

Full Length Research Paper

Conservatism and social justice: Why do some teachers strive harder for social justice while others do not?

Gülay Öngel^{1*} and Erkan Tabançalı²

¹Şehit Batuhan Ergin Anatolian High School, Istanbul, Turkey.

²Department of Educational Administration, Faculty of Education, Yildiz Technical University, Turkey.

Received 16 March, 2022; Accepted 6 June, 2022

Teachers are seen as change agents in the world of social justice because they embody the educational ideals of equality and fair treatment. The aim of this study is to examine the more conservative personal and social attitudes of teachers that may affect how their social justice beliefs play out in the classroom. The research findings reveal important results about the relationship between the attitudes of resistance to change and opposition to equality at the personal and social levels, which underlie conservatism, and social justice beliefs about teaching.

Keywords: Social justice, conservatism, resistance to change, opposition to equality.

INTRODUCTION

Why do some people make stronger implicit and explicit choices for fair changes, egalitarianism, and system criticism, while others prefer tradition, hierarchical social relations, and system continuity (Block and Block, 2006)? One possible answer to this question comes from the field of political psychology. Social and political preferences can be analyzed and explained on the basis of psychological causes (Jost et al., 2008). Individuals tend to align themselves with particular social judgments and thoughts by means of their own epistemic and existential motivations and then act accordingly (Haidt and Graham, 2007). Thus, an evidence-based approach can be developed to make sense of individuals' preferences on issues that are important to both that person and society in general, such as equality, justice or welfare (Jost et al., 2007). Recent studies emphasize two psychological dimensions that are the source of different

tendencies regarding political and social judgments and thoughts. The first of these is resistance to change, and the second is opposition to equality. How people tend towards these psychological dimensions affects their social and political attitudes. Conservative profile occurs when individuals oppose these two fundamental variables, namely equality and change. It should be noted that what is being done here is not a religious but a political psychological conceptualization of conservatism (Sarıbay et al., 2017; Jost et al., 2003). In opposition to equality, interpersonal equality in social and economic matters is not desired. Hierarchical relationships are considered much more plausible (Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Jost and Thompson, 2000). For conservatives, inequality is state of nature. It can even be said that they consider the demands for equality as a threat to this natural state (Jost et al., 2003; Tetlock and Mitchell, 1993;

*Corresponding author. Email: glyngl@gmail.com.

Jost et al., 2017). It is important to acknowledge that entrenched attitudes and beliefs are what sustain prominent institutions, and so, resistance to change and opposition to equality becomes necessary to ensure the system stays true to its current state. In essence, inequalities and injustices inherent in the existing system must be maintained in order to protect and maintain it (Jost et al., 2013). To conservatives, change comes as unpredictability and uncertainty. An egalitarian social order without hierarchies expresses chaos (Carney et al., 2008). Conservatives' interpretation of this type of social system sees results that contradict social justice standards (Jost, 2020). According to the principles of social justice, if the current system produces that which is unequal and unjust, it is not the system that should be. Egalitarian and fair change interventions should be made. Conservatives see the current system as legitimate and oppose change interventions. The reason for this preference is that they evaluate hierarchical (unequal) structures as more stable (Tyler and Huo, 2002; Skitka et al., 2009). Similarly, egalitarians will want to legitimize egalitarian systems by reflecting their own values on the system (Brandt and Reyna, 2012). Conservative personality traits are reflected in all the practices in one's daily life (Carney et al., 2008). *Opposition to equality and resistance to change*, which are the determinant attitudes underlying conservatism, affect the behavior of individuals in many areas of life. The interaction of individuals with conservative tendencies in a wide social network causes these attitudes to create more important social consequences. Teachers, in particular, have relationships with students and parents which allows for them and their conservative philosophy to have quite a wide area of impact.

Teachers' conservative beliefs and attitudes affect their practices in the classroom and their interactions with students (Good and Brophy, 1973; Garmon, 2004; Rochmes, 2013; Kraker-Pauw et al., 2016). If education is conducted by teachers with conservative attitudes, it can produce results that are incompatible with social justice principles. Although this is not observed formally and overtly most of the time, it continues to pervade schools (Gorski, 2006). The school community is becoming more diverse every day, with people of different cultures, religions, values and worldviews entering the once-monochrome classroom. This makes the requirements for social justice all the more important (Philpott and Dagenais, 2012). And whether they realize it or not, teachers can even perpetuate the inequalities prevailing in the society in classroom practices. Achieving social justice requires that all students are shown equal value and experience no discrimination. They must also recognize the prevailing inequalities in society and challenge the existing status quo by questioning their own role (Kaur, 2012). However, conservative ideals can cause teachers to resist change, stick to the status quo, weaken their social interactions (Tam and Cheng, 2003),

and reveal a more authoritarian and controlling philosophy of education (Biesta, 2012). It can be said that teachers with a conservative perspective have a belief that the differences in the classroom community will negatively affect their classroom learning practices (Elhoweris and Alsheikh, 2004; Brandes and Crowson, 2009). Teachers can help some groups or individuals overcome obstacles that result from family or other social reasons and that negatively affect their realization of their potential. In some cases, teachers may not even notice these obstacles. It is also possible that they prefer not to make remedial interventions despite noticing them, or they may reinforce all obstacles. In this respect, it is important to examine the beliefs of teachers that will affect their behavior towards minorities and socially and economically disadvantaged students (Rochmes, 2013). For example, Brandes and Crowson (2009) concluded in their study that conservative teacher candidates are more likely to have negative attitudes towards student differences in the classroom environment.

