Social Behaviors in Nuclear and Extended families Children Age 6 to 11 – A Longitudinal Study with Turkish Sample

Serdal Seven and Mehmet Akif İnci

***Abstract*—The main aim of this study is to identify whether or not the social behaviors such Prosociality, Shyness and Aggression of children, living in a stable life period families, are stable from age 6 to age 11 in a sample of Turkish children. In total, 47 children participated in the study, of whom 24 male and 23 female lived in families in Muş Province, Turkey. Teacher Assessment of Social Behaviors Scale were applied to the same group four times (at ages 6, 7, 9, 11) in five years. The children in this sample were assessed initially at the end of their final preschool year (age 6) and were reassessed at the end of the first (age 7), third (age 9) and fifth grade (age 11) of elementary school. All assessments were conducted in May. In conclusion, social behavior was found to be stable for 55% prosocial behaviors, 31% Shynese behavior and 79% for aggressive behavior as results of regression analysis. These findings support the argument that aggression and prosocial behaviors follows a stable course from age 6-11 age onwards. Repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that mean not differed statistically significantly between aggression's ($F(2.19, 98.56) = .235$, $P > 0.05$), shyness' ($F(2.92, 131.58) = .982$, $P > 0.05$) and prosocial behaviours' ($F(2.63, 118.67) = .383$, $P > 0.05$) time points and family types.**

***Index Terms*—Aggression, shyness, prosocial behaviors, middle childhood, nuclear family, extended family.**

I. Introduction

During the past 20 years suggests that children who do not have a basic level of social competence by the age of 6 may have trouble with relationships when they are adults. Thus, all children should have enough positive social behaviours [1]. The term "social competence" covers a broader domain than does the term "social behaviors". Social behaviors' characters are the strong aspect for observing social competence. Aggression, prosocial behavior and shyness are determinative social behaviors.

Aggression has been defined [2] as 'a category of behaviour that causes or threatens physical harm to others'. 'Aggression' as generally used is encompasses a variety of behaviours, including physical fighting, bullying, verbal aggression, robbery, homicide, and rape. Any behaviour aimed to harm someone or something, even if the source aimed at is not directly harmed, is considered to be aggression. Aggressive behaviour is a special form of anti-social behaviour [3]. Even though aggression is not a new concept, it has become an issue discussed more frequently in recent years. The increasing rate of aggression displayed by children has caused an increase in the number of studies carried out to assess aggression.

Although historically shyness has been a difficult term to define, recent efforts have sought to clarify the term for its inclusion in research. Shyness can be conceptualized as a feature of the larger category of social withdrawal, which encompasses many forms of behavioural solitude [4]. Shy children are often described as hesitant to participate in social interactions [5] and although research has suggested that they want to play with other children, social fear and anxiety prevent them from doing so [6].

Shyness has been found to be moderately consistent in early childhood [7]. Shyness has been relevant to problems with peers and with adjustment problems such as internalizing [8], [9], it is vital to identify variables that contribute to its development. Children are subjected to a great variety of environmental influences as they age, such as parenting behavior, the relationship between brothers and peers at day care, and these experiences could have implications for the development of shyness.

Humans are different from other species in terms of features such as the level of assistance, collaboration, and abnegation [10]. Prosocial behavior, that is, behavior intended to help others [11], is known as the fundamental component of human relationships [12]. Prosocial children get on with other children and have better relationships than children who have lower in prosocial behavior [13].

Besides wide parenting styles, parents ensure a socialization system for their children, and parent's prosocial behaviors have been proved to relate to children's behaviors. For instance, mothers of 6- to 11-year-olds claimed that they felt peaceful about using a reward system for developing children's prosocial behavior [14]. For these children, rewards damaged subsequent prosocial behavior [14]. On the contrary, there is proof that doing household works made children to concern for others [15].

