

Original article

An Examination of Migrant Students' Social-Emotional Skills in Terms of Various Variables

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the social-emotional learning skill levels of immigrant students attending primary school. In the study, which was designed using the survey model, the social-emotional learning levels of immigrant students were analyzed in terms of various variables using the "Social-Emotional Learning Skills Scale." The data reveal that the social-emotional learning skills of immigrant students are at a moderate level. Furthermore, when the change in the social-emotional skills of immigrant students according to gender was examined, a significant difference was found only in the friendship relations sub-dimension in favor of girls. Regarding grade level, it is observed that there are differences in the friendship relations, achievement, and persistence sub-dimensions of the social-emotional skills of second, third, and fourth-grade immigrant students in favor of third and fourth-grade students. Significant differences are observed in some sub-dimensions according to the education levels of parents. In addition, it is understood that there is no significant difference in social-emotional learning skills according to the immigrant students' status of being born in Türkiye and the number of siblings. Regarding the variable of Turkish language course achievement, a significant difference is seen in favor of students whose Turkish language achievement is very high. It is thought that the results obtained from the research will contribute to understanding the social-emotional needs of immigrant students, organizing curricula according to these needs, and improving experiences in the learning environment.

Keywords: Migrant Students, Social-Emotional Skills, School-Based Social-Emotional Learning, Primary School

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INTRODUCTION

While migration can be a voluntary choice for some individuals with the desire to achieve better living conditions, it may also become compulsory at times due to forced reasons such as war, violence, and disasters. The civil war that broke out in Syria has brought such a necessity, and millions of Syrians have taken refuge in Türkiye, which constantly receives migration due to its geopolitical position, in a short period of time (Aydın-Güngör and Pehlivan, 2021; Başar et al., 2018; Biçer and Alptekin, 2021; Doğan and Avcıoğlu, 2022). In recent years, due to increasing migration movements and intercultural interactions, developments in scientific and technological fields, the facilitation of travel opportunities, and the influence of digital media and the internet, individuals with different cultural characteristics can come together in a short time. Consequently, many individuals are exposed to more than one culture, internalize them, and become multicultural. This situation transforms classrooms in schools—which are micro-institutions reflecting the structure of society—into multicultural environments where children with cultural differences are present (Çalamak et al., 2022; Nguye and Benet-Martínez, 2013). These demographic changes occurring in schools reveal the need to effectively deal with students who have different cultural characteristics, to welcome multiculturalism, to value diversity, and to confront prejudices. Furthermore, these changes present the necessity and challenge of removing social, economic, political, ethnic, and linguistic barriers to student development and transforming diversity into educational success (EUNEC, 2013). Migration, as a social phenomenon, can affect various fields such as education, economy, politics, and health. These effects manifest themselves through various psycho-educational impacts in today's schools (İzmir et al., 2023).

All foreign children in Türkiye are subject to temporary protection status and possess numerous legal rights, as our country is a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, in practice, various barriers are observed, such as poverty, gender discrimination, health problems, and the inability to adapt to the school climate, environment, and culture (Aydın-Güngör and Pehlivan, 2021). Furthermore, differences between the education level of immigrants in their home country and the education level of the host country are also at the source of these problems. These differences affect both the immigrants and the people in the host country in psychological and emotional terms (Ereş, 2015). In multicultural societies, language plays a key role in the social adaptation of immigrant students. For this reason, adopting both the mother tongue and the language of the host country is essential for ensuring social cohesion. However, when research in the literature regarding the difficulties experienced by immigrant students in education is examined, it is observed that these students face language problems and challenges concerning their sense of belonging to their environment (Arısoy et al., 2022; Ergin and Ermeğan, 2011). Indeed, Temur and Özalp (2022) stated that immigrant students experience difficulties in communication and adaptation with other students due to reasons such as language and cultural differences. Aydeniz and Sarıkaya (2021) expressed that immigrant students face language problems, lack of motivation, adaptation issues, and cultural difficulties, and are excluded by

their peers; for these reasons, they encounter challenges in receiving an education. Atagül et al. (2025) state that immigrant students cannot express themselves adequately because they do not know the language of the country they have settled in, and their academic achievement levels are low because they cannot communicate sufficiently with their peers, teachers, and other staff at the school. Similarly, Tösten et al. (2017) expressed that there is no system or program to help immigrant students gain proficiency in the Turkish language, which causes both academic and social problems; they further stated that since immigrant students cannot fully comprehend the lessons, they likely begin to take less interest in school after a few attempts and tend to learn less at school. Indeed, Denham and Ferrier (2024) stated that children who start school without social and emotional competence skills are more frequently rejected by their peers, develop less supportive relationships with their teachers, and enjoy school less. In this case, they noted that these children demonstrate lower academic achievement, show less school attendance, and experience various difficulties at school due to behavioral problems.

