

Ethics of Teaching Profession from the Perspective of Students According to the Gender Variable

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the professional, ethical and unethical behaviors that undergraduate students encounter during their education life from a gender perspective. Phenomenology design, which is one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the study. The research was conducted with 64 students studying at the education faculty of a state university during the 2019-2020 academic year. The most expressed unethical behaviors by female and male students are discrimination, roughness and misconduct. While female students stated that the ethical behaviors they faced were, in turn, professional commitment/development, moral aid and equality/impartiality; Male students, on the other hand, expressed financial aid, moral aid and research on the cause of the problem. The most important result of the study is that male students stated that they did not encounter ethical behavior in teachers. According to the answers given by the female students to the research questions in the study, the unethical behaviors of the teachers were revealed as discrimination, roughness and misconduct, respectively. In contrast, male students stated roughness, discrimination and misconduct.

Keywords: Ethical behaviors, Unethical behaviors, Discriminatory, Moral aid.

Introduction

Nowadays, it is obvious that one of the concepts mentioned in many disciplines from education, health, justice to management sciences is ethics. Ethics is a discipline that investigates the foundations and underlying values of moral actions (Usta, 2011), determines the right and wrong boundaries of actions (Lamberton & Minor, 1995). Ethics based on what makes human actions morally valuable or worthless (Pehlivan-Aydın, 2001) "is the doctrine of correct action" (Korkut, 2014). Ethics focuses on attitudes and behaviors such as evaluating, choosing, making desired actions related to human rights and responsibilities towards other people (Rausch, Lindquist, & Steckel, 2014; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2011; Smith & Smith, 2016). When these definitions are examined, the concept of ethics can be defined as a field that examines the moral correctness of an individual's behavior and the values and norms underlying these behaviors. From this point of view, ethics is the whole of values and moral principles that determine what is right and what is wrong and set universal criteria in this direction (Cevizci, 2002). These criteria are also important for professions. Professional ethics, defined as the behaviors that a professional must obey, is also important for the teaching profession.

Because professional values and ethics guide teachers' professional practices in many respects (Bullough, 2011; Campbell, 2008; Hansen, 2001). All teachers need to develop their understanding of ethics to maintain professional standards in teaching and research and monitor and guide students' ethical behavior (Kruea-In & Kruea-In, 2015).

Ethical behaviors of teachers are important in terms of being role models in society and increasing the reputation of the teaching profession (Korkko, Kyro-Ammala, & Turunen, 2016). Because students not only learn knowledge and skills from teachers but also learn values such as justice, equality, or discrimination (Bergman, 2013). Principles of teaching professional ethics generally determine the boundaries of the basic principles teachers must obey in their interactions with students, parents, colleagues and other members of the society and fulfilling their responsibilities towards them (Karatas, Caner, Kahyaoglu, & Kâhya, 2019). The ethical principles that teachers must comply within the teaching profession Aydın (2006) stated that professionalism, responsibility, justice, equality, ensuring a healthy and safe environment for students, avoiding corruption, honesty-truthfulness and trust, impartiality, professional commitment and continuous improvement, respect and the effective use of resources. Shapira-Lishchinsky (2019) gathered the ethical dimensions of the teaching profession into five dimensions: caring for the learning and well-being of students, professionalism, professional relations between teachers, respecting the law, school regulations and student rights, and respecting parents and the school community. When these dimensions are examined, it can be said that teachers establish standards of behavior regarding the situations they encounter. According to Wynne (1995; cited in Bergman, 2013), teachers should be experts in ethics since they will be confronted with ethical events throughout their professional lives. Teachers who do not know how to react ethically will not teach ethics and will not be an example for their students (Gokçe, 2013).

Problem of Research

When the literature is examined, it is seen that there has been a rapid increase in the rate of teachers'

misconduct in recent years (Malone, 2009); There are also studies revealing that teachers exhibit unethical behaviors (Arslan-Namlı, 2017; Demirkasımoglu & Kuru Çetin, 2015, Yılmaz & Altınkurt, 2009; Pelit & Guçer, 2006). However, in the researches it is seen that they focus on the ethical codes of the teaching profession (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016), the ethical perceptions of teachers (Sakar, 2014), ethical practices related to the teaching profession (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2015), the ethical perceptions of teacher candidates (Nganga & Chanb, 2015; Kruea-In and Kruea-In, 2015; Karatas, Caner, Kahyaoglu, & Kâhya, 2019; Pelit & Guçer, 2006) and ethics in teacher education (Afdal, 2019). These studies are generally based on the concept of ethics and examine teachers' ethical and unethical behaviors. From this point of view, it is seen that the student perspective is ignored in studies on teachers' ethical behavior. The aim of this study is to reveal ethical and unethical behaviors related to professional ethics that students encounter throughout their education life. Within the aim of this study, answers to the following questions were looked for.

1. What are the unethical behaviors that students encounter during their education life according to their gender?
2. What are the ethical behaviors that students encounter during their education life according to their gender?

