

EXAMINING THE COMMITMENT OF TEACHER CANDIDATES TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on an experimental model that examines pre-service teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. In the study, 150 students studying at universities in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and taking the Teaching Practice course were selected as the population. In the study, a personal information form including demographic information from the participants and the Commitment to Teaching Profession Scale developed by Yıldız (2020) were used. The findings obtained as a result of statistical analysis with SPSS 28.00 program provide important information about the level of professional commitment of pre-service teachers. According to the results of the study, the overall average score of the students in the Professional Identification dimension was determined as 3.23, which shows how much the students identify with their profession. In the Professional Value dimension, the average score was recorded as 4.07, which reflects that students show a high value and respect for their profession. In the Professional Effort dimension, the average score for students' professional development was 3.69. In the Professional Commitment dimension, the average score expressing how committed students are to their profession was found to be 3.77. In the Total Commitment to the Teaching Profession (TPC) Total dimension, the average score expressing the general level of professional commitment was determined as 3.66. In the gender-based analyses, it was found that there were significant differences in favor of female pre-service teachers in the dimensions of Professional Identification, Professional Value, Professional Effort, Professional Dedication and SCT Total. It was observed that female pre-service teachers generally had higher levels of commitment. Especially in the Professional Identification dimension, it was observed that students in Preschool Teaching and Special Education Teaching departments had higher levels of commitment compared to other departments.

Keywords: Teacher, Profession, Commitment, Commitment to profession.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Problem Status

Education is an important factor that directs and shapes the development of society in every period. In this interaction, the role of educators is of vital importance. Educators shape the future of society by being in an influential position in human life (Akyüz, 1982). Therefore, it is critical that educators are well-equipped individuals who are committed to their profession with love and dedication. In order to train teachers with these qualifications, it is necessary to provide them with comprehensive vocational training and to create suitable environments where they can turn the knowledge they have acquired into experience (Erdem, 2005). Duties, responsibilities and roles of teachers may change depending on the dynamics of society, changes in parent and student profiles, education-related legislation, international developments and advances in science and technology. In this context, it is time to think and discuss the teaching profession. The definition of the teacher, the importance of the profession, its qualifications and roles should be addressed in accordance with social and technological changes (Altan & Özmusul, 2022). Educators should be seen as guides who not only convey knowledge but also contribute to the individual and social development of their students. In this context, equipping educators with constantly updated information and practicing their profession with an attitude of openness to learning will make significant contributions to the sustainable development of societies (Karataş, 2020).

Individuals look for teachers not only to convey the content of a subject or to provide them with certain skills, but also for personality traits that can be taken as an example. Students expect to see diligence, intellectuality, being educated, and what it means to be a virtuous individual through the words, attitudes, and actions of teachers. In this way, teachers are seen as guides who not only convey knowledge but also exemplify the meaning and values of life to students (Parlar, 2012). Teachers shape both their students and themselves within the framework of these

expectations and impressions of society. (Ertürk and Keçecioglu, 2012) In addition to being a source of inspiration to students, teachers also play an effective role in their personal development. This is important not only for the transfer of academic knowledge but also for the acquisition of character and values. Therefore, teachers' efforts not only to focus on the course content but also to be good models for students contribute to the deeper and more meaningful educational process (Yürür and Keser, 2010).

The teaching profession requires teacher candidates not only to receive a qualified theoretical and practical education, but also to have a high awareness of professional responsibility and commitment to the profession (Yinal & Okur, 2022). Teachers, who have the responsibility of not only transferring knowledge but also setting an example to students, play an effective role in shaping their societies (Çelikte, 2005). At this point, it is important for teacher candidates to go beyond focusing only on course content and teaching methods in their professional education processes and to give importance to ethical values, student-centered approaches and continuous development. The development of professional responsibility awareness is based on the teacher's aim to establish a holistic relationship with students and contribute to their character development, beyond being just an information and communication tool. (Aktağ & Walter, 2005) Additionally, commitment to the profession is a critical factor in performing the teaching profession effectively. This commitment to the profession, combined with love and responsibility for students, allows the teacher to have a deep and meaningful interaction with students, beyond just being a figure giving information (Yıldız, 2020). In this context, teacher candidates' focus on improving their professional knowledge and skills and their sensitivity to ethical values and professional responsibilities form the basis for a successful teaching career.

