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To cite this article:

Ozkanal, U. (2023). Investigating pre-service teachers' perspectives on classroom management strategies demonstrated by mentor teachers. *International Journal on Social and Education Sciences (IJonSES)*, 5(3), 643-652. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijones.601>

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Investigating Pre-Service Teachers' Perspectives on Classroom Management Strategies Demonstrated by Mentor Teachers

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Article Info

Article History

Received:

14 January 2023

Accepted:

08 June 2023

Keywords

Classroom management

Pre-service teacher

School experience course

Mentor teacher

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding classroom management strategies employed by practicum instructors in school experience courses. This cross-sectional investigation was conducted with 245 pre-service teachers from various university departments. The study's data was collected via "Classroom Management Strategies Evaluation Scale". The scale had a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.94. For data analysis, descriptive statistics, the t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used. According to research findings, the gender of pre-service teachers, the gender of practice teachers, and the seniority of practice teachers had no significant impact on their opinions regarding the classroom management strategies used by practice teachers. However, the degree program that pre-service teachers attended and their grade point average had a significant impact on their opinions.

Introduction

One of the biggest factors affecting the quality of education is undoubtedly the quality of teachers who take an active role in education and training (Bilgin, Tatar & Ay, 2012). Considering the general competencies that teachers should have, it is seen that skills such as organizing learning environments, behavior management, time management, and guiding students are directly related to classroom management. Therefore, it can be said that teachers' classroom management strategies and practices have an important effect on achieving their educational aims.

Classroom management is the most fundamental and first step in the educational management procedure. The classroom is the primary environment in which the teacher and students interact in a continuous manner. It contains the main educational resources, such as students, teachers, programs, and materials, and enables students to acquire the desired behaviors through education (Başar, 1998). Brophy (1988) defines classroom management as a process that provides and maintains the opportunities and processes, learning order, environment, and norms necessary to create a learning environment.

Çakmak, Kayabaş, and Ercan (2008) define classroom management as the systematic application of principles, concepts, theories, strategies, methods, and techniques related to all dimensions from plan to practice in order to achieve educational objectives. It is evident that the learning-teaching theory, strategy, methods and techniques,

and communication skills that teachers employ in the formation of classroom management strategies and their implementation of these strategies are crucial. According to Ağaoğlu (2003), the success and effectiveness of educational activities conducted in the school in general and the classroom in particular are directly related to classroom administration. For this reason, a teacher's classroom management skills must be strong. Regarding the success of the students, the classroom management skills of the teacher are crucial. Consequently, effective classroom administration has a direct impact on teaching quality.

Institutions of teacher education operate their programs to best educate teacher candidates for the profession. In this process, both theoretical and practical courses are used to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and habits required for the teaching profession. The Classroom Management course is a pre-service education course with this objective (YÖK, 2007).

Classroom administration is a two-dimensional subject, encompassing both theory and practice. It is a course designed to provide pre-service teachers with theoretical and practical knowledge of topics such as communication with students in the teaching-learning process, time management, how to solve undesirable classroom behaviors, motivation, classroom management models, and classroom organization (Çakmak et al., 2008). Kaya and Samancı (2013) found that pre-service teachers have fundamental problems such as not being able to provide classroom discipline, evaluate student work, use appropriate materials, not knowing the techniques of asking questions, not being able to motivate their students, and not being able to perceive individual differences when they are just beginning their careers following vocational training. This situation is closely related to the quality of pre-service education's practice courses, and faculty-school collaboration is crucial in this context.

The purpose of faculty-school cooperation is to increase teacher candidates' participation in school experience and teaching practice activities under the supervision of school instructors (YÖK, 2007). The School Experience course is an essential course that improves teacher qualifications, particularly the general and specialized field competencies required for the profession, and contributes to their becoming experienced and equipped teachers in the future (Şaşmaz Ören, Sevinc, & Erdoğan, 2009). The purpose of the school experience application is to familiarize pre-service teachers with all aspects of the school institution and its operation. It is a course that focuses on observation and analysis of school experience, and it is included in the curriculum so that students can comprehend the school's organizational structure, identify the units and elements of the institution, and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for teaching. One of the purposes of these practices is to prepare the ground for the effective and efficient use of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and understandings acquired by candidates in teaching formation courses in the professional environment (Yapıcı & Yapıcı, 2004).

Research indicates that novice instructors who have just begun their careers are unable to maintain classroom control despite their deep affection for their students (Aydın, 2012). According to Green (2006), not only do experienced teachers employ excellent instructional practices, but they also have the flexibility to respond appropriately to various classroom situations. When school experience courses are considered, it can be stated that the availability of the course is that pre-service teachers should observe the practice teachers in the classrooms where they are observers and effectively analyze the variables that influence classroom management. From the

perspective of the mentor teacher or pre-service teacher, it is conceivable that these variables may alter.

