

A Study on Preschool Children's Perceptions of Moral and Social Rules

Saide Özbey

Gazi Education Faculty
Department of Elementary Education
Division of Preschool Education
Gazi University
Turkey

Abstract

This study was conducted to examine preschool children's perceptions about moral and social rules with respect to certain variables. The study group comprised a total of 140 children aged between 48–66 months who were attending an independent kindergarten (N=100) and the preschool year of an elementary school (N=40) in Keçiören and Yenimahalle, Ankara. The study was based on a relational survey model and used Smetena's (1981) Moral and Social Rule Knowledge Scale, which was tested for validity and reliability with Turkish children by Seçer, Sarı and Olcay (2007). The results showed that children's knowledge on moral and social rules varied significantly with respect to their socioeconomic level, the school they attend, the age of their teacher, and the school that the teacher graduated from. Also, a significant difference was found between children's knowledge on moral and social rules in favor of the former ($p < 0.05$).

Keywords: Preschool, children, moral rule, social rule, moral development

1. Introduction

Moral development is closely related to the level of self-control an individual can exert regarding social rules. Individuals can display certain internally or externally controlled behaviors regarding universal values in their society. If the individual behaves properly regarding rules without an external reminder or pressure, he can be said to be *internally controlled*, and if proper behavior requires an external influence, he can be said to have *externally controlled* moral development. Individuals with internal control have internalized social rules such as establishing effective communication, avoiding hurting others, and getting along well with them. Individuals who have these characteristics which may be called social adaptation also contribute to the process of setting new rules and replacing those that are not valid at (Yaşa Giren, 2008, p.16). Children first accept right and wrong behaviors as they are explained to them by authorities. In time, however, they discover other views around them and form their own value systems (Akman, 2011, p.151). The socialization of children occurs as their families, society and culture shares perceptions of values, attitudes, roles and the world with them. The nature of socialization is character and moral development (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, s.204).

Mentions of morality and rules date back to 400 B.C. Ancient Greek philosophers emphasized the necessity of moral rules for social order and encouraged the youth to live honestly. Socrates (469–399 B.C.) argued that morality starts by examining one's own life. He focused on *how people should manage their lives* or, in other words, the questions *How should I live, What should I do?*. If people want a beautiful and happy life, they should act accordingly because just wishing for something is not enough. Socrates stated that people should only have logical wishes and that logical thought comes through maturity (Dewettere, 2002, p.13). He believes that the right knowledge is inherent. Therefore, it can be reached by unveiling the knowledge hiding in the nature of humans instead of teaching them from the outside. In other words, Socrates defends that people should become real humans by searching for the perfectionism in their nature. In order to do so, they need to use the reason and conscience in their nature. Humans can only be happy when they use their reason and conscience in the right way. Happiness includes concepts such as courage, virtue and justice. Socrates defended all his views with the hypothesis that *one who knows what is right will inevitably do so* (Komşu, 2011, p.38). As long as the right knowledge is on one's mind, it has more possibility to emerge. Temporary knowledge cannot lead to permanent behaviors (Grote, 1865, p.10).

On the other hand, Aristotle explains human behavior by referring to rational and irrational inherent wishes. For Aristotle, physical wishes such as eating and drinking, and feelings such as pity, anger, embarrassment, fear and pride are irrational. On the other hand, rational wishes come from judgment and thinking, and they are those that the individual knows are good for him. Aristotle states that emotions and the intellect both lie at the bottom of all human behavior. Plato agrees by emphasizing that morality involves behaviors governed by emotions and the intellect, and that rational wishes are more important as they are governed by the latter. Aristotle states, “*We want certain things thinking they will be good for us. Our aim in our thought and behavior is to find good. Things we strive for may not be right for us even though they may look good. Ocean water may look potable but sailors in a shipwreck may die of thirst*”. Therefore, right and wrong behaviors should not be evaluated as right or wrong superficially. Rational explanations about why right is right and wrong is wrong are essential (Dewettere, 2002, p.17, 23). It would be reasonable at this point to view the different definitions of and perspectives on morality.

