

## An investigation of studies on professional ethics conducted with the participation of pre-service teachers in Turkey

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyse the studies on the professional ethics of pre-service teachers in Turkey and to present the data on pre-service teachers and their professional ethics. Accordingly, the systematic review method was used. The keyword combinations as 'pre-service teacher and ethic' and 'pre-service teacher and professional ethics' were used in both Turkish and English to conduct the literature review in the databases as Google Scholar, ERIC, PsycINFO, Web of Science and EBSCO. As a result, 18 studies from 17 scholarly journals were found using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. These studies were analysed based on the year; participants' grades in the university, number, departments, the curricula of the departments and the contexts of the studies. It is believed that future studies should be done with the participation of pre-service teachers from the 2nd and 3rd grades. Training programmes for pre-service teachers should be organised and the effectiveness of these programmes on professional ethics can be determined.

**Keywords:** Ethics, pre-service teachers, professional ethics, systematic review, teachers

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## 1. Introduction

Ethics is considered one of the concepts that have been frequently discussed recently and is sometimes used in the same sense as morality. While morality refers to things that are experienced individually or socially, ethics is defined as a discipline of philosophy that classifies and criticises moral views and teachings (Özlem, 2004). While morality is based on social and local values, ethics is based on universal and human values. Based on this statement, it can be inferred that morality is more individual and can change from one society to another, while ethics is more clearly defined and universally accepted. Although the concepts of morality, or immorality which is the opposite, are used in daily life mainly to refer to sexual matters, ethical and unethical concepts are mainly used in structures related to business and professional groups (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2012). Ethics as a term stems from the Greek word 'ethike'. This Greek word means character. Ethics is the theory of moral principles that deal with values and shows people's experiences with values (Cevizci, 2002). Ethics, which has been considered important throughout history, is a topic that has been put back on the agenda, especially in the 20th and 21st centuries, and is associated with almost every action of people (Yıldız, 2008). In other words, ethics examines the basis of every action and behaviour of people, namely their speeches and discussions, their likes or dislikes (Mengüşoğlu, 1965). One of the fields in which ethics is frequently encountered is the professions. Education as a profession is one of these fields.

Education aims to realise the moral development of the individual in a healthy way, as well as the development of the individual in other areas, and the adoption of universal values by the individual is another aim of ethics. The realisation of this goal can be possible through teamwork. While the teacher acts as the core of this team, administrators and other professionals provide supportive educational services. However, teachers assume an important role and responsibility in educational environments in the execution and implementation of educational services. The fact that teachers, as key members of the educational team, can effectively and efficiently carry out these roles and responsibilities depends on their awareness and adoption of certain criteria related to their profession. These criteria generally represent ethical principles (Gündüz, 2005; Yiğit, 2005).

People who practice certain professions such as in the fields of health, justice and education have a special place and importance in society (Cevizci, 2018). Although teaching is a profession that involves services that require expertise, the quality of this profession significantly affects both society and people. This impact extends to both the present and the future. This imposes a responsibility on people who practice the teaching profession to behave according to ethical behavioural criteria consistent with this profession (Aybek & Demir, 2012).

The teaching profession is responsible for preparing individuals, who are new members of society for social life. At the same time, it plays an important role in ensuring these new members follow the principles to become moral, fair, respectful, tolerant, loving and virtuous individuals. Ethics of the teaching profession includes the behaviours, rules, norms and values that are consistent with the universal norms and rules of education and that teachers should demonstrate during the performance of their educational work towards students and their relatives (Cevizci, 2018). Teachers need to consider some ethical principles in their relationships with students, with parents and in the teaching process. Ethical principles of the teaching profession can be listed as professionalism, responsibility in terms of service, fairness, equality, ensuring a healthy and safe environment, staying away from corruption, honesty-truthfulness and trust, objectivity, professional dedication and continuous development, respect and using resources effectively (Aydın, 2018). Ethical principles determine the limits that encompass behaviours that should not be done as well as behaviours that should be done. While exhibiting ethical behaviours is related to the educational process of individuals, whether or not unethical behaviours are performed is also closely related to the level of moral development of individuals. Teacher training plays a very important role in bringing ethical principles into the education and training process.

