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Discussion of the Effects of Teachers' Behaviors in Learning Environments on Students' Motivation

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to investigate teachers' opinions on the effects of teachers' behaviors in learning environments on students' motivation and to discuss them within the context of the resonance field. The study employed the case study design. The study group consists of a total of five primary school teachers, four women and one man, who graduated from the primary teaching undergraduate program, have at least 10 years of experience, are actively working as primary teachers and have completed their master's studies in the field of primary education. In the study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews using a single open-ended question prepared by the researcher. In the analysis of the collected data, content analysis was used. The codes identified in the study indicated that all the participants agreed that teachers' behaviors in the learning environment can have both positive and negative effects on students' motivation and that the participants attempted to explain these positive and negative effects based on different reasons. In addition, the participants expressed their opinions on possible solutions to the problem and thus demonstrated that they are experienced and well-equipped regarding the research issue. In the process of being role models for their students, teachers are advised to display patient, tolerant, sharing, and loving behavior wherever they may encounter them.

Keywords: Motivation; learning environments; teacher opinions; resonance field

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1. Introduction

Motivation can be defined as the activation of individuals' internal states that lead them to behave in a desired manner, push them toward a selected goal and make them willing to carry out a task. Motivation can also be defined as the creation of the effort and energy necessary for individuals to perform a desired activity or as an act of influencing them to carry out their tasks with the required quality and quantity (Aslan & Doğan, 2020; Güney, 2013, p. 353). Studies indicate that it is possible to classify motivation into two types as extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Aslan & Doğan, 2020; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci et al., 1991, p. 328; Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 331).

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Extrinsic motivation is the type of motivation in which behavior is performed with a focus on achieving a specific outcome (Deci et al., 1991, p. 328). Individuals generally perform their behaviors through intrinsic motivation during their childhood years. However, over time, individuals begin to understand social rules through their interactions with the environment; as a result, behaviors driven by intrinsic motivation decrease and they start to exhibit behaviors that comply with established rules. At this point, individuals no longer act to gain intrinsic satisfaction, but rather to receive rewards or avoid punishment. These behaviors are associated with extrinsic motivation (Aslan & Doğan, 2020; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Intrinsic motivation can occur when individuals engage in an activity because they find it interesting and enjoyable, or because they naturally derive satisfaction from doing it. For individuals who are intrinsically motivated, the activity being interesting and enjoyable is more important than external rewards or pressures. From birth, people exhibit behaviors driven by curiosity and the desire to explore, without the need for external incentives (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 56). In short, intrinsically motivated individuals carry out activities freely and according to their own will, without the need for rewards or pressures (Deci et al., 1991, p. 328). It is claimed that, in today's world, people have positive or negative effects on each other's DNA (Franckh, 2024). Along with these claims, the concepts of resonance and frequency come to the fore. Therefore, it is believed that these concepts should be explained in order to discuss individuals' motivations in this context.

Frequency is defined as the number of vibrations (waves) that occur in one second. The frequency of the sound (resonance) produced when a finger is tapped on a glass is the natural frequency of that glass. In other words, it is the resonant frequency. When an object is subjected to an external influence and the frequency of the resulting vibration becomes equal to the object's natural frequency, the amplitude of the object's vibration motion increases exponentially. This is called resonance. Some opera or vocal artists turn breaking crystal glassware into a performance by producing sounds at a specific frequency that causes the glasses to break in a short time. This performance is a commonly used example of resonance. If the frequency of the sound from another source is equal to the natural frequency of the glass, the glass can vibrate with larger amplitude. If the sound source forcing the glass to vibrate continues to vibrate at the glass's natural frequency, the resulting composite amplitude, due to constructive interference, grows exponentially. The amplitude of these vibrations eventually exceeds the glass's elasticity, causing the glass to break (Seçer Esmer, 2022; Serway & Beichner, 2010; Yıldırım, 2013, p. 58).

