

TURKISH SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON DIVERSITY: A PILOT STUDY

ABSTRACT

In social work education, it is important to look out for diversities and shape professional practice accordingly. In this study, 236 Turkish students from the first and fourth years of a social work undergraduate program were interviewed to access their views on diversity. According to the findings, the social work students consider that thoughts, attitudes and behaviors that are contrary to the dominant social values in Turkey, that are passed on from generation to generation, directly affect the views regarding diversity. This is manifested as the students' reluctance to share a flat, be school-mates, co-workers and work with clients who are homosexuals, have substance addiction or a mental disorder.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, coexistence of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, social and economic structures is gradu-

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ally becoming inevitable. Several sociocultural problems may arise due to the co-existence of diverse structures mentioned in this process. Besides, according to Maguire (2002), the perspective concerning the portrayal of individuality of each culture, religion, race and sexual orientation is gradually becoming the basic foundation of social work. The social work profession is the closest profession to these diverse, neglected population groups in terms of helping them and working with them. Social workers should comprehend rich cultural foundations, histories as well as points that are considered important by diverse population groups and they should be sensitive about these issues. One of the major ways to realize this is getting a social work education. An outlook that internalizes respect for diversity needs to be embedded in the curriculum as well as in in-class and extracurricular activities.

Turkey is among the countries where four-year social work education has been provided since 1961. Between 1961 and 2002, »Hacettepe University Department of Social Work« had been the only educational institution in this field. The number of departments of social work has gradually increased since 2002 to reach 33 active departments (providing education at undergraduate level) by July 2014 in Turkey. Whereas the issue of diversity is frequently emphasized in curricula of departments of social work during the four-year undergraduate education, it is mainly addressed in »Human Rights«, »Social Work Theory«, »Ethical Principles, Values and Responsibilities«, »Human Behavior and Social Environment« and »Anti-oppressive Practice« courses.

Social work requires working with different groups, moreover it sees this phenomenon as an important value, and has led researchers to study this subject in Turkey. This study is the first research in social work literature to address the social work students' outlook regarding the issue of diversity emphasized in social work education in Turkey. Within this framework, the aim of the research is to study the »Hacettepe University« first-year and senior students' viewpoints regarding diversity.

BACKGROUND

The population of Turkey is 77 695 904. In 2014, the female ratio of the total population was 49.8% (38 711 602) and the male ratio 50.2% (38 984 302). Although female and male populations appear to be equal quantity wise, the social status of women is below that of men in the Turkish population. This inequality manifests itself in domestic roles and relationships as well as in education and employment. 12 691 746 people of the Turkish population constitute the young population of 15 – 25 age groups. This ratio of the young population to the total population is

16.6%. Social position of youths in Turkey has an ambivalent structure. A youth is viewed as both an object which is in need of constant protection by families and facing the risk of substance addiction and delinquency, as well as individuals who are required to get higher education, hence conditioned to get into university. The ratio of elderly population (aged 65 and above) to total population was 8% in 2014 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2015). 98.6% of the Turkish population is Muslim whereas 80% of this Muslim population consists of Sunnis, 15% Alawites and 5% other sects (Miller, 2009). The ethnic structure of Turkey consists of Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Bosnians, Albanians, Zazas, Georgians, Circassians, Gypsies, Laz, Armenians, Jews and Greeks in general (Buran and Çak, 2012). It is considered that the religious, ethnic and sectarian diversity has a significant effect on the outlook on diversities in Turkey. Religious and ethnic origins of people are directly related to how they make sense of diversities. For instance the fact that Islamic faith does not allow homosexuality, substance abuse and criminal behavior affects the outlook on these concepts. According to the results obtained from the »World Values Survey« conducted in 2011, 84% of the Turkish society would not like to have a homosexual neighbor; 74% would not like to have a neighbor with AIDS; 68% would not like to have a cohabiting couple as neighbors; 64% would not like to have an atheist neighbor; 54% would not like to have a pro-sharia neighbor; 48% would not like to have a Christian neighbor; 39% would not like to have a neighbor from another religion; 39% would not like to have an immigrant or foreign worker as neighbor; 26% would not like to have a neighbor whose daughter walks around in shorts; 20% would not like to have a neighbor who does not fast and 17% would not like to have a neighbor who votes for a party that the respondent does not favor (World Values Survey Association, 2014).

