Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Compassion

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study adopted a phenomenological research design to investigate how preservice teachers perceived compassion. The sample consisted of 43 students from Van Yüzüncü Yıl University. The data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide. The data were analyzed using content analysis. The results showed that participants associated "compassion" with "pity," "sympathy," "being human'," "affection," "empathy," "help," "favor," "conscience," and "forgiveness." They stated that compassion was necessary to understand others and to maintain social order and peace. The most common forms of compassion were "having compassion for animals," "helping those in need," "helping the poor," "parents' compassion," "helping the old," and "love for children." Participants recommended that parents and teachers be role models for others, inculcate compassion in children, and get them to help others, adopt animals, visit nursing homes, and read books.

Keywords:
Compassion, preservice teachers, phenomenology

1. Introduction

The concept of compassion is frequently used in education, health, psychology, philosophy, and the religious sciences. The Turkish Language Association (TLA) defines "compassion" as "sadness and pity for the plight of another living being." It is also defined as the emotion that arises when witnessing someone else's pain (Goetz, Keltner & Simon Thomas, 2010; Lazarus, 1991). There are three types of compassion: (1) self-compassion, (2) the compassion we experience for others; and (3) the compassion we experience from others (Çevik, 2022; Gilbert et al., 2017; Gilbert, Mcewan, Matos & Rivis, 2011). Hoffman (1981) argues that compassion is a vicarious feeling, while Sprecher and Fehr (2005) view it as some form of love or sadness. On the other hand, Cosley, McCoy, Saslow, and Epel (2010) maintain that it is the concern we feel for the well-being of others. Compassion and empathy are so related that they are often used interchangeably. However, there are notable differences between the two concepts. Although both concepts lack a universal definition (Gerdes, 2011), unlike compassion, empathy does not involve the intention to see the pain go away or the motivation and readiness to take action to alleviate it (Jazaieri, 2018). We can think of compassion as an effort to witness and alleviate suffering.

Compassion has four components. First, it involves an awareness of suffering (cognitive component). Second, it involves a sympathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering (affective component). Third, it includes a wish to see the relief of that suffering (intentional component). Fourth, it includes responsiveness or readiness to help relieve that suffering (motivational component) (Jazaieri, 2018). According to Halifax (2012), compassion is a two-component concept. He defines it as the motivation to feel the emotionality of caring for and comforting someone who is suffering. For Strauss et al. (2016), compassion

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consists of five elements: recognizing suffering, understanding the universality of human suffering, feeling for the person suffering, tolerating uncomfortable feelings, and motivation to act to alleviate suffering.

The essence of compassion is to treat others as we would like to be treated. Compassion invites us to alleviate the suffering of other living things, stop thinking that we are the center of the world, and tone down our egos. It demands that we treat everyone with justice, equality, and respect and refrain from inflicting pain on others in our private and public lives. It encourages us to avoid depriving others of their fundamental rights and arousing hatred by belittling them, even if they are our enemies (Sayar & Manisalıgil, 2016, pp. 273-274).

