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Evaluation of ethnocentric beliefs among short-term study abroad student travelers and non-travelers

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ABSTRACT

Study abroad programs often lack in formal evaluation practices. Many programs rely on anecdotal feedback from students to support the benefits of study abroad travel. In two studies, the authors examined whether ethnocentric beliefs were influenced among students participating in short-term study abroad programs and whether they differed from students who had no intention to travel abroad. In study one, a paired samples t-test was used to compare pre-travel and post-travel ethnocentrism scores. Post-test scores decreased, but there were no significant differences in ethnocentrism between the pre-travel (M=26.29, SD=7.02) and post-travel (M=25.81, SD=7.45) groups; $t(26)=0.60$, p = 0.55. In study two, an independent samples t-test was computed to compare pre-travel and non-travel ethnocentrism scores. There was a significant difference in pre-travel (M=26.29, SD=7.02) and the non-travel groups (M=31.19, SD=8.64); $t(51)=-2.26$ p=.03, and results showed that the non-traveled group scored higher on the Ethnocentrism Scale.

Keywords: *Short-term study abroad, ethnocentrism, student travelers*

Introduction

In 2005, the United States' Congress established the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program. The Commission's (2005) report proposed an expansion of study abroad within American higher education as the next step in increasing access to study abroad experiences. Specifically, the Commission argued students in higher education should engage in study abroad to understand other "lands, languages, and cultures" (para. 5). The goal of the Commission was to reach one million students studying abroad annually by 2017. Although the Commission's work was introduced as the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Act of 2006, it was referred to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and did not advance. Despite this setback, the work of the Commission gained the attention of American higher education leaders who sought to promote global literacy through study abroad in an era of global trade and interdependence.

Study abroad programs within American higher education have taken on many forms. Exchange programs allow students to enroll directly at a foreign university for a semester or an entire year. Institutions also have formed partnerships with third-party organizations that provide academic programming to students who wish to study abroad. Through these organizations, students may take courses to satisfy major, minor, or elective requirements at their home university. Finally, institutions of higher education have offered faculty-led study abroad experiences for institutional course credit that can range in duration from a few weeks to an entire semester.

As American higher education institutions have embraced study abroad and sought to increase participation in these programs, the question remains whether that participation results in global literacy as intended by the Commission. Specifically, does studying abroad change learners' understanding of other lands, languages, and cultures? Global literacy is a complex construct. Scheuerholz-Lehr (2007) defined global literacy as individuals' "values, belief systems, and behaviors" (p. 183). For this research, we focused only on changes in students' beliefs following participation in a short-term study abroad program. Specifically, we examined students' ethnocentric beliefs.

Ethnocentrism is the "belief that one's own culture is superior" and should be the standard by which all others are regarded (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2005, para 5). According to Hales and Edmonds (2019), ethnocentrism can be related to familial ties and psychological identification as an in-group cultural identification. In-group bias is associated with the we-versus-them mentality and can create a host of negative feelings towards so-called outsiders. Higher ethnocentric beliefs are associated with greater levels of intolerance and discrimination, while lower ethnocentric beliefs are associated with more positive interactions and promote intercultural communications. Xenophobia, which is the prejudice of people from other countries, is a closely related concern and has been a topic of discussion during the pandemic (Kim & Shah, 2020). Xenophobia and ethnocentrism are similar societal dilemmas that create negative perceptions and biases within our population. It is important to understand that high ethnocentric beliefs may make it difficult for students to meet employers' expectations to work in a global environment. Developing global awareness and intercultural sensitivity may allow students to work more effectively in contemporary society by changing their ethnocentric beliefs.

Bizumic et al., (2021) stated that ethnocentrism was originally introduced over 150 years ago and has been a topic of discussion at various points in time depending on global events. More recently, ethnocentrism is a common concern within our global and political climate. Events with new political leaders, immigration, and the COVID-19 pandemic have brought this topic back to the forefront of discussion. When a homogenous group uses its standards to determine what is right and wrong, subjective opinions dominate the group's identity. However, on the other hand, it is important to have a sense of group awareness among a population, as it is important to appreciate group identity, develop social norms, and help foster group collaboration, and success. For example, many organizations spend significant amounts of money to develop a cohesive team, and it is important that they work together and strive for success. Everyone does not have to agree, but they must learn to treat each other with respect to work toward the end goal. For that reason, it is important to think about how differences can be used to build a group that is productive. Studies have shown that groups composed of very diverse individuals can be very creative and generate a larger number of ideas compared to homogenous groups (Paulus et al., 2018).

A new study addressed differences in individualistic and collectivist cultures and ethnocentrism (Muhammad, et al., 2022). Collectivist cultures tend to score higher in ethnocentrism, due to their high level of identification within the group, and interestingly much of the literature focuses on individualistic cultures. It is not that group norms should be seen in a negative light, rather it should be used to understand and appreciate differences among in-group and outgroup contexts. Positive interactions between two heterogenous groups can facilitate understanding of these differences and can help foster acceptance. Therefore, American college students should be exposed to opportunities that foster positive reciprocal relationships to develop in communication within study abroad programs and beyond.

The promotion of global awareness has positive benefits, which include interpersonal skills, intercultural awareness, and communication (Chieffo & Griffith, 2004). These items are associated with collaboration, conflict management, and resolution skills, and are a valuable skill set to develop prior to moving into a career. According to NAFSA (2021), "40% of companies surveyed missed international business opportunities because of a lack of internationally competent personnel" (Section 1) and with the American trade market and the ever-changing population dynamic, there is a growing need to explore ways to develop future employees. Chieffo and Griffith (2004) compared students' intercultural awareness and found that students who studied abroad developed a greater understanding of global awareness and interpersonal skills than those who had not. Employers find these skills to be valuable, and the study abroad experience can help facilitate these competencies.

Cultural Competence and the Workforce

The Commission's (2005) work noted that American higher education institutions play an important role in ensuring an educated citizenry ready to respond to globalization and international economic competition. Faculty and universities are challenged by employers to prepare culturally competent members of the future workforce. Employees who can work effectively with individuals representing diverse backgrounds are expected. Therefore, universities have employed many of the traditional means of helping students understand different perspectives. For example, they offer exposure to speakers, service learning opportunities, and courses that address cultural and diversity issues (Gordon et al., 2019). However, engaging in these opportunities may be ineffective in terms of changing beliefs and behaviors simply because they are not immersive and transformational. Study abroad programs may serve as an immersive and transformational experience to develop a global perspective and cultural competence.

Rodriguez and Lamm (2016) stated that students may already possess specific views about individuals from other cultures. These views influence how students understand individuals and their cultures. Moreover, views about culture may include beliefs about race. Those beliefs, in turn, shape individuals' attitudes toward others. Attitudes can be positive, negative, or neutral and can be difficult to change. However, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory describes how cognitive and environmental factors interact to influence behavior. In this theory, behaviors can be learned from one's environment through observational learning. Further, mediational processes of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation help determine the extent to which an individual's observations influence his or her behavior. Social learning theory would predict that direct or indirect experiences with individuals representing multiple races and diverse cultures may influence our understanding of these cultures.

To develop and produce culturally competent graduates who are prepared to enter the workforce and operate productively and respectfully, colleges and universities must continue to identify and develop effective methods for developing students' global perspective and increasing their cultural competence. One way to facilitate this process is to encourage greater participation in study abroad programs. According to NAFSA (2021), only 10% of American graduates have traveled abroad, while 80% of college freshmen are interested. There is a disconnect between those who want to travel abroad and those who participate. Historically, students have the option to participate in year-long, semester-long, and short-term study abroad programs. Short-term, which are classified as 30 days or less, account for almost 60% of all study abroad programs (Kamdar & Lewis, 2015). Popularity related to short-term programs, compared to semester abroad or year-long programs, can be attributed to financial limitations and the inability or lack of desire to travel abroad for an extended amount of time (Mapp, 2012). Students may have family or job obligations that prevent them from leaving home for long periods. Financial obligations play a big factor as well, as year-long programs can cost upwards of $36,000, semester-long programs upwards of $18,000 (Fusco, 2019).

Measuring and comparing ethnocentric beliefs between students who have and have not participated in study abroad provides one way to examine whether such experiences may contribute to the development of global awareness and intercultural sensitivity. In a series of two studies, we examined students' ethnocentric beliefs and participation in short-term study abroad. We focused on students' ethnocentric beliefs because we assumed participation in short-term study abroad experiences or the intention to participate may be associated with differences in measured levels of ethnocentrism.

In study one, we were interested in whether study abroad participation would affect ethnocentric beliefs. Using a pre-test/post-test design to control for individual differences, we addressed the following research question: Does participation in a short-term study abroad experience reduce ethnocentrism? Therefore, this study sought to provide a direct comparison of ethnocentric beliefs before and after a short-term study abroad experience.

In study two, we turned our attention to pre-existing ethnocentric beliefs. Specifically, we were interested in whether a student's ethnocentric beliefs influence their willingness to participate in short-term study abroad. We assumed that students with lower measured ethnocentrism would be more likely to demonstrate an intention to participate in study abroad than those with higher measured ethnocentrism. Using an independent-groups design, we asked the following research question: Do students who intend to participate in study abroad hold less ethnocentric views compared to students who have no intentions to study abroad? By addressing this research question, we were able to discern whether ethnocentric beliefs may be a factor in discouraging participation in activities like study abroad.

Methods

Participants

Participants were 53 students attending a mid-sized public university in Texas. A majority of the participants were female (47), five were male, and one did not to report. A majority of the participants were White (45), six were Black and two were Asian. The age range was 18-61, with a mean age of 28 and a median of 22.

Materials

The revised Ethnocentrism Scale, also referred to as revised GENE (see Appendix, p. 11), was used to measure students' attitudes and beliefs related to cultural differences. The scale is a 22-item Likert scale that offers five answer choices ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree with the statement provided. Out of the 22-items, 15 are scored, seven have been included to balance the number of positively and negatively worded items. Questions four, seven, and nine are re-coded in reverse scoring, and items are added together for a composite score (Neuliep & McCroskey, 2013). Using Cronbach's alpha, the internal consistency for the revised Ethnocentrism Scale estimates the reliability to be between .82 and .92. Data related to the revised Ethnocentrism Scale show that the measurement scale is valid, as compared to four other instruments that measure similar aspects of ethnocentrism. The revised scale scores "were statistically and significantly correlated with scores on the Travelling to Other Countries scale, $r(88) = -0.41$, $p < 0.001$, the Working with Foreigners scale, $r(88) = -0.37$, $p < 0.001$, Gudykunst's Ethnocentrism scale, $r(88) = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$, and the Patriotism scale, $r(88) = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$" (Neuliep, 2002, p. 14).

Procedures

For study one we recruited students who were scheduled to travel on short-term study abroad programs. Students were identified from a database system maintained by the university study abroad director, and contacted via university email. Students were asked to participate in a pre-test/post-test survey via email. Prior to traveling, students were given a pre-test survey, which included demographic questions, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and race, followed by the Ethnocentrism Scale survey. Upon return, students were sent the same survey as a follow-up to assess pre and post-test ethnocentrism scores. In study two, we recruited students who had no plans to travel abroad in the future. These students were recruited through a university research system called Sona. Sona is a cloud-based system where faculty can post current and ongoing research studies, and students have access to sign-up to participate in studies at their discretion. Students were asked if they planned to travel abroad, and if so, skip logic was applied and no further information was collected. If students had not planned to travel abroad, they were taken to the same demographic questions and Ethnocentrism Scale items related to study one. We then compared ethnocentrism scores between groups to address the research questions for study one and study two.

Results

Study One

Design. To address the research question, study one examined ethnocentrism before and after travel for a short-term study abroad experience among students enrolled at a mid-sized public university in Texas. Student participants were recruited from those who participated in a short-term study abroad opportunity offered at the university during the 2018 to 2019 academic year. We assumed that participation in study abroad would reduce students' ethnocentric beliefs. The study employed a pre-test/post-test design to test this assumption. The Ethnocentrism Scale was administered one week before departure for the study abroad experience and re-administered within one week after the students returned. The study abroad experience for this sample was 30-days or less.

Descriptive analyses. The range of scores for the Ethnocentrism Scale is 15 to 75 with the scale authors reporting scores of 55 or greater as indicating high levels of ethnocentric beliefs. For the 27 participants, average ethnocentrism scores were low and were similar for both administrations (Pre-Travel: M = 26.29, SD = 7.02; Post-Travel: M = 25.81, SD = 7.45).

Inferential analysis. A paired-samples t-test was computed to compare mean ethnocentrism scores for the two scale administrations. The results of the paired-samples t-test confirmed the observation that the two administrations' mean scores were similar. There was no statistically significant reduction in ethnocentric beliefs after traveling for this group of participants, $t(26) = 0.60$, $p = 0.55$.

Study one discussion. Study one addressed the research question: Does participation in a short-term study abroad experience reduce ethnocentrism? An examination of the results of study one showed no reduction in ethnocentrism after participation in a short-term study abroad experience. A close examination of the descriptive statistics for the pre-travel administration of the Ethnocentrism Scale suggested that we possibly had recruited a group of participants who were already somewhat culturally competent as measured by the ethnocentrism scores. Participants’ mean scores prior to travel were not low, indicating lower levels of ethnocentrism. That is, we considered the pre-travel scores to represent a floor effect with little room for a reduction in ethnocentric beliefs as a result of our intervention, a short-term study abroad experience. Students who have self-identified to participate in a study abroad experience may already possess less ethnocentric beliefs. This assumption is supported indirectly by Goldstein and Kim’s (2005) findings. In their study, students reporting higher levels of ethnocentrism were less likely to participate in study abroad. Because we conducted study one among those students who had already committed to participating in study abroad and who also had low mean ethnocentrism scores, we determined that we may have not included students who would hold more ethnocentric beliefs.

Study two was designed to examine if those who intend to participate in study abroad already hold less ethnocentric views in comparison to those who have no intentions to engage in study abroad.

Study Two

Design. To test our assumption that students who intend to study abroad may have lower levels of ethnocentrism in comparison to their counterparts who never intend to study abroad, we recruited an additional sample of students at the same mid-sized public university in Texas as in study one. Specifically, we recruited an additional sample of individuals who expressed having no intention of engaging in study abroad. We administered the Ethnocentrism Scale to these participants and sought to compare them to the pre-travel Ethnocentrism Scale scores of the participants in study one.

Descriptive analyses. For the 27 participants from study one who had self-selected as study abroad participants and who were measured prior to travel, the scores on the Ethnocentrism Scale remained the same (M = 26.29, SD = 7.02). The scores for the 26 new participants who expressed no intention to participate in study abroad were slightly higher, (M = 31.91, SD = 8.64).

Inferential analysis. An independent-samples t-test was computed to compare mean ethnocentrism scores for the two samples. The results of the independent-samples t-test confirmed the observation that the two administrations' mean scores were different. The group expressing no intention to travel scored higher on the Ethnocentrism Scale, $t(51) = -2.26$, p = 0.03. Therefore, they reported stronger ethnocentric beliefs than students who intended to participate in study abroad.

Study two discussion. Study two addressed the research question: Do students who intend to participate in study abroad hold less ethnocentric views compared to students who have no intentions to study abroad? An examination of the results of study two confirmed that the participants in study one were individuals who already held low levels of ethnocentric beliefs. When compared to a group of students from the same university, there was a statistically significant difference in ethnocentric beliefs as measured by the Ethnocentrism Scale. Students who expressed no intention to travel reported higher average ethnocentrism scores than those who were planning to participate in short-term study abroad. Therefore, the individuals who self-identify for study abroad experiences may not change their beliefs as a result of the experience simply because they already hold beliefs and attitudes that are tolerant of other cultures. The results of both studies led us to consider how faculty and higher education institutions should move forward in efforts to develop culturally competent graduates who will enter the workforce.

Discussion

We were guided in this research by the assumption that immersive experiences can be transformative. Specifically, we assumed that Bandura's social learning theory would apply to the development of cultural competence among students as a result of participating in a short-term study abroad program. That is, students participating in study abroad would have opportunities to observe and learn about another culture through immersion. While the results of the studies reported did not provide resounding support for the effectiveness of study abroad experiences in reducing ethnocentric beliefs, they revealed that students who choose to study abroad may represent a population of learners within higher education who already can "relax their culturally conditioned ways of seeing" and approaching foreign societies (Walonen, 2015,

p. 44). However, we cannot assume that such low levels of ethnocentrism exist among all students who participate in study abroad. In a case study of a pre-service teacher's intercultural development during a semester-long teacher education program abroad, Marx and Moss (2011) reported qualitative evidence of changes in ethnocentric beliefs. Marx and Moss noted that immersion in another culture challenges one's by creating cultural dissonance. That dissonance is reconciled through a process of raising one's cultural consciousness and increasing intercultural sensitivity. Therefore, participant characteristics may or may not influence the extent to which a study abroad experience changes one's beliefs about other cultures.

Apart from participant characteristics, it is important to note that study one measured ethnocentric beliefs before and after a short-term study abroad experience. Although study one showed that our participants reported low levels of ethnocentric beliefs prior to travel, we also must consider whether the intervention, the study abroad experience, was long enough in duration to produce a post-travel reduction in ethnocentrism beliefs. In this study, we did not compare study abroad experiences outside of short-term durations. However, DeLoach et al. (2021) conducted a longitudinal study of 80 study abroad programs from a single higher education institution. For all programs, participants were measured on global awareness before and after travel. Their results showed that increased duration of study abroad experiences that lasted an entire semester were associated with greater intercultural awareness when compared to students who participated in short-term study abroad programs. In contrast, those students who participated in short-term study abroad programs showed greater statistically significant gains in their awareness of global interdependence as compared to those who studied abroad for a semester. These results provide more evidence that changing attitudes and behaviors is complex. That is, there may be no single experience or intervention that may influence students' ethnocentric beliefs. Rather, we must understand the etiology of these beliefs before we can understand how they may be changed.

Conclusion

According to the United States Census (2022), there are approximately 333 million people in America. As our population increases, new Census data indicates that "4 in 10 Americans identify with a race or ethnic group other than White" (Frey, 2020, Section 1). A diversified workforce is already necessary, and we must increase opportunities to develop cultural awareness among our youth to produce culturally competent employees. Study abroad programs are immersive and they directly facilitate engagement with businesses, educational facilities, and individuals from other countries. Study abroad allows students to have a direct experience with those outside of their day-to-day interactions. Research in study abroad programs can help facilitate a broader understanding of ethnocentrism and global awareness.

Based on our results, universities must be more aggressive in study abroad recruitment opportunities. Specifically, we recommend direct efforts to recruit those who have never planned to study abroad. This population, based on our results, may demonstrate greater changes in ethnocentric beliefs following immersive intercultural experiences. To understand how study abroad may influence individuals' beliefs about others and other cultures, future research should examine a variety of program lengths, varying academic and immersive experiences while traveling in the foreign country, and student traveler characteristics. It will be necessary to continue to complete formal assessment techniques related to study abroad and content, as most programs rely on anecdotal feedback from students. Therefore, continued research in this field is necessary (Kamdar & Lewis, 2015). In addition, it is important to consider transformative experiences tied to study abroad programs and course content in order to facilitate the development of global awareness and intercultural sensitivity during a short-term program.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study was completed at one single University in Texas. It would be helpful to get a broad group of participants from a variety of locations across the United States and perhaps beyond. Other experiences that offer students engagement, diverse and collaborative interactions, and transformational learning experiences would be beneficial to assess as well. Involvement with groups that facilitate conversations with global perspectives and cultural competence in mind would be a good starting point with freshman undergraduate students. As their college career progresses, offering more opportunities to take part in interactive experiences is necessary to foster a globally competent employee. We need to continue to work on these strategies within our Universities across the United States.

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Intercultural Competence: Attitudes and Comprehension of Social Studies Teacher Candidates

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21st century imposes intercultural communication since citizens live in an increasingly interconnected world. Contemporary and democratic societies necessitate the peaceful coexistence of people of different cultures. In most communities, people encounter individuals of different perspectives and origins daily on the street, at school, or at work. So each individual should get the chance to live peacefully, cooperate and develop a sense of responsibility for the well-being of society. Social Studies course is essential in teaching future citizens knowledge, skills, and values related to cultural differences. This research aims to reveal the attitudes and comprehension of Social Studies teacher candidates (TCs) toward different cultures. The study, carried out with a basic qualitative research design, covers the data collected during the activities designed to improve the attitudes and comprehension of TCs toward intercultural communication. 32 TCs participated in the study. Data collection tools used in the research are individual interviews, focus group interviews and documents. The eight interviews, three focus group interviews, and performance assignments and evaluation papers prepared by the participants were analyzed using the content analysis technique. The results indicate specific patterns in TCs attitudes and comprehension toward different cultures. The paper shows that TCs define culture with its formalistic features, and do not realize that culture may be related to worldview. Also, TCs are insufficient in researching cultural concepts and generalize superficially about culture.

Keywords: Intercultural competence, social studies teaching, prospective teachers

Introduction

The perspective that approaches citizenship within the framework of certain rights and responsibilities (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992) has been criticized, especially in the 1990s. Because, with the 1990s, the nation-state, a rational, singular actor, ceased to be the sole actor of the political setting. In the 21st century, there are numerous reasons for people to realize the effects of globalization and embrace the idea of global responsibility. Categories such as culture, ethnicity, religion, and gender are now multiplying, diversifying, and redefining (Alpan, 2019). Globalization (Ritzer, 2018), the advancement of information and communication technologies (Castells, 2000), the idea of global responsibility (Giddens, 2006), anti-democratic practices and understandings, as well as wars erupting in various parts of the world makes the training of multicultural citizens (Kymlicka, 1995) more persuasive and necessary. Then citizens are supposed to act in a society that faces various challenges, such as pollution, migration, poverty, and inequality. Global migrants and refugees may be at the top of the list as a case for Turkey.

To International Organization for Migration IOM (2022a) estimated number of international migrants has exploded over the past 50 years from 84 million to 281 million. As of 2022, over 89.4 million people have been displaced forcibly. While 55 million people were forced to move within their country of residence, over 34 million people migrated to other countries (IOM, 2022b). These numbers alone clarify that it is inevitable for societies to live together with different cultures. Turkey ranks first among the countries most affected by migration and refugee issues.

Erdoğan (2021) examines the harmony that has been achieved between Syrian refugees and local groups. Because the country hosting the most refugees in the world is Turkey, with 3.7 million people. 98.6% of 3.7 million Syrians live together with the community in 81 provinces (UNHRC, 2021). The research results suggest that many people in Turkey are not optimistic about refugees living in a neighborhood as neighbors, students, friends, and co-workers and demand that refugees stay in refugee camps or refugee-only areas. Although more than ten years have passed since the Syrian refugees began to arrive in Turkey in 2011, the opinion that the Syrian refugees have not learned to adapt to rules, norms, and values has not diminished; on the contrary, it has become more robust. However (according to the same research), Syrians find themselves well-adapted to Turkish society by learning the language, culture, and norms. Another finding of the study is about the deficiencies/inaccuracies in the information about Syrian refugees. Erdoğan (2021) found that the perceptions of how refugees live and their conditions are based on prejudice and wrong information. Refugees' language, education, and financial barriers (Orakçı & Aktan, 2021) are not sufficiently recognized. Those who have refugees in their neighborhood/local environment see Syrians as a "problem/threat" more. Tolerating the refugees is dominant rather than embracing them in terms of coexistence status.

It is difficult to say that tolerance suffices to live together in a democratic society. A democratic society requires people to live peacefully, cooperate and develop a sense of social responsibility (Dahl, 2015, p.56). Citizens in 21st societies live in an increasingly interconnected world that imposes intercultural communication. Since refugees take part in community, send their children to school, and develop social relations, some refugees will continue to live in receiving societies.

