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## Examination of the Relationship between Occupational Professionalism and Occupational Alienation in Kindergarten Teachers

Muhammet U. Oztabak\* 

Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University,  
TURKEY

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between the levels of occupational professionalism and occupational alienation in kindergarten teachers. Correlational survey model among the quantitative research models was used in the research. In this context, 224 kindergarten teachers were reached via convenience sampling model. The data of the research was collected via the Teacher Information Form, Teachers' Occupational Professionalism Scale and Occupational Alienation of Preschool Teachers Scale. SPSS software and statistical measures such as independent samples t-test, ANOVA and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation were used to analyse the obtained data. According to the research findings, both occupational professionalism and occupational alienation levels of kindergarten teachers were found to be high. Levels of occupational professionalism and occupational alienation may differ according to some demographic variables among teachers. The relationship between occupational professionalism and occupational alienation was found to be statistically significant. The same is also true for the sub-dimensions of the scales. Lastly, the findings and results obtained during the research were discussed in the light of the literature and suggestions were made.

**Keywords:** Kindergarten teacher, occupational alienation, occupational professionalism, teacher alienation, teacher professionalism.

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### Introduction

Occupation is not only the work done for a fee, but also the social status that an individual or a group of individuals with certain qualifications and abilities obtain via a certificate or competency concerning a specific job (Buyruk & Akbas, 2021). Professionalization in the occupation is possible based on the development of the qualifications and competencies in question. Thus, the need to study and evaluate the profession of teaching arises as it is an occupational field involved in the future of the society. There has been an emphasis on the necessity of teacher professionalism in transforming schools into learning communities in order to adapt to meet external demands and various needs of students (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Teachers are expected to be skilled practitioners who can solve practical problems and create quality learning opportunities for the students (Sachs, 2005). Professional development elements and educational policies have the potential to affect the teaching abilities of teachers to a great degree (Loeb et al., 2009).

Professionalism, in the literature of education, is associated with occupational values based on trust, competence, strong occupational identity and cooperation (Sachs, 2016). In this context, various indicators have been listed in the literature for the professional practice of teaching as an occupational class. In Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD, 2016) report on occupational professionalism, teacher professionalism is defined as knowledge, skills and practices teachers must have in order to be effective educators. It is seen that the occupational professionalism of teachers is discussed within the context of knowledge, autonomy and interaction between colleagues. Evans (2011) discusses teacher professionalism in terms of attitude, behavior and intellectuality. In this context, she considers teachers' skills and competencies, knowledge levels and abilities to structure and transfer knowledge, physical behaviors, perceptions, beliefs, job satisfaction and motivation levels among the factors that determine professionalism. Teacher professionalism encompasses factors such as having sufficient subject knowledge

#### \* Correspondence:

Muhammet U. Oztabak, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Istanbul-Turkey.  
✉ [muoztabak@fsm.edu.tr](mailto:muoztabak@fsm.edu.tr)



and pedagogic knowledge, commitment to continuous improvement and maintaining responsibilities in the work environment (Socket, 1993). Yılmaz and Altinkurt (2015) define occupational professionalism as having knowledge related to the field of profession, being informed of and able to adapt to the changes and developments that take place in the field, using the acquired qualifications for the benefit of the workplace and abiding by the ethical rules. Appleyard and Appleyard (2014) list the common points in the definitions of teacher professionalism as (i) subject/field expertise, (ii) teaching expertise, (iii) continuous learning, (iv) multi-faceted accountability towards the student, institution and society, (v) acceptance of and compliance with the ethical rules. Ilgan et al. (2015), on the other hand, determined quality, professional awareness, public views on teaching, commitment, skills and knowledge, discipline, development, trust, and autonomy as subscales of the Teacher Professionalism Scale they were developing.

The occupational professionalism and the performance of teachers concerning job-related processes is either affected by personal and environmental factors. The occupational professionalism of teachers is improved when they have greater occupational awareness. Teachers who are aware of their requirements, who are in good communication and cooperation with their colleagues and who strive to do their job as best as they can have high occupational awareness (Celik & Yılmaz, 2015).

Teacher professionalism indicates the responsibility of teachers regarding student development and their own professional development (Wang et al., 2014). Increased attention of teachers to the processes and events that take place in schools is of special importance with regard to contributing to their professional development and thus their occupational professionalism (Price & Weatherby, 2018).

Emotional labor is centrally located in teaching performance (Yin, 2015). Emotional labor strategies help teachers with the factors preventing desired occupational performance and causing problems in the educational environment. Teaching satisfaction is remarkably related to emotional labor of teachers (Huang et al., 2019). Teachers' ability to show emotional labor requires awareness of situations and requirements concerning teaching and school.

Awareness of teachers is an important indicator that improves the quality of education (Buettner et al., 2016). There is a strong relationship between personal development and personal awareness (Mustaffa et al., 2013).

