

Unethical Behaviours of Teachers in the Opinions of School Administrators and Colleagues

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Abstract:In the current study, conducted to determine the unethical behaviours of teachers based on the opinions of school administrators and colleagues, a phenomenological design was employed. The sample comprised various districts in Istanbul, an online form was used to collect data, and answers were sought to the research questions posed by the researcher. The data obtained were coded within the framework of descriptive analysis and analysed according to categories and themes. The unethical behaviours of teachers were examined under three themes: economic return, educational/instructional processes, and personality traits. According to the findings, teachers exhibit unethical behaviours within the context of private tutoring, financial gain, communication problems, neglect of duty, negative attitudes towards stakeholders, pressure, bullying, lack of competence and understanding, and character. Moreover, the noteworthy unethical teacher behaviours included exploiting students for financial benefit, abusing rights such as medical reports and permits, causing debts for stakeholders, discrimination towards students and parents, using students and the school for personal interests, maintaining relations with administrators to obtain privileges, and acting contrary to scientific rules.

Keywords: Professional ethics, unethical behaviour, ethical principles, teaching profession, teacher behaviours

Introduction

Ethics generally deals with the theory of moral actions, rules, values, and norms, but also focuses on principles rather than subjective or personal values and judgments (Bartneck, Lütge, Wagner & Welsh, 2021). The concepts of ethics and morality differ from each other. While ethics is seen as a philosophical discipline that offers systematic analysis, understanding, and distinction in terms of behaviours such as right/wrong, good/bad, and acceptable/unacceptable, morality is related to

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subjective, up-to-date specific beliefs, paths, and behaviours arising from ethical principles and involving cultural and regional differences (Rich, 2013).

When evaluated within an ethical framework, organizational plans generally come together to achieve common goals, and organizational ethics, thus, creates the heart of the organization by giving life to the organization through shared values and a sense of common purpose (Butts, 2013; Pearson, Sabin & Emanuel, 2003). Ethics in the organizational context requires employees to fulfil their duties with honesty and integrity, to comply with the organizational policies and rules in achieving the goals, and to feel a commitment to ensure the quality of the work in order to improve the reputation of the organization (Singh & Prasad, 2017). Based on this understanding, according to Butts (2013), organizational ethics offers initiatives that define the mission and values of organizations, introduces values that may cause tension in the organization, seeks solutions to these tensions, and manages practices within the framework of maintaining values in the organization. In short, ethics in organizations serves as a mechanism that ensures that the decisions on important issues such as business/finance, management, communication, and relationships in organizations are handled within an ethical framework, and, in this context, it has a structure focusing on the choices of the organization and individuals (Boyle, DuBose, Ellingson, Guinn & McCurdy, 2001). According to Gino (2015), while the most important unethical behaviours in today's organizational societies involve elements such as cheating, organizational abuse, and deception; according to Ivcevic, Menges, and Miller (2020), they consist of illegal behaviours, lying, and discrimination; and, according to Schwartz (2015), misuse of time, harassing behaviours, abuse and theft of organizational tools, and lying to employees.

Concerning the underlying causes of unethical behaviours in organizations, there are many different views expressed. Demographic characteristics such as personal background, personality traits, tendency to act according to hidden goals, low job satisfaction, gender, and socio-economic status can trigger unethical behaviours (Grigoropoulos, 2019). Especially with the contribution of their background, inexperienced and uneducated individuals can make incorrect and unwise choices during the decision-making process (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The probability of unethical values and behaviours being exhibited by individuals with an egoistic character is higher and unethical choices and behaviours activate the individual through impulsive ways and thus their prediction is difficult (Grigoropoulos, 2019; Kish-Gephart, Harrison & Treviño, 2010). Gino (2015) states that the effect of individual psychology and environmental stimuli on the individual should not be

ignored. According to Gino, there are two types of unethical behaviour: (1) “intentional unethical behaviour”, which means that although the individual is aware that his/her behaviour is wrong, he/she is unaware of the environmental influences that push him to act in that way and (2) “unintentional unethical behaviour”, which includes unethical tendencies without knowing and realizing that the behaviour is wrong. According to Kish-Gephart et al. (2010), there are three elements that lead employees to exhibit unethical behaviours in organizations. The first of these is “individual factors”, which lead them to act within the framework of their personal characteristics, views, and values and in line with their own interests. The second is “issue-specific factors”, which occur when one feels that the harm caused by unethical behaviour specific to a situation or an issue is not obvious, or is postponed, or is not condemned by others. The third is “environmental factors”, which encourage the individual to try every way to achieve a goal, like a performance management system, directing the individual towards the goal without considering the benefit to the organization or society.

