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ARAŞTIRMA

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Mindfulness in Teaching and Positive Characteristics in Teachers: Prosocial Behaviors as Mediator

Öğretimde Bilinçli Farkındalık ve Pozitif Öğretmen Özellikleri: Prososyal Davranışların Aracılığı

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ABSTRACT

The importance of the influence of teachers on the development of individuals is often emphasized; It is accepted that positive teacher characteristics have positive effects on both teachers and students. However, it is seen that studies on variables that affect positive teacher characteristics are mainly concerned with intrapersonal psychological processes. For this reason, it is thought that considering the variables that may affect positive teacher characteristics in the context of interpersonal and educational environments will contribute to the literature on positive teacher characteristics. This study examines the mediating role of prosocialness in the relationship between mindfulness in teaching and positive characteristics in teachers. A total of 398 teachers working at various educational levels participated in the study. It was observed that the goodness of fit values in the tested model was within acceptable limits. Prosocialness was found to be a full mediator between mindfulness and positive characteristics in teachers. When the findings of the study were examined, it was seen that it is important to study prosocialness and mindfulness in teaching among teachers and teacher candidates.

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ÖZET

Öğretmenlerin, bireylerin gelişimleri üzerindeki etkilerinin önemi sıklıkla vurgulanmakta; pozitif öğretmen özelliklerinin hem öğretmenler hem de öğrenciler üzerindeki olumlu etkileri kabul edilmektedir. Ancak pozitif öğretmen özelliklerinde etkili olan değişkenlere yönelik çalışmaların ağırlıklı olarak kişi-içi psikolojik süreçlerle ilgilendiği görülmektedir. Bu nedenle pozitif öğretmen özelliklerinde etkili olabilecek değişkenlerin kişilerarası ve eğitim ortamı bağlamında ele alınmasının pozitif öğretmen özelliklerine dair alanyazına katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu çalışma, öğretimde bilinçli farkındalık ile öğretmenlerdeki olumlu özellikler arasındaki ilişkide prososyal davranışların aracı rolünü incelemektedir. Araştırmaya çeşitli eğitim kademelerinde görev yapan toplam 398 öğretmen katılmıştır. Yapısal eşitlik modelinin kullanıldığı bu çalışmada öğretimde bilinçli farkındalık ile pozitif öğretmenlik arasındaki ilişkide prososyal davranışların tam aracı olduğu bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmanın bulguları incelendiğinde, öğretmen yetiştirme ve hizmet içi eğitimlerinde öğretimde bilinçli farkındalık ve prososyal davranışlara yer verilmesinin önemli olduğu görülmüştür.

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Ethical Statement: The research was reviewed by Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee and was given permission.

INTRODUCTION

The effects of teachers on the lives of individuals are indisputable. It is known that positive characteristics in teachers such as extraversion, self-efficacy, and teaching performance are related to students' academic achievement (Hakim, 2015), student-teacher interaction (de Jong et al., 2014), student self-efficacy (Kim, Dar-Nimrod & MacCann, 2018), and happiness (Eryılmaz, 2014). Although it is difficult to handle positive features of teachers in a theoretical framework, in a study on the examination of student views on the characteristics of positive teachers, these features are categorized as analytical/synthetic approach, organization/openness, lecturer/group interaction, lecturer-student interaction, and dynamism/enthusiasm (Aregbeyen, 2010). In another study, adolescents describe the teachers who are extroverted as "liked" teachers (Eryılmaz, 2014). Positive teacher characteristics are included under concepts such as effective (Isenberg et al., 2016; Külekçi, 2018) and master (Zayac & Lenhard, 2018). In the positive teaching model based on positive psychology proposed by Eryılmaz and Bek (2018), these characteristics are stated as having extroverted personality traits, experiencing flow during the lesson, telling the subject by embodying it, including the student in the lesson and establishing positive relationships with the student. Considering the positive relationship of positive teacher traits with positive traits and their negative relationship with negative traits, the importance of understanding the variables that have a causality relationship with positive teaching becomes more important. In this study, positive teacher characteristics were investigated using the theoretical model proposed by Eryılmaz and Bek (2018).