The above-mentioned ethical principles are tried to be taught to prospective teachers within the courses of the teacher training programme they attend. The issue of teaching professional ethics has been frequently included in recent discussions about the teacher education and it was stated that professional ethics courses are necessary in teacher training programmes (Karaköse, 2007; Karaköse & Kocabaş, 2009). It was also stated that a professional ethics course can have positive effects on the pre-service teachers since their awareness of ethical principles will be raised (Akhan & Öztürk, 2022).

In the 2006–2007 Regulation on Teacher Education in Turkey, the issue of professional ethics teaching was emphasised. In the regulation, it was proposed to include elective courses for the acquisition of professional ethics in teacher education programmes (YÖK, 2007). In this sense, all components of the teacher training programmes should be approached with questions and constantly improved in an ongoing evaluation procedure to train teachers in terms of quantity and quality needed today and in the future (Baskan et al., 2006). In addition, future teachers should possess the ethical perceptions that are specific to the teaching profession (Kanat & Erkan, 2021). For this reason, the Ethics and Morality in Education was included as a course in the New Undergraduate Teacher Training Curriculum updated on May 30, 2018. This course covers the basic concepts, theories, ethical principles and rules, business and professional ethics; ethical aspects regarding teaching job, the rights of education and learning; and ethical principles in the teaching, learning and assessment process (YÖK, 2018).

Today, there are studies in the literature that include professional ethical and unethical behaviours of pre-service teachers (e.g., Akhan & Öztürk, 2022; Altinkurt & Yılmaz, 2011; Karataş et al., 2019; Yıkmiş, 2022). However, the scope and other features of these studies need to be known in detail. This is because the professional ethical principles that constitute a critical factor of the teacher training system and that pre-service teachers should continuously be evaluated and questioned. Therefore, there is a need to summarise the studies in the literature which are conducted on professional ethics to reach the quantity and quality needed for the future of education. In other words, learning and evaluating the studies in terms of the scope of professional ethics in the research, the approaches, opinions and suggestions of pre-service teachers, in detail can provide sufficient input to readers and future researchers in terms of variables. Therefore, knowing the content and scope of the studies can shed light on the issues that need to be investigated. The purpose of this study was determined as to examine the studies conducted in Turkey with prospective teachers on professional ethics. With this purpose in mind, the questions to be answered can be listed as follows:

- 1) What is the distribution of studies by years?
- 2) What is the distribution of studies according to the research methods that they adopted?
- 3) What is the distribution of studies according to the characteristics of their participants?
- 4) What is the distribution of the participants of these studies according to their undergraduate programmes?
- 5) What is the distribution of the studies according to their contexts?
- 6) What are the important findings of the studies?

## **2. Methodology**

This study was designed as a systematic review of the studies conducted in Turkey with prospective teachers on professional ethics. In systematic review studies, a clear and systematic process should be followed to determine the research question, reach the publications after a review of the literature, evaluate their quality and synthesise the results qualitatively or quantitatively (Armstrong et al., 2011). Therefore, the systematic review method was preferred to identify and analyse the studies on prospective teachers' professional ethics and to synthesise the findings of the studies on teacher candidates and professional ethics in a transparent way.

### *2.1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the studies to be included in the present study were determined by the researchers.

The inclusion criteria for the studies are as follows:

- i. Studies published between 2005 and 2022;
- ii. Studies conducted with prospective teachers in Turkey;
- iii. Studies conducted on prospective teachers;
- iv. Studies conducted on professional ethics;
- v. Studies published in a peer-reviewed journal.

The exclusion criteria for the studies are listed below:

- i. Studies carried out only with teachers;
- ii. Studies carried out with pre-service teachers studying in countries other than Turkey;
- iii. Studies published as book chapters or conference proceedings;
- iv. Studies not published in a peer-reviewed academic journal.

