



EXAMINING THE PROFESSIONAL DEDICATION LEVELS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS WORKING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT VARIABLES

Cahit NURI

Cyprus International University, Northern Cyprus

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0805-1972>

cnuri@ciu.edu.tr

Kevser GÜLEÇ

Cyprus International University, Northern Cyprus

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6997-3797>

kevsergulec35@gmail.com

Başak BAĞLAMA

Cyprus International University, Northern Cyprus

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7982-8852>

bbaglama@ciu.edu.tr

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the professional commitment levels of special education teachers working in inclusive classes in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), according to different variables. This study used a relational survey model, which is a quantitative research method. A total of 130 special education teachers working in special education schools participated in this research during the 2021-2022 academic year. In the study, “Demographic Information Form” and “Teaching Professional Commitment Scale” were used as data collection tools. According to the findings obtained from the research, no significant differences were found in special education teachers’ professional commitment according to age, gender, marital status, professional seniority, support from colleagues, and support from administrators. Significant differences were found in special education teachers’ professional commitment according to educational status, job satisfaction, and wage satisfaction. According to the findings obtained as a result of the research, it has been revealed that special education teachers who are satisfied with their job are highly committed to their profession, self-sacrificing and devoted to their students.

Keywords: Professional commitment, special education, special education teacher, profession.

INTRODUCTION

In today's education system, the professional dedication levels of special education teachers working in preschools have a significant impact on the quality of education and student achievement (Fernandes, Jardim, & Lopes, 2021). Therefore, understanding the dedication of these teachers to their profession and identifying the factors that influence it have become focal points in educational research. This study aimed to examine the professional dedication levels of special education teachers working in preschool institutions according to different variables. Factors influencing teachers' professional dedication levels range from individual characteristics to institutional factors. For example, factors such as teachers' educational level, professional experience, characteristics of the institution they work for, student profiles, and professional support can influence their levels of professional dedication. This study provides an opportunity to better understand the impact of these factors on teachers' dedication to their profession (Gul & Gul, 2022).



Special education is education conducted in appropriate environments with specially trained personnel, developed educational programs, and methods based on the characteristics of individuals with special needs in all areas of development and their competencies in academic disciplines (Francisco, Hartman, & Wang, 2020). Özyürek (2008) stated that a scientific approach must be applied to solve existing educational problems and that only through this approach can qualified and competent teachers be trained. The shortage of teachers in this field is filled by appointments made by regular school and classroom teachers. The selection and in-service training of these teachers are important management issues. Administrators working in special education institutions are also expected to be proficient and experienced in the field. Special education administrators should strive to develop themselves in two ways. First, they should closely follow national and international innovations and developments related to special education and convey these changes to their staff, thereby contributing to their professional development. Second, they should remain up-to-date and renew themselves in the field of management. The administrator should be well-informed about the personnel's rights and adopt an attitude that ensures they do not suffer any losses (Özsoy et al., 2001).

One of the greatest challenges is special education teachers' commitment to their institutions. This is due to the increasing number of students with special needs and the significantly lower number of qualified special educators. In such cases, it is crucial to develop a skilled workforce and create healthy working environments that ensure the participation of special educators (Nance & Calabrese, 2009). Ingersoll (2011) reported that 25% of teachers leave the organization, and among them, 50% leave within the first five years of their career. This has become a serious issue in the public sector, as there are not enough teachers to meet the increasing number of children with special needs. Repetto, Cavanaugh, Wayer and Liu (2010) researched the issues related to special education and reported a significant increase in children with disabilities.

Various studies have associated teachers' commitment to their profession with different factors and conducted research in this direction (Evans & Tribble, 1986). Research shows that workload, the needs of children with special needs, paperwork, and administrative policies cause stress and low job satisfaction and commitment among teachers (Billingsley, 2004). In a national study, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) found that 1,000 special education teachers working in less privileged environments experienced burnout and high levels of attrition (Bibi et al., 2019).

Effective and qualified education is important for individuals' development. In this context, teachers play an important role in the education system. Therefore, teachers committed to their profession have a great need for effective teaching (Hoy & Miskel, 2010). There are several definitions of professional commitment. According to Shukla (2014), individuals' sense of attachment to the profession in a professional group is called their professional commitment. Butucha (2013) revealed that the commitment of individuals in any occupational group to their work strengthens their profession. Contributing to the development of students, increasing their academic success, giving importance to the profession, and attributing value is a dedication to the teaching profession.

