reasons for migration include natural disasters, climate change, and armed conflicts. According to the International Organization for Migration report, approximately 281 million people live outside their country of origin. This rate, which corresponds to approximately 3.6 of the world's population, reveals the extent of migration crisis today (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2024; Şimsek-Ademi & Aslan, 2024).

The civil war that began in Syria in 2011 had significant consequences for Turkey as a neighboring country. Welcomed large numbers of foreign nationals migrating masse (Fansa, 2021a). Mass migrations to Turkey took place in the five years following the Syrian war. As of 2024, there are 3.099.524 foreign nationals under temporary protection, and over one million foreign nationals are granted residence permits in Turkey. It is noteworthy that the number of foreign nationals currently residing in Turkey is over four million. 98% of those holding residence permits are concentrated in 10



provinces. Samsun being among them (Directorate of Immigration Administration, 2024; Sağiroğlu et al., 2021). The number of migrants living in Turkey is substantial and irregular and forced migration have resulted in certain difficulties in various areas. Migration affects not only the displaced population, but also the host country in several ways. The economy and the social structure of the host country are particularly affected by migration. Job seeking process, labor force participation, and social integration efforts affect both the immigrants and the native residents of the country (Başar et al., 2018).

Although migration is defined in the most general sense as a displacement movement. It is a phenomenon with multiple dimensions affecting various structures of society (Özdemir, 2008). Irregular and forced migration pose challenges across multiple domains, including education. Indeed, the number of foreign-born school-age children is substantial. According to the General Directorate of Migration Management, there are over one million migrant children of school age in Turkey. As of January 2022, 935.731 of these children have been registered in schools. Migration affects both adults and children in distinct ways. Children's adaptation to school in their new environment involves unique dynamics. Studying in a different country presents specific adaptation challenges for foreign national children.

Studies examining the adaptation of foreign children to school show that children experience challenges such as language barriers, difficulties in socializing with their peers, behavioral problems, problems arising from cultural differences, and problems originating from teachers' attitudes. It is also seen that the lack of communication between the teachers and the families of foreign children in terms of school-family cooperation makes it difficult for children to adapt to school. Moreover, foreign children who occasionally encounter negative attitudes displayed by other children or teachers at school may be exposed to peer bullying, marginalization, or social exclusion. In addition, children can experience difficulties in communication due to barriers. When such challenges accumulate, they paint a deeply concerning picture in terms of migrant children's adaptation process (Alkalay et al., 2021; Avcı, 2019; Başar et al., 2018; Delen & Ercoşkun, 2019; Dolapçı, 2019; Özdoğru et al., 2021; Sağlam & İlksen Kanbur, 2017). To address these challenges, developing intervention programs starting from the preschool period is crucial, as the majority of school-aged foreign children attend preschool and primary school, encompassing early childhood (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Especially at the first-grade level where children begin learning to read and write, foreign born children face distinct problems that hinder the acquisition of these foundational skills. Language barriers are major determinant of academic performance. So much so that language problems in the classroom environment are reflected in the relationships of foreign children with both their teachers and their peers (Fansa, 2021b; Telsaç et al., 2022). Teachers have reported that foreign children experience exclusion and behavioral problems in terms of socializing with their peers (Baysal & Çimşir, 2020; İmamoğlu & Çalışkan, 2017; Sarier, 2020). In their study on the challenges faced by foreign children in primary schools, Selbes & Selbes (2023) revealed that children experience reluctance to participate in social activities, difficulties in adapting to school culture, and problems related to self-confidence. Similarly, Delen and Ercoşkun (2019) conducted a study on the children who exhibited such behaviors where also experiencing academic and communication problems. In this context, it is also important to highlight the role of parental support, particularly in relation to homework.

At the first-grade level, parental support is especially important for helping children acquire foundational literacy skills compared to other grade levels. Teachers who work with foreign children at the first-grade level can encounter challenges such as the inability to communicate with families and the disinterest of parents in school activities. Studies have shown that migrant families face various challenges related to school cooperation, particularly due to the lack of school-family communication (Akgöz & Dağyar, 2023; Doğan & Özdemir, 2019; İmamoğlu & Çalışkan, 2017; Kaya, 2022; Koşak & Atasoy, 2022; Sarıtaş et al., 2016; Silgan, 2022; Turan & Polat, 2017; Yıldız Yılmaz & Demir, 2021). Many factors such as the low level of education of foreign families, poverty,



lack of access to social security, and cultural differences make it difficult for their children to establish a firm relationship with their schools (Ereş, 2015). In addition, families often refrain from participating in the school-family cooperation due to factors such as cultural differences and language barriers (Güngör & Şenel, 2018). It is essential for foreign nationals to learn the Turkish language in order to adapt to both public and social life in Turkey.

When viewed from the perspective of parents a range of difficulties become evident, such as lack of motivation due to limited communication, not being able to receive the guidance and counseling services needed due to language barriers, inability to express themselves well, exclusion, peer bullying, loss of self-confidence, and inadequate communication with teachers (Chuang et al., 2011). In addition to the stress caused by migration and the problems experienced within the family, the aforementioned difficulties also negatively affect their children's education. The economic conditions of families are a significant stress factor within the household and can directly or indirectly affect the child. Furthermore, parents' low education level is also a negative influence on children's academic performance (Telsaç et al., 2022).

