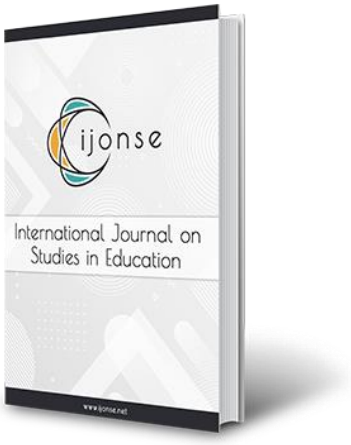

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Crafting Connections: Developing a Comprehensive Social Skills Scale for Children

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Crafting Connections: Developing a Comprehensive Social Skills Scale for Children

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Abstract

This study portrays the development and validation of the Social Skills Scale for Children (SSSC), which addresses a critical need in educational and psychological assessments. The initial scale comprised 41 items carefully vetted through expert reviews. It incorporated positive and negative statements to capture social skills such as establishing relationships, respecting others, and adhering to social norms. The scale underwent rigorous validation with a sample of 158 fifth-grade students from a primary school, employing a four-point Likert-type response format. Validity and reliability analyses revealed the scale's robust psychometric properties. The exploratory factor analysis led to the refinement of the scale by removing items with low cross-correlation coefficients, resulting in a more concise and focused measure of social skills. The confirmatory factor analysis further supported the scale's structure, indicating a good fit with the data. Notably, the scale showed high levels of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .889), suggesting it reliably assesses the intended construct. The final scale's 20 items, obtained after a series of empirical analyses, encompass a broad spectrum of social interactions and behaviors critical for children's social development. With its strong psychometric properties, the SSSC is a valuable resource for researchers, educators, and practitioners aiming to enhance children's social skills education and intervention programs.

Introduction

Significance of Social Skills for Children

Children's development and nurturing of social skills represent a cornerstone in their overall growth and well-being, impacting many aspects of their lives, from interpersonal relationships to academic success. This essay endeavors to weave together research findings to paint a comprehensive picture of the importance of social skills in children, examining the multifaceted factors influencing their development, the ramifications of deficits in these skills, and underscoring the necessity for robust, practical tools for their assessment.The literature consistently illustrates that social skills are indispensable for children's development and well-being. For instance, Wu et al. (2020) found a noteworthy correlation between family socioeconomic status and children's social skills development, suggesting that environmental factors play a significant role in shaping these abilities. Similarly, interventions like social skills training have shown promise for children diagnosed with attention deficit

hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), significantly improving their social interactions (Antshel & Remer, 2003). Such enhancements in social skills are pivotal for fostering positive relationships with peers and teachers and crucial for academic achievement (Maleki et al., 2019).

The significance of social skills extends to children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), for whom social competence and tailored training are essential, given their distinct challenges in critical social interactions (Cotugno, 2009). Innovative approaches, such as gamification for training healthcare providers, have demonstrated positive outcomes on the social skills of preschool children, highlighting the potential of engaging strategies in developing these competencies (Kouchaksaraei et al., 2021). Furthermore, evidence suggests that social skill education positively influences preschool children's academic self-esteem and problem-solving abilities, further bolstering the case for its inclusion in early childhood education (Özbey & Köyceğiz, 2020).

The importance of early intervention cannot be overstated, with research pointing to the preschool years as a critical period for developing social skills. Early social competencies lay the groundwork for future academic performance, behavior, and mental health (Han & Hock, 2023). These skills are directly linked to the independence of kindergarten children, underscoring their role in fostering autonomy from an early age (Rusmayadi & Herman, 2019). Moreover, targeted social skills training in early childhood has been shown to enhance cooperation, promote prosocial behavior, and facilitate the acquisition of new social skills (Fikri & Tegeh, 2022).

In sum, cultivating social skills is fundamental to the holistic development of children, influencing their interpersonal relationships, educational outcomes, and overall quality of life. The evidence underscores the efficacy of interventions like social skills training across various developmental conditions, highlighting the imperative for early and targeted support. This research synthesis underscores the necessity for developing and validating comprehensive scales to measure social skills in children, ensuring that these critical competencies are accurately assessed and nurtured from an early age.

