



## The Effect of Bibliotherapy Method on Social and Emotional Learning Skills in Gifted Children \*

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### Abstract

Gifted individuals differ from their peers in terms of social and emotional aspects as well as cognition. These characteristics have advantages and disadvantages. To turn their disadvantages into advantages, they need to receive qualified counseling and guidance services. Bibliotherapy is an effective method in the counseling process for gifted individuals. In this context, the current study aims to examine the effect of bibliotherapy on the social and emotional skills of 11-12 year old Science and Art Center (SAC) students. The research model was an experimental design with experimental and control groups. A total of 120 gifted students participated in the study, and the "*Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale (SELSS)*" was used as a data collection tool to determine their social and emotional learning levels. Twelve students with below-average scores were randomly assigned to the experimental group and 12 to the control group. The implementation lasted for eight weeks. It was observed that there was a significant difference in the social and emotional skills of the students who participated in the group guidance program prepared with bibliotherapy method and the students who did not participate in the group guidance program prepared with bibliotherapy method in favor of the students. The results were discussed in the context of the current literature, and recommendations were presented.

### Keywords

Bibliotherapy  
Guidance  
Social and emotional learning  
Gifted and talented

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### Introduction

In a constantly transforming and changing world, the individuals and society that initiate change are affected by the same change. Ongoing changes and innovations bring different meanings to the social world of the individual as well as different challenges. Educational environments play an important role in adapting to the developing world and in preventing future social and emotional difficulties. Social and emotional learning activities in schools are very important in this context. A report published in 2019 emphasized the importance of social and emotional learning not only in

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schools but also from preschool age and being learned by society. The development of these skills affects school life, work life, and society together with the individual. This effect facilitates the adaptation of the individual to the period in which he/she lives and supports the continuity of this adaptation throughout life (TÜSİAD, 2019). In the report titled "The Future of Jobs" published by the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2020, 2023), empathy, complex problem-solving, self-awareness, coping with stress, and resilience skills, including social and emotional learning competencies, are among the important skills for employees in future business life.

There are many concepts related to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Some of these are social self (James, 1890), social intelligence (Thorndike, 1909), behavioral intelligence (Guilford, 1959), and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1990; as cited in Bacanlı, 2006). The concept of SEL was first used in 1994 at the Fetzer Institute to identify the sources of behavioral problems in childhood. SEL programs contribute to students' healthy identity and behavioral development, academic success, and positive relationships (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020). Many countries, especially the USA, implement SEL programs in schools by integrating them with education programs as well as separate intervention programs (Mahoney, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2018).

There are some sub-skills involved in social and emotional learning. These skills are classified in different ways. For example, according to the classification made by Elias (2004); "recognizing emotions in self and others, listening and communicating, taking others' perspectives, problem solving, decision making, and planning". According to another classification, the skills identified by CASEL (2020), Elias, O'Brien, and Weissberg, (2006), and Kress and Elias (2006) are as follows: "self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making". Kabakçı (2006) emphasized the common skills that stand out in these classifications. These skills, which are also included in preventive guidance studies and SEL programs, are "communication, enhance self-esteem, problem solving, and coping with stress".

Although the first SEL studies in the world were conducted in the 90s, the effectiveness of SEL programs was examined and published about ten years later with the reports of CASEL. Studies on the effectiveness of programs related to SEL in Türkiye have intensified since 2018 (Ağırkan & Ergene, 2021). Some of the practices carried out in Türkiye related to SEL are as follows: The "Second Step" program developed by the Committee for Children in 1979, and translated by the SEL Academy; the Lions Quest Life Skills Program (LQYBP), which was launched in the USA in 1975 and implemented in many countries, was translated into Turkish with the joint work of Boğaziçi University Peace Education Application and Research Center (BEUAM) and Lions Quest in Türkiye and implemented in nearly 500 schools (TÜSİAD, 2019). It is seen that there is an increase in students' positive behaviors and academic performance (Esen-Aygün, 2017), self-perception and self-esteem (Eraslan-Çapan & Korkut-Owen, 2017; Merter, 2013; Papadopoulos, 2020), stress management (Çakır-Çelebi & Zorlu-Uğur, 2021), and life satisfaction (Akbulut-Kılıçoğlu, 2016) with the applications for SEL competency areas. In a meta-analysis (Cipriano et al., 2023), which systematically examined research on SEL practices from 2008 to 2020, it was observed that SEL practices are methodologically diverse and that apart from social and emotional learning skills; school attitude, friendship relations, and school achievement are also affected.