Güngör defines morality as (1998, p.27) value judgments “expressed in relation to human actions” (cited in Aydın, 2011, p.44). Philosophically, morality can be stated in two dimensions. The first one is the behavior dimension of morality which shows value judgments and emphasizes the importance of abiding by them. This dimension also sets rules about how the individual should behave to meet his responsibilities towards himself and his environment. The second dimension is theoretical morality. Instead of expressing value judgments, theoretical morality makes comments on the factors that play a role in the emergence of moral judgments. The real aim of moral behaviors is not the happiness of a single person but the welfare of the entire society. For moral development, the minimizing of negative behaviors and maximizing of positive ones is important (Ekşi and Katılmış, 2011, p.1–5).

The components of morality, which was referred to as *ethics* in ancient philosophy, are *value* and *behavior*. Each behavior carries a value behind. The word *ethics* means *value*, and *behavior* means *morality*. Thus, it is possible to say morality is built on values and behaviors (Aydın, 2011, p.44). Educators and researchers define morality as *the totality of common behaviors that may be considered right and wrong in a society or group*. It is not only emotions that are used in the evaluation of these behaviors as right or wrong. As moral actions are guided by emotions, they at the same time require thinking skills. Considering this, it may be said that moral behaviors are peculiar to humans. The prosocial behaviors of animals who risk their lives to protect their offspring are not considered moral behaviors but instinctive ones. Accordingly, it is possible to define morality as *knowledge of right and wrong behaviors*. For moral development, individuals need to have developed healthily in both social and cognitive domains (Nucci, 2001, p.6).

Gander and Gardiner (2000) mention three dimensions of moral behavior: cognitive, affective and behavioral. The cognitive dimension involves an understanding of why right is right and wrong is wrong. The behavioral dimension involves adopting right behaviors and avoiding wrong ones. The affective dimension refers to the emotions evoked by right and wrong behaviors. The learning of right and wrong behaviors is based on the immediate environment of a child. The development of a sense of trust, gender based behaviors, and having positive role models in social development all play a significant role in the development of self perception. They are also necessary for moral development. Children need to be explained right and wrong behaviors and then why they are deemed so. It is thus important that children are given an environment conducive to the willful adoption of good and right behaviors (Bayhan and Artan, 2004).

Adults act as models for children with both their words and behaviors in the development of values such as empathy, cooperation, kindness, helpfulness, honesty, forgiveness, managing friendship relations, compassion, love and respect, self control, discipline. These values become internalized as a result of children's interaction with those around them and determine how they act when they become adults. For healthy character development and internalization of moral and social rules, interaction with preschool teachers is important. In preschools, teachers should plan their instruction by considering the sensitive aspects of children's different socio-affective development stages. They also need to organize instruction in such a way to improve self control and positive self perception. Children need instructional environments in which they will learn about both social and universal values. Likewise, it is important to present children with various problem situations and practice finding alternative affective and behavioral solutions (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, s.204; www.elcmdm.org/2013; Allen, 1976, p. 15).

Johansson (2013) made recommendations for developing moral behaviors in the classroom. In his study, he states that children experience a natural process of interaction and communication as they are born into a social world. In this process of interaction, they evaluate and question each other's behavior. They make decisions about whether these behaviors are right or wrong by discussing their outcomes. Children understand what moral behaviors are and why they need to follow them over time. Johnson (2013) mentions the importance of teachers in helping children understanding others' perspectives and emotions, seeing the links between emotions and actions, sharing others' sadness and showing this, replacing negative emotions with positive ones and displaying this through actions, and being able to distinguish right from wrong behaviors. Teachers need to set up situations where children respect both themselves and others, and display behaviors that express this. At the same time, teachers also have the responsibility to develop skills such as expressing oneself accurately, discussing different ideas properly and aching solutions, and compensating for hurtful behaviors (Johansson, 2013, p.205–216).