These triggering factors are influential not only in the commercial and private sectors, but also in public organizations in terms of the occurrence of unethical behaviours. In fact, unethical behaviours may occur from time to time in state educational organizations, especially on the part of teachers, who are among the main stakeholders. In the study conducted by Gözütok (1999), it was revealed that unethical behaviours such as using school money for personal purposes, establishing sexual intimacy, discrimination, bias in evaluating success, using parental opportunities, and abusive speech can be exhibited by teachers. In the study conducted by Toprakçı, Bozpolat, and Buldur (2010) to examine compliance with public ethical principles among teachers, their acting within an ethical framework was in parallel with their socio-economic level, and the level of compliance with general ethical principles of the majority of teachers decreased perceptually. In order to prevent this, the Ministry of National Education [MoNE] published a circular in 2015 entitled “Professional Ethical Principles for Educators” for all teachers in Turkey and the ethical principles to be followed by teachers are listed in the circular as follows: in their relationships with students, teachers must (1) show love and respect, (2) be a good role model to students, (3) be understanding and tolerant towards students and their mistakes, (4) treat students justly and equally, (5) care about the development of students, (6) keep student information confidential, (7) not exhibit negative psychological conditions to students, (8) avoid abuse during the performance of his/her job, (9) have professional competence, (10) provide a healthy and safe education environment, (11) comply with working and class hours, (12) not accept

gifts, (13) not make personal gains, (14) not give private tutoring, and (15) not ask for donations or aid from the parents of students (MEB, 2015).

Despite this circular, which is an important step, the problem of teachers' unethical behaviour is still addressed in research today. In the study conducted by Yıldırım, Albez, and Akan (2020), unethical behaviours such as showing more interest in successful students, being prejudiced against students, not showing interest in students who create problems, ignoring students of low socio-economic status and with low family interest, ignoring individual differences, not sharing information with colleagues, threatening students with giving bad grades, acting in an anti-democratic and selfish way, exploiting the administration for their personal interests, gossiping, expecting privileges, accepting gifts, exploiting students for personal gain, and sharing students' private information were the most prominent ones. Behaviours such as neglect of duty, ill-treatment of students, and gaining unfair advantages can also be reflected in stakeholder perceptions (Yakar, 2021). Moreover, teaching classes without preparation, incurring excessive debts and not paying them, dealing with his/her private affairs during working hours, expressing their ideological views to students, coming to class late or leaving early, getting a medical report despite not being sick, being careless at work, carrying out commercial activities with a student or parent, and religion- or ethnicity-based discrimination are some of the unethical behaviours voiced in the press (Gelecek Eğitimde, 2019).

In this context, it is seen that the unethical behaviour orientation reflected in the teacher's behaviours continues and the studies conducted on this orientation are very limited. National and international studies appear to be concentrated mostly on students' unethical behaviours (Barın, Han & Aybirdi, 2018; Chudy, 2002; Dömeová & Jindrová, 2013; Iorga, Ciuhodaru & Romedea, 2013), the ethical and unethical behaviours of school leaders (Frank, 2012; Oplatka, 2016; Özan, Özdemir & Yirci, 2017; Sam, 2021; Sunar & Tabanlı, 2012), teachers' unethical behaviours in the eyes of students (Karakurt, Akarsu & Katılmış, 2019), and ethical and unethical teacher behaviours according to pre-service teachers (Altinkurt & Yılmaz, 2011; Bergman, 2013; Kıralp & Manolova, 2017; Pelit & Güçer, 2006; Tlali, 2021; Yakar, 2021). There are not enough studies dealing with unethical behaviours of teachers on the basis of the opinions of school administrators and colleagues in Turkey. Hence, the aim of the present study was to examine the unethical behaviours of teachers in the opinions of school administrators and colleagues. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the unethical behaviours of teachers in the opinions of school administrators?
2. What are the unethical behaviours of teachers in the opinions of teacher colleagues?

Method

Research Design and Model

The phenomenological design, which is a qualitative research approach, was used in the current study. With this method, we focus on the facts that we are aware of but for which we do not have a deep and detailed understanding (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Thus, it was attempted to determine the *unethical behaviours* exhibited by teachers working in public schools in the opinions of school administrators and colleagues and to reveal and focus on these phenomena with support from experiential samples and quotations.

Study Group/Participants

In the selection of the school administrators and teachers to participate in the current study, maximum variation sampling, which is a non-probability purposive sampling method, was used. In this method, different and common patterns in the phenomenon examined are determined and common meanings are revealed by including individuals and institutions that are as diverse and varied as possible in line with the research topic and purpose (Baltacı, 2018; Grix, 2010; Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2005). In this context, teachers and school administrators working in different types of public schools in the districts of Sancaktepe, Çekmeköy, and Beykoz on the Anatolian side of Istanbul were included in the research to ensure teacher and school diversity within the framework of the research phenomenon. These districts were included in the sample considering the convenience of accessing the participants and the cost of the research for the researcher. Information about the teachers and school administrators forming the sample is presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Demographic Information about the School Administrators

