

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Comparing levels of professional satisfaction in preschool teachers whose classes include or do not include a special-needs student

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**The purpose of this study is to compare the professional satisfaction of the preschool teachers in whose class there is a student with special needs to the preschool teachers in whose class there are not any students with special needs. The research study group was composed of 185 pre-school teachers who work in the city and county center in Isparta. Research data were collected by the researchers by having the participants fill out a personal information form, along with the Minnesota Satisfaction with Profession Questionnaire, to determine whether there are any students with special needs in the teachers' classes. The data were analysed with t-test by registering in SPSS 15. It has been determined as a result of the research that the preschool teachers' levels of satisfaction with their professions have not formed a statistically meaningful difference according to whether there are any students with special needs in their classes or not.**

**Key words:** Satisfaction with profession, inclusive, preschool teacher.

## INTRODUCTION

Preschool education, which includes from birth until the beginning of primary school, is an important education period in terms of providing children with a fertile, stimulating environment. It facilitates child development cognitively, emotionally and socially (MEB, 1993).

The preschool period is one in which the child starts to observe and recognize his/her environment, communicating with it and gaining the behaviours and habits that are suitable for the ethos he/she lives in. In this period in which the crucial foundations of personality are formed, the child needs conscious guidance at home, school and in his/her social life (Şahin, 2005). Besides the family, preschool teachers are the ones that can

provide this guidance. Preschool teachers are primarily responsible for performing the education process successfully and applying activities appropriately and on time. It is thought that the level of preschool teachers' satisfaction with their professions has an important effect on their ability to fulfil their tasks effectively and efficiently. (writer's interpretation.)

There are some theories to explain satisfaction with one's profession. It is possible to place these theories into two categories: "content theories" and "process theories". Content Theories are Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation Theory and the Motive of Success Theories. These theories state

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that satisfaction with life is affected by different factors. While Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory states that satisfaction with life is affected by psychical or basic needs, need of security, social needs and need of self-actualization (Öztürk, 2002), Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation Theory says that it is affected by two factors: incentive factors (Success, Being Popular, The Qualities of The Profession, Responsibility, Opportunity for Promotion, Opportunity for Progress) and protection factors (Company Policy and Management, Supervisors, Working Conditions, Pay, Stature, Relationships with colleagues) (Ağan, 2002) and the Motive of Success Theory which states that it is affected by three factors: success, faithfulness and needing to be strong (Eren, 1993; Balcı, 2004).

Process Theories are Vroom's Expectations Theory, Motivation with Multiple Variables Theory, Aiming Inconsequence Theory and Parity Theory. Process Theories handle the importance of personal differences in motivation by explaining the variables in the activities that are noted from the appearance of the behaviour until its letup. According to these, although different people have different idea and value judgements, the motivation process that stimulates the behaviour is the same for all of them (Teltik, 2009). Satisfaction with profession is as important a concept for teachers as for any other profession. Different definitions about satisfaction with profession are met in the literature (Blum and Naylor, 1968; Locke, 1976; Eren, 2000). Satisfaction with profession for the teachers can be defined as "teacher's attitude towards his/her students and school" or "pleasure or displeasure that teachers experience with their profession" (Vural, 2004).

Preschool teachers' high satisfaction with their professions contributes to being creative, happy and successful in their job. Providing productive education activities has a close relationship with a positive attitude that preschool teachers develop about their profession. In a converse situation, dissatisfaction with profession is present. The individuals that cannot get satisfaction from their profession develop some reactions to being able to put up with the time at work. Irregular attendance at work, taking long breaks, working more slowly, using working time for personal activities, appearing busy without working, talking to colleagues about subjects that are not relevant to work, coming out against authority by breaking the rules, aggressive behaviours towards their colleagues and immediate managers, revenge and retaliation can be considered as contributing to these reactions (Sun, 2002).

There are various factors that affect satisfaction with profession. Sorting these factors is a relatively long and complicated process. The main reason for this is the differing approaches to measuring satisfaction with profession. When the commonly stressed factors are examined, it is seen that the sources of satisfaction with profession for the teachers consist of elements such as

relationship with students, relationship with the students' parents, relationship with the immediate managers, holidays, economical confidence, the quality of the profession, promotion opportunity, chance of utilizing his/her own ideas, payments, working conditions and hours, fulfilling personal interests, control, organization and management, occupational safety, personality, being praised and employment security (Vural, 2004).

