

Preservice Teachers' Preferences About Instructor Gender

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This is a qualitative research. Interview technique was used to collect data and the data were analyzed using quantifying the qualitative data. The participants were selected using convenience sampling method. They comprised 99 (51 female, 48 male) preservice teachers studying at eleven education faculties around Turkey. The consistency percentage of the research was found 89%. In response to the question about their preferences of instructor gender, 16 % of the male preservice teachers who preferred "female" instructors stated that they do so because "they increase motivation", while 44% of the female preservice teachers preferred "female" instructors because "they are more understanding as they are mothers" and "they understand us better as we are of the same gender". On the other hand, 85 % of the male preservice teachers who preferred "male" instructors stated that they do so because "I prefer male instructors because female instructors cannot establish authority", 45% said they preferred because "male instructors are honest and close" and because "female instructors are not understanding against male students", while 73% of the female preservice teachers preferred "male" instructors because "female instructors are fastidious and extremely regulatory", 63% preferred because "female instructors have poor communication competence", 60 % preferred because "male instructors are authoritarian and control the class".

Introduction

When we look from a narrow perspective, social structures can be seen as a composition of gender roles constructed by cultural practices of child raising. The main reason underlying the transformation from matriarchic societies to patriarchic societies can be considered to be the transformation of the meaning attributed to gender roles. To Kagitcibasi (1998), the reason for children and adults in different cultural settings to attribute different meanings to the same behaviours is related with the fact that they "attribute environment-dependent meanings" on what is normal or abnormal. For example, the meanings and values attributed to the child and adult behaviours are different in US where children are raised with a rather free discipline understanding and in Japanese culture where a strict understanding of child raising is used.

When the reflections of gender roles into everyday lives, it is seen that the value systems of cultural structures are similar. For example, male children are expected to have dominant characteristics in terms of assertiveness and physical superiority, while female children are expected to be harmonious and dependent. Therefore, role and behaviours related with the gender develop in harmony with cultural values. The way a family grows up a child differs

according to gender generally through cultural subconscious. The gender-based division of labour generally begins from early childhood.

An analysis of the common practices of child raising in Turkish society would reveal that the judgements about a behaviour or attitude are done predominantly according to the meanings attributed to the genders and role behaviours formed in relation to these meanings. Based on the different conditions of the society that an individual is born into, the meanings attributed to these roles can involve much freedom or firmness. As the level of wealth increases, types of traditional relationships also change quickly.

It is a social learning process for the individuals to learn their gender roles mainly by imitating and observing (Zimmerman&Rosenthal, 1974; Bandura, 1977). Moreover, children can learn gender roles by observing and imitating each other (especially the young children observing the older children) (Azmitia, 1988). Considering the Piaget's (1964) concepts of accommodation, assimilation and equilibrium, it is obvious that the learned gender roles have a more or less persisting impact on people's lives. It can be said that whatever an individual does or does not do, or say or does not say is affected by the gender roles. We can see the implications of the personalization of gender roles by an individual everywhere including school, home, and street.

School not only socializes the individuals but also provides them with society's accepted gender roles. Gender refers to the biological differences (Dokmen, 2010). Yet gender role is something beyond biological differences. Yogev (2006) argues that social gender is formed by culture, and comprises gender roles, identity, status and responsibilities developing independent of biological gender. Social gender roles are the culturally determined attitudes and behaviours, including stance and body language, such as code of conduct, personality traits, emotions which are the most representative characteristics of being a male or female in a certain culture (Firestone, 1993; Erdogan, 2008; Dokmen, 2010).

