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An Investigation of Turkish EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Identity*

Ahmet KESKİN¹, Senem ZAIMOĞLU²

ABSTRACT: Teacher professional identity molds teachers' interpretation of their roles, educational reforms, changes in curricula, classroom practices, use of methods and techniques, and their relation to other significant in the educational context. From this point of view, this study aimed to find out Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of professional identity in relation to their commitment to 'student needs', 'school issues', and 'personal growth and development'. This research also attempted to explore whether there was a significant difference in terms of teachers' perceptions of professional identity according to various variables. The data were gathered from 200 EFL teachers. In this mixed method research, Teacher Professional Identity Scale and semi-structured interview questions were used to collect data. For quantitative data, descriptive, inferential, and correlational statistics were used while content analysis was carried out for qualitative data. The results unearthed that Turkish EFL teachers had a very strong professional identity and were mostly committed to personal growth and development, student needs, and school issues, respectively. Moreover, it was found that female teachers had a stronger identity and were more committed.

Keywords: Teacher Identity, Professional Identity, Teacher Commitment, Types of Commitment.
JEL Code: C10, I20, I29

Türk Yabancı Dil Öğretmenlerinin Mesleki Kimlik Algılarının Araştırılması

ÖZ: Öğretmen mesleki kimliği, öğretmenlerin rollerini, eğitim reformlarını, müfredat değişikliklerini, sınıf uygulamalarını, yöntem/tekniklerin kullanımını ve eğitimin diğer paydaşlarıyla ilişkilerini nasıl yorumladıklarını şekillendiren en önemli unsurdur. Buradan yola çıkan bu araştırma da, Türk yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin öğretmenlik kimliği algılarını 'öğrenci ihtiyaçlarına bağlılık', 'okul meselelerine bağlılık' ve 'kişisel gelişime bağlılık' açısından incelemiştir ve öğretmenlerin mesleki kimlik algılarında çeşitli değişkenler açısından önemli bir farklılık olup olmadığı araştırılmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri, 200 yabancı dil öğretmeninden toplanmıştır. Karma metoda sahip bu çalışmada, veri toplamak için Mesleki Öğretmen Kimliği Ölçeği ve yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakat soruları kullanılmıştır. Nicel veriler için betimsel, çıkarımsal ve korelasyonel istatistikler uygulanmışken nitel veriler için içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, Türk yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin çok güçlü bir mesleki kimliğe sahip olduklarını ve sırasıyla en çok kişisel gelişime, öğrenci ihtiyaçlarına ve okul meselelerine bağlı olduklarını göstermiştir. Ayrıca, kadın öğretmenlerin erkeklere göre daha güçlü bir kimliğe sahip oldukları ve bağlılık düzeylerinin daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretmen Kimliği, Mesleki Kimlik, Öğretmen Bağlılığı, Bağlılık Türleri.
Jel Kodu: C10, I20, I2

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1. Introduction

There has been a growing body of research on the concept of teacher professional identity (TPI) in educational domains all around the world (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Alsup, 2006; Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Cheung, 2008; Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Dikilitaş & Yaylı, 2018; MacLure, 1993; Yazan & Peercy, 2016). Despite the increasing interest in teacher identity research, scholars still fall short of conceptualizing both identity and teacher identity. This situation is caused by complexity of identity which is a multidimensional and unstable construct (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Therefore, scholars mostly use definition of 'identity' when referring to TPI. In general terms, identity can be defined as "who or what someone is, the various meanings someone can attach to oneself or the meanings attributed to oneself by others" (Beijaard, 1995, p. 282) or "being recognized as a certain kind of person in a given context" (Gee, 2000, p. 1). In addition to difficulty of defining identity, categorization of identity into sub-identities has been a long journey as different scholars have approached identity from various perspectives in a variety of research domains for a long time. As a result of an overview of related theoretical literature, Bukor (2011) reached three sorts of identity (p. 66): "ego identity", "personal identity", and "social identity" while Block (2009) came up with seven sorts of identity: 'national identity', 'ethnic identity', 'racial identity', 'migrant identity', 'gender identity', 'social class identity', and 'language identity'. On the other hand, Gee (2000) suggested four sorts of identity (p.100): 'nature identity', 'institution identity', "discourse identity", and "affinity identity". Moreover, identity was categorized into three sub-domains by Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, and Gu (2007): situated, personal and professional identities. Taking all these sub-identities into consideration, it can be claimed that identity is not stable but rather it is multi-faceted and shaped in relation to the different social contexts.

To bring the construction of TPI into the forefront, it can be said that explanation of TPI construction process is another challenging phenomenon. Scholars cannot exactly reach a consensus over what factors affect construction and development of TPI but they agree on that internal and external factors are influential in shaping and forming TPI (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Cheung, 2015). For instance, teaching context, the biography of teacher, and teaching experience (Beijaard et al., 2000), economic factors, social factors, psychological factors, and organizational/environmental factors (Mansaray, 2011; Zare-ee & Ghasedi 2014). Considering what scholars found about factors influencing TPI construction, it is apparent that various factors play role in forming TPI. Last but not least, many scholars tried to explain TPI referring to various concepts like teachers emotions (Kelchtermans, 2005), teacher beliefs (Lasky, 2005), teacher education (Danielewicz, 2001), professional development (Beijaard et al., 2000), and teacher commitment (Day et al., 2005). This wide range of concepts associated with the concept of identity makes it a more complex and abstract construct. In this study, teacher commitment is viewed as the most essential concept related to TPI and therefore, teachers' perceptions of TPI is explored in terms of their commitment. To conclude, it can be proposed that it is impossible for teacher to reflect on their self as teacher as long as they completely make sense of their identities, beliefs, and values (Kumaravadivelu, 2012), which makes exploration of TPI studies more vital.

