

The Impact of Turkish Cypriot Folktales on Middle School Students' Social Skills

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Folktales, as products of oral culture, play a significant role in supporting children's language development during their preschool and primary school years. They facilitate children's adaptation to social and cultural environments and contribute significantly to their cultural and educational lives. Additionally, folktales enhance children's social skills, including critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, planning, analysis, and coping with stress. This study aims to investigate how Turkish Cypriot folktales influence the social skills of middle school students. This research highlights the potential of folktales in enhancing children's social skills. A mixed-methods research design was employed to measure the impact of Turkish Cypriot folktales on middle school students' social skills. The study group consists of 56 students attending a private school in the Northern Cyprus. The quantitative data collection tool used was the "Matson Evaluation of Social Skills in Children (MESSY)" scale, and two open-ended interview questions created by the researchers were administered. According to the quantitative data, the intervention of teaching social skills with Cyprus Turkish folktales did not statistically make a difference on the experimental group students. However, the qualitative data revealed that according to the expressions of the participating students, Cyprus Turkish folktales have increased their awareness of social skills such as problem-solving, planning, analysis, and coping with stress.

Introduction

Folktales serve as a longstanding educational tool, supporting and enriching children's linguistic development and vocabulary through the language and concepts they employ. Universal and national tales are used to educate, stimulate imagination and critical thinking, entertain, foster healthy communication with peers and the environment, and prepare children for future challenges. Academically, they continue to function as a widespread educational resource, contributing significantly to the development of children's social skills.

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According to Pilli and Çakır (2022), through the folktales they listen to or read, children learn words and concepts related to their native language, and develop their abilities to express themselves, communicate, and solve problems. They also acquire habits of critical and creative thinking. Folktales take children on a journey from imagination to reality, helping them easily concretize abstract concepts. Tosunoğlu and Melanlıoğlu (2007) also state that folktales are a fundamental literary genre that nourishes a child's language and soul: "From the moment an individual is born, they encounter the language of the society they are born into and the literature created with this language. In Turkish communities, the first literary genre encountered is folk literature. The literary genres encountered during the growth process, starting with lullabies, diversify and enrich into folktales, and stories. By listening to works of different genres, a child's language, mind, soul, and social structure develop." According to Boratav (1992), types of folk literature such as 'tales, rhymes, and riddles' help children learn their native language and appreciate its richness. After a tale is read or listened to, activities such as "discussing the tale, answering questions about it, and dramatizing it will enhance the child's listening and storytelling skills" (Mert, 2012, pp. 4-5). Folktales are a genre that nourishes, embellishes, enriches, and prepares a child's spirit for the future, conveying truth indirectly. "With the help of folktales, children concretize reality by comparing it with their imagination. In this way, they have the opportunity to experience both their own imaginary world and the narrated world together" (Yalçın & Aytaş, 2003, p. 60). Children embark on a happy journey in their own imaginary world with folktales and have the chance to experience and compare the folktale world with the real world. The literary genres encountered during the growth process include lullabies, folktales, folktales, and stories. The language, mind, and spirit of a child who reads and listens to different genres develop and become enriched. "While folktales develop a child's language skills, they also instill an unconscious awareness of both national and universal values based on culture, thereby contributing to the child's moral and social education" (Enginün, 1987; Karatay, 2007). Folktales entertain children, expand their imagination and thinking, and guide their lives. "By telling appropriate folktales to children, their vocabulary and emotional world are enriched. Using the rhythm and imitations in folktales supports children's motor development" (Gülyüz, 2003, p.180; Zengin & Zengin, 2007, p.164). Folktales have significant benefits for children's creative thinking, language and attention development, adoption of societal values, and understanding of real life. According to Şimşek (2001), "Folktales encourage listeners to do good and contain educational and moral lessons". Folktales hold an important place in children's lives due to their advice, fluent and understandable structure, simple language, imaginative and real elements, reasoning, and problem-solving aspects. They generally contribute positively to child development. Additionally, in each folktale, children encounter a hero with both positive and negative traits, giving them the opportunity to recognize different types of people and analyze their characters. This can guide their education and help structure their school life accordingly.

Aksoy (2021) and Şahin (2011) indicated that, folktales can help identify children's strengths and weaknesses. Yeniasır and Gökbulut (2017) specified that, Cypriot folktales contain both positive and some negative elements for children. These include killing, violence, jealousy, greed, lying, and begging. For instance, the Cypriot tales "Fatmacıñnan Yusufcuk" and "Dürdane" involve themes of violence, jealousy, and killing. Some folktales, due to the negative messages they contain, can harm child development. In a Cypriot folktale called "Fatmacıñnan Yusufcuk," negative elements are portrayed as follows: "In the tale, the woman cuts her own breast to find a solution, and the stepfather wants to cut and eat his stepchildren, while the servant throws the woman into the pond with fish to be eaten by them" (Yeniasır & Gökbulut, 2017, p. 313). This situation underscores the importance of carefully selecting and

