

# The Relationship between Work Engagement and Organizational Trust: A Study of Elementary School Teachers in Turkey

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## Abstract

The relationships based on trust which are established by a teacher with a school's internal stakeholders can provide greater engagement in work. Teachers who are engaged in their jobs can be decisive in turning their schools into successful and effective schools. It is important to research the relationship between work engagement and organizational trust in teachers since these are two significant variables affecting the performance and productivity of employees. The main purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between elementary school teachers' sense/understanding of work engagement and their understanding of organizational trust. The research is a correlational research study. Its environment consisted of 4016 elementary school teachers. 559 of the teachers were included in the sample. In the research the "Utrecht Work Engagement Scale" and "Multipurpose T Scale" were appropriately/favourably used. In this research, confirmatory factor analysis and reliability analyses were repeated in order to validate the structure described in the scale. In the research, it is concluded that there is a positive, high level of significant relationship between participant teachers' perceptions of work engagement and their perceptions of organizational trust.

**Keywords:** work engagement, organizational trust, elementary school teachers, teachers' perceptions

## 1. Introduction

Work has an important place in human life since it is the basic tool through which needs are met and the field of activity to which a large part of the day is allocated. Work engagement is one of the factors that affect an employee's performance and productivity at work. According to Bakker et al. (2008), work engagement means a "positive, fulfilling, effectively motivating state of work-related subjective well-being". Work engagement is an important index for the quality of working life. In addition, it is an important factor in understanding behaviors such as labor transfer, reluctance to work and absenteeism (Aryee, 1994). Thus, it is possible to say that work engagement in employees is a very important factor in terms of the performance and productivity of the employee.

Engagement is "love, respect and being close to and loyal to someone" (TLI (Turkish Language Institute) Dictionary, 2016). Moreover, it is a commitment that an individual shows to another individual, an opinion, an institution or something she/he sees as greater than her/himself as well as an obligation that she/he has to fulfil (Col, 2004). Work engagement can be defined as the cognitive belief state of the psychological identification of the employee with her/his job (Kanungo, 1982). Employees' psychological identification with the job ensures that they become energetic, effective and willing and fulfil the requirements of their profession while performing activities related to their work (Maslach & Leiter 1997; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001). Believing in the work and accepting the values and objectives of the work is important in terms of work engagement (Gunluk, 2010). Work engagement can be seen as an important factor in increasing the performance of the employee and, thereby, the organization's level of efficiency.

Work engagement does not have the same meaning as organizational engagement. Employees can feel engaged not only with their organizations but also in their jobs (Engelberg-Moston et al., 2009). Work engagement can be affected by the employees' positive attitudes towards their jobs and organizations. Having a low level of intent to leave their job, job satisfaction and organizational engagement are among these attitudes (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001, Schaufeli, Taris & Van Rhenen, 2008). Work engagement is also related to positive organizational behaviours such as personal initiative and motivation to learn, taking on additional roles and planning (Sonnentag, 2003; Salanova, Agut &

Peiró, 2005). Employees' trust in their organizations can also be included in these factors.

It can be said that trust is the determinant of good relationships and harmony between people. Trust is "a feeling of believing and engaging without fear, hesitation or suspicion" (TLI (Turkish Language Institution) Dictionary, 2016). Trust means that one side in a relationship is confident that the other side will not exploit his or her weakness (Korczynski, 2003). In other words, it means expecting positive behaviours and attitudes from other individuals (Kramer, 1999; Costa, 2003). Trust is a human feeling nourished and improved by mutual discussion, commitment and action, and is a concept based on honesty and integrity in the most general sense (Ayaz Yilmaz, 2005; Demircan & Ceylan, 2003). Stakeholders in an organization also need to trust each other. Organizational trust is important for both stakeholders and organizations because problems will be encountered in attaining goals in an organization that has trust issues (Yilmaz, 2004). Trust forms the basis of harmonious and productive relationships, effective cooperation, and communication within the organization (Baier, 1986). In such an organizational environment, the performance and the productivity of the employee will increase. Therefore, it can be said that organizational trust is a variable that determines the organization's level of effectiveness.