As is the case for every child, early childhood is a critical period during which certain acquisitions are more easily achieved for foreign-born children. It is a well-established fact that experiences and achievements gained at these ages significantly influence the child's future academic life. Studies have shown that a child's adaptation to school affects his/her attitude towards school, social-emotional adjustment and consequently, his/her future academic success (Baker, 2006; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Buhs, 2005; Erten, 2012; Jimenez et al., 2009; Ladd & Price, 1987; Murray et al., 2008; Perry & Weinstein, 1998).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to facilitate the transition to primary school, which is a turning point for children. It is also important to evaluate the effectiveness of the Parental Supported Primary School Preparation program implemented to foreign-born children starting from the preschool period. In addition to enhancing children's readiness for primary school, the program aims to foster the development of their peer relationships, language skills and social skills. Furthermore, the study aims to provide foreign parents with information on various topics, such as how they can support different aspects of their children's development, the Turkish education system, and school-family cooperation. For this purpose, the study seeks to answer the following research question: Does the Parental Supported Primary School Preparation program significantly improve the school readiness, language skills, social skills, and school adjustment of foreign national children?

METHOD

Research Design

The study was designed using the mixed method approach, which uses both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. The convergent parallel design was chosen in this study is to give equal emphasis to both qualitative and quantitative methods and to allow these two methods to complement each other, thereby obtaining stronger findings. To understand the effects of the Parental Supported Primary School Preparation program on the adaptation of 5–6-year-old foreign children to primary school, an experimental design involving pretest, posttest and retention measurement was employed. In the qualitative dimension of the study, interviews were conducted with the parents and teachers of the foreign children to explore the education program's effects. Quantitative and qualitative data were obtained compared and interpreted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the program's outcomes (Creswell, 2017).

Experimental research allows researchers to go beyond mere explanation and prediction. The effects of the independent variable on participants are examined across both experimental and control groups. Similarly, pretests and posttests are administered to both groups to measure changes. While the training program is implemented with the experimental group, no action is taken in the control group (Ocak, 2019). In order to assess the long-term effects of the program, retention tests were later conducted with both the experimental and control groups.



Population and Sample

The population of the research consisted of foreign children aged 5-6 who were enrolled in their preschool education in official independent kindergartens and nursery classes in the central districts of Samsun province in the 2022-2023 academic year and who were expected to begin primary school the following year. A total of 49 foreign children, along with their parents and teachers, were included in the sample. While determining the sample, the criterion sampling method, which is a type of purposeful sampling, was used. The criterion sampling method involves selecting individuals and cases based on certain predefined criteria. Accordingly, only those individuals and cases that met the established criteria were included in the scope of the research (Büyüköztürk et al., 2017). While selecting the sample, information was obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education regarding schools with a high concentration of foreign children. Information about the number of foreign children and their school attendance was obtained by interviewing the school administrators and teachers. The schools with the highest concentration foreign children and verified attendance of these children were selected. The findings concerning the demographic characteristics of the foreign children included in the research sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of demographic characteristics of foreign national children in the experimental and control groups.

		Experimental Group		Control Group	
		n	%	n	%
Gender	Girl students	12	44.40	11	50.00
	Boy students	15	55.60	11	50.00
	Total	27	100	22	100
Age	65-70 months	10	37.00	10	45.50
	71 months and above	17	63.00	12	54.50
	Total	27	100	22	100
Number of Siblings	1 Sibling	13	48.10	7	31.80
	2 Siblings	7	25.90	8	36.40
	3 Siblings	3	11.10	4	18.20
	4 and above Siblings	4	14.80	3	13.60
	Total	27	100	22	100
Where he came from country	Iraq	27	100	22	100
	Total	27	100	22	100
To school continue	1 year	13	48.10	10	45.50
	2 years	14	51.90	12	54.50
	Total	27	100	22	100
Mother's education status	Illiterate	10	37.00	6	27.30
	Primary School/Secondary School	16	59.30	16	72.70
	High school and above	1	3.7	-	-
	Total	27	100	22	100
Father's education status	Illiterate	8	29.60	3	13.60
	Primary School/Secondary School	12	44.40	12	54.50
	High school and above	7	25.90	7	31.80
	Total	27	100	22	100
Income	0-10.000	8	29.60	8	36.40
	10.001-20.000	15	55.60	10	45.50
	20.001-25.000	4	14.80	4	18.20
	Total	27	100	22	100

Approximately half of the children participating in the study were girls (44.40%) and half were boys (55.60%). Regarding the ages of the children participating in the study, it was observed that most of the children were 71 months or older (63.00%), while the others were 65-70 months old (37.00%).



When examining the number of siblings, it was found that most of the children (48.10%) have one sibling. From the other half, 25.00%, have two siblings. All of the children came from Iraq. Approximately half of the children (51.90%) had attended kindergarten for two years, while the other half (48.10%) had attended for one year. More than half of the mothers participating in the study (59.30%) had completed primary or secondary school education, while 37% were illiterate. Less than half of the fathers (44.40%) had completed primary or secondary school education, while the other half, 29.90%, were illiterate, and 25.90% had attained high school degree or higher. Most of the families (85.20%) have low or very low income, while 14.80% have middle income status.

Data Collection Tools

Demographic Information Form

Information regarding the children's age, gender, nationality, school starting age, and the date of arrival in Turkey collected through a demographic information form. Personal information about parents and teachers was obtained verbally at the outset.

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (4-12 Years Old)

The Peabody Picture and Vocabulary Test implemented to assess the language competence and vocabulary skills of the children included in the study. In this test, the extent of children's language development and vocabulary knowledge are measured through picture-based prompts. The child is asked to identify words associated with the picture cards they are presented with. The child is given a word, and must point to the picture that best represents that word and is awarded one point for each correct response. If the child answers six out of the last eight questions incorrectly, the test is discontinued. The total number of correct answers by one child constitutes the raw score. The test consists of two different forms: A-Form for under eight years of age (100 items) and B-Form for children over eight years of age (150 items). For each item, the child is presented with a word that corresponds to one of four pictures on the card and is scored based on the total number of correct answers.

