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# The Market Value of Knowledge and Academic Failure

Ceyda Çavuşoğlu Deveci* , Mustafa Gündüz*

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**Abstract**

As in many countries, neoliberal policies have affected the field of education in Turkey. The competitive school ranking system and its meritocratic narratives have shaped students' aspirations and their understanding the sources of success and failure. This study reveals the resonance of these policies on individuals. Through in-depth interviews with high-school students in Istanbul, this phenomenological qualitative study engaged with 29 students intensely. It is found that individuals aspired to reach top positions within the neoliberal system. Which corresponds to entering Anatolian High Schools in the Turkish education system. Often influenced by parents who helped to deliver the system's messages, students themselves ignore their abilities and strive for promising positions in the market. They viewed themselves as solely responsible for their academic failures. However, this article suggests that student failure results from an educational system that encourages all students to pursue the same goals while ignoring their unique talents and predispositions.

**Keywords:** Academic failure, School Choice, Neoliberal Policies, Academic Attainment, Phenomenology

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## Introduction

Is it possible to order knowledge sets hierarchically by their value? Political science professor W. Brown (2011) has expressed her concern that the humanities today are facing near extinction at public universities in the United States. The ever-expanding global dominance of the neoliberal market[1]—which demands rational and measurable indicators—has gradually reduced the financial power and demand for academic fields that do not promise market-based return. In this context, education has been reduced to a tool that serves the goals of the individual with psychological approaches that put the student at the center and philosophical approaches that emphasize the subject. The individual has the 'freedom' and 'obligation' to choose the knowledge s/he will acquire, weighing its benefits to her/himself. As a result, the value of education is evaluated based on its income potential. This situation jeopardizes all theory-based scientific fields that form the basis of applied sciences.

Neoliberalism is not merely an economic model but a hegemonic ideology that reshapes the global order, restructuring various aspects of life, including the concept of education and education systems. As in many other countries, Turkey has also been significantly influenced by these ideological transformations. With the increasing dominance of neoliberal policies, education has been redefined through market-oriented principles that prioritize competition, individual responsibility, and measurable outcomes. This study reveals how neoliberal policies—particularly influential in Turkey's education system since the 1980s—have shaped the ways in which students make sense of academic failure. By focusing on failure, the study examines how students in Turkey position themselves within this competitive framework and the types of knowledge they rely on to define success. In doing so, this research highlights the extent to which macro-level neoliberal policies resonate at the micro level, influencing students' perceptions of the individual, success, and failure in Turkey.

Undoubtedly, all ideologies see education as a means to serve their ends. It is impossible to plan education without influence from ideologies (O'Neil, 1981) and all actors involved in education take part in political action, whether consciously or not (Apple, 2019). With the industrial era, the necessity of mass education was understood, and compulsory education was introduced for efficient production. Education is designed to serve the objectification of the individual within the state (Hegel, 1991, pp. 113–114) and the rationalization of political power (Weber, 1993, pp. 221–223). With the collapse of both the Soviet Union and the Keynesian economy in the 1980s, neoliberalism has become a widely adopted ideology worldwide. Thus, the transition process from an industrial society to an information society has begun. Therefore, developing tools that provide information, establishing creative connections between different information,

[1] The dictionary meaning of the word market is the square—a market place where buyers and sellers meet. This concept has been used in more abstract and inclusive meanings within discussions on neoliberal ideology. In this study, it is generally used in the sense of abstract authority in which the material equivalent of a product or service is determined on the social ground and supply-demand relations are determined.

entrepreneurship, lifelong learning and competitiveness has become more critical than acquiring the knowledge itself. The relationship between knowledge and education has gradually become instrumental (Güllüpınar, 2015).

The adoption of neoliberal ideology has also affected educational systems. Notably, neoliberal understandings built on the principles of the free market, the individual's freedom of choice, individual benefit, and competition (Harvey, 2005; Beaud, 2015) lead education to be evaluated as a product or sector like other fields, including health, agriculture, and media (Apple, 2000; Davies et al., 2006). Educational institutions have also turned into companies seeking profit (Connell, 2013). Education has become a commodity rather than a citizenship right through the increasing number of private education institutions or tuition fees. Neoliberal education policies have held the student (and sometimes the family) responsible for investing in themselves, claiming that the schooling system offers the right to free choice. The entrepreneurial individual, created by neoliberalism, has the freedom of choice and should therefore determine the profitable educational path for her/himself.

Neoliberalism sees education as a means of shaping human capital. The goal of education is to train manpower in skills and knowledge that the market needs (Connell, 2013). The skills and behavioral patterns an individual acquires during the education process should return to the market in the form of a productive workforce. The existing market order in the state will serve to meet the needs of individuals, and therefore the benefit arising from scientific advances and knowledge should serve the functioning of the market (Hayek, 1995, p.155). Thus, this understanding glorifies technological and application-based information that can revive production and be transformed into a product or service. Education has transformed from a system that deepens and expands intelligence and sensitivity and provides historical consciousness into a system intended to raise entrepreneurial individuals proficient in technical skills (Brown, 2011). Consequently, training programs and distribution of resources prioritize commercial concerns (Ball et al., 1994, p.19). As a result of ranking systems that categorizes schools according to their success, school administrators search for talented students. The emphasis shifted to the student's performance rather than the student's needs. In other words, what the school contributes to the student is not as important as what the student contributes to the school (Apple, 2001).

In the market order—where everything is transformed into a buyable product—those without the means to struggle are pushed out of the system and marked as failures. Social groups with appropriate behavioral codes in their habitat have been able to use them for their own benefit by re-coding and transformation mechanisms (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990). Thus, neoliberal policies continue to reproduce existing social divisions (Apple, 2001). With the influence of neoliberalism's discourse on individuality and free choice, the individual is declared solely responsible for his own decisions. The individual is obliged to look after her/his own interests within the market conditions (Olssen, 1996). In this case, academic failure is understood to be due to the individual not making suitable investments in her/himself. Considering the continuous re-evaluation of the

certificates obtained as a result of certificate inflation, the individual finds her/himself in a constantly intensifying race, just like the market competition (Brown, 2003).

Although the impact of neoliberal policies on education in Turkey has become more noticeable in recent years, traces of neoliberal influence emerged as early as the 1980s. In 1986, then-President Kenan Evren questioned the education services provided by the state to its citizens, asking, 'He has 12 children, 12 of whom are educated by the state free of charge. Is this social justice?' (quoted in Gök, 2004, p. 101). A guide published by the Ministry of National Education in 1999 (Bal et al., 1999) emphasized the need to raise individuals who can produce marketable products using advanced technology. In addition to abstract goals, the state undertook many practical steps that served neoliberal policy. The first of these was the privatization of education.

While private schools comprised only 7.71% of all schools in 2006–2007 (MoNE, 2007), that number increased to 19.02% for the years 2023–2024 (MoNE, 2024). In addition, the state announced a financial incentive package for families who sent their children to private schools, which varied according to the socioeconomic development level of the region and the school level (T.C. Official Journal 2014). Following curriculum reform in 2004, the new textbooks included individual-oriented rather than society-oriented narratives. These textbooks evaluated the individual as a producer, consumer, and entrepreneur (Akkaymak, 2010, p. 101; İnal, 2006, p. 281). In his article, İnal (2006) drew attention to the conflict between the new curriculum and the sentimental and moral values of the Turkish society, such as compassion and self-sacrifice. The individual competition is centralized within the education system. The scarcity of schools providing a strong education gradually sharpened this competition in this exam-based education system. While the ratio of government funding allocated for education has gradually decreased (ERG, 2021), the household budget allocated to education by families struggling for their children to be placed in good schools has increased. These practices prioritize the individual's economic capital in the education system, yet also encourage the belief that individuals are solely responsible for acquiring this capital. Therefore, a qualitative study that reveals students' perceptions of academic failure and how these perceptions are associated with different fields of knowledge will provide a critical contribution to the field and complement the existing literature. This study aimed to reveal the relationship between the neoliberal policies especially in the field of education and students' interpretation of academic failure and success.

In the following sections, a literature review will analyze the basic principles of neoliberalism, its development process, and its relationship with education. The article will then explore the relationship between the neoliberal individual and academic failure; this relationship will be understood in relation to educational inequality in the context of Bourdieu's theory of reproduction. After detailing the stages of qualitative research, the value that the market places on students' knowledge areas will be discussed in the context of academic success and failure. It will be focused on two main themes: 'the knowledge hierarchy message conveyed by the market' and 'academic failure of the individual through the education system'.

## Neoliberalism and its impact on education

The economic crisis of the late 1970s led to widespread criticism of the Keynesian model's 'strong state, strong market' emphasis. In response, neoliberalism emerged with the 'strong free market, weak state' approach, becoming the dominant political and ideological structure of capitalism by the 1980s (Theodore et al., 2011). This shift promoted privatization, deregulation, tax cuts for capital owners, and the reduction of social welfare programs, arguing that economic growth depended on a self-regulating market and individual entrepreneurship (Uçkaç, 2019). Proponents of neoliberalism claim that competition drives societal progress (Friedman, 1951, as cited in Peck, 2010, pp. 3–4) and that private property should take precedence over the public interest. In this framework, the state's primary role is to maintain market mechanisms rather than intervene for social welfare (Turner, 2008). As Margaret Thatcher famously stated in 1987, "There is no such thing as society! There are male and female individuals," reinforcing the idea that individuals, not the state, are responsible for their own well-being. This ideology has profoundly reshaped public services through three forms of privatization (Brown, 2011). First, public services are outsourced to non-profit organizations but operate under profit-driven rather than public-interest motives. Second, public goods are replaced by individualized services, as seen in the rise of toll roads, paid higher education programs, and privatized public transport. Finally, responsibility for funding and accountability is transferred to the lowest units, leaving teachers, students, and office workers to safeguard their own interests without regard for collective welfare.

As in many areas of life, education has experienced the painful effects of the neoliberal worldview. In addition to privatizing educational institutions that care for social benefit, neoliberal policy has positioned schools as places for the production of actors to feed itself. Hayek (1995, p. 155) sees the money network as the mechanism that holds society together and argues that the benefits arising from scientific advances and knowledge reach humanity by feeding the market order. In this way, neoliberal education has recognized natural sciences, engineering sciences, and applied sciences under the umbrella of empirical knowledge as valid and valuable. In addition, the educational environment supports learning by doing and the entrepreneurship of the individual (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 334). In this case, a product or service produced through applied sciences can be a commodity that can be marketed and converted into money. In short, education is positioned as a tool that will pave the way for high-paying jobs (Hayek, 1978). The market values knowledge according to the degree to which it turns the wheels of production and consumption in the market.

Giving the knowledge clusters in the education program the right to exist as long as they feed the market - like decreasing the hours of the fundamental sciences and increasing the hours of applied sciences instead in the curriculum -has brought many intellectual, moral, and sociological problems. In his article 'The Separation of Knowledge from the Knower', Bernstein (2000, p.86) stated that after about 1,000 years, knowledge has separated from its humane and inward orientations. The neoliberal approach does not

aim to raise individuals with intellectual knowledge, as the link between knowledge and human self-discovery has been severed and wholly secularized. The production of new knowledge and scientific discoveries exists within the framework of commercial competition (Delanty, 2001, pp. 108–109). Knowledge becomes money itself, rather than being like money (Bernstein, 2000, p. 86). In this case, instead of pursuing spiritually nourishing knowledge, the individual turns toward fields that provide him/her with material gain. This market-driven educational system results in the individual lacking the freedom to choose the knowledge she/he wants to acquire. The individual must instead act according to the demand of the market. While neoliberalism emphasizes the freedom of the individual, it also creates the problem of freedom.

Neoliberalism also prioritizes commercial concerns within educational institutions and therefore necessitates that resources are allocated to meet these concerns (Ball et. al. 1994, p.19). National and even international ranking tables for universities were established as quality indicators of schools. Schools have, therefore, competed to recruit more successful and intelligent students to develop products to feed the market. This prioritization of high-achieving students has led to the withdrawal of resources from students with special needs or learning difficulties (Apple, 2001, p. 185). The image of schools as 'safe, domesticated and progressive' has transformed into 'threatening, estranged and regressive' (McCulloch 1997, p. 80). Students who can continuously invest in themselves can survive in such a system. This system benefits middle-class families in terms of their ability to figure out the system's rules and their social, economic, and cultural capital (Apple, 2001; Ball et al., 1994).

Therefore, education in the context of neoliberal policies is far from a system with equal opportunity for everyone or where individuals can freely make choices, as claimed. Individuals with the power to access the necessary resources can use them in their own favor. In this case, it only deepens the existing educational inequality in society.

## Educational inequality, neoliberal self and academic failure

Bourdieu (1977), who carried out important studies on educational inequality, argues that schools, as the transmitters of a certain culture, are essential in ensuring social reproduction by excluding children who are not members of the dominant culture. The 'habitus' that forms the basis of Bourdieu's theory is a system that includes all the ways of thought, action, and perception of a particular social group. Individuals have latently limited freedom in choosing the codes of behavior within this field. It is, therefore, unthinkable for the individual to act independently of the store of the social group in which he/she is located (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 91).

In Bourdieu's theory (1977), another concept that explains the mechanism of the wheel of reproduction is the concept of 'capital', which describes how cultural transmission occurs. Families strengthen their children's educational lives through cultural transfer, purchasing services, and utilizing human resources. Bourdieu argues that capital

(economic, social, and cultural) is largely inherited from the family, and therefore education only legitimizes the values of a certain segment of society and ensures the reproduction of the existing social class structure (Bourdieu, 1977). Although the education system seems to function based on merit, it transforms existing social classifications into academic classifications, thus ensuring the existing structure's preservation (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). According to Bourdieu, the idea that the education system is an institution that develops students' abilities stands as a 'myth' (Bourdieu, 1974, p. 32).

In the neoliberal understanding, individuals are not only free but also responsible for their own actions and welfare (Harvey, 2005, p. 66). In the field of education, individuals are obliged to improve themselves and make the right choices in this direction. They must overcome the problems they encounter in this process with personal efforts. This perspective aligns with the concept of the neoliberal self, which is characterized as an agent who pursues autonomy, fulfillment, and meaning by making strategic choices aimed at self-improvement. As a rational competitor, the neoliberal self operates within an economic logic of productivity and efficiency, constantly seeking ways to optimize personal value (Vassallo, 2013). In this framework, the individual is expected to take full responsibility for his/her own life, where success or failure is seen as a direct consequence of personal choices and efforts (Davies et al., 2006). The neoliberal self is active, calculating, and continually seeking betterment, always assessing risks and opportunities to enhance their own capital. This ongoing process involves strategic control to reach the ultimate goal, shaping oneself into a more competitive and efficient subject in an ever-demanding market-driven society (Vassallo, 2013).

Neoliberalism emphasizes the concepts of freedom, equality, and justice while ignoring economic and social inequalities. However, the equality of the individual in a free-market economy disappears when the 'profit-loss system' does not favor the unfit structures (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 318). An individual born into an environment with a lack of the valid resources is destined to be pushed out of the picture. In this case, failure is dealt with as a purely individual situation, free from explanations related to class or poverty. Illness, addiction, unemployment, or other abnormal conditions once perceived as a blow of fate are now considered the fault and responsibility of the individual as a result of neoliberal self understanding (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 24). An individual life also requires taking responsibility for unfortunate and unexpected events.

In education, students are considered the architects of academic successes and largely responsible for academic failures. All students take the same courses in the classroom, pass the same exams, and are ranked accordingly. The only person with power over this situation is the student. Meyer and Rowan (1977) mention that many programs, policies, and practices expose students to this individualistic perspective. The most important practice is the constant assessment and grading of students. Exams are both central to the functioning of the school and emphasize the individuality of student achievement (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Oakes et al., 1977; Meyer et al., 1983). These practices lead students to evaluate success and failure as an individual phenomenon. Even students

who experience failure see themselves as the sole cause of failure (Farrington, 2008; Meyer et al., 1983). According to Mehan et al. (1986), a student's career options do not consist of a simple equation of potential and effort. Rather, these options result from the continuous interaction between the child's existing or developing capacities, the ongoing socialization processes at school, and the way the child transforms cultural capital into behavior.

This study reveals how neoliberal policies—influential in Turkey's education field since the 1980s—have affected the process of making sense of academic failure. Through its focus on failure, the study illuminates how students in Turkey evaluate themselves in this competitive system and through which set of knowledge they define success. In so doing, this study provides indicators of how neoliberal policies implemented at the macro level resonate at the micro level, affecting students' perceptions of the individual and success/failure in Turkey.

## Method

In the following section, details regarding the research methodology will be presented. The section will outline the research design, describe the participants, and explain the data collection process. It will also address reliability and validity considerations, along with the researcher's role in conducting the study.

### 1. Research Methodology

In this study, phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, was employed within the framework of the interpretive paradigm, as the research focuses on students' experiences of academic failure and seeks to explore how they make sense of this phenomenon. Phenomenology is a systematic approach aimed at uncovering and explaining the essential meaning of lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10).

### 2. Participants of the Study

This research was conducted using maximum variation sampling in Istanbul. As Turkey's most populous city, Istanbul reflects Turkey's socio-cultural mosaic. Two districts—one with the highest quality of life index (HLQR) and another with the lowest quality of life index (LLQR)—were selected based on the study conducted by Şeker (2011) in which the researcher grouped the regions of Istanbul with reference to physical, social, economic, infrastructural indicators. A total of seven[2] schools were selected from different types of secondary education institutions in these districts: one vocational high school, one

[2] In one of the districts, Imam Hatip high school is mixed gender, while in the other, it is divided into two separate schools for boys and girls.

Anatolian high school, and one religion-based Imam Hatip high school.[3] Since high school students experience their first central placement exam[4] and are subjected to a national ranking system, it was predicted that they would be more likely to experience academic failure than those in Middle School. Schools were selected to ensure that the central placement exam scores were parallel across districts. After confirming the diversity of districts and schools, all 10th-grade students in the selected schools were asked to write a story of failure in their academic life and to fill out a form with their demographic information and 9th-grade GPA scores to ensure diversity in student achievement and socio-demographic status. Forms from a total of 1,085 students were collected, of which 1,048 were analyzed, including 494 males and 554 females. Students were selected for interviews based on whether they held above or below-average GPA scores in their schools. Thus, a total of 29 students were interviewed, 15 of whom were from HLQR and 14 of whom were from LLQR. Fourteen students were female and 15 were male; 12 studied in Imam Hatip high schools, 9 in Anatolian high schools, and 8 in vocational high schools. Fourteen students maintained above-average GPA scores, while 15 held below-average GPA scores.

To make the demographic characteristics of the participants easily identifiable, 'L-AS-S(+)F2' was used to code participant information. The first digit of this code represents the district. The letter 'L' represents a low life quality index while 'H' represents a high life quality indexed region. The second digit represents the type of school. The abbreviation 'AS' stands for Anatolian high school, 'VS' for vocational high school, and 'RS' for İmam Hatip high school (religious schools). The next digit represents achievement status. The symbols 'S(-)' were used for participants with below-average GPAs in their schools and 'S(+)' for those with above-average GPAs. The last digit represents gender. The abbreviation 'F' was used for female students and 'M' for male students. Table 1 below schematically presents the coding system.

[3] There are many types of schools in the Turkish education system's structure of secondary education institutions. Science Anatolian high schools and Anatolian high schools were established to prepare students for university education. Vocational schools include vocational courses and apprenticeships, which means there is less mathematics and science in the curriculum compared to Anatolian high schools. Imam Hatip schools offer many religious courses, like kalam, Qur'an, fiqh, hadith.

[4] In the Turkish education system, during the transition from primary to secondary education, a centralized exam consisting of questions related to the primary education curriculum is held simultaneously throughout the country. In the years this research was conducted, this exam was compulsory for all students and students made their choices according to the score they received regardless of the type of school.

Table 1 Participants Codes

| Code Element | Symbol | Description |
|---|---|---|
| District | L | Low life quality index region |
| | H | High life quality index region |
| School Type | AS | Anatolian High School |
| | VS | Vocational High School |
| | RS | Imam Hatip High School (Religious School) |
| Academic Performance | S(-) | Below-average GPA in school |
| | S(+) | Above-average GPA in school |
| Gender | F | Female Student |
| | M | Male Student |
| Number | If multiple students share the same demographic characteristics, numbers such as '1', '2' have been used to differentiate them. | |

## 3. Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participating students. In the semi-structured interview form, questions were designed to explore different aspects of the participants' experiences. These included opinion- and value-based questions such as "How do you define failure?", emotion-related questions such as "How did you feel after experiencing failure?", past-related questions such as "What has happened in your educational journey so far?", and experience- and behavior-related questions such as "Have you ever experienced failure in your education?". The interview questions were reviewed and revised based on the feedback of two field experts. Before finalizing the form, pilot interviews were conducted with two 10th-grade students. Based on these interviews, revisions were made to clarify misunderstood questions, and the final version of the interview form was developed.

Data were collected after obtaining ethical approval from the university and official permissions from the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education and the Governorship of Istanbul. With the approval and guidance of the school principal, the researcher was supported by either guidance counselors, school officers, or vice-principals. The opinions of the school staff who assisted the researcher in selecting the students for one-on-one interviews were also considered. In cases where the students predetermined by the researcher did not want to participate, substitute selections were made. The total duration of the interviews was approximately 950 minutes. The data were transcribed, resulting in a total of 422 pages of text. After the transcription process, participant verification was obtained from the students who could be reached via email.

## 4. Data Analysis

After transcribing the interviews, the researcher applied thematic analysis based on Van Manen's (1990) 6-step data analysis. In this approach, the text is listened to and read multiple times, allowing for the selection of key expressions that are thought to reveal the phenomenon or experience (Van Manen, 1990). These expressions are then grouped and categorized. Once the themes emerge, they are interpreted in conjunction with the existing literature. Since the research was designed with a qualitative approach, the data is not intended to be generalizable. From an interpretive perspective, the focus was on how students made sense of their situations.

## 5. Reliability and Validity

To ensure validity and reliability of the research, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) approach was adopted, which redefined traditional notions of validity and reliability to align with the nature of qualitative research. Instead of using positivist terms, they introduced alternative concepts that better reflect the interpretive paradigm. They replaced internal validity with credibility, emphasizing that findings should be accurate and trustworthy from the perspective of participants. External validity was reconceptualized as transferability, suggesting that qualitative research should provide detailed contextual descriptions to allow applicability in similar settings. Internal reliability was substituted with dependability, which requires consistency in data collection and analysis despite the evolving nature of qualitative inquiry. Lastly, external reliability was reformulated as confirmability, ensuring that findings are derived from the data rather than the researcher's biases or subjective interpretations. These constructs provide a framework for evaluating qualitative research rigor while respecting its contextual and interpretive nature.

To enhance credibility, this study employed prolonged engagement, triangulation, expert review, and participant verification. The researcher maintained long-term interactions with participants to minimize biases and better understand their experiences. Data triangulation was achieved through multiple data sources, including document analysis, interviews, and observations, to ensure a well-rounded understanding of the phenomenon. Expert feedback was obtained from professors and field specialists

throughout the research process, refining the methodology and data interpretation. Additionally, participant verification was conducted by sharing transcribed interviews with students to confirm accuracy. To ensure transferability, the study utilized thick descriptions of the research setting, participant demographics, and data collection process. A maximum variation sampling strategy was employed to include a diverse range of participants, providing insights applicable to similar educational contexts. For dependability, the researcher followed standardized procedures during data collection, such as applying the same protocols when distributing demographic forms and conducting interviews. Expert opinions were also sought to validate coding and thematic analysis, ensuring consistency.To establish confirmability, a peer debriefing process was conducted with field experts to review data interpretations. Additionally, an audit trail was maintained, documenting all research decisions, reflections, and methodological choices, allowing transparency in how conclusions were reached.

### 6. The Role of the Researcher

Coming from a relatively wealthy family, I grew up in an environment where education and achievement were highly valued. My early understanding of success was deeply rooted in hard work and personal effort, believing that academic excellence alone could open all doors. However, over time, this perspective shifted. While pursuing my doctorate, I began questioning the broader social and structural factors influencing academic performance. My growing interest in how students perceive academic failure led me to choose this as my research topic. I recognized that academic failure is not solely an individual shortcoming but a complex phenomenon shaped by both societal and personal conditions. Despite my own experiences, I remained aware that others may interpret failure differently, which shaped my approach to interview questions and data analysis. I carefully designed my study to avoid imposing personal biases, ensuring that I allowed students to express their own unique perspectives on academic failure.

## Findings

### 1.The market's knowledge hierarchy messaging

The market communicates its demands and needs to society through many channels. Students not only make sense of these messages themselves but are also exposed to more clearly articulated forms of the same message by their families. Under this theme, "You will be out in the cold" refers to the message conveyed by families, while "My abilities vs. my acceptances" and "Neither inside nor outside the circle" are sub-themes that reflect how students interpret this message.

### 1.1. 'You will be out in the cold'

The phrase 'be out in the cold' is the most common of these messages. This term is generally used in social life to suggest that others have filled all available positions and

there is no place left for the individual. This term is often used when students who did not achieve the exam scores required for enrollment in their preferred schools are not placed in a school or when they cannot find a job after graduation. The phrase emphasizes that the individual will not be able to find a job that will allow him/her to earn money. The individual who cannot find a 'useful' position for himself/herself is 'out in the cold'.

There exists a social consensus regarding what constitutes failure and success. Students learn that alternative routes to the socially accepted linear equation that leads to success are not even worth considering. Participant students stated that parents and close relatives subjected them to suggestions, warnings, and even angry reactions when choosing their high school department preferences. These reactions were relayed in more detail by students who wanted to take paths that differed from the mainstream. They stated that they faced objections from their families when they wanted to choose fields such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, or language. The most important reason underlying the objections of their families was economic concerns. As observed in Bourdieu and Passeron's (1964) study, families fear that their children will not be able to earn enough if they graduate from these departments.

In this regard, L-AS-S(-)F shared her concern that her father was not yet aware of the last-minute change in her department preference. Although she predicted that her father would not react harshly, she also stated that he warned her, 'If you study languages, you will be out in the cold'.

*"Honestly, I haven't told my father yet that I chose the language track. Here's what happened: At first, my father and I came here together, and since my father knew that I was going to study law—because I had been saying it since I was a child—he assumed that was the plan. So, we initially chose the equal-weight track together. Later, I thought about it at home, reflected on it, and then I went to my school teacher and changed my department. I only told my mother; I haven't told my father yet. I don't know how he will react when I tell him, I hope he won't be angry. I don't think he will be, but I still hope he won't. I think my father will say, 'It's up to you, whichever you want, go for it,' but also, 'I wish you hadn't done this because if you study in the language track, you will be left out in the cold.' I mean, a lot of students from the science track, even engineers, are currently unemployed. For example, my cousin is a computer engineer, and he is jobless. And it's not even that he graduated from a bad school. He would say, 'So you chose the language track? What are you planning to do with it? At which company do you plan to work?' But for me, even translating books would be fine. I mean, at least, I think if I applied somewhere to translate a book, maybe they would hire me. I hope it works out."* (L-AS-S(-)F)

The participant student justified her decision to her father by stating that 'even engineers and so on are currently out in the cold'. She also gave the example of her cousin, a computer engineer, who was unemployed despite graduating from a good school. The fact that her father said 'you chose the language department even worse' to her, implying that she was embarking on a path that could not be fought under these conditions, reveals the relationship between the chosen field of study and the income foreseen in the future.

An academic background with no financial return in the market is a source of worry for the father. The father considers it essential for his child to receive an education in a field

that will help her stand on her own feet. The institution's reputation and the degree must therefore meet social expectations. In this situation, the student is 'free' to choose one of two options: a field in which the market does not promise a material return but which he or she enjoys intellectually, or a field in which the market promises a material return but which he or she does not enjoy intellectually. As a result of rational thinking, individuals often choose the second option. Therefore, as Brown (2011) argues, neoliberalism extends its domain beyond the administration of the state to the human psyche.

A few of the participant students stated that, in addition to concern over the lack of financial return, their families found some university departments worthless for other reasons. The academic reputation of these departments was equated with failure.

A 10th-grade female student at the Imam Hatip high school conveyed her parents' views as follows:

"*A person, for example, being interested in philosophy, sociology, or psychology—these kinds of things is just full of hot air (useless trivia).. A person is considered successful if they are a doctor, an engineer, or an architect. This is how they think.*" (H-RS-S(-)F1)

Her parents identified social and human sciences with failure and other fields of knowledge with success. The social perception of success conveyed to students through their families leads them to choose departments they do not want or to worry about their future even if they choose the department they want. In the examples given, students expressed their families' opinions in a critical way. They positioned themselves as thinking differently from their families. Some students internalized these messages from the market and accounted for them in their academic career decisions.

### 1.2. My abilities vs. my acceptances

Some students internalized and accepted their society's hierarchy of knowledge at the expense of furthering their unique abilities. Students whose skills were appreciated by their community but at the bottom of the value hierarchy considered their talents 'hobby activities' or 'obligations'. The Imam Hatip high school student, who was recognized in his social circle for his ability to read the Holy Quran well, explained his recognition in this field by saying, 'I had to do this (Quran recitation) when I failed in mathematics and other numerical courses' (L-RS-S(-) M2). The participant student, who had won degrees in provincial competitions in his field, said that if he had been successful in mathematics, he could have become 'even a mathematics teacher'. He stressed how desirable but unattainable such a position was for him.

"*The subject I am successful in is the Quran side, the verbal side, so to speak. I believe I am successful in those areas. But even if I studied and barely passed math with a 50, that would be enough for me, let me put it that way. … I mean, if I had been successful in math, I could have even become a math teacher. So, I realized that I am unsuccessful in that area, in the numerical field. I wish I could have gone to a big university and eventually become something there. I mean, I could have been a lawyer; I might have had such an ambition.*" (L-RS-S(-) M2)

The fact that he imagined going to a 'big university' and becoming 'something' indicates that the success he achieved through his talent in reciting Quran did not satisfy him. The student wanted to be successful in mathematics not because he enjoyed the field, but because he aspired toward the status and prestige that being 'something' provides in society. He understood that to achieve this respect he must study at a 'big university' that ranks high in the university league table (Apple, 2001).

Another participant student, more in tune with her abilities and interests, sought to strike a balance between the impositions of life and her own aspirations.

*"In 10 years, I see myself—though this keeps changing—right now, I plan to study gastronomy and do a minor in philosophy. … I want to do a minor in either psychology, sociology, or philosophy because, generally speaking, apart from psychology, philosophy and sociology are not fields with vast career opportunities. And I don't want to spend my life constantly waiting for an appointment or waiting for something to happen. I want to be active, have a steady income, be happy, but at the same time, continue pursuing my dreams. The things I choose as my minor are my dreams..."* (H-RS-S(-)F)

The student stated, 'I don't want to wait to be appointed or to wait for something in my life'. This assertion underscored her concern that her dream fields of philosophy, sociology, and psychology would not offer her strong economic opportunities in the future. The student's wish that 'I want to have an income, I want to be happy, but at the same time, I want to continue my dreams', led her to plan a dual-track education. Thus, she envisioned majoring in gastronomy and minoring in philosophy. The student, torn between 'making a living' and 'achieving fulfillment', it can be said that by choosing gastronomy as a major she put the priorities of the market hierarchically above her wishes by placing philosophy in a minor position.

As Bernstein (2000) indicates, knowledge has been transformed into 'money' because it is valuable only if it is advantageous and efficient. By separating knowledge from people, the link between knowledge and the knower has been severed. From this point of view, it makes sense for families and students to prioritize acquiring knowledge that can bring them greater financial benefits in the future. The market assigns a value to professions and therefore disciplines in line with its needs. Students and their families who try to exist within the system aim to reach the 'most valuable' knowledge while ignoring the variables of their interests and abilities.

### 1.3.Neither inside nor outside the circle[5]

Students considered academic failures by the education system often look for alternative career paths. Although they see the likelihood of being academically successful as very low, they are wary to take the plunge and devote all their energies to an alternative route. They fear exiting the circle completely, although they do not think they can remain within the academic circle due to their unsuccessful ranking. Participant students who repeated a grade expressed that the success standards determined by the system may

[5] This sub-section is named after the song "Çember"(circle), sung by Yeni Türkü (a Turkish band) and written as a poem by Turkish writer and poet Murathan Mungan.

not fit everyone. Still, they were hesitant about their alternative career paths. A male student studying at a vocational high school said that having an academic career was good and that it was necessary to pursue one of the 'professions that hold in this era'. However, he expressed how agonizing the thought of working in these professions was for him, asking, 'Do I have to commute to that job every day?'. In which he meant he has to spend time at that job every day even though he wouldn't experience a bit of joy. During the conversation, he shared, 'Sometimes I wonder if I can come to a place other than education'. This statement expresses his uncertainty about whether defining success outside the academic channel was possible. In a hypothetical scenario where the participant student remains within the educational system, he took a position that reinforced his place in the circle, stating:

"*I mean, if I am very successful, I would do music as a hobby or something. Being a lawyer could be an option. Out of all the professions, only that one stands out—being a lawyer is good in a way.*" (H-VS-S(-)M)

The students stated during interviews that they did not enjoy the lessons and that getting up early in the morning and coming to school was a torment for them, comparing their schools to 'dungeons' and 'prisons'. These statements are similar to the behavior of the student group that Willis (2003) defines as 'lads'. Contrary to Willis' findings (2003), however, the participant students felt that academic success would help them access well-paying jobs. Here, there is a search for an alternative path that promises a future for the student who cannot exist within the system. However, the social acceptance of the relationship between academic achievement and a promising future in fields determined by the market has such an impact on students that they experience insecurity about pursuing these alternative paths. Bourdieu and Passeron (1964) help understand student insecurity through their thesis on the unequal distribution of information about job opportunities for students of different socioeconomic statuses. With the impact of neoliberal policies on educational programs and resources (Ball et al., 1994), the career paths of becoming a doctor, a teacher, or an engineer are clearly laid out through schools. However, gaining information about the career paths of musicianship—the student's field of interest—is challenging without the necessary social, cultural, and economic capital. This situation requires that the student risks pursuing a path without clear criteria for success.

## 2. Academic failure of the individual through the education system

Encouraged by neoliberal policies, the state ranked schools using centralized test scores to ensure standardization and efficiency control among educational institutions. Schools were thus held accountable for improving their performance indicators by monitoring their scores, which were updated every year (Apple, 2001). As a result, even schools with different education programs were ranked by the same standards. This system created a hierarchy between school types and even among schools of the same type. In Turkey, enrollment into schools required centralized exams with the Transition from Primary Education to Secondary Education (TEOG) system between 2013 and 2017. After 2017, only schools designated as 'Qualified Schools' continued to require examination. The

students participating in the study experienced the TEOG system in transition from primary to secondary education. While all students wanted to enter the schools that ranked highly, the centralized exam restricted their academic opportunities. Academic attainment mechanisms, which comprise achievement-based criteria designed to determine the schools students will attend (Oakes, 2005), ensure that students are educated in relatively homogeneous groups. The participating students were aware of this practice and believed that it had significant consequences for their future. Those who recognized the hierarchy between different school types—and the hierarchical ranking of schools within the same type—expressed feelings of sadness and regret about not being able to study at "better" schools. A female student studying at an Anatolian high school stated that her school 'was not even on my list' and that she expected to be placed in schools ranked much higher. In addition, she stated that:

"*This was not the place I expected; in fact, it wasn't even on my list. I thought very poorly of this place and kept saying that I didn't want to go to any school in this district. Maybe this was a prejudice, I don't know, but it felt like students in other schools were happier. I would look at the appearance of other schools, and they seemed very beautiful, especially in other cities, but this place didn't seem nice to me.*" (L-AS-S(-)F)

Almost all the students participating in the study wanted to study at an Anatolian high school. The unbalanced distribution of the demand for school types can be considered a reflection of social structures on schools. McDermott (1974) mentioned that in the existing order, some people must be successful, and others must be unsuccessful. In line with the market's demand, the differences in status and earnings in occupational groups make high-status and high-income professions more attractive. To access those professions, following certain routes within the education system is necessary. Consequently, a student who wants to become an engineer targets an Anatolian high school. In a society where everyone wants to be an engineer, doctor, or business manager, all students are expected to aim for Anatolian high schools. Therefore, since it is out of the question for everyone to become an 'engineer', the system must distinguish between successful and unsuccessful students.

Students believe attending a higher-ranked high school will lead to acceptance into a more reputable university and profession. These student beliefs are supported by the findings of Alacacı and Erbaş (2010) that the type of school highly impacts student achievement. Similarly, Kavurgacı and Selvitopu (2022) found that school type plays a crucial role in shaping students' experiences with their families, teachers, and social environments. Their study highlights that students encounter significantly different experiences based on the type of school they attend, and that school type is a major determinant in both their present and future opportunities. Schoville et al. (2024) further argue that elite public schools in Turkey establish a clear career trajectory for their students, steering them towards high-status professions rather than non-technical or lower-qualified jobs. This trajectory is reinforced through habitus, which is carefully shaped by familial cultural capital and a school culture that instills a sense of exceptionalism. By modeling expectations through peers, teachers, and administrators, these schools contribute to the reproduction of social and economic inequalities,

positioning elite students not only for academic success but also for a superior status in society.

This structured trajectory is not only reinforced within elite schools but is also deeply embedded in societal perceptions of school hierarchy. Beyond official ranking tables, society also upholds and transmits the hierarchy between schools. Students are exposed to evaluations about schools from the adults in their lives. A female student studying at an Anatolian high school explained why vocational high schools were not among her preferences by saying, 'In elementary school, our teachers used to tell us about vocational high schools in a very bad way' (L-AS-S(-)F). According to the student, teachers cited as factors that make vocational high schools disadvantageous that 'you cannot enter university' and 'you will work for a 2.5 times minimum wage at most'.

The teacher defined vocational high school as a barrier to university admission. The teacher warned that, without being placed in university, students would not earn enough money to provide for themselves and their families. This explanation, which ignores the student's personal interest and ability, is a rather mechanical cause-and-effect relationship that is assumed to be valid for everyone. Similar to the relationship Hayek (1995) established between scientific developments and the market order, the teacher established a correlational relationship between the type of school and the earning potential. The consequence of attending a vocational high school is not being placed in a university, and the consequence of not being placed in a university is settling for minimum wage. The neoliberal system places academic failure into a broader string of concurrent failures.

Almost all the participant students blamed themselves for their academic failure. They attributed their situation to not working hard enough. The Imam Hatip high school student explained that he went to the toilet and cried on the first day of school because he could not get into an Anatolian high school. He said that while crying, he thought, 'If I had studied a little more, I would have gone to a school I dreamed of' (L-RS-S(+)M). He asked himself, 'Why didn't I study?', and reminded himself of what he had lost, saying, 'I could have gone to the school of my dreams'. Believing himself responsible for his failure, he experienced deep 'regret'.

However, academic failure is not solely an individual matter but is also shaped by social background and structural inequalities. As Akçatepe et al. (2024) and Schoville et al. (2024) argue, school selection is influenced by the habitus of the home, which determines the educational choices available to students. Yet, despite these structural constraints, students often interpret their failure through a neoliberal lens, seeing it as a result of their own shortcomings rather than external conditions.

The fact that students hold themselves responsible for their academic failures gains meaning when considered in terms of neoliberal identity construction and individualism. According to a neoliberal understanding, an individual's success and failure stem entirely from himself/herself. Successes are associated with him/her being a good entrepreneur,

while failure is attributed to inadequately investing in one's education (Davies et al., 2006). Neoliberalism produces a competitive environment between individuals, and this competition surfaces in education in the form of exams. Bauman (2011, 19) stated that only the individual himself is praised or blamed for the 'good and bad' in his life. In this case, positive exam scores were understood as a result of students' diligence, while doing poorly on exams was attributed to laziness. As a natural consequence, the participant students were viewed as solely responsible for not being placed in the schools they wanted. The economic conditions, family traumas, or other abnormal situations in their lives are not associated with the results (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 24). An individual life also requires taking responsibility for unfortunate and unexpected events. According to the researchers, this understanding differentiates the 'life story' narrated by the individual from the 'biography'. While biographies include fact-based personal history, 'life stories' consist of individuals' explanations of events with self-entitled values, such as decision-making, negligence, ability, and overcoming (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). The fact that students portray themselves as the source of their academic failure in their 'life stories' coheres with neoliberalism's individualist identity construction.

Students who did not score well enough on the exam to be placed in Anatolian high schools—which were established to prepare them for university education—still aim for professions that provide a good income and are accepted by society. Having this goal despite the school's curriculum means rowing against the current. Students stated that they were at a disadvantage compared to Anatolian high school students and that this represented a systematic injustice. In other words, even though they are tracked by the education system, they consider themselves in the same race and take the structural format of different types of schools as a threat to their individual success. A male student studying at a vocational high school mentioned that in the last two years of high school, they take internships and vocational courses instead of studying the subjects appearing in the university entrance exam. He drew attention to the fact that even though he was studying at a vocational high school, everyone was running the same race with the same goal, saying, 'we are both taking the same exam'. He emphasized that he was in a much more disadvantaged position compared to students studying at Anatolian high schools, saying, 'I think we should make more effort than them' (L-VS-S(+)M). Paradoxically, the student perceived the fact that vocational high schools fulfilled their founding function by implementing their own curriculum as an 'injustice'.

The school's vocational courses and internship programs were seen as barriers to preparing for the university entrance exam. Even though students are subjected to academic ranking by the education system and assigned to different tracks, they still try to achieve the same goal: to pursue the natural sciences, engineering, and applied sciences (Hayek, 1995), which the market considers valid and valuable. A similar situation applies to Imam Hatip high schools. L-RS-S(+)F complained about the weight of religious education courses in the curriculum and expressed concern about failing these courses, stating, 'my GPA will drop'. She complained that when she spent time on these courses in order to maintain her high GPA, she could not focus on the courses that were within the scope of the exam, which she characterized as 'normal courses'. As a

reminder that even though they are in different schools, everyone is running towards the same goal, she expressed, 'After all, we will take the same exam, and the exam does not include *siyar*, *fiqh*, or Quran'.

Participant students who attended another type of religiously oriented school also viewed religious courses as an obstacle to their success. Stating that these courses would not help them in the university entrance exam, a student again blamed the education system for their possible failure. As a result of the academic attainment mechanism of the education system, students could not go to a high school suitable for their goals. Therefore, they were not the victims of their own 'choices' but of an 'allocation' process (McDermott, 1977).

## Results and Discussion

This research is based on the data obtained from interviews with 10th-grade students studying in two different districts of Istanbul, Turkey—one with the lowest and the other with the highest life quality indexes—to reveal the relationship between neoliberal policies and students' educational preferences and perception of academic failures. With the implementation of neoliberal education policies in Turkey, the competitive education approach has become much more visible in the education system. The ranking tables in all sub-units of education have led to clear distinctions between schools and fields of knowledge based on whether they are within the scope of the exams. These distinctions, in turn, have reshaped society's perception of success and failure in schooling and the value judgements associated with various academic fields.

This study revealed that society's assumptions around success affect students' academic failures. Families want their children to choose departments that lead to professions that are seen as socially successful, ignoring their predispositions and talents. Likewise, despite their success in other fields, students want to pursue careers considered successful (lawyers, engineers, doctors, etc.), determined by market demands (Bernstein, 2000). Monetizability determines the value of particular fields and occupations. Therefore, students widely desire fields and professions with high market value, aspiring toward identical goals regardless of their unique predispositions and abilities. This situation—where students with different characteristics try to reach the same goal—results in the failure of certain groups. As stated by Bourdieu and Passeron (1964), the socioeconomic status of individuals is effective in orientation towards professions with high market value. Individuals with high economic and cultural capital can make 'arbitrary-based' rather than 'money-based' choices. On the other hand, individuals without this capital must meet the market's demands to guarantee their future. The fact that certain career paths are less known than market-determined career paths discourages participants from pursuing alternative professions.

This study also found that the market's prioritization of particular fields impacts student career plans. Students make 'rational' choices by accepting their parents' warnings or adopting this value ranking themselves. These preferences generally direct students

toward knowledge areas where the market promises high income. In conclusion, this study confirms the concerns of Wendy Brown, mentioned at the beginning of this article. Participant students considered success in mathematics more valuable than in fields such as sports, arts, religious studies, philosophy, sociology, or linguistics. Similarly, in Smith's (2010) study, students associated success in mathematics with success in their future careers and general happiness. Rodeiro (2007) found that high school students considered traditional subject areas such as mathematics, chemistry, or biology more important than areas such as psychology or media. In the United Kingdom, students enrolled in an art course said they would like to continue with art in their futures, but as a hobby in addition to their full-time jobs (Thomson et al., 2020).

This study's findings elucidate the hierarchical order among school types in the Turkish education system. The demand for schools correlates with the income level and earning status they promise in the future. Almost all students, therefore, aspire to attend Anatolian high schools, which rank highest among Turkish high schools. As a result of academic attainment mechanisms, all students—except those placed in the few top-ranked schools—consider themselves academically unsuccessful.

Research indicates that academic failure is explained by the family's socioeconomic status by 38% (Karaağaç, 201911). Broader findings show that an individual's social, economic, and cultural capital is the main determinant of access to higher education. Additionally, social class—shaped by parental education, profession, and income—significantly influences students' educational trajectories and their ability to navigate the system effectively (Bülbül, 2021). Despite these structural constraints, the majority of students in this study held themselves responsible for their academic failure. The education system claims to put forward a fair and impartial system based on meritocratic values. In this system, the scores obtained according to the evaluation criteria are decisive, and students are placed based on their scores. However, in this system, the unique circumstances of the students and the level of support they received during the education process are ignored. The belief that assessments are merit-based is so dominant that even students stated that they failed because they did not work hard enough. The fact that students ignored their disadvantageous situations and blamed themselves for academic failure underscores the widespread individualist approach in society. The individualistic understanding in neoliberalism places the consequences of all kinds of unfortunate events in life on the individual. No matter the circumstances, the student must make the right investment at the right time to score well on exams (Davies et al., 2006). With four decades of neoliberal influence, Turkey's educational system provides one of the best representations of how neoliberalism has reconfigured understandings of education, failure, and self.

## Recommendations

Future research on academic failure should focus on specific student groups, such as male and female students who have failed a grade, to explore potential differences in their perceptions of failure. Additionally, ethnographic studies could provide deeper insights into how cultural contexts shape students' understanding of academic success and failure. Since this study was conducted in public schools, it did not fully capture the perspectives of upper-class students. A similar study in private schools would help highlight differences in how academic achievement is perceived across socio-economic groups. Furthermore, qualitative research on parental perceptions of academic success across different socio-economic backgrounds would be valuable in understanding how family influence shapes students' attitudes toward failure.

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## Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Neoliberal politikalar, eğitimi, piyasanın ihtiyaç duyduğu beceri ve bilgiyi sağlayacak insan sermayesini yetiştiren bir araç olarak görmektedir. Eğitim sürecinde kazanılan beceriler ve davranış kalıpları, üretken bir iş gücü olarak piyasaya geri dönmelidir. Bu anlayış, teknolojik ve uygulamalı bilgiyi yüceltir ve eğitimi, girişimci bireyler yetiştiren bir sistem haline getirir. Okulların başarısını değerlendiren sıralama sistemleri, öğrencinin performansına odaklanmıştır. Bu sistemde, öğrencinin okula katkısı, okulun öğrenciye katkısından daha önemli hale gelmiştir.

Wendy Brown (2011), bugün beşeri bilimlerin kamu üniversitelerinde yok olma tehlikesiyle karşı karşıya olduğunu ifade etmektedir. Neoliberal piyasa mantığı, rasyonel ve ölçülebilir göstergeler talep ederek, finansal gücü ve talebi olmayan akademik alanların değerini azaltmıştır. Bu bağlamda eğitim, bireyin amaçlarına hizmet eden bir araç haline gelmiştir. Neoliberal ideolojinin benimsenmesi, eğitimin bir ürün veya sektör olarak değerlendirilmesine yol açmıştır. Eğitim kurumları, kâr arayan şirketlere dönüşmüştür ve bu sistem, öğrenciyi (ve bazen aileyi) kendi kendine yatırım yapmaktan sorumlu tutmaktadır.

Pierre Bourdieu, okulların belirli bir kültürü aktaran kurumlar olarak sosyal yeniden üretimi sağladığını ve bu süreçte çocukları dışladığını savunmaktadır. Neoliberal anlayışta bireyler, kendi eylemlerinden ve refahlarından sorumludur. Eğitimde, bireyler kendilerini geliştirmek ve doğru seçimler yapmak zorundadırlar. Başarı veya başarısızlık, bireyin kendisinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu sistem, ekonomik ve sosyal eşitsizlikleri göz ardı ederek bireysel sorumluluğu vurgulamaktadır.

Dolayısıyla, öğrencilerin akademik başarısızlık algılarını ve bu algıların farklı bilgi alanlarıyla nasıl ilişkilendirildiğini ortaya koyan nitel bir çalışma alana önemli bir katkı sağlayacak ve mevcut literatürü tamamlayacaktır. Bu çalışma, özellikle eğitim alanındaki neoliberal politikalar ile öğrencilerin akademik başarısızlık ve başarı yorumlamaları arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koymayı amaçlamıştır.

Bu nitel araştırma, İstanbul'un en yüksek ve en düşük yaşam kalitesi endekslerine sahip iki farklı ilçesindeki 10. sınıf öğrencileri ile yapılan fenomenolojik görüşmelere dayanmaktadır. Okul türü, ilçe, cinsiyet ve başarı puanına göre farklılaşan toplamda 24 öğrenci ile derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bu öğrenciler seçilen okullarda 10. Sınıfta okuyan toplam 1085 öğrenciden 1048'inin formlarında yer alan demografik bilgileri ve başarısızlık hikayeleri incelenerek ve maksimum çeşitlilik örneklem türü benimsenerek seçilmiştir.

Araştırmanın sonucunda ortaya çıkan bulgular eğitimde uygulanan neoliberal politikaların öğrenciler üzerindeki etkisini pek çok açıdan ortaya koymaktadır.

Piyasa, taleplerini ve ihtiyaçlarını topluma çeşitli kanallar aracılığıyla iletmektedir. Öğrenciler bu mesajları kendileri yorumlamakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda ailelerinden de duymaktadırlar. "Açıkta kalırsın" ifadesi, mevcut pozisyonların dolu olduğunu ve birey

için fırsat kalmadığını ifade eder. Bu terim, tercih ettikleri okullara yeterli puanı alamayan veya mezun olduktan sonra iş bulamayan öğrenciler için sıklıkla kullanılır. Bireyin, "işe yarayan" bir pozisyon elde edememesi, etkili para kazanma imkanlarının olmaması anlamına gelir ve bireyi "açıkta" bırakır.

Bazı öğrenciler, toplumlarının bilgi hiyerarşisini kendi benzersiz yetenekleri pahasına içselleştirip kabul etmişlerdir. Toplum tarafından takdir edilen ancak düşük değer verilen yetenekler, "hobi faaliyetleri" veya "zorunluluklar" olarak görülmüştür. Bir İmam Hatip lisesi öğrencisi, Kur'an okuma yeteneği ile tanınmasına rağmen, "Matematikte ve diğer sayısal derslerde başarısız olduğumdan bunu yapmak zorunda kaldım" demiştir. Başka bir öğrenci, kendi yeteneklerine ve ilgi alanlarına daha uyumlu olan bir denge kurmaya çalışmıştır. Bu öğrenci, hayatındaki dayatmalar ile kendi arzuları arasında bir denge kurma çabasını dile getirmiştir.

Eğitim sistemi tarafından akademik başarısız olarak değerlendirilen öğrenciler, alternatif kariyer yolları arayışına girmektedir. Ancak, akademik başarı şanslarının düşük olduğunu görmelerine rağmen, alternatif bir yola tam anlamıyla adım atmaktan çekinmektedirler. Meslek lisesinde okuyan bir erkek öğrenci, akademik kariyerin önemini kabul ettiğini ancak bu mesleklerde çalışma düşüncesinden nefret ettiğini belirtmiştir. Bu öğrenci, eğitim sistemi içinde kalmanın önemini kabul ettiğini ve avukat olmayı düşündüğünü ifade etmiştir.

Neoliberal politikaların teşvikiyle devlet, okulları merkezi test puanları kullanarak derecelendirmiş ve standartlaşmayı sağlamıştır. Türkiye'de TEOG sistemi ile öğrenciler merkezi sınav sonuçlarına göre lise tercihlerini yapıyorlardı. Bu sınav, öğrencilerin akademik fırsatlarını sınırlamıştır. Katılımcı öğrenciler, bu uygulamanın gelecekleri üzerindeki önemli etkisinin farkında olduklarını ve daha iyi okullara gidememekten dolayı üzüntü ve pişmanlık hissettiklerini belirtmişlerdir.

Bu çalışma, neoliberal politikaların öğrencilerin eğitim tercihleri ve akademik başarısızlık algıları üzerindeki etkisini ortaya koymaktadır. Aileler, çocuklarının toplumda başarılı görülen mesleklere yönelmesini istemekte ve öğrencilerin kendi eğilim ve yeteneklerini göz ardı etmektedirler. Benzer şekilde, öğrenciler de diğer alanlarda başarılı olmalarına rağmen, piyasa talepleri tarafından belirlenen kariyerleri hedeflemektedirler. Bu durum, farklı özelliklere sahip öğrencilerin aynı hedefe ulaşmaya çalışması sonucunu doğurmakta ve belirli grupların başarısızlığına yol açmaktadır. Bu durumun sonucunda başarısızlık yaşayan öğrenciler başarısızlıklarını kişisel bir yetersizlik olarak değerlendirmektedirler.

