



## Determination of In-Class Trust Levels of Secondary Education Students

Serdar ÖZÇETİN<sup>a\*</sup>

<sup>a\*</sup> Assist. Prof. Dr., Akdeniz University, Antalya/Turkey, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0797-5268 \*serdarozcetin@akdeniz.edu.tr

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to determine students' in-class trust levels and compare them according to some variables. In the research, survey, one of the quantitative research methods, was adopted. The population of the research consists of the secondary school students participating in the central districts of Antalya in the 2019-2020 academic year. The sample consists of 271 secondary school students determined by simple random (probabilistic) sampling method. In the study, the "In-Class Confidence Scale" was used as a data collection tool. The data collection tool is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 3 sub-dimensions and 34 items [Basic Trust (25 items), Freedom of Expression (5 items) and Threat Perception (4 items)]. In this study, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was found to be .80 for the whole in-class confidence scale. Frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, t-test for independent samples and One-Way ANOVA analyses were used to analyze the data. As a result of the research, it was found that the students' in-class confidence levels were at medium levels. As a result of the comparison made according to gender, a significant difference was found in all dimensions of in-class confidence, and it is seen that the averages of males are higher than females in all dimensions. In the comparison made according to the classes of the students, it was observed that the sense of basic trust of the 11th grades is higher than the other classes; the freedom of expression was higher in the 9th graders compared to the 10th graders, and the 10th graders compared to the 11th grades. It has been determined that the threat perceptions of 11th grade students are higher than 9th and 10th grade students.

**Keywords:** In-class trust, secondary education, trust.

## Ortaöğretim Öğrencilerinin Sınıf İçi Güven Düzeylerinin Belirlenmesi

ÖZ

Bu araştırmanın amacı; öğrencilerin sınıf içi güven düzeylerini belirlemek ve bazı değişkenlere göre karşılaştırmaktır. Araştırmada nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden tarama modeli benimsenmiştir. Araştırmanın evrenini 2019–2020 eğitim-öğretim yılında Antalya merkez ilçelerinde öğrenim gören ortaöğretim öğrencileri oluşturmaktadır. Örneklemi ise basit seçkisiz (olasılıklı) örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenen 271 ortaöğretim öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada, Akbaş (2005) tarafından geliştirilen "Sınıf İçi Güven Ölçeği" veri toplama aracı olarak kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama aracı, 3 alt boyutta [Temel Güven (25 madde), İfade Özgürlüğü (5 madde) ve Tehdit Algısı (4 madde)] 34 maddeden oluşan 5'li likert tipi bir ölçektir. Bu araştırmada sınıf içi güven ölçeğinin tümü için Cronbach alfa güvenirlilik katsayısı .80 olarak bulunmuştur. Verilerin analizinde frekans, yüzde, aritmetik ortalama, standart sapma, bağımsız örneklem için t-testi ve tek faktörlü varyans (ANOVA) analizleri uygulanmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda; öğrencilerin sınıf içi güven düzeylerinin orta seviyelerde olduğuna ulaşılmıştır. Cinsiyete göre yapılan karşılaştırma sonucunda sınıf içi güven boyutlarının tamamında anlamlı fark tespit edilmiş ve tüm boyutlarda erkeklerin ortalamaları kadınlara göre daha yüksek olduğu görülmektedir. Öğrencilerin sınıflarına göre yapılan karşılaştırmada da 11.sınıfların temel güven duygusunun diğer sınıflara göre daha yüksek olduğu; 9. sınıfların 10. sınıflara göre, 10. sınıflarında 11. sınıflara göre ifade özgürlüğünün daha yüksek seviyede olduğu görülmüştür. 11.sınıf öğrencilerinin 9. ve 10. sınıf öğrencilerine göre tehdit algısının da daha yüksek seviyede olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Sınıf içi güven, ortaöğretim, güven.

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Trust is one of important factors in maintaining human relations and organizational life (Omarov, 2009). Trust is generally perceived as a concept based on honesty and integrity (Demircan & Ceylan, 2003).

It is possible to see the key role of trust in every field from family life to friend relationships. For this reason, it has become one of the fields of study for educational psychologists. Maslow (1996) states that people have high-level needs such as security, belonging and respect that distinguish humans from animals, and that these needs can only be met in environments where the necessary cultural conditions are provided. Maslow stated that trust is the second basic need after physiological needs. According to him, the individual needs to feel safe immediately after physiological needs such as hunger, thirst and sexuality are met.

Erikson established a relationship between the individual's state of trusting other people and the experiences in the first years of their lives. The situation of meeting the needs of the baby after its coming to the world by their close environment creates trust or distrust in the baby against people (Can, 2002). In order for the child to gain a sense of confidence, there must be familiarity, consistency and continuity. For example, if the person caring for the child does not change frequently, if there is consistency and continuity in their behavior, it becomes easier for the child to gain a sense of trust (Bacanlı, 2003).

