

The Examination of Pre-school Teacher Candidates' Academic Locus of Control Levels According to Gender and Grade

Hakan Sariçam*

Kilis 7 Aralık University, Muallim Rifat Education Faculty, Kilis, Turkey,

Ayşe Duran

Kilis 7 Aralık University, Muallim Rifat Education Faculty, Department of Pre-School Teacher, Kilis, Turkey,

Mehmet Çardak

Phd, Sakarya University, Faculty of Education, Sakarya, Turkey

Medera HALMATOV

Phd, Agri Ibrahim Cecen University, Faculty of Education, Department of Pre-School Teacher Agri, Turkey

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The aim of this study is to examine the level of academic locus of control of the students who study pre-school education program. The sample of study is 329 students selected randomly in Faculty of Education from a mid-sized state University. In the study, Personal Information Form and Academic Locus of Control Scale prepared by researchers were used. Academic Locus of Control Scale includes two sub-dimensions; internal locus of control and external locus of control. Independent samples t test was used to show differences between variables and sub-dimensions. According to findings, there is a significant difference between scores of internal and external locus of control of females and scores of internal and external locus of control of males. Whereas the average score of external locus of control of female is lower than male², point average of internal locus of control of female is high. There is a significant difference between scores of internal and external locus of control of 1st grade students and scores of internal and external locus of control of 4st grade students. According to results, females find themselves in origin of success and males attribute the success to other causes. In conclusion, before teaching their students to find the origin of success in themselves, candidates of preschool teacher should learn that they are the origin of success.

Introduction

Pre-school years, including important years in our lives, are the foundation of personality and self- confidence (Oktay, 2005). In this period, parents attitudes and important others behaviors to children are critical in terms of development of children. During this time, after parents, teachers have important effects on development of children. Especially in this period, students take teachers as example by characteristics, behaviors and attitudes (Zembar, 2005). Henderson (2001) characterized 'noble' teachers as a person who is internal locus of controlled, having roles in social activities, having respect and sense of responsibility. The main purpose in education of teachers is to guide internal locus of controlled teachers. If teachers have internal locus of control, they show and teach these to their students (Bozkurt, Serin & Emran, 2004; Garcia, 2005). For instance, teachers who have the internal locus of control, they increase the creativity of children during their works and support them in terms of different activities (Walden & Ramsey, 1983). Internal locus of control is very essential structure for sense of responsibility. Especially, preschool teachers must

* Correspondence: Kilis 7 Aralık University, Muallim Rifat Education Faculty, Kilis, Turkey, hakansaricam@gmail.com

have internal locus of control because their children are in critical period for origin of responsibility and to obtain internal locus of control (Sarıçam & Duran, 2012).

The means of locus of control is a belief system regarding causes of person's experiences and factors affecting success or failure (Barzegar, 2011). Feldman, Saletsky, Sullivan, and Theiss, (1983) said that locus of control shows person the extent of his/her in terms of controlling what happens. Locus of control is seen as a predictor of many behaviors (Dilmaç, Hamarta & Arslan, 2009; Tella, Tella & Adeniyi, 2009; Atik, 2006; Chubb, Fertman, & Ross, 1997; Jorgenson, 1981; Lefcourt, 1976). In addition, the predictor of academic and social behaviors is locus of control (Deniz, Traş & Aydoğan, 2009; Tella & Adika, 2008; Park & Kim, 1998; Walden & Ramsey, 1983). Bostic (2010) defined locus of control as effects on life events. Locus of control theory comes from the social learning theory of Rotter and that is personality is the result of interaction of individual and environment (Yates, 2009). In addition, the foundation of locus of control is expectancy- value theory describing human behaviors with perceiving likelihood of an event and the value placed on this event (Yates, 2009; Dağ, 2002).

According to Rotter (1966), locus of control includes two parts: internal locus of control and external locus of control. Person who has internal locus of control believes that his/her success /failure are reason of his/her efforts and abilities. If she/he has external locus of control, s/he thinks that her/his success or failure is because of fake or luck (Sarıçam & Duran, 2012). Yeşilyaprak (1990) said that students having internal locus of control would be successful at distance learning because this type of learning situations requires independence from learner. The type of locus of control has effects on reason of concerning a specific event of a person. When people are successful, they have internal locus of control and when they are failure, they have external locus of control (Daum & Wiebe, 2003). Academic locus of control is the same structure like locus of control (Sarıçam & Duran, 2012) and it shows the control of beliefs in terms of achievement and academic contexts (Daum & Wiebe, 2003; Auer, 1993; Trice, 1985).

