

## AN ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS' SOME PROFESSIONAL VALUES IN RELATION TO A RANGE OF VARIABLES\*

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### Abstract

This study aimed to define in-service primary and middle school teachers' levels of adopting professional values and to evaluate these levels in relation to a range of variables. The study, which explored the levels of professional values adopted by primary and middle school teachers and their perceptions about these levels in relation a range of variables such as gender, seniority, city of employment and school of graduation, employed the survey model. The study sample consisted of 353 teachers. In this study, the Personal Information Form which was developed by the researchers and the "Teachers' Professional Values Scale" (TPVS) which was developed by Tunca for determining teachers' professional values were used. Results of this study indicate that primary and middle school teachers have the impression that they already possess this value at a high level. Levels of professional values did not display any significant difference in the sub-dimensions *being respectful to differences, individual and social responsibility, being against violence* while the sub-dimension *being open to cooperation* exhibited a significant difference in favor of primary school teachers.

**Keywords:** Professional Values, Scale of Professional Values of Teachers, Primary School Teachers, Middle School Teachers.

## İLKOKUL VE ORTAOKUL ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN BAZI MESLEKİ DEĞERLERİNİN ÇEŞİTLİ DEĞİŞKENLER AÇISINDAN İNCELENMESİ

### Özet

Bu çalışmada ilkokul ve ortaokulda görev yapan öğretmenlerin mesleki değerlere sahip olma düzeylerinin çeşitli değişkenler açısından incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. İlkokul ve ortaokul öğretmenlerinin mesleki değerlerinin cinsiyet, kıdem, görev yapılan şehir, mezun olunan fakülte gibi değişkenler açısından incelendiği bu araştırma tarama modelindedir. Araştırmanın örneklemini 2016 TÜİK verilerine göre İç Anadolu Bölgesinde nüfusu en fazla olan Kayseri, Konya ve Ankara şehirlerinde ilkokul ve ortaokul kademesi devlet okullarında çalışan öğretmenler arasından tesadüfi örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilen 353 öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada; araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan Kişisel Bilgi Formu ile öğretmenlerin mesleki değerlerini belirlemek amacıyla Tunca (2012) tarafından geliştirilen "Öğretmen Mesleki Değerler Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Yapılan araştırma sonucunda öğretmenlerin mesleki değerlere sahip olma düzeylerinin cinsiyet, şehir, mezun olunan fakülte değişkenleri açısından anlamlı bir farklılık görülmez iken mesleki kıdem değişkeni açısından görüşlerin farklılaştığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Mesleki Değerler, Öğretmen Mesleki Değerler Ölçeği, İlkokul Öğretmenleri, Ortaokul Öğretmenleri.

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## 1.INTRODUCTION

Value is a concept that has long evolved and existed together with the lives of societies or thinkers. Humans have worked towards internalizing values so as to make their lives more meaningful. The values a virtuous individual or society is expected to uphold have, for years, been underlined. The concept of value has never lost importance, although its place among priorities or the ways of understanding about it have exhibited some variances in accordance with some variables such as time and place (Çakıroğlu, 2013).

Values that are associated with a given occupation or job are referred to as work values. Criteria, standards, principles, sets of ideal behaviors and concepts about beliefs, attitudes and behaviors are placed particular emphasis in definitions pertaining to work values (Ros, Schwartz and Surkiss 1999; White, 2006; Avallone, Farnese, Pepe, Vecchione, 2010; Lyons, Higgins Duxbury, 2010; Liu and Lei, 2012). Some researchers who hold the belief that work values represent the special characteristics of a given occupation have defined the term in accordance with this approach. For example, according to Roe and Ester (1999), work values are the requirements of a job; while according to Anderson (1997) and Harpaz (1986), these values are better defined as the purposes of a given job (Lyons, Higgins and Duxbury, 2010). The researchers state that the professional values are influenced by ethnicity, gender roles, age, educational background, socio-economic status, and economic conditions (Cassar, 2008; Warr, 2008; Gahan and Abeysekera, 2009; Hirschi, 2010; Liu and Lei, 2012). Hyde and Weathington (2006) denote that professional values are one of the variables pertaining to personality; and it develops in line with one's personality. There are also researchers arguing that professional values are under the influence of the features of a profession (Hegney et al, 2006; Cooman et al, 2008).

