

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPATHY SKILLS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDENTS

Çocuk Gelişimi Öğrencilerinin Duygusal Zeka Ve Empati Becerileri

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ABSTRACT

The importance of having one's emotional intelligence and empathic tendencies has been increasing as well as intellectual intelligence in effective communication with team work. This research was carried out so as to investigate the effects of emotional intelligence and empathy levels of the students who were studying in the field of child development and on their socio-demographic characteristics, emotional intelligence and empathic tendencies. The study group consists of students from a high school, undergraduate, associate and MA graduate students, studying at the department of child development (N = 265). The average age of the study group range between 21 ± 2.46; and 48.3% of the time spent in child development is 5-9 years. In addition to the demographic information forms, Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale and Emotional Empathic Tendency Scale were used as the data collection tools. Data were assessed by T- tests, one-way variance test and Pearson correlation analysis. It was revealed that 76.9% of the study group had empathy with children; 73.2% stated they were enjoying playing games; 95.8% used their feelings when they were dealing with the children; 74.7% took care of the children willingly; 69% mentioned that they were eager to do team work during their practicum studies. **DISCUSSION:** The results of the research made it clear that the empathic tendencies were influenced by the sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence. The average optimism scores of undergraduate and MA students were higher than those of high school and associate degree students. The students' empathic tendencies were found to be above the average level. Within the scopes of findings obtained, suggestions were made for improving the emotional intelligence and empathy skills of the children who were studying in the field of child development

Key words: Child Development, Emotional Intelligence, Empathy.

ÖZET

Bireylerin duygusal zeka ve empatik eğilimlere sahip olması önemlidir. Bu araştırma, çocuk gelişimi alanında öğrenim gören öğrencilerin duygusal zeka ve empati düzeylerinin, sosyo-demografik özellikleri, duygusal zeka ve empatik eğilimleri üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Çalışma grubu çocuk gelişimi alanında öğrenim gören lise, lisans, önlisans ve yüksek lisans düzeyindeki öğrencilerden oluşmaktadır (N=265). Çalışma grubunun yaş ortalaması 21±2,46'dır. Çocuk gelişimi alanında öğrenim gören süre değerlendirildiğinde katılımcıların % 48.3'ü 5-9 yıl bu alanda öğrenim görmüştür. Veri toplama aracı olarak demografik bilgi formlarına ek olarak Schutte Duygusal Zeka Ölçeği ve Duygusal Empatik Eğilim Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Veriler t testi, tek yönlü varyans testi ve pearson korelasyon analizi ile değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışma grubunun %76,9'u çocuklarla rahatlıkla empati kurduğunu; %73,2'si oyun oynamaktan hoşlandığını; %95,8'i çocuklarla uğraşırken duygularını kullandığını; %74,7'si çocuklarla isteyerek ilgilendiğini; %69'u staj çalışmaları sırasında ekip çalışması yapmaya istekli olduklarını belirtmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları empatik eğilimlerin duygusal zekanın alt boyutlarından etkilendiğini açıkça ortaya koymuştur. Lisans ve yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin ortalama iyimserlik puanları lise ve önlisans öğrencilerine göre daha yüksektir. Öğrencilerin empatik eğilimleri ortalama düzeyin üzerinde bulunmuştur. Elde edilen bulgular kapsamında, çocuk gelişimi alanında eğitim gören çocukların duygusal zeka ve empati becerilerini geliştirmek için önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çocuk Gelişimi, Duygusal Zeka, Empati

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, upon adopting emotions as essential in human life, it has been negotiated over how people can control their emotions and how emotions can be used to get through to success (Uhlmann et al., 2013). In all aspects of life, the ones with high IQ levels and a lot of technical and professional knowledge are considered to be less successful than those who have good communication with the environment, prone to team work, and having high emotional quotient (EQ) (Tatar et al., 2017).