Variables such as children's personality, gender, level of maturation, age, birth order, family size, socio-economic-cultural status, language, participation in social activities, peer relationships, and parental child-rearing attitudes affect their social-emotional development (Durualp, 2024). Indeed, Aranda-Vega et al. (2024) state that this development is influenced by variables such as nationality, gender, age, and place of residence; they further express that boys score higher than girls in skills related to rejecting or terminating interactions and making suggestions to others, while also noting that social interactions within a community and the development of specific social skills are determined by the traditions and customs of each country. Similarly, Livernini et al. (2019) state that immigrant adolescents from low socioeconomic backgrounds and girls establish fewer friendships with their classmates, exhibit lower levels of positive emotions at school, and are less accepted by their peers. Lencher and Urban (2025) state that parents' education level and immigrant background create inequalities in the social-emotional skills of immigrant students, noting that immigrant students whose parents have completed academic education demonstrate proficiency in only some skills compared to native students. Thomson et al. (2024) state that immigrant students in the 4th grade demonstrate lower social-emotional skills compared to non-immigrant students. Pointing out that parents' birthplaces are a determining factor, the researchers emphasize that analyses should consider not only immigrant status but also the families' countries or regions of origin, and that these differences should be defined after controlling for sociodemographic variables. In this context, parents and teachers can improve some of these factors in a positive direction by understanding that all children carry potential in terms of social-emotional development and that many external factors shape developmental outcomes (Kwong et al., 2018).

The social, emotional, and cognitive needs of children, such as belonging socially to a group, engaging in mutual exchange, playing and being accepted, communicating with peers, being understood by other children to meet their needs, and living within a community, must be effectively understood

and met (Yurttutan, 2019). The school period is a developmental stage where teachers and friends play a decisive role in children's social relationships, friendship relations intensify, and peer influence is strongly felt (Durualp, 2024). Since schools are important institutions that contribute to the social and emotional development processes of children as well as their academic success, the education of immigrant children is one of the basic needs arising from forced migration (Sakız, 2016). Schools, which offer rich social environments for children in the name of multiculturalism, should be able to teach immigrant students the language, culture, and norms of the host country through their structured programs, while simultaneously ensuring the integration of individuals into society to achieve social adaptation rapidly and develop the process of social cohesion and acculturation in a healthier manner (Ergün, 2022; Yüncü and Akgül, 2023). Since social and emotional factors play an important role in children's academic success, schools must pay attention to this aspect of the educational process for the benefit of all children and contribute to the improvement of their social and emotional development (Zins et al., 2007). In this sense, social and emotional skills constitute a fundamental and indispensable part of the educational process by contributing to students' emotional intelligence, social skills, and overall well-being (Wicaksono and Saraswati, 2024).

Social-emotional learning is a process involving the acquisition and application of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support youth and adults in establishing healthy identities, managing their emotions, achieving individual and social goals, developing and reflecting empathy in their behaviors, and establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships. This process is built upon five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2025). Self-awareness enables individuals to recognize their emotions, values, goals, and identity components; evaluate their strengths and areas for growth; and develop a positive self-perception alongside an optimistic perspective (Jagers et al., 2019). Self-management, on the other hand, involves the individual balancing their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors under changing conditions; it includes skills such as setting goals, managing stress and impulses, self-motivation, and adapting in the face of difficulties (Wicaksono and Saraswati, 2024). Social awareness involves understanding the perspectives of individuals from different cultural backgrounds and approaching them with empathy (Weissberg et al., 2015). Relationship skills include competencies such as establishing clear communication, active listening, being inclined toward cooperation, resisting inappropriate social pressure, resolving conflicts constructively, and both seeking help and helping others. Responsible decision-making, on the other hand, refers to the individual making decisions regarding both their own behaviors and social interactions in accordance with ethical values, safety, and social norms (Jones and Doolittle, 2017). As a result, it is observed that when social and emotional skills are supported by structured interventions, individuals know and manage themselves better, establish healthy relationships by respecting the perspectives of others, and can take part as successful and participatory individuals in different areas of

life (Weissberg et al., 2015). Based on this information, it is understood that all groups need to be supported in terms of social and emotional aspects. In Türkiye, social-emotional skills have been included in the teaching programs with the 2024 Turkish Century Maarif Model. Studies on the social adaptation of immigrant students started in 2024 with the Project on Supporting the Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System. While these projects in practice and the updating of teaching programs are extremely important in terms of building school-based SEL, situations such as peer bullying, communication problems, and adaptation issues show that social-emotional problems continue to manifest in schools. The limited number of studies addressing children's social-emotional development in the context of primary school students is a reflection of this situation.

Previous studies are mostly in the form of problems and solutions encountered in the education of immigrant students based on the opinions of teachers and administrators (Aydeniz and Sarıkaya, 2021; Börü and Boyacı, 2016; Dere and Demirci, 2023; Eren, 2019; Temur and Özalp, 2022; Yurdakul and Tok, 2018). These studies shown that immigrant students experience difficulties such as social adaptation, loneliness, and discrimination. However, there are no studies related to identifying the social and emotional skills of immigrant students holistically. This study is important as it will provide a holistic perspective to identify the social and emotional skills of immigrant students and determine how immigrant students perceive themselves socially and emotionally. Furthermore, the research is thought to be significant in terms of contributing to the literature regarding the social and emotional skills of immigrant students and the education of immigrant students in Türkiye. We anticipate that the findings will reveal the differences in the social-emotional skills of immigrant students and contribute to the restructuring of educational policies with the principles of cultural diversity and inclusivity.

