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An Investigation of the Relationship between Democratic Attitudes and Communication Skills of Drama Educators

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Abstract

Creative drama encompasses two primary learning objectives: the internalization of democratic values and the cultivation of advanced communication skills. To foster these attributes in individuals through creative drama education, it is imperative that the educators themselves possess these skills. This research pursues a dual objective: firstly, it delves into the communication skills and democratic attitudes of creative drama educators, considering various influencing factors. Subsequently, it explores the correlation between communication skills and democratic attitudes. The study included 143 creative drama educators from 18 cities in Turkey. Various statistical analyses, including independent samples t-tests, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis, were employed. The findings reveal that the gender and years of experience of drama educators are not significantly linked to their democratic attitudes or communication skills. However, the faculty that they are graduated from significantly impacts both their communication skills and democratic attitudes. Finally, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis demonstrates a significant and positive relationship between the communication skills and democratic attitudes of creative drama educators.

Introduction

Creative drama is described as a collective play experience wherein participants engage in performances addressing real-life issues (Adıgüzel, 2017). It serves as a versatile tool with diverse applications, ranging from serving as a potent educational instructional technique to functioning as a full-fledged art form or a method of cultural education. (Adıgüzel & Timuçin, 2010). When it is used for educational purposes, it is called as “Drama in Education” (Adıgüzel, 2017).

Adıgüzel (2017) juxtaposed the general objectives of creative drama as “improving communication skills, democratic attitude and behavior, language skills and nonverbal expression, self awareness, self actualization, aesthetic behavior, critical and independent thinking, creativity and imagination, cooperation and collaboration, social awareness, healthy control of the emotions and senses”.

Creative drama as an effective and valuable educational strategy and it is commonly being used in educational

settings for improving communication and social skills (Haneem et al. , 2022; Yassa, 1999; Ulas, 2008; Erbay & Dogru, 2010; Ulubey, 2018). Utilizing drama within education fosters profound, participatory, and contemplative cognitive processes, while also elevating one's abilities in communication (McCaslin & Schonmann, 2006). Additionally, it strives to cultivate democratic values and dispositions in individuals, encompassing principles like the appreciation of human rights, reconciliation, tolerance, equity, liberty, and engagement (Karatas and Oral 2015). Since creative drama promotes a tolerant and democratic environment, it enables individuals to learn in an active and enjoying way, and brings real life problems into the classroom through role playing and improvisation (Aykac, 2014).

Freire (2020) states that democracy should be addressed in the process of socialization in order to be adopted and internalized by students and teachers. He also stated that, a tolerant, respectful and democratic classroom environment should be created via creating exemplary behavior models in the learning environment. Based on this proposition, teachers are expected not only to teach the meaning of democracy, but also to be individuals who have internalized democratic behavior. In order to achieve the aim of developing democratic attitudes and behaviors, which is one of the most important aims of creative drama, creative drama educators who teach in an area where participants are expected to express themselves freely and comfortably, should have internalized democracy and developed a democratic attitude.

In order for democracy to be fully implemented and sustained in educational institutions, teachers must transform democracy into a lifestyle (Angell, 1991). The most effective way of raising individuals who have developed democratic attitudes and behaviors is to create a real democratic environment in the classrooms and to provide opportunities for students to internalize democracy by experiencing it (Kesici, 2008). In order to keep the culture of democracy alive in the educational environment, teachers themselves must have developed democratic attitudes and behaviors (Freire, 2020).

Another important purpose of creative drama education is to contribute to the development of communication skills. One of the most important factors that increase students' communication skills is that the educators have advanced communication skills. An effective teacher-student communication not only increases students' academic achievement, but also positively affects their interpersonal communication skills (Frymier & Houser, 2000). It is very important for the educator to have effective communication skills because the learning process is also a communication process, and the ability to exchange meaningful messages in this process is largely related to the adequacy of the teacher's communication skills (Dobransky & Frymier, 2004).

Numerous studies suggested that democratic classrooms and effective teacher-student or peer-peer communication are related (Brunson & Vogt, 1996; Miretzky, 2004; Kesici, 2008; Tas, 2018). Tammi and Rajala (2018) emphasized that teachers who want to create a democratic classroom environment and to raise students with a developed democracy awareness should pay attention to creating a democratic communication environment in classrooms. Tuncel and Balçı (2015) also stated that one of the characteristics that a democratic teacher should have is the ability to communicate effectively with students. From this, it can be concluded that a teacher with a developed democratic attitude should give importance to in-class communication and therefore should have

positive communication skills. Same way; It can be thought that teachers who can communicate positively with students and have advanced communication skills will have a positive democratic attitude. For this reason, it is necessary to examine whether there is a correlation between communication skills and democratic attitude.