## 2.2. Literature review

A literature review was carried out to find studies on prospective teachers' professional ethics. To conduct the literature review, five keywords were determined: 'pre-service teachers', 'ethics', 'ethical principles', 'opinions' and 'professional ethics'. The keyword combinations such as 'pre-service teacher and ethic', 'pre-service teacher and professional ethics', 'pre-service teacher and ethical principles', 'pre-service teacher' and 'professional ethics and opinions' were determined. Using these keywords, the web search was conducted between 18.06.2022 and 30.06.2022. The search was done in Turkish and English using the predetermined combinations in the following databases Google Scholar, ULAKBİM, ERIC, PsycINFO, EBSCO and Web of Science databases. As a result of the literature search made with keywords in Google Scholar, ULAKBİM, ERIC, PsycINFO, EBSCO and Web of Science databases, a total of 2,580 studies were reached. After the preliminary analysis which was done according to the inclusion–exclusion criteria, 18 studies from 17 academic journals were identified. The studies that were included in the systematic review process in this research were shown in the references section with an asterisk (\*).

## 2.3. Coding of studies

After the literature review and preliminary analysis according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 18 publications were coded. Among the studies, the study conducted the earliest was coded as R1. The rest of the studies were coded subsequently based on the year of publication; coding was carried out in the form of R2, R3,...,R18 until the last study. The studies that were coded are given in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Codes and Studies*

Code	Studies	Code	Studies
R1	Pelit and Güçer (2006)	R10	Genç (2019)
R2	Altinkurt and Yılmaz (2011)	R11	Doğaner and Özbek (2019)
R3	Sakar and Aybek (2016)	R12	Karataş et al. (2019)
R4	Aybek and Karataş (2016)	R13	Burakgazi et al. (2020)
R5	Eren and Rakıcioğlu-Söylemez (2017)	R14	Özyıldırım and Bilgin Aksu (2021)

R6	Özen (2017)	R15	Özyıldırım and Sabancı (2021)
R7	Şener et al. (2018)	R16	Karataş and Yılmaz (2021)
R8	Sahan (2018)	R17	Akhan and Öztürk (2022)
R9	Ünlü (2018)	R18	Yıkmiş (2022)

#### 2.4. Analysis of the data

In this study, descriptive content analysis, which is an analysis method adopted in systematic review studies, was used. Descriptive content analysis ensures that studies using quantitative, qualitative and mixed research methods are examined together and within certain criteria (Calik & Sözbilir, 2014). Therefore, descriptive content analysis was adopted to examine the studies conducted with prospective teachers on professional ethics.

The steps followed during the process of analysis of the studies determined to be included in the analysis were identified as follows: (1) The studies were uploaded to a reference management software that automatically extracts features such as the author(s), year of publication and journal in which they were published. (2) The studies were examined based on the year they were published, the research method adopted in the studies, the background information on their participants (gender, grade levels and the undergraduate programme they attend), the focused context in terms of professional ethics and the conclusions reached. During the analysis process, the studies were read by the researchers and coded according to these themes. (3) The obtained data are included in the tables and the findings are presented in these tables.

#### 2.5. Inter-rater reliability

Inter-rater reliability analysis was calculated in the study. Inter-rater reliability was determined according to the formula as 'Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement) × 100' (House et al., 1981). As a result of the analysis, the agreement level was found to be 100%.

### 3. Results

In this study, which was conducted to investigate the studies on professional ethics conducted with prospective teachers in Turkey, the findings were presented after the descriptive content analysis of the 18 studies in the scope of the current study. The findings were reported in accordance with the order for the themes determined during the analysis of the studies. These themes can be listed as the year of publication, the methodology of the studies, the background information of the participants (gender, grade levels and the undergraduate programme they studied), the focused context in terms of professional ethics and the conclusions reached.

#### 3.1. Distribution of the studies by year

The findings regarding the year of publication of the studies examined in the current study are given in Figure 1.