Participant code	Gender	Position	Type of school	Participant code	Gender	Position	Type of school
A1	Female	Vice Principal	Middle School	A14	Male	Principal	Primary School
A2	Male	Principal	Middle School	A15	Female	Vice Principal	Middle School
A3	Male	Vice Principal	Anatolian High School	A16	Male	Principal	Middle School
A4	Male	Principal	Primary School	A17	Female	Vice Principal	Vocational and Technical High School
A5	Male	Principal	Imam Hatip Middle School	A18	Male	Principal	Vocational and Technical High School
A6	Female	Vice Principal	Middle School	A19	Male	Principal	Middle School
A7	Female	Principal	Primary School	A20	Male	Principal	Middle School
A8	Female	Principal	Middle School	A21	Female	Vice Principal	Middle School
A9	Male	Principal	Imam Hatip High School	A22	Male	Principal	Primary School
A10	Female	Principal	Multi-program Anatolian High School	A23	Female	Vice Principal	Middle School
A11	Male	Principal	Middle School	A24	Male	Principal	Middle School
A12	Male	Vice Principal	Vocational and Technical High School	A25	Male	Principal	Primary School
A13	Male	Principal	Primary School	A26	Male	Vice Principal	Middle School

As can be seen in Table 1, 9 of the participants were female and 17 were male. At the same time, 17 were school principals and 9 were vice principals. In addition, 6 worked in primary schools, 13 in middle schools, 1 in an Imam Hatip middle school, 1 in an Imam Hatip high school, 1 in an Anatolian high school, 1 in a multi-program Anatolian high school, and 3 in vocational and technical high schools.

Table 2. Demographic Information about the Teachers

Participant code	Gender	Type of school	Participant code	Gender	Type of school
T1	Female	Middle School	T21	Male	Primary School
T2	Male	Middle School	T22	Female	Middle School
T3	Female	Middle School	T23	Female	Primary School
T4	Female	Primary School	T24	Male	Multi Program Anatolian High School
T5	Female	Middle School	T25	Female	Primary School
T6	Female	Primary School	T26	Female	Primary School
T7	Female	Anatolian High School	T27	Female	Primary School
T8	Male	Middle School	T28	Male	Primary School
T9	Female	Imam Hatip High School	T29	Female	Middle School
T10	Female	Primary School	T30	Male	Primary School
T11	Male	Primary School	T31	Female	Primary School
T12	Female	Primary School	T32	Male	Imam Hatip Middle School
T13	Female	Primary School	T33	Female	Middle School
T14	Male	Primary School	T34	Male	Primary School
T15	Female	Primary School	T35	Female	Middle School
T16	Male	Primary School	T36	Female	Primary School
T17	Female	Primary School	T37	Male	Middle School
T18	Female	Primary School	T38	Female	Anatolian High School
T19	Male	Primary School	T39	Male	Anatolian High School
T20	Male	Pre-School Institution			

As can be seen in Table 2, 24 of the participants were female and 15 were male. While 1 of them worked in a pre-school institution, 22 worked in primary schools, 10 in middle schools, 1 in an Imam Hatip middle school, 1 in an Imam Hatip high school, 3 in Anatolian high schools, and 1 in a multi-program Anatolian high school.

Data Collection and Analysis

An online form prepared for obtaining data was used. This data collection method was chosen in particular to prevent potential problems in the interviews such as the possibility that the researcher might bias the interview, the loss of time and cost involved in conducting the interview, participants' not fully expressing their own views, and the problem of confidentiality (Karasar, 2022; Kuş, 2007; Opdenakker, 2006). Moreover, this method was used to prevent the participants from being influenced by the researcher while expressing themselves about "unethical behaviours." Two of the questions asked to the participants on the online form are as follows:

1. Can you explain the behaviour of the teacher/teachers you work with at the same school that you have witnessed and described as unethical?
2. Can you explain in detail this example of unethical behaviour you witnessed?

The data obtained in the current study were first transferred to word processing software and then were subjected to descriptive analysis. This analytical method is often used to reveal and describe personal experiences and perceptions in areas of which little is known (Sandelowski, 2010) and a more inductive process is followed (Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017). In this method, (1) the data are transcribed and ordered, (2) coded, (3) similar relationships and themes are identified, (4) they are structured through generalizations, (5) as a theory or a construct (Braun & Clark, 2006; Newell & Burnard, 2006). The data obtained in this framework were coded using the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis program and then the codes obtained were themed and shaped within a certain structure.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, as stated by Guba and Lincoln (1982), more emphasis is placed on ensuring trustworthiness in terms of validity and reliability and, in this context, in order to ensure trustworthiness, the research carried out should have the characteristics of transferability, dependability, confirmability, and credibility.

Thus, attempts were made to contact as many participants as possible during the data collection process and opinions were collected using the online form, which eliminates factors such as the researcher, interview environment, stage fright, and participant reactivity that may affect the views of the participants. In this context, the participants expressed their views and experiences based on their sincere perceptions and information security. In this respect, the research and data collection process ensures a valid and reliable framework (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). In addition, two researchers were involved in the coding of the data, and the coding consistency formulated by Miles and Huberman (1994) was 87%. At the same time, direct quotations representing participant opinions and consisting of raw data as much as possible were included in the reporting process and detailed information about the research process was given, thus increasing the credibility and transferability of the research (Sharts-Hopko, 2002; Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Thus, it can be assumed that the study was valid and reliable.