Factors Influencing the Development of Social Skills in Children

The research underscores the significance of early social competence, revealing that it can predict later developmental outcomes similarly to expressive and receptive language skills (Barnett et al., 2012). The quality of early relationships, particularly with parents and teachers, plays a pivotal role. Parental involvement is crucial, enhancing children's social skills and reducing problematic behaviors (Nokali et al., 2010). Additionally, the nature of children's initial interactions with their teachers can significantly predict their future social relations with peers (Howes, 2000). The impact of early attachments and family educational involvement further emphasizes the role of the home environment in social skill development, highlighting parents as a vital source of support (Liu et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Moreover, neighborhood social cohesion and the warmth of a father's relationship with his child have positively affected children's social skills (Hong et al., 2022; Webster et al., 2013). Conversely, exposure to adverse environments, such as witnessing intimate partner violence, has been found to detrimentally affect children's socio-emotional skills (Anderberg & Moroni, 2020).

Consequences of Inadequate Social Skills

The development of social skills is not only crucial for immediate interpersonal interactions but also has long-term implications for children's lives. Inadequate social skills can lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships, emotional challenges, and hindrances in academic and professional achievements (Karateke, 2017). Research has shown that early social skills, measured as early as kindergarten, are predictive of academic growth, highlighting the intertwined nature of social and academic development (Caemmerer & Hajovsky, 2022). This underscores the need to foster early social skills to support children's development and future success.

The Necessity for a Comprehensive Social Skills Scale for Children

The importance of social skills in children's development is widely recognized, serving as a foundational element for their ability to form relationships, navigate social situations, and succeed academically. However, the tools available for assessing these critical skills, especially in young children and those with specific needs like hearing impairments, are often limited and not sufficiently tailored to their unique developmental stages (Toe et al., 2020). Many instruments initially designed for older children have been adapted for use with preschoolers, revealing a significant gap in the availability of age-appropriate assessment tools (Wang et al., 2011). This gap underscores the burgeoning need for more contemporary and comprehensive tools to measure social and emotional learning, as emphasized by recent research interests in these areas (Humphrey et al., 2011).

Assessing social skills in children is pivotal for a multitude of reasons. It provides insights into a child's ability to interact socially. It is crucial to identify those who may struggle with social interactions and could benefit from targeted interventions to enhance their social competence (Davis & Qi, 2020). Furthermore, such assessments are integral for tracking progress and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving these essential skills (Samanci et al., 2018). These evaluations help pinpoint areas needing support, facilitating personalized and effective interventions.

The lack of specificity and appropriateness of existing tools for different age groups drives the call for a comprehensive social skills scale designed for children. A scale focused on children would address this gap by offering a standardized, age-appropriate instrument for evaluating social skills development in young children, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of their social abilities (Samanci et al., 2018). This, in turn, would enable more tailored interventions and support, ensuring that children's social development needs are met effectively.

Moreover, developing such a scale is crucial for the early identification of social skill deficits, essential for timely and supportive interventions (Ergin & Ergin, 2017). A comprehensive scale would cover various social behaviors and interactions, providing a holistic view of a child's social competence and encompassing empathy, communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills (Major & Seabra-Santos, 2014). A well-validated and reliable scale would also enhance the consistency and comparability of assessments across different settings and populations, further bolstering its utility (Samanci et al., 2018).

The benefits of a social skills scale explicitly tailored for children extend beyond mere assessment. It represents a standardized approach to evaluating social competence, facilitating the early identification of deficits, and guiding interventions that address the unique social needs and developmental stages of children (Jabeen, 2022; Wang et al., 2011). Such a focused tool enables systematic assessment, allowing educators, healthcare professionals, and parents to identify strengths and weaknesses in children's social skills and to implement targeted support strategies effectively (Özbey & Köyceğiz, 2020; Kamani Mataki & Ashori, 2021).

Additionally, this scale would be invaluable for tracking the progress of social skills over time and evaluating intervention effectiveness, offering a consistent framework for assessing social development across various contexts (Frey et al., 2011; Ji et al., 2014). This standardized assessment is critical to monitoring intervention impacts and adjusting strategies to support positive social development.

In conclusion, developing a comprehensive, tailored social skills scale for children is imperative. Such a scale addresses the current assessment limitations, supports early identification and intervention, and aids in monitoring and enhancing children's social development. By focusing on the unique developmental needs of children, this scale would facilitate a more effective and personalized approach to fostering social competence, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and success in life. Integrating cross-cultural adaptations and diverse assessment methodologies will ensure the scale's robustness and relevance across different populations and settings, making it a critical tool for researchers, educators, and healthcare professionals.

Theoretical Framework for a Social Skills Scale for Children

Developing a social skills scale for kids requires a solid theoretical foundation that captures the intricate interactions between social interaction's cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects. The foundation for creating and understanding the survey questions is this framework, which has its roots in moral growth and prosocial conduct. Prosocial conduct includes selfless deeds that benefit others, such as lending a hand, sharing, consoling, and collaborating. According to Boateng et al. (2018), these actions demonstrate social competence and reveal a person's capacity for moral thinking and ethical decision-making.