1.2. Purpose and Importance of the Research

The main purpose of this research is to examine teacher candidates' commitment to the teaching profession. In this context, it is aimed to determine the emotional, cognitive and behavioral commitments of teacher candidates regarding their profession. This analysis will allow us to understand the complex relationships between the difficulties that teacher candidates face during the education process, the experiences they gain, and their attitudes towards the profession. The importance of the research is that the data obtained will contribute to the professional development processes of teacher candidates and the determination of strategies for the effectiveness of training programs. Additionally, this study will help us understand the potential effects of teacher candidates' commitment to the profession on the quality of social education in order to support a higher quality education system in society.

1.3. hypotheses

H0 : There is a difference between teacher candidates' level of commitment to their profession and the gender variable .

H1 : There is no difference between teacher candidates' level of commitment to their profession and the gender variable .

H0 : There is a difference between teacher candidates' level of commitment to their profession and the department variable .

H2 : There is no difference between teacher candidates' level of commitment to their profession and the department variable .

1.4. Definitions

Teaching Practice: This course in education faculties aims to provide teacher candidates with the ability to create weekly lesson plans and to provide them with the opportunity to experience the process of implementing these plans (Görgeç et al., 2013).

Commitment to the Teaching Profession: It refers to a strong commitment, loyalty and passionate devotion that a teacher feels towards his profession (Özkan, 2012).

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Teaching Profession

A profession is an activity of working and earning money in a specific field that requires certain education and skills. Professions generally refer to areas of work in which individuals gain expertise, have knowledge and skills in a certain field, and generally acquire them through a certain educational process (Baskan, 2001). Professions can be found in a wide range; For example, there are professions in various fields such as teaching, engineering, doctor, lawyer, carpenter, electrician. Professionals are generally obliged to comply with certain ethical rules and act in accordance with professional standards. Profession is an important tool for individuals to serve society and contribute in a particular field of expertise (Yurdakul et al., 2016).

The teaching profession represents a sacred duty that aims to provide individuals with knowledge and skills, to educate and develop them. Teaching is an important profession that shapes the future of society, guides students and equips them with knowledge. This profession is not limited to just teaching, but also aims to provide students with ethical values, social skills and life awareness (Erdem & Şimşek, 2013). Teachers try to reveal the potential of many different students in their classrooms by interacting with them. Teachers, who contribute to the personal, social and intellectual development of students during the education process, are key figures who make significant contributions to the progress of society and the transfer of knowledge. For this reason, the teaching profession is considered one of the cornerstones of society and teachers are valued as important figures who inspire, guide and equip students with knowledge (Çermik & Şahin, 2010).

The teaching profession stands out as an element that forms the basis of society. Teachers convey knowledge and values to younger generations and raise them to be responsible individuals. This makes a fundamental contribution to the sustainable development and progress of society. Additionally, teachers play a key role in individual development and unlocking potential. By providing students with the opportunity to discover and develop their unique talents, they contribute to their self-expression and increase their knowledge and skills. Therefore, the teaching profession has a fundamental importance that contributes to the development of individuals and society (Tosuntaş, 2020).

2.2. Commitment to the Profession

Commitment means the sense of devotion, loyalty and responsibility that a person or a group feels towards a goal, value, person, institution or a job. The term can refer to emotional, social, professional, or other types of commitments. Commitment is generally associated with a relationship or commitment and indicates that the individual has a strong relationship with the thing or person to whom he or she is attached (Demirel & Aslan, 2008). For example, job commitment refers to an employee's sense of loyalty and responsibility towards his job and his employer. Commitment often includes feelings of trust, respect, and responsibility. Organizational commitment is a strong sense of devotion, loyalty and commitment that an employee feels towards the organization he works for. This commitment may affect the employee's relationship and participation with the organization (Taşkın & Dilek, 2010). Organizational commitment can be examined in three basic dimensions: emotional commitment, normative commitment and continuous commitment to the employee's job and organization (Aslan & Terzi, 2023).

