Effect of Theatre and Drama Practices Course on Social Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

Individuals who make up society interact and communicate with their social environment. While the healthy realization of this communication enables the individual to live in harmony with the community, in the opposite case, the individual cannot communicate with their environment and may face many problems in both professional and daily life. This situation can turn into social anxiety. In this work, which aims to analyze the impact of the "Theatre and Drama Practices" course on reducing social anxiety, experimental research design, one of the quantitative research designs, was used, and a one-group pretest-posttest model was used in the experimental design. In the work, which was implement on 45 4th-grade university students who study at Bayburt University School of Education, Department of Turkish Education autumn semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, data were collected with the 12-item Social Anxiety Scale Short Form. In the examination of the data obtained, the data were entered into the computer system and analyzed with the SPSS 18 program. Mean scores and standard deviation values of Turkish teacher candidates were calculated. To compare the data, the t-test for dependent group and t-test for independent group were used. Before the "Theatre and Drama Practices" course, Turkish teacher candidates had moderate social anxiety, and their social anxiety levels didn't differ significantly by gender; after the "Theatre and Drama Practices" course, Turkish teacher candidates had low social anxiety, and their social anxiety levels didn't differ significantly by gender. A statistically significant difference was obtained between Turkish teacher candidates' pre-test and post-test scores in terms of social anxiety. It was defined that the "Theatre and Drama Practices" course effectively reduced the social anxiety levels of teacher candidates.

Key words: Turkish Teacher Candidates, Social Anxiety, Theatre and Drama Practices

INTRODUCTION

In addition to living their lives individually, people are part of a social environment from the first years of their lives. They interact and communicate with their social environment. When mutual communication and interaction progress healthily, individuals continue their lives in harmony with society and establish a comfortable dialog with other individuals. When individuals cannot adapt to their changing and developing environment, they have difficulty communicating with their environment. Communication and interaction difficulties experienced by individuals can cause problems in both their daily and professional lives (Öztürk, 2014). The cause of the problem that individuals face in their daily or professional lives may vary. One of the main factors that cause communication difficulties experienced by individuals is social anxiety.

Social anxiety can be defined as excessive imaginary or real fear and anxiety that individuals feel physically or mentally in their social lives. APA (American Psychiatric Association) identify social anxiety as the marked and constant fear individuals feel when they come together with people they have not met before or when they take action in front of different people (Köroğlu, 2014).

Individuals with social anxiety think that the interaction and communication they perform during social relationships will be received negatively and that they will be ridiculed because of the anxiety they experience (Doğan & Tosun, 2016). Therefore, they avoid relationships that will trigger social anxiety and didn't want to interact with other people. As this level of anxiety increases, individuals may not be able to demonstrate their academic skills. They may encounter some negativities in their educational lives, and this may even lead to school dropout (Özbaş et al., 2012). Considering the role of social anxiety of individuals with high levels of anxiety in educational processes, it is necessary to eliminate anxiety-induced thoughts of failure or thoughts that there will be some problems on the way to success. Excessive social anxiety experienced by individuals can be eliminated with methods such as psychoeducation programs (Bal & Öner, 2014), virtual reality exposure therapy (Özden, 2021), psychodrama and cognitive behavioral therapy (Göveç, 2014), as well as courses with content that can reduce situations that

trigger social anxiety. One of these courses is the Theatre and Drama Practices (TDP) course.

The "TDP" course is one of the compulsory courses defined by the Council of Higher Education for the Turkish Language Teaching undergraduate program for the seventh semester. Within the scope of this course, Turkish teacher candidates, who aim to prepare their students for life, perform plays. Within the scope of this course, teacher candidates are expected to learn the basic concepts of theatre and animation techniques; improvisation studies, staging the essential elements of drama; images related to the ways of using creative drama in Turkish education; dramatization techniques, and psychological foundations of the play. In addition, with the aforementioned content within the scope of the course, individuals' skills in managing interpersonal relationships, developing social skills, decision-making and problem-solving, recognizing emotions, and self-expression are also developed. Through theatre and drama techniques, individuals explore events or phenomena and relationships. According to Akyol (2003), through theatre and drama, individuals create an imaginary world using their real-life knowledge and experiences and learn to analyze events and relationships. In this way, individuals find the opportunity to experience the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need for life.

Through a theatre study conducted at the basic education level, Bakır (2007) found that theatre increased children's assertiveness, decreased their shyness, increased their desire to engage in new activities, improved their friendship relations, increased their desire to make new friends, helped them make friends more easily, improved their environment, helped them express their problems and wishes more clearly, gave them a critical perspective, helped them get rid of boredom, engaged them to behave more calmly, helped them get rid of communication barriers (blaming others, etc.), helped them get rid of the fear of making mistakes, taught them to analyze events, skills and experiences, and helped them get rid of inferiority complexes.