Persons prefer to be internal academic locus of control at the situations of being successful and prefer to be external academic locus of control during being failure (Sarıçam & Duran, 2012). There is a relationship between academic achievement and locus of control (Uguak, Habibah, Jegak, & Turiman, 2007). Students who have high internal control score showed better performance than students who have high external control score (Gordon, 1977; Brown, Fulkerson, Furr, Ware & Voight, 1984). Daum and Wiebe (2003) found that students in their first year in university have a high score in external academic locus of control regardless of their success or failure in their midterm-exams results. Crandall & Katkovsky (1965) and Tella, Tella & Adeniyi (2009) found that there is a significant correlation between locus of control and academic achievement. Another research showed that high-achieving students have high score in internal locus of control than low achieving students (Shepherd, Owen, Fitch & Marshall, 2006; Yates, 2009). According to the study of Bostic (2010), there is a significant difference in academic achievement of students who have internal locus of control between students who have external locus of control. This research showed that students having internal locus of control are more successful than students having external locus of control are and this difference changed when gender is considered; the score of female is higher than male' in terms of locus of control. Another study showed that students who have higher locus of control have high score on standardized test (Sterbin & Rakow, 1996; Yates, 2009).

The relationship between locus of control and gender was studied and according the results women having external locus of control have less involvement in career planning and lower expectations than women having internal locus of control (Marecek & Frasch, 1977; Bostic, 2010). However, Yates (2009) found that there is a significant relationship between gender and academic

achievement but there is no effect of gender on locus of control. In addition to this, Sterbin and Rakow (1996) cite a few studies that found no relationship between the locus of control and success. Early childhood is the most important part of the childrens' life. People, who together with children, attitudes and personality are very important at this period. In early childhood progress, teachers are one of the most important person together with parents. That is why preschool teachers' attitudes and characters are very important. According to Çinko (2009) academic locus of control is effective on teachers' attitudes. The basic aim of this study is to examine pre-school teacher candidates' internal and external academic locus of control levels according to gender and grade.

Sub-aims:

1. Are there any statistical differences between male and female preschool teacher candidates' internal and external academic locus of control levels?
2. Are there any statistical differences between 1st grade and 4th grade preschool teacher candidates' internal and external academic locus of control levels?

Method

Participants

The general research model was adopted for this study. Although independent variables are gender and grade, dependent variable is academic locus of control. Participants were 329 university students at pre-school education program 224 (68%) were female, 105 (32%) were male and 168 (51%) were 1st grade, 161 (49%) were 4th grade who were enrolled in Sakarya University Faculty of Education and Kilis 7 Aralık University Muallim Rifat Education Faculty, in Turkey. Their ages ranged from 18 to 31 years and the mean age of the participants was 22.9 years. Participants took part in the study on a voluntary basis.

Measures

Academic Locus of Control Scale: Academic Locus of Control Scale was developed by Akın (2007), it consists of two subscales (academic external locus of control and academic internal locus of control) account for the 71.7 % of the total variance. This instrument is a "5" point Likert type scale consisting of 17-items providing separate scores for Internal Academic Locus of Control and External Academic Locus of Control (score range = 6-30 for internal academic locus of control and 11 – 55 for external academic locus of control sub-scales). In the concurrent validity, significant relationships were found between The Academic Locus of Control Scale, which was developed in this study, and Locus of Control Scale (Dağ, 2002). The internal consistency reliability coefficients were .94 for internal academic locus of control and .95 for external academic locus of control. Findings also demonstrated that item-total correlations ranged from .57 to .92. Test-retest reliability coefficients were .97 and .93 for two subscales, respectively. The item-total correlations ranged from .57 to .92.

Procedure

Permission for participation of students was obtained from related chief departments and students voluntarily participated in research. Completion of the scales was anonymous and there was a guarantee of confidentiality. The scales were administered to the students in groups in the classrooms. The measures were counterbalanced in administration. Prior to administration of scales,

all participants were told about purposes of the study. In this study, Independent samples t-test was used for examination differentiate between variables. These analyses were carried out SPSS 17.

Results

The results of analysis are presented in tables 1 (Independent samples t-test results about Academic Locus of Control's Scores According to Gender) and tables 2 (Independent samples t-test results about Academic Locus of Control's Scores According to Grade) in below.