Schools are essential tools for diagnosing, stimulating, and transforming antisocial behavior toward different cultures and providing citizenship, human rights, and inclusive education (Nenadovic, 2017). Therefore, educational institutions are expected to give more importance to the skills and values necessary for living with cultural differences. Social studies education has an essential role in teaching the meaning and significance of cultures because it is a course that brings together the knowledge, skills, and values of the concepts of culture and citizenship. Social studies education should not only deal with the concepts of culture and different cultures but also develop the skills of future citizens towards cultural differences. Therefore, multicultural education practices such as living with different cultures, cultural harmony, and recognizing differences in Social Studies teaching became more crucial.

Attitudes and comprehensions regarding intercultural competence

Culture is the leading study subject of anthropology (Duranti, 1997). Scholars defined the notion of culture in various ways, including race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, language, socioeconomic status, group or individual principles, beliefs, and customs (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The present paper defines culture as the norms, values, beliefs, worldviews, behaviors, lifestyles, and products shared by a particular community (Kramsch, 1998). Again, in the present study, culture is considered a concept that is influenced by geography, immigration status, age, gender, ethnicity, time, social class, environment, family history, language, and political and religious beliefs (Gay, 2018). So it has a dynamic structure (Kramsch, 1998). So communicating with people from a different culture requires a specific set of skills, values, and knowledge called intercultural competence. A large amount of literature examines what competencies individuals should have to communicate with people from different cultures.

Intercultural competence has dimensions of knowledge, attitude, understanding, value, and skill. However, intercultural competence has been the subject of various approaches, such as multicultural education in education (J. A. Banks & Banks, 2004), global or international education (Hanvey, 1975; Merryfield, 1996), peace education (Stomfay-Stitz, 1993), cultural or culturally sensitive (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings), 1994), intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2004), global competence training, democratic cultural competence. In line with this, the knowledge, skills and values needed presented in the literature are global competence, global citizenship, multicultural competence, cultural harmony, communicative competence, cultural competence, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, cultural intelligence, cultural literacy, intercultural capacity, etc. conceptualized in different ways (Deardorff & Jones, 2022). These approaches seem to have certain common features. The aforementioned approaches are based on the premise that different cultures are increasingly meeting each other in the same environment, neighborhood, and workplace. However, the literature shows that the encounter and interaction of cultures is sensitive. It is possible for individuals to carry out their cultural exchanges in a healthy way only if they gain specific competences.

The present paper used an intercultural competence frame (Deardorff, 2006), which focuses on interactions with people of different cultures, observing and questioning own and the other's cultural points of view. Deardorff (2006), in a Delphi study, examined the dimensions of intercultural competence. As a result, a synthesis has emerged that includes the dimensions of intercultural competence. According to the synthesis, intercultural competence comprises five dimensions (Deardorff & Jones, 2022). These are attitudes, knowledge-comprehension, skills, desired internal outcomes, and desired behavioral outcomes. Attitudes are respect, openness, and curiosity. Comprehension is the individual's understanding of his culture, cultural concepts, and linguistic understanding. The skills are related to the individual's capacity to listen, observe, interpret, analyze, evaluate and relate to the culture. Internal outcomes are adaptability, flexibility, perspective on cultural relativism, and empathy. Behavioral outcomes are related to the individual's ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultures in line with a specific goal. Those related dimensions follow a hierarchical order (Deardorff, 2009a). The first stage follows a sequence starting from attitudes toward understanding. The most advanced stage of competence is behavioral outcomes. This research focuses on the dimension of attitude and comprehension.

For TCs to develop intercultural competence, they should be curious about culture and its features, respectful to people from different cultures, and open to new learnings. Examples of intercultural attitudes are being tolerant towards those from different cultural, socioeconomic, and religious communities, not being prejudiced when deciding about people and situations, and having a calm and understanding attitude (Deardorff, 2006). TCs should evaluate a student's behavior from a different culture, not only from their cultural perspective, but also by understanding the student's cultural perspective. The TCs should be curious about different views, beliefs, and perspectives and be able to show that they value (Deardorff, 2009b). Relevant attitudes are expected to be accompanied by a thorough understanding. To communicate effectively with students from different cultures, TCs should be able to recognize the worldview, beliefs, values, and concepts that guide their cultural perspective in the first step. Relevant understanding requires students to accept these worldviews, beliefs, values, and concepts. Therefore, it is expected that the TCs learn the cultural background that guides the students' perspectives and develop their teaching to appeal to different cultures.

A teacher education rich in cultural diversity has three dimensions (Smolcic & Katunuic, 2017). (1) A school-based practice that emphasizes equality and diversity, (2) reinforcing intercultural communication skills, and (3) acquiring experiences that will improve observation and communication skills are required. Similarly, according to Cushner & Mahon (2009), emphasis should be placed on experience and affective dimensions. TCs need to experience different cultural environments firsthand. It is recommended that TCs should escape from their comfort zone and acquire experience with different cultures. Relevant experience can be accomplished by suspending one's own cultural perspective. Practices based on experience and cultural interaction are essential in intercultural education. Observing a particular culture abroad in its natural environment is seen as the most effective practice (Bardo, 2018) in terms of intercultural competence. However, since the time, money and effort cost of this will be high, methods and techniques such as simulation, discussion and drama may be preferred. Nganga (2016) implemented the activities suggested for the development of intercultural competence of TCs. He found that particular techniques and materials, such as classroom discussions and evaluations, technological tools are effective in teaching of related subjects.

Literature review

Intercultural competence provides an opportunity to understand the complexity of global problems and to develop cooperation with different people in the solution to these problems (Spitzer & Chagnon, 2009). Higher education institutions must provide intercultural competence education to future citizens. In this context, the attitudes and comprehension of teachers and TCs to different cultures is important. Because TCs are supposed to teach in classrooms where students of different cultures are present, they are also responsible for developing correct knowledge and attitudes about them. Besides eliminating the deficiencies of university education in this context, intercultural competence education makes it possible to raise individuals who can quickly adapt to different cultures. Also, respecting the lifestyles of different cultures, coping with the difficulties they encounter in the global world, and developing proper communication in multicultural working environments will be improved (Deardoff, 2009b, 2006). TCs will work with students from different cultures and teach them their own culture. (Gorski, 2016; Sleeter, 2001). Therefore, TCs should gain knowledge and experience about culture in teacher education. Teaching activities should develop attitudes and comprehension toward individuals from different cultures.

Intercultural competence effects TCs teaching performance. Because it is seen that the way teachers communicate with their students from different cultural backgrounds can increase harmony and success (Gorski, 2009; Haenni Hoti et al.,2019; Makarova and Birman, 2015; Vedder and Geel, 2012). Makarova and Birman (2015) showed that caring for cultural diversity in the classroom increases the social cohesion and belonging of the students. Similarly, Vedder and Geel (2012) showed in their study that students with different cultural backgrounds increase their self-confidence and learning motivation when their cultural identities are accepted. Haenni Hoti et al. (2019) also showed that cultural adaptation studies positively affect the approach of children from immigrant families to school. Still, the literature indicates that TCs do not always perceive culture correctly. For example, teachers may think culture is related solely to race, and TCs may think culture comprises visible features (Gorski, 2009). Aydın and Kaya (2017) stated that teachers in Turkey have positive attitudes toward refugee students, but they feel inadequate about the education of these students.

In Turkey, there are several studies examining the concept of intercultural attitudes. In these studies, the attitudes of students, teachers, and TCs were examined. Perceptions of English language teachers/TCs (Çubukcu, 2013), primary school teachers/TCs (Erdoğan, 2018; Renk, 2014; Sezer & Kahraman, 2017; Yılmaz & Göçen, 2013), and preschool teachers/TCs (Sezer & Kahraman, 2017), Turkish language teachers/TCs (Akın, 2016) are examined. Intercultural sensitivities of students enrolled in undergraduate programs or other TCs (Çoban, Kahraman, & Doğan, 2010) were examined. According to the results of the research, students, teachers, and TCs are open to different cultures.

The cited studies include findings based on self-reflections of teachers or TCs to the imagined community of different cultures. However, studies with social studies TCs differ from other studies in terms of methods and their results. Studies probing into actual cases from daily life (Akpınar & Cantürk, 2021; Ibrahimoglu, 2018; Zayimoğlu, 2021; Karataş, 2018) point out situations that cannot be explained with being open to cultures. For example, TCs taking part in the research conducted by Akpınar and Cantürk (2021) seem confident that they can communicate with someone from a different culture. However, TCs think intercultural education can alienate them from their culture. İbrahimoğlu (2018) refers to a similar situation. Although the TCs stated they were respectful to different cultures, 5 of the eight TCs stated they would respond negatively to students of different cultures' requests for permission due to the special celebration day. Refugee students told that their peers did not accept them in Zayimoğlu (2021)' s study, in which she examined the subject through the eyes of the "other." Turkish students believe teachers have a good attitude toward their refugee friends. Participants stated that the Social Studies course did not contribute to integrating refugees into society. For the social acceptance and academic success of refugees, it is recommended to be given more educational support on cultural adaptation (Zayimoğlu, 2021). In addition, TCs teachers taking part in the study of Akpınar and Cantürk (2021) and Karataş (2018) stated that the courses for intercultural communication are limited.

Present paper aimed to contribute the literature by documenting intercultural attitudes and comprehension of Social Studies TCs. This study is unique in inquiring about attitudes and comprehension in an environment where TCs and international students interact. TCs and international student interaction may give an insight into the teaching of intercultural competence education. This research aimed to describe the attitudes and comprehension adopted by TCs in working and communicating with individuals who are culturally different from themselves (international students). In line with the related purpose, answers were sought for two questions.

1. How is the comprehension of social studies TCs towards different cultures?

2. How are the social studies TCs' attitudes of different cultures?

Methods and Materials

A basic qualitative research design (Merriam, 2013) was used in this study since the researcher aimed to examine the attitudes and comprehension of TCs towards different cultures. This research design was chosen because it allows presenting the participant's attitudes and comprehension in its context and from the participants' perspective. The data collection tools were interviews, observations, and documents (Merriam, 2013). The present paper aimed to reveal the attitudes and comprehension of the participants on the subject based on individual and focus group interviews, assignments, and reflection papers.

Setting

This research includes the data collected during the activities carried out to improve TCs attitudes and comprehension of intercultural competence. Activities were carried in an environment where TCs could apply the knowledge they gained during their undergraduate education. Thirty-two TCs aged between 20 and 25 attended the lesson actively and participated in the activities. 11 students were born and raised in the city where the university is located. Twenty-one students come from different ethnic groups, socioeconomic levels, and regions. All 25 female and seven male participants are registered as Social

Studies TCs. Thirty-two students were divided into seven groups. Each group researched and analyzed the culture of a different country and introduced the country's culture to the class. Therefore, presentations of foreign cultures were presented for seven weeks. 1-2 international students from each culture were invited and asked to give information or comment about that culture. International students comprise ten undergraduate-level students from different countries such as Indonesia, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Kashmir. International students are also university students. The activities continued with each group meeting with international students to inquire more about the culture. The participants made an interview with international students and reflected on their perspectives.

Participants

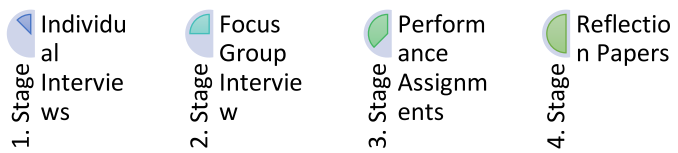
In the selection of participants, the researcher used the teaching situation sampling approach, which is under the single-case sampling technique. The researcher preferred the teaching situation sampling technique (Patton, 2015, p. 404) for situations where a particular group will be studied to provide in-depth information about the research phenomenon that can indicate the teaching activities. Participants are 7 female and 25 male TCs who actively attended Globalization and Society, which is one of the elective field courses in the 2021-2022 Fall Semester in Social Studies Teacher Education Program. The study participants are all undergraduate students who were enrolled in the course. The course included theoretical information on cultural, different cultures, prejudice, refugees/immigrants, and empathy. The researcher aimed for the participants to acquire experience regarding the concepts. Participants voluntarily took part in both the course and the research. The views and perspectives of 32 TCs actively participating in the course were used as data in the study.

Data collection and analysis

The researcher collected different types of data to understand the phenomenon in depth and increase trustworthiness. To reveal their attitudes and comprehension on the relevant subject, the researcher has employed several data collection tools. Research data were collected using individual interviews, focus group interviews, and documents (documents related to performance assignments and reflective papers). Multiple data collection tools were employed to perform triangulation (Silverman, 2011) and to increase trustworthiness (Patton, 2015, p. 989). Triangulation let the researcher compare and contrast the findings across different data sources.

The researcher analyzed the interviews, focus group interviews, performance assignments, and evaluation writings.

Figure 1. Data Gathering Process



In the first stage of the data collection process, individual interviews are conducted to examine the participants' preconceptions on the research topic. As a performance assignment, the participants researched the culture of a particular country and presented it to the rest of the class. In the next stage, participants completed the performance assignment on different cultures.

Table 1. Information on Data Gathering Tools

Data Gathering Tool	Individual Interviews	Focus Group Interview	Performance Assignments	Reflection Papers
Format	Voice Recordings	Voice Recordings	Presentatio n, PPT	Text
Lenght	Appr. 8-28 min	Appr. 30-41 min.	Appr. 40-65 pages	Appr. 5-7 pages
Frequency	8	3	7	7

In the second stage of data collection, the researcher did focus group interviews with the participants. After the performance assignments, the researcher examined their approaches to different cultures, knowledge acquisition, and attitudes and comprehension towards different cultures through focus group interviews.

In the third stage of data collection, the researcher also examined the participants' studies (presentations, knowledge acquisitions) on the relevant countries and cultures. At this point the researcher aimed to observe how the research phenomenon is constructed in participant performances. After the getting performance assignments, the researcher asked the participants to interview an international student from the assigned country and then evaluate the cultural similarities and differences. The fourth stage of the data collection process is the collection of reflection papers.

The data collected within the research were transferred to the Nvivo 10 package program and analyzed. The researcher analyzed research data using the content analysis approach. During the analysis process, The researcher coded the data line by line and reached the themes from the codes. The researcher made constant comparisons (Glaser, 1965) to reveal the common and opposite dimensions across different data types. For example, the continuity and discontinuities between how the concepts are perceived in individual interviews and how they are stated in the reviews are examined, and the researcher has aimed to reveal the patterns in this way.

Findings

Four different themes had been reached. These are cultural approach, different culture approach, identity, and limited knowledge. The themes observed in the attitudes and comprehension of the participants were presented, and direct statements were included.

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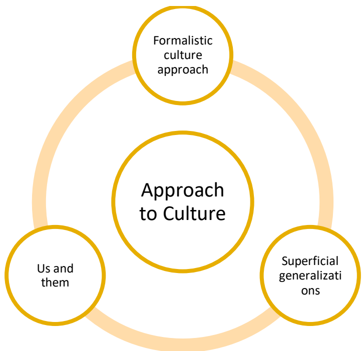
Figure 2. Finding Themes

Approach to culture

The concept of culture exists its formal appearance in the perspective of participants. All the participants perceive the idea of culture with food-kitchen, weddings, weapons, traditional games, etc., characterized by features. Different forms of weddings or entertainment in other regions and the popular dishes were the most frequently repeated cultural elements. However, the symbolic aspect of culture, which is the distinguishing feature, has rarely been brought to the interviews or documents. Therefore, researcher concluded that the participants defined the culture with its formal features but did not mention the symbolic aspect.

Figure 3. Sub-themes Regarding Approach To Culture



Analysis of student presentations also support the finding revealed in the interviews. In the presentations, participants reflected general categories as cultural characteristics. General features are history, politics, geography, faith, military status or power, traditions, cuisine, and gender. Participants presented certain customs and essential days as cultural information in few examples. For example, in the presentation on Syrian culture, the subjects of women, cuisine, belief, and traditions, that is, the customs and habits of the society were placed. Participants presented detailed information about the Nowruz festival or wedding traditions.

Pakize: "Bride's Table," a tradition among Turks living in the north of Afghanistan, is laid out for girls for seven days from the first day of Eid al-Fitr. According to tradition, during the feast, girls from far *away visit the couple's house to see the beauty of the newly married brides and the table they set, and they evaluate the table they set among themselves.*

Participants mention cultural meanings and symbols rarely. Meanings and symbols are limited to one or two sentences. When the cultural meanings and symbols are noted, they are close to having a superficial quality. The knowledge of culture is generalized to a whole society, its context is removed, and it is superficially placed.

Yeliz: You can't get an invitation to drink coffee in Lebanon because a meal in Lebanon is not limited to coffee. While many dishes are typically eaten with fingers in Lebanon, some locals adopt European standards and culinary traditions. According to them, this is an insult.

In the presentations, culture was taken as a monolithic whole, and concepts such as cultural diversity and perspective were neglected. Dimensions, such as cultural meanings and the origin of meanings, are not mentioned. Limited elements of culture (tradition, ritual, behaviors) are presented as static, monolithic, and object-like entities.

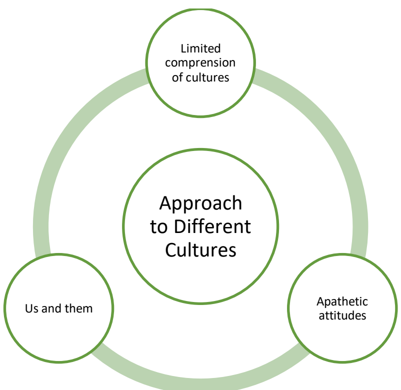
Nur: The people of Kashmir are hardworking people with great skill and artistic talent. Kashmir shawl loom, hand-woven carpets, hand-woven shawls, fabrics processed one by one with needle lace, shawls, and clothes, paper comes to life, outstanding paper. You can find bachelor, wood carving, copper craftsmanship, and many more.

In the presentations, not the symbolic content and originality of the culture, but rather its relationship with Turkey stressed by TCs. The similarities between the Turks living in Kashmir, Lebanese cuisine, and Turkish cuisine are explained with emphasis on their relationship with "us," as in the examples of similarities with the Syrian culture. Another dimension of this is whether or not the country has a Muslim population. If the Muslim population is present, it is given by a percentage.

Approach to different culture

Respect for different cultures has a complex image in the participants' perspective. Participants tend to refer to different cultures by their geographical regions (Aegean, Eastern Anatolia, etc.) and countries (India, USA, Syria). To them, other regions or countries have unique and monolithic cultures. A significant group of respondents hesitated for a long time when asked how they defined the concept of a different culture. After the pause, some participants considered Indians and African tribes as other cultures. It can be said that the participants tend to seek contrast with their characteristics (us/them) when it comes to different cultures.

Figure 4. Sub-themes Regarding Approach to Different Culture



There are participants (5) who talked about immigrants as individuals from different cultures. Although these participants stated that they respected immigrants, they included pejorative expressions (dirty, uneducated, vulgar). When it comes to the differences within the country, the same participants discussed them in a non-pejorative way and emphasized the difference in customs. On the other hand, 3 participants did not use a pejorative expression for domestic and immigrant individuals and stated that different cultures should be respected.

Most of the participants found the clothes and food of people from different cultures strange. For example, the participants, who stated that the clothes in Kashmir are not modern and are primitive, claimed that if there are people who prefer this type of clothes in their place of residence, they would react negatively. Only 1 out of 5 participants who expressed their opinion on Kashmir explained that it would not be right to criticize people's preferences and that it is a cultural difference. Only TCs who researched Burkina Faso culture expressed constructive views. Like Kashmir, cultural elements are not found interesting for most participants about Lebanese culture. Participants also did not like the idea of meeting a Lebanese person or visiting Lebanon. Only few participants (2) said they would choose to taste Lebanese cuisine. Neither did they show interest in the idea of the participants interacting with the Lebanese student, asking more questions, or learning their perspective, nor did they try it during the lesson. Very few of the participants communicated with individuals from different cultures during and after the class.

Metin: "Let's call Palestine Israel!" frankly, her saying made me depressed. I said it for the first time, from the very beginning.

Researcher: I wonder whether she meant, we should not call it Israel.

Metin: Oh, that's what she said; I got on my nerves.

Researcher: Why were you angry?

Metin: She should have waited a while, she should have said later. And she gave such a harsh reaction when I raised his hand in a snap; I said I must have said something wrong.

Researcher: Do you think you said something wrong?

Metin: But she says so, so what can I do?

Researcher: What did she want from you?

Metin: I understood neither; she changed the name of that country.

The data revealed in the interviews show that even simple issues are not negotiated with international students. Although the word preferences or behaviors of people from different cultures caught the attention of the participants, they did not turn into interaction. Also, in most cases, TCs ignored possible interactions with international students and did not inquire.

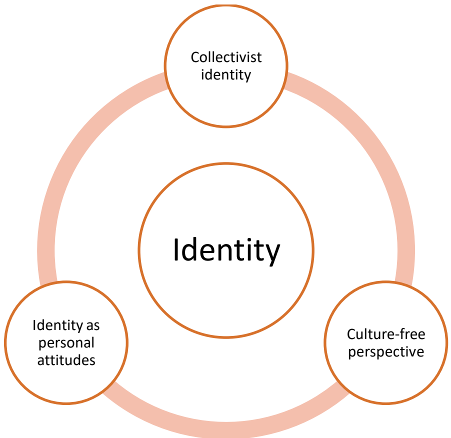
Identity

Participants defined themselves with personal attitudes instead of identity features. It was noted that those who described themselves with individual identity and belonging were few. In individual interviews, only 2 participants stated they were from a particular city, an ideology, or an ethnicity. Most of the participants preferred to define themselves with personal characteristics and attitudes.

Remzi: I mean, I'm serious, but I don't like people who talk too much. There are subjects I like; there are subjects I dislike. I do not establish intimacy with everyone; my tone must match.

The participants have used a normative discourse in their views. Being open to innovation, being shy, being self-confident, and being honest are the most preferred features. Except for 2, none of the participants realized their views about attitudes were also a cultural interpretation. The participants, who stated that "people should be nice," "should be sincere," and "should be self-confident," neglected that cultural forms of human qualities could be diversified across cultures. Only one participant stated that the discussion in a culture-related lesson caused him to question his perspective on the other.

Figure 5: Sub-themes Regarding Identity



In the reflection papers, the participants defined their culture with the religion of Islam, Turkishness, and other collectivist identities. All the participants commented on the collectivist identity (Islam, Turkishness, Conservatism, etc.) in their reflection papers. A significant majority of them expressed an opinion implying that this is the only truth.

Kerem: For example, I always favor treating such women well. I said, after all, I am a person with religious belief; I am a Muslim. Our Prophet has a word. In other words, our women are the crown of our heads.

While most participants tended to present a more contrasting picture of issues related to immigrants and local people (us and them), they managed to refer to familiar aspects of people from different customs in Turkey. These references are usually related to Islam, nationalism, or being from a particular city. Only one of the participants stated that he took his own culture as a reference and said that there are still many valuable cultures.

It was observed that in the reflection paper, the participants did not present a detailed photograph of the different cultures that were the subject. Even two participants who used neutral expressions for different cultures did not use a more complex term than stating that each culture is unique. The other 6 participants, on the other hand, tended to bring up the formal characteristics of people or groups (wedding customs, meals, etc.) that they called different cultures, or to use prejudiced expressions.

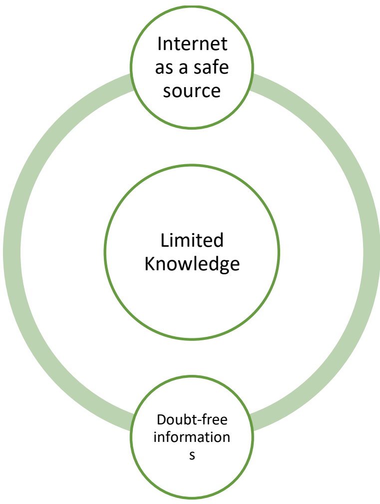
Limited knowledge

The researcher found that participants researched the country's culture only using internet resources. The participants stated that they did not receive the information they first reached and tried to reach the correct information. They also told that if the information is same in several websites then it is assumed-to be true. It is understood that participants have done detailed internet research.

