

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Role of Empathic Tendency, Belief in Teaching Competency and Job Satisfaction in Predicting Attitudes towards the Teaching Profession in Primary and Secondary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Background/purpose – Attitude towards the teaching profession functions as an important factor in the successful continuation of the education and training process. In this context, the first aim of the study is to examine teachers' attitudes towards teaching according to gender, education level, experience, and location of the school. Second, it is to reveal whether or not empathic tendency, teaching competence belief, and job satisfaction predict attitudes towards the teaching profession.

Materials/methods – In this research, correlational research model, which is one of the quantitative research methods, was used. For these purposes, data were collected from 316 teachers with an average age of 40.34 ($SD = 3.15$) years old, of which 189 are female (59.8%) and 127 (40.2%) male. The Attitude Scale towards Teaching Profession, Empathic Tendency Scale, Ohio Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Job Satisfaction Scale were used as the study's data collection tools.

Results – According to the first findings obtained from the research, while teachers' attitudes towards teaching did not differ according to gender, education level (primary/secondary school), or school location (urban or rural); they were found to differ according to their length of experience. Accordingly, the attitudes of teachers with a seniority of more than 20 years were shown to be more positive than those with less experience. Second, empathic tendency, belief in teaching self-efficacy, and also job satisfaction were found to positively and significantly predict attitude towards the teaching profession.

Conclusion – Within the framework of these findings, it can be said that gender, education level and school location are not determining variables in teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession. On the other hand, it has been seen that work experience is important in the attitude towards the profession. Finally, it can be said that self-efficacy belief towards the teaching profession and job satisfaction are important variables in the attitude towards teaching. The obtained findings are then discussed, interpreted, and recommendations put forwards in light of the current literature.

Keywords – Attitude, self-efficacy, empathy, job satisfaction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary educational and instructional processes involve three areas; education-instruction, educational management, and student personality. Teachers are the primary actors central to performing all the vital tasks throughout this process. Whilst conducting academic activities in the classroom, teachers also aim to direct the emotional, social, and behavioral aspects of their students, which in reality means that teachers are required to serve as role models to their students. Studies in this area have shown that positive or negative personality or the professional traits of teachers may have a critical impact on their students' academic success (Çapa & Çil, 2000; Küçükahmet, 1976; Louis, 1998; Ustuner, 2006; Varış, 1988). Research has explored that one of the most important professional attributes that teachers should possess is a positive attitude toward their jobs (Akpınar et al., 2006; Celikoz & Cetin, 2004; Yanpar-Yelken et al., 2007). In support of this, Karadağ (2012) stated that, in order to be successful in managing their important responsibilities in the academic process, teachers need to develop a positive professional attitude, and accordingly they should acquire and employ affective competencies so as to discharge their assigned responsibilities and thereby enhance the quality of the educational system in which they work. One can argue, therefore, that having a positive attitude towards the job is an important professional attribute for all teachers to have.

As a prominent concept in several fields with regards to individuals' lives, attitude was defined by Kagitcibasi (1999) as a "tendency that is attributed to an individual and regularly forms their thoughts, emotions and behaviors about a psychological object" (p. 102) and by İnceoglu (1993) as a "cognitive, affective and behavioral reaction by an individual based on themselves or their experiences of any social relation, matter or incident around them" (p. 119). Wood (2000) and Morris (2002) both stated that attitude consists of three primary aspects; cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The cognitive aspect involves perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions regarding individual phenomena and incidents, whereas the affective aspect refers to emotional experiences and reactions to several facts and incidents, and the behavioral aspect refers to an individual's intentions and insights as to how they act in the face of a certain phenomenon or incident, and is based upon their own personal assumptions and beliefs (Andronache et al., 2014). Accordingly, it is possible to suggest that the job that an individual does can therefore be an important object of attitude amongst the incidents and phenomena emphasized.

As one of the most important developmental tasks, deciding on a profession (Havighurst, 1972), maintaining that profession, and one's attitude toward that profession continue to be important subject matters. According to Capri and Celikkaleli (2008), when it comes to teaching, teachers' attitudes are considered even more important. Celep (2000) suggested that attitudes are significantly important with regards to individuals in educational organizations acquiring desirable behaviors. Oktay (1991) argued that students are influenced by the overall attitudes and behaviors of their teachers, as they supposedly present an ideal adult model in addition to what they teach in the classroom. Similarly, Sunbul (2003) stated that the impact of teachers on their students resides in "teachers being models for their students" (p. 261). For these reasons, one of the conditions that teachers need to meet as a requirement of being effective is a positive attitude toward the profession (Ustuner, 2006). Furthermore, teachers' attitudes toward their profession also impacts on their teaching performance, teaching quality, and the extent to which they discharge their professional responsibilities (Tarkin & Uzuntiryaki, 2012). Similarly, as argued by Kucukahmet (2003), the attitudes of teachers toward the teaching profession are one of the singularly

most important personal attributes that can affect students, as attitudes towards the profession, students, and school activities can substantially impact upon students' learning and personality. In this context, attitudes toward the teaching profession can be defined as, what individuals think and feel about the teaching profession and their performance when they are engaged in the profession (Camadan & Duysak, 2010).