Purpose of Research

Purpose of Research

This research aims to examine the social-emotional skills of immigrant students attending primary school. In line with this objective, the research questions have been determined as follows:

1. What are the social-emotional learning skill levels of immigrant students?
2. Do the social-emotional learning skills of immigrant students show a significant difference according to: a. gender, b. grade level, c. parents' education level, d. status of being born in Türkiye, e. number of siblings, f. academic achievement in Turkish language lessons?

MATERIALS and METHODS

Research Model

This research is designed using the survey model. The survey model is the description of the people, subjects, and objects that are the subject of the research as they exist within their own conditions

(Karasar, 2023). In this research, the social-emotional skills of immigrant students attending primary school were attempted to be described in their existing state in terms of the determined variables.

Study Group-Universe/Sample

A total of 584 immigrant students attending 11 primary schools in Gaziantep city center participated in the study during the 2024-2025 academic year. Since the size of the population or the heterogeneity of population characteristics cannot be fully known, it is necessary to work with as large a study group as possible (Cohen et al., 2021). In this sense, the 584 participants collected in this study were considered sufficient. The study included 203 second-grade, 189 third grade, and 192 fourth-grade students, totaling 584 immigrant students. Of these students, 307 were girls and 277 were boys. The 11 primary schools included in the study are in areas with a high concentration of immigrant students, generally in low socio-economic regions, and comprised of students with similar socio-cultural characteristics.

Data Collection Tool

In the research, the "Social-Emotional Learning Skill Scale" developed by Esen-Aygün and Şahin-Taşkın (2017) was used. The scale consists of seven factors—self-confidence, self-management, perception of friendship, friendship relations, impulse control, success, and persistence—and a total of 27 items. The scale, which is a triple Likert-type measurement tool, is responded to with the expressions "always," "sometimes," and "never," and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the entire scale was calculated as .856. This indicates that the scale is highly reliable. The construct validity of the scale was tested with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and the Confirmatory Factor Analysis results were calculated as (GFI=0.92, AGFI=0.90, CFI=0.97). These findings demonstrate that the measurement tool ensures construct validity in the current sample.

Data Collection

Research data were collected during the second semester of the 2024-2025 academic year. After obtaining ethical committee approval from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University on 05.12.2024 date and number 17/26 the researcher commenced the study on 02.03.2025 with official permission from the Gaziantep Provincial Directorate of National Education. After informing students about the purpose of the research and the content of the measurement tool, data was collected from students who voluntarily participated in the classroom. Students who could read and write and understand what they read were given instructions and asked to fill out the forms independently. For students who could not read and write, their classroom teachers and the researcher helped. Data collection was completed on 23.05.2026.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the Social-Emotional Learning Skill Scale were analyzed using the SPSS 27 program. Whether the data showed a normal distribution was evaluated by calculating skewness and kurtosis coefficients, applying the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and examining histograms. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the data were suitable for parametric tests; therefore, the t-test was applied for pairwise group comparisons, and the (ANOVA) test was applied for comparisons among multiple groups.

Ethics Committee Approval Process

The research data was collected during the second semester of the 2024-2025 academic year. The researcher commenced the study after receiving ethical committee approval from the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee (dated 5.12.2024, number 17/26) and official permission from the Gaziantep National Education Directorate (dated 03.02.2025).

RESULTS

In the research, first, the SEL skill levels of immigrant students were examined. In this regard, the mean scores of the responses given by immigrant students to the Social-Emotional Learning Skill Scale were calculated (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Sub-dimensions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis
Friendships relations	584	2.31	0.43	2.38	0.10	4.50
Success	584	2.32	0.51	2.33	-0.48	-0.08
Self-management	584	2.25	0.55	2.33	-0.38	-0.64
Perception of friendships	584	2.38	0.50	2.33	-0.71	0.05
Impulse	584	2.17	0.63	2.33	-0.11	0.01
Self-confidence	584	2.08	0.44	2.00	0.04	-0.02
Persistence	584	2.24	0.53	2.33	-0.41	-0.59
Total	584	2.26	0.35	2.26	-0.32	0.54

When the findings in Table 1 are examined, it is observed that the mean score of the immigrant students' social-emotional skills is 2.26. This situation indicates that the SEL skill level of immigrant students is at a moderate level. In addition, the highest mean scores belong to the sub-dimensions of perception of friendship (= 2.38) and success (= 2.32), while the lowest mean was obtained in the self-confidence (= 2.08) dimension.

