

Prospective Teachers' Tendency of Liking Children and Profession Preference

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Abstract: Love is believed to be the source of many positive emotions in various fields including teaching profession. To put it simply, a teacher who likes children is compassionate, merciful and well intentioned. As a result, the state of teachers' tendency to like children is considered to be related to their attitudes towards their profession. Therefore, the present study aims at investigating whether there is a relationship between the undergraduate teacher education faculty students' tendency of liking children and their choosing teaching as a profession. Following the mixed methods approach, the study used questionnaire to collect the participants' relevant demographic data such as participants' gender, type of high school they graduated, and the place where they were raised. For this purpose, 224 undergraduate students majoring in teaching were administered the Turkish version of Barnett's Liking of Children Scale. In addition to quantitative data received from this scale, three open-ended questions were administered to 50 randomly selected participants after the scale administration in a written form. The purpose is to investigate the reasons of their choosing teaching as a profession both in the beginning and at the end of their teacher education. Statistical analysis revealed that female undergraduates' tendency to liking of children is more effective on choosing teaching as a profession. However, other independent variables were found not to be effective. Results of qualitative analysis showed that, liking children, finding a job easily and the suitability of teaching to their personality were the major reasons to choose this job both at the beginning and at the end of teacher education program. The implications for different fields and groups such as teacher education programs, Ministry of National Education, parents and prospective teachers were also provided in the study.

Keywords: Tendency of Liking Children; Teaching; Prospective Teachers; Teacher Education

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INTRODUCTION

The choice of profession for the individual is a turning point that provides the necessary preconditions for the continuation of the life-long process in a qualified manner. This process is equipped with the trainings to be taken in the following periods, which are carried out in order to step into the future, to create a perspective about life, to meet different needs. Especially for the development of societies, and reaching the level of contemporary civilization choosing an education-oriented profession that contributes to the development of 21st Century skills such as communication, cooperation, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, scientific-financial-cultural-technological literacy, leadership, entrepreneurship and awareness is undoubtedly important.

The teaching profession, which is specified as a special profession with its social, cultural, academic, technological and economic sub-dimensions related to education, is defined as a special area profession that takes on the education, training and related administrative duties of the state in Article 43 of the National Education Basic Education Law No.1739 (Iřık, iltař, & Bař, 2010; Ko, 2014). Considering as a profession that raises professions, teachers provide effective services in areas such as the development of the country, social peace, training of qualified human power and preparation for social life and gaining professional competence (Kabaklı imen, 2015; Kaya & Alcı, 2019). Therefore, it is clear that the duties and responsibilities of teachers in the field of education, and different qualifications they have cannot be compared with other professions.

According to Oğuzkan (1998), the teaching profession as a social status in which the product created within the framework of personal competence, and professional attitudes is mostly not possible to change qualitatively and the result can be transformed into individual, and social gain in the long run, has the characteristics of research, questioning, leading, and academic competence in terms of field and methodological knowledge (cited in Ko, 2014).

The teacher, who can place the child in the center according to his level of interest, need and readiness, prioritizes the transfer of knowledge and experience of the field, general culture and teaching profession. S/he is also expected to understand the child, value him with a liking and affectionate approach in every sense (Can, 2019; Ekici, Bař & Kızılkaya, 2017; Kabaklı imen, 2015; Mustan, 2002). Love, which is defined as a feeling that leads a person to show close attention and devotion to something or a person, is transformed into a behavior by verbal and / or physical contact, that is, touching, hugging, kissing, expressing good words, and looking with smiling eyes (Ercan, 2014). Teachers who work in the modern education system are expected to be willing to learn, focus on success, patient, versatile, have strong communication skills, open to cooperation, have responsibility, understand the wishes and needs of children and show them the necessary interest and love (Ercan, 2014; Erden, 2005; Keskin, 2013). In the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, it was accepted that "an environment of happiness,

love and understanding is necessary for the full and harmonious development of the child's personality". As it is known, the first place where this environment can be built for the child is the home environment in which he lives with his parents. The school environment which s/he shares with peers and teachers ranks second. In the school environment, the environment created as a result of the child's positive interaction with his teacher constitutes the basis of his social, cognitive and academic success (Kabaklı Çimen, 2015; Yazıcı, 2013).

Studies have shown that people who love children and to teach are more successful in the teaching profession (Ergün & Özdaş, 1999), and also liking to work with children is stated to be an important variable among the reasons for choosing the teaching profession (Marso & Pigge, 1994). Also, it is emphasized that in order to become a teacher, characteristics such as liking children, being patient, being concerned, understanding, tolerant, kind and flexible, communicating and interacting with children and adults, and empathic thinking are significant (Downing, Ryndak & Clark, 2000; Eskicumalı, 2012; Gelbal & Duyan, 2010; Keskin, 2013 ; Uğurlu, 2013).

