

Examination of the Relation between the Possession of Compassion and Effective Teaching Qualities of Special Education Pre-Service Teachers in Special Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the relation between possession of compassion and effective teaching qualities of special education pre-service teachers. The study group of the research consisted of special education pre-service teachers enrolled at special education departments of universities in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 2019-2020 spring semester. Relational survey method, a qualitative research method, was used in the study. 315 pre-service teachers participated in the research. "Personal Information Form", "Compassion Scale" and "Effective Teaching Qualities" scales were applied to the special education pre-service teachers. It has been found out that there is statistically significant and positive relation between the scores obtained by students from Effective Teaching Qualities Scale and the Tenderness, Being Aware of Sharing and Conscious Awareness sub-dimensions. Accordingly, as the scores of the students on the Effective Teaching Qualities Scale increase, their Tenderness, Being Aware of Sharing and Conscious Awareness scores also increase. It was determined that there is a statistically significant and negative relationship between the scores of the students within the scope of the study from the Effective Teaching Qualities Scale and the Apathy, Disconnection and Disengagement sub-dimensions of the Compassion Scale. Accordingly, as the scores of the participants on the Effective Teaching Qualities Scale increase, their Apathy, Disconnection and Disengagement scores decrease.

Key Words: *Compassion, Effective Teaching Skills, Pre-service Teacher, Special Education.*

Özel Eğitim Öğretmen Adaylarının Özel Eğitimde Merhamet ve Etkili Öğretmenlik Özelliklerine Sahip Olma Durumları Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi

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Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının merhamet ve etkili öğretmenlik özelliklerine sahip olma durumları arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesidir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu 2019-2020 yılı bahar döneminde KKTC’nde bulunan üniversitelerin özel eğitim bölümünde okumakta olan özel eğitim öğretmen adayları oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden ilişkisel tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Araştırmaya 315 özel eğitim öğretmen adayı katılmıştır. Araştırmada, özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarına “Kişisel Bilgi Formu”, “Merhamet Ölçeği” ve “Etkili Öğretmen Özellikleri” ölçekleri uygulanmıştır. Araştırmadaki öğrencilerin Etkili Öğretmen Özellikleri Ölçeğinden aldıkları puanlar ile Merhamet Ölçeğinin Sevecenlik, Paylaşımların Bilincinde Olma ve Bilinçli Farkındalık alt boyutlarından aldıkları puanlar arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ve pozitif yönde ilişki olduğu saptanmıştır ($p<0,05$). Buna göre, öğrencilerin Etkili Öğretmen Özellikleri Ölçeğinden aldıkları puanlar arttıkça Sevecenlik, Paylaşımların Bilincinde Olma ve Bilinçli Farkındalık puanları da artmaktadır. Araştırma kapsamındaki öğrencilerin Etkili Öğretmen Özellikleri Ölçeğinden aldıkları puanlar ile Merhamet Ölçeğinin Umursamazlık, Bağlantısızlık ve İlişki Kesme alt boyutlarından aldıkları puanlar arasında ise istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ve negatif yönde ilişki olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Buna göre, katılımcıların Etkili Öğretmen Özellikleri Ölçeğinden aldıkları puanlar arttıkça Umursamazlık, Bağlantısızlık ve İlişki Kesme puanları azalmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Merhamet, Etkili Öğretmen Becerileri, Öğretmen Adayı, Özel Eğitim.

Introduction

The quality of education depends on the qualifications of teachers. The skills that special education teachers gain in their undergraduate education and in-service training increase the quality (Sisman, 2007). Special education teachers should train them as individuals who adapt to the society and living independently in the society before providing students with knowledge and skills in the education they give to individuals with special needs (Akcamete, 2012).

It is believed that special education pre-service teachers put themselves in the shoes of individuals with special needs and show compassion while continuing their education (Aydemir, 2018). The concept of compassion has been explained with different definitions in various studies. Lazarus (1991) defined compassion as "a feeling triggered by someone else's pain and leading to helping the other person." Hosking (2007) defined it as "the desire to relieve and eliminate the suffering and to be sensitive to the other person's pain", Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas (2010) described it as "a feeling that emerges while witnessing the pain of the other person". Hokelekli (2011) defined compassion as "showing an interest in someone else's weakness, distress and trouble, showing pity and compassion for his situation, and suffering with him". Neff and Germer (2017) defined it as follows: "The individual, instead of ignoring the distress, the experienced pain activates himself emotionally and tries to alleviate the distress of the other person". According to these definitions, it has a structure that consists of the interactions of emotional, intellectual and behavioral structures (Isgör, 2017). Compassion feeling has positive effects on individuals as well as on the people around them. The higher this feeling, the higher is the ability to fight difficulties, and the ability to turn difficulties in their favor. The tendency of the individual towards negativity and hopelessness decreases. Apart from that, compassion can be described as a source of internal power (Dalai Lama, 2002; Aydemir, 2018; Di Fabio and Saklofske, 2021).