According to the number of household members, families are generally classified as nuclear, extended, or fragmented [16]. In the assessment of family types in Turkey, classification is generally made according to the number of household members, following from recent social, cultural, and sociological changes and the process of modernization. In Turkey, as in many societies, modernization is the most important factor that has altered the family structure. As a result of modernization, which has gained pace since the 19th century, the family structure has changed and the number of

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nuclear families has increased and become more widespread compared to the number of extended families [17], [18]. Significant social developments in Turkey in recent years, such as migration from rural areas to urban areas and the inclusion of women in business as a result of an increase in their education level, have led to changes in the family structure. Although the nuclear family structure is gradually becoming more widespread, especially in big cities, extended families are commonly found in small cities and villages. Relationships have a definite form in nuclear families with an only child. These are child–mother, mother–father, child–father, and mother–father–child forms. When it comes to extended families, in which members such as grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, and uncles exist, relationships become more complicated. In extended families, more than one generation can live together in the same house. On the contrary, a fragmented family is defined as a family type in which either the mother or the father or both is absent from the house because to reasons such as death, divorce, or separation [19], [20], [16], [21], [22]. In this study, nuclear and extended family types are discussed. Nuclear families consist of the mother, the father, and their children. Extended families include the mother, the father, and children as well as close relatives such as grandfathers, grandmothers, or aunts.

The question regarding the stability of aggression, shyness and prosocial behaviors in childhood seems not to be whether these social behaviors is stable or not stable. Regardless whether social behaviors are examined in short-term or long-term studies [23], [24]. Here are some longitudinal studies' results about aggression, prosocial behavior and shyness: Asendorpf [25], Degnan *et al.* [26], Prior *et al.* [27] and Roberts and del Vecchio [28] reported low stability of shyness before middle childhood. In conterast for shyness, Adams, Bukowski & Bagwell [23], Loeber [29], Loeber & Hay [7] and Olweus [30] found high stability about aggression. Similarly Knafo & Plomin, [31] found middle level stability for prosocial behaviors.

Finally, there are limited long-term longitudinal studies about social behaviors for 6-11 years old children. In this respect, this study has attempted to answer the following questions:

1) Do aggression scores at age 6 significantly predict aggression scores at age 11?
2) Do shyness scores at age 6 significantly predict shyness scores at age 11?
3) Do prosiocial behavior scores at age 6 significantly predict prosocial behaviors scores at age 11?
4) Do mean of aggression's, shyness and prosocial behaviours differed or not statistically significantly between time points and family types

II. Method

A longitudinal method was used in this study.

A. Participants

The participants were 47 preschoolers (23 girls and 24 boys) with normal development from six preschools in the region of Muş Province, Turkey. The children in this sample were assessed initially at the end of their final preschool year (age 6) and were reassessed at the end of the first, third and fifth grade of elementary school (age 7, 9, 11). The children were located at 12 different schools after the school transition (preschool to elementary). All of the children lived with both parents. The socio-economic levels of the families were based on their level of income. Families with a monthly income of $500 or less were included in the lower socio-economic level; families with an income between $500-1500 were included in the middle socio-economic level; and those with an income of more than $1500 were included in the higher socio-economic level.

1) Demographic data about the nuclear families

Of the nuclear families, 12.5% (*n*=3) were at the lower socioeconomic level, 70.8% (*n*=17) were at the middle socioeconomic level, and 16, 6% (*n*=4) were at the higher socioeconomic level. With regard to the education level of the mothers in the nuclear families, 16.6 (*n*=4) of the mothers were illiterate, 50% (*n*=12) were primary school graduates, 20.8 (*n*=5) were high school graduates, and 12,5% (*n*=3) were university graduates. With regard to the fathers in the nuclear families: 4,2% (*n*=1) were illiterate, 20,8% (*n*=5) were primary school graduates, 33.2% (*n*=8) were high school graduates, and 41,6% (*n*=10) were university graduates. All of the children in the group had at least one sibling. Four of the children (16.6%) had one sibling, whereas 20 children (83.3%) had two siblings.

