

Self-Esteem Levels of Physical Education Teacher Candidates in Turkey and Iran: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the levels of self-esteem among pre-service teachers in Turkey and Iran who were studying in the Physical Education and Sports Teaching Departments at their respective countries. The study's participant group consisted of 80 Turkish and 111 Iranian students. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory was used for this cross-cultural comparative research approach. A two-way analysis of variance was used to examine the data. When the self-esteem scores of pre-service teachers were examined, it was shown that pre-service teachers in both Turkey and Iran scored higher than the national average. Although the mean self-esteem ratings of pre-service teachers in Turkey were found to be higher than those of pre-service teachers in Iran, it could be claimed that the self-esteem levels of pre-service teachers did not differ according to the culture they lived in, in other words, they were at a similar level. Similarly, it was discovered that self-esteem levels did not differ significantly by gender, grade level, perceived level of academic accomplishment, or cultural characteristics. One of the key elements of human personality is the sense of self-esteem which influences both the level of self-acceptance and self-awareness. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to develop these skills and the psychophysical characteristics in the process of upbringing and education.

Keywords: cross-cultural study, culture, physical education pre-service teachers, self-esteem, the Coopersmith self-esteem inventory

Introduction

The rapid development and changes that occur in social life nowadays also affect the mental structure of people at different levels. To sustain the mentioned harmony healthily, people need to have a healthy development and emotional personality that will help them cope with the problems they face because it is stated that individuals, whose personality traits are developed, awareness is high, emotional intelligence is strong, who are innovative and who have developed empathy skills and self-esteem, will be advantageous in overcoming problems (Karademir et al., 2010).

Positive and high self-esteem, according to the World Health Organization's definition of health, is good for people's mental and social health. In this regard, the notion of self-esteem is assessed as a concept that is also relevant to the field of social medicine (Tözün, 2010). In general, individuals with high self-esteem levels are evaluated as individuals who have high self-confidence, who rely on their ability to overcome problems, and who easily overcome the problems they face in their lives. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, has been linked to the development of depression in people (Çelikkol, 2008).

Teaching is among the basic elements of the education system, where teachers play an active role in teaching new knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits to students through education. Teaching, which is a stressful profession, and which requires patience, requires features such as tolerance, devotion, continuous self-improvement, and the fulfillment of the profession willingly and fondly, besides content and professional knowledge. The content and professional knowledge, and the general culture, which are taught to pre-service teachers during undergraduate education before the teaching profession, aim to make them useful members of the society in the future (Kara, 2017). For pre-service teachers, besides the mentioned objective, there are some qualifications and competencies that they need to have to realize their profession more efficiently and professionally (Clotfelter et al., 2007). One of the qualifications and competencies they should have is self-esteem.

The teaching profession is known to be a respectable profession in society. Furthermore, when education is examined as a social system, considering that the most basic element of this system is teachers and the quality of education depends on teachers (Dilmaç & Ekşi, 2012), teaching is observed to have lots of

characteristic qualities directly related to self-esteem (Dursun et al., 2014). Self-esteem, according to Coopersmith (1967), is an individual's level of perceiving himself/herself as capable, important, successful, and valuable. In the definition suggested by Roseberg (1965), it is stated that 'self-esteem is our positive and negative attitudes toward ourselves.' Individuals with high self-esteem appreciate and value themselves, whereas those with low self-esteem do not respect themselves and believe they are worthless (Chiu, 1989). People with high self-esteem strive to be happy, productive, and successful; they are more determined to overcome challenges and yield less to peer pressure, and those with low self-esteem are anxious and pessimistic, have negative thoughts about the future, and are more likely to fail, according to Coleman and Hendry (1990).

Self-esteem, which is among the priority concepts in the efficient implementation of the teaching profession, was observed to be in a mutual relationship with different factors such as professional education that teachers have received, gender, and culture (Dursun et al., 2014). The undergraduate education that teachers have received before their professional life takes an important place in their having a high self-esteem level. For this reason, many studies have been conducted in the literature on the self-esteem levels of pre-service teachers (Deniz & Avşaroğlu, 2014, Man & Hamid, 1998; Reisoğlu et al., 2013; Yılmaz & Altınok, 2010). It can be said that one of the variables that determine self-esteem is the value judgments and lifestyle of the society we live in and the culture. Anthropologists and sociologists have defined culture in a broad sense (Miller-Loessi & Parker, 2006). Culture is described by D'Andrade (1995) as "the entire social heritage of a group, including material culture and external structures, learned actions, and mental representations of many kinds"(p. 212). Culture is regarded as one of the most essential factors in determining a society's way of life. Societies have formed their unique culture by blending traditions and practices, as well as geographical and climatic variables. This cultural atmosphere that emerges is one of the fundamental elements that differentiate that society from other societies. The more different places, religions, climates, languages, and nations exist in the world, the more diverse cultures are expected to exist. This cultural difference in the world adds a different wealth to living spaces. This diversity helps to facilitate the coexistence of societies and to experience cultural diversity (Önger, 2013).