The most important factor in meeting the learning needs of individuals is the skills and behaviors of teachers. Teachers should be aware of the learning needs of the student group they work with in order to leave a mark in their education life. In order to determine these needs and to provide the education conditions that individuals need, the person who will deliver

education must have the necessary know-how. Teachers who receive the necessary specialist training are expected to know what, how, when and in what ways they will teach and to bring about the necessary behavioral change (Dogan and Coban, 2009). A teacher is one of the most important architects designing the future. Teachers set an example with their behavior while conveying knowledge, skills and attitudes to their students. A teacher will have a positive impact if he/she exhibits good, patient and understanding behaviors; on the other hand, if they exhibit opposite behaviors, they will have a negative effect (Guclu, 2000). In this context, a teacher is expected to be a person who fulfills his / her responsibilities, is well educated, respectful, and has the goal of teaching and self-improvement. Teaching is among the professions that aim to gain regular habits with their attitudes beyond simply conveying information to students. The attitudes and values of the candidates who have chosen the teaching profession, who are currently being educated, are as important as the knowledge they have learned (Celikoz and Cetin, 2004; Nelson, Hall, Anderson, Birtles and Hemming, 2018). According to Eskicumalı et al. (2014), teaching is one of the important occupational groups that should be practiced with love. Teachers are expressed as people who will not get bored of being with children, have high patience, respect, and aim to see all students the same. It is envisaged to develop studies on the concept of compassion and Effective Teaching Qualities in the literature. It is believed that the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of special education pre-service teachers about compassion will affect the Effective Teaching Qualification. Considering that this research will contribute to the field of education, it is aimed to determine the relationship between compassion and effective teaching characteristics of special education pre-service teachers. For this purpose, answers were sought for the following sub-purposes:

1. What are the compassion levels of special education pre-service teachers?
2. What are the levels of special education pre-service teachers regarding their possession of effective teaching qualities?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the compassion and effective teaching characteristics of the special education pre-service teachers?

Material And Method

In the study, approval was taken from Cyprus International Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee with 14/02/2020 dated decision to apply the scales and collect the data.

Research Model

This research is a descriptive study, and since it was aimed to determine the compassion levels and Effective Teaching Qualities of the special education pre-service teachers, the relational survey model was used, which is one of the quantitative research methods (Karasar, 2012).

Study Group

The study group of this research consisted of the special education pre-service teachers studying in the special education departments of the universities in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the 2019-2020 Spring academic semester. 315 pre-service teachers participated in the study. 49.52% of the participants were women and 50.48% were men. The age group distribution of the students included in the study was as follows: 24.44% was 18-20 years old, 48.57% was 21-23 years old and 26.98% was 24 years old and older.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form: In the personal information form prepared by the researcher, the special education pre-service teachers participating in the study were asked questions about age, gender, whether there was a teacher in the family or immediate environment, whether or not there were individual(s) with special needs in immediate environment, and their family structure.

Compassion Scale: It is stated that the 5-point Likert-type Compassion Scale, whose validity and reliability study was conducted by Akdeniz and Deniz (2016), consists of 6 sub-dimensions: Apathy, Tenderness, Being

Aware of Sharing, Disconnection, Conscious Awareness and Disengagement. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was reported as .85. The researchers found the Cronbach alpha value of .80 for this study group of the scale.

Effective Teaching Qualities Scale: The Effective Teaching Qualities Scale, developed by Ay and Yurdabakan (2015), was used to determine the Effective Teaching Qualities of the pre-service teachers included in the study. The Effective Teaching Qualities Scale was developed by Ay and Yurdabakan (2015) and is a two-dimensional measurement tool consisting of 41 items in total. This study has only one dimension used to measure the "characteristics that an effective teacher should possess" as regards pre-service teachers. The Cronbach alpha value was found to be 0.94 in the internal consistency reliability analysis results of the scale. In addition to the reliability analysis conducted by Ay and Yurdabakan (2015), according to the results of the internal consistency reliability analysis made by the researcher, the Cronbach alpha coefficient calculated for the overall scale was found as 0.979.