This study aims to examine children's perceptions of moral and social rules by considering variables such as the age of teacher, their years in the profession, the education institutions they attended, the gender of children, the type of school they attend, and socioeconomic level. In addition, the difference between children's perceptions of moral and social rules was also examined. No previous studies were found in the literature that focused on the teacher dimension and moral and social rule perceptions. It is therefore believed that the study will contribute significantly to the field by revealing children's moral and social rule perceptions according to teacher characteristics.

2. Method

2.1. Study Group

The study group consists of 140 children aged 48–66 months who were attending an independent kindergarten (N=100) and the preschool of an elementary school (N=40) in Keçiören and Yenimahalle, Ankara, and their teachers. Of these children, 40,7% (N=57) were female and 59,3% (N=83) were male. The study is a relational survey.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

Moral and social rule knowledge scale: It was developed by Smetana (1981: 1333–1336) to identify children's knowledge on moral and social rules. The scale has 10 pictures to measure children's knowledge, 5 in which moral rules are being violated and 5 in which social rules are being violated. It can be used separately to measure children's perceptions of moral and social rules. The validity and reliability studies of the scale were conducted by Seçer, Sarı and Olcay (2007). Expert opinion was used for Kapsam validity and the scale was finalized accordingly. Following expert opinion, the scale was implemented on 10 children with an interval of 10 days, and the correlation between scores from the two implementations was considered. The correlation from the two implementations was $r = .78$. This correlation value was taken as the reliability coefficient of the tool. For scoring, children's reactions to each picture were asked. The contents of the 10 pictures were as follows:

Pictures about moral rules:

- Picture 1. A child hits another.
- Picture 2. A child refuses to share a teddy bear.
- Picture 3. A child pushes another.
- Picture 4. A child throws water at another.
- Picture 5. A child takes another's apple off him.

Pictures about social rules:

- Picture 1. A child refuses to play.
- Picture 2. A child refuses to sit where she is asked at story time.
- Picture 3. A child throws apple peels on the floor, not in the rubbish bin.
- Picture 4. A child misplaces toys.
- Picture 5. A child refuses to hang his coat and throws it on the floor.

Questions the children were asked about the pictures:

- Is the behavior in the picture right or wrong? If it is wrong, how wrong is it? (Seriousness perception)
- Is it OK for the child to act like this when the teacher is not there? (Lack of authority perception)

If the teacher had not told the child this was a wrong behavior/If this rule did not exist, would this behavior be right? (Lack of rule perception)

Would this behavior be right if it was displayed at another place and not the school? (Generalization perception)

Should the child be punished for his behavior? If yes, should the punishment be light or strict?

Taking into account children's answers to all pictures, children's moral and social rule perceptions are evaluated in the following five dimensions: seriousness, lack of authority, absence of rules, generalization and punishment perceptions. seriousness, High scores in the dimensions of lack of authority, absence of rules, and generalization show high moral and social rule perceptions by children. In the punishment perception dimension, a high score shows that children think the misbehavior at hand deserves more punishment.

2.3. Data Analysis

Multiple comparisons in data analysis were made by using one-way analysis of variance and kruskal wallis test. Paired comparisons, on the other hand, were made by using independent samples t-test, while two independent variables related to the sample were compared with dependent samples t-test.

3. Findings

3.1. Moral Rule Perception/ Socio Economic Level

Table 1: Moral Rule Perception Scale Mann Whitney U test scores with Respect to Children's Socioeconomic Levels

Moral Rule Perception Scale	SEL	N	Mean ranks	Total ranks	U	p
Seriousness perception	Middle	122	71.91	8773.50	925.500	.265
	Upper	18	60.92	1096.50		
	Total	140				
Lack of authority perception	Middle	122	69.65	8497.50	994.500	.109
	Upper	18	76.25	1372.50		
	Total	140				
Absence of rules perception	Middle	122	69.79	8514.50	1011.500	.062
	Upper	18	75.31	1355.50		
	Total	140				
Generalization perception	Middle	122	69.93	8531.50	1028.500	.134
	Upper	18	74.36	1338.50		
	Total	140				
Punishment perception	Middle	122	73.93	9019.00	680.000	.002*
	Upper	18	47.28	851.00		
	Total	140				

* $p < 0.05$

Table 1 shows that children's moral rule scores vary in punishment perception with respect to their socioeconomic levels ($p < 0.05$). No significant difference is present in other dimensions. According to this, children from the middle socioeconomic level believe that more punishment should be given when moral rules are violated.