Methodology of Research

General Background of Research

The phenomenology design, which is one of the qualitative research designs, which is suitable for the nature of the research, was used in the study. Within this design, it is aimed to reveal and interpret individual perceptions or perspectives regarding a certain phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

Sample of Research

The research was conducted with 64 students at the education faculty of a state university in the 2019-2020 academic year. 42 female and 22 male students participated in the study. Among the sampling methods, the students participating in the research were determined by the maximum diversity sampling method, and attention was paid to age, department, gender and grade.

Instrument and Procedures

Since it was aimed to reach detailed data on ethical and unethical behaviors related to teaching professional ethics that students encountered during their education life within the framework of certain headings in the study, the data were collected with a semi-structured interview form. Interview forms are a good way to learn how people understand reality, what meaning they attribute to reality, how they define and construct reality (Punch, 2005). The personal opinions of the researchers were not included in the study. Researchers have excluded their opinions and value judgments from the study.

Data Analysis

The data were collected from the participants in a written form. Descriptive analysis technique was used to analyze the obtained data. The main purpose of descriptive analysis is to summarize and interpret data according to previously determined themes (Yıldırım & Simsek, 2008). The themes in the study were determined as “ethical and unethical behaviors” of the teaching profession, in line with the sub-objectives of the research. Although these two main themes were created at the beginning of the research with the deductive method, the subcategories were determined by the inductive method during the analysis. The researchers avoided examples and expressions that would reveal the identity of the participants in the study.

Validity and Reliability

The research has been arranged according to the basic elements of “credibility, transferability, invariance, verifiability” developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985, akt. Guler, Halıcıoğlu, & Taskın, 2015) to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research. To ensure “credibility” in the study, participating confirmation of the students interviewed was obtained. In analyzing the data, it was tried to provide credibility by calculating the percentage of agreement in coding, taking into account the perspective of more than one researcher. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) suggested that detailed descriptions should be made to increase the “transferability” of research results. Moreover, maximum diversity sampling was used to

ensure transferability in the research. For the concept of “invariance,” which has a parallel meaning with reliability, what needs to be done is to explain in detail the stages of data collection and analysis. In this process, comprehensive data usage and detailed explanation were made in the research. Additionally, while presenting the study results, appropriate graphics were used to provide the reader with more information.

Results of Research

Unethical Behaviors

In the study, students were asked what unethical behaviors they encountered during their education life, and the answers were given in Figure 1, separated by gender.

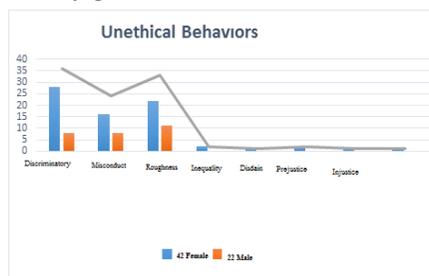


Figure 1: Unethical Behaviors

As seen in Figure 1, female students were mostly stated unethical behaviors as discriminatory (n = 28), roughness (n = 22), misconduct (n = 16), inequality (n = 2), disdain (n = 2), prejudice (n = 1), injustice (n = 1), responsibility (n = 1); Male students, on the other hand, mostly stated unethical behaviors as roughness (n = 11), discrimination (n = 8) and misconduct (n = 8). In total, the three most frequently expressed unethical behaviors are discrimination (n = 28), roughness (n = 22) and misconduct (n = 16). Considering the views of the participants, it is seen that female students mentioned discrimination from unethical behavior more than male students. Still, male students mentioned roughness as an unethical behavior more than female students. One of the most important findings is that both male and female students focus on behaviors related to discrimination, misconduct and violence. A few opinions are given below as an example:

In my school years, our principal beat the kids so badly when there was nothing (Male,1, physical violence to students)

In middle school, our math teacher used to beat students when he got angry, so nobody liked math class (Female,1, physical violence)

Ethical Behaviors

In the study, students were asked what the ethical behaviors they encountered were during their education life, and the answers were given in Figure 1, classified by gender.

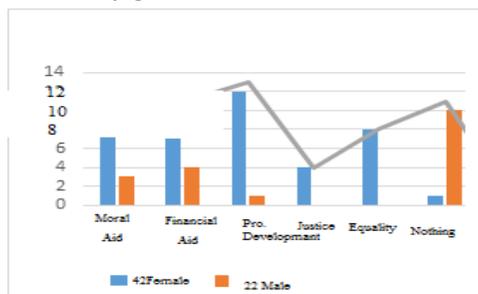


Figure 2: Ethical Behaviors

As shown in Figure 2, ethical behaviors expressed by students are professional commitment/development (n = 13), moral aid (n = 11), financial aid (n = 11). While female students stated that the ethical behaviors they faced were professional commitment/development, moral aid and equality/impartiality, respectively; Male students, on the other hand, expressed financial aid, moral aid. An important point that draws attention here is that ten male students did not encounter any significant ethical behavior. Considering the opinions of the participants, it is seen that the female students focused on the behaviors related to professional commitment in ethical behavior. In contrast, the male students mentioned more about the financial aid provided by teachers. It is an important result that female students give examples of ethical behaviors related to direct equality and impartiality.