2) Demographic data about the extended families

Of the extended families, 34.8 % (*n*=8) were at the lower socioeconomic level, 56.5% (*n*=13) were at the middle socioeconomic level, and 8.7% (*n*=2) were at the higher socioeconomic level. With regard to the education level of the mothers in the extended families, 34.8% (*n*=8) of the mothers were illiterate, 52.2% (*n*=12) were primary school graduates, and 13% (*n*=3) were high school graduates. With regard to the fathers in the nuclear families, 17.4% (*n*=4) were illiterate, 30.45% (*n*=7) were primary school graduates, 39.15% (*n*=9) were high school graduates, and 13% (*n*=3) were university graduates. All of the children in the group had at least two siblings. Thirteen of the children (56.5%) had two siblings, and 10 children (44.5%) had three siblings. Moreover, these families included at least two other adults, such as grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, or aunts, in addition to the mother, the father, and their children. During the period of the study, there were no significant changes in the demographic statuses of the children participating in the study.

B. Measure

Teacher Assessment of Social Behavior (TASB): Children's social behavior in the peer group was assessed with the TASB. Teachers were asked to rate children on four behavioral dimensions: prosocial, aggressive, shy/withdrawn, and disruptive. Each dimension was assessed using three items, for a total of 12 items. The scale ranged from a 1 (very uncharacteristic) to a 5 (very characteristic). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was from .88 to .91 for eachdimension. The TASB was adapted to Turkish by Seven [32]. All items

loaded on three dimensions (prosocial, shy/withdrawn, and aggressive/disruptive), with loadings ranging from .63 to .89. Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged from .74 to .94 for these dimensions.

C. Procedure

In 2006, a letter explaining our study was sent to the families of 110 children of 6 years of age who had attended six preschools. In the letter, they were asked whether or not they wanted their children to participate in our study. They were requested to fill in the information form and to send it back to us if they gave their consent for their child's participation. Seventy-two families gave their consent for their children's participation in our study. Five years later, the families of 21 of the children had moved to another city. One of the children had lost his mother. Therefore, information was gathered from 47 children, 23 of whom came from extended families, and 24 of whom came from nuclear families. The first data were collected in May 2006. The second, third and fourth set of data was obtained in May 2007, 2009, 2011 when the children were in their fifth year of primary education. The TASB was applied to the 10 teachers in 2006, 18 teachers in 2007, 19 teachers in 2009 and 2011 individually in a separate room in the 12 primary schools which the children attended.

III. Results

A. Descriptive Statistics

1) Aggression

TABLE I: Descriptive Statistics of Aggression

	Famıly Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	*N*
6 Years	Nuclear	12,5417	5,69500	24
	Extended	14,2174	6,33860	23
	Total	13,3617	6,01240	47
7 Years	Nuclear	13,0000	6,94700	24
	Extended	13,6087	6,51390	23
	Total	13,2979	6,67218	47
9 Years	Nuclear	10,9583	5,30364	24
	Extended	12,4348	6,11872	23
	Total	11,6809	5,70319	47
11Years	Nuclear	10,7500	5,47921	24
	Extended	12,8261	6,90620	23
	Total	11,7660	6,23877	47

2) Prosocial bahevior

TABLE II: Descriptive Statistics of Prosocial Behaviors

	Famıly Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	*N*
6 Years	Nuclear	11,4583	2,87386	24
	Extended	10,4348	3,31424	23
	Total	10,9574	3,10650	47
7 Years	Nuclear	10,8333	3,15769	24
	Extended	9,3478	3,43258	23
	Total	10,1064	3,34426	47
9 Years	Nuclear	11,2083	2,81269	24
	Extended	10,7391	3,12202	23
	Total	10,9787	2,94507	47
11Years	Nuclear	11,2500	3,13812	24
	Extended	10,0870	2,48474	23
	Total	10,6809	2,86741	47

3) Shyness

TABLE III: Descriptive Statistics of Shyness

	Famıly Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	*N*
6 Years	Nuclear	6,4583	1,76879	24
	Extended	7,2174	2,87555	23
	Total	6,8298	2,38035	47
7 Years	Nuclear	6,1250	2,59284	24
	Extended	7,5652	2,48314	23
	Total	6,8298	2,61533	47
9 Years	Nuclear	6,5417	2,24537	24
	Extended	6,4348	3,21680	23
	Total	6,4894	2,73363	47
11Years	Nuclear	5,4167	2,18526	24
	Extended	6,0435	2,63677	23
	Total	5,7234	2,41104	47

4) Stability of aggression in children at 6 to 11 years of age

Predictions of changes in aggression scores from age 6 to age 11 were examined. The results indicated that aggression at age 6 was a significant predictor of aggression behavior at age 11 ($F = 23.28$, $p < .001$. see Table I). Notably, there was a significant level of stability ($r = .79$, $p < .001$) in aggression behavior over time.