An independent groups t-test was applied to examine the SEL skills of immigrant students according to gender. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. t-Test results according to gender

Sub-dimensions	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	sd	t	P
Friendship relations	Female	307	2.35	.43	578	2.05	.041*
	Male	273	2.28	.41			
Success	Female	307	2.36	.50	578	1.75	.081
	Male	273	2.28	.52			
Self-management	Female	307	2.25	.55	578	0.06	.956
	Male	273	2.25	.55			
Perception of friendship	Female	307	2.39	.50	578	0.84	.399
	Male	273	2.36	.51			
Impulse	Female	307	2.20	.67	578	1.27	.209
	Male	273	2.14	.59			
Self-confidence	Female	307	2.09	.43	578	0.55	.585
	Male	273	2.07	.45			
Persistence	Female	307	2.26	.51	578	0.76	.451
	Male	273	2.23	.55			
Total	Female	307	2.28	.35	578	1.64	.102
	Male	273	2.23	.36			

When the findings in Table 2 are examined regarding the variation of social-emotional skills of immigrant female and male students by gender, it is observed that only in the friendship relations sub-dimension do female students have significantly higher scores compared to male students ($t(578) = 2.05, p < .05$). No significant difference was found in the other sub-dimensions ($p > .05$). Although female students' scores were higher especially in the success sub-dimension, this difference is not statistically significant ($p > .05$). Small differences in favor of female students were also observed in the scores for self-management, perception of friendship, impulse, self-confidence, and persistence sub-dimensions; however, these differences were not found to be statistically significant ($p > .05$).

The ANOVA test was used to examine the SEL skills of immigrant students according to grade level. Table 3 presents the ANOVA results.

Tablo 3. ANOVA results according to grade level

Sub-dimensions	Grade	N	X	ss	df	f	p	Significant Difference
Friendship relations	2nd grade	203	2,19	,56	2-581	10,732	,000	2-3 2-4
	3rd grade	189	2,36	,48				
	4th grade	192	2,42	,46				
Success	2nd grade	203	2,26	,46	2-581	7,342	,001	2-3 2-4
	3rd grade	189	2,35	,43				
	4th grade	192	2,41	,33				
Self-management	2nd grade	203	2,22	,56	2-581	1,572	,208	
	3rd grade	189	2,23	,56				
	4th grade	192	2,31	,52				
Perception of friendship	2nd grade	203	2,38	,53	2-581	,116	,890	
	3rd grade	189	2,36	,48				
	4th grade	192	2,39	,50				
Impulse	2nd grade	203	2,15	,67	2-581	2,760	,064	
	3rd grade	189	2,11	,60				
	4th grade	192	2,26	,62				
Self-confidence	2nd grade	203	2,03	,48	2-581	1,787	,168	
	3rd grade	189	2,11	,44				
	4th grade	192	2,10	,40				
Persistence	2nd grade	203	2,16	,55	2-581	4,045	,018	2-3 2-4
	3rd grade	189	2,29	,55				
	4th grade	192	2,29	,48				
Total	2nd grade	203	2,19	,38	2-581	5,763	,003	2-4
	3rd grade	189	2,26	,35				
	4th grade	192	2,31	,31				

When the findings in Table 3 are examined, it is determined that there is a statistically significant difference between grades in the sub-dimensions of friendship relations ($F_{2/581}=10,732$; $p < .05$), success ($F_{2/581}=7,342$; $p < .05$), and persistence ($F_{2/581}=4,045$; $p < .05$) according to the grade level variable. On the other hand, no significant difference was found according to grade level in the sub-dimensions of self-management, impulse, perception of friendship, and self-confidence ($p > .05$). Regarding the grade level variable, it was observed that the mean scores of 2nd-grade students in the

dimensions of friendship relations, success, and persistence were significantly lower than those of both 3rd-grade and 4th-grade students. In this case, it can be said that as the grade level and the duration spent in school increase, students' development in the sub-dimensions of friendship relations, success, and persistence shows progress.

The ANOVA test was applied to examine the SEL skills of immigrant students according to maternal education level. The ANOVA test findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. ANOVA results according to maternal education level

Sub-dimensions	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Significant Difference
Friendship relations	Between groups	2.420	4	.605	3.365	.010	University> Illiterate
	Within groups	104.109	579	.180			
Success	Between groups	5,583	4	1,396	5.544	.000	University> Illiterate, Primary School
	Within groups	145,778	579	0,252			
Self-management	Between groups	1,625	4	0,406	1,352	.249	
	Within groups	173,929	579	0,300			
Impulse	Between groups	0,695	4	0,174	0,434	.784	
	Within groups	231,952	579	0,401			
Perception of friendship	Between groups	5,115	4	1,279	5,228	.000	University> Illiterate, Primary School
	Within groups	141,621	579	0,245			
Self-confidence	Between groups	0,539	4	0,135	0,682	.605	
	Within groups	114,292	579	0,197			
Persistence	Between groups	3,477	4	0,869	3.135	.014	University> Primary School
	Within groups	160,559	579	0,277			
Total	Between groups	1,474	4	0,368	2,995	.018	University > Illiterate
	Within groups	71,217	579	0,123			

*p <.05

When the findings in Table 4 are examined, it is observed that there are significant differences according to maternal education level in the sub-dimensions of friendship relations ($F(4, 579) = 3.365$, $p < .05$), success ($F(4, 579) = 5.544$, $p < .05$), perception of friendship ($F(4, 579) = 5.228$, $p < .05$), and persistence ($F(4, 579) = 3.135$, $p < .05$). Regarding the maternal education level variable, it was determined that in the dimensions of success and perception of friendship, students whose mothers have a "university" education level scored significantly higher than those whose mothers are "illiterate" or "primary school graduates." Conversely, no significant difference was found in the sub-dimensions of self-management ($p = .249$), impulse ($p = .784$), and self-confidence ($p = .605$). These results reveal that students whose mothers are university graduates obtain higher scores in the skills and are advantaged in terms of SEL skills.

