Submission date: May 2025 **Acceptance date:** November 2025 **Publication date:** December 2025

ANALYZING THE LIFE SKILLS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE TURKISH CONTEXT

ANÁLISIS DE LAS HABILIDADES PARA LA VIDA DE LOS NIÑOS EN EDAD PREESCOLAR EN EL CONTEXTO DE TURQUÍA

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Suggested citation (APA, seventh ed.)

Güney, M., & Kabadayı, A. (2025). Analyzing the life skills of preschool children in the Turkish context. ***Revista Conrado, 21***(S1), e4568.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to examine the life skills of children attending preschool education in Turkey. A quantitative approach using a survey design was adopted. Data were collected through a personal information form and a scale developed to assess life skills in early childhood. These tools gathered information on demographic characteristics and key competencies such as decision-making, effective communication, empathy, and problem-solving. Statistical analysis was carried out using independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA. The findings indicated significant differences in children's life skills based on gender, number of siblings, birth order, duration of preschool education, and parental education and income levels. The study highlighted the potential influence of family and contextual variables on the development of these skills. Based on the results, suggestions were made to support educators, families, and professionals working in early childhood education. The findings may provide a useful foundation for future research and contribute to developing practices that promote holistic development in preschool-aged children.

Keywords:

Life skills, Preschool children, 21st century skills, Problem solving.

RESUMEN

El estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar las habilidades para la vida de los niños que asistían a la educación preescolar en Turquía. Se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo basado en un diseño de encuesta. La recolección de datos se llevó a cabo mediante un formulario de información personal y una escala diseñada para evaluar habilidades para la vida en la primera infancia. Estos instrumentos permitieron recopilar datos sobre características demográficas y competencias clave como la toma de decisiones, la comunicación efectiva, la empatía y la resolución de problemas. El análisis estadístico se realizó utilizando pruebas t de muestras independientes y ANOVA de un solo factor. Los resultados mostraron diferencias significativas en las habilidades para la vida según el género, el número de hermanos, el orden de nacimiento, la duración de la educación preescolar y el nivel educativo y económico de los padres. El estudio puso de relieve la posible influencia de variables familiares y contextuales en el desarrollo de dichas habilidades. En base a los hallazgos, se formularon sugerencias orientadas a apoyar a docentes, familias y profesionales interesados en la educación infantil. Los resultados pueden servir como base para futuras investigaciones y propuestas educativas que promuevan el desarrollo integral de los niños en edad preescolar.

Palabras clave:

Habilidades para la vida, Niños en edad preescolar, Habilidades del siglo XXI, Resolución de problemas

INTRODUCTION

In light of major developments in the 21st century and rapid global changes, traditional educational approaches focused solely on cognitive development have come under increasing scrutiny (Rasa, 2025). In today's information-rich world, educating students solely as passive recipients of knowledge is widely acknowledged as developmentally inappropriate. Today, unlike the previous understanding of education, it has become important to raise individuals who use the right knowledge and put it into practice, think innovatively and creatively, make effective decisions in the face of any situation or event, solve problems, question, maintain a social life in peace with the society they live in and have high self-awareness (Masterson, 2023). In this context, the acquisition and development of life skills during the preschool period, which is regarded as one of the most critical stages of human development, is highly significant.

Life skills are competencies that help people develop flexible behaviors suitable for individual and social changes, meet their cultural and environmental needs, and gain self-esteem (Jamali et al., 2016). UNESCO (2004) describes life skills as an individual's ability to effectively use the knowledge, talent, expertise, and values s/he has to achieve a goal. Although life skills are a concept used by different disciplines such as sports, art, business life, and education, it generally covers skills that concern many areas such as physical, cognitive, professional, moral, sexual, psychological, self, and emotional development.

The 0-6 age period plays a crucial role in developing skills like "interpersonal relations, effective communication, stress management, creative thinking, emotional regulation, self-awareness, problem-solving, empathy, critical thinking, and decision-making", as identified by World Health Organization [WHO] (1997). In line with the aims of preschool education, life skills education programs should be implemented to enable children to actively participate in learning and express themselves appropriately, to spend quality time with his peers, to produce solutions in the face of problems, and to make effective decisions (Kirchhoff & Keller, 2021). The preparation of effective education programs is possible by knowing which variables are associated with life skills in the pre-school period. Understanding these variables can help design targeted interventions that foster the development of essential life skills in early childhood.

