

An Investigation of Temperament and Charactertraits of Teachers in Terms of Some Variables

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Abstract: The aim of this study is was to investigate the relationship between the temperament characteristics and demographic variables of the preschool teachers. Data were collected through the use of two instruments: Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) and Demographic Information Form. The Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) is a 240-item self-administered questionnaire constructed to assess four temperaments (Novelty Seeking, Harm Avoidance, Reward Dependence and Persistence) and three character dimensions (Self-Directedness, Cooperativeness and Self-Transcendence). Moreover, a Demographic Information Form which includes demographic data about the teachers was used. Totally 130 preschool teacher participated in this study. According to the study result, significant relationships were found between age, marital status and income level and the temperament and character sub-dimensions.

Key words: Preschool Education • Preschool Teachers • Temperament and Character Traits

INTRODUCTION

As a complement of features that differentiate the individual from the others, personality affects all human experiences. For this reason, it is stated that, personality traits of the individuals are one of the main reasons of the fact that the individuals develop different perceptions and solutions against the same events [1]. Character and temperament are the words, which are used often in the meaning of personality. Explains the basis of temperament and the growth of character and suggests that personality is the product of the interaction between these two notions [2] Temperament which the study is based on may be defined as the determining styles of behavior specific to the individual [3]. The definition of the temperament, as being generally accepted today, is that, it is generally of biological origin and it is developed in the earlier stages of life, remains stable lifelong [4]. Character consists of the attitudes, which have been developed and learned under the effects of the environment and upbringing. Therefore, it contains the features that can be changed by the course of time [5]. Temperament defines the state in which one comes to the world, whereas character defines the state into which he/she willingly changes himself/herself [6].

Cloninger has developed a general psychobiological theory to define the structure and development of personality. This theory comprises four dimensions of temperament which are assumed to be genetically independent from each other, moderately stable throughout life and unchanging against socio-cultural factors (Novelty Seeking, Harm Avoidance, Reward Dependence and Persistence) and three dimensions of character which are assumed to mature in adulthood and to affect personal and social effectiveness with learning insight about the concepts of self (Self Directedness, Cooperativeness and Self-Transcendence) [7, 8].

Novelty seeking (NS), they quickly engage themselves in new interests and activities, but they tend to neglect the details, their interests vanish rapidly and they become bored [6, 9, 10]. The individuals, who have higher *Harm avoidance (HA)* points, tend to be attentive, fearful, nervous, shy, skeptic, halfhearted, distrustful and pessimistic. These people get tired easily. They need for more confirmation and encouragement [6, 10]. *Reward dependence (RD)*, they respond to practical rewards like money, they are insensitive to oral signals of social reinforcement such “well done, good job” and they quickly terminate relationships and activities that do not

greatly satisfy them [6, 9, 10]. The ones, whose *Persistence* points are higher, work excessively, show determinedness and they have high achievement ambitions. The individuals, who show low levels of stability, tend to be lazy, inactive, imbalanced and inconsistent [2].

Cloninger's model includes three dimensions of character: Self-Directedness (SD), Cooperativeness (C) and Self-Transcendence (ST). Self-Directedness, An individual directing himself/herself is an autonomous individual: he/she is responsible, has objectives, is skillful, receptive and is an individual with a sense of duty [9]. When they are directed by an authority, they may become people who challenge the targets and values of the authorities, who are very rebellious and are troublemakers. They seem to lack the ability to set meaningful targets, as well as the necessary inherent principles for achieving these targets [9]. Cooperativeness, they appreciate and respect the needs and preferences of others, just like they do their own [9]. Self-Transcendence, they can tolerate uncertainty. They enjoy the work they do without having to experience a sense of control and without thinking about whether they will derive any gain from their labor. Even if they have exerted a lot of effort, they concede failure and are thankful for both their accomplishments and their failures. The advantage for these individuals is that they can concede the unavoidable miseries of life and even death and they can be patient [9].

Preschool education has been deemed as a critical period for the cognitive development, school readiness and achievement, language development, learning motivation, social and emotional development of the children [11- 13]. Teachers are one of the most important adults in young children's lives. In this regard, teachers' temperament characteristics can play an important role in teacher-child interactions, within the classroom [14]. A preschool teacher is the most important part of preschool education and is one of the most important adults in the lives of children [14]. Teachers have significant influence on the children in the class, both with their behaviors and personality traits [15]. Temperament and character features of teachers affect the attitudes of the students they bring up in school, as well as their lessons, personal developments and academic achievements [16]. Furthermore, the quality of the teacher-child relationship is influenced by the temperament and character traits of the teacher [17]. To improve the qualification of the education and to achieve the expectations, it is required to know the temperament and character traits of the

preschool teachers, who carry out duties in this first step of the education life. Moreover, important changes have been made in our country in the areas of education and teacher training. It is seen that; while planning the changes to be made in the area of education, the traits of the teachers, who are the important parts of education, are taken into account abroad [18]. Whereas, number of the studies about revealing the temperament and character traits of the teachers, is little or no in the national literature. Therefore, the purpose of this study to determine preschool teacher's temperament and character traits related to various variables. Answers to the following questions have been sought:

- Do the preschool teacher's temperament and character traits differ according to their ages?
- Do the preschool teacher's temperament and character traits differ according to the marital status?
- Do the preschool teacher's temperament and character traits differ according to the income level?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method: A relational survey method was used for this study.