Mindfulness in Teaching and Positive Characteristics in Teachers

In recent years, various studies have been carried out on mindfulness and the personal and professional characteristics of teachers. For example, positive significant relationships were found between teachers' dispositional mindfulness and their well-being, resilience, teacher-student relationships, and professional performance (Becker, Gallagher & Whitaker, 2017; Birchinall, Spendlove & Buck, 2019; Hwang, Barlett, Greben & Hand, 2017). Dispositional mindfulness is defined as the individual focusing all his/her attention on what is happening at the moment and accepting it without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Most of the studies on mindfulness in teachers have addressed mindfulness within a dispositional framework. In recent years, there have been several research-based on conceptualizing the contextual and interpersonal structure of mindfulness; interpersonal mindfulness (Erus & Tekel, 2020; Pratscher, Rose, Markovitz, & Bettencourt, 2018), mindfulness in parenting (McCaffrey, Reitman & Black, 2017), and mindfulness in teaching (Frank, Jennings & Greenberg, 2016). Interpersonal mindfulness is conceptualized as a structure in interpersonal interactions that includes an individual's awareness of themselves and others, as well as judgmental and non-reactive processes (Pratscher et al., 2018). Mindfulness in teaching approaches mindfulness in the context of teaching deals with mindfulness in teaching processes and examines it in a two-factor structure, namely, teacher intrapersonal mindfulness and teacher interpersonal mindfulness. Teacher intrapersonal mindfulness indicates attention and awareness, while teacher interpersonal mindfulness points out that the teacher is open, accepting, and receptive in teacher-student interaction (Frank et al., 2016). It is stated that teacher interpersonal mindfulness is associated with emotional supportiveness (Molloy Elreda, Jennings, DeMauro, Mischenko, & Brown, 2019) and well-being (Tarrasch, Berger, & Grossman, 2020), whereas intrapersonal mindfulness is associated with work meaning and burn out (Guidetti, Viotti, Badagliacca, Colombo, & Converso, 2019).

Prosocial Behaviors as Mediator

Mindfulness in teaching is defined as the use of mindfulness skills in the process of teaching activities (Frank et al., 2016). Hunter (2013, p.59) stated that “If people pay attention to their mind, body, and emotions, they begin to approach the world with more openness and inquisitiveness. Quite often that touches off deeper values, such as concern for others and the world at large”. Hunter's approach shows that there is a link between mindfulness in teaching and concern about others. This concern is thought to indicate prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior is defined as the act of a person considering the benefits of other people (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006). According to Carlo, Hausmann, Christiansen, and Randall (2003), prosocial behavior is defined as behaviors that can be for the benefit of another person or a group of people, without being under pressure and of their own will. In studies on mindfulness and prosocial behaviors, it has been found that dispositional mindfulness significantly predicts and/or increases prosocial behavior (Chen & Jordan, 2018; Condon 2019; Hafenbrack, Cameron, Spreitzer, et al., 2020).

Taking into account the above, the first hypothesis of the current study was established on the focus of mindfulness on interpersonal processes in teaching and the findings of studies on mindfulness and prosocial behavior:

Hypothesis 1: Mindfulness in teaching is directly related to teacher prosocial behavior.

In the current study, teachers' positive characteristics were discussed as extroversion, establishing a positive relationship with students, having a flow in the lesson, explaining the subject by concretizing it and including the student in the lesson. It is also observed in the relevant literature that there are significant relationships between prosocial behaviors and extroverted personality traits and establishing positive relationships with others (Tariq & Naqvi, 2020). The other three positive characteristics contain a concern aimed to help the learner. Therefore, the second and third hypotheses of the research have been formed:

Hypothesis 2: Teacher prosocial behaviors are directly related to teacher positive characteristics.

Hypothesis 3: Teacher prosocial behaviors mediate the relationship between mindfulness in teaching and positive teacher characteristics.

METHOD

Design

This research was designed in a descriptive research model. Descriptive research is aimed at revealing the relationships between variables (Karasar, 2006). In the study, the existence of co-change between variables that are expected to be theoretically related was examined.

Sample

The sample of this research was reached through convenient sampling. Participants consisted of 398 teachers, of which 261 (65.6%) were women and 137 (34.4%) were men. The average age of the teachers participating in the study was 46.28. The professional experience of the participants varied between 1-47 years. The average years of professional experience were 22.86. The analysis of the level of education worked showed that 63 of the participants work in kindergarten (15.8%), 158 (39.7%) in primary school, 93 (23.4%) in secondary school, and 84 (21.1%) in high school.

Ethical Statement

This study was completed in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration. Accordingly, the research was reviewed by Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee was given permission.