Compassion is defined in different ways. Some associate it with pity, while others with sympathy. For example, Nietzsche sees compassion as a weakness because he considers it a kind of pity (Gilbert, 2017). Gilbert (2019) approached compassion from a comprehensive perspective and sought answers to two questions: How do cognitive competencies constitute human compassion? And what is the nature and function of compassion? Nas and Kardaş (2022) examined compassion education and compassion in education in various dimensions. Nas (2020) reported that adults associated compassion with affection, sympathy, pity, forgiveness, assistance, and benevolence and viewed it as a source of life and a spiritual characteristic. Sayar and Manisalıgil (2016) also addressed compassion from the perspectives of consumer culture, impulsivity, technology, morality, and empathy. Kıral and Başdağ (2017) found that most classroom teachers associated compassion with pity, sympathy, and sadness. Nas and Sak (2020) provided information and research on compassion-focused therapy. While Nas (2021) focused on compassion satisfaction, Nas and Sak (2021a; 2021b) developed the Fear of Compassion Scale and the Compassion Satisfaction Scale, respectively. Aydemir, Göçen, and Yıldırım (2021) determined that middle school teachers associated compassion with pity and defined it as an emotion that arises within the scope of wanting the well-being of all living beings and having sympathy for them. Bayırlı (2020) investigated how primary school classroom teachers thought they could help their students develop compassion. The participants stated that they should collaborate with parents, promote school charity activities, and encourage students to visit hospitals and nursing homes. Hacıkeleşoğlu and Kartopu (2017) recruited students to examine the relationship between religiosity and compassion. The researchers determined that students with high religiosity were more compassionate than those with low religiosity. İşgör (2017) investigated how much attachment style and academic performance predicted compassion in university students. Pür (2022) focused on the relationship between compassion and religiosity in high school students and reported two findings. First, there was a positive correlation between compassion and religiosity. Second, female high school students associated compassion with religiosity more than their male counterparts. Nas, Sak, and Tanhan (2021) used the Compassion Scale (CS) to examine how sociodemographic characteristics affected high school students' compassion levels. They reported that age, the number of siblings, grade level, mother's education and employment status, father's employment status, and high school type did not affect the participants' CS total and subscale scores.

Researchers have looked into compassion in healthcare professionals (Atilla Gök, 2015; Kılıç, Bakan, Aslan & Uçar, 2020; Kırçı & Kızıler, 2021; Polat & Erdem, 2017; Sökmen & Taşpınar, 2021). Some researchers have also focused on compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and compassion fear (Çevik & Tanhan, 2020; Nas, 2021; Pehlivan & Güner, 2018; Şeremet & Ekinci, 2021; Yılmaz & Üstün, 2018). Researchers have conducted review studies, including conceptual analyses of phenomena, developed scales, and focused on people's perceptions of compassion. All students should be taught compassion because social, affective, and ethical skills play an increasingly central role in addition to academic learning (Jazaieri, 2018). Educational activities related to compassion are critical for values and character education. Therefore, educators can use educational activities to help their students develop compassion (Nas & Kardaş, 2022). One should have the compassion to maintain one's well-being and to understand the feelings and pain of others. Compassion is instrumental in developing altruism, respect, love, cooperation, and justice. Jazaieri (2018) says that while parents and family systems are powerful models of compassion for young children, compassion can also be modeled for students within the classroom, beginning with preschool and continuing into graduate school. Values education is included in almost all curricula (preschool, primary, secondary, higher education, postgraduate, etc.). Values education begins at home and is reinforced at school. Thus, teachers play a crucial role in helping their students adopt values. Preservice teachers are the teachers of tomorrow. If we identify how they view compassion, we can encourage them to develop an awareness of it. Individuals' perceptions of compassion may differ. Addressing the perceptions of preservice teachers will contribute to the literature in order to better understand

compassion. Therefore, this study investigated how preservice teachers perceived compassion. To that end, the following are the research questions:

- What does compassion mean to you?
- Why do you think compassion is necessary?
- What characteristics do you think compassionate people have?
- Do you observe compassion in your daily life? If so, can you give us some examples, please?
- What should parents and teachers do to ensure children care about and develop compassion? (at home and at school)

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Model

This qualitative study adopted a phenomenological research design to determine how preservice teachers perceived compassion. Phenomena come in various forms, such as events, experiences, perceptions, orientations, concepts, and situations. Researchers adopt phenomenological research designs to analyze phenomena or events that we are not entirely alien to but do not have a deep understanding or knowledge of (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006, p. 72). Qualitative research helps us understand a phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). This study adopted a phenomenological research design because it aimed to reveal how preservice teachers perceived compassion. This study focused on revealing why preservice teachers think compassion is necessary, what characteristics they think compassionate people have, if they observe compassion in their daily lives, and their perspectives on what parents and teachers should do to ensure children care about and develop compassion at home and at school.