Studies have shown that teachers' attitude toward the teaching profession correlates with students' academic achievement (Smith, 1993), students' learning processes, the ability to establish a creative classroom environment, their job performance as educators (Gun, 2012), being successful in their execution of professional tasks (Andronache, 2013; Sahin, 2010), and their job satisfaction (Kimengi, 1983). Based on these findings, teachers with a positive attitude towards teaching can contribute to their students' academic achievement, developing a more positive learning attitude, and their psychosocial development.

It is thought that one factor which can affect teachers' attitude towards the teaching profession may be empathic tendency. As a profession, teaching requires empathetic skills (Akbulut & Saglam, 2010), and teachers are expected to exhibit increased performance and job satisfaction within educational environments where empathic tendencies are more prevalent and satisfactory, and where qualified social relations are established (Yılmaz & Akyel, 2008). The concept of empathy, which is clearly important for the teaching profession, is defined as an emotional reaction arising from perceiving or comprehending another's emotional condition, or similarly feeling what another feels or is expected to feel (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1999). It is also said that empathy means to walk in other people's shoes and to have an accurate understanding of their emotions and thoughts (Dokmen, 2003). In addition, empathy is a process of putting oneself in the place of another, comprehending their thoughts accurately, feeling their emotions, and being able to express this situation back to them (Tutarel-Kışlak & Çabukça, 2002).

Empathy plays a key role in the development of social understanding and positive social behaviors (Schultz et al., 2003) and has an important function in coping with stress and resolving a conflict (Kremer & Dietzen, 1991). It also provides a foundation for social behavior as a central component of normal social functionality (Charbonneau & Nicol, 2002), forms a basis for social relations (Noller & Ruzzene, 1991) and improves psychological well-being (Musick & Wilson, 2003). Moreover, it has been observed that empathy positively correlates with prosocial behaviors such as helping, peaceful conflict resolution, and problem solving (de Wied et al., 2007). Wilson and Kneisl (1988) suggested that it would not be possible for individuals with no empathic tendencies to enter other people's emotional worlds, and then, they could not help others in the real sense.

Considering empathy in terms of the teaching profession, it involves how a teacher expresses their interest, their ability to understand the student's perspective, and the domains of cognitive and emotional empathy (Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). If teachers connect with and understand the student, they build trust, and this can result in the student's improved ability to understand and express their own problems (Gottschall, 1989). As argued by Cooper (2002), teachers who fail to empathize effectively ignore the emotions of their students, and focus instead on the whole group, subject, or even program, which can result in students losing their motivation to learn. On the contrary, teachers exhibiting empathic behaviors and setting a role model for their students allows them to learn from their teacher's style of communication, and which then also contributes to their psychological health as a result of being understood (Dilekmen, 1999).

In previous studies, empathy has been found to negatively correlate with conflict tendency (Barut, 2004), aggression (Rehber & Atici, 2009), and undesirable student behavior (Celikkaleli & Avci, 2015), whilst being positively correlated with critical thinking (Ekinci & Aybek, 2010), the liking of children and communicational skills (Ugurlu, 2013), problem solving (Rehber & Atici, 2009), and interpersonal competence (Celikkaleli & Avci, 2015). Taken together, it is anticipated that higher empathic tendency may trigger positive factors, whilst lower empathic tendency may lead to negative factors. Thus, a positive correlation is expected between higher empathic tendency as a positive psychological factor and attitude toward the teaching profession among teachers.

The self-efficacy beliefs of teachers represent another potentially important factor that may affect their attitude towards the profession. Self-efficacy belief is one of the most studied concepts of the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy belief as “judgments of individuals about organizing and implementing the required actions to achieve specific performance types” (p. 391). In another definition, the concept was defined as individual’s belief in successfully organizing and maintaining their actions toward a desired purpose (Bandura, 1997). Hence, the concept does not emphasize an individual’s abilities, but what they can do using those abilities. Indeed, Bong and Skaalvik (2003) described self-efficacy belief as referring to an individual’s judgments about what they can do with their skills and abilities, not to their overall judgement about their skills and abilities. Self-efficacy, as suggested by Bandura (1997), plays an important function in deciding upon whether or not actions toward an objective will be started, how much effort will be put in, and for how long such action will be maintained unrelentingly in the face of obstacles and failures. Furthermore, self-efficacy can impact on one’s choices, actions and the amount of effort exerted to achieve those goals, how long they will resist and endure when obstacles are encountered, their ways of thinking and their emotional reactions, and ultimately, the level of achievement they can accomplish (Bandura, 1986, 2006). Self-efficacy belief is fed and improved by four main sources, which are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1986, 1997). The most powerful source, however, is mastery experiences because an individual’s experiences in successfully having completed something can provide strong evidence regarding what can be achieved within a given subject in the future.