Despite the 21st-century erosion of social cohesion (WEF, 2023), adapting to a developing and changing world is also very important for gifted individuals who have a high level of awareness and sensitivity to the environment and events (Roeper, 1982). There are two contrasting theories in the literature focusing on the social and emotional structure of gifted individuals (Preckel & Vock, 2020). Harmony theory suggests that gifted individuals are socially adaptive and successful because of their cognitive capacities (Jones & Day, 1996). According to Moon (2009), the view that gifted individuals do not have social and emotional problems is a common misconception. The disharmony theory, on the other hand, states that there are certain costs associated with being 'gifted' and that this situation may cause social and emotional difficulties for the individual (Neihart, 2002). Rinn and Majority (2018)

emphasize that the asynchronous development of gifted individuals will lead to a different developmental process than their peers with normal development and will be accompanied by different social and emotional experiences. The hyperbrain-hyperbody theory points to the overexcitability of the superior intellectual structure and the difficulties it brings (Karpinski, Kolb, Tetreault, & Borowski, 2018). Baudson and Preckel (2013) emphasize that these two perspectives may prevent gifted individuals from benefiting from appropriate educational and psychological interventions to discover their talent and develop their potential.

Gifted students need to have and develop certain SEL skills to achieve academic success, well-being, healthy relationships, dignity, and expertise in the field of talent (Rinn & Majority, 2018; Smith, 2017). The development of these skills, revealing the inner capacities of these individuals, and approaching their social and emotional needs with awareness can be achieved through effective guidance and psychological counseling services. In addition to performing typical developmental tasks, gifted individuals have giftedness-related counseling needs (Mendaglio & Peterson, 2007). Some of these are unhealthy perfectionism, anxiety (Blaas, 2014), loneliness, and adjustment problems (Leana-Taşçılar, 2017). It has been suggested that counseling services for gifted individuals should focus on the development of the following skills, including SEL competencies: discovery of strengths and weaknesses, self-acceptance, conflict resolution, problem solving, communication, acceptance of self and others, decision making, and coping with stress (Silverman, 1993).

Gifted students need differentiated guidance, counseling services, and education (Yoo & Moon, 2006). Counseling services for gifted students can be in the form of peer groups, group counseling, peer counseling, and bibliotherapy (Silverman, 1993). In particular, bibliotherapy is one of the effective counseling techniques for gifted individuals to cope with their dilemmas and gain insight into the difficulties they experience (Hébert, 1991).

#### *The bibliotherapy technique*

Although bibliotherapy as a term has been mentioned more frequently recently, the entrance to a library in Ancient Egypt reads "ψῦχῆς ἰατροεῖον", meaning "the healing place of the soul". This is an example of how ancient the use of books as a healing tool (Moore, 1943). This term was first used by Samuel McCord Crothers in 1916. In his article, Crothers (1916) focuses on the question, "What is the therapeutic value of books, regardless of language, history, or literary genre?"

Bibliotherapy is the reading and discussion of literature that brings about emotional change and supports individual development (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993). Cornett and Cornett (1980) emphasize that for a practice to be called bibliotherapy, a book should be selected in line with the needs of the individual and then presented and followed up by a specific plan. Bibliotherapy consists of a four-stage process of identification, catharsis, insight, and universalization (Halsted, 2009). In the discussion during the implementation process, the question lists that the practitioner utilizes serve as a menu. The question that the practitioner chooses from the question menu should be appropriate for the situation and interaction. Consecutive questions are contrary to the interaction-based nature of bibliotherapy (Schlichter & Burke, 1994). Bibliotherapy has both affective and cognitive effects on the individual. (Table 1.) (Cornett & Cornett, 1980):

**Table 1.** Cognitive and Affective Effects of Bibliotherapy

<b>Cognitive effects</b>	<b>Affective effects</b>
Supports critical thinking.	Develops empathy skills.
It is possible to observe that the issues encountered may be widespread.	Provides a positive attitude.
Provides experience through reading.	Assists in achieving social adaptation.
Provides information on human emotions and actions.	Develops a positive self-perception.
Supports self-assessment.	Reduces emotional pressures.
Provides awareness that a problem may have multiple solutions.	Develop new interests.
	Promotes tolerance, respect, and acceptance of others.
	Provides awareness that good people exist.
	Assists readers in recognizing socially accepted behaviors.
	Prompts reflection on moral values.