When the characteristics of dedicated teachers are examined, the fact that teachers are proud of doing this profession while continuing their teaching profession and that they are very eager for professional development shows that they are dedicated to the profession. These teachers not only try to progress professionally but also make an effort and care for their students to reach a more advanced level (Shukla, 2014). Among the most important characteristics of teachers devoted to their profession are that they want to be better teachers than they can be, strive to convey new and different current changes to their students, fulfill their professional duties and be aware of their responsibilities, and accept that all their students are valuable and give the same importance to all of them. In addition, they are willing to spend extra time with their students and collaborate with their families (Jung & Sheldon, 2020). The dedication of teachers to the profession and the effort they make to their profession are directly related to each other (Turhan et al., 2012).



For teachers committed to the profession, work is the most important part of their lives. The fact that teachers are active in decision-making situations increases their dedication to the profession and enables them to continue their profession satisfactorily (Bogler & Somech, 2004). Committed employees are those who have a strong relationship with the work to be done and can compete with the obligations of their profession (Mostert & Rathbone, 2007). It is thought that there are three different components of professional commitment and these three components are behavioral (for example, “I spend a lot of energy doing my job.”), emotional dimension (for example, “I do my job with all my heart.”) and cognitive dimension (for example, “I do my job with concentration and I don’t notice how time passes.”) (Attridge, 2009). Professional commitment can be described as giving importance to one’s job, being enthusiastic, feeling inspired, honored, and risking everything (Antonison, 2010; Sawang, 2012; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). For this reason, it is seen that the importance of teachers in the education system is crucial, and teachers constitute the basic building blocks of the education system.

According to Shann (2014), teachers’ professional satisfaction plays an important role in their desire to continue their profession and their commitment to the profession. In addition, the importance of professional commitment greatly affects the success of teachers while performing the profession (Turhan et al., 2012). Bakker and Bal (2010) explained the importance that the most effective motivation source of the work performance of those who do the teaching profession is commitment, and as a result, they found that commitment has a significant effect on the work performance with their study among teachers. In a study conducted by Oncel (2007) on the relationship between teachers’ job engagement levels and their performance and intention to leave their workplace, it was observed that committed teachers moved away from their intention to leave their job. Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2006) examined teachers’ job engagement and burnout and found that, as the level of work engagement increased, the burnout level of teachers decreased. Therefore, for teaching to be efficient, teachers who are committed to the profession are needed (Tindowen, 2019).

In recent years, studies on students in need of special education have increased, and new practices have been introduced to expand and improve them (Er-Sabuncuoglu, 2016; Ozdemir et al., 2022; Yildiz et al., 2016). It is predicted that individuals who differ significantly from their peers in terms of their individual characteristics and educational qualifications need special education for various reasons. It is known that a job or profession takes an important time in an individual’s life and plays an undeniable role in the economic survival of the individual (Koustelios, 2001).

In special education, the preparation of the education and teaching plan according to the needs of the students, their individual characteristics, and their inadequacies play an important role. The quality of education depends on the qualifications of the teachers (Ibrahim & Iqbal, 2015). The skills gained by special education teachers, both in undergraduate education and in-service training, increase in quality (Ergul et al., 2013). In this context, before providing students with the knowledge and skills they will provide to individuals with special needs, it is among the primary objectives to be able to continue living independently in society and educate them as individuals who adapt to the world in which they live (Eldeniz-Cetin, 2017). In a study, determined that teachers who work with children who need special education are more prone to burnout than other teachers because of the environment in which they teach (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Nuri et al., 2017). Studies in the field of education have shown that organizational support is positively related to professional commitment (Cheung & Hukuk, 2008; Kaplan & Öğüt, 2012; Köse & Gönüllüoğlu, 2010; Piercy et al., 2006; Turunç & Çelik, 2010). Employees who receive sufficient support from their managers demonstrate greater commitment to their organizations. This finding indicates a positive relationship between organizational support and the three dimensions of organizational commitment (affective, continuance, and normative commitment) (Edwards & Peccei, 2010; Sofdel et al., 2013). Higher organizational support not only increases job satisfaction, but also improves the relationship between employees and the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).



When the literature is examined, it is seen that the most frequently studied subjects include teachers' professional commitment levels, the problems they experience, and factors affecting professional commitment levels, such as motivation, trust, and emotional intelligence (Billingsley, 2004; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Ibrahim & Iqbal, 2015; Stempien & Loeb, 2002).

