

Historical Awareness of Pre-Service Teachers about Female Teacher Education in the Ottoman Empire

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Abstract

Historical knowledge is not always formed through systematic, evidence-based research; rather, it is often shaped by socially circulated narratives and collective perceptions. This study compares the historical realities of female teacher education in the Ottoman Empire with the contemporary knowledge and perceptions of pre-service Turkish language teachers. Data obtained from semi-structured interviews with 106 pre-service teachers were analyzed through thematic content analysis. The study adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design and follows an explanatory framework in which historical document analysis is interpreted alongside qualitative data obtained from pre-service teachers. The findings indicate that participants possess limited, often fragmented knowledge of female teachers in the Ottoman period and that historical awareness remains relatively weak. In addition, gender-related perceptions are reproduced through various thematic patterns in participants' responses. By connecting historical evidence with contemporary perceptions of pre-service teachers, the study contributes to the literature on teacher education, historical consciousness, and gender in education. These findings highlight the importance of integrating historical perspectives into teacher education programs in order to strengthen professional identity formation and historical consciousness among future teachers.

Introduction

The historical development of the teaching profession and women's participation in education has attracted increasing scholarly attention across different national contexts. Research on teacher education highlights that the transition from student to teacher involves a complex process in which individuals gradually construct their professional identity and develop the competencies required for professional practice (Wang et al., 2025). During this process, teacher candidates not only acquire pedagogical knowledge but also reshape their beliefs and professional perspectives through educational experiences and practical engagement with teaching contexts.

Studies in teacher education emphasize that pre-service teachers enter teacher preparation programs with pre-existing beliefs about teaching and learning. These beliefs may evolve throughout the training process as teacher candidates encounter new pedagogical approaches, practical experiences, and institutional expectations (Shi et al., 2025). In this sense, teacher education programs function not only as environments for pedagogical training but also as spaces in which teachers' professional perspectives and identities are gradually formed.

In teacher education research, professional identity is therefore not viewed as a purely technical outcome of pedagogical training; rather, it emerges through continuous interaction between individual experiences and broader educational contexts (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Goodson, 2014; Sachs, 2001). Recent studies further indicate that teacher identity develops through teachers' engagement with institutional environments, professional communities, and the social expectations surrounding the teaching profession (Zhang et al., 2024). From this perspective, awareness of the historical foundations

of teaching may play a crucial role in shaping how teachers understand their professional roles and responsibilities.

Literature Review

Historical consciousness and teacher education. From the perspective of historical consciousness, teachers' interpretations of the past influence how they understand professional traditions and educational practices. Teachers' understanding of the historical development of their profession may therefore shape their perceptions of teaching and their sense of professional responsibility.

In the context of teacher education, this perspective suggests that knowledge of the historical development of the teaching profession can contribute to the formation of teachers' professional awareness and identity. Research on teacher education programs shows that teacher candidates' professional beliefs and pedagogical perspectives evolve through their engagement with educational theory, classroom experiences, and institutional contexts (Shi et al., 2025).

From the perspective of collective memory theory, professional identities are shaped not only through individual experiences but also through socially transmitted narratives and shared professional traditions (Halbwachs, 1992). In this sense, the historical legacy of female teachers may influence how contemporary teacher candidates interpret their profession and its social significance.

Recent research in teacher education further highlights the importance of social and cultural contexts in shaping teachers' professional perspectives and pedagogical awareness. Studies emphasize that teacher education programs should encourage reflective and socially aware approaches to teaching, allowing teacher candidates to engage critically with broader educational and societal issues (Cuenca-López et al., 2021; Güngenci, 2025). Similar patterns have been observed in teacher education programs across different national contexts, where the focus on competency-based training models may sometimes overshadow broader historical and sociocultural perspectives in teacher preparation.

Women's education and female teaching in the Ottoman context. In the final century of the Ottoman Empire, education became one of the most significant instruments for social transformation and modernization. Educational reforms implemented during this period aimed to strengthen state institutions and expand educational opportunities, thereby contributing to broader social change.

The attempt to move beyond traditional structures and construct a more modern social and administrative order placed women's education increasingly at the center of reform agendas. During this period, education began to function not only as an instructional activity but also as a means for women to gain access to the public sphere and develop professional identities.

Teaching, in particular, played an important role in women's participation in professional life. The institutionalization of teacher training and the expansion of educational opportunities for women facilitated their entry into the teaching profession and contributed to the transformation of women's

social roles. The institutional support provided for the training of female teachers and women's access to higher and vocational education further consolidated this process.

Although women had long been involved in various forms of labor across different social strata, the emergence of female teaching as a recognized profession marked an important step in the professionalization of women's participation in education. Through the development of the concept of *muallime*, female teaching gradually acquired a socially and institutionally recognized status.

Prior to the Tanzimat era, girls' education was largely confined to neighborhood primary schools (*sıbyan mektepleri*), where instruction was conducted in mixed-gender settings. However, with the establishment of girls' secondary schools in 1858–1859, concerns emerged about adolescent girls being taught by male teachers, given prevailing social and cultural sensitivities regarding privacy (*mahremiyet*). This social necessity led to the growing demand for female teachers.

