

The Examination Of The Relationship Between The Preschool Teacher Candidates' Emotional Intelligence and Empathic Tendency

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Abstract

The aim of this study is the examination of the relationship between the preschool teacher candidates' emotional intelligence and empathic tendency. This research is a descriptive study; The study group is composed of 90 (28 male, 62 female) university students at the department of preschool teacher who are chosen randomly. The Scale of Emotional Intelligence and The Scale of Empathic Tendency are used for research. Data of this study is analyzed with t test, Pearson Moment Correlation Analysis and Simple Regression Analysis at SPSS 17 package programme for Windows. According to findings, empathic tendency were found to be significantly correlated to emotional intelligence. A significant effect of empathic tendency on emotional intelligence was also detected.

Key words: Emotional intelligence, Empathy, Empathic tendency

Introduction

Education is a concept which is existed with the history of human being. This concept has a need of communication of teacher and the student. Today, technological devices have taken the

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mission of transferring information to the students, from teachers. The biggest problem seen on these devices is communication problems come up with emotional intelligence and the ability of empathy. Emotional intelligence gets more important when properties of a teacher are reviewed. Teachers need to communicate with others in a more effective way. This kind of communication is available with emotional intelligence. (Freeland, Terry, , & Rodgers, 2008).

Emotional intelligence is a concept of improving emotions in order to give people chance to understand each other. People who use their emotional intelligence have a better understanding of others and a better success in their lives (Evans , & Allen, 2002). When looked from the perspective of teachers, it is seen that emotional intelligence plays a big role for them to become successful while teaching some behaviors to the students (Murat, Özgan , & Arslantaş, 2005).

Emotional intelligence is analyzed in different ways. In this work, concept of emotional intelligence, different aspects and role of empathy in success of pre-school teacher candidates will be discussed.

At the preschool period, the children need a model with whom they can identify themselves and whose characteristics and behaviours they can imitate. This model is first the parents at home and then the teacher at school. The teacher who can be a model to the people around him, shows love and compassion to the people, are tolerant, can share his feelings by sympathising with people will help children to develop positive personality, acquire compatible personality traits, releasing their potential and become more successful in their future academic lives by providing the children with effective and proper communication. (Dökmen, 2002; Oktay, 1999; Akman, Çörtü, Özden , & Okyay, 2006; Çelik , & Çağdaş, 2010). From this perspective, preschool teacher plays an important role on the development of the children in all respects and their becoming self-confident individuals.

Emotional Intelligence

Peter Salovey and John Mayer, who first introduced emotional intelligence in 1990, explain the emotional intelligence as “Emotional intelligence is consciousness of emotions of oneself and others and the ability of identify them and use this information in opinions and actions.” (Svyantek , & Rahim, 2002, s.299).

Emotional intelligence is someone’s ability:

- (a) to understand his feelings,

- (b) to listen to others and to feel them, and
- (c) to Express his emotions in a productive manner (Goleman D., 1998).

EQ, is personal difference related to other aspects of intelligence, with having chance to be improved. People with high EQ, do not have the ability to distinguish only their own emotional status, but also others' emotions and coordinate their actions according to people's mood. By this way, people have a better communication with others.

Emotional intelligence has different aspects. These aspects, which discussed by Daniel Goleman (Psenicka , & Rahim, 2002, s.305);

- a. **Consciousness of emotions of oneself:** the ability to understand the emotions, mood and the reason why s/he is in this situation. This aspect also specifies the effect of emotions of oneself on the mood of other people.
- b. **Managing Emotions of Oneself:** the ability to keep emotions and reactions of oneself under control and being calm and not being affected from others' emotions in unexpected situations.
- c. **Motivating oneself:** the ability to stay focused on success and accepting change in spite of all obstacles.
- d. **Empathy:** ability to understand people's emotions and thoughts by verbal or nonverbal communication, support people emotionally and to create a link between others' actions and emotions.
- e. **Social abilities:** ability to cope with problems of oneself, prevent emotions of oneself, which prevent to form collaboration, and managing conflict by efficient actions.