Every object and living being in nature has its own unique vibration. It can be inferred that all the atoms, cells and organs in the human body have their own vibrations. The resonance field is created by the energy of a person's emotions, thoughts and beliefs. This energy is transmitted through the person's heart, DNA and thoughts. Through the resonance field, a connection can be made with everyone and every object. Resonance fields that vibrate in harmony and share the same frequency influence each other. The resonance field can have an effect even from a great distance and instantly (Franckh, 2024, p. 81). In addition, there is a special group of neurons in the human brain known as "mirror neurons". Mirror neurons make observations more effective and efficient. Mirror neurons provide the observer with the capacity to perform the actions they

observe in others. The writer Pierre Franckh shares in detail an experience from his youth to help readers clearly and easily understand the functions of mirror neurons. Pierre states that, despite putting in a lot of effort and even taking private lessons from a teacher at the beginning of his youth to learn how to play the guitar, he was not very successful. One evening, he attends a concert by Spanish guitar virtuoso Manitas de Plata and sits in the front row. During the concert, he feels almost mesmerized, as if he had absorbed every note. After the concert, he says that he played choruses from Spanish songs on his guitar and found himself performing the techniques successfully, as if he had practiced them beforehand (Franckh, 2024, pp. 98-99).

A Cynic philosopher, Diogenes, sees a child drinking water from a fountain with his hands. Diogenes is surprised and mutters to himself, "Have you learned your lesson?". Then, he takes out his wooden cup from his bag and throws it far away with a victorious smile. Diogenes is happy because he has freed himself from yet another burden (Gros, 2019:121; Yıldız, 2020). In a natural environment, this observation made through mirror neurons allowed Diogenes to gain important implicit knowledge and skill (Feyerabend, 2015; Yıldız, 2023b; Yıldız, 2020). It can be said that the motivation gained from the observation he made in a natural learning environment played a significant role in the decision of a Cynic philosopher to free himself from the wooden cup he had carried in his bag for many years. At the same time, this behavior or decision of Diogenes serves as evidence that Cynic philosophers preferred making choices that simplified their lives.

The individual characteristics of teachers and the behaviors they display in the classroom play a significant role in students' mental, emotional and social development (Karataş, 2020; Sünbül, 1996). According to some researchers, students who are better motivated are more likely to be active participants in the learning process (Mazur, 2019; Yıldız, 2018; Yıldız, 2024). Teachers should believe that the behaviors they exhibit in classrooms or learning environments will have positive effects on students, support their motivation and even enhance it. It should be understood that teachers need to experience and acquire this during the years they spend learning about the teaching profession. This experience can be provided through the implicit knowledge of experienced teachers or academics who love their job (Feyerabend, 2015; Yıldız, 2023a; Yıldız, 2023b). Pre-service teachers can acquire the implicit knowledge and skills they need by observing experienced instructors in learning environments, using their own mirror neurons. Relating the concept of resonance field to the behaviors teachers will exhibit in learning environments and discussing its impact may offer a different perspective in the literature. It is anticipated that experienced instructors performing their duties with patience, tolerance, self-acceptance, unbiased attitudes and loving behaviors will positively influence pre-service teachers and cause them to be successful teachers.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate teachers' opinions on how teachers' behaviors in learning environments affect students' motivation and to discuss them within the context of the resonance field.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The current study employed the case study design. The most fundamental characteristic of a case study is the in-depth investigation of the case or cases (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p. 73). In this regard, a small-sized sample is generally preferred (Merriam, 2023; Yıldız, 2023a). In the current study, convenience case sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used. This sampling method adds practicality to the study by enabling data to be collected quickly, easily and at low cost (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p. 123). Patton (2018, p. 242) stated that this sampling strategy is probably one of the most frequently used ones, but it should actually be among the least preferred strategies.

2.2. Study Group

The participants in this study were determined according to criterion sampling (Patton, 2018, p. 238), one of the types of purposive sampling. The study group consists of a total of 5 experienced primary school teachers, 4 women and 1 man, who have completed a master's degree in primary education and work at public schools located in different districts of a metropolitan city. The participants were selected based on the criteria that they graduated from an undergraduate program in primary school teaching, have at least 10 years of experience, are actively working as primary school teachers and have completed a master's degree in the field of primary education.

2.3. Data Collection

In the study, the data were collected by using semi-structured interviews that included only one open-ended question prepared by the researcher. Before the interview, the teachers participating on a volunteer basis were informed about the purpose of the study and were given the necessary explanations they might need while answering the open-ended question. It was stated that no recording device would be used during the interviews, that the participant's views would be written down by the researcher immediately after the interview and that they would be presented to the participant at the end for confirmation. The participants were informed that they should be prepared for a second interview if needed. For the interviews to be productive and the participants to feel safe and comfortable, the interviews were conducted at their preferred times and locations. All these measures were taken to ensure that the participants could express their opinions openly and clearly. In the studies conducted, it is stated that in order to obtain effective and accurate data from participants, their trust should be gained and they should be met several times (Büyüköztürk et al., 2023, p. 235; Creswell, 2023, p. 21; Patton, 2018, pp. 438-446; Yıldız, 2020).