Considering all these, it is obvious that teacher professional identity (TPI) lies at the heart of teaching. It is also a key element in ensuring teacher motivation, sustaining the commitment of teachers to their profession, and improving their philosophy of teaching. In this respect, this study is expected to

provide significant contributions to the teaching and teacher domain in various ways as it sheds light how Turkish EFL teachers make sense of their TPI and how committed they are to 'student needs', 'school issues', and 'personal growth and development'. As there is not much research carried out in Turkish context regarding investigation of TPI in relation to teacher commitment, this study would contribute a lot to the existing literature. Most of the identity studies conducted in Turkish context are generally confined to EFL instructors at universities and pre-service teachers and development of their TPI. Moreover, it provides all parties in the teaching domain like policymakers, teachers, educational authorities, and principals with how teachers make sense of their TPI. Since teachers play the most important role in implementation and success of curriculum, it's vital to know their professional characteristics.

The present study is mainly concerned with investigation of Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of TPI. Specifically, this study intends to find out Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of TPI in relation to their commitment to 'student needs', 'school issues', and 'personal growth and development.' Moreover, the study attempts to explore whether there is a significant difference in Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of TPI in terms of gender, age, type of school they work, undergraduate programs, and years

of experience,. Finally, the study aims to find out whether there is a meaningful relationship between teachers' perceptions of overall TPI and sub-domains of TPI.

2. Literature Review

Teacher professional identity (TPI) has been a prominently researched area and become a prime topic in the field of education, especially for the last three decades (Beauchamp & Thomas; 2009; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Gee, 2000; Lasky, 2005; MacLure, 1993, Miller, 2009; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005; Yazan, 2018). Although a great deal of research has been carried out on identity and TPI, defining and theorizing identity still appears to be very challenging phenomenon. As it is highly difficult to construct a fixed theory of identity which is both an obscure concept and is approached from different disciplinary perspectives like sociology, psychology and educational psychology, researchers ground their studies on different identity theories based on their research domain. Among these, Stryler's Identity Theory, Turner and Tajfel' Social Identity Theory, Burke and Stet's Identity Theory, Lave and Wenger' Situated Learning and Communities Theory, Norton's Identity Theory, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Identity come to the forefront. In this study, taking complexity and multiplicity of it, TPI is approached in relation to Pennington's (2015) 'A Frames Model of Teacher Identity', which views TPI from various frames such as practice-centered frames and contextual frames. Practice-centered frames refer to various orientations to teaching practices and teacher identity such as instructional, disciplinary, professional, vocational and economic frames. To clarify them, instructional identity represents "the teacher's classroom persona and the roles s/he enacts in carrying out acts of teaching, such as facilitator, disciplinarian, or subject- matter expert" (Pennington, 2015, p. 20). On the other side, disciplinary identity builds a bridge between a teacher and "a specific field and its areas of knowledge and research" (Pennington, 2015, p. 20). As for professional identity, teachers incorporate "individual teacher characteristics within the disciplinary knowledge, standards, and practices of the field" (Pennington, 2015, p. 22). Vocational identity of teachers involves "strength of commitment and attachment to teaching work and/or to teaching in a specific field or context" (Pennington, 2015, p. 23).

Finally, economic identity is significantly related to economic facet of TPI because "whether the work one does is driven by economic necessity or choice, and whether it is felt to be fairly rewarded, are considerations that impact a teacher's level of satisfaction and identification with TESOL work, in both a particular job and in the TESOL field." (Pennington, 2015, p. 24).

On the other hand, when it comes to the contextual frames, it can claimed that teacher identity is greatly affected by the contexts (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Based on this, TPI has three contextual facets which are global, local and sociocultural frames. First of all, global teacher identity relates to "the extent to which the teacher has an international orientation and experience related to global trends" (Pennington, 2015, p. 25). As English is the world language and teaching English is a global phenomenon, it is required to gain an insight into how English varies all over the world and in what ways English is taught. This facet of identity also urges teachers to keep up with the latest language teaching practices and pedagogical and content knowledge in different countries and make use of them in their classrooms. The second facet of teacher identity is local identity which stands for "the situatedness of practice in departmental, institutional, community, and national contexts, and the teacher's awareness of constraints and consideration of priorities and appropriate actions in each of those contexts" (Pennington, 2015, p. 26). In this respect, it can claimed that the local contexts in which teaching is done significantly shape the ways teaching is done because it is a well-known fact that teaching is mediated by local and national contexts to a great extent. As teachers are mostly enact in and concerned with local context, it has greater influence on teachers' instructional, disciplinary, professional, vocational, and economic identities than other facets of TPI. Final facet of TPI is sociocultural teacher identity which corresponds to "teacher's sociocultural characteristics to those of other people, including students, other teachers, employers, and the wider society and teaching field" (Pennington, 2015, p. 27). It also incorporates "linguistic, ethnic, racial, and gender features of identity which are operative in the teaching context" (Pennington, 2015, p. 27). To sum up, it is not very easy to define TPI based on a single theory as it is complex, multiple, ever-changing, unstable and prone to be affected by different internal and external factors in different circumstances and contexts. For this reason, a frames model can be considered an effective tool to approach TPI because "different framings of one and the same thing are not necessarily mutually exclusive and, as different perspectives, can be complementary angles of vision or can simply

represent different aspects or facets of one thing" (Pennington, 2015, p. 16).

