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## Tendencies in Educational Philosophy and Perceptions of Learning Environment: A Research on Undergraduate Students

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between educational philosophy tendencies and learning environment perceptions of undergraduate students of child development and preschool education departments. This cross-sectional study applied a correlational research model to address the research questions at hand. A total of 445 undergraduate students participated in the current study. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, correlation analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) have been utilized in data analysis. It has been observed that students in the faculty of applied sciences (2,59) show less inclination towards essentialist philosophy, whereas students in the faculty of education (2,67) are more likely to adopt it. Among students, progressive philosophy (4,50; 4,52) is found to be the most commonly adopted philosophical approach, while perennial (3,68; 3,63) and essentialist (2,59; 2,67) philosophies are less frequently adopted. Those students who take philosophy courses have higher perceptions of their learning environment ( $x=3,65$ ,  $sd=.78$ ,  $t=2,897$ ), and it is understood that their perception is closely related to their educational philosophical tendencies. The significant effect ( $p < 0.001$ ) of the Essentialist tendency on learning activities ( $r: 0.25$ ) and evaluation ( $r: 0.28$ ) may be due to this approach's focus on structured learning processes that emphasize fundamental knowledge and skills. The significant effect ( $p < 0.001$ ) of the perennialist tendency on learning activities ( $r: 0.29$ ) and evaluation ( $r: 0.20$ ) may be an indication of teachers who adopt classical teaching methods and learning processes based on universal values. The significant effect ( $r: 0.19$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) of the reconstructivist tendency on learning activities and evaluation shows that this approach embraces critical thinking and learning processes focused on social transformation. The progressive tendency ( $r: 0.14$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) on learning activities indicates that this approach adopts student-centered, experiential, and problem-solving learning processes.

**Keywords:** Essentialism, Learning environment, Perennialism, Progressivism, Reconstructionism.

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## Introduction

Philosophy, with its various definitions, seeks clarity in the analysis and criticism of knowledge, understanding, beliefs, and theories and is often referred to as a “love of wisdom” (Çüçen, 2018). Classical thinkers such as Plato and Socrates regarded philosophy as a systematic search for truth and an awareness of the limits of one’s knowledge, while Islamic philosophers including Al-Farabi and Avicenna emphasized the relationship of philosophy to existence and its practical as well as theoretical dimensions (Doğan, 2011). Modern perspectives, such as those of Karl Jaspers, underline philosophy as an ongoing journey rather than a final destination (Youngs, 2001). In this respect, philosophy is characterized more by the questions it raises than by definitive answers, since every answer opens the way for new inquiries (Noddings, 1986). As the foundation for many scientific disciplines, philosophy has long provided guidance for education, shaping both its aims and methods (Guttek, 2010; Jarvis, 2006).

Perennialism is an educational philosophy based on unchanging truths and universal principles. This philosophy emphasizes the analysis of classical literature in order to promote the intellectual and ethical development of students (Jarvis, 2006). Influenced by thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle, perennialism argues that education should focus on the search for truth, virtue and the development of critical thinking skills (Noddings, 1986). Perennialists state that the main purpose of education is to develop students' intellectual and moral abilities. This approach supports a curriculum that emphasizes enduring literary works, philosophical treatises, mathematical theories and scientific discoveries (Parker, 2009). Adopting a teacher-centered teaching method, perennialism emphasizes the educator's responsibility to disseminate knowledge and nurture intellectual curiosity (Dewey, 1916). However, perennialism has been criticized for its overemphasis on abstract concepts and its educator-centered approach (Kliebard, 2004; Grossman, 1990). Consequently, perennialism is based on the discovery of enduring literature and the nurturing of intellectual and moral evolution. This philosophy aims to strengthen students' critical thinking abilities and foster their personal development.

Essentialism is an educational philosophy that emphasizes the importance of basic knowledge and essential skills. These essential skills typically include literacy, numeracy, scientific reasoning, civic responsibility, and moral values, which are considered necessary for students to become disciplined, responsible, and productive members of society. This approach advocates that students acquire basic knowledge and values through a rigorous and organized curriculum. Originating from a traditionalist and conservative perspective, essentialism aims to transmit cultural heritage and educate students as accountable citizens. Fundamentalists argue that education should focus on core subjects such as mathematics, science, history, literature and language arts (Guttek, 2010). Proponents argue that core disciplines ensure students acquire essential knowledge and skills. Essentialism advocates for a curriculum aligned with standardized assessments, featuring clear learning outcomes and sequenced content. This philosophy underscores the significance of discipline, order, and scientific rigor in education (Guttek, 2010). Educators, as authorities in their subjects, are responsible for imparting knowledge, setting high expectations, and maintaining classroom discipline. They also play a crucial role in character development and instilling moral values (Grossman, 1990). However, essentialism is not without its critics. Opponents argue that this approach may promote a narrow and homogeneous view of education, neglecting diverse perspectives and interests. They also contend that an excessive emphasis on core subjects

might hinder the development of critical thinking, creativity, and social competencies. Critics assert that essentialism can perpetuate social inequalities by maintaining traditional power dynamics and cultural hegemony (Kliebard, 2004). In summary, essentialism is an educational philosophy that prioritizes foundational knowledge and essential skills. By focusing on core subjects and a structured curriculum, it aims to provide students with a solid academic foundation and prepare them for societal responsibilities.