While functioning in the emotional, social, and academic domains, the role of self-efficacy belief in teaching and learning has continued to intrigue both academic researchers and educational practitioners (Hoy & Spero, 2005; Wheatley, 2005). Among several remarkable factors in the educational and instructional process (i.e., school climate and student skills etc.), teacher efficacy is regarded as the most reliable factor regarding teaching and learning (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Teacher’s trust in their ability to perform certain actions which will help their students learn is one of the few attributes that may help reliably predict teaching practices and the outcomes expected from their students (Ross, 1994a). Within this framework, several definitions of teacher self-efficacy belief have been put forwards, and those definitions are generally based on Bandura’s definition of self-efficacy belief, which is “individual’s judgment about their ability to complete a future action successfully” (Bandura, 1977a), p. 79).

In line with this basic conceptualization, teacher self-efficacy belief has been defined as teachers’ expectations that can ensure their students’ learning (Ross et al., 1996), teachers’ own beliefs about planning, organizing, and performing the required activities to achieve certain educational goals (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, 2010), teachers’ belief in their ability to

organize and implement the required actions to succeed in a specific teaching task within a given context (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), teachers' motivation to persist in the face of obstacles and their willingness to make the effort to overcome such obstacles (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001), and teachers' belief in their ability to manage and perform their role successfully through teaching strategies, classroom management, and student participation (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). For teachers, self-efficacy belief has been shown to increase the required persistence to work with challenging students and to affect their teaching practices, enthusiasm, commitment, and teaching behaviors (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

In light of these definitions, successful actions associated with teachers' self-efficacy belief can include the ability to appropriately involve all their students within learning activities, maintaining discipline or providing additional explanations according to the level of students who perform poorly in a certain problem in order that they can understand the subject (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). As in the sources of self-efficacy, the most important that enables the development of self-efficacy in the teaching profession is mastery experiences (Mulholland & Wallace, 2001). If teachers attribute their achievements to internal or controllable causes such as their skills or efforts, they can therefore acquire more or improve upon their self-efficacy beliefs. Vicarious experiences can also enhance the self-efficacy belief of teachers; while a good educational-instructional activity conducted according to a reliable model can increase the self-efficacy of other teachers who observe the activity, the observing teacher's self-efficacy can be reduced when the model teacher performs poorly (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Despite being limited in its effect, social or verbal persuasion can increase self-efficacy at certain times when the teacher's persistence is interrupted, where the teacher doubts themselves, which can lead to their failure, and in the process of overcoming occasional setbacks. As suggested by Mulholland and Wallace (2001), this may have an even stronger impact on beginning teachers. Finally, the psychological and physiological state of teachers can also increase their self-efficacy belief. The potential negative effect of a teacher's high anxiety level and their physiological state (e.g., trembling, sweating, or stammering) can be evaluated as their exhibiting low self-efficacy belief.

In previous studies, teacher self-efficacy belief has been found to correlate with job satisfaction (Avanzi et al., 2013; Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014), greater enthusiasm for teaching (Allinder, 1994), teacher behaviors in the classroom, students' self-efficacy beliefs, motivation, and achievement (Ross, 1992), burnout (Egyed & Short, 2006; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010), student achievement (Caprara et al., 2006), student motivation (Woolfolk et al., 1990), student self-esteem (Cheung & Cheng, 1997), the attempt to implement novelties in teaching, sparing more time for teaching (Czerniak & Lumpe, 1996), preventing undesirable student behaviors in the classroom, occupational commitment (Caprara et al., 2006), classroom management skills (Babaoglan & Korkut, 2010; Henson, 2001), and teachers' in-class behaviors and performance (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Thus, self-efficacy belief as a positive personal and professional attribute that teachers should possess, and may be considered to positively and significantly correlate with teachers' positive attitudes toward their profession.

Job satisfaction is considered another variable that can positively affect teachers' attitude toward their profession. This concept has been defined by Locke et al. (1983) as pleasing and positive emotions arising from an individual's evaluation of their job and job experience; by Eren (1984) as the sum of material gain obtained from a job, colleagues with whom an employee enjoys working, and their own happiness due to their work, or having

produced some product or service; by Robbins (1999) as an individual's overall attitude to their job; by Koustelios (2001) as how a job provides a positive emotional condition that satisfies the individual; and by Barutcugil (2004) as an emotion experienced by an employee when they notice that the job and what they get from it coincides with their own needs and value judgments.

