

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Self-values of pre-school teachers working in Turkish public schools

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**This study aims at describing the self-values held by pre-school teachers working in public schools and at determining whether or not those values differ on the basis of seniority, marital status and having children. This research employs a descriptive method. The research population comprised 278 pre-school teachers working in public pre-school education institutions and in public primary education schools. The Rokeach Value Survey was used in the research. The data was analysed using the techniques as mean, standard deviation, t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Turkey HSD test in order to find the sources of differences. The self-values preferred most by pre-school teachers were “a peaceful world”, “being healthy”, and “national security”. The self-values they considered the least important were “an exciting life”, “a variable life”, and “authority”. Pre-school teachers’ self-values differed significantly on the basis of seniority, marital status, and having children.**

**Key words:** Self-values, values education, pre-school education, pre-school teachers.

## INTRODUCTION

Owing to the fact that values influence our perspective of life, making sense out of life as well as making decisions should be analysed at organizational levels. Values, which form the guiding or reference points in people’s decision-making, are at the same time the goals with differing degrees of importance. According to Sisman (2002), values are the criteria that determine what is right, what is wrong, what is good, and what is bad. According to another definition suggested by Rokeach (1973: 5), value is “a long-term personal belief about a certain manner of behaviour or about the fundamental aim of existence”.

Values form the foundation that holds the societies

upright (Bursalioglu, 2002), and therefore, certain values are commonly adopted by societies (Ersoy, 2006). Research results (Nartgun, 2006; Sagnak, 2005; Yilmaz and Balci, 2009) demonstrate that the values available in the organizational environment are congruent with the self-values held by the individuals in organizations.

Values are first learnt in the family setting where the basic knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits in relation to all the development of individuals are acquired. Institutions preparing children to social life after the family and supporting the family in values education are the educational institutions. Hence, one of the duties of educational institutions is to teach children the social

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culture and values (Demirel, 2009).

Due to the importance of educational institutions in values education, a great amount of research concerning values in the field of education and values of education in Turkey in recent years is found. The majority of the aforementioned studies are concerned with teachers' values and pre-service teachers values (Aktepe and Yel, 2009; Cavdar, 2009; Dilmac et al., 2008; Donmez and Comert, 2007; Kusdil and Kagitcibasi, 2000; Oguz, 2012; Tokdemir, 2007; Yilmaz, 2009; Yilmaz and Yildizbas, 2012) and with values education (Balat-Uyanik, Ozdemir et al., 2011; Dilmac, 2007; İscan, 2007; Yalar and Yanpar Yelken, 2011; Yildirim, 2009). In addition to that, values in educational organizations (Nartgun, 2006; Yilmaz and Balci, 2009), and school administrators' values (Baloglu, 2012; Ercetin, 2000) are also among the issues of research. The self-values held by teachers and managers differ significantly according to their seniority (Donmez and Comert, 2007; Yilmaz, 2009) and marital status (Yilmaz, 2009) in these research results. However, values and values education remains a neglected area for research and practice in early childhood education and care (Sigurdardottir and Einarsdottir, 2016).

The first educational institution gaining importance in values education after the family is the pre-school education institution. Theoreticians such as Piaget and Kohlberg, who explain the development of values in children, suggest that Thompson (2011) values education should start in the pre-school period (Zembar, 2001). Therefore, it is important that an environment sensitive to children's rights should be created in pre-school education institutions and that pre-school teachers should set models in such an environment with what they say and they do.

According to the latest regulation, a pre-school teacher is the teacher who offers wealthy stimulating environmental possibilities appropriate to the developmental level and individual properties of 0 to 65 month old age group children, who supports their development in physical, mental, emotional, social and moral ways, and who prepares them for primary education. Besides, these teachers are the people who can increase children's willingness to display certain behaviours with their behaviours and can thus set models to children (Anderson, 2000; Sonmez, 2002; Tugrul, 2005). As part of their pedagogical tasks, educators can urge their students into certain values and they can also impose their own values and encourage them (Veugelers, 2000; Willemse, Lunenberg and Korthagen, 2005).