According to İl, Duyan and Tuncay (2010) the average age of students who discuss the demographic features of social work students is 21. Nearly half of the students are from rural regions and have large families and their parents' educational levels are comparatively low. In the literature there is not much information on the diversity (ethnic, religious, etc.) of social work students in Turkey. At the same time, according to another research, Turkish students who are in social work departments are sexually unexperienced and conservative regarding this issue since Islam forbids pre-marital sexual relations (Duyan and Duyan, 2005). Therefore, students have a negative approach towards homosexuality (Duyan et al., 2011). In addition to that and according to the research conducted to analyze the approach of Turkish social work students towards people with HIV/AIDS, the general attitude is positive and female students have a more positive attitude than male students do (Duyan, 2011).

On the contrary to the Western culture, people in Turkey do not tend to highlight their individualities but rather lead their lives as the culture, traditions and social norms they live in designate. For instance a young adult usually assumes preferences of his/her parents correct and thus forms his/her identity and make his/her decisions in accordance with his/her parents' ideas, attitudes and behaviors. This process is handed down from generation to generation through social learning and this situation directly affects people's outlook on diversities.

DIVERSITY IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Being a profession as well as an academic discipline based on practice, social work encourages change, development and cohesion in social terms and it makes people stronger, more confident and emancipates them. Human rights, social justice, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are fundamentals of social work (IFSW, 2014). As can also be seen in this definition provided by IFSW, respect for diversities is among the major topics central to social work. In addition to this, social work practice aims to teach students social work theory and values as well as necessary skills to intervene between individuals and families. This social work area is a content area that covers all of this. One of the aims of a course provided in this area is getting the student to display a special sensitivity to people and social groups who are disparaged or oppressed due to their age, gender, race, socio-economic class, ethnicity, culture, religious or spiritual orientation, sexual preference and state of physical, social or mental disability (Dyeson, 2004).

So far the concept of diversity is understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation (CSWE, 2012). However, according to McGrath, Berdhal and Arrow (1995) who indicate that diversities should be considered merely as demographic differences, diversities express the entirety of elements such as demographics (race, gender, age, etc); knowledge and skills that people possess; values, beliefs and attitudes; personality, cognitive and behavioral styles; as well as status at the workplace. Lynch (1996) states that courses would include preaching, blaming, punishment or accusatory kinds of presentations in case diversity was confined to be expressed by demographic variables such as gender and race alone. All these diversities define the dynamics of power in human relations and they may be directly associated with oppression. Dominelli and Campling (2002) define oppression as relations that separate people into groups, namely superior and inferior. These relations decrease the value of people who are systematically inferior and are excluded by dominant groups from social resources. During this process

the identity and values of the superior group creates an »us and them« discourse and thus, reproduces oppression. Therefore, diversities such as race, gender and age are also components of anti-oppressive practices in social work. According to Hogewoning (2012), the anti-oppressive social work model aims to ensure social justice and non-oppressive social relations between groups that possess different identities and values. Therefore, it is of vital importance for social work students, who are the practitioners of the future, to internalize respect for diversities and anti-oppressive practice, which is directly linked to the former.

Preparing students for practice with cultural competence is a fundamental element of an effective social work curriculum. From a multicultural perspective, the challenges that a student faces as s/he gains competence at the three dimensions of diversity practice are cultural diversities, oppression and vulnerable population groups or population groups at risk (Anderson and Carter, 2003). Social work educators are required to help their students raise their own cultural awareness and help them comprehend how this awareness affects their perception of diversities of others; meanwhile, they develop curricula that address multiple dimensions of diversity (Lum, 2011). As educators endeavor to inculcate their students who seek to become assisting professionals with diversity values, skills and knowledge, student resistance happens to be a chief difficulty for the educators to overcome. The resistance in question has not one but many forms it can take. Discrediting the instructor or the course as well as disclaiming the structural and institutional constituents of oppression are among the forms that such resistance can possibly take (Deal and Hyde, 2004). Student resistance can be avoided by diversity training to be given by convenient methods. Diversity training cannot be considered within the confines of teaching technical job knowledge and skills but it rather aims to affect workers' understanding, values and attitudes regarding cultures and/or groups that are not the same as theirs (Rynes and Rosen, 1995). Respecting diversity is crucial since it helps students gain self-awareness which is an essential element of the learning process at professional schools. Especially in a classroom where diversity training is given, group dynamics can be strong and can definitely affect students' learning (Lee, Brown and Bertera, 2010). Yet the instructional activities often consist of videos, lectures, fact sheets and/or small group discussions. Some of the topics may be as follows: problems related to a diversity of cultural interface, social interaction and cultural communication patterns related to racial-ethnic groups, accurate information concerning racial groups who are inadequately represented, equal employment opportunity or sexual harassment laws, and so forth (Stockdale And Crosby, 2004). Nicotera and Kang (2009: 195) have suggested an important classification regarding how diversity training can be: »Teaching strategy on diversity has four parts: interactive lecture, a small-group exercise, examining one's own