Durmuşođlu Saltalı and Erbay (2013) emphasized in their study that love of children should be accepted as a prerequisite for the teaching profession. Kabaklı Çimen (2015), on the other hand, emphasized the importance of teaching, which is a profession that requires being with children, and stated that liking children is the basis of a healthy relationship with children. Brown, Morehead, and Smith (2008) and Gelbal and Duyan (2010) also emphasized the characteristics of effective teachers in their studies and stated that child-liking situations started to gain importance, and that this was among the priorities in choosing a profession.

In a study about the reasons for choosing the teaching profession (Özbek, 2007), personal, economic and social factors were emphasized. In another study (Boz & Boz, 2008) three main categories were created as self-sacrifice, internal and external factors. In another study (Bursal & Buldur, 2013), it was emphasized that the factors that affect profession choice can be examined in two groups as intrinsic and extrinsic factors, and it was stated that essential factors consist of two sub-dimensions, altruistic and internal. There is also a different study (Övet, 2006) stating that the reasons for preference can be collected under the titles of consciousness, assurance, ideal and being affected. Çermik, Dođan, and Şahin (2010), on the other hand, examined the reasons for profession preference under four headings in their studies and stated these as self-interested, extrinsic, internal and altruistic factors (cited in Yılmaz & Dođan, 2015). In other studies examining the reasons for professional preference (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Martin & Steffgen, 2002; Myers, 2004; Urhahne, 2006; Young, 1995; Bastick, 2000; Brown, 1992; Chuene, Lubben & Newson, 1999; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Saban, 2003) generally focused on three basic groups, and the reasons formed as internal, external and altruistic reasons were detailed (cited in Atav & Altunođlu, 2013; cited in Çermik, Dođan, & Şahin, 2010).

In the literature, it is observed that teachers' and prospective teachers' reasons for professional preference are associated with different variables in the studies, and it is noteworthy that studies on the relationship between child liking tendencies and choosing teaching as a profession are limited. It is known that the behavior and attitude shown reflects basic beliefs towards children and a profession in which they share time with them (Duyan & Gelbal, 2008). Considering the emphasis on the significance of this situation on profession preference, it is important to note that prospective teachers, who have a great share in the cognitive, social, emotional and academic development of our children, who are the building blocks of our future and who strive to learn the theoretical-practical details of their profession, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the prospective teachers' tendency of liking children and their preference to be a teacher. In light of this discussion, following research questions were addressed;

1. Is there a significant relationship between the prospective teachers' tendency of liking children and their reasons for professional preference in terms of socio-demographic characteristics of the teacher candidates (age group, gender, type of high school graduated, place where they were raised)?

2. What are the reasons of prospective teachers' preference for teaching as a profession at the beginning and at the end of the teacher education program?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, convergent parallel design, one of the mixed method strategies, was adopted (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The convergent-parallel approach is a *concurrent* approach and involves the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data, followed by the combination and comparisons of these multiple data sources (i.e., the two methods are ultimately merged). This approach involves the collection of different but complementary data on the same phenomena. Thus, it is used for the converging and subsequent interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data. This approach is often referred to as the *concurrent triangulation design* (single-phase) because the data is collected and analyzed individually but at the same time.

This design is recommended if the concurrent timing is used while gathering data through both quantitative and qualitative sources in the research process. In this design, the data sources are kept independent during analysis and then the results are mixed during the overall interpretation. This approach is also claimed to enable triangulation and gathering stronger data for reliability concerns.

Participants

In the study, 224 preservice teachers (195 female, 29 male) majoring in different departments (pre-school teaching (N=189 F=83%), Primary Education (N=14 F=6.3), English Language Teaching

(N=16 F=7.1%), Guidance and Psychological Counselling (N=9 F=4%)) participated. The age range of the group is between 18-35.

Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire

Participants' type of high school graduation, university admission ranking, and type of place where they were raised, were elicited through demographic questions.