3.2. Social Rule Perception/ Socioeconomic Level

Table 2: Social Rule Perception Scale Mann Whitney U test Scores with Respect to Children's Socioeconomic Levels

Social Rule Perception Scale	SEL	N	Mean ranks	total ranks	U	p
Seriousness perception	Middle	122	73.33	8946.00	753.000	.027*
	Upper	18	51.33	924.00		
	Total	140				
Lack of authority perception	Middle	122	71.02	8664.00	1035.000	.510
	Upper	18	67.00	1206.00		
	Total	140				
Absence of rules perception	Middle	122	70.28	8574.00	1071.00	.656
	Upper	18	72.00	1296.00		
	Total	140				
Generalization perception	Middle	122	69.93	8531.50	1028.500	.134
	Upper	18	74.36	1338.50		
	Total	140				
Punishment perception	Middle	122	76.19	9295.00	404.000	.000*
	Upper	18	31.94	575.00		
	Total	140				

* $p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows that children's social rule scores vary in seriousness perception in favor of middle socioeconomic level children ($p < 0.05$). Likewise, punishment perception scores show children from the middle socioeconomic background believe that misbehaviors should be punished more severely. The difference is significant ($p < 0.05$). Other dimensions do not vary.

3.3. Moral and Social Rule Perception/Gender of Children/Type of School Attended

Children's moral and social rules perceptions did not vary with respect to the school they were attending or gender ($p > 0.05$).

The t-test showed that the *punishment* dimension varied in favor of children who were attending the preschool year of elementary schools (mean=9.42) ($p < 0.05$) No significant difference was found in other dimensions. The mean value of children attending independent kindergartens was 7.89.

3.4. Moral Rule Perception/ Teacher's Degree

Table 3: Moral Rule Perception Scale Independent T-Test Scores With Respect to Teachers' Degrees

Moral Rule Perception Scale	Degree	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Seriousness perception	Two-year college degree	100	12.31	2.84	138	-2.044	.043*
	Preschool Education	40	13.37	2.62			
Lack of authority perception	Two-year college degree	100	5.08	1.16	138	.435	.664
	Preschool Education	40	5.00	.00			
Absence of rules perception	Two-year college degree	100	5.05	1.05	138	.298	.766
	Preschool Education	40	5.00	.00			
Generalization perception	Two-year college degree	100	5.07	1.05	138	.428	.677
	Preschool Education	40	5.00	.00			
punishment perception	Two-year college degree	100	9.06	1.69	138	-1.429	.155
	Preschool Education	40	9.50	1.51			

* $p < 0.05$

Table 3 reveals that children's moral rule scores vary in seriousness perception in favor of teachers who graduated from preschool education departments ($p < 0.05$). No difference was found in other dimensions.

3.4. Social Rule Perception/ Teacher's Degree

Table 4: Social Rule Perception Scale Independent t-test Scores with Respect to Teachers' Degrees

Social Rule Perception Scale	Degree	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Seriousness perception	Two-year college degree	100	11.38	2.88	138	-2.516	.013*
	Preschool Education	40	12.75	2.98			
Lack of authority perception	Two-year college degree	100	4.94	1.06	138	-2.731	.007*
	Preschool Education	40	5.45	.81			
Absence of rules perception	Two-year college degree	100	4.99	.88	138	-0.72	.943
	Preschool Education	40	5.00	.00			
Generalization perception	Two-year college degree	100	5.07	1.05	138	.418	.677
	Preschool Education	40	5.00	.00			
Punishment perception	Two-year college degree	100	8.09	2.60	138	-1.918	.071
	Preschool Education	40	8.92	2.01			

* $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows that social rule perception scores vary in the seriousness and lack of authority dimensions in favor of teachers that graduated from preschool education departments ($p < 0.05$). No difference was found in other dimensions.