Aforementioned characteristics and complexity of TPI lead up to TPI's being addressed in relation to many concepts by different scholars such as "self/personal identity" (Alsup, 2006; Cardoso, Batista, & Graça, 2014; Mead, 1934; Wenger, 1998); "agency" (Day, Stobart, Sammons, & Kington, 2006; Sfard & Prusak, 2005); "personal history/experience" (Bukor, 2011; Flores & Day, 2006; Sachs, 2005); "emotions" (Day & Leitch, 2001; Hargreaves, 2001; Yazan & Peercy, 2016; Zembylas, 2003); "professional development" (Dikilitaş & Yaylı, 2018; Kwakman, 1999); beliefs (Barcelos, 2015; Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000), and "commitment" (Cheung, 2008; Crosswell, 2006; Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Fairclough, 2003). Among these concepts, commitment is one of the most crucial factors that is influential in teachers work and performance in the workplace. From this point of view, it can be said that as teachers' roles and practices mediated by commitment, therefore; the best way to understand TPI is to scrutinize teacher commitment and how it affects teacher work and practices.

Many researchers define commitment in different ways such as "a sense of identification as a teacher" (Nias, 1981, p. 182), "a partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of an organization, to one's role in relation to goals and values, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its instrumental worth" (Buchanan, 1974, p. 533). Taking these definitions into consideration, a psychological attachment to a goal or value and identification of a person with special roles appear to be the most common themes when defining commitment.

According to Crosswell and Elliott (2004) "commitment, as investment of personal resources, has long been associated with the professional characteristics of a teacher." Upon their extensive research in the literature, they classified teacher commitment into 5 domains: (1) Commitment to the school or organization, (2) Commitment to students, (3) Commitment to career continuance, (4) Commitment to professional knowledge base, and (5) Commitment to the teaching profession.

Among the various domains of commitment, 'commitment to the school or organization' is the first domain which encompasses teachers' belief and embracement of the values and goals of the workplace, teachers' endeavor to adopt these values and goals and finally teacher's eagerness to keep pace with engagement and devotion in the workplace (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1979). The more teachers are committed to the school or organization, the more effective and devoted they are to their role and practices, which develops their professional identities.

The second domain of teacher commitment is 'Commitment to students' which advocates that when teachers make every single effort to spice up their classroom with different practices and provide a quality environment for learning, the development and success of their students increase. Firestone and Pennell (1993) emphasizes that achievement of students can decrease if teacher commitment is reduced as they are closely related to each other. In this respect, it can be said that the reason why teachers exist is because of the students, which makes the students key components of education. In order to sustain and enhance student learning, maintaining teacher commitment is a crucial phenomenon.

The third teacher commitment domain is 'Commitment to career continuance' which suggests that teachers' desire to continue their job "when they have a good relationship with pupils and when they function well in the school organization." (Beijaard, 1995, p. 292). Since teaching turns out to be a demanding and challenging profession for teachers in due course, their willingness to remain in their job is vitally important to keep up involvement in teaching.

The fourth teacher commitment domain is 'Commitment to professional knowledge base' which comprises everlasting professional development of teachers and enhancement of subject-matter knowledge and skills needed for a better teaching environment (Day, 2004). Teachers are required to be committed to professional knowledge base in order to keep up with the latest trends in educational field. This type of commitment constitutes a stronger and more well-settled professional identity as teachers with professional knowledge base commitment tend to show more effort to attend different workshops, conferences and other professional development activities related to their field of teaching to improve themselves for becoming a more effective and qualified teacher.

The last domain of teacher commitment is 'Commitment to teaching profession' which refers to teachers' loyalty to profession of teaching (Tyree, 1996). Teachers with this sort of commitment considers teaching more than a job. Despite difficulties and demanding side of teaching, teachers with commitment to teaching profession are eager to be devoted to their profession at any cost.

In this study, Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of TPI are investigated in association with the concept of commitment based on (1) commitment to school or organization, (2) commitment to students, and (3) commitment to professional knowledge base.

3. Methodology

A mixed method research design which involves both quantitative and qualitative methods was used in this study to collect in-depth data to explain research questions thoroughly. Mixed method research is of high importance as it provides researchers with more than one data collection source (Cresswell, 2009). Of the quantitative research methods, survey-based method was employed to obtain quantitative data. For the collection of qualitative data, semi-structured interview was used to collect in-depth data. As data collection tools, Teacher Professional Identity Scale formulated by Cheung (2008) was used. Five Likert scale questionnaire ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5) included two parts: first part deals with demographic information like age, gender, and years of experience. In the second part, there are 19 items investigating EFL teachers' commitment to school issues, commitment to student needs, and commitment to personal growth and development. To gather qualitative data, Semi-structured Interview by Crosswell (2006) was utilized to gain insight into how committed the teachers think they are.