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# Opinions of Students, Parents and Classroom Teachers on Implementing a Science Course with Activities Based on Multiple Intelligences Theory*

Muhammet Fatih Doğan*, Mehmet Gültekin**

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**Abstract**

This research aims to evaluate the opinions of the students participating in the application, their parents and the classroom teacher about the application process related to the teaching process carried out with the activities within the scope of multiple intelligences theory applications based on daily life problem-solving skills in the primary school fourth-grade science course, which was carried out with the phenomenology model, one of the qualitative research models. The research participants comprised 23 students attending the fourth grade in a public primary school in Istanbul in the 2022-2023 academic year, their parents, and the classroom teacher. Within the scope of the research, a six-week implementation process was carried out with the students in the classroom environment, and the researcher prepared the lesson plans within the scope of the "Our Food" unit. After the implementation, the data were collected through a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher. The research data were analysed using content analysis. As a result of the analysis of the data obtained in the research, it was concluded that the implementation process positively contributed to the students' course achievement, attitudes towards the course and the development of daily life problem-solving skills. In this context, activities based on the theory of multiple intelligences as an effective teaching method for students' cognitive, affective and skill development at the primary school level and in the context of science courses are recommended in line with the research results.

**Keywords:** multiple intelligence, science course, primary students

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## Introduction

In today's "information and technology" age, where scientific and academic knowledge increases exponentially, technological innovations have gained significant momentum, and the impact of science and technological developments is prominent in all areas of our lives, it can be seen that science education has a vital role in terms of the development of society (MEB, 2006). Educational activities related to science enable individuals to understand their environment better and provide them with skills related to creative thinking. Science education also allows individuals to recognise their world and make sense of it correctly. It also develops the individual's logical thinking and problem-solving skills. This enables students to solve the problems they encounter in daily life more efficiently and to control their learning processes. Thus, while increasing students' practical skills for daily life, the development of science skills and learning to learn are provided (Hançer et al., 2003).

Intelligence is a mental ability or skill that originates from human biology and psychology and arises from the capacity to calculate or process information (Gardner, 2006). The theory of multiple intelligences is a student-centred educational approach that offers rich activities and materials compatible with the individual differences and dominant intelligence areas of students and their specific learning styles in this direction, where the teacher is in the position of a guide. It shows educators the differences between students and how they can learn (Baykal, 2005). Multiple intelligences theory is an educational theory developed by Howard Gardner as an alternative perspective on intelligence, who argues that the traditional method of testing intelligence does not capture the wide range of potential people have (Armstrong, 2020). Gardner first explained his theory in his book "Frames of Mind", published in 1983 (Nuzzi, 1997; Gardner, 1999).

According to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence, eight areas of intelligence are innate to every individual and offer options that can support the individual's understanding and learning styles. These include "verbal-linguistic intelligence", "logical-mathematical intelligence", "visual-spatial intelligence", "musical intelligence", "bodily-kinesthetic intelligence", "interpersonal intelligence", "intrapersonal intelligence", and naturalistic intelligence (Türkuzan, 2004). Wilson (2018) explains each intelligence as a transformative process for students' education. However, Gardner (1993) interpreted human intelligence as each student's discovery of their power in teaching. Accordingly, each intelligence defines how students can understand various lessons taught in the classroom. The fact that their strengths are different for each student and the goal of helping students in a group reach their maximum learning potential reveals the necessity for the instructor to carry out studies to diagnose students in the teaching process (Gardner, 2004).

Currently, as a reflection of the student-centred education approach, studies on Gardner's multiple intelligences theory have increased (Kural, 2020). An examination of studies conducted in Turkey and abroad revealed that these studies were carried out in

a broad target group from the preschool period to adulthood and within the scope of many different courses (Çelik Özer, 2010; Koç, 2012; Ermiş, 2012; Durmuş, 2013; Dalbudak Pekdemir, 2014). However, studies generally focus on increasing academic achievement in specific courses or determining the multiple intelligences areas of the relevant target group. The studies carried out in Turkey are generally aimed at foreign language education at the high school and university levels; however, studies conducted within the scope of high school science courses such as physics, chemistry and biology have come to the fore (Yavuz, 2010; Kurt, 2012; Şakir, 2013; Pourfeiz, 2014; Tüysüz, 2015; Hergüner, 2016; Elgün Gündüz, 2017). In addition, domestic and foreign studies on skills carried out with gifted, special needs or preschool children are also included in the literature (Çalışandemir, 2010; Şahlı, 2010; Darga, 2010; Koç, 2012; Şahin Zeteroğlu, 2014). The literature review observed that the number of studies carried out at the primary school level on the multiple intelligences theory in Turkey was more significant than in other countries. The fact that these studies, which were carried out primarily within the scope of the science course, were mainly aimed at determining the intelligence areas of the students and did not focus on the skills expected to be gained by the students in line with the objectives of the science programme, caused the functionality of the theory of multiple intelligences within the scope of the science programme to not be fully revealed.

### *Problem Statement*

According to Gürkan and Gökçe (2000), students' interest in science is relatively high in the first stage of primary education, but this interest decreases in the following years. Since students' attitudes towards science are generally low in Turkey, there has been a decrease in their achievement in science. The emergence of this situation can be thought of as a problem arising from the fact that students are not handled with different intelligence areas (Öngören, 2007). Educators can optimise student education by learning a child's strengths and preferences. This situation increases the value of using the theory of multiple intelligences effectively in daily teaching processes (Adcock, 2014). Research also shows that using teaching activities based on multiple intelligences theory by students in science lessons is more exciting and fun than the current teaching methods and increases academic achievement (Altınsoy, 2011). However, within the scope of the research, it was inferred that evaluating the opinions of students, parents and teachers about the activities related to the theory of multiple intelligences within the framework of the relevant application will provide findings that will allow a general framework to be drawn for the application development process.

### *Importance and Purpose of the Research*

Science includes all branches of science consisting of the knowledge acquired by human beings from examining themselves and their natural environment (Çilenti, 1985). With the rapid development of technology, the importance of science is rapidly increasing in the 21st century. The first aim of education is to raise well-equipped individuals who will keep up with age, research, and questions through critical thinking (Bökeoğlu & Yılmaz,

2005). Among the main objectives of the courses related to science, raising individuals who think, ask, and do comes to the forefront. To achieve these aims, it is necessary to work on teaching ways of learning and to provide the opportunity to apply what has been learned instead of providing students with ready-made information (Gürkan & Gökçe, 1999). Science education allows individuals to recognise the world they live in and their environment while also providing them with creative thinking skills. In this direction, it enables individuals to recognise their world, make sense of it correctly through good communication processes, and develop their logical thinking and problem-solving abilities. This enables students to solve the problems they encounter in daily life more efficiently and to control their learning processes. Thus, students' practical skills for daily life increase when they develop science skills and learn to learn (Hançer et al., 2003).

Gardner (1983) introduced the theory of multiple intelligences to the literature. This theory suggests that individuals have varying intelligence at different levels and that this reveals individuals' learning styles, interests, skills, and tendencies. With this theory, educators have revealed new methods for preparing programmes that emphasise students' differences and strengthen them through the basic principles they use creatively. The theory of multiple intelligence, which enables a student-centred approach, has a vital role in achieving the goals of the science education process (Kurt, 2012).
Individuals differ in mental, psychological, and social aspects as well as physical differences (Kuzgun, 2004). Considering that the essential tools that individuals use to learn and adapt to their environment in daily life are their intelligence and abilities that emerge specific to the individual in line with their differences, it is necessary to organise the teaching processes in line with these parameters (Turgut et al., 2016). Individual differences also play an essential role in determining educational policies. In the face of situations such as the economic structure of society, its goals for the future and the quality of the workforce planned to be trained, it becomes necessary to direct individuals according to their differences in the education process. (Kuzgun, 2004; Aktepe, 2005).
The roles of teachers and students, as well as the curricula from past to present, have changed over time, and in this direction, the aim of creating more efficient learning environments has come to the fore in the teaching process. (Alkan et al., 2013; Deniz, 2019). In this context, the course content applied within the curricula should transform to keep up with the age of the new perspectives gained by the programmes and the expectations of the students. Research shows that students have positive attitudes towards lessons taught in line with lesson plans developed based on the theory of multiple intelligences (Kural, 2020). In this direction, a multidimensional approach to the teaching processes related to multiple intelligences applications carried out within the scope of the science course will provide a better understanding of this change process.
It is well known that in traditional learning environments, teachers do not consider students' prior knowledge and see students as empty structures filled with information about the subject to be covered (Baki, 2008). As the sole responsibility for the delivery of the lesson in these environments lies with the teacher, under the influence of this responsibility, teachers usually only know the answers to questions such as what, how

and why to teach and learn in the teaching process in which they are at the centre, and therefore, they have to be very active. The relevant objectives are generally included in applications related to the theory of multiple intelligences, which rejects the didactic transmission of objective knowledge and its unquestioning acceptance. Instead of teaching the subject directly, the aim is to enable students, individually or as a group, to make sense of their existing knowledge using the teaching tools developed. Research shows that with this new role of the teacher in line with the theory of multiple intelligences, the role of the students has also changed. However, teachers and students have difficulties adapting to the new situation (Gürbüz & Birgin, 2011). In addition, parental involvement is a factor that increases the success of implementing the theory in applications based on multiple intelligences theory (Erdem & Demirel, 2005). In this vein, the opinions of students, parents, and teachers will help us obtain in-depth information about the implementation of the theory.

Therefore, this research will reveal students', parents', and teachers' opinions about applying multiple intelligences theory in primary school science courses. In line with this purpose, questions about the opinions of students, parents, and classroom teachers about the applications of multiple intelligences theory carried out within the scope of the research were sought. In this context, as the problem statement of this research, the question of what the opinions of students, parents and classroom teachers are about science courses carried out in the context of multiple intelligence theory was determined.

## Method

### *Research Model*

This research focuses on the opinions of the students, their parents, and the classroom teacher about the implementation process within the framework of the six-week lesson plan prepared by the researcher based on the theory of multiple intelligences within the scope of the "Our Foods" unit, which is among the units of the fourth-grade science course of primary school. The lesson plans prepared by the researcher were designed to teach the relevant outcomes within the scope of the science course. They included creative drama, storytelling, singing, physical activities, writing activities, logical analyses, mutual communication processes, and internal decision-making stages. The researcher aimed to enable students to use different intelligence areas in teaching processes through these activities. According to the literature, qualitative research methods are the most appropriate methods for obtaining information about individuals' perspectives, opinions, and perceptions (Bell, 1992; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). Accordingly, phenomenology, a qualitative research model, was used in this research. Cases can appear in different forms, such as experience, perception, orientation, concept, and situation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The phenomenological model is defined as a phenomenon in terms of the experiences of individuals or a particular group (Christensen et al., 2014). In this context, a phenomenon is something that is accepted

as existing, true or realised. A phenomenon can be defined as the truth within the scope of the research. In this direction, in case studies, analyses are made on the reality in the nature of the research. Accordingly, in this research, the aim was to explain the process of multiple intelligences theory applications in line with the thoughts and experiences of the participants, including their perceptions.

### *The Role of the Researcher*

In this research, the researcher is involved in more than one role. In this research, the researcher in the role of instructor carried out the preparation of the lesson plans in the background of the research, the implementation of the lesson plans prepared by the researcher, and thus the transfer of knowledge necessary for the acquisition of the relevant outcomes to the students. With the role of guide, the researcher carried out the guidance activities necessary for the use of the data collection tools within the scope of the research in accordance with the purpose of the research and to meet the feedback needs of the participants regarding the problems that arose during the process. The researcher carried out the necessary activities to obtain the findings by creating reports on the behaviours exhibited by the participants during the implementation, the processes put forward, and the implementation of the prepared lesson plans. Finally, the researcher was involved in the research as a participant observer in the research process.

### *Participants of the Research*

Within the scope of the research, a state primary school in the Bağcılar district of Istanbul Province was selected as the school where the research would be conducted. Detailed studies were carried out to determine the school within the scope of the research. In this context, general statistical data were utilised to determine ideal schools. Within the scope of these data, it was given importance that the school where the research was carried out overlapped with the socio-economic and educational characteristics of the population. In this direction, it was aimed that the participants of the study would be typical members of the population. In determining this school, the nature of the research population, the distribution of the characteristics sought within the population and research opportunities were considered. In qualitative research, purposive sampling methods are used for in-depth investigation of situations that are thought to have rich information content (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). In this research, the criterion sampling method, a purposeful sampling method, was used to identify the participants. Considering the purpose of the research, the criteria used to identify the students who participated are given below.

- Being a 4th-grade student in primary school,
- Volunteering to participate in the research,
- Their families allowed them to participate in the research,
- Having problems in line with the aims of the research.

In line with the criteria determined for the research participants, this research consisted of 23 fourth-year students attending a public primary school in the Bağcılar district of Istanbul Province in the autumn term of the 2022-2023 academic year, their parents and the teacher of the class in which they were studying. The participants of the research other than the students consisted of seven families and one classroom teacher.

### *Data Collection Tools*

In this research, semi-structured interview forms were used to collect the data. The interview questions were prepared separately for the students, parents and classroom teachers, and corrections were made after the expert evaluation and the application were carried out. Patton (2014) emphasises the importance of interviews in revealing people's feelings, thoughts, and intentions that we cannot observe directly and in determining people's perspectives on a subject. The interviews revealed a mutual and interactive communication process by asking and answering questions per a predetermined purpose (Stewart & Cash, 1985).

Maxwell (2018) emphasises that interviews focus on three types of questions:

- Questions about the meaning of the activities and events of the people involved in the process,
- Questions connected with the effects of physical and social orientation in the context of these events and activity processes,
- They are process-oriented questions about the occurrence of event and activity processes and the resulting situations of these processes.

Semi-structured interviews reveal a technique in which researchers prepare the questions they plan to ask. However, researchers can change the flow of interviews by directing different questions that vary depending on the interview process or obtaining more detailed answers from the individuals to whom the questions are directed (Türnüklü, 2000). The continuation of semi-structured interviews based on previously prepared interview questions enables semi-structured interviews to reveal more systematic and comparable information (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Qualitative data were used to find a solution to the problem within the scope of the research. These data were collected with the participants from the school where the research was carried out in the autumn of the 2022-2023 academic year, with the activities carried out in the classroom environment within the scope of the "Our Food" unit in the primary school fourth-grade science course programme and the data collection tools used within the scope of the research. The "content analysis" method was used to analyse the collected data.

Data analysis can be defined as the process of exporting the meaning of the data to answer the research questions. Transferring the meaning of the data is a process of interpretation that combines, reduces, and interprets what the participants say with what the researcher sees and reads (Merriam, 2015).

Content analysis is a data analysis method used to analyse written, verbal, and visual communication statements (Cole, 1988). It can produce reproducible and valid results for comprehending texts and providing information from texts (Krippendorff, 1980). Two approaches are used in content analysis: inductive and deductive (Mayring, 2000).

Inductive content analysis enables researchers to create criteria for definitions that align with the answers to the research questions and the theoretical framework. Researchers have attempted to reveal the main themes for the problems in line with the descriptive and detailed data they collected to ensure that the collected data have the structural integrity that contains meaning and to develop a theory in line with these data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). In deductive content analysis, the category structure created in advance for researchers to provide definitions, examples, and coding rules within the scope of all deductive categories is revealed. In this regard, inductive content analysis was used to analyse the data obtained through the data collection tools used in this research.

Within the scope of content analysis carried out within the scope of qualitative data, there are also two theoretical approaches. These are manifest content analysis and latent content analysis. In manifest content analysis, the context is derived from the apparent and literal meanings of words, and these meanings are accepted as they are. In latent content analysis, you apply a more profound, interpretive analysis to extract the underlying meaning from the words or phrases you have chosen to analyse. Both overt and covert qualitative content analysis produce phenomenological explanations that seek to explain people's lived experiences and how they explain these experiences. However, the approach to producing these explanations is different. Explicit content analysis is typically achieved through a deductive, top-down research approach with preexisting studies or theories about your research topic. On the other hand, latent content analysis typically results from an inductive, bottom-up analysis where you begin your study without preconceived categories or theories. This is often because preexisting theory or literature on the topic is sparse. This study utilised latent content analysis in line with inductive content analysis. The latent content analysis extends the explicit analysis to an interpretative level and reveals the implicit meaning that is implied rather than expressed literally. This allows going beneath the surface of the text and revealing what the people quoted in the text say (Catanzaro, 1988; Downe-Walbolt, 1992; Berg, 2001).

The data obtained within the scope of the research were analysed and interpreted using the microanalysis method. In this method, the data are evaluated by reading the data line by line to the finest detail (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). In this context, the data were first divided into sections containing meaning; the conceptual meaning of each section was analysed, and the sections were named and coded. After this stage, the thematic

coding stage was started to reveal the findings. In the thematic coding phase, the data were re-evaluated to determine the similarities and differences between the codes.

The coding process was completed by categorising the codes and identifying similar and different situations between the codes. In this vein, the data defined through the reorganised codes were used to explain the findings.

## Findings

### *Findings Related to Semi-structured Interviews with Students*

The students who participated in the application were asked what they thought about the Science lesson carried out together during the six weeks. All students had positive thoughts about the application process when the answers were evaluated.

- Mehmet: It was very fun; I was never bored. I wish all lessons were like this.
- Büşra: The Science class was delightful. I wish it would never end.
- Deniz: The activities were very nice. We had much fun.
- Özgür: Before you came, we were not doing activities in science class. I understood better when we did activities.
- Caner: It was perfect. Let us perform the activity again.

When the students' answers are evaluated, the activities based on multiple intelligences attract the students' attention in the lessons, and they enjoy performing these activities; however, the students find it more beneficial to teach the lessons with activities in general, and as a result of this benefit, they think that their achievement and attitudes towards the course are positively affected.

Within the scope of the six-week implementation, the students were asked to describe the activities carried out in the lessons and the teaching process. Most students answered this question in line with the relevant unit acquisitions.

- Deniz: We learned about food families, healthy eating, and not overeating junk food.
- Ayşe: We learn about healthy and balanced nutrition and the harm of smoking.
- Mehmet: We learned what we should pay attention to when we buy something. We learned about the TSE certificate.
- Ezgi: We learned that if we eat unhealthy things, we can gain much weight.
- Büşra: We saw food groups, did drama, and sang songs. We learned that we must eat a balanced diet to protect our health.

The students' responses are primarily evaluated in relation to the relevant unit acquisitions and their daily life problem-solving skills.In this vein, activities based on

multiple types of intelligence within the scope of the application are appropriate activities for developing students' daily life problem-solving skills.

The students were asked how they felt about the Science lessons we taught together. When the answers to this question were evaluated, it was seen that the students had a positive attitude towards the lessons.

- Ayşe: It was lovely; I had much fun.
- Deniz: I was thrilled; we learned a lot of new things.
- Mustafa: I would not say I liked science class either, but it is good like this.
- Özgür: I used to get bored at school. Physical education and art classes were fun, but we wrote in maths and science classes. I had much fun doing science lessons with activities. I do not get bored at school anymore.
- Çağdaş: I did not want to come to school very much, but I want to come even if I am sick on the days when there is a science lesson.

The responses of a student named Mustafa, who answered the question, revealed that the application could increase positive attitudes towards science courses. When the responses of students named Özgür and Çağdaş were evaluated, it was revealed that their positive attitudes towards the course also positively affected their attitudes towards school. When the students' responses were evaluated in general, all the students used positive keywords such as "fun", "beautiful", "enjoyable", and "instructive" for the application process. In this vein, lesson plans with activities based on multiple types of intelligence have positive attitudes towards the course and school.

The students were asked to state which skills they thought they developed through the activities within the scope of the applications. Some students answered this question within the scope of teaching methods and techniques.

- Mustafa: I could not do the lessons, but the activities are perfect; I can do them when there are activities.
- Deniz: We learned how to do drama.
- Göksu: We learned about drama and brainstorming.

A significant portion of the students provided answers related to daily life problems.

- Caner: When we go to the supermarket, I buy nothing without looking at the packaging.
- Erdem: In the supermarket, I examine everything first.
- Zahra: I pay attention to what I eat now. I eat more healthy and child-friendly foods.
- Deniz: I warn my friends when they eat unhealthy things.

When the students' answers are evaluated, it can be said that the teaching plan carried out with activities based on multiple intelligences can also improve students' skills in

course methods and techniques that are not included much in the lessons taught with traditional methods. In addition, problems in activities associated with daily life reveal a significant improvement in students' skills, especially in daily life problems.

The students were asked how the activities affected their learning of the subjects within the scope of the "Our Food" unit. All students stated that the science lessons taught with activities based on multiple types of intelligence over six weeks positively affected their learning within the scope of the related unit. The answers given by the students, Eda, Ömer and Mehmet, to the questions are below.

- Eda: It is enjoyable to teach with activities. It helped me understand the subjects better.
- Ömer: I did not understand science subjects very well before. In the lessons we had with you, everything was straightforward. I understood very well.
- Mehmet: I am very bored in lessons, especially science class, but your activities were fun. They helped me learn better.

The student named Ezgi answered the question and stated that she thought the lesson taught with activities based on multiple types of intelligence was more suitable for other students and herself.

- Ezgi: I think doing activities in the lesson is better for our learning. I learned the subjects better.

The student named Deniz, who answered the question, revealed that he thought the homework assignments within the scope of the application were more valuable than the homework assignments given to them before.

- Deniz: I was always sleepy while doing homework. However, the homework you gave me was better. I understood the subjects better.

In line with the students' common perceptions, it can be said that the in-class and out-of-class activities carried out in the science course, which was taught with activities based on multiple intelligence, enabled the students to understand the topics covered in the unit better. The data obtained through the evaluation forms about the students' course achievement also support this. However, the students used positive expressions intensively about the application process. This situation reveals an essential idea about the student's interest and attitudes towards the activities.

The students were asked to compare the activities prepared within the scope of multiple intelligences theory in which they participated during the unit with the traditional teaching activities they performed in other lessons. All students revealed differences between the activities in the science course and other courses. What the students named Büşra, Mehmet, Eda and Deniz, who answered the question, said about this issue is given below.

- Büşra: Before you came, we did not do any activities in science class. Now we do activities in science classes.
- Mehmet: We were always solving tests in class, and in Turkish, we were dictating. It is not very interesting.
- Eda: I wish every lesson were like this. Our teacher does not perform any activities.
- Deniz: Our teacher reads from the book, and we write in the notebook. We cannot learn anything.

Caner and Nil, like Deniz, associated the differences in the teaching of the lessons with course achievement.

- Caner: There are no activities in math classes. We permanently solve tests. I do not understand anything.
- Nil: Sometimes we also do activities in English class. That is why my English class is also good.

The students Ezgi and Göksu explained the differences in teaching the courses, citing their interests and attitudes towards them.

- Ezgi: I like Science class very much now, but I would not say I like other classes. Science class is enjoyable.
- Göksu: I like science lessons very much because we do activities in them, but in other lessons, we always write. That is why I do not like them that much.

The students who responded to the question stated that the previous science and other courses were generally taught using traditional processes. For this reason, they revealed that science courses taught with activities based on multiple types of intelligence differ from other courses. They stated that this difference affected their course achievement and attitudes towards the course. In this vein, conducting a science course with activities based on multiple types of intelligence positively affects students' academic achievement and attitudes towards the course in the context of their self-evaluations.

The students were asked whether the application process we carried out within the scope of the science course affected their other courses. Göksu and Mehmet answered the question, stating that they applied the new methods and techniques they learned within the scope of the application in their other courses.

- Göksu: We made a drama for our teacher in an English class; she liked it very much.
- Mehmet: I did not understand how to make a concept map; now I can do it quickly.

The student named Mustafa, who responded to the question, answered the question by evaluating it in terms of his attitude towards other courses.

- Mustafa: I was afraid to raise my finger in class before you came. Now, I raise my finger in every class.

Ömer, who answered the question, evaluated it in terms of attitude and stated that they participated more in similar activities within the scope of other courses.

- Ömer: I did not want to get up on the blackboard before, but if our teacher organises a good activity like you, I would like to participate.

A significant portion of the students who responded to the question evaluated the question within the scope of activities. It stated that activities similar to those in the science course are not carried out in other courses. In this vein, students' expectations about activities in other courses are essential regarding their attitudes towards other courses. For this reason, it can be said that the activities carried out during the implementation positively affected the students' attitudes in the science course, unlike other courses. However, this effect was not observed in other courses due to the continued use of traditional teaching methods. This positive change in student attitudes could not be transferred to other courses.

Students were asked to indicate whether they could transfer what they learned within the scope of the application to their daily lives. Students Zehra and Erdem who answered the question stated that they examined the nutritional value of the products while shopping in supermarkets.

- Zehra: I now read all the packages at the supermarket. I wonder what is inside the things I buy.
- Erdem: I look at what is in the chocolates. They are all very sweet.

Eda and Cansu, who answered the question, also warned their families about this issue.

- Eda: I told my mom she should not buy anything without reading the packaging. Sometimes, she forgets. I always remind her.
- Cansu: Some of the articles are too small; I cannot read them. I told my mom, who reads them to me before I buy them, not to buy the harmful ones.

The student named Eda also stated that she started drinking mineral water to meet her body's mineral needs and that she recommended this to her family.

- Eda: Mineral water has the most minerals in the mineral family. I ask my dad for it. We all drink it, and my brother drinks it, too.

Göksu, Fatma and Ezgi stated that they go to the market with their families and now pay more attention to the products there.

- Göksu: When I go to the market with my mom, I check everything we buy. We do not buy the rotten ones.
- Fatma: I go to the market to help my mother. I tell her that we should ensure all the fruit and vegetables are fresh.

It was also observed that the student named Ezgi expressed an opinion on food waste during Sunday shopping.

- Ezgi: We should buy as much as we need in the market. I warn my mom that if we buy too much, it might rot at home, so we do not buy more.

Caner is another student who expressed an opinion on food waste within the scope of this question.

- Caner: I pay attention to the expiration dates of what we buy. If there is expired food at home, I say that we should not eat it. We should eat everything before it spoils. However, we should buy as much as we need so they do not spoil.

Caner and most of the students stated that they paid more attention to the expiration dates of the products.

- Eda: I check the expiry date on everything before I buy it.
- Zahra: I pay attention to the expiration dates.
- Mehmet: I pay attention to expiry dates in supermarkets.

Within the scope of the question, many students expressed their opinions in line with their orientations about healthy and balanced nutrition.

- Eda: I do not buy things like crisps and cola anymore. They are all very harmful.
- Mustafa: I eat fruit in my diet but have not eaten it before.
- Nil: I eat a small quantity of everything. If I overeat, I can become obese, and my health can deteriorate.

The student named Mehmet expressed an opinion about smoking and healthy nutrition.

- Mehmet: I tell my mom that we should eat things that are good for our health. I told my dad that he should not smoke because we might get sick.

Again, Zehra and Murat also had opinions about the harm of smoking.

- Zehra: I told mom not to smoke. She is poisoning herself and us.
- Murat: I tell my mom and dad that smoking around children is a terrible thing.

When the answers given to the question asked to evaluate the students' ability to associate what they learned within the scope of the application with their daily lives were evaluated, almost all of the students increased their skill levels for the problems they may

encounter in their daily lives within the scope of the "Our Food" unit. This situation was reflected in their behaviours.

*Findings Related to Semi-structured Interviews with Parents*

The parents of the students who participated in the application were asked to indicate whether their children shared anything about the application process carried out in science lessons. All parents stated that their children shared their process in the Science lesson with their families at home.

- Mrs Asiye: Sometimes, she tells them what they did when she returns from school. However, she started to talk about the science lesson all day. She always talks about the activities you do.
- Mrs Gül: He always talks about science at home. We do drama together at home.
- Mrs Aysun: Normally, he used to talk about what he did at school all day, but currently, he talks more about what he did in science class. When there is something he likes at school, he talks about it all the time.
- Mrs Hatice: Our son is not very talkative about his lessons. However, he has always started talking about science lessons.
- Mrs Ayşegül: We review what they do at school daily. We always talk about science lessons. I know what is done in the classroom.
- Mrs Emine: His father and I always ask him how he is doing at school. Ours is quiet. However, he currently has a particular interest in science lessons.
- Mrs Burcu: While doing homework, we discuss what she does in class and during breaks. The subject always comes to science class.

When the parents' answers are evaluated, the students constantly and mostly willingly share the processes carried out within the scope of the application with their families with positive words. This situation can be seen as an indicator of students' positive attitudes towards the course.

Parents were asked to share their observations about the implementation process's effects on their children's daily lives.

- Mrs Asiye: She always talks about nutrients while cooking. He told me we must cook with protein and not too much fat.
- Mrs Gül: He has been cautious about what we eat. I used to tell him not to overeat junk food, but now I feel he is being careful, too, and he says so.
- Mrs Aysun: These days, we read the packages of everything we buy at home, check the nutritional values, and start sorting our purchases according to food families. We constantly do quiz competitions, asking which food family this product belongs to.
- Mrs Hatice: I have noticed some changes, especially since he started paying more attention to health. He banned smoking at home.

- Mrs Ayşegül: He asks market vendors questions. Questions such as: Is this fresh, when did it arrive? She also tells me about it.
- Mrs Emine: She tells her brother what she learned in science class like a teacher. We are making a TV programme, which we are combining with a game.
- Mrs Burcu: She is cautious about what we buy from the market and the market. She mentions that if we shop a lot, we might waste. He also pays more attention to what he eats.

The parents' responses revealed that the students can use the daily life problem-solving skills they are expected to acquire within the scope of the application within the unit in their daily lives.

The parents were asked how they thought that the science course we taught with their children affected their success in the course.

- Mrs Asiye: I think he understands the subjects better with the activities. He does not have difficulty doing science homework.
- Mrs Gül: I notice that she is more confident. She answers my questions at length. We also answered all the questions in the exercise book. I think his success has increased even more.
- Mrs Aysun: She studies more when she likes her lessons. He started to like science lessons very much. This helps him understand better.
- Mrs Hatice: I think it is positive because we do our homework with fun. Usually, we would have much trouble. We also talk about it in the parent group. All parents are delighted.
- Mrs Ayşegül: I think her success in her lessons has increased. She does her lessons more willingly. Especially science lessons. He does not tire me out.
- Mrs Emine: We have problems in lessons, but Science has improved in the last few weeks. The teacher also said there was improvement.
- Mrs Burcu: I think he understood the lessons better, mainly thanks to the activities. He is already a brilliant student, but sometimes he cannot devote himself to the lessons. I saw that the activities were helpful, and it will get better.

When the parents' responses are evaluated, the students' course achievement increases in a way that the parents can observe in addition to other measurement tools.

Parents were asked how the six-week implementation process affected their children's interest and attitudes towards the science course.

- Mrs Asiye: Our student is hardworking. However, he often becomes bored while doing homework. I think science activities increase his interest in homework. He starts to tell us about his science homework without us telling him.
- Mrs Gül: I think he is more interested in science. He was not like this before, but I can see he likes the activities very much, which is good for us.

- Mrs Aysun: We had more problems with the school than with the lessons. Children do not like school very much. It is as if we send them to school by force. However, I observed that he loved science class very much. He waits all week for Wednesday (when weekly practices are carried out).
- Mrs Hatice: He talks more about what was done in science class. I have never heard him speak badly; he always talks well. I can also see that he makes more effort.
- Mrs Ayşegül: I can see the effect of the activities very well. I noticed that he started to like the lesson.
- Mrs Emine: What we want the most is for him to like school more and to be engaged in his lessons. He is a brilliant child, but he says he does not like school and nothing else. Science class is not like this. I can see that he is very interested in science now. I hope it will continue like this.
- Mrs Burcu: He likes his teacher and his friends, but the important thing is that he also likes his lessons. Since you came, I can see that he likes his lessons more. He goes to school more eagerly.

The parents' answers reveal that implementing a six-week course with activities based on multiple intelligences positively affected the students' attitudes towards the science course.

*Findings Related to the Semi-structured Interview with the Classroom Teacher*

The teacher of the class where the implementation was carried out was asked how he/she thought the Science implementation affected the students' course achievement. The classroom teacher stated that the increase in students' course achievement could be evaluated with different measurement tools.

- Classroom Teacher: It varies from student to student, but I have to say at the very beginning that I have seen that the students' success in the course has increased with this practice. I am not saying this only about exam results or exercises, which can sometimes make it difficult for students to reveal their achievements. In particular, exercise books.

The classroom teacher explained the measurement tools on which she based her opinion about the increase in students' course success.

- Classroom Teacher: The evaluation forms you use in practice are beneficial. I also ask such questions to the students in the lessons. However, I realised I was pushing myself and the students regarding exam questions. The work that students perform in lessons and for homework is also important. The most important thing is my observations of the students. As a teacher, I see that students have a good command of the subject covered in the lesson. All these factors increase course success.

When the classroom teacher's response was evaluated, it was revealed that the application increased the students' academic achievement. The classroom teacher also observed this situation using different methods.

The classroom teacher was asked about the students' current attitudes towards school and lessons and how she thought the implementation process affected the students' attitudes towards the science course. The classroom teacher stated that the students initially had a negative attitude towards school and listed the reasons for this.

- Classroom Teacher: Students' attitudes towards lessons vary. In addition, I can say that they are generally negative. There are many factors affecting this situation. First, students have prejudices against the school. This also negatively affects their attitudes towards school and lessons. We are trying to overcome this. However, the greatest obstacle we face is the curriculum. The curriculum allows us to provide students with information. It is impossible to go around this. Because there is not enough time for anything. Monotonous education causes students to become bored. This feeds their prejudices.

The classroom teacher stated that the current curriculum did not allow them to implement alternative teaching practices. Thus, they could not use different methods or approaches with students.

- Classroom Teacher: We cannot perform such activities in the classroom. Most of the time, our lessons are spent trying to keep up with the curriculum. This causes students to become bored. I can understand this from their looks.

The classroom teacher stated that the six-week implementation, which included activities based on multiple types of intelligence, positively affected the students' attitudes towards the course. She thought this was due to the activities carried out during the implementation.

- Classroom Teacher: Regarding the Science lessons you did, I can see that the students' attitudes towards the lesson improved more than I expected. Yes, I expected it to be better, but not this much. The most important reason for this is related to activities. Students were always able to be in the lesson. Instead of telling students to "sit down", telling them to "get up and show us" affects them. They can express themselves. This causes them to take ownership of the lesson. They can give all their attention to the lesson.

In line with the classroom teacher's opinions, it was revealed that the current curriculum hurt students' interest and attitudes towards the lessons; however, the science application carried out with activities based on multiple types of intelligence had a positive effect on students' interest and attitudes towards the lessons because it allowed them to express themselves in different ways.

The classroom teacher was asked which skills she thought were developed in the students with the activities carried out in the science course during the implementation. The classroom teacher especially emphasised communication skills in this regard.

- Classroom Teacher: I have observed an improvement in students' communication skills, and I think this is because they are allowed to express themselves. In the lessons we do in the form of question-answer, there is one correct answer to a question. You either know this answer correctly or incorrectly. In your activities, students encountered questions with more than one correct answer. I can see that their communication skills improve as they can express their thoughts.

The classroom teacher stated that apart from communication skills, she also observed that students' skills towards classroom rules increased.

- Classroom Teacher: They have also become better about classroom and lesson rules. We make much effort to help them respect each other's right to speak, obey orders, and clean the classroom. Instead of being rules to be obeyed, these were given by doing – experiencing the activities, which affected the students even more.

In line with the classroom teacher's responses, the application positively affects students' classroom skills, such as communication and adaptation.

The classroom teacher was asked whether she observed a difference in the students' daily lives through the implementation process and the unit outcomes. In this direction, the classroom teacher shared her observations about the feeding hours.

- Classroom Teacher: I observed that they applied them one-to-one in the lesson, but the most important thing was that I saw examples of this outside the lesson. I can give nutrition as an example. Usually, they were forbidden to eat junk food, but no matter how much we told them, they could not follow this rule. Now I see that they have dialogues with each other about healthy nutrition. I also heard this from my parents.

The classroom teacher stated that the students also associated these skills with other lessons and observed this during break times.

- Classroom teacher: Balanced nutrition is also on the agenda in other lessons. Students have internalised this. Even during breaks, I saw them reading the nutritional value of the fruit juice they drank to each other.

In line with the classroom teacher's opinions, it was revealed that the students could transform the daily life problem-solving skills that they were expected to have within the scope of the unit outcomes into behaviours in the school environment.

The classroom teacher was asked to provide feedback from the students regarding the applications carried out within the scope of the science course.

- Classroom Teacher: The students always say that they have much fun. I already notice this, too. The lessons are very lively.

The classroom teacher stated that the students also wanted other lessons to be taught with activities.

- Classroom Teachers: They want to perform activities such as science in all lessons. Sometimes, they even get up and show an example of an activity.

The responses of the classroom teachers show that the students' attitudes towards the course are positive. The students are interested in and have positive attitudes towards the activities.

Another evaluation of the implementation process by the classroom teacher is given below.

- Classroom Teacher: When I first saw the lesson plans and even when we started the lessons, I thought this subject might not be completed. However, I observed a very efficient implementation process that went in the opposite direction of my expectations. There was enough time for all activities. If a well-planned lesson process is implemented, our problems related to the curriculum will be solved.

In line with the classroom teacher's evaluation, the lesson plans within the application's scope are appropriate and can help students acquire the relevant outcomes.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In the teaching process carried out with activities based on multiple intelligences in the science course, a six-week teaching process was planned by preparing activities for different areas of intelligence within the scope of the "Our Food" unit, which is among the fourth-grade units of primary school. After the teaching process, the opinions of the students who participated in the application, the parents of these students and the classroom teacher about the application process were collected through semi-structured interviews. The conclusions reached within the scope of the findings obtained as a result of the research, the discussion within the scope of the relevant literature and the suggestions related to the research process are given below.

According to the research results, it was concluded that applying multiple intelligences theory in primary school science courses positively affected students' success in science courses, their comprehension of course subjects and their practical learning experience.

The studies conducted by Gürçay and Eryılmaz (2005) with ninth-grade secondary school students in a physics course, Yıldırım and Tarım (2008) with fifth-grade primary school students in a mathematics course, and Gülfırat Kıbrız (2016) with fourth-grade primary school students in a social studies course also supported this result. According to the results of studies in the literature, teaching based on the theory of multiple intelligences and the use of activities based on multiple intelligences in lessons positively affect students' course achievement compared to the methods and activities in traditional and current programmes (Köroğlu et al., 2001; Balım et al., 2004; Işık et al., 2007; Alaz, 2009; Altınsoy, 2011; Gün, 2012; Aydın, 2015; Şahan, 2018; Kural, 2020). This situation supports the results of the research. In addition, this typical result obtained in studies conducted in different courses and units, as well as in different grade levels and age groups, reveals the importance of using multiple intelligences theory-based teaching and activities for all courses and all grade levels in the curriculum. In addition, the results related to the fact that the application of different methods, techniques, and approaches for student achievement supported by the theory of multiple intelligences significantly increases the effects of these methods, techniques, and approaches on course achievement, which are also considered necessary.

Another study concluded that applying multiple intelligences theory in a primary school science course positively affected students' interest in and attitudes towards the science course. When the findings obtained within the scope of the research were evaluated, it was seen that the activities based on multiple types of intelligence enabled the students to be happy during the lesson process, to have fun in the lessons, to enjoy the lessons, to be excited about the lessons and to participate willingly in the activities included in the lessons. In addition, the implementation process effectively improved students' self-confidence and self-efficacy perceptions. The studies conducted by Bümen (2001) with eighth-grade primary school students within the scope of the Citizenship and Human Rights course, Hamurlu (2007) with ninth-grade secondary school students within the scope of the English course and Atik (2010) with fourth-grade primary school students within the scope of the science course supported this result. According to the research results obtained in the literature, activities based on the theory of multiple intelligences positively affect students' interest and attitudes towards courses (Balım et al., 2004; Üngören, 2007; Yıldırım & Tarım, 2008; Kutluca et al., 2009; Beyazıt, 2009; Baş, 2010; Altınsoy, 2011; Gün, 2012; Aydın, 2015; Nasri et al., 2021). This situation supports the results of this research. In addition, this typical result obtained in studies conducted in different courses and units, as well as in different grade levels and age groups, reveals the importance of including more activities based on the theory of multiple intelligences in all courses and all grade levels in the curriculum.

In this research, it was also concluded that students associated the subjects they learned with their daily lives and applied them in their daily lives through activities prepared based on daily life problem-solving skills. Research in the literature has shown that activities based on the theory of multiple intelligences contribute to the development of different types of skills for students (Talbot, 2004; Lin & Xie, 2009; Çayır, 2011; Torreon & Sumayang, 2021). However, no similar research in the literature investigates the effect of lessons carried out with activities based on the theory of multiple intelligences

evaluated within the scope of the research on students' daily life problem-solving skills. For this reason, it is thought that this research will fill an essential gap in the field.
In this context, it is recommended that educators use activities based on the theory of multiple intelligences as an effective teaching method for the cognitive, affective, and skill development of students at the primary school level and in the context of science courses as well as at other grade levels, age groups, teaching levels, and courses.

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## Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Zekâ, insan biyolojisinden ve psikolojisinden kaynaklanan, hesaplama veya bilgiyi işleme kapasitesine yönelik olarak ortaya çıkan zihinsel yetenek veya beceriyi tanımlamaktadır. Çoklu zekâ kuramı, öğrenci merkezli, öğrencilerde bireysel farklılıklara ve baskın zekâ alanlarına ve bu doğrultuda kendilerinin özgül öğrenme biçimlerine uyumlu zengin aktivite ve materyaller sunan, öğretmenin rehber konumunda olduğu, öğrencilerin farklılıklarını ve ne şekilde öğrenebileceklerini eğitimcilere gösteren bir eğitim yaklaşımıdır. Gardner tarafından geliştirilmiş olan Çoklu Zekâ Kuramı'na göre, her bireyde doğuştan gelen, bireyin anlama ve öğrenme stillerini destekleyebilecek seçenekler sunan sekiz zekâ alanı vardır. Bunlar "sözel-dilsel zekâ", "mantıksal-matematiksel zekâ", "görsel-uzamsal zekâ", "müzikal-ritmik zekâ", "bedensel-kinestetik zekâ", "kişilerarası-sosyal zekâ", "içsel-özedönük zekâ" ve doğacı zekâdır. Geçmişten günümüze öğretim programlarının yansıra öğretmen ve öğrenci rollerinin de zaman içerisinde değiştiği ve bu doğrultuda günümüzde daha verimli öğrenme ortamlarının oluşturulması amacının öğretim sürecinde ön plana çıktığı görülmektedir. Bu kapsamda öğretim programları dahilinde uygulanan ders içeriklerinin de programların kazandığı yeni bakış açıları ve öğrencilerin beklentileri dahilinde çağa ayak uyduracak şekilde bir dönüşüm sürecinden geçirilmesi gerekliliği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda fen bilimler dersi kapsamında gerçekleştirilen çoklu zekâ uygulamaları ile ilgili öğretim süreçlerinin çok boyutlu bir biçimde ele alınması bu değişim sürecinin daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlayacaktır. İlkokul dördüncü sınıf fen bilimleri dersinde çoklu zekâ kuramı uygulamaları kapsamında gerçekleştirilen etkinlikler ile yürütülen öğretim süreci ile ilgili olarak uygulamaya katılan öğrencilerin, bu öğrencilerin velilerinin ve sınıf öğretmeninin uygulama süreci ile ilgili görüşlerini değerlendirmeyi amaçlayan bu araştırma nitel araştırma modellerinden olgu bilim modeliyle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın katılımcılarını İstanbul'daki bir devlet ilkokulunda 2022-2023 öğretim yılında dördüncü sınıfa devam eden 23 öğrenci ile onların velileri ve sınıf öğretmeni oluşturmuştur. Araştırma kapsamında Fen bilimleri dersinde çoklu zekâya dayalı etkinlikler ile yürütülen öğretim sürecinde ilkokul dördüncü sınıf üniteleri arasında yer alan "Besinlerimiz" ünitesi kapsamında farklı zekâ alanlarına yönelik olarak etkinlikler hazırlanarak altı haftalık öğretim süreci planlanmıştır. Gerçekleştirilen öğretim süreci sonrasında uygulamaya katılan öğrencilerin, bu öğrencilerin velilerinin ve sınıf öğretmeninin uygulama süreci ile ilgili düşünceleri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri içerik analizi ile çözümlenmiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre İlkokul Fen Bilimleri dersinde çoklu zekâ kuramı uygulamalarının öğrencilerin Fen Bilimleri ders başarısına, ders konularını kavramalarına ve etkili bir öğrenme yaşantısı geçirmelerine olumlu yönde etki ettiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmanın bir diğer sonucuna göre İlkokul Fen Bilimleri dersinde çoklu zekâ kuramı uygulamalarının öğrencilerin Fen Bilimleri dersine yönelik ilgi ve tutumlarına olumlu yönde etki ettiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında

elde edilen bulgular değerlendirildiğinde, çoklu zekâya dayalı etkinliklerin öğrencilerin ders sürecinde mutlu olmalarını, derslerde eğlenceli vakit geçirmelerini, derslerden keyif almalarını, dersler ile ilgili heyecan duymalarını ve derslerde yer verilen etkinliklere istekle katılmalarını sağladığı görülmüştür. Bununla birlikte uygulama sürecinin öğrencilerin öz-güven ve öz-yeterlik algılarını geliştirmede etkili olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Araştırmada ayrıca öğrencilerin günlük yaşam problemleri çözme becerileri temelli olarak hazırlanan olan etkinlikler yoluyla öğrendikleri konuları günlük yaşamlarıyla ilişkilendirdikleri ve günlük yaşamlarında uyguladıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bu kapsamda çoklu zekâ kuramına dayalı etkinliklerin öğrencilerin gerek bilişsel gerekse duyuşsal ve beceri gelişimleri için ilkokul kademesinde ve fen bilimleri dersi bağlamında olduğu kadar diğer sınıf düzeyleri, yaş grupları, öğretim kademeleri ve derslerde de etkili bir öğretim yöntemi olarak kullanılması araştırma sonuçları doğrultusunda eğitimcilere önerilmektedir.

***Ethics Committee Approval:*** The ethics committee approval for this study was obtained from Anadolu University.

***Informed Consent:*** Informed consent was obtained from all of participants.

***Peer-review:*** This study was peer-reviewed.

***Contribution of Authors:*** The authors contributed equally to this study.

***Conflict of Interests:*** The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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# Identification and Elimination of Misconceptions in Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education*

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to determine the misconceptions that may arise in the training of prospective primary school student teachers regarding Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education (HRDCE) and consider how activities that eliminate such misconceptions could be created and applied. This study utilizes a form of action research which was conducted on 31 pre-service primary class teachers. Data was collected through concept definition forms, student diaries, focus group interviews, and activity sheets. The collected data was then analyzed using content analysis. It was concluded from the results obtained from the research findings that most of the students had misconceptions about the basic concepts, but that the activities applied eliminated the misconceptions and improved the learning and teaching process. As it was determined that students were positive about the expressed positive opinions and found the applications efficient, it is recommended that such concept teaching techniques be utilized in the lessons and that lesson plans be prepared following an application-oriented system.

**Keywords:** Human rights and democratic citizenship education, Action research, Primary school teacher candidates, Misconceptions

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## Introduction

The purpose of teaching Life Sciences and Human Rights, Citizenship, and Democracy in Social Studies at primary school is for the children to learn how to be citizens in a democratic society, to be aware of and exercise their rights and responsibilities, to assimilate various values and make them part of their lives, and to recognize the relationship networks between societies. However, some of the concepts taught in the process, such as democracy, rights, freedom, equality, justice, citizenship, duty, responsibility, and sovereignty, may be rather abstract for the cognitive development level of these children.

Concepts, which constitute part of the experiences gained in the interaction of emotion, thought, and action between people, can be defined as being various forms of knowledge that enable understanding of the world and the realization of communication between people (Ülgen, 1996). In regard to expecting classroom teachers to be able to teach these concepts, one prerequisite must be that the teachers first fully comprehend the concepts themselves. For this prerequisite to be achieved, any prospective teacher needs to have obtained accurate and scientific knowledge from the courses they take during their undergraduate education, in which the basic concepts in the courses are learnt and missing learning and misconceptions are identified and eliminated.
Conceptual learning is an active cognitive process that occurs not through rote memorization, but by meaningfully integrating information into one's mental schemas. In this process, individuals relate new information to their pre-existing concepts, and meaningful learning takes place through this association (Ausubel, 1968). Bruner (1960) emphasized that concepts are constructed through students' abilities to classify and generalize and highlighted the critical role of discovery learning in conceptual development. However, students' prior knowledge about concepts is often incorrect or incomplete, leading to the formation of misconceptions (Driver, Guesne, & Tiberghien, 1985). According to the theory of conceptual change, individuals reconstruct such misconceptions by comparing them with new information, through a process of cognitive conflict (Vosniadou, 2002; Duit & Treagust, 2003).

According to the literature, classroom teachers generally believe that the acquisition from an early age of abstract concepts such as human rights, citizenship, rights, justice, law, equality, reconciliation, and democracy, will contribute positively to the individual (Akçeşme & Kurtdede Fidan, 2021). Classroom teachers are also seen to have a positive attitude towards students' learning about human rights and democracy (Merey & İşler, 2018).

However, when the studies on concept teaching for pre-service teachers in the literature are examined, it can be seen that such training mostly focuses on science and mathematics (Akbaba Dağ, 2009; Başaran Uğur, 2018; Baygeldi, 2023; Demirci, 2003; Dönmez, 2011; Eren, 2019; İhtiyar Şahin, 2023; Karakuş, 2023; Kınık Topalsan,

2015; Sezgin, 2020; Şemet, 2023; Uygun, 2023; Yıldırım, 2010; Zeybek, 2007). These studies particularly focus on the difficulties students encounter in learning advanced and counter-intuitive concepts. Conceptual change is not limited to the natural sciences; rather, it is relevant across a wide range of disciplines, from mathematics and biology to history and gender studies. The number of studies which focus on the teaching of basic concepts that is required for the teaching of the Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education (HRDCE) course for student teachers who have not yet started their profession is seen to be quite limited.

When the studies in the literature on misconceptions of the basic concepts that can be used in the HRDCE course are examined, it is seen that student teachers often have a limited understanding of the concepts involved. This can lead to misconceptions, a tendency to use more everyday expressions instead of scientific language when defining concepts, and the confusion and interchangeable use of related concepts (Alkar & Yılmaz Derin, 2023; Ertuğrul, 2023; Kılıç, 2015).

When the studies on eliminating the misconceptions identified in the basic concepts that can be used in the HRDCE course were examined, it was seen that the application of concept teaching techniques to the lessons was effective in eliminating students' misconceptions, improving the teaching process, increasing the retention of information, and ensuring that the definitions made by students after lessons structured using concept teaching techniques were more understandable and scientific (Akşit, 2016; Dere & Aktaşlı, 2019; Kılıçaslan, 2021; Kürümlüoğlu, 2019; Namlı Altıntaş & Yıldırım, 2017; Taşkıran, 2023). It has also been observed that students have fun in lessons supported by concept teaching techniques. Furthermore, not only do they tend to like and find the activities engaging, but they also believe that they make the lesson more efficient (Taşkıran, 2023; Kılıçaslan, 2021; Akpınar, 2019; Akşit, 2016).

This study focuses on determining the possible misconceptions of pre-service classroom teachers of the HRDCE course taught in the undergraduate program of primary teaching at a state university, and the improving of the educational activities by the creation of an action plan to eliminate these misconceptions. At the same time, it is hoped that expressing the opinions and suggestions of pre-service primary school teachers on the applied action plans will allow the deficiencies and problems that may be overlooked in the plan to be noticed, and thus provide an opportunity to improve the process. Based on this aim, the following questions were asked:

1. What misconceptions do student teachers have during the HRDCE course, which is a requirement of the undergraduate primary class teaching education program?
2. To what extent were the misconceptions of the student teachers eliminated by the activities carried out within the course of research?
3. How do primary school student teachers feel about the activities carried out within the course of research?

## Method and Design

An action research design was adopted to attain the above aims. Action research is a systematic, orderly, and cyclical process of defining the problem, collecting and analyzing data, creating an action plan, and finally implementing the action plan and sharing the findings (Johnson, 2019; Mcniff et al., 1996). The approach involves defining a problem, solving it, and then evaluating the researcher's practices, observations, or possible aspects of the problem in terms of how successful the results are (Dinkelman, 1997). Berg (2001) classifies action research into three types: technical/scientific/collaborative, practical/collaborative/deliberative, and emancipatory/developmental/critical action research.