transmitting educational and instructive folktales. Folktales should be chosen with great care when used in children's education; otherwise, they can cause actual harm to the child reading or listening to them. Helimoğlu (2002, pp. 70-90) extensively discusses the educational functions of folktales but also notes the presence of many characters displaying negative behaviors. For example, jealous, deceitful, cunning women, wicked stepmothers, witch women, and giant mothers; greedy, deceitful, evil-hearted men, etc. In "The Tale of Dürdane (Dürdane Masalı)" (Yorgancıoğlu, 1998, pp. 111-112), the two sisters killing their youngest sister out of jealousy involves violence. This is highly detrimental to the child's socio-psychological development. In "The Cursed Child Tale (Beddualı Çocuk Masalı)" (Yorgancıoğlu, 1998, pp. 23-25), the Sultan's refusal to accept a daughter and his declaration that he would kill her if she were born creates negative gender discrimination among children listening/reading the tale.

Similarities between Anatolian and Cypriot folktales can be attributed to shared historical and cultural origins. For instance, hospitality is a cultural motif prominently featured in both Anatolian and Turkish Cypriot folktales. Guests are considered as "God's guests" and are warmly welcomed and treated with utmost hospitality. In Anatolian Turkish folktales such as "The Hunter Ahmet (Avcı Ahmet)" a shepherd slaughters an animal for a guest visiting his home (Alptekin, 2002, pp. 224-229). Similarly, in Turkish Cypriot folktales like "The Lazy Cingoz (Tembel Cingöz)" a man arriving in the village is also accommodated as a guest (Yorgancıoğlu, 1998, pp. 13-15).

Transitional periods, which hold significant importance in both Anatolian and Turkish Cypriot cultures, are extensively portrayed in folktale texts. Anatolian folktales depict themes such as seeking solutions in the absence of children, naming a child, seeking a bride, conducting weddings lasting forty days and nights, burial rituals, and post-death ceremonies. The tradition of conducting weddings lasting forty days and nights is depicted in Anatolian tales like "Honesty (Doğruluk)" and "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Kırk Haramiler)" and in Turkish Cypriot folktales such as "Sultan and Daughters (Padişahınan Gızları)" and "Pigeon Prince (Güvercin Şehzade)". For example, in the tale "Sultan and Daughter" it is narrated that "the sultan orders, festivities are arranged, drums are beaten, and a wedding lasting forty days and nights is held" (Yorgancıoğlu, 1998, pp. 87-89). Based on these examples, it can be said that Anatolian and Turkish Cypriot folktales similarly and functionally depict transitional periods such as birth, wedding, and death. According to Yeniasır, Gökbulut et al. (2021), an example of a Turkish Cypriot tale sharing common motifs with Anatolian tales is the story "The Woman and the Flea (Bit Kadınla Pire Kadın)". The motif of embroidery found in the Cypriot Turkish tale "Güvercin Şehzade" (The Prince of Pigeons) (Yorgancıoğlu, pp. 152-153) is also present in the Anatolian tale "Yemen Padişahının Oğlu (The Son of the Yemeni Sultan)" (Sakaoğlu, 2002, pp. 479-481). While some Turkish Cypriot tales incorporate motifs from Anatolia, there are also tales in the literature that include motifs specific to Cypriot culture. According to Konedralı (1996), some of these tales include "Gara Böcü, Pakla Ağacı, Değirmenlik, Avcının Oğlu, İncircinin Dediği, Zümrüt Halka Guşu, Ağlayan Nar ile Gülen Ayva." Due to centuries of sharing the island with Greeks, Turkish Cypriot tales and other literary genres exhibit similar episodes and motifs. Coexistence has led to mutual influence and borrowing between Turkish Cypriot and Greek tales. Gökçeoğlu (2005), who studied and compiled 141 Turkish Cypriot folktales, indicated that, one of the tales that shares common motifs with Greeks is the 'Dirimo' (Dirimbo) tale and type. In the comparative analysis by İslamoğlu and Öznur (2007) in their book "Comparative Turkish Cypriot and Greek Folktales," the 'Dirimo' (Dirimbo) tale is described as follows: The character who is a sultan in the Turkish tale is a king in the Greek

tale. In the Greek version, the giant disguises himself as a human, while in the Turkish version, he disguises himself as a priest. Both versions of the tale feature a segment where three brothers write a letter to the giant's wife. Instead of cooking animals in the Greek version, in the Turkish version, the giant is asked to bring halloumi cheese bread. In the Greek tale, the giant steals gold, bedspreads, a horse, and a ring, whereas in the Turkish tale, they steal a blanket, a horse, and a bowl. Alongside these similarities, influences from other cultures (Greek, British) in the region have led to some variations. Turkish Cypriot tales also show influences from Greek culture, including elements of Christianity. Sakaoğlu (1983) similarly notes in his work that unlike Anatolian tales, Turkish Cypriot tales feature the character type of a priest. The character of a priest or priest's wife, rarely seen in Turkish tales, is quite common in Cypriot tales (Karabacak, Öznur, & Piro, 2023, p. 96).

Folktales are a significant phenomenon that shapes a child's mental world, personality structure, social life, and skills. They play an important role in forming the child's character, transitioning from abstract to concrete, from fantasy to reality, and developing social skills.