To compare cultural differences and similarities, cross-cultural comparisons are used (Stewart & Bennett, 2005). Miller-Loessi & Parker (2006) outlined several reasons why this process should be included in social-psychological research. To begin with, cross-cultural barriers have shrunk, and diverse cultures are now more apparent in society. To adjust to these changes, it is consequently vital to comprehend these disparities. Second, because most social psychological studies rely solely on participant samples from the West, comparative studies that include research from the East will aid in the correction of any cultural bias in psychological theory. Finally, comparative studies will also help us to identify the various facets of developmental psychology that can be generalized to different cultural groups.

Studies in which cultural comparisons are made provide an advantage in revealing similarities and differences between them by examining some variables that are intertwined in a cultural environment and those that are not intertwined in another culture in the same way (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2000). Study results support the idea that due to differences in the sense of self of people in different cultures (such as individuality or collectivism), they may have various perceptions and assessments about themselves (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, self-esteem should be studied comprehensively from an intercultural perspective. Cultural differences, on the other hand, continue to be a source of contention. Although it is commonly thought that individuals in individualist cultures have higher self-esteem than people in collectivist cultures (Heine et al., 1999; Chan, 2000), some study has revealed that collectivist people's self-esteem levels are comparable to those of individualists (Schmitt & Allik, 2005; Li et al., 2015). There are quite a few studies in the literature, which deal with the concept of self-esteem comparatively in terms of individuals living in different cultural environments (Tafarodi et al., 2011). While it is observed that in most of these studies, the majority and minority groups living in the same country are compared, the number of studies comparing the groups living in different countries is much less (Dai, 2016; Khalid, 1985; Chan, 2000). Moreover, the majority of these studies are observed to be conducted on children and adolescents (Chiu, 1989; Booth & Gerard, 2011; Tafarodi et al., 2017; Rizvançe, 2005). On the contrary, there are no studies in the literature that compare pre-service teachers' self-esteem levels across cultures, particularly pre-service teachers' self-esteem levels in physical education and sports teaching. Because they grow up in diverse socio-cultural situations, pre-service teachers in different nations are likely to have varying degrees of self-esteem. However, to determine these

differences, more academic studies are needed in this field. This study emerged from this requirement.

This cross-cultural study examines the differences in self-esteem levels between Turkey and Iran physical education teacher candidates. The following four research questions are addressed in this study:

1. Do the two cultural groups have different levels of self-esteem?
2. Does the gender of teacher candidates from two cultural groups affect their self-esteem assessment?
3. Do class levels of teacher candidates from two cultural groups affect their self-esteem assessment?
4. Do perceive academic achievement levels of teacher candidates from two cultural groups affect their self-esteem assessment?

Methodology

Research Model

In this study, in which the socio-demographic variables related to the self-esteem levels of the students studying in the physical education and sports teaching departments in Turkey and Iran were examined, the intercultural comparative research method, one of the descriptive studies, was used in the survey model. Cross-cultural comparative research, which is widely used in social sciences, is the name given to research that aims to compare different countries or cultures in terms of certain characteristics (Elder, 1976). Similarly, in this study, the similarities and differences of the students studying in the physical education and sports teaching departments in Turkey and Iran were examined in terms of the independent variables considered within the scope of the research.

Participants

Participants were 80 students (44 women and 36 men) from Anadolu University's Department of Physical Education and Sports Teaching in Turkey and 111 students (74 women and 37 men) from Tabriz Farhangian University's Department of Physical Education and Sports Teaching in Iran. The following were the ages of the people in the sample: 13 (6.8%) under the age of 18 (52.4 percent

) 19-21 years old, 59 (30.9%), 22-24 years old, and 19 (9.9%) above 25 years old. A convenience sampling procedure was applied in this study. According to Gay (1996), “two major examples of convenience sampling are the use of volunteers and the use of existing groups just because they are there” (p. 126).