The present study of children's life skills in preschool education is based on several theoretical frameworks. First and foremost, this study is aligned with the tenets of constructivist theories. These theories place emphasis on active participation, problem-solving and holistic development. In accordance with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, children's learning is facilitated through social interactions and collaborative endeavours (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of this study, this implies that life skills are not solely innate, but are also shaped by the child's environment, interactions with peers and exposure to a range of experiences. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, multiple environmental influences shape a child's developmental trajectory. In this study, these contextual interactions are taken into account to understand the development of life skills (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). By examining the influence of the variables under consideration in our study, we aim to elucidate the manner in which these ecological elements intersect and contribute to the development of life skills.

Life skills education is more effective in developed countries with systematic programs and research, whereas in most developing countries, programs are lacking in terms of implementation, evaluation, and monitoring (Nasheeda et al., 2018). In developed countries, it emphasizes the importance of providing diverse experiences and rich environments to promote the acquisition of life skills from an early age. For example, Finland, Estonia, and Ireland have developed comprehensive learning modules on out-of-class learning activities that are comprehensively integrated into their preschool education systems. These modules cover a wide range of developmental areas, promoting holistic development in children (Özgem & Akcil, 2022). Similarly, successful programs such as Life Skills Education (LSE) have been implemented in many Western countries to reduce children's risky behaviors and promote positive behaviors (Kirchhoff & Keller, 2021; Nasheeda et al., 2018).

Turkey, on the other hand, continues to experience some difficulties in implementation and evaluation, especially the lack of programs to systematically increase children's life skills (İlhan-İyi & Esen-Çoban, 2023). When Turkey's current official preschool education curriculum is examined, although there are partial outcomes related to the subcomponents of life skills, there is no comprehensive program. Despite these challenges, the Turkish Ministry of National Education underlined that individuals with life skills should be raised. In recent years, official institutions, educators, and various non-governmental organizations have also carried out projects and activities related to life skills. A "Life Skills" activity book was prepared within the scope of the "Technical Support Project for the Prevention of Violence Against Children" for children of different age groups and financed by the European Union and the Republic of Turkey.

When we look at the studies on life skills in Turkey, in general; it is seen that studies are more intense in the context of combating substance addiction, self-care skills of children who need special education, and social skills of individuals in secondary school and above (Özbek Ayaz et al., 2025). There seems to be a limited number of studies directly related to life skills in the field of pre-school education. Studies are available that examine the effects of life skills education programs prepared for preschool children on children's problematic behaviors, social skills, social-emotional adaptation, and self-perceptions (Topcu-Bilir, 2022). To develop children's life skills, such training programs should be prepared and implemented by including them in the education curriculum throughout the country. It is, therefore, necessary to determine the life skills of pre-school children and which variables they are related to. The main purpose of this research is to investigate the life skills of pre-school children in terms of different variables. To achieve this primary objective, the study aimed to address the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference between the gender and life skills of the preschool children?

2. Is there a significant difference in the life skills of preschool children based on their number of siblings and birth order?

3. Is there a significant difference between the duration of preschool education and the life skills of preschool children?

4. Is there a significant difference between the education and income levels of parents and the life skills of preschool children?

In the context of rapidly evolving educational paradigms, the necessity of this study becomes evident when considering the growing recognition of life skills as essential components of holistic development in children. In Turkey, while there have been initiatives to integrate life skills into the educational framework, there remains a lack of comprehensive and systematic programs, particularly at the preschool level. By examining the variables that influence the development of these skills among preschoolers, this research aims to inform and enhance educational practices, thereby contributing to the creation of more effective, life skills-oriented educational programs. This focus not only aligns with global educational trends but also responds to specific national needs, fostering a generation of children better equipped for personal and societal well-being.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study analyses the relationship between preschool children's life skills and various variables. The study adopted a quantitative research approach and used a survey model. This model provides a systematic framework for determining relationships between variables and exploring possible causal relationships (Cohen et al., 2018). The population of this study consists of preschool children, aged 48–72 months, who attend official kindergartens in Şanlıurfa, a province located in the Southeastern region of Turkey. The study focuses on children in Şanlıurfa's central districts who exhibit typical developmental patterns. Taking care to ensure that the sample represents the study population at the highest level, a total of 6 kindergartens, two from each of these districts with different socioeconomic characteristics, were selected by random cluster sampling method. Accordingly, the sample of the research consists of 475 students, who are 48-72 months.