Collection of Data

It was planned to collect the research data by the researchers by distributing by hand the scales to the special education pre-service teachers studying in the special education teaching department at universities. However, due to the isolation created by the Covid 19 Pandemic period in the society, it was decided by the researchers to collect the data via Google Forms. The researchers met with the special education department heads of universities in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. After getting permission from the department chairpersons, the contact information of the representatives of the student groups was given to the researchers by the department heads. After the interviews with the representatives of the student groups, the e-mail addresses of the students and the addresses of the mass media accounts where the student groups could be found were sent to the researchers. The researchers asked the students willing to participate in the study to answer the scales by sharing the scale link to the e-mail addresses they reached and the addresses of the mass media where the student groups

were located. The prepared scales required to answer all questions compulsorily. The students participating in the research admitted to participating in the research voluntarily.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 version was used in the statistical analysis of the data. Kolmogrov-Smirnov test, one of the tests of normality, was applied to examine whether the data set showed normal distribution in order to determine the hypothesis tests to be used in statistical analysis. As a result of the test, it was determined that the scores of Compassion Scale and Effective Teaching Qualities Scale were not normally distributed, and non-parametric hypothesis tests were used. Frequency analysis was used to determine the demographic characteristics of the special education pre-service teachers who participated in the study. Descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values regarding the scores obtained by special education teachers from compassion scale and effective teaching qualities scale are provided. Spearman correlation test was used to compare the scores of the compassion scale and effective teaching qualities scale according to the demographic characteristics of special education teachers.

Findings

Table 1. The Scores Students Received from Compassion Scale and Its Sub-Dimensions (N=315)

Sub-dimensions	n	\bar{x}	SS	Low	High
Tenderness	315	17,38	2,80	7,00	20
Apathy	315	7,37	3,02	4,00	20
Being Aware of Sharing	315	17,06	2,44	7,00	20
Disconnection	315	7,91	2,96	4,00	20
Conscious Awareness	315	17,13	2,37	8,00	20
Disengagement	315	7,27	2,86	4,00	18
General Total	315	74,12	16,45	34	118

According to the findings obtained from the table, the mean score of the sub-dimensions of the Compassion Scale were found as follows: Tenderness dimension mean score was 17.38 ± 2.80 , Apathy dimension mean score was

7.37 ± 3.02, Being Aware of Sharing dimension mean score was 17.06 ± 2.44, Disconnection dimension mean score was 7.91 ± 2.96, Conscious Awareness mean score was 17.13 ± 2.37 and Disengagement mean score was 7.27 ± 2.86. When the score obtained by the students from the compassion scale was examined, the mean total score of the scale was found to be 74.12 ± 16.45.

Table 2. The scores students got from the Effective Teaching Qualities Scale (N = 315)

	n	\bar{x}	SS	Low	High
Effective Teaching Qualities Scale	315	194,00	18,65	64,00	205

Table 2 shows the scores obtained by the students who participated in the research from the effective teaching qualities scale. When the findings obtained from the table are examined, it can be seen that the mean score the students received from the effective teaching qualities scale is 194.00 ± 18.65.

Table 3. Relationship between students' scores from Compassion Scale and Effective Teaching Qualities Scale (N = 315)

		Effective Teaching Qualities Scale
Tenderness	r	0,452
	p	0,000*
Apathy	r	-0,376
	p	0,000*
Being Aware of Sharing	r	0,247
	p	0,000*
Disconnection	r	-0,306
	p	0,000*
Conscious Awareness	r	0,350
	p	0,000*
Disengagement	r	-0,426
	p	0,000*

* $p < 0,05$

In Table 3, correlations regarding the relationship between the scores of the students included in the study from the Compassion Scale and the Effective Teaching Qualities Scale are provided. When the data in Table 4 are examined, statistically significant and positive correlations are found between the scores of the effective teaching qualities scale and the tenderness, being aware of sharing and conscious awareness sub-dimensions of the compassion scale ($p < 0.05$). Accordingly, as the scores of the students from the effective teaching qualities scale increase, their tenderness, being aware

of sharing and conscious awareness scores also increase. There were statistically significant and negative correlations between the scores received by the students participated in the study from the effective teaching qualities scale and the apathy, disconnection and disengagement sub-dimensions of the compassion scale ($p < 0.05$). Accordingly, as the scores of the participants on the effective teaching qualities scale increase, their apathy, disconnection and disengagement scores decrease.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the relationship between the compassion levels in special education and effective teaching qualities of the special education pre-service teachers studying at various universities in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was examined. Discussions and conclusion are provided in the light of the findings of the research.