The establishment of the *Dârülmualлимât* (Female Teacher Training School), whose legal basis was laid by the *Maarif-i Umûmiye Nizamnâmesi* of 1 September 1869 and which officially opened in 1870, marked a turning point in the history of Turkish education. In the opening speech delivered by Saffet Pasha, references to Islamic principles emphasizing women's education were used to legitimize women's participation in education and their roles as teachers.

Awareness of historical female educators among pre-service teachers. Existing scholarship on women's education and the teaching profession from the Ottoman period to the Republic has largely focused on institutional histories, biographical studies, or analyses of specific reform periods such as the Tanzimat and the Second Constitutional Period. By contrast, studies examining contemporary pre-service teachers' awareness of the historical roots of their profession remain relatively limited.

Research on teacher education indicates that teacher candidates' perceptions of teaching are strongly influenced by the educational narratives and pedagogical frameworks encountered during their training (Shi et al., 2025). When historical perspectives are underrepresented in teacher education curricula, future teachers may develop fragmented understandings of the profession's historical development.

At the same time, educational research emphasizes the importance of integrating historical and cultural perspectives into teacher education to foster reflective, socially aware educators (Cuenca-López et al., 2021). Engaging with historical narratives and educational heritage can help teacher candidates develop a deeper understanding of their profession and its evolution.

The historical development of female teaching was not limited to the establishment of institutions such as the *Dârülmualлимât* and the *İnas Darülfünunu*; it also contributed to the formation of a pedagogical and intellectual tradition. Despite these developments, female teachers faced various challenges, including social pressures framed around discourses of morality and honor, as well as institutional inequalities in appointments and working conditions.

Ottoman archival records reveal, for example, that a directive dated 10 September 1906 from the Ministry of Education to the Directorate of Education in the Province of Aleppo stipulated that female teachers were exempt from the vergi-i şahsi, a tax deducted from educational employees' salaries and imposed only on male teachers. While women were thus integrated into working life, they were simultaneously positioned within a gender-differentiated fiscal and administrative framework.

Research gap and aim of the study. The primary aim of this study is to examine the construction of the "female teacher" identity and the social meanings attributed to it from Ottoman modernization through the Republican era—and, based on these historical realities, to comparatively analyze contemporary pre-service Turkish language teachers' perceptions and levels of historical awareness. By synthesizing historical data with current pre-service teachers' views, the study seeks to reveal the continuity of professional memory and to assess the extent to which present-day perceptions of female teachers are informed by their historical foundations. Within this framework, the study examines the establishment of the Dârülmualimât from 1870 onward, the factors that drew women toward the teaching profession, the social pressures centered on notions of chastity and honor, and the educational legacy transmitted to the Republican period. This historical perspective provides a deep foundation for interpreting the origins of contemporary professional perceptions among pre-service teachers.

The emergence of female teaching in the Ottoman Empire is closely linked to transformations in modernization and educational policies; however, the extent to which this legacy is reflected in contemporary pre-service teachers' professional memory remains unclear. Methodologically, this study aligns with limited research on pre-service teachers' perceptions of the Ottoman educational heritage while highlighting female teaching as its central focus. Although previous studies have examined the historical roles of women educators, the level of awareness among pre-service Turkish language teachers remains underexplored. Accordingly, this study focuses on identifying the extent of the disconnect between the Ottoman legacy of female teaching and contemporary perceptions. By bridging historical evidence with contemporary perceptions of pre-service teachers, the study contributes to the literature on teacher education, historical consciousness, and gender in education. In this respect, examining pre-service teachers' awareness of the historical foundations of their profession offers an important perspective on how professional identity and historical consciousness are formed in teacher education.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on women's education and the historical development of the teaching profession, the relationship between historical educational realities and contemporary pre-service teachers' perceptions has received relatively limited attention. While existing studies have examined institutional developments such as the establishment of teacher-training schools and the contributions of pioneering female educators, fewer have explored how these historical developments are understood, interpreted, or remembered by today's teacher candidates. This gap is particularly significant in contexts such as Turkey, where the historical foundations of teacher education extend back to the late Ottoman period and where institutions such as the Dârülmualimât played a pivotal role in shaping women's participation in education. Addressing this gap is important not only for reconstructing

historical knowledge but also for understanding how professional identity and historical consciousness are formed within teacher education programs. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge historical evidence with contemporary perceptions by examining both the institutional development of female teacher education in the Ottoman Empire and the current levels of historical awareness among pre-service Turkish language teachers. These findings contribute to the literature on historical consciousness in teacher education by linking historical educational realities with contemporary perceptions of pre-service teachers.

Methods

Research design. This study adopts a qualitative research design supported by descriptive quantitative analysis. This study adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design to comparatively examine the historical development of female teacher education and the institution of female teaching (Dârülmuallimât) in the Ottoman Empire, in relation to contemporary pre-service Turkish language teachers’ knowledge and perceptions. The research follows an explanatory design in which historical document analysis is interpreted alongside qualitative data obtained from pre-service teachers.