Barnett's Liking of Children Scale

In order to investigate the tendency of prospective teachers' liking children, Barnett's Liking of Children Scale was used. It is an assessment tool developed by Barnett and Sinsini (1990) to measure people's attitudes towards children. Its Turkish validity and reliability were conducted by Duyan and Gelbal (2008). The scale was first studied on 284 university students, consisting of 145 boys and 139 girls. There are fourteen items in the scale to determine the status of individuals' liking children. The scores that can be obtained from the scale range from 14 to 98. Barnett's Liking of Children Scale has an internal consistency of 0.93 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was determined as 0.91. According to Fischer and Corcoran (1994), Barnett's Liking of Children Scale is a valid and reliable measurement tool. Individuals are asked to report opinions at seven degrees, ranging from "I totally disagree" to "I completely agree" to the opinion stated in the items. Four of the items on determining love for children have negative (3, 6, 10 and 13 items) and all have positive meaning. While scoring the positive items, the answer "I totally agree" is scored with "7" and the answer "I totally disagree" is scored with "1". In scoring the negative items, the answer "I do not agree at all" is scored with "7" and the answer "I completely agree" is scored with "1". High scores on the scale indicate that people love children more; low scores mean that the level of liking children is low (Duyan and Gelbal, 2008 Cited in: Gold, 2019).

Open-Ended Questions

As for the second purpose of the study which is related to the reasons of preferring teaching as an occupation, fifty randomly selected participants were first asked to state whether they would chose the same department if they had a second chance (Would you chose the same department if you were given a second chance?). Following it, they were asked to explain their reasons of choosing teaching as a profession both before and at the end of their teacher education (What were the reasons to choose your department?).

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected by following the procedure suggested by convergent parallel design (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Open-ended questions were administered together with the questionnaire. All participants responded to the questionnaire. However, only volunteered students answered the

open-ended questions. Among the 73 volunteered students, 50 were chosen randomly for the qualitative data analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was run on SPSS 22. The reliability value of the scale was found to be .92, which is accepted as a high reliability value to conduct further analysis. In order to decide whether parametric or non-parametric tests, the normality of the data was checked with Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The result showed that the data was not normally distributed ($p = .000$). As a result, in order to explore the relationship between participating prospective teachers' tendency to liking children and other demographic variables namely, gender, type of high-school and place of being raised in non-parametric test of Kruskal Wallis-H was run.

In order to answer the second research question, qualitative data from fifty randomly selected participants were gathered. The questions were administered written and they responded on paper. Content analysis of the responses was done to find out both the recurring codes and the frequencies. As for the trustworthiness of the qualitative data, criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1985) were applied. To ensure both the reliability and validity; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were checked through member checks, detailed explanation of the setting, and thick description. Member check which is also known as participant validation, is a technique for exploring the credibility of results. Data gathered from open-ended questions were returned to participants to check for accuracy. Moreover, thick description was applied with detailed explanation of the participants' education and personal backgrounds.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Demographic Data

Types of high-schools that participants graduated from were depicted in the following table.

Table 1. Types of High-schools Participants Graduated from

Type of High-School	N	F (%)
Occupational HS	56	25
Teacher Training HS	21	9.4
Anatolian HS	115	51.3
Regular HS	28	12.5
Super HS	4	1.7

75 (F=33.5%) stated to be placed to the university and department preferred at first rank, 132 (F=58.9%) stated to register to the university in the second rank and only 19 (F= 8.5%) stated to be placed to the university and department in the last rank.

Another demographic question was about the type of place they were raised during their childhood. 34 (15 %) were raised in a village, 113 (50%) in a small city and 77 (35%) of the participants were raised in a metropole.

Relationship between the prospective teachers' tendency of liking children and professional preference

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there is a statistically significant difference in participating pre-service teachers' tendency of liking children score between different high school types they graduated, $X^2(2) = 11.606$, $p = 0.021$, with a mean rank liking children score of 104.23 for Anatolian High School, 164.38 for Super High School, 130.63 for Regular High School, 125, 43 for Occupational High School, and 89.24 Teacher Training High School. This finding might be the result of unequal number of participants who were graduated from each school type.

In addition, same statistical procedure revealed a statistically significant difference between genders, $X^2(2) = 10.028$, $p = 0.002$, with a mean rank liking children tendency score of 117.78 for females, and 77.02 for males which supports previous studies (Acat & Yenilmez, 2004; Çermik, Doğan ve Şahin, 2010; Dağ, 2010; Ekinci, 2017; Korkut-Owen et al., 2012; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Övet, 2006; Özbek, 2007; Özsoy et al., 2010;). This result has been supported by some other studies indicating that female pre-service teachers are more idealist and conscious in preferring their future profession (Acat & Yenilmez, 2004; Çermik, Doğan & Şahin, 2010; Dağ, 2010; Korkut-Owen et al., 2012; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Övet, 2006; Özbek, 2007; Özsoy et al., 2010). On the contrary, there have been some studies showing no effect of gender on preferring teaching as a profession (Chuan, 2013; Buldur & Bursal, 2015; Bursal & Buldur 2013; Hacıömeroğlu & Şahin-Taşkın, 2010; Kılcan et al., 2014; Sharif et al., 2014). In this context, female pre-service teachers' tendency of liking children can be accepted as a reason of their profession preference.