Bibliotherapy is an effective technique that can be used for individuals at all age levels from preschool to adulthood in the context of preventive guidance (Akgün & Karaman-Berli, 2019; Bulut, 2010). When the researches are examined, bibliotherapy supports self-perception (Karacan, 2009; Şahin, 2019), empathy (Kurt, 2018), parental awareness (Acar-Arican, 2019), friendship skills (Turan, 2005), problem solving skills (Özan, 2017; Taş, 2019; Uyar & Güleç, 2021), self-esteem (Leana-Taşçılar, 2017), coping with stress and self-confidence (Hazlett-Stevens & Oren, 2017; Meier-Jensen, 2001). On the other hand, bibliotherapy decreases perfectionism (Adderholdt-Elliott & Eller, 1989; İlter, Leana-Taşçılar, & Saltukoğlu, 2018), night fear in children (Barclay & Whittington, 1992), family conflict (Yılmaz, 2002), behavioral problems (Khalik, 2017), panic attacks (Febbraro, 2005), and social phobia (Carlbring, Furmark, Steczko, Ekselius, & Andersson, 2006).

#### *Using the bibliotherapy technique with gifted individuals*

Bibliotherapy is a more effective technique for individuals who are willing to read. Gifted individuals can read earlier than their peers (Gross, 2002). It is known that gifted students have positive attitudes towards reading at an early stage compared to their peers (Worrell, Roth, & Gabelko, 2006). Therefore, bibliotherapy can be an effective tool for solving problems faced by gifted students (Karacan-Özdemir, Yaman, Kurtoğlu, Ayaz, & Demir, 2019). Kerr (2006) states that gifted clients respond positively to bibliotherapy and that using books between sessions in the counseling process can be supportive. Bibliotherapy can play an effective role in preventing problems that gifted individuals may experience (Frasier & McCannon, 1981).

When the literature is examined, studies on bibliotherapy with gifted individuals are divided into two groups: the first group includes qualitative studies on the use of bibliotherapy with gifted individuals (Adderholdt-Elliott & Eller, 1989; Frasier & McCannon, 1981; Halsted, 1990; Hébert, 1991; Jeon, 1992; Karacan-Özdemir et al., 2019; Leana-Taşçılar, 2012). In qualitative studies, there are suggestions for the use of bibliotherapy in a specific situation or problem area. For example, Hébert and Furner (1997) suggested bibliotherapy to reduce mathematics anxiety among gifted students and provide the reader with a sample plan at the end of the study. Another example suggests bibliotherapy as a strategy for dealing with emotional problems in the lives of gifted individuals. In addition, at the end of the study, a list of books that can be used in the bibliotherapy process at the secondary education level was included (Hébert & Kent, 2000). Schlichter and Burke (1994) suggest using bibliotherapy to support the social and emotional development of gifted students. In this context, they included a summary of six books and examples of questions that would enable interaction in the bibliotherapy process.

In the second group, experimental studies have revealed the effect of bibliotherapy on gifted individuals. Experimental studies conducted using bibliotherapy techniques to support the development of gifted students' self-esteem have drawn attention. For example, Spear (1996) found no effect of bibliotherapy on students' self-perception, while Tofaha (2012) found that 8-session bibliotherapy had a positive effect on gifted students' self-esteem. In another experimental study, Setiowati and Wimbari (2014) found positive results in seven sessions of bibliotherapy in reducing social anxiety among gifted adolescents.

In Türkiye, there are many studies demonstrating the effectiveness of bibliotherapy. It can be said that especially experimental studies have increased in 2015 and after. In Türkiye, the effects of bibliotherapy on gifted students' perfectionism (İlter et al., 2018), self-esteem (Leana-Taşçılar, 2017), empathy development (Kurt, 2018), and problem-solving skills (Taş, 2019) were examined. The studies that paved the way for it to gain frequency after these dates are mostly qualitative studies that include the introduction of the bibliotherapy method and examples of its application. These studies have been observed since the end of the 90s (Öncü, 2012; Öner, 1987; Uçar, 1996).

A review of the literature reveals that there are few studies examining the effects of the bibliotherapy technique on SEL (Elley, 2014) and its subdimensions; problem-solving (Özan, 2017; Taş, 2019; Uyar & Güleç, 2021), communication, coping with stress (Betzalel & Shechtman, 2017; Hazlett-Stevens & Oren, 2017) and skills that increase self-worth (Leana-Taşçılar, 2017; Şahin, 2019). It is seen that the variety of programs supporting the social and emotional development of gifted students in Türkiye is quite limited. In these studies, it is seen that the implementation process is structured with group sharing, information transfer, and homework assignments and that gifted students do not undergo differentiation (Büyükcünal-Göyçek, 2019; Sevgili-Koçak, 2020). The current study is the first to use bibliotherapy, an effective counseling technique for gifted individuals, to strengthen the social and emotional skills of these students.

The bibliotherapy-based group guidance program is expected to provide individuals with a rich experience in awareness of their inner worlds, effective problem-solving approaches in their lives, improved communication skills, coping skills in stressful situations, and social and emotional development through the characters in the books. Considering the benefits of bibliotherapy and social and emotional learning skills on gifted individuals, it is thought that considering bibliotherapy and social and emotional learning skills within the framework of a preventive guidance program will add diversity and contribute to the studies in the field.