Literature Review

Educators consider folktales as materials that facilitate an individual's adaptation to social and cultural environments, enable healthy communication, and contribute significantly to becoming equipped with values and skills. Boratav, who has conducted research on folktales, defines a folktale as "a short narrative entirely based on imagination, independent of religious beliefs, unrelated to reality, and making no claim to convince about what it tells" (Boratav, 1992, p. 75). According to Konedralı et al. (2007), folktales are the oldest and most beloved genre of children's literature. Kaya (2000) argues that folktales are important tools in helping children understand themselves and grow into individuals who are kind-hearted, fair, tolerant, helpful, and who adapt to social and cultural environments. Yorgancıoğlu (1998) states that folktales and Cypriot tales have their roots in the past. They are considered as stories told and passed down about people's lives in the past.

Çakır (2022) argues that folktales are among the fundamental elements that educate society. Today, folktales are used as an educational tool in school environments and classrooms. "Folktales nurture the emotions and thoughts of preschool children and serve as a valuable educational tool" (Kıbrıs, 2002, p.44). Folktales support children's linguistic development during preschool and primary-secondary school years. Sanders (1994) highlights the contribution of folktales to language development: "Folktales, as oral language products, play an effective role particularly during the preschool period - the period of verbal acquisition." Therefore, storytelling is an important educational tool that should be utilized.

Folktales, through imaginative creations and supernatural characters, convey the cultural and moral values of a society to the listeners. Therefore, it is known that the educational functions of folktales, especially integrating them into children's lives, are important for their development (Yılmaz, 2012, p.299). "Folktales gain many functionalities in the language of teachers and appeal to both the minds and hearts of individuals. In doing so, it should not be forgotten that teachers are actually storytellers. Therefore, the concepts of folktales and teachers should not be considered separately" (Akin & Akin, 2021, p.18). In folktales, it is possible to find a society's traditions, psychological, sociological, ethical, aesthetic, and cultural values. Therefore, raising children with a 'folktale culture' is important (Yücel, 2015, p. 215). According to Karadağ (1999), Arıcı (2016), and Sakaoğlu (2002), children, as carriers of culture, learn and apply cultural values of different times and places and those related to their own culture while listening to or reading folktales. Aydın and Gürler (2012)

suggest that families should utilize stories and folktales to transmit values and skills, providing children with heroes and ideals they can emulate. A folktale tradition dating back from the past to the present is known in Cyprus. According to Çakır (2020), prominent researchers who have conducted studies on Turkish Cypriot folktales include scholars such as Alptekin and Sakaoğlu (1985), Yorgancıoğlu (1998), Karadağ (1999), Öznur (2002), Gökçeoğlu (2005), and İslamoğlu and Öznur (2007), who are folklorists and educators.

Social skills can be briefly defined as the display of behaviours and thoughts by an individual that are adaptive to the environment in which they are situated. Social skills can be briefly defined as the behaviors and thoughts that individuals exhibit to adapt to and interact effectively within their environment. According to Çiftçi and Sucuoğlu (2012), and Aksoy (2021), studies in the field have shown that social skills are associated with various competencies. Social skills are defined as the responsibilities individuals undertake and the attitudes and behaviors they adopt to adapt to the community and conditions they are part of; Elliott and Gresham (1987) define social skills as the tools used to initiate and maintain significant interpersonal relationships and interactions between individuals and their environment. Individuals who demonstrate healthy social development are those who have completed their social skill competencies and are effective communicators. According to Elliot and Busse (1991), social skills encompass certain behaviours, including cooperation behaviours such as following rules and sharing, suggestion behaviours, responsibility behaviours such as communication or task completion, self-control behaviours in conflict situations, and empathy behaviours. Dereli (2008) states that various theories such as behaviourist theory, cognitive development theory, social-cognitive learning theory, and cognitive-behavioural theories are utilized in the acquisition of social skills. The acquisition of social skills through family and school education enables children to establish healthy relationships with individuals in society, significantly contributing to their success and making their lives meaningful and fulfilling.

Social behaviors refer to the practical application of social skills. Folktales enhance children's inferential and analytical skills through observed cause-and-effect relationships. In the Turkish Cypriot folktale "Pears in the Basket," the middle and eldest sons who lie are punished by the Sultan, while the youngest son who tells the truth is rewarded. In the folktale "Bakla," a bad neighbor is punished at the end of the tale. These two tales illustrate the cause-and-effect relationship where committing evil deeds or being a bad person has negative consequences on individuals. In these two tales, it is observed that engaging in wrongdoing or being a bad person can have negative consequences, as evidenced by the cause-and-effect relationships (Gökçeoğlu, 2005, p.140). For example, in the tale of 'Dirimo-Drimbo', the educated child saves his siblings from the giant through his intellect, knowledge, and skills. Children who read or listen to this tale believe that they can use their reasoning even in very difficult situations to save themselves.

