



Examining the Relationship Between Teachers' Professional Commitment, Inclusive Competence and the Social Acceptance of Students with Special Needs¹

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Abstract

The present study examined the relationship between teachers' professional commitment, inclusive competence, and the social acceptance of students with special needs. The correlational survey model was used as a research model. According to the study results, while there were no significant differences in teachers' professional commitment according to gender and colleague support, significant differences were found in favour of those with more years of service and those who received support from administrators. While significant differences were found in favour of female teachers and those who received support from administrators in terms of inclusive practice efficacy, no significant differences were found in terms of support inclusion students, significant differences were found in favour of female teachers and those who received support from colleagues in the gender variable, while no significant differences were found in the variables of year of service and level of support from administrators. In addition, positive relationships were found between professional commitment, inclusive practice efficacy and inclusion student acceptance.

Key Words

Inclusive
Inclusion student
Professional commitment
Social acceptance
Inclusive practice efficacy

About Article

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Introduction

Children with special needs need to be able to fulfill their daily life skills in order to adapt to society and live as independent and productive individuals within it (Cavkaytar, 2011). Children with special needs can adapt to society to the extent that they can fulfill their daily living skills. In order for them to fulfill their daily life skills and adapt to society, they need to receive education in well-organized educational environments (Şahbaz & Kalay, 2010). One of the educational environments where children with special needs receive education is inclusive environments (Renzaglia, Karvonen, Drasgow, & Stoxen, 2003; Şahbaz & Kalay, 2010). Inclusion is a multidimensional practice that encourages collaboration among children with special needs, typically developing children, families, teachers, school administrators, staff, and all members of the community (Cologan, 2013). The concept of inclusion is a philosophy that encompasses and values the school, the neighborhood, the society in general, and everyone regardless of their differences. In this practice, all physical and necessary educational services are provided for the education of all children (Renzaglia, Karvonen, Drasgow, & Stoxen, 2003).

One of the most important factors that ensure the success of inclusive education is teachers' belief in the benefits of inclusive (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). If teachers believe in the benefits of inclusion, they will make more effort for the success of their students (Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2006). When they make more effort for their students, they will raise more successful students who adapt to society. For this reason, teachers working with inclusive students should have certain characteristics. Some of these characteristics are professional commitment (Green, 2011), inclusive practice efficacy (Ismailos, Gallagher, Bennett, & Li, 2019), and acceptance of children/students with special needs (Mouchritsa, Romero, Garay, & Kazanopoulos, 2022).

Professional Commitment, Inclusive Competence, and the Social Acceptance of Students with Special Needs

Professional commitment is an individual's dedication to their profession and their feeling of responsibility for fulfilling the requirements of their profession (Klein, Molloy & Brinsfield, 2012). Professionally committed individuals believe in their careers and strive to improve themselves in order to perform their professional duties effectively. Professional commitment is a desired characteristic of teachers because high professional commitment levels contribute to a more qualified education (Celep, 2014). Teachers with low levels of professional commitment fail and may experience burnout (Goulet & Singh, 2002). In addition, teachers with high levels of professional commitment have high levels of life and professional satisfaction, are proud of their profession, and make more effort to improve themselves (Ünal, 2015).

Another variable that increases success in inclusive settings is the perception of inclusive practice efficacy (Sharma, Loreman & Forlin, 2012). Teachers' perception of effectiveness in inclusive implementation also affects their attitudes towards inclusion (Weisel & Dror, 2006). A teacher's efficacy belief is his/her judgment of his/her abilities to engage even difficult students or students who are not motivated to participate in the lesson and to provide students with learning outcomes appropriate to educational goals (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Teachers' perceptions of professional efficacy significantly influence their behaviors and overall professional success. Those with a high sense of efficacy tend to be more successful in the classroom. When teachers perceive themselves as professionally effective, they demonstrate greater commitment to their profession, show increased interest in their work, and invest more effort in achieving the goals of the school (Yavuz, 2017). In addition, teachers with a high perception of efficacy spend more effort for the success of their students, always support their students, are more cheerful, make their students freer, and strive to raise more qualified students (Almog & Shechtman, 2007).

The attitudes of teachers working in inclusive settings toward inclusion and students with special needs are important (Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008). Teachers' acceptance of students in inclusive settings contributes significantly to the success of inclusive education. As a concept, social acceptance is defined as the positive attitudes of individuals with normal development towards individuals in need of special education and not seeing individuals in need of special education as different people (Özyürek, 2016). When the literature is examined, it is seen that teachers have negative attitudes towards inclusion

(Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Negative attitudes toward inclusion naturally lead to lower levels of acceptance of students in inclusive settings. The reasons for these negative attitudes include students' social skills, learning, and behavioral problems. Even if their teachers accept them, their peers and other teachers may not accept them socially (Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2006). Students who are not accepted in inclusive environments do not like school and fail in their lessons (Snell & Janney, 2000).