On the other hand, the variation of the responses provided by immigrant students according to paternal education level was examined. Table 5 presents the ANOVA results.

Table 5. ANOVA results according to paternal education level

Sub-dimensions	Paternal Education Level	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	df	f	p	Significant Difference
Friendship relations	Illiterate	49	2.20	.49	4-579	5.115	.000*	University> Illiterate Middle School> Primary School
	Primary school	232	2.25	.48				
	Middle school	168	2.38	.34				
	High school	78	2.32	.37				
	University	57	2.45	.33				
Success	Illiterate	49	2.12	.48	4-579	5,234	.000*	University> Illiterate, Primary School Middle School> Illiterate
	Primary school	232	2.26	.56				
	Middle school	168	2.37	.48				
	High school	78	2.35	.43				
	University	57	2.51	.41				
Self-management	Illiterate	49	2.12	.58	4-579	1,651	.160	
	Primary school	232	2.22	.57				
	Middle school	168	2.31	.50				
	High school	78	2.30	.53				
	University	57	2.29	.60				
Impulse	Illiterate	49	2.14	.63	4-579	.505	.732	
	Primary school	232	2.19	.64				
	Middle school	168	2.13	.64				
	High school	78	2.16	.62				
	University	57	2.26	.57				
Perception of friendship	Illiterate	49	2.34	.46	4-579	3,107	.015*	University> Illiterate, Primary School

	Primary school	232	2.30	.53				
	Middle school	168	2.46	.46				
	High school	78	2.36	.49				
	University	57	2.49	.48				
Self-confidence	Illiterate	49	1.98	.38	4-579	1,088	.361	
	Primary school	232	2.06	.48				
	Middle school	168	2.09	.43				
	High school	78	2.12	.42				
	University	57	2.14	.40				
Persistence	Illiterate	49	2.24	.51	4-579	6,666	.000*	University> Primary School
	Primary school	232	2.15	.55				
	Middle school	168	2.30	.49				
	High school	78	2.20	.51				
	University	57	2.52	.46				
	Illiterate	49	2.16	.34	4-579	4,694	.001*	University > Illiterate
	Primary school	232	2.21	.39				
	Middle school	168	2.30	.31				
	High school	78	2.26	.33				
	University	57	2.39	.30				

*p < .05

When the findings in Table 5 are examined, it is determined that there are significant differences according to paternal education level in the sub-dimensions of friendship relations ($F(4, 579) = 5.115$, $p < .05$), success ($F(4, 579) = 5.234$, $p < .05$), perception of friendship ($F(4, 579) = 3.107$, $p < .05$), and persistence ($F(4, 579) = 6.666$, $p < .05$). In contrast, no significant difference was detected in the sub-dimensions of self-management, impulse, and self-confidence ($p > .05$). Regarding the paternal education level variable, it was determined that the scores of students whose fathers are "university" graduates in the relevant dimensions were significantly higher than those in groups with lower paternal education levels. This situation indicates that as the paternal education level increases, the student's social-emotional skills also become higher.

An independent groups t-test was conducted to examine the status of being born in Türkiye. The independent groups t-test findings, based on the responses provided by the students, are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. t-Test results according to the status of being born in Türkiye

Sub-dimensions	Born in Türkiye	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	sd	t	p
Friendship relations	Yes	396	2,32	.45	1.05	434.29	.327
	No	188	2,29	.37			
Success	Yes	396	2,33	.53	0.82	582	.410
	No	188	2,30	.47			
Self-management	Yes	396	2,27	.56	1.45	582	.147
	No	188	2,20	.53			
Perception of friendship	Yes	396	2,38	.49	0.05	582	.961
	No	188	2,37	.52			
Impulse	Yes	396	2,19	.65	0.71	582	.477
	No	188	2,15	.60			
Self-confidence	Yes	396	2,08	.45	0.23	582	.819
	No	188	2,07	.43			
Persistence	Yes	396	2,24	.54	-0.18	582	.858
	No	188	2,25	.51			
Total	Yes	396	2,27	.37	0.94	414.39	.370
	No	188	2,24	.32			

*p < .05

When the findings in Table 6 are examined, it is observed that there is no statistically significant difference in the social-emotional skills of immigrant students according to their status of being born in Türkiye in the sub-dimensions of friendship relations ($p = .327$), success ($p = .410$), self-management ($p = .147$), perception of friendship ($p = .961$), impulse ($p = .477$), self-confidence ($p = .819$), and persistence ($p = .858$; $p > .05$).