Instruments and Procedures

Mindfulness in Teaching Scale (MTS). The scale was developed by Frank, Jennings and Greenberg (2016). MTS has two factors “teacher intrapersonal mindfulness” (9 items) and “teacher interpersonal mindfulness” (5 items). As a result of the test-retest reliability performed with an interval of six months ($p>.05$), no significant difference was obtained between the two measurements. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was conducted by Aslan-Gördesli, Arslan, Çekici, Aydın-Sünbül, and Malkoç (2019). After testing the linguistic equivalence of the scale, CFA was performed for construct validity. The second item with a factor load below .30 was excluded from the scale and CFA was repeated. The goodness of fit values of the 13-item Turkish form were found as $\chi^2/df=2.111$, IFI=.93, CFI=.93, GFI=.95 and RMSEA=.055. The convergent validity study of the Turkish scale was carried out with the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale and a significant relationship was found between the two scales ($p<.001$). For the discriminant validity of the scale, the scores of the lower 27% and upper 27% groups were compared and significant differences were observed between the groups. As a result of the reliability analysis of the scale, the internal consistency coefficient was found to be .78, and significant relationships were found between the test-retest scores performed with an interval of three weeks. The internal consistency coefficient of the Mindfulness in Teaching Scale was found to be .71 in this study.

Adult Prosocialness Scale. The scale was developed by Caprara, Steca, Zelli, and Capanna (2005). The internal consistency coefficient of the original form of the scale consisting of 16 items was observed as .91 and the corrected item-total correlation values varied between .47 and .77. The Turkish adaptation study of the scale was carried out by Bağcı and Öztürk Samur (2016). As a result of EFA, it was revealed that the Turkish form of the Adult Prosocialness Scale consists of a single factor as in the original scale. The fit index values as a result of CFA were obtained as $\chi^2=430.84$, $\chi^2/df=4.14$, CFI=.93, NNFI=.92, NFI=.92 and GFI=.85 for the mother sample; whereas it was found to be $\chi^2=360.92$, $\chi^2/df=3.47$, CFI=.95, NNFI=.95, NFI=.94, and GFI=.87 for the father sample. On the other hand, the internal consistency coefficient was found to be .71 for the mother sample and .90 for the father sample. The internal consistency coefficient of the Adult Prosocialness Scale in this study was found as .94.

Positive Teacher Scale. The scale was developed by Eryılmaz and Bek (2018). As a result of the EFA of the 21-item scale, a five-factor structure that explains 63.23% of the total variance was obtained. These factors were named as “to have extroverted personality”, “to concretize the subject that is taught”, “to establish a positive relationship with the student”, “to increase student’s engagement in the class”, and “to increase students’ flow experience”. As a result of the CFA performed for this five-factor structure, the goodness of fit values were reached as RMSEA=.067, NFI=.92, NNFI=.95, CFI=.96, IFI=.96, RFI=.91, GFI=.87 and AGFI=0.83. Positive and moderately significant ($r=0.45$; $p<0.01$) relationships were found between the Positive Teacher Scale and the Positive Emotions Scale. The internal consistency coefficient of the whole scale was reached to be .89. For this study, the internal consistency coefficient of the Positive Teacher Scale was found to be .75.

Data Analysis

Data were collected from 437 teachers within the scope of the research. By calculating Mahalanobis distances, 39 data sets that were not normally distributed were excluded from the analysis, and analyzes were conducted with 398 data sets. Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients between variables were performed with SPSS 22.0 package program; while the model test was carried out using AMOS 23 package program.

RESULTS

The analysis of the data obtained from the sample is first initiated with the examination of the correlation coefficients between variables (Table 1). Then, a model test was implemented to test the hypotheses of the research and the measurement model to understand whether the relationships between variables were convenient for model testing.

Table 1. Correlation coefficients between variables

Variable	Pearson correlation			Descriptive Statistics			
	1	2	3	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Mindfulness in teaching	1	.16**	.16**	56.20	5.71	-1.16	1.83
Prosocial behavior		1	.58**	69.67	7.49	-.33	-.41
Teacher positivity			1	92.79	8.80	-.46	.33

Note: N=398, ** p<.01

As presented in Table 1, the skewness-kurtosis values of the variables vary between -1.16 and 1.83 for mindfulness in teaching, -.33 to -.41 for prosocial behavior, and -.46 to .33 for teacher positivity. Stevens (2002) states that the skewness-kurtosis coefficient being in the ± 2 range indicates the normal distribution of the data. When the correlation coefficients between variables were examined, significant relationships were found between teacher positivity and mindfulness in teaching ($r=.16$, $p<.01$) and prosocial behaviors ($r=.58$, $p<.01$). In addition, a significant relationship was found between mindfulness in teaching and prosocial behaviors ($r=.16$, $p<.01$).