Progressivism, on the other hand, is an educational philosophy that emphasizes active student participation in the learning process, problem-solving, and the inculcation of democratic ideals. This approach, which advocates for relevant, experiential, and student-centered education, prioritizes the needs and interests of individual learners (Dewey, 1916). Progressivists believe that students learn best when they actively construct knowledge through hands-on experiences and collaboration (Kilpatrick, 1918). Education, in this view, is a tool for developing critical thinking, creativity, social responsibility, and life skills (Guttek, 2010). Progressivism supports a curriculum that integrates real-world scenarios and student interests, facilitated by project-based learning, collaborative activities, and inquiry-based methods. This flexible and adaptable curriculum fosters an environment conducive to learner autonomy and exploratory learning. Educators transition from being mere distributors of information to mentors and facilitators, encouraging student engagement and critical thinking (Guttek, 2010). As Dewey suggested, educators have the responsibility to guide students' inquiries, integrating personal experiences with academic content and developing social-emotional competencies. Nevertheless, progressivism faces criticism as well. Some argue that a focus on student-centered education might overshadow the acquisition of core knowledge and competencies, potentially eroding academic rigor and accountability (Hirsch, 1987). Furthermore, the emphasis on individual interests could diminish the importance of societal cultural knowledge and values. In brief, progressivism is an educational philosophy that values student engagement, active learning, and the development of life skills, aiming to foster critical thinking, creativity, and democratic values through pragmatic experiences and student interests.

Reconstructionism, another educational philosophy, views schools as agents for social reform. It posits that education should extend beyond knowledge and skills acquisition, aiming to address and resolve pressing societal issues. George S. Counts' seminal work, *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?* epitomizes this approach. Counts (1965) argued that schools should actively participate in social transformation, utilizing education as a tool to combat social injustices. Social reconstructionism emphasizes educating students as active citizens capable of challenging social norms, fighting inequality, and advocating for social justice. Critical thinking, problem-solving and activism are central to this philosophy. Students are encouraged to engage with issues such as environmental concerns, social inequality, and political discourse. Teachers serve as facilitators, guiding students in their exploration of social issues. The curriculum adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing knowledge from various subject areas. However, social reconstructionism also faces criticism. Detractors argue that its focus on social issues might overshadow the development of academic skills and basic knowledge. It is also argued that it can give education a political flavor and risks imposing educators' personal ideologies on students. For example, an educator adopting a constructivist philosophy may encourage a student-centered and inquiry-based approach, whereas a behaviorist educator may create an environment that emphasizes repetition and practice (Guttek, 2010; Jonassen, 1999). Shortly, social reconstructionism is an educational philosophy that defines schools as catalysts of social change. It aims to confront social problems and build a more positive future by encouraging critical thinking, problem solving and social action.

A learning environment embodies a variety of concrete spaces, contexts and cultural bases in which learners assimilate knowledge. Learning environments can be categorized into four different dimensions: physical, virtual, socio-cultural and pedagogical. The physical dimension concerns the tangible qualities of the space where learning takes place, such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories and home environments. These conditions should foster an environment of comfort, safety and engagement to support the educational process (Barrett et al., 2013). The virtual learning environment supports teaching and learning by creating a digital platform. This dimension includes platforms such as learning management systems (Means et al., 2010). Socio-cultural environment refers to cultural norms, values and social interactions that shape and influence the learning trajectory. These elements can influence students' motivation, engagement and attitudes towards the learning process (Trigwell, 2012). Finally, the pedagogical environment includes teaching methodologies, curriculum structure, assessment techniques and feedback mechanisms and profoundly influences students' knowledge and skill acquisition. The link between learning environments and educational philosophy is complex and interdependent. Philosophy of education is a set of beliefs and principles about the aims, methods and essence of education, while learning environments encompass the physical, social and psychological environment in which learning takes place. In this context, philosophy of education significantly shapes the creation, structuring and evaluation of learning environments.

Perennialism and essentialism propose a uniform, organized curriculum that emphasizes indispensable knowledge and skills. Under these philosophies, the learning environment is usually teacher-centered and students receive knowledge from an authoritative figure. Traditional classroom configurations, with desks oriented towards the teacher's desk, are compatible with these philosophies. Progressivism, based on the ideas of John Dewey, advocates a student-centered learning environment that emphasizes pragmatic and experiential learning. Progressivists favor a flexible classroom setting that encourages co-operation and exploration. In this environment, educators act as facilitators rather than direct instructors (Dewey, 1916). Constructivism, which is compatible with the theories of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, perceives learners as dynamic participants in learning processes. Learning environments derived from this philosophy include interactive, hands-on activities and group work. Teachers provide guidance rather than direct instruction (Piaget, 1954; Vygotsky, 1978).

## **Problem Situation**

There are various reasons for conducting this study. Educational philosophy tendencies and perceptions of learning environments are not only theoretical constructs but also critical factors that directly influence students' academic achievement, motivation, and long-term professional development. Understanding these factors can guide educators and policymakers in shaping teaching and learning strategies that are both effective and sustainable. The Faculties of Education and Applied Sciences are key institutions where future teachers and healthcare professionals are trained, and the educational perspectives developed during this period have lasting effects on the quality of education and social services provided to society.

Examining the influence of variables such as gender or prior exposure to philosophy courses offers insights into how individual differences shape students' educational orientations. This knowledge can support the design of more inclusive and responsive educational programs. Moreover, identifying gaps in the current literature highlights the originality and necessity of

this study, as limited research has specifically focused on the philosophical tendencies and learning environment perceptions of students in these faculties.

Finally, investigating whether educational philosophy tendencies serve as predictors of learning-teaching environment perceptions enhances our understanding of the mechanisms that underpin effective education. By revealing these relationships, the study contributes not only to academic knowledge but also to practical improvements in educational practice, thereby strengthening the connection between philosophical foundations and contemporary learning environments.

## **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between educational philosophy tendencies and learning environment perceptions of undergraduate students of child development and preschool education department.

For this purpose, answers to the following questions will be sought:

Undergraduate students of child development and preschool education department;

1- What are the educational philosophy tendencies?

2- What are the learning-environment perceptions?

3- Educational philosophies, tendency and learning environment perceptions

a. Does it show a significant difference by gender?

b. Does it show a significant difference according to whether or not they have taken a philosophy course before?