Considering the studies carried out on this subject, it is seen that there are studies in which different methods and applications are used to eliminate social anxiety. In these studies, the use of psychoeducation (Bal & Öner, 2014), psychodrama, and cognitive behavioral therapy (Göveç, 2014) were used to help individuals get rid of their social anxiety. On the other hand, there are also studies examining the relationship between social anxiety and smartphone use (Doğan & Tosun, 2016) and early maladaptive schema relationships (Özbaş et al., 2012). It was also observed that teacher candidates' social anxiety was evaluated according to different variables (Ateş, 2015). There are also studies on the "TDP" course in the literature. In these studies, it was an attempt to define the opinions and attitudes of Turkish teacher candidates about the course (Özkan et al., 2011; Doğan & Özberk, 2013). In addition, there are studies analyzing the impact of theatre studies on self-confidence (Bakır, 2007), determining the opinions of Turkish teacher candidates about theatre and drama courses (Özkan et al., 2011), choosing the attitudes of Turkish teacher candidates towards "TDP" course (Doğan &

Özberk, 2013), revealing the effect of the course on teacher candidates (Maden, 2011), but there is no study examining the relationship between "TDP" course and social anxiety. Social anxiety, which is seen intensely in individuals, especially in young people (Çakır, 2010), negatively affects the lives of individuals. Determining the effect of the "TDP" course on social anxiety with its characteristics reveals the importance of the work. This work aims to examine the impact of the "TDP" course on reducing social anxiety. For this aim, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the social anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates before the "TDP" course?
2. Do Turkish teacher candidates' social anxiety levels before the "TDP" course differ according to gender?
3. What are the social anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates after the "TDP" course?
4. Do Turkish teacher candidates' social anxiety levels after the "TDP" course differ pursuant to gender?
5. Is there a statistically meaningful difference between Turkish teacher candidates' social anxiety pre-test and post-test scores?

METHOD

This section of the study provides detailed information about the model, study group, data collection tools and data analysis process used in the research process.

Research Model

In this study, experimental design, one of the quantitative research designs, was used, and a one-group pretest-posttest model was utilized. In this model, the effect of an independent variable on a randomly selected group is evaluated. For this purpose, measurements are made both before and after the procedure. Within the scope of the determined purpose, pre-test and post-test measurements were made on the same group in order to examine the effect of the "TDP" course on the social anxiety of Turkish teacher candidates.

Study Group

Findings of the research were obtained from 45 4th grade students in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching, Faculty of Education at Bayburt University in the autumn of 2022-2023. Purposeful sampling method was used (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The participants forming the study group were included in the research according to the principle of voluntariness. It is understood that 19 of the students in the study group were male (42.2%) and 26 were female (57.8%), and more than half of the study group consisted of female students.

Data Collection Tool

The instrument that was used to identify the social anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates had a personal information section, followed by a 12-item questionnaire developed by Nunes et al. (2018) and translated into Turkish by Can

and Bozgün (2021). This questionnaire, which was originally developed by Greca et al. (2015), was shortened to 12 items by Nunes et al. (2018). It measures the social anxiety of both high school students and adults. It consists of 3 sub-dimensions "fear of negative evaluation, social fear, and uneasiness in new situations, social fear, and uneasiness in general situations". The questionnaire consists of 12 items in total. In the five-point Likert-type measurement tool, ranging between 5 and 1. The maximum score obtained from the Social Anxiety Scale Short Form is 60, while the minimum score is 12. A rise in the total score received from the scale corresponds to an increase in the individual's social anxiety; a decrease in the score corresponds to a decrease in social anxiety.

All activities carried out to determine the effect of the "TDP" course on the social anxiety of prospective Turkish Language Teachers were conducted within the scope of the "TDP" course. No additional time was allocated for practices and activities. Before proceeding to the practices and activities in the content of the "TDP" course, which is planned as 2 weekly hours in the undergraduate program, the Social Anxiety Scale Short Form was applied to the students as a pretest in the first week, and then the course process was followed in line with the weekly detailed course content in the information package of Department of Turkish Language Teaching, Faculty of Education, Bayburt University. After the completion of the course process, the Social Anxiety Scale Short Form was applied to the students as a post-test in order to see the effect of the course on the social anxiety of Turkish Teacher Candidates.