One of the teacher's most important sources of satisfaction with profession is his/her relationship with the students. Students' individual differences and the effects of these differences on the teacher may affect satisfaction with profession. When the students' developments are normal, it does not generally create a problem, but the students whose developments present differences meaningfully from the other students may affect the teachers' satisfaction with profession. These students that are meaningfully different from the students that present normal development are named as the students that need special education (Akçamete, 2010). When the educational approach is geared to the students that need special education, those students go from an experience of separation to one inclusion.

Besides the fact that there are different definitions for inclusion in the literature, in the Ministry of Education's Inclusive Services Regulation (2006) inclusion is defined as "the individuals with special needs carrying on their education at public and private, pre, primary, secondary education and mass education schools with their coequals that do not have any insufficiency by being provided with supportive education services". The purpose of inclusive education is not to make the student with special needs normalized but to make him/her integrated with society educationally and socially. The concept is that the students with special needs improve their ability to make friends, and enrich their educational environments. Studying with students that present normal development inspires the desire and courage for greater success for the special-needs students, and helps them learn acceptable social behavior by observing children that present normal development and using them as a model (Şahbaz, 1997; 2004).

According to the 7th item that is in the section regarding preschool education of the 573 numbered executive order about special education that was published in the official journal numbered 23011 and dated 06/06/1997, children needing special education started to educate inclusive education at preschools by taking the special-needs children's development and individual characteristics into consideration after the obligation of their receiving education at special education schools and the other preschools.

The preschool teachers' tasks and responsibilities (for example; preparing individualized education plans, developing appropriate materials for the special education students, etc.) have increased after inclusion of children with special needs became obligatory, and this situation

created new factors that affect the teachers' levels of satisfaction with profession.

When research that has been conducted about teachers' satisfaction with profession in Turkey and abroad are examined, it is seen that the preschool teachers' levels of satisfaction with profession were researched in some of the studies (Abu taleb, 2013; Cheng and Chen, 2011; Ngovi, 2011; Tezcan, 2011; Şahin and Dursun, 2009; Altıncılıç, 2008). Preschool teachers' satisfaction with profession was compared to attitude (Tekerci, 2008), their occupational efficiency concepts (Teltik, 2009), colleague relationships and school management support (Eser, 2010), the managers' cultural leadership behaviours (Çek, 2011); in some of them, preschool teachers' satisfaction with profession was compared to their burnout levels (Öztürk, 2006; Tsigilis, Zachopoulou and Grammatikopoulos, 2006; Akkurt, 2008; Gürbüz, 2008). It has been found that preschool teachers' levels of satisfaction with profession are high in some of the studies (Şahin, Dursun, 2009; Teltik, 2009; Gürbüz, 2008), they are moderate in some of them (Abu Taleb, 2013; Tezcan, 2011; Eser, 2010; Akkurt, 2008; Öztürk, 2006; Tsigilis, Zachopoulou and Grammatikopoulos, 2006) and they are low in some of them (Cheng and Chen, 2011; Altıncılıç, 2008). However any research about whether the presence of students with special needs has an effect on the preschool teacher's levels of satisfaction with profession has not been found, indicating that there is a need for this research.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to compare the professional satisfaction of the preschool teachers in whose class there is a student with special needs to the preschool teachers in whose class there is not any student with special needs. The author will attempt to address the following questions.

## Sub-purposes

1. Do preschool teachers' internal satisfaction levels differ according to whether there is a student with special needs in their classes?
2. Do preschool teachers' external satisfaction levels differ according to whether there is a student with special needs in their classes ?
3. Do preschool teachers' general satisfaction levels differ according to whether there is a student with special needs in their classes ?