According to Turan and Aktan (2008), individuals can transform their values by means of the interactions they engage in. School life is of great importance for this process, because a significant part of the process through which individuals acquire values is school life. Teachers are determinants of quality at school. Accordingly, defining and developing teachers' levels of professional values in Turkey bears importance for all stages of education (Turan and Aktan, 2008). Though teaching education is given at university level, teachers' values are influential on all the students' values studying in any area or department of higher education passing beyond preschool, primary, and middle school education. Therefore, developing values of teaching profession in teachers is of great importance. Performing a successful instruction of values involves transforming the knowledge into behavior in students and teachers' reflecting ideal behaviors while fulfilling their duties. In order for teachers to prevent the behaviors considered negative for teaching profession, they need to possess values regarding teaching profession. They need to internalize these values, and make them inseparable aspects of their professional lives.

Turkish National Ministry of Education (MNE) (2006) has identified teachers' qualifications within the scope of the basic education support project. In the afore-mentioned project, qualifications with regard to values were covered in a rather limited way. For example, valuing, understanding and respecting students; believing in students' ability to understand and succeed; attaching due importance to national and universal values and performance indicators for all these components. In the relevant literature in Turkey, research has focused primarily on the democratic values of pre-service and in-service teachers (Karadağ, Baloğlu and Yalçınkayalar, 2006; Akın and Özdemir, 2009; Gömlüksiz and Çetintaş, 2011; Oğuz, 2011; Yazıcı, 2011; Yılmaz, 2011). Tunca and Sağlam (2013), on the other hand, have defined professional values of teachers by means of the scale they developed, and from a holistic perspective, they have evaluated teachers in terms of their professional values.

The present study is expected to make a major contribution to the process of planning training activities for institutions of teacher education and for teachers themselves since the study demonstrates, in relation to a range of variables, the extent to which in-service primary and middle level public school teachers possess professional values and hence, makes it possible to evaluate teachers in terms of the professional values they are expected to uphold.

### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to define in-service primary and middle school teachers' levels of adopting professional values and to evaluate these levels in relation to a range of variables. For this general objective, answers to the following questions were explored:

1. What are primary and middle school teachers' levels of adopting professional values?
2. Is there a significant difference between primary school teachers' levels of adopting professional values and those of middle school teachers?
3. Do teachers' levels of adopting professional values vary significantly by gender?
4. Do teachers' levels of adopting professional values vary significantly by city of employment?
5. Do teachers' levels of adopting professional values vary significantly by professional seniority?
6. Do teachers' levels of adopting professional values vary significantly by the school they graduated from?

## 2.METHODOLOGY

The study, which explored the levels of professional values adopted by primary and middle school teachers and their perceptions about these levels in relation a range of variables such as gender, seniority, city of employment and school of graduation, employed the survey model. Survey model is convenient for studies that aim to describe a past or current situation as the way it is (Karasar, 2015). It is easy to collect data regarding teachers, supervisors, and managers and to analyze these factors in terms of their relationships with variables via survey model. The survey model is a research method that aims to depict a present or past phenomenon as it is/was. The research topic, as much as possible, is described under its unique circumstances and in the unique form it exists (Karasar, 2015).

### 2.1. The Universe and the Sample

The universe of the study covers teachers working in public primary and middle schools located in Kayseri, Konya, and Ankara provinces whose populations are the highest in Central Anatolia Region of Turkey based on the data retrieved from Turkish Statistical Institute in 2016. To determine the sample of the study, the teachers in the universe were divided into two as primary school teachers and middle school teachers. Then, 353 teachers were randomly selected from these two categories. The distribution of teachers in relation to gender, educational stages, city of employment, professional seniority, and school of graduation is given in tables.