2.2. Study Group

The sample consisted of 43 students from the faculty of education (science teaching, primary school math teaching, art and craft teaching, English teaching, music teaching, Turkish teaching, and social studies teaching) of Van Yüzüncü Yıl University in the 2022-2023 academic year. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling, which is a purposive sampling method. Convenience sampling was the method of choice because it is time-effective and practical (Patton, 1987; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006).

Table 1. *Sociodemographic Characteristics*

Variable		*f*
Gender	Woman	30
	Man	13
Department	Art and craft teaching	17
	Primary school math teaching	5
	Science teaching	5
	English teaching	4
	Social studies teaching	3
	Preschool teaching	3
	Classroom teaching	3
	Turkish teaching	2
	Music teaching	1

The sample consisted of 13 men and 30 women. Participants majored in art and craft teaching (n=17), primary school math teaching (n=5), science teaching (n=5), English teaching (n=4), social studies teaching (n=3), preschool teaching (n=3), classroom teaching (n=3), Turkish teaching (n=2), or music teaching (n=1).The preservice teachers in the study are from 9 different fields in the faculty of education at Van Yüzüncü Yıl University.

2.3. Data Collection Tools and Procedures

The researchers received the necessary permission from the Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Ethical Commission. The data were collected at Van Yüzüncü Yıl University's educational faculty in the 2022-2023 academic year during the autumn period in about one month. The data were collected using a semi-structured interview

guide based on the researchers' literature review on compassion. The guide consisted of five open-ended questions based on expert feedback. Two preservice teachers checked the questions for intelligibility and relevance. Experts opinions and preservice teachers opinions were examined, necessary corrections were made, and the semi-structured interview form was finalized. All preservice students were briefed about the research purpose and procedure. Informed consent was obtained from those who agreed to participate in the study. Preservice teachers who volunteered to participate in the study were contacted by the researchers. They were informed that they could drop out of the study at any point they wanted, and their personal information would not be disclosed in the study results. The preservice teachers are students of researchers. After the lessons of preservice teachers in their class, they asked to volunter for the research. It took each participant 15-20 minutes to answer the questions.

2.4. Data Analysis

The study data were collected through face-to-face interviews, but some of the preservice teachers opinions regarding the questions in the interview form were taken in writing.

The data were analyzed using content analysis, which is a qualitative method. Researchers employ content analysis to obtain concepts and relationships to explain data. Content analysis involves the systematic identification of key concepts and themes in order to make inferences in a way that readers can understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006).

First, the researchers read the raw data and coded it. The applied forms were numbered 1 to 43, and the answers were read one by one. During the data analysis, the two researchers separately created a list of codes. Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula was used to measure inter-coder reliability (Reliability=Number of consistencies/Consistencies+Number of inconsistenciesx100). Inter-coder reliability was calculated to be 91%. Second, researchers assigned a code to each participant (P1, P2, P3, etc.). Third, researchers developed themes out of the codes. Fourth, researchers turned the findings into tables and provided direct quotes from all participants.

2.5. Ethical

This study was received from Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee on 23.01.2023 with the application number "2023/02-10".

3. Findings

This section presented the results in line with the research questions.

Compassion

The first research question was, "What does compassion mean to you?" Participants' responses were grouped under six themes: pity and sympathy (n=25), being human and affection (n=12), empathy (n=10), help and favor (n=9), conscience (n=5), and forgiveness (n=2). Participants expressed their opinions regarding these six themes. Twenty-five participants associated compassion with pity and sympathy. The following are some quotes:

> *"Compassion means sympathy for others. For example, if something bad happens to someone, and you feel bad for them; like you have sympathy for them, we call that compassion. Everyone should have compassion. Life without compassion would be cruel (P4)."*

> *"Having compassion means pitying another living thing (P8)."*

> *"Compassion is the feeling for pity we have on someone who experiences a misfortune (P26)."*

> *"Pitying a living thing in an unfortunate situation (P27)."*

> *"When I hear 'compassion,' I think about sadness and pity (P34)."*

> *"Compassion is at the heart of human interaction. It is the pity we feel when we sense another's pain or when we have pain, which is self-compassion (P37)."*

Twelve participants associated compassion with being human and affection. The following are some quotes:

"Compassion is an important value that ensures the continuation of humanity. It is the hope of life for the oppressed and victimized (P1)."

