

Examination of 4th Grade Students' Empathic Tendency Level and Empathic Writing Skills

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Abstract: In this paper, 4th grade primary school students' empathic tendency levels and their empathic writing skills are aimed to define. As we analyze a specific case, a special case approach is used. 78, 4th grade primary school students who are studying in the Bayburt's city center primary schools and they were chosen by easy reachable case sample survey and among the volunteers (female student:38 and male student:40) The data were obtained from stories that students wrote by using KA-Sİ 'Empathic Tendency Scale', which is improved by Kaya and Siyez (2010). The data that are obtained from scale were analyzed with the help of statistic packet program and the data that are obtained from students study were analyzed with the help of a rubric which is improved by researchers. Then the relation between empathic story writing points and KA-Sİ empathic tendency scale points were analyzed. According to obtained results: it is determined that If students' empathic tendency level (cognitive empathy and emotional empathy) are high, their empathic writing skills are high too. In a class students' presence whose empathic tendency levels are high, increase the empathic school perception and accordingly school life quality. With the rise of class level, perception about empathic class level declines. So studying in primary school level is important for further age levels. So, if the necessary precautions for improving students' empathic writing skills while students are studying in primary school level, this may contribute to increase productivity in education.

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1. Introduction

Empathy can be described as a skill that enables to understand and share others' emotions, respond them with appropriate reaction (Cohen, Strayer, 1996; Eisenberg, Strayer, 1987; Hoffman, 1987) and, perceive the world in terms of others (Hollin 1994 cited: Smith 2006). In other words according to Rogers, empathy is a skill that is necessary to understand others' emotions by putting himself into them, feel and express.

Feshbach is the first person who emphasized that empathy has multi dimensions (Cited: Gini, Albicco, Benelli, Altoe, 2007). Besides, a large body of the researchers noted that empathy consists of cognitive, emotional components and individual can respond based on either cognitive or emotional elements (Brems, 1988; Strater, 1987, cited: Gladstein, 1983). The fact that empathy, multi-dimensional one, can be dealt with two dimensions: empathic skill and empathic tendency, makes the concept easier to be described (Lawrence et al., 2004). Empathic skill is about getting felt that the emotion is understood. Empathic tendency is potential to feel and understand others' emotions. The empathic tendency can be

dealt with in two ways: cognitive empathy and emotional empathy (Cohen, 1992; deKemp et al., 2007; De Wied et al., 2005; Smith, 2006).

At present it is widely accepted that empathy both cognitive elements and emotional elements and those elements interact each other (Chlopan et al., 1985).

Identifying children's level of empathic skill and tendency as early as possible and taking essential measure are thought to be useful to solve children's problems in both school and family environments and children to continue to develop normally (Hunter, 2003). There are various ways of evaluation of the empathy such as self-expression scale, story/picture methods, observer rating, evaluation form close persons who knows the individual, making complete senses in film or story, evaluating empathic reactions in a given scenario (Miller, 1988; cited: Dadds et al., 2008; Hunter, 2003). Self-expression scales are frequently used in assessing the empathic tendency among those methods (dWied et al., 2005; Aristu et al., 2008).

Literature indicates that academic success depends on 50 % traditional intelligence and 50 %

emotional intelligence (Liff, 2003). Bonner and Aspy found that there is significant correlation between students' empathic understanding and their exam marks. Therefore, empathic training in family and school settings is thought to be an advantage.

Students are more open to development, social and constructive in empathic classroom atmosphere thus displaying expected behavior. Under classroom settings without empathic classroom atmosphere students try being in the way which somebody else wants, it won't be possible and they will get bored find school as boring, a place where strict rules are applied. Finally they will neglect school and fail. Unsuccessful students will turn into irresponsible and unproductive persons by accepting failure (Özgan, 1999: 3).

When relevant literature are closely examined, it can be seen that the studies about the empathic tendency and empathic skill are intended to include university students, adults and, worker from different professions. There is less studies that aim to development of empathy and its impact on ages with different variables. It is very important to research, assess primary school children's empathic skill and level of empathic tendency in order to raise future generations which are spiritually and physically healthy.

Aim of the Study:

The present study aims to determine 4th grade primary school students' level of empathic tendency. In accordance with that aim following research questions were sought:

- Is there significant difference between genders among 4th primary school students' level of empathic tendency?
- Is there significant difference between genders among 4th primary school students' level of empathic writing skills?
- Is there any correlation between level of empathic tendency and empathic writing skills among 4th grade primary school students?

2. Methodology

Such definite case was investigated that case study approach was employed. Case study method enables researchers to examine in depth, find the correlation among data, and explain cause and results (Çepni, 2010).