When we look at the literature, we come across various studies examining teachers' professional commitment levels (Collie, Shapka & Perry, 2011; Green, 2011; Sakalli Demirok, 2018; Özkan Hidroğlu, 2021). In addition, there are various studies measuring teachers' inclusive competence levels (Kazak, 2022). In addition, various studies examine teachers' social acceptance levels (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014; Mouchritsa, Romero, Garay & Kazanopoulos, 2022; Saloviita, 2020).

When the literature is examined, there is no research examining the relationship between professional commitment, integration practice competence and the social acceptance levels of teachers working in integration settings. This research is thought to contribute to literature in this respect. Furthermore, if the variables that affect teachers' professional commitment, the efficacy of inclusive practices, and the social acceptance levels of inclusive students are identified, and solutions are developed for these variables, teachers will be able to fulfill their professional roles more effectively. In this case, teachers will be better able to support their students. This research is thought to contribute to literature in this respect. For this reason, this study aims to examine the relationship between teachers' professional commitment, inclusion competencies and the social acceptance of students with special needs. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

- Do teachers' professional commitment, inclusion competencies, and the social acceptance levels of students with special needs differ significantly based on gender, support from colleagues, support from administrators, and years of service?
- Is there a relationship between teachers' professional commitment, inclusion competencies and the social acceptance levels of students with special needs?

Method

This section describes the study model, participants, data collection instruments, data collection processes, and data analyses.

Study Model

In this study, the correlational survey model was used as a research model to determine the existence and/or degree of change between two or more variables (Karasar, 2012).

The dependent variables of this study are teachers' professional commitment, integration competence and the social acceptance levels of students with special needs. Independent variables are gender, level of support from colleagues, years of service and level of support from administrators, integration competence and the social acceptance levels of students with special needs.

Participants

Table 1. The participants' demographic characteristics

Gender	n	%	Receiving support from colleagues	n	%
Male	96	44.7	Yes	174	80.9
Female	119	55.3	No	41	19.1
Support from administrator	n	%	Year of Service	n	%
Yes	160	74,4	1-10 years	38	17.7
No	55	25,6	Between 11-20 years	88	40.9
			21 years and above	89	41.4

As seen in Table 1, 96 (44.7%) of the teachers were male (44.7%), 119 (55.3%) were female (119.3%), 174 (80.9%) received support from their colleagues and 41 (19.1%) did not receive support

from their colleagues. In addition, 160 (74.4%) of the teachers receive support from administrators and 55 (25.6%) do not receive support from administrators.

Instruments

Demographic Information Form

The researcher's Demographic Information Form included questions regarding gender, support from administrators and colleagues, years of service, and support from the administrator.

Professional Commitment Scale

The Professional Commitment Scale developed by Ergen (2009) consists of a total of 14 items and three sub-dimensions: "Professional Pleasure", "Social Gain" and "Professional Career". The five-point Likert-type scale is scored as Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Most of the time (4), Always (5). 386 primary school teachers participated in the scale development phase. The factor loadings of the scale items ranged between .53 and .84. The contribution of the factors to the total variance was 59.93%. In the internal consistency analysis of the scale, Cronbach (α) coefficient was determined as .92.

Competency Scale for Inclusive Practices of Schools (CSIPS)

Developed by Yazıcıoğlu and Sümer-Dodur (2021), the CSIPS consists of a total of 25 items and 4 sub-dimensions: "School Guidance Services (SGS)", "Support Education Room Services (SERS)", "Environmental Educational Arrangement (EEA)", and "Teacher Knowledge Level (TKL)". The scale is scored as "Never", "Rarely", "Undecided", "Usually" and "Always". The scale was administered to a total of 582 teachers during the development phase. Cronbach's Alpha reliability (internal consistency) coefficient of the scale was found to be .95. The reliability coefficients of the factors were found to vary between .87 and .94.

Teacher Social Acceptance Scale for Individuals with Special Needs (TSASISN)

Developed by Aktan (2021), the TSASISN consists of 31 items and two sub-dimensions, namely "Teacher social acceptance behaviors (TSAB)" and "Developing social acceptance competencies (DSAC)". The scale is organized as a five-point Likert scale and is scored as "never (1)", "rarely (2)", "quite often (3)", "mostly (4)" and "always (5)". The Cronbach Alpha reliability level for the overall scale was calculated as .94, for the TSAB sub-dimension as .94, and for the DSAC sub-dimension as .92. Regarding the convergent validity of the scale, the correlation values between the scale and its sub-dimensions ranged between .46 and .87, and a significant positive relationship ($p < 0.01$) was observed between the overall scale and the sub-dimensions.