Other studies have concluded that case load, student needs, paperwork, tasks, and demands in policies contribute to increased stress levels, reduced job satisfaction, and decreased commitment among special education teachers (Billingsley, 2004). Hulpia and Coladarci (1992) noted that “encouraging a teacher's sense of competence can promote that teacher's commitment to the organization and, consequently, to teaching.” Among the factors affecting the professional commitment of special education teachers, this appears to be the most critical, yet the least studied. Research indicates the need for further investigation into the factors contributing to special education teachers' professional burnout and commitment, as well as those that help motivate teachers in challenging situations (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Franse, 2008).

Additionally, in their study of professional commitment and professionalism, Guarino et al. (2006) stated that special education teachers' commitment varies. They noted that teachers' professional commitment in public schools might differ from that of the private sector. This study supports the need for further examination of this issue and comparison of professional commitment across different types of collaborative school environments.

No studies have examined the level of professional commitment of special education teachers according to various variables such as age, gender, marital status, professional seniority, education level, job satisfaction, wage satisfaction, support from colleagues, and support from administrators. In this respect, it is believed that this research will make an important contribution to the literature. In addition, it is thought that with the results to be obtained from this study, it can contribute to the professional development of teaching by determining and increasing the professional commitment levels of special education teachers who shape the future of special education and reducing their professional dedication problems. In this context, the aim of this study is to examine the level of dedication to the profession of special education teachers according to different variables. In line with this general aim, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the level of the professional commitment of special education teachers?
2. Do professional commitment levels of special education teachers differ according to the variables including age, gender, marital status, professional seniority, education level, job satisfaction, wage satisfaction, support from colleagues and support from administrators?

METHOD

Research Model

In this study, the relational survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, was used. Relational survey is a research model used to determine whether and/or how many related changes exist in two or more variables (Karasar, 2015).

Population and Sample

The population of this research consists of special education teachers working in special education schools throughout North Cyprus during the 2021-2022 academic year. The sample constituted a limited part of the population studied to obtain information about existing features. Sampling describes the process of obtaining reasonable samples to reveal the existing characteristics of the population and to make predictions regarding all transactions established during that time (Buyukozturk et al., 2010). The research sample consisted of 130 special-education teachers working in North Cyprus. Table 1 shows the distribution of special education teachers included in the study according to their demographic characteristics.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of special education teachers.

Variable		Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	21-29	36	27.27
	30-39	52	39.39
	40-49	34	25.76
	50 and above	10	7.58
Gender	Female	90	68.18
	Male	42	31.82
Marital status	Single	49	37.12
	Married	83	62.88
Professional seniority	1-10 years	52	39.39
	11-20 years	59	44.70
	21 years and above	21	15.91
Education level	Graduate	102	77.27
	Postgraduate	30	22.73
Job satisfaction	Yes	70	53.03
	No	62	46.97
Wage satisfaction	Yes	48	36.36
	No	84	63.64
Support from colleagues	Yes	113	85.61
	No	19	14.39
Support from administrators	Yes	97	73.48
	No	35	26.52

Table 1 shows that 27.27% of the teachers participating in the research were between the ages of 20-29, 39.39% between the ages of 30-39, 25.76% between the ages of 40-49, and 7.58% of those aged 50 and over. In addition, 68.18% of the teachers were female, 31.82% were male, 37.12% were single, 62.88% were married, 39.39% had a professional seniority of 1-10 years, % 44.70 had a professional seniority of 11-20 years, 15.91% had a seniority of 21 years or more, 77.27% had a postgraduate degree, and 22.73% had a graduate degree. It was determined that 53.03% of the teachers were satisfied with their jobs, 46.97% were not satisfied with their jobs, 36.36% were satisfied with the wages they received, and 63.64% were not satisfied with the wages they received. It was revealed that 85.61% of the teachers participating in the research received support from their colleagues, 14.39% did not receive support from their colleagues, 73.48% received support from administrators, and 26.52% did not receive support from administrators.

Data Collection Tools

In this section, the data collection tools “Demographic Information Form” and “Teaching Professional Commitment Scale” are explained.

Demographic Information Form

This form was prepared and used by the researchers in order to obtain information about demographic characteristics of special education teachers participated in the research such as age, gender, marital status, professional seniority, education level, job satisfaction, wage satisfaction, support from colleagues and support from administrators.