3.5. Moral Rule Perception/ Age of Teachers

Table 5: Moral Rule Perception Scale One-Way Analysis of Variance with Respect to the Age of Teachers

Moro Rule Perception Scale		Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p	Source of variance Sheffe
Seriousness perception	Between groups	.853	2	.426	.053	.948	
	Within groups	1102.319	137	8.046			
	Total	1103.171	139				
Lack of authority perception	Between groups	2.128	2	1.064	1.109	.333	
	Within groups	131.415	137	.959			
	Total	133.543	139				
Absence of rules perception	Between groups	3.113	2	1.556	1.980	.142	
	Within groups	107.709	137	.786			
	Total	110.821	139				
Generalization perception	Between groups	2.941	2	1.471	1.871	.158	
	Within groups	107.709	137	.786			
	Total	110.650	139				
punishment perception	Between groups	18.718	2	9.359	3.557	.031*	20–30 years old (mean=8.60)< Above 40 (mean=9.51)
	Within groups	360.454	137	2.631			
	Total	379.171	139				

*p<0.05

Table 5 shows that the punishment scores of children with a teacher aged above 40 was higher than that of children with a teacher aged between 26-30 years (p<0.05). This means that the former children think that moral rules violation requires **more punishment**.

3.6. Social Rule Perception/ Age of Teacher

Table 6: Social Rule Perception Scale One-Way Analysis of Variance with Respect to the Age of Teachers

		sum of squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p	Source of variance Sheffe
Seriousness perception	Between groups	30.295	2	15.147	1.740	.179	
	Within groups	1192.391	137	8.704			
	Total	1222.686	139				
Lack of authority perception	Between groups	8.396	2	4.198	4.211	.017*	20–30 years old (mean=5.45) 31–40 years old (mean=4.76)
	Within groups	136.575	137	.997			
	Total	144.971	139				
Absence of rules perception	Between groups	.282	2	.141	.252	.777	
	Within groups	76.710	137	.560			
	Total	76.993	139				
Generalization perception	Between groups	2.941	2	1.471	1.871	.158	
	Within groups	107.709	137	.786			
	Total	110.650	139				
Punishment perception	Between groups	163.031	2	81.515	16.235	.000*	20–30 years old (mean=6.54) < 31–40 yearsbold (mean=8.23) Above 40 (mean=9.25)
	Within groups	687.855	137	5.021			
	Total	850.886	139				

*p<0.05

According to Table 6, children's perceptions of social roles vary significantly in the dimensions of lack of authority and punishment perception ($p < 0.05$). In the lack of authority dimension, children whose teachers were aged between 31-40 mentioned that misbehaviors may happen when there is no authority. In other words, children responded more flexibly to the question *If this misbehavior was displayed without the teacher knowing, would it be okay?*, and there are children who think that it is okay to do certain things when the teacher is not looking. Similarly, children whose teachers were aged between 31–40 years and above 40 believed that misbehaviors against social rules should be punished more severely than children whose teachers were between 20–30 years.

3.7. Children's Moral and Social Rules Perception/ Teacher's Years in the Profession

No significant difference was found between children's moral and social rules perception scores with respect to their teachers' years in the profession ($p > 0.05$).

3.8. The difference between Children's Moral and Social Rules Perceptions

Table 7: Paired Samples T-Test Scores of the Seriousness Subdimension in Moral and Social Rules Scales

Dimensions		N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Seriousness perception	Moral Rule Perception Scale	140	12.61	2.81	139	3.822	.000*
	Social Rule Perception Scale	140	11.77	2.96			

* $p < 0.05$

Table 8: Paired Samples T-Test Scores of the Punishment Subdimension in Moral and Social Rules Scales

Dimensions		N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Punishment perception	Moral Rule Perception Scale	140	9.18	1.65	139	5.474	.000*
	Social Rule Perception Scale	140	11.77	2.47			

* $p < 0.05$

Paired samples t-test was conducted to examine whether there was a difference between moral and social rules perceptions. The test showed a difference between the two scales in the *Seriousness* (table 7) and *Punishment perception* (table 8) dimensions, in favor of the Moral Rules Scale ($p < 0.05$).

