

## The Relationships among Attitudes toward Teaching, Liking of Children and Occupational Anxieties of Prospective Teachers

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships among attitudes toward teaching, liking of children and occupational anxieties of prospective teachers. A total of 166 prospective teachers participated in the study. Of the participants 64% were female, and 36% were male. The mean age of the participants was 22.32 (SD=2.94). In the data-gathering phase of the study, Barnett Liking of Children Scale, Attitude Scale toward Teaching, and Occupational Anxiety Scale were administered to the participants. Results showed that there was a low negative statistically significant correlation between liking of children and attitudes toward teaching ( $r=-.217$ ;  $p=.005$ ), whereas there was a low positive statistically significant correlation between liking of children and occupational anxiety ( $r=.188$ ;  $p=.015$ ). Results also showed that there was no significant correlation between attitudes toward teaching and occupational anxieties of prospective teachers. Results showed that female prospective teachers reported higher levels of liking of children than male counterparts ( $p=.06$ ), whereas male prospective teachers have more positive attitudes toward teaching than female counterparts.*

*Keywords: liking of children, attitudes, occupational anxieties, preservice teachers.*

### 1. Introduction

Attitudes have been widely studied in the field of education and are believed to influence teachers' perceptions, expectations, and performance. Female teachers are thought to have positive attitudes toward both children and teaching as a profession. Western studies have shown that females reported a significant greater liking of children than did males (Barnett & Sinisi, 1990), prospective teachers reported liking of children as being the most frequently reported influences given for deciding to teach (Marso & Pigge, 1994), and female prospective teachers were more likely than male prospective teachers to have been influenced in their decision to become teachers by prior experience with youth and liking of children (Pigge & Marso, 1988). Studies demonstrated that female and male prospective and practicing teachers did not differ significantly in their reported levels of liking of children (Gelbal & Duyan, 2010), whereas some studies showed that female prospective teachers reported a significant greater liking of children than did male prospective teachers (Çimen, 2016, İman, 2014; Yazıcı, 2013). A meta-analysis study indicated that females' attitudes toward teaching profession were more positive than males in Turkey (Kubiatko & Arik, 2014). However, some Turkish studies showed that female and male prospective teachers did not differ significantly in their reported attitudes toward teaching as a profession (Akgün & Özgür, 2014; Tok, 2012). Chakraborty and Mondal (2014) found that prospective teachers' attitudes toward teaching profession did not differ significantly in terms of gender, whereas Jain (2007) found that female teachers have favourable attitudes towards teaching profession as compared to their counterparts.

Occupational anxiety in teaching is related to the levels and sources of stress, anxiety and concerns in both prospective and practicing teachers. Turkish studies have shown that prospective teachers reported low-to-moderate level of occupational anxiety (Akgün & Özgür, 2014; Taşdemir, 2015). The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationships among attitudes toward teaching, liking of children and occupational anxieties of prospective teachers.

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## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants

A total of 166 Turkish prospective teachers participated in the study. Of the participants 64% were female, and 36% were male; 19.9% were the students of ICT teacher training program; 10.8% were the students of counselling and psychological guidance program; 14.5% were the students of pre-school teacher training program; 15.1% were the students of social science teacher training program, 22.3% were the students of special education teacher training program, and 17.5% were the students of classroom teacher training program. The mean age of the participants was 22.32 ( $SD = 2.94$ ).

### 3. Measures

*Attitude Scale toward Teaching* (ASTT) is a 23-item self-report scale yielding a total possible score ranging from 23 to 115. This scale was developed by Erkuş et al. (2000) in the Turkish language. A principal components analysis revealed that the ASTT constitute a single-factor scale. The items of the ASTT are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. A sample item from the ASTT include “*To me, teaching is the most holy profession*”. In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.64 for the ASTT.

*Barnett Liking of Children Scale* (BLOCS) is a 14-item self-report scale yielding a total possible score ranging from 14 to 98. This scale was developed by Barnett and Sinisi (1990) to assess the extent to which individuals have a favourable attitude toward children. The adaptation study of BLOCS to Turkish language and culture was conducted by Duyan and Gelbal (2008). A principal components analysis revealed that the BLOCS constitute a single-factor scale. The items of the BLOCS are scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. A sample item from the BLOCS includes “*I feel happy when I make a child smile*”. In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.89 for the BLOCS.

