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# What Should an Ideal Pre-Service Mother-Tongue Teacher Look Like?

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### Abstract

In this study, it was tried to determine the profile of an ideal pre-service mother tongue teacher according to the views of Turkish mother tongue teachers and pre-service teachers. The data of the study were collected through a semi-structured "Characteristics of a Good Pre-Service Mother Tongue Teacher Form" created by the researchers. In this form, 5 mother tongue teachers working in Erzurum province of Turkey and 10 pre-service mother tongue teachers studying at Atatürk University Kazım Karabekir Faculty of Education, Turkish Language Teaching undergraduate program were asked what an ideal pre-service mother tongue teacher should be like. Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. Phenomenology was chosen in this study to set a standard for what a pre-service mother tongue teacher should be like. According to the results obtained from the findings of the study, a good pre-service mother tongue teacher should be especially good in the field of communication skills. Suggestions were made together with the other results.

### **Key Words**

Ideal pre-service mother tongue teacher • Pre-service teacher • Teacher profile

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#### Introduction

In the teaching profession, not only knowledge and skills are not enough, experience is also necessary. But is having these qualifications enough to be a good teacher? For this reason, answers to questions such as "Who is a qualified teacher?" and "What are the characteristics that a qualified teacher should have?" were sought. It is possible to consider the basic components of the characteristics that a teacher should have in three dimensions. These are general culture, special field knowledge, and pedagogical formation skills. In Turkey, Article 43 of the National Education Basic Law No. 1739, which entered into force in 1973, emphasizes that the teaching profession is a profession of expertise. One of the most important tasks expected of teachers is to be role models for students. Mother tongue teachers are role models in the transfer of cultural and social values. With the objective of addressing this matter, it is noteworthy that Turkey initially delineated specific "Turkish Language Teaching Special Field Qualifications," subsequently supplanted by the "General Qualifications for the Teaching Profession," as introduced by the Turkish Ministry of National Education in the year 2017 (MEB, 2017). The General Qualifications for the Teaching Profession determined in 2017 consisted of three interrelated and complementary competencies, 11 subcompetencies, and 65 competency indicators related to these competencies (Tosuntas, 2020, p. 56). Within the scope of these competencies, the competencies expected from an ideal teacher are put forward. Based on this study, senior students in the teacher training departments of faculties of education should also be by this. Faculties of education, that train teachers, conduct Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II courses in different teaching programs in practice schools to provide pre-service teachers with professional competencies (YÖK, 2018). In the "Teaching Practice I" and "Teaching Practice II" courses, which are among the compulsory courses for senior students in the teacher training departments of faculties of education, students have the opportunity to do internships in secondary schools. Thus, pre-service teachers both gain experience before teaching and have the opportunity to get to know the institutions where they will work closely.

In 1982, with Decree No. 41, the responsibility for teacher training was transferred from the Ministry of National Education (MEB) to the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). As a result of the restructuring process carried out by YÖK in the faculties of education, more importance was given to teaching practices in related schools.

The Council of Higher Education made a comprehensive regulation on teacher training in 1997. This restructuring was initiated by YÖK in the 1998-1999 academic year (Küçükahmet et al. 1999, p. 45). In 2006-2007, a new regulation was introduced to update the Teacher Training Programs within the scope of the restructuring of education faculties (Şehirli, 2010, p. 551). One of these regulatory measures pertains to the cultivation of prospective teachers' capacity to effectively translate their theoretical acumen and competencies into practical application within school settings. This initiative seeks to comprehensively acquaint them with the multifaceted dimensions of the teaching profession, facilitating their holistic preparation for the vocation (Otacioğlu, 2010, p. 82). With the restructuring process, new departments and programs that train teachers for secondary education were established in faculties of education, relations with practice schools and the Ministry of National Education were improved, teaching formation courses were reorganized and accreditation practices were initiated in faculties of education (Durukan & Maden, 2011, p. 556). The main reason for all these efforts is to train teachers who are qualified and

competent enough to meet Turkey's needs. In this context, the programs of departments in the faculties of education have been enriched by increasing the number of courses that develop students' general culture and field knowledge as well as their teaching skills and qualifications. In addition, the duration of pre-service teachers' attendance at practice schools and the number of activities have also been increased. Thus, education faculty students receiving teacher education become experienced individuals by applying the knowledge and skills they have gained through "Teaching Practice I" and "Teaching Practice II" courses. Moreover, pre-service teachers enrolled in faculties of education are anticipated to culminate their professional readiness and enhance their pedagogical aptitude through the orchestration of a diverse array of activities within the framework of Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II courses, conducted in collaboration with practice schools under the aegis of the Ministry of National Education.