Child Peer Relations Teacher Rating Scale (4-6 years old)

The Child Peer Relations Teacher Rating Scale was used to evaluate the peer relationships of children in early childhood, specifically those aged 4 to 6. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Atış-Akyol & Karaman (2021), and developed by conducting a Teacher Checklist of Peer Relationships (TCPR) study. The scale consists of 18 items and three sub-dimensions (Peer Relations, Aggression, Social Skills). The items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type as "1-Never true", "2-Rarely true", "3-Sometimes true", "4-Often true", "5-Always true". The lowest possible score is 18, and the highest is 90. The Peer Relations sub-dimension consists of six items and its internal consistency coefficient is .85. The Aggression sub-dimension consists of five items and its internal consistency coefficient is .88. The Social Skills sub-dimension consists of eight items and its internal consistency coefficient is .94 (Atış-Akyol & Karaman, 2021). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient calculated for the entire scale using the data obtained in this study is .82.

Social Skills Assessment Scale (4-6 years old)

The Social Skills Assessment Scale was used to assess the social skills of preschool children. The scale was developed by Avcioğlu (2007) through a literature review and consultations with experts, and it consists of 62 items and nine sub-dimensions. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale "5-Always does it", "4-Very often does it", "3-Usually does it", "2-Very rarely does it" and "1-Never does it". The lowest possible score on the scale is 62, and the highest is 310. A low score indicates that the child does not possess sufficient social skills, while a high score reflects well-developed social skills. The Interpersonal Skills (IS) sub-dimension consists of 15 items and its internal consistency coefficient is .95. The Skills of Controlling Anger Behavior and Adapting to Change (KDKEDUSB) sub-dimension consists of 11 items and its internal consistency coefficient is .94. The Skills for Coping with Peer Pressure (CPP) sub-dimension consists of 10 items and its internal consistency coefficient is .92. The Verbal Explanation Skills (VES) sub-dimension consists of seven items and its internal consistency coefficient is .91. The Self-Control Skills (SCC) sub-dimension



consists of four items and its internal consistency coefficient is .85. The Goal Setting Skills (GFS) sub-dimension consists of three items and its internal consistency coefficient is .95. The Listening Skills (LS) sub-dimension consists of five items and its internal consistency coefficient is .87. The Task Completion Skills (TSC) sub-dimension consists of three items and its internal consistency coefficient is .78. The Skills for Accepting Consequences (SKEB) sub-dimension consists of four items and its internal consistency coefficient is .88. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient for the entire scale is .98 (Avcıoğlu, 2007). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient calculated for the entire scale using the data obtained in this study is .87.

Developmental Elementary School Readiness Scale (44-69 months)

The Developmental Elementary School Readiness Scale was created by Sak and Yorgun (2020) based on High Scope basic development indicators and a literature review. The scale consists of 59 items and eight sub-dimensions. The items are rated on a 4-point Likert -type scale: "4-Very good", "3-Good", "2-Bad" and "1-Very bad". The lowest possible score is 59 and, the highest is 236. A low total score indicates that the child's primary school readiness levels are low, while a high score indicates that their primary school readiness levels are high. The Learning Approach sub-dimension consists of six items and the internal consistency coefficient is .95. The Social and Emotional Development sub-dimension consists of seven items and the internal consistency coefficient is .93. The Physical Development and Health subdimension consists of eight items and the internal consistency coefficient is .96. The Language, Literacy and Communication subdimension consists of seven items and the internal consistency coefficient is .95. The Mathematics subdimension consists of 12 items and the internal consistency coefficient is .97. The Creative Arts subdimension consists of five items and the internal consistency coefficient is .93. The Science and Technology subdimension consists of seven items and the internal consistency coefficient is .96. The Social Sciences subdimension consists of seven items and the internal consistency coefficient is .94. The total reliability coefficient calculated for all items of the scale is .96 (Sak & Yorgun, 2020). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient calculated for the entire scale using the data obtained in this study is .94.

Primary School Readiness Scale (1st Grade)

The Primary School Readiness Scale was used to measure the readiness levels of first grade primary school children. The scale was developed by Canbulat and Kırıktas (2016) based on a literature review. The scale consists of 33 items and four sub-dimensions. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale: "Completely-sufficient=5, Sufficient=4, Moderately sufficient=3, Partially sufficient=2, and" Not sufficient=1". The lowest possible score is 33, and the highest is 165. A higher score indicates greater level of school readiness among children. The Cognitive Skills sub-dimension consists of 17 items and its internal consistency coefficient is .98. The Affective Skills sub-dimension consists of eight items and its internal consistency coefficient is .97. The Psychomotor Skills sub-dimension consists of three items and its internal consistency coefficient is .96. The Self-Care Skills sub-dimension consists of five items and it's .96. The total internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .99 (Canbulat & Kırıktas, 2016). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient calculated for the entire scale using the data obtained in this study is .86.