When a conservative enters an organization, the social domain in which they interact expands. Thus, while fulfilling organizational roles, individuals greatly increase their capacity to discriminate. Therefore, unfair and unequal practices that occur in institutions and organizations become one of the main factors that contribute to the emergence and maintenance of social inequalities and hierarchy (Feagin and Feagin, 1978). Similarly, when teachers bring their social and personal beliefs to the classroom, and ultimately to the school at large, they are invariably re-shaping the perception and manifestation of social justice within the entire educational environment (Katsarou et al., 2010). Working to create a fair learning environment where everyone has equal opportunity means, first of all, that educators must open their heart and mind to the perspectives and lifestyles of others (Takács, 2006). However, among the known typical characteristics of conservative people, it can be counted that they show skeptical, anxious and even hateful tendencies towards people they find different (Wilson, 2013). Such teacher attitudes may hinder equal learning opportunities for students. For this reason, it is important to investigate the personal and social tendencies of teachers reflected in their teaching practices.

According to literature on political psychology, political tendencies of individuals can be explained based on their preferences regarding equality and change. The main motivation of the research is to reveal the possible effects of the conservative profile that emerges when individuals are against these two variables. By illuminating the basic processes behind social justice violations, we can learn how to produce more realistic solutions. In the literature, there are many studies that deal with the injustices suffered by students who, according to common social acceptance, are seen as disadvantaged in terms of their social class, ethnicity or physical characteristics (Allen, 2015; Chin et al., 2020; Hanna and Linden, 2009;

Peterson et al., 2016; van den Bergh et al., 2010; Vangararai, 2008). However, studies focusing on the basic processes underlying social justice violations experienced in the educational sphere are quite limited. The aim of this research is to reveal the main reasons behind social justice violations that occur in the classroom. Revealing problematic tendencies of instructors and the consequences they have on students can create awareness and help us push towards overcoming them. It is imperative that institutions offer humane educational conditions to all students, helping them to settle in the social positions they deserve, thereby raising the human potential to transform injustices in society. This research, therefore, aims to investigate the effects of teachers' personal and social attitudes underlying their conservative tendencies on their beliefs about providing social justice in teaching. In light of the findings, inferences can be made regarding the role of teachers in the realization of social justice in schools. In accordance with the purpose of this study, finding answers for the following questions has been our primary goal.

1. Are there relationships between teachers' personal attitudes of resistance to change and opposition to equality and their social justice beliefs?
2. Are there relationships between teachers' social attitudes of resistance to change and opposition to equality and their social justice beliefs?
3. Do teachers' personal attitudes of resistance to change and opposition to equality predict their social justice beliefs?
4. Do teachers' social attitudes of resistance to change and opposition to equality predict their social justice beliefs?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Conservatism

Wilson (1973) defines conservatism as resisting change, prioritizing security, and preferring traditional and local forms of institutions and behaviors. Conservative attitudes can also be associated with the need for order, closedness to new experiences, and intolerance to uncertainty (Tal and Yinon, 2002; Jost, Sterling and Stern, 2018). Conservatism conceptualizations have three main emphases:

1. The preference to oppose the change of existing institutions
2. Preferring traditional institutions
3. Tendency to be prudent

When these three emphases are synthesized, it can be said that conservatives are pro-traditional and find

change dangerous in terms of security. Consequently, they prefer to attach themselves to the current order (Wilson, 2013).

The core of conservative political ideology consists of two main points: attitudes towards social stability rather than change and social hierarchy rather than equality (Mikołajczak and Becker, 2019). According to Jost et al. (2003), political conservatism is an ideological belief system that consists of two main components, resistance to change and opposition to equality, that serve to reduce uncertainty and threat. Conservatives reject risk-taking and social change, ultimately attempting to eliminate all brands of uncertainty. They resist change in order to maintain the existing order. They also perpetuate inequalities because they are considered an inherent part of system (Carney et al., 2008). Owing to their intolerance to uncertainty, conservatives prefer hierarchical structures in which the distribution of power and rights is clearly arranged (Fay and Frese, 2000). When evaluated in organizational contexts, conservatives are less innovative and less entrepreneurial in the workplace. They spend less effort to improve the organization (Frese et al., 2007). Conservatism negatively affects individuals' development of new strategies and attitudes (Mittler, 2012). According to Wilson (1993), the main reason for conservatives' tendency to avoid uncertainty is to simplify, organize and make their inner and outer worlds safer. However, these preferences hinder one's ability to be flexible or adaptable. In addition, it can be more difficult to take initiative and responsibility for one's duties, and intervene to ensure the development of themselves, the society and the institutions they work for. In short, the unequal distribution of rights and benefits may not bother conservatives, as they are more unlikely to notice and interfere with disruptions arising from these unequal distributions (Fay and Frese, 2000). This causes them to perpetuate inequalities and injustices (Jost et al., 2013; Eyerman and Jamison, 1991; Jost, 1995; Jost et al., 2013). These conservative attitudes and characteristics can best be summed up as exhibiting less tolerance towards minorities (Wilson, 1973), obedience to authority (Oyserman and Schwarz, 2017), more narrow-minded thinking (Carney et al., 2008), less initiative and responsibility in work environments, less innovative and development-oriented attempts, preference for existing hierarchical social structures, importance to security rather than diversity and avoidance of change (Fay and Frese, 2000; Lehmler and Schmitt, 2006), maintenance of the existing distribution of power and status, and a tendency to underestimate those who have the potential to be discriminated against (Kossowska and Hiel, 2003).