One of the survey's vital theoretical pillars is Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2001), which holds that people pick up social behaviors via imitation, modeling, and observation. This idea emphasizes how crucial social contact is for learning and proposes that people may acquire prosocial behaviors by imitating and watching others. Using questions that evaluate actions like participating in the sorrow of others, praising friends, and lending a helpful hand, the survey uses this idea. These actions are closely related to reinforcement and observational learning (Damschroder et al., 2009).

Additionally, the study is consistent with Kohlberg's theory of moral growth, which describes a step-by-step evolution of moral reasoning from self-interest to adherence to universal ethical ideals. The survey's focus on speaking the truth, treating everyone equally, and showing empathy for those in need is consistent with this idea,

which explains how people come to have a sense of justice and fairness (Kohlberg, 1971; Zhang, 2018). The survey's inclusion of these components emphasizes the fundamental connection between moral growth and social abilities and the function of ethical reasoning in directing prosocial action.

In order to fully comprehend the subtleties of social relationships and the driving forces behind prosocial conduct, the poll also includes questions about empathy, altruism, and social responsibility. Being empathetic, or having the capacity to comprehend and experience another person's feelings, is an essential social skill that allows people to react to other people's emotions in a caring manner. Altruism, characterized as unselfish care for the well-being of others, is another example of the behaviors that the survey seeks to evaluate because it shows a dedication to others' welfare that goes beyond personal gain (Damschroder et al., 2009).

The survey's theoretical framework includes moral growth, empathy, altruism, and social learning. This multimodal method guarantees a comprehensive evaluation of kids' social abilities, including the range and complexity of actions that make up moral integrity and social competence.

Methodology

The researchers' Social Skills Scale for Children (SSSC) was used in this study to gauge the students' social ability levels. One hundred fifty-eight accessible fifth-grade students attending a primary school in the Buca district of Izmir, Turkey, participated in validity and reliability assessments of the scale. The social skills scale pilot research findings will be elaborated next.

Study of Validity and Reliability

The preliminary study used a four-point Likert scale with 41 items. The validity and reliability of the SSSC used in the study were conducted with 158 fifth-grade primary school students attending a primary school in the Buca district of Izmir, Turkey. This school was selected because of the middle-level socioeconomic status of the families of the participating students. The researcher carried out the application of the preliminary scale. After the researcher introduced herself in the classrooms, the purpose of the study was explained, and it was stated that the answers to be given would be evaluated solely for their contribution to science. Students were told not to write their names and that the researcher would keep their responses confidential. Only students showing normal development were included in the preliminary application, and forms were not distributed to the integrated students. To prevent students from influencing each other and in case they might not understand the sentences in the personal information form and on the scale, the items were read to the students individually, and they were assisted in answering. It was observed that all the forms were filled out. The researcher analyzed the data using Lisrel 8.51 and SPSS 17.0 analysis programs.

The validity and reliability of the SSSC used in the study were conducted with 158 fifth-grade primary school students attending a primary school in the Buca district of Izmir, Turkey. This school was selected because of the middle-level socioeconomic status of the families of the participating students.

Content Validity

After the researchers prepared the social skills item pool, it was presented to the opinions of two counselors (school psychologists) and an educational scientist who worked at primary schools. Following the suggestions received, necessary corrections were made to the items, new items were added, and some items were removed, making the scale ready for application (see Appendix 1).

The development stage of the scale after the preliminary applications will be explained in the following sections of the methodology. The stages carried out during the development process of the scale are as follows:

Item Pool

In the study, the "Social Skills Scale for Children" consists of 41 items numbered 8, 17, and 32, which are the three negatively worded items. There are 38 positively worded items on the scale. Positive items are scored from 4 to 1, while negative items are scored from 1 to 4.

Results and Discussion

Factor Analysis and Total Correlation of Items

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was used to assess the suitability of the data derived from the sample. According to the test, a KMO result of 0.50 is considered bad, 0.70 and 0.60 are medium, 0.80 is very good, and 0.90 is exceptional. The Bartlett test determines the predicted distribution in the population, which is necessary for factor analysis (Tavsancil, 2006). The KMO value must be more than 0.60 and the Bartlett test must be significant for the data structure to be appropriate for factor extraction (Buyukozturk, 2011).