**Table 1. Distribution of the Participant Teachers by Gender**

Gender	N	%
Female	199	56.4
Male	154	43.6
Total	353	100.0

**Table 2. Distribution of the Participant Teachers by Educational Stages**

Stage	N	%
Primary School	163	46
Middle School	190	54
Total	353	100.0

**Table 3. Distribution of the Participant Teachers by Cities of Employment**

City of Employment	N	%
Ankara	121	34.3
Kayseri	110	31.2
Konya	122	34.6
Total	353	100.0

**Table 4. Distribution of the Participant Teachers by Professional Seniority**

Professional Seniority	N	%
1-5 years	113	32.0
6-10 years	101	28.6
11-15 years	63	17.8
16-20 years	39	11.0
21 years and longer	37	10.5
Total	353	100.0

**Table 5. Distribution of the Participant Teachers by School of Graduation**

School of Graduation	N	%
School of Education	309	87.5
A Four-Year Program + Pedagogical Formation Program	45	12.5
Total	353	100.0

## 2.2. Data Collection Tools

In this study, the Personal Information Form which was developed by the researchers and the “Teachers’ Professional Values Scale” (TPVS)” which was developed by Tunca (2012) for determining teachers’ professional values were used. This scale is a 5-point Likert type measurement tool of 24 items (1=It is in no way true for me, 2= It isn’t true for me 3= It is partially true for me 4= It is true for me 5= It certainly is true for me). As the scores obtained from the scale increase, the level of adopting professional values also rises. Validity and reliability of the scale was checked in a joint study by Tunca and Sağlam (2013). According to their study, the scale is comprised of four sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions are *being respectful to differences, individual and social responsibility, being against violence and being open to cooperation*. The lowest possible number of points that can be obtained from the scale equals to 24 while the highest number of points is 120. KMO value of the scale is .89. As to the internal consistency coefficients of the four sub-dimensions, it is .77 for “being respectful to differences,” .78 for “individual and social responsibility,” .70 for “being against violence” and .72 for “being open to cooperation” (Tunca and Sağlam, 2013).

## 2.3. Analysis of the Data

SPSS 22.00 software was used for the analysis of the data obtained from the research scale. For the analysis; descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) and Mann Whitney U test were utilized. The level of significance was accepted to be .05 for the study.

### 3.FINDINGS

Findings of the present study, which explored levels of professional values upheld by primary and middle school teachers in Turkey and attempted to determine whether perceptions about these levels vary by such variables as educational stage, gender, city of employment, seniority and school of graduation, are explained in this section. Findings are presented in the same order with the research questions.

**Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' Levels of Adopting Professional Values**

Sub-Dimension	N	K (Number of Items)	Lowest Score	Highest Score	x	s	x/k
Being Respectful to Differences	353	8	18	40	34,21	3,8	4,27
Individual and Social Responsibility	353	8	13	40	28,19	5,0	3,52
Being Against Violence	353	5	5	25	17,48	3,7	3,49
Being Open to Cooperation	353	3	4	15	11,89	2,4	3,96
TPVS Total Score	353	24	40	120	91,77		3,82

As can be seen from Table 6, if arithmetic means of the points received from the sub-dimensions of the scale are converted to scores ranging from 1 to 5, the mean scores of the sample, which consisted of 353 teachers, are  $X = 4.27$  for the 8-item sub-dimension of *being respectful to differences*; are  $X = 3.52$  for the 8-item sub-dimension of *individual and social responsibility*; are  $X = 3.49$  for the 5-item sub-dimension of *being against violence*; and finally, they equal to  $X = 3.96$  for the 3-item sub-dimension of *being open to cooperation*. As to the participant teachers' total mean scores from the 24-item scale, it is  $X = 3.82$ . Findings indicate that primary and middle school teachers perceived themselves to have high levels of professional values. If put in a descending order, teachers believed the top value they upheld was *being respectful to differences* and that it was followed by the values *being open to cooperation* and *being against violence*, respectively.