With the findings of this study, it is hoped that the use of bibliotherapy will positively affect the development of social and emotional skills in gifted students. In the process of psychological counseling and guidance in educational settings, it is important to develop solution-oriented, economical, and appropriate strategies. In this study, the use of bibliotherapy in the solution and prevention of the social and emotional problems of gifted students will provide applicability. This study is also important in terms of inspiring professionals in the field to use bibliotherapy in counseling and guidance services in Türkiye.

This study aimed to examine the effect of a bibliotherapy-based group counseling program on the SEL skills of 11-12-year-old gifted students. In line with this purpose, we aimed to answer four main questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the total and subscale pretest scores of the experimental and control groups?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference between the total and subscale pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between the total and subscale pretest and posttest scores of the control group?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between the total and subscale posttest scores of the experimental and control groups?

## Method

### *Research Design*

In this study, a pretest-posttest experimental design with a control group was used to examine the effect of a group guidance program prepared using a bibliotherapy technique on the social and emotional skills of gifted students. In this model, participants were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. Data were collected from both groups before and after intervention. In the implementation phase, an experimental intervention was administered to the experimental group. This intervention was not applied to the control group to keep variables that threaten internal validity under control (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2008). The research model is shown in detail in Table 2:

**Table 2.** Research Design

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Pre-Test</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Post-Test</b>
Experimental	Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale	8-session bibliotherapy-based group counseling program	Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale
Control	Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale	No intervention	Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale

### *Study Group*

This study was conducted with 24 gifted students at the 6th and 7th grade levels studying at a SAC in Istanbul in the 2020-2021 academic year. Certain steps were followed to determine the study group for the research. First of all, the "Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale" (Kabakçı & Korkut-Owen, 2010) was applied to all 6th and 7th-grade students (n= 120) attending SAC. Students who scored low on this scale were identified. The research was conducted with 24 students by assigning 12 students to the experimental group and 12 students to the control group on a voluntary basis. When the average age of the students included in the study was analyzed; the average age of the experimental group was 12.7, while that of the control group was 12.8. The experimental and control groups were equally distributed in terms of gender.

### *Data Collection Tools*

"Personal Information Form" was used to obtain demographic information from the students included in the study, and the "Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale" developed by Kabakçı and Korkut-Owen (2010) was used to measure social and emotional learning skills. The scale was preferred because it covers the social and emotional learning subdimensions of CASEL (2020), is appropriate for the age level of the study group, and is a valid and reliable scale.

### *The Personal Information Form*

The personal information form prepared by the researcher included information about the gender, age, and weekly reading frequency of the students.

### *Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale (SELSS)*

Based on the social and emotional learning approach (Elias, 1997; Pasi, 2001), the SELSS was developed by Kabakçı and Korkut-Owen (2010). This 40-item Likert-type scale targets middle school students and consists of four subdimensions. The subdimensions of the scale are communication skills, problem-solving skills, coping skills with stress, and skills that enhance self-esteem. While the communication skills dimension includes issues to be considered in social relations and expressing emotions; the problem-solving skills dimension includes ways and stages of problem-solving; the coping with stress dimension includes ways and stages of coping in challenging situations; and finally, skills that enhance self-esteem include skills, such as self-respect and self-confidence. Each item on the scale was evaluated between 1 (not at all suitable for me) and 4 (completely suitable for me). There are no items that have reverse meanings. The total score that can be obtained from the scale varies between 40-160 points. A high score on the scale indicates the development of the student's social and emotional learning skills, whereas a low score indicates the weakness of these skills. The average application time

was 15 minutes. The internal consistency values of the scale were between .86 and .89. In the current study, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient for the internal consistency of the scale was .908. According to the results of the Kaiser Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, conducted to reveal the suitability of the data for factor analysis, .805 was calculated.

### ***Bibliotherapy Group Guidance Program and Process***

The bibliotherapy-based group counseling program prepared by the first researcher has 8 sessions. Each session consisted of 120 minutes. Based on the view that preventive guidance activities are necessary for students to cope with the problems caused by "giftedness" (Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, 2007) and not to carry social and emotional risks in their future lives (NAGC, 2021; Papadopoulos, 2020), a group guidance program based on the relevant literature was developed to improve the social and emotional learning skills of gifted students. Group guidance programs were preferred because they allow more than one participant to interact and see that there are others in the group with similar problems and provide an opportunity to act together in the problem-solving process (Öncü, 2012). The group guidance activities were structured by Halsted's (2009) developmental bibliotherapy stages.