2.1. Sample

Research sample consists of 78 fourth grade primary school students who study in Bayburt Province and are voluntary by employing random sampling.

Table 1. Distributions of Percentage and Frequency (f) of the Students Based on Demographic Characteristics

Variable		f	%
Gender	Male	43	55.1
	Female	35	44.9
Level of Mother Education Level	Illiteracy	2	2.6
	Literate	35	44.9
	Primary School	18	23.1
	Secondary School	10	12.8
	High School	12	15.4
	University	1	1.3
Level of Father Education Level	Illiterate	1	1.3
	Literate	17	21.8
	Primary School	21	26.9
	Secondary School	14	17.9
	High School	18	23.1
	University	7	9.0

2.2. Data Collection Instruments

Empathic Tendency Scale (KA-SI) the Child Form was used to determine level of children's empathy level (Kaya and Siyez, 2010), story forms and personal information form, developed by researchers by examining the literature and obtaining expert ideas was employed to discover empathic writing skills in the study. The items on the Empathic Tendency Scale includes situations about the sub-scale which is aimed to scale.

Each item on the scale is not a question does not have a single true answer. The scale was designed through four rating grade as "Not suitable for me (1)", "Somewhat suitable for me (2)", "Rather suitable for me (3)" and, "Completely suitable for me (4)". There is no negative item on the scale. There are three types of points. The first one is point of emotional empathy sub-scale which is found by totaling seven items measuring empathy. The second type of point is the point of cognitive empathy subscale which is derived by adding up six items about the cognitive empathy. The third one is empathic tendency point found by totaling the point of emotional empathy sub-scale and that of cognitive empathy sub-scale. The point in the emotional empathy sub-scale ranges from 7 and to 28. The point in the cognitive empathy sub-scale varies between 6 and 24 point. Empathic tendency that includes total point of the two other sub-scales changes between 13 and 52. The higher point from the scale means higher empathic tendency or vice versa.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data from the stories was analyzed through grade rating key developed by the researchers.

2.3.1. Special Analytic Grade Rating Key of Empathic Story Writing

The Special analytic grade rating key of empathic story writing was prepared so as to measure the skill in writing empathic story. Therefore, it was named as "The Special Analytic Grade Rating Key of Empathic Story Writing". It was prepared by following the steps suggested by Goorich (2001). It was displayed in the Appendix-1. Those steps was followed to develop it:

(1) Itemizing the criteria to determine performance:

Criteria were decided with course teachers based on empathic story writing skills. Those criteria were determined by taking necessary performance into consideration. As a result five criteria were determined. Each of the criterions focuses certain parts of the performance.

(2) Decision on which type of grade rating key would be used as scoring strategy:

While decision about type of grade rating key was being made up, aim of the evaluation was taken into account. Functional product is not only aim at the end of the study, but also is it evaluation about if students acquire necessary skills during the activity. In this sense, analytic grade rating key was developed. Furthermore, the key was designed according to empathic story writing skills. Therefore, it was named as "Special Analytic Grade Rating Key"

(3) Identification level of the performance and definition on the level of the performance:

St this phase, level of performance (their grades) was determined and scored from the weakest one and the most competent. Relative statements were avoided as soon as possible. The level of the performances was quantified. It was thought that quantification of the level of the performances decreased bias from rates. According to rating, the student showing the performance in the most competent way is given 4 points just as the student doing the performance in the weakest way scores 1 point. Totally the weakest student can score 5 points whereas the most competent student can score 20 points.

(4) Receiving expert opinion:

During the development of the special analytic grade rating key two experts participated. The students was expressed clearly about construct of the special analytic grade rating key and how to be applied and, information about the key was reinforced by displaying sample of it. Grade rating was prepared in accordance with field experts' suggestions and other two field experts who attended the application, opinions were taken. Finally the key was formed through contributions from the experts. At the each phase necessary corrections were made in accordance with suggestions of the experts.

In the present study the instances which were

given by the participant children, were analysed by using the special analytic grade rating key. The key was score as follows: if the participant child does not put himself into existence or person, he is scored 1 point (initial level); if he put himself into person or existence but not relate at least one person or existence in the story, he is scored 2 points (acceptable level); if he put himself into person or existence and, found partial relations with other story characters, he is scored 3 points (good level); if he put himself into person or existence and found complete and nice relations with other story characters, he is scored 4 points (the highest level).

3. Results and Interpretations

Independent t-test was done to discover whether the children's score about the empathic tendency changed according to the gender variable. Findings about the independent t-test was indicated the Table 1.

Table 2. Findings about the Gender Variable

Gender	N	X	S.s.	t	p
Male	43	3.54	.583	1.562	.122
Female	35	3.33	.594		

T-test value was found as 1.56 ($p = .12$) $p > 0.05$ that indicated that there is no significant difference between the genders. Although average score of empathic tendency of the male children is higher than that of the female children, the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant.