## The ideal teacher and the ideal pre-service mother tongue teacher

No teacher can be completely ideal in theory and practice (Rusu, Shoitu, & Panaite, 2012, p. 1017). Being a truly ideal teacher means that the teacher has reached such a level of perfection that he/she no longer needs to make further efforts to improve himself/herself. In a developing and changing world, this is almost impossible. The conception of the 'ideal teacher' as a concept is derived by each individual from various sources. Therefore, the vision of an ideal teacher will differ from source to source or person to person.

There are many studies on the ideal teacher in the literature. According to a study by Rusu, Shoitu & and Panaite (2012, p. 1019), the most important characteristic of an ideal teacher is to be skilled in human relations. The second characteristic is fair assessment. Even if teachers are not scoring machines, the evaluation of student performance should be objective. Subject knowledge ranked third. From the students' point of view, the ideal teacher shows expertise in the subject he or she teaches and spends a lot of time acquiring new knowledge. The fourth characteristic is the facilitation of students' intellectual development. It indicates the need for the teacher not only to know but also to know how to transmit his/her knowledge, thus answering the basic educational purpose. The last one is respect, which is expressed not only in the discussions that the teacher initiates with the students but also in the tone of voice, the courtesy felt, and the humility in communication. According to the results of this study, the relational competencies of an ideal teacher come to the fore. According to the findings of Singh et al. (2021, p. 1162), there are two main categories of ideal teachers. These are dispositional characteristics and professional knowledge of the teacher.

A study by Harley et al. (2000) on ideal teachers revealed the situation faced by teachers in comparison to the ideal teachers defined in policy. The findings showed that teachers' roles are unique and fall into six categories. These are facilitators of learning, localcharactersradministratorsodesignersner of learning programs, all-tlearnersmer and commucreatorseatorcitizensitizen. McKnight et al. (2016) examined the qualities of an effective teacher in 23 countries and concluded that teachers should have a good mastery of subject knowledge, create ways to get to know students, demonstrate a high level of professionalism, demonstrate the ability to develop productive relationships, have confidence in students, empathize with students by being patient, caring and kind. Çetin (2001) found that the ideal teacher behavior is identified as friendly, responsive, empathetic, sympathetic, sympathetic, helpful, always conscious, and sensitive to students' individual differences and general student psychology. A study by Sztejnberg et

al. (2004) found that ideal teachers are characterized as leadership, accommodating/supportive, considerate, and supportive of student autonomy. Among other relevant findings, the characteristics of a student-oriented teacher who is both a source of inspiration for the student and exhibits a high sense of closeness to the student come to the fore.

According to Arnon and Reichel (2007), the two main elements of ideal teachers are personal qualities and subject knowledge. In the study in which educational philosophers revealed various images of ideal teachers, supporting the cognitive development of students was identified as the main task of an ideal teacher (Gopal & Singh, 2020; Yunus et al., 2021). Ko and Sammons (2013) state that other important aspects include the current social, behavioral, and emotional goals and objectives of education. Pozo-Muñoz et al. (2000) identify four main factors that can define an ideal teacher: teaching competence, teaching qualities, teacher appearance, and dedication to teaching. Furthermore, the pedagogical skills of an ideal teacher should be assessed and developed to achieve the quality and standards set to improve learning performance (Boonen et al., 2014). A plethora of scholarly inquiries has been undertaken with the objective of delineating the optimal attitudes and behavioral attributes requisite for a teacher. The construction of an idealized teacher persona within the cognitive framework of students is a nuanced process, influenced by several variables, including the age, gender, and political affiliations of the students themselves (Douna et al., 2015). Furthermore, students commonly ascribe attributes to an ideal teacher, perceiving such an educator as an advocate for critical thinking, unconventional pedagogical approaches, and innovative instructional methodologies, possessed of a profound mastery within their field of expertise, and adept at the pragmatic translation of their knowledge into the pedagogical realm (Singh et al., 2021, p. 1163). In addition to the aforementioned attributes, the idealized teacher persona is also characterized by a harmonious and well-balanced personality, coupled with an unwavering commitment to the equitable treatment of students, thereby eschewing any form of prejudice or bias.