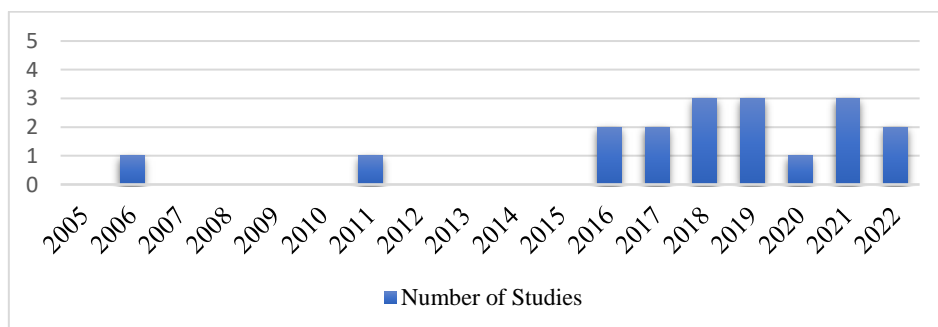


Figure 1: Distribution of the Studies by Year

Figure 1 shows that the studies were conducted between 2006 and 2022. It was figured out that the majority of the research was conducted in and after the year 2016. Most studies were done in 2018, 2019 and 2021. Moreover; it is evident that no study was conducted in 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

### 3.2. Distribution of the studies by their methodology

The findings regarding the methods used in the studies examined in this study are given in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Methods used in Studies*

Method	<i>f</i>	Studies
Quantitative	9	R1, R2, R3, R5, R6, R7, R9, R11, R13
Qualitative	8	R4, R8, R10, R12, R15, R16 R17, R18
Mixed method	1	R14

It is clear in Table 2 that nine of the studies were conducted with a quantitative design. There are eight studies carried out with qualitative design, while only one study was carried out using a mixed method.

### 3.3. Numbers, gender distributions and grade levels of the participants included in the studies

Table 3 shows the total number of participants included in the studies, their gender distribution and their grade level. Studies in the table are ordered according to the number of coding.

**Table 3**  
*Participants of the Examined Studies and their Characteristics*

Studies	The number of participants	Gender	Grade levels
R1	630	M: 347 F: 283	1st and 4th grades
R2	459	M: 129 F: 330	PF training and undergraduate students
R3	560	M: 184 F: 376	1st and 4th grades
R4	140	M: 40 F: 100	PF training students
R5	128	M: 37 F: 91	1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades
R6	352	NA	1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades
R7	261	M: 60 F: 201	4th grade
R8	54	M: 27 F: 27	4th grade
R9	126	M: 60 F: 66	NA
R10	138	M: 63 F: 75	PF training students
R11	416	M: 274 F: 142	PF training and 4th-grade students
R12	15	M: 2 F: 13	PF training students
R13	540	M: 106 F: 433	4th grade
R14	437	M: 133 F: 304	4th grade
R15	172	M: 65 F: 97	PF training students
R16	51	M: 8 F: 42	NA
R17	55	NA	4th grade
R18	20	M: 10 F: 10	4th grade

PF: Pedagogical formation; NA: Not detected.

It can be observed in Table 3 that the number of participants included of these studies ranges from 15 to 630. It can be said that the studies were mostly carried out with over 100 participants. When the gender distribution is examined, it can be stated that most female participants outnumber male participants in these studies. In two of the studies (R6, R17), the gender distribution of the

participants could not be determined. When the results on the grade levels of the participants were examined, it was figured out that the 4th-grade students, the prospective teachers who went through pedagogical formation training and the 1st-grade students were more studied compared to the other grade levels. In the two studies examined (R9 and R16), data on the grade levels of the participants could not be determined. In one of the studies (R2), it was reported that the participants consisted of prospective teachers who received pedagogical formation training and pre-service teachers who were attending undergraduate programmes. For this reason, no findings on the grade levels of undergraduate students could be revealed for this study.