Before starting the implementation, permission, parent information, data collection, preparation of the program, and selection of books suitable for the outcome of each session were made. In addition to including social and emotional learning skills, attention was paid to the characteristics that students could identify with (Halsted, 1990), including areas of overexcitability (Silverman, 1993), having the characteristics of gifted individuals (Davis & Wilson, 1992), and supporting the text with visuals (Cornett & Cornett, 1980). An expert in the field of children's literature was consulted regarding the books selected in terms of compliance with the learning outcomes and conditions. In line with the opinions received, book selection was completed, and session plans were prepared.

### ***Resources Utilized***

The books used in the implementation process are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Books Used in the Bibliotherapy Process

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Session order</b>	<b>Book Title</b>
Recognition, Introductions, and Interaction	1st session	Larf (Ashley Spires)
Managing Emotions	2st session	The Red Tree (Shaun Tan)
Problem Solving	3st and 4st session	What You Do Matters? (Kobi Yamada), Le Gentil P'tit Lapin (Michael Escoffier)
Coping with Stress	5st, 6, and 7st session	Zor Balık (Büşra Tarçalır Erol), Zeno and Mondo (Nilay Yılmaz), Vacío (Anna Llenas)
Self-Esteem	8st session	Spork (Kyo Maclear)

Twelve gifted students in the experimental group participated in the program. When the program content was examined; in the first session, the focus was on the character's (*Larf*) feeling different from others and the loneliness he experienced. In addition, issues to be considered in communication and the importance of body language were emphasized. The second session focused on challenging emotions and coping skills through a character. In sessions 3 and 4, problem-solving steps were addressed through the students' daily life problems. In sessions 5, 6, and 7, experiences about ridicule from the book "*Zor Balık*" were shared. Ways of coping in stressful situations were also discussed with "*Vacío*" and "*Zeno and Mondo*". In the last session, the focus was on the strengths and positive aspects of being different and unique from others, such as "*Spork*", rather than giving the individual a sense of strangeness.

During the implementation process, the books were read aloud by the practitioner. The pages of the books were projected using a projection device to allow readers to follow them. The location where the application was carried out was organized with posters and visuals related to the subject before the session. Based on Pardeck's (1994) suggestion that the process of group discussions in bibliotherapy sessions can be done through art activities, the creative drama technique was used in the program. At the end of each session, an informative letter about the subject was sent to the parents. In this way, it was aimed to generalize the skills worked in the home environment.

In this study, permission was obtained from the Biruni University Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee (decision number 2020/38-09 dated 06.03.2020) before the implementation process. Ethical rules were followed for all stages of the study. It was stated that the individual shares made during the sessions would be kept according to the principle of confidentiality on behalf of both the researcher and other students. Care was taken to ensure that each student was given an equal opportunity to share their feelings and thoughts during the process. After the research was completed, a bibliotherapy-based group guidance program was applied to the students in the control group to ensure equal opportunities.

#### *Data Analysis*

In the current study, the Social Emotional Learning Skills Scale- SELSS (Kabakçı & Korkut-Owen, 2010) was used for quantitative data. The data were analyzed using the SPSS 25.00 program. Nonparametric tests were applied because the size of the study group was less than 30. In order to reveal the effectiveness of the bibliotherapy-based group guidance program, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used to compare the data within the two groups, while the Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare the pretest-posttest scores between the groups. The findings were statistically tested at a .05 significance level.

#### **Result**

In this part, the findings obtained from the Social Emotional Learning Skills scale and their interpretations are presented. Descriptive analyses of the total and subdimension pretest-posttest scores and standard deviation values of the SELSS of the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Descriptive Analyses of Total and Subdimensions of the SELSS Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Dimensions	Experimental				Control			
	Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s
Total SELSS	121.17	13.5	130.92	14.65	117.0	12.04	114.58	13.30
Communication	27.33	5.02	29.75	2.90	25.58	5.65	25.58	4.56
Problem solving	35.08	4.01	37.17	4.67	33.58	4.05	33.00	5.34
Coping with stress	23.92	3.18	28.67	6.46	24.50	3.37	24.67	2.74
Self-esteem	34.83	4.15	35.33	3.77	33.17	3.38	31.92	3.78

As shown in Table 4, the mean of the total SELS Scale pre-test scores of the experimental group was 121.17 with a standard deviation of 13.58, while the mean of the post-test scores was 130.92 with a standard deviation of 14.65. After the program was applied to the experimental group, there was an increase in mean scores. The mean pre-test score of the control group was 117.00, with a standard deviation of 12.04, and the mean post-test score was 114.58 with a standard deviation of 13.30. There were no positive differences in the mean scores of the control group. Accordingly, it can be said that the pre-test-post-test scores of the experimental group students increased in favor of the post-test.