To verify construct validity, component analysis was carried out on 41 items in the social skills scale's development phase. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.81 indicated the construct validity of the scale, and a significant Bartlett test result was obtained (χ^2=2291.791; df=820, p=0.000<0.05). Factor analysis may be performed on the data since the KMO value is more than 0.60 and the Bartlett test is significant (Buyukozturk, 2011). We may conclude that factor extraction is appropriate for the data structure. Twelve variables account for the grouping of the 41 items with eigenvalues larger than one, according to the study. Of the entire variation, 23.65% can be explained by the first dimension. When taken as a whole, all dimensions explain 62.87% of the variation. A total of 23.645% of the variance can be explained by the first factor, 6.108% by the second, 4.484% by the third, 3.947% by the fourth, 3.811% by the fifth, 6.622% by the sixth, 3.342% by the seventh, 3.049% by the eighth, 2.907% by the ninth, 2.836% by the tenth, 2.654% by the eleventh, and 2.466% by the twelfth. In single-factor scales, a variance explanation of thirty percent or more is deemed enough; however, in multi-factor scales, a greater variance explanation is necessary. Furthermore, according to Buyukozturk (2011), a large variance suggests that the relevant idea or construct is well-measured.

It is possible to accept the variance value as a single component directly if it is 3.5 times the succeeding value

(Buyukozturk, 2011). This approach looks at the eigenvalue graph and includes elements in the solution until the vertical line flattens. Stated otherwise, the quick decline in the variance's explanation rates determines the number of components. The x- and y-axes in the graphic correspond to factors and eigenvalues, respectively. A review of Figure 1's slope diagram and scree plot has been conducted (Hayton et al., 2004).

Figure 1 shows that the scale is determined to consist of a significant single element based on the slope diagram or scree plot.

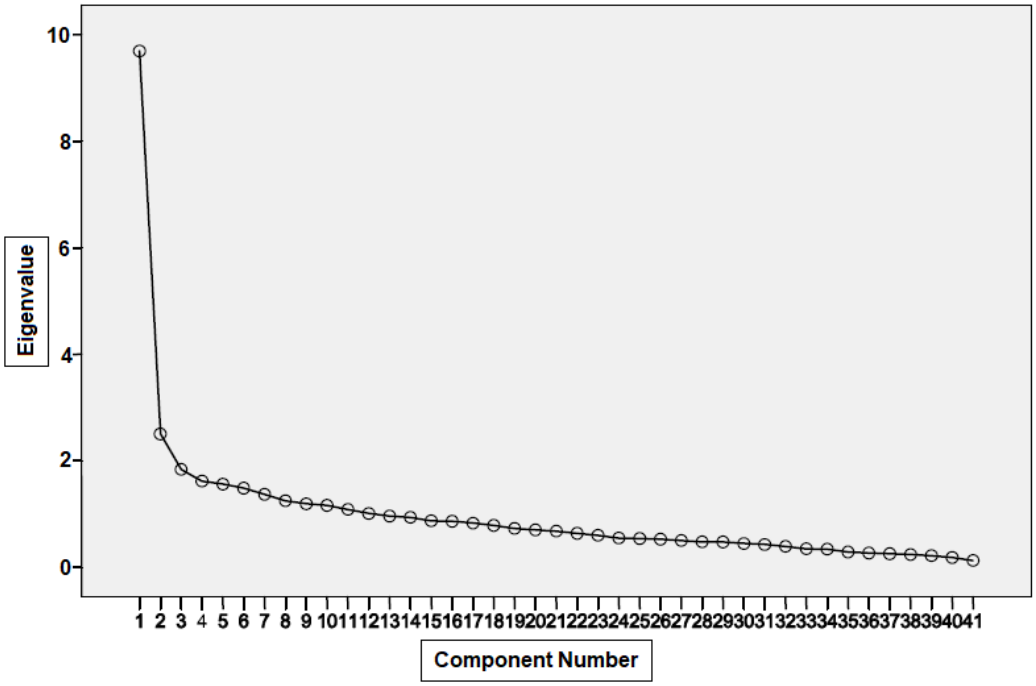

Figure 1. Scree Plot

The single factor associated with the items has typical variances ranging from 0.50 to 0.78. As a result, it is noted that they account for most of the overall variation of the items as well as the variance associated with the scale, in addition to the key components that surfaced throughout the research. Albayrak-Arin (1999) that a scale may not group under sub-scales, as also noted by Yuksel (1997) and Riggio et al. (1989). It was suggested that there should be fewer questions and simple, short phrases should be used, and that statements with reversible wordings that are difficult for children to understand so they should be used less often. It was determined that six dimensions and one factor would make up the social skills scale designed for primary pupils in the fifth grade. In a similar study by Vural and Kocabas (2011), seven items were originally eliminated from the 37-item emotional intelligence scale developed by the researchers because their overall correlation values were less than 0.30. To ascertain if the sample was appropriate before factor analysis, the KMO value was computed. The Bartlett test yielded a substantial chi-square value, and a coefficient of 0.40 was chosen as the threshold for the study items. Despite finding three values greater than one, the abrupt shift in the slope graph led to the decision to treat it as a single component. On the scale, confirmatory factor analysis was then performed, and the dependability coefficient was calculated. Following these procedures, items 1, 8, 17, and 32 were eliminated from the scale by examining the Anti-Image because their low cross-relationship coefficients in the matrix were less than 0.70. The analysis was