**Table 7. T-Test Results from the Analysis on Teachers' Levels of Adopting Professional Values in terms of the Educational Stage Variable**

Sub-Dimension	Stage	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	SEM	df	t	p
Being Respectful to Differences	Primary school	163	34.5644	3.52948	.27645	351	1.599	.111
	Middle school	190	33.9158	4.01627	.29137			
Individual and Social Responsibility	Primary school	163	28.5399	4.93569	.38659	351	1.174	.241
	Middle school	190	27.9053	5.16925	.37502			

Being Against Violence	Primary school	163	17.7733	3.53693	.27703	351	1.368	.172
	Middle school	190	17.2316	3.84887	.27923			
Being Open to Cooperation	Primary school	163	12.4172	2.13673	.16736	350.698	3.895	.000*
	Middle school	190	11.4421	2.56643	.18619			

\*p<0.05

As a result of the t-test, no significant differences were identified between the sub-dimensions of *being respectful to differences*, *individual and social responsibility* and *being against violence* of the Teacher's Professional Values Scale in relation to the educational stage variable. Being open to cooperation dimension, on the other hand, was found to entail a significant difference between educational stages (p<0.05). In this being open to cooperation dimension, mean scores of primary school teachers ( $\bar{x}$  =12.4171) were found to be higher than those of middle school teachers ( $\bar{x}$  =11.4421). This result demonstrates that primary school teachers upheld the professional values in the being open to cooperation dimension more strongly than did middle school teachers.

**Table 8: T-Test Results from the Analysis on Teachers' Levels of Adopting Professional Values in terms of the Gender Variable**

Sub-Dimension	Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	SEM	df	p	t
Being Respectful to Differences	Female	199	34.4874	3.66510	.25981	351	1.52	.127
	Male	154	33.8636	3.96895	.32983			
Individual and Social Responsibility	Female	199	28.1658	5.06599	.35912	351	-.137	.891
	Male	154	28.2403	5.0811	.40945			
Being Against Violence	Female	199	17.5980	3.62778	.25717	351	.669	.504
	Male	154	17.3312	3.82639	.30834			
Being Open to Cooperation	Female	199	12.0553	2.38725	.16923	351	1.43	.151
	Male	154	11.6818	2.46201	.19839			

\*p<0.05

A review of the independent sample t-test results for the four dependent variables revealed no significant differences between the *being respectful to differences*, *individual and social responsibility*, *being against violence* and *being open to cooperation* sub-dimensions by gender.

**Table 9. F-Test (ANOVA) Results about the Variance of Teachers' Levels of Adopting Professional Values by City of Employment**

Sub-Dimension	Var. Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Being Respectful to Differences	Groups	42.339	2	21.287	1.461	.233
	Within Group	5056.377	349	14.488		
	Total	5098.716	351			
Individual and Social Responsibility	Groups	31.066	2	15.553	.606	.546
	Within Group	8921.777	348	25.637		
	Total	8952.843	350			
Being Against Violence	Groups	31.990	2	15.995	1.161	.314
	Within Group	4820.141	350	13.772		

	Total	4852.130	352			
Being Open to Cooperation	Groups	18.562	2	9.281	1.581	.207
	Within Group	2048.549	349	5.870		
	Total	2067.111	351			

\*p<0.05

As a result of the F-test (ANOVA) analysis, the difference between the mean scores for sub-dimensions of the Teacher's Professional Values Scale in terms of teachers' levels of professional values by city of employment group was found to be not significant at the level of .05. One-way variance analysis (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether teachers' levels of adopting professional values varied by professional seniority and the respective findings are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10. F-Test (one-way ANOVA) Results about the Variance of Teachers' Levels of Adopting Professional Values by Professional Seniority**

Sub-Dimension	Var. Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Being Respectful to Differences	Groups	74.164	4	18.541	1.283	.276
	Within Group	5029.473	348	14.453		
	Group	5103.637	352			
	Total					
Individual and Social Responsibility	Groups	180.203	4	43.051	1.771	.134
	Within Group	8851.916	348	25.437		
	Group	9032.119	352			
	Total					
Being Against Violence	Groups	149.795	4	37.449	2.771	.027*
	Within Group	4702.336	348	13.512		
	Total	4852.13	352			
Being Open to Cooperation	Groups	108.584	4	27.146	4.821	.001*
	Within Group	1959.325	348	5.630		
	Total	2067.909	352			