Participants: Participants of this study consist of 130 preschool teachers working in in the city of Uak in Turkey. The necessary permissions for the application have been obtained by contacting with Uak Directorate of National Education. Besides, the list of the preschool teachers, who work in the Center of Ussak, has been received from Directorate of National Education. Out of the total 175 questionnaires, 130 were filled in correctly and then returned. Data collection was initiated in April, 2013 by sending data collection tools by post and e-mail and ended in July, 2013. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Instruments: The first instrument, prepared by the researcher, aimed to gather demographic information regarding age, marital status and income level.

Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI). It was developed by Cloninger *et al.* [7]. TCI is a 240-item, self-report, true/false format, paper-and-pencil test. It was used to assess the four dimensions of temperament [Novelty seeking, harm avoidance, reward dependence and persistence] and the three dimensions of character [Self-directedness, cooperativeness and self-transcendence]. The validity and reliability of the

Turkish translation of the test were confirmed by Köse *et al.* [8]. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha value was determined to be between 0.56 and 0.78 for temperament and 0.66 and 0.80 for character.

Procedure: The initial step was to hold a meeting with teachers at schools, which accepted to participate in the study, during the process of collecting data of the study. Together with an explanation about the purpose of research and how to fill in the questionnaires, measurement tools and the questionnaire on demographic features have been sent as sealed and printed materials to all preschool teachers, who work in the Center of Uşak. Then, the teachers have been asked to fill in the questionnaires without writing their names and send them back in sealed envelope form. The first page of the questionnaire included a general introduction to the study, the name and address of the investigator and information for the subjects to the effect that participation was on a volunteer basis. This page also included the questions on demographic characteristics.

Data Analysis: The data of the study were analyzed by means of SPSS 19.0. A t-test was made in order to find the difference between the point averages of age, marital status and level of income, along with those of temperament and character traits.

RESULTS

When Table 1 was examined at the end of the independent sample t test about the temperament and

character trait scores according to age, no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) were observed among the novelty seeking, reward dependence, persistence, self-directedness sub-dimensions of temperament and character scores of the preschool teachers according to their age. Additionally, Table 1 shows that certain dimensions of temperament and character's, namely harm avoidance, self-transcendence ($p < 0.01$), significantly related to the age variable of the teachers. Harm avoidance, self-transcendence and cooperativeness levels of 31-40 age teachers higher than according to 20-30 age teachers at a significant levels.

Table 2 shows that harm avoidance and reward dependence sub-dimensions of temperament and character of preschool teachers according to their marital status. There no significant difference in terms of novelty seeking, persistence, self-directedness, cooperativeness and self-transcendence ($p > 0.05$). Table 2 indicates that harm avoidance and reward dependence sub-dimensions of temperament and character of married teachers no significantly higher than that of single teachers' level.

Table 3 demonstrates that harm avoidance sub-dimension of temperament and character according to income level. Harm avoidance scores of middle income level significantly higher than for the lower income level of preschool teachers. In addition, there no significant difference between lower and middle income level in terms of novelty seeking, reward dependence, persistence, self-directedness, cooperativeness and self-transcendence sub-dimensions of temperament and character.

Table 1: Differences between temperament and character traits in relation to demographic variable (Age)

Temperament and Character Traits	Age	N	Mean	SD	t	p
NS	20-30	75	60.85	4.21	-1.653	0.10
	31-40	55	62.23	5.31		
HA	20-30	75	53.40	5.60	-2.010	0.04*
	31-40	55	55.41	5.73		
RD	20-30	75	33.57	3.44	.863	0.39
	31-40	55	33.05	3.29		
P	20-30	75	10.45	1.67	.194	0.85
	31-40	55	10.40	1.35		
SD	20-30	75	57.52	6.06	.222	0.83
	31-40	55	57.27	6.53		
C	20-30	75	53.68	3.78	3.121	0.00**
	31-40	55	51.30	4.87		
ST	20-30	75	46.93	5.00	2.128	0.03*
	31-40	55	44.94	5.59		

Note: N: 130, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, [NS= Novelty seeking, HA= Harm avoidance, RD= Reward dependence, P= Persistence, SD= Self-directedness, C= Cooperativeness and ST= Self-transcendence].

Table 2: Differences between temperament and character traits in relation to demographic variable (Marital Status)

Temperament and Character Traits	Marital Status	N	Mean	SD	t	p
NS	married	86	61.89	4.72	1.543	0.12
	single	44	60.54	4.71		
HA	married	86	53.36	5.65	-2.541	0.01*
	single	44	56.00	5.51		
RD	married	86	34.00	3.65	3.615	0.00**
	single	44	32.09	2.33		
P	married	86	10.60	1.44	1.810	0.07
	single	44	10.09	1.68		
SD	married	86	57.61	6.46	.511	0.61
	single	44	57.02	5.84		
C	married	86	52.93	4.48	.913	0.36
	single	44	52.18	4.30		
ST	married	86	45.76	5.75	-1.057	0.29
	single	44	46.72	4.40		

Note: N: 130, *p <0.05, **p <0.01, [NS= Novelty seeking, HA= Harm avoidance, RD= Reward dependence, P= Persistence, SD= Self-directedness, C= Cooperativeness and ST= Self-transcendence].