Based on these definitions, job satisfaction can be said to refer to the pleasure, happiness, and satisfaction that an individual can realize from their working life (Keser, 2005). According to Luthans (1995), job satisfaction, which covers the emotional aspect of working life, is composed of three important components. The first is that job satisfaction is a substantially emotional concept, and cannot be seen but only felt. Second, it may be explored mostly according to the extent to which job output meet expectations. The third is that it leads to several interrelated attitudes. This emotional aspect of job satisfaction is formed by the combination of the satisfaction that an individual realizes from their job, what they seek from the job, how much they want to obtain it, and what they have obtained to date (Isikhan, 1996).

There are various factors that can affect job satisfaction, which is one of the emotional elements of working life. Those factors are divided into two groups: individual and organizational (Başaran, 2000; Tengilimoglu & Yigit, 2005). Crossman and Harris (2006) stated that factors which affect job satisfaction can be addressed as environmental factors (i.e., the job itself and the working environment), psychological factors (e.g., personality, behavior, attitude), and demographic factors (e.g., age, gender). Accordingly, personal factors include expectations from working life, age, gender, educational level, years of service, marital status, and life norms, whilst organizational factors include qualities of the job, colleagues, an organization's management style, remuneration policies, competition, opportunities for development and promotion, relations with superiors, job norms, working duration and conditions, supervision, and also control (Başaran, 2000; Konuk, 2006; Tengilimoglu & Yigit, 2005). In addition to these factors, whether or not employees feel competent (Aydemir-Sevim & Hamamci, 1999) and their attitude toward their job (Konuk, 2006; Onen & Ulusoy, 2012; Robbins, 1994) can also affect job their satisfaction.

As for the importance of job satisfaction among teachers, Bogler (2001) argued that achievement of educational objectives depends on what teachers feel about their job, and in how much satisfaction they obtain from their job. In this sense, teacher job satisfaction refers to teachers' emotional relationship with their teaching role, which has been defined as a function of the perceived relationship between what teachers expect from teaching, what the profession offers back to them as teachers (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004), and their attitude toward their students and school, or their contentment or discontentment with the job (Vural, 2004). Due to the important function of teacher job satisfaction, not surprisingly, researchers have recommend that schools need to attach more importance to increasing teachers' job satisfaction (Heller et al., 1993).

Regarding the factors affecting teacher job satisfaction, Jackson et al. (1986) determined stress, working conditions, working environment, and school environment to be the most important factors. As suggested by Vural (2004), sources of teacher job satisfaction include teacher's relationship with their students, other teachers, and their administrators; opportunities to put their own thoughts into practice, taking a vacation, having adequate financial security, income, working conditions, the ability to realize personal areas of interest, working hours, quality of job, career opportunities, supervision, organization and

administration, occupational safety, personality traits, and appreciation. Furthermore, Yilmaz and Akyel (2008) stated that job satisfaction can be higher in schools where empathic tendencies are exhibited and satisfactory, and where adequate quality social relations are present. On this, Duru (2002) argued that satisfactory and quality social relations contribute to teacher performance, job satisfaction, and the functioning of schools; whereas, job satisfaction has been shown to affect teachers' classroom management skills (Akin & Koçak, 2007), participatory decision making and transformational leadership (Rossmiller, 1992), teachers' autonomy (Poulin & Walter, 1992), and having chosen the teaching profession according to certain known professional values (Goodlad, 1984).

Studies have shown job satisfaction to be correlated with burnout (Atmaca et al., 2020; Avsaroglu et al., 2005; Erturk & Kececioglu, 2012; Filiz, 2014; Gencay, 2007; Kiral & Diri, 2016; Telef, 2011), school climate (Xiaofu & Qiwen, 2007), classroom management skills (Akin & Kocak, 2007), organizational citizenship (Yılmaz, 2012), students' academic achievement (Knox & Anfara, 2013), motivation (Karakose & Kocabas, 2006), job stress (Gunbayi & Tokel, 2012; Mondal et al., 2011), satisfaction with life and self-efficacy belief (Telef, 2011), organizational commitment (Demirtas, 2010), perceived workplace friendship (Yavuzkurt, 2017), happiness (Terzi, 2017), loneliness in the workplace (Gafa & Dikmenli, 2019), organizational citizenship, transformational leadership (Nguni et al., 2006), anxiety and depression (Ferguson et al., 2012), and job performance (Lay, 2020). These various findings all indicate that job satisfaction positively correlates with positive factors, and similarly that it negatively correlates with negative factors. Therefore, a positive significant correlation is expected between job satisfaction, as the emotional aspect of the teaching profession, and attitude toward teaching.

It has been observed that teachers' attitudes toward teaching can critically impact upon achieving their own educational and instructional goals, and enabling their students' personal development and attitudes toward the school. While some studies have focused upon the outcomes of teachers' attitudes toward their profession, none appear to have investigated the factors that affect their attitude toward teaching. In addition, since no study was found to address empathic tendency, teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction, which can affect teachers' attitude toward teaching overall, it is anticipated that the current study will fill a significant and relevant gap in the literature.