The first finding of the study is that tenderness dimension mean score was 17.38 ± 2.80 , apathy dimension mean score was 7.37 ± 3.02 , being aware of sharing dimension mean score was 17.06 ± 2.44 , disconnection dimension mean score was 7.91 ± 2.96 , conscious awareness mean score was 17.13 ± 2.37 and disengagement mean score was 7.27 ± 2.86 . When the score obtained by the students from the compassion scale was examined, the mean total score of the scale was found to be 74.12 ± 16.45 . While the students had a higher average than the positive sub-dimensions of the compassion scale such as tenderness, being aware of sharing, and conscious awareness, they had a low average of the negative dimensions of the scale, namely apathy, disconnection, and disengagement. This similar result can be explained by the fact that ethics education has an important place in special education teacher education. The first thing faced by the special education pre-service teachers when they are introduced to the profession is to aim to develop the independent life skills of the individuals with special needs and to make them a part of their society. Patience and self-sacrifice come first in working with individuals with special needs. Planning and developing a child's education and aiming to integrate him/her into society is based on acting in this direction. Compassion is the element of the behavior at this point. The concept that arises in this context is the concept of compassion.

The second finding of the study is that the average of the scores that the special education pre-service teachers received from the effective teaching qualities scale is 194.00 ± 18.65 . In their study Aslan and Akyol (2006) examined the attitudes towards teaching profession and professional self-perceptions of students studying the teaching department. According to the results of the study, it was found that whether there is a teacher in their family or not has no effect on their attitudes towards the teaching profession. In this context, they stated that the findings were supportive. As a result of their studies, Konig and Rothland (2012) stated that influencing and choosing the teacher profession have an effect on teaching skills. According to the results of the research, it was concluded that the gender, age, pedagogical experience and the education they received from secondary education levels of the candidates who chose the teaching department, their education types and teacher training are factors affecting their learning and teaching skills. In another study, Ay and Yurdabakan (2015) stated that the most important qualities of an effective teacher are being open to self-renewal, having command of the subject area, being respectful to the teaching profession, having classroom management skills, having teaching skills, knowing when and how to behave, being knowledgeable about the subject, not being prejudiced and being self-confident.

In the last finding of the study, statistically significant and positive correlations were found between the scores they received from the effective teaching qualities scale and the scores they received from the positive sub-dimensions of the compassion scale, namely tenderness, being aware of sharing, and conscious awareness. accordingly, as the scores of the students on the effective teaching qualities scale increase, their tenderness, being aware of sharing and conscious awareness scores, which are the positive sub-dimensions of the compassion scale, also increase. In addition to the foregoing, statistically significant and negative correlations were found between the scores of the private education pre-service teachers on the effective teaching qualities scale and the scores of the apathy, disconnection and disengagement sub-dimensions of the compassion scale, which are the negative sub-dimensions. Accordingly, as the scores of the participants on the effective teaching qualities scale increase, their apathy, disconnection and disengagement scores, which are the negative sub-dimensions of the compassion scale, decrease. Gulactı and Ciftci (2018) also found in their study

that students' compassion sub-dimensions had significant relationships within themselves. It was determined that there is a positive relationship between life satisfaction and satisfaction with family, friends, self and school. A positive relationship was found between the satisfaction dimensions of the students. It has been observed that individuals feel better as a result of showing compassion and helping someone else when they feel unhappy. Compassion includes the motivation to relieve the pain of other individuals, cognitive processes related to finding the source of pain, and behavioral processes related to performing actions with compassion. In other words, compassion occurs with a mixture of desires, feelings, ideas and behaviors. Thanks to this motive, values such as love and justice can be protected. When viewed from a different point of view, the parallel relationship between levels of compassion and effective teaching qualities is one of the expected results. In light of this information, assuming that effective teaching qualities are related to creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom and being productive to students, it is clear that compassion should be associated with seeking help for someone else's painful emotion. Every child needs patience and understanding, but social needs of individuals with special needs are more than and different from other children. For this reason, it was thought that conducting researches to determine what other factors that affect the compassion feeling of pre-service teachers would make a significant contribution to the field. Teacher education already includes pedagogy; yet it has been suggested to develop and adapt training programs to improve the feeling of compassion.

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