Social justice in education

Social justice requires fairness and equality as a basis in the distribution of resources and rights. It is most urgently

needed for individuals and groups who, for any reason, have suffered from inequality in the sharing of social welfare and resources, are neglected, or marginalized (Constantine et al., 2007). According to Young (1990), "Social justice refers to the elimination of institutionalized domination and oppression, and the attempt to overcome the inequality that has spread throughout the society and in many areas". Social justice requires actors with a sense of responsibility towards social issues (Adams et al., 2007). Teachers can also be considered social actors who play a role in the realization of social justice (Kaur, 2012). An educational process aiming to promote social justice requires teachers to be aware of social inequalities and to demonstrate actions and attitudes against these inequalities (Apple, 2004; Journell, 2017). Discerning whether or not one is capable of fulfilling the requirements of social justice demands that potential teachers examine their own beliefs and the origins of these beliefs and have the sensitivity to recognize the inequalities caused by the dominant culture. Ultimately, they need to be able to filter their practices at school through this awareness (Lárusdóttir and O'Connor, 2021). Those who will practice social justice should be aware of social inequalities, take a position against them, and act for a more just and equal society. However, it can be said that teachers' beliefs, behaviors, attitudes and perspectives are generally in the direction of perpetuating inequalities and injustices (Kaur, 2012). Such beliefs of the teachers may lead to the negative assessment of the students' academic performances based on their social and biological backgrounds. Of course, teachers alone cannot completely eliminate the basic inequalities of society. However, they are able to contribute to the realization of social justice by raising awareness among their students and peers (Lalas, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

The research aims to examine the effects of teachers' personal and social attitudes underlying their conservative tendencies on their beliefs about providing social justice in teaching. In terms of being suitable for the purpose of the research, a quantitative approach with a relational design was preferred because it allows for an examination of bivariate or multivariate relationships and estimations.

Sample

The research population consisted of primary, secondary and high school teachers from the Istanbul Province in the 2020-2021 academic year. To determine the study group, the random sampling method was used. In random sampling, each element of the study group has an equal and independent chance of being selected (Özen and Gül, 2007). In this study, the participants were selected on a voluntary basis, and it was found appropriate that 980 teachers from the universe of 163483 teachers participated in the research at a significance level of 0.5 and a confidence level of 95% (Yamane, 2009). Demographics of the participants are presented on Table 1. Of all the participants, 58.5% (n=583) were

females and 41.5% (n=407) were males. Besides, 38% (n= 372) of the participants work in high schools, %31.9 (n=313) of the participants work in secondary schools and 30.1% (n= 295) of the participants work in primary schools.

Data collection tools

Personal attitudes and social attitudes scales developed by Sarıbay et al. (2017) were used in the research. These scales have been developed to represent the dimensions of conservatism, opposition to equality and resistance to change, both at societal/ideological and personal/psychological levels. The Personal Attitudes Scale is a 7-point Likert-type scale consisting of 29 items. The scale consists of (a) resistance to personal change (18 items) and (b) opposition to personal equality (11 items) sub-dimensions. The Cronbach-alpha coefficient of the personal attitudes scale was 0.984; 0.994 for resistance to personal change; 0.987 for opposition to personal equality. The Societal Attitudes Scale is a 7-point Likert-type scale consisting of 29 items. The scale consists of (a) resistance to societal change (9 items) and (b) opposition to societal equality (17 items) sub-dimensions. The Cronbach-alpha coefficient of the personal attitudes scale was 0.983; 0.977 for opposite to societal change; 0.990 for opposite to societal equality.

Finally, the Learning to Teach for Social Justice-Beliefs Scale, which was developed by Enterline, Cochran-Smith, Ludlow and Mitescu (2008) and adapted into Turkish by Gezer (2017), was used in the study. The scale was developed to determine teachers' social justice beliefs in teaching, and can be classified as a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 11 items. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the whole scale was .980.

Analysis of data

The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Windows 25.0. Numbers, averages and standard deviation were used as descriptive statistics methods for data evaluation. The results of the kurtosis and skewness analysis are presented on Table 2. Moreover, Kurtosis and Skewness values were examined to determine whether the study variables were normally distributed. Kurtosis and Skewness values between +1.5 and -1.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013) or +2.0 and -2.0 (Mallery and George, 2010) are considered normal distribution. As the sampling is adequate according to the law of large numbers and the central limit theorem (N=980), the analyses were continued with the assumption that the distribution was normal (Harwiki, 2013; Inal and Günay, 1993; Johnson and Wichern, 2002). The prediction level of the independent variable to dependent variable was determined with regression analysis.

FINDINGS

In the study, first of all, the results of the arithmetic mean, standard deviation and correlation analysis regarding the answers given by the teachers to the scales are presented in Table 3. As shown in the table 3, all variables identified in the study yielded high and significant means. In addition, there are positive and significant correlations between the social justice belief, which is the dependent variable of the study, and all independent variables. Table 4 shows the results of the regression analyses of all independent variables. The

Table 1. Demographics of the participants.

