

Experiences of Prejudice, Stereotype, and Discrimination Exposure of Secondary School Students*

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Abstract: Although being exposed to prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination reduces the level of self-esteem and quality of life of individuals, its effect on secondary school students is not fully understood. This study aimed to reveal the meaning, structure and essence of secondary school students' experiences of being exposed to prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination. The present study was conducted with phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs. Maximum variety and criterion sampling from one of the purposive sampling strategies were used to determine the participants. In this study, research participants consisted of 12 students studying in 7th and 8th grades in two public schools in Ankara, Türkiye. Research data were collected using a semi-structured interview method. Within the scope of this study, 24 in-depth interviews were conducted. Each participant was interviewed twice. In data analysis, phenomenological analysis, bracketing, listing key phrases, developing sets of meanings, textural description, structural description, and extracting essences, were used. The findings showed that the students who were exposed to prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination suffered from low self-esteem and self-confidence, and their academic motivation decreased. Results also showed that the students developed sympathy for the in-group and antipathy for the out-group and they were in search of equality and justice.

Keywords: Secondary school students, prejudice, stereotype, discrimination, phenomenology.

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Introduction

Today, in many societies, minorities belonging to different ethnic origins, religious beliefs, sects, and ideologies from the dominant group, or various disadvantaged groups, such as women, the poor, the disabled, and the elderly, are victims of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination.

In daily life, while prejudice is used to mean all kinds of preliminary ideas that are not based on knowledge, evidence or experience, in the social psychology literature, it is explained as prejudices containing negative attitudes towards a certain group and its members (Göregenli, 2012, p. 22; Myers, 2017, p. 308). The literature has many definitions of the content and scope of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. Aronson, Wilson, and Akert (2012) define prejudice as "having a hostile or negative attitude towards people in a distinguishable group solely based on their membership in that group" (p. 750), stereotyping as "almost a group of people regardless of their differences" generalizing about a group of people by attributing the same characteristics to all its members" (p. 752) as well as they defined discrimination as "performing unjustly negative or damaging actions against members of a group simply because they are members of that group" (p. 757). In addition to these definitions, it is useful to draw attention to some distinctions between the mentioned concepts. Namely, people can know cultural stereotypes, even if they are not prejudiced. Therefore, stereotypes do not always cause negative attitudes and behaviors. However, standardizing all members of a group opens the way for prejudices (Taylor, Peplau, & Sears, 2015, p. 183). Stereotypes are generalized beliefs or ideas about a social group. If this is accompanied by a feeling of dislike or hatred of the related group, prejudice comes out as an attitude. Unlike these two concepts, discrimination is explained at the level of observable behaviors (Paker, 2012, p. 42).

Prejudices shape people's behavior toward each other. Allport (2016, pp. 44-45) revealed the degrees of these behaviors as follows: (1) Back-talk: People with prejudices can express their opposition to others in various environments. Many people do not go beyond this action. (2) Avoidance: If the prejudice is more intense, the individual does not communicate with the members of the group he does not like. (3) Discrimination: Here, the prejudiced individual undertakes to exclude all members of the outgroup from jobs, housing, political rights, educational or recreational opportunities, healthcare or other social rights. (4) Physical Assault: In exaggerated emotional conditions, prejudice can lead to minor individual interventions. (5) Elimination: Lynchings, massacres, and genocides are situations where prejudice is exposed to extreme violence.

Being exposed to prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination has many negative consequences. People experience psychological problems when they encounter hate speech because of a group membership. For example, Swim, Hyers, Cohen & Ferguson (2001) reported that the psychological well-being of women who were

exposed to sexist stereotypes and behaviors was affected as well as their anger, anxiety and depression increased. Another psychological effect of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination is the damage it causes to individuals' self-esteem. The place of the included social group in the class hierarchy, its perception in society, and the behavior and attitude of the outgroup members affect the individuals' thoughts about themselves (Korkmaz, 2017). Therefore, self-esteem is affected by our social identity. It is more challenging for members of groups who are constantly humiliated and discriminated against in society to achieve a happy and prosperous future than individuals with high self-esteem.

Stereotypes may also cause crucial consequences because they affect people's perceptions, judgments and behaviors (Hortaçsu, 2014, p. 254). Individuals are aware that others can judge them from a stereotypical point of view and that they can be treated accordingly. While individuals are working on a task, they may worry that their behaviors may confirm these stereotypes, and this anxiety may have negative effects on performance (Hogg & Vaughan, 2017, p. 380). For example, in a job interview, the employer's cold treatment of a black individual, low communication, and expressing common stereotypes about blacks may cause the other person to make more mistakes. Experimental studies have shown that reminding women of gender stereotypes or social identities while working on a mathematical problem has a disruptive effect on performance (Johnson, Barnard-Brak, Saxon & Johnson, 2012; Shih, Pittinsky & Ambady 1999).