Measure

Self-esteem. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI) is a self-report questionnaire for teenagers and adults that measures attitudes toward themselves in a range of domains (peers, school, family, and general social activities). In this study, CSEI Short Form was utilized to collect data. In addition to the traditional 58-item scale, a Short Form of the scale is available, which has just 25 questions (Coopersmith, 1967; Hill et al., 2011). The SF-CSEI was shown to have satisfactory reliability and construct validity (with Cronbach’s coefficients ranging from 0.68 to 0.77). Turan & Tufan conducted a validity and credibility investigation in Turkey in 1987. $r=0.76$ ($p<0.05$) was found to be the reliability co-efficient. When the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory and the credibility of the means were compared, a significant association of $r=0.61$ ($p<0.05$) was discovered (Turan & Tufan, 1987). Ebrahimi edited the reliability of the Persian version of the CSEI (1990). The scale’s reliability index was between 0.80 and 0.85. In separate investigations, reliability ranged from 0.83 to 0.89. (Nayebi-Fard, 2003; Sabet & Houman, 2007). The scale’s internal consistency coefficient was determined to be in this study. 75.

Procedures

The researcher gained approval from my University’s Ethics Committee before initiating research. The faculty management was sent a letter of consent by the researchers to seek their consent. The students were asked about their willingness to participate in the study after permission was given by the school administration. School management and students were explained that their names will be kept anonymous and confidentiality will be stored. In addition to it, both the school management and students were given an orientation on their right of refusal and voluntary participation will be ensured throughout the process. After the data collection, the process of data coding, editing, and entry was carried out. No incentives were given to the students. Applications lasted approximately 15 minutes.

Data Analysis

The statistical tool SPSS 22 was used to analyze the data. For the study, a two-way ANOVA was utilized to test the data. When one dependent variable has two independent variables, two-way ANOVA is utilized as a statistical analysis technique (Field, 2013; Ho, 2013). There are three assumptions in a two-way ANOVA (Field, 2013; Ho, 2013). The samples were picked independently from the source universes, according to the first of these hypotheses. This assumption is based on the research design and is not statistically testable. Both sample groups, on the other hand, were chosen independently from the source universe. The dependent variable should have a normal distribution, according to the second assumption. This hypothesis was evaluated by examining skewness and kurtosis values while accounting for sample size and following the recommendations of measurement and assessment specialists (Field, 2013; Hair et al., 2014; Ho, 2013). Before each two-way ANOVA, the skewness and kurtosis values of variables in the data set were calculated. The acquired data was determined to have a normal distribution. The third assumption is that the variances are homogeneous. The Levene test was used to verify this assumption, and the data were found to be homogeneous. The statistical significance was set at 0.05.

Findings

After ensuring that there was no outlier in the data as shown by the boxplot, this study used an independent t-test to determine the mean difference between these two cultural groups.

Table 1

Mean for Turkey and Iran Teacher Candidates on Self-Esteem

		N	Mean	SD	t	p
Self-esteem Levels	Turkey	80	73.99	14.64	.846	.40
	Iran	111	72.07	15.98		

In both Turkey and Iran, as indicated in Table 1, teacher applicants' self-esteem levels are above the middle range. However, it is observed that the mean scores of teacher candidates in Turkey are higher than the average scores of teacher candidates in Iran. When this difference is statistically significant, the average self-esteem score of teacher candidates in Turkey and Iran is shown to be statistically insignificant ($t=.846$; $p=.40$).

Table 2

Two-Way ANOVA Results of Self-Esteem Among the Two Ethnic Groups Across Gender

	df	KO	F	p	Partial η^2
Culture (A)	1	265.64	1.109	.294	.006
Gender (B)	1	55.44	.232	.631	.001
A x B	1	159.21	.665	.416	.004
Error	187	239.48			

Table 2 shows that cultural groups had no significant main impact on self-esteem ($F(1, 187)=1.109, p>.05, \text{partial } \eta^2=.006$). There was no significant interaction between gender and cultural groups ($F(1, 187)=.665, p>.05, \text{partial } \eta^2=.004$), and no significant influence of gender on self-esteem ($F(1, 187)=.232, p>.05, \text{partial } \eta^2=.001$).