Despite the fact that studies on classroom management in primary and secondary education address the dimensions of teacher, student, school, and environment, it has been observed that there are few studies examining pre-service teachers' perceptions of classroom management strategies employed by mentor teachers. This study seeks to determine the perceptions of pre-service teachers participating in the school experience course regarding the classroom management strategies employed by their mentor teachers and to contribute to the existing literature on the topic. In accordance with this primary objective, the following sub-problems were investigated:

1. Does the gender of pre-service teachers attending the school experience course influence their perceptions of the classroom management strategies employed by the mentor teachers?
2. Does the gender of the mentor teacher influence the opinions of pre-service teachers attending the school experience course regarding the classroom management strategies employed by the mentor teachers?
3. Does the seniority of the mentor teacher influence pre-service teachers' opinions regarding the classroom management strategies employed by mentor teachers?
4. Do pre-service teachers' perspectives on classroom management strategies employed by mentor teachers vary by field?
5. Is there a correlation between the pre-service teachers' grade point average and their perceptions of the classroom management strategies employed by mentor teachers?

Method

Research Methodology

This study is a survey-based quantitative investigation. The survey model is an appropriate research strategy for describing a past or present situation as it exists (Karasar, 2008). In this study, the current situation is attempted to be revealed by examining the opinions of pre-service teachers who participated in the school experience course regarding the classroom management techniques employed by mentor teachers.

Study Group

During the autumn semester of the academic year 2021-2022, 245 pre-service teachers for the fourth grade who received training at a university in Central Anatolia participated in the study. Examining the gender breakdown of the study group's pre-service instructors reveals that 168 (68.57%) are female and 77 (31.43%) are male. Table 1 provides details regarding the study cohort.

As shown in Table 1, 27 (11.02%) of the pre-teachers enrolled in the study are majoring in Computer Education and Instructional Technology Education, 42 (17.14%) Education in Science, 61 (24.90%) Religion and moral instruction in Primary Education, 77 (31.43%) Mathematics Education in Primary Schools and 38 (15.15%) Classroom Instruction.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Study Group

		Male	Female				Total
Gender	η	77	168				245
	%	31.43	68.57				100
		CEIT	SCIENCE	RCET	MATHS	CT	Total
Program Studied	η	27	42	61	77	38	245
	%	11.02	17.14	24.90	31.43	15.51	100

Data Collection Tool

Classroom Management Strategies Scale

Classroom Management Strategies Scale was utilized to acquire the study's data. The original version of the scale was created as a questionnaire by Çakmak, Kayabaş, and Ercan (2006), and it was converted into a scale with the researchers' approval. In this context, no additional item pools were created for the scale. For the scale's construct validity, item analyses and factor analysis were conducted to determine the factor structures. Examining the item total, item remaining, and item discrimination features of the prototype scale items revealed that these values of the scale items are significant. Additionally, it was observed that the values were distinct for the lower and upper classes. During the item analysis procedure, no items were removed from the scale draft.

According to Pullant (2001), a KMO value of at least 0.60 is recommended for data factor analysis. In this instance, the derived KMO value exceeds the recommended KMO value, indicating that the data are appropriate for factor analysis Kaiser Meyer Olkin= .95 and Bartlett ($p < .01$). The factor analysis reveals that the scale items were accumulated in a single dimension. The scale's eigenvalue was determined to be 8.61%. Observations revealed that the obtained factor loading varied between 0.85 and 0.59. It was determined that it explained 54.37 percent of the scale's variance. The scale's Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.942. This demonstrated that the measuring instrument performed at a high level. The scale contains fifteen 5-point Likert items. All scale items have a positive structure, and the maximum possible score on the scale is 75 and the minimum possible score is 15. Table 2 displays the results of factor analysis and factor loading values.

Table 2. Factor Analysis Results of Classroom Management Strategies Scale

Items	Item No	Factor Loads
Motivates all students before they start teaching	I 2	0.853
Gathers the attention of all students before starting the teaching	I 1	0.824
Creates a safe atmosphere in the classroom	I 11	0.815
Uses communication channels for a healthy interaction in the classroom	I 12	0.804
Keeps students' interest on the subject and maintains attention	I 3	0.796
Controls the classroom with fair and consistent management strategies	I 5	0.785
Uses time effectively in the classroom	I 7	0.759
Considers students' opinions and suggestions	I 13	0.757
Uses reinforcers according to students' behaviors	I 14	0.756

Items	Item No	Factor Loads
Shows his friendly attitude to the student	I 9	0.723
Provides classroom control (or supervision) without interrupting teaching	I 4	0.706
Uses various assessment strategies (project, performance, portfolio, ...) while evaluating students	I 15	0.684
Defines behavioural problems exactly	I 9	0.672
Shows maturity and moderation in the face of unexpected student behaviour	I 10	0.616
Makes changes in the teaching process and classroom arrangements to reduce behavioural problems	I 8	0.594
Kaiser Meyer Olkin: .950 Bartlett (p<.01)		
Explained Variance		
Total: 57.37%		
Factor-1: 8.60%		

Data Analysis

Methods such as descriptive statistics, the t-test, and one-way analysis of variance were used to analyze the answers to the research queries. In the study, the significance level was set at 0.05.