Data Collection

The research data were collected during the 2022-2023 academic year. First of all, permissions were obtained from the ethics committee and Edirne Directorate of National Education for the collection of research data. Subsequently, schools were visited, teachers were interviewed face-to-face, and the purpose of the study was explained to them. The scales were given to teachers who volunteered to participate in the study and explained how to fill them out. As a result of the examinations, 45 scales were found to be incorrectly or incompletely filled and were excluded from the evaluation. The approval of the ethics committee of the research was obtained from T.C. Trakya University Rectorate Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee with the letter numbered E-29563864-050.04.04.04-232417 and dated 28.03.2022.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with SPSS 24 program. The normality test was first applied to the data. After the normality test, the skewness and kurtosis values of the data were examined. It was observed that the skewness value of the Professional Commitment Scale was 2.35 and the kurtosis value was 4.18, the skewness value of the TSASISN was 2.43 and the kurtosis value was 3.10, and the skewness value of the CSIPS for was 3.01 and the kurtosis value was 3.46. According to Bachman (2004), skewness and kurtosis values between -2 and +2 assume a normal distribution of the data. For this reason, Mann Whitney U Test, Kruskal Wallis Test and Pearson Correlation Coefficients test were applied, assuming that the data of this research did not show normal distribution.

Results

Table 2 shows that the professional commitment levels of the teachers showed no significant differences in Professional Pleasure ($U = 5623.000$, $p > .05$), Social Gain ($U = 5200.000$, $p > .05$), and Professional Career ($U = 4705.500$, $p > .05$), Professional Commitment main score sub-dimensions ($U = 5625.000$, $p > .05$) in terms of gender variable.

Table 2. The Mann-Whitney U test results for professional commitment based on the gender variable

Variable	Variable	N	Rank average	Rank Total	U-Value	p
Professional Commitment	Male	96	108.91	10455.00	5625.000	.848
	Female	119	107.27	12765.00		
Professional Pleasure	Male	96	107.08	10279.50	5623.50	.839
	Female	119	108.74	12940.50		
Social Gain	Male	96	102.67	9856.00	5200.000	.257
	Female	119	112.30	13364.00		
Professional Career	Male	96	108.48	11374.50	4705.500	.235
	Female	119	109.54	11845.50		

Table 3 reports no significant differences in the sub-dimensions of teachers' professional commitment levels in terms of receiving support from colleagues, professional commitment scale main score ($U = 3427.500$, $p > .05$), Professional Pleasure ($U = 3541.000$, $p > .05$), Social Gain ($U = 3350.500$, $p > .05$), and Professional Career ($U = 3557.000$, $p > .05$).

Table 3. The Mann-Whitney U test results according to the variables of professional commitment and support from colleagues

	Variable	N	Rank average (RA)	Rank Total	U-Value	p
Professional Commitment	Yes	174	107.20	18652.50	3427.500	.697
	No	41	111.40	4567.50		
Professional Pleasure	Yes	174	107.85	18766.00	3541.000	.940
	No	41	108.63	4454.00		
Social Gain	Yes	174	106.76	18575.50	3350.500	.544
	No	41	113.28	4644.50		
Professional Career	Yes	174	107.94	18782.00	3557.000	.978
	No	41	108.24	4438.00		

Table 4 shows significant differences in teachers' professional commitment levels based on the variable of years of service, both in the overall score of the Professional Commitment Scale ($\chi^2 = 8.909$, $p < .05$), and in the Social Gain sub-dimension ($\chi^2 = 10.709$, $p < .05$). According to the results of the Binary Mann-Whitney U Test, significant differences were detected in the leading score of the professional commitment scale and the Social Gain sub-dimension between those who worked between 1-10 years and those between 11-20 years, in favor of those between 11-20 working years. No significant differences were detected in the Professional Pleasure ($\chi^2 = 5.215$, $p > .05$) and Professional Career ($\chi^2 = 3.790$, $p > .05$) sub-dimensions.