privileged identities and examining and disrupting privilege and oppression in research and practice.«.

These elaborate suggestions call to mind Paulo Freire's critique of the banking model in education. This model, in which knowledge is transmitted to students without discussion hence passively deposited, is awfully incorrect in terms of diversity training. Freire criticizes this mistake to bring forward the concepts of critical thinking, participatory understanding and learning through experience (Freire, 2000). Social work educators need to internalize this view of Freire with respect to diversity training. When analyzing the studies carried out on diversity training in social work it is possible to find some successful examples. For example Yuen and Pardeck (1998) aimed to discover the changes in the attitudes of social work undergraduate students after they took a class on human diversity. 153 students participated in the research and pretest-posttest method was used for comparison. Findings showed that the human diversity course had a positive effect on students' attitudes regarding diversity and that this positive effect persisted as the students pursued higher levels of education. Duyan et al. (2011) conducted research where they organized a training program on homosexuality for 45 students in a social work undergraduate program in Turkey and evaluated the change in their attitudes in a comparative manner, using pre-test and post-test methods. It was observed that students' attitudes towards lesbians and gays changed significantly and positively after the training.

METHODS

Research Design

This study was conducted by employing the »cross sectional« technique of quantitative research, with first-year and senior students of »Hacettepe University Department of Social Work«. 132 out of 184 first-year students and 104 out of 137 seniors volunteered to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted in classrooms and students were free to choose whether they would like to participate in the research. An interview form that aims to scrutinize students' perspectives was prepared by the researchers and applied to 236 students majoring in first-year and senior classes of »Hacettepe University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Social Work«.

Social Distance Scale

Prior to getting down to the data collection process of the research, the interview form was prepared by taking the opinions of two experts with relevant studies. Later on the interview form was finalized as a result of the discussions made between research projects. The social distance scale developed by the researchers consists of seven subscales and 36 items, the seven subscales being social distance towards individuals who have a different religion, sect and ethnic origin, social distance towards homosexual individuals, social distance towards individuals with different socioeconomic status, social distance towards individuals who have psychiatric disorder, social distance towards individuals with different political affiliation, social distance towards individuals with substance addiction and social distance towards delinquent individuals. Social distance towards individuals who have a different religion, sect and ethnic origin subscale is measured with 12 items on the subscale whereas each of the other six subscales, namely social distance towards homosexual individuals, social distance towards individuals with low socioeconomic status, social distance towards individuals with psychiatric disorder, social distance towards individuals with different political affiliation, social distance towards individuals with substance addiction and social distance towards delinquent individuals subscales consist of 4 items. By giving four different statements for each diversity situation and employing five point Likert scale type of questions regarding the statements (definitely would not like to, would not like to, neutral, would like to, definitely would like to) it was attempted to see if they agreed or disagreed. The four situations were determined by asking the students if they would like to have a flat mate, schoolmate and co-workers in the same occupation or work with a client whose religion, ethnic origin, sect, socioeconomic status, political view was different or who had HIV/AIDS, who was homosexual, delinquent, substance addicted or who had a psychiatric disorder as a social worker.