4- Is there a significant relationship between educational philosophies, tendencies and learning environment perceptions?

5- Are educational philosophy tendencies a meaningful predictor of perceptions of learning-teaching environment?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

Using a quantitative methodology, specifically a cross-sectional study, this study examines the relationship between philosophy of education dispositions and learning environment perceptions of undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of Child Development and Preschool Education. Correlational survey design is an appropriate strategy for observing and characterizing relationships between variables, and this approach enables hypotheses to be tested and findings to be interpreted within a theoretical framework (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2015).

This study uses the correlational survey design to describe and analyse the relationship between educational philosophy dispositions (independent variables) and perceptions of learning environment (dependent variables). The correlational survey design is an appropriate research design to examine the characteristics of a particular sample and the links between variables. The study includes undergraduate students in the department of child development



and preschool education. This group was selected because they are closely related to children's education and learning processes. As a result, the educational philosophy orientations and learning environment perceptions of these students have a direct impact on children's education and learning processes. ChatGPT 4.0, an artificial intelligence application, was utilized to translate this study into English as well as to assist in drafting portions of the literature review and conclusion sections.

## Participants

In this study, convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was used to select participants. This method was chosen because it allowed the researchers to easily access participants based on geographical proximity and willingness to participate (George & Mallery, 2010). The researchers identified eligible undergraduate students in their region and included those who volunteered to participate in the study. In total, 445 students chose to participate in this research study. Of these participants, 65 (14.6%) were male and 380 (85.4%) were female. When the academic affiliations of the participants were examined, it was seen that 268 (60.2%) were enrolled in the Child Development department, while the remaining 177 (39.8%) were enrolled in the preschool education program. It is important to note that although convenience sampling provides an appropriate participant selection method for this study, it also brings potential biases such as selection and sampling bias.

## Data Collection Tools

In this study, two different data collection tools and a demographic information form were used. These are introduced below:

### *Education Philosophy Tendencies Scale*

The scale used in this study, developed by Aytaç and Uyangör (2020), was designed to measure students' dispositions towards various educational philosophies. The initial version of the scale, comprising 48 items, underwent rigorous linguistic validation and participant feedback. Following this, the validity and reliability of the scale were meticulously examined through statistical methods such as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), reliability analysis, and item analysis. This thorough validation process resulted in a refined 5-point Likert scale consisting of 36 items across four dimensions: Progressivist Philosophy of Education Tendencies (13 items), Reconstructionist Philosophy of Education Tendencies (9 items), Essentialist Philosophy of Education Tendencies (7 items), and Perennialist Philosophy of Education Tendencies (7 items). Subsequent reliability analysis yielded Cronbach's Alpha values confirming the scale's consistency and reliability, with an overall value of .83. The individual sub-dimension values were .89 for Progressive Philosophy of Education Tendencies, .84 for Reconstructivist Philosophy of Education Tendencies, .82 for Essentialist Philosophy of Education Tendencies, and .66 for Perennialist Philosophy of Education Tendencies. Further analyses revealed internal consistency coefficients of .83 for the overall scale, and .93, .90, .87, and .86 for the Progressive, Reconstructivist, Essentialist, and Perennialist Philosophy of Education Tendencies sub-dimensions, respectively.

### ***Teaching-Learning Environment Perception Scale***

Ekinci's (2008) 'Teaching-Learning Environment Perception Scale' is a five-point Likert-scale instrument featuring three distinct dimensions: Teaching-Learning Activities, Evaluation, and Workload. This 31-item scale is structured with 17 items about Teaching-Learning Activities, 9 to Evaluation, and 5 to Workload. The reliability of the scale was assessed via Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded values of .89, .84, and .65 for each of the respective dimensions, with an overall scale reliability of .86. In the context of the present study, our data collection resulted in Cronbach's Alpha values of .91 for the Teaching-Learning Activities sub-dimension, .92 for the Evaluation sub-dimension, and .80 for the Workload sub-dimension.

### ***Personal Information Form***

A personal information form created by the researchers is used to collect personal information about the participants. This form consists of closed-ended questions for the participants to answer. These questions are related to gender, department, grade level, taking the Philosophy of Education course, place of living until university, type of high school graduated, accommodation type, parents' profession and education level.

### **Data Collection Process**

Data were collected from undergraduate students of child development and preschool education department through online forms in the 2023-2024 Spring Education term. The online forms used as a data collection tool were delivered to the students via e-mail and social media. The use of online forms allowed students to participate regardless of time and place and to collect data quickly and efficiently. Also, the anonymity of the online forms helped to protect the privacy of the participants. In the data collection tool, it was emphasized that the participation of the students was voluntary and that the data would only be used for research purposes. 17 out of 462 forms obtained at the end of the data collection process were not included in the analysis because they were incomplete and insufficient. The analysis of the data was made with the form that 445 participants filled out completely.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis section encompasses several steps to analyze and interpret the collected dataset. Firstly, it is noteworthy that the data collection process was conducted online, and no missing data were encountered. The dataset was meticulously examined to detect any outliers or data entry errors. Necessary cleaning and adjustments were performed to ensure the integrity of the dataset.

Subsequently, the normality of the collected data was assessed by examining the kurtosis and skewness values. For the variables in this study, skewness values ranged between -1.61 and 0.75, while kurtosis values ranged between -0.65 and 1.97. According to George and Mallery (2010), a distribution is considered 'perfect' when kurtosis and skewness values are between -2 and +2. In this study, it was found that the progressivism tendency variable approached this limit, while the other variables were close to zero, indicating a relatively normal distribution.

Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were employed to address the first and second research questions. These statistics provide a summary of the central tendency and distribution of the data. The third research question, which involves the comparison of means between two groups, was analyzed using an independent samples t-test. The significance level for hypothesis testing was set at 0.05.