Trust can also be defined as a generalized expectation that we can be sure of people's words, written and verbal promises (Asunakutlu, 2007). According to Doney and Cannon (1997), trust occurs at both individual and organizational levels. Trust has an important place in the life of organizations and realization of their visions (Rosen, 1998), openness to improvement, quality communication and organizational effectiveness (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). There is a consensus that in environments where there is no interpersonal trust environment, people use their energy not to improve but to prevent others (Covey, 2002; Solomon & Flores, 2001; Fukuyama, 2000; Esmer, 1999; Caine & Caine, 2002).

Trust is very important in educational organizations as in all organizations. That schools are learning centers is very effective in this (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). In this respect, students' relationships with each other can also cause distrust. According to Bilge (2002), the individual feels insecure in class environments where there is threat, ridicule and cruel criticism. In situations where needs and values are under threat, perception becomes difficult and appropriate behavioral change cannot be made. Caine and Caine (2002) state that derogatory messages can also pose a threat to students. Under threat, decrease in an individual's capacity to create meaning and perceive is seen. Students in such environments prefer processes verified by testing and thought patterns instead of using their creativity and imagination. In a safe environment, the individual is more successful in absorbing, reorganizing and demonstrating consistent behavior (Akbaş, 2005). In a safe classroom environment, fundamental behavioral changes are taking place. This safe environment has three essential qualities such as unconditional respect, empathy and honesty. In such classes, students are more successful in expressing their opinions freely, absorbing and reorganizing information (Bilge, 2002).

In a research conducted by Lee (2007), it was revealed that the relationship of trust is an important predictor of adolescents' school adjustment, academic motivation and performance. Goddard, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) state that trust is the foundation of strong relationships that help children learn, especially disadvantaged children. Bilgiç and Gümüşeli (2012) stated that schools are the most important organizations of the society; success and efficiency of schools mostly depends on trust among teachers, students and parents.

In order to build trust in the classroom, teachers must try to understand their students, show small, loving and kind behavior, and clarify their expectations from students. At the same time, they must keep their promises, behave honestly, and be able to apologize when necessary. When all these communication rules are implemented in teacher-student and student-student communication, it will be easier to build trust in the classroom (Akbaş, 2005). As a result, when there is trust in the classroom, students act sincerely, learn, and listen to each other's opinions. In such classroom settings, inspiration suddenly comes. The whole class is transformed with tactual but hard to explain new move, new idea or new direction (Covey, 2002).

Researching trust in educational institutions is seen important for students' personal and academic development. In this context, the aim of this study is to determine students' in-class confidence levels and compare

them according to some variables. In line with the purpose of the research, the following sub-problems were created.

Sub-problems:

1. What is the in-class trust level of students?
2. Is there a significant difference regarding the in-class trust level of students according to gender?
3. Is there a significant difference in terms of students' in-class trust level according to their grades?

## 2 | METHOD

### RESEARCH MODEL

In the research, because of the description of a past or present situation as it is (Karasar, 2005), the scanning model was adopted as a quantitative research method. Descriptive models (Balçı, 2009) were used in the study as it was aimed to determine the relationships between the in-class trust levels of students in educational institutions and their gender and grade level variables.

### POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population of the research consists of secondary education students attending in the central districts of Antalya in the 2019-2020 academic year. Its sample consists of 271 secondary school students, determined by simple random (probabilistic) sampling method. Information about the general characteristics of the study group of the research is given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** General Characteristics of the Working Group

Variables	Variable Parameters	n	%
Gender	Female	186	68,6
	Male	85	31,4
Grade	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	76	28,0
	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	58	21,4
	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	65	24,0
	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	72	26,6
Total		271	100

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 186 (68.6%) of the students participating in the research are female, 85 (31.4%) are male, and 76 (28%) of the students are 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 58 (21.4%) are 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 65 (24%) are 11<sup>th</sup> grade, 72 (26.6%) are 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

### DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

In this study, an in-class trust scale developed by Akbaş (2005) was used as a data collection tool. Factor analysis results for the construct validity study of the scale showed that the scale is three-dimensional. The data collection tool is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 34 items in 3 sub-dimensions [Basic Trust (25 items), Freedom of Expression (5 items) and Threat Perception (4 items)] scored as “I totally agree”, “I agree”, “Undecided”, “Disagree”, “I totally disagree. The scale consists of the first part that includes preliminary information and variables (gender and grade), and the second part, which aims to determine students' in-class confidence levels. In the study by Akbaş (2005), the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was found to be .92. In this study, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was found to be .80 for the whole in-class confidence scale, .77 for factor 1, .64 for factor 2, and .57 for factor 3 for sub-factors.