Empathy and Empathic Tendency

Understanding emotions and thoughts of individuals is the main factor in relations. This property is an essential qualification of communication and confront as empathy. Empathy is defined in different ways through the whole history. Adler define empathy as looking from other's perspective, hearing with other's ear and feeling with other's heart (Barrett Lennard 1981), while Rogers (1983) define this as walking in other people's shoes to understand others' emotions, thoughts, senses correctly and the period of this situation to them.

Concept of empathy is generally defined as the ability of understanding the emotions of another individual and individual's role psychologically (Barut, 2004). Empathy has an important role in understanding and explaining social behaviors (Hunter, 2003). Empathy is

known as understanding and sharing of another individual's emotional situation (Cohen , & Strayer, 1996).

Empathy is the ability to get an insight or recognize the emotions of others. Empathy does not mean that we live emotions of other people, but it means that we understand other people's emotions from our experiences. Empathy does not mean for one to identify with another thus canceling his own personality, but to get in his mind and soul to understand how he perceives reality. It is built on openness to feelings of others, on the ability to read information from nonverbal channels (Badae , & Pana, 2010).

Empathy is approached by two aspects: empathic skills and empathic trend. Empathic skills are related to the other person's feelings have been understood where empathic trend is the potential to understand others' way of living and emotions. Empathic trend has two aspects: cognitive and emotional. Cognitive aspect of empathy is related to understand other's emotions, but emotional aspect of empathy is related to feel the emotion of other individual and giving the most proper reaction (de Wied, Goudena,, & Matthys, 2005). Emotional empathy has rather a lot importance in moral development (Smith, 2006). Understanding the feeling of other's is meant by cognitive empathy, where feeling other's feeling is meant by emotional empathy (Gladstein, 1983). Rogers (1983) sees emphatic trend as a characteristic property and define as social sensibility. He states that people who have social sensibility can be more empathic and learn empathy much easier.

Empathy as an aspect of emotional intelligence has an important role for pre-school teacher candidates when considered moral development of children.

Teachers, who could comprehend students' perspectives and emotions, can understand students' needs and put in effort to take care of them. So, students can focus on learning, creativity and sharing. Emotional intimacy also helps teacher to discover confidential factors that develop and restrict leaning. Cooper (2002) says that teacher has no ability to empathize, ignore students' emotions and focus on a whole group, subject and program and this behavior causes students' motivation to be lost. Because of this reason, teacher candidates need to learn and apply empathy.

According to Dökmen (2004), teacher candidates have to have these qualifications:

- a) People need to put themselves in others' place and look events from others' perspectives.
- b) Feeling and thoughts of person across should be understood and felt correctly

c) Lastly, empathic approach formed in individual's mind should be transferred to the other

According to Dökmen, individual who tries empathy can help oneself and other to relax and get boredom away. Empathic communication does not help only the individual being emphasized but both of the individuals. People who have high empathic skills and trend are accepted and liked by their surroundings (Dökmen, 2004).

Every individual take his/her place in social life and has a different way of communication with others. According to some researchers, one of the most fundamental factors of communication, empathy starts to develop from childhood. Results that gained from one of the research about empathy shows, those babies are not irrelevant to others' emotions and not bereft of understanding them (Thompson, 1990). So it is essential for teacher candidates, who will play a big role in early period of children, to have emotional intelligence and an aspect of it, empathy.

The aim of this study is the examination of the relationship between the preschool teacher candidates' emotional intelligence and empathic tendency.

Method

This research is a survey-descriptive study.

Group of Study

The study group is composed of 90 (28 male, 62 female) university students at the department of preschool teacher who are chosen randomly at Agri Ibrahim Cecen University.

The Scale of Bar-on Emotional Intelligence

The Bar-on EQ-i is an 133 item self-report instrument developed in 1997 by Reuven Bar-On. The instrument assesses socially and emotionally intelligent behavior and gives an estimate of the individual's emotional intelligence, and is used for individuals aged sixteen and above (Bar-On, 2003).