- Emotional Commitment: The employee feels emotionally committed to the organization. This situation is related to passionate commitment to the job, the employee's love of his job and a positive emotional state at work.
- Normative Commitment: It is the feeling of responsibility and commitment that the employee feels that it is right or ethical not to leave the job. This type of commitment refers to the tendency to stay at work within the framework of social norms and values.
- Continuance Commitment: The employee feels committed with the thought that leaving the organization would be costly. This is based on the perception that changing jobs or leaving the organization can cause personal and professional losses.

Vocational commitment is a strong sense of devotion, loyalty and commitment that an individual feels towards a profession or career. This concept refers to the state of being in an emotional, normative and continuous commitment to the profession an individual chooses (Çelik & Atmaca, 2023). Commitment to the profession means being in harmony with the individual's professional identity, values and goals. Commitment to the profession includes elements such as liking the individual's job, giving importance to professional development, commitment to professional ethical values, feeling of professional responsibility and confidence in professional success (Arslan, 2013). In this context, commitment to the profession can affect an individual's performance at work, motivation, and dedication to his career. Job commitment is generally associated with an individual's job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and job performance. A healthy career commitment can enhance an individual's professional success and contribute to long-term career satisfaction. Commitment to a good profession allows the individual to cope with the difficulties he encounters in his professional life and to constantly improve himself (Özkan, 2012).

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Model

This study, which is an experimental model among the quantitative research methods, was carried out to understand and evaluate the relationship between variables. Experimental research aims to examine the effects of one or more independent variables on one or more dependent variables. This model provides a powerful tool for determining cause-effect relationships and understanding the relationships between variables (Karasar, 2011).

3.2. Population and Sample

In this research, students who took the Teaching Practice course were selected as the population among the students studying at universities in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. For sampling, the purposeful sampling method was preferred. The purposive sampling method is a method that allows researchers to select students from a certain population in a way that the sample is representative. This method aims to obtain a representative subset from a broad population of students. The selected student group includes students who have taken the Teaching Practice course on which the research is focused. This group of students will be examined in line with the specific objectives of the study and will contribute to the overall results of the research. This group of students, selected using the purposive sampling method, allows the research to draw inferences from a generally broad population. Thus, it allows the findings to be carried to a more general perspective and to obtain information that can represent the universe. In this context, 150 people were included in the study.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

In this research, a personal information form containing demographic information from the participants was used, and a quantitative data collection tool called "Commitment to the Teaching Profession Scale" was used to obtain data regarding the two variables within the scope of the research. The Commitment to Teaching Profession Scale developed by Yıldız (2020) was used. This 5-point Likert type scale contains 33 items in total. The scale consists of four sub-dimensions: Professional Identification, Professional Value, Professional Effort and Professional Dedication. Professional Identity refers to the teacher candidate's suitability for the profession and their level of adoption of the profession; Professional Value refers to the level of internalization of the social and individual value of the teaching profession; Professional Effort refers to the level of desire and motivation to fulfill the requirements of the profession and improve oneself in the profession; Professional Commitment aims to measure the desire to do professional work and support students outside of working hours. The variance ratio explained by the entire scale was calculated as 48.14%. According to the results of the reliability analysis, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients in the sub-dimensions ranged between .80 and .92, while this value was determined as .93 for the entire scale.

3.4. Analysis of Data

SPSS 28.00 program was used to analyze the data and various statistical analyzes were performed. These analyzes include T-Test and ANOVA Test. The T-Test is used to evaluate the statistical difference in means between two groups. If the research aims to examine the difference between two groups, the T-Test can be used to determine the significance of this difference. ANOVA Test (Analysis of Variance) is used to determine statistical differences between three or more groups. If the research focuses on understanding differences between three or more groups under one categorical independent variable, ANOVA Test is a useful method of analysis.