Values in education were handled during the decisions made at the 18th National Education Council and in the circular issued by the Ministry of Education in the 2010-2011 academic year (Balat-Uyanik, 2012). The fact that an insufficient number of research concerning the self-values of pre-school teachers was found in Turkish education literature and that the recently regulated 9th plan for development (2007-2013) targets spreading pre-

school education and increasing the social awareness for pre-school education makes it necessary to conduct this current research. This research is important in terms of being aware of self-values and doing self evaluation of pre-school teachers in public schools. In addition, this study may be the reference source for researchers seeking to conduct research on the same topic.

### Objectives of the study

This research aims to describe pre-school teachers' self-values while working in public schools and to determine whether or not those values differ on the basis of seniority, marital status and having children. In line with this general purpose, answers are sought for the following sub-problems:

- (1) What are the self-values that are considered as the most important and the least important by pre-school teachers?
- (2) Is there any significant difference in pre-school teachers' self-values in terms of seniority?
- (3) Is there any significant difference in pre-school teachers' self-values in terms of marital status?
- (4) Is there any significant difference in pre-school teachers' self-values in terms of having children?

### METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive method. This current research makes use of quantitative research methods.

This section of the study deals with participants, data collection and analysis.

#### Participants

The research population comprised all the pre-school teachers working in the public pre-school institutions or in the nursery classes of public primary education schools which are under the supervision of Canakkale Province Directorate of Education. Since the research population was small, no samples were taken, and reaching all the pre-school teachers in the research population was preferred. 294 pre-school teachers (MoNE, 2015) were in the research population. 278 teachers voluntarily took part in the research. Thus, participants represented the research population at the rate of 94.55%. The demographic information of pre-school teachers' included in the research sample are listed in Table 1.

#### Data collection and analysis

The Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) was used in the research. It is a 7-pointed likert type scale of 18 instrumental and 18 objective value adjectives. RVS items consist of 56 value adjectives. This is a 7-pointed likert type scale ranging from -1 (opposite to my value) to 7 (highly important) for each value (Rokeach, 1973). The Turkish adaptation of the RVS, which was translated into Turkish by Bas (2004), and the questions for personal information were used for the purposes of data collection in this research. In this study, the reliability of the RVS was found as 0.93 (Cronbach  $\alpha$ ) as a result of

**Table 1.** Frequency and percentage distributions regarding the demographic information on the research sample.

Variable		1	2	3	Total
Seniority	-	1-10 years	11-20 years	21 years and more	-
	N	177	70	31	278
	%	64	25	11	100
Marital status	-	Married	Single	-	-
	N	175	103	-	278
	%	63	37	-	100
Having or not having children	-	Yes	No	-	-
	N	119	159	-	278
	%	43	57	-	100

a pilot study carried with 240 teachers.

In this research, first, in order to determine pre-school teachers' self-values, statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used. Then, in order to see whether or not pre-school teachers' self-values differed on the basis of seniority, the homogeneity of variances was tested and the ANOVA analysis was conducted, and in order to find the source of differences, Tukey HSD test was used. Finally, so as to see whether or not the values differed on the basis of their marital status and of having children, t- test was used. In the statistical analyses, significance level has been taken as 0.05.

**FINDINGS**

**The most important and the least important self-values of pre-school teachers**

As is clear from Table 2, the self-values that pre-school teachers consider the most important are “a peaceful world” ( $\bar{x}$ =5.80), “being healthy” ( $\bar{x}$ =5.62), “national security” ( $\bar{x}$ =5.46), “self-respect” ( $\bar{x}$ =5.42), “family security” ( $\bar{x}$ =5.38), “the peace of mind” ( $\bar{x}$ =5.28), “real friendship” ( $\bar{x}$ =5.27), “honesty” ( $\bar{x}$ =5.10), “equality” ( $\bar{x}$ =5.00), and “independence” ( $\bar{x}$ =4.98), respectively. The self-values they consider the least important, on the other hand, are “an exciting life” ( $\bar{x}$ =2.10), “a variable life” ( $\bar{x}$ =2.54), “authority” ( $\bar{x}$ =2.55), “social power” ( $\bar{x}$ =2.62), “accepting one’s share in life” ( $\bar{x}$ =2.94), “enjoyment” ( $\bar{x}$ =3.07), “being wealthy” ( $\bar{x}$ =3.16), “being ambitious” ( $\bar{x}$ =3.24), “courage” ( $\bar{x}$ =3.30), and “paying for the benevolence” ( $\bar{x}$ =3.47).