After testing the significance of the correlations between variables, the goodness of fit values for the measurement model were tested. The goodness of fit values of the measurement model was found as $\chi^2/df=1.99$, CFI=.98, TLI=.97, GFI=.97, SRMR= .035 and RMSEA=.05.

The measurement model goodness of fit indexes was found sufficient, the structural model tested. Since Prosocialness Scale is a unidimensional scale, parceling was carried out. In structural equation models, if one latent variable is unidimensional, parceling is used (Matsunaga, 2008). After observing that the standardized path coefficient between mindfulness and teacher positivity in teaching was not significant in the structural model, the revised model was tested. The goodness of fit values for the structural model and the adjusted model are included in Table 2.

Table 2. The goodness of fit values of the tested model

The goodness of Fit Indexes	Structural model	Adjusted model
χ^2/df	1.90	1.89
CFI	.98	.98
TLI	.97	.97
GFI	.97	.96
SRMR	.035	.036
RMSEA	.048	.047

Table 2 presents the goodness of fit values of the model as $\chi^2/df=1.89$, CFI=.98, TLI=.97, GFI=.96 and RMSEA=.047. The tested model and standardized path coefficients are presented in Figure 1.

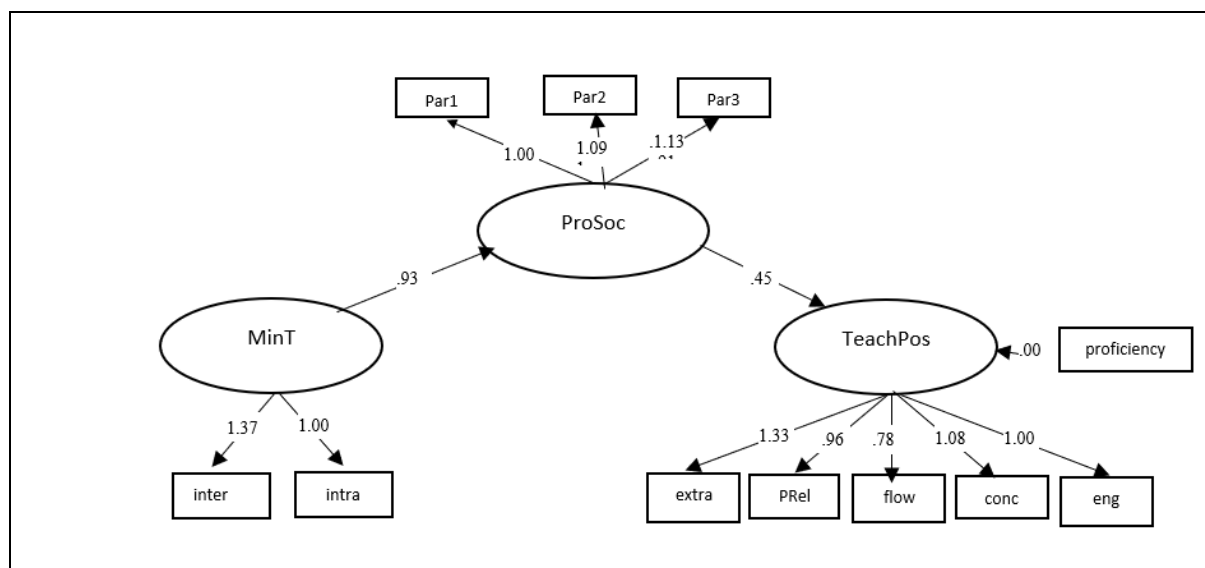


Figure 1*. Structural Model and Standardized Path Coefficients.

*MinT= Mindfulness in teaching, ProSoc=Prosocial behaviors, TeachPos=Positive teacher characteristics, inter=interpersonal mindfulness, intra=intrapersonal mindfulness, Par1=Parcel1, Par2=Parcel2, Par3=Parcel3, extra= to have extroverted personality, PRel= to establish positive relationship with the student, flow= to increase students' flow experience conc= to concretize the subject that taught, eng.= to increase students' engagement in the class

After it was observed that the model was within the accepted limits, bootstrapping was performed regarding 10000 samples and 95% confidence interval. The findings obtained as a result of the bootstrapping process are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Direct and indirect effects of the tested model

Path	Bootstrapping		Bias %95 CL	
	Estimate	SE	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Direct				
MinT → ProSoc.	.40	.14	.17	.67
ProSoc. → TeachPos.	.74	.05	.66	.84
Indirect				
MinT → ProSoc. → TeachPos.	.30	.11	.13	.51

It is shown that there were direct and significant relationships between mindfulness and prosocialness in teaching, and between prosocialness and positive teaching (Table 3). In addition, mindfulness in teaching is indirectly related to positive teaching through prosocial behavior. These findings indicate that prosocialness is a full mediator of the relationship between mindfulness and positive teaching (bootstrap coefficient=.30, 95% C.I.=.13-.51).