Gender socialization, which is one role acquired in the social life (Chodorow, 1978; Connell, 1998), is experienced to a great extent in the school. It is observed that the roles attributed to female or male students are also followed by parents and teachers as well, thus the same is attributed to female and male teachers' roles. Studies on course books (Zimet, 1976; Kalia, 1980) suggest that women are usually illustrated as mother and housewives at home, or as teachers or nurses in line with the traditional female professions. In terms of behaviours and attitudes males are handled in relation with bravery, intelligence and success, while females are illustrated with such characteristics as abiding, self-sacrifice and dependency. Some research in Turkey (Kulahci,1989; Dokmen, 1995; Helvacioglu, 1996; Esen and Turkan, 2002) also found similar results. Given that schools should be the places where gender discrimination is observed the least, it can be said that gender socialization in society is very strong and it will take long years to lose its effect. However, as a social accelerator, school should take a more active role. Unfortunately, the schools, which are just the extensions of social structures, are seen to be not so much active.

The metaphor studies about teachers show that one of the most common metaphors used for teachers is mother-father (Clarcken, 1997; Saban, 2004). Definitely, this metaphor itself cannot be regarded as towards gender preference. It can also be the result of the students' need for love and affection. Yet, even with this form, this metaphoric belief among students can be claimed to be a derivative of gender socialization as a reflection of cultural child raising system. Therefore, gender roles reflected in metaphors can well transform into actual experiences in the form of attitudes and codes of conduct

Method

In the present study, participating preservice teachers were asked two main questions: “Would you prefer your instructors to be female or male?”, “What are the reasons for your preference?” The interview form was developed utilizing the relevant literature (Miles&Huberman, 1994; Yildirim&Simsek, 2006; Glesne, 2012).

Instrument

“Interview” method was used as the data collection instrument in the study. The purpose of the interview is to understand the individuals’ viewpoints, feelings, experiences, thoughts, goals, perceptions and evaluations (Patton, 2002). The qualitative data obtained with interview technique were quantified producing frequencies and percentages.

Participants

The participants of the research were selected using “convenience sampling method” (Yildirim&Simsek, 2006). They consisted of 99 freshmen (51 female, 48 male) studying at the first classes of eleven faculties of education. Freshmen were selected so as to be able to analyze the reflections of their previous school experiences on today and thus make analysis and interpretations for future. The participating preservice teachers came from eleven universities including Amasya University (9 Female, 7 Male), Adiyaman University (6 Female, 8 Male), Afyon Kocatepe University (5 Female, 6 Male), Usak University (8 Female, 5 Male), Akdeniz University (5 Female, 4 Male), Dokuz Eylül University (4 Female, 4 Male), Ankara University (5 Female, 7 Male), Pamukkale University (3 Female, 4 Male), Nigde University (2 Female, 2 Male), Marmara University (2 Female, 1 Male), Ondokuz Mayıs University (2 Male).

Interview

The researcher interviewed the participants in advance and informed them about the purpose of the study and ensured them that they would not be asked about their identities in anyway, the content of the interview would not be used for any other purpose, no statement including their identity would be disclosed. After granting their permissions the interview content was registered by taking notes and notes were shown to them in order to get their final consent. Interviews were done between June 2011 and December 2012 during holidays in Adiyaman, Afyonkarahisar, Amasya and İzmir by the researcher.

Data analysis

The interview notes were first registered one by one in sentence form. Next, the statements considered to have same meaning were combined and transformed into main propositions and their frequencies and percentages were produced. Finally, an external instructor was asked to repeat he data analysis with the same method and both classifications were compared to estimate the agreement percentage. The reliability estimation of the study was done using Miles & Huberman’s (1994) *Agreement Percentage Formula* [$P = (Na / Na + Nd) \times 100$] (P: Agreement Percentage, Na: Number of Agreement, Nd: Number of Disagreement). The minimum agreement percentage of 70% is considered reliability of analysis (Yildirim and Şimşek, 2006). The agreement percentage in this study was found 89%.

Findings

This part presents frequencies and percentages about preservice teachers' preferences of their instructors' gender and their reasons.

Table 1: Participants' answers to the question "Would you prefer your instructors to be female or male?"

| | I prefer Female | | I prefer Male | | Gender does not matter | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----|---------------|----|------------------------|----|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Male preservice teachers | 18 | 37 | 20 | 41 | 10 | 20 |
| Female preservice teachers | 9 | 17 | 30 | 58 | 12 | 23 |

While 37% of the male preservice teachers prefer their instructors to be female, this rate of preference is 17% for females. While 41% of the male preservice teachers prefer their instructors to be male, this rate of preference is 58% for females. While 20% of the male preservice teachers state instructor's gender does not matter, this rate of indifference is 23% among female preservice teachers.