Study group. The study group consists of 106 pre-service teachers enrolled in the Turkish Language Teaching undergraduate program of a state university in Türkiye. Teacher education programs in Turkey are four-year undergraduate programs leading to a bachelor’s degree. The distribution of participants by grade level is presented below.

Table 1 Distribution of the study group by grade level and gender.			
Grade Level	Male (n)	Female (n)	Total (n)
1st Year	6	23	29
2nd Year	11	19	30
3rd Year	7	15	22
4th Year	9	16	25
Total	33	73	106

As shown in Table 1, the study group consists of 106 pre-service teachers enrolled in a Turkish Language Teaching program at a state university who voluntarily participated in the study. Of these participants, 29 were first-year students, 30 were second-year students, 22 were third-year students, and 25 were fourth-year students. In terms of gender distribution, 33 participants were male and 73 were female. Accordingly, the study group represents a purposive sample with diversity in both grade level and gender.

Responses to the open-ended questions were carefully examined. Responses that were incomplete, not directly relevant to the research questions, or lacking sufficient analytical depth were excluded from the analysis. As a result, the final dataset consisted of valid responses from 76 participants.

Data collection instrument. The data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher, titled *Pre-service Turkish Language Teachers' Views on Female Teacher Education in the Ottoman Period*. The form consists of a personal information section and 15 open-ended questions.

The personal information form collected data on participants' gender, grade level, number of siblings, parents' educational background, city/country of long-term residence, reasons for choosing the Turkish Language Teaching profession, and level of interest in history.

Items 1–5 of the interview form focus on teacher training and the Ottoman education system; items 6–13 address female teachers' educational processes, professional roles, challenges, and contributions; and items 14–15 concern the sources used by participants and their additional views. The questions were structured to elicit both factual knowledge and participants' perceptions and evaluations.

Data collection procedure. The interview form was administered face-to-face by the researcher in a classroom setting. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, assured that their identities would remain confidential, and invited to participate voluntarily. No names were requested on the forms; instead, each participant was assigned a student paper number. This number, together with grade level information, was used during analysis to ensure anonymity. Participation in the study was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data analysis. Participants' responses to the open-ended questions were first read by the researcher, and a letter code was assigned to each unit of meaning. If a response contained more than one unit of meaning, multiple codes were assigned (e.g., “e, y” indicating both course books and exam preparation books; “i, ı” indicating both knowledge of *Dârülmualîmât* and emphasis on challenges). Thus, each student–question combination could be represented by multiple codes when necessary.

After the coding process was completed, the codes were transferred to Microsoft Excel. Participants were placed in rows, and questions were arranged in columns. Relevant codes were entered into each cell, separated by commas, and later disaggregated for analysis. To enhance reliability, coding procedures were applied systematically, and categories were reviewed repeatedly throughout the analysis.

The analysis was conducted in three stages:

Descriptive code analysis (Frequency analysis). The frequency of each code across the entire data set was calculated in order to identify the most frequently occurring codes (particularly codes such as “a, e, f, g, ı, î, q, y, z”). The distribution of codes by questions and grade levels was examined. At this stage, Excel pivot tables were used (Code × Grade Level; Code × Question).

Thematic content analysis. Codes were grouped into higher-order themes based on semantic similarity. Drawing on the code list, the following main themes were generated:

- Lack of Knowledge and Problems of Historical Memory (a, t, etc.)
- Educational Institutions and Structures (f, g, h, İ/i, k, j, v, #, etc.)
- Women's Position and Gender Perceptions (İ, ö, q, s, u, etc.)
- Educational Policies and the Nature of the Profession (l, m, n, p, o, ü, etc.)
- Sources of Knowledge and Learning Channels (d, e, y, z, etc.)
- Perceptions of the Teaching Profession (r, w, etc.)

Within each theme, the concentration of relevant codes across questions and grade levels was descriptively analyzed.

Direct quotations from participants were used in the findings section to support the thematic interpretations.

Comparative descriptive analysis across grade levels. The distribution of codes and themes across grade levels was examined, with particular attention to key codes such as “a” (lack of knowledge), “İ/İ” (institutional knowledge), “İ” (emphasis on challenges), and “q” (the perception that female teachers did not exist). Qualitative interpretations were then made regarding changes in historical knowledge and awareness across grade levels.

Given the qualitative-dominant nature of the study, the quantitative findings served a supportive, descriptive function, while the primary emphasis was on the content and patterns of codes and themes. To enhance the credibility of the analysis, coding procedures were applied systematically, and themes were derived through iterative comparison of data segments.

Trustworthiness was ensured through systematic coding based on units of meaning and the consistent application of the coding framework across the dataset. Detailed descriptions of the study group, data collection process, and analysis procedures support dependability and transferability. Confirmability was strengthened by grounding interpretations in participants' responses and historical documents.

Ethical Approval and Informed Consent. The study was approved by the Dokuz Eylul University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (Decision No: 4, Date: 28 May 2024).