*The Occupational Anxiety Scale* (OAS) is a 45-item self-report scale yielding a total possible score ranging from 45 to 225. This scale was developed by Cabı and Yalçınalp (2013) in the Turkish language. This scale measures eight facets of occupational anxiety that pre-service teachers may experience in their future professional lives: (1) anxiety of licensure exam (3 items), (2) anxiety of socio-economic status (7 items), (3) anxiety of interaction with school administrators (3 items), (4) anxiety of disharmony (3 items), (5) anxiety of interaction with students (6 items), (6) anxiety of self-development (4 items), (7) anxiety of job-related issues (14 items), and (8) anxiety of interaction with colleagues and parents (5 items). The items of the OAS are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= I am very anxious about to 5 = I am not anxious about. Therefore, a low score shows a high level of anxiety in the related factor. A sample item from the OAS includes “*what if I will regret for my career choice in teaching*”. In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficients were found to be 0.96 for the “anxiety of job-related issues”, 0.88 for the “anxiety of socio-economic status”, 0.93 for the “anxiety of interaction with students”, 0.86 for the “anxiety of interaction with colleagues and parents”, 0.89 for the “anxiety of self-development”, 0.89 for the “anxiety of licensure exams”, 0.77 for the “anxiety of disharmony”, 0.83 for the “anxiety of interaction with school administration”, and 0.96 for the entire scale.

## 4. Statistical Analysis

To analyze the data, we employed descriptive statistics, Pearson’s product-moment correlations, and *t*-test comparisons.

## 5. Results

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the study variables. The participants reported moderate level positive attitudes toward teaching profession, and a general tendency to like children, whereas reported relatively lower levels of occupational anxiety regarding teaching profession.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables (N = 166)

Measures	M	SD
Anxiety of job-related issues	53.10	13.42
Anxiety of socio-economic status	22.31	7.03
Anxiety of interaction with students	22.07	6.16

Anxiety of interaction with colleagues and parents	19.23	4.73
Anxiety of self-development	14.46	4.50
Anxiety of licensure exam	7.83	3.68
Anxiety of disharmony	9.92	3.44
Anxiety of interaction with school administrators	9.94	3.19
<i>OAS-Total</i>	158.89	36.55
<i>BLOCS</i>	83.11	13.41
<i>ASTT</i>	59.52	8.95

### 5.1 Correlational Analysis

There was a low statistically significant negative correlation between liking of children and attitudes toward teaching as a profession ( $r=-.217$ ;  $p=.005$ ), while there was a low statistically significant positive correlation between liking of children and occupational anxiety ( $r=.188$ ;  $p=.015$ ). However, a Turkish study showed that liking of children has a low but positive significant effect on the prospective teachers' attitudes toward teaching as a profession (Çelik et al. 2013). The correlational analysis also showed that there was no statistically significant relationship between attitudes toward teaching as a profession and occupational anxiety. This finding is consistent with Akgün and Özgür's (2014) findings showing that there was no significant relationship between prospective teachers' occupational anxiety and attitudes toward teaching profession ( $r=.125$ ;  $p > .05$ ).

### 5.2 T-Test Analyses

A *t*-test analysis showed that female and male prospective teachers did not differ significantly in their reported levels of liking of children: for females ( $M=84.53$ ,  $SD=12.87$ ), for males ( $M=80.41$ ,  $SD=14.10$ ), ( $t= 1.89$ ,  $df =164$ ,  $p = .06$ ). Similarly, *t*-test analysis showed that female and male prospective teachers did not differ significantly in their reported levels of occupational anxiety: for females ( $M = 156.79$ ,  $SD = 37.95$ ), for males ( $M = 162.91$ ,  $SD = 33.67$ ), ( $t = -1.02$ ,  $df = 164$ ,  $p = .30$ ). In addition, *t*-test analyses revealed that females and males did not differ significantly in their reported eight different occupational anxiety sub-dimensions. However, these findings are not consistent with the findings of Akgün and Özgür (2014), showing that male prospective teachers were more anxious than their female counterparts. A *t*-test analysis also showed that female and male prospective teachers differed significantly in their reported attitudes toward teaching as a profession. Interestingly, male prospective teachers reported more positive attitudes toward teaching than did female prospective teachers. These findings are not consistent with the findings of Akgün and Özgür (2014), showing that there was no significant differences between the male and female prospective teachers' levels of attitudes toward teaching profession.

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