Table 2: The reasons of the male preservice teachers for preferring "female" instructors

| Male preservice teachers' reasons | f | % |
|--|---|----|
| Because they increase motivation | 3 | 16 |
| Female instructors' lessons are more interesting | 2 | 11 |
| Because they are beautiful | 2 | 11 |
| Because they are mothers (Affectionate) | 1 | 5 |

Among those male preservice teachers who preferred "female" instructors, 16% stated they prefer female instructors because "they increase motivation", 11% said "female instructors' lessons are more interesting" and "they are beautiful", 5% said "they are mothers (affectionate)".

Table 3: The reasons of the female preservice teachers for preferring "female" instructors

| Female preservice teachers' reasons | f | % |
|--|---|----|
| They are more understanding as they are mothers | 4 | 44 |
| They understand us better as we are of the same gender | 4 | 44 |
| Because we can communicate more easily | 2 | 22 |
| As they are understanding and tolerant | 2 | 22 |

Among those female preservice teachers who preferred "female" instructors, 44% stated they prefer female instructors because "they are more understanding as they are mothers" and "they understand us better as we are of the same gender", and 22% said "because we can communicate more easily" and "as they are understanding and tolerant."

Table 4: The reasons of the male preservice teachers for preferring “male” instructors

| Male preservice teachers’ reasons | f | % |
|---|----|----|
| I prefer male instructors because female instructors cannot establish authority | 17 | 85 |
| As male instructors are honest and close | 9 | 45 |
| I prefer male instructors as female instructors are not understanding against male students | 9 | 45 |
| I prefer male instructors as female instructors do gender discrimination (doing positive discrimination in favour of female students) | 7 | 35 |
| I prefer male instructors because females are unlikable | 4 | 20 |
| I prefer male instructors as female instructors’ proficiency in the subject field is inadequate | 2 | 10 |
| They distract me with their sexuality and I cannot learn, thus I prefer male instructor | 1 | 5 |
| I prefer male instructor because it is a sin for a female instructor to lecture male student | 1 | 5 |

Among those male preservice teachers who preferred “male” instructors, 85% stated they prefer male instructors because “female instructors cannot establish authority”, 45% said “as male instructors are honest and close” and “as female instructors are not understanding against male students”, 35% said they preferred male instructors “as female instructors do gender discrimination (doing positive discrimination in favor of female students)”. Moreover, the reason “I prefer male instructors because females are unlikable” constitutes 20 %, while “I prefer male instructors as female instructors’ proficiency in the subject field is inadequate” constitutes 10% of the reasons.

Table 5: The reasons of the female preservice teachers for preferring “male” instructors

| Female preservice teachers’ reasons | f | % |
|--|----|----|
| I prefer male instructors because female instructors are fastidious and extremely regulatory | 22 | 73 |
| I prefer male instructors because female instructors have poor communication competence | 19 | 63 |
| They are authoritarian and control the class | 18 | 60 |
| They are understanding | 17 | 56 |
| I prefer male instructors because female instructors are capricious and arrogant | 15 | 50 |
| As they are objective and consistent | 12 | 40 |
| As I can communicate well | 12 | 40 |
| I prefer male instructors as female instructors’ lessons are boring | 12 | 40 |
| I prefer male instructors because female instructors are emotional and touchy | 11 | 36 |
| I prefer male instructors because female instructors discriminate (in favor of male) | 9 | 30 |
| I prefer male instructors because female instructors reflect private lives to the lesson | 7 | 23 |
| I prefer male instructors because female instructors | | |

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| are mean in their grades | 6 | 20 |
| As their proficiency in their subject field is better | 5 | 16 |
| As the male instructors know better about the real life | 2 | 6 |
| As they do not beat the female students | 2 | 6 |
| As they are tolerant | 1 | 3 |
| I prefer male instructors because female instructors shout more | 1 | 3 |