School Adjustment Teacher Evaluation Scale (5-6 years old)

The School Adjustment Teacher Evaluation Scale was used to assess the school adjustment of children aged 5 to 6 years. The scale was developed by Önder and Gülay (2010) through an adaptation study and it consists of 25 items and four sub-dimensions (Liking School, Cooperative Participation, Avoiding School, Self-directedness). The items are rated on a 3-point Likert-type scale: "1-Not Appropriate," "2-Sometimes Appropriate," and "3-Completely Appropriate." The lowest possible score is zero and the highest score is 50. Higher scores indicate a greater, level of school adjustment. The Liking School subscale consists of five items and its internal consistency coefficient is .81. The Cooperative Participation sub-dimension consists of eight items and its internal consistency coefficient is .84. The Avoiding School sub-dimension has five items and its internal consistency coefficient is .73. The Self-directedness sun-dimension consists of 7 items and its internal consistency coefficient is .67. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the entire scale



is .70 (Önder & Gülay, 2010). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient calculated for the entire scale using the data obtained in this study is .74.

Teacher Interview Form

Interviews were conducted with teachers in order to examine the effects of the Parental Supported Primary School Preparation program as observed in the classroom. Interview questions were prepared based on the literature review and needs analysis. Teachers were asked questions about their professional experiences with foreign children, the adaptation of foreign children to school, school-family cooperation, and the education program.

Parent Interview Form

Interviews were conducted with the parents in order to examine the effects of the Parental Supported Primary School Preparation program. Interview questions were prepared based on the literature review and needs analysis. Parents were asked questions regarding their knowledge of the education system, school-family cooperation, their children's adaptation to school, and the education program.

Data Collection

Upon the submission of the research proposal, the necessary application was made to the Ethics Committee of the Ondokuz Mayıs University Institute of Social and Human Sciences. Following the permission issued by the Ethics Committee of the Ondokuz Mayıs University Institute of Educational Sciences, a permission was requested from the Samsun Provincial Directorate of National Education. After the permission process was completed, the necessary meetings were held with the Provincial Directorate of National Education to identify schools with the highest number of foreign children. Among these, the school with the large population of foreign children was selected for the study.

Prior to the implementation, an introductory brochure and invitation translated into Arabic about the program were distributed to the parents of foreign. Parents were invited to the school for an orientation and information meeting. During this meeting, the parents were introduced to the program, and an informative presentation lining educational content of the program was held. The presentation was prepared in both Turkish and Arabic. In addition, an Arabic speaking translator participated in the process throughout the education program to provide interpretation where necessary. At the initial meeting, the parents were asked to fill out the "Parent Consent Form". Both parents and teachers were informed about the purpose of the study and the measurement tools to be used. In the following weeks, the education program was implemented for both parents and children. The program lasted a total nine weeks. In the final week, certificates were presented to the parents of the participating children in a small ceremony.

The curriculum of the program consisted of the following main topics: Introduction, My Body/Features, Family/Home, My School/Classroom, Food/Drinks, Weather/Seasons, and Games. Four subtopics are listed under each main topic. Activities were carefully designed to support various areas of development. However, as it was became evident during the program that children particularly needed to be supported in their language development and social skills, a greater number of activities were designed and incorporated these areas. The curriculum was implemented over nine-week period, including an "Introduction" week at the beginning and a "Closing" week at the end.

Analysis of Data

In the study, the triangulation method was employed. Qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis. Content analysis is the process of assigning common labels to consistent segments of data. The coding process includes segmenting, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and correlating the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Initially, codes were generated based on the raw data. These codes were then grouped into main themes and categorized according to their frequency of occurrence. Findings were derived the data obtained through the analyses. To enhance internal reliability, direct quotes from participants were included.

To examine the effects of the Parental Supported Primary School Preparation program on children's school adaptation, the ANOVA test was conducted. Quantitative data of the study were analyzed



using the SPSS 20.0 statistical software package. In the analysis of the data, the normality of the distribution of the scores obtained from the experimental and control groups was first determined using the Kolmogorov Smirnov and Shapiro Wilk tests. The result of normality analyses, indicated that the data were normally distributed. An independent samples t- test was conducted to determine the differences in pretest scores between two groups. In order to determine whether there was a significant difference among the pretest, posttest and retention test scores of the children in the experimental and control groups, a one-way repeated measures ANOVA test was performed.

Validity and Reliability

The study aimed to accurately reflect the existing situation, without bias. The principle of flexibility was taken into consideration and additional questions were included in the interviews in order to verify the information obtained when necessary. In addition, the collected data were systematically reported to obtain findings and to ensure that the findings formed a meaningful whole both internally and within in their contextual environment in which they were obtained. The triangulation method was employed to enhance the validity of the research, and the data obtained in the quantitative part of the research was supported with qualitative findings.

To strengthen the, internal reliability, direct quotes from participants were included, these quotations, were coded based on the frequency of parent responses. Themes were then developed based on the identified codes. The participating children and their parents were observed throughout the implementation of the education program, and detailed notes were taken. In order to ensure the external validity of the research, comprehensive descriptions regarding the participants interviewed, the role of the researcher, and data collection and analysis methods were provided (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

RESULTS

Results of Unrelated Samples t-Test Based on Pretest Scores for All Tests

There was no significant difference between the scores the children received on the School Adjustment Test [$t_{(47)}=.87, p>.05$], Developmental Primary School Readiness Test [$t_{(47)}=-.21, p>.05$], Peabody Picture and Vocabulary Test [$t_{(47)}=.56, p>.05$], Peer Relations Test [$t_{(47)}=.79, p>.05$], and Social Skills Test [$t_{(47)}=-.18, p>.05$]. Therefore, it can be concluded that the experimental and control groups were statistically equivalent. The analysis results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Pretest scores of experimental and control groups