Table 4. The Kruskal-Wallis test results for professional commitment based on the variable of years of service

	Variable	N	Rank Average	SD	χ^2	P	Significant Difference
Professional Commitment	1-10 years	38	132.07	2	8.909	.002	2 high between 1-2
	Between 11-20 years	88	96.22				
	21 years and above	89	109.38				
Professional Pleasure	1-10 years	38	122.59	2	5.215	.074	
	Between 11-20 years	88	97.82				
	21 years and above	89	111.84				
Social Gain	1-10 years	38	133.66	2	10.709	.005	2 high between 1-2
	Between 11-20 years	88	94.65				
	21 years and above	89	110.24				
Professional Career	1-10 years	38	125.57	2	3.790	.150	
	Between 11-20 years	88	105.40				
	21 years and above	89	103.07				

Table 5 shows a significant difference was observed in the leading score of the professional commitment scale ($U = 4017,000$, $p < .05$) and in the sub-dimensions of Professional Pleasure ($U = 4104,000$, $p < .05$), Social Gain ($U = 4031,000$, $p < .05$) and Professional Career ($U = 4029,500$, $p < .05$) according to the variable of receiving support from administrators. According to the variable of receiving support from administrators, a significant difference was observed in the leading score of the professional commitment scale and the sub-dimensions of Professional Pleasure, Social Gain, and Professional Career in favor of those who received support from administrators.

Table 5. The Mann-Whitney U Test results according to the support from administrators

		N	Order average	Rank Total	U-Value	p
Professional Commitment	Yes	160	134.96	16897.00	4017.000	.003
	No	55	85.61	6323.00		
Professional Pleasure	Yes	160	133.38	16984.00	4104.000	.000
	No	55	86.15	6236.00		
Social Gain	Yes	160	134.71	16911.00	4031.000	.000
	No	55	85.69	6309.00		
Professional Career	Yes	160	134.74	16909.50	4029.500	.006
	No	55	85.68	6310.50		

Table 6 reveals significant differences in the sub-dimensions in terms of the CSIPS gender variable, teachers' CSIPS main score ($U = 5273.000$, $p < .05$), SGS ($U = 5273.000$, $p < .05$), SERS ($U = 5261.000$, $p < .05$), EEA ($U = 4655.000$, $p < .05$), and TKL ($U = 4829.000$, $p < .05$). In the main CSIPS score, significant differences were detected in favor of female teachers in the SGS, SERS, EEA, and TKL sub-dimensions.

Table 6. The Mann-Whitney U Test results according to the CSIPS gender variable

	Variable	N	Order average	Rank Total	U-Value	p
CSIPS	Male	96	103.43	9929.00	5273.000	.000
	Female	119	111.69	13291.00		
SGS	Male	96	103.43	9929.00	5273.000	.000
	Female	119	111.69	13291.00		
SERS	Male	96	103.30	9917.00	5261.000	.013
	Female	119	111.79	13303.00		
EEA	Male	96	99.12	11425.00	4655.000	.000
	Female	119	119.01	11795.00		
TKL	Male	96	98.80	9485.00	4829.000	.000
	Female	119	115.42	13735.00		

Table 7 shows no significant differences in terms of the variable of receiving support from CSIPS colleagues in the main CSIPS score ($U = 3302.500$, $p > .05$), SGS ($U = 3399.000$, $p > .05$), SERS ($U = 3157.500$, $p > .05$), EEA ($U = 3448.000$, $p > .05$), and TKL ($U = 3524.000$, $p > .05$) sub-dimensions.

Table 7. The Mann-Whitney U test results for CSIPS based on the variable of receiving support from colleagues

	Variable	N	Rank average	Rank Total	U-Value	p
CSIPS	Yes	174	109.52	19056.50	3302.500	.460
	No	41	101.55	4163.50		
SGS	Yes	174	108.97	18960.00	3399.000	.634
	No	41	103.90	4260.00		
SERS	Yes	174	110.35	19201.50	3157.500	.251
	No	41	98.01	4018.50		
EEA	Yes	174	108.68	18911.00	3448.000	.726
	No	41	105,10	4309.00		
TKL	Yes	174	107.75	18749.00	3524.000	.903
	No	41	109.05	4471.00		

Table 8 shows no significant differences in the sub-dimensions in terms of the teachers' years of service variables in the CSIPS main score ($\chi^2 = .031$, $p > .05$), SGS ($\chi^2 = 1.372$, $p > .05$), SERS ($\chi^2 = .948$, $p > .05$), EEA $\chi^2 = .168$, $p > .05$), and TKL ($\chi^2 = 3.392$, $p > .05$).