In the data analysis section numeric variables are shown in average standard deviation, while categorical variables are shown in figures and percentages. The normality of the numeric variables is analyzed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Table 1 shows the results of normality test. Based on the figures in Table 1, it is clear that all subscales are normally distributed. Hence, parametric statistical methods are used. The numeric variable differences between two groups' averages were analyzed with t-test and differences among the averages of more than two groups were analyzed by one-way-ANOVA. The reliability of the scales used is evaluated by the Cronbach's Alpha and the level of significance is assumed $p < 0.05$ in all statistical analyses.

Table 1. Results of the Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test

Factors	Shapiro-Wilk statistic	p
Religion, Sect and Ethnic Origin	0.979	0.123
Homosexuality	0.984	0.285
Socioeconomic Status	0.986	0.392
Psychiatric Disorder	0.989	0.603
Political Affiliation	0.983	0.233
Substance Addiction	0.992	0.829
Delinquency	0.981	0.169

The literature review indicates that there are some scales concerning diversity issue. On the other hand, it was determined that those scales did not apply to the social and cultural realities of Turkey. Therefore the researchers formed their own questionnaire compatible with the specific case of Turkey and collected data accordingly. Initially it had been intended to ask the students if they had any of the diversities being scrutinized within the scope of the research, yet it was assumed that they would not be willing to declare even if they had because Turkey still lacks the adequate consciousness in terms of respect for diversities.

FINDINGS

Average age of the students who participated in the research is 21 whereas the numbers of male and female students are close. 132 students are in their first year whereas 104 students are in the senior year. Majority of the participants stated that they have been living in a city and had medium economic status (Table 2).

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the sample

Variables	Group	n	%
Age	<= 21	120	51.7
	> 21	116	48.3
Gender	Male	122	51.7
	Female	114	48.3
Class	1st year	132	55.9
	Senior	104	44.1
Residential Area	Rural	55	23.3
	Urban	181	76.7
Economic Status	High	64	27.1
	Medium	156	66.1
	Low	16	6.8

The reliability coefficient takes value between 0 and 1. When the reliability value is sufficiently high, especially larger than 0.9, it indicates that reliability of the scale used is quite high. The reliability analysis results obtained for the social distance scale is provided in Table 3. The general reliability of the social distance scale amounts to 0.938 and is fairly high. When analyzing the Cronbach's alpha values obtained for subscales, it is determined that the reliability is high for all subscales.

Table 3. Results of Reliability Analysis

Subscales	Cronbach's Alpha
Social distance towards individuals with a different religion, sect and ethnic origin	0.942
Social distance towards homosexual individuals	0.932
Social distance towards individuals with different socioeconomic status	0.890
Social distance towards individuals with psychiatric disorder	0.872
Social distance towards individuals with different political affiliation	0.901
Social distance towards individuals with substance addiction	0.859
Social distance towards delinquent individuals	0.855
General social distance	0.938

Table 4. Results for Principal Component Analysis

Factors	Items	I		II		III		IV		V		M	Factor Load	Factor Average	Cronbach's Alpha	
		%		%		%		%		%						
Origin	Flat mate from a different ethnic origin	1.3	4.2	12.7	58.5	23.3	3.98	0.83								
	Co-worker from a different ethnic origin	1.3	1.7	7.6	66.5	22.9	4.08	0.87								
	Schoolmate from a different ethnic origin	1.3	1.3	5.5	61.9	30.1	4.18	0.81								
	Working with a client from a different ethnic origin	1.3	2.5	11.0	60.2	25.0	4.05	0.57								
	Flat mate from a different religion	2.1	8.1	25.0	47.0	17.8	3.70	0.24								
	Co-worker from a different religion	0.8	5.1	15.3	61.0	17.8	3.90	0.33								
	Schoolmate from a different religion	1.3	3.8	13.6	61.9	19.5	3.94	0.36								
	Working with a client from a different religion	1.3	3.8	16.1	58.5	20.3	3.93	0.29								
	Flat mate from a different sect	0.8	3.0	15.7	65.7	14.8	3.91	0.57								
	Co-worker from a different sect	0.8	2.1	8.5	73.7	14.8	4.00	0.66								
Religion, Sect and Ethnic Origin	Schoolmate from a different sect	0.4	2.1	6.4	74.6	16.5	4.05	0.60								
	Working with a client from a different sect	0.8	3.0	8.5	71.2	16.5	4.00	0.50								
	Homosexual flat mate	32.6	20.3	27.1	15.3	4.7	2.39	0.80								
	Homosexual co-worker	18.6	18.6	26.3	29.7	6.8	2.87	0.87								
	Homosexual schoolmate	17.4	16.1	26.7	30.9	8.9	2.98	0.89								
	Working with a homosexual client	12.7	9.3	24.2	37.7	16.1	3.35	0.68								
	Flat mate from a different socioeconomic status	1.3	5.5	19.5	59.7	14.0	3.80	0.86								
	Co-worker from a different socioeconomic status	1.7	3.0	9.7	71.2	14.4	3.94	0.91								
	Schoolmate from a different socioeconomic status	2.1	3.0	8.9	74.6	11.4	3.90	0.93								
	Working with a client from a different socioeconomic status	0.8	2.1	10.2	69.1	17.8	4.01	0.65								
Socioeconomic Status																
Homosexuality																