Prejudice and discrimination may create results that match the expectations of prejudiced people by putting social barriers in front of the groups they target (Morgan, 2011, p. 344). If we think that a social group in society is ignorant and incorrigible, that they are only suitable for working hard jobs, and we do not consider it worth spending educational resources on them, the education that these individuals receive will be insufficient. Thus, prejudices will cause discrimination and will eventually create a disadvantage for the target group (Aronson et al., 2012, p. 789). Labeling some social groups as worthless and discriminating causes an increase in inequalities between classes. Groups that are victims of prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination are left behind in education and employment and cannot reflect their potential as citizens.

Schools can be one of the most effective factors in reducing prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination as they can turn into institutions where these concepts are produced and disseminated. It is necessary to examine the possible effects of prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination on the educational process, teacher-student relationships and school climate in schools. However, these studies are quite limited. Research on prejudice, stereotyping, and exposure to discrimination has mostly been conducted on adults. A large part of the studies in the literature have been focused on women (Aydın Yürükçü, 2019; Doğan, 2012; Fırat, 2017), disabled people (Taşkın & Demirel, 2019; Tezcan, 2013), elderly people (Artan & Taşçı, 2018; Işık, 2020), individuals with different sexual orientations (Aypar, 2014; Elçi,

2018) or Afro-Turks (Körükmez Kaya, 2017). In other studies, in the literature, the views, experiences and perceptions of Turks living abroad regarding ethnic discrimination were investigated (Aksoy, 2010; Gelekçi, 2010; Kesici, 2016; Orhan, 2015; Ural, 2012). In the studies in education, the discrimination and its effects that teachers are exposed to due to their various characteristics, such as age, gender, type of employment, and political opinion, have been examined (Çelik, 2011; KeskinliçKara & Oğuz, 2016; Polat & Hızıılmaz, 2017). There are also studies dealing with the types of prejudice and discrimination that university students face in their educational lives (Balcı & Tuncel, 2017; Esen, 2013).

To our knowledge, in the current literature, there is no study that reveals secondary school students' experiences of being exposed to prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination and the meanings they attribute to these experiences. Given the lack of literature and the gap, the findings obtained from this research will raise awareness among researchers, teachers and other education stakeholders. In addition, the findings of the present research can form the basis for the steps to be taken to reduce prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination in secondary schools. Finally, research can serve to raise the voices of students and groups that are exposed to social pressure due to reasons, such as gender, academic achievement and socioeconomic level, as well as set an agenda for change.

This study aims to explore the experiences of secondary school students who are exposed to prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination due to gender, academic achievement, and socioeconomic level. For this purpose, what is the meaning, structure, and essence of students' experiences of being subjected to prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination? The answer to his question has been sought in this study.

Method

In this section, the research model, study group, data collection, data analysis, and validity and reliability strategies take place.

Research Model

This study was conducted based on qualitative research, which is "an approach to discovering and understanding the meanings attributed to a social or human problem by individuals or groups" (Creswell, 2016a, p. 4). Phenomenology, which is one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the present study. Phenomenological research, which aims to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and nature of everyday experiences, defines the common meanings of several people's experiences with a phenomenon or concept (Creswell, 2016b, p. 77; van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Phenomenological studies examine how people make sense of experience and transform it into consciousness, both as individuals and as shared meaning. With phenomenology, the participants' experiences, feelings and judgments about the research subject are described (Patton, 2014, p. 104)

Study Group

Criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling, which are purposive sampling strategies, were used to determine the participants of this study. In purposive sampling, situations with rich information are selected to clarify the questions studied in the research. Criterion sampling is one of these strategies and all cases that meet predetermined criteria are examined in this study. In the sample based on maximum diversity, the aim is to find out what kind of similarities or differences exist between various situations (Patton, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

In phenomenological studies, data are collected from individuals or groups with experience in the research subject. Based on this criterion, students who were directly and for a long time exposed to prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination were included in this study. In addition, the maximum diversity sample was used by including students who were exposed to prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination due to different social group memberships (gender/girl, academic success/failure, socioeconomic level/poor). These categories were determined based on prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination literature.

The process of determining the working group proceeded as follows. First, research permission was obtained from the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey. Later, two schools at the middle socioeconomic level were identified in the Mamak district of Ankara province. The schools were located in a nationalist and conservative environment where artisan, farmer, minimum wage and civil servant families were concentrated. At the next stage, the administration, guidance service and teachers of the designated schools were contacted. The principals and teachers were informed about the research topic and permission was obtained for the start of this study. Support was obtained from the school administration and teachers in verifying the social group membership of the students. The names of the poorest and the most unsuccessful students at the school were listed. In addition, announcements were made about the research topic in the classrooms. All students who had experience in the subject and would like to participate voluntarily were added to the list. The parental consent form was distributed to the students on the list and an interview was conducted with those who submitted it the next week. Until reaching the 12 students included in this research, 90 students from 16 classes announced in both schools were interviewed and students who were directly and intensely exposed to prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination were included in the present study. Table 1 presents information about the participants.