Social skills are defined as the ability to understand both one's own and others' feelings, thoughts, and behaviors in various interactions, and to behave appropriately based on that understanding (Çubukçu & Gültekin, 2006, p.159). In this study, Turkish Cypriot folktales with educational value, such as "The Sultan's Apple Tree" "Drimbo" "The Mill" and "The Pears in the Basket" which address coping with stress, planning, and problem-solving skills, were narrated to students using drama techniques. Studies in the literature emphasize that activities like drama, play, and storytelling support social development (Pekdoğan, 2016, p.386). In tales such as "The Pears in the Basket," "The Sultan's Apple Tree" and "Drimbo", it is observed that engaging in wrongdoing or being a bad person can have negative



consequences and lead to punishment, while doing good deeds, being honest, and being a good person are rewarded.

Significance of the study

Children listening to folktales from their mothers or elders is important for their cognitive and social development. Folktales contribute to children's cognitive development by stimulating their creativity, imagination, and artistic abilities. Folktales support children's language development from the preschool period onwards (Cihangir, 2013). Therefore, storytelling can be considered an important instructional technique. It is believed that using folktales in the social skills development of middle school students will positively impact their social skill development. The acquisition and improvement of social skills are achieved through folktales, which contain many values. According to Bacanlı (1999), social behaviours encompass learned behaviours that can be observed and unobserved. Through the observed cause-and-effect relationships in folktales, children develop skills such as making inferences, interpreting content, expressing themselves, communicating, and critical and creative thinking. From this perspective, folktales have an important place. The use of folktales in the social skills development of middle school students and the behaviour changes they will bring about will play a significant role in their social acceptance, academic achievements, and professional lives. While there are studies on the educational aspect of folktales (Yeniasır & Gökbulut, 2017), this semi-experimental study is expected to fill a significant gap in the field by exploring the use of Turkish Cypriot folktales in social skills teaching.

Among the limitations of this study is that the sample of the research only includes 6th-grade students at Girne American College in the 2022-23 academic year, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other schools and students. Additionally, the research is limited to students who participated in the "Turkish Cypriot folktales for social skills instruction" program. The study is confined to testing the impact of the independent variable, social skills, on the dependent variable. Furthermore, this research is limited to the dates on which the study was conducted.

Purpose of the Research

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of Turkish Cypriot folktales on students' social skills and to develop recommendations. The question "Does integrating Turkish Cypriot folktales into social skills instruction affect the social skills of middle school students?" forms the problem statement of the research. The following questions were addressed to conduct the research:

- (1) Is there a significant difference in MESSY total pre-test scores between the group of students participating in the application of Turkish Cypriot folktales for social skills instruction (Experimental Group) and the group of students not participating in the application (Control Group)?
- (2) Do the MESSY total pre-test to post-test score averages of the Experimental Group students significantly differ?
- (3) Do the MESSY total pre-test to post-test score averages of the Control Group students significantly differ?
- (4) Do the MESSY total post-test score averages of the Experimental and Control Group students significantly differ?
- (5) What are the opinions of 6th-grade students regarding the contributions of messages and skills mentioned in Turkish Cypriot folktales to their social skill development?

Methodology

In this study, a mixed research design, which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods, has been utilized. The mixed methods approach aims to complement the shortcomings of both quantitative and qualitative methods. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the mixed research method enhances the overall efficacy of the research, serving the research objectives more effectively (Gültekin, Bayır, & Yaşar, 2020). In this study, the quantitative research model is designed as a pre-test post-test, control group experimental design. In experimental designs, the aim is to determine the impact of the intervention on the outcome (Creswell, 2014). In quasi-experimental designs, groups are randomly assigned (Keppel, 1991). The present study was conducted as a quasi-experimental study. The study comprises one experimental group and one control group. Both experimental and control groups are measured on the dependent variable before and after the experimental procedure. Following the pre-test administration, manipulation is applied to the experimental group but not to the control group. The pre- and post-test results of the experimental and control groups are compared to determine whether the procedure applied to the experimental group has an effect on the dependent variable (Büyüköztürk, 2016). Similar to quasi-experimental studies, this research is conducted as an Unmatched Comparative Group Design. The symbolic design of the study is as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