An ANOVA test was conducted to examine SEL skills according to the number of siblings. The ANOVA results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. ANOVA results according to the number of siblings

Sub-dimensions	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Friendship relations	Between groups	1.749	11	0,159	0,868	.572
	Within groups	147.182	572	0,183		
Success	Between groups	4.178	11	0,380	1,476	.136
	Within groups	147.182	572	0,257		
Self-management	Between groups	2.110	11	0,192	0,633	.801
	Within groups	173.444	572	0,303		
Impulse	Between groups	3.361	11	0,306	0,762	.678
	Within groups	229.286	572	0,401		
Perception of friendship	Between groups	3.825	11	0,348	1,392	.172
	Within groups	142.911	572	0,250		
Self-confidence	Between groups	3.205	11	0,291	1,493	.130
	Within groups	111.625	572	0,195		
Persistence	Between groups	3.840	11	0,349	1,247	.253
	Within groups	160.196	572	0,280		
Total	Between groups	1.633	11	0,148	1,195	.287
	Within groups	71.058	572	0,124		

*p < .05

When the findings in Table 7 are examined, no statistically significant difference was found in the SEL skills of immigrant students according to the number of siblings in the sub-dimensions of friendship relations ($F(11, 572) = 0.868, p > .05$), success ($F(11, 572) = 1.476, p > .05$), self-management ($F(11, 572) = 0.633, p > .05$), perception of friendship ($F(11, 572) = 1.392, p > .05$), impulse ($F(11, 572) = 0.762, p > .05$), self-confidence ($F(11, 572) = 1.493, p > .05$), and persistence ($F(11, 572) = 1.247, p > .05$).

The ANOVA test was used to examine the results according to Turkish language course achievement. Table 8 presents the ANOVA results.

Table 8. ANOVA results according to Turkish language course achievement

Sub-dimensions	Turkish Grade	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	df	F	p	Significant Difference
Friendship relations	Needs improvement	162	2.09	.43	3-580	30,812	.000	Very Good> Good, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement
	Satisfactory	50	2.37	.43				
	Good	189	2.31	.41				
	Very good	183	1832	50.33				
Success	Needs improvement	162	2.00	.52	3-580	43,201	.000	Very Good> Good, Satisfactory,

								Needs Improvement
	Satisfactory	50	2.28	.46				
	Good	189	2.36	.43				
	Very good	183	2.56	.42				
Self-management	Needs improvement	162	2.11	.57	3-580	7,706	.000	Very Good> Needs Improvement
	Satisfactory	50	2.17	.58				
	Good	189	2.25	.51				
	Very good	183	2.3	.52				
Perception of friendship	Needs improvement	162	2.21	.53	3-580	12.714	.000	Very Good> Good, Needs Improvement
	Satisfactory	50	2.43	.53				
	Good	189	2.34	.49				
	Very good	183	2.53	.41				
Impulse	Needs improvement	162	2.05	.62	3-580	5,861	.001	Very Good> Needs Improvement
	Satisfactory	50	2.13	.63				
	Good	189	2.32	.60				
	Very good	183	1.91	.47				
Self-confidence	Needs improvement	162	2.12	.44	3-580	13,085	.000	Very Good> Good, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement
	Satisfactory	50	2.08	.38				
	Good	189	2.20	.43				
	Very good	183	2.04	.58				
Persistence	Needs improvement	162	2.23	.53	3-580	14,073	.000	Very Good> Good, Needs Improvement Good> Needs Improvement
	Satisfactory	50	2.25	.48				
	Good	189	2.40	.47				
	Very good	183	2.06	.36				
Total	Needs improvement	162	2.26	.35	3-580	35,437	.000	Very Good> Good, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement
	Satisfactory	50	2.25	.25				
	Good	189	2.25	.30				
	Very good	183	2.42	.29				

*p <.05

When the findings in Table 8 are examined, significant differences were identified between immigrant students' Turkish language course achievement and their SEL skills in the sub-dimensions of friendship relations ($F(3, 580) = 30.812, p < .05$), success ($F(3, 580) = 43.201, p < .05$), self-management ($F(3, 580) = 7.706, p < .05$), perception of friendship ($F(3, 580) = 12.714, p < .05$), impulse ($F(3, 580) = 5.861, p < .05$), self-confidence ($F(3, 580) = 13.085, p < .05$), and persistence ($F(3, 580) = 14.073, p < .05$).

According to the Turkish Language Course Achievement variable, the SEL skills of students with "very good" achievement in Turkish are significantly higher than those of students whose achievement "needs improvement."

CONCLUSION

In this research, in which the SEL skills of immigrant students attending primary school were examined in terms of various variables, it was determined that the social-emotional skills of immigrant students are at a moderate level, but there are distinct differences among the participants, particularly in the sub-dimensions of success and impulsivity. Similar to this result, Di Toro et al. (2025) state that teachers believe immigrant kindergarten students possess average social skills. Fernández-Leyva et al. (2023) reveal that immigrant adolescents obtained higher scores in all analyzed social skill dimensions. In contrast, Lechner and Urban (2025) state that immigrant adolescents possess lower social, emotional, and behavioral skills in most skill areas compared to non-immigrants. In this case, it is possible to suggest that the social-emotional skill levels of immigrant students may vary according to school level.