Table 1
Participants

Participants (Code)	Group Membership	Gender	School (Code)	Class Level
Student 1	Girl	Girl	Secondary School A	7
Student 2	Girl	Girl	Secondary School A	7
Student 3	Girl	Girl	Secondary School B	8
Student 4	Girl	Girl	Secondary School B	8
Student 5	Unsuccessful	Girl	Secondary School A	8
Student 6	Unsuccessful	Boy	Secondary School B	8
Student 7	Unsuccessful	Boy	Secondary School B	8
Student 8	Unsuccessful	Girl	Secondary School B	8
Student 9	Poor	Girl	Secondary School A	8
Student 10	Poor	Boy	Secondary School B	7
Student 11	Poor	Boy	Secondary School B	7
Student 12	Poor	Girl	Secondary School B	7

As seen in Table 1, the participants of this study consisted of 12 students studying in 7th and 8th grades in two public schools in Ankara. Since four of the students were girls, four of them were unsuccessful and four of them were poor, they were exposed to prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination in their educational lives. To protect their identities, the students were given codes.

Data Collection

In this study, data were collected using the semi-structured interview method. In the interviews, the experience was examined in depth with open-ended questions. After the initial analysis, the questions were continuously revised during the data collection process (Sample questions: What kind of stereotypes/prejudices/discriminations did you encounter at school? Is it unfair for girls/unsuccessful/poor students at school? Could you give an example? What do you think about this experience? How did it feel to experience all this? How does this experience affect the way you look at school/friends? What is the meaning of prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination in your life?).

After a place was requested from the school administration for the data collection process, the interviews were conducted one-on-one in the library. Before starting the interview, the parental consent forms were taken from the students; explanations were made about the subject, and the mutual participation acceptance form was signed. The interviews were recorded with a voice recording program with the participants' permission. A total of 24 interviews were conducted with each

participant twice within the scope of this study. The data collection process was carried out between February 20th and April 22nd. Interviews with students within the scope of the present study lasted an average of 45 minutes.

Data Analysis

In the data analysis, phenomenological analysis, "aiming to understand and clarify the meaning, structure and essence of the experience of a person or a group of people about a phenomenon," was used (Patton, 2014, p. 482). The data analysis process was carried out in six stages: "bracketing" (letting aside personal experiences with the phenomenon under study), "listing key phrases" (listing key phrases about how participants experience their experiences), "developing sets of meanings" (grouping key phrases into larger semantic units), "textural description" (describing the participants' experiences), "structural description" (describing the setting and context in which the phenomenon is experienced) and "revealing essences" (revealing the basic meanings of mutually constructed understandings through a jointly experienced phenomenon) (Creswell, 2016b).

Validity and Reliability Strategies

After analyzing the first interviews, the findings regarding the meaning and essence of the experience were presented to the participants in the second interviews, and the results were confirmed. In addition, the implicit answers and ambiguous statements given in the first interview were clarified in the second interview. This method is known as participant control and "it is one of the most important ways to eliminate the possibility of misunderstanding what the participants say and do, the bias on what you observe" (Maxwell, 2018, p. 126). Another method used is expert review. The co-author of the article examined the study data, evaluated the accuracy of the findings and determined whether the results were supported by the data (Merriam, 2015). In addition, in some cases specific to qualitative research, it was reflected in the nature of the data collection process and the approximately two-month period spent in the research area paved the way for establishing a mutually trusting relationship with the participants.

Findings

In this section, there are prejudices, stereotypes and discriminations that students are exposed to and the meanings attributed to this experience.

Prejudice, Stereotypes and Discriminations to which Students are Exposed

The students participating in the present research were exposed to prejudiced behaviors, stereotypical expressions and discriminations of their teachers and friends in different classes in their educational lives . They faced various practices ranging from derogatory expressions to isolation because students 1,2,3,4 were girls, students 5,6,7,8 were unsuccessful and students 9,10,11,12 were poor.

Experiences of Female Students

Student 2, one of the participants in this study, reported that her teacher made condescending evaluations based on gender stereotypes about the future of the girls in the class: "Our teacher says 'You are very young now; you will understand when you grow up.' He was insulting us by saying, 'you will all sit at home under your husband's care. I'm sure most of you won't continue your education.' He says, 'most of you will marry at an early age. You have less understanding. Most of you won't go to college. He was using words, such as 'getting married at an early age, taking care of by husbands.' He said things like 'I will see you, all of you will either straighten your hair at the hairdresser or go to the houses for cleaning. You have no other choice or something.'..." It was seen that student 1 was similarly exposed to expressions based on gender stereotypes: "He said things like 'You girls do not understand anything.', 'Even if you understand when you grow up, you will just get married.' 'You have no place in the family.' 'You will never be anything.' 'Get married; what else can you do?'..."

The experiences of students were not limited to these discourses. Student 1 stated that they were exposed to various discrimination practices throughout the period. "When we do our homework and ask what we don't understand, he always says 'what if you had listened to the lecture'. When boys ask, he says, 'Come, son, let me explain'. He never looks after the girls' homework properly. We always get less attention than boys." Student 3 also said that her teacher did not show enough attention to girls, "He gave more importance to boys. He was very prejudiced against girls; he was constantly oppressing girls." she stated. Student 4, on the other hand, exemplifies that her teacher favors male students and discriminates against girls with the following incident, "For example, when I make memorization, there is a lot of noise. He doesn't tell them to shut up, so I get confused. But when a boy makes memorization, he silences everyone and shouts."