Table 8. The Kruskal-Wallis test results based on the years of service variable in the CSIPS

	Variable	N	Rank Average	SD	χ^2	P
CSIPS	1-10 years	38	107.32	2	.031	.985
	Between 11-20 years	88	107.40			
	21 years and above	89	108.88			
SGS	1-10 years	38	116.42	2	1.372	.504
	Between 11-20 years	88	102.91			
	21 years and above	89	109.43			
SERS	1-10 years	38	99.28	2	.948	.623
	Between 11-20 years	88	110.73			
	21 years and above	89	109.03			
EEA	1-10 years	38	104.62	2	.168	.920
	Between 11-20 years	88	108.16			
	21 years and above	89	109.28			
TKL	1-10 years	38	93.11	2	3.392	.183
	Between 11-20 years	88	107.34			
	21 years and above	89	115.01			

As shown in Table 9, no significant difference was observed in the main score ($U = 3855,000$, $p > .05$), SGS ($U = 3835,000$, $p > .05$), SERS ($U = 3960,000$, $p > .05$), EEA ($U = 4110,000$, $p > .05$), and TKL ($U = 4293,000$, $p > .05$) sub-dimensions of PBES according to the variable of teachers receiving support from administrators.

Table 9. The Kruskal-Wallis test results examining CSIPS scores according to the support received from administrators

		N	Order average	Rank Total	U-Value	p
CSIPS	Yes	160	111.41	17825.00	3855.000	.171
	No	55	98.09	5395.00		
SGS	Yes	160	111.53	17845.00	3835.000	.150
	No	55	97.73	5375.00		
SERS	Yes	160	110.75	17720.00	3960.000	.267
	No	55	100.00	5500.00		
EEA	Yes	160	109.81	17570.00	4110.000	.442
	No	55	102.73	5650.00		
TKL	Yes	160	107.33	17173.00	4293.000	.786
	Hayır	55	109.95	6047.00		

Table 10 indicates significant differences in the sub-dimensions in terms of gender in the TSASISN main score ($U = 4017.000$, $p < .05$), TSAB ($U = 4104.000$, $p < .05$), and DSAC ($U = 4031.000$, $p < .05$). Significant differences were detected in favour of female teachers according to the gender variable of the teachers in the social acceptance scale's main score, TSAB, and DSAC sub-dimensions.

Table 10. The Mann-Whitney U Test results according to the TSASISN gender variable

		Variable	N	Order average	Rank Total	U-Value	p
TSASISN	Male		96	100.13	11304.50	4775.500	.037
	Female		119	117.76	11915.50		
TSAB	Male		96	99.46	11384.50	4695.500	.021
	Female		119	118.59	11835.50		
DSAC	Male		96	100.67	11240.50	4839.500	.049
	Female		119	117.09	11979.50		

Table 11 reveals significant differences in favour of those who received support from their colleagues in terms of the 'receiving support from colleagues' variable in the TSASISN main score ($U = 3445.000$, $p < .05$) and TSAB ($U = 3533.000$, $p < .05$), DSAC ($U = 3448.500$, $p < .05$) sub-dimensions. Significant differences were detected in the TSASISN main scale dimension and its sub-dimensions in favour of those who received support from their colleagues.

Table 11. The Mann-Whitney U test results based on the variable of receiving support from TSASISN colleagues

		Variable	N	Rank average	Rank Total	U-Value	p
TSASISN	Yes		174	118.70	18914.00	3445.000	.001
	No		41	95.02	4306.00		
TSAB	Yes		174	118.20	18826.00	3533.000	.002
	No		41	97.17	4394.00		
DSAC	Yes		174	118.68	18910.50	3448.500	.005
	No		41	95.11	4309.50		

Table 12 shows no differences in terms of the variable, years of service. There was a significant difference in the TSASISN main score ($\chi^2 = .821$, $p > .05$), TSAB ($\chi^2 = 3.392$, $p > .05$), and DSAC ($\chi^2 = .948$, $p > .05$) sub-dimensions.

Table 12. The Kruskal-Wallis test results based on the TSASISN years of study variable

		N	Rank Average	SD	χ^2	P
TSASISN	1-10 years	38	112.70	2	.821	.663
	Between 11-20 years	88	103.54			
	21 years and above	89	110.40			
TSAB	1-10 years	38	93.11	2	3.392	.183
	Between 11-20 years	88	107.34			
	21 years and above	89	115.01			
DSAC	1-10 years	38	99.28	2	.948	.623
	Between 11-20 years	88	110.73			
	21 years and above	89	109.03			

Table 13 shows no significant difference was observed in the leading score of the social acceptance scale ($U = 4026,000$, $p > .05$) and the sub-dimensions of TSAB ($U = 4051,500$, $p > .05$) and DSAC ($U = 4023,500$, $p > .05$) according to the variable of receiving support from administrators.