In this study, it is aimed to investigate the communication skills and democratic attitudes of the creative drama educators in terms of various variables and to reveal whether there is a correlation between communication skills and democratic attitude. In the literature review, it is seen that the studies on democratic attitudes or communication skills are generally conducted with pre-service teachers, and rarely for teachers from different branches, but there is no similar study on creative drama educators in the literature. The fact that the study is the first of its kind for creative drama educators and that similar studies examining the relationship between communication skills and democratic attitude have not been conducted for creative drama educators before, increases the importance of the study.

Method

In the first part of this study it is aimed to investigate the communication skills and democratic attitudes of drama educators in Turkey. Therefore, for the first part of the study cross sectional survey method is used to reveal the existing situation. Participants completed 3 scales: Demographic Information Form, Communication Skills Scale, and Democratic Attitudes Scale.

In the second part of the study, Correlation Analysis was conducted to investigate whether there is a relationship between creative drama educators' communication skills and their democratic attitudes.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, written permission was obtained from the researchers who developed the scales that are used in the study. Then, ethical approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the Ankara University, approval number of the study is 188. Questionnaires are uploaded to the internet, all the participants filled a consent form before participating to the study and data collection was completed within a period of 3 months. 157 drama educators filled the forms. Incomplete and incorrectly filled questionnaires were removed from the data pool and 143 questionnaires were remained to be used in the main study.

Participants

A total of 143 drama educators participated in this study. 112 Female (78.3%) and 31 Male (21.7%) drama educators from 19 different cities of Turkey were participated to the study. The majority of the participants (74 people) were working in big cities such as Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. 88 (61.5%) participants were working in Public Schools, 34 (23.8%) participants were working in Private Schools and 21 (14.7%) participants were working in private drama Associations. Years of experience of the participants were as follows: 51 participants (35.7%) are 0-2 years, 40 (28%) are 3-4 years, 36 (25.2%) are 5-6 years, 8 people (5.6%) are 7-8 years, 5 (3.5%)

for 9-10 years and 3 (2.1%) have been working in this field for more than 10 years. The faculties that the participants graduated from are as follows: 50 (35%) Faculty of Literature and Sciences, 56 (39.2%) Faculty of Education, 3 (2.1%) Faculty of Agriculture, 22 (15.4%) Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 11 (7.7%) Conservatory/ Fine Arts, and 1 (0.7%) Faculty of Architecture. Educational levels were differing from Associates' degree to PhD (see Table 1).

Table 1. Educational Level of the Participants

<i>Educational Level</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Associate's degree	1	0.7
Bachelor's degree	99	69.2
Master's degree	40	28
PhD	3	2.1
Total	143	100

Data Collection Instruments

Demographic Information Form

The demographic information form was developed by the researchers and it was aimed to obtain information about the participants on variables such as gender, age, graduated departments, the institutions they work, marital status, city that they work and years of experience.

Communication Skills Scale

Owen and Bugay developed the Communication Skills Scale (CIS) in 2014, and its validity and reliability coefficients were calculated. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the 25-item scale was calculated as .88. The scale consists of 25 items and four factors, namely Communication Principles and Basic Skills (CPB), Expression of Oneself (EO), Active Listening and Non-Verbal Communication (ALNVC), Willingness to Communicate (WC). In this 5 point Likert scale teachers rated each question from Always (5) to Never (1).

Democratic Attitudes Scale: The original version of this scale was developed by Attitude Research Laboratory to examine the democratic attitudes of teachers, and it was adapted to Turkish in 1995 by Gözütok. The reliability coefficient of this scale, which consists of 50 items in total, was stated as 0.87.

Limitations

Cross sectional surveys have three main internal validity threads: Location, instrumentation, and the data collector characteristics (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2011). The location threat is that as a result of the data being collected in a different place for each person, the participants are influenced by their environment and give different answers to the questions than their actual thoughts. One way to avoid this is to have all participants fill out the questionnaire in a similar setting. The questionnaires were sent via e-mail, and the participants were warned to fill in the

questionnaire in a relaxed atmosphere, rested and reflecting their real thoughts as much as possible, and it was assumed that the location threat was avoided by this way.