**A comparison of pre-school teachers’ self-values on the basis of seniority**

According to Table 3, the pre-school teachers’ self-values differ on the basis of seniority significantly in eight values, namely, “the meaning of life” ( $F_{(2, 275)}= 3.94$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), “courage” ( $F_{(2, 275)}= 3.42$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), “social order” ( $F_{(2, 275)}= 3.35$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), “social recognition” ( $F_{(2, 275)}= 4.46$ ;  $p <$

0.05), “mature love” ( $F_{(2, 275)}= 3.90$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), “national security” ( $F_{(2, 275)}= 6.36$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), “independence” ( $F_{(2, 275)}= 5.23$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), and “politeness” ( $F_{(2, 275)}= 17.00$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

An examination of the Tukey HSD test which was done in an attempt to find the source of difference, shows that there are significant differences between teachers with 1 to 10 years experience and 11 to 20 years experience in the values of “the meaning of life” and “courage”; while there are significant differences between groups with 1 to 10 years experience and groups with 21 years or more experience in the values of “social order”, “social recognition” and “mature love”. The significant differences are observed between groups with 1 to 10 year experience and 11 to 20 years experience, and those with 11 to 20 years experience and 21 years or more experience in the values of “national security” and “independence”.

Finally, significant differences are also available in the value of “politeness” between the groups with 1 to 10 years experience and 11 to 20 years experience as well as between groups with 1 to 10 years experience and 21 years or more experience. It was also found that parallel to the rise in their teaching experience, pre-school teachers attached more importance to the values of “social order”, “social recognition”, “mature love”, and “politeness”.

**A comparison of pre-school teachers’ self-values on the basis of marital status**

As seen in Table 4, pre-school teachers’ self-values differ significantly on the basis of marital status. Hence, those who are married attach more importance to “honesty” ( $\bar{x}$ =5.30), “politeness” ( $\bar{x}$ =4.34), and “accepting one’s share in life” ( $\bar{x}$ =3.34) than the single teachers do. This result may stem from the fact that they have internalised the responsibilities and duties imposed by being married and being a spouse. The fact that most of those teachers

**Table 2.** The most important and the least important self-values of pre-school teachers.

Values	Mean	SD	
The most important self-values	1. A peaceful world	5.80	1.29
	2. Being healthy	5.62	1.25
	3. National security	5.46	1.02
	4. Self-respect	5.42	0.97
	5. Family security	5.38	1.43
	6. The peace of mind	5.28	1.42
	7. Real friendship	5.27	1.40
	8. Honesty	5.10	1.44
	9. Equality	5.00	1.42
	10. Independence	4.98	1.53
The least important self-values	1. An exciting life	2.10	1.52
	2. A variable life	2.54	1.52
	3. Authority	2.55	1.47
	4. Social power	2.62	1.56
	5. Accepting one's share in life	2.94	2.20
	6. Enjoyment	3.07	1.56
	7. Being wealthy	3.16	1.73
	8. Being ambitious	3.24	1.84
	9. Courage	3.30	1.84
	10. Paying for the benevolence	3.47	1.33

are female (Erkan et al., 2002), the gender-based roles in the society may be another cause of this result.

Single teachers, on the other hand, attach more importance to the values of "a peaceful world" ( $\bar{x}=6.13$ ), "national security" ( $\bar{x}=5.66$ ), "self-respect" ( $\bar{x}=5.59$ ), "setting one's own target" ( $\bar{x}=5.28$ ), and "courage" ( $\bar{x}=3.66$ ). It was also found that those who were single considered the universal values and national security important, they took care of themselves more, and that they struggled for their targets.