2.4. Data Analysis

The analysis involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into workable units, coding, synthesizing and searching for specific patterns within the data

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2022, p. 176). In qualitative research, interviews are considered suitable for data collection and are frequently used (Büyüköztürk et al., 2023, p. 250). The more researchers focus on examining and rereading the qualitative data they have collected, the more patterns, relationships, and categories begin to emerge for them (Patton, 2018, pp. 438-446). In the current study, the analysis of the data obtained through semi-structured interviews was conducted using content analysis. Content analysis is the process of carefully, thoroughly and systematically examining and interpreting materials with the aim of extracting patterns, themes, assumptions and meanings (Berg & Latin, 2008; Berg & Luna, 2019; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Neuendorf, 2002). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), content analysis is fundamentally a coding operation and a process of data interpretation. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2021, p. 242), the main purpose of content analysis is to organize and interpret similar data in a way that readers can understand by bringing them together. As a result of the content analysis of the data obtained from the interviews in the study, themes, categories and codes related to the research question were created and presented in Table 1.

3. Findings

The findings of the study were obtained through the content analysis conducted on the responses written by the participants to the open-ended question, "In your opinion, how do the behaviors exhibited by teachers in the learning environment affect students' motivation? Could you explain?" prepared by the researcher. The themes, categories and codes derived from the participants' responses to the research question are given in Table 1. Moreover, some opinions expressed by the participants for confirmation during the semi-structured interviews with the researcher were quoted (P1, P2...).

Question 1. In your opinion, how do the behaviors exhibited by teachers in the learning environment affect students' motivation? Could you explain?

Table 1. The themes, categories and codes derived from the participants' responses to the research question

| Theme | Category | Code | Participant |
|----------|------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Effect | Positive | Permanent learning Makes a lot of effort Asks questions Increased participation in the lesson Good communication | P1, P3, P4, P5 P2 |
| | Negative | Becomes demotivated Doesn't like the lesson Doesn't ask questions Becomes reluctant Doesn't speak | P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 |
| Solution | Happy teacher | Good salary Housing Transportation Merit Permanent institutionalization Administrators' attitudes Good training during the pre-service period | P1, P2, P3, P4 P4 P1 |
| | Teacher's system | Teacher's effort Teacher's experience | P5 |

It can be said that all the participants in the study agree on the idea that the behaviors exhibited by teachers in the learning environment affect students' motivation in both positive and negative ways. The codes provided in the third column of Table 1, where the participants attempt to explain the positive and negative effects with different justifications, provide evidence for this. Positive effects on students are supported by the explanations coded as follows; "permanent learning", "makes a lot of effort", "asks questions", "increased participation in the lesson" and "good communication". The claim that teachers' behaviors will have negative effects on students is supported by the explanations coded as follows; "becomes demotivated", "does not like the lesson", "does not ask questions", "becomes reluctant" and "does not speak". The participants also shared opinions on solutions. Four participants expressed that student motivation could be increased in learning environments, supporting their opinions with various codes under the "happy teacher" category. It can be understood from the explanations reflected with codes such as "good training during the pre-service period", "good salary", "not experiencing problems with housing and transportation", "administrators' attitudes", "permanent institutionalization" and "merit" that the participants associate the "happy teacher" category with these factors. One participant (K5) claimed that the solution could be possible if the teacher has a unique system of his/her own.

In the teacher training process, it is certain that experienced instructors will positively influence pre-service teachers by doing their job with patience, tolerance, self-peace, unbiased attitudes and loving behavior. Pre-service teachers who are well-trained in the teacher training process will demonstrate the outcomes of the good education they have received when they become a teacher. Teachers who have the highest level of love and desire to share can naturally positively influence students' motivation through the resonance field created in learning environments (Franckh, 2024), and this can facilitate the achievement of permanent learning.

Participant Opinions

After the semi-structured interviews, the participants expressed their confirming or supporting thoughts to the researcher regarding the opinions they had mentioned. The participants' confirming statements were immediately written down by the researcher. The four original views selected from the statements made by the participants for confirmation are presented below exactly as they were stated.