\*p<0.05

When ANOVA results which analyzed the extent to which teachers adopted professional values i.e. their levels of professional values in terms of professional seniority were examined, a significant difference was found between the *being against violence and being open to cooperation* sub-dimensions. Tukey HSD test was performed to identify the sources of this difference. As a consequence of Tukey HSD, in the *being against violence* sub-dimension, this difference was found to be significant between teachers with 1-5 years of professional experience and those with a professional experience of 21 years or more. In the *being open to cooperation* sub-dimension, on the other hand, the difference was revealed to be significant between teachers with 1-5 years of professional experience and those with a professional experience of 16-20 years.

**Table 11. Mann Whitney U Test Results about the Variance of Teachers' Levels of Professional Values by School of Graduation**

Sub-Dimension	School	N	M.R.	S.R.	U	Z	P
Being Respectful to Differences	Faculty of Education	309	182.76	56473.50	5017.500	-2.823	.005*
	Pedagogical Formation Program	44	136.53	6007.50			
		353					
	Total						

Individual and Social Responsibility	Faculty Education Pedagogical Formation Program Total	of	309 44 353	181.15 147.83	55976.20 6504.50	5514.500	-2.031	.042*
Being Against Violence	Faculty Education Pedagogical Formation Program Total	of	309 44 353	177.78 171.49	54935.50 7545.50	6555.500	-.385	.701
Being Open to Cooperation	Faculty Education Pedagogical Formation Program Total	of	309 44 353	179.11 162.22	55343.50 7137.50	6147.500	-1.040	.298

\*p<0.05

When t-test results which explored whether teachers' levels of professional values varied by school of graduation were examined, no significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions of *being against violence* and *being open to cooperation* of the Teacher's Professional Values Scale. As to the sub-dimensions of *being respectful to differences* and *individual and social responsibility*, a significant difference was revealed in favor of the school of education variable.

#### 4.DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

353 teachers who were employed at primary and middle level public schools in Kayseri, Konya and Ankara, the most densely populated cities in the Central Anatolian Region according to 2016 figures of Turkish Statistical Institute were analyzed in terms of the levels of adopting professional values in relation to a range of variables.

Although findings of the present study are consistent with those of the past studies focusing on teachers' levels of professional values in the relevant literature, they contradict the findings of some other studies.

In their study, Akın and Özdemir (2009), Yazıcı (2011), Yılmaz (2011), found pre-service teachers' democratic values to be high. Karacaoğlu (2008), who addressed the issue from the perspective of having due competence for adopting values, concluded that teachers perceived themselves to be competent enough for possessing national and universal values. It was also found out that teachers considered their professional value of being against violence to be low. A low level of perception regarding the professional value of being against violence can be expected to have an impact on educational practices. In fact, there are some studies that justify this expectation. According to findings of Gözütok (2008), Hatunoğlu and Hatunoğlu (2005), teachers employed practices of violent nature to cope with their students' inappropriate behaviors. Karahancı (2013), concluded that teachers employed at unpopular schools displayed such violent behaviors as shouting/yelling, hitting and threatening in order to manage students' minor but inappropriate behaviors. This is an indicator of teachers' need for education and training in the area of classroom management skills.

Another important area of value in the profession of teaching is showing respect to differences. Results of this study indicate that primary and middle school teachers have the impression that they already



possess this value at a high level. Given the fact that values an individual upholds shapes his/her lifestyle, teachers who respect differences are expected to support and apply an egalitarian pedagogy in schools. Conclusions of the studies by Çoban, Karaman and Doğan (2010), Altinkurt and Yılmaz (2011), Yurtseven (2003) seem to correspond to those of the present study. Yet, findings of some studies contradict our findings. For example, Turgut (2010) found out that teachers discriminated their students according to their socio-economic levels and identities.