All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with institutional and internationally accepted ethical standards.

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the research process.

Findings

Female teacher training institutions in the Ottoman Empire. The Dârülmua'llimât (female teacher-training schools) were established in Istanbul in 1870. Until 1858, girls in the Ottoman Empire did not attend educational institutions providing instruction beyond the primary level (Akyüz, 2012). As noted by Ergin (1977), boys' access to schooling was likewise largely justified by administrative and military needs. With the opening of girls' secondary schools in 1858, a demand for female teachers emerged. Initially, this need was met by elderly, morally reputable male teachers; however, in subsequent years, it led to the establishment of female teacher-training schools. The 1869 General Education Regulation (Maarif-i Umûmiye Nizamnâmesi) included provisions for the establishment of the Dârülmua'llimât as an institution categorized at the level of higher education (Akdağ, 2016; Büyükboyacı, 2025; Cücük et al., 2018; Özkul and Baysal, 2017; Tunç, 2018; Yanardağ, 2023). Within this regulation, the Dârülmua'llimât was organized into two branches: sıbyan (primary) and rüşdiye (secondary). According to the regulation, the curricula were as follows (Ergin, 1977):

Table 2. Curriculum of the Sıbyan Branch.	
Course Title	Content / Purpose
<i>Mebâdi-i Ulûm-i Dîniye</i>	Basic religious knowledge taught in accordance with the belief principles of each religious community.
<i>Ulûm-i Dîniye</i> (in Each Community's Own Language)	Instruction of religious knowledge in the language of the students' respective communities.
<i>Kavâid-i Lisân-ı Osmânî ve Kitâbet</i>	Grammar rules of Ottoman Turkish and the development of written expression skills.
<i>Usûl-i Ta'lîm</i>	Teaching methods and techniques; pedagogical training for the teaching profession.
Each Community's Own Language	Development of reading, writing, and language skills in students' mother tongues.
<i>Risâle-i Ahlâk</i>	Moral education aimed at fostering individual and social values.
<i>Hesap ve Defter Tutmak Usûlü</i>	Basic mathematics along with bookkeeping and record-keeping skills.
<i>Tarih-i Osmânî ve Coğrafya</i>	Ottoman history and geography to promote historical consciousness and spatial awareness.
<i>Ma'lûmât-ı Nâfia</i>	Practical and useful knowledge applicable to daily life.
<i>Musiki</i>	Basic music education to develop aesthetic sensitivity and cultural awareness.
Sewing and Embroidery	Manual skills aligned with contemporary social expectations and practical vocational outcomes.

An examination of Table 2 indicates that the curriculum was primarily structured around basic religious instruction, moral education, language teaching, and daily life skills. Courses such as *Mebâdi-i Ulûm-i Dîniye*, *Risâle-i Ahlâk*, and instruction in each community's own language aimed to enable pre-service teachers to provide value transmission, moral guidance, and basic literacy education to younger pupils.

Moreover, the inclusion of courses such as bookkeeping, *Ma'lûmât-ı Nâfia*, music, sewing, and embroidery suggests that female teachers were expected to be equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with practical skills closely related to everyday life. This structure demonstrates that the *sıbyan* branch curriculum adopted a protective and guiding educational approach designed to prepare female teachers in accordance with both their pedagogical responsibilities and socially ascribed roles.

Table 3. Curriculum of the Rüşdiye Branch.	
Course Title	Content / Purpose
<i>Mebâdi-i Ulûm-i Dîniye</i> (in Each Community's Own Language)	Teaching basic religious knowledge in the language of the students' respective communities.
<i>Kavâid-i Lisân-ı Osmânî ve İnşâ</i>	Grammar of Ottoman Turkish, written expression, and text composition skills.
<i>Arabî ve Fârisî</i>	Basic Arabic and Persian language instruction aimed at understanding classical texts and enhancing cultural-linguistic competence.
Each Community's Own Language	Development of literacy and language skills in students' mother tongues.
<i>İlm-i Ahlâk</i>	Moral education fostering individual and social values as well as professional responsibility.
<i>Tedbîr-i Menzil</i>	Knowledge related to family life, household management, and daily organization, reflecting societal role expectations.
History and Geography	Courses aimed at developing historical consciousness and spatial awareness.
<i>Mebâdi-i Ulûm-ı Riyâziye ve Tabîiye</i>	Basic mathematics and natural sciences to promote analytical thinking and a scientific perspective.
Drawing	Development of visual perception, aesthetic sensitivity, and basic drawing skills.
<i>Musiki</i>	Music education fostering aesthetic and cultural development and a sense of rhythm.
<i>Envân-ı Ameliyât-ı Hayyâtiye</i>	Practical life skills and applied knowledge related to daily living and handicrafts.