The teacher's facial expression as he/she enters the classroom determines how the students' day will go. The attitudes and behaviors of administrators are important for teachers to be happy (P4).

If the teacher is happy, he/she carries out more activities in the classroom (P2).

He who sows barley cannot reap wheat. In other words, bad or problematic behavior does not lead to good outcomes. Criticizing students individually can have very destructive effects (P1).

Some teachers create a unique system in their classrooms, and once students adapt to that system, they become academically successful (P5).

4. Results and Discussion

In the study, the idea that teachers' behaviors in the classroom have positive or negative effects on students was accepted by all the participants. The fact that the participants support the positive or negative categories with a set of relative codes proves that the discussed situation has been experienced or observed by them in different ways before. Some studies state that the teacher has roles such as a guide, instructor, mediator, leader, environment organizer and role model (Çelikten et al., 2005; Karataş, 2020; Özmen, 2014; Sünbül, 1996). In other words, it is stated that the teaching profession can be described as the art of role-playing. However, it is not expected for an unhappy teacher to play a role for a long period of time. As part of the findings of the current study, it is emphasized that the teacher should be made happy. In short, the teacher should go to the learning environment happy.

Researchers argue that the behaviors exhibited by teachers in the learning environment play an effective role in students' social development. Based on this claim, it can be said that students are not only in learning environments to acquire information, but also undergo a socialization process in harmony with their peers. For this socialization to occur in a healthy and expected manner, the behaviors exhibited by the teacher are important. Since the behaviors exhibited by unhappy teachers in the learning environment negatively affect students, it cannot be said that unwilling, non-questioning, non-participating, non-sharing and silent students will experience a healthy socialization process. Yıldız (2023b) states that online courses should be avoided in undergraduate programs that equip individuals with professional qualifications. Since all programs in faculties of education aim to train teachers, it should be considered necessary and mandatory for all courses in these programs to be conducted face-to-face, as this allows pre-service teachers to acquire the tacit knowledge and skills of experienced instructors.

As is well known, the 5E model consists of five stages: engage, explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate. In the engagement stage, the teacher usually asks questions to spark curiosity in students and encourages them to ask questions as well (Özmen, 2004). Naturally, this curiosity positively impacts the students' motivation. Allocating the first stage of the model to student motivation ensures the successful implementation of the model because the more students are motivated to learn the topic, concept or unit, the more successfully the other stages of the 5E model can be carried out. In other words, students' participation in the lesson or activities can be that much higher and more effective.

Therefore, the teacher must exhibit behaviors that positively affect student motivation in the learning environment.

Through mirror neurons, people have the opportunity to experience feelings such as empathy, disgust or happiness and to reproduce these emotions by understanding them. Most importantly, they can feel as if they had lived through these experiences themselves. The moment an individual mentally engages with how others have achieved the impossible, their mirror neurons begin to activate. If a person wants to achieve a certain goal, he/she should wish to experience how others have reached that goal themselves. In order for their experiences to become the individual's own, the person needs to think, read, observe and conduct research (Franckh, 2024, p. 104). When the resonance field created by the teacher and the effect of the mirror neurons of the observing students are considered, it is seen as important and necessary for teachers to behave enthusiastically, with a smile and happily in learning environments to motivate students.

When pre-service teachers think that they will become patient, tolerant, sharing and loving teachers, like the experienced instructors they observe through mirror neurons, the behaviors they exhibit in learning environments will be positively affected, which may trigger the development of positive attitudes toward their profession. Students may always wish to have teachers who are smiling and loving them. Naturally, having a teacher like the one they wish will make students happy, motivate them and support their success. It might be argued that students who always have the support and love of their teachers will be able to overcome many challenges and achieve their goals.

5. Recommendations

- 1- It should be ensured that young people who truly love the teaching profession and are aware of its challenges choose it.
- 2- Necessary measures should be taken to ensure that young people who choose the teaching profession with passion receive a good education during the teacher training process and possess the necessary skills and qualifications at the end.
- 3- It should be considered necessary and ensured that teachers have an income that allows them to maintain the living standards of their colleagues working in developed countries from the moment they begin their profession.
- 4- Necessary arrangements should be made to encourage, facilitate and support activities for teachers' personal and professional development after they begin their professional career.
- 5- If a teacher is to be a role model for students, he/she should exhibit patient, tolerant, sharing and loving behaviors everywhere, including the classroom, laboratory, hallway, cafeteria, library, gym and garden.

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