Psychiatric Disorder	Flat mate with a psychiatric disorder	21.2	26.7	35.6	12.7	3.8	2.51	0.85
	Co-worker with a psychiatric disorder	14.0	28.4	34.3	19.5	3.8	2.71	0.89
	Schoolmate with a psychiatric disorder	11.9	22.5	37.3	22.0	6.4	2.89	0.82
Political Affiliation	Working with a client with a psychiatric disorder	9.7	10.2	17.4	45.3	17.4	3.50	0.40
	Flat mate who votes for a political party I do not favor	4.2	10.2	25.4	53.0	7.2	3.49	0.85
	Co-worker who votes for a political party I do not favor	3.0	6.8	20.3	63.1	6.8	3.64	0.93
Substance Addiction	Schoolmate who votes for a political party I do not favor	3.0	6.4	16.5	66.5	7.6	3.69	0.89
	Working with a client who votes for a political party I do not favor	2.1	4.2	15.3	66.9	11.4	3.81	0.65
	Substance addicted flat mate	36.0	32.2	24.2	5.1	2.5	2.06	0.86
Delinquency	Substance addicted co-worker	28.0	33.5	23.7	13.6	1.3	2.27	0.84
	Substance addicted schoolmate	28.8	29.7	23.7	15.7	2.1	2.33	0.83
	Working with a substance addicted client	16.9	13.1	16.5	36.9	16.5	3.23	0.36
Delinquency	Flat mate who had committed a crime in the past	13.6	20.8	44.1	18.6	3.0	2.77	0.79
	Co-worker who had committed a crime in the past	6.8	16.9	39.4	32.6	4.2	3.11	0.87
	Schoolmate who had committed a crime in the past	8.1	16.1	35.6	35.6	4.7	3.13	0.83
Delinquency	Working with a client who had committed a crime in the past	6.8	8.5	22.0	43.2	19.5	3.60	0.40
	Working with a client who had committed a crime in the past	6.8	8.5	22.0	43.2	19.5	3.60	0.40

Table 4 shows descriptive statistics, article factor loads and reliability co-efficient for each item. According to the Principal Component Analysis conducted the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) value demonstrates the efficiency of the sample value, whereas the Bartlett's test demonstrates the applicability of the factor analysis.

The question with the highest factor load for the sect and ethnic origin sub-scale is the question on »A co-worker from a different ethnic origin in my future professional life«. Most of the students would be comfortable with a co-worker from a different ethnic origin in their future professional life. The question with the highest factor load for the homosexuality sub-scale is the question on »a homosexual classmate«. 39.8% of the students would be comfortable with a homosexual class mate, while 33.5% would not. The question with the highest factor load for the socioeconomics subscale is the question on »a class mate having a different socioeconomic status«. Most of the students would be comfortable with a class mates with different socioeconomic statuses. The question with the highest factor load for the psychiatric disorder sub-scale is the question on »a co-worker with a psychiatric disorder in my future professional life«. 23.3% of the students would be comfortable with a co-worker with a psychiatric disorder in their future professional lives. The question with the highest factor load for the political subscale is the question on »a co-worker who votes for the party I dislike in my future professional life«. 69.9% of the students would be comfortable with co-workers in their future professional lives who vote for the party they dislike. The question with the highest factor load for the substance addiction sub-scale is the question on »having a substance addicted flat mate«. A very little portion of the students (7.6%) would be comfortable with a substance addicted flat mate. The question with the highest factor load for the delinquency sub-scale is the question on »a co-worker in my future professional life who has committed a crime in the past«. 36.8% of the students would be comfortable with a co-worker that committed a crime in their professional lives. When all subscales are evaluated as a whole, it can be seen that the most respected diversity issue by participant students is sect and ethnic origin while the least respected diversity issue is substance addiction.