The researchers developed a personal information form to collect data on various factors, including gender, number of siblings, birth order, duration of pre-school education, and other relevant background characteristics of the participating children. To assess children's life skills, the Early Childhood Life Skills Scale (ECLSS), developed by Topç-Bilir (2022), was used. This scale was designed to measure the life skills of children aged 48–72 months with typical development. It consists of 56 items that reflect 10 skill areas identified by the World Health Organization—such as creative thinking, coping with stress, decision-making, effective communication, empathy, coping with emotions, problem-solving, critical thinking, interpersonal relations, and self-awareness—as well as two additional areas, "safety" and "health," included by the scale's author. All items are positively worded and cannot be reverse scored.

The scale is a Likert-type instrument completed by either the child's parents or teacher. Each item is rated on a five-point scale: Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), and Always (5). Example items include: "When faced with a problem, s/he seeks a solution by keeping calm," "S/he is aware of his responsibilities for home, school, and the environment s/he lives in," and "S/he knows safe people." Total scores range from 56 to 280, with higher scores indicating stronger life skills. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the original scale was reported as 0.98 (Topçu-Bilir, 2022), and it was calculated as 0.97 in the current study, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency.

The ECLSS was chosen for this study because it is appropriate for the Turkish preschool context and measures a wide range of essential skills. This scale covers 12

important sub-domains emphasized by WHO and UNICEF, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and effective communication. Its high reliability and validity make it an ideal tool for assessing the various life skills of Turkish pre-school children. Another strength of the scale is that it can be easily completed by families with low socio-economic status. For all these reasons, data were collected using the ECLSS in this study.

Before starting data collection, permission was obtained from the Turkish Ministry of National Education (Approval No: E.22696671). Additionally, approval was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Harran University (Approval No: 752.01.01-11707). After the official kindergartens in the central districts of Şanlıurfa were identified, the data collection instruments utilized in the study were distributed to the teachers, who were subsequently asked to forward them to the families of the children in their classes. When deemed necessary, the teachers were asked to inform families about the research. 900 forms and scales were sent to the parents of the children. In this context, 502 forms and scales, which were returned, were meticulously examined. 27 scales that were largely incomplete or incorrectly filled were excluded from the study. For this reason, the data were analyzed over 475 children in total.

In this study, data analysis was conducted using the SPSS 24 statistical package. Descriptive statistics, including percentage, frequency, and arithmetic mean calculations, were employed to examine the demographic characteristics of the children and their families whose data were collected within the research framework. To determine the appropriate statistical methods for analyzing the independent variables, the normality of the data was assessed. In this context, skewness and kurtosis coefficients were calculated, as values within the range of -1.5 to +1.5 are considered indicative of a normal distribution (Kline, 2005). The results confirmed that the data followed a normal distribution. Consequently, independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were applied to evaluate the statistical significance of differences across variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part of the research, the findings obtained in line with the data obtained are included. The findings obtained are presented in tables. Independent groups t-test was conducted to determine whether the life skills of children receiving pre-school education show a significant difference by the gender variable.

Table 1: t-test results for gender variable

Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	P
Life Skills	Girl	220	3.78	.64	3.11	.00*
	Boy	255	3.59	.66		

Source: Own elaboration

* p <.05

Table 1 shows a statistically significant difference (p<0.05) in the mean life skills scores between boys and girls. Considering the mean scores of the children from the ECLSS, there is a significant difference in favor of girls ($\bar{X}$=3.78).

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the life skills of children attending pre-school show a significant difference by the variable of the number of siblings. The Tukey test was applied to determine which group the significant difference was in favor of.

Table 2: ANOVA results of the number of siblings

Dimension	Number of siblings	N	Mean	SD	F	P	Tukey
Life Skills	No siblings (1)	31	3.90	.61	5.07	.00*	5<1,2,3
	1 (2)	122	3.80	.58			
	2 (3)	117	3.74	.60			
	3 (4)	98	3.60	.76			
	4 and above (5)	107	3.49	.65			

Source: Own elaboration

* p <.05

The life skills mean score of children statistically significantly differs by the number of siblings (p<.05) in Table 2. Based on the Tukey test results, it is seen that this difference was between those who have four or more siblings and those who do not; those who have four or more siblings and those who have one sibling; and those who have four or more siblings and those who have two siblings. When the mean scores of the children in the ECLSS are examined, a differentiation is observed in favor of the children who do not have siblings and who have fewer siblings. While the mean score of the children with four or more siblings ($\bar{X}$=3.49) is the lowest, the mean score of the children who have no siblings ($\bar{X}$=3.90) is the highest.