When the variation of immigrant students' SEL skills according to gender is examined, a significant difference is observed only in the friendship relations sub-dimension in favor of girls. In parallel with these findings, Aranda-Vega et al. (2024) stated that gender is a significant variable in the development of social skills at early ages and noted that girls exhibit higher social skill development compared to boys. Similarly, Yurttutan (2019) stated that SEL skills show a significant difference according to gender, noting that girls' social skills and school adjustment behaviors are higher than those of male students. Girls are better at adapting in terms of social skills and adjustment compared to boys (Arace et al., 2021). Mammadova and Aypay (2023), working with immigrant students, stated that gender is important in terms of the sense of school belonging among Syrian middle and high school students, and that the sense of school belonging in girls is higher than in boys. Yılmaz (2014) stated that SEL skills vary by gender, noting that the mean scores and communication mean scores of girls attending 6th, 7th, and 8th grades were higher than those of boys. On the other hand, He and Fischer (2020), in their study examining the relationship between school-level practices and school success and sense of belonging for 15-year-old immigrant and non-immigrant students in Germany, Italy, and Spain, stated that girls in Germany felt a lower sense of belonging at school than boys, whereas in Italy and Spain, the sense of belonging was higher in boys. Esen-Aygün and Şahin-Taşkın (2017) stated that the

gender of third and fourth-grade primary school students, consisting of Turkish students, did not influence SEL skills. In conclusion, although the research findings align with many studies in literature, it is observed that there are also studies indicating that social-emotional skills do not vary by gender. In this case, it is thought that besides gender, context and culture may also have an impact on the social-emotional skills of immigrant students.

When the social-emotional skills of immigrant students were examined according to their grade levels, significant differences were found in the sub-dimensions of friendship relations, success, and persistence for fourth grade and third-grade students compared to the second-grade level. In contrast, Nolan (2003) stated that middle school students exhibited fewer social skills compared to primary school students due to the lack of reinforcement and application of social skills in the classroom, inconsistencies regarding the development and reinforcement of social skills in the school environment, and cultural factors that were not addressed or considered in the classroom. Similarly, Kabakçı and Korkut (2008) stated that, in terms of grade level, the mean total scores of social-emotional skills decreased as the grade level increased. Indeed, Durualp (2024) stated that the SEL skills of adolescents studying in the sixth grade were higher than those of adolescents studying in the seventh and eighth grades. Uşaklı (2023) stated that regarding students' perceptions of SEL skills, the mean scores for the relevant skills of fourth-grade students were higher compared to fifth-grade students. Deniz-Köroğlu and Doğan (2025) stated that the SEL levels of adolescents did not show a significant difference according to grade level, but ninth-grade students exhibited a higher level of school adjustment compared to tenth and eleventh-grade students. In conclusion, the increase in social-emotional skills as the grade level increases in the current study may be due to the strengthening of immigrant students' adjustment to the school environment over time and the reinforcement of social interaction skills. In this context, it can be stated that grade level is not a decisive variable on its own and should be considered together with the quality of the social experiences the students undergo.

When the findings are examined, we observed that in the sub-dimensions of friendship relations, success, perception of friendship, and persistence, students whose parents are illiterate have lower social-emotional skills compared to students whose parents are university graduates. Similar to this, Yurttutan (2019) stated that communication skills increased as the mother's education level increased, noting that the communication skills of children of mothers who graduated from primary education were lower than those of children of mothers who graduated from secondary and higher education. Mammadova and Aypay (2023) stated that parents' education level and socioeconomic status are highly correlated with students' educational expectations, and the higher the parents' education level, the longer the duration and higher the quality of their children's education. He and Fischer (2020) found that the achievement of immigrant children from less educated families was lower than those from educated families, and that parental education level significantly influenced the academic development of immigrant children; they identified that adolescents whose parents had completed academic education

had higher levels of all social, emotional, and behavioral skills, with the exception of speaking skills, compared to those whose parents had not completed academic education. Lechner and Urban (2025) suggest that most parents have a high education level, with more than half holding a master's degree, and that this can positively influence their children's learning and development. Çetinkaya (2016) and Değer (2019) stated that there was no significant difference according to the father's education level, whereas Yorulmaz (2017) indicated that preschool students' self-perceptions significantly differed based on the father's education level, noting that students whose fathers were illiterate had lower self-perception. Arslan and Kesicioğlu (2018) stated that mean social skill scores showed a significant difference according to the mother's education level, noting that the social skills of students with higher maternal education levels increased. Özabacı (2006) indicated that the quality of parents' social skills determines the quality of children's social skills, noting that children of parents who improve themselves in terms of social competencies are equally successful. Yalçın and Karoğlu (2023) stated that parents should guide children in introducing the rules prevalent in society and serve as models for the development of children's social values, and that parents' literacy skills are important for the sustainability of socialization, the formation of social values, and the development of children's verbal expression skills. In conclusion, it is possible to state that parental education level is a significant factor in students' social-emotional skills, and that students with literate parents have higher self-perception and social adaptation skills, which enhances both the quality and duration of the student's educational process.