The instrumentation threat means that the researcher evaluating the questionnaire misinterprets the results of the questionnaire as a result of being too tired. In order to prevent this problem, the researcher divided the questionnaires into equal numbers and worked at time intervals, and after the data coding process was completed all the data checked by a second researcher. The data collector characteristics threat is based on the assumption that the age, gender, character, ethnicity, profession or appearance of the data collector can affect the answers of the participants. In this study, this problem was prevented because the questionnaires were filled online and the participants did not see the researcher. In the current study, previously developed scales were used.

Because of these structured scales, creative drama educators may not have had the chance to fully express their views by having to choose the closest options or the options they think are the most correct according to social norms. This is a common limitation for quantitative studies, therefore the study can be repeated with a qualitative approach in the future and the results can be compared.

Results

Democratic Attitudes and Gender

In this study, a dependent variable (mean score from the democratic attitude scale) was examined according to the gender of creative drama educators. For that purpose independent samples t-test was conducted. The assumptions of the independent samples t-test are as follows: Level of measurement (the dependent variable is a continuous variable and the independent variable consists of two categories and independent groups), the independence of the observations, the absence of significant outliers, normality, homogeneity of variance (Pallant, 2007). All these assumptions were confirmed before the analysis. According to the findings (see Table 2), no significant difference was found between women ($M=4.01$, $SD=0.24$) and men ($M=4.01$, $SD=0.16$) in terms of averages of democratic attitudes ($t(141) = -0.2$, $p = 0.843$). Therefore, it can be said that drama educators of both genders have similar democratic attitudes.

Table 2. Independent Samples t Test Results for Democratic Attitudes and Gender

t	Sig. (2 tailed)	df	Mean Difference
-0.2	0.84	141	-0.01

Democratic Attitudes and Years of Experience

After checking all assumptions, One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted to understand whether the democratic attitudes of creative drama educators differ according to their years of experience. As seen in Table 3, Sig. value is 0.592. This means that there is no significant difference between the groups in terms of democratic attitude. Therefore, there was no need to conduct a Post-Hoc Test.

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA Results according to the Years of Experience

Democratic Attitude Mean	df	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5		
Within Groups	136	0.744	0.592
Total	141		

One-way ANOVA was applied to examine whether the democratic attitudes of creative drama educators differ according to their years of experience. Participants were grouped as 0-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, over 10 years. There was no significant difference between the groups at the $p < .05$ significance level. $F(5, 136) = 0.74$, $p = 0.592$. This shows that the years of experience does not have a significant effect on the democratic attitudes of the drama educators.

Democratic Attitudes and the Graduated Department

After checking all assumptions, One-way ANOVA conducted to understand whether the democratic attitudes of creative drama educators differ according to the departments that they are graduated from. As seen in Table 4, Sig. value is 0.005. This means that there is a statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of the democratic attitude. Therefore, a Post-Hoc Test conducted.

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA Results according to the Graduated Departments

Democratic Attitude Mean	df	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4		
Within Groups	137	3,899	0.005
Total	141		

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to investigate whether the democratic attitudes of creative drama educators change according to the faculty that they graduated from. Participants were grouped as Conservatory/Fine Arts, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Literature and Sciences, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. A significant difference was found between the groups at the $p < .05$ significance level $F(4, 137) = 3.90$, $p = 0.005$. Tukey HSD Post Hoc analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between the mean values of democratic attitudes of the creative drama educators who were graduates of Conservatory/Fine Arts ($M=4.24$, $SD=0.29$), and the mean values of those who graduated from the Faculty of Education ($M=4.01$, $SD=0.30$), Faculty of Literature and Sciences ($M=3.98$, $SD=0.16$) and FEAS ($M=3.97$, $SD=0.19$). When Cohen's (1988) effect level formula is applied, it is seen that there is 0.10 effect level, which means there is a moderate level of difference between the groups.

Communication Skills and Gender

Independent samples t-test was conducted in order to understand whether the communication skills of creative drama educators differ according to their gender. According to the results, no significant difference was found

between women ($M=4.02$, $SD=0.29$) and men ($M=3.94$, $SD=0.21$) in terms of communication skills ($t(141)= 1.36$, $p= 0.59$). As seen in Table 5, no significant difference was found between the genders in terms of communication skills. Therefore, it can be said that both groups have similar communication skills.