Among those female preservice teachers who preferred “male” instructors, 73% stated they prefer male instructors because “female instructors are fastidious and extremely regulatory”, 63 % said they prefer male instructors because “female instructors have poor communication competence”, 60 % said male instructors are “authoritarian and they can control the class”, 56% said “because they are understanding”, and 50% said they prefer male instructors because “female instructors are capricious and arrogant”. Moreover, the reason “As they are objective and consistent”, “As I can communicate well” and “I prefer male instructors as female instructors’ lessons are boring” constitutes 40 % of the reasons; and “I prefer male instructors because female instructors are emotional and touchy” constitutes 36% of the reasons; “I prefer male instructors because female instructors discriminate (in favor of male)” constitutes 30% of the reasons; and “I prefer male instructors because female instructors reflect private lives to the lesson” constitutes 23 % of the reasons.

Table 6: The reasons of male preservice teachers who said “gender does not matter”

| Male preservice teachers’ reasons | f | % |
|---|---|----|
| The quality and how the lesson is conducted is more important | 8 | 80 |
| Instructor’s being authoritarian is important | 7 | 70 |
| The ability to communicate is important | 7 | 70 |
| Being understanding and tolerant is important | 5 | 50 |
| Being full of love is important | 3 | 30 |
| It is important not to discriminate | 2 | 20 |
| Giving few assignments is important | 1 | 10 |
| Lecturing well is important (my learning) | 1 | 10 |
| Not using rude and bad language is important | 1 | 10 |

Among those male preservice teachers who responded that “gender does not matter”, 80% stated that “the quality and how the lesson is conducted is more important”, 70% said “instructor’s being authoritarian is important” and “the ability to communicate is important”. Moreover, the reason “being understanding and tolerant is important” constituted 50%, “being full of love is important” constituted 30% and “it is important not to discriminate” constituted 20% of the reasons.

Table 7: The reasons of female preservice teachers who said “gender does not matter”

| Female preservice teachers’ reasons | f | % |
|---|---|----|
| Being understanding and tolerant is important | 9 | 75 |
| Lecturing well is important | 9 | 75 |
| It is important to communicate well with students | 6 | 50 |
| I have had good teachers of both genders | 3 | 25 |
| Personality traits are important | 1 | 8 |
| My female teachers at primary school were good, | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| but my male teachers at high school were good | 1 | 8 |
| It is important to speak and act politely | 1 | 8 |
| Establishing the authority is important | 1 | 8 |
| Being specialized in their subject field is important | 1 | 8 |
| To be trusting is important | 1 | 8 |

Among those female preservice teachers who responded that “gender does not matter”, 75% stated that “Being understanding and tolerant is important” and “Lecturing well is important”, 50% stated that “It is important to communicate well with students”. Moreover, the reason “I have had good teachers of both genders” constituted 25%, “Personality traits are important”, “My female teachers at primary school were good, but my male teachers at high school were good”, “It is important to speak and act politely”, “Establishing the authority is important”, “Being specialized in their subject field is important” and “to be trusting is important” constituted 8% of the reasons.

Discussion

When we look at the preservice teachers’ preferences of their instructors’ gender, male preservice teachers were found to prefer female instructors because “they increase motivation” (16%), “Female instructors’ lessons are more interesting” and “Because they are beautiful” (11%). It is believed that the underlying phenomenon behind this is sexuality. These preferences of male preservice teachers can be asserted to stem from how they have been raised by their family and the conservative social life. The reason of “because they are mothers (Affectionate)” stated at a rate of 5% can be asserted to stem from hospitalism. Considering that boys in traditional Turkish family structure are behaved with a perceived message of “be strong” or “see a thing through”, male students can be said to compensate the lack of love at school with the female teacher (possibly attributing the role of mother).