Emotional intelligence is referred as the sub-dimension of social intelligence that includes the ability to monitor one's own the feelings and others, to differentiate between emotions, and to use the knowledge gained accordingly (Goleman, 2005, p.49); also the one by means of which individuals can understand their own feelings, raise their motivation, define feelings, build empathy and reflect on these talents in their behaviours (Thomas&Fletcher, 2003). In this context, emotional intelligence and empathy are important skills that enable healthy communication and interaction in one's own life (Yuksel & Geban, 2014). Emotionally intelligent individuals are those who are able to use the right communication techniques, and the ones who are aware of their own and others' feelings, who can perceive, manage, empathize and develop their motivation to recognize their anxieties and worries (Titrek, 2007, p.70). Self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy, social competence and communication skills are also specified as the competencies for emotional intelligence (Chen et al., 2007 Ernek Alan, 2016). The child developers with high level of emotional intelligence can both protect their mental health, and serve effective and qualified training as well as care for the children they deal with.

Individuals with high emotional intelligence also use effective strategies when managing their emotions (Mayer and Salovey, 1993). Thanks to the importance given in developing emotional intelligence during the education within child development departments, contribution will be provided with the training of child development specialists with the qualities of innovative and effective management as a leader, besides improving the field of child development education (Plesa-Skwerer et al., 2006). Undergraduate child development students, who have yet started to practice their profession, can improve communication abilities especially by means of applied training as well as the activities involving different methods, in which their self-confidence can be raised through relevant projects.

There are some studies stating the fact that children can be made smarter by developing their characters and their social/ethical intelligences via empathy, respect and cooperation (Costa and Kallick, 2008; Kaya and Çolakoğlu, 2015). The ability to empathize with others prevents communication interferences and plays an important role in building healthier relationships. The person who is supposed to empathize with his/her interlocutors should see the world through someone else's eyes, by putting himself/herself in their shoes. In order to be able to realize this, what one should do is to take the role of the interlocutor in a given time; after a while to return to his/her own role again, which is an attempt to understand one another, to live and feel things in the same way. The empathic tendency is the capability of one's feeling empathy, whereas empathic skill is one's ability of getting across himself/herself to show that he/she is aware of the interlocutors' feelings. (Arı vd, 1995; Ioannidou, Konstantikaki, 2008, p.119). Therefore, child developers, who are interacting with children, need to be empathy-enhanced individuals in order to understand a child's feelings, needs and desires.

1.1. Importance of The Study

Today, emotional intelligence and empathy skills are considered as important attributes that enhance one's own job performance. However, there are few studies that have been carried out on child development specialists and on those taking education at the department of child development in Turkey. Unlike some schools that have incorporated emotional intelligence and empathy skills into their curriculum, it seems there is not enough training given to develop these skills during high school and college years. In fact, it is necessary to add competencies that bring in empathy skills

and enhance emotional intelligence into the curricula for child developers, who interact with children. Child developers need to be experts in the improvement of their careers by equipping with broad capabilities with which they are supposed to face the challenges of their own personal achievements. Providing that child developers become the individuals whose empathy skills and empathic skills have been improved, there could be considerable progress in terms of child care and education for the sake of children. In order to develop the quality of practices in the field of child development and education, the impact of emotional intelligence on child care and educational behaviours should be considered while individuals are still at the stage of learning; and attention should be paid to the importance of emotional intelligence accordingly. Determining the characteristics related to emotional intelligence during the studentship phase will also motivate educators so that they can find out different methods in educational activities. In accordance with such issues, our study aims to make contributions to the literature by investigating the effects of socio-demographic characteristics of children in the field of child development on their emotional intelligence attributes.

The aim of this research is to compare the levels of empathy and emotional intelligence to determine the effects of socio-demographic characteristics on emotional intelligence characteristics of high school, associate, undergraduate and graduate students studying in the child development departments.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research is a descriptive study designed to determine the effects of emotional intelligence and empathy levels on students in the field of child development and to reveal the effects of socio-demographic characteristics on emotional intelligence and empathy skills.

Within the research, the answers to the following questions were investigated:

- ✓ What are the levels of emotional intelligence of students in the field of child development?
- ✓ Are the levels of emotional intelligence significantly different among high school, associate degree, undergraduate and graduate students in the field of child development?
- ✓ What are the relationships between socio-demographic variables and emotional intelligence characteristics of students in the field of child development according to the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire?