The fourth research problem was addressed by correlation analysis, which measures the strength and direction of the relationships between variables. Correlation coefficients were interpreted using the thresholds suggested by Cohen (1988): ( $|r| < 0.30$  low;  $0.30 \leq |r| < 0.50$  medium;  $|r| \geq 0.50$  high).

To investigate the fifth research problem, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis was conducted using AMOS 20.0 statistical package software. In this analysis, the relationships between undergraduate students' philosophy of education dispositions (independent variable) and the sub-dimensions of their perceptions of instructional environment (dependent variables) were examined. The fit of the model to the data was evaluated using fit indices such as Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI).

The analyses were performed using the maximum likelihood method, a widely used technique for estimating model parameters. This method allows an assessment of how well the model fits the data. The results of the data analysis provided valuable information and contributed to the overall findings of the study.

## Ethical Issues

It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited. (Afyon Kocatepe University Social and Humanities Scientific Research and Ethics Committee, Date of ethics review decision: 27.01.2023, Ethics assessment document issue number: 2023/9)

## Findings

In this section, the findings related to the research questions are given. In this context, The data related to the questions (*What are the educational philosophy trends? What are the learning-environment perceptions? Educational philosophies tendency and learning environment perceptions; Does it show a significant difference by gender? Does it show a significant difference according to whether or not they have taken a philosophy course before? Is there a significant relationship between educational philosophies trends and learning environment perceptions? Are educational philosophy practices a meaningful predictor of perceptions of learning-teaching environment?*) are explained and interpreted in the form of sub-headings through tables.

### Findings for the First Research Question

The first sub-problem of the research aims to determine the educational philosophy tendencies of undergraduate students according to their faculties. The findings obtained in this direction are presented in Table 1.



**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics of the Educational Philosophy Tendencies of the Participants*

<b>Educational philosophy</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>sd</b>
Progressivism	Applied Sciences	268	4,50	,64
	Education	177	4,52	,61
Reconstructionism	Applied Sciences	268	4,37	,68
	Education	177	4,40	,65
Perennialism	Applied Sciences	268	3,68	,82
	Education	177	3,63	,85
Essentialism	Applied Sciences	268	2,59	1,02
	Education	177	2,67	1,13

The table presents the findings of the analysis on participants' educational philosophy tendencies categorized into four dimensions: Progressivism, Reconstructionism, Perennialism, and Essentialism. The data is further disaggregated by faculty, specifically Applied Sciences and Education.

For the dimension of Progressivism, participants in both faculties showed relatively high average scores, with Applied Sciences having a slightly higher average of 4.50 compared to Education's average of 4.52. This indicates a positive tendency towards progressive educational philosophy among the participants in both faculties.

Regarding the dimension of Reconstructionism, participants in both faculties demonstrated a favorable inclination, although slightly lower than that of Progressivism. Applied Sciences had an average score of 4.37, while Education had a slightly higher average of 4.40.

In terms of Perennialism, participants in Applied Sciences exhibited a lower average score of 3.68, indicating a moderate tendency towards this educational philosophy. On the other hand, participants in Education had a slightly lower average of 3.63, suggesting a similar inclination towards Perennialism.

Lastly, the dimension of Essentialism received relatively lower average scores from participants in both faculties. Applied Sciences had an average score of 2.59, while Education had a slightly higher average of 2.67. These findings indicate a relatively weaker tendency towards essentialist educational philosophy among the participants.

Overall, the data suggests that participants from both faculties generally showed positive tendencies towards Progressivism and Reconstructionism, while exhibiting more moderate inclinations towards Perennialism. However, there was a relatively weaker inclination towards Essentialism among the participants in both faculties. These findings contribute to our understanding of participants' educational philosophy tendencies within different academic contexts.

## Findings for the Second Research Question

The distribution of findings according to faculties regarding undergraduate students' perceptions of learning activities, evaluation, workload, and learning environment is presented in Table 2, which is related to the second sub-problem of the research.

**Table 2***Descriptive Statistics of Learning Environment Perceptions*

Learning environment	Faculty	N	Average	sd
Learning activities	Applied Sciences	268	3,66	,71
	Education	177	3,68	,74
Evaluation	Applied Sciences	268	3,47	,89
	Education	177	3,57	,91
Workload	Applied Sciences	268	3,11	,93
	Education	177	3,41	,88
Total (Perception of learning env.)	Applied Sciences	268	3,51	,72
	Education	177	3,60	,73

The table presents the descriptive statistics of learning environment perceptions among the participants, categorized by faculty. The table includes four dimensions of learning environment perceptions: Learning Activities, Evaluation, Workload, and Perception of Learning Environment (Total).

For the dimension of Learning Activities, the average perception among participants from the Applied Sciences faculty is 3.66, with a standard deviation of 0.71. Among participants from the Education faculty, the average perception is slightly higher at 3.68, with a standard deviation of 0.74.

Moving on to the dimension of Evaluation, participants from the Applied Sciences faculty have an average perception of 3.47, with a standard deviation of 0.89. Participants from the Education faculty have a slightly higher average perception of 3.57, with a standard deviation of 0.91.

In terms of the dimension of Workload, participants from the Applied Sciences faculty report an average perception of 3.11, with a standard deviation of 0.93. On the other hand, participants from the Education faculty perceive the workload to be slightly higher, with an average of 3.41 and a standard deviation of 0.88.

Lastly, the Perception of Learning Environment (Total) dimension reflects participants' overall perception of the learning environment. Among those in the Applied Sciences faculty, the average perception is 3.51, with a standard deviation of 0.72. Participants from the Education faculty have a slightly higher average perception of 3.60, with a standard deviation of 0.73.