The sample of the study consisted of 200 EFL teachers working in the city of Adıyaman located in the southeastern Anatolian Region of Turkey. All the participants worked in public schools in Adıyaman. There were 57 seven male and 143 female teachers. The participants were divided into two according to their age, the teachers aged 24-39 years and the ones aged 40-54 years. The rationale behind this age division was the fact that the youngest participant was 24 years old while the oldest was 54.

The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were processed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In the first phase of data analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to evaluate the questionnaire's validity and reliability because the original questionnaire was formulated for in-service Hong Kong teachers from different branches. After employing EFA, Cronbach's Alpha was found .89, which approved that the questionnaire was appropriate for Turkish context and achieved high level of reliability. Moreover, descriptive statistics like, frequency, mean values, and standard deviation were applied. In addition to this, t-test for independent groups, one-way ANOVA and correlation statistics were also conducted. The qualitative data obtained from semi structured interview were firstly transcribed verbatim. Following this, content analysis was applied.

4. Results

Among the participants (N= 200), there were 57 male (28.5 %) and 143 female (71.5 %) EFL teachers. The age of these participants ranged from 24 to 54. The participants were divided into two categories according to their age. The first category included EFL teachers aged from 24 to 39 while the age of EFL teachers in the second group was between 40 and 54 in the second category. 85 % (n= 170) of the participants were in the first category and 15 % (n= 30) of them were in the second category. Last of all, when teaching experience of the participant EFL teachers was considered, nearly 1 in 4 of the participants (38 %, n= 76) had experience in teaching between 1 and 5 years followed by the participants with teaching experience from 6 to 10 years (29.5 %, n= 59). The results also showed that there were 36 EFL teachers who had 11-15 years of teaching experience. The teachers with 15-20 years of experience constituted 10 % of the participants (n= 20) whereas the most experienced participants who had 21 and over years of experience formed 4.5 % of them (n= 9).

As revealed in Table 1, EFL teachers' perceptions of TPI were rather high (M= 4.11, SD= 0.45) and they were very committed in their occupation. When EFL teachers' perceptions of each sub-domain of TPI were considered, it is evident that teachers were committed to personal growth and development the most, therefore their perception of personal growth and development domain was the highest (M= 4.29, SD= 0.48). This finding may be an indicator of teachers' having desire to change, learn and keep up with the latest in the educational context. This was followed by the perception of student needs domain (M= 4.09, SD= 0.50), which implied that teachers cared their students and gave importance to what they needed during teaching and learning process. EFL teachers' perception of school issues had the lowest values (M= 3.91, SD= 0.53), which showed that they were committed to school issues the least. Lack of

sense of belonging to their own institutions caused by demanding working conditions, not being included in decision taking process, or never ending requests of school administration may lead teachers to have less commitment to school issues.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Related to Teachers' Perceptions of Overall TPI and Sub-Domains of TPI.

	N	Mean	SD
Students Needs	200	4.09	0.50
School Issues	200	3.91	0.53
Personal Growth and Development	200	4.29	0.48
Overall Teacher Professional Identity	200	4.11	0.45

When it comes to the sub-domains of Teacher Professional Identity Scale, Student Needs sub-domain was concerned with how committed teachers were to needs of students and tried to take every single step to provide best learning environment for the students. In this sense, EFL teachers agreed and strongly agreed with all the items in this sub-domain of the scale. Most of the teachers (96.5 %) agreed and strongly agreed with Item 2 ($M= 4.60$, $SD= 0.64$), which suggests that they loved and cared for students to a great extent. Furthermore, most of the teachers (91.5 %) also advocated that they could enhance their students' learning outcomes upon agreeing and strongly agreeing with Item 17 ($M= 4.20$, $SD= 0.61$). Approximately 9 in 10 teachers (89.5 %) agreed and strongly agreed with Item 4 ($M= 4.21$, $SD= 0.68$), which reveals that they could successfully motivate student learning. Similarly, nearly 9 in 10 teachers (89 %) believed that they tried to explore the complexity of the various factors that affect student needs as they agreed and strongly agreed with Item 6 ($M= 4.12$, $SD= 0.64$). Moreover, the results demonstrated that 83.5 % of the teachers could identify and support their students' diverse needs for planning and design curricular events as they agreed and strongly agreed with Item 8 ($M= 4.01$, $SD= 0.73$). Similarly, Item 1 ($M= 4.05$, $SD= 0.80$) was agreed and strongly agreed by about 83 % of the teachers, which proves that teachers helped their students apply that they had learnt to their daily life. More than 7 in 10 teachers (73 %) agreed or strongly agreed with Item 16 ($M= 3.86$, $SD= 0.82$), which points that they used assessment results consistently to develop programs that improve student learning. Finally, the lowest rated item that teachers agreed and strongly agreed was Item 12 ($M= 3.70$, $SD= 1.15$) as only 61 % of the teachers believed that all students could learn.