Side: We rechecked all the [information] that came out, the information we found, from other pages [websites]. Because it was instantly different; on the one hand, when we look at religion, for example, 61% said Muslim; on the other hand, it was 65%.

The information given in the presentations and in the reflections has a definite quality or nature. Information obtained from sources is presented as if it is the only truth and as if it is firsthand knowledge. However, presentations and reflection papers are filled with information from a particular media. Participants showed no understanding of the limitedness of presented information/knowledge about the culture studied. In the interviews, no word or meaning was presented to express uncertainty, annotation, or limitation on the issues mentioned. The participants realized that the information might not be correct after they presented it.

Figure 6: Sub-Themes Regarding Limited Information



Participants stated that they realized that the information might not be correct when they encountered the comments of a person from that culture. In the participant reflections taken from the last data collection tool, they also used a discourse implying that they had sufficient knowledge about the culture in question. In these reflections, expressions of being unsure, making comments, and expressing subjective opinions were not used, and the limitations of the information presented were not specified.

Yeliz: In the same way, visiting the graves of deceased elders on holidays is a strong tradition expressing respect for us, but this tradition is sporadic. There are many differences when it comes to citizenship. For example, we have civic duties such as voting and joining the military. But they don't have them.

Discussion

Specific patterns regarding the attitudes and comprehension of TCs towards different cultures are presented. These patterns are about definitions of traditional culture, problems related to perspective and culture relationship, problems in information literacy, superficial generalization, and keeping a distance from interaction with different cultures. It is noteworthy that TCs considering culture in general with its physical and formal aspects and TCs talking about it without evaluating its symbolic aspect. Some papers support that finding. In the study by Deveci (2009), TCs tended to define culture as formal elements (food, wedding, etc.). Such an understanding of culture is found necessary but not sufficient.

Because cultural interaction is basically an exchange of meaning or, to put differently, culture is a form of meaning. Discovering the cultural construction of meaning or knowledge refers to intercultural competence. Defining culture only with its standard feature can limit the intercultural competence of TCs. This conception of culture makes it hard to comprehend how the culture is constructed and what implications it may have.

In the study conducted by Günel (2016), it is noteworthy that TCs also emphasize the worldview and thoughts as a dimension of culture. Silva (2022) showed in his study that TCs define culture with individual values and characteristics. Silva (2022) criticized the perspective that it reduces culture to the personal level. Because she argued that personal level type of understanding might prevent understanding the socialization dimension of culture and consequences it will cause for social groups. This research shows that TCs deal with culture with its standard features. Comments and evaluations about countries and cultures do not contain the subtlety or complexity required by the cultural perspective. It can be inferred that formal or individual approaches to culture may limit the intercultural competence.

The TCs in this study consider different cultures only on their visible features and judge them superficially. TCs need a more robust approach to the concept of culture since it is necessary for them to define and understand their future students' cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2018). Doğanay (2008) stated that culture is one of the ten basic standards in teaching Social Studies and argued that students should gain an in-depth understanding and experience of culture and cultural differences in order to compare the interaction styles of people from different cultures with their physical and social environments. Both findings of the study and Zayimoğlu (2021) showed that culture is a concept that hard to comprehend. It is also seen that practice-based activities improve cultural competence education. Because TCs are expected to recognize and evaluate the contribution of culture to social action. Participants rarely realized that they were also cultural creatures. The first step to understanding a different culture is to realize one's own cultural perspective (Bennet, 1986; Ersoy & Günel, 2011). TCs should realize that they were born and raised in a particular culture and that the meaning and attribution are constructed continuously regarding the culture they were born into.

Overconfidence in information gained mostly from websites about the culture is another result of the research. TCs rarely have questioned the validity of the source. Information validity is especially crucial when it comes to the concept of culture. Since culture is complex, symbolic and relativistic (Kramsch, 1998), it is not easy to understand by reading some texts from a website. In another study (Dilek Eren, Muşlu Kaygısız, & Parlak, 2018), TCs gave importance to the content and similarity with the reader's views in deciding the reliability of the information. Still, they did not attach importance to the authorship and type of the text. It is important to realize that although the information is valid and reliable, it may be incomplete or insufficient to cover the whole country. On the other hand, there may be different approaches or differences of opinion on the same subject. The information on culture may be inaccurate and may contain cultural biases. According to Banks (2020), one of the main elements of teaching about culture is to raise TCs awareness of how knowledge is constructed. However, the research results show that TCs tend to take and use information that does not seem contradictory. The study by Ünal and Er (2015) shows that the information literacy levels of social studies TCs are insufficient. This research supports the findings of Ünal and Er (2015).

Result

The relevant results are not in line with the literature concluding that the cultural attitudes of the TCs are sufficient (Çubukçu, 2013; Erdoğan, 2018; Renk, 2014; Sezer & Kahraman, 2017; Yılmaz & Göçen, 2013; Sezer & Kahraman, 2017; Akın, 2016; Çoban, Kahraman & Doğan, 2010). On the other hand, the results of the research expand the literature (Akpınar & Cantürk, 2021; İbrahimoğlu, 2018; Zayimoğlu, 2021; Karataş, 2018) that points to problems in cultural attitudes and comprehension. Therefore, it can be said that there are two opposite situations. On the one hand, TCs think they are culturally competent; on the other hand, they display attitudes and comprehension that do not match with competence in real-life scenarios or situations. In that case, it would not be wrong to say that TCs have certain cultural biases and that their reflective perspectives are insufficient. Therefore, it is suggested that TCs is supported in terms of necessary attitudes and comprehension regarding intercultural competence (Deardoff, 2006, 2009a, 2009b).

Limitations and Recommendation

Considering the research results, suggestions for future research and practice is presented. Various studies have been conducted on attitudes and comprehension toward intercultural competence and offer a scientific perspective on the field. However, studies on improving attitudes and comprehension of intercultural competence are limited in number and scope. Therefore, applied research can illuminate the field of study. TCs should encounter issues involving culture, different cultures, and interaction more frequently. One of the results of this research is the limitation of TCs reflective perspectives on their cultural judgments. This limitation can be overcomed by practical studies enriched with a theoretical background on intercultural competence. Therefore, practices, where people can gain firsthand experience, can contribute to training TCs who are more competent in terms of intercultural competence.

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An Analysis of Instructional Leadership Studies in Türkiye: A Meta-Synthesis Study

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ABSTRACT

Instructional leadership has a remarkable importance in student learning and school development in the international literature. This situation enables researchers to examine different aspects of instructional leadership. This study aims to synthesize qualitative research findings examining the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals in Türkiye. Meta-synthesis method was employed; thus, 21 studies that met the inclusion criteria were analyzed using this method. The studies constituting the study's data source were accessed by scanning the databases of ERIC, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, YÖKTEZ (Council of Higher Education, National Thesis Center), and ULAKBİM (Turkish Academic Network and Information Center). As a result of the research, three themes were obtained: Instructional leadership behaviors, effects of instructional leadership, and factors hindering instructional leadership. Although the research results indicate positive relationships between instructional leadership and organizational effectiveness and development, the roles of school principals as instructional leaders in the Turkish education system, which has a centralized structure, are reflected in their actual daily practices to a limited extent. To this end, there is a need for more comprehensive empirical studies and evidence-based models of exactly how instructional leadership affects organizational development in the Turkish literature.

Keywords: Instructional leadership, meta-synthesis, qualitative research, school leadership.

Introduction

School leaders are important in terms of their direct or indirect influence on the teaching processes in the school. The main purpose of schools is learning and teaching processes, student learning, and student well-being. Therefore, the concept of instructional leadership is emphasized as a leadership approach that focuses on student learning, student well-being, and professional initiatives for learning. Instructional leadership became popular through the effective school movement that began in the late 1970s and attracted attention as a key feature of effective schools (Edmonds, 1979). In effective school studies, the leadership behaviors of the school principals were regarded as one of the main factors in the effectiveness of the school (Seong, 2019; Şişman, 2016). Therefore, an effective instructional leader was needed to design an effective school. Thus, instructional leadership has become a fundamental research area of educational administration for the last 35 years (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Şişman, 2018). Instructional leadership began to be conceptualized through various initiatives after the 1980s (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) conceptualization was the most notable and widely adopted model. In this model, emphasis was placed on the role of instructional leaders in defining and communicating the school's mission, managing the curriculum, and fostering a positive learning climate in the school. With these initiatives, instructional leadership gained an important place in the educational administration knowledge base and obtained momentum with research in different contexts (Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1990; Nguyen, Ng, & Yap, 2017; Şişman, 2018). Studies have shown that school principals exhibiting instructional leadership behaviors showed a strong influential positive effect on outcomes such as student achievement (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008), teachers' professional development (Blase & Blase, 1999), and organizational learning (Rosmanar & Marzuki, 2016).

Instructional leadership research in Türkiye emerged at the end of the 1990s (Gümüşeli, 1996; Ercan, 1997; Şişman, 1997). Especially in the 2000s, these studies increased and have continued today(Baş & Yıldırım, 2010; Çalık & Kılınç, 2018; Koşar & Buran, 2019). In these studies, subjects such as the instructional leadership roles of school principals, their necessity for school stakeholders, and the effect of instructional leadership on the school and learning processes were examined. Through these studies, the need to synthesize, interpret and evaluate the body of knowledge about instructional leadership emerged. Hence, there have been various compilation attempts to synthesize research findings on instructional leadership in Türkiye (Cansoy & Polatcan, 2018; Gümüş, Hallinger, Cansoy, & Bellibaş, 2021; Özdoğru & Güçlü, 2020). These compilation studies make significant contributions to the instructional leadership knowledge base. Likewise, this study is based on a research synthesis initiative that will shed light on instructional leadership practices in the context of Türkiye. Nevertheless, science is a cumulative process. Through this research, a more comprehensive and holistic conclusion is expected to be reached based on the knowledge of previous review studies. This compilation study was carried out to reveal the process and meaning of instructional leadership research based on different methodologies, approaches, and time. In this study, the findings of qualitative research on instructional leadership conducted in Türkiye were synthesized. Besides, it was aimed to develop suggestions for policymakers and practitioners about the instructional leadership practices of school leaders in the context of Türkiye. Thus, it is envisaged to reach a rich content of information about the behaviors and effects of school leaders regarding instructional leadership in Türkiye and the conditions that prevent these behaviors. Therefore, the following research question was determined in the study: *What are the results of qualitative studies on instructional leadership in Türkiye?*

Instructional leadership concept

Effective school research in the 1980s focused the attention of policymakers and academics on instructional leadership. The most crucial aspect that distinguishes instructional leadership from other leadership types is its focus on the learning processes at school (Şişman, 2018). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) proposed the most extensively tested and widely adopted model in their research on instructional leadership. This model identified three key instructional leadership roles: Defining school mission, managing curriculum, and promoting a positive learning climate in the school. Accordingly, the two functions of defining the school mission are setting the school's goals and communicating those goals. Second, instructional leaders have three roles in terms of managing curriculum: Supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Finally, to develop and promote a positive learning climate at school, the roles of instructional leaders are referred to as creating an academic learning environment, developing high standards and expectations for students, providing incentive mechanisms for learning, and promoting teachers' professional development.

Similarly, Hallinger (2005) highlighted five characteristics of school principals as effective instructional leaders: (1) being strong and directive, (2) managing the instructional program and curriculum activities, (3) being culture builder, (4) being goal-oriented, and (5) adopting the principles resulting from the combination of expertise and charisma. In addition to these, there are some expectations from school principals as instructional leaders. In this context, it is expected to conduct course supervision and be a guide and model for all stakeholders to develop and improve teaching processes (Koşar & Buran, 2019).

Methodology

Research Model

This research, which analyzes the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals in terms of form, condition, and process, is a meta-synthesis study, which is an inductive qualitative research method in which qualitative research findings and results are brought together, analyzed in-depth, interpreted, and synthesized with a critical perspective (Au, 2007). Aspfors and Fransson (2015) suggest that meta-synthesis studies are not an ordinary review of qualitative studies but aim to develop new knowledge with an interpretive analysis. Meta-synthesis studies also become a rich source of reference for decision-makers, teachers, and researchers by synthesizing the common aspects of studies that deal with the same subject with different dimensions (Ünal, Çalık, Ayas, & Coll, 2006). In this context, in this study, the findings of qualitative research on the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals, the hindering factors, and their effects were synthesized and interpreted with a critical perspective.

Data Collection and Determination of Studies

To determine the studies to be included in the study, databases of ERIC, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, YÖKTEZ (Council of Higher Education, National Thesis Center), and ULAKBİM (Turkish Academic Network and Information Center) were searched. In addition, the keywords "instructional leader" and "instructional leadership" were used in the literature review. Finally, the studies reached as a result of the review were checked one by one, and a total of 21 studies, 16 of which were master's theses and 5 of which were articles, were included in the study within the framework of inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criteria For Study Inclusion and Exclusion

In this study, the steps of Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) to be followed before determining the studies, including (i) determining the study field, (ii) determining the keywords, (iii) performing the search, (iv) determining the inclusion and exclusion criteria, were considered. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were considered to conduct detailed reviews and set a limit for the studies. The criteria and explanations about them are given below. The criteria such as the following are suggested:

- Conducted by a qualitative research method,
- Inclusion of the concepts of "instructional leader" or "instructional leadership" in the title,
- Supporting the findings with raw data,
- Having full text, and
- Sample with Turkish participants.

Studies Included in the Research

As a result of the evaluation of the reached studies within the framework of the determined criteria, 21 studies were included in accordance with the study's inclusion criteria. The flowchart of the process of incorporating the studies obtained by reviewing the relevant literature into the meta-synthesis is presented in Figure 1.

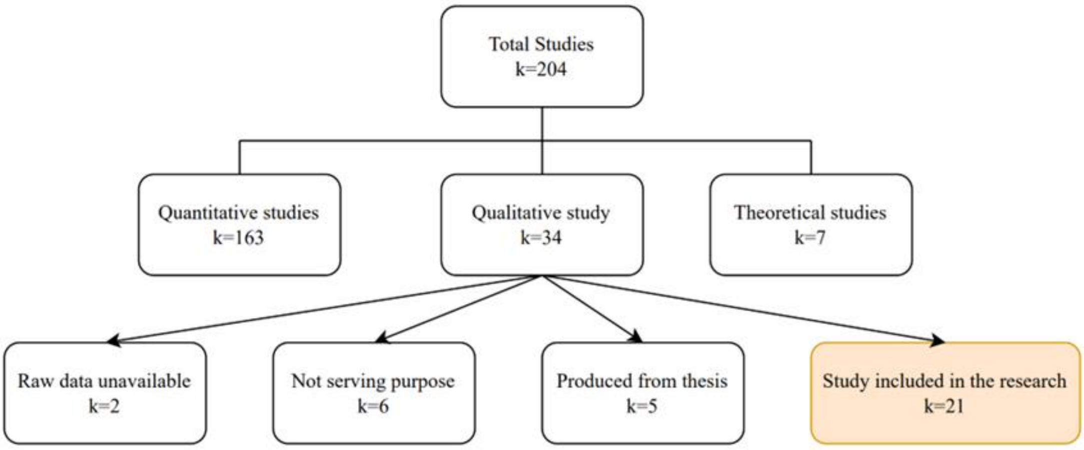

Figure 1. Studies included in the research

The general characteristics of the studies included in the research, such as code, author (s), publication year, type of publication, purpose, and method information, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Information on the studies included in the study

Coding	Author(s) and Publication Year	Type	Purpose	Participants	Data Collection Tool	Data Analysis
S1	Aktepe and Buluç (2014)	Article	Determining the instructional leadership characteristics of school principals	13 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S2	Anıl and Sarpkaya (2014)	Article	Determining how school principals perform instructional leadership behaviors	16 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Descriptive analysis and content analysis
S3	Bağrıyanık (2017)	Thesis	By determining the instructional leadership levels of school principals, collecting their opinions on organizational commitment and behaviors that cause organizational cynicism in line with teachers' perspectives.	30 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S4	Bal (2019)	Thesis	Identifying the opinions of primary and secondary school principals on the display of instructional leadership behaviors	16 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Descriptive analysis
S5	Bayar and Önder (2016)	Article	Determining primary school principals' levels of displaying instructional leadership behaviors	10 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	----
S6	Bozkurt (2013)	Thesis	Determining at what level school principals try to realize their instructional behaviors	16 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S7	Bozkurt (2019)	Thesis	Determination of instructional leadership behaviors of school principals working in primary and secondary schools	14 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Descriptive analysis and content analysis
S8	Çalık and Kılınç (2018)	Article	Determining how school principals make sense of instructional leadership based on their professional experiences and experiences.	6 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Phenomenological analysis

S9	Deniz (2015)	Thesis	Identifying the factors limiting the instructional leadership of school principals according to principals and assistant principals working in primary and secondary education institutions.	26 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S10	Gaziler (2017)	Thesis	Determining the opinions of school principals and teachers on instructional leadership	10 school principals and 10 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S11	Göçen (2013)	Thesis	Determining the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals within the scope of the constructivist approach-based program	16 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Descriptive analysis
S12	Güneş (2014)	Thesis	Revealing the effect of the instructional leadership behaviors of the secondary school principals on the academic success of the school by collecting the opinions of the school principals.	12 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S13	Özdoğru (2020)	Thesis	Determining the barriers to school principals' instructional leadership behaviors and the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals who contribute to their corporate reputation.	10 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S14	Sağır (2011)	Thesis	Determining the levels of primary school principals in performing their instructional leadership roles according to the perceptions of principals and teachers and the problems they encounter while performing these roles.	10 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	----
S15	Sezer (2017)	Thesis	Determining the level of realization of instructional leadership by pre-school principals	10 school principals and 20 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S16	Şahin (2011)	Thesis	Determining the opinions of secondary school principals on instructional leadership roles	10 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S17	Taşdelen, Aküzüm, Tan and Uçar (2015)	Article	Determining the instructional leadership roles of school principals in the education process.	52 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S18	Topaloğlu (2020)	Thesis	Determining to what extent private school principals perform their instructional leadership roles and how these roles are perceived by teachers.	10 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S19	Tüzün (2019)	Thesis	Determining the impact of school principals as instructional leaders on students' academic achievement	10 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	----
S20	Yağmur (2018)	Thesis	Determining the school principals' performance of instructional leadership behaviors	13 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Descriptive analysis and content analysis
S21	Zorlu (2015)	Thesis	Determining the opinions of teachers working in secondary schools on the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals	15 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis

Table 1 indicates that most of the studies are master's theses; semi-structured interview forms are used in all studies; the number of school principals and teachers in the study group is close to each other; and content and descriptive analysis methods are used together or separately.

Data Analysis

In this study, the analysis steps consisting of five stages were followed, considering the qualitative data analysis recommendations in the literature (Creswell, 2013).

1) *Reading and editing qualitative data*. At this stage, the general purpose of the studies included in the research, the statements in the themes and sub-themes, the findings, results, and suggestions were arranged and transferred to a document file.

2) *Coding*. First, a code (such as S1, S2…) was assigned for each study. Then ideas and concepts that were deemed necessary by open coding were marked separately for each study, with codes consisting of one or more words. Next, with axial coding, the studies were read in-depth;new codes were added to the first coding, and similar codes were brought together. To determine the similar aspects of the studies and to obtain common themes, they were grouped by associating with each other.
3) *Creating categories by combining codes*. Codes divided into groups were categorized.
4) *Synthesis (revealing analytical themes).* At this stage, analytical themes were revealed. According to Merriam (2013), the themes were named at this intuitive stage. Abstract generalizations were reached by examining the codes divided into groups in depth.
5) *Presenting and interpreting analytical themes.* The themes, sub-themes, and codes created at this stage were presented in tables. Additionally, direct quotations from the studies included in the study were included with the study code and the participants in the relevant study and were supported by comments and syntheses.

Validity and Reliability

Different strategies can be used to ensure the validity and reliability of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018) consider detailed reporting of the collected data and how the results are achieved as an essential criterion for validity. In this study, the data source was clearly stated (see Table 1), and analysis methods and the creation of themes were described in detail. These demographic features were coded by creating a Microsoft Office Word document table, and codes (numbers and letters) were assigned to the studies. The two encoders performed the coding separately. To test the internal consistency, the codes produced by the encoders were compared. The agreement between encoders was calculated as 88%. According to Miles and Huberman (2002), this value is at an acceptable level in terms of internal consistency.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics committee was not needed because this study was meta-synthesis and did not require participants.

Findings

In this section, the themes, sub-themes, and codes obtained from data analysis are presented as tables. The themes reached within the scope of the research were determined as (i) instructional leader behaviors (Table 2), (ii) factors hindering instructional leadership (Table 3), and (iii) effects of instructional leadership (Table 4). The main themes and sub-themes shown in the tables were interpreted, supported, and explained by participants' quotations from the relevant research.

Instructional Leader Behaviors

The sub-themes under the theme of "instructional leader behaviors" in the research reflect the general thoughts on the question "What are the behaviors and attitudes that the instructional leader should have at school?" The codes reached regarding the instructional leadership behaviors are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The sub-themes and codes regarding instructional leader behaviors

Sub-Theme	Codes
Developing and implementing school goals	Creating an original vision and mission
	Engaging stakeholders
	Developing a goal by setting goals
	Developing goals according to changing and developing conditions

	Drawing student attention to school goals Sharing school goals
Improving the teaching process	Motivating the student to learn Maintaining teaching time Student monitoring and evaluation Rewarding/honoring the student Ensuring that teaching time is spent effectively and efficiently Coordinating between courses Having up-to-date curriculum information Carrying and sharing good practices and examples in education to school Organizing social, sporting, and cultural activities
Supporting and developing teachers	Allocating time for teachers Procurement of tools Supporting ideas and projects Rewarding/honoring Motivating and tolerating the teacher Mentoring Modeling Supporting the professional development of teachers
Developing a positive school climate	Organizing social activities Building a collaborative learning culture Sharing tasks and giving the job to those who are competent Participating in decisions Paying attention to teachers' opinions Being visible at school Gathering around common goals/values Building team spirit Distribution of tasks according to merit Developing cooperation and dialogue among teachers Respect for values Being solution-oriented, not accusatory Being friendly, being kind Being equal to everyone
Monitoring, supervising, and evaluating the teaching process	Supervising the courses Supervision on a branch basis Guiding Identifying teachers' strengths and weaknesses

	Objective performance evaluation Providing feedback to teachers Analyzing written/practice exams
Family and environmental cooperation	Parent visits Providing financial support from parents and the environment Giving guidance by attending parent meetings

Table 2 shows that school principals should have instructional leadership behaviors for school development, student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and environmental cooperation. Furthermore, under the theme of "developing and implementing school goals" , it was emphasized that besides the vision, mission and purpose patterns determined by the Ministry, the school's own situational, changing, and developing conditions should be considered, and stakeholder participation should be ensured. One of the direct quotations from the related studies referenced in the creation of sub-themes and codes are as follows:

> "… while achieving our goals, we act together by taking into account the opinions of all our teachers and staff, that is, we have an understanding of education that is not selfish, but cooperation … we take these decisions together at the meetings at the beginning of the year…" (S6-P14).

The opinions under the theme of "improving the teaching process" are that the principal should feel responsible for each student. It is thought that the school principal's primary function of motivating the student with reinforcements, such as rewarding to increase student success and striving to increase student knowledge, skills, and equipment, improves the teaching process. The statement of a principal on this subject S6-P11, "*…We try to motivate our students by holding frequent meetings with my teachers, especially to increase student achievement…*" explains that the main purpose is to increase the quality of the student teaching process.