### 3.4. Undergraduate programmes and training programmes which the participants included in the studies attended

The distribution of the undergraduate programmes and the training programmes (pedagogical formation training) of the participants included in the studies can be seen in Table 4. Since there were some studies which included participants from more than one programme, this finding was reported over the total data from 18 studies.

**Table 4**  
*Distribution of Programmes in which the Participants Included in the Studies Attended*

Programmes	<i>f</i>	Studies
Physical Education and Sports	1	R11
Computer and Instructional Technologies Education	3	R3, R5, R13
Office Management Education	1	R1
Geography Education	1	R9
Religious Education	1	R8
Science Education	5	R3, R5, R8, R13, R14
Elementary Mathematics Education	2	R13, R16
English Language Education	4	R3, R5, R13, R14
Hospitality Management Education	1	R1
Mathematics Education	3	R5, R13, R14
Accounting and Finance Education	1	R1
Pre-school Education	3	R3, R5, R14
Special Education Teaching	2	R5, R18
Pedagogical Formation Training	6	R2, R4, R10, R11, R12, R15
Guidance and Psychological Counselling	1	R3
Art Education	1	R3
Travel Business Management and Tourism Guidance Education	1	R1
Classroom Education	5	R3, R6, R7, R13, R14
Social Studies Education	4	R3, R5, R14, R17
Turkish Education	4	R3, R5, R13, R14

It is evident from Table 4 is that the participants included in the study were prospective teachers from 19 different undergraduate programmes of education and pedagogical formation training. The highest number of participants was composed of the prospective teachers who were receiving pedagogical formation training, studying in classroom education, science education, social studies education, English language education and Turkish education undergraduate programmes. It is clear that prospective teachers from physical education and sports, office management, geography, religious education, hospitality management, accounting finance, guidance and psychological counselling and art education undergraduate programmes were included in the studies only once.

### 3.5. The focused context of professional ethics

The findings regarding the contexts that the reviewed studies focused on are given in Table 5.



**Table 5**  
*The Focused Context of Professional Ethics*

Focused context	<i>f</i>	Studies
Professional ethical behaviours	8	R4, R6, R7, R8, R9, R11, R15, R18
Professional unethical behaviours	2	R1, R2
Perceptions, awareness and sensitivity regarding professional ethics	3	R12, R14, R15
Factors affecting professional ethical behaviours and perceptions	4	R3, R5, R6, R13
Knowledge, perception, awareness and opinions about the courses or training they have received related to professional ethics	4	R10, R12, R16, R17

It can be observed from Table 5 that the studies were conducted on five categories as professional ethical behaviours; professional unethical behaviours; perceptions, awareness and sensitivity regarding professional ethics; factors affecting professional ethical behaviours and perceptions; and the knowledge, perception, awareness and opinions about the courses or training they received on professional ethics. The distribution of the focus of the studies was found as follows: professional ethical behaviours in five studies; professional unethical behaviours in two studies; perception, awareness and sensitivity regarding professional ethics in three studies; factors affecting professional ethical behaviours and perceptions in four studies; and knowledge, perception, awareness and opinions about the courses or training they received on professional ethics in four studies.

### *3.6. Important results of studies*

Some of the important results reached in the studies on professional ethics were determined. These results are discussed separately for each category in Table 5. Some of these results are described below.

In terms of professional ethical behaviour, Aybek and Karataş's (2016) study showed that prospective teachers think that the behaviours that teachers should possess in terms of professional ethics were related to their characteristics. When the study of Sahan (2018) is examined, it can be seen that the pre-service teachers included in the study think that they would be competent, self-developed, up-to-date, planned and organised teachers in the future. Regarding professional unethical behaviour, in Altınkurt and Yılmaz's (2011) study, pre-service teachers see the most frequent unethical behaviour of teachers as not paying enough attention to students with lower achievement levels, while the least frequent unethical behaviour was considered as applying pressure on students in religious matters.