These descriptive statistics provide insights into the participants' perceptions of the learning environment, indicating variations between faculties in terms of their experiences with learning activities, evaluation, workload, and overall perception of the learning environment.

## Findings for the Third Research Question

### *Comparison in Terms of Gender*

The third problem of the research aimed to examine whether there are any differences in undergraduate students' educational philosophy tendencies and perception of learning environment according to their department, gender, class level, previous experience of taking philosophy courses, location, type of high school they graduated from, place of residence, and

parents' educational level. In this context, the findings obtained according to the gender variable are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Gender Differences in Learning Environment Perceptions and Educational Philosophy Tendencies*

Dimensions	Gender	N	X	sd	t	p
Learning activities	Male	65	3,72	,77	,630	,53
	Female	380	3,66	,71		
Evaluation	Male	65	3,61	,96	,963	,34
	Female	380	3,50	,89		
Workload	Male	65	3,59	,90	3,435	,00*
	Female	380	3,17	,90		
Total (Perception of learning env.)	Male	65	3,67	,77	1,394	,16
	Female	380	3,53	,71		
Progressivism	Male	65	4,25	,85	-3,669	,00*
	Female	380	4,56	,57		
Reconstructionism	Male	65	4,20	,85	-2,346	,01*
	Female	380	4,41	,63		
Perennialism	Male	65	3,86	,80	2,130	,03*
	Female	380	3,62	,83		
Essentialism	Male	65	3,10	1,17	3,953	,00*
	Female	380	2,54	1,02		

\*  $p < ,05$

The table presents the results of the analysis examining gender differences in learning environment perceptions and educational philosophy tendencies among the participants. The variables analyzed include Learning Activities, Evaluation, Workload, Perception of Learning Environment (Total), as well as specific educational philosophy tendencies: Progressivism, Reconstructionism, Perennialism, and Essentialism.

Regarding learning activities, the average perception among males ( $N = 65$ ) was 3.72, with a standard deviation of 0.77, while females ( $N = 380$ ) had a slightly lower average perception of 3.66, with a standard deviation of 0.71. The difference in perceptions between genders was not statistically significant ( $t = 0.630$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

In terms of evaluation, males ( $N = 65$ ) had an average perception of 3.61, with a standard deviation of 0.96, while females ( $N = 380$ ) had an average perception of 3.50, with a standard deviation of 0.89. The difference in evaluation scores between genders was also not statistically significant ( $t = 0.963$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

However, a significant difference in perceptions of workload was observed between males ( $N = 65$ ) and females ( $N = 380$ ). Males reported an average workload perception of 3.59, with a standard deviation of 0.90, whereas females reported a higher average workload perception of 3.17, with the same standard deviation. This difference was statistically significant ( $t = 3.435$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that females perceived a higher workload compared to males.

Regarding the overall perception of the learning environment (Total), males ( $N = 65$ ) had an average perception score of 3.67, with a standard deviation of 0.77, while females ( $N$

= 380) had a slightly lower average perception score of 3.53, with a standard deviation of 0.71. However, this difference was not statistically significant ( $t = 1.394$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

Analyzing the specific educational philosophy tendencies, it was found that males showed a lower average tendency towards Progressivism ( $X = 4.25$ ,  $sd = 0.85$ ) compared to females ( $X = 4.56$ ,  $sd = 0.57$ ). This difference was statistically significant ( $t = -3.669$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that females had a stronger inclination towards Progressivism than males. Similar patterns were observed for Reconstructionism, Perennialism, and Essentialism, with males exhibiting lower tendencies compared to females and statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the genders.

Overall, the findings suggest that gender differences exist in educational philosophy tendencies, with females demonstrating higher tendencies towards Progressivism, Reconstructionism, Perennialism, and Essentialism compared to males. However, no significant gender differences were found in learning environment perceptions, except for the perception of workload, where females reported higher perceptions of workload compared to males. These findings provide insights into the relationship between gender and educational experiences in relation to learning environment perceptions and educational philosophy tendencies.

### **Comparison According to the Status of Taking a Philosophy Course**

**Table 4**

*Comparison of Learning Environment Perceptions and Educational Philosophy Tendencies Based on Course Status*

Dimensions	Course Status	N	X	sd	t	p
Learning activities	Taken	204	3,7569	,76	2,500	,01*
	Not taken	241	3,5865	,67		
Evaluation	Taken	204	3,6187	,95	2,261	,02*
	Not taken	241	3,4255	,85		
Workload	Taken	204	3,3931	1,01	3,422	,00*
	Not taken	241	3,0971	,81		
Total (Perception of learning env.)	Taken	204	3,6581	,78	2,897	,00*
	Not taken	241	3,4608	,66		
Progressivism	Taken	204	4,5245	,67	,379	,70
	Not taken	241	4,5018	,59		
Reconstructionism	Taken	204	4,3753	,71	-,095	,92
	Not taken	241	4,3813	,63		
Perennialism	Taken	204	3,6232	,86	-,835	,40
	Not taken	241	3,6894	,81		
Essentialism	Taken	204	2,7724	1,10	2,702	,00*
	Not taken	241	2,5015	1,01		

\*  $p < ,05$

The table provides insights into the comparison of learning environment perceptions and educational philosophy tendencies based on the participants' course status, specifically whether they have taken a philosophy course or not. The variables examined include Learning Activities, Evaluation, Workload, Perception of Learning Environment, and the specific

educational philosophy tendencies: Progressivism, Reconstructionism, Perennialism, and Essentialism.

In terms of learning activities, participants who have taken a philosophy course ( $N = 204$ ) had a higher average perception score of 3.7569, with a standard deviation of 0.76, compared to those who have not taken a philosophy course ( $N = 241$ ) with an average perception score of 3.5865 and a standard deviation of 0.67. This difference was statistically significant ( $t = 2.500$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that participants who have taken a philosophy course had more positive perceptions of learning activities.