### DATA ANALYSIS

In the research, demographic information and characteristics of the students were examined by frequency and percentage analysis. Descriptive statistics (arithmetic means and standard deviations) were calculated in order to reveal the situations related to the items that constitute the dimensions of the students' in-class confidence levels.

T-test for samples independent from parametric tests (Büyüköztürk, 2006), one-way variance analysis (One Way ANOVA) (Büyüköztürk, 200; Duncan, 2003) were used in order to determine the effect of demographic variables on in-class trust. In significance tests,  $\alpha = 0.05$  level was sought.

Regarding the assumptions of the parametric tests, the following criteria were taken as a basis and the analyzes were carried out in this direction. The equality of the variances of the distribution of measurements in both groups was examined by Levene's test. In fact, it is stated that it is difficult to meet the assumption that the subgroups display a normal distribution in the universes they belong to in the measurements of the dependent variable in education and behavioral sciences; for this reason, if each of the subgroups formed according to the group variable consist 15 or more, neglecting this assumption will not have a significant effect on the results (Büyüköztürk, 2006; Muijs, 2004; Leech, Barrett & Morgan, 2005; Field, 2009). SPSS 20.0 statistical package programs were used to analyze the data.

### 3 | FINDINGS

In this section, findings and comments obtained in line with the purpose and sub-purposes of the research are included. Descriptive statistics regarding in-class trust dimensions are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics on In-Class Trust

	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>
Basic Trust	3,38	,67
Freedom of Expression	3,88	,68
Threat Perception	3,48	,83
Total	3,45	,63

As seen in Table 2, students participating in the study showed the highest participation in freedom of expression dimension ( $\bar{X} = 3.88$ ,  $sd=0.68$ ). This dimension was followed by threat perception ( $\bar{X} = 3.48$ ,  $sd=0.83$ ) and basic trust ( $\bar{X} = 3.38$ ,  $sd=0.67$ ) followed by the dimensions. Looking at the average of the items of the whole scale ( $\bar{X} = 3.45$ ,  $sd=0.63$ ), it is seen that the in-class trust level of the students in the classroom is medium.

Table 3 includes the results of the t-test analysis carried out for the purpose of comparing the dimensions of in-class trust based on gender.

**Table 3.** Comparison of In-Class Trust Dimensions According to Gender

Dimensions	Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>	df	t	p
Basic Trust	Female	186	3,30	,67	269	-2,961	.003
	Male	85	3,56	,64			
Freedom of Speech	Female	186	3,81	,67	269	-2,582	.010
	Male	85	4,03	,67			
Threat Perception	Female	186	3,36	,84	269	-3,822	.000
	Male	85	3,76	,75			

As seen in Table 3, there is a statistically significant difference in all dimensions as a result of the analysis made to reveal whether there is a significant difference with the dimensions of the in-class trust scale according to the gender variable of secondary school students participating in the research. It is seen that in the basic trust dimension [ $t(269) = -2,961$ ;  $p < .01$ ] there are more positive views in favor of male students ( $\bar{X} = 3.56$ ,  $sd = 0.64$ ) than female students ( $\bar{X} = 3.30$ ,  $S = 0.67$ ). It is seen that in freedom of expression dimension [ $t(269) = -2,582$ ;  $p < .01$ ] there are more positive views in favor of male students ( $\bar{X} = 4.03$ ,  $sd = 0.67$ ) than female students ( $\bar{X} = 3.81$ ,  $sd = 0.67$ ). It is seen that in the threat perception dimension [ $t(269) = -3,822$ ;  $p < .01$ ] there are higher perception in favor of male students ( $\bar{X} = 3.76$ ,  $sd = 0.75$ ) than female students ( $\bar{X} = 3.36$ ,  $sd = 0.84$ ).

In Table 4, the results of ANOVA analysis conducted with the aim of comparing the in-class trust dimensions according to the grade level of the students are given.

**Table 4.** Comparison of In-Class Trust Dimensions According to Grades

Dimensions	Grades	n	$\bar{X}$	sd	df	F	p	Meaning Difference (Scheffe)
Basic Trust	A. 9 <sup>th</sup>	76	3,34	0,65	3-267	4,434	.005	B-C
	B. 10 <sup>th</sup>	58	3,19	0,66				
	C. 11 <sup>th</sup>	65	3,61	0,67				
	D. 12 <sup>th</sup>	72	3,37	0,65				
Freedom of Speech	A. 9 <sup>th</sup>	76	3,92	0,70	3-267	7,005	.000	A-B B-C
	B. 10 <sup>th</sup>	58	3,59	0,70				
	C. 11 <sup>th</sup>	65	4,13	0,62				
	D. 12 <sup>th</sup>	72	3,83	0,61				
Threat Perception	A. 9 <sup>th</sup>	76	3,38	0,83	3-267	4,091	.007	A-C B-C
	B. 10 <sup>th</sup>	58	3,35	0,87				
	C. 11 <sup>th</sup>	65	3,79	0,73				
	D. 12 <sup>th</sup>	72	3,44	0,84				