Student 2 stated that her primary school teacher, who was also a woman, discriminated against girls for four years with these words: "She never takes us to a picnic. " 'You're a girl; nobody knows what's going to happen to you,' she says. All the other classes went with girls; only our class could not go with girls. For example, while giving a report card, she takes photos with boys. She doesn't take photos with the girls. She doesn't include the girls in the frame." She also stated that her teacher was prejudiced against them and underestimated this even if they were successful, with the following words: "Our teacher is prejudiced against us using words like these: 'boys are more talented than you'. Even if we know the right answer, he says: 'Let's see, you know the one, but you won't know the next ones.' On the contrary, he encourages male students; 'The perception of boys is more open. You will understand more quickly. You are more capable of working.' He motivates boys with words like compared to girls your unemployment rate is very low when you grow up."

On the other hand, student 3 stated that her teacher does not care about the girls in the class and separates their desks, "He always teaches boys. He takes the boys aside and the girls on the other side. He always speaks to the boys' side." She also added that the physical education teacher discriminates against girls. "The boys do everything in PE class. He doesn't let us do anything. I mean, we aren't playing ball or something; we are mostly sitting on benches. The teacher always leaves the boys out and sends the girls to class."

In addition, it was determined that teachers' negative statements and behaviors toward girls disrupted the classroom climate. Student 1 stated that male students who achieved status in the classroom due to the teacher's behavior became bullies and added that her teacher did not interfere with this situation. "While the teacher is insulting us, the boys are laughing from behind. They like what the teacher says because he usually praises boys and acts the opposite of girls." "We go and talk to our teacher a few times. He says that 'they are our friends', yells at and sends us to our place." The findings suggest that the sexist expressions used by the teacher in the classroom are effective in reducing the tendency of male students to engage in these behaviors. Student 2 also drew attention to the fact that boys who are in a privileged position in the classroom oppress girls by being inspired by the teacher. "After what the teacher said, the boys come and call out as hairdressers or cleaners and throw something on the floor for us to clean it. Boys are always laughing at us. They are using words like the teacher loves us very much and he doesn't like you."

Experiences of Unsuccessful Students

Student 6, one of the research participants, stated that his teacher did not support him; he only helped hardworking students and discriminated against him: "He doesn't look at my question. He is interested in the others' question, takes a picture of it, and tries to do it. While I'm taking a test, I ask the teacher questions. He doesn't even look at me. If he tells us, we will do it too. He says 'your intelligence level is low or something', he says 'you cannot do' ". He added that they told their complaints, but it didn't work. "We said 'sir, you are discriminating'. You always help hardworking students. We say 'we can't do anything because of you'. He never looks at us. He turns his back." Student 6, on the other hand, said that the teacher was prejudiced against unsuccessful students. "Teachers ask what we are going to be in the future. When I say it, they say I can't be. My friends also tell me the same. They tell us to become shepherds. Teachers influence the thoughts of students. There are already two or three successful students in a class. They don't care about the others."

Student 5 stated that at the beginning of the term, her teacher separated students according to the results of the exams. "When I first came to the class, the teacher treated me well before the exam. After I had my first test, when I failed, his behavior changed. That's how he treated all failures. After the first exam, my friend's order changed. My friends moved away from me." In addition, in the answers of the participant, it is stated that unsuccessful students in the class are isolated: "When we

sit next to our other hardworking friends, he calls us cheaters. That's why he always sits in the back. When our hardworking friends help the unsuccessful, the teacher gets angry with them. If you talk to them, your grades will drop too. He is saying your success is more important than theirs. Think about yourself. A few successful students are also excluding us."

In addition, student 5 stated that she was systematically discriminated against until she left the classroom, with the following words, "He was teaching the lesson to them. When our smart friends asked questions in the exam, he was telling some of our friends. When we asked, he said, you will find out; think a little more. When we get a low mark, he says 'you are unsuccessful'. Let's change your class. He was saying that he doesn't want us in his class anymore."

A participant named student 8 stated that she faced prejudice when she said what she wanted to do about her career with the following words: "You cannot graduate from this class. You can't go to science high school, either. It really bothered me a lot, but I couldn't say anything because they are my teachers." Student 6 also stated that he was exposed to his teacher's prejudiced expressions because he failed a lesson. "You can't be a successful person in the future. My teacher told me this once after I got a low grade."

Student 6 stated that the teacher separated the desks in the classroom and did not care about the unsuccessful. "He put the successful ones on one side and the unsuccessful ones on the other. Even if anyone raised a finger on our side, he didn't care at all." He also stated that the teacher did not give the course materials to them and discriminates against them. "Sometimes he says 'why should he waste paper for nothing'. He definitely gives the papers to the successful ones in some way. For example, he sometimes tells us that the printer is broken. At worst, he texts the families. So they will go and get the photocopy out of the stationery."