4. FINDINGS

Table 1. Demographic Variables

		N	%
Gender	Woman	101	67.3
	Male	49	32.7
Section	School Pre Instructor.	25	16.7
	Special Education Instructor.	41	27.3
	Class Instructor.	27	18.0
	English Instructor.	14	9.3
	Science Information Instructor.	23	15.3
	Primary education Maths Instructor.	24	16.0
	Total	150	100.0

When we look at the gender distribution of the sample consisting of 150 people in total, the rate of women is 67.3% (101 people) while the rate of men is 32.7% (49 people). In the analysis of the departments in which individuals received education, the following results were obtained: 25 people from the Pre-School Teaching

department (16.7%), 41 people from the Special Education Teaching department (27.3%), 27 people from the Classroom Teaching department (18.0%), There are 14 people (9.3%) from the English Language Teaching department, 23 people (15.3%) from the Science Teaching department, and 24 people (16.0%) from the Primary Mathematics Teaching department.

Table 2. Descriptive Findings Regarding the Level of Commitment to the Teaching Profession

Dimension	min	Max.	\bar{x}	SS
Vocational I identify with	1.00	5.00	3.23	.93
Vocational Value	1.40	5.00	4.07	.65
Vocational Effort	1.00	5.00	3.69	.85
Vocational dedication	1.00	5.00	3.77	.78
ÖMB Total	1.42	4.80	3.66	.66

In the Professional Identification dimension, the average score was 3.23 and the standard deviation was 0.93. The average score of the students in the Professional Value dimension was recorded as 4.07 and the standard deviation was 0.65. The average score in the Professional Effort dimension was 3.69 and the standard deviation was 0.85. The average score in the Professional Dedication dimension was 3.77 and the standard deviation was 0.78. In the Total Commitment to Teaching Profession (ÖMB Total) dimension, the average score was 3.66 and the standard deviation was 0.66. While these values show the professional commitment levels of teacher candidates in different dimensions, the standard deviation values reflect how much these commitment levels vary among students. In particular, the high mean value in the Professional Value dimension indicates that students have a high value and respect for their profession, while the standard deviation value shows that this dimension is generally evaluated homogeneously.

Table 3. Comparison of the Level of Commitment to the Teaching Profession and the Gender Variable

Dimension	Gender	\bar{x}	SS	t	p
Vocational	Woman	3.37	.88	-3.20	0.000
I identify with	Male	3.03	.98		
Vocational	Woman	4.12	.51	-4.42	0.000
Value	Male	3.68	.77		
Vocational	Woman	3.81	.75	-2.67	0.000
Effort	Male	3.43	1.02		
Vocational	Woman	4.03	.65	-4.28	0.000
dedication	Male	3.41	.95		
ÖMB Ball-	Woman	3.81	.53	-4.23	0.000
slide	Male	3.37	.82		

While the average score of female teacher candidates in the Professional Identification dimension was 3.37, the average score of male teacher candidates was determined as 3.03. While the average score of female teacher candidates in the Professional Value dimension was 4.12, the average score of male teacher candidates was 3.68. Similarly, it is seen that women have higher average scores in the Professional Effort, Professional Dedication and ÖMB Total dimensions. Statistical analysis reveals that there are significant differences in favor of female teacher candidates in the dimensions of Professional Identification, Professional Value, Professional Effort, Professional Dedication and ÖMB Total ($p < 0.05$). These findings show that the gender variable may affect the level of commitment to the teaching profession, and that female teacher candidates generally have higher levels of commitment. These results may be useful in developing strategies to support teacher candidates and strengthen

their professional development, taking into account gender-based differences in education programs. Understanding the effects of gender on commitment to the teaching profession can be considered an important step to make teacher training processes more effective and inclusive.

Table 4. Comparison of the Level of Commitment to the Teaching Profession and the Department Variable