Table 5. Independent Samples t Test Results for Communication Skills and Gender

t	Sig. (2 tailed)	df	Mean Difference
1.36	0.59	141	0.08

Communication Skills and Years of Experience

After checking all assumptions, One-Way ANOVA conducted. As seen in Table 6, Sig. value is 0.084. This means that there is no significant difference between the groups in terms of communication skills. Therefore, there is no need to do a Post-Hoc Test.

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA Results according to the Years of Experience

Communication Skills Mean	df	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5		
Within Groups	137	1.991	0.084
Total	142		

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to understand whether the communication skills of creative drama educators change according to their years of experience. Participants were grouped as 0-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, over 10 years. There was no significant difference between the groups at the $p < .05$ significance level. $F(5, 137) = 1.99$, $p = 0.084$. This shows that the years of experience do not have a significant effect on communication skills.

Communication Skills and the Graduated Department

After checking all assumptions, One-Way ANOVA conducted to understand whether the communication skills of creative drama educators differ according to the departments that they are graduated from. As seen in Table 7, Sig. value is 0.001. This means that there is a statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of the democratic attitude. Therefore, a Post-Hoc Test should was conducted.

Table 7. One-Way ANOVA Results according to the Graduated Departments

Communication Skills Mean	df	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4		
Within Groups	138	4.855	0.001
Total	142		

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to investigate whether the communication skills of creative drama educators change according to the type of faculty they graduated from. A significant difference was found between the groups at the $p < .05$ significance level $F(4, 138) = 4.86$, $p = 0.001$. Tukey HSD Post Hoc analysis revealed that there was a significant difference with the mean values of communication skills of the drama educators who were graduates of Conservatory/Fine Arts ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.40$), and the graduates of Faculty of Literature and Sciences ($M=3.94$, $SD=0.23$) and FEAS ($M=3.90$, $SD=0.13$). When Cohen's (1988) effect level formula is applied, it is seen that there is 0.12 effect level.

Correlation between the Communications Skills and Democratic Attitudes of Creative Drama Educators

Correlation analysis was conducted after all assumptions were checked. Table 8 shows the results of the correlation analysis.

Table 8. Relationship between Communication Skills and Democratic Attitudes

	Communication Skills		
	N	r	p
Democratic Attitudes	143	0.54	0.00

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the Communication Skills and Democratic Attitudes of creative drama educators. Before starting the analysis, a preliminary study was carried out and the data was checked in order not to violate the assumptions of normality, linearity and covariance. As a result of the study, it was determined that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the variables ($r=.54$; $p<.01$). The correlation value between the variables (0.54) is higher than Cohen's (1988) table. In other words, as the democratic attitude score increases, the communication skills score is expected to increase, and as the democratic attitude score decreases, the communication skills score is expected to decrease.

Discussion and Conclusion

Participants consisted of 1 Associate Degree (0.7%), 99 Bachelor's (69.2%), 40 Master's (28%) and 3 Doctorate (2.1%) graduates (Table 1). This result reveals that most of the creative drama educators have Bachelor's degree and there is a need to encourage creative drama educators to pursue a postgraduate education and improve their field knowledge and their abilities for social and cognitive skills. Papavassiliou-Alexiou and Zourna (2016) suggested that being involved to drama in education, motivates educators to pursue higher degrees of education such as postgraduate education, in service education, or professional education. Which contrasts with the results of the current study. The reasons of not pursuing postgraduate education for drama educators in Turkey, and the competency levels of drama educators with post graduate degrees versus with Bachelors's degrees could be investigated for the further studies.

The majority of the participants in the study work in private schools (61.5%), which shows that creative drama

education is given more space in private schools. Necessary steps should be taken to make creative drama lessons a part of the curriculum in public schools as well. San (1998) mentioned that the endeavors for creative drama education in Turkey started in late 90's. The fact that the majority of the participants have been teaching creative drama for 0 to 6 years can be explained by the fact that this field has just been developing in Turkey in recent years and there is still a long way to go in order to make creative drama an integral part of various educational levels. As Adıguzel and Metinnam (2021) asserted, there is a need for tangible governmental regulations by the National Ministry of Education for the status of creative drama education in Turkey

In this study, it was found that the democratic attitudes or communication skills of the creative drama educators did not differ according to the gender variable (Table 2 and Table 5). These results coincides with the results of the studies of Gözütok (1995), Bulut (2006), Şahin (2008), Elkatmış and Toptaş (2015), Tas (2018) which reveal that the democratic attitudes of educators are not dependent on gender. At the same time, similar results were obtained with the studies of, Tunçeli (2013), Turk & Tulunay Ates (2022), Tas (2018) who concluded that gender and communication skills were not dependent. It can be concluded that the democratic attitudes or communication skills of the creative drama educators are similar for both genders.