Table 3.: Differences between temperament and character traits in relation to demographic variable (Income Level)

Temperament and Character Traits	Income level	N	Mean	SD	t	p
NS	lower	47	61.85	3.84	.808	0.42
	middle	83	61.20	5.19		
HA	lower	47	52.89	5.32	-2.065	0.04*
	middle	83	55.02	5.82		
RD	lower	47	33.48	3.58	.343	0.73
	middle	83	33.27	3.28		
P	lower	47	10.29	1.44	-.737	0.46
	middle	83	10.50	1.60		
SD	lower	47	58.27	6.84	1.185	0.23
	middle	83	56.92	5.86		
C	lower	47	52.61	4.52	-.116	0.90
	middle	83	52.71	4.38		
ST	lower	47	46.61	5.23	.843	0.40
	middle	83	45.79	5.40		

Note: N: 130, *p <0.05, **p <0.01, [NS= Novelty seeking, HA= Harm avoidance, RD= Reward dependence, P= Persistence, SD= Self-directedness, C= Cooperativeness and ST= Self-transcendence].

DISCUSSION

As a result of the study, significant differences were found between age and the temperament and character sub-dimensions. In this study it was found out that, 31-40 age teachers had higher scores than 20-30 age teachers on the sub-dimensions such as harm avoidance, self-transcendence and cooperativeness. There no significant difference according to age of teachers in terms of novelty seeking, reward dependence, persistence, self-directedness sub-dimensions of temperament and character. In the results of this research, married teachers' reported higher levels of harm avoidance and reward dependence scores than single teachers'. In also, there no significant relationship in terms of novelty seeking, persistence, self-directedness, cooperativeness and

self-transcendence their marital status. According to the present research results, income level related to harm avoidance scores. Harm avoidance scores of middle income level is significantly higher than that of lower income level. In addition, there is no significant difference between lower and middle income in terms of novelty seeking, reward dependence, persistence, self-directedness, cooperativeness and self-transcendence sub-dimensions of temperament and character.

In a study, which was made by Totan *et al.* [18] with the prospective teachers, significant difference has been found between harm avoidance, reward dependence and cooperation levels of the participants. 237 classroom teachers have attended to the study done by Sahinoglu and Arkar [19] to research the relationship between the

personality traits and burnout levels of the classroom teachers. In consequence of the research, the three dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory as; emotional burnout, depersonalization and personal achievement lowness have shown negative relation with harm avoidance temperament dimension and positive and self-management and cooperation character dimensions. In the study, which was made by Deniz and Kesicioğlu [20] with prospective preschool teachers by using Eysenck Personality Inventory, no relationship has been determined between class and father's educational level variables and personality sub-dimensions. Significant relationship has been determined between gender variable and lying sub-dimension and mother's education level and extroversion sub-dimension. In one study, the features that should be possessed by a preschool teacher were listed as follows: persistence, risk taking, patience, flexibility, creativeness, authenticity, high energy and a sense of humor [21]. Downing *et al.* [22] list such features as liking children, being able to interact with children, being patient, interesting, kind and flexible, being able to communicate with adults and children and being able to stay calm, as requirements for being an educator. The more flexible and sensitive the teachers are, the more secure they cause the children feel and thereby allowing the teachers to contribute significantly to the upbringing of the children as more independent individuals [23]. In a study, which was made to determine the temperament traits of the teachers, who work with mentally retarded students and normal students [24], it has been found that the teachers, who work with the mentally retarded students are more active and busy but show less conformity and persistence than the teachers, who work with normal students. Zimmerman and McDonald [25] have found that; the quality of the children and their relationship with their teachers is related with the personality traits of the teachers.

In consequence of the study, the dimension of harm avoidance has been found related with the age, marital status and level of income variables. Harm avoidance is related with fear of uncertainty, getting tired quickly and the pessimistic thought about the future [26]. The fact that the harm avoidance points are higher is suggestive of the thought that the teachers can likely to have higher risks of having burnout in the preschool education, which requires high levels of devotion, patience and energy. Thus, in a study, which was made by using Temperament and Character Inventory [27], a positive relationship has been found between harm avoidance point and anxiety and chronic fatigue syndrome.

There are some limitations in this research. The research has been done only to determine the temperament and character traits of the preschool teachers. It is needed to determine the same traits of the teachers, who carry out duties in the other education stages. Secondly, this research has been performed for the teachers, who work in a specific region. Therefore, the generalizability levels of these results are low. In consequence, the investigation of the temperament and character traits of the teachers and the relationship of the other variables (Ex.: the temperament traits of the students) will contribute to the literature

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