Teaching Professional Commitment Scale

In this study, the “Teaching Professional Commitment Scale” developed by Kozikoğlu and Senemoğlu (2018) was used as a data collection tool with 20 items in the scale. The scale has three sub-dimensions, the first eight items representing the “the commitment to the profession” dimension, the next 4 items the “dedication to the students” dimension and the last eight items the “devotion to the profession” dimension. The items in the scale were measured with a 5-point Likert type between “Strongly Disagree” and “Strongly Agree.” A high score on Likert-type scales indicates a high level of



the measured construct (Balci, 2021). To determine the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients were calculated as .92, .86, .70, and .90, for the first, second, third, and total scales, respectively. These values indicate that the scale was reliable.

Data Collection

In this study, special education teachers working in special education schools in North Cyprus were included in the study in order to collect data. Special education teachers participating in the research were obtained using the convenience sampling technique, a non-random sampling method. In the convenience sampling method, the researcher starts to create a sample from the most accessible respondent until he reaches a group of the size he needs or works on a case sample that is the most accessible and will provide the highest level of savings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005). While using the convenience sampling method, it was thought that the sample should represent the main group well, and care was taken to reach schools in different regions as much as possible. Special education teachers were provided online in electronic media via Google Forms.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with the SPSS 25 program. Kurtosis and skewness values were checked to determine distribution normality. Parametric analysis was used depending on the normal distribution of the data on each scale. After the normality analysis, descriptive statistics for the demographic variables in the study were calculated. Before starting the analyses, the Cronbach Alpha test was applied to the teachers' responses to the "Teaching Professional Commitment Scale." According to the Cronbach Alpha test results, the alpha coefficient of the teachers' responses to the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale was found to be 0.936. The distribution according to the demographic characteristics of the teachers participating in the research was calculated by frequency analysis, and descriptive statistics were included for the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale scores. In Table 2, the normal distribution of the scores on the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale included in the study was examined with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and it was determined that the data set did not show a normal distribution. For this reason, non-parametric hypothesis tests were used to test the hypotheses of the research.

Table 2. Teaching professional commitment scale normality tests.

	Value	Df	p
Commitment to the profession	.78	132	.000
Dedication to the students	.85	132	.000
Devotion to the profession	.91	132	.000
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	.88	132	.000

The Mann-Whitney U test was used when the independent variable consisted of two groups and the Kruskal Wallis H test was used when it consisted of more than two groups.

RESULTS

Results on the Scores of Special Education Teachers from the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale

Table 3. Scores of special education teachers from the teaching professional commitment scale.

	n	\bar{x}	Sd	Min	Max
Commitment to the profession	132	4.31	.88	1.75	5.00
Dedication to the students	132	4.46	.58	2.75	5.00
Devotion to the profession	132	4.17	.74	2.00	5.00
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	132	4.34	.62	2.25	5.00



When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the average of 4.31 ± 0.88 points, a minimum of 1.75, a maximum of 5 points from the sub-dimension of commitment to the profession of the special education teachers participating in the research, an average of $4.46 \pm .58$ points from the sub-dimension of dedication to the students, a minimum of 2.75, a maximum of 5 points, an average of $4.17 \pm .74$ points, a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 5 points from the sub-dimension of devotion to the profession and an average of $4.34 \pm .62$ points, a minimum of 2.25 and a maximum of 5 from the general Teaching Professional Commitment Scale.

Results on the Comparison of the Scores of Special Education from the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale by Age Group

Table 4. Comparison of the scores of special education from the teaching professional commitment scale by age group.

	Age	n	\bar{x}	SD	M	SM	X ²	p
Commitment to the profession	20-29	36	4.56	.82	4.94	79.82	7.314	.063
	30-39	52	4.18	.89	4.50	58.13		
	40-49	34	4.29	.85	4.69	64.63		
	50 and above	10	4.20	1.07	4.75	68.40		
Dedication to the students	20-29	36	4.59	.45	4.63	74.46	3.518	.318
	30-39	52	4.35	.64	4.50	59.51		
	40-49	34	4.49	.56	4.75	67.78		
	50 and above	10	4.43	.77	4.75	69.85		
Devotion to the profession	20-29	36	4.38	.69	4.75	78.28	5.643	.130
	30-39	52	4.04	.74	4.00	59.03		
	40-49	34	4.15	.74	4.25	64.65		
	50 and above	10	4.20	.80	4.13	69.25		
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	20-29	36	4.54	.48	4.63	78.88	6.344	.096
	30-39	52	4.22	.66	4.48	58.16		
	40-49	34	4.34	.61	4.55	65.32		
	50 and above	10	4.29	.76	4.50	69.30		