In terms of the perception, awareness and sensitivity regarding professional ethics, Karataş et al. (2019) determined that pre-service teachers state that teachers who do not discriminate, are fair, adhere to professional principles, present a role model with their behaviours, respect different ideas and dress smartly are ethical. According to the studies conducted by Özyıldırım and Bilgin Aksu (2021) and Özyıldırım and Sabancı (2021), it was stated that the ethics courses to be provided to teacher candidates should include practice as well, rather than presenting only theoretical information. Regarding the factors affecting professional ethical behaviours and perceptions, in Özen's (2017) study, it was reported that as the grade levels of pre-service teachers increased and their views on teaching professional ethics changed significantly. In the study by Burakgazi et al. (2020), it has been reported that the gender factor is an important predictor of prospective teachers' perceptions of professional ethics and that female participants revealed higher ethical perceptions than males. Regarding the knowledge, perception, awareness and opinions about the courses or training they received on professional ethics; in Karataş et al.'s (2019) study, it was concluded that the professional ethics course contributed to defining ethics, listing the characteristics of an ethical teacher and encouraging them to behave in accordance with professional ethics. When the study of Akhan and Öztürk (2022) was considered, it was reported that professional ethics practices showed a positive



effect on pre-service teachers' perspectives on professional ethical principles, contributed to their professional, personal and social development and improved their sense of responsibility.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

This purpose of the current study was to examine the studies on professional ethics which were conducted in Turkey with prospective teachers. Eighteen studies were included in the present study according to inclusion and exclusion criteria, after the literature review. The studies were examined through the following themes: year of publication, research methodology, characteristics of the participants and the focused context.

It was observed that the studies were carried out between the years 2006 and 2022. While there were two studies before 2016, it was found out that 16 of the studies were done in or after 2016. According to Aybek and Karataş (2016), it was stated that there was a need to determine the opinions of prospective teachers on professional ethics before starting the profession. Based on this suggestion, it can be claimed that the professional ethics of prospective teachers has increasingly become the subject of research in recent years and this is a positive development. When the methods adopted in these studies were examined, it was determined that both quantitative and qualitative studies were carried out. In addition, one of the studies was conducted using the mixed method. This finding is consistent with Decker et al.'s (2022) systematic review study on professional ethics and teacher training. It was observed that the studies included in this study were carried out using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Regarding the characteristics (number, gender distribution and grade level) of the participants of the examined studies; it was figured out that the majority of the studies were done with 4th-grade and 1st-grade students, and prospective teachers receiving pedagogical formation training. It can be suggested that in future studies on professional ethics the gap regarding 2nd-and 3rd-grade pre-service teachers should be occupied or they can be studied together with all grade levels. It was observed that the studies focused on professional ethical behaviours; professional unethical behaviours; perceptions, awareness and sensitivity regarding professional ethics; the factors affecting professional ethical behaviours and perceptions; and knowledge, perception, awareness and opinions about the courses or training they have received related to professional ethics. It was found that the least number of studies were conducted on professional unethical behaviours while the highest number of studies were conducted on professional ethical behaviours.

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the results of the studies conducted in Turkey on prospective teachers' professional ethical principles, perceptions and the factors affecting their professional ethical behaviours. Thus, it will guide future studies on the professional ethical behaviour of prospective and in-service teachers. In addition, the general picture of the current situation in Turkey has been presented for studies that will investigate professional ethical behaviours comparatively. Based on the results of the current study, it can be suggested that the future can be conducted to compile the ethical views of teachers on ethics, compile the ethical practices of teachers and use quantitative research methodology that reveal teachers' ethical understanding. When the results regarding the undergraduate programmes of the participants are considered, the number of studies on the prospective teachers studying in special education, primary school mathematics, physical education and sports, office management, geography, religious education, hospitality management, accounting and finance, guidance and psychological counselling and art education undergraduate programmes can be increased. Overall, it can be suggested that studies on professional ethics should be increased. According to Altinkurt and Yılmaz (2011), ethical principles draw the boundaries of what should and should not be done. Therefore, it can be suggested to increase the number of studies examining the views of prospective teachers on professional unethical behaviours.

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