Student 5, by giving a similar example, expressed the discrimination made against her and explained why they were not given the test as follows: "The tests were distributed, but they were not given to us. My hardworking friend was sitting next to me. I wanted to solve it with him. I asked a friend, what we were solving. The teacher passed and made me sit in the back. He said I influenced his lecture. He said you would turn him into yourself. Because he thought we had failed. It was a waste." Student 5, who stated that she blamed herself and distanced herself from her hardworking friends after what happened, expressed this incident like this: "I stopped talking to smart friends because our teacher said so. To lower their success. I always blamed myself because the teacher said so. Just in case I hurt them."

Student 6 stated that he could not participate in the activities since he was successful. His teacher only takes the successful students and discriminates against others. "For example, the teacher went on a trip with the class and did not take us. He would

deprive us of such things just because we failed. You got low grades. He used to say that we don't deserve the trips. Even with the manager's permission, he somehow blocked us. Sometimes, I can't even go to places I am inquisitive about."

Student 8, on the other hand, stated in the following words that her teachers ignored unsuccessful students and discriminate against them: "Teachers choose successful students in activities, such as projects. Then unsuccessful students get stuck with questions like what am I doing there. In my opinion, they could have a better future if they chose unsuccessful students."

Experiences of Poor Students

Student 10, one of the participants in the present study, stated that his teacher at his former school did not like the poor students in the class and constantly discriminated against them. "Our teacher was more interested in the wealthy. Let me check your homework like this, do you understand it or not? When there were poor people with him, for example, he said it would be okay if you didn't understand them. He said I was already mindless or something like that. I always wanted to go to the board; I wanted to solve the question. But he was always making me sit down and pulling out the riches. The rich were solving the questions; he was very interested in them. He was throwing us aside and saying we wouldn't understand anyway. He was saying I was tin-headed. He called me tin, he said empty, he called me lazy. But I was very interested in solving the questions if he let me on the board." Student 11 also said that they were ignored because they were poor: "He paid less attention to us. He spoke more to the rich. He would place them in the row in front of him and tell them. While we were raising our fingers, he was only picking them up, and he was not raising us. We have to learn, though."

The statements of student 9's teacher, for example, "the poor are that much, what will happen with such an intelligence, what can they do with it at work," show that he expressed his prejudices and stereotypes about the poor. Student 9 stated that her teacher stayed away from the poor. "The teacher asked for a book. We could not afford at that time to buy it. We couldn't buy the book either. I told the teacher and he didn't talk to me for two months. After that, I was constantly getting it from a friend and doing my homework. When I asked questions, he was constantly pushing me away and refused to talk to me."

Student 11, on the other hand, stated that his teacher was prejudiced and underestimated him as follows. "When I was a little boy, my math class was good, a little on my own. But the teacher told me that he could not be my math teacher. He used to say that my math was bad, too. 'We also need garbagemen in our country.' He used to say to me that I didn't need to go to university to be a garbageman. That's what happened most of the time." Student 11 said that his teacher gave nicknames to poor students and that this situation upset and angered them. "He used to call me the garbage man. He called my friend a mechanic. He

called one a watchman and another a worker. That was what he called us. When this happened, everyone was upset. We were saying not to call him a teacher, but he would still say. That's why we were angry with the teacher, of course."

Student 10 evaluated paid exams as discrimination and evaluated this situation as follows: "There were paid exams. For example, I could not enter them, whereas everyone else entered." Student 12, on the other hand, stated that she faced various obstacles because she was poor. "Always when there is a project, the poor stay in the background and they are not involved in the project, it does not matter he or she is hardworking." Student 12 pointed out that the children of families who contributed financially to the school were more privileged. "Such grades of the rich could be corrected back, but our grades were not. After the exam, the teacher would invite some people to join him. Later, they corrected some of their questions. So his grades were changing. So this was happening right before our eyes. He used to correct the mistakes of rich students like that. And then he says, 'I've corrected enough people'. Yours are not now later. But he always continued in the same way. He was somehow eluding us."

The behaviors of teachers also affected students' relationships with their friends. The teacher's discrimination against student 10 and his friends negatively affected the classroom environment, and groupings were formed. This situation was expressed as follows. "For example, in the class presidential candidate, friends were saying that you are poor, you can't afford to do anything. No one chose us. We used to have fights from time to time. When he said that we were poor, we were getting angry, and suddenly, we started to fight." Besides, student 12 mentioned that she was not accepted by her friends because she was poor, and was left alone. "My friends wanted to be on the rich side. They always wanted to hang out with them. That's why I was always alone. They would never let me in. I was always alone." She also explained the reason why her friends did not include her. "I think it was because I was of a lower class among them. I was equal with all of them in the lesson because I was no different." Student 9 mentioned that her friends blamed her for theft in the classroom. "A friend of mine brought ten liras. His money was stolen; they blamed me. Because I was poor, they thought I was stealing."

Student 10 criticized his prejudiced friends with the following sentences. "A year ago, my father quit his job and was out of work for two months. At that time, we were a little short on hand. At school, my mother was always cooking from home. Normally, I eat at the school canteen. For example, when everyone ate like that, they called me poor. They were saying that this can't take anything for sure. They immediately discriminated and were prejudiced. For example, let's say, he says he doesn't seem like a good person at all. For example, they say that this is a lie. They are making prejudices without knowing it."