Under the theme of "supporting and developing teachers", managerial behaviors that motivate teachers, show sensitivity to the problems experienced by teachers, direct them to in-service training organized by central and local institutions, and support teaching processes are included. The following are the opinions of the principals stating that they provide material support to teachers and set an example as a model:

> "I try to support teachers in every way. In particular, I try to provide tools and materials related to the course. For example, the photocopy machine is one of the most used and most important tools for my teachers in our school. I regularly service the copier. Besides, A4 paper is another tool that we need the most. Therefore, I provide teachers with A4 paper" (S10-AP5).

> "When the school principal or administration leaves their job unfinished, the teacher will also leave it unfinished. So this is a ripple effect. In other words, "A fish rots from the head down." First of all, the school administration should give all its time and energy to its institution before anyone else" (S12-P5).

Under the theme of "developing a positive school climate," teachers emphasized the positive personality traits of their principals, which are considered important in human relations and managerial processes. Some of the participants' opinions in related studies on positive climate creation practices are summarized below:

> "I work with a principal who contributes to the achievement of the school's goals, shows an understanding, affectionate, fatherly attitude towards the teacher, is smiling, does not judge the teacher, and does not offend. Our principal, who has a democratic attitude, stands at an equal distance from all teachers. As this is the case, school work runs smoothly, and school goals are met quickly and smoothly. Thanks to our principal, who has a democratic attitude, teachers feel comfortable. We work efficiently because we are not under pressure" (S1-T8).

> "…I take care not to use 'you' language and not to be judgmental or accusatory when addressing my students, teachers, and parents. In general, I try to take the events with examples from myself and convey what I feel to them by using the 'I' language, so I try to establish empathetic communication and arouse a sense of trust in them. I do this to ensure that they come to me willingly and know that I will listen to them, try to understand them and approach them in a solution-oriented manner, not fearfully or timidly…" (Ç19-Duru).

The sub-theme of "monitoring, supervising, and evaluating the teaching process" addressed the behaviors towards the responsibility of supervising and evaluating their colleagues, with the control given to the principals from the education inspectors. Principals' objectivity in supervising teachers and guiding them with feedback was emphasized.On this subject, the principal with the code S12-P3 said, "*I supervise the teachers' lessons at least once every semester. After the inspection, I evaluate the process with the teachers. I indicate their strengths and tell them what to do about their weaknesses. In this way, I supervise and evaluate the teaching process*", and I added that he meticulously carried out the inspection process.

Under the sub-theme of "family and environmental cooperation", there are opinions that communication with parents contributes to school and student achievement. One principal said, "*As the school, we are in cooperation with the parents. When a parent has a problem with the school, we always meet and provide a solution. As a school, we visit the parents in case of a parent's illness, having a child, or death of a family member... Thus, school-environment cooperation develops* (S10-AP2)." and expresses the necessity of communication.

Effects of Instructional Leadership

To this end, three sub-themes were identified regarding the impact of instructional leadership behaviors and processes. These are individual, organizational, and social and environmental effects.

Table 3. Sub-themes and codes regarding the effects of instructional leadership

Sub-Theme	Codes
Individual	Increasing student achievement
	Revealing the individual awareness of each student
	Being motivated
	Internalizing goals
Organizational	Providing a positive climate
	Ensuring organizational commitment
	Building organizational trust
	Avoiding organizational cynicism
	Creating a sense of collective responsibility
	Providing job satisfaction
	Creating a democratic environment
	Organizational identification

	Creating a learning organization Supporting organizational happiness
Social and environmental	Enabling social change Developing environmental and family relationships

Table 3 shows the opinions on the increase of students and revealing the individual differences of each student are presented from the direct quotation in the related studies expressing the "individual" contributions of instructional leadership to teachers and students.

> "Because every student has different characteristics and different abilities. We had a very problematic student. She was a girl who cut and scratched herself. She was the child of a broken family. We sent her to fine arts high school. She was very talented in painting. It is not a very realistic goal to aim to send this child to science high school now. Then a deaf girl became a national player in badminton, and maybe her life was saved" (S7-P6).

Regarding the sub-theme of "organizational" effects of instructional leadership, instructional leadership enables teachers and students to come to school with pleasure, helps to create a caring and willing profile, and allows them to enjoy their studies. On this subject, in the related study with the code of S3-P29, the participant teacher expressed the sense of commitment he felt with the opinion that "*I would never think of leaving my school because the principal provides cooperation among teachers instead of competition.*"

Finally, the sub-theme of "social and environmental" refers to the fact that instructional leadership contributes to the school's functioning and changes in the social structure in the initiatives based on integration and cooperation with the environment and family. On this subject, the participant's opinion coded S7-P9 explains the situation saying, "*I think that being in cooperation with parents contributes positively to the school. They both help us in the process of improving the physical environment, and when we consider their ideas and include them in work to be done at school, they feel valued and contribute with their ideas.*"

Factors Hindering Instructional Leadership

In the research, sub-themes of managerial competencies, physical conditions of the school, curriculum, teacher qualifications, administrative affairs, bureaucratic and legal procedures, structural and political elements, and the social-cultural environment of the school were formed under the theme of factors hindering instructional leadership. In Table 4, sub-themes and codes related to the factors affecting the instructional leadership reached as a result of the meta-thematic analysis of the studies included in this study are given.

Table 4. Sub-themes and codes regarding the factors hindering instructional leadership

Sub-Themes	**Codes**
Administrative incompetencies	Technology use Conflict management Diversity management Problem-solving Time management Communication
Physical conditions of the school	Number of classrooms

	School and class size Suitability of common areas Safe, healthy, and clean environment
Curriculum	Frequent changes of the curriculum Intensive curriculum
Teacher qualifications	Teacher's interest/attitude Teacher's professional knowledge
Administrative affairs	Managerial workload Resource allocation Management of the guidance service
Bureaucratic and legal procedures	Legislation Circulation Mid-year appointments Frequent changes in curriculum Teaching time adequacy
Structural and political elements	Centralized structure Incentive for instructional leadership Assignment status Political concerns and expectations
Social-cultural environment of the school	Parent attitude Parent profile Social structure

Table 4 shows the difficulties faced by principals in displaying instructional leadership behaviors and some limitations, most of which are not due to principals. Under the theme of "administrative incompetencies", the managers' lack of expertise, subject matter knowledge, and management skills were expressed. Direct quotations from studies in which teachers critically evaluate their administrators are as follows:

> "Our principal is not very enthusiastic and encouraging about researching and informing new methods. On the contrary, he prefers traditional methods that will not cause problems and noise in the classroom and therefore judges teachers according to their dominance in the classroom and the level of students' fear of the teacher" (S11-T4).

> "Our principal only communicates with us when there is paperwork; I think that is not enough. He does not meet with the parents too much; he only communicates when necessary" (S15-P11).

It was stated that the "physical conditions of the school" sub-theme, the size of the school and classroom size, security, and cleaning problems negatively affect the teaching activities. In this context, some opinions are given below:

> "… the number of classrooms is too small for the implementation of new curricula. Because the new curriculum requires switching to the classroom system, in other words, the classrooms of each course should be different. However, unfortunately, this is not possible … Or when we say infrastructure, the educational material deficiencies of schools should have been completely eliminated. However, this did not happen; we still do not have many materials. This is also a problem for curricula" (S14-YI).

> "That is one of the things that prevent us from being crowded. In other words, the average classroom sizes are currently around 40-45. So, the biggest reason for this development is the crowd" (S4-P15).

In the sub-theme of “teacher qualifications”, the negative effects of teachers’ lack of knowledge and indifferent attitudes toward the teaching process were emphasized. The opinions of the principals in the related studies, which stated that the teachers did not go out of certain patterns, are given below:

Senior teachers, that is, ex-teachers do not want to change their old habits. They do not follow innovations. They do not want to participate in activities outside of working hours. The understanding of “this is not my duty” prevails” (S9-P5).

> “…They are far from technology, they are not enough about motivating the student. Most of our teachers do not do research and have a disinterested attitude. They react to the new applications…” (S6-P7).

In the sub-theme of “administrative workload,” it can be said that principals and teachers complain that the intensity of administrative work, such as bureaucratic correspondence and resource problems, precedes educational activities, according to the opinions of the participants in the related studies:

> “School principals do not have time to lead the way because of bureaucratic correspondence, business follow-ups, welcoming and sending off those who come to the school, dealing with problems related to teachers, students, and parents, and their willingness and enthusiasm to respond to the needs and expectations of the school” (S1-P2).

> “All of our problems are of monetary origin. We pay for the working cleaning staff; the state pays for only one of them. Since we could not pay the others, we wanted to open a kindergarten this year, and we wanted to pay the employees from the income of the kindergarten. However, it did not turn out the way we thought it would because kindergarten’s expenses were already high enough. Therefore, we could not make our payments…" (S9-P7).

Opinions under the sub-theme of “bureaucratic and legal procedures” express that strict legislative understanding, managerial appointments, and instability in curricula create obstacles to being an instructional leader. The opinions of teachers and administrators on this subject are given below:

> “The Law No. 657 on civil servants gave the teacher the right to receive a medical report for 40 days for 1 year, and the right to excused leave for up to 10 days…I cannot prevent it. As I said, the class is empty, but I quit my administrative work and attend the class myself, and my assistant principal also attends” (S4-P7).

> “At the beginning of the year, detailed orders by our Ministry on how we should do teaching activities, including the training programs we implement in our courses, are communicated to both us teachers and principals. In other words, school principals and we are obliged to carry out the tasks determined by the center and do not have much flexibility. I can say that because the system is like this, school principals cannot contribute much in teaching activities” (S13-Teacher 5).

On the other hand, regarding the sub-theme of “structural and political elements,” it was stated that the centralized structure of the Turkish education system, the problems related to the merits of the appointment of principals, and the lack of encouragement of instructional leadership constitute an obstacle for instructional leadership. Therefore, the opinions of the managers on this subject are as follows:

> “After a certain period, we move away from the classroom, the student, and the teaching profession after we switch from the teaching profession to school principals. Administrative work related to the functioning of the school constantly distracts us from teaching and causes us to stay out of the teaching process” (S13-P9).

> “We were appointed as a result of the oral exam. The criteria are clear. I can’t go to school proudly. It is not possible to become an instructional leader by appointment” (S8-P4).

In a relevant study, as underlined in the statement of participant coded as S14-YJ regarding the theme of the “socio-cultural environment of the school”, the participant said, “*The parents are told about the school's aims, but they do not show much interest. Because they are not aware of the importance of school goals on student achievement. Since the environment does not interfere with the school anyway, it does not interfere with the purposes*” and revealed that the demographic and cultural status of the parents affect the principal's display of instructional leadership behaviors. Participants also think that the social structure in general also affects the principal.

Discussion

This study examined qualitative studies on instructional leadership in Türkiye, and the findings were reinterpreted with the meta-synthesis method. Thus, it was aimed to reveal the basic perceptions and current situation regarding the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals. It is thought that reinterpreting the studies on instructional leadership holistically guides the models and practitioners to be developed. As a result of data analysis in the research, three themes and sub-themes and codes of these themes emerged.

First, when the studies included in the meta-synthesis were examined in terms of defining *instructional leader behaviors, it* is indicated that there are six sub-themes, including developing and implementing school goals, improving the teaching process, supporting and developing teachers, developing a positive school climate, monitoring, supervising, and evaluating the teaching process, and family and environmental cooperation. Hallinger and Murphy (1985), who first conceptualized instructional leadership through their empirical studies in North America, the most widely used and accepted instructional leadership framework in the literature is defining the school's mission, managing the curriculum, and promoting a positive school learning environment (Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale - PIMRS). In the following years, in the context of Türkiye, Şişman (2018) was influenced by international studies and included instructional leader behaviors, involving defining and sharing the goals of the school, the management of the curriculum and teaching process, the evaluation of the teaching process and students, the support and development of teachers, and the creation of a stable learning-teaching environment and climate. Although the studies conducted in Türkiye mainly depended on Şişman's framework, the similarities and overlapping aspects with PIRMS support this study.

Research findings emphasize that while determining the objectives, the objectives would be internalized by ensuring stakeholder participation, considering the characteristics of the school and the region, and updating them according to changes and developments. Instructional leadership literature emphasizes that the principal should set a vision for the school, establish a vision-based mission, goals, and objectives, and demonstrate a solid and guiding leadership that can align the strategy and activities with the academic mission of the school (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). In the Turkish Education System, which has a centralized structure, the schools' aims are predetermined in the relevant legislation. However, according to Şişman (2018), these are general abstract expressions and are open to interpretation and development. In Türkiye, in accordance with Law No. 5018, it is necessary to define the vision and mission-specific to schools and determine the goals and objectives within the strategic plan. Developing the vision, mission, and objectives of the principals due to legal obligations may cause the situational conditions to be ignored and the determined objectives to remain on paper. In Singapore, which has a centralized system similar to Türkiye, the relevant Ministry determines the vision. Schools in Singapore, which perform well in exams such as PISA and TIMMS, consistently implement their visions in cooperation. Although they do not seem to have the freedom to create their vision, they can improve and change the goals in the process (Nguyen, Ng, & Yap, 2017). Nguyen et al. (2017) suggest that school principals in Singapore constantly create their school vision and reflect it in their strategies to align education with desired outcomes, even when constrained by the narrow framework imposed by the Ministry. The most crucial difference between school administrators in Singapore and those in Türkiye is the initiative they take in determining the school-specific vision. .

The research concludes that the teaching process is improved when principals motivate students and teachers by rewarding them, taking time to follow up on lessons to ensure they are practical and efficient, and coordinating between lessons. The research results also coincide with the research results of Gümüş et al. (2021), who synthesized the instructional leadership studies carried out in Türkiye. In this context, Gümüş et al. (2021) underlined the roles of school principals as instructional leaders in Türkiye, such as maintaining the learning environment and motivating and activating teachers.

Although the awarding authority of school principals in Türkiye has been restricted due to the legislative amendment made in 2013 (Ministry of National Education [MoNE]), the instructional leadership studies in the national literature give importance to written and verbal appreciation behaviors. Furthermore, it can be said that rewarding behavior, which is not prominent in the international literature, describes the cultural context based on gift-giving, which is seen as a way to keep traditional/social ties strong in Türkiye.

In the studies included in the scope of the research, the participating teachers sought support from school principals by demanding that both material supply and their ideas be valued. In this study, Andrews and Smith (1989), who defined the support behaviors of the instructional leader desired by the teachers as being a resource provider and an instructional resource, emphasized the necessity of this support for teacher performance and an effective educational process. Pan and Chen (2014), synthesizing the qualitative research findings on instructional leadership behaviors in Taiwan, found that administrators attach importance to teachers' physical and emotional well-being and support teaching materials by providing a safe and orderly environment. Additionally, the findings show that principals' behaviors of directing professional development, mentoring, and being a model are also effective in their development. On the other hand, the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (2018) report indicates that the professional development needs of teachers for Türkiye cannot be fully determined, and professional development activities are not effective (Ceylan, Özdoğan Özbal, Sever, & Boyacı, 2020). From this point of view, the expectation that the principals' knowledge and competence are at a level to be a mentor and model for the teacher brings a paradox for Türkiye. School principals appointed to the management after teaching for a certain period and are not seen as a profession, who have not received postgraduate education or do not participate in training, may not want to be a manager for staff with more training than themselves. In this regard, it is promising that the 2023 Vision Document of the Ministry of National Education aims to improve the expertise of teachers by supporting them with postgraduate education (MoNE, 2018).

The findings of the studies included in this meta-synthesis united in the opinion that sharing culture, cooperation, team spirit, gathering around common goals, respecting values, friendly treatment, and visibility are needed to create a positive school culture. The favourable climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), considered one of the essential dimensions of instructional leadership, is essential for administrators, teachers, and students in schools where social communication is effective in all educational processes. Murphy (1990) considers a positive climate at school as the academic goal of the school and a supportive learning environment. Examining instructional leadership behaviors in the Singapore context, Ng et al. (2015) reported that principals primarily support a collaborative environment, organize activities that ensure staff integration, implement an open-door policy for teachers and students, and attach importance to visibility by going to classes to motivate students. Similarly, studies conducted in the context of Malaysia revealed that administrators achieve their effects on learning and teaching quality not by having deep and detailed interactions with teachers and students but by developing a favourable climate, and they place the positive climate at the center of instructional leadership (Harris, 2002; Harris, Jones, Adams, & Cheah, 2019).

In this study, under the theme of supervision and evaluation, the opinions of school principals to guide teachers in the issues they have difficulty in teaching, make objective evaluations, share the results of these evaluations with teachers, and give feedback were included. While the literature on instructional leadership demonstrates the importance of teachers' professional development in Western countries such as the United States, where the principal provides feedback to teachers through regular classroom visits (Blase & Blase, 1999; Ovando, 2005), on the other hand, in Asian countries such as Taiwan and Singapore, it is not the primary responsibility of the instructional leader, but instead, principals should improve education by increasing teacher capacity and creating a supportive learning environment (Horng & Loeb, 2010; Ng, Nguyen, Wong, & Choy, 2015; Pan & Chen, 2014). Dimmock and Walker (2000) attribute this difference to the view that teachers in Asian countries have a high social reputation and that any intervention in their field will be met with tension by teachers. In Türkiye, the task of supervision was left to school principals in recent years. However, the studies show that the principals are not sufficient in guiding them educationally, instructionally, and professionally, and the reason for this is that the principal who supervises and the supervised teacher received the same undergraduate education (Aktepe & Buluç, 2014; Bozkurt, 2019). This situation necessitates the questioning and evaluation of managerial competencies in Türkiye.

Finally, the importance of keeping active relations with parents and the environment was mentioned in the theme of instructional leadership behaviors. While the international literature emphasizes more cooperation for the academic development of students in instructional leadership behaviors, it is seen that cooperation in Türkiye, where more budget aid is emphasized, is mentioned. This is because a significant part of the schools' budgets in Türkiye is provided by the external environment and the school-parent union. Çalık's (2007) opinion on this subject that "the main point of school-family cooperation should not be donations, but should be accepted as a requirement of being a democratic society" is noteworthy. In this respect, as an instructional leader, the school principal makes a significant contribution to the achievement of the school's goals if he carries out positive and supportive relations between the parents and the community.

An important theme that emerged as a result of the research is *the effects of instructional leadership*. The studies included in the meta-synthesis show individual, organizational, and social and environmental effects of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership significantly affects the feelings of teachers and students, such as achievement, motivation, trust, and commitment. It also creates a democratic environment where diversity is valued, and equality and justice are experienced. The compilation and meta-analysis studies in the international literature on instructional leadership and the results of instructional leadership showing positive effects on teacher attitudes, practices, and student outcomes are in line with the findings of this study (Blase & Blase, 1999; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger, et al., 2020; Harris et al., 2019; Louis et al., 2010; O'Donnell & White, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008). These results led to the idea of instructional leadership as a powerful tool for Lieberman and Pointer-Mace (2006), who argue that teacher learning is the key to sustainable education reform. Besides, a meta-analysis study conducted in Türkiye also revealed the positive relationships of instructional leadership with organizational outcomes such as commitment, motivation, self-efficacy, citizenship, and job satisfaction (Özdogru & Güçlü, 2020). In this respect, the synthesis of quantitative research results parallels this study, which is the synthesis of qualitative research. It is valuable to provide empirical evidence that instructional leadership increases student achievement in Türkiye, which has a centralized education system.

Under the theme of *factors hindering instructional leadership* obtained in the research, sub-themes of administrative incompetencies, physical conditions of the school, curriculum, teacher qualifications, administrative affairs, bureaucratic and legal procedures, structural and political elements, and the socio-cultural environment of the school were included. Opinions on this theme point to the lack of knowledge and skills stemming from the principals and the limitations related to senior management. Instructional leadership theory was also criticized in the literature for reasons like the findings of this study. For the same reasons, Horng and Loeb (2010) evaluated the theory of instructional leadership as far from the reality of schools and as traditional. Hallinger (2005) described the instructional leader as "a combination of expertise and charisma" but added that this expertise contradicted expectations. It is stated that the principal's focus on both administrative and educational tasks may lead to dysfunction and that educational leadership cannot be defined with a "one-size-fits-all model," as schools differ in terms of resources, size, staff, and student needs (Barth, 1986; Cuban, 1988; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; March, 1978). School principals in Türkiye are trained in an inadequate training program in terms of teaching management skills, and there is no obligation to receive in-service training after becoming a school principal. For this reason, school principals are not effective in producing solutions to crises/problems, and being appointed as a school principal by taking specific exams after teaching is not sufficient for instructional leadership.

Other factors hindering instructional leadership include the physical conditions of the school, curricula, and teacher qualifications. However, the intensity of the frequently-changing curriculum becomes completely difficult for the principals who are already alienated from the teaching process. Although principals and teachers are subjected to in-service courses for the curricula that have started to change gradually since 2004, the relevant literature in Türkiye shows that the principals do not transfer the curricula to the teachers, but the teachers research and learn with their means. Within the theme of teacher quality, the opinions are that qualified teachers will lead to qualified learning.

The excessive workload of the principals and the lack of resources are considered among the factors hindering instructional leadership. Resources are needed for many works and studies to be done at school. As of 2016, the schools' water, electricity, and natural gas bills are paid by the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye; however, resources are sought for the maintenance, repair, equipment, and cleaning of the buildings and facilities. The fact that school principals must deal with technical work and administrative tasks such as budget preparation and personnel services turns into an administrative workload and keeps them from being visible at school. At the turn of the century, there was a shift towards the phenomenon of “shared or distributed instructional leadership” in instructional leadership studies (Harris, 2003). Since schools require multiple interactions and mutual relationships among stakeholders in terms of implementation processes, Printy (2010) considers this shift to provide the instructional leader with the necessary conditions to support teachers in leadership and take individual and collective responsibility for teaching. Therefore, by focusing on distributing knowledge and skills, the principals increase synergy by creating an active collaborative culture and learning organization rather than a leader-teacher relationship (Gronn, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003).

When the centralized structure of the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye and political elements are added to the administrative workload of school principals, we can say that their bureaucratic leadership roles based on only applying the instructions from the upper management dominate the work. In a dynamic environment that grows and becomes more complex day by day, the limitations of the strict regulatory understanding restrict the authorities of the principals and prevent them from acting freely. Kesen, Sundaram, and Abaslı (2019) assert that the centralized structure of the Turkish Education System creates an imbalance between the authorities and responsibilities of school principals; thus, various problems arise. The authority areas of school principals should be expanded in parallel with their responsibilities. Additionally, the way school administrators are appointed and problems related to merit also affect instructional leadership. Although the expectations from the instructional leadership are explained theoretically, the fact that the policy of selecting, training, and employing educational administrators based on a scientific basis with the knowledge and skills to fulfill these roles and responsibilities has not been developed in Türkiye describes the political context of Türkiye.