The mean pretest scores of the experimental group in the subdimensions of the scale "communication skills" were 27.33 and the mean posttest score was 29.75, the mean pretest score in the subdimension "problem-solving skill" was 35.08 and the mean posttest score was 37.17, the mean pretest score in the subdimension "coping with stress skills" was 23.92 and the mean posttest score was 28.67, and the mean pretest score in the subdimension "skills that enhance self-esteem" was 34.83 and the mean posttest score was 35.33. The scores of the experimental group increased in all subdimensions after implementation.

The mean pretest score of the students in the control group was 25.58 while the mean posttest score was 25.58, the mean pretest score of the "communication skills" subdimension was 33.58 while the mean posttest score was 33.00, the mean pretest score of the "coping with stress skills" subdimension was 24.50 while the mean posttest score was 24.67, and the mean pretest score of the "skills that enhance self-esteem" subdimension was 33.17 while the mean posttest score was 31.92. It was seen that there was no score increase in the pretest-posttest scores of the control group.

#### *Findings related to the first sub-problem*

When the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups were analyzed, it was observed that there was no difference between the pretest total and subdimension mean scores of the students in the experimental and control groups. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test total and subdimension scores of the experimental and control groups, and the results are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Mann Whitney U-Test Results for Pre-test Scores of SELSS Total and Sub-Dimensions of the Experimental and Control Groups

Dimensions	Group	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	p
Total SELSS	Experimental	12	13.58	168.00	59.000	.452
	Control	12	11.42	137.00		
Communication	Experimental	12	13.33	160.00	62.000	.563
	Control	12	11.67	140.00		
Problem solving	Experimental	12	13.75	165.00	57.000	.383
	Control	12	11.25	135.00		
Coping with stress	Experimental	12	11.83	142.00	64.000	.641
	Control	12	13.17	158.00		
Self-esteem	Experimental	12	14.21	170.50	51.500	.233
	Control	12	10.79	129.50		

Table 5 shows that there was no significant difference between the social and emotional learning skill levels of the experimental and control groups ( $U = 59.00$ ,  $p > .05$ ). It also shows that there is no significant difference between the pretest scores of the students in the experimental and control groups on the social and emotional learning skill subdimension scores ( $p > .05$ ). From this perspective, it can be said that the social and emotional learning skills of the experimental and control groups were at a similar level before the application.

#### *Findings related to the second sub-problem*

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test to test the significance of the difference between the total and subdimension measurements of the SELSS pretest and the total and subdimension measurements of the posttest of the experimental group are given in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results for the Pre-test and Post-test scores of SELSS Total and Sub-Dimensions of the Experimental Group

Dimensions	Ranks	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	Z	p
Total SELSS	Negative Ranks	1	5.50	5.500	-2.630	.009*
	Positive Ranks	11	6.59	72.50		
	Ties	0				
	Total	12				
Communication	Negative Ranks	2	5.25	10.50	-2.010	.044*
	Positive Ranks	9	6.17	55.50		
	Ties	1				
	Total	12				
Problem solving	Negative Ranks	1	2.50	2.50	-2.567	.010*
	Positive Ranks	9	5.83	52.50		
	Ties	2				
	Total	12				
Coping with stress	Negative Ranks	2	4.25	8.50	-2.396	.017*
	Positive Ranks	10	6.95	69.50		
	Ties	0				
	Total	12				
Self-esteem	Negative Ranks	5	5.60	28.00	-.448	.654
	Positive Ranks	6	6.33	38.00		
	Ties	1				
	Total	12				

\*p &lt;.05

As shown in Table 6, there was a significant difference at the .05 level between the scores of the experimental group before and after the implementation ( $Z=-2.630$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). It was seen that the Bibliotherapy-Based Group Guidance Program positively affected the social and emotional learning skills of the experimental group students. There was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group for the subdimensions of "communication skills" ( $Z=-2.010$ ,  $p<.05$ ), "problem-solving skills" ( $Z= -2.567$ ,  $p<.05$ ), "coping with stress skills" ( $Z=-2.396$ ,  $p<.05$ ) subdimensions, while there was no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores in the subdimension of "skills that enhance self-esteem" ( $Z=-.448$ ,  $p>.05$ ). While there was an increase in the scores of the experimental group students in all subdimensions, the increase in the "skills that enhance self-esteem" subdimension was not significant.