Table 4 shows the respect paid by students to diversities according to gender, age, class, residential area and economic status. Independent samples t-test was used for the comparison of two independent groups, while one-way-ANOVA analysis was used for the comparison of more than two independent groups. High scores indicate high respect for diversities, whereas low scores indicate low respect for diversities.

Table 5. The results of social distance towards different groups in view of demographic characteristics of social work students

Variables	Group	Religion, Sect and Ethnic Origin		Homosexuality		Socioeconomic Status		Psychiatric Disorder		Political Affiliation		Substance Addiction		Delinquency	
		M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD	M ± SD
Age	<= 21	50.17±0.62	9.80±0.37	15.30±0.24	10.89±0.34	14.66±0.27	8.73±0.33	12.20±0.29							
	> 21	53.44±0.70	13.43±0.38	16.00±0.22	12.35±0.33	14.60±0.27	11.07±0.34	13.01±0.33							
	t	-3.546***	-6.827***	-2.160*	-3.060***	0.165	-4.484***	-1.813							
Gender	Male	51.43±0.71	10.37±0.43	15.55±0.24	11.14±0.35	14.44±0.27	9.84±0.37	12.42±0.33							
	Female	52.14±0.64	12.90±0.36	15.75±0.21	12.11±0.33	14.84±0.26	9.93±0.33	12.80±0.30							
	t	-0.73	-4.537***	-0.6	-2.017	-1.042	-1.055	-0.856							
Class	1st year	50.41±0.61	10.20±0.37	15.42±0.23	10.91±0.34	14.69±0.26	8.88±0.33	12.39±0.29							
	Senior	53.51±0.74	13.37±0.40	15.93±0.23	12.50±0.33	14.57±0.29	11.14±0.34	12.87±0.34							
	t	-3.337***	-5.774***	-1.574	-3.318***	0.316	-4.471***	-1.095							
Residential Area	Rural	52.04±0.90	10.96±0.67	16.00±0.27	11.31±0.51	14.67±0.33	9.60±0.51	12.49±0.40							
	Urban	51.69±0.56	11.78±0.32	15.54±0.20	11.70±0.28	14.62±0.23	9.97±0.28	12.64±0.26							
	t	0.261	-1.195	1.203	-0.682	0.107	-0.789	-0.275							
Economic Status	High	51.42±0.74	12.37±0.52	15.58±0.30	11.55±0.44	14.36±0.39	9.22±0.41	12.15±0.37							
	Medium	52.03±0.59	11.27±0.36	15.82±0.18	11.78±0.30	14.86±0.22	10.15±0.32	12.81±0.30							
	Low	50.75±2.97	11.62±1.32	14.19±1.00	10.25±1.01	13.56±0.96	9.94±1.06	12.50±1.03							
F	0.198	1.397	5.164***	1.226	0.701	0.913	0.944								

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Male students have a more distant attitude regarding the subject of homosexuality compared to female students ($t = -4.537, p < 0.001$). It is quite likely that men who think homophobia has to do with insecurities about masculinity keep their distance from gay people and prevent other people from calling them »gay« by confirming their roles as heterosexuals within a heteronormative culture. It may also be the case that individuals strongly oppose »the Other« as a means of constructing their own identity as a part of the majority hence as a means of gaining social acceptance. Females usually do not have a distanced attitude towards homosexuality probably because they are subject to social exclusion as well, just like homosexual individuals. Social distance of senior-year students towards issues such as sect and religion, homosexuality, psychiatric disorder and substance abuse is higher than first-year students (Table 5). These data demonstrate that senior-year students adopt social work's values like equality, justice and respect for diversity as well as its anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory theories and develop attitudes accordingly in the course of their four year education period. Students' respect towards socioeconomic diversity differs statistically based on their own economic status ($F = 5.164, p < 0.001$). On the other hand, social distance of students with low socioeconomic status towards students with high socioeconomic status being high can be explained by discriminatory practices they experience due to poverty.