When we look at the female preservice teachers’ reasons, they were found to prefer female instructors because of such reasons as “They are more understanding as they are mothers” and “They understand us better as we are of the same gender” (44%), “Because we can communicate more easily” and “As they are understanding and tolerant” (22%). It is seen that these reasons are predominantly sensitive. This sensitiveness can be asserted to stem from the manner of child raising in family and mother’s being a dominant role model while raising the female child.

It was found that the reasons of male preservice teachers who preferred “male” instructors included “I prefer male instructors because female instructors cannot establish authority” at a rate of 85%, “as male instructors are honest and close” and “I prefer male instructors as female instructors are not understanding against male students” at a rate of 45%, and “I prefer male instructors as female instructors do gender discrimination (doing positive discrimination in favor of female students)” at a rate of 35%. Also, the reason “I prefer male instructors because females are unlikable” constituted 20 %, while “I prefer male instructors as female instructors’ proficiency in the subject field is inadequate” constituted 10%, and “They distract me with their sexuality and I cannot learn, thus I prefer male instructor” and “I prefer male instructor because it is a sin for a female instructor to lecture male student” constituted 5% of the reasons.

An overall look at the reasons suggests that the reasons of male preservice teachers who preferred “male” instructors were justified not directly but indirectly over female instructors. This is regarded as an interesting situation. For example, the phenomenon of female

instructors' failure to establish authority is quite interesting. Considering the Turkish social family structures, it is a well known phenomenon that man (father) is regarded as a figure of authority and woman (mother) prevail so much in this structure.

Among those female preservice teachers who preferred "male" instructors, 73% answered they preferred male instructors because "female instructors are fastidious and extremely regulatory", 63 % said they preferred male instructors because "female instructors have poor communication competence", 60 % said male instructors are "authoritarian and they can control the class", 56% said "because they are understanding", and 50% said they prefer male instructors because "female instructors are capricious and arrogant". Also, the reasons "As they are objective and consistent", "As I can communicate well" and "I prefer male instructors as female instructors' lessons are boring" were preferred at a rate of 40 %; and "I prefer male instructors because female instructors are emotional and touchy" was stated at a rate of 36%; "I prefer male instructors because female instructors discriminate (in favor of male)" was stated at a rate of 30%; and "I prefer male instructors because female instructors reflect private lives to the lesson" was mentioned at a rate of 23 %. Other reasons by female preservice teachers' for preferring male instructors included "I prefer male instructors because female instructors are mean in their grades" (20%), "As their proficiency in their subject field is better" (16%), "As the male instructors know better about the real life", and "As they do not beat the female students" (6%). A general look at the female preservice teachers' reasons may suggest that they believe that female instructors are adversely affected by psychological and emotional problems and thus cannot perform well as a teacher. This can be said to stem from female instructors' suffering underlife burdens of women (statuses of mother, wife and teachers) working in the male-dominant society.

Among those male preservice teachers who responded that "gender does not matter", 80% were found to believe "the quality and how the lesson is conducted is more important", and 70% believed "instructor's being authoritarian is important" and "the ability to communicate is important". Also, the reason "being understanding and tolerant is important" was preferred at a rate of 50%, "being full of love is important" was preferred at a rate of 30%, "it is important not to discriminate" was preferred at a rate of 20%, and the reasons of "Giving few assignments is important", "Lecturing well is important (my learning)" and "Not using rude and bad language is important" were preferred at a rate of 10%. When we look at the reasons of male preservice teachers who said "gender does not matter", it can be said that they stem from an emphasis on the phenomena of academic achievement and discipline.

Among those female preservice teachers who responded that "gender does not matter", 75% were found to put forward that "being understanding and tolerant is important" and "Lecturing well is important", 50% suggested that "It is important to communicate well with students". Moreover, the reason "I have had good teachers of both genders" was preferred at a rate of 25%, and reasons of "Personality traits are important", "My female teachers at primary school were good, but my male teachers at high school were good", "It is important to speak and act politely", "Establishing the authority is important", "Being specialized in their subject field is important" and "to be trusting is important" were preferred at a rate of 8%. When we look at the reasons of female preservice teachers who said "gender does not matter", it can be said their preferences were shaped based on academic achievement and interpersonal relationship.

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