Accordingly, the current study aims to examine teachers' attitudes toward teaching according to gender, educational stage, years of experience, and school location, and to explore whether or not empathic tendency, teacher self-efficacy belief, and job satisfaction predict attitudes toward the teaching profession. To that end, answers to the following research questions were sought:

- Do teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession differ according to gender, professional experience, and the school's education level and location?
- Is there a relationship between teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession, empathetic tendency, teacher self-efficacy, and job satisfaction?
- Does empathic tendency, teacher self-efficacy, and job satisfaction predict teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Model

The current research is conducted as a descriptive study which aims to reveal an existing situation through a relational study that examines changes of two or more variables together. While the dependent variable of the study is teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession, the independent variables are their gender, professional experience, their school's education level (i.e., primary or secondary school), their school's location (urban or rural), as well as their empathic tendency, professional self-efficacy belief, and job satisfaction as a teacher.

2.2. Participants

The study group consisted of 316 teachers working in schools affiliated to the Turkish Ministry of National Education in the south-west province of Muğla. In total, 189 of these teachers are female and 127 are male. According to their experience, 27 of the teachers have 1-5 years' experience, whilst 71 have 6-10 years, 63 have 11-15 years, 79 have 16-20 years, and 76 of the participant teachers have more than 20 years of experience. Descriptive analysis of the study group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of the study group

Variable		<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Female	189	59.8
	Male	127	40.2
Experience	1-5 years	27	8.5
	6-10 years	71	22.5
	11-15 years	63	19.9
	16-20 years	79	25.0
	20+ years	76	24.1
School type	Primary school	144	45.6
	Secondary school	172	54.4
School location	Urban	157	49.7
	Rural	159	49.3
<i>N</i>		316	

2.3. Instruments

2.3.1. Attitude toward Teaching Profession Scale: The scale was developed by Erkus et al. (2000) to assess teacher's attitudes toward the teaching profession. It consists of 22 items, with each scored from 5 = *completely appropriate* to 1 = *never appropriate*. In the scale, Items 2-4, 6-10, 12-13, 17, 19, and 22 are all reversed scored. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of the whole scale was found to be .99. In the conducted study, the fact that the measurement tool distinguishes between teacher candidates and individuals who perform the teaching profession has been shown as evidence that it is a valid scale. In the study of Capri and Celikkaleli (2008), the Cronbach alpha internal consistency of the Attitude toward Teaching Profession Scale was reported as .94.

2.3.2. Empathic Tendency Scale (ETS): The ETS was developed by Dokmen (1988) to assess the potential of individuals to establish empathy in their daily life. The test-retest reliability of the scale was calculated to be .82. In terms of validity, the relationship between the ETS and the Understandings Emotions subscale of the Edwards Personal Preference Inventory was examined and the correlation was found to be .68. ETS is formed as a five-

point, Likert-type scale which consists of 20 items ranging from 5 = *strongly agree* to 1 = *strongly disagree*. When calculating the scale's scores, Items 3, 6-8, 11-13, and 15 are reverse scored. The minimum score obtainable from the scale is 20, whilst the maximum is 100. The total score refers to the respondent's emphatic tendency, with high scores indicating a high level of empathy tendency, whilst those with low scores are suggested to have a low level of empathic tendency.

2.3.3. Ohio Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale: The scale was originally developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) and subsequently adapted to the Turkish context by Baloglu and Karadag (2008). The scale consists of 24 items within five dimensions (Guidance, Direction of behaviors, Motivation, Teaching ability, and Testing and evaluation). The reliability coefficient of the whole scale was originally calculated as .90, whereas the application of the scale in the current study was calculated as .95. Additionally, from validity analysis on the scale, it was observed that all of the item factor loadings were above .60, and that the total variance that explained by one factor was measured as being .48. Consequently, total the self-efficacy score can be satisfactorily calculated based on a single factor.

2.3.4. Job Satisfaction Scale: The scale was developed by Batigün and Şahin (2006) based on job satisfaction scales published in the literature. The scale consists of 32 items arranged as a self-report questionnaire, with five-point, Likert-type items listed as 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% satisfaction from certain characteristics of the job. The scales has six factors and satisfactory Cronbach alpha scores calculated as between .53, and .94, and also supports the criterion related validity of the scale.

2.3.5. Personal Information Form: The form was used to capture information about the teachers' gender, professional experience, plus their school's education level and location.

2.4. Procedures

The data of the study were collected in the school environment during 2019, after having obtained the necessary permissions from the Muğla Provincial Directorate of National Education. The measurement tools were applied by the researchers and the applications each lasted approximately 15-20 minutes.

2.5. Data Analysis

Prior to the analysis of the data, its distribution was first examined. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated that the study data represented a normal distribution ($p > .05$) in all variables. The histogram graphics and normal distribution curve were determined by Skewness and Kurtosis (see Table 2) and further analyses were then performed accordingly. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used in order to identify the relationship, and multiple regression analysis to test whether or not teachers' emphatic tendencies, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction predicted their attitudes towards teaching. In order to determine whether or not the dependent variable differed according to the independent variables, both *t*-test and ANOVA were applied, and IBM's SPSS 20.00 was used in the data analysis.