The second research question of the study explored whether primary school and middle school teachers displayed significant differences in terms of the levels of adopted professional values. Levels of professional values did not display any significant difference in the sub-dimensions *being respectful to differences, individual and social responsibility, being against violence* while the sub-dimension *being open to cooperation* exhibited a significant difference in favor of primary school teachers.

The third research question of the study explored whether gender was a significant variable affecting the levels of professional values teachers adopted. It is noteworthy that respective findings of the present study correspond to those of past studies investigating the professional values of teachers in terms of the gender variable. Tunca (2012) concluded in her study that scale scores of participant teachers did not vary significantly by gender. In their study on teachers' democratic values, Karadağ, Baloğlu and Yalçinkayalar (2006), Yılmaz (2011), Palavan (2017) found out that male and female teachers had similar levels of democratic values. Concerning the same question, Yazıcı (2011) and Oğuz (2011) conducted research with pre-service teachers. According to their findings, male and female pre-service teachers had similar levels of democratic values. Karatekin, Meley and Kuş (2013), on the other hand, revealed that women had higher democratic values than men.

Teachers' city of employment was found to have no impact on their perceptions about democratic tendencies. In a way, teachers working in the three largest cities of the Central Anatolian Region of Turkey perceived their values to be at similar levels. Culture is defined as the social heritage one acquires from the society he/she is a member of and hence, this can be explained by the fact that these teachers worked in culturally similar settings. Ergün (2003) supports this point of view by suggesting that value priorities of individuals are under the influence of the dominant values of the culture they live in. Ergün (2003) claims that individual values are a product of the culture they belong to. Finally, Demir (2005) describes values as the key in understanding individuals' behaviors in an organization.

In relation to the professional seniority variable, teachers' perceptions regarding the levels of professional values they held were found to vary significantly in the sub-dimensions of *being against violence* and *being open to cooperation*. In the *being against violence* sub-dimension, this difference was understood to be apparent between teachers with 1-5 years of professional experience and teachers with 21 years of or more professional experience. In the *being open to cooperation* sub-dimension, on the other hand, the difference was revealed to be significant between teachers with 1-5 years of professional experience and those with a professional experience of 16-20 years. If past studies exploring whether values vary by professional seniority are reviewed, Yılmaz's study (2011) can be an example. In that study, elementary school teachers' democratic values were understood not to vary significantly by professional seniority in the "Right to Education" sub-dimension while some differences were identified in teachers' total scores from the scale. In a study by Yılmaz (2009), values of elementary school teachers were found to vary, in some sub-dimensions, by professional seniority. Similarly, Yurtseven (2003) concluded that although there were significant differences in some sub-dimensions, total scores did not exhibit any difference. Genç (2008) addressed the issue of professional values of managers and suggested that senior scores of teachers working

in management positions exhibited significant difference in comparison to others' scores while Erçetin (2000) indicated that manager teachers' total scores did not exhibit any significant variance. And Palavan (2017) argued that teachers' democratic values varied by professional seniority.

In terms of the school of graduation variable, teachers' perceptions of value levels were found not to vary significantly in the sub-dimensions of *being against violence* and *being open to cooperation* while in the sub-dimensions of *being respectful to differences* and *individual and social responsibility*, a significant difference in favor of schools of education was revealed. In the relevant literature, the number of studies investigating the impact of the school of graduation on the levels of professional values teachers adopt is quite limited. In a study by Yılmaz (2011), it was concluded that teachers' opinions did not vary by educational background in relation to the "Right to Education and Freedom" sub-dimension; however, their opinions were found to vary in the "Solidarity" sub-dimension.

#### 4.1. Recommendations

Given the conclusions of the present study, it can be recommended to encourage teachers to attend in training courses on peaceful resolution of problems and classroom management skills since they admitted to have relatively lower values in the sub-dimension *being against violence*. By placing constant emphasis on the issue during each semester and course of their graduate programs, pre-service teachers can be promoted to acquire professional values which are required in teaching occupations. This can pave the way for building awareness about these values during prospective teachers' college years without waiting for them to begin service. Finally, new research can be undertaken to explore the issue in other regions.

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