

The effects of some values on the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards equal opportunities

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The aim of this study is to determine what kind of mediating effects such positive values as modesty and tolerance have on the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards equal opportunities. The study is based on the correlation survey model. In the study, three scales developed by Goldberg have been used. The confirmatory factor analysis in Spss (Amos) program has been implemented for each scale used in the study. The population of the study comprises 420 pre-service teachers who are attending the Faculty of Education at Fırat University in Elazığ, Turkey during the spring term of 2010-2011 academic year. No population-choice has been done in the study, and the scales have been distributed to all the pre-service teachers in Fırat University Education Faculty. 302 scales answered by the pre-service teachers have been evaluated. As a result of the study, it has been identified that modesty through tolerance has a more powerful effect on equal opportunities.

Keywords: Tolerance, equal opportunities, pre-service teachers.

Introduction

The fact that social and economic equal opportunities cannot be offered among people gives rise to many problems. Thus, there is greater emphasis on such concepts as democratic rights, pluralism, equal opportunities, social justice in this day and age (Tanilli, 2007). The creation of the societal relationships that are democratically healthy depends on the establishment of equal opportunities. The problem that equal opportunities are not exactly offered in education, technology, transportation, health, law, and other public services concerns both the political authority and the civil society (Ateş, 2007).

The mission for overcoming this problem falls primarily to families and schools. The social facilities and capacities of schools should be developed in order for students and teachers to contribute to their own self-improvement according to their interests and abilities. As such, the establishment of equal opportunities among students becomes possible essentially by training conscious administrators and teachers. And this study tries to scrutinize the direct or mediating effects of some values on offering equal opportunities from the viewpoint of the pre-service teachers.

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The concept of equal opportunities means 'no discrimination among individuals in terms of rights and opportunities' in social sense, and it means 'doing everybody justice, accordance of rights and fairness' in moral terms; and jurally it implies the equality of the legal obligations and prohibitions for all citizens regardless of their personal and social statuses and characteristics (Ünlü, 2009). In order for a positive attitude toward equal opportunities to become a determinant element in societal relations, we need parents, teachers and administrators who demonstrate positive attitudes towards equal opportunities and democracy (Akpınar, 2008). And a positive attitude toward equal opportunities is possible when individuals adopt some values such as modesty and tolerance.

In relevant literature, tolerance is not only used to mean 'to support, reinforce, value (Kabaagaç and Alova, 1995). and to protect and look after (Lewis, 2009), but it is also used to mean 'to put up with, endure, bear up, resign oneself to, unprejudicedness, goodwill, fraternity, giving an opportunity, affection and sympathy (Flexner, 1977). The point that draws attention in all of these definitions is that tolerance highlights the fact that one should be tolerant of other individuals, opinions and life styles, and acknowledge them (Atalay,2008).

Modesty is generally used to mean humbleness, not looking down on and not ostracizing others, openness to being consistently renewable and avoiding egocentrism (Bardakçı, 2008). Being modest can ensure an individual such practical gains as attaining optimum results with available facilities, being open to change and communication means. It is easier for modest individuals to get such achievements as acting fairly, commitment to equality of opportunity and evaluating impartially. The point to be considered here is that such values as equal opportunities, modesty, indulgence and tolerance are all interrelated, because commitment to equal opportunities and developing democratic attitudes are realizable only by loving, embracing and tolerating people unconditionally (Cihan, 2010). Together with the technological innovations that have speeded up more especially since the onset of the 21th century, increase in competition and determination to win have become ultimate goals for people. Becoming besotted with this rapid flow has caused to turn a blind eye to the vital importance of such values as cherishing, caring and embracing others, patience, thinking calmly and comprehensively, tolerance, showing others respect and modesty (Sayar, 2010). The need for these values necessitates efforts to promote love, tolerance and equal opportunities primarily within families and schools. Thus, it is crucial that teachers, educational administrators and families have the necessary equipment for the issues of tolerance, modesty and equal opportunities.

Problem of study

There are various factors directly effective on the attitude toward the necessity of equal opportunities among people. However, the main problem here is that it is not known to what extent the mediating and latent factors other than those researched for their direct effects can influence the available effect. Concordantly, the fact that it has been sofar estimated to what extent tolerance as a mediating variable, along with modesty, has effect on the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards equal opportunities has been considered as a problem in this study.