3.8. Children's Responses to the Questions about the Pictures Included in the Scale

The scale asked the children an additional question about why a behavior that they labeled as misbehavior was wrong. The children's responses are given below.

Q. If no one was upset with you for hitting a friend, would this behavior be right? (If not) Why would it not be right?

- A. It wouldn't be right because then there would be no one in the world to point out misbehaviors. (4-year-old girl)
- B. If a child hits another one without the teacher seeing, then mothers wouldn't know this. They wouldn't know what's going on in the school (4-year-old girl)
- C. I couldn't hit my friends because I like them very much (4-year-old boy)

Q. Would it be Right if you Littered/didn't tidy your Toys Outside School?

- A. My mother would have to tidy up after me and this would be difficult. Guests wouldn't want to visit a house like that.
- B. We shouldn't litter outside the school either because then there would be rubbish everywhere and this would cause acid rain. This rain sticks on and harms us.
- C. If we littered at home, there would be rubbish lying around everywhere.

Q. Is it right not to listen to the teacher/not to participate in the activity as a teacher reads a story?

Even if the teacher doesn't know that we're not listening, this is still not right behavior because if we don't listen to the teacher, we can't learn anything.

Children's responses show that they can make explanations in accordance with their ages about why moral and social rules must be followed.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to examine preschool children's moral and social rules perceptions with respect to certain child and teacher related variables. There is a limited number of studies in the literature on preschool children's moral and social rules perceptions. Particularly those studies conducted in Turkey have focused on moral and social perceptions with respect to parent attitudes, cognitive structures of children, etc. Many studies on moral rules have been conducted with older age groups. This leads to a limitation in the discussion of research results. However, the results are discussed below by referring to certain studies that include parallel variables examining children's social behaviors.

Children's gender: No significant difference existed between the moral and social rule perception skills of girls and boys. Smetena (1981); Walker (1984); Özgüleç (2001) Kabadayı and Aladağ (2010); Seçer, Çağdaş and Seçer (2006) found in their studies concerning children and adolescents that moral judgment perception levels do not vary with respect to gender. This result suggests that gender is not a predictive variable in moral and social rules perception.

The type of school children attend: In the punishment perception of the Social Rules Scale, children who attend the preschool years of elementary schools believe in the need for punishments more than children in independent kindergartens do (3.3). Seçer and Sarı (2004) examined moral and social rules perceptions of children who did and did not attend preschool and found that preschoolers had higher scores in the dimensions of lack of authority, absence of rules and generalization. They also found that boys at preschools had higher scores in the dimensions of lack of authority and absence of rules, while girls had higher scores in the generalization of social rules dimension. Sarıçam and Halmatov (2012) studied the moral and social rule perceptions of children who did and did not attend preschool and found that preschoolers had higher perceptions. In the present study, it may be said that children attending the preschool years of elementary schools have internalized social rules more. Tepeli and Yılmaz (2012) examined the social rules perceptions of preschoolers at preschools with different curricula, and found a difference between the perceptions of children attending Montessori schools, and those following Multiple Intelligences and the regular Ministry of Education programs in the *seriousness, lack of authority and punishment* dimensions. The difference was in favor of children at Montessori schools. Considering all findings together, it may be possible to state that preschools have a positive effect on moral and social rule perception and that this effect may vary depending on the content of the education they offer.