*p<.05

When Table 4 is examined, it was determined that there is no statistically significant difference between the general scores of Teaching Professional Commitment Scale and the sub-dimensions of the scale involving commitment to the profession, dedication to students and devotion to the profession according to age groups of the teachers participating in the research ($p > 0.05$). Regardless of the age groups of the teachers, the scores of commitment to the profession, dedication to students and devotion to the profession are similar.

Results on the Comparison of the Scores of Special Education from the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale by Gender

Table 5. Comparison of the scores of special education from the teaching professional commitment scale by gender.

	Gender	n	\bar{x}	SD	M	SM	Z	p
Commitment to the profession	Female	90	4.32	.92	4.88	68.67	-.979	.327
	Male	42	4.29	.82	4.75	61.85		
Dedication to the students	Female	90	4.45	.58	4.63	65.92	-.258	.796
	Male	42	4.48	.59	4.63	67.74		
Devotion to the profession	Female	90	4.16	.75	4.25	65.87	-.279	.780
	Male	42	4.20	.72	4.50	67.85		
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	Female	90	4.34	.62	4.55	66.53	-.015	.988
	Male	42	4.35	.61	4.58	66.43		

*p<.05



The scores of the teachers on the scale of commitment to the teaching profession according to their gender were compared using the Mann Whitney U test. The results regarding this comparison are presented in Table 5. When the table is examined, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the general scores of the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale and the scores of the sub-dimensions of the scale according to the gender of the teachers participating in the research ($p > .05$). The general scores of female and male teachers on the scale of commitment to the profession, the scores of commitment to the profession, dedication to students and devotion to the profession are similar.

Results on the Comparison of the Scores of Special Education from the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale by Marital Status

Table 6. Comparison of the scores of special education from the teaching professional commitment scale by marital status.

	Marital Status	n	\bar{x}	SD	M	SM	Z	p
Commitment to the profession	Single	49	4.29	.92	4.88	66.23	-.063	.950
	Married	83	4.33	.86	4.75	66.66		
Dedication to the students	Single	49	4.58	.54	4.88	74.60	-1.899	.058
	Married	83	4.39	.60	4.50	61.72		
Devotion to the profession	Single	49	4.31	.70	4.50	74.09	-1.770	.077
	Married	83	4.09	.75	4.25	62.02		
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	Single	49	4.41	.58	4.55	71.59	-1.177	.239
	Married	83	4.30	.64	4.55	63.49		

* $p < .05$

When Table 6 is examined, it has been determined that there is no statistically significant difference between the general scores of the special education teachers participating in the research according to their marital status, and the scores of the sub-dimensions of commitment to the profession, dedication to the students and devotion to the profession ($p > .05$). The level of dedication to the profession among special education teachers is not affected by their marital status.

Results on the Comparison of the Scores of Special Education from the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale by Professional Seniority

Table 7. Comparison of the scores of special education from the teaching professional commitment scale by professional seniority.

	Professional Seniority	n	\bar{x}	SD	M	SM	X ²	p
Commitment to the profession	1-10 years	52	4.56	.71	4.88	77.32	7.697	.021*
	11-20 years	59	4.13	.93	4.50	57.74		
	21 years and above	21	4.19	1.00	4.50	64.33		
Dedication to the students	1-10 years	52	4.54	.51	4.63	71.89	4.441	.109
	11-20 years	59	4.37	.59	4.50	58.88		
	21 years and above	21	4.50	.72	4.88	74.55		
Devotion to the profession	1-10 years	52	4.25	.72	4.50	70.60	1.225	.542
	11-20 years	59	4.11	.72	4.25	62.65		
	21 years and above	21	4.15	.83	4.25	67.17		
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	1-10 years	52	4.49	.50	4.58	74.90	5.312	.070
	11-20 years	59	4.22	.64	4.45	58.30		
	21 years and above	21	4.31	.76	4.60	68.74		

* $p < .05$



When Table 7 is examined, no statistically significant difference was found between the general scores of the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale according to professional seniority in the profession of the special education teachers participating in the research and the scores of the sub-dimensions of the scale ($p > .05$). The general scores of the teachers with a seniority of 1-10 years in the profession and the mean scores of the sub-dimensions of the scale were calculated higher, but this is not statistically significant. There is no difference in the level of dedication to the teaching profession among special education teachers based on their seniority. However, in the "Commitment to the profession" sub-dimension of the dedication to the profession scale, it can be interpreted that as seniority increases, professional commitment decreases.