Aim of study

This study aims to show that it is also possible for the mediator variables, instead of only one factor, to have an effect on the attitude toward equal opportunities within the context of the pre-service teachers' views. Therefore, the study has tried to answer the following questions:

- Does modesty have a direct effect on the attitude toward equal opportunities?
- Does tolerance have a meaningful mediating effect between modesty and equal opportunities?

Methods

This research study is based on the correlation model; and three scales (questionnaires) developed by Goldberg have been used in the research. The confirmatory factor analysis in SPSS (AMOS) program has been implemented for each scale used in the study. Then, a consistent structural (mediating) model has been drawn, and a mediating model having good consistency values (fit) (Bayram, 2010; Bentler and Benet, 1980; Hu and Bentler, 1998) has been tested.

Universe and population

The population of the study comprises 420 pre-service teachers who are attending the Faculty of Education at Firat University in Elazığ, Turkey during the spring term of 2010-2011 academic year. No population-choice has been done in the study, and the scales have been distributed to all pre-service teachers (from the teacher-training programs of science education, social sciences education, Turkish language education, preschool education, classroom teaching, maths education, arts education and education of religion and ethics). 302 scales answered by the pre-service teachers from the departments afore-mentioned have been evaluated.

Data collection instruments

Tolerance scale: This is a 10-item and one-factor scale designed by Golberg (2011). The Cronbach’s alpha (consistency) coefficient for the scale has been computed as .70. The scale has been translated from its original version into Turkish by the researchers under the supervision of a language expert. A confirmatory factor analysis has been applied on the scale, and five items lowering its consistency (reliability) value have been omitted. The scale has been evaluated based on the remaining five items having good consistency value. The confirmatory factor analysis result of the scale is shown in Figure 1.

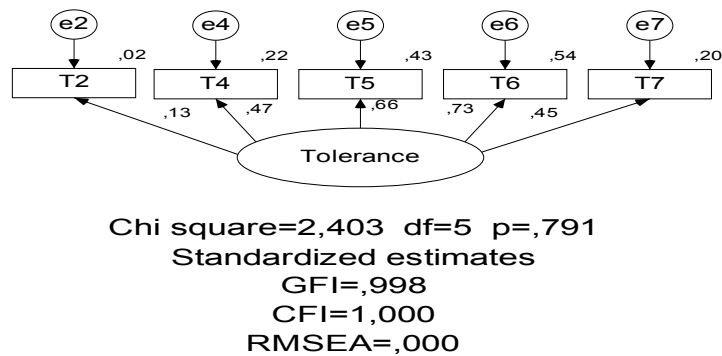


Figure 1. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis of the tolerance scale

As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, it has been observed that the tolerance scale comprises five items, and the consistency values of the scale (GFI, CFI > .95) have been found to be quite high.

Modesty scale: This is a 10-item and one-factor scale designed by Golberg (2011). The Cronbach’s alpha (consistency) coefficient for the scale has been identified as .77. The scale has been translated from its original version into Turkish by the researchers under the supervision of a language expert. And for this study, a confirmatory factor analysis has been applied on the scale, and six items lowering its consistency (reliability) value have been omitted. The scale has been evaluated based on the remaining four items having good consistency value. The confirmatory factor analysis result of the scale is shown in Figure 2.

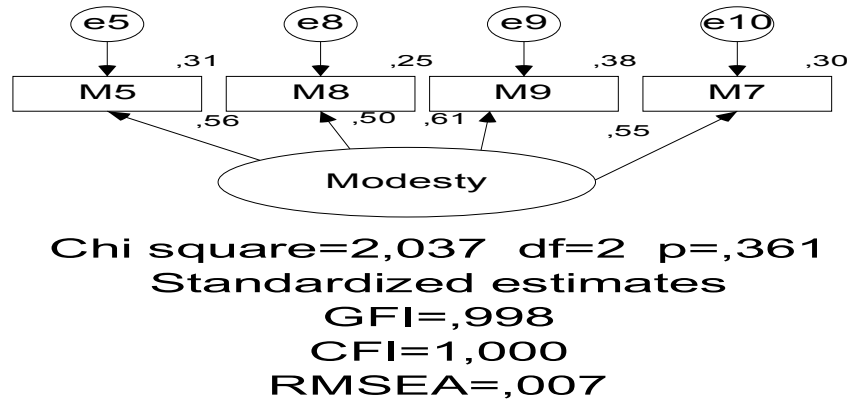


Figure 2. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis of the modesty scale

As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, it has been observed that the modesty scale comprises five items, and the consistency values of the scale (GFI, CFI > .95) have been found to be quite high.