"To me, compassion is the core of being human. The world would be more livable if people fully understood and practiced compassion. As beautiful emotions like love and happiness disappear, anger, greed, and self-centeredness become stronger, destroying compassion. Someitmes compassion is the way you look at an animal or a human being. Even a naive way of speaking can be compassionate (P3)."

"Compassion is the affection within a human being. It is the care and affection that a human being has toward other living things (P28)."

"Being human is more than having a human body. A human being is not born as a human being. Being human is a status, a level that can only be attained through great sacrifice, self-sacrifice, and working on oneself. To reach that state, one has to go through many paths, and one of those paths is compassion. It is one of the most basic emotions that makes us who we are. Compassion means the end of all atrocities that ravage the whole world. At a time when all values, virtues, and the most sublime concepts are vanishing, compassion is the salvation of a dying humanity. Compassion is the sun rising into a dark future (P41)."

Ten participants associated compassion with empathy. The following are some quotes:

"When I hear the word 'compassion,' I think of someone understanding others and having empathy for them (P5)."

"Empathy is the key to feeling and practicing compassion (P14)."

"Empaths can put themselves in others' shoes and understand what they feel and think (P25)."

"The first thing that comes to mind when I hear the word 'compassion' is having empathy for someone and using my imagination to better understand their actions (P27)."

"Compassion means empathy for someone who can't cope with an unfortunate situation they find themselves in (P30)."

Eight participants associated compassion with favor and help. The following are some quotes:

"Compassion has something to do with doing someone a favor and helping them (P10)."

"Compassion makes us feel good. I also think it has something to do with doing a favor or showing kindness to someone (P13)."

"Compassion is an unconditional feeling for others. It's doing someone a favor without expecting anything in return. It's about caring about someone so much that you treat them with kindness (P20)."

"To me, having compassion is helping someone even when you're on bad terms with them (P31)."

"To me, having compassion means helping a human, an animal, or all living things in need of help. Giving food to the hungry, watering a plant that is about to die, leaving food for stray animals in the forest, parks, and gardens, and whatnot. All these things are signs of compassion (P39)."

"Compassion is not sharing your bread with a stray dog, but it is sharing your bread with a stray dog when you're as hungry as it (P42)."

Five participants associated compassion with conscience. The following are some quotes.

"Compassion is when one acts with one's conscience…(P12)."

"Compassion is a virtue that everybody with a good conscience should have. Being sensitive about animals, respecting children…(P16)."

"The word 'compassion' makes me think of the word 'conscience.' Conscience and compassion are directly proportional. I don't think someone without compassion can have a good conscience. If living conditions are properly regulated, everybody can be compassionate. Because compassion is something innate (P19)."

"Compassion is the good conscience in us (P28)."

Two participants associated compassion with forgiveness. The following are some quotes:

''Compassion means being a forgiving person, that is, being merciful (P35)."

''Having compassion is forgiving a guilty party, although you have the power to punish them (P43)."

Why Compassion is Necessary

The second research question was, "Why do you think compassion is necessary?" Participants' responses were grouped under four themes: understanding others (n=17), social order, security, and peace (n=13), a basic need

(n=7), and the development of values (n=7). Participants expressed their opinions regarding these four themes. Seventeen participants stated that compassion was necessary to understand others. The following are some quotes:

> *"We should treat others as we would like to be treated. Compassion is necessary to communicate better with others and to be more understanding and tolerant toward them (P18)."*

> *"Compassion is what makes us human. You can't expect anything good from someone with no compassion. Compassion lets us understand others and care about them (P20)."*

> *"Humans are innately emotional. However, we have gone through wars and calamities throughout history. So, compassion is our greatest weapon. We need compassion to understand others in every situation (P21)."*