Results on the Comparison of the Scores of Special Education from the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale by Education Level

Table 8. Comparison of the scores of special education from the teaching professional commitment scale by education level.

	Education Level	n	\bar{x}	SD	M	SM	Z	p
Commitment to the profession	Graduate	102	4.24	.93	4.75	63.90	-1.478	.139
	Postgraduate	30	4.55	.65	4.88	75.35		
Dedication to the students	Graduate	102	4.43	.58	4.63	63.64	-1.608	.108
	Postgraduate	30	4.56	.61	4.88	76.22		
Devotion to the profession	Graduate	102	4.11	.72	4.13	62.72	-2.118	.034*
	Postgraduate	30	4.38	.78	4.63	79.37		
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	Graduate	102	4.29	.63	4.50	62.63	-2.145	.032*
	Postgraduate	30	4.52	.54	4.73	79.65		

* $p < .05$

When Table 8 is examined, it was revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the scores of devotion to the profession and the general scores of the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale according to the educational status of the special education teachers participating in the research ($p < .05$). The sub-dimension of devotion to the profession scores and the overall scores of the scale among teachers with postgraduate degree were found to be statistically significantly higher than the scores of the teachers with graduate degree.

Results on the Comparison of the Scores of Special Education from the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale by Job Satisfaction

Table 9. Comparison of the scores of special education from the teaching professional commitment scale by job satisfaction.

	Job Satisfaction	n	\bar{x}	SD	M	SM	Z	p
Commitment to the profession	Yes	70	4.70	.51	5.00	83.17	-5.455	.000*
	No	62	3.87	1.00	4.00	47.68		
Dedication to the students	Yes	70	4.61	.50	4.75	76.50	-3.242	.001*
	No	62	4.28	.63	4.31	55.21		
Devotion to the profession	Yes	70	4.38	.64	4.50	76.71	-3.291	.001*
	No	62	3.94	.78	4.00	54.98		
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	Yes	70	4.60	.42	4.73	82.22	-5.025	.000*
	No	62	4.05	.67	4.20	48.75		

* $p < .05$

According to Table 9, it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the general scores of the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale and the sub-dimensions of the scale including commitment to the profession, dedication to students and devotion to the profession



based on the job satisfaction of the participating special education teachers ($p < .05$). In general, it was found that teachers who are satisfied with their job got higher scores when compared to the teachers who are not satisfied with their job.

Results on the Comparison of the Scores of Special Education from the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale by Wage Satisfaction

Table 10. Comparison of the scores of special education from the teaching professional commitment scale by wage satisfaction.

	Wage Satisfaction	n	\bar{x}	SD	M	SM	Z	p
Commitment to the profession	Yes	48	4.65	.63	5.00	82.59	-3.746	.000*
	No	84	4.12	.95	4.50	57.30		
Dedication to the students	Yes	48	4.57	.55	4.81	74.65	-1.879	.060
	No	84	4.39	.60	4.63	61.85		
Devotion to the profession	Yes	48	4.34	.76	4.50	77.16	-2.445	.015*
	No	84	4.07	.71	4.00	60.41		
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	Yes	48	4.56	.54	4.63	81.11	-3.324	.001*
	No	84	4.22	.63	4.38	58.15		

* $p < .05$

When Table 10 is examined, it has been determined that there is a statistically significant difference between the general scores of the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale and the scores of the sub-dimensions of commitment to the profession and dedication to the students according to the satisfaction with the wages of the special education teachers participating in the research ($p < .05$). In conclusion, it can be said that the monthly salary of special education teachers affects their professional commitment and dedication to their work.

Results on the Comparison of the Scores of Special Education from the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale by Support from Colleagues

Table 11. Comparison of the scores of special education from the teaching professional commitment scale by support from colleagues.