The research was carried out to incorporate the ISE Zübeyde Hanım Girls' Vocational High School, and Konya Chamber of Commerce Karatay University and other universities in the field of child development in Konya.

The study involves 72 students of associate degree and 138 undergraduate students who have continued their university education during 2016 - 2017 period. In the high schools, since the area has not been selected yet in the 9th grades, they have been considered outside the scope. Yet, there are 168 participating students in 10th, 11th and 12th grades. Snowball and chain sampling methods have been used to reach graduate students; a graduate student was asked to whom else to reach on research subject and 17 MA students, and those who willingly accepted to fill in the data collection form with snowball effect, were included in the study group.

Within the study, students of high school, associate degree, undergraduate and graduate level child development have created the universe of research. A total of 350 child development students were informed about the purpose of study in the data collection stage; and a demographic form of personal identification and the scales were given accordingly. 265 forms were included in the evaluation phase, by excluding missing and incorrectly filled out forms. The characteristics of the study group included in the study are given in Table 1.

| | | n | % |
|---|-------------------|-----|------|
| Gender | Female | 259 | 97,7 |
| | Male | 6 | 2,2 |
| Educational status | High School | 88 | 33,2 |
| | Associate degree | 72 | 27,1 |
| | Undergraduate | 88 | 33,2 |
| | Post graduate | 17 | 6,4 |
| Marital status | Married | 18 | 6,7 |
| | Single | 247 | 93,2 |
| Age | 15-19 | 104 | 39,2 |
| | 20-24 | 148 | 55,8 |
| | 25 + | 13 | 4,9 |
| Years in profession | 1-4 years | 87 | 32,8 |
| | 5-9 years | 128 | 48,3 |
| | 10-14 years | 47 | 17,7 |
| | 15 years and over | 3 | 1,1 |
| Receiving training on the field of child education apart from the formal school curriculum. | Not received | 185 | 69,8 |
| | Received | 80 | 30,1 |

It has been revealed that 97.7% of the child development students in the study group are females. According to TURKSTAT 2016 data it is stated that, while male students prefer technical sciences in selecting higher education area, female students mostly prefer language, literature and social areas. As the main task of childcare is attributed to females in the Turkish society, it could be reason why there are small number of males registered in the department of child development. The average age of the study group was 21 ± 2.46 , 48.3%, spending 5-9 years in the field of child development.

2.1. Data Collection Forms

2.1.1. Personal Characteristics Form

It is a form including the characteristics of age, educational status of the participants in the study group; mother's age, educational background and profession; father's age, educational background and profession; the statement regarding whether the field of child development is voluntary selection for the participant, and previous participation in other trainings parallel to the field of child development.

2.1.2. Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale

The scale was devised by Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden and Dornheim, and Turkish adaptation and psychometric properties of the scale were later investigated by Arkun Tatar, Serdar Tok and Gaye Saltukoglu in 2011. The new version of the scale was presented as 41-items and three factors. These factors are described as Optimism / Regulation of Emotions, Utilisation of Emotions and Appraisal of Emotions. The assessment is based on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree.

2.1.3. Empathic Tendency Scale

The scale, devised by Dökmen (1988), was developed to measure the potentials of establishing empathic of people in their daily lives. Since empathic communication could be affected negatively when people responded with the self-centred phase of empathy building, Dökmen added a couple of items to reflect some egocentric attributes of (selfish, self-centred) communication into the current items of the scale. Participants were asked to determine the extent to which they agree with the item in each question by letting them mark one of the numbers from 1 to 5 next to each item. The numbers, which participants mark after reading the items, constitute the scores for that item. Negative scores have been assessed reversely, as 1 in response to "I totally agree", 5 in responses to "I do not agree at all". The higher score stands for the higher empathic tendency, and the lower

means that the empathic tendency is lower. It has been revealed that the model, tested in line with the obtained results, has pretty good fit indices.