Limitations of the Research

For the reasons explained in the data collection section, an online form was used to collect data, and since face-to-face interviews enable a more in-depth examination, this constitutes a partial limitation. Moreover, since the direct quotations representing the opinions of the participants were translated from Turkish to English in this text, there may have been some loss of meaning, which was also a partial limitation.

Findings

In this section, teachers' unethical behaviour orientations are examined within the context of the findings obtained from school administrators and colleagues' perspectives, experiences, and perceptions. The unethical behaviours of teachers in the administrators' opinions are discussed in the first part and in the opinions of their colleagues in the second part. Examination of the findings indicates that unethical teacher behaviour orientations according to the opinions expressed by colleagues are more common.

Teachers' Unethical Behaviours in the Opinions of the School Administrators

The findings obtained from the opinions expressed by the school administrators were examined under two themes, namely (1) unethical behaviours oriented to economic return and (2) unethical behaviours related to educational and instructional processes, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Unethical Behaviours of Teachers in the Opinions of the School Administrators

Theme	Category	Code
Unethical Behaviours Oriented to Economic Return	Private Tutoring	Giving private tutoring to his/her students
		Threatening to give bad grades to students to encourage private tutoring
		Using school as a source of students for private tutoring
	Financial Interest	Obtaining financial benefits
		Borrowing
		Using school supplies for his/her personal interests
Unethical Behaviours Related to Educational and Instructional Processes	Communication	Disrespect for colleagues
		Inappropriate communication with students
	Job Commitment	Being careless in matters related to his/her job
		Lack of commitment to course objectives
		Coming to class late or leaving early
	Attitude	Receiving false medical reports and paid-leave abuse
		Discriminating

Unethical Behaviours Oriented to Economic Return

The findings obtained within the framework of this theme are examined in two categories: private tutoring and financial interest. In the private tutoring category, according to the school administrators, some teachers give private tutoring to their students and encourage them to get private tutoring by telling parents that their children are inadequate. In addition, according to the school administrators, some teachers knowingly and willingly give low grades to their students, do not pay enough attention to the accomplishment of course objectives, and ask difficult questions in examinations, causing the grades of students to be low in order to be able to persuade them to get private tutoring. They emphasized the unethical nature of the situation by stating that some teachers use the school as a source of students to give private tutoring to. A20, A15, A8, and A1 expressed their opinions on this as follows:

“He/she encouraged students to get private tutoring by convincing their parents of the inadequacy of the students.” (A20)

“I witnessed a mathematics teacher deliberately giving low grades to students in order to steer them towards private tutoring and to manage the classroom and he/she was suspended after parents complained about this.” (A8)

“It was during the first months in my administrative position and I was new to the school. I saw that a teacher in my school came, even though the school day was over, with a high school student and they went upstairs. I asked the other vice principal “Where are they going?”. He/she said that the teacher would give private tutoring to the student with him/her. When I asked “Is this normal?” and said that “it is unethical,” the other vice principal responded “yes”. (A1)

In the financial interest category, according to the school administrators, some teachers prioritize their financial interests, present unethical suggestions to the school administration, and force students to serve their financial interests. In fact, they may exhibit behaviours such as demanding additional tuition fees for lessons not taught and forcing students who are not willing to take extra school courses to attend them. In addition, school administrators stated that they encountered unethical teacher behaviour of borrowing money from some stakeholders such as other teachers, parents, and shopkeepers or washing their cars with the school’s water. A1, A17, and A21 expressed their opinions about this as follows:

“I give the additional lessons at our school, and I check whether extracurricular activities are done or not. Our teacher informed me that he/she would do not activities because the weather was bad in the winter, he/she would do the activities he/she did not do in the spring, and he/she would continue to be paid during the winter months for the additional lessons concerning the activities he/she did not do in the winter. I can’t tell you how surprised I was by this situation. I reported it to the school principal and he/she stated that what I had done was correct. The teacher cancelled his/her extracurricular activities.” (A1)

“I have seen that they forced students who were not willing to do extra courses to apply for them.” (A17)

“A teacher at the school where I worked was playing gambling games and was constantly borrowing money from teachers and not paying them back, he/she even started to borrow money from parents and shopkeepers over time, he/she was making professional excuses, and finally he/she was subjected to an investigation.” (A21)

Unethical Behaviours Related to Educational and Instructional Processes

The findings obtained concerning this theme are discussed in three categories: communication, job commitment, and attitude. In the category of communication, according to the school administrators, some teachers may communicate in an unethical manner with other teachers and harm the institutional climate. They also stated that they encountered unethical teacher behaviours such as trying to communicate with students in a way that was inappropriate in terms of time and content. A7 and A12 expressed their opinions on this as follows:

“A teacher in our school was very disrespectful to his/her colleagues; this was damaging the institutional climate.” (A7)