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the life skills of children attending pre-school show a significant difference by the variable of birth order. The Tukey test was applied to determine which group the significant difference was in favor of.

Table 3: ANOVA results for the birth order

Dimension	Birth Order	N	Mean	SD	F	P	Tukey
Life Skills	1.(1)	149	3.85	.58	7.25	.00*	3<1
	2.(2)	139	3.66	.67			
	3.(3)	106	3.47	.73			
	4. and above (4)	81	3.67	.59			

Source: Own elaboration

* p <.05

The life skills mean scores of children differ statistically significantly by the birth order (p<0.05) in Table 3. The significant differentiation is between first-born children and third-born children regarding the Tukey test. Considering the mean scores of the children in the ECLSS, it was found that the significant difference was in favor of the first-born children. While the mean score of the third-born children ($\bar{X}$=3.47) was the lowest, the mean score of the first-born children ($\bar{X}$=3.85) was the highest.

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the life skills of children receiving pre-school education showed a significant difference by the variable of the duration of attendance in pre-school education. The Tukey test was applied to determine which group the significant difference was in favor of. The obtained results are given in Table 4.

Table 4: ANOVA results of attendance to pre-school education

Dimension	Duration of pre-school education	N	Mean	SD	F	P	Tukey
Life Skills	1.year (1)	324	3.68	.64	3.30	.04*	3<2
	2nd year (2)	128	3.73	.63			
	3rd year and above (3)	23	3.35	.83			

Source: Own elaboration

* p <.05

The life skills mean scores of children statistically significantly differ by the variable of the duration of attendance in pre-school education (p<0.05) Table 4. According to the results of the Tukey test, this differentiation is seen between the children who attend pre-school education for two years and those who continue their preschool education for 3 years or more. When the mean scores of the children in the ECLSS are examined, it is seen that the significant difference is in favor of the children who attend pre-school education for two years. While the mean score of the children who attended pre-school education for three years or more ($\bar{X}$=3.35) was the lowest, the mean score of the children who attended pre-school education for 2 years ($\bar{X}$=3.73) was the highest.

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the life skills of children attending pre-school education showed a significant difference by the variable of mother's education level. The Tukey test was applied to determine which group the significant difference was in favor of.

Table 5: ANOVA results of mother's education level

Dimension	Mother's education status	N	Mean	SD	F	P	Tukey
Life Skills	Illiterate (1)	86	3.32	.73	11.29	.00*	1<3,4,5,6 2<6 3<6
	Literate (2)	56	3.52	.76			
	Primary school (3)	120	3.68	.65			
	Middle School (4)	71	3.81	.52			
	High School (5)	74	3.81	.52			
	University (6)	68	4.00	.49			

Source: Own elaboration

* p <.05

The life skills mean scores of children statistically significantly differ by the variable of mother's education level (p<0.05) Table 5. This differentiation is between those whose mothers are illiterate and those whose mothers are primary, secondary, high school, and university graduates; between those whose mothers are university graduates, and literate and primary school graduates regarding the Tukey test. When the mean scores obtained from the ECLSS are examined, this differentiation is in favor of the children whose mothers have a high education level. The children whose mothers are university graduates had the highest mean score ($\bar{X}$ = 4.00), while those whose mothers are illiterate had the lowest ($\bar{X}$ = 3.32).

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the life skills of children receiving pre-school education exhibit a significant difference by the variable of father's education level. The Tukey test was applied to determine which group the significant difference was in favor of.

Table 6: ANOVA results of father's education level

Dimension	Father's education status	N	Mean	SD	F	P	Tukey
Life Skills	Illiterate (1)	24	2.78	.57	15.6	.00*	1<2,3,4,5,6 2<5,6
	Literate (2)	51	3.44	.56			
	Primary school (3)	88	3.65	.70			
	Middle School (4)	96	3.74	.66			
	High School (5)	99	3.75	.59			
	University (6)	117	3.89	.54			

Source: Own elaboration

* p <.05

The life skills mean scores of children statistically significantly differ by the variable of father's education level (p<0.05) Table 6. This differentiation was between illiterate fathers and all other groups; between those whose fathers are literate and those whose fathers are high school and university graduates regarding the Tukey test. It is proved by the mean scores that this differentiation is in favor of the children whose fathers are high education graduates. While the mean score of the children whose fathers are illiterate ($\bar{X}$=2.78) is the lowest, the mean score of the children whose fathers are university graduates ($\bar{X}$ =3.89) is the highest.