2.1.4. Ethical Dimensions of the Study

Before the data of research were collected and used, ethics committee approval and other necessary permits were provided from the relevant institution. During the data collection phase, information about the aim of the study was presented to all of the students who would participate in the study, and research process was realized considering the willingness to participate. Implementation of the data collection forms took about 15 minutes. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the data; the collected data were carefully examined and the missing and incorrectly filled forms were excluded in the process of evaluation. Finally, the results of the data analysis were obtained by consulting the opinions of the statistical experts.

2.1.5. Assessing the Data

The data obtained by the demographic information and the forms of emotional intelligence scale were analyzed via electronic software of SPSS 26.0. The ranges regarding the answers to demographic questions and scale items were carried out through frequency analysis. The answers to the scale items were classified and the values related to scales and their sub-dimensions were assessed accordingly. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to determine the normal distribution of the obtained values which revealed that it showed a normal distribution. An independent Samples T-test was used to compare the means of two independent groups in order to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the associated population means are significantly different; in addition, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was realized to see whether there were any statistically significant differences between the means of more than two independent groups. Once one-way ANOVA tests resulted in a significant difference, TUKEY test was implemented to understand in which groups there appeared significant differences among the samples specifically. Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to measure of the strength and direction of association that existed between two continuous variables within the scales and their sub-dimensions.

3.RESULTS

The distribution of the responses of the study group to the questions concerning the field of child development is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Responses to the questions about the field of child development

| | | n | % |
|---|-----------|-----|------|
| If you had the chance again, would you choose the field of child development? | Yes | 156 | 58,8 |
| | Perhaps | 92 | 34,7 |
| | No | 17 | 6,4 |
| After graduation, will you think about moving your career away from child development? | Yes | 14 | 5,2 |
| | Perhaps | 81 | 30,5 |
| | No | 170 | 64,1 |
| Do you feel satisfied when the lessons and practices related to child development are over? | Never | 4 | 1,5 |
| | Sometimes | 86 | 32,4 |
| | Always | 175 | 66,0 |
| How do you rate your success after interacting with children? | Very poor | 51 | 19,2 |
| | Well | 96 | 36,2 |
| | Average | 106 | 40 |
| | Poor | 12 | 4,5 |

It was revealed that 58.8% in the study group stated they might choose the field of child development again if they had the second chance. Participants in the study group were also asked to choose their own the response about the expressions regarding the field of child development and the results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Responses of the study group based on their self-evaluation of child development field

| | N | % |
|---|-----|------|
| I can empathize with children. | 204 | 76,9 |
| I can have fun by playing games with children. | 194 | 73,2 |
| I can use my emotions while I am dealing with children. | 254 | 95,8 |
| I take care with children willingly. | 198 | 74,7 |
| I am voluntary to do team work with my colleagues during the internship. | 183 | 69 |
| When doing the practicum with my colleagues and children during internships, I can take on the leadership when necessary. | 174 | 65,6 |

The results in Table 3 showed that 76.9% of those in the study group were able to empathize with children; 73.2% enjoyed playing games; 95.8% used their feelings when they were dealing with children; 74.7% cared with children willingly; 69% said they were voluntary to work with their colleagues in the internship, and 65.6% stated they could take the lead of their colleagues and children during internship when necessary.

The students in the study group were also asked to list the main features of emotional intelligence in the questionnaire, then to mark the relevant features they thought best expressing themselves; and the results are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Emotional intelligence characteristics that the study group believes reflecting themselves best

| Emotional intelligence characteristics | N | % |
|--|----|------|
| Social skills | 42 | 15,8 |
| Developing empathy | 35 | 13,2 |
| Being aware of feelings | 57 | 21,5 |
| Managing feelings | 66 | 24,9 |
| Self-activation | 52 | 19,6 |
| Leadership | 13 | 4,9 |