The independent t-test was employed to discover if children's score on the empathic story writing varied according to the gender variable. The findings about score of empathic story writing was displayed the Table 3.

Table 3. Findings Concerning to Empathic Story Writing

Gender	N	X	S.s.	t	p
Male	43	2.69	1.18	.175	.862
Female	35	2.74	1.06		

The Independent t-test results was found as .175 ($p = .862$) $p > 0.05$. This value discloses that there is no significant difference. Although the female children scored higher than the male children in the empathic story writing, the difference between the groups is not statistically significant.

The Pearson Correlation was used to discover whether there is correlation between the empathic tendency and the empathic story writing skills. Findings were indicated in the Table 4.

Table 4. Findings Relationship between Empathic Tendency and Empathic Story Writing Skill

	Empathic Tendency	Empathic Story Writing Skill
Empathic Tendency	-	.21*
Empathic Story Writing Skills	.21*	-
X	44.52	13.58
S.s	7.73	5.63

N=78

(*) p< 0.05

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient between the empathic tendency and the empathic story writing skills was found as $r=.21$, $p<0.05$ and significant. It can be said that based on this result that the more empathic tendency increases, the more empathic story writing skills are better.

Basic regression analysis was used understand whether the empathic story writing is predicted by the empathic tendency. Results are indicated in the Table 5.

Table 5. Findings about Regression Analysis

Model	R ²	β	F	t
Independent Variable: Empathic Tendency	.047	.400	5.56*	4.169*
Dependent Variable: Empathic Story Writing Skill				

*p < .05

Results from the Table 5 indicates that there is significant correlation between empathic story writing scores and empathic tendency scores ($R=.217$, $R^2=.047$, $p<.05$). Empathic tendency explains 47% variance of the empathic story writing skill. When the t-test result concerning significance of regression coefficients is examined, it can be said that the empathic tendency is significantly predictive on the empathic story writing skills.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Empathy is described as suitable reaction by understanding other person's emotion and thought. Researches on the empathy reveal that empathic skills increase in parallel with chronologic age and cognitive development (Hoffman, 1982 cited: Carr and Lutjemeiri, 2005; Carlozzi and Liberman, 1983). Similarly Damonda (1988) emphasizes that empathy develops based on age (Cite: Spellings, 2007).

According to research results it was concluded that although female children's scores in empathic story writing is higher than male children's score, male children has higher level of empathic tendency than

the female children have. Besides it was found that there is no significant difference between female children's score of empathic tendency and empathic story writing scores and those of the male children. (Alver, 2005; Akyel and Yılmaz, 2008). This result can be interpreted that male children have empathic tendency and empathic story writing skills as much as female children have.

Several studies from the literature found that females have higher level of empathy than males do. (Küçükkaragöz, Canbulat and Akay, 2011; Filiz, 2009; Rehber, 2007; Seymen, 2007; Duru, 2002; Murat, Özgan, Arslantaş, 2005; Şahin and Özbay, 1999; Arslantaş, 2005; Ün-Açıkgöz, Özkal ve Güngör-Kılıç, 2003). Bilgiç (2009) and İşcen (2006) concluded that male students' average score on empathic classroom atmosphere is nearly equal to that of female students. Bilgiç (2009) stated that this result can be indicator of that teachers in the research sample treat students equally and therefore, female and male students found their teachers equally empathic. Female's higher empathic tendency scores can attributed to two causes. The first one is that female is so more sociable that they can understand others' emotions. The second one is that female is biologically superior with respect to empathic tendency.

When fourth grader children's future and school life quality are taken into consideration, it can be said that empathic story writing skill is another important factor as well as empathic tendency.

It was observed that the students having high level of empathic classroom perception possess high level perception of school life quality (Bilgiç, 2009). On the other hand large body of the research support the idea that better classroom life quality plays important role in perception of school life quality. (Ainley, 1986; Mok and Flynn, 2002; Majeed, Fraser and Aldridge, 2002). The fact that communication environment between teacher and student is encouraging, safe leads to the context in which students conceive themselves precious, valuable, acceptable. This interaction in classroom enables students to develop positive attitude towards learning, teachers, peers and school (Jones and Jones, 1998: 70).

5. Recommendations

The more empathic tendency level increases, the better students understand each other, and also rise in the level of empathic tendency can be related to personal differences and age. Furthermore, changes in the empathic tendency may have positive impact on motivation, liking so on, even though they do not have any link with academic achievement. Those factors

influence positively academic achievement within short-term, they will improve it in long-term.

Note:

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