3. RESULTS

The study's findings regarding differentiation in the teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession according to gender, professional experience, and the school's education level and location are as follows.

It was seen that the teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession did not differ according to their gender ($t = 1.815, p > .05$), but that their attitudes towards the teaching profession did vary according to their level of professional experience ($F_{(4-311)} = 4.252, p < .05$). Accordingly, it was seen that teachers with more than 20 years of professional experience had a more positive attitude towards the teaching profession than those having served between 1 and 20 years. Teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession, however, were not found to differ according to the education level (primary or secondary) of the school at which they taught ($t = 1.187, p > .05$). Finally, it was observed that the teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession did not differ according to the location of their school (urban or rural) ($t = -1.245, p > .05$).

The relationships between teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession and empathic tendency, teacher self-efficacy, and job satisfaction are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and Intercorrelations matrix for research variables

Variables	\bar{X}	SD	1	2	3	4	Skew.	Kurt.	α
1. Attitude toward Teaching Profession	89.74	13.34	1				0.458	-0.779	.90
2. Empathic Tendency	71.56	8.92	.42**	1			0.417	0.760	.79
3. Teacher Self-Efficacy	98.54	11.04	.40**	.50**	1		0.400	0.326	.94
4. Job Satisfaction	107.58	19.11	.23**	.17**	.20**	1	0.399	1.033	.94

$N = 316, **p < .01$

Bivariate correlations among the variables of the current study are demonstrated in Table 2. The outcomes show that attitude toward teaching profession and emphatic tendency, teacher self-efficacy, and job satisfaction are significantly correlated. As can be seen, attitude toward teaching is significantly correlated with emphatic tendency ($r = .42, p < .01$), teacher self-efficacy ($r = .23, p < .01$), and job satisfaction ($r = .23, p < .01$). On the other hand, empathic tendency is significantly correlated with teacher self-efficacy ($r = .50, p < .01$) and job satisfaction ($r = .17, p < .01$). Lastly, teacher self-efficacy was found to significantly correlate with job satisfaction ($r = .20, p < .01$).

The results of stepwise multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 3, which shows whether or not empathic tendency, teacher self-efficacy, and job satisfaction in teachers predicted their attitudes towards the teaching profession.

Table 3. Stepwise multiple regression analysis for teachers' attitude toward teaching

Variables	ΔR^2	B	Standard Error	β	t	p	Tol.	VIF
Constant	-----	22.203	6.921	-----	3.208**	.001	-----	-----
Empathic Tendency	.174	.414	.085	.277	4.846**	.000	.748	1.336
Teacher Self-Efficacy	.050	.287	.069	.237	4.134**	.000	.740	1.352
Job Satisfaction	.016	.090	.035	.129	2.544**	.011	.951	1.051

** $p < .01; r = .489; R^2 = .239; F = 32.742; p < .000$

When the findings in Table 3 are examined, it may be noted as important that the score for attitude towards the teaching profession in the prediction equation ($r = .489$; $p < .01$) includes empathic tendency, teacher self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. The independent variables accounted for 24% of the total variance in the attitude toward teaching. According to the standardized regression coefficient (β) result, the predictor variables' order of importance was as follows: empathic tendency, teacher self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. However, when the results of the t -test for the meaningfulness of regression coefficients are considered, it can be seen that all variables within the three regression models were statistically meaningful predictors of attitude toward teaching at the level of .01. When the R^2 values are examined, it can be seen that emphatic tendency explained 17% of the variance in attitude toward teaching, 5% for teacher self-efficacy, and 1.6% for job satisfaction. When all the variables are considered together, it explained approximately 24% of the variance in teachers' attitude toward teaching.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this section, the findings revealed from the research are discussed and interpretations offered.

The first finding indicates that the teachers' attitudes toward teaching did not differ according to their gender. However, the literature includes examples of research where female teachers have been shown to have a more positive attitude toward teaching than their male peers (Barwal, 2011; İpek & Camadan, 2012; Issan et al., 2011; Pehlivan, 2017; Sarkar & Behera, 2016), whilst many others, as in the current study, found no difference in teachers' attitudes based on gender (Bulut, 2009; Can, 2010; Çakır et al., 2006; Çapa & Çil, 2000; Çimen, 2016; Demirtaş et al., 2011; Erdem & Anılan, 2008; Gomleksiz et al., 2006; Hacımeroglu & Sahin-Taskin, 2010; Kilic & Bektas, 2008; Korkmaz & Sadık, 2011; Kucuk, 2012; Ozder et al., 2010; Parvez & Shakir, 2013; Polat, 2013; Qureshi & Jan, 2015; Sahin & Hacımeroglu, 2010; Sahin-Sak et al., 2019; Semerci & Semerci, 2004; Tanel et al., 2007; Tekerek & Polat, 2011). These findings may be explained in that both female and male teachers embrace and care about their professions on similar levels (Demirci et al., 2021; Kozikoglu & Gonulal, 2020; Sahin-Sak et al., 2019; Tanel et al., 2007). This explanation may be evidenced by male teachers having chosen preschool as their branch of teaching in recent years (Sak et al., 2015). According to Korkmaz and Sadık (2011), the reason for any attitudinal difference based on gender may be linked to teachers having graduated from teacher training faculties and colleges, having received education based on content knowledge as well as occupational knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and having conducted teaching practices as a means to getting to know the classroom and the school environment prior to starting in their teaching role. Moreover, Çimen (2016) suggested that attitudes toward teaching cannot be explained by gender alone, and that personal traits may be more decisive in such attitudes.

