

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ATTITUDES OF PRE-SERVICE
TEACHERS TOWARDS TEACHING PROFESSION AND THEIR LEVELS OF
ACADEMIC EXPECTATION STRESS**

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Abstract

Main objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the profession of teaching and their stress levels on academic expectations. The study group of the research conducted with survey model consisted of 165 pre-service teachers. The data were collected using Teaching Attitude Scale and Stress Inventory on Academic Expectations. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for these data collection tools were .82 and .84, respectively. The analysis of data was conducted with descriptive statistics, t-test, one-way analysis of variance, and correlation techniques. Findings of the study demonstrated that attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession and their stress levels for academic expectations were both high. Findings also showed that the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession and their stress levels for academic expectations did not differ significantly based on gender. However, pre-service teacher attitudes towards teaching profession differed significantly based on their field of study. The findings of the study also demonstrated significant relationships between the attitudes of pre-service teachers, their stress levels for academic expectations, and their achievements.

Keywords: Attitude, academic expectation, stress.

INTRODUCTION

One of the factors that affects the success of a system of education is the qualifications of the teachers that serve in educational institutions. The basic qualifications of a good and effective teacher are teaching proficiency and attitudes towards the profession of teaching. High professional proficiency and positive attitudes of teachers towards the vocation of teaching are quite significant in providing quality education (Akdemir, 2006). Teachers achieve these proficiency and attitudes during their training in teaching education programs. Thus, the level of teacher training programs to provide vocational proficiencies for pre-service teachers becomes significant. Therefore, determination of the levels of teacher training programs to provide vocational proficiencies for pre-service teachers, and their levels of positive attitude towards the occupation of teaching by scientific research would achieve significant contributions to the development of educational programs.

Attitudes are among characteristics that should be considered within the realm of affective features. Previous studies established the significant effects of attitudes on learning. Thus, it could be argued that, in addition to knowledge and skills, attitudes are also a significant factor in the professional achievement of teachers within the context of affective characteristics (Güler, 1990). Attitudes are defined as learned dispositions that prompt individuals to demonstrate certain behavior towards certain individuals, objects or situations (İnceoğlu, 2004). In other words, attitudes provide direction for an individual and affect the individual's decision-making process. It is known that, as with behavior, attitudes are gained through learning as well (Özgür, 1994). Thus, an individual, who has a positive attitude towards an event would have a positive behavior against this event, while the same individual would make negative decisions about an event that he had negative attitudes for. However, it is difficult to directly observe the attitudes. The information on attitudes could be gathered using various methods. Likert-type rating scales are the most common data collection tools used for this purpose (Çapa ve Çil, 2000).

It was also considered that, in addition to the attitudes, academic expectation stress was another factor that affects the achievements of pre-service teachers. In addition to their self-expectations, the expectations of families and teachers play a significant role in experiencing academic stress (Ağargün ve Ark., 1995). The support that pre-service teachers receive from their families and teachers predicts their academic success positively and significantly (Öztürk, 2009; Yıldırım and Ergene, 2003). However, the support of the families and teachers could be perceived as pressure by children and adolescents due to the competitive nature of the education system (Kellecioğlu and Bilge, 2009). In several studies, it was determined that the depression adolescents experience was related to academic success, test anxiety, anxiety, social phobia, and other variables (Kellecioğlu and Bilge, 2009). Studies demonstrated that the parents want to achieve their own goals through their children, which puts the children in an awkward position between the goals of their parents and their own, resulting in academic stress (Yıldırım and Ergene, 2003; Subaşı, 2010; Subaşı, 2000). Same studies showed that the parents suggested the children to study more and study more organized, which was misunderstood by the students, hence the parents often committed unintended mistakes (Öztürk, 2004; Leary, 1982).

Thus, this study was conducted to research the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards teaching profession and their stress levels on academic expectations. The following research questions were attempted to be answered.

1. What are attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession and the stress levels of pre-service teachers related to academic expectations?
2. Is there a significant difference between the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession and their academic stress levels based on gender?
3. Is there a significant difference between the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession and their academic stress levels based on fields of study?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession and their academic stress?

METHOD

Design

In this descriptive study, a cross sectional survey design was used to examine and compare participants' attitudes towards teaching profession and their academic expectation stress levels based on their departments and school grades.

Participants

The study was conducted with 165 pre-service teachers registered at Osmangazi University Faculty of Education Pedagogical Formation program. Demographics for the study group is presented in Table 1.

Tablo 1. Demographic distribution for participating pre-school teachers

		N	%
Gender	Female	79	47,9
	Male	86	52,1
Department	Maths	25	15,2
	Literature	24	14,5
	Social sciences	67	40,6
	Physical edu.	49	29,7
	Total	165	100,0

Table 1 demonstrates that 79 pre-school teachers were female (47.9%) and 86 were male (52.1%). 67 pre-school teachers from social departments (history, geography, theology), 49 pre-school teachers from physical education, 25 pre-school teachers from mathematics, and 24 pre-school teachers from the literature department participated in the study.