As one could see in the Table above, 24.9% of the students in the study group stated that their ability to control their emotions was the strongest the of all. It seemed that theoretical lectures and practices related to children and interaction with children may have contributed to improving their ability to control their emotional intelligence levels in the process of child development education. The empathy characteristics of the participants according to the scale of empathic tendencies are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The empathic characteristics of the study group according to the scale of empathic tendencies

| | Mean |
|--|------|
| 1. I have a lot of friends. | 4,29 |
| 2. I am usually pleased with my life. | 3,72 |
| 3. The problems of others concern me as of my own. | 3,69 |
| 4. Those who tell me their about troubles leave me feeling relieved | 4,05 |
| 5. It makes me feel comfortable to tell a friend about my own trouble | 4,06 |
| 6. My friends often tell me their troubles. | 3,54 |
| 7. I am a very popular person in my circle. | 2,96 |
| 8. I am an outgoing person. | 2,80 |
| 9. I am usualy in a good mood | 3,89 |
| 10. I usually trust people. | 3,77 |
| 11. I feel relieved upon watching the films with happy ending on TV. | 2,47 |
| 12. My eyes are sometimes filled with tears while watching films. | 2,98 |
| 13. I am a nervous person. | 2,99 |
| 14. Most people are selfish. | 3,86 |
| 15. I find it strange to see the people with watery eyes while watching films. | 2,88 |
| 16. People are not fully be able to understand me. | 3,87 |
| 17. I have difficulty in transmitting my thoughts to others. | 3,98 |
| 17. I have difficulty in transmitting my feelings to others. | 4,19 |
| 19. I often feel like alone. | 3,08 |
| 20. When arguing with others, my attention is sometimes focused on the reply I will give rather than what they are saying. | 3,80 |

According to Table 5, the mean scores of empathic tendency states of children in the field of child development vary between 4.29 and 2.47. At the highest level of has been the statement "I have many friends"; whereas at the lowest level of all has been mentioned as " I feel relieved when the films have happy ending on TV" of all. The mean scores of the study group regarding the subscales of the Emotional Intelligence Scale are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Emotional intelligence sub-dimensions and mean scores of the study group from the empathic tendency scale

| Emotional Intelligence | Mean | Score Intervals |
|------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Optimism | 64.14±7.56 | 17-85 |
| Utilisation of feelings | 16.85±4.21 | 6-30 |
| Appraisal of Emotions | 38.88±6.06 | 14-70 |
| Total Emotional Intelligence Score | 115.33±10.28 | 41-191 |
| Emotional Tendency Scale | Mean | Score Intervals |
| One dimension | 72,04 | 30-95 |

It was determined that the average scores of the empathic tendency were $72,04 \pm 8,760$ points by the students who continued their education in the field of child development. A regression analysis was performed to see the strength of relationship between emotional intelligence and the empathic tendencies of the participants, and the results are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Regression analysis between emotional intelligence and empathic tendency

| Scale-1* | Scale-2** | r | F | Beta | P |
|-------------------------|------------------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| Optimism | Empathic | | | ,076 | ,264 |
| Utilisation of feelings | tendencies | ,278 | 18,628 | ,107 | ,218 |
| Appraisal of Emotions | | | | ,341 | ,000 |

* Emotional intelligence scale, ** Empathic tendency scale $p < 0.001$

According to the regression analysis between emotional intelligence and empathic tendency, 27.8% of the variance in empathy skills appeared to be predicted by emotional intelligence sub-dimensions ($F = 18,628$; $p < 0.001$). Empathy tendencies were significantly influenced by emotional intelligence subscales, specifically in terms of appraisal of emotions. The relationship between the utilisation of feelings and optimism subscales was not found to be significant. In this sense, appraising the feelings of individuals can be considered as an effective factor on empathy skills.

The T-test results of independent groups, which were realized to determine whether averages in terms of the educational status of the overall and sub-dimensions of the scale as well as the difference between these averages were significant, are given in Table 8,

Table 8. T-test results on the variance of emotional intelligence scale and sub-dimensions according to educational statuses