Teachers' efforts to contribute to organization for the improvement depend on ensuring that they participate in school and administration processes (Weingarten, 2012). Schools that encourage teacher accountability and especially teacher leadership at the same time have better performance (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

Development of sub-concepts articulated within the context of teacher professionalism will carry the professional teaching standards and therefore the education system to a higher level. A rise in the professionalization levels of teachers can be predicted to improve the outputs of the education system, especially the students. However, teacher professionalization depends on many other factors besides the individual efforts of the teacher (Toh et al., 1996). That is because a teacher is an employee who works alongside his/her colleagues within a structure that is by definition organizational. In addition to this, the variability of the teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding their profession can also be said to have various effects on their occupational development. Thus, a contribution to the literature is possible by examining professionalization through multiple variables together as both dependent and independent variables and establishing hypotheses afterwards. For instance, Cansoy and Parlar (2017) discussed teacher professionalism and school development together in their study on a sample consisting of primary, middle and high school teachers. They found that teachers' sense of professionalism was high and that there was a significant relationship between professionalism and school development. Occupational professionalism of teachers was examined according to various demographic variables by Yılmaz and Altinkurt (2015) in their studies and it was determined that the occupational professionalism of teachers can be considered high. The findings of Hosgorur's (2017) study also concluded that the occupational professionalism of teachers was high. It was found that the professional awareness subscale had the highest averages in the occupational professionalism of the teachers. In a recent study by Buyruk and Akbas (2021), the findings obtained from a large sample also found that the occupational professionalism was high among teachers. In their studies directly examining the relationship between organizational alienation and occupational professionalism of teachers, Yorulmaz et al. (2015) point out to the existence of negative correlations between the two.

In this study, it was aimed to find out whether occupational alienation in kindergarten teachers had any relation to occupational professionalism. The concept of alienation, in its broadest sense, refers to the individuals' withdrawal from each other or from a certain environment or a process (Marshall, 1999). Seeman (1975) who focuses the most on the concept of alienation, suggests that it is not possible to make a single definition of alienation, because alienation is a disorder that emerges depending on social conditions and emotional personality. He shows the effects of alienation in stages by approaching alienation from a multi-dimensional perspective within a socio-psychological framework and limiting the concept of alienation.

Seeman (1959) discusses alienation in five different categories: (i) Powerlessness: Individual's inability to be effective or have control over the conditions affecting their lives, (ii) Meaninglessness: Actions of the individual's not making sense to them, failure to make a connection between actions and general goals, (iii) Normlessness: Rules losing their

effect, the individual's belief that illegal actions are necessary to achieve goals, (iv) Isolation: Beliefs or goals highly valued within the society or the organization not carrying any value for the individual, (v) Self-Estrangement: Actions of the individual becoming a means for external gratification outside themselves, rather than being a source of gratification in itself (as cited in Simsek et al., 2012).

Occupational alienation is a "prolonged experience of disconnectedness, isolation, emptiness, lack of a sense of identity, a limited confined expression of spirit, or a sense of meaninglessness" (Braveman & Bass-Haugen, 2009, p. 9). Wilcock and Hocking (2015, p. 258) clarified that occupational alienation is associated with "deep feelings of incompatibility with the occupations associated with a place, situation or others to the extent that basic needs and wants appear impossible to attain or maintain".

Mobility and change of roles in work life, which has an important place in the individual's life, is defined as occupational alienation. The happiness of the individual, who spends a significant part of their life working, is also an element that increases organizational productivity. The alienated individual experiences difficulty in managing and understanding oneself and often feels powerless (Fromm, 1992). The symptoms of alienation are estrangement, apathy, inability to be deeply committed to anything, lack of work engagement, retreating, disconnection in relationships and isolation (Erjem, 2005). Dash and Vohra (2018) associates concepts of weakness, meaninglessness, normlessness and social isolation with alienation in school. Bureaucratic structure in schools, hectic and inconsistent curriculums, rapidly changing technological material, overcrowded classrooms, useless knowledge loads that have no function in everyday life, exclusion of students and teachers from the educational decision-making processes can be listed among the reasons for the alienation of teachers from their jobs (Erjem, 2005; Sidorkin, 2004; Yilmaz & Sarpkaya, 2009).

Research shows that bureaucratic school structure, intensive education program, undemocratic school management, unilateral decision-making, and excessive workload lead to teacher alienation (Hascher & Hadjar, 2018; Sidorkin, 2004). The hierarchy and the network of relationships between the employees in bureaucratic organizations such as public schools can often form an environment of conflict and dissatisfaction for teachers. Teachers have expectations of being more autonomous in their work and tend to be more involved in the decision-making processes. In the case that these demands are not met, occupational alienation may manifest itself (Cox & Wood, 1980; Sidorkin, 2004). According to Elma (2003), occupational alienation in teachers can manifest itself as indifference in the face of students' success or problems, decrease in the commitment to work and school, finding oneself insufficient in improving the students, getting tired of dealing with students, etc. In this case, minimizing alienation in schools have the utmost importance for teachers and therefore students.

When looking at the past studies, it is seen that organizational alienation is discussed through many variables. In his study, Polatcan (2020) examined the effect of servant leadership on teacher alienation in the context of supportive school culture. According to the study results, it was found that servant leadership behaviors of the administrators reduced the alienations levels of teachers. In a study examining the relationship between organizational ostracism and alienation and organizational cynicism Abaslı (2018) found that teachers' sense of alienation from work was low. In their theoretical studies, Yilmaz and Sarpkaya (2009) presented the situations that cause alienation in educational institutions and administrative solution proposals to these.