“One of our teachers sent a message to a 10th grade girl at 4 am via WhatsApp and defended this as “I sent a message in a moment of foolishness.” (A12)

In the category of job commitment, according to the school administrators, some teachers behave carelessly in the work and activities that need to be done as a requirement of their job and may exhibit unethical behaviours such as downloading examination questions from the Internet without checking them and obtaining various documents such as the annual lesson plan from the Internet without making any effort. Moreover, according to the school administrators, some teachers may deprive students of the knowledge and skills they need to acquire in the lessons, ignore the teaching of objectives by not giving importance to the inculcation of the objectives in students or not behaving in accordance with the teaching profession, and hinder the teaching activities by acting carelessly. In addition, according to the school administrators, some teachers do not act in accordance with professional ethics by exhibiting behaviours such as coming to class late or leaving class early. A2, A19, and A21 expressed their opinions on this as follows:

“In the simplest way, there are colleagues who create the examination by downloading questions from the Internet without even checking them properly. Subsequently, we encounter situations such as scoring mistakes and incorrect questions. Similar situations are seen in other materials that are readily downloaded from the Internet, such as annual lesson plans.” (A2)

“Instead of interacting with the students by talking or discussing or conveying knowledge on the subject, the teacher simply opens the smart board and shows videos from platforms such as YouTube and only playing them to the students.” (A19)

“One of our teachers was constantly coming to class late, while another was constantly leaving early. Yet another teacher was avoiding coming to school by getting a bi-weekly

medical report from a friendly medical centre, resulting in unjust treatment of the students.” (A21)

In the category of attitude, according to school administrators, some teachers receive false medical reports when they do not have health problems. Furthermore, according to the school administrators, some teachers may abuse their rights such as having paid medical leave, compassionate leave, unpaid leave, ending unpaid leave during the summer vacation and taking unpaid leave again when school starts, receiving medical reports to prolong holidays, or constantly receiving false medical reports from doctors they are friends with. At the same time, some teachers may exhibit various types of ethnic or religious discrimination against students and exhibit othering behaviour not compatible with professional ethics. A11, A20, A26, and A6 expressed their opinions on this as follows:

“One teacher avoids coming to school by getting a medical report for 1 week before or after each holiday. He/she repeats this without exception.” (A11)

“One of our teachers was on unpaid maternity leave when the school started, then she ended her unpaid leave during the summer vacation and received her salary for two months, and when the school started again, she was on unpaid leave again.” (A26)

“From time to time, I felt that Syrian, Kurdish, and Alevi students were discriminated against.” (A20).

I know a teacher who stated that he/she does not feel a sense of duty towards his/her student because the student is Syrian (A6).

Teachers’ Unethical Behaviours in the Opinions of Colleagues

The findings obtained regarding colleagues’ opinions were analysed in three themes as shown in Table 4: (1) unethical behaviours oriented to economic return, (2) unethical behaviours related to educational and instructional processes, and (3) unethical behaviours related to personality development processes.

Table 4. Unethical Behaviours of Teachers in the Opinions of Their Colleagues

Theme	Category	Code
Unethical Behaviours Oriented to Economic Return	Private Tutoring	Giving private tutoring to his/her students
		Threatening students with bad grades and manipulation
	Financial Interest	Obtaining financial benefits
		Accepting gifts
		Directing students
Unethical Behaviours Related to Educational and Instructional Processes	Pressure	Punishing a student who speaks in class with a fine
		Requesting high grades for a student who is a relative of the teacher
	Job Commitment	Loafing and asking for privileges by exploiting administrators
		Coming to class late or leaving early
	Attitude	Discriminating
		Denigrating others in front of students
		Student selection
	Bullying	Maltreatment of students
		Grouping
		Mobbing colleagues
		Insulting and disrespect
	Competence	Acting unscientifically
Unethical Behaviours Related to Personality Development Processes	Understanding	Lack of sincerity
		Jealousy/gossip
	Disposition/Character	Anger
		Exploiting students for personal interests
		Immoral attitudes

Unethical Behaviours Oriented to Economic Return

The findings obtained concerning this theme are discussed under two categories: private tutoring and financial interest. In the private tutoring category, according to colleagues, some teachers give private tutoring to their students outside school such as at the students' homes, and even give some privileges to these students. In addition, they exhibit unethical behaviours such as lowering the grades of students

who do not receive private tutoring and increasing the grades of the students who do. Moreover, according to their colleagues, some teachers exhibit various manipulative behaviours in order to ensure their students do not stop taking private tutoring from them. T1 and T13 expressed their opinions about this as follows:

“I witnessed teacher behaviours such as lowering the grade of a student who does not get private tutoring from him/her or increasing the grade of a student who does.” (T1)

“In order for his/her student to get better grades from tests and thus not to lose this student, a teacher colleague used to examine test booklets beforehand and solve the problems during private tutoring that he/she thought that the student would not otherwise be able to solve in the next test.” (T13)