## RESEARCH MODEL

Relational scanning model toward general scanning models, looking for the presence of a correlation, and/or the degree of difference between two or more variables, was used to compare the

**Table 1.** The table showing the qualities of the study group.

	<i>N</i>
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	181
Male	4
<b>Type of School</b>	
Preschool	85
Preschool class	100
<b>Place of work</b>	
City Center	120
Country Center	65

satisfaction with profession levels for preschool teachers in whose classes there is a student with special needs to those in whose classes there are not any students with special needs (Karasar, 2012).

## Population-sample

The study group was comprised of 185 preschool teachers that worked at the preschool and pre-classes in the city and country centers in Isparta in the 2011-2012 educational year. The characteristics of the research study group have been presented in Table 1. According to this, it is apparent that 181 of 185 preschool teachers are female and 4 of them are male; 85 preschool teachers work at independent preschools, 100 preschool teachers work at preschool classes that are held at a primary school, 120 preschool teachers work in the city center and 65 preschool teachers work in the country centers.

## Data collection tool and data analysis

Research data were collected from preschool teachers who work at independent preschools and preschool classes at primary schools of the Ministry of Education in the city and country centers of Isparta, using a personal data form developed by the researchers, and the Minnesota Satisfaction with Profession questionnaire developed by Weiss et al. (1967).

The personal data form consists of two parts. There are personal data about the preschool teachers (gender, age, length of service, educational background) in the first part, and questions about the students' with special needs characteristics and inclusive applications in the second part.

As a second means of collecting data, the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction with Profession Questionnaire was used, in which Alpha co-efficients are .86 for internal satisfaction, .85 for external satisfaction and .91 for general satisfaction. This questionnaire, developed by Weiss et al. (1967) and adopted into Turkish by Baycan (1985) was used to determine the individuals' levels of satisfaction with profession (Gündüz et al., 2013).

The Minnesota Satisfaction with Profession Questionnaire is a fivefold Likert type grading system that consists of 20 items classified from the most negative one to the most positive one as "I am not pleased at all" (1), "I am not pleased" (2), "I am neutral" (3), "I am pleased" (4), "I am very pleased" (5). There are two sub-dimensions of the Minnesota Satisfaction with Profession questionnaire consisting of internal satisfaction and external satisfaction.

**Table 2.** t-test results comparing the internal satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers in whose classes there is a student with special needs, versus that of teachers whose classes do not contain any students with special needs.

Student with special needs	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Yes	53	49,79	5,89	183	,451	,65
No	132	49,36	5,83			
Total	185					

Internal satisfaction includes the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th and 20th items and the external satisfaction includes the 5th, 6th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 17th, 18th and 19th items. Internal satisfaction covers factors such as the individual's appropriateness for his/her interest, skill and capacity. The contribution of the profession towards the person's creativeness and external satisfaction covers factors such as work environment, pay, relationship with colleagues, and school management. The scores in the Minnesota Satisfaction with Profession Questionnaire are calculated by adding the values between 1-5. The highest score that one can get from the questionnaire is 100 and the lowest score is 20. The high scores mean high satisfaction with profession and low scores mean low satisfaction with profession.

Evaluation of scores for the Minnesota Satisfaction with Profession Questionnaire are evaluated in the following manner: scores under 25 and below are interpreted as low satisfaction with profession, scores between 26-74 are interpreted as medium satisfaction with profession and scores of 75 and above are interpreted as high satisfaction with profession. The highest score that can be gained from the internal satisfaction with profession sub-dimension of the questionnaire is 60 and the lowest one is 12. The highest score that can be obtained from the external satisfaction with profession sub-dimension of the questionnaire is 40 and the lowest one is 8. High scores of internal and external satisfaction with profession show high internal/external satisfaction with profession and low ones show low internal/external satisfaction with profession.

The data gained from the research were recorded on computer via SPSS 15.0 (Statistical Packages for The Social Sciences).

The skew co-efficient was watched to determine whether the data obtained from the research was distributed normally or not. If the skew co-efficient is within  $\pm 1$  in the analysis, the score is represent normal distribution. The skewness score was watched to measure the skew co-efficient to analyse whether the total scores of preschool teachers' satisfaction with profession represent a normal distribution or not. Skew co-efficient of preschool teachers' total satisfaction with profession scores was found as  $-.784$  as a result of the analysis. As this result is within  $\pm 1$ , it has been determined that the scores represent a normal distribution. The data were analysed to compare the satisfaction with profession levels of the preschool teachers in whose classes there is a student with special needs to the satisfaction with profession levels of the teachers in whose classes don't include any students with special needs by using t test to test whether the difference between related two sample averages is meaningfully different from zero (from each other) (Büyükoztürk, 2012).