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the life skills of children receiving pre-school education exhibit a significant difference by the variable of family income status. The Tukey test was applied to determine which group the significant difference was in favor of.

Table 7: ANOVA results of family income status

Dimension	Family income status	N	Mean	SD	F	P	Tukey
Life Skills	800-1600 TL (1)	141	3.54	.75	4.14	.00*	1<4
	1601-2400 TL (2)	167	3.68	.65			
	2401-4000 TL (3)	94	3.75	.56			
	4001 TL and above (4)	73	3.85	.51			

Source: Own elaboration

* p <.05

The life skills mean scores of children statistically significantly differ by the variable of family income (p<0.05) Table 7. The differentiation is between the children whose families have an income of 800-1600 Turkish Lira (TL) and those whose families have an income of 4001 TL or more regarding the Tukey test. The most notable difference favors children from families earning 4001 TL or more. Those with a family income between 800-1600 TL have the lowest average score ($\bar{X}$ = 3.54), while children from families earning 4001 TL and above achieve the highest average score ($\bar{X}$ = 3.85).

DISCUSSION

Life skills, as defined by the WHO, encompass cognitive, social, and emotional competencies that enable individuals to manage challenges, communicate effectively, and make responsible decisions. Since these skills emerge through complex interactions between personal characteristics, family dynamics, and educational experiences, their interpretation requires a multidimensional and context-based perspective. Accordingly, the findings of the present study are discussed by examining possible explanations and comparing them with previous research across variables such as gender, number of siblings, birth order, duration of preschool education, parental education level, and family income.

Regarding the gender variable, the results indicated a significant difference between girls and boys in terms of life skills, with girls achieving higher scores. This finding may be linked to the tendency of girls to demonstrate stronger skills in empathy, communication, emotional understanding, and social problem-solving in early childhood, which are recognized as core components of life skills. Parallel to this result, Mohtadi and Zboon (2017) and Haas et al. (2015) found that girls showed a higher level of life skills development compared to boys. Similarly, Çebi (2019) reported that girls outperform boys in social problem-solving, understanding emotions, and empathy, which are closely related to interpersonal competencies. Some studies suggest that boys' higher impulsivity may hinder their effective use of problem-solving and decision-making skills, as impulsivity increases the likelihood of making premature or risky decisions (Álvarez-Voces & Romero, 2025). In addition to individual characteristics, cultural and environmental factors may also reinforce these differences. In the Turkish context, girls are often encouraged to be more communicative, calm, and emotionally expressive, while boys may receive less guidance in emotional regulation and interpersonal communication. These gender-related socialization patterns may contribute to girls' higher life skills scores in early childhood.

Another noteworthy finding concerned the number of siblings, which revealed a significant difference in life skills, with children who had no siblings or fewer siblings demonstrating higher life skills scores compared to those with four or more siblings. This pattern indicates that as the number of siblings decreases, children's life skills tend to increase. This result challenges the common assumption that having multiple siblings provides children with richer opportunities for social interaction, cooperation, and problem-solving, which are believed to support the development of life skills. However, similar to the findings of this study, Aksoy and Özkan (2015) reported that children with fewer siblings showed higher levels of social and emotional competence. One possible reason for this outcome may be that in larger families, parental attention, time, and emotional resources are divided among many children, which may reduce the quality of individual support, guidance, and communication provided to each child. Lower levels of parental responsiveness and communication may negatively affect children's development of social-emotional skills, which are fundamental

components of life skills. Therefore, individual attention and emotionally supportive parenting environments, which are more common in families with fewer children, may contribute to the development of stronger life skills in young children.

In relation to birth order, the study found a significant difference in life skills between first-born and third-born children, with first-born children scoring higher. This result is consistent with previous research indicating that birth order may influence children's cognitive, social, and emotional competencies. For instance, Çebi (2019) found that first-born children scored significantly higher in social problem-solving, while Mercan and Özbey (2020) reported similar results for interpersonal problem-solving skills among preschool children. A possible explanation for this finding is that first-born children often receive greater parental attention, responsibility, and expectations, which may contribute to the development of stronger social-emotional and self-regulation skills. In the Turkish cultural context, first-born children are frequently viewed as role models and are expected to be more responsible, helpful, and compliant than their younger siblings. Moreover, during the early years, particularly between ages 0–2, when emotional attachment and basic trust are formed, parents are more likely to establish strong, consistent, and emotionally responsive relationships with their first child. As the number of children in the family increases, parental time, patience, and emotional resources may become more limited, which can reduce individualized attention for later-born children. These differences in parenting practices and expectations may contribute to the higher life skills scores observed among first-born children.