In the second finding of the current study, attitudes toward the teaching profession were found to be more positive for those teachers with over 20 years of experience when compared to teachers with between 1 and 20 years of experience. However, this finding notably contradicts previous research findings reported in the literature (Barwal, 2011; Korkmaz & Sadık, 2011; Pehlivan, 2017; Sarkar & Behera, 2016; Sahin-Sak et al., 2019; Yüksel, 2010). Interestingly, in a study by Pehlivan (2017), it was reported that participant teachers obtained similar and positive attitude scores in the love, value, and harmony

subscales and with regards to the overall scale. Idealist approaches adopted by beginner teachers and the experience gained by teachers having taught for over 10 years, both in terms of subject matter and student experience, may have redressed any differences to those with between 1 and 20 years of teaching experience.

As professional experience increases, it is expected that individuals become more embracing of their profession, take on more responsibility, and are more successful at and conscious about meeting the requirements of their profession. In previous research, teachers' attitudes towards their students and their profession have been shown to be more positive amongst more experienced teachers (Karahan, 2005; Tanriverdi, 2008), and that experienced teachers considered that the profession required them to take on additional responsibilities over time (Mooji, 2008). One can therefore argue that these consistent results arise from increases in professional experience over time. Teachers inherently become more competent in combining both the theory of their profession and its practical application as they gain experience, and improve their ability to communicate with students and approach in-class incidents with an increased level of sensitivity. Moreover, in one study, Korkmaz and Sadık (2011) noted a difference between teachers with 20 years or more professional experience and those with less experience, which was found to be significant in favor of teachers with 20 or more years professional experience.

As the third finding of the current study, the teachers were not found to have different attitudes based on the educational level (primary or secondary) of the school at which they taught. Some of the research in the literature concurred with this finding; for example, Şahin-Sak et al. (2019) observed that the attitudes of preschool teachers did not differ by those teaching at private kindergartens and nursery schools. Nevertheless, in other studies, primary school teachers were found to have more positive attitudes compared to secondary school teachers (Korkmaz & Sadık, 2011; Tasleema & Hamid, 2012). The reason for this disparity is thought to be that teachers working in the first shift (where schools adopt double shifts) or during normal school hours have more positive attitudes as they spend more time with their colleagues and students, and thereby have more of a chance to get to know their students (Korkmaz & Sadık, 2011; Yüksel, 2010). Moreover, Elaldi and Yerliyurt (2016) found that preservice preschool teachers had moderately positive attitudes towards teaching, whilst Argun and İkiz (2003), Basbay et al. (2009), and also Yılmaz (2009) found that preservice preschool teachers had positive attitudes toward the teaching profession.

The fourth finding of the current study was that teachers' attitudes toward their profession did not differ by the location of their schools (urban or rural). Similarly, Khan and Jan (2007) also found that attitude scores of secondary school teachers working in rural and urban schools did not differ significantly. As observed in another study, attitudes towards the teaching profession did not differ in city locations, but different attitudes were found to exist in village locations (Sharma & Bedi, 2016). Some other studies have found that teachers working in rural schools have more positive attitudes compared to those working in urban schools (Barwal, 2011; Paramanik et al., 2018).

As the fifth finding of the current study, a positive and significant correlation was found to exist between teachers' attitudes toward their profession and their empathic tendencies, with empathic tendency observed to more significantly predict their attitudes toward teaching compared to either self-efficacy belief or job satisfaction. However, no studies were found that reached a similar finding regarding this correlation between teachers' attitudes

toward their profession and empathic tendency. In fact, studies on this subject have been notably conducted not with data obtained from inservice teachers, but from preservice candidate teachers (Celik et al., 2012; Oguz & Altun, 2011; Sayin, 2003). Thus, presentation of the findings obtained from preservice teachers, as seen in the literature as evidence for the finding achieved in the current study, is considered to be only indirectly supportive because it is somewhat expected that attitudes toward the teaching profession will improve once teaching is actively being performed. Studies conducted with preservice teachers have therefore only been based upon their expectations, dreams, and predictions about their future teaching career; whereas, the attitudes of inservice teachers with professional experience is based on what they have actually experienced. Hence, the attitudes of inservice teachers toward the profession is considered to be more accurately reflective.