Children's socioeconomic levels: Children from the middle socioeconomic level seem to believe that **moral** and **social** rules violation requires **more punishment** (Tables 1 and 2). These children have a significantly higher score in the seriousness dimension of the social rules scale. This finding suggests that children from the middle socioeconomic level define social rules misbehaviors (littering, misplacing toys, throwing clothes on the floor, refusing to join activities, etc.) more severely (i.e. as very wrong). Children from the upper socioeconomic level were more flexible in defining the wrong nature of misbehaviors (Table 2). There seems to be a disagreement between the findings of previous studies regarding this. Hatunoğlu, Halmatov and Hatunoğlu (2012) showed in their study that the moral and social rules perceptions of preschool children from the upper and lower socioeconomic levels differed in favor of the former. Jersild (1979), on the other hand, stated that moral criteria may be stronger in the lower socioeconomic level, and thus the concept of punishment may be more common when the authority is disrespected (Cited in Kabadayı and Aladağ, 2010,p.882). Jersild's (1979) view is closer to the results of the present study.

The age of the teacher: Children whose teachers are above 40 believe more in punishments for **moral** and **social** rule violations (Tables 5 and 6). In the *lack of authority* dimension of the Social Rules Scale, children whose teachers are between 31-40 years believe more than those whose teachers are between 20-30 years that social rules may be violated when the authority is not around (Table 6). This may be a result of the fact that older teachers are more authoritative when it comes to rules.

The education institution attended by teachers: Children's scores in the *seriousness* dimension of the **Moral Rule Perception Scale** varied in favor of the teachers who graduated from preschool education departments (Table 3). Children's scores in the *seriousness and lack of authority* dimensions of the **Social Rule Perception Scale** also varied in favor of the teachers who graduated from preschool education departments (Table 4).

This may be attributed to the quality of the educational background of those who graduated from elementary education departments as opposed to those who attended two-year colleges. The latter build their qualifications upon two years of education through their own efforts.

A difference was found between children's seriousness and punishment scores in the two scales, in favor of the Moral Rules Scale (Tables 7 and 8). This shows the importance attached to moral rules by children. They have absolute judgments about right and wrong moral behaviors. At the same time, they believe that any violation of moral rules requires more punishment. They are more flexible about social rules and think that their violation deserves less punishment. This is supported by earlier research findings. Siegal and Storey (1985) argue that children are able to discriminate between social and moral rules. Siegal and Storey (1985) studied 4–5 year-old children and showed them pictures of moral and social rules violation, measuring their seriousness, authority, generalization and punishment perceptions about the wrong nature of these misbehaviors. The children referred to moral rules as more *generalizable* than social rules and stated that their violation needs to be *punished* more. While they conceived of social rule violations as naughtiness, they referred to moral rule violations as wrong. Nobes and Pawson (2003) examined children's judgments about moral and social rules violation by reading stories for them. They concluded that children's social rule perceptions may depend on *authority*.

Catron and Masters (1993) studied 4-11 year-old children told six stories concerning moral and social rules and asked questions about dimensions such as seriousness, lack of authority, genderless generalization, punishment in each story. The results showed that children's social rules seriousness perception scores were lower than their moral rules seriousness perception scores. Smetena (1981) found that children think moral rules are more serious, generalizable and punishable than social rules. In the literature too, experts state that social rules are random, changeable, dependent on content, and unique to given locations, while moral rules are universal, unchangeable, compulsory and impersonal. Moral rules include issues such as justice and welfare, and their violation brings physiological and psychological harm (Smetena,2006.121; cited in Çeliköz,Seçer,Çetin and Demir Şen,2012,p.3). In light of these results, the following recommendations may be made:

Children have coherent thoughts about world and social rules and why we must abide by them, revealing that training on these rules must be offered in preschools. Considering the awareness of elementary school children, such work may also be recommended for independent preschools.

Considering the statement that “*If the rule 'it is wrong to hit a friend' did not exist, there would be no one in the world who speaks the truth*” from a 4-year-old, it may be recommended that moral and social rules education should start from age 4.

Instruction in preschools may be supported with different educational models and project work.

Family seminars may be used to support children's awareness of moral and social rules in different settings.

Educational sets may be prepared to raise the awareness of children on moral and social rules.

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