The test-retest reliability of the Bar-On EQ-i was assessed for four months. The coefficients ranged between .78 and .92 and from .55 to .82 respectively (Bar-On, 1997).

The first adaptation of the Bar-On EQ-i to Turkish was done by Füsun Acar in her doctoral dissertation (2001). During the piloting study of this adaptation of the inventory, Acar (2001) removed 15 items from the 133 statements as they were not related to the sub-factors of the Bar-On EQ model and were in the inventory just to assess the tendency of the participants to fill in the questionnaire consistently. Besides, after 4 interviews with people who are knowledgeable

about the EQ concept, some ambiguous items were detected and were removed from the inventory. Finally, an 87-item questionnaire including items related to the 5 meta-factors and 15 sub-factors of the Bar-On EQ Model was formed. An 88th item was added to the questionnaire for participants to state whether they filled in the questionnaire honestly. There are five possible answers to each item scaled according to Likert (1.Strongly disagree, 2.Disagree, 3.Undecided, 4.Agree, 5.Strongly agree). The internal consistency of the total factors in the inventory was assessed through Cronbach Alpha Coefficiency to ensure the reliability (Alpha = .92,12). Then, alpha coefficients for the intrapersonal (Alpha = .83,73), interpersonal (Alpha = .77,87), adaptability (Alpha = .65,42), stress management (Alpha = .73,14) and general mood (Alpha = .75,06) sub-factors were measured. In this study, Cronbach's alpha for the scale was calculated .68.

The Scale of Empathic Skills

The Scale of Empathic Skills was used for examine levels of empathic. Scale for Empathic Skills - B Form was based on Dökmens (1988) staged empathy classification. One of the twelve reactions given under each of the six questions is meaningless and the form of any subject who chooses this reaction is considered not valid. Each reaction has a different score and the points belonging to each chosen reaction add up to a total score. A higher score shows higher empathy. Reliability of the scale is $\alpha=.83$, and the validity correlation coefficient with .78 (Dökmens, 1988). In this study, Cronbach's alpha for the scale was calculated .69.

Analysis

Data of this study is analyzed with t test, Pearson Momentum Corelation Analysis ve Simple Regresyon Analysis at SPPS 17 package programme for Windows. In all statistical counts; the meaning difference is taken at $p < .05$

Results

Comparison of Emotional Intelligence Levels of Participants According to Gender

Independent samples t-test was applied to understand whether there is a difference of emotional intelligence on male and female students, and the results are given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Results Of Independent Samples t-Test About Differences Of Emotional Intelligence Levels Of Male and Female Students

Gender	n	\bar{X}	Sd	t	P
Male	28	125.93	10.41	1.37	.17

Female	62	129.15	10.27
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* $p < .05$

When table 1 is examined, as a result of t test applied in order to understand whether there is a difference of emotional intelligence on male and female students, t values ($t=1.37$ and $p=.17$) related to emotional intelligence, $p>.05$ is not found significantly important. These findings show that there is no difference statistically between male and female students' emotional intelligence.

Differences Between Male and Female Students According to Empathic Tendency

Independent samples t-test was applied to understand whether there is a difference of empathic tendency on male and female students, and the results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. The Results Of Independent Samples t-Test About Differences Of Empathic Tendency Levels Of Male and Female Students

Gender	n	\bar{X}	Sd	t	P
Male	28	62.54	9.82		
Female	62	64.34	8.04	-.92	.36

* $p < .05$

When table 2 is examined, as a result of t test applied in order to understand whether there is difference of empathic tendency on male and female students, t values ($t=-.92$ and $p=.36$) related to empathic tendency, $p>.05$ is not found significantly important. These findings show that there is no difference statistically between male and female students' empathic tendency.