Conducting a research similar to ours, Anderson et al. (2009) compared students' outlook on diversity at the beginning and at the end of the diversity class they got in the first term of the master's program and observed significant differences regarding this matter. Findings showed that students belonging to a racial minority, homosexual students, disabled students and students who are not from the USA had a higher level of awareness compared to other students. As seen from the research of Anderson et al. (2009) the attitude of social work students towards diversities may depend on them being »the Other« in the social environment they are in and it may also depend on the social structure of the country they are living in according to Kohli and Faul's research (2005). According to the findings of the research which Kohli and Faul conducted in order to study the diversity outlook of social work students from the USA and India; no difference was observed in terms of attitudes of the students from the two countries concerning four diversity issues, namely gender, physical and differential abilities, social class and political affiliation. On the other hand, differences observed in the attitudes of graduating social work students in both USA and India in terms of ethnicity, age, religious affiliation and sexual orientation were significant. Students in India had more negative attitudes towards ethnicity, age, religious affiliation and sexual orientation issues than students in the United States. Because India, being an Eastern society like Turkey, is still going through ethnic and religious conflicts. And elderly are paid

unconditional respect, whereas sex is still considered taboo. However, in our study, students were not asked about their own diversities since diversity is still a sensitive issue in Turkey. This issue forms the most important restriction for our research.

CONCLUSION

This study has found that »Hacettepe University School of Social Work« students generally have low levels of tolerance with regard to issues such as homosexuality, substance addiction, religion, sect and ethnic origin. On the other hand, according to the research findings, no negative attitude is observed among the students with regard to socioeconomic status, political affiliation and delinquency. Male students are discovered to have more social distance regarding homosexuality compared to female students. When years of study of the students are examined, it is seen that 4th year students have a more positive attitude regarding religion, sect and ethnic origin, homosexuality, substance addiction and psychiatric disorder, in contrast to 1st year students. These data demonstrate that senior year students better internalize social work values like human dignity and worth and respect for diversity at the end of their four year education. This case can be suggested to reveal the behavior changing and attitude changing effect of social work education.

Social work students' social distance towards diversities addressed within the scope of this study may affect their professional attitudes and behaviors once they start their professional lives. A social worker with negative personal attitudes may not objectively evaluate the request for help of an applicant with some sort of diversity. Therefore, social work students should go through various educational practices aimed at reducing social distance towards diversities, whereas, the emphasis should be on research where these educational practices are assessed. Activities such as panels, seminars and workshops for reducing attitudes and behaviors of social distance towards diversities may be effective. Additionally, the issue of diversity should be more emphasized in social work curricula and examination of students' own personal identities through interactive methods such as small team work, role plays, creative drama techniques, critical and empathetic thinking exercises should be conducted. Efforts aimed at reducing students' anxiety regarding human diversity as well as their timidity, which obstructs their interaction with groups with different needs, should be started as early as the beginning of undergraduate education.

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POGLEDI NA RAZLIČITOSTI TURSKIH STUDENATA SOCIJALNOG RADA: PILOT STUDIJA

SAŽETAK

U obrazovanju socijalnih radnika važno je obratiti pažnju na različitosti i prema njima oblikovati stručnu praksu. U istraživanju je intervjuirano 236 studenata prve i četvrte godine preddiplomskog studija socijalnog rada kako bi se istražili njihovi pogledi na različitosti. Prema nalazima se smatra da mišljenja, stavovi i ponašanja koja su oprečna društvenim vrijednostima u Turskoj, a koja se prenose s generacije na generaciju, izravno utječu na poglede na različitosti. To se očituje u činjenici da studenti nisu skloni dijeliti stambeno okruženje ili biti u okruženju s kolegama u školi i na radnom mjestu te klijentima koji su homoseksualne orijentacije, ovisni o drogama ili imaju duševni poremećaj.

Ključne riječi: poštovanje raznolikosti, socijalna distanca, obrazovanje socijalnih radnika, student socijalnog rada.



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