Table 1 presents the details of the process, which aims to reveal the basic concepts of theatre as a learning outcome

Table 1. Implementation process

Week	Course objective
1	Orientation and Pre-test
2	What is Theatre? What are the characteristics of theatre as a type of literature and stage art?
3	What is the emergence and development of traditional and modern theatre?
4	World Theatre, Theatre in Western Literature, an Overview of English and French Tragedies
5	Traditional Turkish Theatre
6	Turkish Theatre from Tanzimat Period to Republic
7	Basic Concepts Related to Theatre
8	Theatre in Terms of Education and Training, Dramatization without Depending on a Literary Text, Dramatization Depending on a Written Text
9	Animation Techniques and Implementations
10	Animation Techniques and Implementations
11	Staging Techniques: Preliminary Preparatory Work/ Staging - Interpretation
12	Staging Techniques: Technical Staff/Stage Staff
13	Turkish Teaching with Drama Method and Implementations
14	Turkish Teaching with Drama Method and Implementations

and to develop strategies on how drama and theatre can be used in Turkish education.

Data Analysis

Analyzing of the data achieved using the Social Anxiety Scale Short Form, the data were entered into the digital environment and analyzed with the SPSS 18 program. The parametric test was used by accepting that the total scores showed normal distribution. The Turkish teacher candidates' mean scores and standard deviation values were calculated. To compare the data, the t-test for dependent group and t-test for independent group were used to compare the data.

FINDINGS

Findings Regarding the First Research Question

The levels of social anxiety of Turkish teacher candidates before the "TDP" course are given in Table 2.

The social anxiety of Turkish teacher candidates before the "TDP" course varies between 17-57 points. The average score obtained from the social anxiety scale is 33.13. Based on the fact that the maximum score that can be obtained from the scale is 60, it is seen that Turkish teacher candidates have moderate social anxiety.

Findings Regarding the Second Research Question

Differentiation of Turkish teacher candidates' social anxiety levels according to gender before the "TDP" course is given in Table 3.

The table shows the independent samples group t-test conducted to identify the differentiation of Turkish teacher candidates' levels of social anxiety before the "TDP" course. The social anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates didn't differ significantly according to gender (t= -0.444, p>.05).

Findings Regarding the Third Research Question

The levels of social anxiety of Turkish teacher candidates after the "TDP" course are given in Table 4.

The social anxiety of Turkish teacher candidates after the "TDP" course varies between 12-48 points. The average score obtained from the social anxiety scale is 25.97. Based on the fact that the maximum score that can be obtained from

Table 2. Descriptive statistics results of social anxiety of Turkish teacher candidates before the course

	n	Min	Max	M	SD
Scale Total Score	45	17.00	57.00	33.13	9.78

Table 3. Comparison of teacher candidates' levels of social anxiety according to gender

Gender	n	M	SD	SD Error mean	t	p
Male	19	32.36	11.03	2.53	-0.444	0.659
Female	26	33.69	8.94	1.75		

the scale is 60, it is seen that Turkish teacher candidates have a low level of social anxiety.

Findings Regarding the Fourth Research Question

Differentiation of Turkish teacher candidates' levels of social anxiety according to gender after the "TDP" course is given in Table 5.

The table shows results of the independent samples group t-test conducted to determine the differentiation of Turkish teacher candidates' social anxiety levels after the course. The social anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates did not differ significantly according to gender (t= 0.398, p>.05).

Findings Regarding the Fifth Research Question

Differentiation of Turkish teacher candidates' levels of social anxiety after the course according to gender is given in Table 6.

The table shows results of the dependent sample group t-test showing the differentiation of the Turkish teacher candidates' mean scores of the pre-test and post-test social anxiety. According to these results, the difference between the pre-test and post-test means of social anxiety of the Turkish teacher candidates is statistically significant (t=3.485, p<.05). Turkish language teacher candidates' social anxiety post-test mean (M=25.97) is statistically significantly lower than their social anxiety pretest mean (M=33.13).

DISCUSSION

Before the course, it was determined that Turkish teacher candidates had moderate social anxiety. In the literature, Yıldırım et al. (2011) found that teacher candidates' social anxiety levels decreased from the first year of undergraduate education until graduation. Ateş (2015), who evaluated the social anxiety of teacher candidates on the axis of a series of

Table 4. Levels of social anxiety of Turkish teacher candidates after the course

	n	Min	Max	M	SD
Scale Total Score	45	12.00	48.00	25.97	9.32

Table 5. Comparison of teacher candidates' levels of social anxiety according to gender

Gender	n	M	SD	SD Error mean	t	p
Male	19	26.63	8.22	1.88	0.398	0.693
Female	26	25.50	10.19	1.99		

Table 6. Comparison of teacher candidates' levels of social anxiety according to pre-test and post-test

Class	n	M	SD	SD Error mean	t	p
Pretest	45	33.13	9.78	1.45	3.485	0.001
Posttest	45	25.97	9.32	1.39		

variables, found that teachers experienced moderate anxiety. These results show similarities with the results of the study.