#### **A comparison of pre-school teachers' self-values on the basis of having children**

As is clear from Table 5, pre-school teachers' self-values differ significantly according to whether or not they have children. Thus, teachers with children attach more importance to "being tolerant" ( $\bar{x}=5.03$ ), "the meaning of life" ( $\bar{x}=4.88$ ), "the world of beauty" ( $\bar{x}=4.06$ ), "accepting one's share in life" ( $\bar{x}=4.05$ ), and "paying for the benevolence" ( $\bar{x}=3.83$ ) than their colleagues who do not have children. It may be said that the feeling of parenthood causes pre-school teachers to try to understand their own children, to be more tolerant, and to internalise their roles in life. On the other hand, the fact that the teachers who do not have children ( $\bar{x}=2.80$ ) prefer the value of "a variable life" more than those who

have children ( $\bar{x}=2.19$ ) may stem from the fact that those who have children wish to live a more regular life.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The self-values that pre-school teachers prefer most are related to "security". They are "a peaceful world", "being healthy", "national security", "self-respect", and "family security". Several research studies conducted in educational institutions have found that "security" is one of the values that educators consider the most important (Aktepe and Yel, 2009; Cavdar, 2009; Dilmac et al., 2008; Ercetin, 2000; KUSDIL and Kagıtcıbası, 2000). This situation can generally be accounted for with the properties of Turkish society. According to Hofstede (1980), avoidance of uncertainty in Turkish society is in a high level. The other self-values that pre-school teachers consider important are: "the peace of mind", "real friendship", "honesty", "equality", and "independence", respectively. The self-values that they consider the least important are: "an exciting life", "a variable life", "authority", "social power", "accepting one's share in life", "enjoyment", "being wealthy", "being ambitious", "courage", and "paying for the benevolence".

It may be stated that values that pre-school teachers consider the most and the least important are similar to the ones in the findings of the research studies conducted in institutions of education with the

**Table 3.** Pre-school teachers' self-values on the basis of seniority.

Values	Seniority	N	Mean	SD	F	p	Meaningful difference
The meaning of life	1.1-10 years	177	4.85	1.40	3.94	0.02*	1-2
	2.11-20 years	70	4.31	1.57			
	3.21 years and more	31	4.61	1.69			
Courage	1.1-10 years	177	3.47	1.83	3.42	0.03*	1-2
	2.11-20 years	70	2.81	1.77			
	3.21 years and more	31	3.48	2.06			
Social order	1.1-10 years	177	4.35	1.40	3.35	0.03*	1-3
	2.11-20 years	70	4.35	1.57			
	3.21 years and more	31	5.06	1.23			
Social recognition	1.1-10 years	177	3.97	1.44	4.46	0.01*	1-3
	2.11-20 years	70	4.20	1.63			
	3.21 years and more	31	4.83	1.46			
Mature love	1.1-10 years	177	4.76	1.37	3.90	0.02*	1-3
	2.11-20 years	70	5.05	1.54			
	3.21 years and more	31	5.48	1.15			
National security	1.1-10 years	177	5.55	0.95	6.36	0.00*	1-2 2-3
	2.11-20 years	70	5.11	1.09			
	3.21 years and more	31	5.77	1.11			
Independence	1.1-10 year	177	5.12	1.45	5.23	0.00*	1-2 2-3
	2.11-20 year	70	4.48	1.72			
	3.21 year and more	31	5.29	1.34			
Politeness	1.1-10 years	177	3.77	1.40	17.00	0.00*	1-2 1-3
	2.11-20 years	70	4.67	1.57			
	3.21 years and more	31	5.16	1.69			

\*p&lt;0.05

administrators, teachers and prospective teachers. Hence, in research conducted by Ercetin (2000) with the administrators of primary education schools, "family security" was the value that was considered the most important. In the research performed by KUSDIL and KAGITCIBASI (2000), teachers were found to attach the most importance to the values of "universalism", "security", and "benevolence". In this research, "paying for benevolence" as one of the values considered the least important was noteworthy. This finding was different from the results reached in KUSDIL and KAGITCIBASI (2000).

In their research, DONMEZ and COMERT (2007) found that "family", "close friendship", "belief", "personal development", and "being healthy" were the values that primary education teachers considered important. The same research also found that "wealth", "career", and "participation in social activities" were the values that teachers considered the least important. According to the research conducted by DILMAC et al. (2008),

"universalism", "security", "benevolence" and "self-orientation" are the values that are considered the most important by prospective teachers.