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Female	573	58.5
Male	407	41.5
Total	980	100
Type of school		
Primary school	295	30.1
Secondary school	313	31.9
High school	372	38
Age range		
20-25	178	18.16
26-30	184	18.70
31-35	219	22.35
36-40	238	24.30
≥41	161	16.49
Total	980	100

Table 2. The results of the kurtosis and skewness analysis

Scale and sub-scales	Kurtosis	Skewness
Social justice-belief	-1.345	-0.363
Resistance to personal change	-1.324	0.286
Opposition to personal equality	-1.163	0.256
Opposition to societal equality	-1.298	0.310
Resistance to societal change	-1.297	0.198

findings provide insight into the importance of personal level conservative attitudes in social justice beliefs about teaching. Table 4 shows that teachers' social justice beliefs about teaching was significantly predicted by resistance to personal change ($\beta=-0.313$), and by opposite to personal equity ($\beta=-0.294$), which together accounted for 57.2% of the variance ($R^2=0.572$, $F=654.680$, $p<0.00$). As teachers' resistance to personal change and opposite to equality attitudes increase, social justice beliefs about teaching decrease. For conservative attitudes at the social level, which is another independent variable of social justice beliefs about teaching, the results revealed that both sub-dimensions were significant. Social justice beliefs about teaching was significantly predicted by resistance to societal change ($\beta=-0.314$) and opposite to societal equity ($\beta=-0.315$), which together accounted for 61.1% of the variance ($R^2=0.611$, $F=769.701$, $p<0.00$). According to the results of the regression analysis, as the teachers' against social equality and resistance to societal change attitudes increase, their belief in societal justice about teaching decreases.

DISCUSSION

Establishing a relationship between conservatism and the common psychological and ideological factors behind social injustices is important in understanding the barriers to overcoming them (Feygina, 2013). Conceptually, social justice refers to the equitable distribution of rights, benefits, and opportunities to build social solidarity. Conservatism, on the other hand, is defined by political choices and hierarchical (unequal) social systems that strengthen stability, thus reinforcing the status quo (Stoesz, 2014). When evaluated in this regard, it can be said that the conservative attitudes of individuals, especially in daily interactions, will create obstacles to the fulfillment of social justice. While designing practices in accordance with social justice principles, it is important to consider the pro-systemic motives of individuals who actualize these practices. If this is not taken into account, practices and policies regarding social justice in schools will be counterproductive and ineffective due to practitioners' attitudes (Blasi and Jost, 2012). In order to reveal these possible effects the relationship between

Table 3. Results of standard deviation, mean and correlation analysis.

Variable	M	Sd	1	2	3	4
Social justice belief	3.435	1.281				
Resistance to personal change	3.600	1.881	-0.670**			
Opposition to personal equality	3.539	1.787	-0.647**	0.516**		
Opposite to societal equality	3.550	1.903	-0.690**	0.747**	0.621**	
Resistance to societal change	3.700	1.281	-0.673**	0.549**	0.697**	0.519**

** Values significant at 0.01 level.

Table 4. Regression analysis.

Dependent variable	Independent variable	β	t	p	F	R ²
	Constant	5.60	85.286	0.000	654.680	0.572
	Resistance to personal change	-0.313	-18.806	0.000		
	Opposition to personal equality	-0.294	-16.785	0.000		
Social justice beliefs	Constant	5.716	89.342	0.000	769.701	0.611
	Opposition to societal equality	-0.314	-20.010	0.000		
	Resistance to societal change	-0.315	-18.461	0.000		

teachers' conservative attitudes and their social justice beliefs regarding teaching is explored in this study.

Conservatism is identified by two core attitudes: opposition to equality and resistance to change. How these two play out on the personal and social level determine the level of conservatism (Saribay, Ökten and Yılmaz, 2017). According to the findings, there is a significant relationship between the dimensions of resistance to change and opposition to equality of personal/psychological attitudes and teachers' social justice beliefs in education. Resisting change and opposing equality insinuates a lack of conviction regarding social justice. The dimension of resistance to personal change is associated with maintaining old habits and having difficulty adapting to new perspectives. Opposition to equality at the personal level is about individuals creating interpersonal relationships based on power, authority or superiority according to different factors. In other words, those opposed to personal equality prefer superiority or subordination rather than egalitarian and democratic relations (Saribay, Ökten and Yılmaz, 2017). Sharing power with students rather than simply actualizing a hierarchical relationship is a requirement of social justice (Ciechanowski, 2013). Nowadays, teachers are expected to create respectful, egalitarian, collaborative and democratic classroom dialogues (Spitzman and Balconi, 2019). However, teachers who are against this model of classroom equality have difficulty in fulfilling this expectation. On the personal level, anti-egalitarian teachers may see themselves as a hierarchical authority in the classroom. In addition, their emphasis on classroom order and

demand for students' compliance may negatively affect students' success and creativity (İci and Öksüz, 2014). Moreover, such teachers, by treating their students unequally according to qualities such as knowledge, skill, success, intelligence and competence to which they attribute great importance; may inevitably create a hierarchical class culture in which they provide advantage for some students while creating potential disadvantages for other students at the same time, which leads to dangerous favoritism (Turetsky et al., 2021). It is important for teachers to support equality in interpersonal relations and to change traditional hierarchical teaching habits for the realization of social justice in teaching (Themane and Thobejane, 2019). This assertion coincides with the results of the research. According to the findings of the study, the opposite to equality attitudes of conservatism at the personal level negatively affects teachers' beliefs in social justice in education. In other words, teachers' conservative tendencies towards equality may play a role in the manifestation of unjust results in schools.