Similarly, participants who have taken a philosophy course ( $N = 204$ ) had a higher average evaluation score of 3.6187, with a standard deviation of 0.95, compared to those who have not taken a philosophy course ( $N = 241$ ) with an average evaluation score of 3.4255 and a standard deviation of 0.85. This difference was also statistically significant ( $t = 2.261$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that participants who have taken a philosophy course had higher evaluation perceptions.

Regarding workload, participants who have taken a philosophy course ( $N = 204$ ) reported a higher average workload perception score of 3.3931, with a standard deviation of 1.01, compared to those who have not taken a philosophy course ( $N = 241$ ) with an average workload perception score of 3.0971 and a standard deviation of 0.81. This difference was statistically significant ( $t = 3.422$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that participants who had taken a philosophy course perceived a higher workload.

In terms of the perception of the learning environment, participants who have taken a philosophy course ( $N = 204$ ) had a higher average perception score of 3.6581, with a standard deviation of 0.78, compared to those who have not taken a philosophy course ( $N = 241$ ) with an average perception score of 3.4608 and a standard deviation of 0.66. This difference was statistically significant ( $t = 2.897$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that participants who have taken a philosophy course had more positive perceptions of the learning environment.

However, no significant differences were found in the educational philosophy tendencies (Progressivism, Reconstructionism, Perennialism, and Essentialism) between participants who have taken a philosophy course and those who have not.

Overall, the findings indicate that participants who have taken a philosophy course have more positive perceptions of learning activities, evaluation, workload, and the learning environment compared to those who have not taken a philosophy course. These results suggest the potential influence of philosophy education on participants' perceptions and experiences within the educational context.

### Findings for the Fourth Research Question

The findings related to the fourth research problem, *"Is there a significant relationship between educational philosophy tendencies and perceptions of learning environment?"* are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Correlations Between Learning Environment Perceptions and Educational Philosophy Tendencies*

Dimensions	Learning activities	Evaluation	Workload	Perception of learning environment
Progressivism	,401**	,256**	,088	,330**
Reconstructionism	,429**	,315**	,132**	,376**
Perennialism	,552**	,450**	,336**	,534**
Essentialism	,423**	,400**	,462**	,472**

\*  $p < .05$

The table presents the correlations between the variables of Learning Activities, Evaluation, Workload, and Perception of Learning Environment, with the specific educational philosophy tendencies: Progressivism, Reconstructionism, Perennialism, and Essentialism. The correlation coefficients are reported, indicating the strength and direction of the relationships.

There is a positive and statistically significant correlation between Learning Activities and all of the educational philosophy tendencies: Progressivism ( $r = 0.401$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Reconstructionism ( $r = 0.429$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Perennialism ( $r = 0.552$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and Essentialism ( $r = 0.423$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These results suggest that participants who have more progressive, reconstructive, perennialist, or essentialist educational philosophy tendencies also tend to engage more actively in learning activities.

Similar to Learning Activities, Evaluation shows positive and significant correlations with all of the educational philosophy tendencies: Progressivism ( $r = 0.256$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Reconstructionism ( $r = 0.315$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Perennialism ( $r = 0.450$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and Essentialism ( $r = 0.400$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings indicate that participants with stronger inclinations towards any of these educational philosophies also tend to evaluate their learning experiences more positively.

There are positive and significant correlations between Workload and all of the educational philosophy tendencies: Progressivism ( $r = 0.088$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Reconstructionism ( $r = 0.132$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Perennialism ( $r = 0.336$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and Essentialism ( $r = 0.462$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These results suggest that participants with higher inclinations towards these educational philosophies tend to perceive a higher workload in their learning environments.

The Perception of Learning Environment demonstrates positive and significant correlations with all the educational philosophy tendencies: Progressivism ( $r = 0.330$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Reconstructionism ( $r = 0.376$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Perennialism ( $r = 0.534$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and Essentialism ( $r = 0.472$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings indicate that participants with stronger inclinations towards any of these educational philosophies also tend to have more positive perceptions of the learning environment.

In summary, the correlations reveal that participants' educational philosophy tendencies, including Progressivism, Reconstructionism, Perennialism, and Essentialism, are associated with their engagement in learning activities, evaluation of their learning experiences, perception of workload, and perceptions of the learning environment. These findings highlight the relationship between educational philosophy tendencies and various aspects of the learning environment, providing insights into how these philosophical