Since the researchers in this study were also practitioners, a fourth type, in which 'the practitioner is effectively the researcher', was employed in this research. This approach involves the researcher(s) collecting data on the identified problem while simultaneously carrying out the practice (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

### Participants and the Role of the Researcher and the Working Environment

Criterion sampling is a purposive sampling technique chosen in accordance with the purpose of the research (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). This approach was adopted due to the researchers taking criteria which they had previously determined as being a reference point in the selection of the participant group. The study group consisted of 31 student teachers who had expressed their willingness to participate in the study while taking the HRDCE course during the 2022-2023 academic year of the Department of Classroom Teaching at the Faculty of Education in a state university in Türkiye. This faculty offers facilities such as technology-equipped classrooms, individual special education service units, modern computer laboratories with an internet connection, a science laboratory, an equipped reading room, seminar rooms, and conference halls. The research was carried out in a classroom with a smart board with an internet connection, a whiteboard, and a green board. A photograph of the classroom where the research was conducted is given in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*The Classroom in Which the Research Was Conducted*



The researchers participated in the research process by determining the basic concepts to be covered in the course and then explaining the purpose of the study to the trainee teachers. Two researchers were actively involved in the study. The first researcher designed and implemented the instructional process with the pre-service teachers, including planning the sessions and preparing the teaching materials. The second researcher participated as a non-participant observer, taking detailed field notes and providing supervisory support throughout the implementation.

This dual-role structure was intentionally designed to minimize potential researcher bias by balancing insider facilitation with external observation. During the data analysis phase, both researchers independently coded the qualitative data and engaged in a comparison process to ensure intercoder reliability. These strategies contributed to the methodological transparency and trustworthiness of both the intervention and the overall research process.

At the beginning of the above-mentioned semester, the researchers generated preliminary data which led to the preparation of teaching activities and materials before implementing them along with other course content and materials.

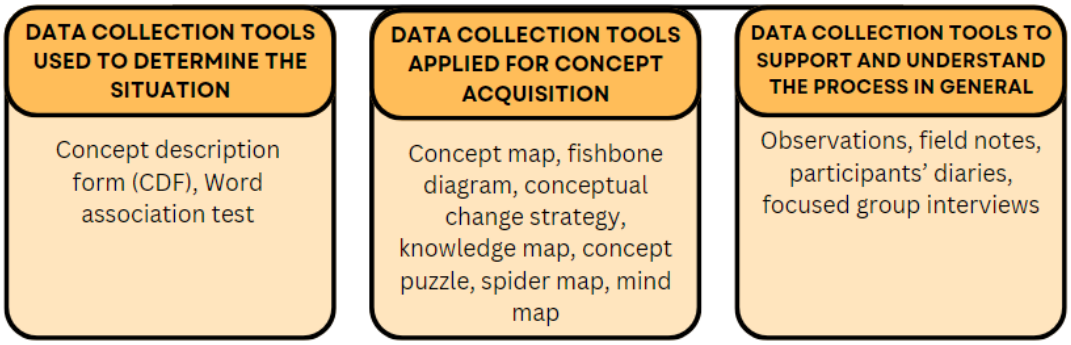
## Data Collection Tools

A data triangulation strategy was applied in the research which involved utilizing various data sources to increase the quality, credibility, consistency, confirmability, and

dependability of the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016), as well as the transferability of the research findings. Data collection tools and other sources used in the research are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.**

*Data Collection Tools*




## Data Analysis

There are several stages to qualitative data analysis, including organizing, describing, making sense, defining and explaining the data, interpreting the preliminary findings from the perspective of the participants and the researcher, and presenting patterns, themes, and categories in an orderly and systematic manner. In the analysis of qualitative data, a single correct way of analyzing and presenting the data is not sought unless it is appropriate for the purpose (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2021).

In this study, the researchers analyzed the students' responses to the concept definition form, student diaries, and focus group interview data using content analysis. An inductive approach was adopted, beginning with open coding to identify initial codes. These codes were then grouped into categories and overarching themes through iterative analysis. This phase of data analysis was carried out collaboratively by the researchers, checking and controlling the developed codes and categories simultaneously and respectively to increase the reliability. Thus, a structured comparison of the codes, categories and themes was not considered necessary to ensure the credibility, dependability and trustworthiness of the findings.

## The Research Process

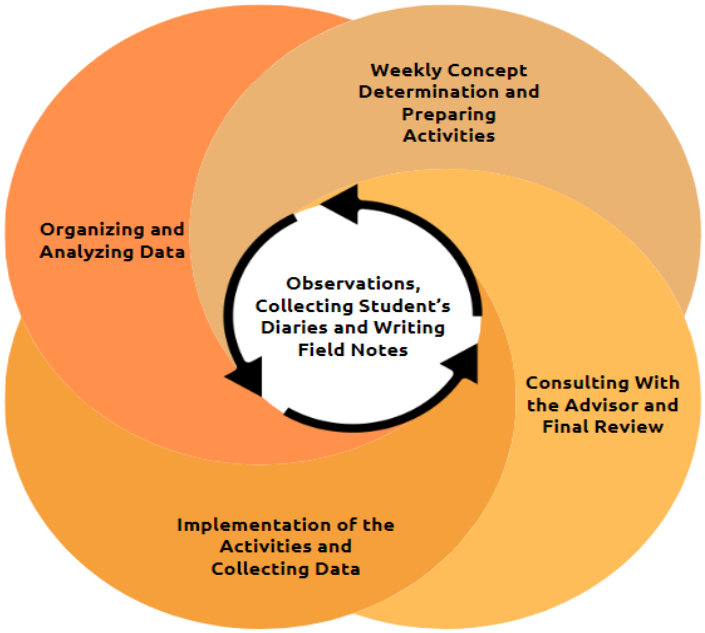
The research process was based on teaching the subjects by following weekly lesson plans that taught 30 basic concepts associated with these subjects. The lectures are supported by question-answer techniques and presentations. The weekly structure of the instructional sessions, the duration of each activity, and the teaching techniques used (e.g., station technique) are presented in detail in Appendix 1.

Action activities related to the topics to be covered were prepared each week for implementation in the classroom. Students were asked to complete diaries from the first week. Before planning and creating the following week's activity, the researcher considered feedback from the previous week's students' diaries before planning activities for the following week.

The weekly research cycle is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.**

*The Weekly Research Cycle*




## Problems Encountered in The Research Process

- **Timing Issues:** Morning sessions scheduled at the beginning of the week led to late arrivals and reduced attendance.

*Solution:* Although the schedule was adjusted to a later time, the issue partially persisted.

- **Inadequate Audio Recording:** Focus group discussions were recorded only via audio, which posed challenges during the analysis phase.

*Solution:* It was noted that keeping detailed observation notes would enhance future data collection processes.

- **Instances of Academic Dishonesty:** Some participants used non-original content in their reflective diaries.

*Solution:* The importance of authentic expression and individual reflection was emphasized during subsequent sessions.

- **Interview Timing:** Holding interviews after the instructional sessions resulted in low participation and engagement.

*Solution:* Second-round interviews were shortened and supported with preliminary preparation activities to improve quality.

- **Irregular Diary Submission:** Participants often failed to submit their reflective journals on time.

*Solution:* Class time was allocated at the end of each session to facilitate immediate writing and submission.

- **Activity Duration Constraints:** Time-intensive activities (e.g., station technique) could not be implemented effectively due to time limitations.

*Solution:* Activities were simplified and adapted to fit the available instructional time.

- **Researcher Inexperience:** The first focus group interviews lacked sufficient depth, likely due to the lead researcher's limited experience.

*Solution:* With guidance from the second researcher, subsequent interviews were conducted more effectively and yielded richer data.

## Credibility, Dependability, Confirmability, Transferability and Ethics

In this study, credibility, transferability, consistency, and confirmability were ensured by using more than one data collection tool. Different methods were used in combination through a data triangulation strategy. In addition, experts were consulted throughout the research process, and the researchers impartially explained the processes in detail in his report.

More accurate and reliable data was obtained through long-term interactions in the research being taken, with the data collection process being determined by the research question. Before the research, the students were informed of their right not to participate, and written permission from an institutional ethics committee was obtained for the research. The researcher explained the purpose of the research throughout the process to the students and did not force the students who did not want to participate. Permission for audio recording of the interviews was also obtained beforehand.

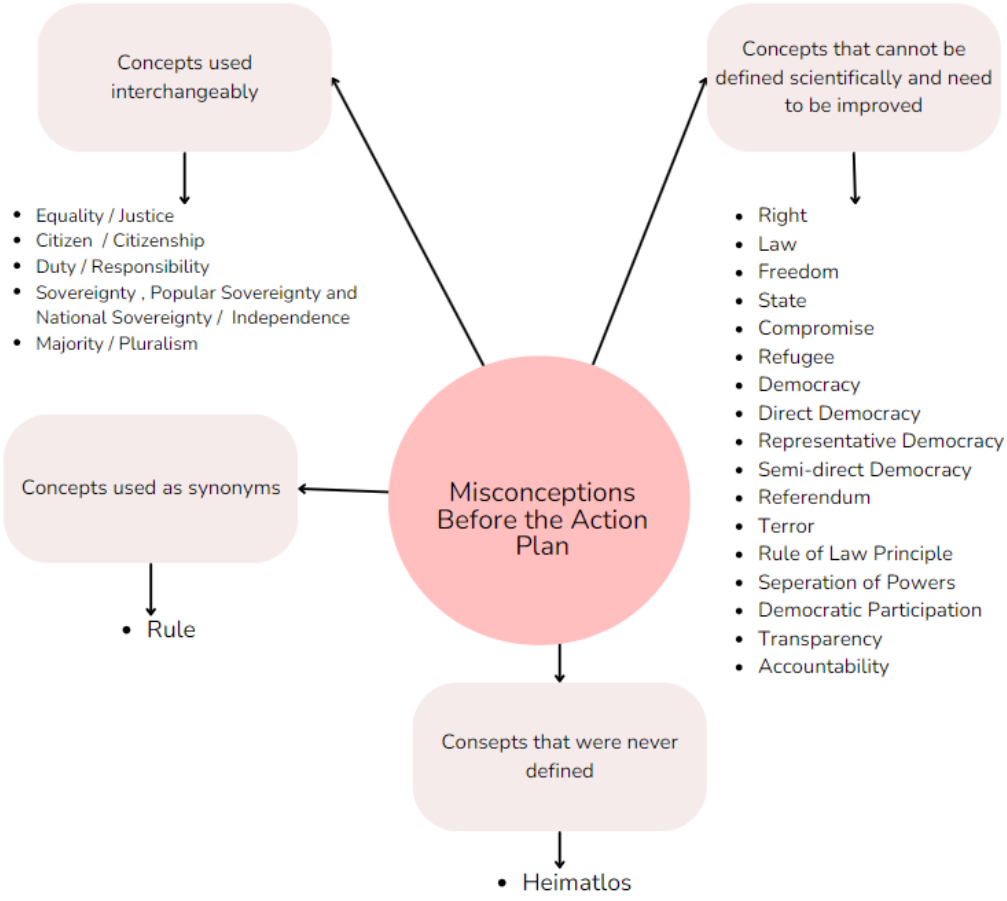
# Findings

## Determination of Misconceptions

Findings related to the participants' misconceptions of the basic concepts in the HRDCE course are provided in Figure 4. It can be seen that before applying the action plan, participants confused the concepts and used every day, rather than scientific, descriptions.

**Figure 4**

*Findings Related to Misconceptions*




It can be seen from the above that the participants used concepts interchangeably, made definitions by using synonyms, and used descriptions of concepts that were not scientific and therefore needed to be developed.

One response provided by a participant in the research process was: 'Equality in every sense.' (P1). As can be seen from this quote, the student tried to establish a relationship between the concepts of equality and justice but confused the concepts. Another participant defined the concept of justice as 'The structure that ensures equality in the country.' (P14). It can be seen from these definitions that the participants do not have a clear understanding of the concepts of equality and justice.

Some definitions which were created from synonyms of the concept were evaluated as being misconceptions. For example, one participant's definition of the concept of 'rule' is '*It is the regulation*' (P23). When this excerpt is analyzed, it can be seen that the use of a synonym for a definition demonstrates that the participant's knowledge of the concept is quite limited. Another participant suggested that a definition of 'rule' could be '*a statute*' (P27). When these definitions are examined, it is seen that they do not fully explain the concept of 'rule' and are actually quite superficial.

One concept where it was observed that the participants, who had not defined it before the action plan, did not have any knowledge of was 'heimatlos'.

It was observed that the participants did not fully explain most of the concepts and used expressions that were far from being scientific. For example, the definition given by one of the participants of the concept of 'freedom' was as follows: '*The individual's use of his/her rights in the way he/she wants*.' (P23). When this excerpt is analyzed, it is seen that the student's understanding of the concept is limited as he/she did not mention considering the rights of others when acting, which is the distinguishing feature of the concept. Another participant expressed the concept of freedom as '*When you close your eyes, there is no limit to your dreams*.' (P9). When this excerpt is analyzed, it is seen that the participant's definition is subjective, rather than being scientific, and that they had not fully grasped the concept.

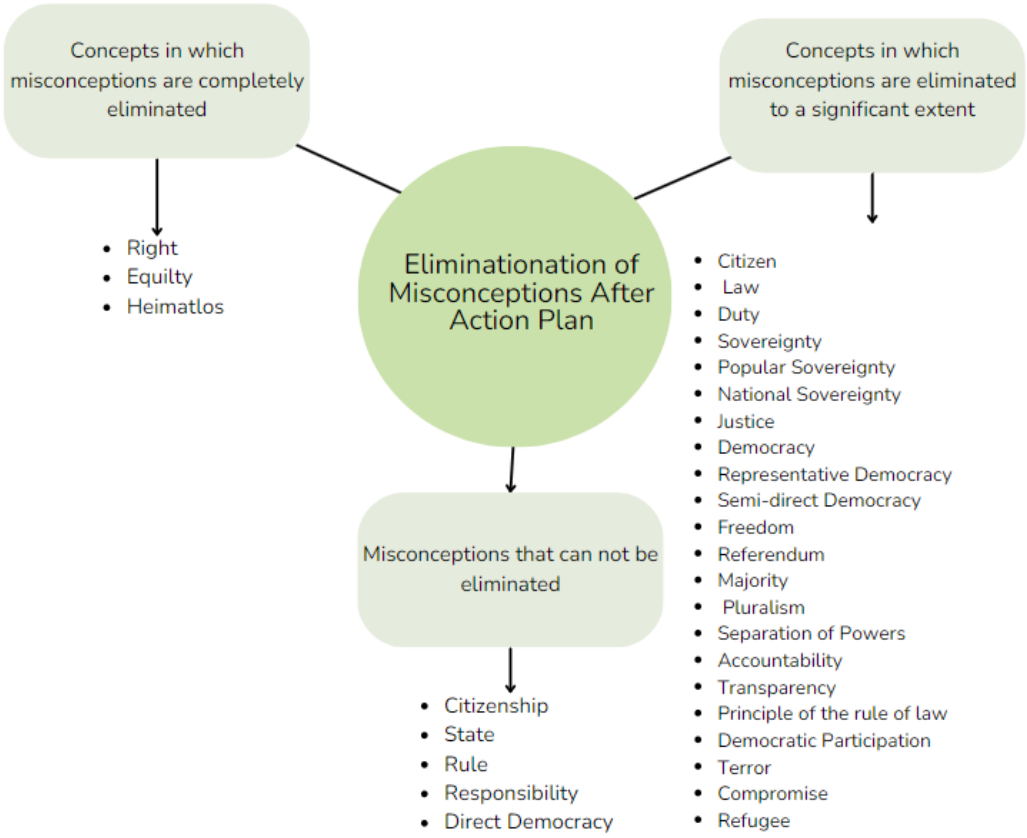
Based on the findings, it can be interpreted that participants tended to explain the concept of 'rule' by only using synonyms of the word and by associating the concept of 'terrorism' only with organizational terms. Based on the findings, it can be said that the participants' learning of the basic concepts in the HRDCE course should be both supported and improved. These conceptual confusions may stem from individuals' pre-existing misconceptions shaped by their daily experiences (Thornberg, 2008). According to Vosniadou (2002), when new information contradicts an individual's existing mental models, it can prevent the development of a coherent understanding of the concept. Teachers' pedagogical practices are often shaped by concrete experiences, everyday language and emotional reactions, with limited reference to key concepts and theoretical frameworks in education. Coupled with the absence of a professional pedagogical language, such practices risk appearing unsystematic and lacking instructional coherence (Thornberg, 2008).

## Elimination of Misconceptions

The findings regarding the correct definitions that the participants wrote on the concept definition form after the implementation of the action plan are given in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

*Findings About Elimination of Misconceptions*




When Figure 5 is analyzed, it can be seen that the misconceptions of the participants were completely or significantly eliminated by the end of the research. Another finding is that misconceptions about the following five concepts: Citizenship, State, Rule, Responsibility, and Direct Democracy, persisted.

When the concepts in which the misconception was eliminated are considered, the participants defined the concept of 'rights' as *'A person is born or acquired. It is the totality of the privileges gained in the country in which it is located.'* (P7) and *'It is the fundamental privilege granted to individuals. Every human being has certain rights. Some*

*of them are innate and some are acquired later*.' (P27). It is seen that the participants are aware that 'rights' should be expressed as a set of privileges. It is seen that the knowledge that rights can be acquired at birth or afterward is present in the students, but it was observed that they did not make use of examples related to rights in the explanation.

When we look at the statements of the participants about 'equality', another concept in which misconceptions were eliminated, it is seen that participants mentioned the economic and political areas of the concept of equality, as well as being able to define the concept scientifically. A sample participant definition is '*Equality can be handled in more than one field: economic equality, political equality, etc. It is about having the same rights as other individuals*.' (P10).

As a result of the activities, it was seen that the misconceptions of the students about the concept of 'law' were eliminated to a significant extent. The statement of a participant whose misconception was eliminated is as follows: '*It is a set of rules. It is the plural form of the word right. It is important to ensure the integrity of society. It is binding. The state is necessary for its implementation*.' (P23). Based on this statement, it can be said that the student is aware that the concept of 'law' is a set of rules regulating society and they emphasize the importance of law. Another participant, similar to the statements of other participants, expressed the concept as '*Rules that regulate the state*' (P6). As can be understood from the expression, it can be said that the participants of the research have acquired the knowledge that law is the rules that provide social order.

After considering 'justice', another concept in which misconceptions were eliminated to a great extent, it was seen that the participants were able to make explanations such as '*Developing a form of behavior by considering the differences between people, being fair between people*.' (P20) and '*Not giving more to those in need than they need or not according to status*.' (P14). When the explanations are analyzed, it is seen that the participants talk about the distribution of opportunities to everyone to the extent they deserve them, and that they can see the distinction between the concepts of 'equality' and 'justice'.

One of the participants had misconceptions about the concept of 'state', which is one of the concepts whose misconceptions persisted after the application. This participant defined 'state' as '*A piece of land with certain borders in which people and communities live*.' (P15). Although the country is an element that constitutes the state, it is not sufficient to explain the concept. It can be said that the participant confused the concepts of 'state' and 'country'. It was also determined that the concepts of 'state' and 'government' were being confused. Sample expressions related to this finding are '*Administration*.' (P30) and '*The structure that has the power to govern a country*.' (P21).

Another misconception that persisted after the application was 'citizenship'. It is seen that the activity related to the concept of 'citizenship' was not significantly effective in eliminating the misconceptions of the participants. Most of the participants had similar

misconceptions such as *'It is the fulfillment of the duties and responsibilities of the individual in the state in which he/she lives'* (P10). Another misconception is shown in the following definition: *'Individuals who have rights and freedoms that are bound to any state and who have responsibilities towards their state'* (P13).

Citizenship rights and duties, fulfillment of citizenship duties, and citizens are related to the concept of citizenship, but it is difficult to consider them as being expressions which explain the concept. Although the concept of 'citizenship' brings with it various duties and responsibilities by its very nature, looking at the concept in terms of duties and responsibilities outside the bond between the state and the individual is insufficient to explain the concept.

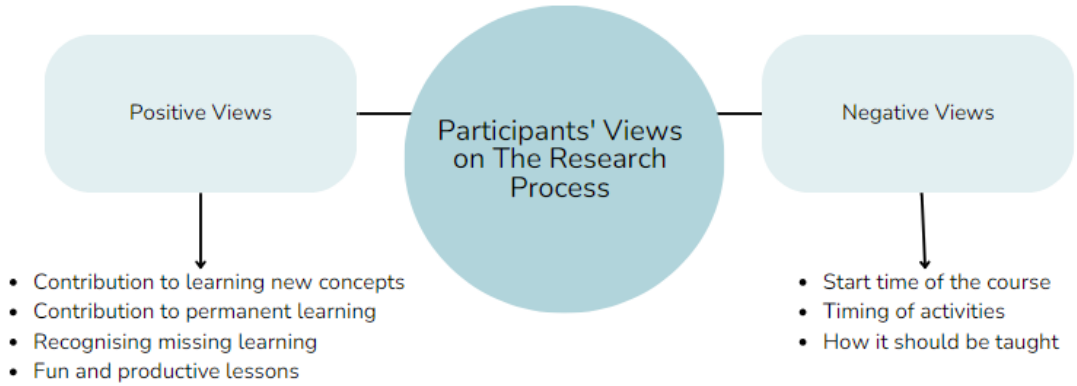
When the findings in Figure 4 are analyzed, it can be said that the students made more comprehensive, clearer, more comprehensible, and more accurate definitions that were closer to the scientific definitions of the concept after the implementation of the action plan. It can therefore be said that the action plan was effective.

## Participants' Views on The Research Process

The opinions and suggestions of participants regarding the action plan were shaped by focus group discussions and the observations of researchers. Findings regarding student opinions are shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6.**

*Participants' Views on The Research Process*




When the positive student opinions about the research process were examined, it was seen that the students generally stated that they found it efficient to start the lesson with the repetition of the previous week's topics, and that the activities were effective in reminding them of previously covered concepts, increased retention, were fun and helped the lesson to be effective, and it was a better way of making sense of the concepts than memorizing them. The participants also realized that they had insufficient

knowledge of the concepts they frequently used in daily life and that they could see their deficiencies. Some positive opinions were: *'In general, the lesson was productive. I learned many concepts that I did not know. With the activities at the end of the lesson, we both repeated what we had learned, and it provided many benefits to make the learning permanent. The subjects were explained clearly. It was very instructive and good.'* (P1) and *'I can say that our lessons were very good. Thanks to these lessons, I learned the meanings of the words that I often encounter in daily life, but I didn't know their exact meanings. Our lessons were very nice and fun.'* (P3)

Considering the negative views of the students about the timing of the activities, one student, who did not find it useful to carry out the activities at the end of the lesson, wrote in his diary that *'...I do not think that the activity papers distributed at the end of the lessons are very useful. At least for me. Because there is an explanation of the concept and it is the end of the lesson, we are constantly in our minds to finish and leave. Therefore, I don't think it has much effect.'* (P8). Based on participants' reflections, the scheduling of activities at the end of the instructional process appears to have diminished their readiness and limited their active involvement.

It was also observed that students felt there was insufficient explanation of how the concepts they had learned could be taught to primary school students, i.e. that the application part of the course was insufficient. They expressed that they were worried about how to reduce the concepts to the level of a primary school student and that the concepts should be embodied more. This situation may stem from the predominantly theoretical structure of the course and the participants' limited exposure to practical teaching experience, as the majority had not yet taken the teaching practicum course. Some example student opinions about this are as follows: *"The lesson was verbal and based on the memorization method. Even now, we know that we know these concepts, but we can notice the weakness of our power of expression in our conversations. I don't feel like I have the power of expression. Maybe something can be done for a much younger age, when we think about it, we can use more visual themes. He stayed a little in theory."* (P13) and *"...We break off after a while. I'll tell you for myself. Maybe a little, or it could be from the subject, or the way it's told, or the scientific nature of the subject. As he said, I think it would be better if it was reduced to a child's level a little more. The concepts should be better embodied."* (P28).

## Results and Discussion

The research shows that participants have misconceptions, incomplete learning, and limited understanding of 30 basic concepts in the course. Students were found to have misconceptions about concepts such as citizenship, state, responsibility, majority, pluralism, and justice. Similarly, in the study conducted by Kılıç (2015) to determine misconceptions in the course, it was found that most of the students had misconceptions in the related concepts.

Thornberg (2008) emphasizes that such concepts are highly prone to pedagogical misunderstandings when acquired incidentally outside formal education. While concepts are taught with scientific or legal definitions in the school context, in everyday life they are often associated with different, and frequently distorted, meanings. This discrepancy creates cognitive conflict in students and hinders their ability to grasp the accurate structure of the concept. Vosniadou (2002) describes this phenomenon as a "mental model conflict."

Conceptual change is not only defined as an individual, internal, and cognitive process, but also as a social activity that occurs within a complex sociocultural World such as culture, media, family (Aikenhead, 1996; Caravita & Halldén, 1994; O'Loughlin, 1992; Vosniadou, 1994). Students tend to develop alternative understandings of the abstract core concepts addressed in the Human Rights, Democracy, and Citizenship Education (HRDCE) course, influenced by their daily life experiences and shaped by colloquial language. This tendency may stem from the strong sociocultural and ideological context surrounding the concepts used in the study.

In the study, it was determined that a significant number of the participants could not define the concept of heimatlos and left the concepts related to different types, and principles, of democracy unanswered. This is thought to be because these concepts have not yet been taught. It was observed that students had an idea, albeit incomplete, of concepts such as freedom, equality, citizenship, compromise, law, rule of law and transparency in democracy.

However, it can be said that students used superficial expressions that were far from the scientific definitions of the concepts. Similarly, in the studies of Kılıç (2015), Yılmaz (2013) and Mulhan (2007), it was observed that students more accurately understood the concepts they frequently use in daily life.

It was concluded that the activities implemented within the scope of the action plan positively affected the learning process, significantly eliminated misconceptions, and lessons supported by concept teaching techniques improved learning. When misconceptions were analyzed, it was seen that students used more objective expressions that met the scientific meaning of the concept and were supported by examples.

Similar to the results of the research, when the studies in the literature are examined, it is seen that the use of concept maps, which is one of the concept teaching techniques, increases student achievement and plays a role in the retention of knowledge (Koçyiğit et al., 2023). It was also apparent that the use of teaching methods and techniques that will make students active in the lessons increases motivation towards the lesson and the efficiency of the lesson, is beneficial in concretizing abstract concepts (Corrales Serrano, 2023; Kılıçaslan, 2021; Namlı Altıntaş & Yıldırım, 2017; Taşkıran, 2023; Tuncel & Ayva, 2010), and that the use of concept teaching techniques eliminates existing

misconceptions and ensures the retention of information (Adıgüzel, 2019; Akpınar, 2019; Dere & Aktaşlı, 2019; Kürümlüoğlu, 2019).

The most frequently left blank concepts at the end of the application were the ones related to sovereignty and types of sovereignty. The reason for students' resistance to misconceptions about the concepts of citizenship and sovereignty may be that these concepts are established concepts that are frequently used in daily life, are taught in a limited way from a young age and are abstract. At the same time, the fact that the lessons were conducted on the axis of the lecture method may have been disadvantageous in terms of students' active thinking and retention of information. This is supported by Yılmaz's (2013) findings that students had difficulty making sense of concepts, such as sovereignty, that they could not experience concretely in daily life.

The concepts to which students gave the most correct answers were the concepts related to heimatlos, freedom, types, and principles of democracy. For example, the reason why the concept of 'heimatlos' was learned the most may be that students found the word interesting because they had never heard the concept of 'heimatlos' before. Students' accurate understanding of the concept *heimatlos* may be related to their first-time exposure to the term and their perception of it as interesting due to its foreign origin. It has been suggested that unfamiliar or symbolically striking concepts can stimulate curiosity and facilitate learning (Berlyne, 1960; Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002). This kind of "novelty effect" can enhance students' attention and contribute to deeper processing of the concept (Renninger & Hidi, 2011). Furthermore, the foreign nature of the term may have triggered a sense of exploration in students.

The reason why misconceptions about the types of democracy and the principles of democracy were mostly eliminated may be that these concepts can be explained in a logical framework based on their names in the context of the lesson. At the same time, supporting the lessons with video, presentation, and discussion techniques in addition to concept teaching techniques may have been effective.

While students found the activities productive and fun, some students stated that the fact that the lesson started in the morning hours caused difficulty in focusing. Regarding the techniques used in the lesson, students stated that techniques such as question-answer and brainstorming, as well as video, presentation, and the active learning methods used in the lesson, increased the interest in the lesson; and that the implementation of the activities after the lecture was more efficient and reinforced learning.

Students stated that even though they had an idea about the concepts, they did not have enough knowledge to express them properly. They were also uncertain about how to explain the concepts they learned at the primary school level, felt that the concepts remained abstract, and although the HRDCE course was theoretically useful and instructive, it should be taught more practically. Similar to the above-mentioned results of the study, it was observed in a study conducted by Akşit (2016) that students liked the activities carried out for concept teaching, enjoyed the lessons supported by concept

teaching methods, and found these lessons fun (Akpınar, 2019; Kılıçaslan, 2021). They also felt that supporting the subjects with concept teaching techniques attracted students' attention and that was useful for them (Taşkıran, 2023).

## Recommendations

Based on the results of the research, it is recommended that teaching methods and techniques that will ensure active participation of students and enrich concept teaching in the HRDCE course and related courses should be used. It can also be suggested that more practice-oriented studies with prospective classroom teachers be implemented. Furthermore, studies can be conducted on how the participants will apply the concepts they have learnt in their lessons in the future, and micro-teaching practices can be included. In terms of the misconceptions that are resistant to change which were revealed in the study, the reasons underlying these misconceptions can be examined in more depth. In addition to concept teaching techniques, technology supported activities can be included. Longitudinal studies can also be conducted with larger participant groups to evaluate the examined subject in different conditions and contexts.

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# Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Bireylerin temel eğitim düzeyinden itibaren demokratik bir toplum düzeninde yurttaş olmayı, hak ve sorumluluklarının farkında olmayı ve bunları kullanmayı, bir toplumun parçası olmayı, çeşitli değerleri özümseyerek yaşam biçimi haline getirmeyi, toplumlar arasındaki ilişki ağlarını fark etmeyi öğrendikleri derslerden bazıları Sosyal Bilgiler, Hayat Bilgisi ve İnsan Hakları, Yurttaşlık ve Demokrasi gibi derslerdir. İlgili derslerde öğretilmesi planlanan kavramlardan bazıları olan demokrasi, hak, özgürlük, eşitlik, adalet, vatandaşlık, görev, sorumluluk, egemenlik gibi kavramlar özellikle ilkokul düzeyindeki öğrenciler için oldukça soyut kalabilecek kavramlardır. Sınıf öğretmenleri tarafından öğretilmesi beklenen bu kavramlarla ilgili olarak, öğretmenlerin kavramları tam olarak anlamaları bir ön koşuldur. Öğretmen adayları, lisans eğitimleri sırasında aldıkları derslerdeki temel kavramları öğrenerek, eksik öğrenmelerini ve kavram yanılgılarını tespit edip gidererek dersler hakkında doğru ve bilimsel bilgiye sahip olabilirler. Nitekim kavramlar bireylerin dünyayı anlamayı ve insanlar arasında iletişimi gerçekleştirmeyi sağlayan çeşitli bilgi formları olarak ifade edilir (Ülgen, 1996). Bu noktada bu bilgi formlarında meydana gelebilecek düzensizlikler bireyin dünyayı anlamlandırma çabasının önüne geçebilmektedir. Bu noktada sınıf öğretmenlerinin insan hakları ve demokrasi eğitiminde geçebilecek temel kavramları doğru bir şekilde anlamlandırabilmeleri önemlidir. Bu önemden hareketle bu çalışma Türkiye'de bir devlet üniversitesinde sınıf öğretmenliği lisans programında okutulan İnsan Hakları ve Demokratik Vatandaşlık Eğitimi (İHDVE) dersinde sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının olası kavram yanılgılarının tespit edilmesi ve bu yanılgıların giderilmesine yönelik eylem planı oluşturularak eğitim-öğretim faaliyetlerinin iyileştirilmesine odaklanmaktadır. Aynı zamanda uygulanan eylem planları hakkında sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının görüş ve önerilerinin alınması, planda gözden kaçabilecek eksikliklerin ve sorunların fark edilmesini sağlayacak ve sürecin iyileştirilmesi için bir fırsat sunacaktır. Bu odaktan hareketle aşağıdaki sorulara yanıt aranmıştır.

1.Öğretmen adayları, sınıf öğretmenliği lisans programının bir gereği olarak aldıkları İHDVE dersinde ne gibi kavram yanılgıları yaşamaktadırlar?
2.Araştırma kapsamında gerçekleştirilen etkinlikler sayesinde öğretmen adaylarının kavram yanılgıları ne ölçüde giderilmiştir?
3.Sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının araştırma kapsamında gerçekleştirilen etkinliklere ilişkin görüşleri nelerdir?

## Araştırmanın Yöntemi

Araştırma amaçlarına ulaşmak için bu çalışmada eylem araştırması benimsenmiştir. Eylem araştırması, problemi tanımlama, veri toplama, toplanan verileri analiz etme, bir eylem planı oluşturma ve son olarak eylem planını uygulama ve bulguları paylaşmaya yönelik sistematik, düzenli ve döngüsel bir süreçtir (Johnson, 2019; Mcniff vd., 1996).
Çalışma grubunun seçiminde daha önce belirlenen ölçütler referans alındığı için araştırmanın amacına uygun olarak amaçlı örnekleme tekniklerinden ölçüt örnekleme tercih edilmiştir (Büyüköztürk vd., 2016). Çalışma grubu, Türkiye'deki bir devlet

üniversitesinin Eğitim Fakültesi Sınıf Öğretmenliği Bölümü'nde 2022-2023 akademik yılında İHDVE dersini alırken çalışmaya katılmaya istekli olduğunu ifade eden 31 öğretmen adayından oluşmaktadır. Bu araştırmada veri çeşitleme stratejisi uygulanmıştır. Bu strateji, toplanan verilerin kalitesini, inandırıcılığını, tutarlılığını, teyit edilebilirliğini ve güvenilirliğini, araştırma bulgularının aktarılabilirliğini artırmak için çeşitli veri kaynaklarından yararlanmayı içermektedir (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2016). Elde edilen nitel verilerin analizi, düzenlenmesi, betimlenmesi, anlamlandırılması, tanımlanması ve açıklanması, ön bulguların katılımcıların ve araştırmacının bakış açısından yorumlanması, kod, tema ve kategorilerin düzenli ve sistematik bir şekilde sunulması gibi birçok gerekliliği içerir. Nitel verilerin analizinde, amaca uygun olduğu takdirde verileri analiz etmek ve sunmak için tek ve doğru bir yol aranmamaktadır (Cohen, Manion ve Morrison, 2021). Bu çalışmada, öğrencilerin kavram tanımlama formuna verdikleri yanıtlar, öğrenci günlüklerine yazdıkları ifadeler ve grup görüşmelerinden elde edilen verileri içerik analizi ile analiz etmiştir.

## Araştırma Süreci

Araştırmacı tarafından ilk hafta uygulanan kavram tanımlama formu ile katılımcıların mevcut durumu betimlenmiştir. Ardından her hafta işlenecek konularla ilgili etkinlikler hazırlanmış ve bu etkinlikler sınıfta uygulanmıştır. İlk haftadan itibaren öğrencilerden ders ile ilgili günlükler toplanmıştır. Bir sonraki haftanın etkinliğini planlamadan ve oluşturmadan önce araştırmacı bir önceki haftanın öğrenci günlüklerini analiz etmiş ve öğrencilerden gelen geri bildirimleri dikkate alarak bir sonraki haftanın etkinliğini planlamıştır.

## Sonuç

Araştırmada katılımcıların kavramları birbirinin yerine kullandıkları, eş anlamlı kelimeler kullanarak tanımlamalar yaptıkları, kavramın bilimsel anlamından uzak ve geliştirilmesi gereken ifadeler kullandıkları belirlenmiştir. Uygulanan eylem planı sonunda ise katılımcıların kavram yanılgılarının bazılarının tamamen bazılarının ise önemli ölçüde giderildiği görülmüştür. Katılımcıların eylem planı sonrasında, uygulama öncesine göre kavramların daha kapsamlı, açık, anlaşılır ve bilimsel tanımına yakın tanımlamalar yaptıkları görülmüştür. Dolayısıyla eylem planının süreci iyileştirmede etkili olduğu söylenebilir. Araştırma sürecine ilişkin görüşler incelendiğinde katılımcıların genel olarak bir önceki haftanın konularının tekrarı ile derse başlamayı verimli bulduklarını, etkinliklerin eski kavramları hatırlatmada etkili olduğunu, kalıcılığı artırdığını, eğlenceli olduğunu ve dersin etkili geçmesine yardımcı olduğunu, kavramları ezberlemekten ziyade daha iyi anlamlandırdıklarını, günlük hayatta sıkça kullandıkları kavramlar hakkında yeterli bilgiye sahip olmadıklarını fark ettiklerini ve eksikliklerini görebildiklerini ifade ettikleri görülmüştür.

Aynı zamanda öğrencilerin öğrendikleri kavramları ilkokul öğrencilerine nasıl öğretecekleri konusunda olumsuz görüş bildirdikleri ve dersin uygulama kısmının yetersiz olduğu belirtilmiştir. Katılımcıların kavramların bir ilkokul öğrencisinin seviyesine nasıl indirgeneceği konusunda endişeli oldukları ve kavramların daha fazla

somutlaştırılması gerektiğini ifade ettikleri görülmüştür. Bu noktada sınıf öğretmeni adaylarıyla daha çok uygulamaya dönük çalışmalar yapılması önerilebilir. Aynı zamanda çalışmada değişime dirençli olan kavram yanılgıları ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu yanılgıların altında yatan sebepler daha derinlemesine incelenebilir. Kavram öğretim tekniklerine ek olarak teknoloji destekli etkinlikler eklenebilir. Bunun yanı sıra daha geniş katılımcı gruplarıyla farklı bağlamlarda boylamsal çalışmalara yer verilebilir.

## Etik

Çalışmada birden fazla veri toplama aracı kullanılarak inandırıcılık, aktarılabilirlik, tutarlılık ve teyit edilebilirlik sağlanmıştır. Ayrıca araştırma süreci boyunca uzman görüşlerine başvurulmuş ve araştırmacı raporunda tarafsız bir yaklaşımla süreç detaylı bir şekilde açıklanmıştır. Araştırmada uzun süreli etkileşimlerle daha doğru ve güvenilir veriler elde edilmiştir. Veri toplama süreci araştırma sorusuna göre belirlenmiştir. Araştırma öncesinde öğrenciler bilgilendirilerek katılmama hakları vurgulanmış ve araştırma için yazılı kurumsal etik kurul izinleri alınmıştır. Araştırmacı süreç boyunca öğrencilere araştırmanın amacını açıklamış ve katılmak istemeyen öğrencileri zorlamamıştır. Görüşmelerin ses kaydı için öğrencilerin izinleri önceden alınmıştır.
***Ethics Committee Approval:*** *This study has been prepared in accordance with the rules of scientific research and publication ethics.* The ethics committee approval for this research was obtained from Anadolu University Social Sciences and Humanities Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee in the Field of Social and Human Sciences. (Ref. number: E-54380210-050.99-432517)

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## Appendix 1

*Action Plan*

| Week | The Subject of The Course | Related Concept | Activity | Time |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Introduction week | Meeting the participants and applying the first CDF | | | |
| 1st week | Rules Regulating Social Life | law | a concept map, a fishbone diagram | 120 min. |
| 2nd week | Citizenship Types | citizen, citizenship, heimatlos, state | concept change strategy, concept map | 120 min. |
| 3rd week | Human Rights and Historical Development | right, sovereignty, popular sovereignty, national sovereignty | knowledge map | 120 min |
| 4th week | Current Situation of Human Rights in the World, including Türkiye, and Classification of Human Rights | rule, equality, justice | concept puzzle, station technique, focus group interviews | 120 min. |
| 5th week | Definition, Principles, and Types of Democracy | democracy, majority, pluralism | spider map | 120 min. |
| 6th week | Classifications of Democracy | immediate democracy, representative democracy, semi-direct democracy, referendum | mind map | 120 min. |
| 7th week | Current State of Democracy, Criticisms and Problems | freedom, accountability, separation of powers, democratic participation, transparency, rule of law principle | concept puzzle | 120 min. |
| 8th week | Democratic Participation, Democratic Life and Democracy Education | duty, responsibility | Teacher talk | 120 min. |
| 9th week | Human Rights Problems in the World and Türkiye | refugee, terror, compromise | word association test | 120 min. |
| End of the action plan | | Applying the last CDF, focus group interviews | | |

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# Exploring English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Instruction: Instructor Perspectives on Challenges and Strategies*

*"… neither field instructors nor English instructors can achieve efficiency in these classes…"*

Nurgül Doğan*, Demet Yaylı**

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**Abstract:** The present study focused on the challenges, strategies and suggestions of a group of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instructors employed at a School of Foreign Languages (SFL) in Türkiye. It employed a qualitative case approach, involving semi-structured interviews with nine ESP instructors. The researchers analyzed the data through both directed and conventional content analysis coding methods. The findings revealed that the primary challenge was the limited or diverse language proficiency of the learners, which could lead to difficulties in selecting and adapting resources and burdening the instructors with hefty workloads. Students' low motivation was another significant challenge, and the absence of pre-service and in-service training and of collaboration with field instructors further exacerbated the situation for ESP instructors. The participating instructors also noted discrepancies in teaching methodologies and assessment procedures both within their own institution and among various universities. To address these issues, they used resources such as native language, artificial intelligence, general English materials, images, videos as translanguaging strategies to support comprehension and motivation. They also believed that certain courses and organizations should be provided at both pre- and in-service levels devoted specifically to ESP teaching, and certain credentials requiring clarification (i.e., establishing standardizations for the ESP groups of learners) should be designed by the Higher Education Council (HEC).Thus, the participating instructors' suggestions for the design and delivery of more efficient ESP classes hold implications for ESP instructors, higher education institutions, instructor educators, coursebook providers, HEC and the researchers in the field.

**Keywords**: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), undergraduate courses for ESP, in-service training, School of Foreign Languages (SFL)

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## Introduction

The discipline of ESP is concerned with the linguistic requirements and behaviors of specific professional or occupational groups. It derives its strength from theoretical frameworks and educational studies that clarify the impact of social circumstances on language utilization and the means by which learners could achieve proficiency. It challenges the division between theory and practice and exposes academic and professional genres to students (Hyland, 2019). The domain of ESP is indebted, at least to some extent, to the widespread and enduring use of English as a common language in field-specific interactions (Nickerson, 2013). ESP training is included into curricula across specialized domains, including vocational fields like tourism and hospitality, professional sectors such as international law and banking, and academic pursuits like thesis and dissertation writing, in diverse contexts (Çelik et al., 2018).

Currently, Hyland (2019) described some influences on ESP and some impacts it had on language teaching. The influences are genre analysis, ethnography, critical perspectives, intercultural rhetoric and social constructivist theory. The impacts include the examination of discourse rather than language, the teacher as a researcher, collaborative pedagogies, the significance of discourse variants, and language alongside institutional applications. He highlighted that needs analysis was at the heart of ESP teaching with different genres because any ESP scope may have different genres, independent of text type. He further concluded that ESP is interdisciplinary, and that institutional practices are quite crucial. Other contemporary themes addressed in ESP education include power issues in classrooms (Hyland, 2019) and the promotion of social justice (Starfield, 2013). In line with these themes, the concept of translanguaging is also present in ESP instruction. In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasized the pedagogical value of translanguaging, particularly in multilingual classrooms where learners face proficiency gaps or limited exposure to English outside formal education (García & Wei, 2014; Makalela, 2017; Wei, 2018). Translanguaging refers to the strategic and dynamic use of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire, across languages and modalities, for meaning-making, communication, and learning (García & Wei, 2014). Although not specific to ESP, such approaches inevitably offer pedagogical implications for ESP instruction, where students are required to access complex disciplinary content in a non-native language. The use of semiotic resources such as visual aids, gestures, and first-language scaffolding can support comprehension and engagement in these contexts (Canagarajah, 2019; Holliday, 2019). Admittedly, these multilingual and multimodal perspectives could open new possibilities for more inclusive and learner-responsive ESP pedagogy.

As for ESP instruction in Türkiye, English-medium instruction (EMI) is limited to a select few universities, as the predominant medium is Turkish. Students study English in 1-year preparatory programs, including English language classes in EMI universities. Non-EMI universities, which constitute the majority, do not offer compulsory language courses before the first grade, leading to heterogeneous proficiency levels among students when

they take ESP courses at the 2nd and 3rd grades because students having basic level English cannot have a chance to study a preparatory program to upgrade their English level to intermediate or upper levels. This may present challenges for both students and instructors in Türkiye. Although certain structural characteristics of ESP instruction—such as whether students have attended a preparatory English program or the elective/compulsory status of ESP courses—may vary in the Turkish context. Studies conducted in diverse educational systems (e.g., Chen, 2011; Suzani et al., 2011; Petraki & Khat, 2022) reveal that different institutional setups can still lead to similar pedagogical challenges. This suggests that while the configurations differ, the resulting difficulties in ESP implementation often converge across various contexts.

Current literature showcases challenges in ESP teaching based upon interconnected themes: overcrowded classes, students' limited engagements and various language proficiencies, materials design and its relevance, instructors' beliefs on ESP teaching and pedagogical challenges, heavy workloads and ESP's perceived importance and recognition worldwide. These themes appear frequently in a wide variety of studies and serve as a basis for identifying persistent challenges in instruction that transcend national borders.

Overcrowded classrooms are a common challenge in ESP teaching, hindering student concentration and complicating classroom management (Chen, 2011; Çelik et al., 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Suzani et al., 2011). Diverse language proficiencies and student engagement also impact instruction effectiveness (Çelik et al., 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Mede et al., 2018). In Turkish and Latvian contexts, Çelik et al. (2018) found that inadequate language proficiencies limit students' ability to benefit from ESP courses, a concern echoed by Hoa and Mai (2016). These studies consistently emphasize that instructors often struggle to manage large, mixed-ability groups, which in turn affects the pacing, targeting, and effectiveness of ESP instruction.

Furthermore, students expressed dissatisfaction with traditional course materials, preferring more real-life activities (Mede et al., 2018; Sandal, 2019; Suzani et al., 2011). To compensate for this, Kazar and Mede (2015) suggested focusing on practical language skills, while also studies in Türkiye demonstrated the effectiveness of alternative methodologies, such as drama (Saygılı, 2014), situational dialogues (Sezgin, 2019), and web tools (Aslandemir, 2020; Zırhlı, 2021) in ESP instruction. Together, these findings underline the need for student-centered and contextually relevant materials that go beyond textbook-bound instruction and have the potential of reflecting students' real-world and professional needs.

On the other hand, material design that includes authentic, relevant content remains a priority, though limited resources and heavy workloads often mean instructors develop materials independently, posing additional challenges (Baştürkmen, 2019; Petraki & Khat, 2022). This reinforces the idea that material development in ESP is not only a

pedagogical task but also an institutional challenge, particularly in under-resourced settings where instructors shoulder most of the responsibility.

More directly related to the gist of the current study, studies on instructors' beliefs revealed two important issues in ESP teaching: instructors' need for training and pedagogical challenges involved. Johnson (2006) previously argued that language instructor educators should integrate tools of investigation into L2 instructor education programs to develop a teaching force of 'transformative intellectuals' who can place themselves as ESP professionals (p. 235). However, insufficient ESP-specific training at both the undergraduate and in-service levels, which includes both pedagogical and subject-related content knowledge for instructors, emerged as a persistent challenge (Hoa & Mai, 2016; Petraki & Khat, 2022; Sincer, 2017; Tao & Gao, 2018) and the need for training seems to be global (Bojovic, 2006; Bracaj, 2014; Sincer, 2017) although some studies (Çelik, et al., 2018; Petraki & Khat, 2022) have indicated that instructors could partially compensate for the aforementioned deficiencies through experience. Most recently, in a case study, the participating instructors' views captured in Kaya's study (2024) seemed to have confirmed some challenges of ESP instructors reflected in the literature. These were by lacking content knowledge and terminology expertise in specific ESP domains, insufficient professional guidance and training support for teaching ESP, feelings of incompetence and insufficiency in handling ESP course content. In another recent study, also supporting the literature, Iswati and Triastuti (2021) revealed instructors' views on their challenges, such as lacking knowledge on students' fields of study, a lack of ESP training, a lack of proper needs analysis, large classes, and various language proficiencies of students.

According to Swales (2000), ESP has yet to attain the status of a complete profession or a distinct sub-discipline in language sciences. Also, Chen (2011) noted the lack of a theoretical framework guiding ESP instruction as a key challenge. Moreover, despite its importance, ESP's recognition as an academic discipline remains unclear for both learners and instructors (Sincer, 2017; Suzani et al., 2011; Tao & Gao, 2018). Participants highlighted uncertainties about course goals, with learners unsure of objectives and instructors debating whether to focus on content or language. While the content-language relationship is widely acknowledged in LSP (Davies, 2001), research in this area is limited, often relying on bilingual studies (Byrnes, 2008; Llosa, 2017). Notably, the studies in the ESP field are limited; (Kırkgöz & Dikilitaş, 2018) especially on 'instructors and teaching' (Başt ürkmen, 2019, p.2). Previous research on ESP revealed similar challenges in different contexts about ESP teaching. Although numerous studies have identified pedagogical and structural challenges in ESP instruction across various contexts, how instructors navigate these realities, particularly in non-EMI institutions where support structures are limited, remains underexplored. Moreover, the practical insights and coping strategies that instructors employ have received comparatively little attention in literature, despite their potential to inform both pedagogical practices and institutional policies. This study addresses this gap by examining not only the challenges

faced by ESP instructors in Türkiye but also the strategies and suggestions they offer for more effective course design and delivery based on the following research questions:

- What are the challenges that ESP instructors have?
- What strategies do ESP instructors apply to deal with the challenges they have?
- What are ESP instructors' suggestions for the design and delivery of more efficient ESP classes?

## Methodology

### Research Design

The current study employed a qualitative case approach which is defined as an approach 'in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time' (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). This methodology was used because it allowed offering an in-depth analysis of the case with its boundaries (Creswell, 2013) in its unique context.

### Participants

The present study utilized criterion sampling as this sampling technique allows researchers to focus on study participants who possess certain qualities or experiences that are relevant to the research objectives (Dörnyei, 2007). The participating ESP instructors for the current study were 1 male and 8 female (EFL) instructors who had been employed at the same institution, a School of Foreign Languages (SFL) for a minimum of 7 years. All the instructors were graduates of the English language teaching program and had either taught ESP classes in the past three years or were presently teaching them. They participated on a voluntary basis. It is important to note that we assumed to achieve data saturation during the interviews because after the ninth interview, no new themes or insights surfaced, supporting the justification for the sample size. Accordingly, the sample was deemed adequate for the study's exploratory and qualitative depth (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Furthermore, the results are meant to offer a thorough understanding of a particular institutional setting and inform comparable ESP environments, not to be generalizable to all contexts, as is the case with many qualitative case studies. Table 1 shows the participating instructors' life histories.

**Table 1**

*Instructors' Life Histories*

| | Age | Gender | Years of Experience | Years of Experience on ESP teaching | Departments ESP taught | Current Teaching Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Instructor 1 | 39 | Female | 17 | 13 | Civil Aviation and Cabin Services, Finance, Food Engineering, Medicine, Sport Science | ESP- Civil Aviation and ESP-Cabin Services, Finance and Sport Science |
| Instructor 2 | 35 | Female | 11 | 2 | Nursing, Logistics Management, Accounting | General English |
| Instructor 3 | 48 | Female | 10 | 7 | Civil Aviation and Cabin Services, Finance, Logistics Management, International Trade and Finance | ESP- Civil Aviation and Cabin Services, Finance, Logistics Management, International Trade |
| Instructor 4 | 48 | Male | 11 | 9 | Logistics Management, International Trade, Foreign Trade, Banking and Accounting, Office Management, Occupational Health and Safety, Tourism and Travelling Services, Tourism and Accommodation Services | ESP-Logistics, Foreign Trade, Office Managementand Tourism |
| Instructor 5 | 36 | Female | 10 | 5 | Tourism Management and Guidance, Logistics Management, Occupational Health and Safety | General English |
| Instructor 6 | 33 | Female | 12 | 5 | Logistics Management, Medicine | General English |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Instructor 7 | 44 | Female | 22 | 5 | Medicine, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, International Trade and Finance, Office Management | General English |
| Instructor 8 | 36 | Female | 12 | 3 | Food Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Finance, Public Administration, Social Services | ESP- Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Social Services |
| Instructor 9 | 33 | Female | 12 | 4 | Nursing Department | General English |

## Data Collection Tools

We collected the verbal data through semi-structured interviews, which are suitable for exploring a well-understood phenomenon while allowing open-ended responses (Dörnyei, 2007). We prepared the initial open-ended questions and consulted 3 ELT experts about the content validity of the questions. After receiving their feedback, we made the necessary arrangements and finalized the interview protocol. The final version included demographic questions and main interview questions.

## Researcher Role

The present study holds an emic perspective by the researcher (i.e., the first author) who has been working at the same institution for 10 years, giving ESP courses at least for 7 years along with the participating ESP instructors who have been working for 7 years on average at the same institution. Therefore, her observations and reflection on her ESP teaching past helped to obtain healthier data analysis, interpretation and meaning making over the captured data. In this way, a more immersive and sensitive approach was aimed for during both data collection and analysis, leading to a deeper understanding of the case. Both researchers took an active role in the development of semi-structured interview questions. The first researcher undertook the data coding as a whole, and the second researcher coded 20% of the data and compared the results with the first researcher to ensure reliability.