Research has shown that students prefer teachers who can teach with good content knowledge and also use technology in creative teaching. They also need to be patient, helpful, kind, fun, and positive (Bullock, 2015). Students prefer teachers who do not shout when they make mistakes and teach patiently as ideal teachers. Students prefer teachers who make them feel safe and facilitate their learning as ideal teachers (Singh et al., 2021, p. 1163). As can be seen, many characteristics of an ideal teacher are mentioned in the studies. While these characteristics differ according to students, different characteristics come to the fore according to colleagues. When we look at the literature, it is seen that there are no studies on ideal heritage language teachers. For this reason, it is thought that our study will fill a gap in the literature.

#### Method

#### Research Design

This study was planned according to phenomenology, one of the qualitative methods. Rose, Beeby, and Parker (1995, p. 1124) define phenomenology as a qualitative research method used to describe perceptions, feelings, understandings, and perspectives about a particular concept or phenomenon and to describe how this phenomenon is experienced, while Giorgi (1997, p. 236) defines it as a concept that refers to the sum of experiences. Phenomenology focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have a detailed and in-depth understanding

of. For this reason, phenomenology is used for studies aiming to investigate phenomena that we frequently encounter in daily life, which are not foreign to us but whose meaning we cannot fully grasp, and creates a suitable research ground (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 69). Therefore, in phenomenological studies, emphasis is placed on the "phenomenon" to be researched, focusing on the participants' perceptions and perspectives on this phenomenon, how they make sense of this phenomenon, how they experience the phenomenon, and how they describe these experiences. The phenomenon in focus can be a concept, an idea, or an emotion (Tekindal & Uğuz Arsu, 2020, pp. 158-159).

It is aimed to increase the quality of language teaching by determining that there are general statements about mother tongue teachers accepted in Turkish society and that these statements are shaped and determined according to the opinions of mother tongue teacher candidates and mother tongue teachers. Primarily, in the pursuit of delineating the archetypal profile of a mother tongue teacher, an investigative approach was employed, involving the presentation of a semi-structured questionnaire to prospective pre-service educators specializing in mother tongue instruction. Subsequently, the collation of their responses ensued, with the overarching objective of constructing a comprehensive and holistic teacher profile.

As the second step of the study, the same form was presented to mother tongue teacher,s and their opinions were taken. In this study, it was aimed to reveal the profile of an ideal pre-service mother tongue teacher in line with the data obtained from mother tongue teachers and pre-service mother tongue teachers. For this reason, phenomenology was preferred in this study to set a standard for how pre-service mother tongue teachers should be.

#### Research Sample/Study Group/Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 5 teachers teaching Turkish in Erzurum province in Turkey and 10 prospective mother tongue teachers studying in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching in 2020-2021. The opinions of a total of 15 mother tongue teachers and prospective mother tongue teachers were taken.

Information about the participants is as follows:

Table 1. *Information about the service mother tongue teachers* 

	Age	Professional Experience	Gender
Service teachers	30, 34, 36, 38, 42	8, 10, 12, 13, 16	W, M, W, M, M

Table 2. *Information about pre-service mother tongue teachers* 

Age		Gender	
Pre-service teachers	22, 22, 22, 22, 22, 23, 23, 25, 26	M, W, M, W, W, W, M, W, W, M	

#### **Research Instruments and Processes**

The data for this study were obtained from interviews with 5 native language teachers and 10 pre-service mother tongue teachers studying in the Department of Turkish Language Teaching in Erzurum, Turkey in 2021-2022. The data were collected through the "Characteristics of a Good Pre-service Mother Tongue Teacher Form" prepared by the researchers. In the preparation of the interview form for the study, the opinions of the participants were collected with a semi-structured form prepared by taking the opinions of 3 Turkish language teaching experts and 3 measurement and evaluation experts. In the initial phases of form development, due diligence was exercised in the integration of teacher competencies that are consonant with prevailing scholarly literature on the subject of societal expectations and the requisite qualifications of an adept educator.