Erjem (2005) considers dense classroom populations, excessive course loads, lack of material, administrative and economic problems as factors in alienation. In addition to this, he states that teachers are unable to experience alienation profoundly with all its aspects. Kurtulmus and Karabıyık (2016), in a study examining the effects of classroom teachers' perception of organizational justice on their work alienation levels, found that organizational justice perception had a significant effect on work alienation. In the same study, teachers' alienation levels were found to be moderate. Normlessness and social isolation were indicated as subscales where alienation is experienced the most. Also, the effects of demographic characteristics and the school environment where the teacher works were also revealed. According to Atmaca's (2020) study, alienation levels vary according to the grade of school the teacher attends to. In this study where personality types of teachers and their alienation levels were discussed together, it was found that teachers who displayed neurotic personality traits or teachers who did not love their profession experienced more alienation. Also, it was found that the alienation levels of teachers who had graduated from postgraduate programs were higher than those who had graduated from undergraduate programs. According to Cimen Kabaklı (2018) occupational alienation levels of preschool teachers were low in general, relatively higher in Powerlessness and Normlessness subscales and lowest in Meaninglessness subscale.

When the studies above are considered, it is seen that they are mostly focused on teachers working at primary, middle or high school levels. Thus, an independent study focusing on kindergarten teachers and examining the occupational professionalization and alienation of teachers was deemed meaningful in terms of filling the gap in the literature. Therefore, examining the relationship between the occupational professionalism and occupational alienation in kindergarten teachers were determined as the general aim of this study. To that end, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the occupational professionalism levels of teachers?
2. What are the occupational alienation levels of teachers?

3. Is there a significant difference between the occupational professionalism levels of teachers and the demographic variables?
4. Is there a significant difference between the occupational alienation levels of teachers and the demographic variables?
5. Is there a significant correlation between the occupational professionalism levels and occupational alienation levels of teachers?

### Methodology

#### Research Model

In this study, correlational survey model was used. Correlational survey model is used to determine the co-variance of the variables within the scope of the research. Whether the variables covary or not, and if they do, how it occurs is determined (Karasar, 2012).

#### Population and Sample

The population of this research was preschool teachers working in the European side of the city of Istanbul. 224 kindergarten teachers were reached via convenience sampling method for the sample of the research. Convenience sampling method is the inclusion of participants who are already available, volunteers or who can be easily included in the sample (Christensen et al., 2015). Information pertaining to the research sample is given in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Teachers

		f	%
Gender	Female	214	95.5
	Male	10	4.5
	Total	224	100.0
Age	21-30	134	59.8
	31 and more	90	40.2
	Total	224	100.0
Marital status	Single	129	57.6
	Married	95	42.4
	Total	224	100.0
Have a child?	Yes	76	33.9
	No	148	66.1
	Total	224	100.0
Educational degree	Associate degree programs	41	18.3
	Graduate	170	75.9
	Postgraduate	13	5.8
	Total	224	100.0
What kind of institution do you work?	Primary school	40	17.9
	Independent kindergarten	139	62.1
	Private school	45	20.1
	Total	224	100.0
Seniority	5 years and less	111	49.6
	6-10 years	75	33.5
	11 years and more	38	17.0
	Total	224	100.0

95,5% of the teachers participating in the research were women. While 59,8% of the teachers were aged between 21 and 30, 40,2% of them were aged 31 and over. Also, while 57,6% of the participants were single, 42,4% were married. 18,3% of the teachers had graduated from associate degree programs, while 75,9% had graduated from undergraduate programs and 5,8% had graduated from postgraduate programs. 17,9% of the participants worked at a primary school, while 62,1% worked at an independent kindergarten and 20,1% worked at a private school. In addition, 49,6% of the participants had been teaching for at least 5 years or less, while 33,5% of them had been teaching 6 to 10 years, and 17% had been teaching for more than 11 years.

*Data Collection Tool**Teacher Information Form*

The form, which was prepared by the researcher, consists of questions regarding the age, sex, marital status, child status, education level, professional seniority of teachers working in pre-school education institutions, and at which type of school they work.

*Teachers' Occupational Professionalism Scale*

Teachers' Occupational Professionalism Scale was developed by Yilmaz and Altinkurt (2014). The scale consists of 24 items. The scale is a 5-point Likert scale, scored between 1 and 5 from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale consists of 4 subscales, which are Personal Development, Contribution to Organization, Professional Awareness and Emotional Labor. When we examine the number of items in each subscale, we see that Personal Development and Professional Awareness have 5 items each, Contribution to Organization has 8 items, and Emotional Labor has 6 items. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, which are the internal consistency coefficients of the scale, were indicated as 0.79, 0.74, 0.86 and 0.80 in the subscales respectively, and 0.90 in the entire scale. There is no reverse-scored items in scale and a total score can be obtained from the entire scale. Since each subscale has a different number of items in the scale, the score obtained from each subscale should be divided by the number of items of the relevant subscale and converted into an average between 1 and 5 to make them comparable with each other. The increase in the scores obtained from a factor or the entire scale indicates that the occupational professionalism level of the teachers is high.