#### *Findings related to the third sub-problem*

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test to test the significance of the difference between the pretest total and subdimension measurements and posttest total and subdimension measurements of the control group are given in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results for the Pre-test and Post-test scores of SELSS Total and Sub-Dimensions of the Control Group

Dimensions	Ranks	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	Z	p
Total SELSS	Negative Ranks	9	6.28	56.50	-1.375	.169
	Positive Ranks	3	7.17	21.50		
	Ties	0				
	Total	12				
Communication	Negative Ranks	5	5.70	28.50	-.103	.918
	Positive Ranks	5	5.30	26.50		
	Ties	2				
	Total	12				
Problem solving	Negative Ranks	6	5.58	33.50	-.045	.964
	Positive Ranks	5	6.50	32.50		
	Ties	1				
	Total	12				
Coping with stress	Negative Ranks	7	5.14	36.00	-.238	.812
	Positive Ranks	5	8.40	42.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	12				
Self-esteem	Negative Ranks	6	5.58	33.50	-1.310	.190
	Positive Ranks	3	3.83	11.50		
	Ties	3				
	Total	12				

When Table 7 is examined, the difference between the rank averages of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results conducted to test the change between the pretest and posttest scores of the control group was not found to be statistically significant ( $Z=-1.37$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). When the changes in the rank averages of the students were analyzed, the number of students showing a positive change was three and the number of students showing a negative change was nine. No significant difference was found in the SELSS pretest-posttest subdimension scores of the control group students.

#### *Findings related to the fourth sub-problem*

While there was no significant difference between the SELSS pre-test total and subdimension measurements of the students in the experimental and control groups (Table 5), there was a difference between the post-test total and subdimension measurements of the experimental and control groups in favor of the participants. In order to analyze whether this difference was statistically significant or not, students' SELSS post-test total and subdimension measurements were examined using the Mann-Whitney U test, and the results are given in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Mann Whitney U-Test Results for Post-test Scores of SELSS Total and Sub-Dimensions of the Experimental and Control Groups

Dimensions	Group	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	p
Total SELSS	Experimental	12	16.33	196.00	26.00	.007*
	Control	12	8.67	104.00		
Communication	Experimental	12	15.67	188.00	34.000	.027*
	Control	12	9.33	112.00		
Problem solving	Experimental	12	15.33	184.00	38.000	.049*
	Control	12	9.67	116.00		
Coping with stress	Experimental	12	16.13	193.50	28.500	.012*
	Control	12	8.88	106.50		
Self-esteem	Experimental	12	15.38	184.50	37.500	.045*
	Control	12	9.63	115.50		

\*  $p<.05$

The Mann-Whitney U test results of the scores of the experimental and control groups after the implementation are presented in Table 8. According to this finding, there was a significant difference between the social and emotional skills of those who participated in the bibliotherapy-based group guidance program and the students who did not participate in such a program ( $U=26.00$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Considering the mean ranks, it is understood that the students who participated in the bibliotherapy-based group guidance program had more developed social and emotional learning skills than the students who did not participate in the program. This finding indicates that the program was effective in improving the social and emotional learning skills of gifted students. These results also showed that there was a significant difference between the posttest scores of the experimental and control group students in the SELSS subdimensions in favor of the experimental group ( $p<.05$ ). In the analysis of the difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental and control groups, it was observed that there was a positive change in the social and emotional learning skills of the experimental group.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted to determine the effect of a bibliotherapy-based preventive group guidance program on the social and emotional learning skills of gifted students. This part presents the results of the study and the discussion of these results in the context of the literature.

The study's first problem revealed no significant difference between the experimental and control groups' scores before the implementation. As Çepni (2005) noted, it is crucial to ensure the similarity between experimental and control groups when forming groups in experimental research. Therefore, the study found that both groups were similar in terms of students' social and emotional learning skills before the implementation.

The result for the second subproblem of the study revealed that there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group in *problem-solving skills*, *communication skills*, and *coping with stress skills*, except for the total score and *skills that enhance self-esteem*. The higher the score obtained from the SELSS, the more developed the individual's social and emotional skills. The increase in the posttest scores of the experimental group indicated that the program prepared using the bibliotherapy method was effective.

In addition, in a meta-analysis by Mahoney et al. (2018) on the development of social and emotional skills of gifted students, it was emphasized that SEL programs increase the development of positive emotions, behaviors, and academic performance. Among the experimental studies, the programs prepared by Büyükunal-Göyçek (2019) and Sevgili-Koçak (2020) on social and emotional development and friendship quality show that programs for social and emotional learning are effective for gifted individuals, and support the results of the current study. As Esen-Aygün and Şahin-Taşkın (2019) stated, SEL includes skills that can be developed and learned. When we look at the studies conducted, it is seen that the practices consist of activities, such as group interaction, knowledge transfer, and homework and that there is no methodological differentiation for gifted students. However, as stated by Yoo and Moon (2006), the use of different methods and techniques in guidance studies, such as gifted education, can increase effectiveness. The positive effect of the bibliotherapy technique on social and emotional development has been emphasized by many researchers (Katz & Watt, 1992; Pardeck, 1990; Stephens, 1981; Sullivan & Strang, 2002). As a matter of fact, the current study differs from these studies in terms of being based on bibliotherapy.