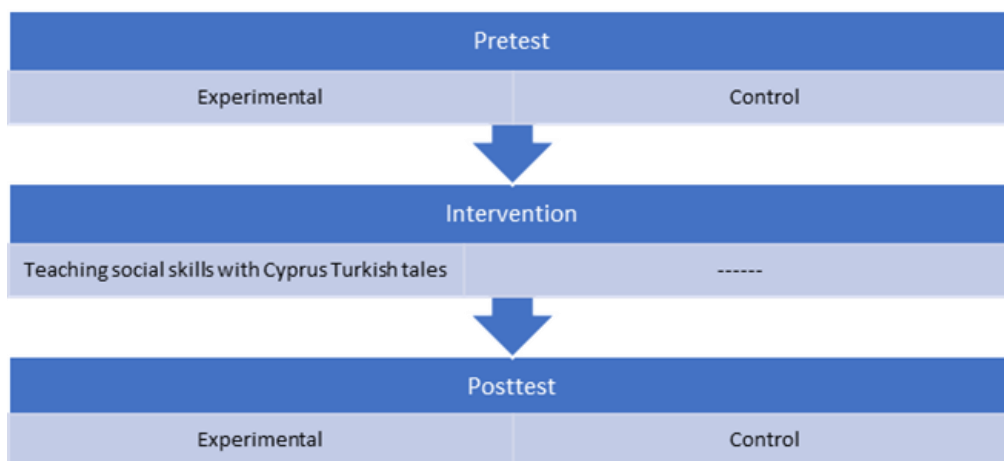


Figure 1. Research design

Study Group

The study group consisted of 56 sixth-grade students attending a private middle school located in Girne, North Cyprus during the 2022-2023 academic year. In this study, a convenient sampling method was employed, considering the acceptance of the application of teaching social skills through Turkish Cypriot folktales in a private middle school where the researchers are affiliated. The selected school provides full-day services to students with good socio-economic opportunities. In this secondary school, the experimental group and the control group were selected using simple random sampling method. In order to prevent possible data loss and expand the number of study groups, two separate classes were used for the experimental group. Of the 56 students in the study group, 34 were randomly selected to form the experimental group and 22 students are participated in the control group. The subjects were not informed about whether they were in the experimental or control group. The distribution of the students participating in the research by gender in the experimental and control groups is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Information about the study group

Groups	Female	Male
Experimental	17	17
Control	10	12

Data collection tool

In this study, "Matson Social Skills Assessment Scale in Children (MESSY)" was used as a quantitative data collection tool. Matson Children's Social Skills Assessment Scale (MESSY), which was developed by Matson, Rotatory and Hessel (1983) to measure the social skill level of the 12-14 age group. The MESSY student form was adapted into Turkish by Bacanlı and Erdoğan (2003). The scale consists of a total of 47 items: "Not suitable for me at all - 1 point", "Not very suitable for me - 2 points", "Somewhat suitable for me - 3 points", "Extremely suitable for me - 4 points", "Extremely suitable for me - 5 points" It is a 5-point Likert type as "score". There are two sub-dimensions in the scale: "Negative Social Behaviours" (Factor I) and "Positive Social Behaviours" (Factor II). In the validity study, factor analysis and similar scale validity were examined, and in the reliability study, test-retest reliability and internal consistency coefficient were examined. Item-total correlations of 41 items of the scale were found above .30. The lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is 47 and the highest score is 235. The Croanbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale is 0.68 for the "Negative Social Behaviours" subscale, 0.74 for the "Positive Social Behaviours" subscale, and 0.85 for the total social skill level. As an indicator of the reliability of the scale, "test-retest" reliability was calculated by Matson, Rotatory, and Hessel (1983) and the correlation coefficient was found to be 0.77. The correlation coefficients calculated for the subscales are respectively; It is 0.70 for "Negative Social Behaviours" and 0.74 for "Positive Social Behaviours". Despite this, in this study, the reliability analysis of the scale was conducted again and its reliability was examined. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients calculated in this study are 0.82 for the "Negative Social Behaviours" subscale, 0.83 for the "Positive Social Behaviours" subscale and .87 for the total social skill level. The Croanbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients of the scale calculated by Bacanlı and Erdoğan (2003) are; It is 0.81 for the "negative social behaviour" subscale, 0.83 for the "positive social behaviour" subscale and 0.94 for total social skills.

Additionally, two open-ended interview questions, devised by the researchers, were directed towards the students after the final test administration to collect qualitative data for the current study. These open-ended questions were exclusively posed to the experimental group students. The draft interview form was presented to three researchers specializing in Educational Sciences, Turkish Language Teaching, and qualitative research. Based on the feedback and revisions that were taken, it was refined and piloted with three 6th-grade students who were not part of the sample, thereby testing the comprehensibility and effectiveness of the questions.

Procedure and data collection

The study was conducted with 6th grade students studying in a private secondary school in the Spring semester of the 2022-2023 Academic Year. The study was initiated in April by administering the social skills survey to the students as a pretest, and then by applying the same scale as a post-test after a 4-week training by the researchers and classroom teacher. In the study, two open-ended questions were asked to the students in the experimental group after the scale in order to collect quantitative data. Only pretest and post-test were

conducted to the students in the control group. The researchers worked on a selected tale from the Turkish Cypriot folktales every week, together with their Turkish teachers, in Turkish lessons, and the messages given in the tales were discussed. As a result of the studies that continued until the second half of May, the messages, motifs and characteristics of the heroes in the "The Sultan's Apple Tree, Drimbo, The Mill, and The Pears in the Basket" tales, which are widely known among Turkish Cypriot folktales and have educational value, were processed by the researchers through mutual dialogues. In the lessons and extracurricular activities during the application, the folktales "The Sultan's Apple Tree, Drimbo, The Mill and The Pears in the Basket" were told practically by the Turkish teacher, and the messages in these tales, lessons to be learned, social skills and folktale heroes were discussed. At the end of the application, MESSY was given to the students again as a post-test. Before the data collection tool was applied, the students' parents were asked to approve the consent form and notify the researcher. In addition, before starting the study, the researchers explained all the necessary information about the study to the Turkish teacher participating in the study and provided the necessary information about the questions and the process.