*Table 2. Reliability Results for the Occupational Professionalism Scale*

<b>Subscale</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Items (N)</b>
Contribution to Organization	.909	8
Emotional Labor	.929	6
Personal Development	.872	5
Professional Awareness	.941	5
Scale Total	.966	24

As a result of the reliability analysis conducted in this study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the variables of occupational professionalism subscales Contribution to Organization, Emotional Labor, Personal Development and Professional Awareness were found to be 0.909, 0.920, 0.872, and 0.941, respectively. All of the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were above 0.7 and quite reliable. In addition, at the end of the scale total item reliability analysis, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.966, which is an indicator of our scale's high reliability level.

*Occupational Alienation of Preschool Teachers Scale*

The scale was developed by Kihri (2013) in order to measure the work alienation levels of preschool teachers. The scale consists of 5 subscales and 68 items: Meaninglessness (16 items), Isolation (17 items), Self-Estrangement (16 items), Powerlessness (13 items), and Normlessness (6 items). Some of the items are reverse-scored. The score for each subscale is obtained by dividing the total of items by the number of items. The increase in the score is interpreted as the increase in the related feature after which the subscale is named. A 5-point Likert scale was used in the evaluation questions of the Occupational Alienation of Preschool Teachers Scale. The participants were asked to rate each item by using one of the options (5) Strongly Agree, (4) Agree, (3) Undecided, (2) Disagree, and (1) Strongly Disagree.

*Table 3. Reliability Coefficients of the Professional Alienation Scale*

<b>Subscale</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Items (N)</b>
Isolation	.937	17
Meaninglessness	.947	16
Self-Estrangement	.875	16
Powerlessness	.949	13
Normlessness	.809	6
Scale Total Item	.974	68

At the end of the reliability analysis conducted in this study, the reliability coefficients for the subscales of the occupational alienation scale were found to be 0.937, 0.947, 0.875, 0.949, and 0.809, respectively. In addition, the reliability coefficient for the total number of items in the scale was found to be 0.974, which indicates that the reliability level of our scale is quite high.

*Analysis of Data*

SPSS software, as well as statistical measures such as the independent t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson Correlation, were used to analyse the data obtained via the scales. In examining the data obtained from the research, the skewness, kurtosis normality test, and reliability analysis for the data's reliability were performed after the frequencies were taken. Firstly, normality assumptions by evaluating skewness and kurtosis values (between -1 and +1) achieved by making square root transformations of the scale scores. Afterwards the homogeneity of variances was examined. It was observed that the variances in all sub-problems with data were homogeneous and normally distributed. The research findings that were found to have a normal distribution were applied parametric tests. Tests such as descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and one-way-ANOVA test were used according to independent variables. Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine whether there is a correlation between occupational professionalism, and occupational alienation. Teachers' occupational professionalism, and occupational alienation levels to determine were used descriptive statistics. For the grading and interpretation of the weighted mean scores in the study, the absolute value of the correlation coefficient between 0.70 and 1.00 was interpreted as a "high"; between 0.30 and 0.70 as a "moderate" and between 0.00 and 0.30 as a "low" level relationship (Buyukozturk, 2002). The significance level of .05 was taken as a basis in testing the significant differences between group mean scores.

**Findings***Findings on the Occupational Professionalism of the Teachers*

In this section, findings, and interpretation regarding the problem and sub-problems of the research are included.

*Table 4. Descriptive Statistics on the Sub-Dimensions of the Occupational Professionalism Scale*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Contribution to Organization	224	1.00	5.00	4.0017	.76108
Emotional Labor	224	1.00	5.00	4.3713	.75626
Personal Development	224	1.00	5.00	3.9991	.80481
Professional Awareness	224	1.00	5.00	4.3750	.84072
Occupational Professionalism Total Score	224	1.00	5.00	4.1713	.70831

Descriptive statistics regarding the occupational professionalism scale and its subscales are given in Table 4 above. For the scale scores, 1 to 1.8 is means very low, 1.81 to 2.60 low, 2.61 to 3.40 moderate, 2.41 to 4.20 high, and 4.21 to 5.00 indicates a very high level. According to this, the scores for the Contribution to Organization subscale was generally high, the Emotional Labor subscale was generally very high, the Personal Development subscale was high, and the Professional Awareness subscale was very high. The scale total score was also high.

*Findings on the Occupational Alienation Levels of the Teachers*

*Table 5. Descriptive Statistics on the Sub-Dimensions of the Occupational Alienation Scale*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Meaninglessness	224	1.00	5.00	4.2302	.75673
Isolation	224	1.24	5.00	4.1064	.77975
Self-Estrangement	224	1.50	5.00	3.5396	.78161
Normlessness	224	1.33	5.00	3.7269	.91299
Powerlessness	224	1.00	5.00	4.2428	.86185
Occupational Alienation Total Score	224	1.44	5.00	3.9947	.70012

Descriptive statistics regarding the occupational alienation scale are given above. For scale scores, 1 to 1.80 indicates a very low, 1.81 to 2.60 low, 2.61 to 3.40 moderate, 2.41 to 4.20 high, and 4.21 to 5.00 a very high level. According to this, sense of meaninglessness was very high, isolation was high, self-estrangement was high, normlessness was high, and powerlessness was very high. The scale total score was also high.

*Findings on the Relationship Between the Teachers' Occupational Professionalism Levels and the Demographic Variables*

In this study, no significant relationship was found between the teachers' occupational professionalism and any demographic variable.