Then, 4 questions were prepared, and preliminary interviews were conducted with 5 teachers. In line with the feedback received from the preliminary interviews, some additions were made to the form, and the form was reorganized by reviewing the points that were not understood. The revised content was reviewed with experts in Turkish language teacher training departments and the interview form was finalized in line with their suggestions and with the opinions of measurement and evaluation experts who made comments supporting the suggestions. The data of the study were collected with this finalized interview form.

# **Data Analysis**

For data analysis, content analysis was performed. Content analysis involves the process of examining and interpreting the material systematically and in detail to reveal patterns, judgments, meanings, and themes (Berg & Latin, 2008). During content analysis, each participant's codes were formed, then the codes from all participants were compared and themes were created. The themes created and the quotes related to these themes are presented in a table. In the realm of qualitative research, the concept of credibility pertains to the veracity of the findings derived by the researcher and the congruence discerned within the statements proffered by study participants (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In ordToase credibility at the qualitative stage, long-term interaction was ensured during the study, interaction was made with the participants during the group sessions, and data diversity and process analysis were performed. In terms of consistency and confirmability, the questions and codes were sent to the field expert and common que, stions and themes were formed. In order to enTohe study is transferable, detailed descriptions and quotations are included.

#### Results

In this study on how an ideal pre-service mother tongue teacher should be, the data were handled as pre-service teacher and teacher views, and the data were analyzed in this context.

Findings related to the question "How would you define an ideal pre-service mother tongue teacher?"

A total of 5 teachers and 10 pre-service teachers responded to this question.

Table 3.

How would you define an ideal pre-service mother tongue teacher?

Pre-service teachers		Service teachers	
Category	Participants Code	Category	Participants Code
Professional development and advancement	PST1, PST3, PST6	Professional development and advancement	ST1, ST4
Communication skills	PST2, PST5, PST7, PST8	Communication skills	ST2, ST5
Dedication and faith	PST6, PST9, PST10	Dedication and faith	ST3

PST: Pre-service teacher S'

ST: Service teacher

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of the participants consider professional development and advancement, communication, dedication, and belief skills as the characteristics that a good HLT candidate should have. Some of the answers given in this context are as follows:

PST3: "A person who follows the lessons step by step, criticizes, researches, is curious, does not hesitate to take responsibility, accesses information, is a good observer, and has gained experience."

PST5: "He/she has developed communication skills, has sufficient subject knowledge, is open to criticism and new learning, and is a good listener."

PST9: "A person who takes his/her job seriously, is responsible, follows achievements, is devoted and hardworking."

ST1: "Active, responsible, sensitive and idealistic."

ST5: "A person who combines his/her education with his/her love and transfers it to students in the most creative way."

ST3: "He/she should follow the lessons without being selfish and gain as much experience as possible."

Findings related to the question "What are the characteristics (professional beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, values, behaviors, teaching practices) of a good pre-service heritage language teacher?"

A total of 5 teachers and 10 pre-service teachers responded to this question.

Table 4.

What are the characteristics (professional beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, values, behaviors, teaching practices) of a good pre-service mother tongue teacher?

Pre-service teacher		Service teacher	
Category	Participants Code	Category	Participants Code
Beliefs about the profession	PST1, PST4, PST8	Beliefs about the profession	ST1, ST4
Information	PST3	Information	ST3, ST5
Attitudes	PST7, PST9	Attitudes	ST2, ST5
Values	PST6	Values	ST1
Behavior	PST2, PST5	Behavior	ST2, ST5
Teaching practices	PST10	Teaching practices	-

As seen in Table 2, the majority of the participants see beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes towards the profession as the characteristics that a good HLT candidate should have. Some of the answers given in this context are as follows:

PST4: "He/she should have the characteristics of a person who is curious, inquiring, researching, and believes that he/she can do this job well."

PST3: "Since they are likely to be role models, they should use up-to-date Turkish and have superior subject knowledge."