Table 13. The Mann-Whitney U test results based on the variable of receiving support from TSASISN administrators

		N	Rank average	Rank Total	U-Value	p
TSASISN	Yes	160	110.34	17654.00	4026.000	.342
	No	55	101.20	5566.00		
TSAB	Yes	160	110.18	17628.50	4051.500	.368
	No	55	101.66	5591.50		
DSAC	Yes	160	110.35	17656.50	4023.500	.332
	No	55	101.15	5563.50		

Table 14 shows positive relationships between professional commitment ($r = .410$, $p < .01$), inclusive competence, professional commitment, and the inclusive of student social acceptance ($r = .248$, $p < .01$).

Table 14. The Spearman-Brown coefficients for the relationships between teachers' professional commitment, inclusive competence, and inclusive student social acceptance levels

CSIPS	r	.410 **		
	p	.000		
	N	215	215	
TSASISN	r	.248 **	.387 **	
	p	.000	.000	.
	N	215	215	215

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

In the inclusive education process, teachers' professional commitment, inclusive practice competence, and social acceptance levels of inclusive students are essential variables. Teachers' professional commitment, inclusive practice competence, and social acceptance levels of inclusive students affect the support teachers offer to students in the classroom. From this point of view, studies on these variables are essential in understanding the variables affecting teachers' attitudes towards their profession, competence in inclusive practice, and acceptance of inclusive students. The findings of this study provide essential data on the variables affecting professional commitment, inclusive practice competence, and social acceptance levels of inclusive students and contribute to the literature.

According to the results of the present study, no significant differences were detected in the commitment scale total scores and scale sub-dimensions in terms of the gender variable of teachers' professional commitment levels. Collie, Shapka and Perry (2011) reported that female teachers in their

study group, including special education teachers, are more committed to professional work. In studies conducted with special education teachers, Green (2011) and Demirok (2018) reported that female teachers were more committed to their profession. On the other hand, Özkan Hıdıroğlu (2021) analyzed teachers who work with typically developed children and reported no significant general differences in their professional commitment. Although society considers the teaching profession to be performed mainly by women in terms of social structure and gender characteristics, and although teaching is mainly preferred by women (Foster & Newman, 2005), gender does not affect professional commitment.

No significant differences were detected regarding the teachers' professional commitment or colleague support. Contradictory findings have been reported in the literature. According to Bogler and Somech (2004) the support received from colleagues in an educational institution positively contributes to professional commitment. In his study on special education teachers, Elitharp (2005) found that receiving colleague support positively affects professional commitment. In his research on teachers of typically developing children. According to Yu, Jiang & Kei (2021) colleague support positively affects teachers' professional commitment. According to the results of the present study, there was no significant difference between support from colleagues and professional commitment. It might be that the teachers who participated in the present study preferred to work individually. According to Sarı (2011), working in collaboration does not provide enough satisfaction for some individuals; working in partnership can bring obstacles and more responsibilities to the individual.

The teachers' professional commitment showed significant differences in the main score and social gain sub-dimension of the professional commitment Scale in favour of those with more years of service according to the years of service variable. Contradictory findings were observed when the literature was reviewed. In their studies of special education teachers, Green (2011) and Sakalli Demirok (2018) detected a significant difference in professional commitment regarding the working year variable. Collie, Shapka and Perry (2011) detected increased professional commitment as the number of years of work experience increased in their study group, which included special education teachers. In their study conducted with teachers of typically developing children, Ergen (2016) reported that professional commitment increased as the years of working in the profession increased. On the other hand, in their study conducted with teachers of typically developing children, Hıdıroğlu Özkan (2021) and Yu, Jiang and Kei (2021) reported more professional commitment from teachers who have just started their careers. According to the results of the present study, a review of the literature reveals that inexperienced teachers working with students with special needs tend to experience higher levels of burnout and encounter more challenges (Stempien & Loeb, 2002; Whitaker, 2000). However, as the duration of working in the teaching profession increases, teachers invest more in their profession, become more experienced and approach their profession more emotionally.