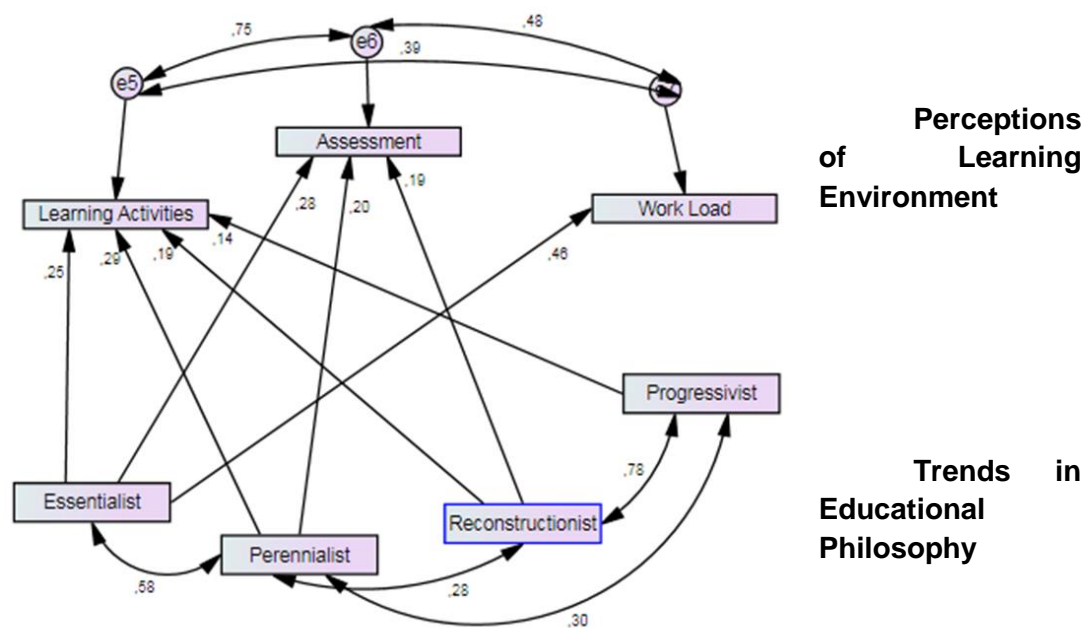
orientations may influence participants' experiences and perceptions. Correlation analysis is a method used to examine relationships between variables. However, this method does not provide sufficient information about the factors that explain the relationship, and it should be noted that correlations do not imply causal relationships. Therefore, when interpreting the results of correlation analysis, one should be cautious and consider using more comprehensive analysis methods, such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), to determine the direction and effect of the relationship between variables. SEM is a statistical analysis method used to test cause-and-effect relationships between variables and to evaluate the fit of the model. By relying on the results of correlation analysis and conducting a more thorough analysis using SEM, more reliable and valid conclusions can be drawn.

### Findings for the Fifth Research Question

The fifth sub-problem, 'Do educational philosophy approaches have a significant effect on perceptions of learning and teaching environment?' The question is discussed considering the fit index values of the model in Figure 1 and the model tested in Table 6.

**Figure 1**

*View of Tested Theoretical Model-A*



**Table 6***Evaluation of the model in terms of fit index values*

Model	Chi-square	d	FI	LI	FI	RMR	MSEA	Pclose
Model-A	10,574		.99	.99	.99	.03	.04	.58

When examining the fit indices of Model A, it can be observed that the model fits the data quite well. The CFI, TLI, and GFI values are quite high at .99, indicating a good fit beyond the generally accepted value of .95 or higher. The SRMR value of .03 meets the good fit criterion of .05 or lower. The RMSEA value of .04 is also between the good fit range of values below .05. When the Pclose value is calculated as .58, it is larger than .05, indicating that the RMSEA's significance test has passed. This shows that the model has achieved an acceptable fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Byrne, 2016; Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008).

In conclusion, based on the fit indices of Model A, it can be said that the model fits the data well. Therefore, it is appropriate to use Model A to analyze the relationship between education philosophy tendencies and perceptions of learning and teaching environments. The significance levels of the parameters in the model for the regression values of undergraduate students' education philosophy tendencies are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7***Significance levels of parameters in Model-A*

The parameters for direct effects		$\beta 1; (\beta 2)$	SE	Z	p
Essentialism	Learning activities	,17 (.25)	,03	5,545	0,00*
	Evaluation	,23 (.28)	,04	5,670	0,00*
	Workload	,40 (.46)	,04	10,975	0,00*
Perennialism	Learning activities	,25 (.29)	,04	6536	0,00*
	Evaluation	,22 (.20)	,05	4,328	0,00*
Reconstructionism	Learning activities	,20 (.19)	,05	4,104	0,00*
	Evaluation	,26 (.19)	,05	5,014	0,00*
Progressivism	Learning activities	,15 (.14)	,05	3,413	0,00*

\*  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\beta 1$ : estimations of the regression weights;  $\beta 2$ : Estimations of the standardized regression weights

The parameters for direct effects in the table show the effects of education philosophy tendencies (Essentialist, Perennialist, Reconstructionist, and Progressive) on perceptions of learning and teaching environments. These effects can be interpreted theoretically as follows:

- The significant effect ( $p < 0.001$ ) of the Essentialist tendency on learning activities ( $r$ : 0.25) and evaluation ( $r$ : 0.28) may be due to this approach's focus on structured learning processes that emphasize fundamental knowledge and skills. The significant effect on workload ( $r$ : 0.40) may be due to this approach's support for more discipline and structured learning processes.

- The significant effect ( $p < 0.001$ ) of the Perennialist tendency on learning activities ( $r: 0.29$ ) and evaluation ( $r: 0.20$ ) may be an indication of teachers who adopt classical teaching methods and learning processes based on universal values.
- The significant effects ( $r: 0.19$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) of the Reconstructionist tendency on learning activities and evaluation indicate that this approach adopts critical thinking and social transformation-oriented learning processes. This approach aims to equip students with skills to solve social problems and transform society.
- The significant effect ( $r: 0.14$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) of the Progressive tendency on learning activities indicates that this approach adopts student-centered, experiential, and problem-solving learning processes. However, the current exam system in Turkey may not be compatible with the Progressive approach, which could explain the limited effect of this tendency on evaluation.

In conclusion, the parameters in the table indicate that educational philosophy tendencies are related to the adoption of different approaches to learning and teaching processes and student experiences. These findings provide important insights into how education policies and practices can be adjusted based on various educational philosophy principles. Teacher education and professional development programs can train teachers on instructional methods and evaluation strategies based on different educational philosophy tendencies. This can enable teachers to have the knowledge and skills to design and evaluate learning and teaching processes based on different tendencies.

### Conclusion, Discussion and Implications

This study reveals that students in faculties of applied sciences exhibit a lesser tendency towards an essentialist philosophy of education, whereas students in faculties of education display a greater tendency towards this philosophy. This indicates the potential impact of different disciplinary contexts on students' philosophical perspectives. Students in applied sciences are less inclined towards essentialism due to the practical and application-oriented nature of their disciplines, which align more closely with philosophical frameworks such as pragmatism and constructivism. Conversely, students in faculties of education are more prone to essentialism, focusing on fundamental educational theories and knowledge transfer (Ulubey & Alpaslan, 2022). Lindblom-Ylänne et al. (2006) emphasized that personal background and motivation can lead to different learning approaches even within the same discipline. In conclusion, the influence of disciplinary contexts on philosophical dispositions is significant, but further research is needed to fully understand these phenomena.