Dimension	Section	\bar{x}	SS	F	p	Difference
Vocational I identify with	School Pre teach	3.17	.97	2.32	0.03	4-5
	Special Education Instructor.	3.28	.93			
	Class teach	3.20	.84			
	English teach	2.78	1.12			
	Science Information teach	3.63	.83			
	Primary education Maths teach	3.21	.92			
	Total	3.23	.93			
Vocational Value	School Pre teach	4.04	.78	1.32	0.29	
	Special Education Instructor.	4.08	.65			
	Class teach	4.25	.44			
	English teach	3.78	.60			
	Science Information teach	3.88	.68			
	Primary education Maths teach	4.05	.57			
	Total	4.07	.63			
Vocational Effort	School Pre Instructor.	3.75	.93	.59	0.63	
	Special Education Instructor.	3.77	.82			
	Class Instructor.	3.81	.82			
	English Instructor.	3.40	1.01			
	Science Information Instructor.	3.78	.85			
	Primary education Maths Instructor.	3.62	.73			
	Total	3.69	.85			
Vocational Adan- immaculate	School Pre teach	3.66	1.02	.96	0.43	
	Special Education Instructor.	3.78	.80			
	Class teach	4.10	.60			
	English teach	3.56	.73			
	Science Information teach	4.03	.74			
	Primary education Maths teach	3.76	.73			
Scale Total	Total	3.77	.78	1.36	0.28	
	School Pre teach	3.79	.80			
	Special Education Instructor.	3.70	.68			
	Class Instructor.	3.74	.53			
	English Instructor.	3.38	.75			
	Science Information Instructor.	3.80	.64			
	Primary education Maths Instructor.	3.61	.57			
	Total	3.66	.66			

In the Professional Identification dimension, it was observed that teacher candidates, especially in the Preschool Teaching and Special Education Teaching departments, had a higher level of commitment compared to other departments ($p < 0.05$). However, no significant differences were detected between departments in the dimensions of Professional Value, Professional Effort, Professional Dedication and Scale Total. Statistical analysis shows that the department in which students study can affect their level of commitment to the teaching profession, and this effect is especially evident in the Professional Identification dimension. The fact that students in Preschool Teaching and Special Education Teaching departments have higher levels of commitment may suggest that professional values and identities specific to students are shaped in these departments.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research results reveal various important findings by examining the professional commitment levels of teacher candidates. In the Professional Identification dimension, the students' overall average score was recorded as 3.23 and its standard deviation was 0.93. This shows how much students identify with their profession. In the Professional Value dimension, the average score of the students was 4.07 and the standard deviation was 0.65, which reflects that the students have a high value and respect for their profession. The mean score in the Professional Effort dimension was 3.69 and the standard deviation was 0.85, which reflects how much effort students put into their professional development. In the Professional Dedication dimension, the average score was 3.77 and the standard deviation was 0.78, which indicates how committed the students are to their profession. In the Total Commitment to Teaching Profession (ÖMB Total) dimension, the average score was observed as 3.66 and the standard deviation was 0.66, which expresses the general level of professional commitment.

In gender-based analyses, it was determined that there were significant differences in favor of female teacher candidates in the students' Professional Identification, Professional Value, Professional Effort, Professional Dedication and ÖMB Total dimensions. It has been observed that female teacher candidates generally have higher levels of commitment. In particular, it has been observed that students in Preschool Teaching and Special Education Teaching departments have higher commitment levels compared to other departments in the Professional Identification dimension.

Based on the results, various suggestions can be developed to increase the professional commitment levels of teacher candidates and make training programs more effective:

- By examining the differences revealed in gender-based analyzes in more detail, teacher training programs can be evaluated in terms of gender sensitivity.
- By understanding the reasons for the high levels of commitment among female teacher candidates, it should be investigated whether these factors are adaptable to other students.
- Special support programs can be developed for students in Preschool Teaching and Special Education Teaching departments who demonstrate high commitment in the Professional Identification dimension.
- By offering similar support programs to students in other departments, various activities can be organized to strengthen students' professional identification.
- Activities such as seminars, workshops and mentoring programs can be organized for students who score high in the Professional Value dimension to increase their value towards their profession.
- In order to strengthen professional values, students can be offered opportunities to meet successful role models within the teaching profession.
- The content of training programs should be designed taking gender-based differences into consideration.
- Programs may include various modules to increase students' professional commitment and meet gender-based learning needs.
- More comprehensive research can be conducted to understand the factors affecting professional commitment levels.
- Educational programs and teacher training processes should be constantly reviewed to strengthen students' professional commitment.

These suggestions point to potential strategies to strengthen pre-service teachers' professional commitment. Each recommendation aims to make teacher training programs more effective and support the professional development of students.

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