Furthermore, School Issues sub-domain tried to reveal how committed the teachers were to adopt values and goals of their school and tried to devote themselves to the workplace. In this respect, most of teachers (92 %) agreed and strongly agreed with Item 18 ($M= 4.32$, $SD= 0.67$), which acknowledges that teachers served as a role model for students in showing keen concern for local/global issues and living out positive social values. Furthermore, 80.5 % of teachers agreed and strongly agreed with Item 10 ($M= 3.93$, $SD= 0.74$), which shows that they were committed to school goals in performing daily tasks. Moreover, Item 9 ($M= 3.88$, $SD= 0.80$) was agreed and strongly agreed by approximately 76 % of teachers, which indicates that they could promote close coordination among departments or committees with a view to enhancing the quality of work. In a similar way, more than 7 in 10 teachers (74 %) believed that they made thorough understanding of school goals and policies as well as their underpinnings as they agreed and strongly agreed with Item 14 ($M= 3.85$, $SD= 0.71$). On the other hand, when it comes to the answers given to Item 5 ($M= 3.54$, $SD= 0.98$), 59 % of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with this item while 24 % of them were not sure whether they could involve parents in the school's decision making whenever appropriate with the aim of continuous school development.

Finally, Personal Growth and Development sub-domain dealt with commitment of teachers to development of knowledge base and professional skills to create a better teaching atmosphere by developing both personally and professionally. In this sense, a very high percentage of teachers (96 %) agreed and strongly agreed with Item 13 ($M= 4.51$, $SD= 0.65$), therefore, it is clear that they respected diversity in their teaching environment by heart. Moreover, most of the teachers (91.5 %) believed that they had passion for continuous learning and excellence as they agreed and strongly agreed with Item 7 ($M= 4.39$, $SD= 0.75$). The results demonstrated that Item 19 ($M= 4.32$, $SD= 0.73$) was agreed and strongly agreed by nearly 90 % of teachers and they claimed that they collaborated, shared, and had team spirit. In a very similar vein, 9 in 10 teachers (90%) believed that they had thorough understanding of and great sensitivity towards family factors that might affect students' learning process as they agreed and strongly agreed with Item 3 ($M= 4.32$, $SD= 0.71$). Moreover, by agreeing and strongly agreeing with Item

15 ($M= 4.17$, $SD= 0.70$), 87 % of teachers advocated that they were committed and dedicated to the profession. Finally, about 80 % of them acknowledged that they demonstrated great flexibility and responsiveness as they agreed and strongly agreed with Item 11 ($M= 4.04$, $SD= 0.80$).

Independent samples t-test was conducted to find out whether there was a statistically significant difference in EFL teachers' perceptions of TPI as regards to their gender. According to Independent samples t-test results, statistically significant difference was found between female and male teachers in terms of their perception of overall professional identity ($t(198)= -2.187$, $p= .030 < 0.5$). When mean values of t-test results are considered, it is obvious that female teachers ($M= 4.15$, $SD= 0.41$) had stronger professional identity than male teachers ($M= 4.00$, $SD= 0.53$). Moreover, another statistical significant difference was obtained between female and male teachers in terms of student needs sub-domain ($t(198)= -2.701$, $p= .008 < .05$). This finding revealed that female teachers ($M= 4.15$, $SD= 0.44$) were more committed to students needs when compared to male teachers ($M= 3.94$, $SD= 0.59$). No significant difference was detected in teachers' perceptions of school issues ($t(198)= -1.560$, $p= .120 > .05$) and personal growth and development ($t(198)= -1.332$, $p= .184 > .05$) sub-domains, which means that male and female teachers viewed school issues from a similar perspective.

As is the case with gender variable, Independent samples t-test was applied to figure out if there was a statistically meaningful difference in teachers' perceptions of TPI according to age variable as well. T-test results showed statistically significant difference between the teachers aged 24-39 and the ones aged 40-54 in terms of their perception of overall teacher identity ($t(198)= -2.483$, $p= .014 < .05$). Findings suggested that the teachers aged 24-39 ($M= 4.14$, $SD= 0.40$) had stronger teacher professional identity when compared to the teachers aged 40-54 ($M= 3.92$, $SD= 0.63$). Statistically significant difference was found between teachers aged 24-39 and 40-54 in relation to student needs ($t(198)= 2.382$, $p= .018 < .05$). This result demonstrates that the teachers aged 24-39 ($M= 4.23$, $SD= 0.45$) had higher level of commitment to student needs than the teachers aged 40-54 ($M= 3.89$, $SD= 0.69$). Furthermore, there also existed a statistically significant difference between age groups as regards to school issues ($t(198)= 2.676$, $p= .008 < .05$). T-test results indicated that the teachers aged 24-39 ($M= 3.96$, $SD= 0.69$) were more committed to school issues compared to the teachers aged 40-54 ($M= 3.68$, $SD= 0.63$), which might be because of the fact that younger teachers embraced school values and they were open to contribute to school culture more. Finally, according to findings, no difference was detected between age groups in terms of personal growth and development sub-domain ($t(198)= 1.602$, $p= .111 > .05$).