PST9: "Student teachers are students and are not expected to have high-level qualifications. If they enjoy doing this profession, they will learn even the smallest details about it and as they gain experience, they will incorporate all the features required by the profession."

PST6: "A person who can observe well, is tolerant and patient."

PST5: "He/she should avoid behaviors that may humiliate students. In addition, he/she should be an exemplary individual who has commitment and belief in his/her profession."

PSST10: "A person who loves teaching, uses learning skillfully with the constructivist approach, and can plan their classes properly and divide them according to the needs of the students, produce activities, respect students, and know their developmental expectations."

ST4: "She should be an idealistic teacher and be able to use her knowledge"

ST3: "They should be open to new methods that emerge over time."

ST5: "They should treat each student equally and prepare before starting the lesson."

ST: "Being aware of the honor and value of the profession, seeing teaching as a service rather than a profession, having a conscience, seeing teaching practice as a stepping stone for self-improvement rather than a duty are the characteristics that a good trainee teacher should have."

ST5: "They should love their job and children, make good observations, and be open to learning."

The third question of the research is divided into 2 sub-sections. The first of these questions is as follows:

"What should be the following characteristics of a good pre-service heritage language teacher?" (Write the answers to this question in the relevant section according to the characteristics given below) Findings related to the question "Physical appearance:

A total of 5 teachers and 15 pre-service teachers responded to this question.

Table 5

What should be the following characteristics of a good pre-service mother tongue teacher? (Write the answers to this question in the relevant section according to the characteristics given below) Physical appearance:

Pre-service teacher		Service teacher	
Category	Participants Code	Category	Participants Code
Clothing	PST4, PST5, PST7, PST10	Clothing	ST3, ST4, ST5
Personal Care	PST1, PST2	Personal Care	ST1, ST2
Gestures and facial expressions	PST3, PST6, PST8		
Other	PST9		

As can be seen in Table 3, the majority of the participants consider clothing and personal care as features that a good HLT candidate should pay attention to. Some of the answers given in this context are as follows.

PST4: "They should dress by the dress code and school rules."

PST2: "He/she should be a clean and well-groomed person who gives confidence to the students."

PST9: "A person who is cheerful, smiling, has a positive and moderate attitude, and reflects this in his/her gestures and facial expressions."

PST8: "Due to her/his profession, she/he should pay attention to her/his clothing, her/his diction should be appropriate, and she/he should be in an active rather than a passive position."

ST5: "She should dress neatly and in a way befitting a teacher. I think she should not dress in an exaggerated style."

ST1: "I do not find it appropriate to put physical appearance into a certain mold"

The answers given in part 2 are as follows:

"What should be the following characteristics of a good candidate mother tongue teacher?" (Please write your answers to this question in the relevant section according to the characteristics given below) Pedagogical knowledge:" question.

A total of 5 teachers and 15 pre-service teachers responded to this question.

Table 6

What should be the following characteristics of a good pre-service heritage language teacher? (Please write your answers to this question in the relevant section according to the characteristics given below) Pedagogical knowledge:"

Pre-service teacher		Service teacher	
Category	Participants Code	Category	Participants Code
Knowing the stages of development	PST3, PST4	Knowing the stages of development	ST3, ST4
Recognition of individual differences	PST5, PST9, PST10	Recognition of individual differences	-
Application of knowledge	PST1, PST7	Application of knowledge	ST1, ST5
Psychological awareness	PST2, PST6, PST8	Psychological awareness	ST2

As seen in Table 4, the majority of the participants think that a good candidate mother tongue teacher should be competent in knowing the stages of development and applying the knowledge. Some of the answers given in this context are as follows.

PST3: "He/she should know the developmental period and human psychology well, understand how to behave, and know the mental and physical development of a child."

PST5: "They should know the age range of the class. Accordingly, he/she should know the learning levels of the students and how they can learn. They should have prior knowledge about the class level."

PST1: "They should be a teacher who is aware that education is not only at school but also in all areas of life."

Therefore, they should be able to apply their pedagogical knowledge to all areas of life."

PST6: "They should be pedagogically competent and should be interested not only in students' academic achievements but also in their psychological conditions."

ST2: "What is more important than knowing is to convey it correctly and pedagogical knowledge makes this possible."