According to the variable of receiving support from administrators, a significant difference was observed in the overall score of the professional commitment scale and the sub-dimensions of professional pleasure, social gain and professional career in favour of those who received support from administrators. The literature has results similar to those of this research. Elitharp (2005), in his study with special education teachers, observed that receiving support from administrators positively affected professional commitment. Berry (2012), Lee and Nie (2014) and Ware and Kitsantas (2007) observed that special education teachers who receive support from administrators have high professional commitment. Receiving support from administrators positively influences teachers' professional commitment. In particular, school administrators who are able to accurately perceive and respond to teachers' emotions (George, 2000), motivate them to work and appreciate their efforts (Eisenberger et al., 2002), and establish a fair balance among staff while considering their needs (Eisenberger et al., 2002) contribute to teachers' positive perception of the profession. When employees believe that their organization values them and cares about their well-being and happiness, it positively influences their professional commitment, increases job attendance, and reduces turnover rates (Akın, 2008).

Significant differences were detected in favour of female teachers in the overall score and sub-dimensions of the scale regarding the gender variable of teachers' proficiency levels in inclusive practices. On reviewing the literature, conflicting findings were observed. In their study, Kazak (2022) and Yavuz (2017) did not report significant differences in terms of the gender variable in teachers' inclusive practices proficiency levels. Ismailos et al. (2019) and Özokcu (2017) reported that female

teachers have higher perceptions of inclusive competence. Alnahdi et al. (2019) reported that female teachers in Saudi Arabia had higher inclusive competency perceptions in their study; they comparatively examined the inclusive practice proficiency levels of Saudi Arabian and Finnish teachers. In Finland, no significant gender differences were detected in teachers' perceptions of inclusive competence. According to the results of the present study, the high level of competence among female teachers may be because the teaching profession is viewed as a woman's profession. In addition, male teachers working with students with special needs experience more burnout (Çiftçi, 2015). This sense of burnout may have negatively affected male learners' inclusion competence levels.

Significant differences were detected in favour of female teachers in the overall score and sub-dimensions of the scale regarding the gender variable of teachers' proficiency levels in inclusive practices. A review of the literature revealed conflicting findings. For instance, Kazak (2022) and Yavuz (2017) did not report any significant differences in teachers' proficiency levels in inclusive practices based on gender. Ismailos et al. (2019) and Özokcu (2017) reported that female teachers have higher perceptions of inclusive competence. Alnahdi et al. (2019) reported that female teachers in Saudi Arabia had higher inclusive competency perceptions in their study; they comparatively examined the inclusive practice proficiency levels of Saudi Arabian and Finnish teachers. In Finland, no significant gender differences were detected in teachers' perceptions of inclusive competence. According to the results of the present study, the high level of competence among female teachers may be because the teaching profession is viewed as a woman's profession.

No significant differences were detected regarding teachers' proficiency levels in inclusive practices or receiving support from colleagues. When the literature was reviewed, we found results that contradicted the findings of this study. In their study conducted with primary school teachers, Ryan and Mathews (2021) reported that receiving support from colleagues positively affects teachers' inclusive practice competencies. Donohoo (2018), Goddard and Goddard (2001), and Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) found that teachers who worked with children with disabilities collaboratively developed professional competence and positive attitudes towards inclusion. According to the results of the present study, the reason there is no significant difference in teachers' proficiency levels in inclusive practices and the 'receiving support from colleagues' variable might be because of the individual working characteristics of the teachers in the present study. Similarly, Yavuz (2020) stated in his research on the professional self-efficacy levels of teachers who worked in special education schools that some teachers preferred to work alone.

No significant differences were detected in teachers' inclusive proficiency levels regarding the years of service variable. Contradictory results have been previously reported. Güner (2011), Hofman and Kilimo (2014) did not report significant differences in the year of service variable in their study. However, Aküzüm and Altunhan (2017) and Aslan and Gönülal (2023) conclude that professional competence increases with the number of years of service. According to the results of the present study, the reason for the lack of a significant difference in teachers' inclusive practice proficiency levels in terms of the working year variable is that young teachers gain experience by observing experienced teachers.

No significant differences were observed in the overall scores and sub-dimensions of the scale regarding the variable of receiving support from administrators. Leifler (2020) and Weisel and Dror (2006) emphasize that administrative support is crucial for the success of inclusive practices. Additionally, Şahan (2019) examined the self-efficacy perceptions of guidance counselors concerning special education and their attitudes toward inclusive education. The study concluded that administrative support positively influences attitudes toward inclusion. Ryan, Ryan and Mathews (2021) conducted research with primary school teachers and found that administrative support positively impacts teachers' competencies in inclusive practices. Despite these findings, this study revealed no significant difference in teachers' competence in inclusion practices related to the reception of administrative support. This may be attributed to the view that teaching is a sacred profession; teachers are often committed to fulfilling their duties and responsibilities regardless of external support. Consequently, this study's teachers may have independently upheld their professional ethics and responsibilities. In addition, according to Başaran (2000), educational administrators can adopt authoritarian, indifferent, cooperative, submissive and confrontational management styles. What is hoped for and desired in

educational environments is democratic management style. Democratic management approach is preferred due to the fact that it cares about people and the work done, employees participate in decisions, adopt team spirit and teamwork, create cooperation between managers and employees, and employees are positively affected by managers. The administrators in the schools within the scope of this research may have adopted a democratic methodology. For these reasons, there may not be a significant difference between teachers who receive support from administrators and those who do not (Sağır & Deveci, 2023).