A friend of ours had leukemia in primary school, and our teacher always visited him. (Female,5, moral aid)

In high school, my teacher would give additional lessons to a few of our friends as there was not enough workspace. (Male, 8, moral aid)

Discussion

This study aims to reveal the professional, ethical and unethical behaviors that undergraduate students encounter during their education life from a gender perspective. Unethical behaviors expressed by female and male students were stated as discrimination, roughness and misconduct. Aybek and Karatas (2016) concluded in their study that the most unethical behaviors teacher candidates encounter are discrimination, humiliation and disrespect. Although the two studies differ from each other with the emphasis of the participants on the concept of roughness in this study, it is a remarkable finding that the act of discrimination appeared in both studies. Witcher and Onwuegbuzie (1999) revealed the characteristics of effective teachers in their research with prospective teachers at a university in the United States. Being student-focused and ethical are among the themes determined in the relevant research. In these themes, students listed the characteristics of effective teachers. They listed traits such as student love, sensitivity, neutrality, non-discrimination, equal treatment, non-prejudice, kindness, compassion and respect. Ye and Law (2019) also state that teachers should have some moral and ethical principles. Individuals raised as teachers in China are taught ethical principles such as love, respect and treat their students as their children and are asked to adopt them when they become teachers. The results of the research they have already done support this assumption. The prospective teachers think that teachers should have similar characteristics, even in different parts of the world.

Considering the gender concepts, which are the main perspectives of the research, while the ethical behaviors faced by female students are respectively professional commitment/development, moral assistance and equality/impartiality; Male students, on the other hand, expressed financial aid, moral aid and researching the cause of the problem. The most important result of the study is that male students stated that they did not encounter ethical behavior in teachers. The reason for this may be that students do not know what ethical and unethical behaviors are or that ethical behaviors are perceived as routine behaviors expected from teachers. Altinkurt and

Yılmaz (2011) found similar results during their research. They concluded that prospective teachers learned the principles of the teaching profession only theoretically and did not learn the profession adequately. Aybek and Karatas (2016), on the other hand, stated that equality, respect, justice and obeying the rules; In the study conducted by Karatas, Caner, Kahyaoglu, and Kahya (2019), prospective teachers found that teachers' behavior not to discriminate, not compare their students, and exhibit fair and impartial behaviors were in the first place. Moreover, in the same study, the behaviors of attending the class on time, using the lesson time effectively, and coming to the lesson prepared were also expressed with high frequency as ethical teacher behaviors.

According to the answers given by the female students to the research questions in the study, the unethical behaviors of the teachers were revealed as discrimination, roughness and misconduct, respectively. In contrast, male students stated roughness, discrimination and misconduct. In the study, it was observed that unethical behaviors observed by female students in teachers were approximately three times more than male students' opinions. Female students expressed more opinions about evaluating unethical behaviors. The fact that women are more punctilious than male students might be the cause of it.

Similarly, Pelit and Guçer (2006) concluded that female students are more punctilious and sensitive about ethical principles than male students. In the study conducted by Lau and Haug (2011), it was found that female students' point of view about ethical principles is more sensitive than male students. In a study conducted by Au, Chan and Tse (2006) in a university in China, it was found that female students gave more importance to ethical standards than male students; In the research conducted by Sakar (2015) with the students of Çukurova University and Stedham, Yamamura and Beekun (2007) at a university in Germany; In the study conducted by Doganer and Ozbek (2019) with prospective physical education teachers, it was found that female students attach more importance to ethical principles than male students. Apart from these studies, in the study conducted by Altinkurt and Yılmaz (2011), it was concluded that male candidate teachers were more

sensitive to unethical behaviors than women. In the same study, according to prospective teachers, the most unethical behavior by teachers was determined as "Not paying enough attention to students with low levels of success." This is also an item included in the misconduct. From this perspective, it can be said that it contains similar results in the research.

Conclusions

Considering that teachers are the ones who train all professionals and instill certain values in them, they are expected to exhibit ethical behaviors and act as an example to society. According to Bergman (2013), students learn ethical or unethical values such as justice, equality, and discrimination from their teachers. Considering the results of the research, ethical and unethical behavior awareness training can be organized for male students since they are less sensitive to unethical behavior. To spread ethical awareness, activities such as theatre plays, musicals, etc. with ethical subjects in which the students take part can be held regularly every year. Ethics conferences, teacher-student meetings, ethics workshops for students can be organized systematically every year. Since teaching professional ethics will be necessary for all teachers in their professional lives, it can be included in compulsory courses for candidates to learn and internalize before becoming teachers. The course can be taught both in theory and in practice. This research which was prepared within gender may be based on the department and grade. This qualitative research can be conducted quantitatively and the results can be generalized. Similar research can be conducted with the education faculty students of private universities and the results can be compared.

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