Table 6. Comparison of Demographic Variables and Occupational Professionalism

	Sub-Dimensions	t	df	p-value
Age	Contribution to Organization	-1.048	222	.296
	Emotional Labor	-1.248	222	.213
	Personal Development	-1.371	222	.172
	Professional Awareness	-1.144	222	.254
	Occupational Professionalism Total Score	-1.317	222	.189
Marital Status	Contribution to Organization	-1.261	222	.209
	Emotional Labor	-1.204	222	.230
	Personal Development	-1.361	222	.175
	Professional Awareness	-1.675	222	.095
	Occupational Professionalism Total Score	-1.511	222	.132
Child Status	Contribution to Organization	.138	222	.890
	Emotional Labor	.487	222	.627
	Personal Development	.432	222	.666
	Professional Awareness	1.024	222	.307
	Occupational Professionalism Total Score	.535	222	.593
Educational Level	Contribution to Organization	.021	2, 221	.979
	Emotional Labor	.413	2, 221	.662
	Personal Development	.758	2, 221	.470
	Professional Awareness	.986	2, 221	.375
	Occupational Professionalism Total Score	.015	2, 221	.985
Seniority	Contribution to Organization	.358	2, 221	.700
	Emotional Labor	.663	2, 221	.517
	Personal Development	.450	2, 221	.638
	Professional Awareness	1.644	2, 221	.195
	Occupational Professionalism Total Score	.594	2, 221	.553
School	Contribution to Organization	1.089	2, 221	.338
	Emotional Labor	.059	2, 221	.943
	Personal Development	3.010	2, 221	.051
	Professional Awareness	.886	2, 221	.414
	Occupational Professionalism Total Score	.668	2, 221	.514

When the subscale scores and the total score of the occupational professionalism scale were compared with the demographic variables (age, marital status, child status, education level, professional seniority, type of school they work at) no significant difference was found in any of the subscales ( $p > 0,05$ ).

#### Findings on the Relationship Between the Teachers' Occupational Alienation Levels and the Demographic Variables

When the subscale scores and total score of the occupational alienation scale were compared with the demographic variables, no significant difference was found among the variables of marital status, child status and professional seniority ( $p > 0,05$ ).

Table 7. Comparison of Age and Occupational Alienation Scale

		N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value	ES (Hedges' g)
Meaninglessness	21-30	134	4.2645	.76539	.826	222	.409	
	31 and more	90	4.1792	.74496				
Powerlessness	21-30	134	4.3680	.83524	<b>2.689</b>	222	<b>.008</b>	<b>0.366565</b>
	31 and more	90	4.0564	.87172				
Normlessness	21-30	134	3.8346	.93870	<b>2.171</b>	222	<b>.031</b>	<b>0.285395</b>
	31 and more	90	3.5667	.85343				
Isolation	21-30	134	4.1370	.80078	.716	222	.475	
	31 and more	90	4.0608	.74945				
Self-Estrangement	21-30	134	3.5802	.72550	.948	222	.344	
	31 and more	90	3.4792	.85905				
Occupational Alienation Total Score	21-30	134	4.0534	.70021	1.536	222	.126	
	31 and more	90	3.9074	.69469				

When the subscale scores and total score of the occupational alienation were compared, the sense of powerlessness score for individuals aged between 21 and 30 was found to be ( $\bar{x}=4,3680$  and  $SD=0,8352$ ), and for individuals aged

between 31 and over, it was found to be ( $\bar{x}=4,0564$  and  $SD=0,8717$ ). the sense of powerlessness scores of individuals aged between 21 and 30 significantly differ from those aged 31 and over ( $p<0,05$ ). The scores of individuals aged between 21 and 30 were significantly higher than those aged 31 and over ( $p<0,05$ ). However, no significant difference was found between age groups in terms of meaningfulness, isolation and self-estrangement scores and scale total score ( $p>0,05$ ).

Table 8. Comparison of Educational Degree and Occupational Alienation Scale

		N	Mean	SD	F	df	p-value	LSD	ES (Hedges' g)
Meaninglessness	Pre-graduate (a)	41	4.4405	.62170	2.400	2, 221	.093		
	Graduate (b)	170	4.1974	.79332					
	Postgraduate (c)	13	3.9952	.51315					
	Total	224	4.2302	.75673					
Powerlessness	Pre-graduate (a)	41	4.4278	.72488	1.750	2, 221	.176		
	Graduate (b)	170	4.2204	.89100					
	Postgraduate (c)	13	3.9527	.81015					
	Total	224	4.2428	.86185					
Normlessness	Pre-graduate (a)	41	4.0325	1.00154	4.027	2, 221	<b>.019</b>	a>b a>c	<b>0.345668</b> <b>0.749559</b>
	Graduate (b)	170	3.6863	.87365					
	Postgraduate (c)	13	3.2949	.92334					
	Total	224	3.7269	.91299					
Isolation	Pre-graduate (a)	41	4.2023	.69290	1.087	2, 221	.339		
	Graduate (b)	170	4.1038	.81574					
	Postgraduate (c)	13	3.8371	.46576					
	Total	224	4.1064	.77975					
Self-Estrangement	Pre-graduate (a)	41	3.6784	.85508	3.077	2, 221	<b>.048</b>	c<a c<b	<b>0.71467</b> <b>0.632305</b>
	Graduate (b)	170	3.5423	.75122					
	Postgraduate (c)	13	3.0673	.81268					
	Total	224	3.5396	.78161					
Occupational Alienation Total Score	Pre-graduate (a)	41	4.1632	.62898	2.690	2, 221	.070		
	Graduate (b)	170	3.9792	.71757					
	Postgraduate (c)	13	3.6674	.56754					
	Total	224	3.9947	.70012					