DISCUSSION

The importance of a positive educational environment for both students and teachers is admitted. In addition to accepting this importance, there is a limited number of research on which characteristics will make a teacher positive and which variables related to these characteristics might be. In this study, the mediator role of prosocial behaviors in the relationship between positive teaching and mindfulness in teaching context was examined. Findings of the research and discussions, results, and recommendations regarding these findings are presented in this section.

The first finding of the study was that mindfulness in teaching was directly related to prosociality. Similar findings were found in studies on mindfulness and prosociality (Chen & Jordan, 2018; Condon 2019; Hafenbrack et al., 2020). These studies address mindfulness at the dispositional level, and along with the findings of this study, the direct relationship of mindfulness with prosociality in teaching is also been revealed. Mindfulness structure includes attention, being in the moment, and being non-judgmental towards others. Mindfulness in teaching refers to the ability to integrate these skills into the teaching environment (Frank et al., 2016). It is understandable that a teacher who can focus his/her attention on students and teaching during the lesson and behave acceptably towards the behavior of students acts voluntarily to help another individual, in other words, to be prosocial.

The second finding of the study was that prosociality was directly related to positive teaching. Examining the literature on personality, Jung argues that personality is open to intrapersonal and social effects, while Adler suggests that personality develops as the product of the individual's attitudes towards himself/herself, other people, and society (Geçtan, 2020). It is also known that extroversion is characterized by frequent and intense social behaviors (Eaton & Funder, 2003; Suda & Fouts, 1980; Verduyn & Brans, 2012;) and that prosociality and extroversion are highly correlated (Cote & Moskowitz, 1998). Prosociality is also thought to bring along extroverted behaviors since it requires social attention. Positive Teacher Scale includes items such as 'I make the lesson interesting and prevent students from breaking away from the lesson', 'I explain the subject by giving examples from daily life', 'I make sentences during the lecture such as "listen here with all ears" concerning the dimensions of increasing students' flow experience, concretizing the subject and increasing students' engagement in the class (Eryılmaz & Bek, 2018). The aforementioned sub-dimensions and items include prosociality as they point to the effort of helping students to understand the lesson better and to social interest towards the student. Another dimension of positive teaching is to establish a positive relationship with the student. Prosocial behaviors are expected to have positive effects on relationships since they include social interest.

The last finding of the study is that mindfulness in teaching is indirectly related to positive teaching through prosociality. In other words, prosociality has a fully mediating role in the relationship between mindfulness and positive teaching. Similar studies show that dispositional mindfulness is related to work commitment, high performance, and better social relationships among professionals in various professions (Dane, 2011; Glomb, Duffy, Bono, & Yang, 2011; Sutcliffe, Vogus, & Dane, 2016; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). Although dispositional mindfulness and mindfulness in teaching are related yet different concepts (Aslan-Gördesli et al., 2019), it is observed that mindfulness in teaching is an important predictor of prosociality similar to dispositional mindfulness. For this reason, prosocialness and mindfulness in teaching seem as important for teachers.

There will be some suggestions for teacher education practitioners and future researchers. For teacher education practitioners; prosocialness and mindfulness in teaching programs should be added to the teacher education curriculum and these programs can be a necessity for teacher in-service training. The limitations of the study will be mentioned before making recommendations for future studies. This study is limited to kindergarten, primary, secondary, and high school teachers. In future studies, it is thought that it will be beneficial to work with educators who carry out educational activities outside of formal education. It can be stated that another limitation of the study is the use of appropriate sampling method, therefore, the use of different sampling methods can be evaluated in terms of the generalizability of the results. Finally, in this study, which examines the mediation of prosocial behavior in the relationship

between positive teacher characteristics and mindfulness in teaching, the findings regarding these variables are limited to the qualities measured by the scales used in the study. It is thought that the use of different measurement tools, especially in studies on the positive characteristics of teachers, will contribute significantly to the positive teaching literature and therefore to the understanding of education.

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Author Contributions

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It has been reported by the authors that there is no conflict of interest.

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