On the contrary, no statistically significant difference was found in the participants scores of liking children tendency between the type of places they were raised, $x^2(2) = 4.524$, $p = 0.104$, with a mean rank liking children tendency score of 124.92 for big city, 104.71 for small city, and 110.25 for village. Therefore, the place where they were raised do not have any effect on pre-service teachers' liking of children. In turn, it can be concluded that, place of being raised in is not a significant factor that might affect tendency of liking children and preferring teaching as a profession. This result is parallel to the findings of study conducted by Yazıcı (2013).

Reasons of the prospective teachers' preference for teaching at the beginning and at the end of the teacher education program

In addition to the results of the statistical analysis, the findings of the content analysis showed that 43 participants out of 50 stated that they would prefer teaching as their profession if they were

given a second chance. Seven participants, on the other hand, disagreed. When these seven participants were asked to explain their reasons following vignettes were elicited.

“I would like to study in a department which I could reflect my personality.”

“I don’t think I am qualified enough to do this profession.”

“I noticed that I am talented in theatre during my university education. I would most probably prefer visual arts.”

“It was not my choice. My family wanted me to study in this department. That’s why I would definitely not prefer it again.”

As it is clear, they think that teaching is not suitable for their personalities, they are not qualified enough, and they chose this profession because of the family pressure.

On the contrary, most of the participants, as stated above, agreed to prefer the same profession. In order to investigate the reasons underlying this result, participants were asked to explain their reasons of choosing teaching as a profession before starting teacher education program and at the end of their education. Following table depicts the recurring codes with the frequencies.

Table 2. Participants’ reasons to become a teacher before and at the end of teacher education

Before starting program	At the end of the program
Loving children (f=26)	Loving children (f=23)
Loving the profession (f=12)	Loving the profession (f=14)
Suitable for personality (f=10)	Suitable for personality (f=8)
Easy to find a job (f= 6)	Easy to find a job (f=8)
Dream job (f=5)	To support children’s development (f=6)
Having a role model at school (f=5)	Having a good rapport with children (f=4)

Some vignettes to explain the above mentioned reasons before starting the program are as follows;

The most effective reason is loving children so much. I always have a good relation with them. They make me feel good all the time.

Being a teacher is always my dream job.

Since my childhood, I have always tried to teach something to someone. I never thought of doing anything else. It matches my personality a lot.

My parents always imposed the easiness of finding a job. I also believe it.

I adored my primaryschool teacher when I was very young.

Following quotations also reflect the codes differed at the end of the teacher education program.

Learning how to contribute a child’s life and witnessing the change in behavior is enough to choose the same profession once again.

During my practicum, I was convinced to have a good rapport with very young learners. So, it is an enough reason to become a teacher.

As it is clear in table, loving children acted as the major reason for participants to choose teaching as their profession both before and at the end of their pre-service teacher education which is parallel to results of many other studies in the literature (Marso & Pigge, 1994; Kyriacou, Hultgren & Stephens, 1999; Downing, Ryndak & Clark, 2000; Eskicumalı, 2012; Gelbal & Duyan, 2010; Keskin, 2013; Uğurlu, 2013, Tomšik, 2016). Even though the number of participants who stated this reason decreased to a small extent, it is apparent that with their theoretical knowledge gained throughout the program, more conscious and academic reasons such as supporting children's development and having a good rapport with children gained importance at the end of the program. Having completed practicum period and experienced real teaching in an authentic classroom might have also contributed to this result of the study. Moreover, the idea of finding a job easily was uttered to be effective on their decisions both before and at the end of their education at university. Thinking of suitability of teaching to their personality also appeared as a recurring theme in both interviews. As stated by Brown (1992), the reasons mentioned by the participants were found to be altruistic in general. In other words, the reasons of selecting teaching as a profession appeared to be all related to participants' themselves and their personalities. From another perspective, this result also proves the effect of participants' intrinsic motivation to become a teacher (Ekinici, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that there is a significant difference between genders' tendency of liking children, and among the type of school they graduated. However, no significant difference was found concerning the place they were raised in. In addition, content analysis showed that more than half of the participants were happy with their choices mostly because the reasons they stated are altruistic and related to their intrinsic motivation.

Results of this study suggest some major implications for a variety of education fields. First of all, the relationship between being a teacher and tendency of liking children need to be considered while guiding students during career planning. Moreover, students' intrinsic motivation to become a teacher should also be considered and they need to be directed to teacher education faculties after high school. In this sense, especially high school teachers' awareness and knowledge level is very significant.

However, the present study has some limitations to generalize the findings. To begin with, the number of participants is not equal for every demographic construct. Additionally, other constructs such as department, having siblings should also be considered in further research.

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