The results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVA supported the aggression behaviors' stability. The findings showed that there were no significant differences between the scores for aggression at ages 6 to 11 ($F = 23.28$, $p > .001$).

TABLE IV: REGRESSION EQUATIONS PREDICTING SOCIAL BEHAVIORS AT 11 YEARS FROM SOCIAL BEHAVIORS AT 6 YEARS

	β	R^2	ΔR^2	F
Aggression (n = 47)	.79	.62	.59	23.28**
Shyness (n = 47)	.31	.10	.04	1.57
Prosocial beh. (n = 47)	.54	.29	.24	5.74*

* p < .01, ** p < .001

5) Stability of shyness in children at 6 to 11 years of age

Predictions of changes in aggression scores from age 6 to age 11 were examined. The results indicated that shyness at age 6 was not a significant predictor of shyness at age 11 (F = 1.57, p > .05. see Table I). Notably, there was not a significant level of stability (r = .31, p >.05) in shyness over time.

On the other hand, the results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVA supported the shyness non-stability. The findings showed that there was significant differences between the scores for shyness at ages 6 to 11

6) Stability of prosocial behavior in children at 6 to 11 years of age

Predictions of changes in prosocial behaviors' scores from age 6 to age 11 were examined. The results indicated that prosocial behaviors' at age 6 was a significant predictor of prosocial behaviors at age 11 (F = 5.74, p < .01. see Table I). Notably, there was a significant level of stability (r = .54, p <01) in aggression behavior over time.

On the other hand, the results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVA supported the aggression behaviors' stability. The findings showed that there were no significant differences between the scores for aggression at ages 6 to 11 (F =5.74, p > .01).

TABLE V: STABILITY OF SOCIAL BEHAVIORS FROM 6 TO 11 YEARS

		M	SD	F	Sig.
Aggression (n = 47)	6 years	13.36	6.01	23.28**	.000
	7 years	13.30	6.67		
	9 years	11.68	5.70		
	11 years	11.77	6.24		
Shyness (n=47)	6 years	6.83	2.38	1.57	.211
	7 years	6.83	2.62		
	9 years	6.49	2.73		
	11 years	5.72	2.4		
Prosocial Behaviors (n=47)	6 years	10.95	3.11	5.74*	.002
	7 years	10.11	3.34		
	9 years	10.68	2.87		
	11 years	10.98	2.95		

7) Family types and aggression

Repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that mean not differed statistically significantly between aggression's (F (2.19, 98.56) = 235, P > 0.05) time points and family types.

8) Family types and shyness

Repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that mean not differed statistically significantly between shyness' (F(2.92, 131.58) = .982 , P > 0.05) time points and family types.

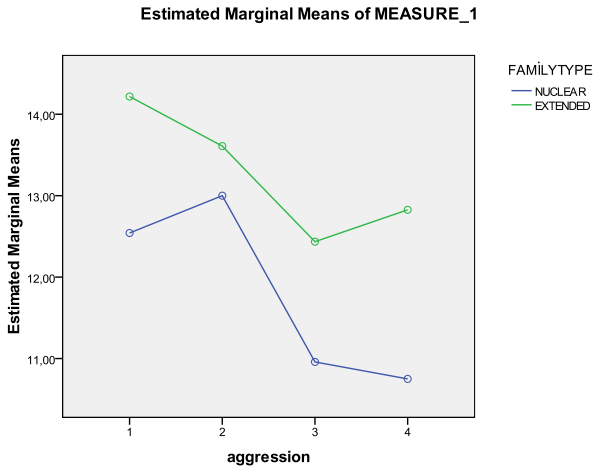

Fig. 1. Time points and family types for aggression.