Table 1. Independent samples t-test results about Academic Locus of Control's Scores According to Gender

Sub Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	p
Academic External Locus Of Control	Female	224	24,30	5,90	,46	-5,20	.00
	Male	105	30,47	9,44	1,49		
Academic Internal Locus Of Control	Female	224	24,62	3,84	,30	2,16	.00
	Male	105	22,55	3,13	,49		

As shown in Table 1, academic external locus of control mean scores of male (30.47) students were higher than those of female students (24.30), ($t= 5.20$) with a significance level of .05.

Internal locus of control mean scores of female students (24.62) were higher than those of male students (22.55), ($t= 2.16$) with a significance level of .05.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test results about Academic Locus of Control's Scores According to Grade

Sub Dimension	Grade	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	p
Academic External Locus Of Control	1	168	30,11	9,32	,88	6,31	.00
	4	161	24,17	5,80	,48		
Academic Internal Locus Of Control	1	168	22,82	3,48	,33	-4,03	.00
	4	161	24,64	3,71	,30		

As shown in Table 2, Academic External Locus of Control mean scores of 1. grade students (30.11) were higher than those of 4. grade students (24.17), ($t= 6.31$) with a significance level of .05.

Internal Locus of Control mean scores of 4. grade students (24,64) were higher than those of 1. grade students (22.82), ($t= 4.03$) with a significance level of .05.

Discussion and Recommendations

According to first finding of this study, there are relationship between gender, academic external locus of control and internal locus of control. In other words, academic external locus of control of male students higher than female students and according to the score of academic internal locus of control, the scores of female students is higher than the scores of male students. This situation may be due to several reasons. Firstly, pre-school education programs at university are

generally preferred by females (Kızıldağ, Halmatov & Sarıçam, 2012) and there are very few male students and this situation may cause male students feel alone. They need others (friends, teachers) in order to study lesson and make presentations and so they may have academic external locus of control. Secondly, there are stereotypes about male pre-school teachers in Turkey. For example, “pre-school teacher is suitable for women, not men”. That's why, male university students are afraid of being preschool teacher. For example, when they make preschool activities with small girl students, they hesitate about how they will do. Therefore, they may need others (co-worker, servant girl and etc.). Finally, despite many female students prefer pre-school education program willingly, male students prefer this program willingly and only to be a teacher easily (Girgin, Özyılmaz Akamca, Ellez & Oğuz, 2010; Kızıldağ, Halmatov & Sarıçam, 2012). However, they don't estimate difficulties of pre-school education program. Therefore, they do not overcome difficulties alone and they need others (classmates, teachers and etc.). Because of all these reasons, males may think that their successes are based on others. By means of these hypotheses, researchers can examine students' academic locus of control levels at different departments and faculties in terms of gender. YOK and MEB may take some precautions by concerting. For example, courses of teaching practice can be increased (Girgin et al., 2010), so male students may like their vocation. If they like their vocation, they may have internal academic locus of control. Similar results are included in some studies, namely there are differences between the scores of internal-external locus of control in terms of gender (Tella & Adika, 2008), but external locus of control of female students higher than male students and according to the score of academic internal locus of control, the scores of male students is higher than the scores of female students (Maqsud & Rouhani, 1991; Wehmeyer, 1993; Salman, 2007). In contrast, there are no differences between males and females' internal-external locus of control (Özer & Altun, 2011; Serin & Derin, 2008) in some studies. For example, the study of Yates (2009), gender has effects on academic achievement but there is no relationship between gender and academic locus of control. Gülveren (2008) examined 12th grade high school students' locus of control levels when students were making career and future plan. No differences were found in the scores of internal-external locus of control with respect to gender.

Findley and Cooper (1983), Landine and Stewart (1998), Deryakulu (2002), Daum and Wiebe (2003) found that academic locus of control and locus of control have effects on achievement and academic contexts. Results of this study contribute to the research of Knoop (1981), Daum & Wiebe (2003) and Deryakulu (2002) which is about relationship between grade level and academic locus of control. External academic locus of control of students who are in first grade is higher than external academic locus of control of students in fourth grade. Content of pre-school education program in Sakarya University and Kilis 7 Aralık University may be effective in improving internal academic locus of control and reducing external academic locus of control. Same studies can be made in different universities.

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