The Meaning of the Experiencing Prejudice, Stereotype and Discrimination

The findings shows that the components that constituted the core of the students' experiences of being exposed to prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination are "damage to self-esteem and self-confidence, decreased academic motivation, sympathy for the ingroup-antipathy to the outgroup, equality and justice-seeking".

Damage to Self-respect and Self-confidence

The students stated that having identities, such as being a low-status girl, being unsuccessful or being poor in their classes, made them feel worthless and gave them a feeling of inadequacy. Student 10, who was discriminated against because he was poor, explained his experience's meaning for himself as follows: "Discrimination made me feel very humiliated. I felt so worthless." Student 12, on the other hand, stated that after being discriminated against because she was poor, she was isolated from the class and withdrawn. "I didn't want to go in front of anyone. I was always hiding somehow or getting in the back rows. I was just putting my head between my hands and just lying like that." He expressed what went through his mind while lying on the bench as follows. "I was always in a state of humiliation to myself because they humiliated me like this: You can't do it, you don't have time, it's like you don't have a situation." It was determined that student 4, like student 12, associates her experience with low self-esteem. Student 4 talked about how it feels to be separated from successful people as follows. "I felt excluded. I thought I wouldn't have any friends; I'd be left alone."

Students 1,2 and 4 stated that they learned that being a girl is not a good thing as a result of their experiences with prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination. Student 1 said the following about this issue: "I felt very worthless. I was thinking that it was the same thing whether we were born in this world or not. Our teacher said the same thing, whether there were girls or not." Student 2, on the other hand, stated that she accepted the stereotypes about the superiority of men. "Because of what our teacher said, I considered boys superior to girls. I was seeing girls as losers. Because our teacher said it, the girls also looked bad to me. I wish we weren't girls; if we were going to be girls, we wouldn't have been born." Student 4 described her feeling of inadequacy as follows. "I felt so unnecessary. It's like committing a crime. I never loved myself. I remember people making fun of me. I thought I would be stronger if I were a man."

Students stated that being exposed to prejudice and discrimination in the classroom affects their self-confidence. It was determined that this experience decreased self-esteem. Student 5 evaluated this situation as follows: "If you treat someone badly, they feel worthless and unsuccessful. His self-confidence drops. So after a while, he believes that he cannot do it or that he is a bad person." She described what went through her mind after the events she had experienced as follows. "I convinced myself of what the teachers said. I believed that even if I studied, nothing would happen to me." Student 4 evaluated the effects of discrimination between girls and

boys at school as follows; "So people lose confidence in themselves. I don't think we can achieve anything. I will meet this in every area of my life. It feels bad."

It was determined that the sexist expressions of the teachers who defined girls with traditional roles reduced the self-esteem and self-confidence of the students. Student 2 stated that stereotypical expressions that associated female students with incompetence affect her thoughts about her career as follows. "Is there an obstacle in front of me because I am a girl, I had thoughts like? The discrimination made by our teacher affected me a lot. I always saw myself as bad at choosing a career. I was thinking, like I can't do this; I can't do that. I was thinking the same way as my teacher because he was older and wiser than me. If I was like this, I wanted my children not to be girls when I grew up."

Student 6 stated that the prejudiced inferences of the teacher created anxiety about his future and damaged his self-confidence as follows; "Sometimes, I was like, what are you going to do, what are you going to be? I was saying what the teacher said. My self-confidence was greatly affected. Most of the time, I used to say that I was a pathetic loser. What the teacher said officially penetrated my soul." Student 8 claimed that when unsuccessful students were not supported, their self-confidence decreased and stated this situation as follows. "For example, when they give more importance to successful students, their self-confidence increases. The desire to study is increasing. But when he doesn't do this to unsuccessful students, they think they are weaker and have no self-confidence."

Decreasing Academic Motivation

Students stated that after being exposed to prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination in the classroom, they moved away from the lessons and their motivation decreased. Student 3, who was exposed to discrimination because of her gender, emphasized that because of the attitudes of her teacher, her interest in the school and lessons was lost. Student 2 also stated that the sexist expressions of the teacher affected her determination to work. "After all, I am a girl and I was not doing my homework because I thought it would not work no matter how hard I worked. It's like why am I wasting myself."

Student 1 stated that she stopped making an effort after facing prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination in the classroom with the following words. "I didn't even want to stand up in any lesson anymore because the teacher was prejudiced against me. He always said I couldn't do anything. That's why I never wanted to do my homework. When I was in that class, I never wanted to study. In the first semester, I did my homework very often for a few months or so. After that, I didn't do my homework because our teacher never checked mine."

Student 7 stated that being exposed to discrimination reduced his motivation in the following words. "Being discriminated against at work alienated me from education."

It was killing my desire to study. We seemed to come in vain and leave in vain." Student 12 also stated that her performance decreased after being discriminated against: "Even if I try to do something, it will be ignored. Then, I was thinking, why am I wasting my time? I just wanted to watch them do that, that's all."