It is observed that progressivism is the most widely adopted approach among university students, while perennialism and essentialism are less preferred. Numerous studies indicate that students generally adopt a progressive perspective and feel the need for continuous change and development. The progressivist pedagogical paradigm aligns well with students' perspectives on the educational process, emphasizing experiential learning, student-centered practices, and democratic teaching methods (Hargreaves, 2000). The preference for progressivism is linked to the increasing emphasis in higher education on active learning, critical thinking, and real-world applicability. As modern university curricula increasingly advocate for these qualities, students may find themselves more aligned with progressive educational principles (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Komarraju et al. (2009) found that students with

progressivist orientations were more engaged in their academic pursuits, suggesting a potential correlation between progressivism and positive educational outcomes in the university context. The lower adoption of perennialism and essentialism may be attributed to the perception of these philosophies as more rigid and teacher-centered, offering limited flexibility (Kim & Axelrod, 2005). Kember (1997) noted that these methodologies might not align with the principles of self-directed learning and critical thinking often emphasized in higher education. However, the adoption of a particular educational philosophy is influenced by various factors such as the discipline of study, previous educational experiences, and cultural context. Therefore, while progressivism is the most prevalent philosophy among university students in general, individual differences and situational factors should not be overlooked. In conclusion, the predominance of progressivism among university students aligns with the shift towards more student-centered, active, and critical learning methodologies in higher education. However, further research is needed to examine the factors influencing students' philosophical preferences and their impact on learning outcomes.

This research demonstrates that students enrolled in philosophy courses have higher perceptions of their learning environments. The nature of philosophy courses, which encourages critical thinking, logical reasoning, and open communication (Abrami et al., 2008), fosters intellectual dialogues among students and offers opportunities to evaluate diverse perspectives and challenge their beliefs. This interaction creates a stimulating and intellectually enriching learning environment, which can enhance student perceptions. Philosophy courses promote a pedagogical discourse known as the 'deep approach' to learning, encouraging students to seek comprehensive understanding rather than relying on rote memorization (Biggs, 1987). This approach can lead to greater student engagement and satisfaction with their learning environment. Philosophy courses serve as conduits for the discussion and understanding of interdisciplinary issues, offering broad relevance and applicability (Bailin et al., 1999). This enriches the learning atmosphere and enhances students' academic experiences. Kember (1997) reported that students exposed to philosophy courses exhibited an increased tendency towards self-directed learning. Komarraju et al. (2009) found that students who adopt progressive perspectives are more engaged in their academic pursuits, suggesting that philosophy courses may positively influence student engagement and perceptions of the learning environment. However, it is important to recognize that this positive correlation can also be shaped by other factors such as pedagogical methodologies, lesson plans, individual student characteristics, and institutional culture. Further research is needed to understand how philosophy courses contribute to improving students' perceptions of their learning environment. The available empirical evidence suggests that the intellectual rigor, critical thinking skills, and broad relevance specific to philosophy courses play a significant role in this process.

The findings indicate that students' perceptions of learning environments are closely linked to their educational philosophy dispositions. Educational philosophy strongly influences how students interpret and interact within educational settings. Those who adhere to a progressive philosophy tend to have more favorable perceptions of learning environments that emphasize experiential learning, proactive engagement, and democratic classroom practices (Hargreaves, 2000; Barr & Tagg, 1995). These students value environments where active participation is encouraged and experiential learning is prioritized. Conversely, students oriented towards traditional philosophies such as essentialism or perennialism prefer structured and disciplined learning environments (Kim & Axelrod, 2005). These students may find environments that emphasize flexibility and personal interests less satisfying. Komarraju

et al. (2009) found that students with progressivist orientations exhibit higher academic engagement, while Kember (1997) noted that traditional philosophies do not align well with the emphasis on self-directed learning and critical thinking prevalent in contemporary higher education. Students' perceptions of learning environments are influenced by various factors, including their discipline of study, educational background, cultural context, pedagogical methodologies, and institutional policies. These elements interact with students' educational philosophies in complex ways. In summary, although students' educational philosophies significantly influence their perceptions of the learning environment, these relationships are nuanced and subject to the influence of other factors. Further research is needed to fully understand these relationships and their impact on educational outcomes.

Essentialism significantly influences learning activities and assessments through structured and disciplined processes that focus on core knowledge and skills. This approach enables students to be more engaged in their own learning processes and to achieve their educational goals. Essentialism advocates the systematic transmission of canonical knowledge (Bagley, 1938) and is often reflected in rigorous learning activities and assessments, which can explain the perception of increased workload (Kim & Axelrod, 2005). Contrary to the belief that essentialism might inhibit student engagement, it can actually enhance it. Tsai and Huang (2002) assert that essentialist instructional strategies with transparent educational goals and systematic content presentation encourage student engagement and improve the comprehension of fundamental knowledge. Klem and Connell (2004) argue that the presentation of clear academic goals in an organized learning environment motivates students to meet these standards, and that the emphasis on basic skills can increase the perceived workload. The impact of essentialism may vary depending on factors such as students' learning styles, academic motivation, and teaching competences. Therefore, while essentialism shapes learning activities and assessments with its orderly and disciplined approach, it can facilitate students' participation in the learning process and help them achieve their goals, even if it increases their perceived workload.

### **Contribution Rate of the Researchers**

Both authors contributed equally to the design, execution, analysis, and writing of the study.

### **Statement of Conflict of Interest**

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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