The last factor hindering instructional leadership is the socio-cultural environment of the school. Under this theme, the attitude of the parents, the socio-economic profile of the parents, and the social structure are mentioned. Schools in Türkiye are generally not able to select their students, and student registration is made through the e-school system in the surrounding area based on the address information in the Central Population Management System (MERNIS) (MoNE, 2014). Coleman et al. (1966) reported the importance of family income and education level in student achievement and laid the groundwork for effective school research. The foundations of instructional leadership, which emerged with the search for effective schools, are based on the idea of “instructional effective schools” (Hallinger, 2005). In this respect, the instructional leader is expected to minimize the negativities arising from family and environment by creating high expectations for all students and preparing an environment conducive to teaching and learning. Therefore, the behaviors expected from the instructional leader form the basis of effective schools.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In conclusion, based on the synthesis of research findings examining instructional leadership with qualitative research methods in Türkiye, it can be argued that instructional leadership is an approach that centers the educational process, strengthens and improves the academic performance of schools. It is precious that it provides empirical evidence that it increases student achievement. Although the studies show positive effects between instructional leadership and organizational effectiveness and development, there are problems in daily practice due to the structure of the education system and the policies it follows. In other words, ideally, the school principal should be an instructional leader, but there is a difference between the ideal and reality in Türkiye. There is a need for more robust, evidence-based models that provide richer empirical explanations of exactly how instructional leadership affects organizational development in the Turkish context, which will illuminate how instructional leadership can be fully implemented in practice. Such studies will significantly strengthen the existing knowledge base and contribute to the international knowledge base.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception, design and writing. All authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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An Investigation of Research/Scientific Publication Processes of Faculty Members

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An Investigation of Research/Scientific Publication Processes of Faculty Members

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the reasons for faculty members to start a research paper, the factors they consider when determining the research methods, whether they prefer to use any particular research method, the parts of their research with which they have difficulty, their feelings about the research during the research process, and the challenges they face while conducting research were examined. The basis of this study was a case study. The research study group consists of 19 faculty members who work in the education faculty of a university in Türkiye. Research data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using content analysis. According to the findings of the study, faculty members start a research paper with the intention of satisfying their curiosity, solving a problem, filling gaps in the field, contributing to the field, and meeting needs. Faculty members give careful consideration to the problem at hand when deciding on the research methods. Almost all faculty members prefer to primarily use a particular research method. In their research, faculty members have the most difficulty with the methods, introduction, and discussion sections, respectively. It has been determined that the predominant emotions faculty members experience during the research process are mainly excitement, pleasure/enjoyment, boredom, happiness, and curiosity. During their research, faculty members often run into problems with technology, funding, bureaucracy, getting their research published, and managing their time.

Keywords: Scientific research, scientific research process, scientific research methods, faculty members, problems of academics

Introduction

Universities assumed their current mission and duties in three basic stages: providing education, conducting research and contributing directly to economic and social development (Sakınç & Aybarç Bursalıoğlu, 2012). Universities with scientific autonomy and public legal personality have responsibilities including conducting educational activities, scientific research, publication, and consulting (Arı, 2007; Tuzgöl Dost & Cenkseven, 2007; Higher Education Law, 1981: Article 3, d; Akçiğit & Özcan Tok, 2020). In order for higher education institutions to fulfill their stated responsibilities, faculty members/academics working in these institutions have duties and responsibilities. The duties and responsibilities of faculty members include lecturing, educating individuals who will practice professions, conducting scientific research, serving the society, providing consultation, and raising future scientists (Arı, 2007; Erdem, 2005; Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua & Stough, 2001).

Research is one of the most essential activities of universities and scientists (Öztürk, 2015). Universities are scientific research assemblies (Akçigit & Özcan-Tok, 2020). Öztürk (2008) describes the fundamental responsibilities of an academician/faculty member using the metaphor of five fingers: The thumb represents the duties of an academician to do research, the index finger to teach, the middle finger to write, the ring finger to orator, and the pinky to succession. Therefore, conducting research is the major responsibility of an academic, and it is the most fundamental characteristic that differentiates him from a teacher. The academician is in the position of producing new knowledge, as opposed to disseminating knowledge already produced.

When the literature is examined, many definitions of "research" are encountered. In general, research is the process of collecting and analyzing data in order to gain an understanding of a topic or event (Creswell, 2012). In accordance with a format that has been used for more than a century, the primary structure of a scientific research or article consists of an introduction, a method, findings, a conclusion, and discussion sections (Karaman as cited in Tiryaki, 2014). It is essential that each section of an article is properly prepared and reflects the article as a whole, so that the piece does not alienate the reader, the message it gives can be understood well, and the article is worth reading (Tiryaki, 2014).

The foundation universities that started to be opened in the 1980s and the state universities that were opened as of the beginning of the 2000s are within the scope of the "A university for every city policy". With the adoption of this policy, it is aimed to increase the number of academic publications and citations belonging to the Turkish scientific world, to increase the number of industrial rights registrations of domestic companies, especially patents, and to make techno-cities and organized industrial zones scientifically attractive (Türkcan 1998, Türkcan 2009 & Çelik ve Tekeli, 2009 as cited in Yalçıntaş and Akkaya, 2019). The most extensive increase in the number and quota of higher education institutions in Türkiye started in 2006, except for 23 universities established in 1992 (Çetinsaya, 2014). It is possible to say that the years 1992 and 2006 in Turkish higher education were at an important point in terms of the increase in the number of universities. As of 2018, there is no city in Türkiye that does not have a university (Günay & Günay, 2011).

In the second half of the 1980s, the number of scientific publications originating from Türkiye increased significantly. This increase in scientific publications indicates that Türkiye has become more recognizable internationally (Orer, 2011). However, Türkiye's scientific publication performance has declined since 2006. The rapid quantitative expansion of Türkiye's higher education capacity in 2006 and subsequent years was not accompanied by a rapid qualitative expansion. The ability of Türkiye to compete with developed countries is contingent upon continued scientific growth and development. Even though the number of scientific studies in Türkiye is increasing, this increase is insufficient. To ensure that Türkiye is among the leading countries in scientific research, the missing and failed components must be identified and addressed (Akçigit & Özcan-Tok, 2020).

In Turkish universities, teaching activities are typically more significant than research activities. Sometimes this is due to necessity. In a higher education system that focuses on teaching, faculty members cannot commit sufficient time to research. Excessive course loads and an excess number of students are the main reasons for this situation (Al, 2008; Tuzgöl Dost & Cenkseven, 2007). This situation is also one of the primary causes of the decline in academic productivity since 2006. Academic production was negatively affected by the fact that the increase in the number of academics at universities was smaller than the increase in the number of students (Akçigit & Özcan-Tok, 2020).

The aim of this study is to examine the scientific publication and research processes of education faculty members engaged in scientific research in the field of education. Higher education institutions like universities are meant to teach, do research, and improve the quality of social service. With all of these demands, expectations, and goals in mind, it is important to look at the scientific research and publication processes of faculty members and figure out what problems they run into. This will help improve the quality of service provided by universities, which are the most important places to train the workers needed in every field. In order to increase academic productivity and publication quality in Türkiye, it is necessary to examine the scientific research processes of faculty members and to identify the difficulties they encounter during this process. It is hoped that this study, which focuses on the research and publication processes of education faculty members, will provide a better understanding of faculty members' research processes and contribute to research aimed at resolving the issues they encounter during their research processes. In this study, answers to the following questions were sought.

Research Questions

1. What are the reasons given by faculty members for starting a research?

2. What are the points that faculty members consider while determining their research methods?

3. Is there a particular research method that faculty members prefer to use in their research? What are the reasons for this?

4. In which parts of the research do faculty members have difficulty?

5. How do faculty members feel about research during the research process?

6. What challenges do faculty members face while conducting their research?

Methods and Materials

In this study, the qualitative research model served as the basis, and the interview technique, one of the qualitative data collection methods, was used. Qualitative research focuses on processes rather than products or outputs. Therefore, meanings are crucial in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009/2015). Interviews are frequently preferred because they facilitate the acquisition of detailed information on a certain subject (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016) and provide specific data collection from each participant (Merriam, 2009/2015).

Participants

The study group of the research consists of 19 faculty members working in a faculty of education, in Türkiye. The study group of the research was determined using criterion sampling, which is one of the purposive sampling methods. People, events, objects, or situations indicated by the nature of the research problem are sampled using the criterion sampling method (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2018). In the study, the criteria determined by the researchers in the selection of the participants, having studies in the field of educational sciences, having at least 3 years of experience, being in different departments and having different titles, constituted the basic criteria of the research. Table 1 displays the distribution of academicians participating in the study according to their departments and titles.

Table 1. Distribution of Academics Participating in the Study by Department and Title

	Academic Title			
Department	**Prof.**	**Associate Prof.**	**Assistant Prof.**	**Total**
Elementary mathematics teaching			2	2
Science teaching	1		2	3
Turkish teaching		1	1	2
Psychological counseling and guidance			2	2
English teaching		1	1	2
Classroom teaching		1		1
Pre-school teaching			3	3
Educational sciences	1	1	2	4
Total	**2**	**4**	**13**	**19**

Data Collection Tools

Within the scope of the study, interviews in a semi-structured format were conducted. For these interviews, the researchers produced a semi-structured interview form with four questions, which is thought to reveal the goal of the research, and three experts reviewed the form. Four questions on the form were revised in accordance with expert opinions, and an interview form with 7 questions was prepared. However, during the data analysis, it was seen that the participants gave similar answers to two separate questions in the interview. Due to their similarity, two research questions were analyzed as if they were a single question.

Data Analysis

The research data were looked at using the content analysis method, which is one way to look at qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews with the participants were audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed. Two researchers independently examined the interviews, and the results were compared. A concordance of more than 90% was found between the analyses of both researchers. The inconsistencies that emerged in this process were discussed and resolved, and the analysis of the interview data was completed. Finally, the collected data were summarized according to the themes determined based on the interview questions, and were often described and interpreted by using direct quotations. Since the faculty members have statements that will correspond to more than one code under a theme and category, there are variations in the themes, categories, and code frequencies in the tables presented in the findings section.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed. None of the actions stated under the title "Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, were not taken.

Ethical review board name: Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee

Date of ethics review decision: 08.06.2021
Ethics assessment document issue number: 2021/23

Findings

Within the scope of this study, it was seen with 19 faculty members working in a Faculty of Education, in Türkiye. Each of the faculty members interviewed was given a number from 1 to 19. For example, Faculty Member 1, Faculty Member 2, etc. In presenting the research's findings, F.M. is short for faculty member.

Examining the Statements of Faculty Members Regarding the Reasons for Starting a Research Paper

In the study conducted, the motivations for education faculty members to start a scientific research paper were investigated. The analysis of the statements of the faculty members on the subject is shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Statements of Faculty Members Regarding the Reasons for Starting a Research Paper (N=19)

	(n)
The desire to satisfy curiosity	11
The desire to fix an issue/problem for the area	8
Detection of missing/gap for the area	8
Willingness to contribute to the field/science	6
Determining the need for the field	4
Desire for academic advancement	2
The research is a professional necessity	1
Suspicion of knowledge in the literature	1
Willingness to do research in the courses conducted	1
Willingness to conduct research in the areas of interest of graduate students under supervision	1

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the main reason for the faculty members to start a scientific research paper is to satisfy their curiosity (n=11). F.M.14 explained how he started a research based on a subject based on his curiosity: *"There is usually a subject that I am curious about. If I'm curious, I see what has been accomplished. If there is nothing that satisfies my curiosity, I try to do something about it myself."* It was observed that the variables that most stimulated the curiosity of faculty members were their reading of literature and the topics linked to their fields of interest. F.M.15 stated that the effective force in starting a research paper is the sense of curiosity generated by the literature readings as follows: *"In general, it is curiosity… I closely follow the research related to my field. What is being done in the country, what is being done internationally... Whenever I encounter an interesting concept or problem while investigating and researching these, I wonder what kind of structure that concept has and how it works in practice. To resolve this, I use it as a starting point for a new research paper."* The opinion of F.M.17, who indicated that he started his research out of a sense of curiosity about the topics he was interested in, is as follows: *"The research topic is significant to me. Because conducting research in an area* *that interests me is more appealing and desirable. In this way, as I work with certain notions, the difficulties associated with them capture my attention."* Curiosity also motivates faculty members to research their observations in their social surroundings and field of study, as well as the situations they encounter throughout their classes. F.M.8 said that his research is based on the confidential observations he made by stating that *"Perhaps I have been secretly gathering information from somewhere. How did I come up with that? When a lightbulb like this comes on, I ask myself, -Can I make a connection between them?-"*

The desire to address a problem in the field of study is one of the primary motivations for faculty members to do research (n=8). F.M.19 expressed his opinion on this issue as follows: *"The problems… The problems within the system also lead you to research. When we refer to a problem, we truly mean to improve the system based on the problem. In other words, the improvement process begins with the identification of the problem. You must be able to identify the areas where improvement is possible."* Some faculty members stated that they were able to recognize these problems during their courses, school and environment observations, literature readings, and discussions with their colleagues. F.M. 18 explained the situations in which he might encounter a problem as follows: *"I come across these problems when I meet teacher candidates in a class, or sometimes when I go to schools and observe students. Sometimes I see these problems while discussing with my academic friends and colleagues."* F.M.13 explains how he detects the problem as follows: *"The problems I observe in society… The things that are not right that I notice around me… I focus on these issues."*

The realization of a deficiency/gap in their field of study (n=8) is an additional major factor that motivates faculty members to conduct research. Faculty members reported that they were able to identify this deficiency/gap through their reading of the literature and the courses they teach. F.M.2 stated that he identified a gap in the field of study as follows: *"Before starting a research paper, when we are running the courses together with the known undergraduate education, whether during the course or while completing independent readings, we seek for relevant studies. When we don't find exactly what we desire in the relevant studies, we start to think that we can improve it."* F.M.14 explained that he could focus on the gap in his field in order to produce research that could be published by stating that *"Maybe I can try to understand what is missing in the literature. I'm not curious about the subject, but there are some issues that I've been interested in for a long time, I wonder if what I do will be published, I examine them, and I try to do something about them."*

The desire to contribute to the field of study (n=6) and the field's requirements (n=4) can motivate faculty members to do research. F.M.19 explained that feeling a need is the source of his research as follows: *"A basic need must be felt for research. In other words, the work does not occur if there is no necessity. In actuality, every study has a problem to solve. What we refer to as a problem arises from a need. The most important factor for me is need."* Faculty members can identify these needs based on their own courses, school observations and experiences. F.M.12 explained that he was able to identify the needs of his field through the lessons he taught by stating that *"I focus primarily on teacher education. I am also engaged in the classroom. As an active participant in the class, you engage in conversation with the students and consider their needs. What do they need…? When they learn something that they need, something that they should use when they teach in the future… I am trying to do research on that."* F.M.19, on the other hand, described the effectiveness of school observations in identifying needs as follows: *"I visit schools in accordance with our field of study. I undertake weekly observations at schools, and as a result of those observations, this may be something I require and that my colleagues in those schools feel. Or it may be something that students or administrators need..."*

Additionally, faculty members responded that they conduct research because they desire academic advancement (n=2) and because research is a professional obligation (n=1). The following statement of F.M.1 reveals his thought in this direction*: "First of all, this is our job. In other words, the distinction between university personnel and National Education teachers is that university staff undertake scientific research. I believe that this is vital for professional fulfillment. It is also essential to make contributions to the field. There are, of course, scholarly reasons as well. There are elements and motives, such as intellectual advancement. But I believe the primary purpose for an academic to conduct research is to contribute to the field and fulfill his professional obligations."*

One of the faculty members interviewed said that he could conduct research to verify questionable literature knowledge (n=1). F.M.17 explained that knowledge he encountered and doubted in the literature directed him to research by stating that “I observe a deficiency, gap or mistake in a field, particularly while teaching and reading. Well... I am saying that it shouldn't be like this. Then, I begin by developing a new hypothesis." Another faculty member (F.M.7) stated that he wished to do research within the framework of the courses he taught and that he could start a new research paper in this area: *“Sometimes the course I will teach, especially the elective course, can lead me to conduct research… I wonder if I can conduct research in this course?”* F.M.7 also stated that he conducts research on topics of interest to students in order to assist the students he supervises.

Examining the Statements of Faculty Members Regarding the Issues They Considered While Determining Their Research Methods

Second, within the scope of this study, the factors faculty members consider while determining their research methods were investigated. The faculty members' perspectives on the topic were examined and given in Table 3:

Table 3. Statements of Faculty Members Regarding the Points They Paid Attention to While Determining Their Research Methods (N=19)

	(n)
Choosing the appropriate method for the problem	14
Approaching the problem with a particular paradigm	8
The time the research will take	4
Characteristics of the participants	3
Examining similar studies	3
Possibilities available	2
Choosing a suitable method for application	2
Examination of method resources	2
Expert opinion	2
Choosing the easiest method	1

According to Table 3, the majority of faculty members (n=14) employ the most appropriate research method to address the problem they are investigating. F.M.15 states his view on method selection as follows: *"My method is decided by my problem. I choose the strategy that presents my research problem most effectively. That is, I do not build research based on the method; rather, I select the method based on the research."* On the other hand, it may be understood from the interview responses of the faculty members that they can address the problem situation with a certain paradigm (n=8). F.M.18 reveals this by stating that *“I like more qualitative methods. Maybe I am leaning towards those problems.”* F.M.9, on the other hand, indicated that the nature of the problem was used as the basis for establishing a study method, but that he could also develop research based on the way he preferred: *"There are certain methods that I prefer. Regarding my branch, education, and field... I find qualitative research to be increasingly efficient. While choosing my method, I try to construct my research problem and process accordingly. Let me work qualitatively so I can consider how to qualitatively design this research."*

The time that the research will take is one of the considerations faculty members make while deciding the research method (n=4). F.M.13 stated that he also considered the time factor in the method selection by stating that *"Naturally, we choose the most cost-effective and time-efficient strategies. These are also given in every research. For instance, while selecting a school, we select the closest schools that won't tire us out or distract us from our work."*

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the faculty members (n=3) might consider the characteristics of the participant group while selecting research methods. F.M.7 explained that the research method was chosen depending on the characteristics of the participant group and the nature of the research: *"If we are working with preschool children, not much quantitative data is collected from these students. Therefore, we develop a residual model using qualitative data collection techniques such as observation and interview. The answer relies entirely on the nature of the research question."*

Some faculty members (n=3) stated that, when selecting their own research method, they examine the methodologies of similar studies. F.M.6 explained that he benefited from similar studies while determining his research method as follows: *"After basically determining this strategy, I am searching for similar papers on research methods. Therefore, it might be compared to a feasibility study. Is this method appropriate for my research process and its outcome, as well as its confirmation? Well… I am reading similar studies."*

According to the faculty members (n=2), the available opportunities can also be used to determine the research method. This issue was addressed by F.M.18 as follows: *"...and other considerations when deciding the method... Who I will collaborate with, which data collecting tools are effective for resolving this issue, or what tools are available to me, the importance of my time, how much time I will spare, or what else can I say... Resources available to me, well…? There may be available funds."*

Some faculty members (n=2) have expressed a preference for research methods that are applicable to practice. In this regard, F.M.11 has stated that *"As I said, I prefer more experimental work. I dislike differentiating quantitative and qualitative research methods. My understanding of experimental is that it is experimental if we can perform an application and if do a different application to the group."*

Some of the interviewed faculty members choose to examine the sources related to research methods (n=2) and seek the expert opinion (n=2) to determine whether they are using the proper method for their research. F.M.5 noted that before deciding on the research method, he investigates related materials and solicited expert opinion by stating that *"When it comes to starting research, it goes without saying that I look at what has already been done. I will then examine the research design, qualitative, quantitative, and experimental resources. And, um, I absolutely have a few academician and Ph.D.-holding friends from whom I solicit comments. I am considering conducting such a study to determine if, methodologically, I can attain the desired outcomes. After obtaining these approvals, I start. I believe that everyone should do this, with the possible exception of veteran teachers."*

One of the faculty members stated that he may select the study method that he found most convenient. F.M.14 expressed his preference for quantitative research methods, which he claimed were simpler for him, as follows: *"I tend to avoid qualitative studies because, as a quantitative researcher, I believe they would be too challenging for me."*

Examining Preferences of Faculty Members Regarding Research Methods and the Motives behind These Preferences

Thirdly, it was investigated whether faculty members had a preferred research method and the reasons behind this preference. The analysis of the statements of the faculty members on this subject is presented in Table 4:

Table 4. Examination of whether Faculty Members Mainly Prefer to Use any Research Method and the Reasons behind These Preferences (N=19)

	(n)
Quantitative Research	**6**
Identified deficiencies/issues are generally suitable for quantitative method	2
More valid and reliable	2
Being generalizable	1
Taking less time	1

Less data loss	1
Easier to collect data	1
Becoming more proficient in the method	1
Mixed Method	**5**
Methods supporting each other	5
Reliable and generalizable data	1
Qualitative Research	**4**
In-depth examination of the problem	3
Eligibility for educational research	2
Criticism of quantitative methods	2
Taking individual differences into account	1
Predominantly not choosing a method	**4**
Suitability to the research problem	3
Methods are not considered superior to each other	1

Table 4 shows that the faculty members utilize quantitative (n=6), mixed (n=5), and qualitative (n=4) research methods, respectively. However, there are also faculty members (n=4) who report that they do not prefer one study approach over another.