## FINDINGS

When Table 2, showing the internal satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers whose classes include at least one student with special needs compared to those whose

classes do not include any students with special needs, is analysed, it is observed that 185 preschool teachers participated in the research, 53 of these had at least one student with special needs in their classes and 132 of them did not have any students with special needs in their classes. The internal satisfaction level score averages of the preschool teachers that had at least one student with special needs in their classes is  $\bar{X} = 49,79$  and the internal satisfaction level score averages of the preschool teachers who did not have any students with special needs in their classes is  $\bar{X} = 49,36$ .

The highest score that can be obtained from the internal satisfaction sub-dimension of the Minnesota Satisfaction with Profession questionnaire is 60. The high scores obtained from the questionnaire mean high satisfaction with profession, and low scores mean low satisfaction with profession. As the internal satisfaction level score averages of the preschool teachers who have at least one student with special needs and those of teachers who do not have any students with special needs are near to the highest score that can be obtained from the internal satisfaction sub-dimension of the questionnaire, it is observed that the teachers' internal satisfaction levels are high, there is a noticeable, yet slight, difference between the averages, but this difference between the averages is not statistically meaningful ( $t_{(183)} = .451, p > 0.05$ ).

The findings showing the external satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers in whose classes there is a student with special needs, and those in whose classes there are not any students with special needs are represented on Table 3. When these findings are examined, it is observed that 53 teachers from the 185 pre-school teachers that participated in the research had a student with special needs in their classes, 132 did not have any students with special needs in their classes. External satisfaction level score averages of the preschool teachers that had a student with special needs in their classes are  $\bar{X} = 30,67$ , and external satisfaction level score averages of the pre-school teachers that did not have any students with special needs in their classes are  $\bar{X} = 29,38$ .

The highest score that can be obtained from the external satisfaction sub-dimension of The Minnesota Satisfaction with Profession questionnaire is 40. High

**Table 3.** t test results regarding the external satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers in whose classes there is a student with special needs, and those in whose classes there are not any students with special needs.

Student with special need	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Yes	53	30,67	4,94	183	1,56	,120
No	132	29,38	5,14			

**Table 4.** t test results about the general satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers in whose classes there is a student with special needs, and the general satisfaction levels of those teachers in whose classes there are not any students with special needs.

Student with special needs	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Yes	53	80,47	10,10	183	1,60	,29
No	132	9,94	78,75			

scores gained from the questionnaire mean high satisfaction with profession and low scores mean low satisfaction with profession. As the external satisfaction level score averages of the preschool teachers in whose classes there is a student with special needs, and the averages of those teachers where there are not any students with special needs are near to the highest score that can be gained from the external satisfaction sub-dimension of the questionnaire, it is observed that the teachers' external satisfaction levels are high, there is a slight meaningful difference between the averages in spite of its slightness, but this difference between the averages is not statistically significant ( $t_{(183)}=1,56$ ,  $p >0.05$ ).

When Table 4 showing t test results about the general satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers in whose classes there is a student with special needs, and the general satisfaction levels for those teachers in whose classes there are not any students with special needs is examined, it is observed that 53 teachers from the 185 pre-school teachers that participated in the research had special education student in their classes, 132 did not have any students with special needs in their classes. The general satisfaction level score averages of the preschool teachers who had a student with special needs in their classes are  $\bar{X} = 80,47$  and the general satisfaction level score averages of the preschool teachers who did not have any students with special needs in their classes are  $\bar{X} = 78,75$ . When the data from the questionnaire are watched and when it is considered that 75 and the scores above 75 mean high satisfaction with profession, it is observed that the general satisfaction levels of the the preschool teachers that had a student with special needs in their classes and that of those did not have any student with special needs in their classes are high, there is a slight but meaningful difference between the averages, but this difference

between the averages is not statistically significant ( $t_{(183)}=1,60$ ,  $p >0.05$ ).