In the findings obtained before the "TDP" course, Turkish teacher candidates' social anxiety levels didn't differ significantly according to gender. This result confirms Hyde's (2005) claim that most of the psychological variables in men and women didn't differ according to gender. However, other studies in the literature support this result (Şahin et al., 2014; Göksel et al. 2018). Studies on teacher candidates (Yıldırım et al., 2011; Ateş, 2015) or Turkish teacher candidates' speaking anxiety (Baki & Karakuş, 2015; Mert, 2015; Özdemir, 2018) didn't find a significant difference in relation to gender.

After the course, it was found that Turkish teacher candidates had low level social anxiety. Yıldırım et al. (2011) determined the social anxiety levels of teacher candidates in the literature and concluded that the social anxiety of teachers decreases from the first year of undergraduate education until graduation. Ateş (2015), who evaluated the social anxiety of teacher candidates on the axis of a series of variables, found that teachers experienced moderate anxiety. These results show similarities with the results of the study.

The findings obtained after the "TDP" course showed that Turkish teacher candidates' social anxiety levels didn't differ significantly according to gender. This result confirms Hyde's (2005) claim that most of the psychological variables in men and women didn't differ according to gender. However, other studies in the literature support this result (Şahin et al., 2014; Göksel et al., 2018). Studies on teacher candidates (Yıldırım et al., 2011; Ateş, 2015) or Turkish teacher candidates' speaking anxiety (Baki & Karakuş, 2015; Mert, 2015; Özdemir, 2018) didn't find a significant difference in relation to gender. However, studies showing that social anxiety is higher in boys than girls (Dilbaz & Güz, 2002); there are also studies (Weinstock, 1999) which determined that it is more common in girls compared to boys.

In the findings obtained, a significant difference was found between Turkish teacher candidates' social anxiety pre-test and post-test scores. The "TDP" course effectively reduced the social anxiety levels of teacher candidates.

Çakır (2010) prepared a program for the social anxiety of individuals aged 13-16. In the program for coping with social anxiety, "Gaining the ability to initiate and maintain conversation", "Social environment awareness", "Listening and remembering", "Showing appropriate assertiveness skills," and "Developing appropriate assertiveness skills" were included. It was stated that the social anxiety reduction program applied reduced the social anxiety of the individuals in the experimental group. Since the topics specified in the program constitute the main outlines of the "TDP" course, the results of both studies are similar.

On the other hand, drama practices within the course scope allow the target group to develop their individual freedom and self-confidence (Aytaş & Uysal, 2016). There are studies in the literature revealing that there is a negative relation between self-esteem, and social anxiety (Parçal, 2018). As individuals' self-confidence increases, their social anxiety levels decrease. At this point, it can be considered a

natural result that the social anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates who gained self-confidence through drama practices decreased.

Although the sample group differs, studies on the positive effects of theatre and drama on individuals' self-expression (Ankay, 2018), social relations, and cooperation behaviors (Aslan, 2008) indirectly support the research result.

CONCLUSION

Despite the existing problems (Maden, 2011), it is clear that "TDP" will reduce the social anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates whose social role and status are very important. For this reason, the effect of the "TDP" course on teacher candidates' social anxiety should be taken into consideration and the course should be given due importance in the faculties in "Teacher Training Undergraduate Programmes". Considering the impact of the "TDP" course on the social anxiety of teacher candidates, necessary steps should be taken to solve the problems in the implementation process of the course. Considering the impact of the course on social anxiety, in-service training should be planned for teachers who are currently working, including the subjects within the scope of the "TDP" course.

Based on the impact of the course on social anxiety, the effect of the "TDP" course on teachers' or teacher candidates' professional anxiety, attitudes, and work motivation can be examined. Based on the fact that the "TDP" course reduces the social anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates, the impact of the "Drama in Education" course, which is among the elective courses of professional knowledge in the Turkish Language Teaching Undergraduate Program, on social anxiety can be examined and compared with the "TDP" course. Based on the effect of the course on social anxiety, a qualitative study can be conducted in which the opinions of prospective Turkish teachers about the "TDP" course are taken.

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