The quantitative research method is the most commonly used (n=6) by the faculty members interviewed. Some faculty members (n=2) reported that they use quantitative methods more often because the inadequacies they noticed in the field and the research questions they were curious about could be addressed with quantitative methods. Some faculty members primarily employ quantitative research methods because quantitative research methods give more valid and reliable results (n=2) and the results are generalizable (n=1). F.M.8 stated that he finds quantitative research methods more valid and reliable, and therefore he mainly uses quantitative methods as follows: *"More validity and reliability. Now that we utilize proven measurement tools, we are more hesitant, i.e., this is no longer our responsibility, since we are measuring the impact of the measurement tools. You are responsible for determining the theme in qualitative studies... It is your sole responsibility... I suppose there is a little bit, because I believe that quantitative research produces more accurate results, and thus I rely on them."* F.M.15 argued that only quantitative research methods make it possible to generalize scientific knowledge: *"Because I believe scientific knowledge should be generalizable. To be generalizable, it is important to reach large samples. Similarly, these can only be interpreted through statistical science."*

Faculty members choose quantitative research methods for a variety of different reasons, including the belief that research with this method requires less time (n=1), data loss is less (n=1), and data collection is easier (n=1). F.M.14 explained his opinions in this direction with these words: *"It is possible to collect data from 100 people in a day, but also it is possible to collect data from only 3 people in a day. Sometimes you can't collect from those 3 people either. In other words, it may not be an issue if you collect data individually, like you did when you came to see me, but... We have always worked with groups in our past research, and we have always worked with groups, so you are going to make a focus group… People are having a lot of trouble getting together. Well, it's hard, it's so hard to manage, it's so hard to manage groups, it's so easy to overlook. You need an assistant with you. You have difficulty managing groups by yourself. While dealing with the group, you may overlook certain aspects. For instance, we film this, and now you film it there and in group interviews, but the man's facial expressions and other such details are missed. Sometimes you wonder whether the participant is kidding or telling the truth, but you can't be sure because you can't remember. You cannot write immediately; he waits sometimes 1 month-2 months. Even if everything is in order, data loss is inescapable. It is also tiresome. It is difficult to transcribe, print, extract themes, etc., and the process takes a long time. There are both classes and other time-consuming tasks, such as preparing for associate professorship that must be completed. I could not become an associate professor, I have to publish, there is pressure. There are additional responsibilities you have with your children... You are leaving the house, the child is ill, and you have a plan in mind. You must abandon all of your plans. You have to spend the whole day with your child and wait a week to realize your plans. You may not be* *available sometimes. However, you can use ready-made data obtained from PISA, TIMSS, the Student Selection and Placement Center, or the Ministry of National Education. Oh, you're saying that I couldn't do this during the day, I'll sit and do something until the morning. For example, you can make time somehow…"*

Another faculty member interviewed attributed his preference for quantitative research methods to the fact that he saw himself as more competent in this field. The following are F.M.17's statements on the subject: *"Why is it quantitative? In other words, it may also be a result of my education. I received additional training in this area, specifically quantitative research methods. It might be around ten. Perhaps because I perceive myself to be more dominant."*

Five of the interviewed faculty members stated that they primarily use the mixed research method. The main reason for this is the faculty members' (n=5) belief that quantitative and qualitative research methods complement one another. F.M.6 said that qualitative and quantitative methods will support each other by stating that *"The Social Sciences deal with humans, and so many variables can be relative. Therefore, for me, acting with a single quantitative or qualitative metric is equivalent to seeing only half of the picture."* F.M.4 also expressed the importance of the quantitative and qualitative data supporting each other in the mixed method: *"I believe mixed researched method should be used because quantitative and qualitative data complement one another. We cannot interpret the process based on numbers alone and conclude that it did not occur. In addition, it is crucial for inferences to understand why individuals undergo this process and what kind of ideas they hold. Or it becomes extremely significant for other research."* F.M.13 also thinks similarly since he states that *"I use mixed research method because I think both are very valuable. Both quantitative and qualitative data are required. I compare it to the human body. I believe that if the quantitative represents the physical existence of the body, the qualitative represents its soul."*

One of the faculty members who stated that he preferred to conduct research using mixed method believes that this approach can produce more reliable and generalizable findings. F.M.6 expressed his viewpoint in the following way: *"So, the more a method can combine diverse patterns, the more things will happen... It is possible to obtain more generalizable and reliable results."*

Four of the interviewed faculty members stated that they primarily employ the qualitative research method. Some of these faculty members stated that they believed the qualitative research method allowed for an in-depth examination of the problem (n=3) and that it was more appropriate for research in the field of education (n=2). F.M.2 stated that qualitative research allows for an in-depth examination of the problem as follows: *"...I think we can obtain a lot more data in the form of both descriptive and content analysis with in-depth perspectives on the job in qualitative terms; I think we can see details that we do not encounter frequently in quantitative terms."*

Some faculty members (n=2), who stated that they primarily employed the qualitative research method, criticized the quantitative method from multiple perspectives. F.M.18 comments on the quantitative method as follows: *"Even though statistically only the data collected through the questionnaire is viewed more objectively, I do not feel very comfortable with it in terms of evaluation; I cannot place a great deal of faith in it. Because I think it is essential to engage the individual and examine his feelings, perceptions, and values in depth."* F.M.9 also expressed his criticisms about the quantitative method as follows: *"...I don't simply distribute a questionnaire, wait for the responses, and then draw a conclusion. I have a lot of trouble filling out the questionnaire on my own, so I do not find it to be appropriate. Because I believe that the process in studies such as the effect of something on something else is not natural... This is how I feel about it."*

Due to the fact that qualitative research methods can highlight individual differences, one of the faculty members uses this method predominately. F.M.12 explained this perspective as follows: *"As educators, we take individual differences into account and emphasize individuality. You do not generalize; rather, you value the individual because he is unique, you examine him closely, and you get familiar with him. I like that part of the quality…"*

On the other hand, some faculty members (n=4) stated that they did not have a preferred research method when conducting their research. These faculty members stated that they determined their research methods based on the research problem (n=3) and that they did not consider any method to be superior (n=1). F.M.1 expressed his thoughts on the matter as follows: *"I cannot say that I use this method specifically... It is directly relevant to the problem situation I'm addressing and the research question. I use whichever method is most appropriate for the study... The method should not be considered a goal; the objective is to identify the problem and find a solution."* F.M.19, on the other hand, stated that the research problem is the primary factor in determining the research method, but explained that multiple possibilities can sometimes be decisive in determining the method: *"I don't have a preferred method... If there is a time constraint or if there are problems with a study or the data collection process, qualitative research methods can sometimes be used. Because the objective of qualitative research methods is not generalization. Therefore, these studies can be conducted with smaller study groups. Sometimes, you know, time constraints, difficulties in the data collection process, or factors such as cost can lead you to qualitative research, but for me, the main problem is the situation."*

Examining the statements of faculty members about the challenging aspects of their research

The fourth issue examined in this study is the research difficulties encountered by faculty members. The analysis of the faculty members' opinions on the subject is presented in Table 5:

Table 5. Statements of Faculty Members about the Parts They Had Difficulty in Their Research (N=19)

	(n)
Introduction	
Writing the introduction	6
Method	
Data collecting	13
Ensuring validity/reliability	8
Data analysis	2
Data input	2
Naming the method	1
Discussion	
Making the discussion	4
Other Difficulties	
Literature review	4
Reporting the study	4
The scarcity of literature on the subject	3
When similar topics are studied, the papers are similar to each other	1

When Table 5 is examined, it is understood that the parts that faculty members have the most difficulty with when conducting research are method, introduction and discussion, respectively. However, faculty members also reported additional difficulties during the research process. These findings are explained in detail below in the form of introduction, method, discussion and other difficulties, taking into account the presentation integrity of a research.

Faculty members stated that they are having difficulty in writing the introduction part of a research they conducted (n=6). According to some faculty members, this problem stems from a lack of written expression skills. F.M.3 stated that writing the introduction is also a literary skill and that it is difficult to write this section with the following words: *"In my works, the findings, interpretation, and methodology sections are very simple to write. I make them exceptionally well. In addition to the discussion's success, I review the relevant literature. But in the introduction, these links irritate me greatly because it is crucial to compile the literature rather than simply scan it. We reach a lot of studies in the literature, but the ability to combine them is also a literary quality. I may have some difficulty with that. Making those connections in the introduction section and being able to combine these* *ideas causes me some difficulty."* F.M.1 also stated that writing the introduction to a research paper can be difficult for him, and he explained that this may be because he has not sufficiently developed his written expression skills: *"I have a little trouble writing the introduction. In other words, the method section, the analysis section, the findings, the discussion, the conclusion, the suggestions, and the definition of the problem situation are all present; however, I have some trouble presenting the problem situation itself. In other words, the problem, the research problem, and the subproblems are all distinct. This may be due to the fact that I come from a numerical background and the past... Perhaps because we always work with numbers... In terms of articulating the problem situation, verbal expression skills may be somewhat lacking. While discussing a finding, we can argue or express the result of the research very easily, as it is a concrete result for us; however, the written expression may be a bit challenging, such as "I'm not sure, but..."* F.M.1 also states that he thinks believes his written expression skill has enhanced over time: *"...in fact, I look at the introductions to the articles I wrote in previous years, during my doctoral studies, and now I look at the introductions I wrote, so I can confidently say that I have vastly improved. I have improved my written expression skills… In fact, the problem situation I present is always similar. When I reflect on the past, however, I would organize this problem situation and this introduction differently. I would make an introduction by relating it to this topic, and I would say that I would reach this point. This is likely related to experience, and I believe it improves the writing ability of humans."* While composing the introduction to the study, F.M.5 experienced a blockage for which he did not know the cause. According to him, this situation stems from his fear of not being able to present the introduction section effectively, or possibly because he finds this section less engaging than the findings. This situation finds a response in the discourses of F.M.5 as follows: *"...it may be necessary to explain the problem thoroughly. When the most beautiful and valuable information or object is presented poorly, it may not receive the value it deserves. If we all serve the best food on rusty plates, perhaps no one will eat it. Perhaps it's his concern, or perhaps the findings are simply more compelling..."*

The faculty members stated that they had difficulty in the method part of their researches and stated that they had difficulties in data collection (n=13), ensuring validity and reliability (n=8), data analysis (n=2), data entry (n=2) and naming the method (n=1), respectively.

The majority of faculty members who stated that they had difficulties in data collection attributed these difficulties to the target participants of the research. The unwillingness of the target participants to participate in the study is one of the main difficulties. According to the faculty members, among the target participants, the teachers are the most reluctant to participate in the research. According to faculty members, some teachers are hesitant to participate in scientific research because they believe they are being evaluated and that the research they will conduct will be ineffective. The fact that teachers feel under evaluation in scientific research is reflected in F.M.7's statements as follows: *"…when you ask to meet with him, he feels as if he is being evaluated. Even when I go to a district that does not have a university, he treats me like I am an inspector. He gets worried, asks questions like where did you come from, who are you? I've had that too."* The following statements from F.M.7 indicate that teachers do not believe their participation in scientific research will be beneficial: *"They are not very cooperative. They think their work is useless. When grading on a scale, for instance, I've encountered teachers who mark them all the same. My instructor asks, "What is the point of doing these?"* F.M.18 stated that the research conducted were not taken into account by the authorities. According to him, this is one of the reasons why teachers consider research to be useless. F.M.18 stated that *"Because teachers do not believe the research, we conduct is significant and will solve problems. They simply believe that we perform these actions procedurally in order to advance our career. However, we do use these studies to be promoted, but our ultimate goal is to solve a problem in that field. One of the reasons for this is that the relevant authorities do not take our proposed solutions to these issues seriously. Therefore, the difficulties encountered when working with teachers are greater."* In addition, F.M.18 stated that teacher candidates may not always want to participate in research, but it is easier to convince them than it is to convince teachers: *"It is easier to convince students, perhaps middle school students. Working with teacher candidates can be challenging at times due to the amount of homework and the Public Personnel Selection Examination. You know, KPSS is a serious obstacle for teacher candidates. I believe I can persuade them to participate more easily than their teachers."*

In addition, according to faculty members, research findings demonstrates that some teachers do not want to participate in scientific studies out of fear that they will not adapt to innovative practices. F.M.11 explained that, in his opinion, one of the factors preventing teachers from participating in scientific research is that they are not very receptive to technological innovations and advancements: *"Our teachers are terrified of technology. The majority of teachers do not wish to introduce anything novel into their classrooms."* F.M.11 also stated that authorities may perceive the possibility of teachers failing to adapt to innovations as a threat: *"They don't believe they can do it... Our teachers do not wish to alter the educational approach they are accustomed to... It is difficult to find self-confident people when it comes to technology because they lack confidence in themselves. What do they believe now, do they believe their authority will be challenged if they are unable to do it?"* Some faculty members think that teachers avoid scientific research because they are tired of filling out questionnaires and view it as a burden. In an interview with him, F.M.5 stated that *"Some teachers do not want to participate in scientific research because they already participate in too many scientific studies and believe that their contributions do not benefit them. The teachers are sent one-on-one forms, and it is their responsibility to fill out the scales. Teachers do not want to complete it because there is no added value for them in doing so. Let's put it in quotation marks, "Honestly answering all survey questions or giving the same answer to all of them does not give a teacher a plus or a minus in any way.""* The findings of this study reveal the following additional difficulties encountered by faculty members during the data collection phase of a research project: Principals of schools do not support or want to participate in scientific research, it is difficult to collect data from preschool children, and it is difficult to collect data from the research subject in qualitative interviews. In longitudinal surveys, there are variances and retrieval challenges for the same participants.

The statements of faculty members (n=8) indicate that ensuring validity/reliability is one of the most challenging aspects of conducting research. Some faculty members stated that research participants did not answer the data collection tools with honesty and thoroughness. This situation is likely to have a negative impact on the validity and reliability of the research. F.M.6 expressed his concerns regarding this matter as follows: *"As I previously stated, the greatest challenge for me is our work with people, as we collect data from individuals. However, ensuring the reliability of this data is always my primary concern. In other words, when a survey or interview is conducted, does the respondent truly state what he thinks, or does he simply give an answer?"* In addition, some faculty members mentioned the difficulty of obtaining expert opinion during the analysis of data, particularly in qualitative research. This situation reduces the validity/reliability of the research. According to F.M.4 and F.M.2, in qualitative research, there is an excessive amount of data that must be submitted to expert opinion, which poses a problem for the researcher. The relevant views of F.M.4 are as follows: *"For example, when I need to categorize some data in qualitative research, a professor should provide my readings and these inferences to my friends who are more experienced, as well as an expert in the field. In other words, to determine if we can reach a consensus... Even after performing some checks, i.e., prior to sending or presenting a piece of work, I am required to show it to a subject matter expert. This is typical for qualitative research. Because multiple interpretations of the subject are possible. It is easier in statistical that is, in quantitative terms…"* F.M.2 also expressed his views as follows: *"We have difficulty finding support for expert opinions when we work qualitatively, that is, when we conduct in-depth analyses of the data we collect. Because it is not always possible to locate teachers in the field who are willing to administer such extensive readings, tests, and details. We are extremely grateful that teachers have jobs. I completely understand why they do not want to do it, but this is a challenge for me, the greatest challenge. One expert is not enough... this is the biggest problem."*

Some faculty members (n=2) reported having difficulties with data analysis. When examining the difficulties encountered by faculty members in the data analysis section, it is notable that the majority of these difficulties are associated with qualitative data analysis. F.M.12 explained the difficulty caused by the accumulation of an excessive amount of data to be analyzed in qualitative research as follows: *"The data analysis part becomes tedious. Since there are numerous documents, pages upon pages... I once had documents as big as a book. You read each page individually, analyze it, and extract the code and themes... It becomes an extremely tedious period."* Another difficulty that faculty members (n=2) stated in the method part of a research - in quantitative method research - is entering the data into analysis programs. Faculty members think that data entry is a tedious, time-consuming task that lacks excitement. One of the faculty members interviewed stated that he had difficulty in naming the research method. F.M.19 described his hesitation in naming the qualitative research method he employed as follows: *"I see a split in the literature, whether our work is sometimes phenomenology or case study, in articles and publications. It's the same with the sources. Since the sources provide a theoretical rather than a concrete explanation of an article, each author interprets it differently. Now, whenever you see them in this state, you are always suspicious. Yes, he is correct in his own way, and this is correct as well. Some referred to it as phenomenology, while others referred to it as a case study. Occasionally, such occurrences are tiring... When you ask your friends what path you took this time and what you think, you discover that your friends and experts fall into two distinct categories. For instance, this is one of the things that wears me out the most... I see that there is a difficulty in naming the method qualitatively."*

Some of the interviewed faculty members (n=4) have difficulty writing the discussion sections of their research. According to them, this section necessitates knowledge of the literature and interpretation of the results, as well as greater concentration. F.M.12 explains how he is having difficulties in composing the discussion section as follows: *"During the writing phase, such as when composing the discussion, I face the greatest difficulty. For example, I find it easier to write the other sections, but when it comes to the discussion, I must take everything into account. All the literature that has been produced must be visualized in your mind. You must critique it by contrasting it with them... This section appears to require considerable attention."*

Faculty members stated that, in addition to the aforementioned difficulties, they encountered additional difficulties during their research. One of these difficulties (n = 4) is the difficulty encountered when scanning the literature. F.M.2 described the difficulties he encountered while reviewing the literature as follows: *"Something is missing, for instance, and I regret seeing it later. Which we do not meet. After the study is published, I realize this is the case... You know, the literature analysis and compilation are very solid, without haste, so as not to miss them... Perhaps that is what should take the most time..."* One of the problems F.M.12 experiences within the scope of literature research is that not every article is open to access: *"For example, I am unable to access certain articles in determining that literature, which is a problem... It is not open to the public, and articles like this occasionally appear. You cannot reach it, but if you could, the information it contains might lead me in a different direction."* Some faculty members (n=4) have difficulties with the reporting of the study. F.M.19 expressed his views on reporting his research as follows: *"But I get angry during the reporting process. For instance, I am currently working on a project. So, the reporting process is a bit of a chore, a drudgery, if I'm being honest."* The lack of knowledge of the literature on some of the subjects studied can also pose a problem for faculty members (n=3). When a faculty member studies similar topics with a shared body of literature, he finds it unsettling that his articles begin to resemble each other. F.M.11 expressed his thoughts on this matter as follows: *"...and people get on repetitions. When I study similar topics, everything I write starts to be the same after a while. It is necessary to find new resources."*

Examining the statements of faculty members about their feelings about research during the research process

The fifth issue in this study is how the faculty members feel about the research during the research process. The relevant opinions of the faculty members were analyzed and shown in Table 6:

Table 6. Statements of Faculty Members about Their Feelings about Research during the Research Process (N=19)

	(n)
Excitement	
In Data analysis/Learning the result section	5
Excited to start	4
The excitement of the process	3
Being excited except for reporting	3
Pleasure/Enjoyment	

Enjoyment of the process	3
Data collection is enjoyable	2
Enjoyment of the discussion	2
Having fun/enjoyment of data analysis	1
Boring	
Reporting	3
Composing the introduction/Literature	2
Data analysis	1
Happiness	
Being happy in the process	4
At the end of the process	2
Curiosity	6
Energetic	2
Cooling down	2
Tiredness	2
Anxiety	2
Stress	1
Having a mood that does not change much	1

When Table 6 is examined, it is seen that the faculty members interviewed during the research process felt primarily excitement, pleasure/enjoyment, boredom, happiness, and curiosity towards the research. This is then followed by sensations of being energized, cold, exhausted, anxious and stressed. A member of the faculty members stated that he did not experience any emotional changes during the research process.

Some faculty members (n=5) who reported being excited about the research during the research process stated that data analysis/learning the results was exciting, while others (n=4) reported experiencing intense excitement when the research was started. Some faculty members (n=3) found the entire research process to be exciting, while others (n=3) reported losing their initial enthusiasm during the reporting phase. F.M.3 described his enthusiasm for data analysis and learning the result as follows: *"I actually tell everyone about the outcome. Aaa, it worked! I'll spread the news around to see if it's connected to anything else. And I find this work stimulating. Why am I embarking on a project that will excite me?* F.M.5 reveals his excitement in the data analysis/result learning process with these words: *"For example, my findings are sometimes so incredibly valuable that I can't write the introduction because of excitement."* Some faculty members (n=4) expressed excitement about starting a research paper. According to some faculty members (n=3), the research process as a whole is exciting. Some faculty members (n=3) think that the research process is generally exciting, with the exception of the task of reporting their own research. F.M.6 reveals that he lost his excitement while reporting his research with the following words: *"At first, I am very excited. Until I collect and analyze the data and observe the outcome, my motivation is high. Then the task of putting it into work, the writing phase of the paper, greatly decreases my motivation."* This is because F.M.6 does not feel free when reporting the research: *"...you must fit it into specific patterns. You must adhere to certain criteria. Ultimately, you want it to be published or accepted somewhere, with referee approval. You want to protect its originality and adhere to the criteria that will be accepted. It's like squeezing into something… I don't like the reporting phase. Although I can say most of what I want to say, it is necessary to base it on certain references. There is no research on this topic, so it is necessary to find it. Come on, there is no study on this subject, it is necessary to find it. It bores me, it lowers my motivation."* F.M.10, on the other hand, described his lack of interest in the reporting phase of his research as follows: *"For example, I begin the research very quickly, I do something, I complete the research, but now I'm seeing the results in the reporting phase. For example, I am slow to convert it into an article... In other words, I'm content with myself and in a state of being okay, even if others are unaware. The problem is that it does not work. Something that is not disclosed or published... Actually, it is there at that point; however, I may be a bit tardy in reporting and sharing it with the literature after I complete the research. For example, one of my greatest errors is my own. Currently, I have a lot of incomplete research papers. Therefore, they are all waiting. My favorite part is collecting the data and completing the work, but I am slow at publishing."*

Some of the faculty members who stated that the research process was enjoyable, enjoyed the whole process (n=3), some (n=2) enjoyed collecting data, some (n=2) enjoyed writing the discussion part, and some (n=1) enjoyed analyzing the data. . The following statements of F.M.12 can be interpreted as that he found the data collection part enjoyable/pleasant: *"I enjoy the data collection phase or the phase in which I will collect research data."* F.M.18's statements show that he enjoyed writing the discussion section: *"I enjoy putting all my findings in front of me, discussing them with the literature, and revealing something new."*

There are certain research-related tasks that faculty members find boring. According to Table 6, these tasks are reporting (n=3), writing the introduction/literature review (n=2), and data analysis (n=1). F.M.15 explained that he found the writing part of the field literature boring as follows: *"The method is a technical part. The process of revealing the findings is the part that satisfies your curiosity. The part about what the results will be is exciting. The part where you interpret it is when you add something of yourself; this is where you may show your creativity more. Writing for the literature is a little boring compared to these parts."* F.M.12, on the other hand, noted that data analysis is a boring process: *"The data analysis part is a bit too much, it gets boring. Because you have many documents, page after page. I previously had a document of book size. It is a difficult process to read the pages one by one, analyze them, and come up with code themes."*

One of the emotions experienced by faculty members during the research process is happiness. Some faculty members (n=4) stated that they were happy throughout the research process, while others (n=2) stated that they were happy at the end of the process. F.M.13 reported that he enjoyed the entire research process. However, based on F.M.13's words, it can be concluded that this happiness was more intense when he completed the paper: *"It is a curious thing. A study piece is like having such a child, educating him, nurturing him, and accepting responsibility for him. Short-term, wonderful happiness... when it's finished, you feel as though you're holding a small child. Because every work is like your child, each... Because of your diligence. The data collection process, the research process, the process of determining the research problem, the application process, then the post-tests collection process if you are doing it experimentally, especially the post-tests collection process, writing it down, the statistics, and here is the data entry, particularly if the study is qualitative or something. Thus, a year is the average amount of time required to conduct research adequately. In a year, it becomes like your child."*

Curiosity is another emotion faculty members experience during the research process (n=6). Faculty members stated that they were mainly curious about the results of the research. F.M.3 reveals his curiosity in the research process as follows: *"I'm always looking at the target, wondering what will come out, what will occur, etc... This is how I conduct a study; I don't know whether it will be completed or not, but I'm intrigued about the results... I normally begin my study with the method section. I see the results first, sate my curiosity, and then write the introduction and the discussion parts."*

Two faculty members reported feeling energetic during the research process. While F.M.2 felt energized towards the conclusion of the study, F.M. 15 reported feeling energetic throughout the entire research process. The form contains F.M.2's views on the subject: *"Emotions are much more pleasant and energizing close to the end."* F.M.15 described this situation as follows: *"Researching gets me really energized. I feel incredibly energetic."*

Table 6 shows that faculty members (n=2) may experience a feeling of alienation towards their research during the research process. Although F.M.19 indicated that he was able to overcome this, he stated that he was occasionally able to deviate from the research he carried out for various reasons: *"There are moments when we become trapped when working. In other words, there is a point where advancement ceases, and a question mark appears regardless. You remark, "Let's wait a while to solve this question mark," such as obtaining an expert's opinion or obtaining support and reinforcement from other sources... When you consider the course load at that moment, there is a pause. Stopping allows you to calm down without exertion. Since you have a strong knowledge of the work, it's not too much of a bother..."* F.M.10, on the other hand, states that he is slow to turn the research process into an article due to his perfectionist attitude, and that this situation alienates him from work: *"I can say a little complacency in order to do it this way; I'm taking my time. After that, I take a break from work."*

During the research process, faculty members may feel tired (n=2), anxious (n=2), and stressed (n=1). F.M.11 described his tiredness and anxiety during the research procedure as follows: *"I'm a little fast-paced. This is why I'm anxious. When I begin a work, I want it to proceed smoothly and conclude quickly, but when this is not the case, I am frequently anxious. Also, since we work practically, locate a practicing school and complete the application; I prefer to work in National Education rather than universities. These procedures are extremely tiring. It's also worrisome, of course, because the situation is unstable."* F.M.9, on the other hand, said that he was concerned about repeating a study in the literature without being aware of it: *"I am always anxious. Sometimes I look at it or abandon it halfway through because the study or whatever is not worthwhile. I don't know, then I find that the same thing has been done, so I continue my literature search to determine how to differentiate it. Of course, we conduct a literature search first, but I am depressed whenever I stumble into it by accident. In other words, I am always anxious till I complete the research. I'm happy after it's over… As I said, it can come to naught at any moment… This is always my fear. I mean, if it's finished, even if we've conducted extensive research... It has happened to me."*

One of the faculty members stated that his mood does not alter significantly during the research process. This faculty member (F.M.1) stated that although he was curious during the research process, his mood did not change significantly, and because he chose research as a career, the research process appeared normal to him: *"...I look at it like this, this is my job. Everyone must work to make a living; this is my occupation. I discard it because, when establishing a study process, I get as excited as a butcher when shearing a sheep. So, this is a normal occurrence that I must perform. Obviously, this occurs, but when you're working on a new topic, what is the result of that topic? So, what kind of result will you achieve, what kind of conclusion will you reach, will the data you collect lead you to the intended or predicted result, and if not, what will you associate it with? Because we may not always reach the planned results... I start every work with curiosity, but I cannot say that I am overly excited."*