## Data Collection Process

We collected the data within 10-minute interview sessions conducted in English with each participant at pre-scheduled times. We recorded the oral interviews for later verbatim transcription.

### Data Analysis

We transcribed and analyzed the verbal data using both directed and conventional content analysis methods (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In the directed approach, we derived initial analytic codes from theoretical considerations and prior research, coding the data for the first research question according to literature-based themes as well as emerging themes. For the second research question and third research question, we used a conventional approach, with coding categories informed directly by the texts.

### Ethical Issues and Trustworthiness

We adhered to a set of ethical criteria during the entirety of the investigation. Initially, prior to the gathering of research data, we secured an ethical approval. Prior to the interviews, we elucidated the study's goal and substance to the participants, who provided both verbal and written consent separately for their participation and voluntary voice recording. We informed the participants about 'confidentiality' and their right of 'withdrawal' from the research (Cresswell, 2013, pg. 89). To ensure validity, we consulted 3 ELT specialists regarding the validity of interview questions. We tested the questions in a piloting session. To assess reliability, the second researcher coded the same 20% of the data, and we observed a high inter-coder agreement.

## Findings

We discussed findings in parallel to research questions. They revealed that participating ESP instructors have very similar challenges as those discussed in the literature, they appear to have some coping strategies and also suggestions for ESP instructors, instructor educators, Schools of Foreign Languages (SFL), ELT programs and the Higher Education Council (HEC) as well.

### What are the challenges that ESP instructors have?

The findings revealed that many challenges faced by ESP instructors, such as diverse and limited student language proficiency, lack of ESP-specific training for teachers, overcrowded classes, low student engagement, and heavy workloads, are not context-specific but common across various settings (Çelik et al., 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Petraki & Khat, 2022). Key challenges included limited and diverse language profiles *(n=9)*, lack of ESP training *(n=9)*, low student engagement *(n=6)*, and overcrowded classes *(n=6)*, with a quote illustrating students' limited language proficiency (see Table 2):

*Instructor 2: "The students usually have basic or intermediate English skills, but ESP courses are designed for the students who have at least B2+ level students. This is the basic problem of these courses."*

**Table 2**

*Challenges Encountered by ESP Instructors*

| Categories | Themes |
|---|---|
| Pedagogical challenges and training | Lack of pre-service training on ESP teaching<br>Lack of undergraduate courses for ESP teacher candidates<br>Lack of content knowledge by instructors<br>Inconsistency among instructors' practices<br>Problems with testing and evaluation<br>Overcrowded classes<br>Heavy loads<br>Lack of instructor motivation |
| Resource and material issues | Limited course hours<br>Materials problems |
| Student engagement and proficiency | Lack of student motivation<br>Limited language profiles among students<br>Diverse language profiles<br>Lack of content knowledge by students<br>Lack of appreciation by students |
| Poor planning | Lack of having units for ESP in SFLs<br>Lack of cooperation with field instructors |

The issue of limited language proficiency appeared to lead to an additional challenge: the selection and adaptation of suitable course books and other instructional materials. This need for adaptation and producing suitable and efficient materials became one of the reasons for instructors' heavy workloads, as stated below:

*Instructor 7: "The problems with the materials are that they generally do not match the student profile and student level. They are too high above the student level. Students' language proficiency is limited for these classes. The level of Cambridge, Oxford books is too high. The books are mostly concentrated on the content rather than the language. Other materials, too, are so difficult. There are absolutely no materials at the basic and intermediate levels, they start directly from B2, or even higher. So, I definitely simplify materials. This is a big burden for me: finding and simplifying the materials every time. I feel bad about it."*

The participating ESP instructors further detailed the issues about course books. They reported challenges in selecting appropriate texts due to insufficient training and unfamiliarity with specific content areas, leading to discomfort with books that prioritize content over language. As one instructor remarked:

*Instructor 9: "Coursebooks are expensive and hard to find for professional areas. I lack familiarity with detailed technical vocabulary. When teaching Job Health and Security (department), for instance, I struggled with tool names, which even native speakers might*

*not know. I prefer using previous materials, as current ones are dull and lack context. Students often come unprepared, so I have to adapt and simplify the materials, which is exhausting."*

*Instructor 8: "I had problems while choosing materials because I am not an expert in the area. For example, I do not know the English equivalent for 'bobin', which is a term for Electronical Engineering. I even do not know the Turkish meaning."*

*Instructor 4: "I have to choose between using general English materials or ESP coursebooks. One is for language; the other is for the content. There is not a balance. I have to sacrifice either one."*

Another common challenge reported was the need for ESP training for instructors both in pre- and in-service levels *(n=9)*, although some participants *(n=2)* indicated that they could mitigate the absence of training through practical experience as indicated in the following:

*Instructor 5: "We learnt to teach four skills for different proficiency levels, but I only discovered ESP classes and their content when I started working here. It was hard, so I believe there should be in-service and undergraduate training for ESP teaching."*

*Instructor 2: "I graduated from a Faculty of Education focused on general English teaching. After starting in higher education, I realized the need for training in ESP."*

*Instructor 6: "The workload can be worth it—I have learned a lot from my students, like terminology in Logistics management."*

*Instructor 3: "We do not have training, but I think I gained a lot in pedagogy through my experience."*

As a noteworthy finding, the participating instructors indicated that some students in specific disciplines can compensate for their language limitations with strong learning abilities and extensive field knowledge, and a high motivation level as illustrated by the following:

*Instructor 7: "In departments like Medicine and Electrical Engineering, students often have better English levels. Even if not, they can learn English alongside content due to their high learning ability."*

*Instructor 8: "In Social Services, students may not excel in English, but their high motivation enables them to learn both English and content knowledge simultaneously."*

The issue of low motivation seems complex. While specific departments including Social Services, Medicine, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, and Nursing had some exceptions, all of the ESP instructors who participated in the study identified a lack of

motivation due to multiple varying factors in students as one of their major challenges, as stated in the following:

*Instructor 8: "In general, we encounter problems with general English. First of all, the students' belief that they can speak English is weak, there is no motivation, and they think that it is less important than other departmental courses."*

*Instructor 1: "In the classes, some students mention that they do not plan to pursue the profession in the future, even though they are currently studying in that department, these students make the already difficult class dynamics even more difficult and reduce motivation. Students who love their department and are interested in their profession are more participative by saying that they can use professional English in any way."*

*Instructor 3: "Some students are aware they need English for their careers, but they lack motivation anyway."*

*Instructor 8: "I think they do not value English classes well enough. They just perceive it as obligatory. A class to pass."*

*Instructor 2: "I think the students just couldn't personalize these classes. They believe their main courses are more important".*

Overcrowded classes and pre-set procedures where instructors are not the sole decision-makers were significant challenges reported by the instructors *(n=6)*. They noted that these issues were linked to various teaching and testing problems which led the instructors *(n=7)* to rely on multiple-choice tests. Additionally, some instructors *(n=2)* reported feeling isolated once assigned to these courses. Examples from participating instructors illustrate these challenges:

*Instructor 6: With so many students, I can't control everyone. Those who attend benefit, but I can't evaluate the rest. In crowded classes, multiple-choice assessments become necessary, which is not ideal. The following exemplifies the issues:*

*Instructor 8:" We do not have enough communication with faculty instructors. I think it would be really beneficial. At least, they can check our syllabus and materials for the content."*

*Instructor 3: "Nobody wants these classes, but you are assigned anyway. Once placed in a faculty, you are isolated from the School of Foreign Languages, left to handle everything—syllabus, testing—on your own."*

*Instructor 4: "Sometimes these lessons are taught by field instructors and sometimes by EFL instructors. And so, there are different practices. So, there is an imbalance."*

The data analysis revealed that ESP instructors faced challenges already noted in the literature, along with unique testing issues not previously highlighted. Additionally, the

findings emphasized course planning difficulties and, in some departments, the ability of highly motivated students to learn content and language simultaneously, contrary to common findings.

**What strategies do ESP instructors apply to deal with the challenges they have?**

In keeping with the findings of previous studies that highlighted the seriousness of the difficulties encountered in ESP teaching environments, the present study also examined strategies used by the participating ESP instructors to combat instructional challenges encountered. In terms of the strategies used, some of the participating instructors stated that although they made an effort, they could not develop successful strategies all the time because of some circumstances such as time constraints and challenging teaching environments. Key strategies employed included using the mother tongue *(n=9)*, general English materials *(n=2)*, artificial intelligence (AI) and some online platforms *(n=3)*, videos and visuals *(n=5)*. Some instructors *(n=3)* specifically linked these resources to enhance student motivation, particularly to address the challenge of limited language proficiency in learners. Example quotes from ESP instructors are provided below:

*Instructor 2: "I cannot apply successful strategies because the classes are too crowded and I am very busy."*

*Instructor 8: "I use Turkish for complex explanations—not just translation. This approach is crucial for motivation, as full English instruction often fails to engage students."*

*Instructor 5: "Coursebooks are so focused on the job content, and they do not realize the students' needs. In these kinds of books, you hardly find a language use or language strategy part. If they have, it is related to professional life. Students have some difficulties. This time, I bring the class general English materials and give a break for ESP."*

*Instructor 4: "I first examine the unit before each class and find general English materials especially grammar materials. It is because I want to motivate them. However, when the vocational part starts, they feel a little bit discouraged. At this stage, I use technology to re-motivate them. I show videos/visuals related to these structures, prepare online quizzes via Kahoot, let them use their smart phones. I show them how to use AI. I believe this works a lot. Even if it does not guarantee full success, they are at least, familiar with the subject. When the field teacher gives them an article, they can know the terminology and read it with tools."*

*Instructor 7: "I motivate students with videos, using sites for basic vocabulary learning. For example, in the Electrical and Electronics department, we watch 10-minute videos and reflect on their content. I try to make them feel comfortable with English, using tools that facilitate communication."*

Some ESP instructors reported that they implemented some techniques to improve assessment methods when circumstances, such as class size, permitted. These include using various question types in exams *(n=2)*, assigning term projects *(n=2)* and offering take-home exams *(n=1)*. To illustrate:

*Instructor 1: "I manage language level challenges with group activities and individual drafts. Take-home assignments are more effective for assessment; however, in some classes, I have to apply multiple choice tests, so I use a lot of techniques in classes, videos, pictures but exams are traditional… It is not good."*

In the category of student-centered instructional strategies and needs analysis, some ESP instructors *(n=6)* reported using group activities to enhance learning and manage crowded classes, as reaching every student can be challenging. Needs analysis, however, was less frequently employed *(n=1)*. Examples include:

*Instructor 6: "With classes exceeding 60 students, managing individual attention is difficult, but group work promotes peer learning. I assign a student leader for each group, which has proven effective."*

*Instructor 8: "I distribute papers before each class for students to outline their expectations and learning goals. I also consult with their subject instructors about content and assign a paragraph writing task to assess language proficiency, guiding my lesson planning accordingly."*

**Table 3**

*ESP instructors' strategies*

| Categories | Themes |
|---|---|
| Using various resources and materials | Implementing AI tools and other technological resources |
| | Mother tongue use |
| | Supporting learning with general English materials |
| | Using visuals and videos |
| Using a variety of testing methods | Including different types of questions in exams |
| | Engaging students in term projects |
| | Take-home exams |
| Student-centered instructional strategies and needs analysis | Analyzing students' needs |
| | Grouping students for in-class activities |

These results reflect many challenges reported in the existing literature, where diverse educational systems across different contexts have surprisingly produced similar obstacles in ESP instruction. However, this study extends the discussion by exploring how instructors actively respond to these challenges. One of the most noteworthy findings is the emergence of coping strategies that align with the concept of translanguaging, a topic increasingly discussed in language education. Without being prompted, instructors

reported using their full semiotic repertoires—such as the learners' L1, visual aids, and digital tools—to compensate for the limitations observed, particularly when institutional conditions allowed. These findings revealed ESP instructors' efforts to transform potential disadvantages into pedagogical opportunities.

### What are ESP instructors' suggestions for the design and delivery of more efficient ESP classes?

In addition to the issues identified in the previous studies, the current study sought to incorporate ESP teachers' recommendations for the enhancement of ESP teaching and learning conditions. We categorized instructors' suggestions about ESP classes around education and training programs, teaching practices and strategies, professional collaboration and cooperation, and academic research and publications (see Table 4). The most common suggestion was centered around the need for ESP-focused pre- and in-service training programs *(n=9)*. Some instructors also suggested that if such training courses *(n=2)* were available, ESP instructors would have fewer challenges in both design and delivery of ESP courses, as exemplified in the following:

*Instructor 1: "I think it is difficult to give lessons to instructor candidates at university because there are a lot of job contents, but there can be some certificate programs for English instructors. It would be more practical."*

**Table 4**

*ESP Instructors' Suggestions*

| Categories | Themes |
|---|---|
| Education and training programs | Pre-service and in-service training |
| | ESP certificate programs |
| | Standardization for ESP classes |
| Teaching practices and strategies | Providing placement tests |
| | Increasing the number of class sections due to crowded classes |
| Professional collaboration and cooperation | Cooperation with faculty members |
| | Having separate ESP units |
| Academic research and publications | Writing theses and articles on ESP |

The notable findings in this section were about planning and cooperation both on an institutional level and within the broader context of Higher Education as illustrated below:

*Instructor 3: "Department lecturers and administrators need to cooperate with English instructors. Materials can be revised in terms of content. The number of classes can be decided together. They can write articles or theses together. Because I think they think of language teaching as lecture and make adjustments accordingly, exams or I don't know, conditions allow it that way, maybe, which brings some problems".*

*Instructor 7: "I think there should be a standardized training system for ESP courses. There can be different practices between universities and even between instructors. Whether this is good or bad is debatable. There is no course on this subject in university programs. There is a need for a guide. YÖK (HEC) can develop a system in this regard. There could even be a certificate program for instructors to teach these courses."*

*Instructor 1: "I think ESP classes should be divided into groups or levels. Crowded classes are huge problems for these courses. More sections are better to teach English."*

To sum up, the participating instructors emphasized the need for a more structured and collaborative approach to ESP course design and delivery. Their suggestions not only align with previously reported concerns but also extend the discussion by proposing actionable steps at institutional and national levels, such as standardized training, certification programs, and enhanced collaboration between departments. This perception may serve as a resource for policymakers, curriculum developers, and higher education institutions aiming to enhance the quality and sustainability of ESP education.

## Results and Discussion

The findings in this study revealed that many problems that the participating ESP instructors stated are not context specific. Basic problems that they mentioned, such as students' diverse and limited language proficiencies, instructors' lack of undergraduate and in-service level language teaching programs specifically on ESP instruction, overcrowded classes, lack of students' engagement with class activities, and ESP instructors' heavy workloads are also the main problems observed in different contexts (Bojovic, 2006; Bracaj, 2014; Çelik et al., 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Petraki & Khat, 2022). The study's findings, which drew from the responses provided by the participating instructors, elucidated the aforementioned challenges and their interconnectedness. This cross-contextual convergence suggests that ESP challenges may stem from structural aspects of higher education rather than purely local constraints.

Current literature identifies some institutional factors that can hinder ESP instruction, such as a lack of a cohesive curriculum (Chen, 2011), inconsistent course quality, limited instructional time (Ünal, 2014), and large class sizes (Suzani et al., 2011). Building on previous research, this study highlighted challenges in testing and evaluation, as reported by participants. These challenges stemmed from overcrowded classes and pre-set procedures that limit instructors' decision-making authority, a concern not emphasized in earlier studies. These constraints led many instructors to rely on multiple-choice tests. Additionally, some instructors reported feeling isolated from SFLs once assigned to these courses (Baştürkmen, 2019). These findings suggest that some of the global challenges in ESP instruction may stem from shortcomings in institutional planning. One possible reason is that course planners may not fully understand or adequately consider the specific nature of ESP instruction, or they may be constrained

by other practical limitations. Therefore, institutional-level course planning in higher education needs to be revisited and aligned more closely with the distinctive requirements of ESP courses.

Students' low motivation levels were another basic problem reported in this study, as it is an issue in the literature (Çelik et al., 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016). However, some minority groups of students were reported to be highly motivated and therefore were able to learn both content and language simultaneously although they may have had limited language proficiency, which is a result that supports Dörnyei's (1998) assertion that high learner motivation can compensate for challenges such as inadequate course materials or an unsuitable classroom environment. Although they stated that they could not always apply useful strategies because of physical conditions such as heavy workloads and overcrowded classes, some ESP instructors reported that they employed a range of strategies to address instructional challenges, offering insights that build on prior research. While studies suggested techniques like drama and Web tools can enhance ESP instruction (Aslandemir, 2020; Saygılı, 2014; Sezgin, 2019; Zırhlı, 2021), this study highlighted instructors' use of semiotic resources—such as the students' first language, general English, artificial intelligence, and visual aids—to facilitate comprehension and engagement. These findings align with the relationship between motivation and course materials noted by previous studies (Hoa & Mai, 2016; Mede et al., 2018).

A key contribution of this study is the natural emergence of translanguaging practices in instructors' coping strategies. Canagarajah (2019) claims that semiotic resources help us communicate and understand each other and our own knowledge. Spoken or written language, pictures, and gestures are some of the many modes into which semiotic resources fall according to him. The participating ESP instructors reported using various semiotic resources, including their mother tongue, and asserted that these techniques were effective to some extent. They stated that, although achieving complete success with ESP classes was challenging because of some circumstances, the instructors observed that at least students became familiar with the subject matter and demonstrated increased motivation by independently applying these tools. This suggests that translanguaging not only emerges as a coping mechanism but also serves as a pedagogical asset in ESP contexts where learners often lack the linguistic readiness to fully engage with field-specific content.

Although the study was limited to a small number of participants thus not easily generalizable, it may have some implications for researchers, ESP instructors, instructor educators, SFLs, HEC and book providers considering teachers' suggestions. All things considered, this study may signify that the challenges encountered in ESP courses were interconnected, and planning ESP courses both at institutional and broader levels may be at the heart of these challenges because it was observed that when optimal physical conditions were held, with the aid of some tools and techniques, improvement in instruction could be possible. Beyond that, students' increased motivation seems to be

crucial to compensating for most of the challenges. Undergraduate level ESP courses and in-service training programs for ESP Instructors were highlighted as central to addressing several challenges in ESP classes.

## Recommendations

Ultimately, considering all the issues, the instructions provided by the participants seem to include several challenging and complex issues. Aligning with previous research, this study revealed that the lack of ESP training programs, the diversity of student language profiles, low student engagement, overcrowded classes, and ESP instructors' difficulties in designing and finding suitable course materials are among the main challenges. However, some of these challenges could be mitigated when favorable conditions were provided.

The present study delved into both the challenges abiding in several different ESP contexts around the world, and also ESP instructors' suggestions for the amelioration of ESP teaching and learning realities. Although the study was carried out with a small number of participants, it may have some implications for several stakeholders such as researchers, ESP instructors, instructor educators, SFLs, HEC and book providers: teachers' suggestions:

- Further researchers should focus on these commonly experienced challenges embedded in ESP teaching within different contexts,
- ESP instructors should consider equipping themselves with new trends in language teaching, such as using AI and translanguaging techniques for ESP instruction.
- Especially if HEC could provide certain ESP teaching courses and organizations at both pre- and in-service levels of language teaching, and set certain credentials requiring clarification (i.e., establishing standardizations for the ESP groups of learners) so that ESP instructors could be empowered.
- A lack of good planning seems to be a global problem, and it may be at the heart of ESP instruction. So, HEC and SFLs may consider replanning of these courses for the Turkish context on the basis of class sizes, establishing units, and grouping students according to proficiency levels.
- Instructor educators may consider providing undergraduate courses and in-service training specifically devoted to the ESP teaching realities.
- Coursebook providers may consider designing ESP books for lower language proficiencies rather than B2+ and higher levels.

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# Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Özel amaçlı İngilizce (ÖAİ) disiplini, belirli meslekî veya iş gruplarının dil gereksinimlerine ve davranışlarına odaklanır. Teorik çerçeveler ve sosyal koşulların dil kullanımına etkisini açıklayan eğitim çalışmaları üzerine kuruludur. ÖAİ, teori ve pratik arasındaki ayrımı sorgularken, öğrencilere akademik ve mesleki türleri tanıtır (Hyland, 2019). ÖAİ eğitimi, turizm ve konaklama gibi meslekî alanlardan uluslararası hukuk ve bankacılık gibi profesyonel sektörlere, tez ve makale yazımı gibi akademik faaliyetlere kadar farklı bağlamlarda müfredata dahil edilmektedir (Çelik, Stavicka & Odina, 2018). Hyland (2019), ÖAİ'nin dil öğretimine etkilerini ve bu alan üzerindeki etkileyici unsurları tartışmıştır. Bu etkiler; tür analizi, etnografi, eleştirel bakış açıları, kültürlerarası retorik ve sosyal yapılandırmacı teoriyi içerirken, ÖAİ'nin etkileri arasında söylem incelemesine odaklanma, öğretmenin bir araştırmacı rolü üstlenmesi, iş birliğine dayalı pedagojiler ve söylem çeşitliliklerinin önemine dikkat çekilmiştir. Hyland (2019), ihtiyaç analizinin ÖAİ öğretiminde kilit rol oynadığını ve kurumsal uygulamaların önemli olduğunu vurgulamıştır. ÖAİ, belirli meslek gruplarının veya akademik alanların dil gereksinimlerine odaklanırken, hala tam anlamıyla bir uzmanlık veya dilbilim alt disiplini olarak tanımlanmamaktadır (Swales, 2000). Ayrıca, yeterli teorik çerçevenin eksikliği (Chen, 2011) ve ÖAİ'nin önemi bariz olmasına rağmen, hem öğrenciler hem de eğitmenler için akademik bir disiplin olarak tanınırlığı hâlâ belirsizdir (Sincer, 2017; Suzani et al., 2011; Tao & Gao, 2018). Öğretmenler ve öğrenciler ders hedefleri konusunda belirsizlik yaşayabilmekte; öğrenciler hedeflerden emin olamazken eğitmenler içerik mi yoksa dil odaklı bir yaklaşım mı benimseyecekleri konusunda tereddüt yaşayabilmektedirler. Araştırmalarda, ÖAİ eğitiminde karşılaşılan ortak zorluklar arasında, öğrencilerin sınırlı dil yeterliliği veya sınıflardaki heterojen dil seviyeleri, düşük öğrenci motivasyonu, kalabalık sınıflar, öğretmenlerin materyaller konusunda yaşadığı güçlükler, ve ÖAİ eğitmenlerinin hem lisans hem de hizmetiçi düzeyde yeterli eğitim almaması gibi sorunlar öne çıkmaktadır (Çelik ve diğerleri, 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Kaya, 2024). Ayrıca, geleneksel ders materyalleri yerine, öğrencilerin gerçek yaşam aktivitelerine dayalı içerikleri tercih ettiği belirlenmiştir (Mede ve diğerleri, 2018; Suzani et al., 2011). ÖAİ eğitiminde alternatif yöntemlerin etkili olabileceği bulunmuş, drama (Saygılı, 2014), durum diyalogları (Sezgin, 2019) ve web araçları (Aslandemir, 2020; Zırhlı, 2021) bu bağlamda öne çıkan yaklaşımlar arasında yer almıştır. Araştırmalar ÖAİ alanındaki çalışmaların yetersiz olduğunu (Kırkgöz & Dikilitaş, 2018), bu durumun özellikle öğretmen ve öğretim süreçlerinde söz konusu olduğunu vurgulamaktadır (Baştürkmen, 2019, s.2).

Bu çalışma, öğretim dili Türkçe olan bir Türk devlet üniversitesindeki öğretim görevlilerinin ÖAİ kapsamında verdikleri Meslekî İngilizce derslerinde karşılaştıkları zorlukları, bu zorluklarla başa çıkma stratejilerini ve bu derslerin iyileştirilmesine yönelik önerilerini incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, nitel bir vaka analizi yaklaşımıyla yürütülmüş ve gerçek hayattaki sınırlı bir sistemi derinlemesine incelemek amacıyla tasarlanmıştır (Creswell, 2013). Araştırma, yüksek öğretimde 7 yıldan fazla deneyime sahip 1 erkek

ve 8 kadın olmak üzere toplam 9 İngilizce öğretim görevlisi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Tüm katılımcılar, İngilizce öğretmenliği programı mezunlarıdır ve son 3 yılda Meslekî İngilizce dersleri vermiş ya da hâlâ vermektedirler. Veriler, 10 dakikalık yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, belirli bir fenomeni anlamak için açık uçlu yanıtlar sunma imkânı tanımıştır (Dörnyei, 2007). Analizde, Hsieh ve Shannon'un (2005) yönlendirilmiş ve geleneksel içerik analizi yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. İlk araştırma sorusu için literatüre dayalı kodlama yapılırken, ikinci ve üçüncü sorular için metinlerden doğrudan çıkarılan kodlar kullanılmıştır. Verilerin geçerli ve güvenilir olmasını sağlamak için çeşitli önlemler alınmıştır. Görüşme sorularının geçerliğini artırmak amacıyla 3 İngilizce öğretim uzmanından görüş alınmış, sorular bir pilot çalışma ile test edilmiştir. Araştırma boyunca veri toplama ve analiz süreçlerinde tutarlılık sağlamak için sistematik yöntemler izlenmiştir. Araştırmacının içeriden (emic) perspektifinin, hem verilerin toplanması hem de analizinde bağlamsal duyarlılığı artırdığı düşünülmektedir.

Araştırmanın sonuçları, öğretim görevlilerinin ifade ettiği birçok sorunun bağlama özgü olmadığını, literatürde rapor edilen diğer bağlamlarda da geçerli olduğunu göstermiştir. Farklı bağlamlardaki çalışmalara paralel olarak bu çalışmada da öğrencilerin sınırlı ve farklı dil seviyeleri, ÖAİ konusunda öğretim görevlilerine yönelik lisans ve hizmet içi eğitim eksikliği, kalabalık sınıflar, düşük öğrenci katılımı ve ağır iş yükü temel sorunlar olarak öne çıkmıştır (Bojovic, 2006; Bracaj, 2014; Çelik ve diğerleri, 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Kaya, 2024; Petraki & Khat, 2022). Literatüre ek olarak bu çalışmada öğretim görevlilerinin stratejilerine ve derslerin iyileştirilmesine yönelik önerilerine de ağırlıklı yer verilmiştir. Kurumların uygulamalarından kaynaklı problemler bazı çalışmalarda vurgulanmıştır (Chen, 2011; Suzani et al., 2011; Ünal, 2014). Bu çalışmada, kalabalık sınıfların ve bazı prosedürlerinin bir sonucu olarak öğretim görevlileri sınav ve değerlendirme zorluklarından özellikle bahsetmişlerdir. Öne çıkan bir bulgu olarak öğrenci motivasyonunun düşük olduğu vurgulanırken, azınlık bir grup öğrencinin yüksek motivasyon sayesinde sınırlı dil yeterliliklerine rağmen hem içerik hem de dili aynı anda öğrenebildiği ifade edilmiştir. Bu durum, Dörnyei'nin (1998) öğrencilerin motivasyonunun yetersiz materyaller ve uygunsuz sınıf ortamı gibi zorlukları telafi edebileceği yönündeki görüşünü desteklemekte ve öğrenci motivasyonunun önemini vurgulamaktadır. Öğretim görevlileri, bazı fiziksel koşullar nedeniyle (ör. büyük sınıflar, ağır iş yükü vb.) her zaman etkili stratejiler geliştiremediklerini ifade etmiş, ancak öğrencilerin anadil kullanımı, genel İngilizce, yapay zekâ ve görsel materyaller gibi araçlarla daha iyi anladıklarını ve motive olduklarını gözlemlemişlerdir. Çalışma ayrıca, translanguaging (dil geçişkenliği) ve anlam yaratmada yarı-işaret sistemlerinin kullanımını vurgulamıştır (Canagarajah, 2019; García & Wei, 2014; Makalela, 2017; Wei, 2018). Katılımcılar, bu yöntemlerin öğrencilerin konuya aşinalığını artırdığını ve motivasyonlarını geliştirdiğini belirtmişlerdir.

Çalışmada ÖAİ derslerinde karşılaşılan zorlukların çözümüne yönelik bir dizi öneri sunulmuştur. Araştırmacıların farklı bağlamlardan daha fazla çalışma ile konuya odaklanması, ÖAİ öğretim görevlilerinin yapay zeka ve dil geçişkenliği gibi yenilikçi dil

öğretim trendlerini dikkate alması, Yükseköğretim Kurulu (YÖK) ve Hazırlık Okulları'nın sınıf oluştururken öğrenci sayılarını ve öğrencilerin dil seviyelerini göz önünde bulundurarak derslerin yeniden planlanmasını değerlendirmesi, öğretmen yetiştiricilerinin lisans düzeyinde dersler ve hizmet içi eğitim programları sunmayı gözden geçirmesi ve ders kitabı sağlayıcılarının temel ve orta dil seviyeleri için de ÖAİ kitapları tasarlaması öneriler arasında yer almaktadır.

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# Examining the Views of Instructors on Micro Teaching Technique

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative research is to examine the views of the instructors on the micro teaching technique. Content analysis was conducted in the analysis. Criterion sampling was used for the study participants in the sample. Instructors teaching micro teaching, special teaching methods or teaching principles and methods courses were determined as the criterion. As a result, the instructors expressed their views on the contribution of the micro teaching technique to the professional development of teacher candidates, such as applying different teaching techniques, principles, methods, recognizing deficiencies, self-assessment, self-confidence, gaining experience, providing preparation for the teaching profession and the opportunity to get to know the classroom environment. According to instructors, the micro teaching technique provides critical thinking skills, improves cooperation skills and problem solving skills in relation to the effect of the micro teaching technique on the solution of the problems that the teacher candidates may encounter in their professional lives.

**Keywords:** Instructors, micro teaching technique, micro teaching course, special teaching methods, teaching principles and methods.

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## Introduction

Teaching is one of the most significant professions in human history, and the teacher is a vital contributor to education. For many years, people have sought to pass down information, particularly their culture, to future generations. Teaching has gained importance over time and has become a profession. However, societies have not been content with teaching being just a profession. They have also been in search of qualified teachers to educate. This situation brought about the testing and using different approaches, models, strategies, methods, and techniques in the training of teachers (Küçük & Bağ, 2018, p. 146; Bars & Kinay, 2019, p. 29). One of the techniques used in teacher training is micro teaching. Micro teaching is a teaching technique that encourages teachers or teacher candidates to see the approaches they use to help students gain the determined goals and to identify and correct their mistakes and deficiencies (Küçük & Bağ, 2018, p. 146). In addition, in the micro teaching technique, teacher candidates aim to perform another skill after mastering one (Singh, 2006; Sharma & Chandra, 2003; Chandra & Sharma, 2004). For this reason, it is seen as necessary for teacher candidates to try one teaching skill at a time. In micro teaching, teacher candidates aim to apply the teaching steps successfully rather than teaching a subject (Demirel, 2004). The micro teaching technique is critical to ensure the professional development of teacher candidates in the pre-service and in-service stages. It is a scaled-down teaching application that reduces the complexity of the real classroom environment in terms of class size, duration of the lesson, variety of activities, teaching, and applying a single subject (Sucuoğlu & Güven, 2019, p. 101). In conclusion, micro teaching is a technique teacher candidates' course experiences are observed by lecturers, teachers, and other teacher candidates through short video shots. By doing so, teacher candidates realize the positive aspects of the course delivery methods in line with the given feedback, complete their deficiencies, and correct their mistakes (Çelebi & Erginer, 2019, p. 126). In other words, micro teaching can be expressed as a set of activities for the education of teacher candidates that are carried out in a controlled manner to acquire teaching skills.

Micro teaching is a teaching technique in which an artificial environment is created for short lessons, where each lesson has teaching purposes, the number of students is limited, and all participants, including the teacher candidate, participate in the evaluation processes (Sucuoğlu & Güven, 2019, p. 110). In addition, it is seen that micro teaching practices have an effective place in teacher education among the preparation practices for teacher candidates such as collaborative learning practices, active short courses, simulated work-based teaching practices, and faculty mentoring (Dunst, Hamby, Howse, Wilkie & Annas, 2019, p. 15).

The micro teaching technique which was met with excitement when it was introduced in teacher education, has quickly found application and has been given importance by those who teach at teacher faculties. In recent times, thanks to technological inventions and the integration of educational practices with technology, its value in teacher education approaches is gradually increasing (Çelebi & Erginer, 2019, p. 125). Micro

teaching, which traditionally means observing the teacher's in-class behavior and correcting their behavior with the feedback given, now analyzes the thinking processes of the teacher to learn how to teach, with the influence of cognitive psychology. It provides new generation teachers with the skills of problem-solving, creative thinking, strategic and practical thinking, and expressing themselves well (Çelebi & Erginer, 2019, p. 126). The instructors suggest that micro teaching has contributed to the professional development of academicians working in teacher training institutions, and it should be a part of teacher education for teacher candidates (Santagata, Zannoni & Stigler, 2007). Besides, in the micro teaching technique, apart from the classical lesson, that is, the teacher or the instructor teaching the lesson and giving homework at the end, it is possible to submit the video of the lesson to the students, share the learned information in the lesson, and shape the gains accordingly (Liu, Wei & Gao, 2016; Sams & Bergmann, 2013). Today, micro teaching techniques are used in this context and contribute significantly to teacher education (Vaughan, 2014).

Micro teaching has now been integrated into the programs at faculties of education as an elective course. When the literature is examined, it is seen that many studies have been conducted on applying micro teaching techniques in the training of teacher candidates in recent years. However, there is a need for research to determine the views of instructors on micro teaching techniques. In this context, the findings of the current study can reveal the thoughts of the instructors about how the micro teaching technique will contribute to the professional development of the teacher candidates and to solving the problems they may encounter in their professional lives. In addition, it is expected that the current research will make significant contributions to the research on teaching techniques in terms of how technological tools can be used in micro teaching by determining the instructors' different views and suggestions on the treatment of the subject in the lessons.

In recent years, with the widespread use of the micro teaching technique in teacher education and the increase in the number of studies conducted on the subject, the need to examine and evaluate the instructors' views on the technique has emerged. To perform these examinations and evaluations, it is necessary to benefit from the instructors who apply the technique in the classroom. It is thought that a study in which the instructors are directly involved and their opinions on the technique are examined is essential in increasing the effectiveness of the micro teaching technique. Looking at the literature, there is a need to evaluate the instructors' views in scientific studies where the micro teaching technique has been applied.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study is to reveal the views of instructors on micro teaching. In line with this purpose, answers were sought for the following sub-objectives:

1. What are the views of instructors regarding the contribution of micro teaching to the professional development of teacher candidates?

2. What are the views of instructors regarding the impact of micro teaching on solving the problems that teacher candidates may encounter in their professional lives?

3. What are the views of instructors regarding how to use technological tools and equipment in micro teaching?

4. What are the views of instructors regarding covering the topic of micro teaching in the lesson?

## Method

### Research Design

The current research, which aims to examine the views of instructors regarding the micro teaching technique, was conducted using the basic qualitative research design, one of the qualitative research designs. Qualitative research is a research method that uses qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis, and aims to determine events in their natural context as they are (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 41).

Basic qualitative research focuses on understanding and interpreting participants' experiences, views, and perspectives. The researcher collects data through such tools as interviews, observations, or document analysis. They decide on the questions, the phenomenon, or the documents related to the research within the context of the theoretical framework. In basic qualitative research, it is necessary to distinguish between data and separate them into appropriate categories when analyzing them. The researcher creates themes from the data in the findings section and tries to make sense of the participants' statements (Merriam, 2013).

The data for this study was collected using a semi-structured interview, one of the qualitative data collection techniques. The semi-structured interview technique allows the researcher to examine the researched topic in depth with fixed-choice answers (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013, p. 152 & Patton, 2005). This technique allows the researcher to ask the participants questions prepared in advance. It provides researchers partial flexibility during the interview and to rearrange the interview questions in the questions and discussions (Ekiz, 2017, p. 63).

### Research Participants

The criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, has been used in the study. In the criterion sampling method, it is essential to have a sample that meets the previously determined characteristics. The researcher can form the criteria list or use a previously prepared one (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 122). In this study, the criteria are the instructors who teach "micro teaching, special teaching methods or teaching principles and methods" courses at a state university. The research group includes 23

instructors: 17 men and 6 women. Table 1 shows the data regarding the personal information of the instructors.

**Table 1.** *Personal Information of the Instructors Participating in the Research*

| Personal Information | Groups | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 17 | 74 |
| | Female | 6 | 26 |
| | | **23** | **100** |
| Title | Research Assistant with a PhD | 5 | 22 |
| | Lecturer | 1 | 5 |
| | Assistant Professor | 4 | 17 |
| | Associate Professor | 7 | 30 |
| | Professor | 6 | 26 |
| | | **23** | **100** |
| Age | 30-35 | 5 | 22 |
| | 36-40 | 7 | 30 |
| | 40+ | 11 | 48 |
| Total | | **23** | **100** |

Table 1 shows that 17 (74%) of the instructors participating in the study are male, 6 (26%) are female. According to the titles of the instructors, 5 (22%) are Research Assistants with a PhD, 1 (5%) is Lecturer, 4 (17%) are Assistant Professors, 7 (30%) are Associate Professors and 6 (26%) are Professors. 5 (22%) of the instructors are between the ages of 30-35, 7 (30%) are between the ages of 36-40, and 11 (48%) are over 40.

## Data Collection

The data of the study were collected by the researchers between 27/09/2021 and 30/01/2021 with the Ethics Committee Approval numbered E-14679147 and dated 09/08/2021 given by the Dicle University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee and the research permit numbered E-53959260 and dated 20/08/2021 given by the Dicle University Ziya Gökalp Faculty of Education. The data were collected using the interview method with a semi-structured form. While collecting the data, the instructors

who teach any of the "micro teaching, special teaching methods or teaching principles and methods" courses were selected as criteria. By scanning the scientific research literature on micro teaching techniques, an open-ended interview form consisting of four questions was created in draft form. Before finalizing the interview form, the researchers requested views from four experts in the field of curriculum and instruction and two experts in linguistics. After the feedback was received, three of the four experts who provided views in the field of education programs and teaching were asked to give their views again. Later, the interview questions were finalized, and it was decided to include a total of four questions in the interview form. The interviews in the study lasted between 25 and 40 minutes, and after the participants were asked to express their views in writing in line with the questions posed, they were asked to transfer their views to the interview form. Content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained as a result of the interview. The common characteristics of the instructors' views on micro teaching were determined, and themes were created. Then, the themes were divided into codes, and the views of the lecturers were explained. In addition, direct statements of the lecturers were given below the tables to support the findings.

## Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the content analysis technique. Content analysis has been defined as a systematic and repeatable technique for compressing texts consisting of many words into fewer content categories based on clear coding rules (Stemler, 2001, p. 2). According to Stemler (2001, p. 2), although content analysis in qualitative research simply means counting word frequencies, this technique goes far beyond simple word counts. Content analysis is a systematic and repeatable process for compressing the text into fewer content categories based on open coding rules (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 221). In addition, in content analysis, researchers bring together data with common characteristics as defined concepts and themes and interprete them in a meaningful way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 242). What makes this technique particularly important and meaningful is that it is based on coding and categorizing data (Krippendorff, 2018). The views of the instructors who participated in the current study were examined in detail, and then the findings were thematized from a holistic perspective and interpreted in the context of the sub-objectives of the research.

## Reliability of the Study

To ensure the reliability of the research during the data analysis process, the answers given by the instructors to the interview questions were examined and coded independently and separately by two researchers. After the coding, the codings made by both researchers regarding the research data were compared. By comparing the codings made by the two researchers, similar and different codes in both codings were determined. However, one way to measure reliability is to measure the percentage of agreement between raters. This involves adding up the number of cases coded identically by two raters and dividing by the total number of cases (Stemler, 2001, p. 3). To ensure internal validity and transferability in the research, the aim, method, study

group and purpose of this research are explained in detail. Characteristics of the group, sampling method, data collection, data analysis process, interpretation of findings and all processes related to the results are explained in detail.

The reliability formula suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 64) was used to find out the reliability of the study: Reliability = Consensus / (Consensus + Disagreement). In the current research, intercoder reliability was calculated twice by two different researchers. In the first coding, the intercoder reliability coefficient was calculated as .89. After one week, it was calculated again, and the coefficient was found as .91. According to Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 64), since a minimum rate of .80 is accepted for intercoder consensus in studies, this study is reliable.

Direct quotes are the raw data source in qualitative studies (Labuschagne, 2003). Sutton & Austin (2015) emphasized that codes and themes should be supported by taking participant views through direct quotes. So, some of the answers of instructors to the research questions are presented in the findings section to ensure the reliability of the study. While expressing these quotes, codes were specified for each instructor using letters and numbers such as "I-1, I-2, I-3..."

## Findings

The data obtained from the opinions of the instructors about the micro teaching technique were analyzed and presented in this section. Themes and codes were created in accordance with the sub-objectives of this research, and the data were presented in the form of tables. In addition, the findings were supported and interpreted by giving quotations from the opinions of the instructors.

### Findings Regarding the First Sub-Objective

**Table 2.** *Views of the Instructors on the Contribution of Micro Teaching to the Professional Development of Teacher Candidates*

| Theme | Codes | Frequency (f) | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| The contribution of micro teaching to the professional development of teacher candidates | Applying different teaching techniques, principles, methods, and strategies | 2 | I-1, I-2 |
| | Realizing deficiencies | 6 | I-1, I-9, I-10, I-12, I-16, I-17, |
| | Self-assessment | 7 | I-1, I-4, I-11, I-13, I-17, I-19 I-23 |
| | Self-confidence | 6 | I-1, I-3, I-8, I-10, I-16, I-17 |
| | Providing experience | 10 | I-3, I-4, I-8, I-12, I-14, I-16, I-17, I-18, I-19, I-22 |
| | Peer assessment | 2 | I-4, I-16 |
| | Opportunity to practice | 5 | I-5, I-11, I-15, I-18, I-23 |
| | Providing feedback | 3 | I-5, I-7, I-9 |
| | Self-criticism | 2 | I-5, I-16, I-10, |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Preparation for the teaching profession | 5 | I-6, I-12, I-20, I-21, I-22 |
| | Classroom management skills | 4 | I-10, I-11, I-14, I-17 |
| | Using materials | 2 | I-10, I-11 |
| | Communication skills | 4 | I-11, I-14, I-17, I-18 |
| | Opportunity to get to know the classroom environment | 3 | I-14, I-15, I-18 |

Table 2 shows the views of the instructors regarding the contribution of the micro teaching technique to the professional development of teacher candidates. The highest frequency among the views on the theme "the contribution of micro teaching to the professional development of teacher candidates" is in the code “providing experience” (f=10). The "providing experience" code is followed by: “self-assessment” (f=7), “realizing deficiencies” (f=6), “self-confidence” (f=6), “opportunity to practice” (f=5), “preparation for the teaching profession” (f=5), “classroom management skills” (f=4), “communication skills” (f=4), “providing feedback” (f=3), “opportunity to get to know the classroom environment” (f= 3), “applying different teaching techniques, principles, methods, and strategies” (f=2), “Peer assessment” (f=2), “self-criticism” (f=2), and “using materials” (f=2).

According to the codes in Table 2, the views of some of the instructors are expressed below in order of codes:

*I-12: Micro teaching provides teacher candidates with an experience close to (similar to) the classroom environment. Through micro teaching, teacher candidates have the opportunity to see their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, teacher candidates can develop their professional competencies through micro teaching.*

*I-19: Micro teaching helps teacher candidates experience the teaching profession, even if on a small scale, and gain experience imparting knowledge to students. It helps teacher candidates gain and develop teaching skills. It also helps teacher candidates self-assess their teaching process and abilities.*

*I-10: I think micro teaching is quite effective in developing professional skills. Through micro teaching, teacher candidates are more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and try to develop these aspects, thus gaining self-confidence. I also think it is quite effective in developing reflective thinking skills. It paves the way for teacher candidates to think reflectively, easily share their thoughts based on theoretical knowledge regarding the materials and techniques, and reveal the aspects that work and do not work. In addition, it offers teacher candidates the chance to make first-hand concrete observations about classroom management, body language, and use of voice. Besides, it allows them to see their deficiencies in these areas. In addition, through micro teaching, they can test new methods that work or do not work in the classroom, and a critical perspective can be developed.*

*I-5: This technique provides teacher candidates with the opportunity to practice outside of the teaching practice course. It provides teacher candidates with feedback on their strong teaching skills or those that need to be developed. Besides, thanks to this technique, teacher candidates can self-criticize their teaching skills and processes.*

When the opinions of the instructors were evaluated, they stated that the micro teaching technique provided more experience regarding the contribution of the prospective teachers to their professional development. In addition, according to the instructors, the micro teaching technique improves students' ability to make self-evaluations, to realize their professional deficiencies and to develop self-confidence skills. In addition, instructors stated that the micro teaching technique provided students with the opportunity to practice and helped them to give feedback.

## Findings Regarding the Second Sub-Objective

**Table 3.** *Views of Instructors on Suggestions to Solve Problems that Teacher Candidates May Encounter in Their Professional Lives*

| Theme | Codes | Frequency (f) | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| Suggestions for solving problems that teacher candidates may encounter in their professional lives | Developing critical thinking skills | 3 | I-2, I-8, I-23 |
| | Developing collaboration skills | 2 | I-2, I-10 |
| | Developing effective strategies | 2 | I-12, I-16 |
| | Increasing class participation | 2 | I-14, I-18 |
| | Developing problem-solving skills | 9 | I-1, I-3, I-8, I-10, I-12, I-14, I-18, I-19, I-20, |

Table 3 shows the views of the instructors regarding the solutions to problems teacher candidates may encounter in their professional lives. The highest frequency of codes among the instructors who expressed their views on the theme of "micro teaching suggestions for solving problems that teacher candidates may encounter in their professional lives" is in the code "developing problem-solving skills" (f=9). The frequency of the "developing problem-solving skills" code is followed by the codes "developing critical thinking skills" (f=3), "developing collaboration skills" (f=2), "developing effective strategies" (f=2), and "increasing class participation" (f=2), respectively.

The views of some of the instructors according to the theme in Table 3 are expressed below in order of codes:

*I-2: Micro teaching develops the critical thinking skills of teacher candidates. It creates the opportunity for quick solutions to problems that may be encountered during the lesson. Thanks to its critical thinking skills, it allows teacher candidates to approach the solution of their problems with more than one option. Since it is a technique open to collaboration, it enables them to produce solutions for problems that they have difficulty noticing.*

*I10: We can say that micro teaching is a simulation of the teaching process. In this context, it creates awareness about the problems that teacher candidates will encounter in their professional lives, such as possible discipline problems in the classroom, the use of technological tools and equipment, and low participation of students. Besides, micro teaching provides experiences about the differences between a real classroom environment and an idealized one. Through micro teaching, teacher candidates try to understand and solve the problem by collaborating or exchanging ideas with other candidates, thus contributing to the teacher candidates' skills in collaborative work or teamwork. They also gain experience in getting help from other friends. In addition, it helps teacher candidates develop different perspectives toward understanding the nature of the problem by allowing them to make self-assessments. Thus, their problem-solving skills also improve in this process.*

*I-12: Thanks to micro teaching, they can develop effective strategies and behavioral models to solve the problems they encounter by making use of their previous observations.*

When the opinions of the instructors were evaluated, they expressed their opinions on the effect of the micro teaching technique on solving the problems that prospective teachers may encounter in their professional lives in this theme. According to the opinions of the instructors, micro teaching technique contributes more to the development of problem-solving skills of prospective teachers. In addition, the instructors expressed the benefits of this technique in terms of gaining critical thinking skills, gaining cooperation skills, developing effective strategies and increasing participation in the lesson.

## Findings Regarding the Third Sub-Objective

**Table 4.** *Views of Instructors Regarding Teacher Candidates' Use of Technological Tools in Micro Teaching*

| Theme | Codes | Frequency (f) | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| Being able to benefit from technological tools in micro teaching | Recording video and audio | 9 | I-1, I-3, I-4, I-6, I-9, I-11, I-12, I-15, I-19 |
| | Using a projector | 3 | I-2, I-4, I-8 |
| | Using a tablet | 2 | I-2, I-19 |
| | Using a smart (interactive) board | 7 | I-2, I-4, I-8, I-14, I-15, I-16, I-18 |
| | Using mobile devices (smartphones) | 3 | I-12, I-18, I-19 |
| | Using technological programs | 2 | I-13, I-14 |
| | Using web tools (Kahoot, Zoom, Google Class) | 5 | I-10, I-14, I-16, I-17, I-20 |
| | Using simulations | 2 | I-16, I-18 |

Table 4 shows the views of instructors regarding teacher candidates' use of technological tools in micro teaching. Among the codes formed by the answers received from the instructors who expressed their views on the theme of "Being able to benefit more from technological tools in micro teaching" the highest frequency is seen in the code "recording video and audio" (f=9). This code is followed by the codes "using a smart

(interactive) board" (f=7), "using web tools (Kahoot, Zoom, Google Class)" (f=5), "using a projector" (f=3), "using mobile devices (smartphones)" (f=3), "using a tablet" (f=2), "using technological programs" (f=2) and "using simulations" (f=2).

The views of some of the instructors according to the themes in Table 4 are expressed below in order of codes:

*I-4: In micro teaching, teacher candidates' experiences are recorded using recording (video) devices. Thus, teacher candidates are provided with the opportunity to make self-evaluations. Besides, teacher candidates can use technological tools and equipment such as smart boards, projectors, and computers during their lectures.*

*I-15: Interactive boards should be used effectively for educational purposes during the lesson, not just for showing slides, of course. Teaching materials such as video and audio files should also be used. Accessing videos suitable for lessons is easier today than before. Teacher candidates should learn to use appropriate videos in their lessons (especially for disciplines such as science, foreign language, and social sciences).*

*I-18: Thanks to smartphones, recording micro teaching has become easier. Providing environments where teacher candidates can benefit from applications such as smart boards and virtual reality, which are likely to be used in real classroom environments, can make micro teaching more successful.*

In this theme, the opinions of the instructors on how technological tools can be utilized in micro teaching techniques were examined. According to the opinions of the instructors, it was determined that cameras, video and audio recording devices were mostly used while applying the micro teaching technique. In addition, smart boards and web tools are also frequently used. Additionally, it was determined that other technological tools used when implementing the micro teaching technique were projectors and mobile devices. It was also stated by the instructors that tablets, technological programs and simulation programs were used together with other technological tools in the micro teaching process. It was also stated by the instructors that tablets, technological programs and simulation programs were used together with other technological tools in the micro teaching process.

## Findings Regarding the Fourth Sub-Objective

**Table 5.** *Views and Suggestions of the Instructors Regarding the ınstruction of the Topic of Micro Teaching*

| Theme | Codes | Frequency (f) | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| Views and suggestions regarding the instruction of the topic of micro teaching | Creating a suitable teaching environment for micro teaching | 6 | I-2, I-10, I-16, I-17, I-20, I-23 |
| | Providing opportunities for practice | 3 | I-2, I-14, I-19 |
| | Reducing class sizes | 3 | I-3, I-20, I-23 |
| | Making micro teaching a mandatory course | 1 | I-6 |
| | Integrating it into teaching practice | 2 | I-6, I-17 |
| | Collaborating with teachers of other disciplines | 2 | I-7, I-22 |
| | Effective use of technology | 3 | I-8, I-10, I-11 |
| | Providing training to instructors on the relevant subject | 2 | I-10, I-14 |
| | Providing opportunities for the development of 21st-century skills | 2 | I-7, I-19 |

Table 5 shows the views of the instructors regarding the instruction of the topic of micro teaching. The highest frequency of codes among instructors who expressed their views on the theme of "views and suggestions regarding the treatment of micro teaching" is in the code “creating a suitable teaching environment for micro teaching” (f=6). This code is followed by the codes “providing practice opportunities” (f=3), “reducing class sizes” (f=3), “effective use of technology” (f=3), “integrating it into teaching practice” (f=2), “collaborating with teachers of other disciplines” (f=2), “providing training to instructors on the relevant subject” (f=2), “providing opportunities for the development of 21st-century skills” (f=2) and "making micro teaching a mandatory course” (f=1).