The research done by AKTEPE and YEL (2009) demonstrated that the values that were considered the most important by primary education teachers were "national security", "family security", "being healthy", "real friendship", "honesty", "equality", and "self-respect". The least important values, found in the same research, were "being wealthy", "social power", "authority", "being ambitious", "an exciting life", and "enjoyment".

The research conducted in five different universities by YILMAZ and YILDIZBAS (2012) found that prospective pre-school teachers preferred the value of "honesty" the most and the value of "social skills" the least. In a research study conducted in South Korea with pre-school teachers, it was found that the teachers considered "emotionality" and "affection" highly important whereas they considered "universalism", and "moral values"

**Table 4.** Pre-school teachers' self-values on the basis of marital status.

Values	Marital status	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Accepting one's share in life	1. Married	175	3.34	2.26	4.02	276	0.00*
	2. Single	103	2.27	1.92	-	-	-
Honesty	1. Married	175	5.30	1.34	3.09	276	0.00*
	2. Single	103	4.75	1.53	-	-	-
Politeness	1. Married	175	4.34	1.55	2.58	276	0.01*
	2. Single	103	3.84	1.54	-	-	-
A peaceful world	1. Married	175	5.61	1.44	-3.28	276	0.00*
	2. Single	103	6.13	0.89	-	-	-
National security	1. Married	175	5.34	1.06	-2.54	276	0.01*
	2. Single	103	5.66	0.93	-	-	-
Setting one's own target	1. Married	175	4.75	1.61	-2.82	276	0.00*
	2. Single	103	5.28	1.29	-	-	-
Self-respect	1. Married	175	5.32	0.96	-2.22	276	0.02*
	2. Single	103	5.59	0.96	-	-	-
Courage	1. Married	175	3.10	1.83	-2.45	276	0.01*
	2. Single	103	3.66	1.81	-	-	-

\*p&lt;0.05

**Table 5.** Pre-school teachers' self-values on the basis of having children.

Values	Having or not having children	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Being tolerant	1. Yes	119	5.03	1.31	-3.10	276	0.00*
	2. No	159	4.50	1.47	-	-	-
The meaning of life	1. Yes	119	4.88	1.25	-2.01	276	0.04*
	2. No	159	4.54	1.45	-	-	-
The world of beauty	1. Yes	119	4.06	1.43	-2.43	276	0.01*
	2. No	159	3.61	1.59	-	-	-
Accepting one's share in life	1. Yes	119	4.05	1.72	-8.01	276	0.00*
	2. No	159	2.11	2.16	-	-	-
Paying for the benevolence	1. Yes	119	3.83	1.18	-3.90	276	0.00*
	2. No	159	3.21	1.38	-	-	-
A variable life	1. Yes	119	2.19	1.86	2.97	276	0.00*
	2. No	159	2.80	1.55	-	-	-

\*p&lt;0.05

important at low levels (Lee et al., 2012). The research done by Sigurdardottir and Einarsdottir (2016)

demonstrated that the values that were considered the most important by pre-school teachers were "care",

“respect” and “discipline”. In another research, Balat-Uyanik et al. (2012) report that parents believe that their children should acquire “honesty”, “responsibility”, “respect”, “happiness” and “justice” in pre-school education institutions as the most important universal values.

In the research conducted by Ercetin (2000) as different from this research, the value of “social power” was found to be one of the values preferred most by school principals. The fact that all those research studies had been conducted at different stages of education, at different periods of time and in different geographical regions may be regarded as the cause of differences in findings. Unlike in this research, in the research conducted by Yilmaz (2009), the importance attached to the value of “independence” (self-control) is higher in the case of teachers with 1 to 5 years’ experience. Research performed by Celik and Cagdas (2010), on the other hand, showed that seniority did not lead to a significant difference in pre-school teachers’ empathetic tendencies.