then repeated with a load value of 0.45. Items with a load value less than 0.45 were investigated after those with an Anti-Image matrix of less than 0.70 were eliminated. Items 11, 22, 19, 7, 31, 15, 27, 36, 23, 5, 6, and 37 with a load value less than 0.45 were taken off the scale, per the component matrix. The analysis was repeated after removing items, accepting a load value of 0.50. Items 3 and 12 with high load values (overlapping) and items with a rotated factor load < 0.50 were taken from the scale.

To verify the accuracy of the identified single-factor structure, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted after exploratory factor analysis (Simsek, 2006). For confirmatory factor analysis, the "Lisrel" software was used (Cheng & Chan, 2003). To determine if there is a fit or strong association between factors and variables, exploratory factor analysis found factors and variables in the data matrix (Ozdamar, 2002). The goodness of fit index (GFI) adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), normed fit index (NFI), root mean square residual (RMR), standardized RMR, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were all taken into consideration in this work within the purview of confirmatory factor analysis. Additionally, model fit is deemed good when RMR and RMSEA values are less than 0.05; a value of 0.08 is regarded as an acceptable limit. Fit indices, comparable to the coefficient of determination R2 determined in multiple regression, often quantify the amount of variance and covariance explained by the model. The model's fit with the data is higher as the fit index values approach 1. Fit indices are appropriate if they fall between 0.90 and 0.95; values greater than 0.95 indicate a high fit (Byrne, 1998; Dickey, 1996; Stapleton, 1997). Notably, a good match is indicated by an RMSEA index value of around 0.00. A good match is shown by an RMSEA of less than 0.05, which displays the least amount of error between the created and observed matrices (Du Toit & Du Toit, 2001; Guzeller, 2005; Tatar, 2005).

Findings of the first CFA analysis were as follows: χ^2=296.56; df=189, p=0.000<0.001; RMSEA=0.06; χ^2/df=2.01; NFI=0.73; NNFI=0.85; CFI=0.87; GFI=0.85; AGFI=0.81. It was concluded that there was a link between the factors and the error variances of items 2, 20, and 30 based on the CFA fit statistics and modification findings. To enable the factors to exhibit a relationship, error covariance between items was included in the model, and CFA was performed again. Together with the fit values of the suggested model, Table 1 displays the permissible limit values of the most widely used fit indices (Schermelleh-Engel & Moosbrugger, 2003). Though not flawless, the model has a decent match with the data based on the criteria set forth in similar studies in the research literature.

Table 1. Fit Criteria of the Recommended Model

Measures of Compliance	Good Fit Range	Acceptable Fit Range	Values Recommended
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	[0.00, 0.05]	[0.05, 0.10]	0.045
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	[0.00, 0.05]	[0.05, 0.10]	0.035
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	[0.95, 1.00]	[0.90, 0.95]	0.88
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	[0.90, 1.00]	[0.85, 0.90]	0.85
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	[0.95, 1.00]	[0.90, 0.95]	0.92
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	[0.95, 1.00]	[0.90, 0.95]	0.93
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	[0.90, 1.00]	[0.85, 0.90]	0.76

The similarity ratio chi-square statistic $\chi 2(168)=221.59;p<0.01$ has been determined per Table 1. Measures of Compliance values of RMSEA=0.045; SRMR=0.035; GFI=0.88; AGFI=0.85; NFI=0.92; CFI=0.93; and RFI=0.76 have been established. The obtained results, while not having perfect fit values, are within acceptable limits, indicating that the items are compatible with a single-factor structure. The results related to the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the scale are given in Figure 2.