Compared to the sıbyan branch, Table 3 reflects a more academic, interdisciplinary, and cognitively demanding structure. Courses such as Kavâid-i Lisân-ı Osmânî ve İnşâ, Arabic and Persian, history and geography, and Mebâdi-i Ulûm-ı Riyâziye ve Tabîiye aimed to equip female teachers with advanced language proficiency, historical awareness, and foundational scientific knowledge. This content indicates that the rüşdiye branch embraced a teacher education approach focused not merely on instructional skills but on the development of intellectual and professional competence.

Courses such as İlm-i Ahlâk and Tedbîr-i Menzil reflect a holistic approach integrating professional identity with socially defined roles, while the inclusion of drawing, music, and Envâ-ı Ameliyât-ı Hayyâtiye highlights the emphasis on aesthetic and applied skills. Overall, the rüşdiye curriculum indicates that female teachers were trained as qualified educators at both primary and secondary levels, with its general structure remaining largely consistent over time.

The establishment of these schools did not occur immediately. On Monday, 8 February 1870, the Minister of Education at the time, Saffet Pasha, together with senior administrators, examined a total of 32 prospective teacher candidates. The entrance examination assessed candidates' knowledge and skills in subjects such as morphology (emsile), the four arithmetic operations (amelî erbaa), geography, spelling, sülûs calligraphy, drawing, embroidery, and tailoring. According to archival documents cited by Ergin (1977), all candidates successfully passed the examination. The Dârülmualлимât was officially opened on 26 April 1870 at Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, with the participation of the Minister of Education. In his opening address, Saffet Pasha stated: "This school is among the most eminent institutions of our Sultan and will provide boundless benefits for women's education" (Akyüz, 2012), emphasizing that the pursuit of knowledge is a religious obligation for both women and men.

Admission to the school required success in an entrance examination, and graduation likewise depended on demonstrating superior achievement in final examinations. By the year 1294 (1878/1879), the number of students enrolled had reached 50, of whom eight earned diplomas as rüşdiye teachers and five as sıbyan teachers. As also reflected in Fatma Aliye Hanım's novel Refet, not all students attended these schools solely with the intention of becoming teachers. Given the absence of alternative higher education institutions accessible to girls at the time, it can be argued that some students who did not necessarily need to work but wished to pursue higher education also enrolled in the Dârülmualлимât (Akyüz, 2012).

Muallim Cevdet identified the year 1879 as particularly significant for the Dârülmualлимât, as courses on usûl-i tedrîs (educational sciences) were included in the curriculum for the first time (Ergin, 1977). Like many other courses offered only when qualified instructors were available, this course was removed from the curriculum the following year. Subsequently, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım—who later authored works in this field—resumed teaching this course in 1891 (Altın, 2017; Büyükboyacı, 2025; Çoban, 2013; Özkul and Baysal, 2017; Şanal and Güçlü, 2016).

The Dârülmualлимât did not experience a stable educational trajectory and was closed at various times. For instance, it remained closed for two years during 1881–1882 and produced no graduates for four

consecutive years. Although the study duration was initially set at 2 years, it was extended to 3 years in 1890 (Ergin, 1977). Despite undergoing numerous transformations over time, female teacher-training schools constitute the foundation for women's roles as teachers in contemporary education. Akyüz (2012) emphasizes that the training of female teachers—viewed as a necessity to encourage girls' schooling—enabled more girls to attend school. Because students who did not receive scholarships were not compelled to work, many young women preferred these schools not only to become teachers but also to study at a higher-level institution. Moreover, the Dârülmua'llimât served as a primary source of students for the İnas Darülfünunu (women's universities) established during the Second Constitutional Period. Beyond enabling women to gain a legitimate profession, the Dârülmua'llimât allowed them to assume a socially respected role as teachers—entrusted with the education of future generations and endowed with moral and symbolic significance.

Knowledge, perceptions, and evaluations of pre-service Turkish language teachers regarding female teachers' educational processes, professional roles, challenges, and contributions to education in the Ottoman Empire. Today's pre-service teachers gain admission to faculties of education by achieving success in a centralized national examination and complete a four-year undergraduate program. In Turkey, the course History of Turkish Education is included as a compulsory course in teacher education undergraduate programs determined by the Council of Higher Education (Council of Higher Education, 2018). This course aims to introduce pre-service teachers to the historical development of the Turkish education system, with particular emphasis on educational institutions and practices during the Ottoman and Republican periods. However, an examination of the course content reveals that information on the education of female teachers in the Ottoman Empire and on institutions such as the Dârülmua'llimât is often presented in a limited and superficial manner. This situation may hinder pre-service teachers from developing sufficient historical awareness of female teachers' educational processes, professional roles, and contributions to education in the Ottoman period, and may also lead to the formation of certain misconceptions. In addition to this compulsory course, elective courses with similar content related to the history of education are also included in teacher education curricula under different titles.