The views of some of the instructors according to the themes and codes in Table 5 are expressed below in order of codes:

*I-20: As is known, micro teaching is a technique applied with small groups. It can be used for the whole class, perhaps thinking it would be more appropriate in real life, or, for some students in a real class environment (schools).*

*I-14: It would be beneficial to provide support such as education, professional development, and participation in academic activities to the teaching staff who take this course within the scope of trainer training, as it should be emphasized micro teaching. Teacher candidates who take this course as a common course can practice in a certain*

*order according to their branches, and in this way, peer learning can be implemented effectively.*

*I-23: In teacher training programs, micro teaching should be used more frequently by limiting class sizes, and importance should be given to feedback and correction. An environment should be prepared for teacher candidates to make presentations freely, and their freedom to express their thoughts should be supported.*

*I-7: Since it is a relatively new technique, it is an area open to development and change. As it is known, interdisciplinary working methods are popular in almost every academic field (science, numerical sciences, health sciences) in the 21st century. Therefore, to make progress in micro teaching, it is necessary to benefit from other fields and to focus on working in collaboration with them. In particular, it is very valuable and important to benefit from the views and studies of expert educators and academicians working in the field of instructional technologies.*

*I19: Micro teaching should allow the teacher candidate to practice after acquiring theoretical knowledge. This process should be planned in a way that will develop and use the 21st-century skills (creativity, innovation, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving) and metacognitive skills (reflection, problem-solving) of the teacher candidate. The student's personal development should be focused on determining their deficiencies and working on them or providing support. The student should be active in the process, and the lessons should be planned by taking their views and expectations into account. In addition, the micro teaching course should be opened as a common elective course in YÖK programs and should be conducted with students from different branches. Although it is good for students to see different teaching approaches between disciplines, I think it would be good for professional development for students from the same discipline to share their own experiences. I also think that it would be good for experienced teachers to be invited to the classroom environment or to make micro teaching presentations within the scope of this course.*

In this theme, different opinions and suggestions of the instructors regarding the processing of the micro teaching technique were evaluated. While the instructors expressed different opinions and suggestions regarding the processing of the micro teaching technique, they mostly stated that appropriate environments should be created for this technique. In addition, the instructors explained that providing the opportunity to practice in the micro teaching process, reducing the class size and using technology are also very important. On the other hand, they stated that it is important to integrate micro teaching with teaching practice. In addition, they also suggested cooperation with other fields and providing training to instructors about micro teaching. Some instructors emphasized that micro teaching enabled the development of 21st century skills. In addition, one instructor's opinion that the micro teaching course should be compulsory can be considered as a remarkable suggestion.

## Results and Discussion

In this section, the discussion of the findings obtained as a result of the research is given in order according to the sub-objectives of the research. The findings related to the first sub-objective of the research show that the instructors have expressed their views on the theme of 'the contribution of micro teaching to the professional development of teacher candidates.' According to the instructors, micro teaching provides opportunities for the teacher candidates such as experience, self-assessment, awareness of deficiencies, self-confidence, practice, preparation for teaching profession, classroom management skills, communication skills, feedback, the opportunity to get to know the classroom environment, applying different teaching techniques, principles, methods and strategies, peer assessments, self-criticism and material usage. In their study, Balcı & Yanık (2022, p.1062) stated that teachers should organize workshops that will enable them to experience various teaching styles theoretically and practically regarding microteaching practices, which is consistent with this study. Semerci (2000, p. 6) stated in his research that the implementation of techniques that develop critical skills, like micro teaching, enables teacher candidates to produce ideas. The current research states that the classroom management skills of teacher candidates improved thanks to the application of micro teaching. Karadağ & Akkaya (2013, p. 54) noted that micro teaching is an effective technique because it provides a practical learning environment, and it is consistent with the findings. In the research of Karataş & Cengiz (2016, p. 578), similar to the results of the current study, it is stated that teacher candidates have gained experience through micro teaching. Oliveira (2009, p. 870) has concluded that micro teaching-related practices improve the teacher candidates' presentation and communication skills, supporting the results. Zhou, Xu & Martinovic (2017, p. 95) have stated that it is essential to practice in a real classroom environment and that only in this way can teacher candidates gain experience and self-confidence. As stated in the study of Gürses, Bayrak, Yalçın, Açıkyıldız & Doğar (2005, p. 9), teacher candidates stated that micro teaching has contributed to the development of their professional skills. In the study conducted by Ralph (2014, p. 24), it is observed that the application of micro teaching, like the results in this study, provides experience and self-confidence to teacher candidates (Ping, 2013, p. 169; Ramasubramaniam and Renganathan, 2014, p. 246; Mergler & Tangen, 2010, p. 17). In addition to these studies, in research by Sevim (2013, p. 310), similar to the findings of the current one, teacher candidates explained that micro teaching improved their communication skills. Besides, implementation in a real classroom environment increases the participation and interest of teacher candidates in the lesson and helps them gain a positive attitude toward the profession. Therefore, micro teaching is a technique that allows teacher candidates to improve themselves personally and professionally.

The findings related to the second sub-objective of the research show that the instructors have expressed their views on the theme of 'views of instructors on suggestions to solve problems that teacher candidates may encounter in their professional lives'. According to the instructors, micro teaching improves the problem-solving skills of pre-service

teachers, provides them with critical thinking and collaboration skills, enables them to develop effective teaching strategies, and increases participation in the class. In the study conducted by Hamidi & Kinay (2024), the opinions that the application of the micro teaching technique improves the presentation skills of prospective teachers, contributes to changing the perspective of teaching and provides the opportunity to practice teaching are in line with the results of this study. Related studies have concluded that micro teaching provides various opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop their teaching skills, which supports the results of the current study (Fernandez & Robinson, 2006; Higgins & Nicholl, 2003). In the studies conducted by Aydın (2013) & Duman (2022), if the micro teaching process has continued, teacher candidates' skills in preparing activities, determining teaching strategies, and making lesson plans, as well as their perception of the effectiveness of this technique have been improved. In addition, Ceyhan (2014), as a result of his research on micro teaching practices, stated that teacher candidates' teaching skills improve thanks to micro teaching, similar to the results of the current study. In addition, in Semerci's (2000, p. 6) study, similar to the views of the instructors participating in the current study, micro teaching improved the problem-solving skills of teacher candidates. Küçükoğlu et al. (2012) explained in their research that micro teaching is effective in using the teaching skills of teacher candidates. Sevim (2013) also stated that micro teaching has improved the teaching skills of teacher candidates. This result supports the results of the current research. Abdulwahed & Ismail (2011) pointed out that micro teaching provides effective teaching strategies to teacher candidates. In another study, Küçükoğlu et al. (2012) noted that micro teaching allows teacher candidates to develop their teaching skills. In addition, Görgen's (2003) statement that micro teaching increases the competence of teacher candidates regarding the teaching process is consistent with the results of this research.

Regarding the third sub-objective of the research, instructors explained their views on teacher candidates' use of technological tools in micro teaching. The instructors who expressed their views on the theme of "being able to benefit more from technological tools in micro teaching" stated that micro teaching improves the teacher candidates' video and audio recording skills, interactive board usage skills, web tool (Kahoot, Zoom, and Google Class) usage skills, projection device usage skills, and mobile device (smartphone) usage skills. Furthermore, tools such as Kahoot or Zoom will not only be available but will also enhance the pedagogical role of technology in teaching applications. In addition, instructors stated that teacher candidates' skills in using tablets, technological programs, and simulations improved when implementing micro teaching. In the study conducted by Asma (2023) with prospective teachers using the school-based and social media-supported micro teaching method, the positive behaviors of the participants during the application support the result of our study. Babacan & Şaşmaz Ören (2017, p. 204) explained in their research that teacher candidates mainly use interactive boards in their course presentations. In the study conducted by Karataş & Cengiz (2016, p. 579), similar to the results of this research, teacher candidates frequently use technological tools while implementing micro teaching. In this study, teacher candidates also stated that they gained experience in using smart boards. On

the other hand, the study of Babacan & Şaşmaz Ören (2017, p. 204) shows the contributions of teacher candidates' use of technological tools in micro teaching practices, supporting the results of the current study. Research conducted by Yıldız (2022) has shown that the experience of distance education using technology in this technique contributed to the knowledge and self-confidence of teacher candidates. In the study conducted by Wu & Kao (2008), teacher candidates stated that using technological tools such as computers and interactive boards is beneficial in teaching techniques such as micro teaching, supporting the results of the current study. Akyüz, Pektaş, Kurnaz & Kabataş Memiş (2014, p. 8) stated in their research that the use of technological tools such as interactive boards in teaching practices is significant, and this is similar to the results of the current research. Similarly, in the studies of Goldwaite (1968, p. 102) and Saban & Çoklar (2013, p. 239), the statements of the teacher candidates that using technological tools such as video cameras contributes significantly to the implementation of micro teaching are consistent with the results of the current research. In the study conducted by Koehler & Mishra (2009, pp. 66-67), teacher candidates stated that using projectors and computers enabled students to actively participate in teaching techniques such as micro teaching, similar to the views in the current study.

Regarding the fourth sub-objective of the research, instructors made different views and suggestions regarding the treatment of micro teaching in the courses. They stated that there is a need for suitable educational environments to implement micro teaching; it is significant to provide practice opportunities for teacher candidates, and class sizes should be reduced. In addition, the instructors stated that it is significant to use technology while the subject of micro teaching is being treated or practiced, that this technique should be integrated with teaching practice, and that cooperation should be established among teacher candidates. They stated that it would be beneficial to provide in-service training to instructors on the subject of micro teaching. In addition, they stated that micro teaching enables the development of 21st-century skills and finally that the micro teaching course should be compulsory. When these views and suggestions are examined, it is seen that to make the application more efficient, it is necessary to reduce class sizes that can affect the educational environment and to implement it in schools, that is, in real classroom environments. In Ülper, Aydın & İnnalı's (2015, p. 138) study, the importance of providing prospective teachers with competence in microteaching starting from the pre-service period was explained. Thus, the fact that they stated that this technique should be used efficiently in educational settings is similar to the results of this study. One of the results of a study conducted on this subject (Kablan, 2012) is that teacher candidates receive both practical and theoretical training when preparing a lesson plan and can prepare the lesson plan during the teaching process. This result supports the findings of the current study. Karışan's (2017, p. 197) opinion that teacher candidates should practice micro teaching in schools, that is, in real classroom environments, rather than in universities, is similar to the results of the current study. In Karaman's (2014, p. 171) research, teacher candidates expressed that they prefer to apply micro teaching in a real classroom environment. Similarly, the research results (Dere, 2019, p. 51) show that teacher candidates encountered some problems arising

from the artificiality of the classroom environment. Allen & Ryan (1969, pp. 2-3) explained that micro teaching would be effective and efficient if it were used in a real classroom environment. In the study by Christian (2017, p. 18), pre-service teachers stated that using materials is significant when preparing for micro teaching practice. This result supports the findings of the current study. In the research conducted by Peker (2009, p. 369), pre-service teachers stated the importance of reducing class sizes in micro teaching practice, similar to the findings of the current research. In addition, Leal-Rodríguez & Albort-Morantn (2018, p. 2), Meutia, Elyza & Yusnila (2018, p. 110); Undiyaundeye & Agbama-Inakwu (2012, p. 101) stated that micro teaching should be implemented in schools and real classroom environments.

## Recommendations

Based on the research results, the following recommendations can be made:

For the micro teaching technique to be more effective and efficient, arrangements should be made to create classroom environments suitable for it. In the implementation phase of micro teaching, opportunities should be provided for implementation in small classes and by reducing class sizes. Micro teaching courses should be included in the curriculum of education faculties as compulsory courses so that all teacher candidates can know and apply micro teaching. Digital infrastructures should be developed by creating classrooms that are well-equipped with the necessary resources. While implementing microteaching, extra activities should be planned for teacher candidates to use their 21st-century skills (creativity, innovation, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving) and metacognitive skills like reflection. Professional development, in-service training, or academic activities related to micro teaching should be provided to instructors.

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# Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Bu araştırmanın amacı, öğretim elemanlarının mikro öğretim tekniğine ilişkin görüşlerinin incelenmesidir. Öğretim elemanlarının mikro öğretim tekniğine ilişkin görüşlerinin belirlenmeye çalışıldığı bu araştırmada nitel araştırma modellerinden temel nitel araştırma deseni kullanılmıştır. Bu araştırmada ölçüt olarak bir devlet üniversitesinde "mikro öğretim, özel öğretim yöntemleri veya öğretim ilke ve yöntemleri", derslerini veren öğretim elemanları belirlenmiştir. Ulaşılabilen öğretim elemanı sayısına göre, çalışma grubu 17 erkek 6 kadın olmak üzere toplam 23 öğretim elemanından oluşmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın verileri, nitel araştırma yönteminin görüşme tekniği türlerinden yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği ile elde edilmiştir. Bu araştırmada, çalışmanın verileri içerik analizi tekniği kullanılarak çözümlenmiştir.

Araştırmanın birinci alt amacına ilişkin bulgular incelendiğinde öğretim elemanları mikro öğretim tekniğinin öğretmen adaylarının mesleki gelişimlerine olan katkısı temasına ilişkin görüş bildirmişlerdir. Öğretim elemanlarına göre mikro öğretim tekniği öğretmen adaylarına; deneyim kazanmayı sağlamakta, öz değerlendirme yapma becerisi kazandırmakta, eksikliklerini fark etmeyi sağlama, özgüvenlerinin gelişmesine imkân verme, uygulama yapma imkânı sunması, öğretmenlik mesleğine hazırlık yapma imkânı sağlaması, sınıf yönetimi becerisini kullanma, iletişim becerisini geliştirme, geribildirim verme, sınıf ortamını tanıma imkânı vermesi, farklı öğretim, teknik, ilke yöntem ve stratejileri uygulama, akran değerlendirme yapabilme, özeleştiri yapabilme ve materyal kullanma gibi katkılar sağlamaktadır.

Araştırmanın ikinci alt amacına ilişkin bulgular incelendiğinde öğretim elemanları mikro öğretim tekniğinin öğretmen adaylarının mesleki hayatlarında karşılaşabilecekleri problemleri çözmeye etkisine ilişkin görüşlerini açıklamışlardır. Öğretim elemanlarına göre mikro öğretim tekniği öğretmen adaylarının problem çözme becerisini geliştirdiği, eleştirel düşünme becerisi kazandırdığı, işbirliği becerisi kazandırdığı, etkili strateji geliştirmeye imkân sağladığı ve derse katılımı arttırdığını belirtmişlerdir.

Araştırmanın üçüncü alt amacına ilişkin bulgular incelendiğinde öğretim elemanları mikro öğretim tekniği konusunda teknolojik araç-gereçlerden nasıl yararlanılabileceğine ilişkin görüşlerini açıklamışlardır. Mikro öğretim tekniği konusunda teknolojik araç-gereçlerden daha fazla yararlanabilmesi teması hakkında görüş bildiren öğretim elemanları mikro öğretim tekniğinin öğretmen adaylarının kamera, video ve ses kaydetme, akıllı (etkileşimli) tahta kullanma becerisini geliştirme, web araçları (Kahoot, Zoom, Google Class) kullanma becerilerini geliştirme, projeksiyon cihazı kullanma ve mobil cihazlardan (akıllı telefon) yararlanılmasına katkı sunduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Ayrıca öğretim elemanları öğretmen adaylarının mikro öğretim tekniğini uygularken tablet kullanma, teknolojik programların kullanılmasını öğrenme ve simülasyon kullanma becerilerinin geliştiğini belirtmişlerdir.

Araştırmanın dördüncü alt amacına ilişkin bulgular incelendiğinde öğretim elemanları mikro öğretim tekniği konusunun işlenişine ilişkin farklı görüş ve önerilerde bulunmuşlardır. Öğretim elemanları mikro öğretim tekniği konusunun işlenişine ilişkin farklı görüş ve önerilerini açıklarken mikro öğretim için uygun ortamların oluşturulması gerektiğini, uygulama yapma imkânı sağlanmasının önemli olduğunu, sınıf mevcutlarının azaltılması gerektiğini belirtmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte öğretim elemanları mikro öğretim tekniği konusu işlenirken veya uygulama yapılırken teknolojinin kullanılmasının oldukça önemli olduğunu, bu tekniğin öğretmenlik uygulamasıyla bütünleştirilmesini, öğretmen adayları arasında işbirliği yapılması gerektiğini de ifade etmişlerdir. Ayrıca öğretim elemanları mikro öğretim tekniği konusu hakkında öğretim elemanlarına eğitim verilmesinin yararlı olacağını söylemişlerdir. Bununla birlikte mikro öğretim tekniğinin 21.y.y. becerilerinin geliştirilmesine imkân sağladığını ve son olarak ise mikro öğretim dersinin zorunlu olmasına ilişkin düşüncelerini belirtmişlerdir. Bu görüş ve öneriler incelendiğinde uygulama ortamının geliştirilmesine bağlı olarak sınıf mevcutlarını azaltmak, okullarda yani gerçek sınıf ortamında uygulama yapmak gerektiğini açıklamışlardır.

Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre mikro öğretim tekniğinin uygulama aşamasının daha etkili ve verimli olması için uygun sınıf ortamlarının oluşturulmasına yönelik düzenlemeler yapılabilir. Mikro öğretim tekniğinin uygulama aşamasında kalabalık olmayan sınıflarda ve sınıf mevcutları azaltılarak uygulama yapmasına ilişkin olanaklar sağlanabilir. Mikro öğretim tekniğinin tüm öğretmen adayları tarafından uygulanabilmesi için seçmeli mikro öğretim dersinin yerine zorunlu bir mikro öğretim dersi eğitim fakültelerinin programlarında yer alabilir. Mikro öğretim tekniğinin daha etkili ve verimli olarak işlenebilmesi amacıyla teknolojik araç-gereçlerle donatılmış sınıf ortamları sağlanarak dijital altyapılar geliştirilebilir. Mikro öğretim tekniği uygulanırken öğretmen adaylarının 21. y.y. becerilerini ve (yaratıcılık, yenilikçilik, iletişim, eleştirel düşünme, problem çözme) ve üst bilişsel becerilerini (yansıtma) kullanmalarına ilişkin etkinlikler düzenlenebilir.

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# Exploring School Principals' Leadership Strategies to Enhance Teacher Well-Being: A Case Study of a Disadvantaged School in Türkiye*

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**Abstract**
This qualitative case study examines the leadership strategies of a primary school principal in promoting teacher well-being within a disadvantaged part of Türkiye. Employing Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework as a theoretical base, our study aims to uncover the leadership strategies employed by a school principal to enhance teacher well-being. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 staff members from the case study school, including the principal, two assistant principals, and eight teachers. Data analysis provided valuable insights into the leadership strategies employed by the principal to influence teacher well-being. Findings suggest that principals play a pivotal role in fostering teacher well-being by providing clear direction, fostering professional development, creating a supportive organizational climate, and enhancing instructional practices. The study adds nuance to the global school leadership literature by underscoring the importance of effective leadership in promoting teacher well-being in disadvantaged school contexts and offers implications for practice and policy.

**Keywords:** case study, disadvantaged school, school principal, teacher well-being

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## Introduction

The impact of teacher emotions on educational outcomes has been extensively documented, revealing significant effects on both students and teachers (Frenzel et al., 2021; Keller et al., 2014; Kunter et al., 2013). Among various constructs related to teacher emotions, well-being has recently emerged as a critical area of scholarly focus (Hascher et al., 2021). The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed both policy-driven and academic efforts to explore and enhance teacher well-being (Hargreaves, 2021; OECD, 2021). Existing research on teacher well-being can be broadly divided into two streams: (1) studies examining its impact on educational outcomes and (2) studies investigating the factors that shape it (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Kouhsari et al., 2023; Liang et al., 2022).

Scholarship in the area of educational administration has increasingly acknowledged the importance of teacher well-being, particularly in the context of disadvantaged schools (Chen et al., 2023; Karakus et al., 2024). These schools pose unique challenges, such as limited resources, socio-economic pressures, and heightened teacher stress, which can significantly affect both teacher well-being and student outcomes (Virtanen et al., 2010). While the critical role of principal leadership in supporting teacher well-being is well established (Laine et al., 2017; Liu, Liu et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023), there remains a scarcity of research examining how principals in disadvantaged contexts specifically enact strategies to enhance it. Prior studies highlight that leadership behaviors such as valuing teachers' contributions (Cann et al., 2021) and showing empathy towards teachers' emotional needs (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018) are beneficial, yet a comprehensive understanding of strategic leadership tailored to disadvantaged schools is still lacking. More specifically, although various leadership styles such as transformational, instructional, and distributed have been extensively examined in relation to school improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008), their connection to teacher well-being in disadvantaged settings has received limited attention (Day & Gu, 2014; Hascher & Waber, 2021). Moreover, existing research on the intersection of principal leadership and teacher outcomes is largely concentrated in Western or high-income countries, leaving important gaps in non-Western contexts such as Türkiye, where principals must navigate additional socio-economic and systemic constraints (Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019). Finally, much of the evidence on school leadership effects is drawn from quantitative surveys (Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2019), which capture broad associations but provide limited insight into the day-to-day practices principals employ.

Addressing the gaps in the literature, this qualitative case study explores the strategies the school principal of a socio-economically disadvantaged school employs to promote teacher well-being. It seeks to provide deeper insight into how leadership is enacted in such a context and to offer guidance for policymakers and practitioners in Türkiye and other comparable settings, supporting the development of interventions tailored to the needs of teachers in disadvantaged schools.

## Literature Review

### Teacher Well-Being

A foundational and frequently referenced definition from the World Health Organization (1946: 2) describes well-being as 'a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. Another perspective on the well-being concept is presented by Ryan and Deci (2011: 48), who describe it as 'open, engaged, and healthy functioning'. In the educational context, well-being is primarily conceptualized within the context of the school environment, emphasizing teachers' positive evaluations and healthy functioning within their professional setting (Collie et al., 2015). In this study, we operationalize teacher well-being as how teachers perceive and respond to the cognitive, emotional, health-related, and social conditions associated with their professional responsibilities and work environment (Matthew & Adam, 2022; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

Beyond these general definitions, several theoretical frameworks have been widely applied in the literature on teacher well-being. For instance, Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, originally developed as a general framework for human flourishing, identifies five core dimensions of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. These domains are considered distinct yet interrelated components of well-being, each of which can be examined and enhanced individually while still contributing to an overall state of flourishing. The model has been adapted to the educational context, where it offers a multidimensional perspective for understanding both student and teacher well-being (Dreer, 2024). Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory emphasizes the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), which are critical for teachers' intrinsic motivation and personal well-being. Similarly, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) explains how the balance between job demands, such as workload and emotional pressure, and job resources, such as support, autonomy, and professional development, shapes teacher stress, engagement, and well-being. We partly benefit from these frameworks to enrich our conceptualization of teacher well-being by linking it not only to individual health and functioning but also to workplace conditions and psychological needs.

The importance of supporting and improving the well-being of teachers is evident, as it significantly influences various factors related to both teachers and students within the educational settings (OECD, 2021). Teacher well-being not only contributes to elevated levels of life and work satisfaction but also helps cultivate strong, positive relationships among colleagues (Kern et al., 2014). Furthermore, it influences factors such as stress, burnout, and motivation to exit the profession among educators (Viac & Fraser, 2020), while also impacting teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Matthew & Adam, 2022).

## School Leadership

Within the dynamic sphere of educational leadership, theoretical foundations have experienced substantial evolution over the past several decades. Initially, the 1980s spotlighted instructional leadership, emphasizing the crucial role of school leaders in refining teaching and learning processes. A line of scholars has extensively documented the significant impact of principals' instructional leadership practices on enhancing school effectiveness and elevating student academic outcomes (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Robinson et al., 2008). Shifting focus in the 1990s, attention turned to transformational leadership. It gained prominence for emphasizing principals' visionary abilities to transform school cultures, thereby facilitating extensive reform and restructuring efforts. This leadership style distinctly prioritizes inspiring and empowering teachers to advance collaboratively towards a cohesive vision (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Marks & Printy, 2003). Although they exhibit distinct nuances, both leadership models converge in highlighting the critical role of principals in initiating and driving leadership actions and bearing the primary responsibility for spearheading school improvement initiatives and boosting student performance. However, scholars have long criticized both instructional and transformational leadership for their tendency to conceptualize leadership as residing primarily in a single, central authority figure (Hallinger, 2003; Printy et al., 2009).

Moving away from traditional models, recent decades have witnessed the rise of distributed or shared leadership models (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2005). These models advocate a pluralistic leadership approach, distributing responsibilities across various stakeholders within educational settings. Recent discourses in educational leadership are increasingly advocating for integrated frameworks that transcend the constraints of traditional, singular leadership models. This advanced discourse underscores the integration of diverse leadership practices, aiming to provide a holistic view and potentially enhance educational outcomes (Day et al., 2016; Printy et al., 2009). This more recent perspective suggests that the continual improvement and efficacy of schools depend not merely on principals' leadership styles but on their ability to tailor leadership practices to the specific contexts of their schools. Nevertheless, the literature has largely overlooked how principals influence the psychological dimensions of teachers' work, particularly their well-being and motivation. This gap has only recently begun to receive scholarly attention in educational research (Cann et al., 2021; Karakus et al., 2024).

In alignment with this evolved viewpoint, our study adopts Leithwood's (2012) framework, which categorizes school leadership into four fundamental dimensions: (1) setting directions, (2) building relationships and developing people, (3) developing the organization to support desired practices, and (4) enhancing the instructional program. 'Setting directions' focuses on aligning organizational members and stakeholders around shared goals and objectives. 'Building relationships and developing people' stresses the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and fostering a trust-based culture within the school community. 'Developing the organization to support desired practices' involves creating collaborative work environments and optimizing

organizational practices and structures to achieve desired outcomes. Finally, 'Enhancing the instructional program' concentrates on improving instructional quality through strategic staffing and comprehensive instructional support.

We acknowledge that in the past decade, important theoretical perspectives have emerged, such as positive psychology-based school leadership (Cann et al., 2021), well-being leadership approaches (Acton & Glasgow, 2015), and research on teacher burnout and stress (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). These perspectives offer valuable insights into how leadership can influence teacher well-being. However, given our study's aim to capture the broad set of leadership strategies a principal employs in a disadvantaged school to improve teacher well-being, we selected Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework because it provides one of the most comprehensive and widely applied models of school leadership. Its four dimensions extend beyond instructional improvement to encompass relational, organizational, and motivational domains, all of which are fundamentally interwoven with the promotion of teacher well-being. For instance, setting directions could reduce uncertainty and enhance teachers' sense of purpose; building relationships and developing people could foster belonging and emotional support; developing the organization to support desired practices could promote collaboration and reduce stress; and enhancing the instructional program could provide professional resources that strengthen teachers' confidence and efficacy. In addition, because this framework is flexible and integrative, it allows us to situate our findings within a well-established structure while also drawing conceptual connections to newer perspectives. Thus, Leithwood's model offers both the breadth and adaptability necessary to guide our analysis in a disadvantaged school context, while also providing a theoretically grounded lens for understanding how principal leadership influences teacher well-being.

## The Role of Principals in Promoting Teacher Well-Being

The literature suggests that school principals play a crucial role in shaping and enhancing teachers' emotions, including well-being and job satisfaction, as well as their emotional health (Hetland et al., 2007; Karakus et al., 2024). Different leadership styles, such as distributed leadership (Bellibaş et al., 2024; Liu, Liu et al., 2024) and transformational leadership (Matthew & Adam, 2022; Thoonen et al., 2011), have been shown to influence teacher well-being significantly. Existing research also indicates that school principals employ a diverse array of strategies to promote teacher well-being, ranging from providing individual support (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018; Langford & Crawford, 2022), fostering trust among teachers (Liu, Liu et al., 2024), cultivating a culture of collaborative decision-making (Bellibaş et al., 2024), building strong relationships (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015), to facilitating continuous professional learning opportunities (Cann et al., 2021).

Yet, despite this growing body of evidence, the literature has paid limited attention to exploring the leadership strategies principals working in socio-economically disadvantaged contexts enact. Research has largely generalized findings from better-

resourced settings, which risks overlooking the unique constraints and demands faced by principals in disadvantaged schools. This neglect has left a critical gap in understanding whether and how leadership practices can be adapted to support teacher well-being under conditions of limited resources, heightened student needs, and stronger community pressures (Preston & Barnes, 2017; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The concept of teacher well-being is also context-specific, influenced by various factors that shape how well-being is perceived and addressed in different educational settings (Viac & Fraser, 2020). In economically disadvantaged areas, limited resources, inadequate physical facilities, and challenges students and their families face can significantly impact teachers' health and well-being (Virtanen et al., 2010).

## Method

### Research Model

This study was designed as a holistic single-case study to uncover the leadership strategies of a primary school principal in promoting teacher well-being within a disadvantaged part of Türkiye. The single-case study design allows for a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon, process, or individual being studied, thereby revealing the contextual richness and complexity of the research (Yin, 2018). Several reasons guided our choice of research design, each closely aligned with the specific purposes of our study. First, this design allows for a deep, contextual exploration of the complex dynamics at play in such unique environments. This is crucial for our purpose of delving into the specific leadership strategies adapted to the challenges of a disadvantaged setting, which would be difficult to capture through a broader, multi-case approach. Second, the intricate and potentially subtle nature of leadership strategies that effectively address the socio-economic challenges in these schools demands detailed, rich data that a single case study can provide. This aligns with our goal to document and understand the comprehensive impact of leadership strategies on teacher well-being. Third, focusing on one school allows for an intensive examination of the principal's role within the specific socio-economic and cultural context of that school, providing insights that are both profound and directly relevant to similar contexts. This focus supports our aim to contribute targeted, actionable recommendations for policy and practice.

In accordance with Yin's (2018) guidelines, therefore, our goal was to understand the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics of a disadvantaged school and identify the effectiveness of leadership strategies in promoting teachers' well-being in these specific conditions. Furthermore, the comprehensive and intensive data collection techniques we employed, including interviews and observations, allowed us to gather in-depth information. Consistent with Yin (2018), this study was designed as a single, holistic case. The bounded case and unit of analysis was School A as an organisation operating in a disadvantaged rural context. Interviews with the principal, assistant principals, and teachers, as well as on-site observations, served as units of data collection rather than separate units of analysis.

## The Study School

This study was conducted at School A (founded in 1994), a primary school located in a rural area of the West Black Sea region in Türkiye. The school is managed by a principal, assisted by two deputy principals, and employs twenty-one teachers serving 180 students. Notably, 60% of these students participate in a transported education program, commuting from surrounding villages.

Under the principal's leadership, who has been in his role at School A since 2016, the school has adeptly navigated a complex array of challenges inherent to its disadvantaged setting, significantly impacting its operational and educational capabilities. These challenges include limited resources, which often restrict the availability of essential teaching materials and hinder the school's ability to invest in advanced technological tools for learning. The low socio-economic status of the student body poses additional difficulties, as many students require additional academic support and resources that their families cannot provide. In addition, the school has no funding sources other than official and limited government funding, offers limited social and cultural events, and serves a community with low parental cultural capital. These constraints significantly impact the school environment, affecting both the teaching and learning experience.

The low socio-economic status of the student body poses additional difficulties, as many students require extra academic support and resources that their families or surrounding communities are unable to provide. This economic disadvantage also affects students' engagement and attendance, making educational consistency a challenge. Additionally, the school's geographical isolation limits access to broader educational collaborations and professional learning opportunities for staff, which are more readily available in urban settings.

Despite these challenges, School A has demonstrated remarkable resilience and success. Academically, it ranks among the top five in city-wide exam scores and consistently excels in sports, securing first place in regional volleyball competitions. The principal's strategies for enhancing teaching and learning are likely pivotal to these achievements. For instance, he initiated the Erasmus mobility program in 2020, which has allowed teachers to engage in professional learning initiatives across Europe. Upon returning, these teachers have shared new instructional methods with their colleagues, potentially boosting teacher well-being through enhanced engagement and improved attitudes. Additionally, the principal has emphasized integrating technological education within the school's curriculum, providing teachers with the tools and training needed to enhance their instructional practices. Efforts to preserve cultural heritage have further enriched the teaching environment, fostering greater engagement among teachers and students alike. These strategic initiatives by the principal have played a crucial role in navigating the complexities of a disadvantaged setting and promoting a supportive and enriching school environment.

## Participants

The selection of the case school for this study was based on its distinctive characteristic of being a relatively high-achieving institution compared to its socio-economically disadvantaged counterparts. We used the national high school entrance test scores to identify high-achieving schools and a national socio-economic development index (SEGE) to categorise the socio-economic disadvantage status of the areas where the schools are located (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Industry & Technology, 2022). In addition to these indicators, we considered publicly available information on project participation (for example, Erasmus mobility) and achievements in sports and cultural activities as complementary criteria reflecting the school's capacity to succeed despite structural disadvantages. Initially, we identified three schools that demonstrated strong academic performance, engagement in projects, and success in sports and cultural activities within a disadvantaged context in the given region of Türkiye. Also, the proximity of this region to the researchers facilitated the possibility of in-person data collection.

We contacted the principals of the three eligible schools that met these criteria, which included SEGE rankings, high school entrance test results, project participation, and achievements in sports and cultural activities. Only the principal of School A returned written consent, while the other two principals did not respond to our invitations despite follow-ups, and therefore, no data were collected from those schools. Since we did not collect any data from the non-responding schools, we cannot report internal characteristics beyond publicly available indicators. However, these indicators (last year's enrollment count, number of teachers, and exam performance) suggest that the non-responding schools were broadly comparable to School A. Given the potential selection bias due to proceeding only with the consenting site, we adopt a purposeful, information-rich case rationale (Patton, 2002), offer thick contextual description to support transferability, and triangulate interviews with on-site observations consistent with case study best practice (Yin, 2018).

For this study, participants were selected from School A using a purposive sampling strategy. The school principal played a key role in this process by recommending individuals who met a set of predefined criteria aimed at ensuring participant diversity. These criteria were carefully formulated to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences (Patton, 2002), focusing on variations in gender, age, and professional tenure. To minimise potential gatekeeper effects and power asymmetries, the principal's suggestions served only as an initial contact frame. The research team independently vetted candidates against a list of predefined diversity criteria (based on role, tenure, gender, and age), obtained individual informed consent directly from participants, and scheduled interviews privately. The principal neither attended interviews nor was informed about who agreed or declined. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was emphasized during recruitment. To further enhance the representativeness of the data, the sampling frame was broadened to include staff members with diverse roles and backgrounds. A summary of participant demographics is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic information of the participants

| Name | Position | Gender | Age | Experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SP | School principal | M | 39 | 17 years of experience, 8 years as principal, 2 years as assistant principal<br>8 years at School A |
| AP1 | Assistant principal | M | 40 | 14 years of experience and 8 years as assistant principal<br>3 years at School A |
| AP2 | Assistant principal | M | 45 | 23 years of experience and 17 years as principal and as assistant principal<br>2 years at School A |
| T1 | Primary Education Teacher | M | 54 | 30 years of experience and 6 years as head of subject department at School A |
| T2 | Information Technologies Teacher | M | 41 | 19 years of experience 9 years as head of subject department at School A |
| T3 | Primary Education Teacher | F | 50 | 27 years of experience and 5 years as head of subject department at School A |
| T4 | Education of Religion Teacher | M | 30 | 8 years of experience, 2 years as head of subject department at School A |
| T5 | Science Teacher | F | 41 | 18 years of experience, 6 years as head of subject department at School A |
| T6 | Pre-School Teacher | F | 43 | 16 years of experience |
| T7 | Physical Education Teacher | M | 46 | 18 years of experience, 11 years as head of subject department at School A |
| T8 | Maths Teacher | F | 35 | 10 years of experience |

The demographic variation in Table 1 demonstrates that the participant group included staff with different roles, genders, ages, and levels of professional experience. This diversity contributed to the analysis by ensuring that the themes reflected perspectives shared across different teacher profiles rather than being limited to a single subgroup. In this way, demographic variation strengthened the credibility of the findings and supported their potential transferability to similar disadvantaged school contexts.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study were collected using a combination of face-to-face semi-structured interviews and observations. After obtaining ethical approval, interviews were scheduled with the principal and teachers of School A during the spring term of the 2023-2024 academic year. The primary method of data collection involved in-depth interviews with the principal and the teachers of School A. The interviews were conducted in a designated private meeting room within the school premises, ensuring a conducive and confidential environment for the participants. Each interview lasted about 60 minutes and was transcribed verbatim. Transcript length varied with speaking rate and formatting. The semi-structured interview guidelines were based on Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework, which encompasses four core components: setting directions, building relationships and developing people, developing the organization to support desired practices, and enhancing the instructional program.

A total of 15 questions were posed to the participants. Additionally, multiple school visits were conducted to ensure that the observations accurately reflected the school's daily realities. By employing multiple data collection methods that include interviews and observations, we aimed to gather comprehensive data that detailed the school's unique context, the principal's leadership strategies, and their impact on teachers' well-being. This methodology grounded the findings in the actual experiences and practices observed within the school, providing a robust basis for analysis. However, we noted that we did not conduct a systematic analysis of internal strategy documents (e.g., school development plans or performance reports). This was a deliberate methodological choice, as the study prioritized capturing teachers' lived experiences and perspectives on well-being through interviews and on-site observations. While publicly available indicators (such as SEGE scores, exam performance, and evidence of project participation) were considered for case selection and contextualization, they were not included as analytic data sources.

After the interviews and observations were completed, all recorded data were transcribed to convert the spoken words and noted observations into written text. This transcription provided a detailed, accessible format for subsequent analysis. We employed a hybrid coding strategy that combined a deductive codebook, informed by Leithwood's four dimensions, with inductive subcodes for emergent codes not captured by the framework (Miles et al., 2019). To ensure the rigour of this approach, two researchers independently coded an initial subset of transcripts, reconciled discrepancies through discussion, and iteratively refined the codebook before applying it to the full dataset. During this process, specific codes were developed concerning the principal's leadership strategies to promote teachers well-being. These codes were systematically applied to text sections within each transcript and observation note, ensuring precise correspondence with the identified thematic concerns.

The transcribed data then underwent content analysis guided by the codebook derived from Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework and inductive codes that emerged from the data. The analysis was executed in two distinct phases: initially, a vertical analysis was conducted to examine each participant's responses independently, aiming to capture their unique perspectives and insights. This was followed by a horizontal comparative analysis performed to identify and synthesize common themes and patterns across all interviews (Cohen et al., 2011). We incorporated illustrative quotations from staff in different roles to represent the range of perspectives captured in the case, ensuring that both shared and distinct viewpoints were reflected in the analysis.

The final step involved organizing the extracted data around a central theme: the leadership strategies employed to promote teacher well-being. This structure allowed us to clearly identify and report the specific leadership strategies executed by the principal of School A to enhance the well-being of teachers at School A.

### Trustworthiness

To ensure validity and reliability, we adhered to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through member checks, sharing interview transcripts with participants for verification, and extended engagement with multiple visits to School A over three weeks. In this study, member checking extended beyond transcript verification; participants also reviewed our preliminary interpretations of interview and observation data. This iterative process confirmed the accuracy of their accounts and allowed participants to challenge and refine our analyses, thereby reducing the risk of researcher-driven bias. Triangulation was employed using interviews and observations to provide a comprehensive understanding of the principal's leadership strategies.

Transferability was addressed by providing rich, detailed contextual descriptions of School A, examining its socio-economic and cultural dynamics, achievements, and challenges. This allows our findings to be assessed for applicability to similar educational settings. Dependability was ensured through a detailed audit trail documenting the research process. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and systematically coded by two independent researchers. Observation records were meticulously kept, and member checking was carried out to verify the accuracy of interpretations.

Confirmability was supported through detailed documentation of data collection, analysis, and decision-making processes. To encourage candid conversations, interviews and observations were conducted by two researchers with prior experience as school administrators. While this professional background enabled rapport and credibility with participants, it could also increase the risk of interpretive bias and influence participant responses. To address this, we systematically documented such risks in reflexive memos, openly discussed them in team meetings, and incorporated counter-interpretations into the coding framework. In this way, the memos became not only records of potential bias but also active tools for shaping more balanced and critical analysis. By rigorously applying these strategies, we ensured that the findings were not only credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable but also reflexively grounded and methodologically transparent.

## Findings

Our analysis revealed a series of strategies employed by the Principal of School A to promote teacher well-being, categorised under the four dimensions of Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework: setting directions, building relationships and developing people, developing the organization to support desired practices, and enhancing the instructional program.

## Setting Directions

Our findings identified three strategies used by the Principal of School A to set directions for the school to foster teacher well-being.

### *Strategy 1: Communicating the vision and goals*

The principal regularly communicated a vision emphasizing overcoming challenges and achieving success despite socio-economic barriers, focusing on student success. This vision was shared through regular staff meetings and individual conversations, highlighting success stories of teachers and students who overcame significant challenges. This approach maintained motivation and resilience among teachers, which is crucial in disadvantaged contexts. T1 stated her opinions as follows:

*"Our principal keeps us updated on the school's goals and celebrates our successes, which really keeps us going. For instance, during staff meetings, he often highlights how teachers have managed to help students improve despite limited resources. This kind of recognition boosts our morale and reminds us why our work is important."*

The recognition of teachers' efforts, particularly in a disadvantaged context where resources are scarce, reduces feelings of burnout and frustration. This sense of appreciation contributes directly to their well-being. Supporting this, the school principal (SP) explained:

*"We communicate our vision and mission regularly through various channels to ensure everyone stays motivated and aligned with our goals. One of our vision statements is 'happy school community."*

The principal's focus on creating a 'happy school community' emerges as essential in promoting teacher well-being. In a disadvantaged school setting, where external pressures such as poverty and limited resources add stress, this emphasis on building a positive, emotionally supportive environment plays a crucial role in reducing teacher stress and enhancing well-being.

### *Strategy 2: Setting specific and measurable goals*

The principal set clear and achievable goals, such as reducing student absenteeism to zero and increasing the percentage of students entering high schools through central exams to 30%. The participant teachers emphasised that these measurable goals provided them with a structured plan, helping to reduce uncertainty and stress. In disadvantaged schools, where challenges can feel overwhelming, having clear targets helps to focus efforts and maintain motivation. T6 highlighted:

*"Our principal sets clear and straightforward goals for the school, which really energises us as teachers. It is like having a roadmap that inspires us and makes our jobs feel more meaningful and rewarding."*

By setting such goals, the principal provided clarity and direction, which helped teachers manage their workload more effectively. This sense of direction is critical for reducing stress in environments where resource limitations can create additional challenges. The achievement of these goals, such as reducing absenteeism, also contributes to improved teacher well-being by fostering a sense of accomplishment and progress.

### *Strategy 3: Encouraging teacher participation in goal setting*

The principal actively involved teachers in setting school goals, considering their insights on handling resource limitations and socio-economic challenges. Teachers stated that such a participatory approach fostered their sense of ownership and empowerment, which is particularly important in disadvantaged contexts where external challenges often make teachers feel powerless. By involving them in decision-making, the principal increased their commitment to school initiatives, which enhanced their sense of well-being. T7 emphasised:

*"Our principal really involves us in setting the school's goals and vision. He often asks for our input, saying things like, 'Your perspectives are important as we figure out our school's direction. What do you think about this plan?' This way, we feel like we are an essential part of the school."*

In disadvantaged schools, where teachers often face significant external stressors, being involved in decision-making processes helps reduce feelings of helplessness and increases engagement. This involvement supports their well-being by giving them a sense of control and agency. Similarly, the assistant principal (AP2) noted that although teachers were actively consulted in setting educational goals, decisions on administrative matters were still finalized by the principal:

*"Ultimately, the final word always comes from the principal."*

## Building Relationships and Developing People

Our research identified three strategies employed by the Principal of School A to promote teacher well-being through building relationships and developing people.

### *Strategy 1: Creating a family-like organizational climate*

The principal cultivated a family-like atmosphere in the school, emphasizing mutual support and personal connections among staff members. In disadvantaged settings, where external professional support may be limited, building a strong internal support system is crucial. Accordingly, most of the participant teachers supported the idea that the sense of solidarity creates a more cohesive and supportive work environment. T2 shared:

*"Our principal creates a family-like atmosphere in our school, which makes us feel like a community. The principal's approachability and willingness to listen contribute significantly to this climate."*

In a similar manner, SP stated that:

*"The strongest aspect of our school is its family-like atmosphere. This unity helps us tackle challenges together."*

In contexts where teachers face significant stress from external pressures, having a strong support system within the school is vital. By creating a family-like atmosphere, our finding suggests that the principal reduced feelings of isolation and stress, contributing directly to teacher well-being.

***Strategy 2: Using positive communication and empathy***

The principal maintained open communication and regularly checked in with teachers, responding empathetically to their concerns. In disadvantaged schools, where emotional strain can be particularly high due to resource limitations and socio-economic challenges, positive communication is essential for reducing stress. T5 highlighted:

*"Our principal's open-door policy makes us feel heard and supported. Whenever we have issues, whether personal or professional, we can talk to him, and he always responds with understanding and kindness. This support is invaluable."*

The SP also noted:

*"By showing that we genuinely care about their problems, we foster a happier staff."*

Our finding suggests that the principal's approach of listening and providing empathy is crucial for reducing emotional stress and fostering a positive work environment. This empathetic leadership enhances teacher well-being.

***Strategy 3: Encouraging and supporting teachers' professional development***

In the disadvantaged school setting of the present study, the principal actively promoted professional development opportunities, including further education, certifications, and specialized training, despite the challenges posed by limited resources. Our analysis revealed that this focus on professional development not only enhanced teachers' skills but also positively impacted their long-term well-being. This is particularly important in disadvantaged contexts where teachers face unique challenges requiring additional support and training. T6 shared:

*"The professional development opportunities provided by our school are invaluable for our growth. Recently, during an Erasmus+ mobility, I attended a workshop in Spain, which significantly improved my teaching practices."*

The SP reinforced this by stating:

*"I have organized training courses on the use of technology in education, and I encourage teachers to participate in Erasmus+ and other national and local projects."*

The principal's commitment to professional development helps build teachers' confidence and competence, which in turn contributes to their well-being. By providing these opportunities, the principal addresses the specific challenges teachers face in a disadvantaged setting, helping them feel more supported and capable.

### Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices

We identified three leadership strategies employed by the Principal to promote teacher well-being by developing the organization to support desired practices.

#### *Strategy 1: Fostering collaboration among teachers*

The principal actively encouraged collaboration, creating opportunities for teachers to share best practices and support one another. Participant teachers noted that, given the scarcity of resources, such collaboration allows them to pool their knowledge and strategies, which not only reduces individual stress but also enhances overall teaching effectiveness. T8 shared:

*"The principal really knows how to bring us together as a team. He creates a relaxed atmosphere where teachers can freely collaborate, share ideas, and work together to support one another."*

Supporting this argument, the assistant principal (AP1) highlighted:

*"The principal develops school culture through shared activities and events, which supports collaboration among teachers."*

In a challenging environment, collaboration becomes a critical tool for overcoming adversity. By fostering this culture, the principal not only enhanced teaching effectiveness but also contributed significantly to teacher well-being. The principal's approach helped mitigate the stress and isolation often accompanying working in disadvantaged contexts, thereby improving overall teacher well-being.

#### *Strategy 2: Promoting a peaceful and supportive work environment*

The principal implemented policies that promoted work-life balance, accommodating teachers' personal needs when scheduling lessons. In disadvantaged schools, where teachers often face overwhelming demands, our analysis indicates that promoting work-life balance is essential for supporting teacher well-being. T3 shared:

*"Our principal really helps us balance work and personal life. For instance, if we need to make some adjustments to our schedule for personal reasons, he tries to accommodate us, which really helps us manage our workload and personal life better."*

### Enhancing the Instructional Program

Our analysis identified two leadership strategies utilized by the Principal to support teacher well-being through the improvement of the instructional program.

*Strategy 1: Providing resources and support for instructional improvement*

The principal ensured teachers had access to necessary instructional materials by leveraging creative solutions, such as partnerships with local businesses and organizations. In a school where the budget is constrained due to the socio-economic status of parents and their expectations in the disadvantaged community it serves, obtaining even basic instructional materials can be challenging. The participant teachers stated that they are often left to manage their classrooms with inadequate resources, which increases their stress and limits their ability to deliver lessons effectively. Recognizing this challenge, the principal sought external funding and donations to provide these much-needed materials. T5 highlighted how this impacted her classroom:

*"Our principal is always finding ways to get us the materials we need. For instance, we recently received a donation of books from a local business, which has made a huge difference in our classrooms."*

By securing these resources, the principal alleviated a significant source of stress for teachers, allowing them to focus more on teaching and less on compensating for the lack of supplies. The SP further elaborated:

*"Given the school's limited budget and the economic challenges faced by our families, securing partnerships and grants is crucial for providing the necessary resources to our teachers. Without these external supports, the pressure on our staff would have been considerably higher."*

*Strategy 2: Monitoring students' academic progress and providing feedback*

The principal regularly assessed students' progress and provided constructive feedback to teachers, focusing on strategies that work in resource-limited settings. Regular assessments were conducted, and results were discussed in meetings with teachers to provide feedback and discuss strategies for improvement. T8 expressed:

*"Our principal keeps a close eye on students' academic performance. Because he has good relationships with the students, he meets with them regularly and motivates them. He often meets with us to discuss the results of practice exams. The guidance he provides helps reduce our stress."*

SP also stressed the importance of monitoring students and providing feedback for teachers' well-being. SP noted that:

*"Every month, we conduct practice exams, and I closely monitor the results. I also review the students' exam scores and provide feedback to the teachers based on my assessments. Keeping a close watch on the teaching process helps keep the teachers motivated."*

In addition to these positive experiences, some teachers also mentioned that high expectations could at times create stress. T5 reflected:

*"When the practice exam results were low, my principal called me… I got very anxious, wondering if he would criticize me."*

This finding suggests that while close monitoring and feedback were generally valued and reduced uncertainty, they could also generate pressure when student performance did not meet expectations.

## Discussion

First, under the 'setting directions' dimension of school leadership, we found that establishing a clear vision, setting specific and measurable goals, and encouraging teacher participation in goal setting are important leadership strategies that contribute to teacher well-being. In disadvantaged schools where socio-economic challenges are pervasive, the principal's proactive communication and goal-setting appear not only strategic but also inspirational. Such leadership strategies help align the school community toward overcoming barriers and strengthening teacher morale and resilience, which are essential for sustaining well-being. Our findings deepen the understanding of contextual factors that shape leadership effectiveness in under-resourced environments and are consistent with previous studies showing that clear and shared goals can enhance both teacher morale and effectiveness, thereby positively influencing their well-being (e.g., Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Robinson et al., 2008). However, in contrast to Western contexts where goal setting is frequently linked to accountability and performance monitoring (e.g., Dotson, 2016), our findings indicate that in disadvantaged Turkish schools, it primarily serves as a source of motivation and resilience against systemic constraints. Other research also offers a different perspective. For instance, in the Flemish context, Hulpia et al. (2009) found that participative decision-making was not significantly related to teacher job satisfaction. This inconsistency across findings from various contexts indicates that while participation in goal setting can foster a sense of ownership, its influence on well-being is not always straightforward. Ultimately, the principal retains final responsibility for management-related decisions, which is a dynamic that may also reflect the centralized structure of the Turkish education system.

Second, under the school leadership dimension of 'building relationships and developing people', we identified a family-like organizational climate, the use of positive communication and empathy, and the encouragement of professional development as key strategies for fostering teacher well-being. In disadvantaged settings where external social and professional networks are often less accessible, these practices take on heightened importance. The principal's initiatives to create a familial atmosphere and organise social events become particularly significant, as they provide teachers with alternative sources of social connection and support (Harrison et al., 2025). Such practices enhance teachers' sense of belonging and emotional support, both of which are crucial for sustaining well-being in challenging contexts (Kern et al., 2014).

Alongside this, providing professional development opportunities, even in resource-limited environments, not only strengthens teachers' teaching and learning capacity but also contributes to their sense of professional fulfilment (Fernandes et al., 2019). Our findings also resonate with Cann et al. (2021), who highlight that leadership actions such as relationship building, meaningful professional development, and fostering a sense of being valued are central to teacher well-being. Yet, international evidence suggests an important contextual distinction. In Western contexts, teachers often draw on external support systems such as professional associations and unions to maintain their well-being and mitigate work-related stress (Coppe, 2024; Han, 2019). In contrast, our findings indicate that such institutionalized supports are largely absent in disadvantaged Turkish schools. Instead, principals' efforts to cultivate collegial trust, empathy, and a family-like climate constitute the main source of social and emotional support for teachers. This distinction underscores that while teachers in Western contexts can rely on both external networks and school-based relationships, in Türkiye they primarily depend on the school itself for sustaining their well-being. In this sense, the emphasis on a family-like climate and positive communication illustrates the importance of principals demonstrating social and emotional competence alongside contextual awareness, which are especially critical in disadvantaged schools. The interviews further revealed that participants most strongly emphasised the strategies within this dimension, reinforcing their central role in contexts where collegial bonds and principal support compensate for systemic shortcomings.

Third, under the 'developing the organization to support desired practices' dimension, we identified fostering collaboration among teachers and promoting a peaceful and supportive work environment as impactful strategies for supporting teacher well-being. These strategies might create a supportive and collegial atmosphere that not only reduces stress but also builds a strong community ethos (Newmann et al., 1989; Rae et al., 2017). Furthermore, by considering teachers' out-of-school lives when scheduling, the school supports a better work-life balance, which is essential for reducing stress and enhancing overall well-being (Yin et al., 2016). This finding may be derived from the inherent necessity for mutual support and collaboration in contexts lacking external resources and support systems. In schools facing challenges and limited resources, the need for teacher collaboration becomes critically important. Collaboration among teachers in these settings can thus provide essential support, enabling them to share resources, strategies, and emotional encouragement and persevere through challenges (Tannehill & MacPhail, 2017). While international research frequently highlights collaboration as a means of professional development and instructional improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Goddard et al., 2007), our findings suggest that in disadvantaged Turkish schools, it also takes on a more pragmatic role. It becomes a necessary strategy for coping with resource shortages and emotional strain, revealing a context-specific dimension of collaboration that has not been sufficiently emphasized in the broader literature.