Pretest	Group	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	df	t	p
Adaptation to School	Experiment	27	26.33	5.08	47	.87	.38
	Control	22	24.95	5.89			
DPSR	Experiment	27	148.29	38.91	47	-.21	.83
	Control	22	150.40	28.96			
Peabody Picture and Vocabulary Test	Experiment	27	27.51	8.88	47	.56	.57
	Control	22	26.13	7.99			
Peer Relationships	Experiment	27	53.25	8.07	47	.79	.43
	Control	22	51.36	8.69			
Social Skills	Experiment	27	198.63	25.70	47	-.18	.85
	Control	22	200.18	32.29			

* $p<.05$

Results of Paired Samples t-Test for School Adjustment and Developmental Primary School Readiness Scale

When the scores for the School Adjustment Scale were examined, a significant increase was observed in the experimental group [$t_{(47)}=-10.65, p<.05$] and the control group [$t_{(47)}=-10.09, p<.05$]. The effect size indicates that the difference is very large for both the experimental group ($d=2.05$) and the control group ($d=2.15$). When the total scores of the children on the Developmental Primary School Readiness Scale are examined, a significant increase is observed for both the experimental group [$t_{(47)}=-20.08, p<.05$] and the control group [$t_{(47)}=-9.45, p<.05$]. The calculated effect size shows that



this difference is very large for both the experimental group ($d=3.86$) and the control group ($d=2.01$). The analysis results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Experimental and control group school adjustment and developmental primary school readiness pretest posttest scores

Test / Scale	Group	n	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	df	t	P
Adjustment to School	Experiment	27	26.31	31.55	26	-10.65	.00
	Control	22	24.95	27.00	21	-10.09	.00
DPSR	Experiment	27	148.29	178.07	26	-20.08	.00
	Control	22	150.40	156.54	21	-9.45	.00

* $p<.05$

The ANOVA Results Conducted on Comparison of Pretest - Posttest - Retention Test Scores

When the results of the Peabody Picture and Word test were examined, it was observed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances of the difference between scores (sphericity assumption) was not met in the experimental group (Mauchly's $W=.47$, $p<.05$). In this case, Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied. In the control group (Mauchly's $W=.84$, $p>.05$), it was observed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances for the differences between scores (sphericity assumption) is met. The analysis results are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Peabody picture and vocabulary test

Group	(1) Pre-test		(2) Post-test		(3) Retention-Test		df	F	p	Significant difference
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.				
Experiment	27.51	1.71	38.37	2.12	43.03	2.37	26	314.16	.00	1-2/, 1-3/, 2-3
Control	26.13	1.70	30.04	1.66	33.50	1.94	21	290.50	.00	1-2/, 1-3/, 2-3

* $p<.05$

According to the results of the repeated measures ANOVA with Greenhouse-Geisser correction, there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of the experimental group [$F_{(1.30-34.04)}=253.78$, $p<.05$]. Similarly, there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of the control group [$F_{(2-42)}=114.58$, $p<.05$]. The calculated effect size for the experimental group ($\eta^2=.90$) indicates 90% of the difference. The calculated effect size for the control group ($\eta^2=.84$) indicates 84% of the difference. When the means of the experimental group are compared, a significant increase is observed between the pretest and posttest, pretest and retention test, as well as between posttest and retention test. In the control group, a significant increase is observed between the pretest and posttest, pretest and retention test, as well as posttest and retention test environments.

Peer Relationship Pretest – Posttest - Retention Test

When the results of the Peer Relationship test were examined, it was observed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances of the differences between scores (sphericity assumption) was not met in the experimental group (Mauchly's $W=.62$, $p<.05$) and control group (Mauchly's $W=.50$, $p<.05$). In this case, the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied. The analysis results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Peer relationship test pretest, posttest and retention test scores of children

Group	(1) Pre-test		(2) Post-test		(3) Retention-Test		df	F	p	Significant difference
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.				
Experiment	53.25	1.55	63.74	1.48	64.14	1.34	26	2019.02	.00*	1-2/, 1-3
Control	51.36	1.85	54.81	1.82	54.59	2.17	21	863.84	.01*	1-2

* $p<.05$



According to the results of the repeated measures ANOVA with Greenhouse-Geisser correction, there was a statistically significant difference between the scores the experimental group [$F_{(1.47-38.20)}=75.69$, $p<.05$] and the control group [$F_{(1.34-28.16)}=4.82$, $p<.05$]. The calculated effect size ($\eta^2=.74$) indicates 74% of the difference for the experimental group. The calculated effect size for the control group ($\eta^2=.18$) indicates 18% of the difference. When the means of the experimental group are compared, a significant increase is observed between the pretest and posttest, as well as between pretest and retention test. In the control group, a significant increase is observed between the pretest and posttest environments.

Social Skills Pretest - Posttest - Retention Test

When the results of the Social Skills test were examined, it was observed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances of differences between scores (sphericity assumption) was met in the experimental group (Mauchly's $W=.91$, $p>.05$). In the control group (Mauchly's $W=.55$, $p<.05$), it was observed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances of differences between scores (sphericity assumption) was not met. In this case, Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied. The analysis results are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Social skills test pretest, posttest and retention test scores of children

Group	(1) Pre-test		(2) Post-test		(3) Retention-Test		df	F	p	Significant difference
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.				
Experiment	198.63	4.94	224.07	4.70	231.33	4.69	26	2111.67	.00*	1-2/, 1-3/, 2-3
Control	200,18	6.88	204.86	6.65	208.72	6.57	21	934.13	.00*	1-2, 1-3/, 2-3

* $p<.05$

According to the results of the repeated measures ANOVA with Greenhouse-Geisser correction, there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of the experimental group [$F_{(2-52)}=470.16$, $p<.05$]. There was a significant difference between the control group scores [$F_{(1.38-29.08)}=49.45$, $p<.05$]. The calculated effect size for the experimental group ($\eta^2=.95$) indicates 95% of the difference. The calculated effect size for the control group ($\eta^2=.77$) indicates 77% of the difference. When the means of the experimental group are compared, a significant increase is observed between the pretest and posttest, pretest and retention test, as well as posttest and retention test. In the control group, a significant increase is observed between the pretest and posttest, pretest and retention test, as well as posttest and retention test environments. It the control group there is a significant increase.