The History of Turkish Education course is generally offered as a compulsory course in the second year of teacher education undergraduate programs (typically in the third or fourth semester). The findings reveal a significant gap between the institutional history of female teacher education and the knowledge levels of contemporary pre-service teachers. The findings obtained within the scope of this study are presented in the tables below:

Table 4. Levels of knowledge of pre-service Turkish language teachers regarding the Ottoman education system and the teacher training process.			
Knowledge Area	Sufficient Knowledge n (%)	Partial Knowledge n (%)	No Knowledge / Incorrect Knowledge n (%)
General structure of the Ottoman education system	4 (5.3)	23 (30.3)	49 (64.4)
Teacher training institutions in the Ottoman Empire	6 (7.9)	21 (27.6)	49 (64.4)
Knowledge of <i>Dârülmualimîn</i> and <i>Dârülmualimât</i>	9 (11.8)	17 (22.4)	50 (65.8)
Training of female teachers in the Ottoman Empire	8 (10.5)	16 (21.1)	52 (68.4)
Objectives of the teacher training process	3 (3.9)	19 (25.0)	54 (71.1)

Table 4 clearly indicates that pre-service Turkish language teachers generally have low levels of knowledge regarding the Ottoman education system and teacher-training institutions, particularly regarding female teacher education and institutions such as the *Dârülmualimât*. With fewer than 12% of participants demonstrating sufficient knowledge across all sub-areas, these findings indicate that Ottoman educational history and female teaching have not been adequately internalized, pointing to a significant gap in historical consciousness. These findings suggest that the institutional history of female teacher education has not been sufficiently internalized by contemporary pre-service teachers.

Table 5. Pre-service Turkish language teachers' views on the educational processes of female teachers in the Ottoman Empire.		
Theme	Prominent Views / Codes	f
Perception of institutional education	<i>Dârülmualimât</i> , women-only teacher schools, education of female students (i, ş)	6
Perception of educational content	Predominantly religious education, limited positive sciences (p, c)	5
Perception of reform and modernization	Post-Tanzimat reforms, change in education (g, i)	4
Gender-based perception	Patriarchal structure, women remaining in the background (l, q)	3
Lack of knowledge	No knowledge of how female teachers were trained (a)	58

Table 5 indicates that pre-service Turkish language teachers' views on the educational processes of female teachers in the Ottoman Empire are largely characterized by limited knowledge, with many participants unable to explain how female teachers were trained. The few institutional references to the Dârülmualimât suggest that female teacher education holds little prominence in pre-service teachers' cognitive frameworks, though isolated references to post-Tanzimat reforms indicate limited historical awareness.

Table 6. Pre-service Turkish language teachers' evaluations of female teachers' professional roles and contributions to education in the Ottoman Empire.		
Theme	Evaluations of Pre-service teachers / Codes	f
Basic instructional role	Education of girls, teaching literacy (i, ş)	9
Moral and social role	Value transmission, moral education, serving as social role models (c, p)	7
Cultural transmission	Transmission of tradition, culture, and language (g)	5
Perception of limited professional impact	View that female teachers had limited influence (i)	6
Lack of knowledge regarding professional roles	No knowledge of the roles assumed by female teachers (a)	49

The results presented in Table 6 indicate that evaluations of female teachers' professional roles and contributions are largely shaped by limited knowledge, with many participants unable to offer concrete assessments. Although a small number of candidates referred to roles such as educating girls, moral instruction, and cultural transmission, this historical awareness remains limited and superficial.

Table 7. Pre-service Turkish language teachers' views on the challenges faced by female teachers in the Ottoman Empire.		
Theme	Views of Pre-service teachers / Codes	f
Social pressure and gender roles	Patriarchal structure, restrictions on women in the public sphere (i, q)	11
Limited educational and professional opportunities	Restricted access to education, difficulty in professional advancement (p, c)	8
Family and social pressure	Family permission, traditional expectations (g)	6
Official and institutional barriers	Perceived lack of state support (f)	5
Lack of knowledge regarding challenges	No knowledge of the problems faced by female teachers (a)	46

Table 7 shows that pre-service Turkish language teachers' views on the challenges faced by female teachers in the Ottoman Empire are characterized by limited historical awareness, with many participants unable to provide concrete evaluations. Although some references to patriarchal structures and limited educational opportunities indicate partial awareness, this understanding remains superficial and distant from a holistic, document-based historical perspective.

Table 8. Sources of knowledge of pre-service Turkish language teachers regarding female teachers in the Ottoman Empire.		
Source of Knowledge	Statements of Pre-service teachers / Codes	f
Undergraduate courses	<i>History of Turkish Education</i> , education-related courses (i, ş)	14
Books and academic sources	Textbooks, academic publications (c, p)	9
Internet and digital sources	Websites, social media (g)	11
Documentary / visual media	Documentaries, TV series, video content (f)	6
No source of knowledge	Those stating that they had not accessed any source on the topic (a)	36

An examination of Table 8 reveals that pre-service Turkish language teachers' sources of knowledge regarding female teachers in the Ottoman Empire are limited. The fact that a substantial number of participants did not indicate any information source suggests that pre-service teachers lack systematic access to historical knowledge. Although undergraduate courses and academic sources are important references, the knowledge derived from them does not appear to be widespread or in-depth. The use of secondary sources, such as the internet and visual media, may also be considered a potential risk area for superficial understanding and misinformation.