When the subscale scores and total score of the occupational alienation scale were compared according to education levels, the normlessness subscale score was ( $\bar{x}=4,0325$  and  $SD=1,0015$ ) for associate degree graduates, ( $\bar{x}=3,6863$  and  $SD=0,8736$ ) for undergraduates, and ( $\bar{x}=3,2949$  and  $SD=0,9233$ ) for postgraduates, and statistically, at least one of the groups was significantly different than the others ( $p<0,05$ ). The differing group was found via the LSD test, and it was revealed that the normlessness subscale average score of the associate degree graduates was significantly higher than those of the undergraduate and postgraduates ( $c<a,b$ ).

When the subscale scores and total score of the occupational alienation scale were compared, the self-estrangement subscale score was ( $\bar{x}=3,6784$  and  $SD=0,8550$ ) for associate degree graduates, ( $\bar{x}=3,5423$  and  $SD=0,7512$ ) for undergraduates, and ( $\bar{x}=3,0673$  and  $SD=0,8126$ ) for postgraduates, and statistically, at least one of the groups was significantly different than the others ( $p<0,05$ ). The differing group was found via the LSD test and it was revealed that the scores of the individuals who were associate degree graduates and undergraduates were significantly higher than those of postgraduates ( $c<a,b$ ).

Also, no significant difference was found between the education level groups in terms of the meaningfulness, powerlessness, and isolation subscale scores and scale total score.



Table 9. Comparison of Type of School and Occupational Alienation Scale

		N	Mean	SD	F	df	p-value	LSD	ES (Hedges' g)
Meaninglessness	Primary school (a)	40	4.2828	.51791	.750	2, 221	.473		
	Independent kindergarten (b)	139	4.1830	.83875					
	Private school (c)	45	4.3292	.66216					
	Total	224	4.2302	.75673					
Powerlessness	Primary school (a)	40	4.2442	.70821	2.163	2, 221	.117		
	Independent kindergarten (b)	139	4.1677	.95231					
	Private school (c)	45	4.4735	.63516					
	Total	224	4.2428	.86185					
Normlessness	Primary school (a)	40	3.6667	.78899	4.025	2, 221	<b>.019</b>	c>a	
	Independent kindergarten (b)	139	3.6343	.94086					
	Private school (c)	45	4.0667	.86486					
	Total	224	3.7269	.91299					
							c>b	<b>0.462503</b>	
								<b>0.499965</b>	
Isolation	Primary school (a)	40	4.1515	.56749	.745	2, 221	.476		
	Independent kindergarten (b)	139	4.0588	.86107					
	Private school (c)	45	4.2131	.67084					
	Total	224	4.1064	.77975					
Self-Estrangement	Primary school (a)	40	3.5297	.72210	.488	2, 221	.614		
	Independent kindergarten (b)	139	3.5094	.82635					
	Private school (c)	45	3.6417	.69193					
	Total	224	3.5396	.78161					
Occupational Alienation Total Score	Primary school (a)	40	4.0110	.52414	1.415	2, 221	.245		
	Independent kindergarten (b)	139	3.9421	.77207					
	Private school (c)	45	4.1428	.58294					
	Total	224	3.9947	.70012					

When the subscale scores and the total score of the occupational alienation scale were compared according to the types of school the teachers work at, the normlessness subscale score was ( $\bar{x}$ =3,6667 and  $SD$ =0,7889) for individuals working at a primary school, ( $\bar{x}$ =3,6343 and  $SD$ =0,9408) for individuals working at an independent kindergarten, and ( $\bar{x}$ =4,0667 and  $SD$ =0,8648) for individuals working at a private school, and statistically, at least one of these groups was significantly different ( $p<0,05$ ). The differing group was found using the LSD test, and it was revealed that scores of the individuals working at private schools was significantly higher than those working at primary schools and independent kindergartens ( $c>a,b$ ).

#### Findings on the Relationship Between the Occupational Professionalism and Occupational Alienation of Teachers

Table 10. Correlation Coefficients Between Scales of Occupational Professionalism and Occupational Alienation

	Meaning- lessness	Power- lessness	Norm- lessness	Isolation	Self- Estrangement	Occupational Alienation Total Score
<b>Contribution to Organization</b>	,279**	,254**	,234**	,294**	,295**	,317**
<b>Emotional Labor</b>	,306**	,219**	,193**	,281**	,251**	,296**
<b>Personal Development</b>	,266**	,181**	,235**	,273**	,300**	,292**
<b>Professional Awareness</b>	,302**	,227**	,153*	,311**	,220**	,293**
<b>Occupational Professionalism Total Score</b>	,319**	,248**	,229**	,322**	,298**	,334**