| Sub-dimension of the scale | Educational Status | N | Mean | Sd | t | df | P |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Optimism/Mood Regulation | High School | 88 | 22,88 | ,52372 | 2,138 | 264 | .04 |
| | Associate degree | 72 | 23,06 | ,48846 | | | |
| | Undergraduate | 88 | 22,67 | ,47644 | | | |
| | Post graduate | 17 | 22,00 | ,48824 | | | |
| Utilisation of feelings | High School | 88 | 33,23 | ,42547 | -1,726 | 264 | .17 |
| | Associate degree | 72 | 33,12 | ,48846 | | | |
| | Undergraduate | 88 | 32,78 | ,51426 | | | |
| | Post graduate | 17 | 32,34 | ,47392 | | | |
| Appraisal of Emotions | High School | 88 | 28,08 | ,47378 | -1,276 | 264 | .20 |
| | Associate degree | 72 | 30,12 | ,51372 | | | |
| | Undergraduate | 88 | 26,34 | ,47627 | | | |
| | Post graduate | 17 | 33,16 | ,51428 | | | |
| Emotional Intelligence Total | High School | 88 | 22,86 | ,52612 | -0,868 | 264 | .15 |
| | Associate degree | 72 | 24,93 | ,51473 | | | |
| | Undergraduate | 88 | 26,67 | ,46825 | | | |
| | Post graduate | 17 | 23,67 | ,42764 | | | |

When we examine Table 8, it is observed that there is a significant difference in respect of optimism/mood for the sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence regarding the statuses of education within the study group. Therefore, it is revealed that average scores of the undergraduate and

graduate students are higher than those of high school and associate degree students ($p < 0.05$). Differences in the educational statuses of the study group and other subscales of emotional intelligence have not been statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). According to the Post Hoc-least significant difference test, which has been used to determine the group from which the significance arises, it is determined that the difference arises from the high school and the associate groups.

The results of the T-test in the independent groups, to reveal the means of the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Self-report Scale overall and sub-dimensions in respect of the state of re-selecting the child development field as well as to see whether the difference between these scores is meaningful, are given in Table 9.

Table 9. Variance of emotional intelligence scale and its sub-dimensions according to selecting child development field willingly (n = 156)

| Sub-dimensions of the scale | Educational status | n | Mean | Sd | F | P |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----|---------|---------|-------|-------|
| Optimism/Mood Regulation | High School | 46 | 76,222 | 7,50167 | ,088 | ,876 |
| | Associate degree | 41 | 72,346 | 11,1816 | | |
| | Undergraduate | 53 | 70,729 | 9,0338 | | |
| | Post graduate | 16 | 74,927 | 7,4650 | | |
| Utilisation of feelings | High School | 46 | 26,5267 | 4,1650 | ,782 | ,562 |
| | Associate degree | 41 | 19,4623 | 4,2846 | | |
| | Undergraduate | 53 | 19,7000 | 4,0056 | | |
| | Post graduate | 16 | 20,8770 | 4,0608 | | |
| Appraisal of Emotions | High School | 46 | 29,7846 | 7,0446 | 4,758 | ,004* |
| | Associate degree | 41 | 27,0256 | 6,8628 | | |
| | Undergraduate | 53 | 27,6750 | 6,5936 | | |
| | Post graduate | 16 | 24,3939 | 6,7845 | | |

* $p < 0,05$ (significant)

One-way analysis of variance has been used to determine whether there was a difference between the subscales of the emotional intelligence scale according to the status of child re-selection by the study group. It was recorded that there was a significant difference between "appraisal of emotions", the sub-dimension of emotional intelligence, and re-selecting of the child development field ($p < 0,05$). Relationship between the re-selection of the child development field and other sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence was not found to be statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). In addition, emotional intelligence and empathic tendencies depending on the marital status were tested via one-way variance analysis, in which no statistically significant difference was found. That is to say that, marital status does not seem to affect the tendency of emotional intelligence and empathy. The average scores of the utilisation and appraisal of emotions according to receiving training on the child education field within the emotional intelligence sub-dimensions are given in Table 10

Table 10. Emotional intelligence mean scores of T-test for receiving training on the field of child education

| Sub-dimensions of the scale | Receiving Training | N | Mean | Sd | t | df | P* |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----|------|--------|-------|-----|-----|
| Optimism/Mood Regulation | Received | 185 | 3,54 | ,57888 | ,146 | 264 | ,88 |
| | Not received | 80 | 3,52 | ,62006 | | | |
| Utilisation of feelings | Received | 185 | 2,88 | ,58774 | 2,024 | 264 | ,04 |
| | Not received | 80 | 3,08 | ,62067 | | | |
| Appraisal of Emotions | Received | 185 | 2,61 | ,61166 | 2,408 | 264 | ,02 |
| | Not received | 80 | 2,84 | ,66838 | | | |

When we examined Table 10, we realized that there was a significant difference in the utilisation of feelings and emotional appraisal dimensions within the emotional intelligence sub-dimensions according to the variable of receiving training on the field of child education.

4. DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in order to determine the effects of socio-demographic and emotional intelligence characteristics of the students, who were studying in high school, associate,

undergraduate, graduate departments, and the findings obtained from this study were discussed in the light of other studies.

According to the age of the participating students, no significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions including the appraisal of emotional intelligence and the utilization of feelings. However, some differences were determined in the subscale of optimism / mood regulation according to the age of the students in the study group as well as the scores of total emotional intelligence. This difference can be interpreted as an increase in emotional intelligence as one ages. These findings are in line with the results of Holt and Jones's (2005) study on the relationship between emotional intelligence and age, which revealed that emotional intelligence could be improved through age and experience.

The arithmetic mean scores of the study group are 3.55 on the Empathy Tendency Scale. This means that the average scores empathic tendencies belonging to the high school, associate, undergraduate and graduate child development students are at "fairly appropriate" levels. Feeney&Collins (2001) revealed that the empathic tendency situations of the students were average levels among the empathic tendencies of the social studies teachers. Likewise, Maden and Durukan (2011) found that the empathic tendency levels of teachers were indecisive; Schwartz&Sendor (1999) determined that the level of empathy for class teachers was quite appropriate. According to the findings obtained in our research ($X=3,55$), it can be said that high school, associate, undergraduate and graduate students who continue their education in child development field have empathic skills.

In the study group, 24.9% of the students stated that their ability to control their emotions was the strongest of all. In the process of child development and education, theoretical lectures and practices related to children, such as interaction with children, may have contributed to improving their ability to control their emotional intelligence levels. Otacioglu (2009) noted that children with low levels of emotional intelligence were more likely to fail in their social relationships and comparatively to develop more negative aggressive behaviours. Kennedy&Adolphs, (2012), in a study of pre-school teachers and senior-level teacher candidates to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and attitudes towards the field, determined that there was a significant difference between teachers' and teacher candidates' emotional intelligence sub-dimensions ($p < 0.05$). In the same study, there was also a significant relationship between pre-school teachers and teachers' emotional intelligence and attitudes towards preschool teaching profession ($p < 0.01$). Some other findings in the relevant literature showed that, child development workers with the communication skills, an important element of emotional intelligence, were highly able to control their emotions. (Mathersul et al, 2013; Titrek, 2007, Uhlmann et al, 2013). The fact that the greater satisfaction of individuals who are aware of the causes and management of their own anger and sadness in their relationships can be explained by the one's affecting the interaction process between emotional skills and other individuals.

As a result of the analyzes made, it was determined that emotional intelligence scores varied significantly according to educational backgrounds ($p < 0,05$). Upon the analyzes to determine variance on the optimism / mood regulation, the utilization of emotions and emotional appraisal factors and emotional intelligence, it was revealed that they differed according to the average of the total scores; ($p < 0.05$) as well as the differences on behalf of the undergraduate students between the undergraduate and graduate participants within the means of optimism, emotional utilization factors and emotional intelligence total scores. It was also found out in the study of Vaananen et al. (2005) that the average scores of total emotional intelligence of the third year undergraduates in the pre-school students were higher than the other classes of undergraduate students. We may assume that as the level of education increases, the students in the field of child development are more aware of the fact that they have emotional intelligence, however they do not use it well or they cannot bring it to the foreground in their daily lives. According to the results in the study of Klimecki&Singer, (2011) on emotional intelligence of the teacher candidates of the education

science faculty regarding the class level variety, it was revealed that the emotional intelligence levels were not differentiated among the teacher candidates. On the other hand, Beeney et al (2011) investigated the relationship between the levels of emotional intelligence and critical thinking tendencies of prospective teachers in the final year of their studies, and they found a significant difference between critical thinking tendencies and emotional intelligence sub-dimensions. In addition, it was determined that the more tendency to critical thinking, the higher became emotional intelligence. In the study of Ergin (2008) with teachers; it appeared a significant difference in age-related emotional intelligence scores among the teachers. That is to say that, emotional intelligence scores vary significantly depending on the length of time teachers spend in their professions, which means that the level of emotional intelligence and the provision of relevant training will also increase the quality of the services provided by the people who will occupy the profession of the child development field in the future.