Table 3

Two-Way ANOVA Results of Self-Esteem Among the Two Ethnic Groups Across Class Levels

	df	KO	F	p	Partial η^2
Culture (A)	1	228.512	.969	.326	.005
Class Levels (B)	3	361.525	1.533	.208	.025
A x B	3	254.573	1.079	.359	.017
Error	183	235.861			

Table 3 shows that cultural groups had no significant main impact on self-esteem ($F(1, 183)=.969, p>.05, \text{partial } \eta^2=.005$). There was no significant interaction between class levels and cultural groups ($F(3, 183)=1.079, p>.05, \text{partial } \eta^2=.017$), and no significant influence of class levels on self-esteem ($F(3, 183)=1.533, p>.05, \text{partial } \eta^2=.025$).

Table 4

Two-Way ANOVA Results of Self-Esteem Among the Two Ethnic Groups Across Perceived Academic Achievement Levels

	df	KO	F	p	Partial η^2
Culture (A)	1	262.918	1.119	.292	.006
Academic Achievement (B)	2	234.897	.999	.370	.011
A x B	1	708.240	3.013	.084	.016
Error	186	235.044			

Table 4 shows that cultural groups had no significant main impact on self-esteem ($F(1, 186)=1.119, p>.05, \eta^2=.006$). There was no significant interaction between perceived academic accomplishment levels and cultural groups ($F(1, 186)=3.013, p>.05, \eta^2=.016$), and there was no significant influence of perceived academic achievement levels on self-esteem ($F(2, 186)=.999, p>.05, \eta^2=.011$).

Discussion

In this section, the data obtained from the results regarding the questions to which an answer was sought in the study were discussed by associating them within themselves and the framework of relevant studies in the literature.

When pre-service teachers' self-esteem levels are assessed, they are found to be above the moderate level in both Turkey and Iran. Although the mean self-esteem ratings of pre-service teachers in Turkey were found to be higher than those of pre-service teachers in Iran, it could be argued that pre-service teachers' self-esteem levels were similar regardless of the culture they lived in. The fact that both nations are Muslim and have similar family structures might be the root of the problem. In contrast to the independent lifestyles of Western societies, Asian societies place a greater emphasis on family. Family bonds in Iranian families are seen as more sacred and vital than individual wishes, just as they are in Turkish families. Furthermore, Iranian families are patriarchal, similar to those in Turkey; consequently, respect for parents and family peace are vital (Sayyedi, 2009). As a result, individuals' self-esteem and overall self-efficacy may be influenced by their perceptions of parent-child relationships. Farruggia et al. (2004) stated in their study that the main reason for the high self-esteem level in Chinese youth might be warm relationships in the family. When the literature is examined, some studies were carried out on children living in Asia and Europe, and America expressed as Eastern societies and Western societies and stated that those living in Western societies have a higher self-esteem level than those in Eastern societies (Chan, 2000; Endo et al., 2000; Ho 2003; Kim et al., 2008). However, in similar studies conducted by some researchers, it is stated that the self-esteem levels of children are similar to each other (Tafarodi et al., 2011; Khalid, 1985).

The study's second result was obtained by comparing self-esteem ratings in terms of gender and cultural factors using the two-way variance test. The results of the test indicated that self-esteem levels were unaffected by gender or cultural differences. As a result, self-esteem levels among female and male pre-service teachers are comparable in both cultures. Men and women have varying degrees of self-esteem, according to many studies (Bush et al., 2000; Menon, 2011; Patton et al., 2004). However, other investigations have shown results that are comparable to those of this research. According to two previous meta-analysis studies (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Wylie, 1979), there is no persistent gender difference in terms of self-esteem, however, there are differences in causes. While Maccoby & Jacklin (1974) discovered that males and females had similar levels of self-esteem, Wylie (1979) stated that she was too indecisive in her research to make any conclusions about whether or not gender differences exist.

Altunbaş (2006) found that students' self-esteem did not differ by gender. Kararımak & Siviş-Çetinkaya (2018) found that the participants' self-esteem levels were not affected by the gender variable in their study. The low self-esteem level of females is attributed to the fact that females gain a lower social status in world societies, and this widespread cultural assumption is internalized by many people (Bardiwick, 1971). According to this view, both males and females become socialized by thinking that females are less capable, less competent, and less admirable. Thus, females will think that they have less social prestige, and consequently, their self-esteem will decrease. However, the findings of this study indicated that there was no significant difference in self-esteem levels of male and female pre-service teachers in both ethnic groups. In addition to the similar structure of the country's cultures, the fact that the participants have chosen the same profession and that this profession has an important status within the society can be explained as the reason for the similar self-esteem levels of both males and females pre-service teachers.