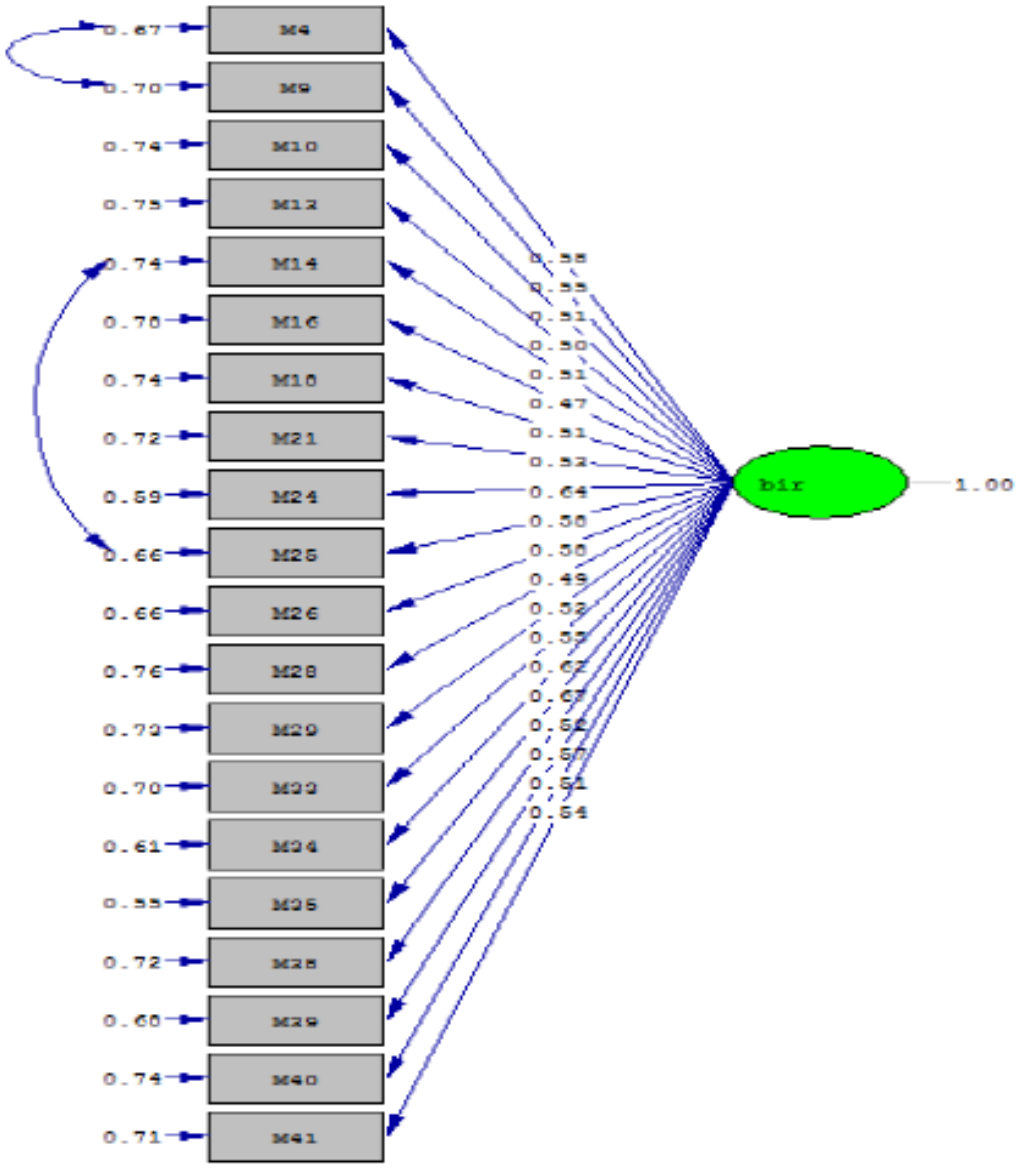

Figure 2. Path Diagram and Factor Loadings for the Single Factor Model

The items in the factors present in the scale, the factor loadings related to these items, and the item-total correlations are specified in Table 2. The scale's factor contained questions, whose factor loadings ranged from 0.53 to 0.75, were designed to measure the social abilities of primary school kids, based on Table 2's results. Buyukozturk (2011) states that a factor loading value of 0.45 or above is a suitable threshold for selection. A threshold value 0.50 for factor loading was established, considering that the factor loading value measures the item's connection with the factor. The factor, whose eigenvalue was set at 6.655, was discovered to explain 33.27% of the variation. For single-factor scales, a variance explanation of thirty percent or more is deemed enough;

however, for multi-factor scales, a greater variance explanation is necessary. Furthermore, a significantly explained variation indicates a well-measured relevant idea or construct (Buyukozturk, 2011). It has been concluded that the factors' items are enough for measuring the pertinent attributes.