At the same time, it was seen that there was an improvement in the sub-skills of SEL, but this increase was not significant in the subdimension of *skills that enhance self-esteem*. Elcik and Bayındır's (2015) correlational screening study showed that the most developed SEL skill of gifted students was the skills that increase self-esteem. It is thought that this result may be related to the fact that the experimental group already had high self-esteem before practice. In addition to this, the fact that this

skill was addressed in a single session may also be due to the fact that the book "*Spork*" used in the application was not suitable for the group. In the literature, in studies examining the effects of programs (not based on bibliotherapy) prepared for the development of SEL skills, it was observed that there was no significant change in the skills that increased self-esteem as in the current study (Totan, 2011; Ulaşan, 2018).

When the findings related to the third sub-problem of the study were examined, it was concluded that there was no significant difference between the pretest-posttest total and subdimension measurements of the control group. According to this result, it can be said that there was no significant change in the social and emotional learning skill levels of the students in the control group during the eight week period without implementation; that is, these skills did not improve without intervention. Within the scope of this study, both experimental and control groups consisted of gifted students. NAGC (2021), while stating that gifted individuals should be supported socially and emotionally, emphasizes the importance of preventive guidance studies for these individuals so that they do not carry potential risks in the future. In this context, in order to ensure equal opportunity, a bibliotherapy-based program was applied to the control group students after this research was completed.

The result for the last sub-problem of the study showed a significant difference between the total and subdimension scores of SELSS of the experimental and control groups at the end of the process in favor of the experimental group. This result indicates that bibliotherapy is an effective method for developing the social and emotional skills of gifted students. In the literature, bibliotherapy is recommended for solving social and emotional problems experienced by gifted individuals (Hébert, 1991; Hébert & Kent, 2000). It is thought that gifted students' enjoyment of reading (Reis et al., 2004), positive attitudes towards reading (Worrell et al., 2006), critical reading skills (Kettler, 2014), tendency to read in the early period (Gross, 2002), and developed reading skills may have an effect on the positive results of the bibliotherapy-based program (Jeon, 1992; Kerr, 2006; Pardeck, 1990).

Demirelli (2020), implemented an assertiveness program using question-answer and conventional lecturing methods to improve students' SEL skills. While the program was effective in the dimensions of communication and coping with stress, it had no significant effect on problem solving and self-esteem. In the current study, the strengthening of the experimental group's communication, coping with stress, problem-solving, and self-esteem is thought to be due to the elements of bibliotherapy such as identifying with the character, making group discussions over the character's problem, learning problem-solving strategies through the character's experiences and discovering the ways of coping of other members in the group (Halsted, 2009). Again, among the studies in which the bibliotherapy method was adopted in the literature, Betzalel and Shechtman (2017) and Hazlett-Stevens and Oren (2017) emphasized the positive effect on stress coping skills; Zepeda (2020) emphasized the positive effect on social and emotional skills; Turan (2005) and Elley (2014) emphasized the positive effect on friendship relationships; (Taş, 2019) emphasized the positive effect on problem-solving skills; Papadopoulos (2020) emphasized the positive effect on self-esteem and self-perception.

As a result, it is seen that the group guidance program prepared using the bibliotherapy method has a positive effect on the development of the social and emotional learning skills of gifted students. It can be said that the arrangement of the application environment in accordance with the outcome, the information letters sent to the parents about the sessions, the variety of materials used in the process, and creative drama activities are the elements that strengthen the bibliotherapy-based preventive group guidance program. This study is important in terms of the effectiveness and applicability of the bibliotherapy method in the guidance and psychological counseling process for gifted students.

Although the current research presents positive results, it also has some limitations. The first of these is that only quantitative data were collected to determine the effectiveness of the experimental study. In future studies, it may be recommended to adopt a mixed method and to include a participant diary in the process or immediately afterward. In this way, the effectiveness of the program can be supported both quantitatively and qualitatively. Another limitation is the inherent limitations of the bibliotherapy. The books analyzed may not have the same effect on every person. Considering the characteristics of individuals who are capable of developing SELS, different books can be tested for their effectiveness. The most challenging and rigorous part of this research process was the selection of appropriate books. At this stage, it is thought that compiling and presenting books on specific topics in Türkiye, suitable for bibliotherapy technique and addressing different developmental areas by experts in the field may facilitate the book selection process of bibliotherapy practitioners. Finally, this study did not examine the long-term effects of bibliotherapy on gifted students. Follow-up measurements should be conducted in future studies. Since bibliotherapy contributes to the multifaceted development of gifted students, its effectiveness in younger age groups should also be examined.

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