Data analysis

SPSS (Statistic Package for Social Science) program was used to analyse the data collected within the scope of the research. Descriptive statistical methods and difference tests were used to analyse the data. Among descriptive statistics, percentage, arithmetic mean, minimum and maximum values and independent t-test statistical techniques were used. Independent t-test was used to compare the pre-test scores of the groups before the experiment, and independent t-test was used to compare the pre-test and post-test scores within the groups and the post-experiment scores of the groups. First of all, in order to choose the most appropriate difference test for the data, the difference data of the pre-test and post-test results were entered into the SPSS program and the Kolmogorov – Smirnov and Shapiro – Wilk tests in Table 2 were applied. In order to decide on the analyses to be carried out using test scores, the Shapiro-Wilks test was examined whether the pre-test and post-test scores violated the assumption of normal distribution. The results obtained are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Kolmogorov – Smirnov and Shapiro – Wilk test results

Test	Group		N	Statistic	Sig.
Pretest	Experimental	Kolmogorov – Simirnov	34	,094	,200
		Shapiro – Wilk	34	,982	,947
	Control	Kolmogorov – Simirnov	22	,101	,200
		Shapiro – Wilk	22	,979	,736
Post-test	Experimental	Kolmogorov – Simirnov	34	,128	,200
		Shapiro – Wilk	34	,956	,405
	Control	Kolmogorov – Simirnov	22	,098	,200
		Shapiro – Wilk	22	,980	,779

At this stage, firstly, the distribution of the data was examined and since the normality tests concluded normal distribution, parametric tests were used. When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the pretest and post-test scores of the control group and the pretest scores of the experimental group do not violate the normality assumption ($p > .05$).

A descriptive analysis approach was adopted in the analysis of qualitative data. Descriptive analysis is a type of analysis that frequently includes direct quotations, where data are



summarized according to predetermined themes, interpreted and presented to the reader (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). During the descriptive analysis process, focus group interviews were read line by line and interpreted, supported by necessary quotations. In reporting the quotes, the names of the students were disguised with pseudonyms.

Results

The findings will be presented in two distinct sections. First, the results obtained from the quantitative data will be discussed, followed by an exposition of the qualitative findings.

Quantitative findings

In this study, which aims to investigate the impact of social skills instruction using Turkish Cypriot folktales on students' social skills, the initial assessment of the social skills of both the experimental and control groups was conducted. Primarily, a comparison was made between the pre-test achievement scores of the experimental group and the control group to determine if there were any initial differences. Furthermore, the distribution of the data was examined, revealing a homogeneous distribution. The results obtained from the independent t test for unrelated samples are presented in Table 3. The examination of any significant difference between the pre-test scores of the control and experimental groups was conducted using the Unrelated Samples t-test, given the normal distribution of the scores. The outcomes of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of independent samples t-test of MESSY pretest scores for both groups.

	Groups	N	X	ss	t test		
					t	sd	p
MESSY pretest scores	Experimental	34	179.03	17.60	-1,72	53	.504
	Control	22	187.05	15.02			

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the MESSY total scores of the experimental and control groups ($t(54) = -1.72, p > .05$). It can be said that the experimental and control groups are equivalent in terms of MESSY total pretest scores.

The investigation into whether there existed a significant difference between the MESSY total scores of the experimental group before and after the intervention was conducted using the Independent Samples t-test, as the post-test scores demonstrated a normal distribution. The obtained results are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. Independent samples t-test results of MESSY total pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group.

Groups	MESSY total scores	N	x	ss	t test		
					t	sd	p
Experimental Group	Pre-test	34	179,02	17,60	-,504	4,31	,733
	Post-test	34	181,20	17,89			

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test MESSY total scores of the experimental group ($t(66) = -0.504, p > .05$). It can be said that the experimental group is equivalent in terms of MESSY total pretest scores.

The assessment of whether a significant difference existed between the total pretest and post-test scores of the control group was performed using the independent samples t-test, as the scores did not deviate from the normal distribution assumption. The outcomes of this analysis are depicted in Table 5.

Table 5. Independent samples t-test results of control group MESSY total pre-test and post-test scores.

Group	MESSY total scores	N	x	ss	t test		
					t	sd	p
Control	Pre test	22	187,04	15,32	1,93	6,03	,10
	Post test	22	181,36	23,36			

As a result of the analysis, it was revealed that there was no significant difference between the MESSY total pre-test and post-test scores of the control group ($t(42) = 1,93, p >.05$). According to this result, it can be said that there is no difference in the social skill levels of the control group.

The assessment of whether there was a significant difference between the MESSY pretest and post-test scores of both the control and experimental groups was conducted using the Related Samples t-Test, as the scores did not deviate from the assumption of normal distribution. The findings are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Independent samples t-test results of MESSY total post-test scores of control and experimental groups.

Groups			N	X	ss	t test		
						t	Sd	p
MESSY test	post	Experiment	34	181.20	17.99	1.05	5.52	.313
		Control	22	175.36	23.22			

As a result of the analysis, it was revealed that there was no significant difference between the MESSY total post-test scores of the experimental and control groups ($t(54) = 1,05, p >.05$). According to this result, it can be said that there is no difference in the social skill levels of the experimental and control groups.