One-way ANOVA test was conducted to find out if there was a statistically significant difference in EFL teachers' perceptions of overall TPI and sub-domains of TPI as regards to years of experience. According to the results, no significant difference was obtained in teachers' perceptions of student needs ($F(4,195)= 1.660$, $p= .16 > .05$) and personal growth and development ($F(4,195)= 1.471$, $p= .21 > .05$) sub-domains as regards to years of experience in teaching. On the other hand, findings demonstrated that significant differences were found in their perceptions of overall teacher professional identity ($F(4,195)= 2.256$, $p= .04 < .05$) and school issues sub-domain ($F(4,195)= 3.750$, $p= .01 < .05$). Posthoc test was applied to detect the source of these differences. Results of posthoc test revealed the difference between the teachers with 1-5 years of experience and the ones with 16-20 years of experience in terms of overall teacher professional identity ($F(4,195)= 3.750$, $p= .04 < .05$). The teachers with 1-5 years of experience ($M= 4.17$, $SD= 0.43$) was found to have a stronger teacher professional identity than the ones with 16-20 years of experience ($M= 3.81$, $SD= 0.73$). Posthoc results also signified that difference between the teachers with 1-5 years of experience and the ones with 16-20 years of experience in terms of school issues ($p= .007 < .05$). The teachers with 1-5 years of experience ($M= 4.00$, $SD= 0.52$) were more committed to school issues than the ones with 16-20 years of experience ($M= 3.50$, $SD= 0.67$). Furthermore, significant difference was detected between the teachers with 6-10 years and the ones with 16-20 years ($p= .03 < .05$). This proved that the teachers with 6-10 years of experience ($M= 3.93$, $SD= 0.52$) had higher commitment to school issues when compared to the ones with 16-20 years of experience ($M= 3.50$, $SD= 0.67$).

Besides these results, Pearson r correlation was applied to see the relation between overall TPI and its sub-domains. The results are shown as shown in Table 2. Pearson Correlation analysis demonstrated that there was a statistically meaningful relationship between teachers' perceptions of overall TPI and student needs sub-domain ($r = .929$, $p < .01$). Moreover, there also existed a statistically meaningful relationship between overall teacher professional identity and school issues sub-domain ($r = .852$, $p < .01$). Finally, statistically meaningful relationship was detected between overall TPI and personal growth and development sub-domain ($r = .901$, $p < .01$). For Cohen (1992), correlation coefficient effect has different ranges: small correlation, $.10 \leq r < .30$; medium correlation, $.30 \leq r < .50$; and strong correlation $.50 \leq r < 1.00$. Considering these sizes of effect, it can be said that there was a strong correlation between overall TPI and all of its sub-domains. This means that sub-domains of Teacher Professional Identity Scale served its purpose.

Table 2. Correlational results for EFL teachers' perceptions of overall TPI and sub-domains of TPI

TPI Sub-domains		1	2	3	4
1. Student Needs	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
2. School Issues	Pearson Correlation	.671**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
3. Personal Growth and Development	Pearson Correlation	.758**	.679**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
4. Teachers Professional Identity	Pearson Correlation	.929**	.852**	.901**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

Note: ** $p < .01$

On the other hand, in terms of qualitative data, the participant teachers were interviewed and teachers expressed their views based on the headings such as 'commitment to student needs', 'commitment to school issues, and 'commitment to personal growth and development'. Content analysis and a priori coding procedures were applied to the collected data. According to qualitative data results, EFL teachers were committed to student needs. In the interview, they expressed their opinions about their commitment to student from different points of views. One of the teachers suggested that he 'loved and cared for students' stating that a highly committed teacher must always try to do his best to be beneficial to his students and provide the most effective and fruitful learning environment. While doing this, he must care about his students' overall well-being, happiness, needs and interest. Apart from this, another teacher believed and claimed that she could enhance students' learning outcomes. She also held the belief that she could "identify and support students" diverse needs for planning and designing curricular events' saying that she tried to design and to make use of different materials for her students, respect their individual differences, and to create an environment for individual learning opportunities.

When commitment to school issues were considered, one of the teachers stated that he was a highly committed teacher who never complained about educational system and what was going on in the school saying that he attempted to take on responsibility of creating projects, taking part in competitions, and organizing special events for the school, and never compared himself with others in the school. He often wanted to be part of the team in the school because he felt devoted to improve school conditions and realize its goals. In relation to "thorough understanding of school goals and policies as well as their underpinnings" another teacher claimed that she held at least 10 meetings at the school and school administration tried to inform us about what we were expected to do whole year. School vision and missions were expressed in a detailed way through strategy plans and we prepared our own plans. But they did not help him about how to realize these plans, he got stuck because he could not get the help of parents in the procedure, find financial sources, and students were sometimes reluctant to attend school events. Finally, one of the teachers advocated that she could "involve parents in the school's decision making whenever appropriate with the aim of continuous school development" stating that as a teacher and member of the school team, she to tried to reshape and enrich the school culture with the help of

parents who were among the most important figures in education and to arrange seminars and workshops for them and their children about various topics according to their needs.

Last of all, in terms of personal growth and development, one of the teachers implied that she “had a passion for continuous learning and excellence” and could “collaborate, share and have team spirit” saying that my priority was to follow recent trends in education to update myself, otherwise, I could not teach for years with the same knowledge base because everything was changing in educational context such as the way students learn, the way they do homework and study, and the way they view the lessons. In line with this, another teacher asserted that in his school, he regularly had a small talk with his colleagues about what we was needed to be done that day and came together to share their experiences by designing materials and talking about pace of the classes.