Student 10 also expressed feeling alienated from school: "I didn't even want to study anymore. I came home and went to bed right away. I used to study my lessons before that teacher came. When that teacher came, I got tired of the lessons. I stopped studying." Student 11 stated that the incident he experienced reduced his interest in the lessons but later on, they increased their grades again by supporting each other with other poor students. "I used to love math. It was then that I started to lose interest in mathematics. My Turkish was good. They all fell. We didn't want to take too many lessons with the teacher. That's why all of our grades dropped. Later, we worked and improved our grades."

Sympathy for the Ingroup – Antipathy to the Outgroup

It was determined that being exposed to prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination affected students' social relations. Student 9 stated that she gained sympathy for her poor friends after the discrimination she was subjected to. "I started to become more attached to the poor students. I can actually put them in my place. When the teacher treated me like that, I started to be better and closer to my other friends." Student 6 also emphasized that after the discrimination they experienced in the classroom, they strengthened their friendships with other unsuccessful students. "We took care of each other, the unsuccessful ones. We said we should all support each other. We were all treated the same. I always wanted to help them because I saw myself as if I were looking in a mirror."

Student 11 stated that he supported his friends who were like him after his experiences; "My friends have insulted me by saying that I am poor. I know what poverty means. A lot of people crushed me. That's why I treat poor people so well. Sometimes when I have money, I share it with my poor friends." Student 11's view of students with good financial status, "I was a little annoyed with them; I didn't like it."

Student 10 commented on how being exposed to discrimination affects his view of individuals from inside and outside groups as follows. "I saw them more like brothers than a friend. They were discriminating against all of us together. In other words, I saw them as enemies because they discriminated against us. They were speaking disrespectfully to us. I started to get very annoyed with them; I held a grudge. I started to dislike the teacher. I started to get very angry with those rich people. When I got angry with the rich, I started to like the poor more."

Student 12's experiences also caused her to develop a positive attitude towards the in-group. Student 12 explained this situation as follows. "Because I was put in the same place as them, I understood them better with more empathy." She also

explained her view of the outgroup as follows; "Of course, I didn't say these things to their faces, but I was more in a situation of hatred." Student 7 stated that he made friends with unsuccessful students and did not like successful students. "We were walking around with unsuccessful friends. The good students tell how much the teacher loves them. That's why they were excluding us during breaks. They always said, 'Don't walk with us, don't do this'. I just didn't want to be friends with them."

Female students stated that they had conflicts with male students because of the pressure and injustice they experienced in the classroom. Student 4 said that after the experience she had, she moved away from the outgroup members. "I thought that if I went into the same environment with men, I would definitely not achieve anything, so that's how it was. Wherever I see a man, I run away. Or trying not to talk. As if they were my enemy," Student 1 stated that she distanced herself from male students. "We used to be close friends, but then we started to drift apart a bit. I didn't want them because they went to support the teacher instead of supporting me." Student 3 also said, "The men were oppressing us a lot by getting support from the teacher. I was getting very annoyed." She stated that she did not like the members of the outgroup.

Equality and the Quest for Justice

The students frequently emphasized the concepts of equality and justice while searching for traces of their experiences in the interviews. Student 4 expressed her thoughts about her experience as follows. "I think the world is a more unfair place. I don't know; I don't want any thoughts like I can't do something because I'm a girl. Maybe because I'm a girl, I'll be able to achieve something. What do I know? We were not born only as boys; there are also girls. There are things that girls can achieve too."

Student 3 said, "Girls have free rights. They have inalienable rights, as do men. I think they can't despise and oppress girls. Girls and boys should be treated equally." She pointed to basic human rights. Student 2 expressed her desire for equality as follows. "There should be no discrimination between men and women." Student 1 said, "I wish they would give more space to girls when they do sports or folklore activities at school." She drew attention to the fact that they could not benefit enough from the opportunities and equal opportunity.

Student 10 expressed his desire for equality and justice as follows: "What is done to them, I want it done to myself. Everyone is doing them a favor. When it comes to us, they start to do evil. They exclude poor people a lot. They do not regard poor people as themselves, but everyone is equal." Student 6, on the other hand, stated that his perception of justice developed as a result of his experience. "I don't think I was this fair even before. I was so discriminated against. Acting unfairly has been the thing I hate the most since then." Student 8 emphasized that teachers should treat all students equally and fairly. "I think they should not discriminate. I am against

discrimination, no matter how successful or unsuccessful. They just lack empathy. They can't think of anything. Everyone has a different talent. No one should be compared to anyone else." Student 12 expressed her thoughts with similar comments. "I think we should all be equal. It is not right for our teacher to approach us like this. So no one should be segregated."

Conclusion, Discussion, Recommendations and Limitations

The findings obtained in this study showed that the students who were exposed to prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination in the educational environment, (1) lost their self-esteem and self-confidence, (2) their academic motivation decreased, (3) they developed sympathy for the in-group and antipathy to the out-group, (4) they sought equality and justice.