In support of this finding, Yılmaz and Akyel (2008) suggested that teacher performance and job satisfaction were expected to increase within educational environments where empathic tendencies were significantly exhibited and more satisfactory, and where quality social relations were prevalent. As a psychological construct that can increase teacher performance and job satisfaction, empathic tendency may also have a positive impact on teachers' attitudes toward teaching. In environments where empathic tendency is present, it may be observed that less conflicts occur and that undesirable in-class behaviors are reduced; whereas critical thinking, communicational skills, problem-solving skills, and interpersonal competence are more likely to increase. Teachers working in such environments exhibit improved positive social and affective skills, which is empathic tendency.

According to the sixth finding in the current study, a positive and significant correlation was found to exist between the teachers' attitudes toward the profession and their self-efficacy belief, and that teachers' self-efficacy belief positively predicted their attitude towards teaching. This finding coincides with several other studies in the literature (Ajmal et al., 2020; Bayrakdar et al., 2016; Cakmak et al., 2021; Cetin, 2016; Colomeischi & Colomeischi, 2014; Dadandi et al., 2016; Demirel & Akkoyunlu, 2010; Demirtas et al., 2011; Huang, 2020; Kanadli, 2017; Kara, 2020; Ozokcub, 2018b; Perren et al., 2017; Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004; Sari et al., 2009; Ustuner, 2017; Yada et al., 2018). Moreover, in a study by Baltaci (2017), a positive and significant correlation was established between the self-efficacy beliefs and professional attitudes of teachers who serve as school principals, with similar results also found with candidate teacher by Kaleli (2020).

Ross (1994b) stated that teacher self-efficacy is one of the few individual teacher attributes that reliably predicts teacher's confidence in realizing the actions that help their students learn, teachers' practices, and student outcomes. Accordingly, one can argue that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy belief are better able to contribute to their students' academic achievement, and as a result achieving their teaching goals. Thus, it may be expected that teachers who believe that they can achieve their teaching goals will have more a positive attitude towards their profession.

Teacher self-efficacy can also impact on students' eagerness to learn (Allinder, 1994), development of student self-efficacy belief, student achievement (Ross, 1992), student motivation (Woolfolk et al., 1990), student self-esteem (Cheung & Cheng, 1997), attempts to implement novel teaching approaches, sparing more time for teaching (Czerniak & Lumpe, 1996), the prevention of undesirable student behaviors in the classroom, occupational

commitment (Caprara et al., 2006), and classroom management skills (Babaoglan & Korkut, 2010; Henson, 2001). It has been observed that teachers who believe that they are effective in their job experience several positive states regarding education and instruction. Hence, teacher self-efficacy is expected to positively affect attitude towards teaching.

According to the final finding of the current study, a positive and significant correlation was found to exist between attitude towards the teaching profession and teachers' job satisfaction. This finding is also supported by other studies in the literature (Cristina-Corina & Valerica, 2012; Cetin, 2016; Dar, 2021; Kimengi, 1983; Thorsen-Spano, 1996). Bogler (2001) suggested that education coming to fruition depends on what teachers feel about their profession as well as the extent to which they are satisfied in their job. Teachers' positive feelings about the profession and their job satisfaction can positively impact upon their attitude towards the profession. Moreover, their attitudes can improve based on their job satisfaction which can be positively influenced by transformational decision-making, teacher autonomy, positive values about the profession and environments where teachers experience satisfactory and quality relations in their schools, functioning in the manner expected by their schools, and by exhibiting good classroom management skills.

Consequently, it is possible to say that professional experience, teachers' self-efficacy belief, and their job satisfaction correlate with and are important factors associated with attitudes towards the teaching profession, whilst gender, school location, and the educational level of the school are not seen as important factors. On the other hand, the fact that these findings reveal the role of these variables in predicting teachers' attitudes towards their profession in the literature is an important issue, since the current study presents the first published research in this area, and thereby has addressed a literature gap in the field.

5. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The current study was conducted only with teachers working in a single province in one country, which weakens the generalizability of the findings and is therefore a limitation of the study. It is recommended, therefore, to conduct similar studies with larger samples from different regions of Turkey or elsewhere.
- Since the study only draws comparative conclusions based on studies conducted with preservice teachers, this could be seen as misleading since preservice teachers have yet to experience the relevant subject matter. It is therefore recommended to conduct further studies with preservice teachers.
- Considering that no other studies have examined all the variables shown in the current study together, similar studies may be conducted that include differing samples since it would be improper to form an opinion based on a single set of findings.
- Future studies could be designed in order to investigate school climate, social support, organizational commitment, and in-class problems which affect teachers' attitudes toward their profession.

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