Finally, under the 'enhancing the instructional program' dimension, we found that providing resources and support for instructional improvement together with monitoring

student academic progress are crucial practices for principals to bolster teacher well-being. Prior research suggests that these practices can reduce the stress associated with resource limitations (Liu, Thien et al., 2024; Robinson et al., 2008). This is particularly important in disadvantaged schools, where limited resources pose significant challenges for teachers. In such contexts, principals' efforts to seek and allocate resources become critical, as teachers strive to keep pace with their counterparts in socio-economically advantaged schools. Ensuring equitable access to resources may therefore help level the playing field, enabling teachers in disadvantaged settings to improve their instructional practices and support student achievement effectively. Regular assessment and constructive feedback, as observed in School A, also allow teachers to make informed adjustments to their teaching practices. By reducing uncertainty, such practices can alleviate stress and strengthen teacher well-being in disadvantaged contexts (Matthew & Adam, 2022). This finding aligns with previous literature emphasizing the vital role of continuous assessment and feedback for both instructional improvement and teacher well-being (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Nevertheless, frequent monitoring and assessment, while generally valued, were also reported as potential sources of stress when outcomes fell short of expectations. Importantly, this tension is not unique to the Turkish context. International evidence demonstrates that accountability systems and achievement pressures are strongly associated with teacher stress and diminished well-being (Jerrim & Sims, 2022). Overall, these findings suggest that although the sources of teacher stress may differ across educational systems, the dual nature of feedback and monitoring as both supportive and pressuring represents a common challenge in international as well as disadvantaged Turkish settings.

It is also worth noting that not all participant accounts are mapped neatly to Leithwood's dimensions. For instance, some teachers placed stronger emphasis on challenges beyond the model's categories, such as dealing with parental expectations in disadvantaged communities or coping with the emotional strain of insufficient systemic support. These aspects suggest that while Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework provides a valuable analytical lens, it may not fully capture the socio-emotional and contextual complexities experienced by teachers in under-resourced schools. Recognising these nuances highlights the importance of adapting existing models to better reflect the lived realities of disadvantaged educational settings.

Overall, our findings add nuance to the global literature on school leadership by demonstrating how context-specific challenges and resources shape the strategies school leaders must employ to enhance teacher well-being, they also broaden our understanding of leadership dynamics in under-resourced schools and thus provide a valuable framework for similar contexts globally. In addition, by applying Leithwood's (2012) school leadership model to a specific context of disadvantaged schools, our study illustrates how principals can operationalize it to promote teacher well-being as well as how the model can be expanded to incorporate contextual and socio-emotional dimensions.

## Conclusion and Implications

This study demonstrates the critical role of school leadership in enhancing teacher well-being in socio-economically disadvantaged settings. By effectively employing strategies aligned with Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework, the principal of School A has successfully navigated the myriad challenges inherent to a resource-limited environment. The principal's leadership strategies, ranging from communicating a clear vision and mission, fostering collaboration among teachers, creating a family-like organizational climate, and providing resources and support for instructional improvement, have not only bolstered teacher morale and resilience but also cultivated a robust, community-centered school culture, ultimately leading to increased teacher well-being.

Our study has important implications for policymakers and educational practitioners. First, policymakers should develop and fund specialised leadership training programs for principals that emphasise building supportive and resilient school cultures. These programs could include modules on strategic communication, conflict resolution, and team building, aligning with the need to foster collaboration and professional development. Second, sustained investment is needed in the continuous professional development of teachers in disadvantaged schools, through workshops, online courses, and collaborative learning opportunities. Beyond training and funding, more concrete measures are necessary. For instance, establishing systematic mechanisms to regularly monitor teacher well-being at the school level would enable the early identification of stress, burnout, and disengagement, allowing for timely and tailored interventions. In addition, school-based support structures, such as peer-support groups, mentoring schemes, and access to psychological counseling, should be institutionalized to address the socio-emotional challenges teachers face in disadvantaged contexts. Aligning these initiatives with the MoNE's existing teacher development and support strategies would help ensure that well-being is embedded as a long-term policy priority rather than treated as a short-term project. Finally, broader policy frameworks should be created to mandate regular professional development and well-being programs for both principals and teachers in disadvantaged schools, incorporating clear guidelines, measurable outcomes, and accountability mechanisms to ensure effective and sustainable implementation.

While the leadership strategies identified in this study for promoting teacher well-being have naturally been context-specific, they hold potential for adaptation by principals in similar disadvantaged settings. Therefore, we suggest that principals in such environments could benefit from prioritizing the establishment and effective communication of clear, actionable goals. Additionally, fostering a collaborative atmosphere that encourages continuous professional development and actively cultivating a supportive, community-focused school culture are recommended. Furthermore, by leveraging available resources through strategic partnerships and implementing rigorous monitoring and feedback mechanisms, such principals could

strengthen the foundational elements of strategic communication, collaboration, resource optimization, and continuous assessment.

## Limitations and Further Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged, each of which also points to avenues for future research. First, this study focuses on a single primary school in a disadvantaged area, which constrains the transferability of the findings to other settings with different socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, the selected school is somewhat atypical, as it has achieved relatively high academic success despite operating in a disadvantaged context. While this makes the case valuable for understanding effective leadership under challenging conditions, it may not fully capture the realities of more typical disadvantaged schools. Future research could address this limitation by adopting a comparative design that includes schools from diverse socio-economic contexts and varying levels of academic achievement. Such an approach would help determine whether the leadership strategies identified here are effective across different environments, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the results.

Second, we did not conduct a systematic analysis of internal school documents, as our methodological design prioritized teachers' lived experiences and perspectives captured through interviews and observations. While this choice aligns with the study's focus, it limits triangulation. Future studies could integrate document analysis (e.g., school improvement plans, project files) alongside interviews and observations, and broaden the design to include multiple stakeholder perspectives such as parents, students, and community members. This would provide a richer and more comprehensive account of how leadership strategies shape teacher well-being.

Third, the reliance on qualitative data, though rich and in-depth, means that the conclusions drawn are inherently subjective and influenced by the participants' personal experiences and perspectives. This subjectivity could affect the replicability of the findings. Future research could therefore combine qualitative approaches with quantitative methods to improve the robustness of the findings, allowing for a more comprehensive evaluation of leadership strategies' effectiveness and reducing the risk of subjective bias.

Fourth, the researchers' professional backgrounds as former school administrators, while providing valuable insider understanding and facilitating rapport with participants, may also have shaped data collection and interpretation. Despite the use of reflexive memos and team discussions to mitigate potential bias, it is possible that the researchers' positionality influenced participants' responses and the analytic lens applied. Therefore, future studies should continue to emphasize reflexivity and consider involving research teams with diverse professional backgrounds to balance insider and outsider perspectives.

Finally, our methodology does not allow for examination of how leadership strategies influence teacher well-being over time. Leadership practices often exert their strongest effects in cumulative or delayed ways, and the absence of longitudinal data limits our ability to assess sustainability and long-term impact (e.g., Thoonen et al., 2011). Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to capture the evolving effects of leadership, offering insights into how principals' efforts accumulate, adapt, or diminish over time in shaping teacher well-being and student outcomes.

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# Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin sosyoekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı bir bölgesinde bulunan bir ilkokulda okul müdürünün öğretmenlerin iyi oluşunu artırmak amacıyla geliştirdiği liderlik stratejilerini incelemektedir. Nitel araştırma yöntemine sahip bu tekil durum çalışması, öğretmenlerin iş ortamında yaşadığı bilişsel, duygusal ve sosyal zorlukları aşmalarına destek olan liderlik pratiklerini ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Araştırma, Leithwood'un (2012) okul liderliği çerçevesi temelinde kurgulanmış ve veriler dört temel liderlik boyutu olan yön belirleme, ilişkileri geliştirme ve insanları destekleme, örgütsel yapıyı güçlendirme ve öğretim programını destekleme temelinde analiz edilmiştir.

Araştırmanın yürütüldüğü "Okul A", Batı Karadeniz bölgesinde kırsal bir alanda yer almakta olup sınırlı kaynaklara, düşük sosyoekonomik düzeye sahip öğrenci profiline ve ulaşım sorunlarına rağmen akademik ve sportif başarılar elde etmiştir. Okul müdürü 2016 yılından bu yana görevde olup, Erasmus+ gibi projelerle öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimini desteklemiş, teknolojik altyapının güçlendirilmesini sağlamış ve okul kültürünü geliştirmeye yönelik çalışmalar başlatmıştır. Çalışmada 11 katılımcı (müdür, 2 müdür yardımcısı, 8 öğretmen) ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmış ve okul gözlemleri gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler tematik analiz ile çözümlenmiştir.

Elde edilen bulgular, müdürün öğretmenlerin iyi oluşunu desteklemek üzere geliştirdiği liderlik stratejilerinin Leithwood'un modeline uygun biçimde yapılandığını ortaya koymaktadır. Yön belirleme kapsamında müdürün, okulun vizyon ve hedeflerini açıkça ifade etmesi, bu hedefleri öğretmenlerle birlikte belirlemesi ve bu hedefleri ulaşılabilir ve somut kılması, öğretmenlerde amaç duygusunu güçlendirmekte ve belirsizlikten kaynaklanan stresleri azaltmaktadır. Müdürün sık sık başarı hikâyeleri paylaşması, "mutlu okul toplumu" gibi pozitif kavramlarla ortak değerler etrafında öğretmenleri birleştirmesi, dezavantajlı koşullarda çalışan öğretmenlerin motivasyonunu artırmakta ve mesleki bağlılıklarını güçlendirmektedir.

İlişkileri geliştirme ve insanları destekleme boyutunda müdür, okulda aile atmosferi oluşturarak karşılıklı destek ve güven ortamı sağlamıştır. Müdürün, empatik bir iletişim tarzı benimsemesi öğretmenlerin yalnızlık ve tükenmişlik duygularıyla baş etmelerinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin bireysel ve mesleki gelişimlerine yönelik fırsatlar sunması (örneğin Erasmus+ hareketlilikleri, teknoloji eğitimleri) öğretmenlerin kendilerini değerli ve yeterli hissetmelerini sağlamış, bu da iyi oluşlarını desteklemiştir.

Örgütsel yapıyı destekleme stratejileri arasında öğretmenler arası iş birliğini teşvik etmek, okul içinde sosyal etkileşimi artıran ortamlar yaratmak ve öğretmenlerin kişisel yaşamlarına uygun program düzenlemeleri yapmak yer almaktadır. Özellikle dezavantajlı bölgelerdeki öğretmenlerin karşı karşıya kaldığı kaynak eksikliği ve sosyal yalıtılmışlık gibi sorunlar göz önüne alındığında, müdürün işbirliğine dayalı, esnek ve destekleyici bir örgüt yapısı inşa etmesi öğretmenlerin psikolojik dayanıklılığını artırmış ve kuruma aidiyetlerini pekiştirmiştir.

Öğretim programının güçlendirilmesi açısından müdür, öğretim materyallerinin temini için yerel paydaşlarla iş birliği yapmış, öğretmenlere gerekli ders materyallerini sağlayarak öğretimin niteliğini geliştirmiştir. Bunun yanında, öğrenci başarısını düzenli olarak izleyerek öğretmenlere geri bildirimde bulunması, öğretim süreçlerinde iyileşmeye katkı sağlamış ve öğretmenlerin çabalarının görünür olmasına olanak tanımıştır. Bu sayede öğretmenler, hem başarıyı daha net gözlemlemiş hem de desteklenmiş hissetmiştir; bu durum da iyi oluşlarını olumlu yönde etkilemiştir.

Araştırma, okul müdürünün uyguladığı stratejilerin öğretmenlerin yalnızca akademik performansını değil, mesleki doyumlarını ve psikolojik sağlamlıklarını da etkilediğini göstermektedir. Özellikle dezavantajlı okullarda çalışan öğretmenlerin içinde bulunduğu stresli ve belirsiz ortamlarda, liderlik yaklaşımının empati, katılım, destek ve gelişim odaklı olması öğretmenlerin iyi oluşunu artırmada kritik bir faktör olarak ortaya çıkmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın politika yapıcılar ve uygulayıcılar açısından önemli çıktıları bulunmaktadır. Öğretmenlerin iyi oluşunu artırmak amacıyla okul yöneticilerinin liderlik becerilerinin geliştirilmesi, destekleyici okul ikliminin oluşturulması ve sürekli mesleki gelişim fırsatlarının sunulması gerektiği anlaşılmaktadır. Özellikle dezavantajlı bölgelerde görev yapan okul müdürlerinin kaynak yaratma, iş birliğini teşvik etme ve empati temelli iletişim kurma gibi becerilerle sahip olmaları öğretmenlerin iyi oluşunu artırmak açısından önemlidir. Ayrıca bu çalışma, Leithwood'un liderlik modelini dezavantajlı okul bağlamında uygulamalı biçimde analiz ederek modele katkı sunmakta ve iyi oluşun liderlik stratejileriyle nasıl bütüncül biçimde desteklenebileceğini ortaya koymaktadır.

***Ethics Committee Approval:*** The ethics committee approval for this study/research was obtained from Düzce University. (2024-232).

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# Conditional Optimism and Contextual Factors in Academic Staff Adoption of AR/VR for Student Assessment

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**Abstract**

The integration of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies is rapidly transforming educational environments, yet their application in student assessment remains underexplored, particularly within higher education. This study investigates the intentions and determinants influencing academic staff's adoption of AR and VR for student assessment in Turkish universities, drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and supplementary technology acceptance frameworks. Employing a qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 academic staff members representing diverse disciplines and levels of experience. Thematic analysis revealed that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are foundational predictors of adoption intention; however, their influence is substantially mediated by contextual factors such as institutional readiness, innovation climate, and a newly identified construct conditional optimism. Findings highlight the necessity of robust infrastructure, targeted professional development, and supportive organizational culture for successful AR/VR integration. The study proposes theoretical and practical insights for policymakers, institutional leaders, and technology developers. This research advances understanding of technology adoption in educational assessment and provides a roadmap for future studies and implementation strategies.

**Keywords:** Student assessment, higher education, augmented reality, virtual reality, technology adoption, conditional optimism.

**About the Article**

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## Introduction

The accelerating pace of technological innovation has profoundly transformed educational environments worldwide, with augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies becoming increasingly prominent in classrooms, laboratories, and other learning settings (Lee et al., 2024). These immersive technologies hold significant promise for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of student assessment by enabling more interactive, authentic, and individualized evaluation processes (Akçayır & Akçayır, 2017; Radianti et al., 2020). Through multisensory experiences and dynamic feedback, AR and VR can enrich both formative and summative assessments, providing educators with powerful tools to better gauge student understanding and engagement (Moro et al., 2021; Vola et al., 2025).

While previous research has amply documented the pedagogical benefits of AR and VR technologies in teaching and learning reporting consistent improvements in student motivation, academic achievement, and classroom engagement (Amirbekova et al., 2024; Parmaxi & Demetriou, 2020) the predominant emphasis has been on their instructional rather than their evaluative applications. Most studies to date have explored how AR and VR facilitate knowledge transfer, foster active learning, or increase students' interest in curricular content, with relatively limited attention devoted to the transformative potential of these technologies in the domain of student assessment (Riyanti et al., 2022). In parallel, a significant portion of the literature has focused on technical challenges, such as hardware accessibility, user interface design, and implementation complexities (Schouten et al., 2025). While these issues are undeniably important, there remains a notable gap concerning the underlying factors that shape educators' willingness and intention to integrate AR and VR specifically for assessment purposes. Furthermore, although quantitative studies employing frameworks like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) have identified several predictors of technology adoption including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and social influence these models may not adequately account for the nuanced, context-dependent, and often qualitative aspects of behavioral intention in educational environments (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Davis, 1989). For instance, factors such as institutional culture, prior experience, perceived assessment validity, and the supportiveness of professional communities may exert significant but less easily quantifiable influences. As such, there is a pressing need for research approaches that move beyond surface-level determinants and seek to uncover the complex, situated motivations and perceived barriers educators face when considering the adoption of AR and VR for student evaluation.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) offers a comprehensive theoretical lens for examining how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control affect individuals' intentions and behaviors. While TPB has been widely applied in studies of technology adoption, its use in understanding the adoption of AR and VR for student assessment remains limited especially within qualitative research designs that

allow for deeper exploration of stakeholders' experiences, beliefs, and challenges. Furthermore, the perspectives of pre-service teachers and academics are often overlooked, with prior studies focusing primarily on in-service teachers. This creates a significant gap in the literature, as the intentions and experiences of these distinct groups may vary substantially due to differences in training, institutional context, and exposure to emerging technologies.

Addressing these gaps, the present study employs a qualitative approach grounded in the TPB to investigate the intentions of academic staff to utilize AR and VR technologies in student assessment. By exploring attitudes toward AR and VR, perceived social pressures, and control beliefs across a diverse participant pool, this research seeks to provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the contextual and motivational factors influencing the adoption of immersive technologies for evaluation purposes. Such an approach allows for the identification of both common and unique challenges faced by different stakeholder groups, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive picture of technology adoption in educational assessment.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by extending the application of the TPB to the context of AR and VR adoption for educational assessment, addressing a domain that has been largely overlooked in previous research. By using a qualitative design, the study provides insights that move beyond the limitations of prior quantitative approaches, offering a deeper understanding of how attitudes, norms, and control beliefs interact in shaping intentions. Moreover, by considering the experiences of teachers, pre-service teachers, and academics, the research highlights the importance of stakeholder diversity in the process of technology integration. Practically, the findings of this study hold significant implications for educational policymakers and administrators who aim to foster meaningful technology integration. The results can inform the design of targeted professional development programs, support systems, and institutional policies that address real-world barriers to the adoption of AR and VR in assessment. Furthermore, insights from this research can guide EdTech developers in creating user-centered AR and VR solutions tailored to the needs and challenges of educational practitioners. For teacher educators and curriculum designers, the study offers valuable recommendations for promoting technology adoption among future educators and ensuring that emerging technologies are integrated effectively and equitably.

Given the rapid proliferation of AR and VR technologies in educational contexts, coupled with persistent barriers to their widespread and effective use in student assessment, this research is both timely and necessary. By filling a critical gap in the literature and offering actionable recommendations, the study aims to advance both theoretical understanding and practical implementation of AR and VR in educational assessment, ultimately supporting the development of more effective, equitable, and future-ready evaluation practices.

In response to these gaps, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of academic staff toward the use of AR and VR in student assessment?
2. How do subjective norms influence academic staff's intentions to adopt AR and VR in assessment contexts?
3. What perceived behavioral control factors facilitate or hinder academic staff's integration of AR and VR in assessment practices?
4. How do these attitudes, norms, and control beliefs interact to shape academic staff's overall intention to use AR and VR for student evaluation?

## Method

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to investigate the intentions of academic staff regarding the use of AR and VR technologies in student assessment. The phenomenon under investigation is the lived experience of academic staff as they encounter, interpret, and make sense of the possibility of adopting AR and VR technologies for assessment purposes. What makes this a phenomenon is that the adoption of AR/VR is not yet a routine or taken-for-granted practice in Turkish higher education; rather, it represents a novel, complex, and evolving educational development that prompts individuals to reflect deeply on its pedagogical, institutional, and professional implications. The phenomenological approach was therefore selected to capture participants' subjective perceptions, meanings, and sense-making processes, as these constitute the essence of how AR/VR adoption is experienced in context (Moustakas, 1994). By focusing on these lived meanings, phenomenology allows the study to move beyond surface-level descriptions of attitudes and instead reveal the underlying structures of thought, expectation, and conditional optimism that shape staff members' intentions toward innovative assessment practices. While the study carries a phenomenological orientation by focusing on participants' subjective experiences of adopting AR/VR for assessment, its TPB-based thematic analysis positions it closer to an exploratory qualitative inquiry rather than a classical phenomenological design.

The research was guided by the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that behavioral intentions are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This theoretical framework informed both the structure of the semi-structured interview protocol and the thematic orientation of the analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method, enabling the exploration of both predetermined TPB constructs and emergent themes relevant to

the integration of AR and VR in assessment practices. The design facilitated in-depth inquiry into the psychological, social, and contextual dynamics influencing academic staff's technology adoption behaviors.

Throughout the study, rigor was ensured by adhering to established qualitative research standards, including iterative coding, peer debriefing, and the use of an audit trail.

## Participants

This study employed purposeful maximum variation sampling to ensure a rich diversity of perspectives regarding the adoption of AR and VR technologies in student assessment. The sample comprised 30 academic staff members from various higher education institutions in Turkey. All participants held academic positions such as lecturer, assistant professor, or professor, and were actively engaged in higher education teaching, assessment, and research activities at the time of data collection.

Participants were evenly split by gender (15 females, 15 males) and represented a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds, including Social Studies Education, Computer and Instructional Technologies, Curriculum and Instruction, Science Education, Educational Measurement and Evaluation, Psychology, Linguistics, Health Sciences, Nursing, Medicine, Sociology, Engineering, and Disaster Management. The inclusion of academic staff from diverse disciplines was intentional to capture cross-disciplinary attitudes and challenges related to AR/VR integration in educational assessment, and to enrich the depth of the qualitative findings.

The years of academic experience among participants ranged from 2 to 21 years, with the sample including both early-career and senior academics. This range enabled the study to explore perspectives related to career stage, technological exposure, and institutional context.

To ensure nuanced insight, the sample included both those with and without experience in AR/VR supported student assessment. Specifically, seven academics reported prior experience in using AR or VR technologies for assessment, while twenty-three academics had no such experience. This balance allowed the study to compare intentions, attitudes, and perceived barriers across both experienced and novice users within academia.

Academic staff were invited to participate via institutional email lists and professional academic networks. Selection criteria included active academic employment and willingness to share views on technology-enhanced assessment. Participation was voluntary, with no financial or other incentives provided. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection.

A sample size of 30 academic staff was chosen in accordance with qualitative research standards, aiming for thematic saturation and variation across fields, gender, and AR/VR experience. This sampling strategy was designed to address the research

questions and theoretical framework of the study, providing comprehensive insight into the factors shaping academic staff intentions toward AR/VR-supported assessment. Table 1 summarizes the demographic and professional characteristics of the participants.

**Table 1**

*The demographic and background information of the participants*

| Gender | Field of Expertise | Experience (years) | Previous AR/VR-based Assessment Experience |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Social Studies Education | 4 | Yes |
| Female | Computer & Instructional Tech. | 12 | Yes |
| Male | Social Studies Education | 11 | No |
| Male | Curriculum & Instruction | 8 | No |
| Female | Distance Education | 16 | No |
| Male | Science Education | 12 | No |
| Male | Educational Measurement | 3 | No |
| Female | Psychology | 4 | No |
| Male | Instructional Technologies | 5 | Yes |
| Male | Computer & Instructional Tech. | 15 | No |
| Female | Health Sciences | 7 | No |
| Female | Quality Commission | 16 | No |
| Male | Medicine | 18 | No |
| Female | Nursing | 4 | No |
| Male | Psychology | 9 | No |
| Female | Sociology | 3 | No |
| Male | Educational Technologies | 3 | Yes |
| Female | Linguistics (Second Language) | 3 | No |
| Male | Curriculum & Instruction | 13 | No |
| Male | Guidance & Counseling | 17 | No |
| Male | Guidance & Psychological Coun. | 13 | No |
| Male | Industrial Engineering | 12 | No |
| Female | Disaster Management | 5 | No |
| Female | Pediatric Nursing | 16 | No |
| Female | Pediatric Nursing | 14 | Yes |
| Male | International Trade | 2 | No |
| Female | Pediatric Nursing | 21 | Yes |
| Female | Guidance & Psychological Coun. | 4 | No |
| Female | Pediatric Nursing | 14 | Yes |
| Female | Internal Medicine Nursing | 12 | No |

## Data Collection Tools

The main data collection tool for this study was a semi-structured interview protocol developed in accordance with the TPB and Ajzen's (2006) guidelines. The tool was designed to comprehensively capture academic staff members' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intentions regarding the use of AR and VR technologies in student assessment.

Initial interview items were generated through a review of TPB literature and prior studies on technology adoption in education, with special attention to the domains of AR and VR. To ensure content validity and contextual relevance, the draft protocol was reviewed by two experts in educational technology and educational measurement. Their feedback resulted in revisions to question wording and construct alignment. The revised protocol was then piloted with three academic staff members, whose feedback informed further refinement; minor adjustments were made for clarity and flow.

A semi-structured, open-ended format was chosen to provide the flexibility to explore both anticipated and unanticipated beliefs, and to allow participants to express their perspectives in depth. This approach facilitated the elicitation of rich qualitative data and enabled probing of complex issues related to AR/VR adoption.

Interviews were conducted in Turkish, the native language of the participants, to promote comfort and authenticity in responses. The interview questions were translated into English for reporting purposes, following a translation and back-translation process by two bilingual researchers to ensure accuracy and equivalence of meaning.

Beyond expert review and piloting, reliability was further supported through iterative revision and consensus meetings among the research team during instrument finalization. All participants gave informed consent. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission, transcribed verbatim, anonymized, and stored in password-protected files to ensure data security and confidentiality.

Each interview question was mapped to specific TPB constructs to ensure comprehensive coverage. This mapping is shown in Table 2. Questions were designed to elicit both direct measures (e.g., overall attitudes, intentions) and belief-based measures (e.g., salient advantages, normative referents, perceived barriers), as recommended by Ajzen (2006).

All interviews were conducted individually, with flexibility to probe further as needed. This mapping ensured that the interview protocol provided comprehensive data for subsequent thematic analysis according to TPB constructs.

Table 2

*Mapping of interview questions to TPB constructs*

| No. | Interview Question | TPB Construct(s) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What does the use of AR and VR technologies in student assessment mean to you? | Attitude |
| 2 | What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of using these technologies for students and teachers? | Attitude (belief-based) |
| 3 | What do you think about the impact of AR/VR applications on student achievement or assessment processes? | Attitude |
| 4 | What are the views of your colleagues or administrators regarding using AR/VR in assessment? | Subjective Norm |
| 5 | Do you feel any social or professional pressure to use these technologies? Please explain. | Subjective Norm |
| 6 | Who are the important people or groups that influence your use of AR/VR technologies? | Subjective Norm (referents) |
| 7 | How easy or difficult would it be for you to start using AR and VR in assessment? Why? | Perceived Behavioral Control |
| 8 | What challenges might you encounter when using these technologies? Can you overcome these challenges? | Perceived Behavioral Control |
| 9 | Is your institution's infrastructure sufficient for such technologies? What needs improvement? | Perceived Behavioral Control |
| 10 | Do you intend to use AR/VR in student assessment in the near future? Why or why not? | Intention |
| 11 | What conditions would need to be met for you to start using these technologies? | Intention |
| 12 | What factors could increase your intention to use AR/VR technologies? | Intention (belief-based) |

## Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis in accordance with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework. This approach enabled a systematic and theory-driven exploration of academic staff members' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intentions related to the use of AR and VR technologies in student assessment. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were carefully reviewed for accuracy prior to analysis. To organize and manage the qualitative data efficiently, MAXQDA 2022 (VERBI Software) was used. This software facilitated systematic coding, retrieval, and categorization of data.

A hybrid coding strategy was adopted:

• **Deductive coding:** An initial coding framework was built upon the four primary TPB constructs Attitude (ATT), Subjective Norm (SN), Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), and Intention (INT).

• **Inductive coding:** Additional codes and sub-themes were generated directly from the data to identify emergent, context-specific insights related to the use of AR and VR in higher education assessment.

Themes were developed within each TPB construct, with illustrative participant quotes selected for their clarity, representativeness, and diversity of viewpoint. A summary coding framework table (Table 3) provides examples of codes and associated quotes mapped to each TPB construct.

**Table 3**

*Example Coding Framework (Excerpt)*

| TPB Construct | Example Code | Illustrative Quote |
|---|---|---|
| ATT | Pedagogical Value | "I believe VR can make assessment more interactive and engaging for students." |
| SN | Colleague Influence | "Most of my peers are still hesitant about using AR in their courses." |
| PBC | Technical Barriers | "The main challenge is the lack of infrastructure in our department." |
| INT | Conditional Adoption | "If training were provided, I would definitely try integrating AR into my assessments." |

Findings are presented according to the main TPB constructs, highlighting both shared and unique factors influencing academic staff's intentions to use AR and VR for student assessment. This analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the motivational and contextual factors driving technology adoption in higher education.

## Credibility and Ethics

To enhance the credibility and confirmability of the findings, multiple strategies were employed throughout the research process. Rigorous procedures were followed to ensure trustworthiness. Initially, a subset of transcripts was coded multiple times to check for internal consistency in interpretation. The researcher maintained a detailed audit trail, documenting all decisions made during data analysis to allow for transparency

and potential replication. To minimize researcher bias, a reflexive journal was kept throughout the study. This journal was used to monitor personal assumptions, prior experiences with educational technology, and potential influences on data interpretation. The researcher also engaged in regular analytic memo writing to critically reflect on emerging themes and consider alternative explanations.

Peer debriefing was employed at multiple points during the analysis. External colleagues with expertise in qualitative research and educational technology were consulted to provide feedback on coding decisions, theme development, and interpretation of findings. Particular attention was given to the ways institutional realities such as infrastructure constraints, professional development opportunities, and academic culture shaped participant responses. These context-specific dynamics were analyzed in relation to each TPB component.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Educational Sciences Ethics Committee (Protocol No: 08/09). All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. Data was anonymized, securely stored, and used solely for research purposes in line with ethical guidelines.

## Findings

### Overview of the Analytical Framework

The analysis of interview data in this study was grounded in the TPB, which conceptualizes intention as a function of three interconnected domains: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm (perceived social and professional expectations), and PBC (Ajzen, 1991). This framework enabled a nuanced examination of not only individual motivations but also the broader psychological and institutional contexts that shape academic staff members' intentions to adopt AR and VR technologies in student assessment.

All interview questions were systematically mapped to TPB constructs, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the beliefs, social pressures, and contextual resources relevant to technology adoption in higher education. The analysis utilized both deductive coding anchored in the TPB domains and inductive exploration to capture emergent themes specific to the pedagogical and organizational realities of Turkish universities.

Thematic analysis revealed several key patterns within each TPB domain:

- Attitude: The majority of participants expressed cautious optimism about the pedagogical value and potential of AR and VR for assessment, citing enhanced engagement and authenticity as potential benefits. However, significant concerns were raised about complexity, equity, and the risk of superficial "technology for

technology's sake." This ambivalence reflects the tension between innovation and constraint frequently reported in the Turkish higher education context.

- Subjective Norm: Social and professional influences including colleagues, departmental leadership, and disciplinary networks were found to play a substantial role in shaping willingness to adopt AR and VR. Most participants described an environment of cautious encouragement rather than strong directive pressure, although minority voices highlighted implicit expectations or peer scepticism, particularly among early-career academics and in technologically progressive departments.
- Perceived Behavioral Control: The sense of agency in adopting AR and VR was profoundly shaped by institutional infrastructure, resource availability, and prior digital experience. Notably, perceptions of feasibility often intersected with attitudes and subjective norms: supportive environments and visible peer models were described as empowering, while institutional inertia and lack of policy guidance acted as strong deterrents.
- Intention: Participants' intentions to use AR and VR in assessment were generally positive but highly conditional. Intention was most robust when favorable attitudes aligned with social support and perceived control; conversely, barriers in any domain often resulted in hesitancy or a "wait-and-see" stance. Contradictory and minority views such as outright scepticism or resistance were most prevalent among staff lacking prior experience or operating in resource-limited settings.

These findings suggest that the adoption of AR and VR in Turkish higher education assessment is best understood as a case of "conditional optimism under constraint" where enthusiasm for innovation is consistently moderated by practical realities and local culture. As researchers embedded in this context, we recognize the influence of our interpretive stance and the limitations of a purposive sample that may overrepresent staff with an interest in educational technology.

This analytical structure forms the foundation for the detailed presentation of findings in the following sections, which elaborate on each TPB construct and illuminate the complex interplay of personal, social, and institutional dynamics shaping AR and VR integration in assessment.

### Attitudes Toward the Use of AR and VR in Student Assessment

Analysis of participant responses to Questions 1, 2, and 3 revealed a spectrum of attitudes toward the use of AR and VR technologies in student assessment, ranging from enthusiastic endorsement to scepticism and ambivalence. These attitudes reflect not only instrumental appraisals of technological advantages and challenges, but also deeper beliefs about educational modernization, equity, and professional identity within the evolving landscape of Turkish higher education.

### Perceived Meaning and Value (Q1)

For the majority of participants (approximately two-thirds), AR and VR were seen as symbols of innovation and progress, often described as "the future of assessment" and associated with the modernization of Turkish universities. This enthusiasm echoed global trends in EdTech and was sometimes tied to institutional aspirations for international competitiveness. As one academic articulated:

"Integrating AR and VR into assessment is, for me, a sign that we are keeping up with technological advancements and striving to make evaluation more engaging for our students."

However, a significant minority questioned whether these technologies represented genuine pedagogical improvement or were simply "trend-driven," cautioning against adopting innovation for its own sake. Some expressed concern that such initiatives could divert attention and resources from proven assessment practices, especially in resource-constrained or traditionally oriented departments.

### Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages (Q2)

Most participants identified clear advantages of AR/VR for assessment, aligning with previous research (e.g., Vola et al., 2025; Akçayır & Akçayır, 2017):

- Enhanced engagement: A large portion believed immersive technologies could increase student motivation and focus, making assessments more stimulating.
- Authenticity and interactivity: Many highlighted that AR/VR enabled the simulation of real-world tasks, offering opportunities for performance-based assessment difficult to achieve otherwise.
- Individualization: Several participants suggested that AR/VR could better accommodate students' diverse learning styles and needs.

A notable quote illustrated these hopes:

"VR allows us to create real-world scenarios for assessment, which is much closer to what students will face after graduation. This is a huge step forward compared to paper-based tests."

At the same time, concerns were prevalent with about half of participants emphasizing:

- Technical and logistical barriers: Limited access to hardware, unreliable software, and insufficient technical support were cited as persistent obstacles, especially in less well-funded institutions.
- Equity and fairness: Many worried about unequal student access to technology or variability in digital skills, which could create new forms of educational inequality an issue echoed in Turkish higher education literature (see Radianti et al., 2020).

- Cognitive overload: A minority raised the risk that technological complexity might hinder rather than help learning, especially for students and staff with lower digital literacy.

These divergent views illustrate how attitude and perceived behavioral control are closely intertwined perceived benefits often depended on the assumption of adequate institutional resources and support.

### Perceived Impact on Student Achievement and Assessment Processes (Q3)

While most participants were optimistic about the potential for AR/VR to enhance student achievement and provide more meaningful, memorable assessment experiences, this optimism was tempered by practical caveats. Participants noted that positive impacts are contingent on thoughtful instructional design, careful alignment with learning outcomes, and sufficient training issues that, if overlooked, could undermine validity and reliability. For example:

"Students who are assessed through simulations or interactive environments can demonstrate their competencies more effectively, which could lead to better achievement and deeper learning."

However, a few participants warned that if implementation was rushed or unsupported, AR/VR could distract from core learning goals or even impede fair and accurate assessment.

Thematic Abstraction: "Innovation Under Constraint"

Overall, participant attitudes can be understood as a form of "conditional optimism" a readiness to embrace innovation tempered by awareness of local constraints and professional responsibility. This theme reflects both the excitement and caution found in Turkish higher education, where technological advancement is often viewed as necessary but must be balanced with practical realities and ethical commitments. Such findings both mirror and extend international literature, suggesting that successful AR/VR adoption in assessment depends as much on context and support as on intrinsic technological promise.

### Subjective Norms

Analysis of Questions 4, 5, and 6 revealed that subjective norms regarding AR and VR use in student assessment are multilayered and contextually nuanced, shaped by not only colleagues and administrators, but also broader institutional and disciplinary cultures within Turkish higher education. While there is broad recognition of the value of professional and peer support for educational innovation, the reality is often characterized by ambivalence and conditional endorsement rather than strong consensus.

### Perceived Attitudes of Colleagues and Administrators (Q4)

A majority of participants described the prevailing attitudes of colleagues and administrators as "cautiously open," reflecting neither uncritical enthusiasm nor outright resistance. For instance, just over half noted that peers expressed interest in AR and VR but hesitated due to lack of experience or confidence a finding that mirrors existing studies in the Turkish context, where technological adoption is often influenced by collective uncertainty and "wait-and-see" attitudes (Akçayır & Akçayır, 2017; Radianti et al., 2020). As one academic reflected:

"Most of my colleagues are still hesitant. They acknowledge the potential, but few have practical experience, so there's a lot of uncertainty."

A notable minority described "innovation pockets" in certain departments, where champions or early adopters actively promoted AR/VR experimentation, especially among younger faculty. Conversely, some participants experienced administrative conservatism, citing priorities for reliability, scalability, and compliance with national education standards as an example of how organizational context mediates both subjective norm and perceived behavioral control.

### Social and Professional Pressure (Q5)

Most respondents (approximately three-quarters) felt little direct social or professional pressure to use AR or VR, describing an environment where academic freedom was largely respected. As another participant put it:

"There isn't a sense of pressure. It's more about personal motivation and interest. No one says you have to use VR, but it's welcomed if you want to try."

However, some dissenting voices pointed to subtle, implicit pressures, especially in technology-focused departments or among early-career staff who felt the need to demonstrate innovation for career advancement. These pressures, while not overt, sometimes shaped self-efficacy and willingness to engage an example of how subjective norms and perceived behavioral control can intersect.

Pilot projects and visible departmental champions were also cited as soft sources of influence, creating aspirational rather than coercive environments. This dynamic aligns with research showing that informal leadership and role models can shape innovation climates in higher education (Jensen & Konradsen, 2018).

### Influence of Key Referent Groups (Q6)

When discussing influential referents, colleagues and department heads were most frequently mentioned, with professional associations and external grant agencies playing a smaller but sometimes pivotal role in setting local innovation agendas. Peer endorsement was described as both a motivator and a validation of new approaches:

"If respected colleagues are positive about using AR, it definitely makes me more willing to consider it."

Student voices, while less central, were also noted: a few participants described how enthusiastic or curious students inspired them to experiment, while others acknowledged that student scepticism or resistance could dampen their intentions.

Thematic Abstraction: "Collegial Innovation Under Cautious Endorsement"

Taken together, these findings suggest that subjective norms in Turkish higher education are characterized by "collegial innovation under cautious endorsement." Strong, directive pressure to adopt AR/VR is rare; instead, a combination of peer encouragement, departmental champions, and institutional conservatism leads to an environment where innovation is tolerated, sometimes quietly supported, but seldom institutionally required. This dynamic has important implications: where social support aligns with perceived behavioral control and positive attitudes, intentions to adopt AR/VR are strongest. Conversely, where organizational support is absent or peer scepticism prevails, even favorable attitudes may not translate into action.

### Perceived Behavioral Control

Participant responses to Questions 7, 8, and 9 revealed that perceived behavioral control (PBC) over adopting AR and VR in student assessment is shaped by a dynamic interplay of individual confidence, technical realities, and institutional resources. This section not only documents practical challenges but also explores how participants' sense of agency is mediated by local organizational and cultural contexts key issues highlighted in prior studies of technology adoption in Turkish higher education (e.g., Akçayır & Akçayır, 2017; Parmaxi & Demetriou, 2020).

### Perceived Ease or Difficulty of Adoption (Q7)

A substantial majority of participants (about three-quarters) anticipated that adopting AR and VR in assessment would be challenging. This was often attributed to their limited prior experience, lack of institutional guidance, and the steep learning curve associated with complex digital tools. As one respondent shared:

"I think it would be quite difficult at first. There are so many new things to learn, and I would need a lot of time to get used to the systems."

Contrastingly, a small but notable group typically those with digital teaching experience or previous exposure to educational innovation expressed greater optimism. They believed that with appropriate support, they could successfully integrate these technologies, highlighting the importance of self-efficacy and peer modeling (see also Venkatesh et al., 2003).

### Anticipated Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them (Q8)

Participants' narratives clustered around three principal challenge domains:

- Technical barriers: These included unreliable access to hardware (e.g., VR headsets), software compatibility, and insufficient IT support. Such challenges were especially acute outside metropolitan universities, reinforcing inequities in Turkish higher education.
- Pedagogical challenges: Many questioned how to align AR/VR-based assessment with existing curricula and learning outcomes. A minority raised the risk that the "novelty effect" might distract from genuine learning, connecting PBC to critical attitudes about the educational value of technology.
- Resource and time constraints: Increased workload, insufficient time for experimentation, and lack of administrative incentives were common concerns. Notably, these factors often intersected with subjective norms: faculty in more innovative departments felt greater peer support, which partially compensated for institutional gaps.

Despite these obstacles, about half the participants described strategies for overcoming barriers, including peer collaboration, professional development, and starting with small-scale pilot projects. This "incremental adoption" approach reflects a broader ethos of cautious experimentation, also reported in international EdTech literature (Radianti et al., 2020).

However, a vocal minority remained sceptical, doubting that institutional resources or support would materialize in the near term a finding that reinforces the conditional and context-dependent nature of behavioral intentions in the Turkish setting.

### Institutional Infrastructure and Support (Q9)

Nearly all participants identified inadequate institutional infrastructure as a significant limitation to adopting AR and VR in assessment. The challenges cited included lack of dedicated equipment, limited software access, and scarce training opportunities. One participant noted:

"Our university is not really prepared for this yet. The infrastructure is lacking, and there hasn't been much investment in these technologies for assessment purposes."

Many recommended targeted investment in equipment and staff development, as well as clear policy guidance. Interestingly, those who expressed more positive attitudes toward AR/VR (see Section 3.2) often did so under the assumption of future improvements in infrastructure and support, highlighting the tight link between PBC and both attitudes and intentions.

Thematic Abstraction and Reflexivity: "Capability Gap Amidst Aspirational Innovation"

Overall, the findings illustrate a theme of "capability gap amidst aspirational innovation." While academic staff recognize the transformative potential of AR and VR, their confidence and intentions are constrained by local realities and perceived institutional inertia. Importantly, these findings echo international scholarship while foregrounding the specific context of Turkish higher education, where rapid expansion of digital infrastructure is often uneven and policy support inconsistent.

As researchers, we recognize that our interpretation is shaped by our own engagement with digital transformation in higher education, and by the voluntary nature of our sample which may have attracted participants already invested in technology adoption. Future research should explore how faculty who are disengaged or resistant perceive these challenges.

### Intention to Use AR and VR in Assessment

Responses to Questions 10, 11, and 12 revealed that intentions to use AR and VR in student assessment are marked by "conditional optimism" a hopeful openness toward innovation that is sharply moderated by real and perceived contextual constraints. This finding echoes previous work in Turkish and international higher education settings, where willingness to adopt new educational technologies is typically contingent on a combination of individual, institutional, and socio-cultural factors (e.g., Akçayır & Akçayır, 2017; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

### Current and Future Adoption Plans (Q10)

Only a small subset of participants (less than one-fifth) expressed a clear, proactive intention to implement AR or VR in their assessment practices in the near term. These respondents often had prior exposure to educational technology or operated in departments with strong innovation cultures. Their decisiveness was reinforced by personal confidence and, crucially, by perceptions of local peer support:

"I definitely plan to experiment with VR in my assessment next semester, especially since I have already used similar technologies in my courses."

However, the majority described their intention as tentative conditional on factors such as access to resources, visible administrative support, and evidence of practical benefit. This "wait-and-see" stance reflects a pattern common in the Turkish higher education system, where faculty frequently balance enthusiasm for innovation against resource scarcity and institutional inertia. Some expressed openness "I would like to try if conditions allow" but also voiced hesitancy due to doubts about feasibility, workload, or the real value added for students.

### Conditions for Adoption (Q11)

Participants consistently identified several preconditions for moving from intention to action:

- Technical infrastructure: The most frequently cited need was access to reliable devices, software, and ongoing technical support findings in line with both this study's PBC results and the literature on technology integration in Turkish universities (Radianti et al., 2020).
- Professional development: Nearly half the sample emphasized the necessity of structured training and peer-led workshops to build confidence and expertise.
- Guidance and policy: Many desired clear guidelines or best-practice exemplars to ensure that AR/VR-based assessment would be valid and aligned with curricular goals.
- Institutional recognition and time: Participants noted that administrative encouragement, incentives, and reduced workloads would make experimentation feasible, connecting subjective norms, PBC, and intention.

One academic summarized this interplay:

"If there was proper training and if I knew I could get help when needed, I would be much more confident to start."

Minority perspectives added nuance: A few participants, sceptical of current institutional support or the pedagogical value of AR/VR, stated that no reasonable condition would be sufficient to motivate adoption in the near future a valuable reminder that intention is not universal, but deeply context-dependent.

### Factors That Could Increase Willingness (Q12)

Reflecting on what would tip the balance toward greater willingness, respondents cited:

- Successful local pilots and exemplars: Firsthand or peer-shared examples of effective AR/VR implementation in their discipline were seen as powerful motivators.
- Collaborative networks: Opportunities for collegial collaboration and knowledge sharing were highlighted as critical, suggesting that subjective norms can "activate" intentions when they reinforce PBC.
- Institutional incentives: Recognition, awards, or dedicated funding were proposed as means to reduce risk and acknowledge innovation.
- Evidence of educational impact: Some emphasized the need for robust evidence either from their own practice or the literature that AR/VR could genuinely improve student learning or assessment quality.

"If I saw that students were truly benefiting, and if there was support from my department, I would definitely want to use these technologies more."

Thematic Abstraction and Reflexivity: "Conditional Optimism in Context"

Overall, intention to adopt AR and VR in student assessment emerges as a case of "conditional optimism in context." While many academic staff display enthusiasm for innovation, their intentions are filtered through practical, institutional, and social realities

unique to the Turkish higher education system such as uneven infrastructure, evolving assessment policies, and varying departmental cultures. Importantly, these findings indicate that intention is not solely a product of personal motivation, but an emergent outcome of cross-construct interactions (attitudes, norms, and PBC) and structural opportunities.

Researcher Reflexivity:

As researchers with experience in Turkish higher education, we recognize our potential bias toward highlighting institutional and cultural constraints, as well as our sample's possible overrepresentation of staff with positive attitudes toward educational innovation. Future work should aim to capture more resistant or disengaged voices to further clarify the full spectrum of intentions.

## Discussion

### Summary of Results

This study explored academic staff members' intentions to use AR and VR technologies in student assessment, guided by the TPB. The findings reveal a nuanced landscape of "conditional optimism," where the willingness to adopt AR and VR is shaped by a complex interplay of personal attitudes, perceived social norms, and behavioral control, all situated within the unique pedagogical and institutional context of Turkish higher education.

Specifically, the majority of participants expressed positive attitudes toward the potential of AR and VR to enhance engagement, authenticity, and individualization in assessment. However, concerns were also raised regarding equity, technical complexity, and the risk of adopting technology for its own sake. Subjective norms were characterized by cautious encouragement from colleagues and institutional leaders, with social support most influential in departments with a culture of innovation. Nevertheless, the absence of strong directive pressure resulted in a climate where experimentation was tolerated but not universally incentivized.

Perceived behavioral control emerged as a critical determinant, with most participants identifying significant barriers related to technical infrastructure, resource limitations, and the need for targeted professional development. Only a minority typically those with prior digital experience and strong peer support reported clear intentions to integrate AR and VR in the near future. For the majority, intention remained highly conditional, contingent upon improvements in institutional support, the availability of best-practice exemplars, and evidence of positive educational outcomes.

Overall, these findings illustrate that successful adoption of AR and VR for student assessment is not simply a matter of individual enthusiasm, but rather depends on the alignment of positive attitudes, enabling social environments, and sufficient institutional capacity. This conditionality highlights both the promise and the persistent challenges of educational technology innovation in the context of Turkish higher education.

## Theoretical Implications

This study employed the TPB (Ajzen, 1991) as its central analytical lens, while also engaging with the TAM (Davis, 1989) and the UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003), to explore academic staff intentions to adopt AR and VR in student assessment. By anchoring the analysis in these widely used frameworks, the study contributes to the cumulative theoretical discourse on technology acceptance in education. At the same time, it provides a novel contextual application by examining Turkish higher education institutions, which are characterized by centralized governance, hierarchical authority, and discipline-specific subcultures. Situating the findings within both global and local debates enables the study to add nuance to existing models of technology adoption, showing that while TPB, TAM, and UTAUT remain robust analytical tools, their predictive power may be mediated or reframed by contextual factors not always emphasized in mainstream adoption research. In this sense, the study contributes to a growing recognition that acceptance models must be flexible enough to account for cultural, structural, and organizational differences across higher education systems.

The results reaffirm the foundational role of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control in shaping adoption intentions, consistent with prior research that validates TPB and related frameworks (Prikshat et al., 2025; Xuan et al., 2024). For instance, academic staff who reported positive beliefs about the pedagogical potential of AR/VR, perceived support from colleagues, and confidence in their own abilities to use the technology were more likely to express strong adoption intentions. This aligns with international studies emphasizing that peer encouragement, infrastructural availability, and personal efficacy are key drivers of adoption (Ateş & Garzón, 2022, 2023). Yet, the Turkish context brought to the fore unique socio-organizational dynamics that differentiate it from more individualistic or decentralized systems. Departmental cultures shaped by collective values, shared professional norms, and the prevailing innovation climate were found to exert significant influence over subjective norms. Likewise, hierarchical authority and centralized administrative decision-making amplified the importance of top-down support. These findings resonate with Hofstede's (2001) theorization of collectivism and power distance, and they extend Straub's (2009) insights that adoption is deeply embedded in institutional culture. Thus, while the findings echo established international research, they also demonstrate how cultural and structural particularities modify the salience of classical predictors, highlighting the importance of adapting adoption models to context-specific realities.

A significant theoretical contribution of this study is the articulation of "conditional optimism." This construct refers to a cautious and contextually responsive enthusiasm for AR/VR, where hope for innovation is tempered by pragmatic concerns about feasibility, institutional support, and alignment with professional identity. Conditional optimism builds on but also diverges from established concepts such as Rogers' (2003) *bounded enthusiasm* and Trowler's (1998) *innovation fatigue*. Unlike these earlier notions, which frame optimism as constrained or waning, conditional optimism is dynamic and oscillatory: individuals move back and forth along a spectrum of enthusiasm depending on evolving enabling conditions. For example, participants expressed willingness to experiment with AR/VR if they had access to workshops, technical guidance, or visible peer role models, but hesitated when such supports were absent. This finding parallels international literature emphasizing the role of organizational climate in sustaining innovation (Schmidt & Cohen, 2020), while also highlighting the need for theoretical refinements that capture the fluid and contingent nature of professional attitudes. By theorizing conditional optimism, the study contributes not only a conceptual innovation but also a lens through which to understand how optimism interacts with institutional structures in shaping adoption trajectories.

Another important insight is that not all participant experiences conformed neatly to the predictions of TPB, TAM, or UTAUT. Several narratives revealed misalignments between positive attitudes and actual behavioral intentions, particularly in cases where institutional barriers were severe. For example, staff members who expressed excitement about the pedagogical potential of AR/VR nonetheless reported little or no intention to adopt the technologies due to chronic shortages in infrastructure, lack of dedicated technical support, or bureaucratic hurdles. This pattern challenges the additive, linear logic of TPB, which assumes that favorable attitudes, strong norms, and high perceived control will reliably coalesce into intention. Instead, the findings show that systemic and organizational constraints can override or attenuate individual-level predictors. Similar patterns have been noted in studies of technology adoption in developing contexts, where meso- and macro-level factors such as institutional inertia, government policy, or resource limitations exert disproportionate influence (Al-Emran et al., 2025; Dwivedi & Vig, 2024). The emergence of "wait-and-see" approaches among participants further underscores this point: staff were less influenced by immediate peer or attitudinal factors and more by shifting institutional directives or uncertainties about long-term policy commitments. Such findings extend current critiques of acceptance models and call for frameworks that more explicitly integrate organizational, systemic, and policy-level determinants of adoption.

As researchers embedded in Turkish higher education, we are acutely aware that local organizational norms significantly shape the salience of TPB constructs. In contexts marked by hierarchical authority and centralized policy-making, administrative endorsement or resistance can rapidly shift departmental norms and alter perceptions of feasibility. For instance, when university leadership or national policy explicitly supported technological initiatives, participants reported heightened perceptions of

normative pressure and greater confidence in implementation. Conversely, where administrative resistance or policy ambiguity was perceived, enthusiasm was quickly dampened. These dynamics illustrate how the Turkish higher education system amplifies the influence of hierarchy and collective norms, distinguishing it from more decentralized systems where professional autonomy often carries greater weight. Moreover, disciplinary subcultures added another layer of complexity, as fields such as engineering or design displayed greater openness to experimentation compared to more conservative disciplines. These patterns echo cross-cultural findings (Hofstede, 2001) and underscore the need to recognize cultural and disciplinary moderators in theoretical models of adoption.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates both the utility and the limitations of applying dominant acceptance frameworks such as TPB, TAM, and UTAUT to higher education contexts characterized by strong hierarchy and collectivism. While the models provide a valuable baseline, the findings show that they must be expanded to incorporate systemic and cultural factors that significantly influence adoption. The articulation of conditional optimism enriches theoretical debates by capturing the oscillatory nature of academic staff attitudes under varying institutional conditions. More broadly, the study emphasizes that technology adoption in higher education is not only a cognitive and individual process but also a deeply organizational and cultural one. Future research should prioritize comparative and cross-national work to test the robustness of conditional optimism and other identified patterns across contexts, and should seek to refine theoretical frameworks so that they can account for the interplay between individual intentions, organizational climates, and broader policy environments. By doing so, scholarship on educational technology adoption will gain both greater explanatory power and stronger cross-cultural generalizability.

## Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several actionable insights for educational leaders, policymakers, EdTech developers, and academic staff seeking to foster effective and equitable integration of AR and VR technologies in student assessment within higher education.

A consistent theme across participants was the need for robust technical infrastructure, reliable hardware and software, and ongoing IT support. Universities aiming to promote AR/VR adoption should prioritize targeted investment in infrastructure, including regular maintenance, accessible technical assistance, and updates tailored to assessment needs. Institutions should also consider centralized resource centers or "technology hubs" where faculty can experiment with and receive support for AR/VR tools before deploying them in assessment contexts.

Given the strong influence of perceived behavioral control on adoption intentions, structured professional development programs are essential. Training should go beyond

basic technological orientation, addressing pedagogical strategies, assessment design principles, and discipline-specific applications of AR/VR. Peer-led workshops, communities of practice, and mentoring from experienced early adopters can help build confidence and create a culture of shared learning. Including real-world case studies and success stories can foster "conditional optimism" and reduce hesitation among staff.

The pronounced impact of departmental and institutional culture on subjective norms highlights the importance of leadership and policy in shaping attitudes. University administrators and department heads should actively communicate their support for experimentation, recognize and reward faculty who innovate in assessment, and ensure that policy frameworks are flexible enough to accommodate emerging technologies. Establishing innovation champions or cross-disciplinary task forces can help diffuse best practices and provide visible role models.

Concerns about equity, student access, and assessment fairness were significant. Institutions must ensure that AR/VR resources are distributed fairly and that accommodations are available for students with disabilities or those unfamiliar with immersive technology. Guidelines for inclusive assessment design and regular evaluation of accessibility barriers are crucial to prevent the deepening of existing inequalities.

Policy directives at the institutional and national levels should be aligned with the pedagogical objectives of technology-enhanced assessment. This includes developing clear guidelines for the ethical use of AR/VR, protecting data privacy, and ensuring assessment validity. Policymakers should also consider mechanisms for pilot projects, incremental scaling, and feedback loops so that practice informs ongoing policy development.

To overcome inertia and encourage broader participation, universities can offer formal incentives such as teaching awards, research funding, or reduced teaching loads for faculty who successfully integrate AR/VR in assessment. Recognition programs can validate risk-taking and innovation, amplifying positive subjective norms.

Implementation strategies should be participatory and iterative, involving faculty, students, IT professionals, and administrators in the design, evaluation, and refinement of AR/VR-based assessment initiatives. Stakeholder feedback can help tailor solutions to the diverse needs of different academic units and student populations, increasing the likelihood of sustainable adoption.

## Limitations and Future Studies

While this study offers valuable insights into the adoption of AR and VR technologies for student assessment in Turkish higher education, several limitations must be acknowledged.

First, the research employed a qualitative design with purposeful sampling of academic staff. Although this approach enabled in-depth exploration of subjective experiences and contextually grounded interpretations, it may limit the generalizability of findings to other institutional, national, or cultural contexts. The focus on Turkish universities, which are characterized by centralized governance structures and distinct disciplinary cultures, further narrows the scope. Patterns observed in subjective norms and perceived behavioral control may manifest differently in more decentralized systems or in institutions with alternative governance traditions.

Second, the participant group consisted exclusively of academic staff. Perspectives from students, administrators, policymakers, and technical support personnel were not included. A more holistic, multi-stakeholder approach would provide a fuller picture of the institutional ecosystem shaping AR/VR adoption. Future studies could incorporate comparative perspectives across stakeholder groups to capture power dynamics, practical constraints, and user readiness more comprehensively.

Third, although gender, field, and years of experience were balanced, the voluntary nature of participation may have introduced self-selection bias. Those with higher levels of openness to technology or prior exposure to innovation may have been overrepresented. Future research should consider strategies to include less-engaged or more sceptical stakeholders, as their perspectives are crucial for understanding resistance and adoption barriers.

Fourth, the reliance on semi-structured interviews means that data are based on self-reported perceptions and intentions, which may not always align with actual practices. The translation of intentions into sustained practice can be influenced by unanticipated institutional, cultural, or technological barriers. Longitudinal and intervention-based designs could provide richer insights into how AR/VR adoption evolves over time, revealing whether initial conditional optimism is maintained, diminished, or strengthened with experience.

Finally, the proposed conceptual model introduced inductively derived constructs such as conditional optimism, innovation climate, and institutional readiness. While these theoretical contributions extend existing frameworks, their empirical robustness requires further validation. Future quantitative or mixed-methods research should test these constructs across diverse disciplines and contexts. Cross-national comparative studies could illuminate boundary conditions and enhance the external validity of these refinements. Moreover, experimental designs exploring the pedagogical effectiveness of AR/VR in actual assessment tasks would help bridge the gap between perceived potential and realized outcomes.

## Conclusion

This study has explored the intentions and determinants underlying academic staff members' adoption of AR and VR technologies for student assessment in Turkish higher

education, employing a conceptual framework that integrates the TPB and relevant constructs from technology acceptance models. Through qualitative analysis, the research revealed that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control remain fundamental predictors of intention; however, their effects are significantly mediated by contextual factors such as institutional readiness, innovation climate, and the emergent theme of "conditional optimism."

The findings underscore the necessity of robust infrastructure, targeted professional development, and supportive organizational culture to enable effective integration of AR/VR in assessment practices. Moreover, the study identified challenges such as resource constraints, equity considerations, and policy uncertainties that can inhibit even the most enthusiastic potential adopters, highlighting the limitations of traditional models when applied in complex, hierarchical, or resource-limited educational environments.

By proposing a refined conceptual model that incorporates both classic and contextually emergent constructs, this research extends current theoretical understandings and offers actionable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and EdTech developers. Ultimately, recognizing the interplay of individual, social, and institutional factors is critical to advancing the effective, equitable, and sustainable use of AR/VR technologies in higher education assessment.

Future research should continue to test and elaborate on this hybrid model across diverse contexts, stakeholder groups, and timeframes to deepen understanding and inform the next generation of technology-enhanced educational practices.

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## Appendix A. Coding Framework Table

| TPB Construct | Code/Theme | Illustrative Quote |
|---|---|---|
| Attitude (ATT) | Pedagogical Value | "I believe VR can make assessment more interactive and engaging for students." |
| | Assessment Effectiveness | "Using AR in exams could help measure skills that traditional tests overlook." |
| | Perceived Drawbacks | "Some students may find these technologies distracting rather than helpful." |
| Subjective Norm (SN) | Colleague Influence | "Most of my peers are still hesitant about using AR in their courses." |
| | Administrative Support | "Our department head encourages us to experiment with VR in teaching and assessment." |
| | Social Pressure | "I sometimes feel expected to adopt new technologies, even if I am not fully ready." |
| Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) | Technical Barriers | "The main challenge is the lack of infrastructure in our department." |
| | Self-Efficacy | "I am confident that I can learn to use these tools if I get proper training." |
| | Resource Needs | "We need more support and funding to implement AR/VR effectively." |
| Intention (INT) | Conditional Adoption | "If training were provided, I would definitely try integrating AR into my assessments." |
| | Readiness to Adopt | "I plan to use VR in the next semester if we get the required equipment." |
| | Hesitancy | "I am interested, but I'm still unsure about how to assess students fairly with these tools." |

# Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Bu araştırmanın amacı, artırılmış gerçeklik (AR) ve sanal gerçeklik (VR) teknolojilerinin öğrenci değerlendirmelerinde kullanımına ilişkin olarak öğretim elemanlarının niyetlerini ve bu niyetleri etkileyen belirleyicileri incelemektir. Günümüzde AR ve VR teknolojileri eğitim ortamlarında giderek daha fazla yer bulmakta, öğretim süreçlerini daha etkileşimli ve anlamlı kılma potansiyeli taşıdığı düşünülmektedir (Akçayır & Akçayır, 2017; Moro vd., 2021). Ancak bu teknolojilerin ölçme ve değerlendirme bağlamındaki uygulamaları, öğretim süreçlerine kıyasla oldukça sınırlı düzeyde araştırılmıştır. Bu çalışma, Planlı Davranış Teorisi (Theory of Planned Behavior - TPB; Ajzen, 1991) temel alınarak, öğretim elemanlarının bu teknolojileri öğrenci değerlendirmelerinde kullanma niyetlerini şekillendiren tutumlar, öznel normlar ve algılanan davranışsal kontrol unsurlarını analiz etmektedir.

Çalışma, öğretim elemanlarının AR/VR'yi değerlendirmelerde kullanmaya ilişkin öznel deneyimlerine odaklanarak fenomenolojik bir yönelim taşımakla birlikte, TPB temelli tematik analiz yaklaşımı nedeniyle daha çok keşifsel nitel bir araştırma niteliği göstermektedir. Türkiye'de farklı üniversitelerden 30 öğretim elemanı ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcıların seçiminde maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak; cinsiyet, alan, akademik unvan ve AR/VR deneyimi açısından dengeli bir dağılım sağlanmıştır. Görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler, TPB kuramı çerçevesinde tematik analiz yoluyla çözümlenmiş; ayrıca bağlamsal ve durumsal değişkenlerin etkileri de dikkate alınmıştır.

Araştırma sonuçları, öğretim elemanlarının AR ve VR teknolojilerine yönelik tutumlarının genel olarak olumlu olduğunu, ancak bu tutumların çoğunlukla "koşullu bir iyimserlik" ile şekillendiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Katılımcılar, bu teknolojilerin öğrenci katılımını artırabileceğini, değerlendirmeleri daha özgün ve bireyselleştirilmiş hale getirebileceğini belirtmiştir (Vola vd., 2025; Lee vd., 2024). Ancak teknik altyapı eksiklikleri, zaman ve iş yükü kaygısı, eğitim ihtiyacı ve erişim adaletsizliği gibi faktörlerin bu olumlu tutumların davranışa dönüşmesini engellediği görülmüştür. Özellikle dezavantajlı üniversitelerde donanım ve yazılım eksikliği, teknolojik entegrasyon sürecinde ciddi bir engel olarak öne çıkmaktadır (Radianti vd., 2020).

Öznel normlar açısından değerlendirildiğinde, katılımcılar meslektaşlarının ve yöneticilerinin genel olarak yenilikçi teknolojilere mesafeli fakat teşvik edici bir yaklaşım içinde olduklarını ifade etmiştir. Bazı bölümlerde, yenilikçi uygulamaları destekleyen lider figürlerin varlığı, öğretim elemanlarının teknoloji kullanım niyetini artırırken; bazı durumlarda ise üst yönetimden gelen açık destek eksikliği, bu niyetin zayıflamasına neden olmaktadır (Jensen & Konradsen, 2018). Bu durum, TPB modelinde yer alan öznel normların bağlamsal olarak nasıl işlediğine dair önemli bir içgörü sunmaktadır.

Algılanan davranışsal kontrol boyutunda ise, öğretim elemanlarının büyük çoğunluğu AR/VR teknolojilerini kullanma konusunda çeşitli güçlükler yaşadıklarını belirtmiştir.

Teknik destek eksikliği, kurumsal düzeyde politika ve rehberlik yoksunluğu, mesleki gelişim fırsatlarının sınırlılığı ve bireysel yeterlik algısındaki düşüklük, teknolojilerin uygulanabilirliğini azaltmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, bazı katılımcılar küçük ölçekli pilot uygulamalarla başlayarak kademeli bir entegrasyon süreci önermekte ve bu sürecin desteklenmesi durumunda başarı şansının artacağını ifade etmektedir (Ateş & Garzón, 2023).

Katılımcıların AR/VR teknolojilerini değerlendirme süreçlerine entegre etme konusundaki niyetleri ise büyük oranda belirli koşulların sağlanmasına bağlıdır. Özellikle kurumsal destek, mesleki gelişim olanakları, başarılı örnek uygulamaların paylaşılması ve teknik altyapının güçlendirilmesi, bu niyetin eyleme dönüşmesi açısından kritik rol oynamaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışmada, "koşullu iyimserlik" (conditional optimism) kavramsallaştırması önerilmiştir. Bu kavram, öğretim elemanlarının yenilikçi teknolojilere yönelik umutlu ancak temkinli yaklaşımlarını betimlemekte ve TPB modeline yeni bir açılım getirmektedir. Koşullu iyimserlik, yalnızca bireysel tutumlara değil; aynı zamanda kurumsal kültür, altyapı yeterliliği ve mesleki toplulukların desteğine bağlı olarak şekillenmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, bu araştırma hem kuramsal hem de uygulamaya dönük önemli katkılar sunmaktadır. TPB modeline dayalı olarak geliştirilen bu nitel analiz, AR/VR teknolojilerinin yükseköğretimde değerlendirme amaçlı kullanımına dair bütüncül bir anlayış geliştirilmesine olanak sağlamaktadır. Araştırma, politika yapıcılara, üniversite yöneticilerine ve eğitim teknolojisi geliştiricilerine, AR/VR entegrasyonu için altyapı yatırımları, öğretim elemanlarına yönelik destek sistemleri ve yeniliği teşvik eden kurumsal politikalar geliştirilmesi yönünde somut öneriler sunmaktadır.

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# Transformation of School Leadership in the AI Era: Requisite Leadership Roles of Teachers

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to investigate the transformation of leadership roles of school principals in line with teacher views. Semi-structured interviews have been carried out with teachers from different school levels, and the data have been analysed through content and descriptive methods. The findings have been collected under three main themes: (1) Changing roles and competencies of school principals in the AI era; (2) Reflection of leadership roles to school management processes in the AI era; (3) Barriers against the effective use of artificial intelligence by school principals. The participants have expressed that school principals should lead not only executive functions but also digital transformation processes, provide necessary guidance to teachers and make decisions with higher ethical sensitivity. However, the technology incompetence and resistance to change of school principals, along with problems related to infrastructure are the main obstacles within the transformation process. This study proposes that school principals should be given such trainings as systematic artificial intelligence literacy and digital leadership; the technological infrastructure of schools should be reinforced; and such emotional intelligence-based support programs aimed to transform the attitudes of school principals against the transition should be developed.

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence, digital transformation, ethical leadership, school leadership.

**About the Article**

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## Introduction

As we approach the second quarter of the 21st century, education systems are undergoing radical changes driven by both digitalisation and the growing influence of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies (Akyel & Tur, 2024). Managerial processes, like learning processes, are also being reshaped by data-driven, vision-based, and automation-focused changes (Vakıflı, 2025). Alongside large institutions, schools also lie at the heart of this technological transformation. This new era challenges the boundaries of traditional leadership. School leaders are now expected to not only manage executive operations but also develop a technological vision, make ethically sensitive decisions, and lead digital transformation (Sezer & Akan, 2018; Turan & Gökbulut, 2022; Yahşi, 2020).

In this context, the nature of leadership is undergoing a fundamental shift. Shared, flexible, and data-informed leadership models are replacing hierarchical, command-based structures (Arıkan, 1999; Kareem et al., 2024; Özdemir et al., 2013). The visionary capacity and data analytics power brought along by AI transform the intuitive decision-making role of leaders into knowledge-based strategic guidance (Akturan, 2024; Kurter, 2025; Smeets et al., 2021). Therefore, from now on, leadership is not only an executive position but it is also a dynamic learning and transformation tool driving the life in an organisation.

This transformation redefines the roles of all school stakeholders. Teachers evolve into professionals who interact through technology, continuously learn, and guide rather than merely transfer knowledge (Mumcu, 2022; Özcan, 2011; Telli & Sarsar, 2022). Students, supported by AI tools, take an active role in managing their learning instead of passively consuming information (Göksün & Kurt, 2022). Principals, in turn, are expected to act not only as supervisors but also as cultural and ethical leaders, since AI challenges core educational values such as equality, privacy, justice, and transparency (Küçükali & Coşkun, 2021; Zhong & Zhao, 2025). Therefore, beyond infrastructure, schools need human resources capable of leading this leadership transformation. From the perspective of teachers and school leaders, clarifying which roles principals must adopt, and where they lag, is critical to sustaining digitalisation (Batu & Taşdan, 2025).

Traditional schools often operate within bureaucratic, centralized, and hierarchical structures. In such systems, school leadership is typically equated with supervision, compliance, and administrative tasks (Alanoğlu & Demirtaş, 2020). This results in authoritarian and reactive leadership styles that limit innovation.

Top-down decision-making, common in centralized systems, restricts principals' proactive leadership roles and reduces them to mere implementers (Marmara & Atmaca, 2023). These roles focus more on following instructions than developing visions, limiting innovation in areas like professional development and school culture.

However, the emergence of the artificial intelligence era has brought about many challenges against this static structure. AI technologies not only make the leadership practices more effective but also redefine the role and identity of leaders (Pabuçcu & İşcan, 2025). For instance, while data-based decision-making processes relocate intuitive reflexes of principals with evidence-based leadership, such tools as learning analytics and algorithmic guidance make the principals more active in the field of educational leadership (Doğan, 2023). Moreover, novel duties as ethical responsibilities, fighting against digital inequalities, and supporting digital competencies of teachers necessitate principals to exhibit more strategic, visionary, and transformative leadership roles (Kubilay, 2022).

AI is more than a tool; it brings a paradigm shift in school management, decision-making, and power structures (Adams & Thompson, 2025). As a transformative force in culture and communication, it reshapes leadership expectations across domains like ethics, pedagogy, and data literacy (Girgiç-Altaş et al., 2025; Kesim et al., 2025). However, many questions remain unanswered from teachers' perspectives about how well school leaders are adapting.

Recent studies have focused on such areas as the integration of artificial intelligence technologies with educational processes, the development of digital pedagogy, and the attitude of school principals towards technology (Krein, 2025; Richardson et al., 2025). These studies have especially put a special interest on digital leadership skills and technology competencies of school principals, and strategic technology management (Banoğlu, 2011; Çalık et al., 2019). Nevertheless, a significant portion of these studies have investigated the matter in terms of technical competencies of school principals and fail to provide a deep analysis on pedagogical, ethical and organisational aspects of the transforming nature of leadership. Besides, while some studies in the literature feature descriptive data based on the self-reports of school principals and vice principals (Gevrek & Çebi, 2023), there is still a need for studies that examine the transformation of school leadership during the AI era from teachers' perspectives. Teachers are the ones who directly observe the technological leadership practices of school principals and are the immediate parties affected by these practices in daily school life. For these reasons, focusing on the experiences and needs of teachers concerning the transformation of school principals will provide a valuable contribution to redefining the leadership roles in the context of digitalisation of education.

This study addresses this gap by exploring teachers' perspectives on school leadership transformation in the AI era. It aims to provide a multi-dimensional field-based understanding of leadership, moving beyond conventional frameworks. The findings will offer practical insights for professional development and policy guidance. Based on this fundamental problem, the questions below have been tried to be replied to:

- How are school principals' leadership roles and competencies transformed during the AI era, according to teachers?

- How does this transformation affect school management processes?
- What are the cognitive and technical barriers principals face in effectively using AI?

# Method

## Research Model

This study aims to understand how school leadership is being transformed in the AI era from the perspective of teachers. Therefore, a qualitative research design was employed. Qualitative research enables an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives within their context (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). A phenomenological approach was adopted, which focuses on revealing individuals' lived experiences and the meanings they assign to these experiences (Creswell, 2013). The study investigates the leadership roles expected from school principals during the AI era and how these roles are interpreted by teachers.

## Study Group

The characteristics of the study group have been provided in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of Study Group

| Code Names | Age | Gender | School Type | Level of Education | Field | Educational Background | Years of Experience | Years of Experience at this School |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T1 | 34 | Male | Public | Secondary School | Special Education | Bachelor | 12 | 1 |
| T2 | 39 | Female | Private | Secondary School | Turkish | Master's | 16 | 4 |
| T3 | 42 | Male | Private | Secondary School | Social Studies | Bachelor | 19 | 3 |
| T4 | 28 | Male | Public | High School | English | Bachelor | 6 | 6 |
| T5 | 54 | Male | Public | High School | Maths | Master's | 31 | 25 |
| T6 | 36 | Female | Private | High School | Biology | Postgraduate | 13 | 8 |
| T7 | 24 | Female | Private | Preschool | Preschool | Bachelor | 1 | 1 |
| T8 | 42 | Female | Public | Secondary School | IT | Master's | 20 | 8 |
| T9 | 27 | Female | Public | Preschool | Preschool | Bachelor | 4 | 1 |
| T10 | 32 | Male | Private | Primary School | Elementary School Teaching | Bachelor | 10 | 8 |
| T11 | 43 | Male | Private | Primary School | Elementary School Teaching | Postgraduate | 21 | 12 |
| T12 | 37 | Female | Public | Preschool | Preschool | Bachelor | 15 | 15 |
| T13 | 32 | Female | Private | Preschool | Preschool | Bachelor | 12 | 8 |
| T14 | 38 | Male | Public | High School | English | Postgraduate | 15 | 5 |
| T15 | 40 | Male | Public | High School | Maths | Postgraduate | 17 | 10 |
| T16 | 30 | Male | Public | Secondary School | Turkish | Bachelor | 8 | 8 |
| T17 | 40 | Female | Public | Secondary School | Turkish | Master's | 18 | 10 |
| T18 | 26 | Female | Public | Primary School | Elementary School Teaching | Bachelor | 2 | 2 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T19 | 36 | Female | Public | Secondary School | Life Sciences | Postgraduate | 15 | 7 |
| T20 | 45 | Male | Public | Secondary School | Special Education | Postgraduate | 24 | 18 |

The study group consisted of 20 teachers from various school types (public and private) and educational levels (preschool to high school). Participants were selected via convenience sampling, allowing the inclusion of individuals who could offer rich and relevant data (Patton, 2015). Teachers had diverse backgrounds in subjects such as Turkish, English, Math, IT, and Special Education, with experience ranging from 1 to 31 years and their ages range from 24 to 54. Data saturation was reached after completing all 20 interviews, as no new themes emerged in the final responses, indicating thematic consistency.

## Data Collection Tool

Data were collected through a semi-structured interview form, a common tool in qualitative research. The form included three main questions and several sub-questions designed to explore participants' perceptions, expectations, and observations regarding school leadership in the AI era. Questions were developed based on the literature and reviewed by experts to ensure content validity. This format allowed participants to express their views freely while ensuring alignment with the purpose of the study.

Such questions as *"What do you think about the extent of transformation of school principals' sense of leadership? How the anticipated leadership roles of school principals that they are expected to have during the AI era are reflected school management processes and why these roles are important?"* could be given as examples of questions within the interview form.

## Data Collection and Analysis

The ethics approval required for this research was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee for Social and Human Sciences at Anadolu University (Decision No: 839356, dated 23.01.2025). Following this approval, data were collected during the 2024–2025 spring term through face-to-face and online interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes. With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Descriptive and content analysis methods were used. Data were coded based on pre-defined themes derived from the research questions. Codes were validated through intercoder agreement between the researcher and a field expert. Direct quotations were used to preserve the depth of participant perspectives.

In terms of assuring ethical considerations, participation was voluntary and all procedures were conducted in line with ethical standards. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the use of their data, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained, and all identifying information was anonymized using code names.

### Validity and Reliability

Ensuring the validity and reliability of qualitative studies is significant in terms of credibility, transferability and accuracy of any qualitative research. Regarding this, several measures have been implemented based on four basic qualitative research criteria (credibility, transferability, consistency, and confirmability) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). In order to increase the credibility, the data has been authentically deciphered in detail and supported via direct quotations during the analysis. Besides, the themes and codes have all been developed based on the data set and the interpretations have been directly attributed to the participant views. The coding process has been independently executed by the researcher and a field expert and then the codes have been compared. Finally, analysis reliability has been reached after getting the consensus percentage.

With the aim of ensuring transferability, detailed descriptions of the participants have been provided by detailing such demographic information as their age, field, school type, and years of experience and therefore, the necessary groundwork has been laid for researchers studying in similar fields regarding the transferability of findings. In order to strengthen the consistency, the data collection has been carried out in a systematic way and the semi structured interview form has been used within the same themes for all the participants.

The method employed during the interviews has been standardised while the processes regarding the collecting, analysis and interpretation of the data have been reported in a detailed way thus ensuring accountability. Finally, with the aim of ensuring the confirmability, the findings have all been related to participant perspectives and the interpretations have been done in an unbiased manner.

In qualitative research, the potential influence of the researcher on data collection and interpretation is acknowledged. To minimize subjectivity, a reflexive journal was maintained, assumptions were discussed with peers, and triangulation was applied through dual coding. The researcher's professional background in education was continuously monitored for potential biases.

## Findings

### Theme 1: Changing Roles and Competencies of School Principals in the AI Era

The integration of artificial intelligence technologies into the field of education has made it compulsory for the roles and responsibilities of school principals to undergo an extensive transformation. According to the views of participants, this change has made school leaders drift apart from the traditional administrative mentality and transform into more visionary, strategic, instructional, and ethical leaders. In this regard, the anticipated novel leadership roles of school principals include pedagogical awareness, ethical

sensitivity, and data-based decision making besides technological competencies. The categories and codes of this theme have been provided in Table 2 below:

**Table 2.** Categories and Codes Related to the Changing Roles and Competencies of School Principals in the AI Era Theme

| Theme | Category | Codes |
|---|---|---|
| Changing Roles and Competencies of School Principals In the AI Era | Transition from Traditional to Visionary and Strategic Leadership | Transition from authority to collaboration |
| | | Strategic vision |
| | | Need for long term planning |
| | | Transforming technology from tool to vision |
| | | Leadership with future projection |
| | Instructional Leadership and Digital Guidance | Supporting digital literacy of teachers |
| | | Leader guidance in technology integration |
| | | Digital support to teaching processes |
| | | Digitalisation of learning culture |
| | Data Based Decision Making and Digitalisation in Management | Use of data analytics |
| | | Analysis of student development reports |
| | | Data based transparent management |
| | | Objective decision-making processes |
| | | Stakeholder communication via digital systems |
| | Increase in Ethical and Cultural Sensitivity | Ethical awareness in technology use |
| | | Privacy of student data |
| | | Inclusive school culture in digital transformation |
| | | Pedagogical and cultural sensitivity |
| | | Humanistic and empathetic characteristics of leaders |

*Transition from Traditional to Visionary and Strategic Leadership*

The participants have expressed that school principals took over a limited role in previous years limited to ensuring discipline and implementing executive duties while the sense of leadership has undergone a significant transformation during the artificial intelligence era. This transformation urges principals to become visionary and strategic-thinking leaders who focus on long-term development of schools. As T6 states, "*While traditionally, becoming a principal was defined as a more authority-based, hierarchical, and control-oriented management style, today this conception has evolved into a model that is open to collaboration, sensitive to digital developments, and data-based.*" In this context, the role of school principals is no longer limited to administrative duties but also includes the responsibility of restructuring the school vision from a digital transformation perspective. Similarly, T7 underlines the paradigm shift by stating "*Democratic, distributive and sustainable leadership now better meets the needs of the age.*" Considering these views, principals are expected to abandon their identities as mere administrators and become visionary leaders who guide the development of the school.

*Instructional Leadership and Digital Guidance Roles*

Participants have emphasised the importance of school principals actively guiding teachers in integrating AI technologies into their educational processes while they have particularly pointed out the need for principals to take a leading role in ensuring teachers embrace technology in pedagogical terms. As T15 indicates, "*As a mathematics teacher, one of the things I need most in the field is that the school principal should act as a guide who not only follows technological developments but also integrates these into the pedagogical structure of the school*." Likewise, T1 remarks on the significant role of school principals in the technological and professional development of teachers by stating, "*Our school principal, whose door we used to knock on only for administrative matters, is now becoming an actor who steers our professional development.*" As understood from the participants' views, the fact that principals transfer digital literacy skills to teachers facilitates the effective use of artificial intelligence tools in education and training processes and directly and positively affects the quality of teaching within the school.

*Data Based Decision Making and Digitalisation in Management*

Another point frequently underlined by participants is that the data analytics opportunities offered by artificial intelligence technologies can make school management processes more transparent, objective, and efficient. According to T12, "*Thanks to the AI-supported systems, individual development processes of students could be easily followed and quick interventions can be made by specifying learning deficiencies.*" Within this context, it is of much significance for school principals to develop a data based decision-making culture and spread this throughout the school. As T13 has pointed out, "*Artificial intelligence has made it easier to make data-based decisions in decision-making processes. If school principals can utilise this convenience, the decisions made will be of higher quality*." Additionally, T4 points out the fact that thanks to data-based approaches, school principals could strengthen their communication with other stakeholders at school by stating "*Another important opportunity brought along by technology is that principals can communicate more effectively and transparently with non-school stakeholders.*" Therefore, school principals' adoption of a data-based management approach will support the creation of a more democratic, accountable and participatory school culture for all stakeholders of the school.

*Increase in Ethical and Cultural Sensitivity*

Participants have also indicated that the ethical and cultural sensitivity of school principals has become even more important during the artificial intelligence era. Managing the ethical issues brought about by technology use and establishing a sustainable and inclusive school culture are among the primary responsibilities of principals. T20 summarises this situation: "*In the age of artificial intelligence, it is not enough for principals to simply understand technology; they must interpret it in line with*

*the needs of the school, lead teachers in developing their digital skills, and guide teaching processes by considering students' individual differences."* T1, a special education teacher, emphasised this ethical and cultural sensitivity, stating that principals' humanistic characteristics, such as ethics, communication, and managerial flexibility in decision-making, have become more evident in the artificial intelligence era. The common view of participants on this matter is that technological opportunities offered by artificial intelligence will lead to meaningful and sustainable transformation only when combined with ethical and cultural sensitivity.

### Theme 2: Reflection of Leadership Roles to School Management Processes in the AI Era

This theme focuses on how the leadership roles expected of school principals in the new era are reflected in management processes and the views of participants have been analysed to determine the leadership skills principals should be equipped with and the impact of these skills on school management. The categories and codes for this theme have been presented in Table 3 below:

**Table 3.** Categories and Codes of Reflection of Leadership Roles to School Management Processes in the AI Era Theme

| Theme | Categories | Codes |
|---|---|---|
| Reflection of Leadership Roles to School Management Processes in the AI Era | Digital Transformation and Technology Leadership | Management and improvement of digital infrastructure |
| | | Pedagogical integration of artificial intelligence tools |
| | | Establishing a culture to support technological adaptation |
| | Data Based Objective Management | Data based strategical decision making |
| | | Analysis and follow-up of student data |
| | | Evaluation of teacher performance via data |
| | Ethical and Humanitarian Leadership | Data security and student privacy |
| | | Integration of ethical sensitivity to administrative procedures |
| | | Featuring soft skills in administrative procedures |
| | Transformative and Learning Leadership | Continuously learning and evolving leadership |
| | | Management culture encouraging innovative applications |
| | | Future oriented visionary management |

*Digital Transformation and Technology Leadership*

A key-shared expectation among participants is that school principals will lead the digital transformation and align technological advancements with pedagogical processes. In this context, establishing, maintaining, and developing digital infrastructure stands out as their primary responsibility. T9 refers to this need as: *"If a school lacks technological equipment, the principal must determine the budget and priorities. Otherwise, what can a teacher do?"* The integration of artificial intelligence tools into teaching processes reveals the pedagogical dimension of digital leadership. T8 mentions this deficiency by stating, *"We talk about how teachers can use tools like ChatGPT in the classroom, but*

*principals do not provide any guidance in this process.*" The issue of creating a culture supporting technological adaptation is also noteworthy. T2, "*Our school principal is biased against every new application. This makes teachers even more conservative,*" points out leadership profiles that fail to cope with the resistance in the school culture. Sustainability of digital transformation will only be possible with this leadership being undertaken in a decisive and guiding manner.

*Data Based Objective Management*

One of the roles expected of school principals in the artificial intelligence era is to make decision-making processes more strategic and accountable by basing them on data. According to the participants, this skill is not only a technical requirement but also a management approach that contributes to the democratic functioning of the school. T12's statement is striking on this point: "*With AI-supported systems, students' individual development processes can be analysed, learning deficiencies can be identified in a timely manner, and rapid interventions can be made*." T4 emphasised the transparency and efficiency aspects of this process, by stating: "*When the school principal's decisions are based on more concrete data, then teachers have more confidence in the decisions made.*" Evaluating teacher performance with data; however, is regarded by some participants as an area that requires careful handling. T18 reminds the ethical limitations of these practices, by mentioning, "*Data can sometimes be misleading; numbers do not tell the whole story*." Nevertheless, the general trend is that data has become an indispensable tool for both guidance and accountability in management processes.

*Ethical and Humanitarian Leadership*

With the advent of artificial intelligence applications, data security, student privacy, and ethical decision-making processes have become core responsibilities of school leaders. Participants agree that despite rapid technological advancements, ethical and humanitarian values should not be left behind. T6 makes a striking statement on this matter: "*It is now very easy for a principal to access a student's entire behavioural history, including attendance, grades, and minutes. But how and for what purpose this access is used is crucial*." Integrating ethical sensitivity into management processes ensures a safe school learning environment. T3 emphasizes this point by saying, "*Without ethical values, technological development creates distrust and tension.*" T1, who advocates for the emphasis on soft skills, states that "*Leadership no longer requires charisma or authority, but empathy and flexibility*." These exemplary perspectives demonstrate the importance of ethical leadership not only in preventing the potential harms of the digital world but also in strengthening human relationships.

*Transformative and Learning Leadership*

Participants occasionally emphasise that during the artificial intelligence era, school principals should not only be managers, but also learners, researchers, and systematically transfer innovations into the institution. Continuous learning leadership

goes beyond simply keeping up with technological changes and means integrating these changes into the school culture. T15 describes this role as follows: "*If the principal doesn't make any kind of innovation on their own, they can not expect innovation from teachers. They must lead by example.*" A management culture encouraging innovative practices directly impacts teacher motivation. T8 shares the positive impact of this, indicating, "*We had a principal who supported all our ideas; projects were approved quickly, and thanks to this, we were motivated.*" Visionary management, which foresees the future, stands out as a less frequently mentioned but still important role. T18 criticises principals without vision, expressing, "*Some principals still defend the old systems, but the world has long since moved on.*" This category demonstrates that principals should be the actors who lead the change and carry their schools into the future.

### Theme 3: Barriers against the Effective Use of Artificial Intelligence by School Principals

This theme highlights the key obstacles school principals face when integrating AI technologies into their educational and administrative processes. Based on participant feedback, these obstacles were generally attributed to principals' lack of cognitive and technological competence, inadequate infrastructure and resources, and negative attitudes and perceptions toward AI. Table 4 below presents the categories and codes for this theme:

**Table 4.** Categories and Codes of the Barriers against the Effective Use of Artificial Intelligence by School Principals Theme

| Theme | Category | Codes |
|---|---|---|
| Barriers against the Effective Use of Artificial Intelligence by School Principals | Cognitive and Technological Competencies | Lack of AI knowledge |
| | | Digital literacy inability |
| | Infrastructure and Resource Problems | Lack of internet and hardware |
| | | Inadequate budget and financial support |
| | | Shortages in technical support and maintenance |
| | Attitudinal and Perceptual Barriers | Leadership culture resistant to innovation |
| | | Fear of change |

*Cognitive and Technological Competencies*

The most common challenges school principals face when integrating AI technologies into educational environments are the lack of digital literacy and technological knowledge. Many participants have stated that while principals possess basic IT skills, they are unable to understand and implement the educational and administrative potential of AI. T12 has stated, "*They don't have any knowledge of what AI is, how it works, or how it can be integrated into educational processes,*" indicating that this deficiency directly impacts their leadership role. Similarly, T15 indicates, "*Principals don't feel adequately equipped to pedagogically integrate these technologies into the school environment,*" pointing out that this inadequacy hinders the teacher guidance process.

T18, on the other hand, has stated that principals "*have difficulty in using technology effectively in decision-making processes*" and emphasised the necessity of improving digital literacy levels. These inadequacies are not merely technical issues; they also stand out as structural deficiencies that weaken the leadership influence on teachers.

*Infrastructure and Resource Problems*

Many participants have highlighted technical infrastructure deficiencies as one of the reasons why AI applications cannot be effectively used in education. Teachers in some public schools, in particular, have stated that inadequate internet connection, a limited number of computers, outdated software, and the lack of physical hardware make it difficult for school principals to lead the digital transformation process. T1 has exemplified this by saying, "*There are limited computers and a weak internet connection.*" Similarly, T5 has stated, "*Sustainable digital transformation cannot be achieved due to weak internet infrastructure and software deficiencies.*" T9's view, "*Simply having technological tools is not enough; the infrastructure system that will enable these tools to operate sustainably must also be strong,*" reveals that this problem is not solely tool-based but also systemic. This situation causes school principals, despite their willingness, to fail to implement the practices and remain mere observers of the process.

*Attitudinal and Perceptual Barriers*

The adoption of AI technologies in educational settings depends not only on technical knowledge but also on a positive attitude and an open mind-set. However, participants have noted that many school principals either resist innovation or trivialize AI by belittling it. T12 has stated that his principal is "mentally resistant" and views technology as "an unnecessary or temporary fad." He argues that this situation also reduces teacher motivation. T13 has indicated that his principal looked down on [a completed task] when he said, "I did it with artificial intelligence," by saying, "I thought you did it." This perception needed to be broken. T14's observation that "Artificial intelligence can be perceived as a factor that will undermine trust in teachers" also indicates that principals can view technological developments as a threat. T8 has remarked that his principal "experiences a high level of anxiety and stress" when using these tools, demonstrating that this attitude has not only a cognitive but also a psychological dimension. All these views demonstrate that attitudes and perceptions significantly affect principals' leadership roles and constitute a significant resistance point against the digital transformation process.

## Results and Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that school principals must transform not only their managerial positions but also their understanding of leadership in the age of artificial intelligence. Participants have specifically stated that the transition from traditional to visionary and strategic leadership is now inevitable, emphasising that this shift plays a significant role in determining the school's development trajectory. This finding aligns with the view of Fullan (2016) and Constantinou (2025) that "leadership should no longer be pure management but a transformational form of guidance." Participants have indicated that while authoritarian and control-oriented leadership was dominant in the past, today a governance-focused approach that includes stakeholders in the process is necessary. The fact that this approach is evolving into a collaborative, digitally responsive, and data-driven leadership model, as some teachers suggest, clearly demonstrates how changing leadership paradigms are finding a local response.

Another striking finding of the study is the prominence of the roles of instructional leadership and digital guidance. It has been specifically found out that principals should lead teachers in adapting to technological advancements from a pedagogical perspective. This finding is directly related to the "impact of instructional leadership on student achievement" revealed by Pietsch et al. (2023) through meta-analysis and big data. As some teachers have emphasised that school principals should not only monitor technological developments but also be guides who integrate them into the school's pedagogical structure. This demonstrates that the role of principals is no longer simply to guide, but also to learn together and lead transformation. The concept of "digital leadership," frequently discussed in the literature recently (Polat, 2021; Saray et al., 2025), has gained new meaning in this study within the context of teachers' daily needs and expectations.

The findings also indicate a growing expectation from school administrators regarding data-driven decision-making and administrative digitalisation. With the advent of artificial intelligence technologies, school principals are expected to establish a managerial system that monitors and evaluates student data rather than relying on intuitive approaches in decision-making. This directly aligns with the "data-driven decision-making culture" defined by Doğan (2023) and Schildkamp & Ehren (2013). As some teachers emphasise, a system that can monitor individual development of students and plan timely interventions positively affects not only academic achievement but also the school climate. This finding is significant since it demonstrates that artificial intelligence is becoming a part of strategic leadership, not a mere tool.

Participants have also noted that ethics and cultural sensitivity have become even more important during the AI era. They have underlined that, in addition to the opportunities brought by technology, issues such as ethical dilemmas, digital inequalities, and student privacy should also be on leaders' agendas. This result aligns with Shapiro & Stefkovich's (2016) multi-paradigm approach to ethical leadership in education. In particular, some

teachers argue that principals should not only be familiar with technology but also interpret it in line with the needs of the school, demonstrating that technological leadership must also be integrated with a pedagogical and humanistic stance.

The findings of the study reveal that the leadership roles of school principals in the age of artificial intelligence are not limited to technological skills; they also require multidimensional leadership models that spearhead digital transformation processes, embrace data-based management, and establish ethical human relationship. This becomes particularly evident in the context of digital transformation and technology leadership.

Participants have stated that school principals should actively guide the integration of technology not only in administrative tasks but also in teaching processes. This finding supports Anderson & Dexter's (2005) approach, which defines technology leadership as not only providing digital tools but also developing strategies to guide pedagogical processes.

On the other hand, the resistance of some principals to technological innovations hinders the transformation of leadership. Some teachers' views indicate that a leader's approach to technology within the school culture directly affects teacher behaviour. This supports the claim by Fullan & Langworthy (2014) that "school transformation is possible through pedagogical leadership." Therefore, the principal's embrace of technology determines not only digital transformation but also the evolution of teaching processes.

The age of artificial intelligence demands that educational leaders not only understand technology but also make sense of and use it effectively. However, research findings point to multifaceted challenges that prevent school administrators from adapting to this transformation. These challenges revolve around cognitive and technological competence deficiencies, inadequate infrastructure and resources, and attitudinal and perceptual resistance. The findings demonstrate that there are both individual and institutional barriers preventing school administrators from fulfilling their digital leadership roles.

The majority of participating teachers have indicated that school principals lack sufficient knowledge about the functioning of AI and its integration into educational processes. This suggests that principals fail to fully grasp not only the technological tools themselves but also their pedagogical potential. This finding, as highlighted in Almohamad's (2024) study, highlights one of the most fundamental obstacles to digital transformation: a widespread lack of digital skills among administrators and employees, coupled with resistance to technological innovation. Almohamad (2024) notes that the inadequacy of digital competencies, particularly among administrators, leads to the disruption of transformation processes despite investments in technological infrastructure. This, combined with other obstacles such as cultural resistance, cost pressures, and cybersecurity concerns within organisations, significantly reduces the effectiveness of digital transformation. Some school principals' lack of artificial intelligence literacy

prevents teachers from using technology confidently and acts as an invisible yet effective barrier to institutional transformation. In this context, the creation of systematic and practical digital leadership training programs for school principals holds the potential to transform not only individual development but also the entire school ecosystem.

The findings indicate that one of the main obstacles to implementing AI-supported systems, particularly in public schools, is inadequate infrastructure and hardware. As participant teachers have stated, a limited number of computers, poor internet connections, and outdated software systems make it impossible for principals to actively assume their digital leadership roles. These results align with the Digital Education Infrastructure Report published by the OECD (2021). The report emphasises that for digital technologies to be effectively used in school settings, not only the tools but also the technical support systems to ensure their sustainability are necessary. In the Turkish context, these deficiencies are often addressed through centralised policies rather than the initiatives of school administrators.

Perhaps one of the most striking findings of the study is that administrators' attitudes and perceptions are a factor that affects the transformation process more than technological inadequacies. The perception of some principals about AI as a passing fad, their disdain for teachers' innovative initiatives, and their anxiety about technological advancements lead to a weakening of leadership roles. This situation negatively affects not only digital leadership capacity but also the motivation and change climate within the school. Some participating teachers have experienced an example of the principal's disdain for digital outputs, thereby devaluing the teachers' professional labour. This attitude, when evaluated within the framework of Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, can be interpreted as a factor that undermines teachers' self-confidence and reduces their willingness to participate in innovation. On the other hand, the anxiety and fear emphasised by some teachers demonstrate that leaders require not only cognitive but also emotional support. In this context, emotional intelligence-based leadership skills and change management training stand out as important development areas for leaders who resist transformation.

In conclusion, this research reveals that in the age of artificial intelligence, the leadership roles of school principals have transcended traditional patterns and acquired visionary, strategic, digital, ethical, and transformational qualities. Analysis based on the views of participating teachers demonstrates that artificial intelligence is not merely a tool but also a paradigm that is redefining educational leadership. The research findings demonstrate that the transformation in school principals' understanding of leadership is taking shape on four fundamental levels:

- The transition from traditional to visionary leadership necessitates a leadership approach that plans the long-term digital development of the school and guides pedagogical processes.

- Instructional leadership and digital guidance highlight the principal's profile, supporting teachers' professional development and technological integration.
- Data-based administrative decision-making demonstrates the effectiveness of AI-supported systems in strengthening a culture of transparency and accountability.
- Ethical sensitivity and humanitarian leadership necessitate interpreting the opportunities offered by AI within a pedagogical ethical framework.
- School principals' cognitive and technological shortcomings, lack of digital infrastructure, and attitudinal resistance to innovation slow down this transformation process. Therefore, leadership in the age of AI has become not only a matter of vision but also of technical capacity, cultural sensitivity, and emotional intelligence.

## Recommendations

Some recommendations based on the findings of the research have been presented below:

- AI-based digital leadership training should be integrated into national in-service training programs for school principals, and these trainings should be sustained at the policy level.
- Digital infrastructure investments in public schools should not be limited to the provision of tools; long-term technical support and maintenance mechanisms should also be established.
- Performance evaluation systems that encourage school administrators to adapt to digital transformation should be developed, and the integration of digital tools into pedagogical processes should be included among the evaluation criteria.
- Education policies should explicitly address data security, ethical use of technology, and the reduction of digital inequalities; accordingly, national frameworks on ethics and data protection must be formulated and rigorously implemented.
- In the era of artificial intelligence, it is essential to explore the influence of school leadership on student achievement, teacher motivation, and the overall school climate through quantitative approaches; in addition, leadership practices should be analyzed in the context of digital transformation by means of cross-cultural comparative research.

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## Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

21. yüzyılın ikinci çeyreğine girerken, eğitim sistemleri yalnızca dijitalleşmeyle değil, aynı zamanda yapay zekâ (YZ) teknolojilerinin hızla artan etkisiyle de köklü bir dönüşüm yaşamaktadır (Akyel & Tur, 2024). Bu teknolojik dönüşümün merkezinde ise büyük yapıların yanı sıra okullar da yer almaktadır. Geleneksel liderlik anlayışlarının sınırlarını zorlayan bu yeni çağda, okul müdürlerinin yalnızca yönetsel işleyişi sürdürmeleri değil, aynı zamanda teknolojik vizyon geliştirmeleri, etik duyarlılığı yüksek kararlar almaları ve dijital dönüşüme rehberlik etmeleri beklenmektedir (Sezer ve Akan, 2018; Turan & Gökbulut, 2022; Yahşi, 2020).

Son yıllarda yapılan çalışmalar, yapay zekâ teknolojilerinin eğitim süreçlerine entegrasyonu, dijital pedagojinin gelişimi ve yöneticilerin teknolojiye yönelik tutumları gibi alanlara odaklanmaktadır (Krein, 2025; Richardson vd., 2025). Özellikle okul müdürlerinin dijital liderlik becerileri, teknolojik yeterlikleri ve stratejik teknoloji yönetimi konularında çeşitli araştırmalar yürütülmüştür (Banoğlu, 2011; Çalık vd., 2019). Bununla birlikte, bu çalışmaların önemli bir kısmı, okul yöneticilerini daha çok teknik yeterlilik düzeyinde ele almakta, liderliğin dönüşen doğasına ilişkin pedagojik, etik ve örgütsel boyutları yeterince derinlemesine incelememektedir. Ayrıca literatürde yer alan bazı çalışmalarda okul müdürlerinin ve yardımcılarının kendi beyanlarına dayanan betimsel veriler kullanılırken (Gevrek ve Çebi, 2023), öğretmenlerin bakış açısıyla okul liderliğinin yapay zekâ çağındaki dönüşümünü anlamaya yönelik çalışmalara da ihtiyaç vardır. Çünkü öğretmenler, okul müdürlerinin teknolojik liderlik pratiklerini günlük okul yaşamı içinde doğrudan gözlemleyen ve bu liderlikten birebir etkilenen en kritik paydaşlardır. Bu nedenle öğretmenlerin, okul müdürlerinin dönüşümüne dair deneyimlerine ve ihtiyaçlarına odaklanmak; dijitalleşen eğitim bağlamında liderlik rollerinin yeniden tanımlanmasına katkı sunacaktır. Ancak mevcut literatürde, öğretmenlerin okul müdürlerinden yapay zekâ çağında bekledikleri liderlik rolleri, yeterince sistematik ve tematik olarak ortaya konmamış; liderlik dönüşümüne ilişkin saha verileri çoğunlukla yönetsel bakışla sınırlı kalmıştır.

Bu araştırma, tam da bu noktada devreye girerek, yapay zekâ çağında okul liderliğinin dönüşümünü öğretmenlerin algı, gözlem ve beklentileri üzerinden analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu yönüyle çalışma, literatürdeki önemli bir boşluğu doldurma iddiası taşımakta; okul liderliğine ilişkin geleneksel yaklaşımların ötesine geçerek saha deneyimlerinden beslenen özgün ve çok boyutlu bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Aynı zamanda bu çalışma, okul müdürlerinin hangi alanlarda gelişim göstermesi gerektiğine dair pratik ve politika düzeyinde yol gösterici çıktılar üretme potansiyeli taşımaktadır.

Bu araştırma, yapay zekâ çağında okul liderliğinin dönüşümünü öğretmenlerin algı ve deneyimleri üzerinden anlamayı amaçladığından dolayı nitel araştırma yaklaşımı kapsamında yürütülmüştür. Bu çerçevede, çalışmada fenomenoloji (olgubilim) deseni

tercih edilmiştir. Araştırmada odaklanılan temel olgu, yapay zekâ çağında okul liderlerinden beklenen liderlik rolleri olup, bu olgunun öğretmenler tarafından nasıl deneyimlendiği ve anlamlandırıldığı anlaşılmak istenmiştir.

Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu, Eskişehir il merkezinde farklı okul türleri (devlet ve özel) ile çeşitli eğitim kademelerinde (okul öncesi, ilkokul, ortaokul ve ortaöğretim) görev yapan toplam 20 öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcılar, amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden biri olan ulaşılabilir durum örneklemesi yoluyla belirlenmiştir. Bu örnekleme türü, araştırmacının erişebileceği, veri sağlayabilecek ve araştırma sorularına anlamlı katkılar sunabilecek katılımcıların seçilmesine olanak tanımaktadır (Patton, 2015). Katılımcılar, okul yöneticilerinin yapay zekâ çağında göstermeleri gereken liderlik rolleri hakkındaki görüş ve deneyimlerini ifade edebilecek ölçüde deneyime ve mesleki çeşitliliğe sahiptir. Araştırmanın verileri, nitel araştırmalarda yaygın olarak kullanılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri, gerekli etik kurul onayı alındıktan sonra 2024-2025 bahar döneminde toplanmış, veriler hem yüz yüze hem de çevrim içi (Zoom gibi araçlar üzerinden) görüşmeler yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Veri toplama süreci boyunca etik ilkelere titizlikle uyulmuştur. Katılımcılara araştırmanın amacı, süreci, gönüllülük esasına dayandığı ve verilerin yalnızca bilimsel amaçlarla kullanılacağı açık biçimde açıklanmıştır. Görüşmeler öncesinde aydınlatılmış onam alınmış, katılımcıların kimlik bilgileri gizli tutulmuş ve tüm veriler kod isimlerle anonimleştirilmiştir.

Araştırma bulguları üç ana temada toplanmıştır: Birinci tema, yapay zekâ çağında okul müdürlerinin değişen rolleri ve yeterlikleri, ikinci tema, yapay zekâ çağında liderlik rollerinin okul yönetim süreçlerine yansıması ve son tema okul yöneticilerinin yapay zekâ kullanımı konusundaki engelleridir. Bu araştırmanın bulguları, okul müdürlerinin yapay zekâ çağında yalnızca yönetsel pozisyonlarını değil, liderlik anlayışlarını da dönüştürmeleri gerektiğini göstermektedir. Katılımcılar, özellikle geleneksel liderlikten vizyoner ve stratejik liderliğe geçişin artık kaçınılmaz olduğunu belirtmiş, bu değişimin ise okulun gelişim rotasını belirlemede önemli rol oynadığını vurgulamıştır. Bu bulgu, Fullan (2016) ve Constantinou'nun (2025) vurguladığı "*liderliğin artık salt yönetim değil, dönüşümsel bir rehberlik biçimi olması gerektiği*" görüşüyle örtüşmektedir. Katılımcılar, geçmişte otoriter ve denetim odaklı liderliğin baskın olduğunu ancak bugün artık paydaşları sürece dahil eden, yönetişim odaklı bir yaklaşımın gerekli hale geldiğini ifade etmektedir. Bu noktada, bazı öğretmenlerin dile getirdiği şekliyle günümüzde bu anlayışın iş birliğine açık, dijital gelişmelere duyarlı ve veri temelli bir liderlik modeline dönüşüyor olması, değişen liderlik paradigmalarının yerelde nasıl karşılık bulduğunu açıkça göstermektedir. Araştırmanın bir diğer dikkat çekici bulgusu, öğretimsel liderlik ve dijital rehberlik rollerinin ön plana çıkmasıdır. Özellikle müdürlerin, öğretmenlerin teknolojik gelişmelere pedagojik açıdan uyum sağlamasına öncülük etmeleri gerektiği dile getirilmiştir. Bu bulgu, Pietsch vd. (2023) tarafından meta analizle ve büyük veriyle

ortaya konulan "*öğretimsel liderliğin öğrenci başarısına etkisi*" ile doğrudan ilişkilidir. Araştırmanın belki de en dikkat çekici bulgularından birisi de, teknolojik yetersizliklerden daha fazla dönüşüm sürecini etkileyen faktörün, yöneticilerin tutum ve algıları olduğudur. Bazı müdürlerin yapay zekâyı geçici bir moda olarak görmesi, öğretmenlerin yenilikçi girişimlerinin küçümsenmesi ve teknolojik gelişmelere karşı duyulan kaygı, liderlik rollerinin zayıflamasına yol açmaktadır. Bu durum sadece dijital liderlik kapasitesini değil, aynı zamanda okul içindeki motivasyon ve değişim iklimini de olumsuz etkilemektedir. Katılımcı bazı öğretmenlerin yaşadığı örnek, yöneticinin dijital çıktıları küçümsemesi üzerinden öğretmenin profesyonel emeğini değersizleştirmesiyle ilgilidir. Bu tutum, Bandura'nın (1997) öz yeterlik kuramı çerçevesinde değerlendirildiğinde, öğretmenlerin kendine olan güvenini zedeleyen ve yeniliklere katılım isteğini düşüren bir etken olarak yorumlanabilir. Sonuç olarak bu araştırma, yapay zekâ çağında okul müdürlerinin liderlik rollerinin geleneksel kalıpların ötesine geçerek vizyoner, stratejik, dijital, etik ve dönüşümcü nitelikler kazandığını ortaya koymaktadır. Katılımcı öğretmenlerin görüşleri doğrultusunda yapılan analizler, yapay zekânın yalnızca bir araç değil, aynı zamanda eğitim liderliğini yeniden tanımlayan bir paradigma olduğunu göstermektedir.