Qualitative findings

To obtain qualitative data for the study, at the end of a four-week intervention, a form consisting of two open-ended questions was administered to the experimental group, which consisted of 17 female and 17 male students. Their opinions were solicited regarding the intervention. The questions posed sequentially were: "In your opinion, what are the messages and skills conveyed in the stories of The Pears in the Basket, The Mill, The Sultan's Apple Tree, and Drimbo?" and "What lesson did you learn from the stories?" Open-ended questions were asked, and students were given adequate time to respond. The data obtained from the interviews were analysed using descriptive analysis technique. The responses provided by the interviewed students to the questions were individually read and analysed by the researchers. Additionally, the data were supported with direct quotations from the responses of the interviewed students to the questions, aiming to provide concrete examples.

As a result of the answers and evaluations received; Data were collected from Turkish Cypriot folktales under two different codes: coping skills with stress and planning and problem-solving skills. In the Turkish Cypriot folktales "The Pears in the Basket and Dirimbo", "skills for coping with stress" are included in the form of coping with an unsuccessful situation and



group pressure, and coping with lies and theft. In the tale "The Pears in the Basket," two elder brothers who fail to deliver the pears (gifts) to the Sultan, employ the wrong strategy, and cannot manage their stress, are thrown into prison by the Sultan. However, success is achieved through the younger brother, who succeeds in delivering the Sultan's gift on time thanks to his intelligence and honesty, and is rewarded with gold. In the tale Dirimbo the unemployed brothers, under pressure from their families and themselves, begin to harvest crops (find a job). Despite resorting to various tricks, lies, and their physical strength, The Monster fail in front of Dirimbo, who is educated, able to reason, and adept at managing stress.

Examples of students' opinions regarding the contributions of Turkish Cypriot folktales to teaching social skills are as follows.

"I concluded that evil deeds will not go unpunished and kindness will be rewarded." (Aslı)

"The messages conveyed in folktales include the beauty of sharing, the importance of sibling love, the negativity of lying as a bad habit, and the positivity of honesty bringing goodness while lying brings evil. I deduced that I should speak the truth and do good deeds." (Can)

"I understood the importance of telling the truth and the necessity of not behaving selfishly." (Meliz)

The skills of planning and problem-solving enhance children's abilities to make new deductions, identify problems, investigate their causes, devise plans, and interpret or solve the content of the problem. In the Turkish Cypriot folktales "The Pears in the Basket" "The Sultan's Apple Tree" and "The Mill" problems are first identified (how to deliver the gifts-pears and how to catch the thief who stole the apples and the mill), and then solved as follows:

In the tale "The Pears in the Basket" an old man asks his three sons to come up with a solution for the gift of pears to be given to the new Sultan. First, the task of delivering the gift is given to the eldest brother, and then to the middle brother, and the problem is solved accordingly. The middle and eldest sons, who resorted to lying for a solution, were punished by the Sultan; whereas the youngest son, who told the truth, was rewarded by the Sultan. Although lying temporarily solved the problem, it ultimately did not save the individuals from punishment.

In the tale "The Sultan's Apple Tree" to solve the theft problem, the Sultan assigns his sons. The eldest and middle sons keep watch at the tree but fail to catch the thief. However, the youngest son reads verses, prays, and wounds the thief with his sword. The thief jumps into a well, and the youngest son descends into it. He opens the doors, kills the giants, and rescues the girls. Here, intelligence, courage, and faith come together in a planned manner, and the problem is solved. In the tale "The Mill," the girl sees the fight between summer and winter on the beanstalk she planted and resolves their conflict by stating the good qualities of both seasons. She resolves the conflict-problem and as a reward, summer gives her a little mill, and winter gives her a chicken. When the Sultan sees the girl's skill in operating the little mill, he steals it. The thief is a powerful Sultan with soldiers and resources. The chicken immediately devises a plan and courageously goes to the Sultan's palace to ask for the mill. The chicken throws them into the pool, oven, and wild horses, and manages to escape each time thanks to its intelligence. Finally, the Sultan has to accept defeat and give up the mill. The chicken, by its courage and intelligence, has successfully solved a major problem through planned action.

This situation is reflected in the exemplary thinking and comments of the students.

“I understand that lying and stealing are bad behaviours, and if we engage in them, we will face consequences. From the tale "The Pears in the Basket," I learned that we should not lie because I realized that if we do, bad things will happen to us. From the tale "The Mill," the lesson I derived is that we should never engage in theft.” (Batuhan)

“I understand that it is important to be generous, refrain from theft, always be honest, and avoid telling lies. I recognize that these actions are wrong.” (Tanya)

“Telling lies is a very bad thing. People who lie are always punished, and those who tell the truth always win.” (Alihan)

“People who lie are punished (put in jail), and those who tell the truth find goodness. We should always tell the truth, refrain from lying, and it has been explained that if we lie, we will face bad consequences.” (Selen)