Table 9. Additional Views of Pre-service Turkish Language Teachers Regarding Female Teachers in the Ottoman Empire.		
Theme	Additional Views of Pre-service teachers / Codes	f
Greater curricular emphasis	Need to address female teachers in the Ottoman Empire more extensively in courses	18
Emphasis on the lack of historical awareness	Insufficient coverage of the topic; superficial knowledge	15
Gender perspective	View that female teachers were historically rendered invisible	12
Linking past and present	Comparing Ottoman female teachers with contemporary female teachers	9
No original evaluation	No additional views or very limited responses	22

Table 9 shows that a significant proportion of pre-service Turkish language teachers believe that historical knowledge about female teachers in the Ottoman Empire should be more prominently featured in teacher education programs. Participants particularly emphasized that this topic is inadequately covered in course content and that their historical awareness remains limited. Evaluations grounded in a gender perspective indicate that the perception of female teachers being historically rendered invisible resonates with a segment of pre-service teachers. These findings suggest that participants have developed not only an awareness of their own knowledge gaps but also a critical stance toward existing teacher education curricula.

Pre-service Turkish Language Teachers’ Sources of Knowledge Regarding Female Teachers in the Ottoman Empire and Their Additional Views on the Topic. In this section, pre-service Turkish language teachers’ sources of knowledge regarding female teachers in the Ottoman Empire and their additional views on the subject are examined together. The findings indicate that a large proportion of pre-service teachers acquire their knowledge on this topic through a limited number of courses, academic sources, or secondary digital content. In particular, it appears that the History of Turkish Education course and other education history–related courses included in teacher education programs do not sufficiently deepen knowledge of the education of female teachers in the Ottoman Empire or of institutions such as the Dârülmua’llimât.

The absence of specified information sources among many participants suggests that female teachers in the Ottoman Empire are not systematically addressed in teacher education programs. However, participants’ calls for greater curricular emphasis indicate that this knowledge gap is recognized by the pre-service teachers themselves, reflecting not only informational deficiency but also critical awareness. Overall, these findings suggest that limited curricular treatment affects both pre-service teachers’ knowledge and perceptions, highlighting the role of the quality and diversity of knowledge sources in developing historical consciousness.

Discussion

This study examined the extent to which historical realities concerning the training of female teachers in the late Ottoman period correspond with the perceptions of contemporary pre-service Turkish language teachers. The findings reveal a considerable gap between historical evidence and pre-service teachers' current knowledge frameworks. Participants' responses indicate that historical knowledge about female teachers in the Ottoman period is often fragmented and limited, suggesting a disconnect between institutional educational history and contemporary professional awareness.

These findings highlight the importance of systematically integrating the historical foundations of the teaching profession into teacher education programs. Teacher education curricula could benefit from incorporating historical case studies, archival materials, and discussions of the profession's historical development. Research on teacher education similarly emphasizes that teacher candidates' professional beliefs and perspectives evolve through their engagement with educational knowledge, institutional contexts, and training experiences (Shi et al., 2025). From this perspective, historical awareness may represent an important dimension of professional identity formation in teacher education.

Within the Ottoman education system, the institutional foundations of female teaching were recognized by law through the 1869 Maarif-i Umûmiye Nizamnâmesi, and the establishment of the Dârülmua'llimât (Female Teacher Training School) in 1870 marked a turning point in the history of Turkish education. Archival records indicate that 302 female teachers graduated from the Dârülmua'llimât over a 24-year period, suggesting that these institutions played a significant role in the training of female teachers. However, the present study's findings indicate that contemporary pre-service teachers have not sufficiently internalized this institutional development or the higher-level professional training provided by these schools. Similar conclusions have been reached by Cücük et al. (2018) and Yanardağ (2023). Yet, as emphasized by Özger (2012), Yanardağ (2023), and Yılmaz (2010), the Dârülmua'llimât constituted the first significant step enabling women to enter the public sphere with civil servant status through compulsory post-graduation service.

From a broader educational perspective, contemporary research in teacher education suggests that training programs frequently prioritize pedagogical competencies and practical teaching skills, sometimes leaving limited space for historical and sociocultural perspectives on the teaching profession. Studies focusing on teacher education indicate that pre-service teachers' professional perspectives are strongly shaped by training environments, curricular structures, and practical experiences during their preparation programs (Wang et al., 2025). When historical perspectives are insufficiently integrated into these programs, teacher candidates may develop limited awareness of the institutional and intellectual heritage of their profession.

From a pedagogical heritage perspective, Ayşe Sıdıka Hanım's *Usûl-i Tâlim ve Terbiye Dersleri* (1897) is regarded as the first modern Turkish-language textbook in educational sciences and emphasizes

teaching as a demanding art requiring pedagogical formation. In contrast, the tendency observed in this study for pre-service teachers to view teaching primarily as a technical process suggests a departure from this historically rooted vision. Likewise, the enlightened female teacher ideal articulated by Halide Edip Adıvar resonates only weakly in contemporary pre-service teachers' historical consciousness. This divergence highlights a weakening of pedagogical continuity between the Ottoman educational heritage and contemporary teacher education. Similar observations have been made in teacher education research, which indicates that professional perspectives and teaching beliefs are often shaped more strongly by current training practices than by historical or philosophical reflections on the profession (Shi et al., 2025).