Another important finding emerged regarding the duration of preschool education, showing that children who attended for two years scored higher than those who attended for three or more years. These results are supported by Hasanah et al. (2024), who found that optimal exposure to preschool education, especially around two years, positively contributes to children's social and emotional competencies. The lower life skills scores observed in children who attended preschool for three years or more may be associated with the characteristics of the sample, as these children are likely to have started preschool at a very early age (around age two). Beginning institutional education too early may limit children's opportunities for family-based emotional bonding, which plays a critical role in the development of secure attachment, emotional regulation, and social competence. Overexposure to structured environments and limited parental interaction during early sensitive periods may negatively affect children's life skills development, especially in the emotional and interpersonal domains. Therefore, it can be interpreted that two years of preschool education represents an optimal duration that balances socialization, structured learning, and emotional stability, particularly for children aged 4–5.

With respect to parental education level, the analysis demonstrated that children with more highly educated parents had higher life skills scores. This result suggests that as parents' education levels increase, their children tend to develop stronger social, emotional, and cognitive competencies. However, Atmaca et al. (2020) reported contrasting findings, which may be due to contextual differences such as parenting styles, income level, and the number of children in the family. The influence of parents on children's life skills development is widely recognized, as parents shape the home environment, provide learning opportunities, and model problem-solving, communication, and emotional regulation behaviors. In the Turkish context, Mercan (2019) found that children of parents with lower educational levels exhibited more destructive problem-solving behaviors compared to those whose parents had higher education levels. These findings indicate that parents with higher education levels may offer more supportive communication, richer learning experiences, and more effective guidance during early childhood, which contribute positively to life skills development.

Finally, in terms of income status, the results showed that children from higher-income families exhibited stronger life skills than those from lower-income households. This result is consistent with Bal and Temel (2014), who emphasized that higher socioeconomic conditions provide children with a richer home environment, more diverse learning experiences, and better access to educational resources that support cognitive, social, and emotional development. Similarly, Arabacı and Ömeroğlu (2013) found that children from higher-income families demonstrated stronger communication and creative thinking skills, which are accepted as core components of life skills. In contrast, Taşçı (2020) reported no significant relationship between income and life skills among older children. This inconsistency may be attributed to developmental differences, as life skills in early childhood are more strongly influenced by family-based interactions, while school and peer environments have a more dominant role in later years. Taken together, these findings suggest that income-related differences are particularly impactful during the preschool years, when parental responsiveness, home learning opportunities, and emotional support are primary determinants of life skills.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

(Bronfenbrenner, 1989), suggesting that children's life skills are shaped not only by individual traits but by continuous interactions with family, socioeconomic conditions, and early educational environments. Likewise, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory explains how parental guidance, social interaction, and learning opportunities function as scaffolding that foster children's cognitive, social, and emotional competencies (Vygotsky, 1978). Together, these theories reinforce the idea that life skills are not innate and fixed, but dynamic, learnable, and context-dependent capabilities shaped through early experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that socio-demographic factors play a significant role in shaping the life skills of children in the preschool period. The results indicate that gender, birth order, number of siblings, duration of preschool education, parental education level, and family income are variables that differentiate children's life skills. Accordingly, life skills should not be regarded as innate, fixed abilities but as competencies that are influenced by and can be developed through environmental, familial, and educational opportunities. Therefore, it is important for educational policies to consider socio-demographic differences to more effectively support the development of life skills in early childhood. It is suggested that families provide sensitive communication, emotional security, and enriched home environments that support children's life skills, while educators adopt developmentally appropriate, inclusive educational approaches that are responsive to children's diverse backgrounds. Future research could examine the relationships between life skills and other variables and expand the scope of investigation to include elementary and middle school levels. Moreover, comparing research findings across different countries and cultures may provide valuable insights. In addition, designing and implementing effective educational programs for children from low socio-economic backgrounds, who are at risk in terms of life skills, is recommended. Such targeted programs can contribute to strengthening life skills, particularly among disadvantaged children, and to supporting holistic development in early childhood.

This study is derived from the first author's master's thesis conducted in the Department of Preschool Education at Necmettin Erbakan University, Institute of Educational Sciences. The authors would like to thank the participating children, their families, and preschool teachers for their valuable contributions.

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