Considering statements collected through interview, it is apparent that findings of qualitative data are in line with results of quantitative data. Based on their own remarks, it is clearly seen that teacher’s perceptions of overall TPI in relation to commitment to student, school, and professional knowledge base are very positive and high, which proves that they are highly committed to student needs, school issues, and personal growth and development.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The first research question in the study “What are Turkish EFL teachers’ the overall perceptions of overall teacher professional identity (TPI) in terms of their commitment to student needs, school issues, and personal growth and development?” sought to figure out how EFL teachers made sense of their professional identity as regards to three sub-domains of teacher commitment, which were commitment to student needs, school issues, and personal growth and development. Results of the descriptive statistics unveiled that overall TPI of Turkish EFL teachers working in Adıyaman was very high, which means that they formed a strong and steady TPI. From this point of, it can be alleged that the more committed the teachers are, the more they define themselves as professionals. This result also suggested that teachers in Turkish context were very committed to their profession, which could be seen as an vital result because “a committed teacher has strong psychological ties to the school, students and knowledge of subject area, and committed teachers make a difference to the learning and the lives of the students” (Mart, 2013, p.337). In this respect, it is noteworthy that teachers have a high level of commitment for effectiveness of school and success of students.

As regards to sub-domains of TPI, teachers were more committed to personal growth and development than student needs and school issues as they stated that personal growth and development was the most important aspect of TPI according to the results. On the contrary, Rezai (2018) found in her study that Iranian teachers had the highest commitment to students needs followed by personal growth and development and school issues. Considering this difference in two contexts, it can be said that contextual factors were influential in teachers’ commitment and perception of TPI (Canrinus, 2011). Moreover, Turkish EFL teachers’ commitment to personal growth and development manifested itself in that teachers believed that developing themselves personally and professionally was a must for them as it makes them more qualified and efficient in satisfying needs of their student and ensuring a better learning environment. Their commitment to personal growth and development probably resulted from their willingness to participate in continuous professional development. There is no doubt teachers were aware that updating professional knowledge, keeping up with latest and participating in professional development was a part of teacher professionalism (Van Veen, 2008) and it was needed in order to answer to ever-changing demands of educational contexts. Finally, it can be asserted that committed teachers are lifelong learners, they always feel devotion to learning.

Considering commitment to students needs which comes after commitment to personal growth and development, it can be asserted that teachers were committed to their students both emotionally and academically. They invested a great deal of time, effort and even maybe money to enhance teaching environment and made use of internal and external resources as much as possible. Teachers’ having a high level of commitment to student needs was of great significance as student learning is significantly affected by teachers’ knowledge base, expectations, classroom practices and overall actions, and values’

and students' success can diminish if level of teacher commitment decreases (Singh & Billinnsley, 1998).

When it comes to commitment to school issues, it is obviously seen that teachers were still committed to their schools as their ratings on it were very high but this level of commitment was lower compared to the student needs and personal growth and development. This might be related to the way teachers viewed themselves in their workplace based on whether their opinions were appreciated during decision-taking process, their embracement of school goals and values, and most importantly their sense of belonging to that school. This signifies that teachers' sense of belonging to the school encourages them to support the goals and objectives of the organization (Delima, 2015) or vice versa. They might even feel less loyal to school issues than student needs and personal growth and development as it is generally accepted that school culture and commitment are in a continuous interplay. If they do not feel devoted to school expectations and values, they may not take action voluntarily to contribute to the development of school. In this regard, the more committed teachers are to school issues, the more effort they put to enhance school improvement and achievement of institutional goals. Furthermore, they would be able to pursue their enthusiasm to remain in the organization and eager to help organization achieve its goals by the professional identity driven commitment. It can be implied that teachers' commitment to school issues is closely related to sense of belonging and job satisfaction, which can affect their turnover, absenteeism, burnout and productive performance (Singh & Dubey, 2011).

The second research question in the study "Are there significant differences in EFL teachers' perceptions of TPI based upon their demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and years of experience?" aimed to find out if teachers' perceptions of TPI differed according to various variables like gender, age, and years of experience. The findings demonstrated that female teachers had stronger TPI and they were more committed to their profession when compared to male teachers. Female teachers were also committed to student needs more than male teachers. Rezai (2018) also found that Iranian female teachers had formed a stronger TPI than male teachers in relation to teacher commitment. On the other hand, Cheung (2008) found that male teachers asserted that they had higher level of commitment to all three sub-domains of TPI than female teachers in Hong Kong context. Furthermore, some other researchers came up with a different finding (Kao & Lin, 2015; Xiong & Xiong, 2017). They found that teachers' sense of professional identity do not change according to gender in their contexts.

Another finding as regards to second research question was that teachers' perceptions differed significantly according to age in terms of overall TPI, student needs, and school issues sub-domains. The teachers aged 24-29 had stronger professional identity. They were more committed to their students' needs and school issues than the ones aged 40-54, which shows that they had stronger identity. On the other hand, no difference was observed in terms of commitment to personal growth and development between age groups, which suggests that teachers were keen on developing personally and professional irrespective of their age. In similar vein, Ying (2018) came up with the result that there was a statistically meaningful difference among age groups. She found that teachers under 30 had stronger and more well-rounded TPI than others. Considering this result, it can firstly be said that younger teachers are more idealist as they are open to change and improve themselves thanks to point of view they adopted during education program they attended. Secondly, they can completely devote themselves to their profession due to lack of priorities in their lives like marriage, childcare, or other family issues. On the contrary to this, in a different context, Canrinus (2011) did not obtain a difference in teachers' perceptions of TPI in terms of age groups.