\*\*  $p<.01$ ; \*  $p<.05$

The Pearson Correlation Coefficients obtained as a result of the correlation tests conducted for each of the subscales of the occupational professionalism scale and the occupational alienation scale are statistically significant ( $p<0,05$ ). The correlation coefficient between the total score of the occupational professionalism scale and the total score of the occupational alienation scale is also statistically significant ( $p<0,05$ ). According to Buyukozturk (2002), when the absolute value of the correlation coefficient is between 0.70 and 1.00 there is a "high" level of correlation; when it is between 0.30-0.70, there is a "moderate" level of correlation; when it is between 0.00-0.30, there is a "low" level of correlation. According to this, there is a low level of positive correlation between the Contribution to Organization

subscale and the subscales of Meaninglessness, Powerlessness, Normlessness, Isolation, and Self-Estrangement, while it has a moderate positive correlation with the occupational alienation scale total score. While the subscale of Emotional Labor has a moderately positive correlation with the subscale of Contribution to Organization, it has a low positive correlation with the total score of Powerlessness, Normlessness, Isolation, Self-Estrangement and Occupational Alienation. There is a low positive correlation between the Personal Development subscale and the subscales and the total score of the occupational alienation scale. While Professional Awareness subscale has a moderately positive correlation with the subscales of Meaninglessness and Isolation, it has a low positive correlation with the total score of Powerlessness, Normlessness, Self-Estrangement and Occupational Alienation. While the total score of Professional Awareness has a moderate positive correlation with total score of Meaninglessness, Isolation and Occupation Alienation, it has a low positive correlation with Powerlessness, Normlessness and Self-Estrangement.

### Discussion

In this study conducted with kindergarten teachers, occupational professionalism and occupational alienation, with all their subscales and total scores, are statistically significantly correlated. This is a positive yet low correlation. In other words, it can be interpreted that an increase in the occupational professionalism in kindergarten teachers may partially lead to an increase in occupational alienation. It is seen that the findings of the study by Yorulmaz et al. (2015), which examined the relationship between occupational professionalism and occupational alienation, do not overlap with the findings of this research. Because in the study in question, it is indicated that a negative correlation exists between organizational alienation and occupational professionalism. What should be noted here is that the sample group of Yorulmaz et al. (2015) consisted of teachers working at primary, middle and high school levels. In addition, occupational alienation level of this sample group was low. In this study, however, the sample consisted only of kindergarten teachers and the occupational alienation level was high. Thus, it can be said that the occupational alienation is experienced differently depending on the grade level or the branch variable of teachers. This interpretation is supported by Atmaca's (2020) study. In the study in question, it was found that the occupational alienation levels of teachers can vary depending on the level of grade they teach. Therefore, the fact that the relationship between the occupational professionalism and occupational alienation yielded contradictory results across different studies can be explained this way.

The scores of the occupational professionalism scale and its subscales seem to be high. This finding is consistent with the studies of Buyruk and Akbas (2021), Cansoy and Parlar (2017), Hosgorur (2017), and Yilmaz and Altinkurt (2015). Since occupational professionalism levels of teachers are found to be high in different studies, it can be concluded that the occupational professionalism levels of teachers in Turkey is generally high. Yirci (2017) considers occupational professionalism in teachers as fulfilling the requirements of being a teacher to the utmost satisfaction. Accordingly, the results of this research confirm the findings of the previous studies and it can be said that the perceptions of the teachers are that they do their job well.

Banković's (2014) study on early childhood professionalism in Serbia touched upon the need for pre-school teachers to be organized in a protected or distinctive way in parallel with teachers in other parts of the education sector and a more supportive infrastructure for a quality early childhood sector. Hordern (2016) explained early childhood professionalism based on the concepts of professional society and professional knowledge. He also stated that processes which can see the validity of certain types of information is needed in order to develop and advance professionalism in early childhood. In the study, it was stated that the development of professional societies focused on advancing professionalism depends on their integration with early childhood workforce, organizational diversity and the roles of governments.

Monk and Phillipson (2017) interviewed early childhood educator candidates for to determine how early childhood educators see themselves professionally and how they understand professionalism in the context of Asia. At the end of the study, professionalism was perceived by teacher candidates in three main dimensions: (i) perception of professionalism in terms of work-life balance and roles, (ii) professionalism is a culturally derived phenomenon, (iii) professionalism is a sense of hope for the future.

Torres and Weiner (2018) targeted at examining the experiences of the contracted schoolteachers and the qualifications of the teaching profession in their study. The results of the research show that teachers perceive their schools and professionalism positively. Teachers stated that their school supports teacher autonomy, professional accountability and cooperation. According to the results of the research, the high accountability climate in these schools enables teachers to develop their sense of competition and question activities.

In this study, no significant difference was found between the occupational professionalism levels of kindergarten teachers and their demographic features. However, in the study conducted by Yilmaz and Altinkurt (2015) on teachers working at primary, middle and high school levels, it was concluded that the occupational professionalism of teachers differed depending on gender, seniority and branch variables. This may be due to the fact that the gender distribution of the kindergarten teachers is, to a large extent, in favor of women. Also, the fact that approximately half of the

kindergarten teachers who make up the sample of this study have less than 5 years of seniority may also be the cause of the inconsistency with the results of the study it is compared with.