In the financial interest category, according to their colleagues, some teachers direct students to some private enterprises with which they cooperate for their personal financial benefit. In addition, according to their colleagues, some teachers accept gifts of high value offered by parents. At the same time, it was stated that some teachers talked to parents to direct students who are financially well off to their classes and institutions. T11, T17, and T37 expressed their opinions on this as follows:

“The teacher accepts high-value jewellery parents bought for him/her at the graduation ceremony organized by a class mom; it’s unethical.” (T11)

“A colleague of ours was directing students to his/her class by going door to door, identifying the students who were going to start the first grade in the district, and who were very financially well off and very academically successful, talking to their families.” (T17)

“After I found out that a kindergarten teacher, whom I know is a partner at a rehabilitation centre, referred his/her students, although they exhibited negative behaviours for only a short time, to this rehabilitation centre without any expert opinion and without giving any information to the administration, I was met with sarcasm when I told this colleague as a counselling teacher how the referral procedure should be.” (T37)

Unethical Behaviours Related to Educational and Instructional Processes

The findings obtained regarding this theme are discussed in five categories: pressure, job commitment, attitude, bullying, and competence. In the pressure category, according to their colleagues, some teachers try to control students by punishing them with fines, while some teachers pressure other teachers to increase the grades of students they are related to. T3 and T32 expressed their opinions about this as follows:

“The teacher I mentioned was giving fines to students who spoke during the lesson and ordering food for the whole class at the end of the month with the money collected, thus creating confusion among the students about whether this is something good or bad.” (T3)

“A colleague of mine, a mathematics teacher, asked me and a few other teachers to increase the grades of a student he/she was related to and, when this was refused, a dispute started between him/her and another teacher.” (T32)

In the category of job commitment, according to their colleagues, some teachers exploit the good relationships they established with the administration and thus ask for some privileges such as coming to class late or leaving early and they do not take their professional responsibilities seriously. According to their colleagues, some teachers exhibit unethical behaviours such as arriving late or leaving class early due to the frivolous attitudes of the school administration or when the school administration is not present at the school. T30 and T20 expressed their opinions on this as follows:

“A teacher colleague of ours was skipping off and obtaining privileges by establishing good relationships with the school principal. For example, he/she had privileges such as coming late or not attending classes at all, being given priority in course and examination assignments, and never accepting the duties he/she did not want.” (T30)

“When the school administration was not at the school, the teacher would go out and leave the students alone in the classroom for a long time.” (T20)

In the category of attitude, according to their colleagues, some teachers exhibit discriminatory behaviours such as excluding some students, being judgemental against them, and not doing their best to teach these students due to their ethnic, regional, or religious identity. In addition, according to their colleagues, some teachers discriminate between students who are of good financial standing and those who are not, because of their financial interests, and sometimes they favour students who are successful in their lessons by treating them more positively. T6, T15, T18, and T36 expressed their opinions about this as follows:

“Sometimes I encounter situations such as excluding a student on the grounds that he/she is Syrian and not doing his/her best to teach such students” (T6)

“I have witnessed clear discrimination between families and students of good economic status and families and students with medium and low income.” (T15)

“One teacher was discriminating between students in his/her class. I think the teacher favoured successful students in his/her class and he/she showed more interest in them.” (T18)

“A colleague of mine said about his/her students from different sects in his/her class, “they are of bad blood,” and he/she blamed his/her students in this way because of the behaviour problems he/she had in the classroom.” (T36)

In addition, according to their colleagues, some teachers exhibit unethical attitudes by vilifying or humiliating some other teachers or students that they do not like in the school or classroom environment. It was also stated that some teachers

did not want students with differences and talked to them in an offensive way and did not do their best to teach these students. T7, T1, and T17 explained their opinions on this as follows:

“The teacher was vilifying the teachers and students he/she didn’t like in front of other students.” (T7)

“There are teachers wanting special classes (such as a foreign language class) and meeting with the administrators in advance for this, not wanting students who need special education in their classes and wanting to send them to another class, and doing different and more instructive activities in their special classes but not in other classes.” (T1)

“Some teachers, after identifying students with learning difficulties, do not care about them at all and leave them alone instead of producing more solutions.” (T17)

In the category of bullying, according to their colleagues, some teachers show unethical bullying behaviours such as mocking, scolding, and resenting students through verbal violence concerning their physical appearance. In addition, it was said that some teachers marginalized others by creating their own groups in the school environment, and that they exhibited bullying behaviours such as mobbing the people having different thoughts and ideas in this environment. It was also stated that some teachers engage in verbal bullying behaviours such as insulting other colleagues. T20, T38, and T31 expressed their opinions about this as follows:

“Making fun of students because of their physical characteristics, calling them snotty when their noses are runny, saying you’re so naughty, I’m tired of you, etc. I think it’s unpleasant and unethical behaviour.” (T20)

“I see that some of the teachers form groups in the teachers’ room and even group together in some specific parts of the room, and they do not even greet anyone outside the group.” (T38)