Findings

In this section of the study, the findings are presented and interpreted according to the subproblems they address. Table 3 displays the distribution of pre-service instructors' opinions according to their gender.

Table 3. Comparison of Pre-service Teachers' Opinions on Classroom Management Strategies Used by Mentor Teachers According to Gender

Gender	η	\bar{X}	SS	Sd	t	p
Female	168	56.82	11.77			
Male	77	54.47	10.41	243	1.505	0.135
Total	245					

Regarding the gender of the pre-service teachers, the averages of female students (\bar{X} =56.82) and male students (\bar{X} =54.47) represent the pre-service teachers' opinions. It is observed that there are no significant gender differences in the opinions of pre-service teachers. [$t(243) = 1,505, p>.05$]

Table 4 displays the distribution of pre-service teachers' opinions according to the gender of the mentor teacher. When comparing the opinions of pre-service teachers based on the gender of the mentor teacher, the average for female teachers is (\bar{X} =56.70) and the average for male teachers is (\bar{X} =55.84). There is no statistically significant difference in the opinions of pre-service teachers based on the gender of the mentor teacher [$t(240) = 0.516, p>.05$].

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Pre-service Teachers' Opinions Regarding the Classroom Management Strategies Employed by Mentor Teachers Based on the Gender of Mentor Teachers

Gender	η	\bar{X}	SS	Sd	t	p
Female	64	56.70	11.03	240	0.516	0.606
Male	178	55.84	11.59			
Total	242					

Table 5 displays the comparison of the opinions of pre-service teachers according to the seniority of the mentor teacher.

Table 5. ANOVA Comparison of Pre-service Teachers' Opinions Regarding Classroom Management Strategies Employed by Practicing Teachers Based on the Seniority of Mentor Teachers

Opinion	Seniority	n	\bar{X}	SS	F	p
Opinions of pre-service teachers	0-6	29	56.10	10.07	0.057	0.944
	6-10	87	56.32	10.88		
	10+	120	55.78	12.33		
	Total	236	56.02	11.51		

Examining the opinions of pre-service teachers according to the seniority of the mentor teacher reveals that the average of mentor teachers with 0-6 years of experience is ($\bar{X}=56.10$), the average of mentor teachers with 6-10 years of experience is ($\bar{X}=56.32$), and the average of mentor teachers with 10 or more years of experience is ($\bar{X}=55.76$). There is no significant difference between the opinions of pre-service teachers regarding the mentor teacher's seniority. There is no difference in the seniority variable between the groups ($p>.05$).

Table 6 displays the opinions of pre-service teachers based on the pre-service teachers' undergraduate program.

Table 6. Comparative Analysis of Pre-Service Teachers' Opinions Regarding the Classroom Management Strategies Employed by Mentor Teachers Based on the Undergraduate Program in Which the Pre-Service Teachers are enrolled

Opinion	Dept.	n	\bar{X}	SS	F	p	Difference
Opinions of pre-school teachers	CEIT	27	55.70	8.09	8.777	.000	MATHS.- SCIENCE MATHS - RCMT CT- RCMT
	SCIENCE	42	54.24	10.69			
	RCMT	61	50.29	11.76			
	MATHS.	77	60.77	10.41			
	CT	38	58.16	11.29			
	Total	245	56.08	11.39			

When the opinions of pre-service teachers on classroom management strategies are examined according to the undergraduate program of the pre-service teacher, it is found that the mean of the pre-service teachers in the Computer and Instructional Technologies Education department is ($\bar{X}=55.70$), in the Science Education

department is (\bar{X} =54.24), in the Primary Education Religious Culture and Moral Education Department is (\bar{X} =50.30), and in the Primary School Mathematics department is (\bar{X} =50.10). Examining the difference between the groups by branch reveals that there is a difference between the opinions of teacher candidates studying in the branches of Mathematics teaching and Science teaching, Mathematics teaching and Religion, Culture and Moral teaching, and Classroom teaching and Religion, Culture and Moral teaching (p.05).