> *"Compassion is a feeling necessary for people to understand each other (P25)."*

> *"For sure, our paths cross with the needy and poor. That's why we need compassion. I mean, we need it to understand those people (P37)."*

Thirteen participants noted that compassion was necessary for social order, security, and peace. The following are some quotes:

> *"Compassion is necessary for social order and vitality. Lack of compassion leads to unrest and a lack of love. The lack of compassion causes wars, violence, and environmental pollution. Compassion is necessary for a safe and peaceful life (P23)."*

> *"Compassion keeps trust and peace among people alive and allows them to respect one another (P24)."*

> *"Life has no meaning without compassion. Lack of compassion brings hatred and unrest. This leads to chaos and disorder. People must have the compassion to live together in peace (P28)."*

> *"Compassion is important for maintaining social order (P35)."*

Eight participants remarked that compassion was necessary for the development of values. The following are some quotes:

> *"Compassion affects people to a great extent. It leads them to goodness and righteousness and encourages them to adopt positive behaviors (P8)."*

> *"We must have compassion for a more righteous and decent life. If we don't have compassion, we only consider our interests and lose the fundamental principles and values that make us who we are. Conscience is the basis of justice, tradition, religious values, and family ties. Any society without compassion loses those values (P9)."*

> *There's no conscience if there's no compassion, so we can't have such values as justice, tolerance, sincerity…(P19)."*

> *"We must have the compassion to keep our values alive (P35)."*

Seven participants viewed compassion as a basic need. The following are some quotes:

> *"I believe that there's no life if there's no compassion. If people weren't compassionate, the big fish would always eat the little ones. Without compassion, we would have problems even with our families. We must be compassionate toward all living things. Compassion is at the core of life. No doubt there'd be more violence if people didn't have compassion (P1)."*

> *"Compassion is a basic need that promotes pity and conscience and shapes the whole life psychologically (P8)."*

> *"Actually, having compassion means pitying, protecting, sparing, and helping. These are our basic needs (P26)."*

> *"At this point, we must think about what life actually is. Certain ideas and systems have played with the identity of life, which has turned into a slavery system. Compassion is life itself and our most basic need (P41)."*

The Characteristics of Compassionate People

The third research question was, "What characteristics do you think compassionate people have?" Participants stated that compassionate people were helpful and benevolent (n=18) empaths (n=19) who were tolerant (n=14), considerate (n=12), respectful (n=12), affectionate (n=8), just (n=5), altruistic (n=3), good-humored (2), and patient (2) sharers (2). Some participants noted that compassionate people were conscientious, knowledgeable, honest, reliable, thoughtful, kind, polite, humble, etc. Participants expressed their opinions regarding these themes. The following are some quotes:

> *"Compassionate people have favorable characteristics. First of all, they are tolerant. I mean, compassionate people are tolerant no matter what they go through. They ask 'why' rather than condemn and judge things or people (P1)."*

"Compassionate people are good to others; they try hard to understand them (P4)."

"Compassionate people have many good characteristics. They're empaths who love, respect, and understand others. They know that whatever happens to others, good or bad, might one day happen to them as well (P5)."

"Compassionate people are philanthropic empaths (P13)."

"Compassionate people are just, polite, conscientious, and kind. They empathize with others and stand against injustices (P16)."

"Compassionate people are considerate and helpful. They help others without expecting anything in return. They can have sympathy for others and take responsibility (P20)."

"Compassionate people are helpful, humble, altruistic, tolerant, respectful, and supportive (P24)."

"Compassionate people are forgiving, understanding, and affectionate (P27)."

"Compassionate people are empaths. They understand, love, and respect others (P33)."

"Compassionate people are tolerant and helpful empaths. They try hard to understand and help others (P37)."

Compassionate people are empaths who understand others (P40)."

"Compassionate people are empaths who can think universally. They help others without fear or expecting anything in return. They have it in themselves to fight for their rights and the rights of others without fearing sanctions or punishment (P42)."