Results of Unrelated Samples t-Test for Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores of Children in Experimental and Control Groups Implemented with Parental Supported Primary School Preparation Program

The t-test for unrelated samples was used to compare the pretest and posttest scores of the children's primary school readiness. The analysis results calculated as a result of the test are given in Table 7.

Table 7. School readiness scores

Test / Scale	Group	n	Mean	df	t	P
To Primary School Readiness	Experiment	27	92.44	47	2.25	.02*
	Control	22	76.27			

* $p<.05$

The Primary School Readiness Test were examined, a significant difference was observed between the mean scores of the experimental group (Mean=92.44) and the control group (Mean=76.27).

Views of Parents Participating in the Parental Supported Primary School Preparation Program

The findings from the interviews with parents are categorized under the following headings: Parents' awareness of the Turkish education system, Parents' awareness of the importance of preschool education, Problems experienced by foreign national children in adapting to school, School-family collaboration, and Contributions of parent-supported education program.



a) Parents' Awareness of the Turkish Education System

When the parents who participated in the study were asked to share their general knowledge about the Turkish education system, all stated that they did not have any prior understanding of the education system in Turkey before their children started school. Some of the parents particularly emphasized the attention their children received in schools in Turkey and noted the lack of kindergartens in their country of origin:

“No, I didn’t know. The education system there and the one here are very different. They take care of the children here and teach everything better. There was no kindergarten there.” (K6)

b) Parents' Awareness of the Importance of Preschool Education

The findings regarding parents’ awareness of the importance of preschool education were categorized under the themes of the language acquisition, socialization, and preparation for primary school.

Language acquisition: Parents reported that their children are learning the Turkish language and that they are socializing with their peers. This was expressed as follow:

“He improved significantly in Turkish. He used to be very shy, but now he’s more confident. I also benefited a lot. He did not have any friends at home, he has them here.” (K9)

Socialization: Parents mostly sent their children to preschool for socialization:

“He didn’t have any friends. I sent him to kindergarten so that he can have friends. He can mingle with the children, play games, make friends, and learn Turkish.” (K13)

Preparation for primary school: Some of the parents expressed that it is important to enroll their children in preschool education in terms of preparation for primary school:

“The most important thing is for him to be prepared for primary school. I will be enrolling him to the first grade so that he can learn to read and write more easily.” (K3)

c) Problems Experienced by Foreign National Children in Adapting to School

Parents who participated in the study stated that the most common problems they experienced in terms of their children’s adaptation to school were language-related. The vast majority of parents who participated in the study stated that their children did not have a good command of the Turkish language:

“It is difficult to not know Turkish. When my son started school, I could not understand what the teacher was saying. There is a Turkish class but I cannot attend because I have children. I do not go out alone.” (K2)

Parents who had some prior knowledge of Turkish stated that they did not have any difficulty with the language when their children started school:

“We are Turkmens; we know and understand Turkish. It was good for us to know Turkish. It would have been very difficult if we didn’t. Children need support with their homework.” (K1)

d) School-Family Collaboration

The majority of parents participating in the study stated that they had problems supporting their children at home due to limited language proficiency and literacy skills:

“My sister-in-law helps me and my son. She translates. That’s how I do my child’s homework.” (K3)

Parents who spoke Turkish, on the other hand stated that they were able to support their children at home:

“We play games, spend time together, I speak Turkish. When I have difficulty, the teachers help, I come to them and talk.” (K15)

Literacy: Some of the parents had difficulty supporting their children because they were illiterate:



"I wish I could read and write. Children need support with their homework. When the teacher gives homework, I check the WhatsApp group on my phone. It would be better if I had more information about school." (K1)

"I need help with the language. I can read and write Arabic, but I don't know Turkish. We learned Arabic at school." (K3)

The parents stated that they received support from their relatives in obtaining information:

Relatives: It is observed that most of the parents who stated that they received support from their relatives in terms of obtaining information were parents who did not know Turkish well:

"My father and sister came before us. It's been 10 years. They helped us. When the children started school, I didn't have much difficulty." (F9)

Contacting the teacher: Almost all of the parents who participated in the study stated that they contacted their children's teachers via WhatsApp groups. All but one parent stated that teachers provided support:

"We have a WhatsApp group, we talk there. We communicate with the teacher there. The teacher helps us from there when we have questions. There is also a translator, who is one of the mothers." (K3)

One person expressed that they had no communication with the teacher as follows:

"No. We just bring my child and pick him up. Sometimes we talk., but there is no cooperation with teachers. For example, teachers do not help with homework." (K1)

e) Contributions of Parent-Supported Education Program to Parents

Child-parent communication: The vast majority of parents who participated in the training program stated that the program had positive effects on their communication with their children. Similarly, the vast majority of parents reported that they socialized with other parents thanks to the training program and that the training program contributed to learning the Turkish language:

"I learned to play games with my child. He says let's do homework together. He wants to do homework with me. We learn new words. I got to know other parents in the course as well." (K1)

Socialization: Some of the parents stated that the education program enabled them to socialize with other parents:

"I didn't know the other mothers at all, but now I have met them. We had a good time with them." (K1)

"I made friends here that I didn't know before. I would like the program to continue." (K18)

Learning the Language: Some of the parents expressed that the education program contributed to their acquisition of the Turkish language with the following statements:

"It helped me to speak Turkish. I learned about preschool education here. It helped me to communicate with my child. We did homework together." (K7)

Teachers' Views on the Parent-Supported Education Program

The findings from the interviews with teachers are categorized under the following headings: Findings related to foreign children, foreign parents, teachers and the education program.

f) Findings Regarding Foreign National Children

Number of foreign children in the classroom: All teachers emphasized to the number of foreign children in their classrooms:

"The reason that there are more foreign children than Turkish children in my class is that there are many foreign families living in our region. It is better for us teachers if the number of children were more balanced." (T1)



“At first, the Afghan children were a minority. We could integrate them. This year, there were suddenly 10 children, more than the Turkish children. Their numbers increase every year, but this year it was even more intense.” (T2)

Adaptation of foreign children: The problems experienced by foreign children during adaptation can be categorized under language problems and behavioral problems:

“When they first arrived, we had problems due to the language barrier. They speak the language they speak at home. Almost all of the children in my class were born in Turkey. That's why they don't know the country they came from. They know their country from their elders. In the past, those who came had behavioral problems such as hitting and breaking things because of the war environment they witnessed.” (T1)

“The most difficult thing for me while working with foreign children was that they did not know the language. It was difficult not being able to communicate with them. They learned it at school. They are generally well-adjustment now.” (T2)

g) Findings Regarding Foreign Parents

School-family collaboration: All teachers expressed that they had difficulties in terms of school-family collaboration with the following words:

“They cannot provide much support because they cannot read or write. We are trying to solve this by sending them voice messages, explaining the content of the homework and asking them to do it accordingly.” (T2)

h) Findings Regarding Teachers

Education status: Teachers did not participate in any training:

“No, I didn't participate in prior training. The children came seven years ago. We all learned something together as we went along. Unfortunately, there was no preparation for this” (T2).

“We had no prior knowledge. We did not know how to communicate with the parents. If we had received training on foreign children, it could have been different. We would have known how to communicate with the parents.” (T3)

i) Findings on the Contributions of the Parental Supported Primary School Preparation Program

Teachers stated that the training program contributed to both the socialization of parents and the improvement school-family cooperation, with the following words:

“Parents were also given the opportunity to socialize in the education program. Many parents especially mothers, have limited social engagement. I think at least now they have managed to socialize and get along with people from their own culture. Before they could not get along well, because they only met when they came to the door to pick up their children. Now, I observe that they communicate more.” (T1)

“I had never expected that there would be so much participation in this program you introduced. They are very happy. Their communication with each other has improved significantly. This also reflects positively on me as a teacher. They share this with me and try to communicate more. I see that they have learned how to take better care of their children. The children are also happier. Thanks to the program, we have now been able to manage the undesirable behaviors that were exhibited at the school year. I also observed that they are now more interested in their children.” (T3)

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

According on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the curriculum positively impacted the primary school readiness and adjustment levels of foreign-born children. The fact that the activities and materials used within the program were geared towards foreign-born children was a key factor in the program's effectiveness. In their study on teaching Turkish as a second language during the preschool period, Arslantaş and Aktürkoğlu (2023) revealed that the challenges faced by teachers were primarily due to the absence of a program specifically tailored for foreign national children. The lack of visual and audio materials and the insufficient of family participation were identified a major



obstacle encountered in language education. In order to address these issues, the education program implemented in this study, incorporated visual and audio materials specifically designed for foreign children. Furthermore, the vocabulary introduced to the children participating in the education program was simultaneously shared with their parents, who also received weekly activity files to complete with children at home. It is believed that conducting the education program in classes composed solely of foreign children is more effective in supporting the development of their language skills. During the implementation of the training program, it was observed that the foreign children were able to communicate comfortably with the researcher. All of the children, including those who had difficulty speaking Turkish, communicated with the researcher using body language. In the study conducted on the problems encountered by preschool teachers in the education of foreign children, Özoruç and Dikiçi Sığırtaç (2022) identified the language barrier as a major obstacle to children's adaptation to school. However, they emphasized that this problem should be addressed not only in the education of children, but also in that of their parents.

Linguistic and cultural differences can lead to exclusion, and the most fundamental factor contributing to exclusion in education is the language barrier (Dinler & Hacifazlıoğlu, 2020). Foreign born children are known to face language-related challenges, particularly in terms school readiness. Language barriers affect not only school readiness of foreign children but also their social adaptation. Research has shown that the education program introduced in this study contributed to the positive development of peer relationship among foreign-born children. It is believed that this achievement is due the education program being designed to focus not only on developing the language skills of foreign children, but improving their social skills as well in the program, particular emphasis was placed on outcomes related to social development. Existing studies indicate that the majority of foreign national children face challenges related to language and social skills. In the study conducted by Aydeniz and Sarıkaya (2021), in which they documented the opinions of teachers regarding the problems they encountered in the education of foreign national children, it is concluded that foreign national children experience communication problems due to language barriers, negatively impacting their social skills leading to exclusion by peers. Baysal and Çimşir (2020), on the other hand, reached the conclusion that foreign national children often experienced problems with their peers such as being mocked, disturbed, and excluded. These findings suggest that difficulties experienced by foreign national children such as not being able to communicate with their peers due to language barriers, misunderstandings, and exclusion are critical factors affecting the development of their social skills

The inclusion of parents in the education program is a crucial factor. In the interviews conducted before the implementation of the program, teachers stated that they had difficulties in communicating with the parents of foreign-born children. However, at the end of the education program, they remarked that they observed more cooperative behaviors among parents. In addition, the teachers stated that the self-confidence of foreign children increased remarkably by at the end of the education program. It is believed that this is due to the activities involving the parents as well as the children. Studies conducted both in Turkey and internationally, have emphasized the importance of involving parents in the education of foreign-born children (Kruse & Kueß, 2022; Ovalı, 2023).