Table 2. Items of the Scale, Factor Loadings, and Item Total Correlations

Item	Eigenvalue: 6.655 Variance Explained: 33.27 %	Factor Load Values Factor 1	Item Total Correlations
4	I congratulate my friends when they do something nice.	.745	.585
9	When my friend is upset about something, I share their sadness by talking about it with them.	.691	.517
10	I say, "good morning," "have a nice day," "good evening" to my friends and teachers.	.727	.458
13	If my friend does something I don't like, I tell them.	.570	.454
14	If I don't understand a topic, I tell my teacher that I don't understand and ask them to explain it again.	.547	.499
16	If I couldn’t do my homework, I tell my teacher why before they ask.	.653	.443
18	I immediately get acquainted with a new student in our class.	.550	.491
21	During group work, I express my ideas.	.637	,500
24	I tell a friend who has done something wrong their mistake without being hurtful.	.686	.562
25	I share information I learn with my friends.	.688	.589
26	I feel happy for helping when I help a friend who has fallen to get up.	.601	.525
28	If my friend wants to beat up another student, I stop them.	.679	.452
29	I voluntarily do class chores.	.585	.498
33	I keep my surroundings clean.	.530	.504
34	In conflict situations, I develop new proposals for reconciliation.	.530	.579
35	I pray for people in need of help.	.531	.617
38	I fix a bad situation positively without getting angry.	.639	.491
39	I move a stone I see on the road to the side.	.603	.540
40	I treat everyone equally.	.549	.455
41	I help people in need as much as I can.	.566	.466

There were no values below 0.30 in the items' reliability analysis. The likelihood of low correlations is substantial in big samples (r=0.15 is significant at α=0.05 for n=100). Items that have an item-total correlation of 0.30 or more are generally seen to be good at differentiating between people; items that fall between 0.20-0.30 may be included in the test if it is thought that it is essential, or the item has to be revised; items that are less than 0.20 should not be included in the test (Buyukozturk, 2011). The items of the measure have item-total score correlations ranging from 0.44 to 0.62. The scale has an overall Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.89. According to Buyukozturk (2011), a correlation coefficient between 0.70 and 1.00 indicates a substantial degree of association. This internal consistency coefficient is generally accepted to be at least 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Higher dependability is indicated by an alpha coefficient that approaches 1; in general, a value over 0.70 is preferred (Ozdemir, 2010).

Following exploratory research, 450 students were administered the social skills measure, which was pared down to 20 questions (Appendix 2). Following implementation, the scale's overall Cronbach's alpha reliability was determined to be 0.87. According to Buyukozturk (2011), a correlation coefficient between 0.70 and 1.00 indicates a strong degree of association. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient was 0.90 when assessing the construct validity of the scale, and the Bartlett test yielded significant results ($\chi 2=2263.102$; df=190; $p=0.000<0.05$). The data are suitable for factor analysis if the KMO value is more than 0.60 and the Bartlett test is significant (Buyukozturk, 2011).

Developing and validating the SSSC yielded significant results in that a theoretically sound, valid, and reliable measurement scale was created to assess fifth-grade students' social competencies methodically. The initial pool comprised 41 items to encapsulate a broad spectrum of social skills. The validation process involved a sample of 158 fifth-grade students, employing a four-point Likert-type scale to gauge responses. Factor analysis played a crucial role in refining the scale, excluding items with low cross-correlation coefficients, thereby enhancing the scale's focus and effectiveness.Confirmatory factor analysis substantiated the scale's single-factor structure, indicating a coherent underlying construct being measured. The refined scale consisted of 20 items and demonstrated excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .87, suggesting high internal consistency. Furthermore, item-total correlations ranged between .443 and .617, reflecting the items' adequacy in distinguishing varying levels of social skills.

Conclusions

Creating and validating a Social Skills Scale for Children is noteworthy in education and child development. This scale helps identify and foster crucial social skills in educational and psychological environments by filling a significant demand for a rigorous and reliable instrument to evaluate children's social competence. This scale's rigorous development and validation procedure guarantees its effectiveness and generalizability in various contexts, making it a priceless tool for researchers, psychologists, and educators. It thoroughly assesses and comprehends kids' social behavior, improving treatments and support networks to promote social growth.

The basis of the scale in well-established psychological theories that provide insight into the mechanisms behind moral growth, prosocial conduct, social learning, and social behavior is essential to its success. The scale's

framework provides a more complex explanation of moral growth by including Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning. Kohlberg's six-stage model, which traces the evolution of moral thinking from egocentric viewpoints to principled ethical reasoning, is based on Jean Piaget's work on cognitive development (Piaget & Cook, 1952; Piaget, 1936). This approach helps evaluate the moral aspects of children's social interactions and offers insights into how they acquire justice, empathy, and altruism. The scale's adherence to Kohlberg's theory not only considers children's changing ethical beliefs and developmental phases but also emphasizes how moral growth is universally applicable in various cultural situations (Kohlberg, 1971; Zhang, 2018; Zhao et al., 2018).