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research is to compare the satisfaction with profession levels of the preschool teachers in whose classes there is a student with special needs with the satisfaction with profession levels for those in whose classes there are not any students with special needs.

The first sub-problem of the research was comparing the internal satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers who had a student with special needs in their classes with the internal satisfaction levels of those who did not have any students with special needs in their classes. It has been found as a result of the research that there is not a statistically meaningful difference between the internal satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers who had a student with special needs in their classes and those that did not have any student with special needs in their classes, and internal satisfaction levels for both groups of teachers are high. This finding obtained from the research represents parallelism with the research finding that was held by Göktaş (2007), Zöğ (2007), Şahin and Dursun (2009), Teltik (2009), Karataş and Güleş (2010) and Kağan (2010) in which the internal satisfaction levels of the teachers are high.

The second sub-problem of the research was comparing the external satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers who had a student with special needs in their classes with those who did not have any students with special needs in their classes. It has been found as a result of the research that there is not a statistically meaningful difference between the external satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers who had a student with

special needs in their classes and those who did not have any students with special needs in their classes, and that external satisfaction levels of the both groups of teachers are high. This finding obtained from the research represents parallelism with the research finding that was held by Gökteş (2007), Şahin and Dursun (2009), Teltik (2009), Karataş and Güleş (2010), Adıgüzel et al. (2012) and in which the external satisfaction levels of the teachers are high, it represents difference from the research findings that were held by Zöğ (2007) and Kağan (2010).

The third sub-problem of the research was comparing the general satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers who had a student with special needs in their classes with those who did not have any students with special needs in their classes. It has been found as a result of the research that there is not a statistically meaningful difference between the general satisfaction levels of the preschool teachers who had a student with special needs in their classes and those that did not have any students with special needs in their classes, and that general satisfaction levels of the both groups of teachers are high. While this finding obtained from the research represents parallelism with the research finding that was held by Teltik (2009), Gürbüz (2008), Şahin and Dursun (2009) and in which the satisfaction with profession levels of the preschool teachers are high, it represents a difference from the research findings that were held by Abu Taleb (2013), Cheng and Chen (2011), Tezcan (2011), Eser (2010), Akkurt (2008), Altınkılıç (2008), Öztürk (2006), Tsigilis et al. (2006).

As a consequence of the research, it has been found that there is not a statistically meaningful difference between the internal satisfaction, external satisfaction and general satisfaction with profession levels of the preschool teachers that have a student with special needs in their classes and those who do not have any students with special needs in their classes, and that satisfaction with profession levels of the both groups of teachers are high. According to the findings obtained from the research, it has been found that special education students do not make the satisfaction with profession levels of the preschool teachers decrease as it is supposed. In fact, when the findings are compared relatively, that situation makes them increase slightly. It is thought that preschool teachers being able to determine common aims in development fields such as self-care skills, cognitive development, language development, psycho-motor development, social-emotional development for both the students representing normal development and the ones needing special education results from the fact that the special education student does not create an extra working load for the teacher. This situation results from the fact that this does not affect the teachers' satisfaction with profession negatively. Furthermore the special-needs students come to preschools with lower readiness levels than their coequals representing normal

development, and they have more to learn than the others. On the other hand the special-needs students cannot learn many of the things that the students representing normal development learn naturally without the help of the teacher, and they need more one-on-one help from the teacher.. Consequently, when the teachers working with the special-needs students see the development of these students as remuneration of their efforts, they experience the feelings of "I can teach" and "I can teach more". This situation is thought to increase their satisfaction with their professions slightly by affecting them in a positive way.

Following suggestions are presented based on the result of the research and intended for further studies.

### **Suggestions for further studies:**

1. The relationship between the teachers' satisfaction with profession and the student with special needs can be investigated.
2. Studies can be done regarding the different factors affecting the preschool teachers' satisfaction with profession (age, gender, length of service, the university that was graduated from, etc.) in different cities.
3. The effect on the preschool teacher's satisfaction with profession according to the disability type and level of the special-needs student can be researched.

### **Conflict of Interests**

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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