Another finding of this study is that pre-service teachers' self-esteem scores did not alter significantly depending on the class level and cultural factors. The fact that in both cultures, the participants were at similar age levels, in other words, in the category of young adults, led to this difference. Biological factors or universal life activities that most people in most cultures master at the same time can be related to similar age patterns (Bleidorn et al., 2013). According to a study (Gül,

2013; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005), self-esteem appears to improve with age. Self-esteem is believed to be relatively high in childhood, drop in adolescence, and then climb gradually in maturity. In research including 1850 school-aged children, the self-esteem levels of children from elementary to secondary school, as well as their self-perception accomplishment in four areas (English, mathematics, social activities, and sports), were examined (Wigfield et al., 1991). The result of the study showed that children's self-esteem levels and their self-perception success in four areas decreased after passing secondary school but increased in 7th grade. In addition, students with a mean age of 27 and above had better self-esteem than those in the 18-20 age group, according to another research on university students. The same study stated that the increase in life experience with the increase in age was effective in the increase in self-esteem in parallel with age (Saygılı et al., 2015). In a similar study, self-esteem levels of pre-service teachers in older age groups were found to be higher than those of pre-service teachers in younger age groups (Gürşen-Otacıoğlu, 2009). Self-esteem levels in senior age groups were greater than those in younger age groups, according to a comparable study conducted on individuals with a mean age of 17-20 and above (Aktaş & Erim-Erhan, 2015). Many studies in the literature concluded that the age variable had a significant effect on self-esteem (Erbil & Bostan, 2004; Kalgı & Aliyev, 2015).

When the studies in the literature which investigated whether self-esteem levels differed according to culture and age were examined, it was observed that similar results to this study were obtained. One of the studies was conducted by Dai (2016). In her study, which included Chinese, Hong Kong Chinese, British-born Chinese, and White Scottish children aged 8, 11, and 14, Dai (2016) discovered that there was no association between self-esteem levels and age or cultural groupings.

The study also discovered that pre-service teachers' self-esteem levels do not change significantly based on perceived academic success level and cultural variables. When the literature was evaluated, the hypothesis that there was a link between high self-esteem and academic success was found to be supported by several studies (Marsh et al., 1999). The conclusions of these investigations, on the other hand, were inconsistent and undocumented. For example, a research of 838 secondary school students in the United States discovered a strong link between self-esteem and academic success for 7th-graders, while the relationship was negligible for 9th-graders (Alves-Martins et al., 2002). Trautwein et al. (2006) did

not find a mutual relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement in a longitudinal study conducted on 7th-grade students in East and West Germany to test whether there was a relationship between self-esteem, self-concept, and academic achievement. In a study of 643 African American and white young people living in the southern countryside, Tashakkori (1993) discovered that academic self-belief was not a significant predictor of self-esteem. Finally, it is uncertain if self-esteem has a direct influence on academic success, comparable to the findings of our study. Furthermore, the fact that they have culturally similar structures and the fact that pre-service physical education teachers are included in both groups can be said to be the reason for the fact that self-esteem scores do not differ significantly according to both the perceived academic achievement level and the culture variable.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Self-esteem is derived from a multitude of sources and is essential for social functioning. It's a complicated function that's influenced by factors including home background stability, parental aspirations, socioeconomic class, and accomplishment motivation. As a result, the impact of a single component cannot be overstated. Although self-esteem is an enduring human attribute, it is undeniable that poor self-esteem can be improved by counseling or pastoral care. Despite assertions in the literature that many important variables (age, gender, parental education levels, etc.) impact self-esteem, self-esteem ratings were not significantly different by gender, grade level, perceived degree of academic achievement, and cultural features. The findings indicate the need for more attention to be paid to self-esteem development in teacher training in physical education.

The recruiting of students from a single institution in each country was the main limitation. The data was just taken once and was not tracked over time. Although the findings appear to be generalizable across two professions and two cultures, it's crucial to note that the sample was a convenience sample rather than a random sample. Other forms of measures that examine the self-esteem of intercultural same and different occupational groups will be useful in a future study to give information on cultural similarities and differences in self-esteem structure.

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