Equal opportunities scale: This is a 9-item and one-factor scale designed by Golberg (2011). The Cronbach's alpha (consistency) coefficient for the scale has been figured out as .70. The scale has been translated from its original version into Turkish by the researchers under the supervision of a language expert. And for this study, a confirmatory factor analysis has been applied on the scale, and four items lowering its consistency (reliability) value have been omitted. The scale has been evaluated based on the remaining five items having good consistency value. The confirmatory factor analysis result of the scale is shown in Figure 3.

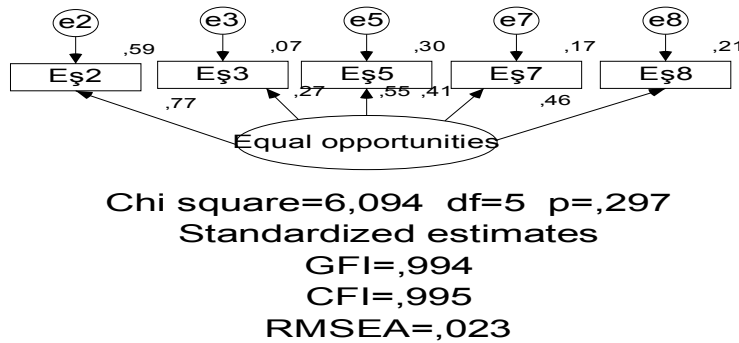


Figure 3. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis of the equal opportunities scale

As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, it has been observed that the equal opportunities scale comprises five items, and the consistency values of the scale (GFI, CFI > .90) have been found to be at a reasonable level.

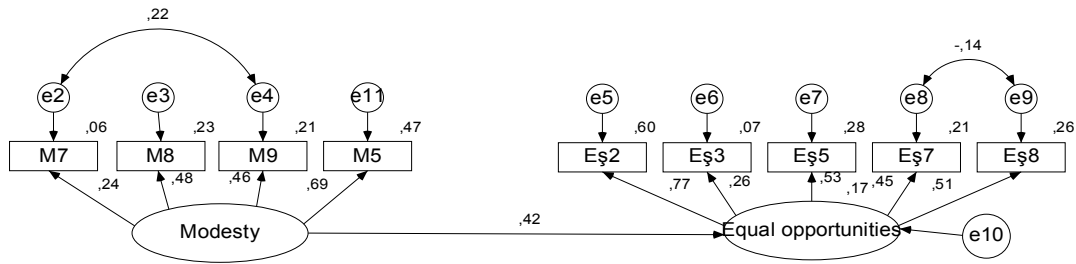
Data Analysis

The data of the study have been evaluated with SPSS (Amos) program, and a mediating model has been developed.

Results

This part of the study gives place to the findings of the relationships among the scales of modesty, tolerance and equal opportunities. Modesty, tolerance and equal opportunities

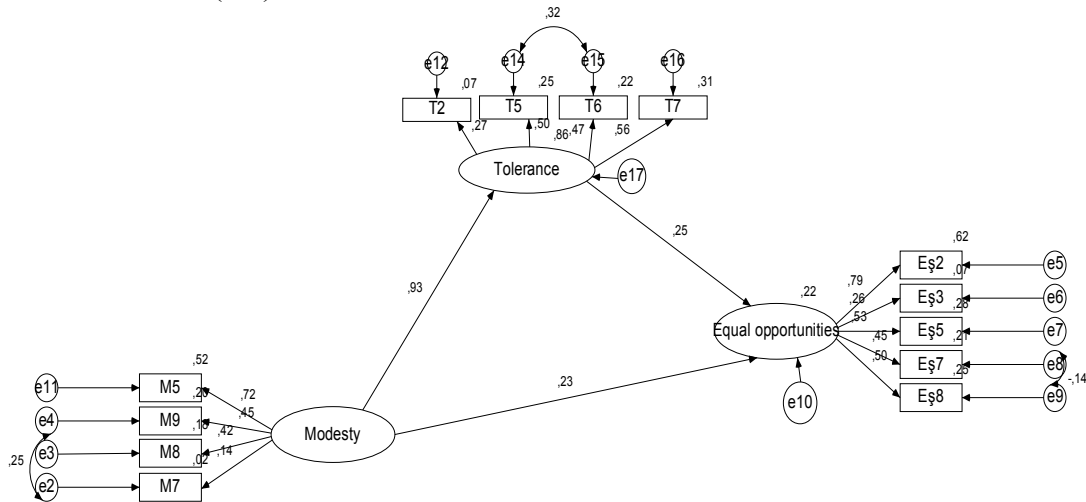
have been accepted as the exogenous variable, the mediating variable and the endogenous variable respectively, and this way the mediating model having the best consistency value has been tested.