Occupational alienation levels of kindergarten teachers are seen to be high in all subscales in this study. However, the occupational alienation levels of preschool teachers were found to be generally low in another study published in 2018 (Cimen Kabaklı, 2018). In another study published in the same year, teachers' perceptions of alienation were also found to be low (Abaslı, 2018). In Kayaalp and Ozdemir's (2019) study, the data of which was collected in the period of 2017-2018, it is seen that the teachers did not experience alienation in the institutions they work. What comes to mind is that the teachers may have experienced more alienation than in previous years, since the year 2021, when the data of this study was collected, corresponds to a period when the effects of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic were felt profoundly. Shepard (1973) emphasizes that alienation emerges from the inconsistency between an individual's own tendencies and the reality of his/her experiences. Since the pandemic has forced the profession of teaching out of its usual working conditions, teachers may have had difficulty in establishing positive connections between their jobs and the reality of life in this process. That is why it can be said that the occupational alienation levels of teachers may have increased compared to previous years as one of the negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic on teachers.

Simsek et al. (2012), associates the factors that come into play in teachers' alienation with demographic features and school environment. In this study, it was found that the occupational alienation levels of kindergarten teachers did not differ in demographic variables such as marital status, child status, professional seniority. However, in the age range variable, the sense of powerlessness and normlessness of individuals aged between 21 and 30 are significantly higher than those who are 31 years and older. When the school type variable was considered, it was found that teachers working at private schools experienced slightly more alienation than those working at primary schools and independent kindergartens. When it comes to the variable of graduation level, it was found that the normlessness subscale score average of the associate degree graduates was significantly higher than those of undergraduate and postgraduates. However, in Atmaca's (2020) study, it was revealed that the teachers who were postgraduates experienced more occupational alienation than teachers who were undergraduates. In the same study, no significant difference was found depending on the variables of age, gender, educational status, type of program they graduated from, type of staff they belong to and professional seniority.

It is seen that the some of the findings of the study are not consistent with the findings of the previous studies. This may be due to the fact that the kindergarten education has its unique characteristics. Compared to other stages of education, kindergarten is a stage where parental expectations and anxiety for academic achievement is low. In addition, the skills the student is required to acquire are limited. It can be said that since there is no transition to an upper level, there is no exam anxiety. When examining the teachers of such an educational level, interpretation and comparison with the teachers at other levels where fierce competition and exam anxiety take place should be made carefully. Especially when comparing statistical results based on gender variable, it should be kept in mind that the majority of kindergarten teachers are female teachers.

### Conclusion

In this study, it was aimed to find out whether occupational alienation in kindergarten teachers had any relation to occupational professionalism. The results of this study on kindergarten teachers can be summarized as follows: Occupational professionalism and occupational alienation, with all their subscales and total scores, are statistically significantly correlated. This is a positive yet low correlation. The scores of the occupational professionalism scale and its subscales seem to be high. There is no significant difference was found between the occupational professionalism levels of kindergarten teachers and their demographic features. Occupational alienation levels of kindergarten teachers are seen to be high in all subscales.

During these days, when the wounds of the pandemic that took Turkey by storm are attempted to be healed, teachers have an important role in compensating for the losses in learning and re-adapting students to the usual educational environment. In that regard, as it was in the past, teachers' professional competencies and performances as employees of an organizational structure have the utmost importance. Thus, as a preparatory factor in these matters, it is necessary to increase the occupational professionalism of teachers. In order for the increase in the professionalism to yield productive results, it is necessary to be isolated from all the negative attitudes, behaviors and feelings related to the profession. In that sense, occupational alienation was a concept that was examined alongside with the occupational professionalism levels of teachers in this study. Occupational alienation not only causes negative feelings towards colleagues, administrators and institutions, but it also negatively affects the expectancies of the employees (Pugh & Zhao, 2003). Thus arises the need to determine the alienation levels of teachers, who have a key role in the education system, and take due precautions to prevent alienation in educational institutions. In that regard, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the field on the subjects of occupational professionalism and occupational alienation.

### Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study and the perspective obtained from the literature; the following suggestions can be made:

- a) The sample of this study is limited to kindergarten teachers who work in Istanbul. It will be possible to reach more comprehensive results with studies conducted in different cities with various branches. Occupational professionalism and alienation of teachers should be discussed with larger samples or study groups, getting tested based on various variables.
- b) In future studies, it may be possible to reach more detailed findings, cause and effect relationships and thus inferences, with the help of mixed-method studies in which quantitative and qualitative approaches are used together.
- c) Studies that will reveal the change in teachers' occupational professionalism and occupational alienation over the years, especially its trend before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, can be conducted.
- d) In education faculty programs, prospective teachers should be gained awareness regarding occupational professionalism and should be provided with access to content that will allow them to gain consciousness about occupational alienation.
- e) Occupational professionalism of teachers should be increased through in-service trainings in both public and private schools.
- f) Education stakeholders, especially administrators, should be encouraged to create favorable environments for teachers so that they will not experience occupational alienation.

### Limitations

There are some limitations in this study as well. Findings obtained from the research are limited as data obtained from preschool teachers working in the European side of the city of Istanbul. Similar research can be done covering both sides (European and Asian) of Istanbul. Also, this research can be done for teachers in different branches. The participants were selected from the public and private schools, teachers working in two different sectors can be examined separately. In this study, correlational survey model was used, so a qualitative or mixed design may be more beneficial and can give more detailed information.

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