	Support from Colleagues	n	\bar{x}	SD	M	SM	Z	p
Commitment to the profession	Yes	113	4.39	.82	4.88	69.22	-2.040	.041
	No	19	3.84	1.11	4.00	50.34		
Dedication to the students	Yes	113	4.49	.57	4.63	68.16	-1.235	.217
	No	19	4.28	.65	4.25	56.63		
Devotion to the profession	Yes	113	4.17	.73	4.25	66.13	-.272	.786
	No	19	4.20	.78	4.00	68.68		
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	Yes	113	4.39	.58	4.55	68.35	-1.360	.174
	No	19	4.09	.77	4.00	55.47		

* $p < .05$

When Table 11 is examined, it is seen that there is no statistically significant difference between the general scores of Teaching Professional Commitment Scale and the scores of the sub-dimensions of commitment to the profession, dedication to students and devotion to the profession according to the support status of the special education teachers participating in the research from their colleagues ($p > .05$). It can be inferred that support from colleagues does not have a statistically significant effect on professional commitment, dedication to students and devotion to the profession. It was concluded that special education teachers are committed to their profession whether they receive support from their administrators or not.



Results on the Comparison of the Scores of Special Education from the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale by Support from Administrators

Table 12. Comparison of the scores of special education from the teaching professional commitment scale by support from administrators.

	Support from Administrators	n	\bar{x}	SD	M	SM	Z	p
Commitment to the profession	Yes	97	4.36	.86	4.88	68.10	-0.822	.411
	No	35	4.18	.93	4.50	62.06		
Dedication to the students	Yes	97	4.48	.59	4.63	68.09	-0.809	.418
	No	35	4.41	.57	4.50	62.09		
Devotion to the profession	Yes	97	4.20	.75	4.25	68.35	-0.935	.350
	No	35	4.09	.71	4.00	61.37		
Teaching Professional Commitment Scale	Yes	97	4.37	.62	4.55	68.84	-1.169	.242
	No	35	4.25	.60	4.45	60.03		

*p<.05

According to Table 12, there is no statistically significant difference between the general scores of the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale and the scores of the sub-dimensions of commitment to the profession, dedication to the students and devotion to the profession based on the support from administrators among special education teachers participating in the research ($p>.05$). The scores of the special education teachers who received support from the administrators and those who did not receive the support from the administrators were found to be similar.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

In this study, professional commitment levels of special education teachers were examined according to various demographic variables, and it was determined that the professional commitment levels of the teachers were high. There was no statistically significant difference between the general scores of the special education teachers' scores on the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale and the scores they obtained from the sub-dimensions of the scale according to gender. Erturk (2011) also found that female teachers' commitment to the teaching profession was higher than that of male teachers, and their commitment to school and colleagues was lower than that of male teachers. On the other hand, other studies indicate no significant difference in terms of professional commitment according to gender among teachers (Artun, 2008; Apak, 2009; Eroglu, 2007; Zog, 2007). Therefore, it can be inferred that there are contradictory results in the literature on teachers' professional commitment and gender. This can be explained by the fact that female teachers are more affectionate, emotional and attached to children with the sense of motherhood stemming from their gender characteristics, while male teachers are more responsible for meeting the economic needs of the family.

There was no statistically significant difference between special education teachers' professional commitments according to marital status. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are not many studies in the literature that deal with teachers' professional commitment levels according to their marital status. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are not many studies in the literature that deal with teachers' professional commitment levels according to their marital status. The findings obtained from this study suggest that marital status does not have distinctive features in terms of commitment to the teaching profession. Results from the present study showed that there was no statistically significant difference between special education teachers' professional commitment and their seniority. Kozikoglu and Ozcanlı (2020) investigated teachers' 21st century teaching skills and their commitment to their profession and concluded that teachers with 1-5 years of experience have a higher level of commitment to the profession than teachers with 6-10 years of experience. Aydin, Sarier, and Uysal (2013) concluded in his study with school administrators and teachers that the level of commitment to the profession does not differ according to seniority and their ideas about