As seen in Table 4, there is a statistically meaningful difference in all dimensions as a result of the analysis made to reveal whether there is a meaningful difference according to the class variable of the secondary school students participating in the research. In the basic trust dimension [ $F_{(3-267)} = 4,434; p < .01$ ], it is seen that there is a meaningful difference in favor of the 11th grade ( $\bar{X} = 3.61, sd = 0.67$ ) compared to the 10th grade ( $\bar{X} = 3.19, sd = 0.66$ ). In the freedom of expression dimension [ $F_{(3-267)} = 7.005; p < .01$ ] It is seen that there is a significant difference in favor of the 9th grade ( $\bar{X} = 3.92, sd = 0.70$ ), compared to the 10th grade ( $\bar{X} = 3.59, sd = 0.70$ ); and in favor of the 11th grade ( $\bar{X} = 3.92, sd = 0.70$ ) compared to the 10th grade ( $\bar{X} = 3.59, sd = 0.70$ ). In threat perception dimension [ $F_{(3-267)} = 4,091; p < .01$ ] It is seen that there is a significant difference in favor of the 11th grade ( $\bar{X} = 3.79, sd = 0.83$ ), compared to the 9th grade ( $\bar{X} = 3.38, sd = 0.87$ ); and in favor of the 11th grade ( $\bar{X} = 3.79, sd = 0.73$ ) compared to the 10th grade ( $\bar{X} = 3.35, sd = 0.87$ ).

#### 4 | DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

According to the results of the research, it was found that the students' in-class confidence levels were at medium levels. According to students' views, the dimension of freedom of expression is higher than other dimensions, followed by threat perception and basic trust dimensions, respectively. In the study conducted by Akbaş (2005), the in-class confidence level of high school students was found to be moderate and supports the result of the research. In the study conducted by Polat (2009) with primary school students, students stated that they were not comfortable in the classroom environment, not able to express themselves enough, hesitant, and afraid to talk.

As a result of the comparison made according to gender, a significant difference was found in all dimensions of in-class confidence, and it is seen that the averages of men are higher than women in all dimensions. Thus, it has been concluded that men have higher levels of trust in class than women. Yılmaz (2006) found a meaningful difference according to gender between primary school teachers' views on trust in administrators and determined that this difference was in favor of male teachers. Bökeoğlu and Yılmaz (2008) also found a situation in favor of male teachers in terms of trust in managers and colleagues in their research. When these results are taken into consideration, it can be said that men create a sense of trust more easily in their environment than women. Contrary to these results, according to the research findings of Özer, Atik, Şad and Kış, (2018), female students trust their instructors more than male students. Two other studies on trust (Maddux & Brewer, 2005; Spector & Jones, 2004) show that women have higher trust scores than men. In a study conducted by Özer, Dönmez and Atik (2016) on secondary and high school students, it was revealed that female students trust their teachers more than male students.

In the comparison made according to the grades of the students, a meaningful difference was found in all of the in-class trust dimensions. According to this, it was observed that the sense of basic trust of 11th grades is higher than other classes; the freedom of expression was higher in the 9th graders compared to the 10th graders and the 10th graders compared to the 11th grades. It was concluded that the threat perception of 11th grade students was higher than the 9th and 10th grade students. The thesis study of Dündar (2018) supports this result. Contrary to these results, in the research of Özer, Atik, Şad and Kış (2018), it was determined that as the grade level gets higher, the trust in the instructor gets lower. Trust decreases or increases as a result of shared life and relationships (Forsyth, Adams & Hoy, 2011; Robbins & Judge, 2013; Solomon & Flores, 2001). As a result of this research, it was concluded that students feel more confident and act accordingly as they move up to the upper grades depending on their experiences. However, there is a decrease in the level of trust of the students when they pass to the 12th grade, and this situation can be thought to be due to the effect of the stress caused by their preparation for exams and their graduation situations.

Recommendations in the context of the findings and results of this research are as follows:

- A sense of trust should be created among students, regardless of their gender.
- Games and activities can be made to build confidence in classroom activities.
- Democratic practices can be implemented to increase trust in the classroom.
- Counseling can be provided to students at all grade levels in line with the factors that reduce trust.
- Training can be given about situations such as exam stress and changes due to adolescence that may cause distrust in students.

#### STATEMENTS OF PUBLICATION ETHICS

Ethical declaration form has been given. Its description is indicated on the form.

#### RESEARCHERS' CONTRIBUTION RATE

The researcher's contribution rate is 100%.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for this study.

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