Examining the statements of faculty members about the difficulties they encountered while conducting their research

Lastly, in this study, the difficulties faced by faculty members while conducting their research were examined. The related answers of the faculty members were analyzed and shown in Table 7:

Table 7. Statements of Faculty Members Regarding the Difficulties They Encounter while Conducting a Research Paper (N=19)

	(n)
Technological and economic	
Failure to find financial support for studies	6
Unable to access some devices/materials	4
Not getting the required software/program	2
Insufficient laboratories	1
Bureaucracy	
Authorized institution permits (National Education Directorates, Student Selection and Placement Center etc.)	6
Ethics committee approval	1
Get parental permission	1
Obtaining permission from faculty members	1
Publication process	
Attitudes of journals/publishers to studies with no significant difference	2
Journals' high publishing fee demands	1
Prolongation of the publication process	1
Finding the appropriate journal	1
Rejection of articles	1
Time	5

Motivation	3
Inability to establish the desired research team/inability of researchers to come together	3

Table 7 reveals that technological and economic inadequacies, bureaucracy, the publication process, and lack of time account for the majority of difficulties faculty members face when conducting research. Faculty members may also encounter difficulties with motivation and research team. Faculty members indicated that technological and economic inadequacies presented the greatest challenges in the research process. The lack of financial support for the studies is one of these difficulties (n=6). F.M.7 stated that social science research is not as important as health and engineering research and therefore cannot receive adequate funding. Relevant statements from F.M.7 include: *"...we want support, for instance universities have BAP units for scientific research. However, these cost-cutting measures, etc. in the previous period were unsuccessful. In this context, the work of social scientists like us is seen as a little less valuable. Here are engineers, medicine etc. While the work of health scientists is regarded as valuable, studies in the social sciences are regarded as less so. We do not receive assistance. If we can finance a portion of our expenses through projects and receive larger budgets, I believe we can do better. Perhaps we can even produce products."* Not having access to certain devices/materials required to conduct the planned research (n=4) is also one of the challenges faculty members face while conducting their research. F.M.11 stated that he could not reach the necessary devices for his studies and that if this situation persisted, he would have to change his field of study: *"After enrolling at X University, I was unable to complete any work. Because I am currently without technical equipment. It was at Y University, I left them all there... So, I can't work in the field I want right now. It is the most difficult challenge I've ever faced. If we get it done, I'll start working again... If I cannot, I will change my field. I will start working on other subjects."* Some faculty members (n=2) stated that they were unable to conduct every study they wanted because they could not afford the necessary software/programs. F.M.5 described the difficulty he encountered because he was unable to access the necessary analysis program for his research as follows: *"For example, I want to conduct a meta-analysis. However, there is a well-known program called x. The annual usage fee was approximately 4000 Turkish Lira, the USD wasn't this high… In other words, it was paid, you may use it for one year, and then the license is revoked... And now neither our university nor any other university has such a thing. They don't pay it back if I purchase it by myself."* A faculty member said that laboratories were inadequate for his research. The following statements of F.M.12 provide a summary of the technological and economic difficulties faced by faculty members conducting research: *"For example, I'd like to create a more extensive and unique application in the laboratory, but the laboratory here is not very suitable. I wish to purchase software, for instance, but because it is prohibitively expensive and not available at my university, I cannot implement it. For instance, I enjoy the most recent studies very much. I need a tool. I have no equipment at the university. For instance, I will contact a professor from a different university; however, there is a problem with his acceptance, which can be an obstacle. I am enrolled in a course on special teaching methods. We need sets, we need materials, I want students to practice with these materials, and I want to oversee their studies, but there are no materials. These situations are problematic."*

Faculty members stated that they are having problems arising from bureaucracy while conducting their research, and all of them are related to permissions. Faculty members have difficulty in obtaining permission from authorized institutions such as the National Education Directorates, the Student Selection and Placement Center (n=6), ethics committees (n=1), parents (n=1) and faculty members (n=1) teaching the course, and that these permissions prolong the research processes. F.M.19 expressed the difficulties he experienced while obtaining permission from the authorized institution and ethics committee as follows: *"The biggest problems are bureaucratic problems. The permission process is unfortunately difficult. Currently, I have three studies in our university's ethics committee that have been waiting for months. Now you will conclude the permissions procedure so that you can move on to the data collection phase. In addition, we must obtain permission from the National Education Directorates in order to work in schools. These authorizations are all bureaucratic processes that require time and correspondence. It is a waste of my time and energy to engage in such activities. However, if I had spent my time and energy on the actual work, it would have been considerably more productive."* According to F.M.4., the instructor of a course that is applied/desired to be applied in interdisciplinary studies can avoid granting the required permissions and sharing the data. Regarding this issue, F.M.4 states that *"If something is* *interdisciplinary, it is difficult to observe or collaborate with other faculty members from that field. I feel compelled to do so. This position restricts me to my own field. In other words, for my students to participate in interdisciplinary activities, those faculty members must also be willing to participate. Not everyone has that appearance. If I'm an engineer like you in a language study and they do not wish to share data with you, you can observe my students. Or they are unwilling to share their notes with you, making it difficult to form another study group. Because of this, I find it difficult to conduct research, as a result of which we focus on a single research area for the majority of the time, and I have personally experienced this as a researcher last year. So, I think it is challenging."*

When Table 7 is examined, it becomes apparent that faculty members may encounter some difficulties when publishing their research. Two faculty members stated that journals and publishers had a negative attitude toward studies that did not demonstrate a statistically significant difference. The following opinions expressed by F.M.11 on this subject are noteworthy: *"For example, I conduct and application. As previously stated, I believe it will have an impact on self-efficacy. It does not have much of an effect on me. As stated, I attempt to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, so I discard quantitative data on occasion.* This is due to F.M.11's reluctance to reveal a result that contradicts the literature, as well as the belief that journal referees will not accept meaningless research results: *"Sometimes, individuals are reluctant to act contrary to the literature... There is a perception, however, that our general objective is to find a meaningful and positive difference. Thankfully, the referees who handle articles in Türkiye don't do much, as far as I can tell. I sent a few of these articles, but I didn't notice any significant differences, so they told me to do it again and returned the papers. That's why I usually extract that data and turn the article into a qualitative one."* F.M.14, who viewed the same situation as a problem in his early academic years, no longer views it as a problem and relates the following anecdote: *"For example, when I was writing my thesis, my results did not agree with the literature; in fact, it was the opposite. At the time, I was terrified and depressed. Why is it this way, how can I explain it, etc... Therefore, here is what everyone says: Let's achieve a meaningful outcome, a meaningful outcome. I did not anticipate "meaningful results" in certain situations. Now that we have begun to cry with the consultant (laughter), you can remove the crying or something. No, I'm crying, so I ask my advisor, "What are we going to do? Why is it like this?" His response opened my eyes, and I became more at ease. He stated that everyone achieves their goals and happiness. However, when you find that you are not expecting… When you say that there is no meaningful difference, many new opportunities become available to you. Everyone says that there is, but you say that there is none. You are actually more, you are in a more interesting position, and you have reached a point where it will attract more attention; do you understand why it is this way? Why is it that when you help a little bit, when you give an idea or something, you then say, "I thought I couldn't find anything, but I actually discovered something very important?" Consider that you are now saying that something that has been accepted as true for a century is incorrect. First, you're afraid…"* One of the faculty members (F.M.18) mentioned that even some non-paid journals charge high fees as part of the economic difficulties he is facing: *"I don't mean paid journals, but some journals have fees and a serious review process for their proofreading article processes. The money paid to them… I mean, I think these are all in terms of financial problems."* On the other hand, a faculty member (F.M.8) discussed the difficulties he encountered in delaying the publication of his research, finding the appropriate journal for his research, and having his articles rejected. F.M.8's statements regarding the difficulty of finding the appropriate journal to publish his research and the possibility that his articles will be rejected are as follows: *"It is true, for instance, that after publishing an article or publication in a journal, finding the right journal is also a significant challenge. Because, for example, you believe the publication is a good fit for you, there may be rejections in this regard. Many journals can reject submissions. I believe this is the area in which I struggle the most. I am speaking for SSCI journals; of course, we do not experience this problem too much in TR index, Turkish national journals."*

Faculty members (n=5) reported that they lacked sufficient time to conduct research. According to them, this is due to the heavy course load and the time wasted by bureaucratic work (research permits).

Faculty members (n=3) reported experiencing motivational difficulties while conducting research. One of these difficulties is the loss of motivation brought on by the prolongation of the publication time of research. Another difficulty in this regard is the belief that there is no motivating factor for faculty members to conduct research. The following are the opinions of F.M.7 regarding this issue: *"A little bit, I suppose, we need a little bit more time, you know, sitting down and working requires motivation and time. Oh, motivation may be even more effective if there is something to motivate me. I have no idea what it could be. I suppose it no longer encourages academic incentives or something... It's becoming normal because now maybe that too. It may be more inspiring when it is first introduced. When you give something of this nature, the quality typically declines. When we give points to congresses in incentives, we see that there have been five or six good congresses in the past, despite the fact that there are currently 150 congresses. Everybody holds conventions, etc. This sort of thing reduces the quality a bit. But I have no idea what to do."*

When the statements of the faculty members (n=3) are examined, it becomes apparent that the researchers are unable to form the research teams they want/are unable to come together. According to them, these problems are the inability to establish research teams with similar perspectives and interests, as well as the inability of researchers to come together due to time and geographical constraints. F.M.16 was unable to find a team and connect with other researchers on a common ground due to the following issues: *"…not being curious about the same subject, not feeling the same excitement… I mean, pretending is not for me… Why are we conducting research that has already been conducted? Let's conduct a study to fill the gap in the literature."* F.M.7 explained that time constraints and distances made it difficult to come together as follows: *"We need to work together, there must be good teams. I believe we need time to collaborate. I believe that the number of teaching staff in each department should be increased slightly. Therefore, we must be able to devote more time to study and research and less to classroom instruction. And when competent teams work together, they produce better results compared to individual efforts. We need to be able to build those teams. The people we can work with at other universities, these distances make it difficult. That too is a problem."*

Result and Discussion

In this study, which examined the research/publication processes of the faculty members of the faculty of education, it was first determined why the faculty members began conducting research. Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017) examined the situations faculty members encounter while conducting research and how these situations affect their research processes. In the study in which 34 academicians working at a university in Türkiye participated, the academicians were questioned about their motivations for conducting research. In Apaydın's (2016) study, which examined the perceptions of scientists toward scientific research, the participants were questioned about the objectives of scientific research. These two studies have some findings overlapping with this study. The majority of the faculty members of the faculty of education interviewed for this study stated that they conducted research to satisfy their curiosity. Participants in Apaydın's (2016) study stated that scientific research satisfies the curiosity of scientists. According to the findings of this study, a substantial proportion of education faculty members can initiate a research process with the goal of addressing a deficiency/problem in their field and filling the gap in the field. The research findings of Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017) indicate that some faculty members conduct research to find answers to problems. According to the findings of Apaydın (2016), one of the objectives of scientific research is to fill the gaps in the literature. Another overlapping finding of this research and the research of Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017) is that some faculty members conduct scientific research to contribute to the field/science.. The participants in Apaydın's (2016) study stated that scientists conduct scientific research to serve humanity, science, and technology. According to the research of Apaydın (2016) and Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017), scientists/faculty members conduct research in order to advance academically. In contrast, one of the faculty members participating in this study stated that conducting research is one of the responsibilities of an academician. In the studies of Apaydın (2016) and Yalçın and Altun Yalçın, findings supporting this research finding were reached. In this study, it was determined that a faculty member of the faculty of education could aim to test a literature knowledge that he doubted when starting a research paper. The participants of the study conducted by Apaydın (2016) agreed that the purpose of scientific research is to test hypotheses and theories. Research findings reveal that one of the faculty members wants to design scientific research that he can conduct within the scope of the courses he teaches and evaluate the scientific productivity of these courses. In addition, the fact that the graduate students under this faculty member's supervision have diverse interests can inspire him to conduct research on those topics. In addition, according to Apaydın's (2016) study, scientists can conduct scientific research in order to improve themselves and because they find it enjoyable. Similarly, according to the study of Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017), faculty members can conduct scientific research for professional development, personal development, and personal fulfillment.

The second issue within the scope of the research is what faculty members consider when determining scientific research methods. A significant number of faculty members stated that they base their research on the method most appropriate for solving the research problem they are addressing. In addition, it is understood that some faculty members have a tendency to employ a particular paradigm when approaching the issue, conducting research, and selecting research methods. The findings indicate that the duration of the research, the characteristics of the research participants, the examination of similar studies, and the availability of opportunities may also affect the selection of research methods of some faculty members. In addition, two of the faculty members tend towards research methods that allow the application and evaluation of a different method, technique etc. Some faculty members consider resources on scientific research methods, expert opinions, and the research method that is easiest for them when determining their research methods.

The third question examined in the study is whether there is a predominant research method employed by faculty members, and if so, what this method is and why they prefer it. The faculty members whose opinions were consulted prefer quantitative (n=6), mixed (n=5), and qualitative (n=4) research methods, respectively. There is no research method used predominantly by some faculty members (n=4).

Two of the faculty members mostly use the quantitative methods as they are suitable for researching the deficiencies/issues they are curious about in the field. Some faculty members who employ the quantitative research method believe that the results obtained using this method are more valid and reliable. According to some faculty members, quantitative research takes less time, and data loss is less in quantitative research, and it is easier for some to collect data. One of the faculty members also uses this method in his research because he feels more competent in quantitative research methods.

Faculty members who stated that they predominantly use mixed research methods in their research prefer this approach because they can benefit from the opportunities of quantitative and qualitative research methods together. In addition, one of these faculty members thinks that mixed research methods produce more reliable and generalizable results.

Some faculty members who stated that they mainly use the qualitative research method in their research explained that this method allows them to examine the problem situation they are addressing in great detail. Two faculty members think that the qualitative research method is appropriate for the nature of educational research, which encourages them to employ this method. One of the faculty members criticizes the use of the quantitative method in educational research on the grounds that this method does not allow for a multi-dimensional examination of the feelings and thoughts of the individual. Another faculty member thinks that quantitative research methods in education are not natural. In addition, one of the faculty members mainly preferred the qualitative research method because it is easier to account for individual differences when using this method.

The nature of the problem situation they face determines the research method preferences of a subset of faculty members who stated that they do not primarily use any research method. However, one of the faculty members believes that there are no superior research methods and, as a result, does not use any method predominantly.

In this study, fourthly, it was investigated what are the parts that the faculty members have difficulty in their research. The results indicate that some faculty members have difficulties in the introduction, others with the method, and others with the discussion sections. In addition, some faculty members have difficulties in literature review and some in reporting the study. Some faculty members encounter difficulties due to the scarcity of literature on the subject they deal with. According to another faculty member, when similar topics are studied, the content of his papers is similar, and he views this as a problem.

Some faculty members have difficulty writing their research's introduction. According to some faculty members who reported having difficulty with this section, this difficulty is the result of inadequate written expression skills. While writing this section, one of the faculty members had difficulty compiling the information obtained from the literature and making connections between the information. In their studies examining the factors that prevent academics from producing, Boice and Jones (1984) also mentioned that the act of writing is difficult. Therefore, the act of writing is based on clarifying and exploring the relationships between ideas, as opposed to being a mechanical task in which something is copied exactly as it is (Nodine 1982 as cited in Boice and Jones, 1984). In their studies, researchers have also addressed how to improve writing skills.

The difficulties experienced by the faculty members in the method section are mainly in data collection, ensuring the validity and reliability of the research, data analysis, and data entry. Naming the method is also among the difficulties faced by the faculty members in this section.

According to this study, the main problem experienced by the faculty members in the method section is data collection. The main issue identified by faculty members during data collection is that the target participants do not wish to participate. In the study conducted by Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017), it was determined that faculty members encountered some challenges during the data collection procedure. According to Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017), faculty members have difficulty reaching diverse sample groups, and target participants are hesitant to participate in surveys/interviews. In the study conducted by Korkmaz, Şahin, and Yeşil (2011), which examined the perspectives of teachers on scientific research and researchers, a significant portion of the teachers interviewed stated that the researchers encountered difficulties in the data collection process, such as the difficulties of the participants and the inability to reach the target audience. The faculty members of faculty of education participating in this study think that teachers are the most reluctant group to participate in the research among the target participants. According to some faculty members, teachers are hesitant to participate in research because they believe they are being evaluated, they do not believe scientific research will be beneficial, they are tired of participating in too much research, and they view it as a chore. In the study of Babayiğit and Başaran (2017), in which faculty members of education faculties examine the problems they encounter while conducting scientific research and offer solutions to these problems, it has been revealed that teachers may have negative/irrelevant attitudes toward scientific research. One of the issues that Korkmaz, Şahin, and Yeşil (2011) addressed in their studies is how teachers approach assisting researchers who reach them to collect data. The researchers concluded that a significant portion of the teachers supported scientific research, but that approximately one-third of them did not volunteer to participate in the data collection process. A significant proportion of teachers who are unwilling to participate in researches state the following reasons for their reluctance; they find the attitudes towards them to be negative in general, they do not find the method used to collect data to be appropriate, they are not treated kindly, they are subjected to excessive demands, they believe that the research will not achieve its goal and is unnecessary, and they believe that these demands are excessive. On the other hand, this research and the study by Babayiğit and Başaran (2017) indicate that the negative attitudes of some school administrators toward scientific research also pose a problem for the scientific research processes of faculty members.

Validity/reliability assurance was stated as one of the main difficulties by faculty members in the method section. According to faculty members, the fact that some research participants do not answer the data collection tools truthfully and completely has a negative impact on the validity and reliability of the studies. In the study of Babayiğit and Başaran (2017), some faculty members stated that the lack of seriousness of research participants is problematic. According to a significant portion of the teachers who participated in the research conducted by Korkmaz, Şahin, and Yeşil (2011), the fact that the participants gave subjective, insincere, and informal responses during the data collection process prevents the researchers from collecting sufficient healthy data. Two faculty members from the faculty of education who participated in this study stated that data analysis was difficult for them. One of these faculty members reported having difficulty with statistical data analysis for quantitative data analysis, while the other reported having difficulty with qualitative data analysis. In the study of Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017), it was determined that faculty members had some difficulties with quantitative and qualitative analysis. Some of the faculty members of the faculty of education may have difficulties in composing the discussion section. The study of Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017), on the other hand, demonstrates that faculty members receive the most criticism regarding the introduction, method, discussion sections, and use of the language from the journals to which they submit their papers for publication.

Some faculty members encounter additional challenges in their research that are not mentioned above. Some faculty members may encounter these difficulties while scanning the literature and reporting the research. In this study, a faculty member from the faculty of education who had difficulties with the literature review stated that certain articles were unavailable. In this study, only one faculty member expressed this situation, while in the research of Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017), it was expressed by most of the faculty members. The fact that the literature on the subject studied is scarce and that articles written on similar subjects begin to resemble one another is also considered as difficulties by the faculty members participating in this research. In this study, faculty members from the faculty of education did not report any difficulty with using a foreign language. However, according to the research of Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017), faculty members have some difficulties in using foreign language effectively in research processes.

Fifthly, the faculty members' feelings toward the research during the research process were examined. According to the findings, faculty members experience excitement, enjoyment, boredom in the process, happiness, and curiosity the most during the research process. Feeling energetic, cooling down, fatigue, anxiety and stress are also emotions experienced by some faculty members during the research process. During the research process, one of the faculty members reported that his emotional state almost never changed.

Sixth and lastly, the difficulties faculty members face when conducting research were discussed. At this point, it is clear from the research findings that faculty members typically encounter technological and economic problems, bureaucracy, the publication process, and a lack of time when conducting research. In addition, faculty members reported experiencing difficulties during the research process, such as a lack of motivation and an inability to establish the desired research team/gather researchers.

Some faculty members of the faculty of education stated that their research did not receive financial support due to a lack of technological and economic opportunities, and that they lacked access to certain essential devices/materials and software/programs. On the other hand, according to a faculty member the inadequacy of the laboratories where the research will be conducted is among the technological and economic shortcomings that faculty members face during the research process. Although the high wage demands of some journals are considered among the problems encountered in the publication process in this study, it can also be considered as an economic inadequacy. In Murat's (2003) study in which he investigated the burnout of faculty members, it was noted that some faculty members complained about economic inadequacies, but these complaints pertained to their academic studies, not their income. Tuzgol Dost and Cenkseven's (2007) research on the problems of academic staff in state and foundation universities found that some academic staff have trouble getting to the lab and equipment they need for their research. Some of the faculty members who participated in this research, and studies of Babayiğit and Başaran (2017) and Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017) stated that bureaucratic difficulties in the research processes negatively affected them. According to this research and the research of Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017), some faculty members encounter difficulties during the publication of scientific research. The findings of these two studies show that some faculty members are negatively affected by the prolongation of the publication process. In addition, according to this study and the study of Yalçın and Altun Yalçın (2017), some faculty members experience time and motivation issues during their research processes. The findings of this study, as well as those of Arı (2007) and Babayiğit and Başaran (2017), coincide with the fact that some faculty members were unable to conduct research due to an excessive course load.

Limitations and Recommendation

The data obtained in this study are limited to the answers given by the 19 faculty members participating in the study to the questions in the semi-structured scale form developed by the researchers.

Considering that some faculty members have attributed their difficulties in writing the introductory part of the articles to the deficiencies in written expression skills, it can be suggested that more emphasis should be placed on teaching written expression skills at undergraduate and graduate education levels.

According to some faculty members, teachers may be reluctant to participate in scientific research. It may be suggested to carry out studies on how teachers can be encouraged to participate in scientific research.

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Leadership for Staff Hope: Can it Offer Similar Outcomes as Student Hope?

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Leadership for Staff Hope: Can if Offer Similar Outcomes as Student Hope?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this cross sectional survey research was to assess whether staff hope offered similar academic achievement and school climate outcomes as student hope. Primary data were collected from 405 staff from 45 schools in one U.S. state who responded to the Perceived Hope Scale using Qualtrics. Secondary data were collected from the state's school performance report. Results from correlation analysis indicated staff hope scores were unrelated with school socioeconomic status, but related with one measure of school climate – student to faculty ratio. Multiple regression analysis indicated student to faculty ratio predicted staff hope when modeled with school level socioeconomic status, offering a potential practical finding. The findings overall, however, did not suggest that staff hope offered similar outcomes as student hope regarding academic achievement. This study contributes to the hope in schools evidence base and provides support for future research to examine the role of staff hope to influence school and student outcomes. A delimitation of this research is the findings are specific to one U.S. state. The author did not receive funding to support this research.

Keywords: Staff Hope; Perceived Hope Scale; Hope in schools; School climate; Academic achievement; Correlation analysis; Multiple regression analysis

Introduction

We can learn more about schools, school improvement efforts, and the role of school leaders by continuing to study the many negative aspects pervasive in schools, but researchers have identified a need to build an evidence base around what might improve schools by studying different positive aspects (Hoy & Tarter, 2011). Research designed with a purpose "in discovering what works, what is right, and what is improving, not what fails, what is wrong, and what is declining" (Hoy & Tarter, 2011, p. 428) might offer school leaders positive targets that are administratively mutable. Leadership agendas focused on the negative aspects of schools – low test scores (Hani, 2016), crime in the school and community (Barnes, 2016), classroom management deficiencies (Shank & Santiague, 2021), or cyberbullying (Waters et al., 2020) – can put additional strain on students and staff in a system of public education that is nearing a critical point (Barnes, 2016; Conderman et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Hani, 2016; Pressley, 2021; Shank & Santiague, 2021; Waters et al., 2020). Burnout, anxiety, and stress are pressing issues facing each layer of schools, including students (Conderman et al., 2020), teachers (Pressley, 2021), and building and district level leaders (DeMatthews et al., 2021). Therefore, building an evidence base around some positive aspects of schools might improve school and student outcomes.