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2001) enhances Kohlberg's framework by stressing the importance of observational learning and contextual factors in developing social skills. This idea clarifies how social interactions teach and reinforce social behaviors, highlighting the importance of modeling and imitation in developing prosocial behaviors (Damschroder et al., 2009). Integrating Bandura's and Kohlberg's ideas into its theoretical framework validates the scale's conceptual foundation. It improves its usefulness in expressing the nuanced character of kids' social interactions.

In conclusion, a theoretical framework including critical psychological ideas of social learning, moral development, and prosocial conduct is the foundation for the Social Skills Scale for Children. This integration guarantees a thorough and methodologically sound approach to social skill assessment, providing a profound understanding of kids' moral and social growth. The scale's consistency with these ideas supports its content and broader application, indicating that more study may be necessary to determine how well it works in various demographics and contexts. This study contributes substantially to the conversation about child development and education by giving parents and teachers a reliable instrument for methodically evaluating and improving children's social abilities.

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Appendix 1. Initial Item Pool of the Scale - 41 items

Social Skills Scale for Children

Items	Always (4)	Often (3)	Now and again (2)	Never (1)
1. I invite my friends to play games.				
2. When an injustice is done to me or someone around me, I tell the person who did it that what they did was wrong.				
3. When I do something good, I tell my friends about it.				
4. I congratulate my friend when they do something nice.				
5. When my friends ask me to do something that is not right, I say no to them.				
6. When I do something wrong, I know how to apologize.				
7. I joke with my friends without being hurtful.				
8. I report my friends to the teacher when they do something wrong.				
9. When my friend is upset about something, I share their sadness by talking about it with them.				
10. I say, "good morning," "have a nice day," "good evening" to my friends and teachers.				
11. If my teacher unfairly scolds me, I explain that I am innocent.				
12. When my friend is mad at me, I ask them why.				
13. If my friend does something I don't like, I tell them.				
14. If I don't understand a topic, I tell my teacher that I don't understand and ask them to explain it again.				
15. When my friend wants to talk with me during class, I refuse their request to talk.				
16. If I couldn’t do my homework, I tell my teacher why before they ask.				
17. If my friend hits me, I hit them back.				
18. I immediately get acquainted with a new student in our class.				
19. I share my opinions with everyone.				
20. I openly say whether I agree with my friend's opinion or not.				
21. During group work, I express my ideas.				

22. If I accidentally cut in line at the cafeteria, I apologize to the person.				
23. I talk about a good event that happened to me in class.				
24. I tell a friend who has done something wrong their mistake without being hurtful.				
25. I share information I learn with my friends.				
26. I feel happy for helping when I help a friend who has fallen to get up.				
27. I tell a crying friend not to be sad.				
28. If my friend wants to beat up another student, I stop them.				
29. I voluntarily do class chores.				
30. I share the biscuit I buy from the canteen with my friends next to me.				
31. I congratulate the winning side in sports tournaments.				
32. I am jealous of a friend who gets a high grade.				
33. I keep my surroundings clean.				
34. In conflict situations, I develop new proposals for reconciliation.				
35. I pray for people in need of help.				
36. I question rules that are illogical.				
37. I warn someone who makes fun of me.				
38. I fix a bad situation positively without getting angry.				
39. I move a stone I see on the road to the side.				
40. I treat everyone equally.				
41. I help people in need as much as I can.				

Appendix 2. Final Item Pool of the Scale - 20 items

Social Skills Scale for Children

Items	Always (4)	Often (3)	Now and again (2)	Never (1)
1. I congratulate my friend when they do something nice.				
2. When my friend is upset about something, I share their sadness by talking about it with them.				
3. I say "good morning," "have a nice day," "good evening" to my friends and teachers.				
4. If my friend does something I don't like, I tell them.				
5. If I don't understand a topic, I tell my teacher that I don't understand and ask them to explain it again.				
6. If I couldn't do my homework, I tell my teacher why before they ask.				
7. I immediately get acquainted with a new student in our class.				
8. During group work, I express my ideas.				
9. I tell a friend who has done something wrong their mistake without being hurtful.				
10. I share information I learn with my friends.				
11. I feel happy for helping when I help a friend who has fallen to get up.				
12. If my friend wants to beat up another student, I stop them.				
13. I voluntarily do class chores.				
14. I keep my surroundings clean.				
15. In conflict situations, I develop new proposals for reconciliation.				
16. I pray for people in need of help.				
17. I fix a bad situation positively without getting angry.				
18. I move a stone I see on the road to the side.				
19. I treat everyone equally.				
20. I help people in need as much as I can.				