The distribution of pre-service teachers' opinions according to GPA is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Comparison of Pre-service Teachers' Opinions Regarding Classroom Management Strategies Based on Their Grade Point Average

Opinion	GPA	<i>n</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	F	P	Difference
Classroom Management Strategies.	1.50-2.50	58	58.60	9.78	2.89	0.03	1.50-2.50 - 3.51 -above 2.51-3.00 - 3.51 -above 3.01-3.50 - 3.51 -above
	2.51-3.00	101	55.27	11.88			
	3.01-3.50	61	56.08	11.19			
	3.50+	25	44.60	14.60			
Total		245	56.08	11.39			

Examining the opinions of pre-service teachers regarding classroom management strategies according to their overall grade point average reveals that those with a GPA of 1.50-2.50 have a mean of (\bar{X} =58.60), those with 2.51- 3.00 have a mean of (\bar{X} =55.27), those with 3.01-3.50 have a mean of (\bar{X} =56.08), and those with 3.51- have a mean of (\bar{X} =44.60). Examining the difference between the groups regarding the GPA variable reveals that pre-service teachers with GPAs of 1.50-2.50 and above 3.51, 2.51-3.00 and above 3.51, and 3.01-3.50 and above 3.51 have distinct opinions (p.05).

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the study's findings, there is no significant difference between the genders of pre-service teachers regarding their perceptions of the classroom administration strategies employed by mentor teachers. Examining the related literature to determine if there are any studies with findings similar to this one reveals that this finding is nearly identical to those of Günay (2003), Gündüz (2001), Korkmaz (2007), Kutlu (2006), Öksüz et al. (2012), Özgün (2008), Yalçın (2007), Çakmak, Kayabaş, and Ercan (2008). Therefore, it can be asserted that the gender factor does not affect the pre-service teacher's pedagogical education in terms of the interpretation of classroom management strategies. Variables can influence the classroom strategies utilized by practicum instructors. Given that the pre-service teachers interpreted these strategies through a constructivist lens in the context of the scale, it is possible that they shared similar perspectives.

When the relationship between the seniority of mentor teachers and gender is studied, it is possible to conclude that there is no distinction between the opinions of pre-service teachers based on the gender and seniority of the mentor teacher. Examining the seniority and gender of mentor teachers reveals that teachers with fewer years of experience have higher mean scores. However, this does not constitute a significant distinction. Considering that

the questions of the scale are formulated using a constructivist approach, it can be argued that mentor teachers with varying years of experience have adapted the constructivist approach similarly in terms of classroom management strategies.

When the nature of the pre-service teacher's undergraduate program is taken into account, it is evident that there is a significant difference in opinion regarding the pre-service teacher's undergraduate program. Pre-service classroom teachers find their mentor teachers in their fields to be more successful at implementing classroom management strategies than pre-service Religious, Culture, and Moral teachers, pre-service Mathematics teachers find their teachers in their fields to be more successful than pre-service Science and Technology teachers, and similarly, pre-service Mathematics teachers find their teachers in their fields to be more successful than pre-service Religious, Culture, and Moral teachers. This finding is comparable to the research conducted by Durmuş and Demirtaş (2009), Cakmak, Kayabaş, and Ercan (2008), Köse (2010), and Terzi (2001). In contrast, Şentürk (2007) concludes that there is no difference between the programs in which pre-service teachers are enrolled, which is a contradictory finding when compared to the majority of studies, which conclude that there is a difference between programs.

When GPAs of pre-service teachers are considered, it is evident that there is a significant difference between the opinions of pre-service teachers with a higher GPA and those with a lower GPA. Pre-service teachers' perceptions in one area influence their perceptions in other areas of pedagogy (Kahramanoğlu & Ay, 2013). Examining the available research, no studies exist that support this conclusion. This may indicate that pre-service teachers with high grade point averages find their mentor teachers' classroom management strategies inadequate or ineffective.

The high participation of pre-service teachers in classroom management strategies indicates that they are prepared to positively apply the classroom management course's knowledge and skills. This result once again demonstrates the significance of the course on classroom administration. In the study conducted by Köroğlu, Başer, and Yavuz (2000) on the evaluation of practice studies on classroom management strategies in schools, the majority of pre-service teachers reported gaining experience in communication, classroom management, and fundamental teaching skills through school experience courses. Therefore, it can be concluded that enhancing this course's content will equip pre-service teachers with more robust strategies (Çakmak, Kayabaş, & Ercan, 2008).

Suggestions

- A course in classroom management at the undergraduate level can be redesigned as an application-oriented course in which various strategies are discussed theoretically based on fields and programs.
- Given that classroom management strategies may vary by discipline, a field educator who has been trained in that field can teach classroom management to teacher education students from various fields.
- Students with low grade point averages should have their pedagogical deficiencies addressed through practice courses and the application process.
- It is possible to conduct a qualitative, observational study to determine the impact of gender and seniority on classroom management strategies.

- Other researchers who can work on this topic may plan new studies employing diverse research methodologies and variables.

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