Significant differences were detected in the overall score and sub-dimensions of the scale in favour of female teachers regarding the gender variable of teachers' social acceptance levels. A review of the literature revealed contradictory findings. Aktan (2023), Mouchritsa et al. (2022), and Saloviita (2020) detected significant differences in the social acceptance levels of teachers in favour of female teachers. Conversely, Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) did not report any significant differences in terms of the gender variable. In addition, Bhatnagar and Das (2014) and Sharma et al. (2015) reported that male teachers have a more accepting attitude towards children/students with special needs. According to the results of the present study, the reason teachers' social acceptance levels favour female teachers in terms of gender variables can be attributed to the fact that female teachers are more sensitive. Given these contradictory findings, teachers' social acceptance levels require further study regarding gender variables (Saloviita, 2020).

Significant differences were detected regarding teachers' social acceptance levels and receiving support from colleagues in the overall score of the scale and all sub-dimensions, in favour of those who received support from their colleagues. Previous studies are consistent with this finding. Teachers may need support from colleagues, especially in the school environment (Özçelik, 2019). In addition, receiving support from colleagues reduces professional burnout (Zabel & Zabel, 2001) and positively affects life satisfaction levels (Yavuz, 2019). According to Ruble, Usher, & McGrew (2015), colleague support positively affects teacher self-efficacy. Based on these perspectives, receiving colleague support contributed positively to all variables. Therefore, it is possible to argue that teacher support from colleagues positively affects the social acceptance of inclusive learners.

No significant differences were detected in the scale's overall score and all sub-dimensions regarding teachers' social acceptance levels and working year variables. Contradictory findings were observed when the literature was reviewed. Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) did not report significant differences in the year of service variable. Ertunç (2008) concluded in his study that the attitudes of young teachers were more positive. Alghazo and Naggat-Gaad (2004) concluded that as the number of years of service increased, teachers' social acceptance levels of inclusive students also increased. Unexperienced teachers might have acquired new information from more senior teachers or by observing them, contributed positively to their social acceptance of inclusive students.

No significant difference was observed in the main score and all sub-dimensions of the scale according to the variable of receiving support from administrators. Avramidis and Norwich (2002), Kristian Øen and Rune Johan Krumsvik (2021), MacFarlane and Woolfson (2013), and Malmqvist (2016) concluded that administrators have a key role in inclusive education. Şahin and Gürbüz (2016) concluded that the support of administrators is important for the success of inclusion. According to this research, social acceptance may not only be affected by receiving support from administrators. Different variables and the combination of different variables may have affected it.

A positive relationship was found between teachers' professional commitment and inclusive competence levels. When the literature was reviewed, no study examined the relationship between teachers' professional commitment and inclusive competence levels. Professional commitment positively affects several variables. For example, when teachers have high levels of professional commitment, they do not think of quitting their jobs, experience more professional satisfaction (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006), are more motivated towards their work, and are more qualified in their profession (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005). Thus, there may be a positive relationship between professional commitment and inclusive competence because the level of proficiency in inclusive practices is also related to teachers' professional skills; as teachers' professional commitment increases, their inclusive competence levels increase.

A positive relationship was detected between teachers' professional commitment levels and the social acceptance of inclusive students. Teachers who had high professional commitment were reported to be less stressed (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006), exert more effort at work, show more interest in their work (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006), have better relationships with parents and students (Bogler & Somech, 2004), and be more committed to teaching, school, and students (Somech & Bogler, 2002).

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has some limitations. First, its results cannot be generalized, as it was conducted only with teachers in Edirne. In addition, it only examined professional commitment, inclusive competence, student acceptance, gender, support from colleagues, years of service, support from administrators, and age. In future studies, the variables of economic level, marital status, education level, and whether or not to take special education courses can also be examined. Additionally, future research should include longitudinal studies. This study examined the professional commitment, inclusive competence, and student acceptance levels of teachers working in inclusive settings. Each variable could be investigated using mixed models in future studies. Finally, based on the study results, we recommend that teachers in inclusive classes receive regular seminars on inclusive practices and the development and learning characteristics of students with disabilities.

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