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***Informed Consent:*** All 20 teachers were fully informed about the nature and aims of the research, and informed consent was subsequently obtained.

***Peer Review***: An independent peer review was conducted for this study.

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# How Does the Aim of the Social Studies Course to Train Effective Citizens Shape the Citizenship Perception of Syrian Asylum-Seekers? A Study on Middle School Students*

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the role of social studies courses in shaping the citizenship perceptions of Syrian asylum-seeker students under temporary protection in Türkiye. Within the scope of the research, the impact of the social studies courses on Syrian students, especially those in disadvantaged groups, was examined. The research was conducted with a qualitative research method and phenomenology design was used. Data were collected from the participants with a semi-structured interview form and these data were analyzed by content analysis. The study group consisted of 40 Syrian asylum-seeker students. The findings of the study show that Syrian students see the social studies course as an important tool in terms of adapting to the society, recognizing their rights and becoming effective citizens; they gain awareness about the functioning of the society, the structure of the state, individual rights and responsibilities, and feel themselves as a part of the Turkish society through the course. The results of the research show that the social studies course undertakes an inclusive and transformative function not only for Turkish citizen students but also for asylum-seeking students. In this respect, it is emphasized that social studies education should be evaluated as a tool to support social.

**Keywords:** Syrian asylum-seeker, Citizenship Education, Social Studies

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## Introduction

In the historical process, not only the belonging of individuals to a community, but also the expectations regarding their roles within this community have been shaped. With the formation of today's state structures, the relations between the individual and the state have gained a new dimension and paved the way for the formation of the concept of citizenship. The acceptance of a person as a citizen depends on the nationality relationship between the individual and the state. In this context, nationality refers to a person's legal status rather than their ethnic origin. Individuals who are bound to the state by this bond of nationality are called "citizens" (Karaman-Kepenekçi, 2014). Citizenship is an individual's special rights, responsibilities, sense of political belonging and legal commitment to the state in which he or she resides (Pamuk & Alabaş, 2008). However, citizenship does not only mean living in the territory of a state; it means the individual's active contribution to social life in political, legal, social, cultural and economic fields. Active citizenship is shaped by individuals' willingness to act together and develop their potential in the processes of participation, social cohesion and self-realization (Balbag & Bayır, 2016).

Citizenship first emerged in Ancient Greece with privileges granted to a certain class of people (Heater, 2007). The understanding of citizenship in this period was limited in terms of political rights. Women, slaves and foreign nationals were not included in the scope of political rights (Turner, 1993). Although feudal structures weakened the bond of citizenship in the Middle Ages, developments in the world such as the French Revolution and the American Declaration of Independence led to the redefinition of the concept of citizenship (Marshall, 1950). Today, democracy is not only about the individual's legal loyalty to the state, but also about the individual's participation in social life and his/her embrace of certain democratic values. This change has been complicated by today's migration phenomenon. The relationship between citizenship and migration has become a social and political problem not only in developed countries but also in all receiving and sending countries. Migration movements are evaluated together with concepts such as human rights, equality, acceptance and self-determination. Wars, inequality of opportunity, population growth and economic reasons force people to leave their geography (Çelik, 2023). For this reason, it is important to clarify the historical dimension of the phenomenon of migration and the concepts related to migration. Throughout history, people have constantly changed their places in search of better living conditions and security. These displacement movements are called migration. "Migrants" are people who migrate legally or voluntarily from their home countries to have better living conditions (Akpınar, 2017). The terms "refugee" and "asylum seeker" are often used interchangeably. These differences are defined by international legislation. In Türkiye, the concepts of "refugee" and "asylum-seeker" are defined as follows in the Regulation on the Procedures and Principles to be Applied to Individual Foreigners Seeking Asylum in Türkiye or Requesting a Residence Permit from Türkiye to Seek Asylum in Another Country and to Foreigners Arriving at Our Borders

Collectively for the Purpose of Asylum and Possible Population Movements (1994), which was prepared on the basis of the 1951 Geneva Convention:

*"A refugee is a foreigner who, owing to events occurring in Europe and having a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country or, if he has no nationality and is outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."*

*"An asylum-seeker is a foreigner who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the country of his nationality or, if he has no nationality and is outside the country of his former residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it." (Republic of Türkiye Official Gazette, 1994, Article 3).*

According to data from the Directorate of Migration Management, with the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, there has been a massive influx of asylum-seekers to Türkiye. This number reached a peak of approximately 3.7 million in 2021. This number has made Türkiye the country hosting the highest number of asylum seekers in the world. After 2021, this number started to decrease due to voluntary returns, crossings to Europe and registration updates. By 2024, this number had fallen below 2.9 million and as of July 2025, the number of Syrians under temporary protection status was announced as approximately 2.6 million. All these data show that the Syrian asylum-seeker experience in Türkiye involves a dynamic process in demographic, social and political terms (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, 2025). This intensive migration movement has not only led to a numerical increase, but also to asylum-seekers facing various problems in areas such as education, language and cultural adaptation. Although the basic needs of asylum-seekers such as shelter and nutrition are met, there are serious problems in areas such as language, education and cultural adaptation. For these reasons, the education and integration of Syrian asylum-seekers into society is of great importance (Yaman et al. 2023). In this direction, educational institutions play an important role in the integration of asylum-seeking students into society and cultural interaction.

The integration of asylum-seekers can be achieved through an effective education system. Therefore, scientific activities should be carried out for the education of asylum seekers and these activities should be put into practice. Educational institutions should be organized in a way that is inclusive of all students and facilitates integration. Asylum seekers adapt more to environments where their values are respected. Therefore, education programs should be organized in a way that facilitates integration (Kara, 2022). In order for asylum-seekers to achieve success in the educational process, arrangements that support multiculturalism should be made in educational environments.

Integrating asylum-seekers into society is important for the welfare of countries. Studies show that asylum-seekers experience various problems in terms of language, social adaptation and economic aspects (Börü & Boyacı, 2016). Children have been the most affected by the phenomenon of migration and their deprivation of education has led to social problems (Er & Bayındır, 2015). Taking subcultures into account in education programs supports integration by preventing assimilation (Kara, 2022). In addition, showing asylum-seekers as a global problem in textbooks can lead to exclusion and human rights violations (Aktaş et al. 2021). For this reason, education is seen as an important tool in solving the adaptation problems experienced by asylum seekers. The school environment and course contents have an important role in the participation of individuals in social life.

All branch courses are important in the adaptation of asylum-seeker students to the social order. However, social studies courses come to the forefront in the acquisition of certain social and cultural values (Arisi, 2011). This course aims to promote values such as tolerance, peace and responsibility. At the same time, the social studies curriculum has a structure that supports global peace and social cohesion (Odia, 2014). In addition, the acquisition of these values depends not only on the social studies curriculum but also on some factors such as teachers' attitudes and students' characteristics (Baloğlu Uğurlu & Akdovan, 2019). The positive use of these factors is an important factor in the adaptation of asylum seekers to society (Şener & Başkan, 2021). The social studies curriculum is one of the basic courses that enable students to grow up with a sense of responsibility and adaptation to society. The social studies curriculum has been updated within the scope of the Turkish Education Century Model. This updated curriculum aims to help students acquire values such as tolerance, respect for cultural diversity, social peace and sensitivity to human rights. The learning areas of “Living Together”, “Common Heritage”, “Economy in Our Lives” and “Living Democracy” in the social studies curriculum contribute to students' ability to understand and accept individuals with different cultures. In addition to history, geography and citizenship knowledge, the program also includes values education and active citizenship practices. In this respect, the social studies course plays an important role in supporting the social adaptation of asylum-seeking students. This inclusive structure of the curriculum acts as a bridge between asylum-seeking students and Turkish citizen students, increasing interaction in the classroom and accelerating the adaptation process of asylum-seeking students (MoNE, 2024).

The relationship between social studies education and inclusive education, particularly when considered in the context of citizenship and identity policies, makes significant contributions to students' multifaceted identity development and the internalization of democratic values. At this point, studies focusing on the thematic patterns of citizenship and identity education, which bring a holistic approach to social studies, show that the concept of inclusive education strongly aligns with the fundamental objectives of the course (Öntaş et al., 2025). Similarly, examining social studies textbooks from an inclusive education perspective reveals how differences are represented in learning materials and how students are included through these representations (Öntaş, 2024).

Research on inclusive citizenship education in Turkey emphasizes that inclusive approaches are not limited to classroom practices but also guide the construction of identity and citizenship at the level of educational policies. Furthermore, examining classroom teachers' implementation of inclusive education for refugees shows that social studies classes play a critical role in developing a citizenship understanding that embraces different identities, rather than being limited to the transmission of national identity (Yıldırım & Öntaş, 2023). In the literature, studies on Syrian asylum-seekers and social studies education have mostly focused on topics such as Syrian students' perceptions of social studies courses, social adaptation processes, citizenship education and their interest in history subjects (Acosta, 2017; Akdeniz, 2018; Alparslan, 2019; Bozkaya, 2020; Clark, 2017; Ekinci & Akman, 2021; Eroğlu, 2016; Gül & Kaylı; 2020; Savar & Kedikli, 2019; Yaman et al., 2023). However, there is a limited number of studies that reveal how the aim of social studies courses to raise effective citizens shapes the perceptions of Syrian asylum-seekers. In particular, how concepts such as values, citizenship and responsibility emphasized by the social studies course in the teaching process affect the perceptions of Syrian asylum-seekers students attending secondary school has not been addressed in depth. This study attempts to fill this gap in the literature. At the same time, it makes a unique contribution to the literature by examining how the social studies course shapes the citizenship perceptions of Syrian asylum-seeker students in line with the aim of raising effective citizens.

## Problem Statement

How does the aim of the social studies course to raise effective citizens shape Syrian asylum-seekers' perception of citizenship?

## Sub-Problems

- How are Syrian students' attitudes towards the social studies course?
- What is the role of the social studies course in the development of Syrian students' sense of belonging?
- What role does the social studies course play in the prevention of peer bullying on Syrian Asylum-seeker students?
- What are the ways in which asylum-seeker students are marginalized by their peers and how does the social studies course affect this marginalization?
- What role does the social studies course play in raising awareness about Syrian asylum-seeker students' rights?
- What are Syrian students' perceptions of the concepts of 'immigration' and 'citizenship'?
- How do Syrian students perceive the differences between the forms of government in Türkiye and Syria and how does the social studies course contribute to their understanding of these differences?

### Purpose of the Research

This study aims to reveal how the aim of the social studies course to raise effective citizens shapes Syrian asylum-seekers perception of citizenship.

## Method

In this study, the qualitative research method was used. Qualitative research is a research method that examines individuals' experiences, perceptions and social phenomena in their natural environment with a holistic understanding (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The aim of the study was to examine in-depth the subjective experiences of Syrian asylum-seekers regarding the citizenship perception of the social studies course's aim of raising effective citizens. For this reason, the qualitative method was preferred. A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. Data were collected in the natural environment and through open-ended questions. This approach makes it possible to focus on the questions that arise during the research process rather than testing predetermined hypotheses and to develop new insights with an inductive approach (Creswell, 2017). The data were analyzed through content analysis and themes were created from the students' statements. Therefore, the qualitative research method provided an effective framework for obtaining deep information in line with the purpose and nature of the study (Büyüköztürk et al. 2015).

### Research Design

Phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. Phenomenology design is an approach to understanding the phenomena that individuals are aware of but cannot explain in detail. This model is used to examine phenomena that individuals are aware of but cannot fully grasp (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The main goal of research using a phenomenological design is to bring personal experiences of a phenomenon to a more general level (Creswell, 2007). The aim of the phenomenological approach in educational research is to learn about the teacher-student relationship in teaching and learning experiences. Phenomenological inquiry seeks to understand how individuals behave during learning and what their perspectives on learning are. In this study, the phenomenology design was preferred because it examined how the purpose of the Social Studies course to raise effective citizens was perceived and made sense of by Syrian asylum-seeker students. Since the phenomenological design offers an approach to understanding the experiences of individuals, it provides an appropriate methodological framework to reveal Syrian asylum-seeker students' citizenship perceptions of the Social Studies course in depth.

### Study Group

Convenience sampling was used to determine the study group of the research. The convenience sampling method is a method preferred in cases where time is limited and

material resources are limited (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). This method is advantageous in research as it is fast, practical and low-cost in terms of application. For this reason, convenience sampling was used in the study. The main reason for using this sampling is that the research was conducted with limited time and resources. In addition, the researcher's direct access to a specific group of students is another effective factor in the preference of this method. In this way, the data collection process was carried out in a fast and cost-efficient manner. The participant group of the researcher consisted of 40 Syrian asylum-seeker students studying in secondary schools in Rize province. Table 1 shows the age and gender status of the students participating in the study.

**Table 1:** *Class and Gender Distribution of Syrian Students Participating in the Study*

| Class Level | Female | Male | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5th grade | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| 6th grade | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| 7th grade | 6 | 7 | 13 |
| 8th grade | 6 | 7 | 13 |

When Table 1 showing the class and gender distribution of the Syrian students participating in the study is analyzed, it is seen that a total of 40 students participated in the study. Participants were categorized into four groups according to their grade levels: 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade. The highest number of participants was in the 7th and 8th grades, while the number of participants in the 5th and 6th grades was evenly distributed. When analyzed by gender, a total of 18 female and 22 male students were interviewed. This situation added richness in terms of the fact that the sample group differed in terms of age and gender characteristics and that the findings obtained included different perspectives.

## Data Collection Tools

In this study, a semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. The semi-structured interview form, which is frequently preferred in qualitative research, is a method that provides flexibility to the researcher. The semi-structured interview form allows the researcher to collect data within the framework of predetermined questions and also allows the researcher to ask new questions according to the answers given by the participants (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018).

The interview questions were determined in several stages. Initially, a literature review was conducted in line with the research questions and sub-objectives of the study. Similar studies in the literature were examined and information was obtained about the types of

questions that can be used in data collection (Dalğa, 2019; Ayaz, 2019; Şener & Başkan, 2021; Pehlivan & Günel, 2022; Ünal & Çalışkan, 2024). Accordingly, a draft question pool consisting of nine open-ended questions was created. After the preparation of the question pool, the opinions of experts in the field were consulted to ensure the content validity of the form. In this context, three faculty members specialized in social studies education and measurement and evaluation were consulted. These experts are experienced academics who have previously worked in studies conducted with qualitative research methods and contributed to the development of the interview form. After the expert opinion, two of the questions in the question pool were simplified and the number of questions was determined as seven. The questions "How does it make you feel to be a citizen of Türkiye?" and "Do you feel that you belong to Türkiye?", which are similar in terms of content, were combined and organized as "Do Syrian students feel that they belong to Turkish society? What is the role of the social studies course in the development of Syrian students' sense of belonging?". Thus, the questions have been made more clear, comprehensible and appropriate for the purpose.

A pilot study was conducted to test the applicability of the form. In the pilot study, three Syrian asylum-seeker students with similar characteristics were interviewed and the functionality of the form and the comprehensibility of the questions were evaluated. As a result of the application, it was observed that the questions were generally clear and understandable. However, it was found that the expressions in two questions were complex and not understood by the students. Accordingly, the questions were revised and further simplified. In addition, the duration was tested in the pilot study and it was seen that 20-25 minutes of interview time was sufficient. After these arrangements, the data collection process started.

Thanks to these steps, the validity and reliability of the semi-structured interview form were increased. At the same time, this approach was also considered as a method suitable for the in-depth data collection purpose of the phenomenological design.

### Data Collection Process

Before the research process started, the necessary permissions were obtained from Rize Provincial Directorate of National Education and the schools where the research would be conducted were determined. The identified schools were visited by the researcher in advance. In addition, the necessary approval was obtained from Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University Ethics Committee to ensure that the study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles. (Ethics Committee Approval No: [E-95531838-050.99-98301], Date: [29/03/2024]).

The negotiations started on 15.04.2024 and ended on 15.05.2024. Interviews were conducted one-on-one and face-to-face and each interview lasted 20-25 minutes. The adequacy of the interview time was assessed based on the depth and clarity of the participants' responses. By the end of the interviews, most of the participants were able to express their views clearly, while some participants made additional explanations at

the end of the interviews at their own request. This shows that the duration of the interview was appropriate for the purpose of the study. The interviews were conducted in areas determined by the guidance service in environments where students could feel comfortable and safe and where they would not be distracted. In addition to the interview forms, a voice recorder was also used. The interviews recorded with a voice recorder were transferred to the computer as audio files, listened to by the researcher and then transcribed. During the interview process, it was observed that some of the participants had difficulty in understanding Turkish expressions. In this case, the questions were rephrased with simpler and more explanatory sentences. Some terms were explained by giving examples appropriate to the level of the students. Thus, communication barriers were avoided and the participants willingly participated in the process.

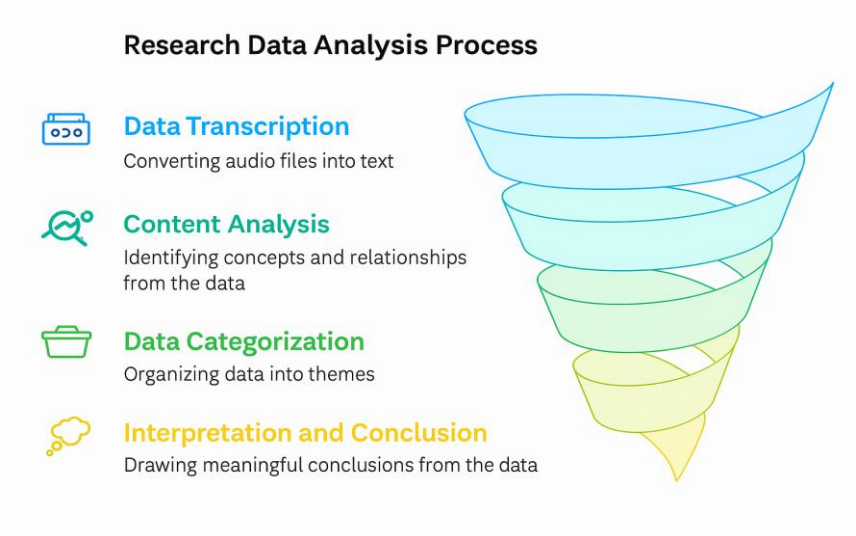
## Data analysis

The data obtained in the study were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is an inductive analysis approach that allows the data to be systematically coded and themes to be formed by establishing relationships between these codes (Baltacı, 2018; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The main purpose of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data, and the general process in this analysis is to bring together similar data within the framework of a specific concept or theme and to organize and interpret them in an easily understandable way (Yıldırım & Şimşek 2018). This analytical approach allows the data to be organized according to both themes based on the research questions and the questions and dimensions asked in the observation and interview phases. The data obtained are first analyzed, then interpreted and results are obtained by trying to reveal causal relationships (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018).

A semi-structured interview form was used in the study. The data collected through this form were transcribed from the audio recordings and then the interview texts were carefully read and meaningful units were identified. The coding process was carried out on these meaningful units and expressions with similar content were combined under the same code. Sub-themes were formed by establishing meaningful relationships between codes. The themes were developed in accordance with the purpose and questions of the research and were based on the interview questions. The recurring patterns of meaning in the participants' statements and the guidance of the research questions enabled the creation of themes.

The researcher took care to maintain the integrity of the meaning of the data during coding and theme development and used direct quotations from the interview texts to increase the validity of the findings. Quotes were coded as F1, F2, M1, M2... and the principle of confidentiality was observed. In order to minimize subjective interpretations during coding, the data were read multiple times and the codes were reviewed and restructured. These steps carried out in the data analysis are presented as a diagram in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** *Data Analysis Process*




## Findings

In the study, it was tried to reveal how the aim of the social studies course to raise effective citizens shaped the citizenship perception of Syrian asylum seekers. The research was conducted with 40 Syrian asylum seeker students. Of the participants, 22 were female students and 18 were male students. The codes "F" for female students and "M" for male students were used.

### Findings on Syrian Students' Views Towards the Social Studies Course

What are the opinions and thoughts of the participants about the social studies course? Their opinions on the question were taken and sub-themes were formed accordingly. The opinions of the students are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** *Syrian Students' Views on Social Studies Course*

| Sub Theme | Code | f |
|---|---|---|
| Appreciation of the Course | Useful/ Fun | 29 |
| Challenging Course | Difficult / boring | 5 |
| History Knowledge | History/Ottoman/Wars | 24 |
| Geography Knowledge | Geography/Map Reading | 10 |
| Knowledge of Rights and Responsibilities | Rights/Citizenship | 6 |
| Social Values | Cooperation/Solidarity/Communication | 5 |
| Patriotism | Love for homeland/flag/country | 3 |

Within the scope of the research, Syrian asylum seeker students' perceptions of the social studies course, their knowledge gains and their views on value education were evaluated.

The participants' emotional and cognitive attitudes towards the social studies course were discussed. The majority of the participants stated that they found the social studies course "useful and fun". This shows that the course was found interesting and meaningful for the participants. Some of the participants, on the other hand, stated that the course was "difficult and boring".

The knowledge gained by the participants through the social studies course was grouped under the sub-themes of "Knowledge of History, Knowledge of Geography, Knowledge of Rights and Responsibilities". The type of knowledge with the highest frequency is history knowledge. Participants frequently mentioned concepts such as war and Ottoman history. This shows that history subjects are memorable. This is followed by knowledge of geography and knowledge of rights and responsibilities. The participants' acquisition of map reading skills and the emphasis on citizenship rights show that the course is cognitively functional.

The values gained by the participants in the social studies course were analyzed. Participants stated that they learned social values such as benevolence, solidarity and communication through the social studies course. In addition, under the patriotism code, feelings such as love for homeland, flag and country were expressed. In this direction, some of the participants expressed their views as follows:

*(F3) "...it is interesting, I like social studies, I learned about our rights thanks to this lesson, it is a useful lesson."*

*(F6) "...We learned about Atatürk, the wars and the Ottoman Empire here. It is a very nice and useful lesson."*

*(M15) "...We learned about history, geography, human rights. This course has contributed a lot to me."*

*(M16)* "*...I like it a lot, it's a fun lesson. It is important to learn history. I learned a lot. Especially with the help of my teacher, it is more fun.*"

### Syrian Students' Perceptions of Inclusion in Turkish Society and the Benefits of Social Studies Courses

What is the role of social studies courses in the development of Syrian students' sense of belonging? Opinions on the question were taken and the findings were formed accordingly. The opinions of the students are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** *Syrian Students' Perceptions of Inclusion in Turkish Society and the Benefits of the Social Studies Course*

| Sub Theme | Code | f |
|---|---|---|
| A Sense of Belonging to the Turkish People | Yes, I see | 24 |
| Not Feeling Belonging | No, I do not see | 13 |
| Positive Contribution | Course Contributed | 20 |
| Value Transfer | Helping / Loving the Country / Patriotism | 5 |
| History and Culture Transfer | Atatürk/ Flag/Turkish History | 5 |
| Knowledge of Rights and Responsibilities | I Learned My Rights/Rights and Responsibilities | 4 |

Within the scope of the research, Syrian refugee students' perceptions of belonging to the Turkish people and the contribution of the social studies course to this perception were evaluated.

Asylum-seeking students' feelings of belonging to the Turkish society were analyzed. Most of the participants stated that they had a "sense of belonging to the Turkish people". These students stated that they developed a sense of belonging due to social and cultural interactions and language skills. On the other hand, some students expressed the view of "Not Feeling Belonging" and stated that they do not see themselves as a part of the Turkish people. They stated that the reason for this situation was not being accepted and being excluded by their peers.

During the analysis process the sub-themes of "Positive Contribution, Value Transfer, History and Culture Transfer, Knowledge of Rights and Responsibilities" were created. Positive contribution is the sub-theme with the highest frequency. Participants stated that the social studies course contributed positively to their sense of belonging. This is followed by value transfer, history and culture transfer, and knowledge of rights and responsibilities. This situation enabled the participants to develop attachment to the Turkish society. In this direction, some of the participants expressed their views as follows:

*(M17) "…Social studies taught me my rights. The social studies course was very useful in this regard."*

*(F23) "…I didn't know what patriotism was, but now I love this country because it took care of me."*

*(M36) "…I feel closer to Türkiye. Social studies helped me in this regard, of course it taught me many rights and responsibilities."*

*(E34) "…I didn't know anything when I first came here. Thanks to the social studies class, I learned that my right to education cannot be denied. I learned about traditions and customs. I consider myself a Turkish citizen because I know the traditions of Turks."*

*(K20) "… No, I don't. My friends ostracize me."*

## The Role of Ethnic Identity in Peer Bullying and the Contribution of Social Studies Courses

What role does the social studies course play in preventing peer bullying of Syrian asylum-seeker students? Opinions on the question were taken and sub-themes were formed accordingly. The opinions of the students are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** *The Role of Ethnic Identity in Peer Bullying and the Contribution of Social Studies Courses*

| Sub Theme | Code | f |
|---|---|---|
| No Bullying | I did not experience bullying | 24 |
| Experiencing Bullying | Sometimes it happens | 4 |
| Eliminated Bullying | Solidarity/No racism | 26 |
| Didn't Stop Bullying | No Course Contribution | 3 |

In the study, it was evaluated whether Syrian asylum-seeker students were subjected to peer bullying due to their different ethnic identities and the role of the social studies course in this issue.

Most of the participants in the study stated that having a different ethnic identity did not cause peer bullying. This shows that students have established positive relationships with their peers. In the study, some participants stated that they were subjected to peer bullying. This shows that ethnic identity differences can cause exclusion in some environments.

The majority of the students stated that the social studies course played an important role in eliminating negativities such as peer bullying. This was attributed to the values of equality, cooperation, communication and anti-racism in the content of the social studies course. On the other hand, some participants stated that the social studies course was not effective in eliminating peer bullying. This situation shows that the values learned in the social studies course are not realized in the social environment. In this direction, some of the participants expressed their views as follows:

*(M37) "… No, no bullying. Social studies helped me. I learned from social studies that you should not look at gender differences, that you should get along well regardless of color differences."*

*(M36) "…I've never been excluded. I think social studies has helped me. I am never excluded. I learned about our rights in social studies."*

*(F2) "…It didn't. But I think it was fixed thanks to the social studies class. Because it taught us not to discriminate."*

*(M34) "…Yes, it happened a lot. Not much at school. When we were playing games, they said you cannot play because you are a Syrian. Social did not contribute anything. They don't do anything because they are afraid of the school administration."*

### The Effects of Being an Asylum-Seeker on Peer Relations and the Role of Social Studies Lesson in Preventing Marginalization

What are the situations in which asylum-seeker students are marginalized by their peers and how does the social studies course affect this marginalization? Their opinions on the question were taken and the findings were formed accordingly. The opinions of the students are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** *The Effect of Being an Asylum Seeker on Peer Relations and the Preventive Role of Social Studies Lesson on Marginalization*

| Sub Theme | Code | f |
|---|---|---|
| No marginalization | Not experiencing discrimination | 25 |
| Experiencing Otherization | Exclusion/ being left out of the game | 9 |
| Eliminated Bullying | Unity/communication/Tolerance/Brotherhood | 21 |
| Ineffective | No positive impact | 5 |

In the study, whether Syrian asylum-seeker students were marginalized or not due to their identities and the role of the social studies course in eliminating the negative situations experienced were evaluated. The findings were grouped under the sub-themes as seen in the table.

A significant number of the participants stated that they did not experience marginalization in educational institutions and that they had positive communication with their friends. This shows that asylum-seeking students are accepted by their peers. Some participants stated that they were marginalized by their peers. These participants stated that they were not included in the game, faced discrimination and were also exposed to negative discourse. This situation shows that social integration does not occur equally for every individual.

The role of the social studies courses in reducing the marginalization experiences of Syrian asylum-seeker students was evaluated. A significant number of participants stated that the course made positive contributions in this regard. "Participants explained this contribution through the development of communication skills, brotherhood, unity and anti-racism values of the social studies course. This finding shows that the course contains content aimed at ensuring social cohesion. Some participants stated that the course did not contribute to eliminating marginalization. These participants emphasized that although these issues were covered in the course, they encountered negative

attitudes of their peers. This is an indication that the course content alone is not sufficient. In this direction, some of the participants expressed their views as follows:

*(F33) "Mostly my friends are nice to me. The social lesson talks about the rules we should follow in society."*

*(F15) "…Yes, it happens. Because friends don't like us, they make fun of us, they scold us. Social studies is a good lesson. He talks about non-racism, unity, brotherhood. Then they understand."*

*(M39) "…Sometimes they exclude us, they don't let us in the game. They say go to your country. The social teacher explains a lot and warns, but the students don't obey."*

*(F13) "…My classmates don't exclude me. They take me with them everywhere they go."*

### Syrian Students' Perception of Legal Rights and the Contribution of the Role of Social Studies Courses

What role does the social studies course play in raising awareness about Syrian asylum-seeker students' rights? Their opinions on the question were taken and the findings were formed accordingly. The opinions of the students are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6:** *Syrian Students' Perception of Access to Legal Rights and the Contribution of Social Studies Courses*

| Sun Theme | Code | f |
|---|---|---|
| I Benefit from Rights | Education, health, housing | 19 |
| I Do Not Benefit from Rights | No equal service | 13 |
| Undecided Attitude | No rights information | 8 |
| Rights Awareness | The lesson taught me my rights | 17 |
| Value Disclosure | Equality, justice, citizenship | 11 |
| Ineffective | Awareness not raised | 12 |

In the study, Syrian asylum-seeker students' utilization of their legal rights in Türkiye and the role of the social studies course in providing them with these rights were examined.

Most of the participants stated that they benefit from basic rights such as education, health and housing in Türkiye and that they do not face any problems in accessing these rights. This shows that state policies towards asylum-seeking children are recognized by the students. Some participants stated that they did not benefit from rights and faced discrimination and exclusion. This shows that not all students access services at the same level and that some students have different experiences. Some participants stated that they lacked knowledge about rights and did not know which rights applied to them. This shows that lack of information can limit the enjoyment of their rights.

The majority of the participants stated that the social studies course was informative about rights and that they learned basic rights, grasped citizenship issues and realized the opportunities offered to them thanks to this course. Some participants emphasized that the social studies course provides not only knowledge but also values such as justice, equality and citizenship. This shows that the course develops not only academic skills but also a sense of responsibility in students. Some participants stated that the social studies course did not contribute. In this direction, some of the participants expressed their views as follows:

*(F19) "…Yes, I have equal rights. In social studies, I learned that all children in the world have equal rights."*

*(F1) "…Yes, we are equal. Social studies class helps us. Because we also have the right to education. I learned about this in social studies class."*

*(M38) "...Yes, we are equal. There is no difference. I learned about our rights and responsibilities in the social studies course and it was very useful."*

*(F15) "…I think we are not. After all, the children of Turks are their descendants."*

## Findings on Students' Concepts of Immigration and Citizenship

How are Syrian students' perceptions of the concepts of 'immigration' and 'citizenship'? Their opinions on the question were taken and the findings were formed accordingly. The opinions of the students are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7:** *Findings on Students' Concepts of Immigration and Citizenship*

| Sub Theme | Code | f |
|---|---|---|
| Forced Migration | Fleeing war/leaving your country | 23 |
| Relocation | Migration | 7 |
| Lack of Information | No Opinion | 10 |
| Belonging | Belonging to a country | 10 |
| Awareness of Responsibility | Following the Rules | 11 |
| Awareness of Rights and Participation | Knowing citizenship rights | 5 |
| Lack of Information | No opinion | 14 |

In the study, the perceptions of Syrian asylum-seekers on the concepts of "citizenship" and "immigration" were evaluated.

Most of the participants defined immigration as leaving their country due to war and hardship. This definition shows that the participants attribute meaning to the concept of immigration based on their own experiences. Some of the participants defined it as displacement. Some participants did not express any opinion about this concept. This

situation suggests that some participants may have deficiencies in terms of concept knowledge.

Participants' views on the perception of the citizenship concept were grouped.While some participants defined the concept of citizenship as belonging to a place, others explained it with a sense of responsibility, while others did not express any opinion about the concept of citizenship.

This situation shows that the participants express the concept of immigration more clearly due to their own life experiences, while they have a more abstract or incomplete perception of the concept of citizenship. In this direction, some of the participants expressed their views as follows:

*(F15) "…Migrant: us. Because we left our country because of the war. In social studies we learned the meaning of migrant."*

*(M40) "…Migrant: someone who has moved to another place because of the war. We came from Syria because of the war."*

*(M11) "…. We left our country because of the war and we came because of Assad".*

*(F1) "…is to belong to a country. It is to contribute to one's country."*

*(M37) "…man is a citizen of his own country. He must fulfill his duties towards his homeland."*

### Findings on the Perception of the Difference between the Forms of Government in Türkiye and Syria and the Contribution of the Social Studies Course

How do Syrian students perceive the differences between the forms of government in Türkiye and Syria and how does the social studies course contribute to the comprehension of these differences? Their opinions on the question were taken and the findings were formed accordingly. The opinions of the students are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8:** *Perception of the Difference between the Forms of Government in Türkiye and Syria and the Contribution of the Social Studies Course*

| Sub Theme | Code | f |
|---|---|---|
| Türkiye is a democracy | There are many parties / there is freedom | 18 |
| Pressure in Syria | There is only one leader | 15 |
| War and Violence | War in Syria | 10 |
| No Idea | Management I don't know | 12 |
| Earning with Social Studies | Forms of Governance | 20 |

The study examined how the participants perceived the differences between the forms of government in Türkiye and Syria and the role of the social studies course in distinguishing these differences.

A significant portion of the participants stated that Türkiye has a democratic form of government. They mentioned the existence of elections, multi-party structure and freedoms in Türkiye. In Syria, on the other hand, factors such as an oppressive administration, no change of leader and an environment of violence were mentioned. Some participants associated war and violence with governance and mentioned the impact of this difference on living conditions.

Some of the participants stated that they learned about the difference in the forms of government between Türkiye and Syria thanks to the social studies course. They stated that they were better able to evaluate the differences in governance between countries with the inclusion of concepts such as "monarchy, republic, election and political party" in the content of the course curriculum. This finding supports the function of the social studies course in gaining political literacy. It also shows that this course contributes to the participants' conscious perception of the administrative structure of the country they live in. A considerable number of participants emphasized that they did not have an opinion on this issue, citing the fact that they had not been in Syria for a long time and had come to Türkiye at a young age. In this direction, some of the participants expressed their views as follows:

*(M34) "...Syria has elections, but it's ridiculous. There is only one candidate. There are free elections in Türkiye. I learned about it thanks to the social studies lesson."*

*(F35) "...There is no democracy there, we have it here. There are many parties in Türkiye, we can choose the one we want. We learned this in social studies."*

*(M3) "...There is always Assad there. He never changed. But it is not like that here. We saw monarchy and republic in social studies class."*

*(M37) "... I learned about monarchy in social studies. That's how Syria is ruled. Before Assad, there was his father and now there is him."*

## Results and Discussion

This section presents the conclusions reached in line with the findings obtained as a result of the research.

The findings of the study reveal that Syrian asylum-seeker students' perceptions of the social studies course are generally positive. This positive attitude is characterized by the evaluation of the lesson as useful and enjoyable. Participants found the knowledge they acquired in history and geography subjects covered in the social studies course to be permanent. At the same time, it was determined that the social studies course has a functional role in providing citizenship and value education.

When the literature was examined, many similar studies were found. These findings have overlapping and divergent aspects with some studies. It is also in parallel with the study conducted by Şener and Başkan (2021). In the study, asylum-seeking students stated that the social studies course was useful, fun and instructive. However, in the aforementioned study, no details were given about the reasons why the participants found the course enjoyable, whereas in this study, the participants expressed their interest in the course on the basis of history topics and teaching rights. In the study conducted by Erten Özalp (2020), it was emphasized that asylum-seeking students who started primary education in Türkiye exhibited positive attitudes towards the social studies course. In the study conducted by Akman and Ekinci (2021), it was emphasized that Syrian asylum-seeker students generally found the social studies course interesting and useful. However, the concepts of value education and civic knowledge were not emphasized sufficiently in the study. In the study, some participants evaluated this course as challenging and not easy to understand. As a matter of fact, Erten Özalp (2020) and Polat (2012) concluded in their studies that asylum-seeking students are not interested in Turkish history and geography. The reason for this lack of interest is that the subjects in the social studies curriculum are different from the education system in their own countries. Çelik (2019) stated in his study that Syrian students had some difficulties in understanding social studies course content. He stated that this situation made the functioning of the social studies course difficult.

Participants stated that they gained knowledge of history, geography, rights and responsibilities in the social studies course. It was found that history topics in particular left a mark on the participants. This is supported by Akhan's (2021) study with Syrian students. In the study, it was concluded that history subjects were found interesting by the students. What needs to be questioned here is to what extent the interest in history affects citizenship consciousness. In the study, map reading skills were emphasized in geography subjects. This shows that the social studies course is functional in terms of spatial awareness. In their study, Seçkin and Erten Özalp (2020) stated that teachers face difficulties in teaching these concepts due to language and cultural differences. In this context, the fact that Syrian asylum-seekers expressed these skills clearly in the study shows that the teaching was implemented effectively.

The emphasis on rights and responsibilities shows that the course not only provides information but also develops a sense of responsibility. In the study conducted by Ünal and Çalışkan (2024), Syrian students' presentation of the concept of citizenship with values such as love, homeland and Türkiye is meaningful in terms of social belonging. Uysal (2022) emphasized that the social studies course is effective in imparting the value of citizenship to immigrant students. Merey et al. (2012) stated that citizenship education in Türkiye tries to convey individual and social values through social studies courses. However, this transfer should be evaluated within the framework of students' understanding of culturally sensitive education. In their study on culturally responsive education, Yılmaz and Günel (2022) emphasized that the social studies course is a tool for empathy and value-based bonding with immigrant students. Akman and Ekinci (2021) emphasized that they see the social studies course as an important resource for learning individual rights.

The findings of the study show that the social studies course has an important role in the development of asylum-seeking students' sense of belonging. A significant portion of the participants stated that they felt like a part of the Turkish people, while some participants stated that they did not develop a sense of belonging due to exclusion and marginalization. Berry (1997) found that individuals who develop a sense of belonging do not have difficulties in integrating into society, whereas individuals who feel excluded from society experience adjustment problems.

Çelik (2019) stated that racist attitudes and peer bullying make it difficult for immigrant students to feel a sense of belonging to the society. In the studies of Gülüm and Akçalı (2017) and Zayimoğlu Öztürk (2018), it was stated that immigrant students experienced adaptation problems due to social exclusion. In the study of Zayimoğlu Öztürk (2021), he stated that the social studies course did not have any effect on the adaptation of asylum seekers to Türkiye. In this study, the effect of the courses they take at school on the adaptation of asylum seekers to social life in Türkiye was examined and it was stated that the social studies course is not among the courses that provide integration. In another study by Zayimoğlu Öztürk (2018), social studies course content was found to be insufficient for the integration of asylum-seeking students into our country.

According to the findings of the study, the social studies course plays an important role in the acquisition of citizenship perception, rights awareness and social values by immigrant students. However, a negative classroom environment or teachers' inadequacies in multicultural education may prevent this effect from being realized at the desired level.

Taneri and Tangülü (2017) emphasized that the social studies course contributed to the acquisition of the value of tolerance and created a positive climate in the classroom environment. She also pointed out that it teaches students about individual differences and cultural diversity. Another noteworthy result of the study is the contribution of the social studies course to the development of communication skills. Likewise, Karasu et al. (2017) support the effect of social studies courses on social interaction by emphasizing

responsibility and communication skills as well as citizenship rights. In the study, it was concluded that the social studies course did not fully prevent peer bullying. At this point, Alparslan (2019), Temur and Özalp (2022) emphasized that students experience exclusion in the game environment and in classroom interaction. Therefore, when the achievements in the social studies course are not reinforced by individual experiences, the desired effect cannot be achieved.

The study shows that the social studies course has a limited effect on the bullying of Syrian asylum-seeker students by their peers, while it reveals values such as tolerance, respect, empathy and communication. Some participants stated that the social studies course created a positive classroom environment and improved their communication skills. This finding supports the finding of Semercioğlu et al. (2023) that asylum-seeking students and teachers established good communication and created a positive classroom environment. Similarly, Börü and Boyacı's (2016) observations that improving language-based interaction with migrant students improves the classroom environment support the communication-based contribution in our study.

In the research, it cannot be said that classroom interaction offered a positive experience for all participants. Kiremit et al. (2018) found that some students considered being in the same class with migrant students as an advantage while others considered it a disadvantage. This situation shows that the value transfer of the social studies course does not have the same effect on every student. The fact that the participants emphasized values such as fraternity and equality taught in the social studies course shows that this course is effective in creating a positive classroom environment. Karataştan and Akcan (2023) reveal that teachers' teaching students the value of empathy contributes to the formation of a positive climate in the classroom environment. Indeed, Ladson and Billings (1992) concluded that a classroom environment where differences are respected strengthens communication. This supports the potential of the social studies course at the theoretical level. Some of the participants stated that the social studies course was insufficient against peer bullying and marginalization. This situation reveals that the course needs to be reconsidered in terms of content and practice. Öztürk (2018) emphasized that the marginalization of migrant students is related to social factors beyond the curriculum. Şahin and Doğan (2018) show in their study that immigrant students' encounters with discriminatory attitudes negatively affect their school adaptation processes. These findings show that the social studies course alone is not sufficient in eliminating inequalities and should be supported by social dynamics.

When the findings are analyzed, it is seen that Syrian asylum-seeker students develop awareness of concepts such as citizenship rights, equality and responsibility through social studies courses. Most of the participants stated that they learned that they have equal rights with other individuals in Türkiye through the social studies course. This situation reveals that the social studies course contributes to the development of not only cognitive but also citizenship awareness. Çelik (2019) emphasized the contributions of social studies teachers in teaching concepts such as rights, responsibility and equality to immigrant students. In their studies, Avery (2004) and Çengelci (2013) stated that one

of the main objectives of the social studies course is to raise active, participatory and democratic individuals in society. This perspective coincides with the findings obtained in the study.

In the research, some participants stated that the value education given in the classroom was not always reciprocated in social life and that they were not treated equally in their social lives. This situation suggests that the social studies course is insufficient in preventing social inequality even though it shows awareness at the individual level. Gül and Şaşman Kaylı (2020) drew attention to a similar contradiction in their study with Syrian university students. The fact that students are exposed to social exclusion despite having adequate knowledge about their rights shows that the achievements obtained in schools may remain limited unless they are applied in social life. Baloğlu Uğurlu and Akdovan (2019) emphasized in their study that the social studies course has an important function in Syrian students' getting to know Türkiye and their adaptation to the society, but this effect may remain limited unless there is comprehensive social support. This approach is in line with the different trends in the research findings. The social studies course is an important tool in teaching the concepts of equality and rights. However, in order for these achievements to be reflected in daily life, social support is also needed outside the school. Otherwise, no matter how rich the social studies course content is, students will be exposed to marginalization and discrimination.

In the study, it was determined that some Syrian students defined the concept of migrant as war and forced displacement. Participants embody this concept through their own life experiences. Therefore, it was found that they were able to make sense of the concept of immigration more easily. This finding coincides with Açıkel's (2019) study, which states that forced migration causes physical and emotional losses. The fact that the participants emphasized that they had to leave their countries due to Assad and war shows that the meaning they attribute to immigration is based on experiences. Baloğlu Uğurlu (2022) mentioned in her study that an asylum-seeking student's sense of belonging develops over time in the host society and that this process is not complete at the beginning. This situation reveals that the concept of migration is shaped by lived experiences rather than the level of knowledge.

In the study, it was determined that the answers given by the participants to the concept of citizenship were more disorganized and abstract. While some of the participants considered citizenship as belonging to a place and fulfilling one's responsibilities, some participants did not express an opinion on this concept. This shows that the participants associate citizenship with belonging and responsibilities. However, the presence of participants who could not define the concept suggests that there are some deficiencies in citizenship education.

Çelik (2019) emphasized that the level of knowledge about citizenship value in immigrant students is limited and therefore the course should be restructured with a more inclusive approach. Memişoğlu (2014) pointed out that the citizenship values that social studies teachers aim to make students acquire most are respect, tolerance,

responsibility and solidarity, but stated that students experience difficulties in practice. This situation reveals that the social studies course should be supported not only with theoretical content but also with practices that touch students' experiences.

The research shows that students' experiences and what they learn in the course shape their perceptions of management systems. This is an indication that the social studies course has an important function in this regard. However, in order for this function to be sustainable, the course should not be based solely on the transfer of conceptual knowledge, but should encourage critical thinking and democratic participation skills.

In the comparison of the form of government between Türkiye and Syria, some of the participants considered the elections in Türkiye as multi-party democratic, while they considered the elections in their own country as ridiculous. This was justified by the fact that there was only one candidate in the elections. It was stated that this comparative perspective was related to the concepts that refugee students learned in the social studies course. The concepts of "elections", 'democracy' and "citizenship" in the social studies course made it easier for students to question and compare political systems. Memişoğlu (2014) stated that social studies teachers try to develop students' critical thinking, comparison, evaluation and social participation skills through citizenship education. However, the fact that some participants in the study stated that they did not see the difference in the administrative system between Türkiye and Syria shows that the social studies course does not have the same level of impact on every participant and that there are conceptual deficiencies. This situation reveals that citizenship education should not only be knowledge-based, but should be presented in a critical and practical way.

In their curriculum review, Şiraz and Bay (2020) stated that changes were made in the goals of citizenship education in the social studies curriculum between 1998 and 2018. After this change, democracy and active citizenship have been given more importance. Although this shows that the curriculum is designed to support democratic consciousness, it is insufficient in terms of concretizing in-class activities.

## Recommendations

In line with the results and findings of the research, the following recommendations were made.

- Social studies teachers need to increase in-service training seminars in order to understand the problems migrant students experience with their peers, to create a classroom environment that prevents marginalization, and to communicate effectively with them.
- Social studies course content should be inclusive of migrant students, and projects and storytelling techniques should be supported to enable migrant students to share their cultural backgrounds in the classroom.

- The social studies course is an important tool in preventing peer bullying. However, in order for it to be more effective, it is necessary to cooperate with other branches and guidance activities.
- In the social studies course, the themes of migration and social cohesion should be taught both to provide information and to create emotional awareness. For this purpose, students should be given the opportunity to share the events they have experienced while migrating with their peers in appropriate environments.
- MoNE's curriculum development efforts can be organized without ignoring the needs of migrant students.
- In the social studies course, teachers should develop monitoring and evaluation tools that can be used by migrant students to measure their civic consciousness achievements.

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## Extended Turkish Abstract

Bu araştırma, Türkiye'de geçici koruma statüsünde bulunan Suriyeli sığınmacı öğrencilerin vatandaşlık algılarının şekillenmesinde sosyal bilgiler dersinin rolünü analiz ederek çok kültürlü eğitim bağlamında önemli bir boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Sosyal bilgiler dersi, vatandaşlık eğitiminin temel taşı olarak kabul edilmekte ve bireylere toplumsal yaşama aktif katılım, hak ve sorumluluk bilinci, demokratik değerler ile sosyal adalet gibi kavramları kazandırmayı hedeflemektedir. Araştırma kapsamında sosyal bilgiler dersinin, özellikle dezavantajlı gruplarda yer alan Suriyeli öğrenciler üzerinde nasıl bir etki yarattığı incelenmiştir. Ayrıca bu çalışma, toplumsal ayrışmaları önlemek, empati ve hoşgörü kültürünü yaygınlaştırmak ve öğrencilerde barışçıl bir toplumsal yapı inşa etmek için sosyal bilgiler eğitiminin dönüştürücü gücüne dikkat çekmektedir.

Araştırma nitel araştırma yöntemi ile yürütülmüş olup nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenoloji deseni kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada Sosyal Bilgiler dersinin etkili vatandaş yetiştirme amacının Suriyeli sığınmacı öğrenciler tarafından nasıl algılandığını ve anlamlandırıldığını incelendiğinden fenomenoloji deseni tercih edilmiştir. Fenomonoloji deseni, farkında olduğumuz ama detaylı bir anlayışa sahip olmadığımız olgular üzerinde odaklanmaktadır. Fenomenoloji deseni bireylerin deneyimlerini anlamaya yönelik bir yaklaşım sunduğundan, Suriyeli sığınmacı öğrencilerin Sosyal Bilgiler dersine ilişkin vatandaşlık algılarını derinlemesine ortaya koyması açısından uygun bir yöntemsel çerçeve sunmaktadır. Katılımcılardan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile veriler doğal ortamda ve açık uçlu sorular aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Bu veriler içerik analizi ile çözümlenmiştir. Araştırmaya bağlı olarak çalışma grubunu 40 Suriyeli sığınmacı öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunun belirlenmesinde kolay ulaşılabilir durum örneklemesi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada bu örneklemin kullanılmasının temel gerekçesi, araştırmanın sınırlı süre ve kaynaklarla yürütülmesidir. Ayrıca araştırmacının belirli bir öğrenci grubuna doğrudan ulaşabilmesi de bu yöntemin tercih edilmesinde etkili olan bir diğer faktördür. Araştırmada elde edilen bulgular, Suriyeli öğrencilerin sosyal bilgiler dersini, topluma uyum sağlama, haklarını tanıma ve etkili vatandaş olma bağlamında önemli bir araç olarak gördüklerini ortaya koymuştur. Bu bağlamda, öğretmen eğitimi, müfredat geliştirme, okul ortamlarının düzenlenmesi ve çok kültürlü eğitimin yaygınlaştırılması gibi çeşitli eğitim politikalarının yeniden gözden geçirilmesi konusunda karar vericilere yol gösterici olabilir. Ayrıca bu çalışma, toplumsal ayrışmaları önlemek, empati ve hoşgörü kültürünü yaygınlaştırmak ve öğrencilerde barışçıl bir toplumsal yapı inşa etmek için sosyal bilgiler eğitiminin dönüştürücü gücüne dikkat çekmektedir. Öğrencilerin ders aracılığıyla toplumun işleyişi, devletin yapısı, bireysel haklar ve sorumluluklar konusunda farkındalık kazandıkları, kendilerini daha fazla toplumun bir parçası olarak hissettikleri ve gelecekte vatandaşlık edinme süreçlerine dair umut geliştirdikleri tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları, sosyal bilgiler dersinin sadece Türk vatandaşı öğrenciler için değil, aynı zamanda sığınmacı ve göçmen öğrenciler için de kapsayıcı ve dönüştürücü bir işlev üstlendiğini göstermektedir. Bu kapsamda öğrencilerin hem akademik hem de duygusal gelişimlerini desteklemek amacıyla sosyal bilgiler dersinde göç ve toplumsal uyum konularının bilinçli ve kapsayıcı bir yaklaşımla

ele alınması önem taşımaktadır. Araştırma sonuçları ve bulguları doğrultusunda sosyal bilgiler dersinde göç ve toplumsal uyum temaları hem bilgi vermek amacıyla hem de duygusal farkındalığı oluşturacak şekilde işlenmelidir. Bunun için öğrencilere göç ederken yaşadıkları olayları uygun ortamlarda diğer akranlarıyla paylaşılmasına fırsat verilmelidir. Bu doğrultuda sosyal bilgiler eğitiminin, toplumsal bütünleşmeyi destekleyici bir araç olarak değerlendirilmesi gerektiği vurgulanmaktadır. Suriyeli sığınmacılar gibi büyük kitleleri etkileyen sosyal konuların eğitim ortamlarında ele alınma biçimi ise, bir toplumun birlikte yaşama kapasitesini doğrudan etkilemektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma aracılığıyla elde edilen bulgular, yalnızca akademik literatüre değil, aynı zamanda sosyal politikalar ve eğitim uygulamaları alanına da önemli katkılar sunmaktadır.

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