Teachers' potential to create change in schools is rather ambiguous. For social justice to take place in the educational sphere, teachers need to understand what kinds of changes are needed at the classroom and school levels in order to ensure all are included and treated equally (Arshad, 2012). Although awareness of unequal practices that create unjust educational results is an important beginning for the realization of social justice in education, it is not sufficient. The formation of educational practices and models based on social justice is absolutely necessary, as is the development of

personal teaching practices that consist of an egalitarian and democratic approach. Promoting egalitarian teaching practices is not an easy task considering that traditional approaches are based on deep-rooted power-distance relationships. The reason for this is found in the contradiction between long-standing stereotyped traditional norms, values and habits and democratic class life (Purao, 2014). In particular, as the demographic diversity of the classroom increases, more innovations should be added to teaching practices to ensure equality and justice (Solís and Estepa, 2021). Being open to change can help individuals accept differences and adapt to them. It also prevents them from being unfair to those who struggle to conform to another's norms, acceptances and priorities. The results of the study confirm this assessment. According to the results, individuals who are open to self-change have higher social justice beliefs in education.

Conservatism is also associated with system bias and is based on a hierarchical structure of society. Changing the system is undesirable even though maintaining the status quo will inevitably lead to inequality. Therefore, addressing conservatism as both resistance to change and anti-egalitarian attitudes provides a helpful focus (Jost, 2020; Alper et al., 2021). Psychological barriers may also affect individuals' resistance to changing the status quo despite all its inequality and injustice. Conservatism is closely related to resistance toward such changes. Status quo is a term which is defined by that which already exists. In other words, it is the established order. It is what people know and have experienced. This type of familiarity can be seen as advantageous as it falls in line with social norms, cultural values, and other expectations found in the current order. At the same time, cognitive pressures and limitations tend to prevent innovative alternatives from emerging. Beliefs that contradict the status quo may not arise for emotional and cognitive reasons, as they require greater motivation, understanding, awareness, and courage (Higgins, 1996; Eidelman and Crandall, 2009; Jost, 2021; Secchi, 2011). For this reason, it can be said that the conservative tendencies of the individuals who make up that society play an important role in understanding the current social order. In the second part of the study, the relationship between teachers' social justice beliefs in education and the reflections of their conservative tendencies at the community level was discussed. One of the most important functions of education in modern societies is to contribute to the realization of social justice. In particular, education plays a decisive role in placing individuals in social positions on merit, regardless of their socio-economic background. However, some demographic variables such as ethnic origin or physical characteristics produce advantages or disadvantages for students, which undermine the function of education to realize social justice (Autin et al., 2015). Resistance to social change is related to attitudes that include seeing certain

civil and minority rights as a threat to territorial integrity, accepting certain segments as privileged, and maintaining social order and acceptances in their current form. And opposition to equality is about not showing sensitivity towards meeting the needs of all segments of society equally (Saribay et al., 2017). These tendencies and attitudes may cause teachers to act as gatekeepers, choosing whether to accept the student or turn him/her away (Allen, 2015). Dealing with teachers' social attitudes and social justice issues together is like considering the classroom as a prototype society.

According to other findings of the study, as teachers' attitudes towards resistance to social change and opposition to equality increase, their beliefs about social justice in education decrease. In classroom practices, when teachers prioritize or trivialize students in certain social positions according to stereotyped social values, beliefs or attitudes, the education is not being provided fairly. The examples, comparisons or choices a teacher gives in the classroom based on these stereotyped norms can lead to inequality by creating consequences that hinder, trivialize, or bring unwanted attention to certain students. Evaluating students in accordance with established social norms and values is one of the most common violations of the principle of equality. Teachers' behaving in accordance with societal prejudices or attitudes regarding students' social backgrounds or origins may also cause the teacher to manipulate assessment processes during grading (Autin et al., 2015; Hachfeld et al., 2015). For example, Hanna and Linden (2009) concluded in their research that teachers tend to give lower grades to lower caste students. Allen (2015) revealed in his research that when common social perceptions regarding black students are suspended, these students achieve more successful results. Chin et al. (2020) concluded that teachers' implicit racist attitudes have negative effects on black students. Again, Vangararai (2008) concluded in his research that his teachers gave more voice to male students. In addition to the literature, this study focuses on the core causes underlying a wide variety of equality violations in teaching. According to the findings of the research, political psychological variables affect whether the teaching is taking place in an equitable manner or not. A teacher may not be able to treat students from different parts of the society equally when he or she adheres to the widespread unequal social convictions that place some segments of the society above others. He or she can also resist social change by adhering to unequal practices and understandings. In addition, giving priority to certain social segments prevents disadvantaged students from settling in the advantageous social positions they may be earning for themselves.

Each child's academic success is and should be the goal of every teacher. Furthermore, the role of the educator as a change agent constitutes an important pillar of teacher professionalism. Fundamentally, teachers

are expected to challenge the status quo, take a different stance on social justice from the injustices inherent in social practices, and support the learning of all students (Pantić and Florian, 2015; Pantić and Carr, 2017). One of the conditions for a teacher to be a change agent for social justice is to support students so that they can analyze the unfair and unequal effects of some common views, stereotypes or social mechanisms (Pantić, 2015; Styslinger et al., 2019). By applying such lessons, a teacher can protect students from these injustices and help them achieve what they deserve. Teachers should have a sensitivity to perceive who is wronged for a more just social order and to worry about it. Opposing inequalities and injustices that result from favoritism and replacing this attitude with one embodying fair practices and discourses is related to teachers' evaluation of their role towards society in a broad context. It is impossible for teachers who are discriminant against a particular ethnic identity, physical characteristic or economic situation to show agency in fulfilling the requirements of social justice. According to the results as the conservative attitude of the participants related resistance to change at the social level increases, social justice beliefs to education decrease.