Clearly, pre-school teachers’ self-values differ on the basis of seniority, marital status and whether or not they have any children. According to seniority, pre-school teachers’ self-values differ significantly in the values of “the meaning of life”, “courage”, “social order”, “social recognition”, “mature love”, “national security”, “independence”, and “politeness”. Thus, teachers with 1 to 10 years’ experience attach more importance to “the meaning of life”, those with 21 years or more experience to the values of “courage”, “social order”, “social recognition”, “mature love”, “national security”, “independence” and “politeness”.

As their work experience increases, teachers consider the values of “social order”, “social recognition”, “mature love”, and “politeness” more important. This situation may stem from the effect of their increased seniority on internalising their occupational roles. Another cause may be that, along with growing age and increasing work experience, teachers want a more regular life and that, because they are in maturity period, they attach more importance to such spiritual values as recognition, loving and being loved (Levinson, 1988; Onur, 1995). In research conducted by Yilmaz (2009), the importance attached to the value of “independence” (self-control) is higher in the case of teachers with 1 to 5 years’ experience. Research performed by Celik and Cagdas (2010), on the other hand, showed that seniority did not lead to a significant difference in pre-school teachers’ empathetic tendencies.

Pre-school teachers’ self-values also differ significantly according to marital status. The married teachers consider “honesty”, “politeness”, and “accepting one’s share in life” more important while the single ones consider “a peaceful world”, “national security”, “self-respect”, “setting one’s own target” and “being courageous” more important. That the married teachers

attach more importance to “accepting one’s share in life” may stem from the fact that they internalise the responsibilities and duties imposed by being married and being a spouse, and from the fact that most of the pre-school teachers are females (Erkan et al., 2002); thus, they adopt their gender-based roles in society.

It was shown in this research that single teachers consider the universal values and national security, they are self-controlled, and they struggle for their targets. Similar to the findings obtained in this research, the research conducted by Yilmaz (2009) shows that the values of “self-respect (self-control)” and “a peaceful world” are at higher levels in single teachers. It was also demonstrated in the same research that marital status did not create a difference in the value of “accepting one’s share in life” (traditionalism).

The self-values held by pre-school teachers differ significantly according to whether or not they have children. Accordingly, teachers with children consider the values of “being tolerant”, “the meaning of life”, “the world of beauty”, “accepting one’s share in life”, and “paying for the benevolence” more important than teachers having no children do. This situation may be the result of the fact that parenthood roles and feelings influence pre-school teachers’ perspectives of life, and their responsibilities in and expectations from life. Yet, in contrast to this research, the research conducted by Celik and Cagdas (2010) revealed that the number of children owned by pre-school teachers did not lead to significant differences in their empathetic tendencies.

Pre-school teaching is a profession that needs high motivation, self-sacrifice, and complete self-acquaintance (Day and Leitch, 2001). Owing to the fact that pre-school teachers are the people to set role models and that children of this period learn by imitation, those teachers should ask themselves the question “what self-values should I have as an educator and with which self-values should I set a model to my students?” and thus they should revise their self-values.

To support children in attaining a healthy personality development and in order for pre-school teachers to become aware of such fundamental values as affection, respect, tolerance, peace, cooperation, sharing, solidarity, creativity, justice, equality, responsibility and aesthetics, and in order to instil those values in those children through activities, the teachers should be offered theoretical and applied education in the form of pre-service and in-service training in values education jointly by the Ministry of Education and by universities (Dunn, 2003; Giovacco-Johnson, 2011; Suh and Traiger, 1999). Thus, their interaction and professional development may be assured. Rodgers and Scott (2008) point out that occupational identity is a dynamic process that constantly develops through interaction with others.

Numerous studies point to the need for pre-service and in-service training values in education for teachers

(Brady, 2011; Crow, 2007; Lovat et al., 2011; Mergler and Spooner-Lane, 2012; Rodgers and Scott, 2008; Tokdemir, 2007; Yalar and Yanpar Yelken, 2011; Yildirim, 2009). In a similar way, Demirel (2009) found that elementary school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in themselves were high in character education, but their self-efficacy beliefs in other teachers were low. Empirical studies in values education, which has gained importance recently in our country, should be performed. Repetition of similar studies on different samplings is important in terms of the generalizability of the research results. Further studies are needed to investigate the relationship between pre-school teachers self-values and other variables.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflicts of interests.

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