Chi square=70,549 df=25 p=,000
 Standardized estimates
 GFI=,962
 CFI=,893
 RMSEA=,067

Figure 4. The path analysis showing the direct effect of modesty on equal scale

It has been identified (figure 4) that modesty regarded as the exogenous variable before the mediating modelling meaningfully affects equal opportunities regarded as the endogenous variable at a level of (.42).



Chi square=178,276 df=62 p=,000
 Standardized estimates
 GFI=,938
 CFI=,851
 RMSEA=,068

Figure 5. The modeling of mediating among modesty, tolerance and equal opportunities

It has been observed (figure 5) that when tolerance is put between modesty and equal opportunities as a mediating variable, the effect of modesty on equal opportunities falls from the level of (.42) to (.23). Here, it can be said that tolerance has a partial mediating effect between modesty and equal opportunities. In other words, according to the pre-service teachers' views, modesty has a positively more powerful effect on equal opportunities via tolerance, but not directly. Here, tolerance stands out as a critical value in offering equal opportunities. In the model above, it is seen that modesty and tolerance explain equal

opportunities with a ratio of % 22. When the consistency values are examined, it can be seen that (GFI > .90), (RMSEA < .08, SRMR: .74 < .80) are within reasonable values, but CFI value is above (.85) but below (.90). Thus, it can be concluded that the model has the valid criteria (Hu and Bentler,1998; Bentler and Benet,1980; Şimşek, 2007).

Discussion and Conclusions

As regards the other research studies parallel with these findings in the relevant literature, (Moore, 2006). Identified in their research study which they conducted in urban and rural areas of Boston, San Francisco and Washington states of the USA that there is meaningful difference among tolerance levels of individuals; and they attributed the high tolerance levels of those individuals living in city centres to their high level of education and adoption of some positive values (tolerance and modesty). In his research on university students, Mc Cann and Mary, 1989). determined that individuals who are selfish and who don't show modesty have low tolerance levels and show their anger towards others abruptly and with physical resposns (Gözübüyük, 2010) found out in his study that individuals who have democratic attitudes have already adopted values such as tolerance and indulgence (Güngör, 2010) stated that a sense of responsibility, tolerance and indulgence are significant components underlying equal opportunities. It can be concluded that the findings already available within the relevant literature and those identified with this study support and complement each other, and modesty and tolerance together are effective in offering equal opportunities for other individuals (different religions / sects, ethnicities and beliefs) and in developing democratic attitudes.

Siding with the fulfilment of equal opportunities is possible by possessing positive values. And the effects of some of these positive values (modesty and tolerance) on equal opportunities have been dealt with in this study. As a result of the study, it has been identified that modesty, not directly but, through tolerance affects equal opportunities more powerfully. In general terms, it can be said that having such positive values as modesty and tolerance is a significant exponent of equal opportunities. In this case, in order for the pre-service teachers to side with the provision of equal opportunities and to adopt such values as modesty and tolerance during their training period:

The pre-service teachers should be able to pursue their education abroad at least for one term during the undergraduate period within the framework of Erasmus Program, The course "Community Services" should be extended through the whole 4-year university education. The drama intensive courses containing values education should be opened for the pre-service teachers.

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Appendix

Table 1. Acceptable Fit Indexes of The Mediating Model

Fit Criteria	Acceptable
Goodness of Fit Index	> .90
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index	> .90
Comparative Fit Index	> .90
χ^2/SD	< 2 . > 3
RMSEA	< .80
SRMR	< .80