Instruments

Academic Expectations Stress Inventory (AESI) was used to determine the academic expectation stress levels of pre-service teachers, while Teaching Profession Attitude Scale was used to determine the attitudes towards the occupation of teaching.

Teaching Attitude Scale – Attitude Scale on Teaching developed by Erkuş, Şanlı ve Bağlı (2000) was used to measure the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching

profession. The scale developed by Erkuş et al. (2000) contained 23 items. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the scale was 0.99. There are 10 positive and 13 negative expressions in the scale. Teaching Attitude Scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale. Participant select one of the following choices for each item listed in the scale: “completely suitable,” “suitable,” “I am not sure,” “not suitable,” “completely not suitable.” Since in this Likert-type scale the scale score is the total of scores obtained from each item, every attitude item in the scale was scored. Scoring differed based on the positive or negative character of the statement. For positive items scoring was in decrements from “completely suitable” to “completely not suitable” (5, 4, 3, 2, 1), while it was incremental for the negative items from “completely suitable” to “completely not suitable” (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The maximum points that could be scored in the scale was 115, and the lowest points possible was 23. Higher scores denote higher attitudes for the teaching profession.

Academic Expectations Stress Inventory (AESI) – The adapted version of Academic Expectations Stress Inventory (AESI) for high school students, developed by Kellecioğlu and Filiz (2009) was used to determine the stress levels of pre-service teachers on academic expectations. The inventory is a Likert-type scale. The categories of AESI vary between 1 (never) and 5 (always). The scale that consists nine items has two dimensions of Family/Teacher Expectations (5 items) and Expectations about Self (4 items). Higher points denote higher level of academic stress. The highest score possible in the scale is 45. Cronbach alpha coefficient for the total AESI scores was determined as .84. Cronbach alpha coefficients for the sub-scales were .80 and .70, respectively.

Data Analysis

Data obtained in the study were analyzed in SPSS 13.0 software package and interpreted using arithmetic mean, t-test, one-way analysis of variance and correlation analysis methods.

FINDINGS

In this section, statistical analyses related to each sub-objective of the study and the interpretation of the findings are presented.

1. Findings on the Attitudes of Pre-Service Teachers towards Teaching Profession and their Academic Expectation Stress Levels

Table 2. Analysis Results Depicting Arithmetic Means for Attitude and Stress Scores of Pre-Service Teachers

	N	min	max	M	Sd
Stress	165	13	45	32,16	7,98
Attitude	165	43	115	86,14	15,85

The mean score for attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching vocation was $M = 86.14$, as displayed in Table 2. This value showed that the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching vocation was at a high level. The minimum score in attitude was 23.00, and the maximum score obtained by pre-service teachers was the scale maximum of 115.00.

Mean academic expectations stress level was found as $M = 32.16$ for the pre-service teachers. This score demonstrated that the academic expectations stress levels of pre-service teachers

were high as well. Minimum score measured in the stress scale was 13.00, while the maximum score was the scale maximum score of 45.00 points.

2. Findings on the Differentiation of the Attitudes of Pre-Service Teachers towards Teaching Profession and their Academic Expectation Stress Levels based on Gender

Table 3. t-test Results for Attitude, Fear, and Stress Scores of Pre-Service Teachers based on Gender

	Gender	N	M	S	sd	T	p
Attitude	Female	79	84,56	13,92	163	1.23	.22
	Male	86	87,60	17,39			
Stress	Female	79	32,04	7,60	163	.19	.85
	Male	86	32,28	8,37			

p<0.01

Table 3 shows that the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession did not demonstrate a significant difference based on gender ($t(163) = 1.23, p > .01$). Although the attitudes of male pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession ($M = 87.60$) were more positive when compared to females ($M = 84.56$), it could not be argued that the differences in attitudes towards the teaching profession were statistically significant.

It was observed in Table 3 that the academic expectations stress levels of pre-service teachers did not differentiate based on gender ($t(163) = .19, p > .01$). Mean academic expectations stress for male participants was $M = 32.28$, while mean academic expectations stress for female participants was $M = 32.04$. Although it could be said that male pre-service teachers experienced more academic expectations stress when compared to females, it could not be argued that the differences in academic expectations stress were statistically significant.