Examples of Compassion

The fourth research question was, "Do you observe compassion in your daily life? If so, can you give us some examples, please?" Participants' responses were grouped under seven themes: having compassion for animals (21), helping those in need (n=15), helping the poor (n=12), parents' compassion (n=8), helping the old (n=8), love for children (n=3), and self-compassion (n=2). Four participants also stated that they observed compassion in cases of visiting relatives (n=1), helping the disabled (n=1), helping refugees (n=1), and having compassion even for those who do not deserve it (n=1). Participants expressed their opinions regarding these themes. The following are some quotes:

"For example, mothers have compassion for their babies. A newborn needs compassion and love. Older adults also need compassion. Helping them, solving their problems, and treating them well, knowing that we'll get old one day, too (P1)."

"For example, I give up my seat to old people on the bus when I go to school or get back home (P5)."

"My parents' pure love for me… or, for example, I want to help the homeless (P7)."

"Adopting or feeding the animals that are cold and hungry. The compassion parents have for their children (P10)."

"The compassion mothers have for their children. Like, children who get compassion from their parents also have compassion for stray animals or those in need (P20)."

"For example, we must help wounded dogs and cats outside (P32)."

"Having compassion for animals, helping those in distress, helping the old, helping those in need, helping the poor…(P34)."

"Feeding and giving water to stray cats and dogs, helping those in need, meeting old people's needs…(P36)."

Recommendations about Compassion

The fifth research question was, "What should parents and teachers do to ensure children care about and develop compassion?" Participants' responses were grouped under two themes: at home and school.

Participants stated that parents should be role models (n=16), inculcate compassion (n=8), explain its importance (n=8), help those in need (n=5), and get children to feed animals (n=3), visit older adults (n=2), and read books (n=2). The following are some quotes:

"Whether children care about compassion depends on how their parents behave at home. Children learn from their parents. They emulate them. If parents are compassionate towards other people and nature, their children will adopt the same values. Parents should also visit their elderly, feed animals, help the poor, or donate money to charity (P1)."

"Parents should inculcate compassion into their children. But, children take their parents as role models, so it is the parents who should be compassionate so that they could raise their children in that way (P4)."

"Parents should show such values to their children by doing and living, not just by telling them (P16)."

> *"Parents should be role models for their children to care about and develop compassion. They must communicate with their children respectfully and affectionately to help them develop compassion (P27)."*

> *"We learn compassion from our parents. So, parents should explain to their children what is right and wrong and why they should or should not do certain things. They should teach their children to respect the elderly, love the younger ones, and avoid bad behaviors. Parents should also be careful in how they act in front of their children because parents are the first teachers of children (P34)."*

Participants noted that teachers should be role models (n=11), tell their students the importance of compassion (n=9), inculcate it into them (n=7), provide games and activities (n=7), help others (n=5), get their students to read books, grow plants, adopt animals, visit animal shelters, and have pen pals. The following are some quotes:

> *"Teachers should get their students to help one another (P3)."*

> *"Teachers should provide their students with in-class activities to make sure that they develop compassion as a value. Those activities should involve educational games. Teachers should tell their children the importance of compassion without scolding or offending them (P34)."*

> *"Teachers should inculcate compassion into their students. They should tell them how important compassion is (P36)."*

> *"All teachers and other staff should be role models for students. They should do activities to enable students to recognize the importance of compassion (P38)."*

> *"Compassion is too important to be covered in 40 minutes at school. Teachers should be psychologically mature to be able to be good role models for their students and help them develop compassion. Students must share with their peers who are subject to inequality. There should be a network of cooperation among schools. Children should plant trees, feed animals, and visit animal shelters. They should both build a network with their peers and be sensitive to other living things (P42)."*

4. Conclusion and Discussion

This study investigated how preservice teachers perceived compassion. The semi-structured interview guide consisted of five questions: What does compassion mean to you?, Why do you think compassion is necessary?, What characteristics do you think compassionate people have?, Do you observe compassion in your daily life? If so, can you give us some examples, please? And what do you think parents and teachers should do to make sure that children care about and develop compassion? This section discussed the results in line with the literature and provided recommendations for educators and researchers.