This research sheds light on the main reasons behind social justice violations, which can occur in different ways in teaching practices, from a political psychological perspective. As the research findings reveal, teachers' personal political tendencies can be counted among the obstacles to the realization of social justice in education. Therefore, the teaching implications of the political and ideological preferences and tendencies of teachers, which determine their personal and social perspectives, should be addressed in future research. This is because the current study shows that the tendencies towards change and equality, which are considered as the two main variables underlying political tendencies, are determinative in terms of social justice in education. According to political psychology literature, attitudes towards equality and change affect how individuals evaluate social issues. A conservative profile is ascribed when an individual opposes equality and change in personal and social matters. Such an ideology certainly contains internal obstacles to fulfilling the requirements of social justice. The findings offer a unique and intriguing political psychological argumentation for why some are more sensitive than others to social justice issues.

Inequality and injustice can be analyzed at all levels, from the individual to the social. They continue by intertwining and reinforcing each other in various dimensions, which include individual, organizational, institutional and social arenas (Adams and Zúñiga, 2016). Equitable and inclusive classroom experiences positively affect students' self-image and increase their sense of confidence and autonomy. Helping them overcome obstacles created by social prejudices or pressures is an important means of educational support provided to them in terms of the formation of successful social identities

(Veliz, 2021). Subjecting individuals to evaluations such as normal, good, superior, acceptable or vice versa leads to feelings of inequality. For social justice to occur in education, it is important for teachers to discover how oppression is learned, internalized and produced in socialization processes. For example, it is important for the realization of social justice for teachers to be aware of the common social-false consciousness of women's roles and to design classroom dialogues or practices to rein in these social pressures. According to Jost (2020), some of the cases of perpetuating injustice and inequalities result from individuals' failure to grasp the true nature of social structures. Dialogue processes that analyze the nature of social systems in terms of cause-and-effect relationships can help change misunderstandings. Another recommendation in this regard is related to teacher education. In order to implement educational values and commitments related to social justice and equality in schools, teacher education programs must reflect a sensitivity that will disrupt power-knowledge hierarchies (Zeichner, 2020). They should also provide teachers with a set of conceptual tools that help them develop a realistic understanding of both the individual and the society and deal with ethical dilemmas (Pantić and Carr, 2017). It is an important condition for social justice in education that teachers consider issues such as justice, equality and ethics and develop responsibility. In this sense, the findings of this research offer important implications.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

- Adams M, Bell L, Griffin P (2007). *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. New York, NY: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Adams M, Zúñiga X (2016). Getting started: Core concepts for social justice education. In *Teaching for diversity and social justice* pp. 113-148. Routledge.
- Allen Q (2015). "I'm trying to get my A": Black male achievers talk about race, school and achievement. *The Urban Review* 47(1):209-231.
- Alper S, Yilmaz O, Saribay SA (2021). How Do Cognitive Styles Influence Political Attitudes? A Joint Consideration of Dual-Process Model and Construal Level Theory. In *The Psychology of Political Behavior in a Time of Change* pp. 177-193. Springer, Cham.
- Apple M (2004). *Ideology and education*. New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Arshad R (2012). Shaping practice: the impact of personal values and experiences. In Rowena Arshad, Terry Wrigley and Lynne Pratt (Ed.), *Social justice re-examined dilemmas and solutions for the classroom teacher* (pp. 3-17). Trentham Books Limited.
- Autin F, Batruch A, Butera F (2015). Social justice in education: how the function of selection in educational institutions predicts support for (non)egalitarian assessment practices. *Frontiers in Psychology* 6:707.
- Blasi G, Jost J (2012). System justification theory and research: implications for law, legal advocacy, and social justice. In: Jon Hanson (Ed.), *Ideology, Psychology and Law*, pp. 81-132. New York:

- Oxford University Press
- Block J, Block JH (2006). Nursery school personality and political orientation two decades later. *Journal of Research in Personality* 40(5):734-749.
- Biesta G (2012). Philosophy of Education for the Public Good: Five challenges and an agenda. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44(6):581-593.
- Brandes JA, Crowson HM (2009). Predicting dispositions toward inclusion of students with disabilities: The role of conservative ideology and discomfort with disability. *Social Psychology of Education* 12(2):271-289. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-008-9077-8>
- Brandt MJ, Reyna C (2012). The functions of symbolic racism. *Social Justice Research* 25(1):41-60. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-012-0146-y>.
- Carney DR, Jost JT, Gosling SD, Potter J (2008). The secret lives of liberals and conservatives: Personality profiles, interaction styles, and the things they leave behind. *Political Psychology* 29(6):807-840.
- Chin MJ, Quinn DM, Dhaliwal TK, Lovison VS (2020). Bias in the air: A nationwide exploration of teachers' implicit racial attitudes, aggregate bias, and student outcomes. *Educational Researcher* 49(8):566-578.
- Ciechanowski K (2013). Beyond one-size-fits-all frameworks: Bringing English Learners' lives and social justice to the center of K-12 Instruction. *ORTESOL Journal* 30:15-20.
- Constantine MG, Hage SM, Kindaichi MM, Bryant RM (2007). Social justice and multicultural issues: Implications for the practice and training of counselors and counseling psychologists. *Journal of Counseling and Development* 85(1):24-29.
- Eidelman S, Crandall C (2009). A psychological advantage for the status quo. In John T. Jost, Aaron Kay, Hulda Thorisdottir (Ed.), *Social and Psychological Bases of Ideology and System Justification* pp.85-106. Oxford University Press.
- Elhoweris H, Alsheikh N (2004). Teachers' Attitudes toward Inclusion. Paper presented at the New York State Federation of the Council for Exceptional Children.
- Eyerman R, Jamison A (1991). *Social movements: A cognitive approach*. Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Fay D, Frese M (2000). Conservatives' approach to work: Less prepared for future work demands? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 30(1):175-195.
- Feagin J, Feagin C (1978). *Discrimination American style: Institutional racism and sexism*. Malabar: Krieger.
- Feyginal (2013). Social Justice and the human-environment relationship: Common systemic, ideological, and psychological roots and processes. *Social Justice Research* 26(3):363-380.
- Frese M, Garst H, Fay D (2007). Making things happen: reciprocal relationships between work characteristics and personal initiative in a four-wave longitudinal structural equation model. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92:1084-1102.
- Garmon MA (2004). Changing preservice teachers' attitudes/beliefs about diversity: What are the critical factors? *Journal of Teacher Education* 55(3):201-213.
- Gezer M (2017). Öğretimde Sosyal Adalet İnançları Ölçeği'nin Türkçe Uyarlaması. *Sakarya University Journal of Education* 7(2):295-309.
- Good TL, Brophy J E (1973). Behavioral expression of teacher attitudes. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 63(6):617-624.
- Gorski P (2006). Complicity with conservatism: the de-politicizing of multicultural and intercultural education. *Intercultural Education* 17(2):163-177.
- Haidt J, Grahami J (2007). When morality opposes justice: Conservatives have moral intuitions that liberals may not recognize. *Social Justice Research* 20(1):98-106.
- Hanna R, Linden L (2009). *Measuring discrimination in education*. National Bureau of Economic Research. Available at: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w15057>.
- Harwiki W (2013). The influence of servant leadership on organizational culture, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and employees' performance: study of out standing cooperatives in East Java Province, Indonesia. *Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies* 5(12):876-885.
- Hachfeld A, Hahn A, Schroeder S, Anders Y, Kunter M (2015). Should teachers be colorblind? How multicultural and egalitarian beliefs differentially relate to aspects of teachers' professional competence for teaching in diverse classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 48:44-55.
- Higgins ET (1996). The "self digest": Self-knowledge serving self-regulatory functions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71(6):1062-1083.
- İci A, Öksüz Y (2014). The relationship between authoritarian personality and liking of children levels of teacher candidates. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 116:3203-3207.
- İnal H, Günay S (1993). *Olasılık ve Matematiksel İstatistik*. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yayınları, Ankara. Sayfa 261; Merkezi Limit Teoremi ve Büyük Sayılar Kanunu Konusu
- Johnson R, Wichern W (2002). *Applied Multivariate Statistical Analysis*. Prentice Hall USA. Page 175; Law of Large Numbers.
- Jost J (1995). *Negative Illusions: Conceptual Clarification and Psychological Evidence concerning False Consciousness*. *Political Psychology* 16(2):397-424.
- Jost J (2020). *A Theory of System Justification*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Jost J (2021). *Left and Right The Psychological Significance of a Political Distinction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jost J, Kruglanski A, Simon L (2013). Effects of Epistemic Motivation on Conservatism, and Other System-Justifying Attitudes. In: *Shared Cognition in Organization of Knowledge*, (Ed.), John M. Levine, Leigh L. Thompson, David M. Messick.
- Jost J, Glaser J, Kruglanski A, Sulloway F (2003). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin* 129(3):339-375.
- Jost J, Napier JL, Thorisdottir H, Gosling SD, Palfai TP, Ostafin B (2007). Are needs to manage uncertainty and threat associated with political conservatism or ideological extremity? *Personality and social psychology bulletin* 33(7):989-1007.
- Jost J, Nosek B, Gosling S (2008). Ideology: Its Resurgence in Social, Personality, and Political Psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3(2):126-135.
- Jost JT, Blount S, Pfeffer J, Hunyady G (2003). Fair market ideology: Its cognitive-motivational underpinnings. *Research in Organizational Behavior* 25:53-91.
- Jost JT, Sterling J, Stern C (2017). Getting closure on conservatism, or the politics of epistemic and existential motivation. In: C. Kopetz, and A. Fishbach (Ed.), *The motivation-cognition interface: From the lab to the realworld: A Festschrift in honor of Arie W. Kruglanski*. New York: Taylor and Francis. pp.56-87.
- Jost JT, Thompson EP (2000). Group-based dominance and opposition to equality as independent predictors of self-esteem, ethnocentrism, and social policy attitudes among African Americans and European Americans. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 36(3):209-232.
- Journell W (2017). Politically conservative preservice teachers and the spiral of silence implications for teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly* 44(2):105-129.
- Kaur B (2012). Equity and social justice in teaching and teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 28(4):485-492.
- Kossowska M, Hiel A (2003). The relationship between need for closure and conservative beliefs in Western and Eastern Europe. *Political Psychology* 24(3):501-518.
- Katsarou E, Picower B, Stovall D (2010). Acts of solidarity: developing urban social justice educators in the struggle for quality public education. *Teacher Education Quarterly* 37(3):137-153.
- Kluegel JR, Smith E (1986). Beliefs about inequality: Americans' views of what is and what ought to be. New York: Aldine DeGruyter.
- Kraker-Pauw E, van Wesel F, Verwijmeren T, Denessen E, Krabbendam L (2016). Are teacher beliefs gender-related? *Learning and Individual Differences* 51:333-340.
- Lalas J (2007). Teaching for Social Justice in Multicultural Urban Schools: Conceptualization and Classroom Implication. *Multicultural Education* 14(3):17-21.
- Lárusdóttir S, O'Connor E (2021). School leadership for social justice. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies* 5 (Fall).
- Lehmiller J, Schmitt M (2006). Group domination and inequality in context: evidence for the unstable meanings of social dominance and authoritarianism. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 37(4):704-724.
- Mallery P, George D (2010). *SPSS For Windows Step by Step: A*