Hope is a construct from the field of positive psychology that might contribute to improved educational outcomes for school leaders who are interested in leading to enhance the positives. Green et. al. (2007) and Marques et. al. (2011) have reported on various interventions, including group coaching, goal setting, and hope-specific interventions, that are available to improve hope in schools (Waters, 2011). Generally defined, hope is a positive expectation of future outcomes (Krafft et al., 2019). Although hope and optimism are often times used interchangeably, there are differences between the two constructs when examined through the lens of positive psychology. While optimism is aligned with an individual's perception of confidence, hope is aligned with an individual's perception of effectiveness (Krafft et al., 2021). For example, an optimistic individual might feel confident about completing a task, while a hopeful individual believes they have the efficacy to accomplish it. Additionally, optimistic individuals expect certain outcomes, while hopeful individuals are less certain about future results (Bury et al., 2016; Gasper et al., 2020). As applied to schools, hopeful students and educators might believe they can offer a positive influence on school and student outcomes, but they are less certain about the actual results. Hopeful students and educators might perceive these outcomes as possible, but not likely to occur.

The research base around hope in schools, particularly measured at the student level, continues to grow (Marquez et al., 2015; Dixson, 2020; Dixson, 2019; Dixson & Stevens, 2018; Dixson et al., 2018; Dixson et al., 2017; Snyder et al., 1997). Using the Children's Hope Scale (CHS), researchers have reported the importance of hope in K-12 schools with respect to a breadth of academic achievement measures (Marquez et al., 2015; Dixson, 2019; Dixson & Stevens, 2018; Dixson et al., 2017; Snyder et al., 1997). More specifically, grade point average seems especially influenced by student levels of hope (Dixson, 2020; Dixson et al., 2018; Dixson et al., 2017). Lenz et al. (2021) used the Herth Hope Index (Herth, 1992) to measure student hope and reported that hope scores predicted school climate in middle and high schools. Dixson et al. (2018) found hope scores among adolescent students, measured via the CHS, to mediate the influence of socioeconomic status (SES) on student achievement (Dixson et al., 2018). Collectively, these findings indicate that efforts to increase student hope in schools might be a worthwhile endeavor to improve student level outcomes.

The research base and administratively mutable nature of student hope provide evidence and strategies for school leaders to consider in practice. Improved student hope is likely to improve a variety of educational outcome measures (Lenz et. al., 2021; Marquez et al., 2015; Dixson, 2020; Dixson, 2019; Dixson & Stevens, 2018; Dixson et al., 2018; Dixson et al., 2017; Snyder et al., 1997). There is, however, a dearth of evidence about the importance of hope among certified school staff – the adults in schools. Throughout the review of the literature for this current study, peer reviewed sources that examined staff hope with academic achievement measures were not identified. To begin to fill this gap in the literature, the purpose of this research was to assess whether staff hope yields similar academic achievement and school climate outcomes as student hope.

This study was conceptualized so school level SES influenced staff hope, a reciprocal influential relationship was present between staff hope and school climate, and a reciprocal influential relationship was present between staff hope and academic achievement. Figure 1 includes a graphical representation of this conceptual framework. The Institutional Review Board at the author's university provided approval to conduct this research.

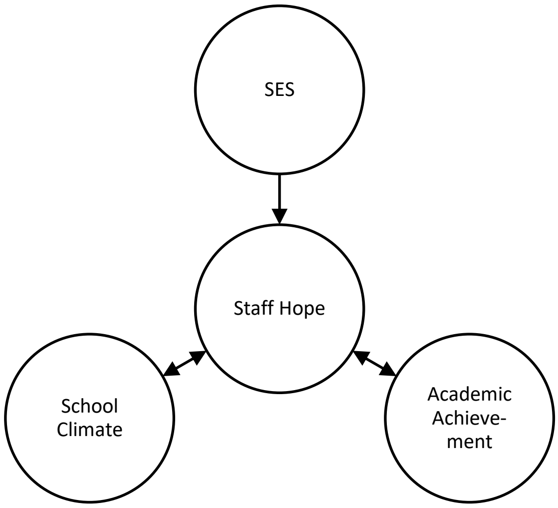

Figure 1
Study's Conceptual Framework

Hope and academic achievement

C. R. Snyder developed hope theory to include goals, agency, and pathways (Dixson, 2018; Peterson, 2006; Snyder, 2002). Agency refers to an individual's belief that they can achieve certain goals, and pathways refers to the steps individuals develop to achieve those goals (Dixson, 2018; Peterson, 2006; Snyder, 2002). Another way to think of agency is that it refers to an individual's determination, motivation, and persistence to achieve a goal – the will – while pathways recognizes an individual's abilities to create alternative paths or plans if they encounter obstacles along their planned course – the way (Dixson, 2018; Krafft et al., 2019). "Key attributes of hopeful people are their tenacity and their active thinking and behaving toward ambitious personal goals" (Krafft et al., 2019, p. 1595). More simply stated, hopeful people seem to embody the commonly used phrase – where there's a will, there's a way.

A widely used instrument to measure hope in children is the CHS (Snyder et al., 1997). In a meta-analysis of hope in schools research conducted by Marques et al. (2017) on a sample of "9250 unique participants" (p. 253), they reported that "93% of the research papers and 89% of the samples" (p. 253) were based on Snyder's hope theory research. Dixson and colleagues have recently contributed findings to the hope theory in schools literature base from their analyses conducted at the student level using the CHS, with alpha coefficients of 0.70 - 0.91 across these studies (Dixson, 2020; Dixson, 2019; Dixson, et al., 2018; Dixson et al., 2017; Dixson & Stevens, 2018). Hope explained most of the variance in a variety of school level variables when modeled with growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) and school belonging, even though growth mindset seems to get more attention than hope in K-12 schools today (Dixson, 2020). Students who reported higher levels of hope also reported higher levels of engagement and motivation in school (Dixson, 2019). Specific to a sample of African American high school students, hope predicted an achievement oriented psychosocial profile (Dixson & Stevens, 2018). Student level hope was related with grade point average and school belonging, as well as with a variety of psychological measures (Dixson et al., 2017). Additionally, hope mediated the influence of SES on academic achievement to suggest hope may have an important role in closing achievement gaps in economically and ethnically diverse schools (Dixson et al., 2018). These previous studies indicate hope is an important positive aspect of schools when measured at the student level, but there is a lack of evidence to suggest whether hope measured at the staff level might yield similar outcomes.

To measure staff hope in schools, it is important to have knowledge of the available instruments to measure hope in adults. Like the CHS, the Adult Dispositional Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) is a widely used instrument, due in part to its use among various adult populations and length of 12 items, to measure hope in adults (Snyder, 2002). Others instruments, which range from one to as many as 60 items, are available to measure hope in adults (Krafft et al., 2019). One instrument in particular, the Spirituality, Religion, and Personal Beliefs questionnaire of the World Health Organization's Quality of Life Measure, includes a total of 132 items, with four items designed to assess hope and optimism (Department of Mental Health & Substance Dependence, 2002). This instrument's brevity specific to hope and optimism, just four items, is perceived as both an advantage and disadvantage. Although the four items specific to hope and optimism contribute to the instrument's brevity, two items each for hope and optimism might not be adequate given its context (Krafft et al., 2019). As a result, Krafft et al. (2019) used the Spirituality, Religion, and Personal Beliefs questionnaire of the World Health Organization's Quality of Life Measure to develop and test their six-item Perceived Hope Scale (PHS) in a diverse sample of more than 17,500 adults in Switzerland over three years. Krafft et al. (2019) reported the PHS addressed some of the criticisms of the Adult Dispositional Trait Hope Scale, was internally consistent with alpha coefficients of 0.87 – 0.89, and offered a broader conception of hope than the Adult Dispositional Trait Hope Scale. For the current study, the PHS was administered to the adult staff of participating schools to measure staff hope. The brevity, psychometric properties, and broad conception of hope measured using the PHS were perceived as advantages to using this instrument.

School climate and SES

A positive school climate can mitigate the influence of SES on student achievement (Berkowitz et. al., 2016). Additionally, school climate can positively influence various educational outcomes that are measured at the school or student levels (Berkowitz et al., 2016; Buckman et al., 2021; Daily et al., 2019; Davis & Warner, 2015; Hopson et al., 2014; Sulak, 2016; Thapa et al., 2013; Wang & Degol, 2016). A positive school climate can influence students' sense of belonging and connection with their schools to mediate increased levels of academic achievement (Reynolds et. al., 2017). These prior works provide evidence for the importance of a positive school climate on a variety of educational outcomes. More recent evidence supports the role of student hope to positively influence school climate (Lenz et al., 2021), however, the relationship between staff hope and school climate remains unclear.

A concern regarding the utility of school climate as an administratively mutable variable to improve educational outcomes is the lack of a consistent measurement and reporting policy, consensus definition, widely used instrumentation, and consistent indicators to serve as proxy measures of school climate. As a result, it is difficult to generalize whether any state's school climate measures or indicators can serve as antecedents to positively influence educational outcomes in other schools.

In the U.S., the New Jersey (NJ) Department of Education's policy for reporting school climate in its School Performance Reports (SPR) database reflects eight different school level indicators to serve as proxies for school climate:

- Length of school day
- Full time instructional time
- Shared time instructional time

- Student to faculty ratio (S:F)
- Student to administrator ratio (S:A)
- Faculty attendance
- Student suspensions
- Student expulsions

Although these proxy measures are not typically included in research informed school climate instruments, these proxies can be useful when exploring school climate in NJ schools. Therefore, it was worthwhile to examine whether these school climate proxies influenced staff hope in the current study. Although Lenz et al., (2021) reported that student hope improved school climate in middle and high schools, the decision was made that the NJ school climate proxy measures were more likely to indicate that school climate influences staff hope.

Yeung et. al. (2022) reported that school level SES was related with and predicted academic achievement in reading and self-efficacy. In the current study, it was worthwhile to examine whether school level SES influenced staff hope, as well as to examine whether the influence of SES on staff hope was stronger than its influence on academic achievement.

This study was designed to test the following hypotheses, which were developed based on hope theory and the evidence for student hope.

H_1: Staff hope is unrelated with school level SES.

H_2: Staff hope is positively related with academic achievement.

H_3: Staff hops is positively related with school climate.

H_4: Staff hope is a positive predictor of academic achievement when modeled with school level SES.

H_5: School climate is a positive predictor of staff hope when modeled with school level SES.

Methods and Materials

The school was the unit of analysis for this cross sectional survey research. The intended sample size for this study was 60 schools. Participant recruitment began upon receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. Participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous, and the participants' schools comprised a convenience sample. A total of 2,533 NJ public school principals were recruited via email to solicit their schools' participation in this research. A copy of the recruitment letter used for this study is included in the Appendix. Participation was voluntary, and the study's participants comprised a convenience sample. Certified administrative, instructional, or educational services staff from these schools served as participants. A minimum of five participants from a school was established for a school's inclusion in this study's sample. The sample size achieved for this study was 45 schools.

Using Qualtrics, primary data were collected from participants via administration of the PHS (Krafft et al., 2019). The PHS contains six items to provide a measure of dispositional hope as perceived by the individual who responds to the instrument. Each of the six items is scored on a continuum from zero through five. A response of zero indicates the respondent strongly disagrees with the item, while a response of five indicates the respondent strongly agrees with the item. Intermediary responses include the following: disagree = one; somewhat disagree = two; somewhat agree = three; and agree = four. Item scores are summed, then an average is calculated to find the respondent's perceived hope score, which can range from zero to five. To obtain a school level measure of staff hope in this study, participant responses to the PHS who worked in the same school were aggregated to determine a school level staff hope score, which also ranged from zero to five. In this study's sample, Cronbach's α for the six items of the PHS is 0.87, which is consistent with the reliability of the instrument in other studies (Krafft et al., 2019; Marujo et al., 2021; Slezackova et al., 2021).

For each school that met the study's inclusion criterion, secondary data were collected from the NJ SPR to obtain a school level measure of SES. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in a school, which included students who received either free or reduced price lunch, served as the school level measure of SES for this study. Although not appropriate for use as a student level measure of SES, Harwell (2018) reported that the percentage of free or reduced price lunch students is an appropriate measure of SES at the school or district levels of analysis.

Additionally, secondary data were collected from the NJ SPR to obtain school level measures of school climate. The following school climate proxy measures included in the NJ SPR were used to serve as distinct school level measures of school climate:

- Length of school day
- Student to faculty ratio (S:F)
- Student to administrator ratio (S:A)
- Faculty attendance
- Student suspensions
- Student expulsions

SPSS was used for all data analyses in this study. Descriptive statistics are reported for all school level measures and inferential statistics to test the study's three directional hypotheses. A correlation analysis was conducted to test H_1, H_2, and H_3. Separate multiple regression analyses were conducted to test H_4 and H_5. The results of these analyses are presented in the following section.

Ethical Considerations

Participant responses to the research instrument used in this study, the Perceived Hope Scale (PHS) (Krafft et al., 2019), were collected electronically via Qualtrics. The use of Qualtrics allowed participants to consent to or withdraw from study participation prior to responding to items on the PHS. Additionally, the use of Qualtrics for primary quantitative data collection ensured participant anonymity. Participation in this study resulted in minimal risks to respondents.

Ethical review board name: The William Paterson University of New Jersey Institutional Review Board for Human Subject Research.
Date of ethics review decision: May 2, 2019.
Ethics assessment document issue number: 2019-349.

Findings

A total of 599 staff members from 122 NJ schools participated in this research. Forty five schools met the study's inclusion criterion, and a total of 405 individual participants from these 45 schools completed the PHS (M = 9.0; SD = 5.34). The study's sample of 45 schools includes 24 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, and 10 high schools from NJ. The average staff hope score in these sample schools was 4.75 (SD = 0.31), which indicated the participants in this study had high levels of perceived hope.

The average percentage of economically disadvantaged students in this sample of 45 schools was 30.82% (SD = 25.25). For academic achievement, the percentage of students in these sample schools who scored at the proficient level or higher on the NJ accountability test was 58.70% (SD = 19.00) for English-language arts and 52.00% (SD = 19.40) for math. Descriptive statistics for the six school level measures of school climate were: length of school day in minutes (M = 396.33, SD = 11.79); S:F (M = 12.31, SD = 2.41); S:A (M = 300.30, SD = 120.28); faculty attendance percentage (M = 96.60, SD = 1.44); student expulsion percentage (M = 0.00, SD = 0.00); and student suspension percentage (M = 2.94, SD = 6.18).

For H_1 – staff hope is unrelated with school level SES – the results of the correlation analysis indicated that staff hope was unrelated with school level SES ($r = .22$, $p > 0.05$). The data from these sample schools for staff hope and SES supported H_1, which is a promising finding for hope in schools research.

For H_2 – staff hope is positively related with academic achievement – the results of the correlation analysis indicated that staff hope was unrelated with English-language arts scores ($r = -.21$, $p > 0.05$) and math scores ($r = -.21$, $p > 0.05$). The data from these sample schools for staff hope and academic achievement did not support H_2.

For H_3 – staff hope is positively related with school climate – the results of the correlation analysis indicated that staff hope was related with one school level measure of school climate, S:F ($r = .34$, $p < 0.05$, $r^2 = .12$). The coefficient of determination for this relationship, however, indicated minimal potential practical benefit. Staff hope scores were unrelated with the other five school level measures of school climate included in this analysis. Therefore, the data from these sample schools for staff hope and school climate partially supported H_3.

For H_4 – staff hope is a positive predictor of academic achievement when modeled with school level SES – the results of the regression analysis indicated that staff hope does not predict academic achievement in either English-language arts or math. Therefore, the data from these sample schools for staff hope, SES, and academic achievement did not support H_4.

For H_5 – school climate is a positive predictor of staff hope when modeled with school level SES – the results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that one school level measure of school climate, S:F, positively predicted staff hope scores when modeled with SES. Table 1 includes the summary of regression analysis for school climate on staff hope. This model accounted for 21.6% of the variance in staff perceptions of hope, thereby offering a potential practical benefit. The data from these sample schools for staff hope, SES, and school climate partially supported H_5.

Table 1. Regression results for school climate on staff hope

Predictor	B	β	t	p	95% CI
SES	.002	.157	.899	.374	[-0.002, 0.006]
LSD	.006	.216	1.349	.185	[-0.003, 0.014]
S:F	.052	.400	2.522	.016	[0.010, 0.093]
S:A	.000	-.053	-.320	.750	[-0.001, 0.001]
FA	-.007	-.032	-.200	.843	[-0.076, 0.062]
SUS	.002	.047	.287	.776	[-0.014, 0.019]

Note. $R^2 = .216$; $F(6, 43) = 1.697$; $p > .05$
LSD = length of school day; S:F = student to faculty ratio; S:A = student to administrator ratio; FA = faculty attendance percentage; SUS = student suspension percentage

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to assess whether staff hope yields similar academic achievement and school climate outcomes as student hope. The PHS was administered to certified staff members from sample schools to obtain a school level staff hope score, and secondary data were collected from the NJ SPR to obtain school level measures of SES, school climate, and academic achievement. In these sample schools, staff hope is unrelated with school level SES, but staff hope is related with one measure of school climate, S:F. These findings provide support for hypothesis one and partial support for hypothesis three, respectively. Hypothesis four, staff hope is a positive predictor of academic achievement when modeled with school level SES, is not supported by the findings. One school level measure of school climate, S:F, predicts staff hope scores when modeled with SES. This finding provides partial support for hypothesis five, school climate is a positive predictor of staff hope when modeled with school level SES, and offers a potential practical benefit for school leaders.

The results of this study indicate that leading with a focus on staff hope is likely to yield limited improvements in academic achievement and school climate. Throughout the literature review for this study, research that examined staff hope and educational outcomes was not identified. Conversely, and as discussed earlier in this paper, there was a wealth of research that examined the role of student hope and educational outcomes (Lenz et. al., 2021; Marquez et al., 2015; Dixson, 2020; Dixson, 2019; Dixson & Stevens, 2018; Dixson et al., 2018; Dixson et al., 2017; Snyder et al., 1997). As a result, it was worthwhile to discuss findings from this study relative to work on student hope.

In the current study, staff hope is unrelated with SES. At the student level, Dixson and Stevens (2018) reported a weak, direct relationship between student hope and self-reported SES. In the current study, the percentage of students who received free/reduced price lunch was used as the measure of SES. In addition to the analyses being conducted at different levels, this inconsistency of measures for SES likely contributes to this study's lack of support for Dixson and Steven's (2018) work on student hope. As conceptualized for the current study, the absence of a relationship between staff hope and SES could be a meaningful finding for school leaders. The level of poverty or wealth of the sample schools is unrelated with perceptions of staff hope.

In the current study, staff hope is unrelated with and does not predict academic achievement. This finding does not support the student level work of Dixson (2020, 2019), Dixson et al. (2018, 2017), and Dixson and Stevens (2018). These prior studies of student hope utilized measures of academic achievement that differed from the measures used in the current study. Dixson (2020, 2019), Dixson et al. (2018, 2017), and Dixson and Stevens (2018) used a variety of non-accountability test measures for academic achievement and reported that student hope predicted these measures. In the current study, the percentage of students who scored at the proficient level or higher on NJ's accountability test was used to measure academic achievement. In addition to the analyses being conducted at different levels, this inconsistency of measures for academic achievement contributes to this study's lack of support for results at the student level (Dixson, 2020, 2019; Dixson et al., 2018, 2017; & Dixson & Stevens, 2018).

In this study, student to faculty ratio (S:F) is one measure of school climate that is related with and predicts staff hope when modeled with SES. Although Lenz et al. (2021) reported that student hope improved school climate, the current study's finding indicates that S:F influences staff hope. This is an unexpected finding, because it suggests that as S:F increases, so will staff hope. As student enrollments increase and the number of faculty members remain constant, staff hope will increase. The limitations of the school climate proxy measures in NJ likely contribute to this unexpected finding.

Limitations and Strengths

The current study had several limitations given its cross sectional survey design. The achieved sample size of 45 schools was adequate to conduct the data analyses, however, this sample limits the generalizability of findings to schools in other states. The findings are also limited within NJ, because sample schools represented elementary, middle, and high school levels. The number of participants per sample school is another limitation. Due to its brevity, psychometric properties, and broad conception of hope, the PHS was used to measure staff hope. To date, other researchers have not used this instrument to study hope in schools, so perhaps another instrument might offer greater utility in these settings. The school climate proxies in NJ continue to be problematic for use in research and appear to offer little value as measures of school climate. Despite these limitations, the strength of this study is its contribution to the hope in schools research base. This is the first study to examine the role of staff hope to predict academic achievement and school climate. This foundational work offers value for future research and school leadership practice.

Implications for Research

More work is needed to examine the value of staff hope as an administratively mutable variable for school leaders to consider in practice. Future research should examine whether staff hope is related with and predicts other school and student level outcomes in various settings, in addition to the psychological and academic achievement measures that others have studied at the student level (Dixson, 2020, 2019; Dixson et al., 2018, 2017; & Dixson & Stevens, 2018). Perhaps the use of accountability test scores as measures of academic achievement to do not adequately serve as an outcome of staff hope. Future work should examine the role of staff hope against educational outcomes used in other work that examined student hope (Lenz et. al., 2021; Marquez et al., 2015; Dixson, 2020; Dixson, 2019; Dixson & Stevens, 2018; Dixson et al., 2018; Dixson et al., 2017; Snyder et al., 1997).

Future research that compares staff hope to student hope would likely be a valuable contribution to the hope in schools research base, especially given the availability of interventions to improve hope in schools (Green et. al., 2007; Marques et. al., 2011; Waters, 2011). Findings from this type of research would provide valuable evidence to school leadership practitioners regarding whether to lead with a focus on hope at the student or staff levels, both.

Implications for Practice

The current study may have two primary implications for practice. First, school leaders can communicate with staff that SES is unrelated with staff hope. Perhaps this might encourage school staff to embrace the popular phrase – where there's a will, there's a way – especially in schools with a higher percentage of students who receive free/reduced price lunch. Second, the one measure of school climate that is related with and predicts staff hope is S:F. The potential practical benefit of this finding is that school leaders can encourage staff that they can positively influence school and student outcomes, even as school enrollments continue to increase.

Acknowledgements or Notes:
I would like to express my very great appreciation to all of the study participants.

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Appendix

Recruitment letter

Dear Principal,

I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies at William Paterson University. The purpose of this email is to ask for your assistance in recruiting your certified staff to participate in my research.

The purpose of this study is to examine staff perceptions of hope and school level variables included in the New Jersey School Performance Report. The design of this study requires me to collect staff responses to the items included in the Perceived Hope Scale (PHS). Staff participation is completely voluntary and anonymous, and survey completion should require less than five minutes. Risks associated with completing the PHS are minimal, meaning that the risks involved are no greater than those encountered in everyday life. A benefit of participation in this study is an enhancement of the general knowledge of this study area.

Please forward this email to all certified staff members so they may consider volunteering to participate in this study and complete the PHS by clicking here. I hope you will consider volunteering to participate in this study and complete the PHS, too.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience if you have any questions about this research. I look forward to collecting your staff's responses to the PHS.

Sincerely,
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Biographical notes:

Samuel F. Fancera: Assistant Professor and Director of Educational Leadership at William Paterson University. Generally, his research is focused on K-12 school leadership and principals. More specific lines of inquiry include school leadership for professional development and learning, positive psychology in schools, and leadership preparation.

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