“In the school where I was newly appointed, the teachers were united and opposed to the principal, and this principal had previously been assigned as a teacher to another school as a result of an investigation. They constantly told me about his/her negative sides; they tried to make him/her seem like a scary person. In fact, when the principal left his/her administrative position, they made and distributed halvah at school. Our principal, who returned to school after winning the court case, held a meeting, acted as if nothing had happened, laughed, and talked. Aside from misdirecting us, they tried to make us partners in their unethical behaviours. He/she was a visionary, hard-working principal. When I started to love and respect him/her, they turned against me.” (T31)

In the category of competence, according to their colleagues, some teachers may exhibit or defend unscientific behaviours, discourses, and behaviours that are contrary to the principles of the profession of teaching. T37 expressed his/her opinions about this as follows:

“At the district counsellors’ meeting I attended in the first years of my career, a counsellor took the floor at the meeting and stated that he/she had prepared a list of the suras for sleep problems and gave it to a student to read before going to bed. Thereupon, he/she received a strong reaction from the hall but he/she still argued that there was nothing wrong with what he/she had done, even though there were teachers who tried to emphasize what a big mistake it was.” (T37)

Unethical Behaviours Related to Personality Development Processes

The findings obtained concerning this theme are discussed in two categories: understanding and disposition/character. In the category of understanding, according to their colleagues, some teachers use inconsistent statements and behaviours in various situations and therefore act in an insincere and unethical way. In addition, according to the opinions of colleagues, some teachers are jealous of teachers who act on the basis of professional awareness and goals and gossip about them. Moreover, they stated that they sometimes witnessed their colleagues gossiping about other teachers with students or instilling negative ideas in the students about the teacher. T5, T19, and T7 expressed their opinions regarding this as follows:

“I have seen teachers who criticize the school administration in the teachers’ room, but do not voice those criticisms to the administration. If the decisions taken by the administration in the school are thought to be wrong by the teachers, the discontent should be voiced; it is not ethical to talk behind closed doors.” (T5)

“I have encountered situations such as gossiping about teachers who do their job willingly and who are envied.” (T19),

“An example of a strange situation I witnessed was a teacher colleague of mine passing on what he/she heard in the teachers’ room to the students.” (T7)

In the category of disposition/character, according to their colleagues, some teachers experience difficulties in anger control and sometimes display outbursts of anger that can be witnessed by students, which is unethical and unprofessional. Moreover, in the opinions of their colleagues, some teachers may use students for their personal work and interests or may have immoral attitudes towards the parents of the students. T29, T25, and T15 expressed their opinions about this as follows:

“In the school where I worked, there were constant complaints from parents about a physical education teacher, with most of them claiming that the teacher was shouting at the children, insulting them, and losing his temper in a way that was unprofessional.” (T29)

“In the school I work, a teacher was exploiting students for his/her personal interests such as making them climb trees and pick plums or help his wife wash carpets. Of course, we didn’t allow this, except for two teachers at the school.” (T25)

“Unfortunately, I have encountered unethical situations such as categorizing parents of the opposite sex according to their marital status and income.” (T15)

As a result, it is seen that the administrators and colleagues have many shared opinions, especially in terms of economic returns and educational and instructional processes. It is seen that unethical teacher behaviours such as giving private tutoring and obtaining financial benefits by making a distinction between different students and parents are reflected in the views of both the administrators and teachers. In addition, it was determined that the school administrators and colleagues share the same views on various other points such as late arrival or early departure, laziness, discrimination, exclusion, and pressure put on students via grading. It is also noteworthy that the witnessing of unethical behaviours is more common among the colleagues than the administrators. In fact, more unethical behaviours are expressed by teacher colleagues than by school administrators (13 codes were obtained from the opinions of school administrators, 22 codes were obtained from the opinions of colleagues).

Discussion

The striking results of the current study, which was based on the perceptions and experiences of school administrators and teachers and which investigated the unethical behaviours of teachers, reveal that the most important ethical problems are experienced in relation to private tutoring. This unethical behaviour has been intensely expressed by both teacher colleagues and school administrators. In fact, the prevalence of examination-based transition and placement processes in Turkey and the inadequacy of schools in terms of academic success result in parents' seeking ways to obtain one-to-one tutoring for their children (Akdemir & Kılıç, 2020; Akdemir & Kılıç, 2022). This situation can be seen as an opportunity for financial gain by teachers who do not act within an ethical framework. Unethical professional behaviours can be exhibited by teachers such as giving private tutoring to their own students and using grades as a means of pressurizing students into getting private tutoring or manipulatory instructional processes for this purpose because they are not willing to obey the basic principles of education set by the Ministry of National Education such as compliance with the goals and regulatory rules, paying great importance to honesty and integrity, and protecting the reputation of the institution (Singh & Prasad, 2017). This may lead to abuse of stakeholders in organizational terms (Gino, 2015).