Ultimately, the qualitative analysis of the children's reflections on the folktales "The Pears in the Basket" and "The Mill" reveals a strong moral understanding. Batuhan emphasizes the consequences of lying and stealing, recognizing that bad outcomes follow such behaviors. Tanya underscores the importance of honesty and generosity, acknowledging the wrongness of deceit and theft. Alihan and Selen similarly stress the punishment of lies and the reward of truthfulness, highlighting a clear moral lesson that truth leads to positive outcomes while deceit results in negative consequences. This consistent theme across the reflections indicates that the tales effectively convey moral values to the children. Thus, Turkish Cypriot folktales may help instill in children essential skills such as stress management, planning, problem-solving, and understanding cause-and-effect relationships. These tales can encourage children to question the events in the story and come up with their own solutions. Consequently, the tales might develop children's thought processes, reasoning abilities, planning skills, analytical skills, and stress coping skills.

Discussion and suggestions

To answer the research questions mentioned at the beginning of this study, the widely known and educationally valuable Turkish Cypriot folktales "The Sultan's Apple Tree," "Dirimbo" "The Mill," and "The Pears in the Basket" were narrated to 6th-grade students attending a private middle school using the drama method. During the lessons, discussions were held on the messages, social skills, and characters depicted in these four tales.

According to the findings of this study, the implementation of social skills teaching using Turkish Cypriot folktales did not yield a significant difference in the social skill levels of 6th-grade students as measured by the MESSY social skill scale. Although, the results obtained from the MESSY scale indicated that the students' social skill levels are high, the post-test scores in the experimental group did not indicate any improvement in the social skill levels of these students. Interestingly, this outcome contradicts the qualitative data gathered during the research. Students reported that they became aware of the social skill messages and abilities intended to be conveyed in the folk tales through the social skills acquisition activities. The analysis of the interview forms clearly indicates that all the messages and skills present in the folktales used in the study were effectively conveyed to the students. Interestingly, the quantitative and qualitative findings of the research contradict each other. Among the reasons for this discrepancy is the fact that the group involved in the study had above-average social



skill levels according to the MESSY social skill scale even before the intervention took place.

In the literature, various folktale interventions aimed at enhancing social skills mostly yield positive outcomes (Arıcı & Bayındır, 2015; Çevik & Müldür, 2019; Pekdoğan, 2016). One such study similar to our research in terms of methodology but with differing results is Erdal's (2020) quasi-experimental thesis study. This study included a total of 40 children from control and experimental groups, with 20 children in the experimental group receiving 7 weeks of drama-based storytelling training. The research concluded that the problem-solving training provided through drama-based storytelling methodology positively contributed to children's problem-solving skills, enhancing their ability to identify problems and generate solutions. Another similar study is Akfirat's (2006) research which was qualitatively supported that creative drama is effective in social skills education and is an economical method that can be used at all school levels. Additionally, İyican (2009) completed a thesis study stating that Turkish Cypriot folktales enrich and educate children's imaginations. In similar studies conducted using the drama method, such as those by Çeker (2020) and Gazioğlu (2021), the training of storytelling and narrative skills is examined through a qualitative approach, highlighting the practical aspects of the training provided. Gazioğlu's research suggests that storytelling using a multisensory learning approach positively influences the attitudes of 5th-grade students towards listening to stories. Furthermore, it is concluded that the training of storytelling and narrative skills is not fully established scientifically and methodologically.

In a thematically similar study, Huiyu (2018) emphasizes the importance of folktales in children's healthy development, moral education, language acquisition, fostering creativity, and aesthetic talents. However, the study also notes that with the invasion of foreign cultures, children nowadays find it difficult to understand traditional folktales, leading to a decreasing emphasis on them. Additionally, Fler and Hammer (2013) have highlighted the dynamic interaction between cognitive processes and psychological functioning during the telling, retelling, and enactment of tales.

The literature primarily supports the positive impact of folktales on children's social skills, emphasizing their role in enhancing moral development, language skills, and cultural identity. However, in the current study did not find any significant change on the students' social skill level after intervention. Similar to current study, there are studies suggest that while folktales may have other benefits, such as cultural awareness or language development, their impact on directly improving social skills appears limited based on current research findings (Sue, Zane, Nagayama Hall, & Berger, 2009). Such as, there is a study conducted by Brac University that highlights a decrease in the use of folktales due to the rise of digital entertainment, which suggests a gap in storytelling practices in urban areas (Sarwar, 2023). The study does not directly refute the benefits of folktales but points to their declining presence in children's lives, potentially impacting their developmental benefits.

The following recommendations can be made for future research: This study could yield different results if conducted with a longer-term implementation process using different Turkish Cypriot folktales. Additionally, this study was conducted with a total of 56 students in the experimental and control groups. Therefore, future studies could replicate the implementation with a larger number of participants. Furthermore, the study was conducted with individuals in the pre-adolescent period. Hence, future studies could examine the effect of teaching social skills with Turkish Cypriot folktales on individuals in other age groups. Lastly, researchers could obtain permission from parents and students to use video recording during the implementation and/or have an expert observer in the classroom to take

observation notes, thus enabling predominantly qualitative studies to be conducted.

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