3. Findings on the Differentiation of the Attitudes of Pre-Service Teachers towards Teaching Profession and their Academic Expectation Stress Levels based on the Departments They Attend

Table 4. ANOVA Results for Attitude, Fear, and Stress Scores of Pre-Service Teachers based on the Departments They Attend

	Department	N	M	S	Sd	F	p
Attitude	Maths	25	91,88	14,14	164	3,47	.02*
	Literature	24	87,55	18,67			
	Social sciences	67	87,54	14,30			
	Physical edu.	49	80,61	16,08			
Stress	Maths	25	28,84	8,75	164	1,99	.12
	Literature	24	33,96	6,52			
	Social sciences	67	32,28	8,16			
	Physical edu.	49	32,82	7,73			

p<0.01

The findings presented in Table 4 demonstrates that there was a significant difference between the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession based on the departments they attend ($F(164) = 3.47, p < .01$). In other words, the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession differ significantly based on the department that they

were trained at. Mean attitude score for mathematics teaching department pre-service teachers was $M = 46.35$; mean attitude score for literature teaching department pre-service teachers was $M = 44.80$; mean attitude score for 7th grade teaching department pre-service teachers was $M = 44.92$; and mean attitude score for physical education department pre-service teachers was $M = 41.93$. Tukey HSD test results that was conducted to determine between which groups the differences between the departments occurred showed that there was a significant difference between the scores of mathematics teaching and physical education pre-service teachers. It could then be argued that mathematics department pre-service teachers had a more positive attitude towards the profession of teaching than physical education pre-service teachers.

Further analysis results demonstrated that there were no significant differences between the academic expectation stress levels of pre-service teachers based on their departments ($F(164) = 1.99, p > .01$). Results showed that mean stress score for mathematics teaching department pre-service teachers was $M = 28.84$; mean stress score for literature teaching department pre-service teachers was $M = 33.96$; mean stress score for social studies (history, geography, theology) teaching department pre-service teachers was $M = 32.28$; and mean stress score for physical education department pre-service teachers was $M = 32.82$. Based on these results, it could be argued that the academic stress of pre-service teachers did not differentiate based on the departments they attend. The results also demonstrated that mathematics teaching department pre-service teachers had lower academic expectation stress levels.

4. Findings on the Relationship between the Attitudes of Pre-Service Teachers towards Teaching Profession and their Academic Expectation Stress Levels

Table 5. Correlation Results between the Attitude, Fear, and Stress Scores of Pre-Service Teachers

	Attitude	Stress	Success
<i>r</i>	1	-.454	.571
Attitude <i>p</i>		.001	.001
N	165	165	165
<i>r</i>	-.454	1	-.678
Stress <i>p</i>	.001		.001
N	165	165	165
<i>r</i>	.571	-.678	1
Success <i>p</i>	.001	.001	
N	165	165	165

$p < 0.01$

Findings in Table 5 demonstrates that there is a negative and intermediately significant relationship between the attitudes and academic expectation stress levels of pre-service teachers ($r = .454, p < .01$). Thus, it could be argued that as the positive attitudes of pre-service teachers towards teaching increase, their academic expectations stress levels decrease. This is an expected result. Because it is normal that positive attitude would reduce stress. There was also a positive relationship between their attitudes and achievements ($r = .571, p < .01$). Thus, it could be said that positive attitude causes an improvement in success. Another finding that supported this result was the decrease in stress as a result of the increase in success ($r = -.678, p < 0.01$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results were obtained in this study that scrutinized the relationship between the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards teaching and their academic expectations stress levels:

Primarily the attitude and stress levels for pre-service teachers were investigated in the study. Results showed that the pre-service teachers had high levels of attitudes towards teaching profession and academic expectations stress. This fact shows that although the pre-service teachers have a positive affection for the profession of teaching, they also had high stress levels. The results demonstrated that although they loved teaching, pre-service teachers were scared of teacher's proficiency exams, experienced future anxiety, and feared from the difficulties they would have to cope with in the future as teachers (Öztürk, 2009).

Secondly, the differentiation of attitude and stress levels based on gender and departments was scrutinized in the study. Results showed that the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching occupation and their academic expectations stress levels did not demonstrate significant differences based on gender. On the other hand, both attitude and stress levels for male participants were higher than female pre-service teachers. Academic anxieties of male pre-service teachers were at a higher level in general. A basic reason for that could be the responsibilities of male participants to bring home the bacon in the future as the head of the traditional Turkish family. Findings showed that there were significant differences between the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession based on the departments they attended. Mathematics department pre-service teachers had higher levels of attitude towards the profession when compared to those in the physical education department. This could be due to the professional possibilities that mathematics teachers might have outside the teaching profession in the future. It was observed that there was no significant difference between the academic expectations stress levels of participants based on their departments. While the stress levels of mathematics department pre-service teachers were low, the stress levels of literature department pre-service teachers were higher.

Finally, the relationships between the attitude and stress levels, and their achievement were scrutinized. Findings demonstrated that as the positive attitudes of pre-service teachers on teaching increased, their stress for academic experiences decreased. This could be interpreted as loving one's profession would reduce the problems that one would face in this profession. Findings also demonstrated that there was a positive relationship between the attitudes of pre-service teachers and their achievements. Tan (2006) achieved similar results in his study. Based on the results of this study, it is possible to argue that as the positive attitude of pre-service teachers would increase, their success would increase as well. Another finding that supports this premise is that as success increases, stress decreases. This finding was in contradiction to the findings in a study by Uçar (2009). Uçar (2009) claimed that as success increases, the expectations are raised as well, and an anxiety to achieve better results prevails. In this context, it could be observed that the results of the two studies differed from each other.

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