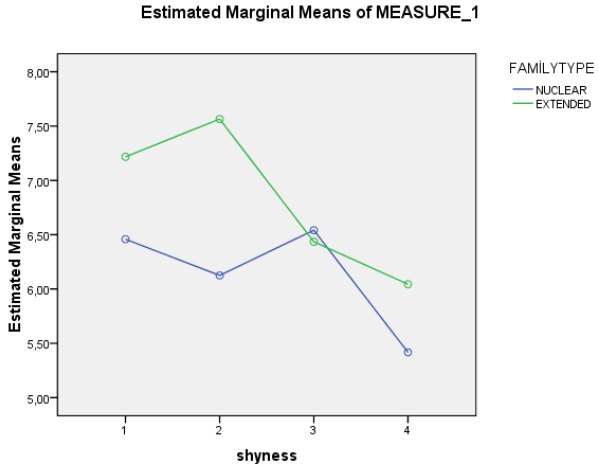

Fig. 2. Time points and family types for shyness.

9) Family types and prosocial behavior

Repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that mean not differed statistically significantly between prosocial behaviours' (F(2.63, 118.67) = .383 , P > 0.05) time points and family types.

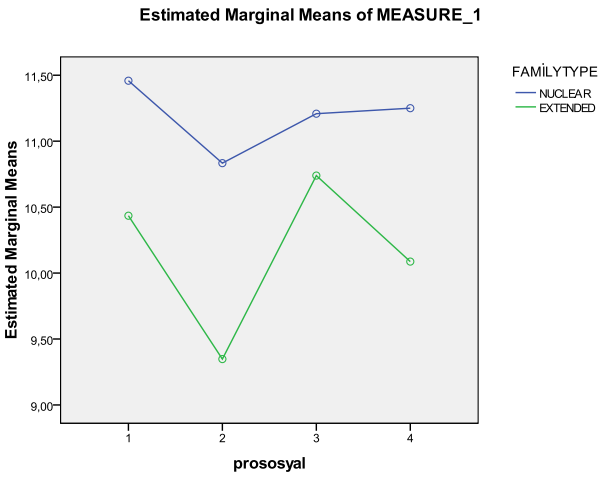

Fig. 3. Time points and family types for prosocial behaviours.

IV. Discussion

This study examined the stability of children's aggression, shyness and prosocial behaviors a five-year period, from age 6 to age 11. The results of the present study show a significant degree of stability of aggression and prosocial behaviors from age 6 to age 11. Whereas, There was no a significant degree of stability was found for shyness. In conclusion, social behavior was found to be stable for 55% prosocial behaviors, 31% Shyness behavior and 79% for aggressive behavior as results of regression analysis. These findings support the argument that aggression [23], [29], [2], [30] and prosocial behaviors [31]. Follows a stable course from age 6-11 age onwards and shyness Asendorpf [4], Degnan et. al. [26], Prior et al [27] and Roberts and del Vecchio [28] follows low stability.

Repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that mean not differed statistically significantly between aggression's (F (2.19, 98.56) = 235, $P > 0.05$), shyness' (F (2.92, 131.58) =982, $P > 0.05$) and prosocial behaviours' (F (2.63, 118.67) =383, $P > 0.05$) time points and family types.

This research has some limitations. The research tools were limited to the TASB scale. Different social behaviors scales should be used and adapted into Turkish in future studies. In this study, social behaviors were determined in line with the opinions of children. However, different and numerous techniques such as observation and peer opinions may be used in future studies. In this study, social behaviors were analysed in terms of stability.

Some proposals have been developed in light of the present study's results. In this respect, first, it is proposed that new scales that measure social behaviors such as aggression, shyness and prosocial behaviors from early childhood to adolescence should be developed in order to conduct studies using different age groups. The results of the present study demonstrate that aggression and prosocial behavior have stability tendency from 6 to 11. Therefore, studies should be carried out on family subjects such as child education, mother-child interaction and childcare. In line with the studies indicating that social behaviours may change depending on culture, studies should be conducted in order to investigate the forms and continuity of social behaviors in the Turkish culture and other cultures.

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