As shown by the findings of the current study, another factor that leads to teachers exhibiting unethical behaviours is the desire to obtain financial bene-

fits. In this context, unethical behaviours that can occur in the form of directing students to private institutions with which they work in cooperation for financial gain, making unethical attempts to persuade students to get private tutoring, accepting gifts of high value, using school materials, and borrowing seriously damage the professional reputation of teaching. In this context, Kıran, Durmuş, and Sucu (2019) determined that the reputation of the teaching profession in the society, school, social media, and press in Turkey was weakened and was shaped by a negative perception.

According to the findings obtained in the current study, unethical teacher behaviours not only involve the economic dimension but also the educational and instructional processes. Unethical behaviours exhibited in relation to educational and instructional processes include negative interactions and communication with other teachers and students, coming late to class, leaving early, abuse of paid leave, not doing their best for the accomplishment of course objectives, reluctance to accept duties given, obtaining false medical reports, discriminating between students, selecting good students, not respecting differences, asking for higher grades for students who are their relatives, maltreatment of students and colleagues, grouping and mobbing, and acting unscientifically. These findings are consistent with those reported in similar studies in the literature (Altinkurt & Yılmaz, 2011; Gözütok, 1999; Ivcevic et al., 2020; Schwartz, 2015; Toprakçı, 2010; Yakar, 2021; Yıldırım et al., 2020). This shows that some teachers still have difficulties in complying with the professional ethical principles published by the Ministry of National Education (2015). The tendency towards unethical behaviours despite both the education they received and the ministry's guidance on professional ethics can be explained by the theory of "deliberate unethical behaviour", which, according to Gino (2015), leads to the individual exhibiting unethical behaviour under the influence of environmental stimuli, although he/she knows that this behaviour is unethical.

Discriminatory behaviour constitutes an important dimension of unethical behaviours manifested by teachers. This behavioural orientation can exhibit itself not only in terms of ethnicity and identity, but also in socio-economic terms. Choosing good students, distinguishing between successful and unsuccessful students, favouring socio-economically privileged students, differences in attitudes towards these students, and showing prejudice when faced with various identities and economic differences increase the harmful dimensions of unethical teacher attitudes. These judgmental teacher attitudes and behaviours based on discrimination have been proven by other research results. For example, Öztürk, Koç, and Şahin (2002) found

that students for whom expectations were high were seated in the front rows, while those for whom expectations were low were seated in the back rows. Somasundar (2021) found that socio-economic- and religious-based discrimination by teachers against students significantly affected student behaviour and that students' cultural differences and economic background triggered the realization of this discrimination to a great extent. In short, these teacher attitudes, which are shaped within an unethical framework, can cause harm by discrimination through a series of behaviours directed at some students who are seen as *other* (Yılmaz & Argon, 2020).

The occurrence of these unethical behaviours reflected in educational and instructional processes can sometimes be connected with the personality development processes of teachers. When the findings of the current study are examined, it is seen that the perceptions of the colleagues regarding this differ from those of the administrators. These findings show that the most visible unethical behaviours in the category of personality development processes include lack of sincerity in relationships, jealousy and gossip, anger, exploiting the student for personal gain, and immoral attitudes. According to Kish-Gephart et al. (2010), individual factors such as individuals' personality traits, opinions and values, and their own interests can lead to these individuals exhibiting unethical behaviours. Moreover, in the studies conducted by Bergman (2013), Kıralp and Manolova (2017), Pelit and Güçlü (2006), and Tlali (2021), the relationship between unethical teacher behaviours and individual factors was discussed and it was stated that personality characteristics determine the tendency to exhibit unethical teacher behaviours to a large extent.

Conclusion

The teaching profession represents the most important branch of public service where the greatest attention should be paid to professional ethics and moral values. Seen from this perspective, professional teaching ethics consists of principles that determine various attitudes and behaviours expected from teachers (Ateş, 2012). Teachers who ignore these principles may exhibit inconsistencies and carelessness in the educational and instructional processes, including attempts to gain economic benefits and earn more as well as negative attitudes towards students, parents, and colleagues. In addition, characteristics related to their personality development processes such as their in-service training background, personality traits, understanding, and character can also be important factors encouraging unethical behaviours.

When evaluated in light of all these findings, pre-service training at university and the professional ethical rules conveyed to them during this training, evaluation

of the personality and psychological characteristics of individuals before accepting them into the teaching profession, re-examination of the measures that can deter teachers from displaying unethical behaviours, and revision of the relevant regulations appear to be important points that should be focused on more seriously.

As stated by Yıldırım et al. (2020), teachers who exhibit unethical behaviours in educational institutions not only damage their own reputations, but also set a bad example for students. Thus, it is important for the benefit and future of the society to reconsider the teaching profession, which is one of the most important professions for a society, within an ethical framework.

In this framework, the following can be done to prevent unethical teacher behaviours: (1) application of personality tests in order to identify individuals who may have unethical tendencies during the pre-service education and before career assignment, (2) taking measures to encourage individuals to comply with professional ethics, and (3) reminding teachers of the principles of professional ethics with in-service training activities and taking them into account for career advancements and promotions.

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