- Simple Guide and Reference, 17.0 Update. Boston: Pearson.
- Mikolajczak G, Becker J (2019). What is (un) fair? Political ideology and collective action. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 7(2):810-829.
- Mitchell L (2012). Individual teachers making a difference in the classroom and the school. In Rowena Arshad, Terry Wrigley and Lynne Pratt (Ed.), *Social justice re-examined dilemmas and solutions for the classroom teacher*. Trentham Books Limited. pp. 19-33.
- Mittler P (2012). *Overcoming Exclusion: Social Justice Through Education*, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Oyserman D, Schwarz N (2017). Conservatism as a situated identity: Implications for consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 27(4):532-536.
- Özen Y, Gül A (2007). Sosyal ve Eğitim Bilimleri Araştırmalarında Evren-Örneklem Sorunu [Population-Sampling Issue on Social and Educational Research Studies]. *Atatürk Üniversitesi Kazım Karabekir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 15:394-472.
- Pantić N (2015) A model for study of teacher agency for social justice, *Teachers and Teaching* 21(6):759-778.
- Pantić N, Florian L (2015). Developing teachers as agents of inclusion and social justice. *Education Inquiry* 6(3):27311.
- Pantić N, Carr D (2017). Educating teachers as agents of social justice: A virtue ethical perspective. In: *Teacher Education for the Changing Demographics of Schooling* (pp. 55-65). Springer.
- Peterson R, Rubie-Davies C, Osborne D, Sibley C (2016). Teachers' explicit expectations and implicit prejudiced attitudes to educational achievement: Relations with student achievement and the ethnic achievement gap. *Learning and Instruction* 42:123-140.
- Philpott R, Dagenais D (2012). Grappling with social justice: Exploring new teachers' practice and experiences. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* 7(1):85-99.
- Purao S (2014). Towards an egalitarian pedagogy for the millennial generation: A reflection. In *Innovative Practices in Teaching Information Sciences and Technology* (pp. 43-51). Springer, Cham.
- Sarıbay A, Ökten O, Yılmaz O (2017). Kişisel ve toplumsal düzeylerde eşitliğe karşıtlık ve değişime direnmenin muhafazakârlıkla ilişkisi. *Türk Psikoloji Yazıları* 39:24-41.
- Secchi D (2011). *Extendable rationality: Understanding decision making in organization*. Springer.
- Skitka J, Bauman C, Lytle B (2009). Limits on legitimacy: Moral and religious convictions as constraints on deference to authority. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 97(4):567-578.
- Solis N, Estepa PM (2021). Egalitarian Interactive Group Dialogue for children in at-risk school contexts. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 28(100456).
- Spitzman E, Balconi A (2019). Social Justice in Action: A Document Analysis of the Integration of Social Justice Principles into Teaching. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 19(5).
- Styslinger E, Stowe J, Walker N, Hostetler H (2019). *Becoming teachers for social justice: Raising critical consciousness. The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies Issues and Ideas* 92(1-2):9-14.
- Stoesz D (2014). Conservatism and Social Justice. In: Michael Reisch (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Social Justice* (pp.147-160). New York: Routledge.
- Tabachnick B G, Fidell L S (2013). *Using multivariate statistics*. Boston: Pearson.
- Takács J (2006). *Social exclusion of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Europe*. Brussels, Belgium: ILGA Europe.
- Tal C, Yinon Y (2002). Teachers' conservatism, openness to change, transcendence and self-enhancement in Daily life and in school situations. *Social Psychology of Education* 5(3):271-293.
- Tam F, Cheng Y (2003). A typology of organizational culture in primary schools: Productive, shaky, conservative, or hindering? *International Journal of Educational Reform* 12(1):1-25.
- Tetlock E, Mitchell G (1993). Liberal and conservative approaches to justice: Conflicting psychopolitical portraits. In B. Mellers and J. Baron (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on justice* (pp. 234-255). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Themane M, Thobejane H (2019). Teachers as change agents in making teaching inclusive in some selected rural schools of Limpopo Province, South Africa: Implications for teacher education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 23(4):369-383
- Turetsky M, Sinclair S, Starck G, Shelton N (2021). Beyond students: How teacher psychology shapes educational inequality. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 25(8):697-709.
- Tyler R, Huo J (2002). *Russell Sage Foundation series on trust. Trust in the law: Encouraging public cooperation with the police and courts*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Yamane T (2009). *Temel Örnekleme Yöntemleri*. Çev. Alptekin Esin, M. Akif Bakır, Celal Aydın. İstanbul: Literatür Yayıncılık.
- Young M (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wilson D (2013). *The psychology of conservatism (routledge revivals)*. Routledge.
- Wilson D (1973). The dynamic theory of conservatism. In G. D. Wilson (Ed.), *The psychology of conservatism*. (pp. 257-266). London: Academic Press.
- Van den Bergh L, Denessen E, Hornstra L, Voeten M, Holland RW (2010). The implicit prejudiced attitudes of teachers: Relations to teacher expectations and the ethnic achievement gap. *American Educational Research Journal* 47(2):497-527.
- Vangararai T (2008). Do teachers treat their pupils equally?
- Veliz L (2021). Translanguaging as a Pedagogy for Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice in a Multilingual Classroom. In *Evolving Multicultural Education for Global Classrooms* (pp.137-153). IGI
- Zeichner K (2020). Preparing teachers as democratic professionals. *Action in teacher Education* 42(1):38-48.