Şahan (2015), who examined the factors influencing the academic success of foreign children, found that family structure, parental education level, parental employment status, language proficiency, well-being, academic self-efficacy, attitudes towards school and school-family cooperation have significant effects on the academic performance of foreign children. Therefore, the effects of each factor mentioned here on the academic success of foreign children should be considered essential. In his study on the psychological resilience of foreign children, Bozdağ (2020) stated that as the social support received from the family, the frequency of social contact, and the level of the sense of belonging to the school increase, the psychological well-being of foreign children also increases.

In addition, considering that all the parents participating in the study had low levels of education, with some being illiterate, it is believed that the participation of parents in the education program played an



important role in informing them about educational resources. Through the education program, illiterate parents had the opportunity to learn about literacy and language courses offered by public education centers. In a similar study, it was concluded that parents who participated in the PAT program implemented abroad learned about language courses through their involvement to the program (Friedrich et al, 2009).

It has been concluded that teachers generally hold positive attitudes towards foreign children. Previous studies examining teacher attitudes towards foreign children also, indicate a generally positive outlook (Çifçi et al., 2019). In the present research, teachers stated that they did not receive any training specifically aimed at the education of foreign children. It is noteworthy that despite the lack of formal training, the teachers did not approach children with prejudice and maintained positive attitudes toward them. Similarly, in the research conducted by Köse et al. (2019), it was concluded that teachers had positive attitudes despite the absence of training specific to the education of foreign children. Similar findings were also reported in the research conducted by Barbarics (2019).

Some studies, have shown that teachers who have not received training in educating foreign children tend to hold more prejudiced attitudes towards them, compared to those who have, highlighting the importance of providing such training (Krüger Potratz, 2007). Another noteworthy finding in this study is that in all of the classes included in the study, the number of foreign children is higher than the number of Turkish children. The teachers included in the study stated that this imbalance was challenging for them, and that they had problems with adaptation and social grouping with foreign children. Similarly, Bucak (2021) concluded in his study, which the perspective of the administrator and teacher, that foreign children were concentrated in certain schools which contributed to the problem of social grouping.

To conclude, the challenges faced by foreign children, particularly as a result of the mass migration that has taken place in recent years, have become increasingly evident and undeniable. The education of foreign children is essential for their integration and harmonious coexistence within society in their future lives. The difficulties experienced by foreign children in schools are influenced by many interrelated factors, including migration experiences, educational experiences, the socioeconomic status of the family, as well as the proficiency in the language of the country of destination (Dewitz, 2016). The adaptation of foreign children to primary school during early childhood should be carried out in close cooperation with their parents, who are their primary caregivers. In addition to foreign children, integrating their parents, especially their mothers, into society plays a crucial role in this process. Only through such a collaborative approach can the effect of educational institutions, and consequently, of teachers, be rendered more effective. Integration a process that extends over a long period of time and influences the education of children beginning in the preschool period and extending into their future academic endeavors. If the educational challenges encountered particularly in the first grade of primary school are not effectively addressed, they may evolve into more complex issues in the later stages of education.

Recommendations

In Turkey, there is a lack of programs that involve foreign parents in the education of their children starting from the preschool level. Considering the contributions of the education program introduced in this study to the development and integration of foreign children, it is important to expand the implementation of similar initiatives. In this context, the research can be replicated with larger groups. Measurement tools like language proficiency, social adaptation specifically designed for foreign children can be developed. Further studies can be conducted on the implementation of educational practices for foreign children. To work better with foreign children, the needs of teachers can be identified, and target training programs can be organized accordingly. Teachers with extensive professional experience with foreign children can be given more active roles. Projects focusing on the education and well-being of foreign children can be supported. For this, the number of support classes can be increased in schools where foreign children are awareness.



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Limitations of the study

One limitation of the study is that it was conducted with 60–72-month-old foreign children attending preschool education in the central districts of Samsun province. The sample size could be expanded to include children from different age groups and regions. The data is limited to the responses of teachers and mothers of foreign children attending preschool and primary schools. Furthermore, to assess long-term effects, the study could be extended over a longer period. Another limitation is that most of the participating children have been attending preschool for only one year. The study could be conducted with foreign children who have been attending preschool for a longer period of time. Due to language barriers, a translator was used during the data collection process. Future research could be conducted using scales developed for foreign children.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

Parents and teachers who participated in the program were provided detailed information regarding the purpose of the study. The participation of both parents and teachers in the study was voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained from the children's parents prior to their children's involvement. The personal information of parents, children and teachers was kept confidential and was not disclosed to any third parties. The necessary application was made to the Ethics Committee of the Ondokuz Mayıs University Institute of Social and Human Sciences on 31.12.2021 with the decision number 2021-1031. The authors declare that the research was complied with ethical principles and that they have no conflict of interest.

Author Contribution

The first author contributed 80% of the work and the second author contributed 20%. The first author was responsible for the study design, literature review, data collection, analysis, and manuscript writing. The second author contributed to the interpretation, and critical revision of the manuscript.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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