Finally, as regards to years of experience in teaching, it was detected that teachers' years of experience was influential in their perceptions of overall TPI and school issues sub-domain. It was found that the teachers with 1-5 years of experience were more committed to school issues than the ones with 16-20 years of experience. Another finding showed that the teachers with 6-10 years of experience had more commitment to school issues when compared to the ones with 16-20 years of experience. It was also observed that the teachers with 1-5 years of experience had stronger and more well-rounded professional identities and they were more committed than the ones with 16-20 years of experience. These differences might be caused by loss of teaching passion or level of burn-out because teachers with less years of experience were more committed and had stronger identity compared to the ones with more years of experience. These differences could also result from teachers' professional and personal experiences. On the other hand, some studies found no difference in teachers perceptions of TPI as regards to years of experience in different contexts (Canrinus et al., 2011; Ölmez, 2016; Xiong & Xiong, 2017) Yet, as

opposed to findings in this study, Watson and Hatton (2002) found that commitment levels of teachers did not decrease as they got older and gained more experience. They also found that teachers with more years of experience could be more committed than teachers with less experience. As teaching is mentally and physically demanding profession, teachers can experience different feelings like job satisfaction, burnout, frustration, or contentment in their teaching life and these can shape their commitment.

As regards to third research question “Does a statistically meaningful relationship exist between teachers’ perceptions of overall TPI and sub-domains of TPI?”, findings proved that statistically meaningful and strong correlational relationship existed between overall TPI and sub-domains of TPI. Correlational analysis results satisfied a statistically significant and strong correlational relationship between TPI and student needs sub-domain, TPI and school issues, and finally TPI and personal growth and development sub-domain. This indicated that commitment to student needs, school issues and personal growth and development contributed to teachers’ sense of overall TPI and perfectly correlated with each other, which implies that the more committed the teachers are, the stronger and steadier professional identity they form. As a result of having a strong identity, they would become confident in their educational decisions and they keep struggling when they are faced with unexpected problems. Additionally, they become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, which would help them become more effective teachers. They can also pursue their passion for lifelong personal and professional development. In this way, they can keep up with the latest educational trends all over the world, make use of various and innovative methods, teaching strategies and classroom practices, which would contribute to students’ achievement. They would also be devoted to their school or organization and take initiatives to advance school development by embracing values and goals of the school.

In addition to quantitative data, interview was used to collect qualitative data about how teachers make sense of their professional identities in relation to commitment. As the concept of teacher commitment itself is multi-faceted and multi-layered, it has not been thoroughly investigated yet (Tyree, 1996). For this reason, interview has been conducted with the teachers to look into various facets of the concepts of ‘identity’ and ‘teacher commitment’ from different angles, especially ‘commitment to student needs’, ‘commitment to school issues, and ‘commitment to personal growth and development’ through the actual spoken words of teachers. The interview findings went along with the findings of the scale by suggesting that teacher believed that they were highly committed to their student needs, school issues and personal growth and development. They also identified themselves as highly professionals, which proves that they own a strong TPI.

To sum up, interest in investigation of Turkish EFL teachers’ perceptions of teacher professional identity (TPI) is increasing day by day but this area of research still requires thorough research. If we can make sense of who teachers are by investigating their professional identity, we can better understand motives behind their actions. Many researchers suggest that job satisfaction of the teachers, what they do in the classroom, how they develop personally and professionally through professional development, and their level of commitment to their profession is canalized by TPI (Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2005) or vice versa. As teaching profession is highly demanding, it requires sustaining commitment. The effectiveness and efficiency of a teacher is mediated by his being devoted and committed to not only his students or school issues or personal growth and development but also to teaching profession as a whole. Committed teachers (1) are eager to be good teachers; (2) they consider teaching more than just transmission of information to students; (3) admit that each and every single student is special regardless of age, gender, background, and level of motivation; (4) they feel loyal to their responsibilities to students, school, administrators, and the community (Fox, 1964). This can be achieved by forming a strong professional identity. In this sense, further research is needed to help this happen. For further studies, it would be better to work with a bigger sample representing EFL teachers from seven regions of Turkey to get more comprehensive results. As the main data collection, a scale has been used but scales cannot provide us with richer understanding of teacher perceptions of professional identity alone. Since it is very challenging to thoroughly make sense of perceptions and identity, both of which are complicated and obscure concepts. This makes them hard to investigate based on scales and statistical data. Even though interview has been used to support quantitative results, interviews could be conducted with a wider group of teachers and other qualitative data collections such as teacher journals, focus groups, and case studies could be utilized to collect richer and in-depth data. Furthermore, factors affecting teachers’

perception of TPI in relation to commitment can be investigated to learn underlying reasons behind high or low level of commitment through interviews and teacher journals because “in order to assess the salience of the teacher role, it is helpful to consider the principal reasons for commitment” (Snyder & Spreitze, 1984, p. 153). Finally, a more comprehensive scale measuring Turkish EFL teachers' professional identity in relation to their commitment to different aspects of education can be formulated as the number of studies investigating TPI in terms of commitment is very high. In this way, better and more reliable results can be obtained.

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