Most participants associated compassion with pity, sympathy, humanity, and affection. They also associated it with empathy, help, favor, conscience, and forgiveness. Nas (2020) reported that adults associated compassion with affection, sympathy, pity, forgiveness, support, and benevolence. Kıral and Başdağ (2017) found that classroom teachers associated compassion with pity, sympathy, and feeling sorry for others. Sprecher and Fehr (2005) define compassion as a form of affection or sorrow. Most of our participants also associated compassion with being human and affection. Bayırlı (2020) documented that classroom teachers viewed compassion as necessary to being human. Cosley et al. (2010) regarded having compassion as feeling concerned about the well-being of others. Some of our participants also associated having compassion with helping others and doing them favors, thus contributing to their well-being. Jazaieri (2018) argues that compassion involves the intention to see the pain go away or the motivation and readiness to take action to alleviate it. This definition is also consistent with our results. Aydemir, Göçen, and Yıldırım (2021) also found that teachers defined compassion by using the terms "pity," "sympathy," "conscience," "affection," "respect," "fairness," and "the softness of the heart."

Most participants stated that compassion was necessary to understand others. Some participants believed it was necessary for social order, security, and peace, while others viewed it as a basic need. Nas (2020) also found that adults regarded compassion as a source of life. Some of our participants remarked that compassion was necessary for us to develop values, suggesting that they associated compassion with numerous values. Therefore, we can state that values education plays a critical role in internalizing compassion for social order.

Participants stated that compassionate people were empaths who were helpful, philanthropic, tolerant, considerate, respectful, affectionate, just, altruistic, good-humored, and patient sharers. They believed that compassionate people had numerous positive characteristics, such as helping others (altruism), which is

critical for value education. We can state that compassion is an umbrella term for many values we should possess.

Participants gave the example of "having compassion for animals" as the most common example of compassion in their daily lives. The other examples of compassion were helping those in need, helping the poor, parents' compassion, helping the elderly, love for children, and self-compassion. They also stated that visiting relatives, helping the disabled, and having compassion even for those who do not deserve it were other examples of compassion. These statements indicate that most preservice teachers associate compassion with helping others. They also view parents showing affection toward their children as a form of compassion. They also talk about self-compassion, which is another dimension of compassion. Having compassion even for those who do not deserve it is similar to the statement, "Compassion encourages us to avoid depriving others of their fundamental rights and arousing hatred by belittling them even if they are our enemies" (Sayar & Manisalıgil, 2016). Participants stated that parents should be role models, inculcate compassion in children, help others, take care of animals, visit older adults, and read books.

Most participants noted that teachers should be role models, inculcate compassion into their students, and get them to play educational games, grow plans, take care of animals, visit animal shelters, and find pen pals. They also recommended that curricula offer courses on compassion. Kıral and Başdağ (2017) talked about in-class and out-of-class activities for compassion education. The in-class activities include being role models, helping others, and focusing on empathy. The out-of-class activities are visiting nursing homes and orphanages and loving and protecting all living things, which is similar to the recommendation of "visiting animal shelters" made by our participants.

5. Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on the results and the perspectives of preservice teachers:

- Parents should be role models.

- Parents and teachers should underline the importance of helping others to ensure children develop compassion.

- Visiting older adults should be encouraged.

- Reading should be encouraged.

Recommendation for preservice teacher education:

- Preservice teachers should provide in-class and out-of-class activities. For example, lecturers should take preservice teachers to animal shelters, orphanages, nursing homes, etc.

- Affective skills are as critical as cognitive skills. Therefore, teachers should provide students with games and activities regarding important values (altruism, affection, respect, etc.) to make sure that they develop compassion.
- The curricula should address compassion. Therefore, experts should revise them and include educational programs. Researchers should conduct further research to determine the effectiveness of those programs.
- Schools should provide values education, or teachers should address compassion in their lectures.

6. References

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