In our study, it was revealed that 58.8% of those in the study stated they could re-select the field of child development if they had the chance to choose again; 66% pointed out that they felt happy when the lessons were over, and 36.2% said they appreciated the success they showed after interacting with children. These features of the participants, which are sub-components of emotional intelligence, are regarded as positive findings. The success scores belonging to those who cannot use emotional intelligence effectively are less than those who can. The people with fewer scores of success cannot communicate effectively; they cannot control themselves or their emotions in negative situations such as stress, conflict and crisis; they cannot establish empathy or positive relations due to becoming one-sided to the surrounding events. Aknin (2013) found that the socialization of individuals was related to their emotional intelligence, and those with high emotional intelligence achieved more pleasure of living. Finding a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction is important in terms of presenting experiences that will positively support communication with children. As a result of their research on emotional intelligence and empathic tendencies among pre-school teachers, Shanafelt et al. (2005) revealed that empathic tendency would be high when emotional intelligence was also high. Furthermore, Galinsky et al' study (2008) concluded that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and problem solving skills of teachers working in primary schools, also stressed that problem solving skills got higher with the increase of emotional intelligence; and empowering individuals who recognized their emotions could reach the resolutions more easily by approaching problems more positively.

According to the results obtained from our study, there was no significant difference between the Empathic Tendency Scale scores of the students, who continued their education in the field of child development, studying at high school, associate, undergraduate and graduate degrees. Riess's study (2012), examining conflict-resolution behaviours according to empathic tendency levels, also found that there was no significant difference in the empathic tendency levels among the primary school second-grade students. However, Eraslan (2016) came up with the results that empathic tendency levels showed significant differences according to age groups; in addition empathic tendencies were observed to have got higher as age increased. Upon the emergence of this result, it can be thought that advancing the level of people's of socialization with increasing age, meeting new people, entering new social circles and increasing self-improvement levels are all quite effective in the process.

It is an important element in the field of child development that one should understand the feelings of himself / herself and his / her environment and use this emotional factors to solve the problems he / she has encountered. In this respect, it is considered that pre-service child developers who are well aware of their own feelings and who can control their own problems will be able to access the solutions of the problems more easily and be more successful in interacting with children when they encounter problems both in school education and practicum areas.

Learning of emotional intelligence skills takes place primarily within the educational process. In this process, child development students should be encouraged to develop personal and professional aspects during formal courses and practices.

Our study provides information on the comparison of empathic intelligence levels and empathic tendencies of high school, associate, undergraduate and graduate students from child development departments with respect to some sub-dimensions.

It is very important that students, who are educated in the field of child development, must be provided to realize their own feelings towards children, control their emotions, understand the person they are supposed to deal with, develop effective communication skills, and have relevant leadership skills.

Project studies should be carried out so as to find out and improve emotional intelligence skills of children in the field of child development. Thanks to such projects, resources will be provided for the students in the child development field. It is necessary to work on improving the emotional intelligence qualities of the students who are educated in the child development departments within their academic educational studies. Pre-service teachers, who are trained in their first years of child development departments and work in the pre-school sector, should learn the most qualified behaviours and communication styles for children by improving their emotional intelligence attitudes via taking courses with experienced teachers in different branches and at various grade levels. With the development of emotional intelligence and empathic tendencies, those who pursue child development education can also improve their social and critical thinking skills in order to succeed in their professional lives in the future. However, educational courses in high schools and universities should be covered with the development of emotional intelligence and empathy skills for child development students in the curriculum, which will likely provide with reflection on education as soon as possible.

As a result of the obtained findings it can be said that the courses and extracurricular activities should be arranged according to the characteristics of the emotional intelligence and empathic tendencies of the students who are studying in child development field.

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