It is founded that the creative drama educators' years of experience did not have a significant effect on their democratic attitude or communication skills. This result is similar to the results obtained by Gözütok (1995), Şahin (2008), and Kelly et al. (2019). It can be concluded that the democratic attitudes and communication skills of the trainers are independent of their years of experience or maybe they do not change by time. Normally, it would be expected that these kind of soft skills develop by time as the teachers gain more experience in teaching but maybe these skills do not change by time because they are a part of the characteristics of drama educators or more stimulants, in service education, or support should be provided to improve the democratic attitude and communication skills of drama educators. Horasan-Doğan and Cephe (2020) suggested that creative drama contributes to the soft skills of the participants. Further longitudinal research could be done to investigate the influence of creative drama on educators's soft skills among time.

The democratic attitudes and communication skills of creative drama educators are investigated according to the type of faculty they graduated from and it is found that creative drama educators who graduated from the Conservatory/ Faculty of Fine Arts have statistically significantly higher democratic attitude skills (Table 4) and statistically significantly higher communication skills compared to other creative drama educators (Table 6). According to those results, it can be concluded that the skill of developing a democratic attitude, which is one of the general aims of creative drama, develops more with the help of an artistic point of view. In addition, it can be concluded that art education affects the communication skills of the individual positively. For this reason, it can be suggested that the education of people who want to be creative drama educators should be given more space to art, artistic perspective, free thought and creativity. The conclusions of Adıguzel and Metinnam (2021) suggests similar results.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between creative drama educators' communication skills and democratic attitude. As a result of the research, it was determined that

there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the communication skills and democratic attitudes of creative drama educators. According to these results, it can be concluded that a creative drama educator with a well-developed democratic attitude have positive communication skills and therefore will give more importance to in-class communication. Same way; It can be concluded that creative drama educators who have advanced communication skills will have a positive democratic attitude in their classes. The significant point is: The fact that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship found between the democratic attitudes of creative drama educators and their communication skills does not mean that there is a cause-effect relationship between these skills. Correlation studies only reveal whether there is a relationship, the direction and severity of the relationship, but do not indicate a cause-effect relationship (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). In this study, a significant relationship was found between democratic attitudes and communication skills of creative drama educators. Researchers who want to examine the cause and effect relationship between these variables should pursue experimental studies in order to reveal the cause-effect relationships.

The results of the study is significant to understand to what extend the drama educators have democratic awareness and effective communication skills, also to reveal the factors influencing these skills and attitudes. When we think of a democratic atmosphere in an education environment; free speech, selfexpression without hesitation, positive interpersonal communication, and respecting eachother's rights would be the initial ideas that come to ourminds (Brookfield & Preskill 2012) . Since creative drama aims to facilitate effective communication, and develop democratic attitudes and behaviors in participants; it is impossible to tackle these skills and dispositions seperately.

Recommendations

The majority of previous studies examining educators' democratic attitudes or communication skills have been conducted with pre-service teachers (Batdi& Elaldi, 2020). Since it is known that teaching develops not only with theory but also with practice, similar studies should be carried out for trainers who are currently working in public / private schools, courses and associations. Because of the quantitative structure of the study, creative drama educators may not have had the chance to fully express their views. In future studies, one-to-one semi-structured interview techniques, video analyzes or case studies can be done in order to get the opinions of the trainers about democratic attitudes and communication skills. In addition, in order to measure the effect of creative drama education on the communication skills and democratic attitudes of trainers, experimental research model can be used and it can be observed whether there is an increase in these skills before and after the training.

In this study, the communication skills and democratic attitudes of creative drama educators were examined in terms of gender, graduated faculty and working year variables. In future studies, these skills can also be examined in terms of different variables. For example, these skills can be examined in terms of different variables such as the education level of the parents of the trainers, the cities they grew up in, their financial situation, their belonging to the institution, their perception of professional self-efficacy, and their interest in the field. Since promoting communication skills and developing democratic behaviors and attitudes are two of the most important objectives of creative drama, it is important to understand the relationship between them. Further studies are needed to reveal the contributing factors to that relationship and to understand the outcomes of that relationship.

Note

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