The social struggles and identity formation processes of female teachers also align with findings in the existing literature. Sources indicate that early female teachers (*muallimeler*) faced intense social pressures structured around discourses of "chastity" and "honor," as well as significant challenges related to appointments, particularly in provincial areas. The limited knowledge demonstrated by pre-service teachers in this study regarding such historical challenges supports the argument that the pioneering role of female teachers in social transformation is not sufficiently addressed in contemporary faculties of education curricula. Educational research also emphasizes that teacher identity develops through complex interactions between institutional contexts, social expectations, and professional communities (Zhang et al., 2024). The historical experiences of female teachers therefore represent an important dimension of the profession's collective memory that can contribute to shaping contemporary teacher identity.

Finally, Adıgüzel (2014) showed that pre-service teachers' awareness of pioneering female figures was "remarkably low," a finding corroborated by the present study, which indicates that candidates remain largely unfamiliar with the historical roots of their profession and figures such as Ayşe Sıdika and Nezihe Muhiddin. This pattern suggests that teacher education prioritizes knowledge transmission over the cultivation of historical consciousness and professional role models, despite the fact that this legacy provides a valuable foundation for contemporary teacher education practices. Addressing this gap is therefore essential for strengthening professional identity formation in teacher education. Studies on teacher training further suggest that reflective engagement with educational heritage and historical narratives can help teacher candidates develop broader professional perspectives and socially aware approaches to teaching (Cuenca-López et al., 2021).

One limitation of this study concerns the use of data from a single university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could examine pre-service teachers from different institutions and disciplines to obtain a broader picture of historical awareness of the teaching profession. These findings indicate that historical awareness is not merely a matter of knowledge transmission but also an important component of professional identity formation in teacher education. These findings suggest that historical awareness is not merely an outcome of curricular exposure, but also shaped by the depth and pedagogical framing of historical content within teacher education.

Limitations. This study has several limitations. First, the data were collected from a single university, which may limit generalizability. Second, the study relies on qualitative data, and future studies may incorporate larger samples and quantitative analysis.

Conclusion

This study comparatively examined the historical realities of female teacher training in the Ottoman Empire in relation to contemporary pre-service Turkish language teachers' levels of knowledge, perceptions, and evaluations. Archival documents and historical literature demonstrate that female teaching in the Ottoman context was systematically organized through institutional structures such as the Dârülmua'llimât, and that women were trained in line with pedagogical, moral, and social roles. In contrast, the present study's findings suggest that this historical accumulation is not adequately reflected in pre-service teachers' professional memory.

The study reveals a pronounced knowledge deficit among pre-service Turkish language teachers regarding the training of female teachers in the Ottoman Empire. The prevalence of responses such as "I do not know / I do not remember" across all grade levels indicates a lack of systematic knowledge of the profession's historical foundations. Although institutional awareness (e.g., Dârülmua'llimât, rüşdiye, Darülfünun) increases with grade level, this does not translate into a holistic or in-depth historical consciousness, as knowledge remains fragmented and superficial even among upper-year students.

Perceptions of female teaching are largely framed through victimhood, patriarchal structures, and limitation, while pedagogical quality, professional contributions, and institutional development receive comparatively little attention. The persistence of the misconception that "there were no female teachers in the Ottoman Empire" further underscores the inadequate internalization of historical knowledge.

The findings also show that pre-service teachers' historical perceptions are shaped mainly by exam-oriented materials and popular narratives, with limited engagement with academic studies and archival sources. This situation contributes to the disconnect between historical realities and contemporary perceptions. Although female teaching in the Ottoman Empire constituted a well-established institutional and pedagogical reality, this legacy is only weakly reflected in the professional memory of contemporary pre-service teachers.

This situation appears closely related to how historical content is presented in teacher education programs and to the types of sources through which pre-service teachers encounter educational history. Strengthening the historical dimension of teacher education may therefore play an important role in fostering both professional identity and critical historical awareness among future teachers. In particular, integrating archival materials, historical case studies, and document-based learning approaches into teacher education programs may help establish stronger connections between past and present and encourage pre-service teachers to interpret their profession within a broader historical and social perspective.

In this sense, strengthening the historical dimension of teacher education should be regarded not only as a matter of historical knowledge but also as a key component of professional identity formation in teaching. Future research may examine historical awareness among teacher candidates from different universities and disciplines in order to provide a broader understanding of how the historical foundations of the teaching profession are perceived in contemporary teacher education.

Declarations

Author Contribution

The author was solely responsible for the conception and design of the study, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, and preparation of the manuscript.

Data Availability

The datasets generated and analyzed during this study are available as supplementary materials submitted with the manuscript. The data include anonymized participant responses, coding schemes, and frequency tables used in the analysis. All data have been anonymized to ensure participant confidentiality.

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