# **Discussion, Conclusion & Suggestions**

According to the results of Table 1, most of the participants consider professional development and advancement, communication, dedication, and belief skills as the characteristics that a good HLT candidate should have. Based on the studies conducted by Rusu, Şoitu & Panaite, (2012); Singh et al., (2021); Çetin, (2001); and McKnight et al. (2016), we see that the results obtained in this study are parallel and the results supported. This circumstance fosters a prevalent perspective wherein the conception of an exemplary candidate for the role of a mother tongue teacher encompasses a strong emphasis on comprehensive training, with particular accentuation on the cultivation of adept communication skills. Furthermore, the prominence accorded to the quantity and caliber of initiatives such as coursework, extracurricular activities, and theatrical performances designed to enhance communicative proficiencies within the undergraduate educational framework becomes increasingly salient. First of all, the candidate's mother tongue teacher should be able to express herself/himself. Then they should be able to communicate effectively with their students.

As can be seen in Table 2, the majority of the participants consider beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes towards the profession as the characteristics that a good pre-service mother tongue teacher should have. These results show that a pre-service mother tongue teacher should believe in the teaching profession (Douna et al., 2015). The way the pre-service mother tongue teacher behaves towards the students was also found to be an important result. In this regard, according to the opinions of both pre-service mother tongue teachers and mother tongue teachers, the teacher should be very careful in his/her behavior towards the students. Conversely, the establishment of a partition between the student and the educator is imminent. It is noteworthy to underscore that instructors who exhibit affability, perceptiveness, and concurrently, empathy, are more likely to foster harmonious and productive interactions with their students. The assertions made by Çetin (2001), Boonen et al. (2014), and Ko and Sammons (2013) corroborate and accentuate these thematic elements in their respective scholarly investigations.

According to Table 3, the majority of the participants think that clothing and personal care are the characteristics that a good candidate mother tongue teacher should pay attention to. When the answers given by the participants are analyzed, it is noteworthy to be formal, especially in terms of clothing. It is seen that well-groomed and clean teachers will give more confidence to the students and are important for communication to be established. In addition, the ability to use body language effectively is one of the prominent results. Within the sphere of the teaching profession in Turkey, there exists no uniform standardization regarding attire, allowing educators a degree

of latitude in their sartorial choices, provided that their selections remain within the bounds of professional decorum. This particular facet of a teacher's appearance has been underscored by Pozo-Muñoz et al. (2000) in their scholarly investigation.

According to Table 4, the majority of the participants think that a good candidate mother tongue teacher should be competent in knowing the stages of development and applying the knowledge. Pedagogical formation competence is one of the most important issues for the teaching profession. As in almost every field, the ability of an individual to explain what he/she knows in the right way is even more prominent in the teaching profession. A teacher or a preservice teacher may know a subject very well, but if he/she does not have the skills to explain it, he/she is considered incomplete in terms of pedagogical formation. Singh et al. (2021); Harley et al. (2000); McKnight et al. (2016); Çetin (2001); Sztejnberg et al. (2004); Arnon and Reichel (2007); (Bullock, 2015) emphasized teachers' ability to teach in their studies. The precise and efficacious transmission of knowledge assumes a paramount role in the skill set of educators. In light of these data, the study delineates a compelling dimension concerning the significance of individual variances and the cultivation of psychological acumen by prospective mother-tongue teachers.

- 1- Pre-service mother tongue teachers' deficiencies in communication skills should be overcome. Necessary changes should be made in the undergraduate curriculum and individual differences should be taken into consideration.
- 2- It is important for pre-service mother tongue teachers to be careful about dressing for communication with students. At this point, a standard for dressing can be established.
- 3- No matter how good the field knowledge of the mother tongue pre-service teacher is, pedagogical competence should be given importance. He/she should take the necessary precautions at the point of transferring knowledge and recognizing the other person.

#### **Ethic**

The approval of the ethics committee regarding the compliance of the research with the ethical rules was obtained from the Atatürk University Legal Consultancy Office with the decision dated 19/03/2021 and numbered 29202147-300-E.2100068931.

Participants participated in this study voluntarily. A form was signed by the participants stating that they participated in the study.

#### **Author Contributions**

All authors contributed in the same proportion.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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