The findings reveal that there is no significant difference between the status of immigrant students being born in Türkiye and their SEL skills. These results indicate that immigrant or refugee students are at a similar level to their peers who were born in Türkiye. In contrast, Fernández-Leyva et al. (2021) demonstrate that nationality and place of residence have the most decisive impact on the process of acquiring social skills for immigrant students with the "nationality" variable in particular having the strongest effect as the unique traditions, culture, and social norms of each nationality directly shape the intercultural relationships students build and the social skills acquired through these relationships. Lechner and Urban (2025) state that adolescents without a migration background have higher social, emotional, and behavioral skills compared to immigrant adolescents. Although the research results indicate that the place of birth is not a significant factor in the social-emotional skills of immigrant students, other studies in the literature reveal the necessity of considering the families' countries or regions of origin as well.

No statistically significant difference was found between the SEL skills of immigrant students according to the number of siblings. Studies in literature also support this finding. Değer (2019) stated that the social-emotional adjustment skills of Syrian preschool students did not show a significant difference according to the variable of the number of siblings. Ogelman and Sarıkaya (2014) suggest that the number of siblings does not show a significant difference in social skill development, and that

variables such as having a sibling and gender may be influential instead. On the other hand, Küçükkaragöz and Erdoğan (2017) stated that social-emotional skills varied significantly according to the number of siblings, noting that students with two siblings received significantly higher scores than those with one sibling or only children, while students with three or more siblings received lower scores than those with two siblings. In this regard, it can be stated that the number of siblings does not influence the development of social-emotional skills on its own and should be re-evaluated within the framework of contextual conditions and the student's life experiences alongside the number of siblings.

A significant difference has been identified between the Turkish course achievement of immigrant students and their SEL skills. Accordingly, students with high achievement in the Turkish course possess higher SEL skills. It is observed that the findings obtained from the research are consistent with the literature. For example, Esen-Aygün and Taşkın-Şahin (2021) stated that language skills play an important role in individuals' adaptation to their environment, communicating with others, and expressing themselves, and that the cognitive and language development of individuals with advanced social-emotional skills is positively affected alongside their social lives and emotional worlds, noting that the Turkish course plays an important role in the development of SEL skills. Similarly, Aydın and Kaya (2017) stated that there is a direct relationship between the achievement of Syrian students and their proficiency level in the target language, noting that while those with less developed Turkish were less successful in their classes, those with more developed Turkish were more successful. Accordingly, they expressed that class participation is also directly proportional to the students' Turkish levels. Temel (2023) stated that refugee students do not understand what is being taught in classes and are unable to express themselves because they do not know Turkish. Uğurlu and Kayhan (2017) stated that Syrians who can learn Turkish can express themselves better in society and establish better communication with Turks. In this context, it reveals that the relationship between Turkish course achievement and SEL skills is directly related to academic success, social integration, social adaptation, and communication.

Suggestions

Results reveal that the SEL skills of immigrant students are not high. It is seen that immigrant students experience peer bullying, communication problems, and adjustment issues in schools; these situations not only affect the social-emotional development of foreign students but also negatively impact their academic achievement and lead to adverse outcomes such as school dropout. The development of these skills is highly effective in improving not only the individual but also the social adaptation and social integration processes of immigrant students. The participation of immigrant students in the educational process is of great importance for their future and integration processes. It is observed that immigrant students with high social-emotional competence can cope more effectively with problems such as peer bullying, cultural conflicts, and social exclusion, and can establish more effective communication with the host society. Therefore, to prevent foreign students from becoming a lost generation and to ensure that integration processes proceed healthily, their social-emotional skills must

be strengthened. In this regard, it is recommended to implement school-based SEL programs that will facilitate the integration of immigrant students into the Turkish education system. Such programs will facilitate the inclusion of immigrant students in the Turkish education system, as well as make it easier to deal with problems arising from cultural differences, resolve conflict issues, and increase the sense of belonging. In addition, based on the SEL and Turkish course achievement of immigrant students, it is understood that immigrant students' mastery of Turkish contributes to their social-emotional development. In this direction, support programs aimed at increasing the Turkish course achievement of immigrant students can be expanded. Another element that facilitates the social-emotional adjustment of immigrant students is the family's SEL approach. In this context, it is recommended to conduct guidance and information studies for the education of immigrant families. Furthermore, intra-school activities that will increase students' social participation can be encouraged. It is anticipated that such measures will create more inclusive learning opportunities for immigrant children.

Additional Declaration

Author Contributions

The concept for this research was developed through the collaborative efforts of both authors, while Birgül ŞAHİN handled the data collection and writing the research report. Hanife ESEN AYGÜN was responsible for the analysis and proofreading of the research data.

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In this study, artificial intelligence tools were used during the translation of the article into English. As authors, we declare that we are fully responsible for any problems that may arise from the content generated by artificial intelligence.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this study.

Ethics Approval

In all processes of this study, the principles of Pen Academic Publishing Research Ethics Policy were followed.

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