professional dedication are similar. According to the results of this research, it has been determined that the variable of professional seniority is not an effective variable in teachers' commitment to the profession. It was found that there is a statistically significant difference between the scores of devotion to the profession and the general scores of the Teaching Professional Commitment Scale according to the educational status of the special education teachers participating in the research. On the other hand, Turhan et al. (2012) revealed in their research that classroom teachers with graduate degrees perceived less difficulty than teachers with postgraduate degrees. In addition, Canli (2020) concluded that there is no difference in teachers' views on dedication, commitment to the profession, and self-sacrificing work according to their education level. Teachers with postgraduate education are considered to have more theoretical knowledge of their profession, and their willingness to apply this theoretical knowledge increases their level of dedication to the profession. The results revealed a significant difference between special education teachers' professional commitment and job satisfaction. In other words, special education teachers who are satisfied with their jobs are highly committed to their profession. It is thought that teachers who are satisfied with their jobs will have a positive effect on their commitment to the profession. It can be inferred that the opposite is true for teachers who are not satisfied with their jobs. It is also considered that dissatisfaction with their job will cause special education teachers to show less patience and be less productive while performing their profession and this might negatively affect their commitment to the profession. When other studies in the literature are examined, there are few that address teachers' commitment levels according to their job satisfaction. It was also determined that there was a statistically significant difference between special education teachers' professional commitment and wage satisfaction. Accordingly, since teachers who are satisfied with their wages may be less worried about meeting their vital needs, they may work more selflessly in their profession and their dedication to the profession may be high. Teachers who are not satisfied with the wage they receive may have low motivation while performing their profession and may be dissatisfied while doing their job. It is thought that this situation will cause their professional commitment to be low. When the research is examined, it is seen that there are few studies in the literature that deal with teachers' commitment levels according to their satisfaction with wages. Therefore, it is important for further research to investigate the relationship between teachers' professional commitment levels and demographic variables such as job and wage satisfaction.

It was determined that there is no statistically significant difference between special education teachers' professional commitment and their perceived support from their colleagues. According to the results of the present study, this might be due to the fact that special education teachers continue to work individually in line with the needs of their students with special needs. The fact that most of the special education teachers have chosen this branch with their own preferences makes us think that they are self-sacrificing in terms of their personality traits. This idea supports the conclusion that there is no significant difference between special education teachers and their colleagues who receive support, even if they do not receive support from their colleagues. When other studies in the literature are examined, there are not many studies that examine teachers' commitment levels according to their support status from their colleagues.

Results showed no significant difference between special education teachers' professional commitment and their perceived support from administrators. Few studies have examined the professional commitment of special education teachers to the teaching profession according to support from administrators. Teachers working with students with special needs require more professional competence, sacrifice, patience, skill and a sense of teacher self-efficacy than teachers working with children with typical development (Karahan & Uyanik-Balat, 2011). In this study, on the other hand, based on the idea that special education teachers have personality traits that include these qualities required by the profession, it was supported that whether the teachers received support from the administrators did not make a significant difference in their commitment to teaching profession.



Based on the results of the study, some recommendations can be presented for further research and practices. Teachers can be provided with working environments where they can interact more with their colleagues, develop positive relationships and benefit from each other's experiences. By emphasizing the impact and important role of the teaching profession on society, it can be ensured that teachers are motivated by the dignity of their profession rather than financial factors. Organizations such as panels, symposiums, conferences and workshops can be organized for teachers who do not want to do postgraduate education. This study is limited to the online data collection method and quantitative research design. In future studies, the scales can be applied by directly reaching the teachers. In addition, the subject can be explored in depth through a qualitative or mixed research design. By improving the economic and social rights of teachers, it can be ensured that they create a more positive perception towards their profession. Different related factors that affect teachers' commitment can be explored.

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Ethics and Conflict of Interest

The ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the International Cyprus University Rectorate on 17.01.2022 with the decision number EKK21-22/08/001. The authors of the study acted in accordance with ethical rules in all processes of the research. There are no individuals or financial relationships that could be perceived as potential conflicts of interest related to this study.

Contribution Rate of Authors

The authors contributed equally to this article.

Corresponding Author

Correspondence to Cahit Nuri, cnuri@ciu.edu.tr

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About the authors

Cahit NURI

Cahit NURI is an assistant professor at the Department of Special Education Teaching in the Faculty of Education at Cyprus International University. He has studied special education, adhd, family education, and psychology.

Kevser GÜLEÇ

Kevser GÜLEÇ is a research assistant in the Faculty of Education at Cyprus International University. She has studied special education.

Başak BAĞLAMA

Başak BAĞLAMA is an assistant professor at the Department of Special Education Teaching in the Faculty of Education at Cyprus International University. She has studied special education, autism, psychology, and family guidance.