Correlations Between Emotional Intelligence and Empathic Tendency

The relationship between emotional intelligence, and empathic tendency level of pre schools teacher undergraduate students was tested by using Pearson's correlation analysis techniques and results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Pearson's Correlation Analysis About The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Empathic Tendency

	Emotional Intelligence	Empathic Tendency
Emotional Intelligence	-	.22*
Empathic Tendency	.22*	-

X	128.14	63.78
S.s	10.36	8.62

* $p < .05$

As shown in table 3, there are significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and empathic tendency ($r=.22, p<.05$).

“If levels of empathic tendency increase, scores of emotional intelligence increase” can be said according to this finding (Ciarrochi, Chan, , & Caputi, 2000).

The Prediction of Emotional Intelligence by Empathic Tendency

A simple regression analysis was performed to predict emotional intelligence by empathic tendency and the results are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Simple Regression Analysis About the Prediction of Emotional Intelligence by Empathic Tendency

Model	R ²	β	F	T
Independent variable: Empathic Tendency	.047	111.53	4.33*	13.848*
Dependent variable:Emotional intelligence				

* $p < .05$

Table 4 shows that emotional intelligence is significantly predicted by empathic tendency ($R^2=.047, F=4.33, p<.05$). Empathic tendency explained 47% of the total variance in emotional intelligence respectively. According to results of a *t* test, it was found that empathic tendency ($t=13.848, p<.05$) were significant predictors of emotional intelligence.

Discussion

Majority of peoples’ general opinion is women have higher levels of emotional intelligence and empathic tendency than men (Ciarrochi, Chan, , & Caputi, 2000; Stein , & Book, 2003; Kafetsios , & Loumakou, 2007). A lot of studies confirm this opinion. For example, Duru

(2002), female teachers have higher levels of emotional intelligence and empathic tendency than male teachers (Barut, 2004; Çelik, 2008). In addition, candidates of pre-scool teacher have high higher levels of emotional intelligence and empathic tendency than other candidates theacher. Another example, Rehber (2007), female students who are at the Second Grade Elemantary School higher levels of emotional intelligence and empathic tendency than male students. Seymen (2007), female nurses who are at the the Magusa State Hospital in North Cyprus higher levels of emotional empathic tendency than male nurses. There are two reasons of this situation according to Ciarrochi, Chan, , & Caputi (2000). Women have high levels of emotional intelligence and empathic tendency because firstly they are very social, so they understand easily other peoples' situatios. Secondly, Women have these characteristics by birth. Hovewer, according to findings of this study, firstly, the mean of emotional intelligence score for male candidates of preschool theacher was 125.93, female candidates score was 129.15 and t value was 1.37 ($p>0.05$). Therefore, there was no significant difference statistically between preschool theacher candidates' emotional intelligence scores with respect to gender. Secondly, the total score mean of empathic tendency score for male candidates of preschool theacher was 62.54 and female candidates was 64.34 and t value was 1.37 ($p>0.05$). So, There was no significant difference statistically between preschool theacher candidates' empathic tendency score in terms of gender. (Alver, 2005; Akyel , & Yilmaz 2008). One of the most important studies about this subject was made by Bar-on and others. There was no significant difference statistically between men and women scores of emotional intelligence and empathic tendency. Thirdly, there are positive correlation between emotional intelligence and empathic tendency ($r=.22$, $p<0.05$) and finally, empathic tendency is a significant predictor for emotional intelligence. The ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action. (Mayer , & Salovey, 1998; Salovay , & Grawel, 2005). Later this definition was refined and broken down into four proposed abilities that are distinct yet related: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. According to these sentences, the more we have high emotional intelligence levels, the more we understand others' feelings, ideas and behaviors. In other words, the higher emotional intelligence level, the higher empathic tendency level, since empathic tendency means that to understand others' feelings, ideas, actions and, to reflect these to them (Barnett, 1997). To sum up, results of the study indicate that emotional intelligence and empathic tendency are very important characteristics and necessary

for pre-schoool teachers (Arslan, 2007). Therefore, some programmes should be made for especially pre-school teacher candidates (Oktay, 1999).

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