In this study, it was determined that the students felt worthless and started to humiliate themselves by accepting the label of inadequacy over time. It was observed that students who were exposed to actions, such as mockery and exclusion were isolated in the classroom. This situation harms self-esteem. Students who experienced self-confidence erosion developed a negative perception of the future and experienced anxiety about their careers. According to another result of the present research, students lost interest in school and lessons after their experience. The negative feelings and thoughts of the students towards their teachers affected their determination to study. Decreased motivation and decreased performance naturally result in low success.

It has been determined that being exposed to prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination also affects the friendship relations of the students. Also, teachers' support for a certain group causes segregation and conflict in the classroom. There is a polarization between female students, unsuccessful students and poor students labeled as inferior in grades, and male students, successful students and rich students labeled as superior. While the students act in solidarity with the in-group members and support each other, they distance themselves from the out-group members. Finally, the students have a desire to receive attention and support and benefit from opportunities equally. In all these situations, the students emphasized the importance of the concepts of equality, justice and human rights.

In this study, it was determined that the prejudiced and discriminatory behaviors of teachers, who are authorized and role models in the classroom, negatively affect the classroom climate and trigger peer bullying. This finding is consistent with the results of the study by Saldıray and Doğanay (2017), which investigated the content of gender relations in a primary school. In the related research, it was revealed that teachers reflected gender stereotypes on students in an uncontrolled way or directly discriminated against gender. Their findings suggest that these behaviors of the

teacher reinforce the gender distinction between male and female students and cause female students to be exposed to verbal violence.

In a study conducted by Esen (2013) with university students, the findings showed that female students were ignored, isolated from activities and given less feedback than men, especially during the teaching processes in middle school and high school. It has been observed that sexist language and rhetoric that humiliates women were used in interpreting the behavior of students in the classroom. In the distribution of duties and responsibilities, it has been revealed that discrimination is made because of gender. In addition, in the related study, it was determined that some male teachers direct their female students to traditional roles (mother-wife). In this research, it was also found that female students were subjected to similar discrimination.

In the research of Balcı and Tuncel (2017), the findings suggest that teachers are mostly the main factors in students' experiences of being subjected to prejudice and discrimination. The answers given by the participants in this research also point to the same conclusion. However, since these results were recruited from a small study group, they should not be generalized to a large occupational group. However, we should note that the ease of encountering students who have had such experiences in schools should be taken seriously.

When teachers approach some students in their classes with low expectations based on their stereotypes and prejudices, their behavior is reflected in the students' performance. Accordingly, the differences and discriminations between the social groups that do not have adequate educational opportunities and the dominant groups are getting stronger. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate students as separate individuals and strive equally for each of them to receive a good education (Madran, 2012, p. 40). One of the most effective areas for the socialization of individuals is education. It is necessary to make this area a place where "anti-discrimination thoughts and attitudes are developed, not where discrimination is reproduced" (Bora, 2012, p. 186). Thus, teachers should act more cautiously in classrooms and take care to reduce prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination.

International human rights conventions and the constitutions of most countries prohibit discrimination. The exclusion of some sections of society from social life, working life or education, the inability to enjoy human rights and freedoms equally, is contrary to the principle that "every individual is equal in rights and dignity," which is the basis of human rights law (Gül, 2012, p. 121). In the Republic of Turkey, Article 4 of the National Education Basic Law No. 1739 – Educational institutions are open to everyone regardless of language, race, gender, disability and religion. Privileges cannot be granted to any person, family, group or class in education. Article 8 - Equality of opportunity is provided to everyone, male and female, in education. To ensure that successful students who lack financial means receive education up to the highest levels of education, and necessary assistance is provided by free boarding,

scholarships, loans and other means. Special measures are taken to educate children in need of special education and protection," which includes the statements of MEB (MEB, 1973). In this context, the state and educators have various duties and responsibilities, such as not discriminating against students, preventing discriminatory behavior of students towards each other, and raising people's awareness by including discrimination in the curriculum (Karan, 2012, p. 140).

Encountering prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination in schools disrupts the qualified education process. Preventing the damage that prejudice stereotypes and discrimination cause to students' self-confidence, character development, mental health, social relationships and academic achievement is the responsibility of all education stakeholders. School administrators, teachers, prospective teachers, students, and parents should be educated about prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination by providing sensitivity and awareness. In addition, control mechanisms should be established in schools to protect the rights of their students. More generally, the application of the principles of restructuring, which aim at social change and a fair social structure by eliminating inequality and injustice in society rather than constructivism in the curriculum, will help eliminate discrimination in education (Yılmaz and Şahin, 2016, p. 166). Researchers can also contribute to this process by conducting studies to reduce prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination in schools.

As a result, some limitations of this study should be emphasized. Findings obtained in this study are specific to participants and context, so generalizations cannot be made. In addition, this study is limited to the experiences students have at school. Although some participants gave examples of discrimination within the family, they were not included because they were not included in this study. Finally, the social groups whose experiences were investigated in this study were girls, the unsuccessful, and the poor. With new research, the experiences of different groups, such as students with disabilities and refugee students, can be examined. In addition, similar studies can be conducted in schools located in different socioeconomic regions.

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