Relationships that a teacher builds on trust with the other internal stakeholders in the school can provide a feeling of engagement with work. Teachers who are engaged in their work can also be decisive for transforming their schools into successful and efficient schools. In the accessible literature, there are no studies researching the relationship between teachers' perceptions of work engagement and perceptions of organizational trust, even though there are studies examining teachers' perception of work engagement and perceptions of organizational trust separately, or the relationship between work engagement and organizational trust and other variables (Ozer vd., 2006; Yilmaz, 2006a; Yilmaz, 2006b; Polat, 2007; Samanci, 2007; Cokluk-Bokeoglu & Yilmaz, 2008; Tak & Ciftcioglu, 2008; Arslan, 2009; Cerit, 2009; Yuksel, 2009; Bakker & Bal, 2010; Zayim, 2010; Bas & Sentürk, 2011; Caglar, 2011; Gokduman, 2012; Ozturk & Aydin, 2012; Yildiz, 2013; Ayele, 2014; Shukla, 2014; Egriboyun, 2014; Yilmaz, 2015; Sancak, 2016; Tumkaya & Ustu, 2016). It is important to research the relationship between work engagement and organizational trust in teachers since they are two important variables that affect employees' performance and productivity. The main purpose of this study is thus to reveal the relationship between elementary school teachers' perceptions of work engagement and perceptions of organizational trust. In accordance with this purpose, the statement of the problem is: "Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary school teachers' perceptions of work engagement and their perceptions of organizational trust?"

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Research Design*

The research is a correlational research study aiming to determine the relationship between elementary school teachers' perceptions of work engagement and their perceptions of organizational trust. Correlational research is research in which the relationship between two or more variables is examined without interfering with these variables in any way, and in which the relationship is described in the general sense (Buyukozturk et al., 2010; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

### *2.2 Sample*

The research environment consisted of 4016 elementary school teachers who work in Kocasinan, Melikgazi and Talas districts of Kayseri (a city in Turkey). 559 of 4016 teachers, all of whom had an equal and independent possibility of being selected in the study, were included in the sample by using the simple random sampling method (Buyukozturk et al., 2010). The sample is based on a 95% confidence interval and 0.05 error.

### *2.3 Data Collection Tool and Application*

In the research the "Utrecht Work Engagement Scale" and "Multipurpose T Scale" were used.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was developed by Schaufeli and colleagues (2002) to assess employees' work engagement. It was carried out on two different samples consisting of 314 university students and 619 employees. It consists of 3 factors, "vigor, dedication and adoption/engagement", and 17 items. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Eryilmaz and Dogan (2012). Confirmatory Factor Analyses were carried out and compared as a one-factor and three-factor and it was concluded that the three-factor structure achieved a higher level of compliance. The item total correlations were between 0.48 and 0.71. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was 0.94 for the whole scale; it varied between 0.84 and 0.87 for its sub-factors. As a result of two implementations with 31 employees with a one month break to determine the test-retest reliability of the scale, it was determined that the reliability coefficient was 0.85 and the test-retest reliability coefficient varied between 0.69 and 0.89 for its sub-factors. The scale was scored as follows: "Certainly Not Appropriate": 1; "Not appropriate": 2; "Slightly Appropriate": 3; "Appropriate": 4; and "Completely Appropriate": 5. There was a reverse coded item in the scale. High scores obtained from the scale show that engagement is high.

In this research, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and reliability analysis were repeated to validate the structure described above. CFA was applied to demonstrate the validity of the structure with the aim of evaluating whether the 3-factor 17-item structure of the scale was valid or not. In the first CFA, it was found that there was no item having a statistically insignificant t value.

Fit Index Values for “Utrecht Work Engagement Scale” are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Fit index values related to reliability study of Utrecht Work Engagement scale

Fit Index	$\chi^2/ (df)$	RMSEA	SRMR	TLI/NNFI	CFI	NFI
	410.30/(112)=3.66	0.069	0.060	0.99	0.99	0.99

When the RMSEA and SRMR values are checked in Table 1, it is seen that they are below the 0.08 critical value and this shows that they have an acceptable fit index (Kline, 2010). It is also seen that CFI, NFI and TLI/NNFI values have an excellent fit index (Sumer, 2000). When the fit index values are examined, it is again seen that measurement model is validated, which was established with the total Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and its sub-factors. The CFA model for the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale is presented in Figure 1.

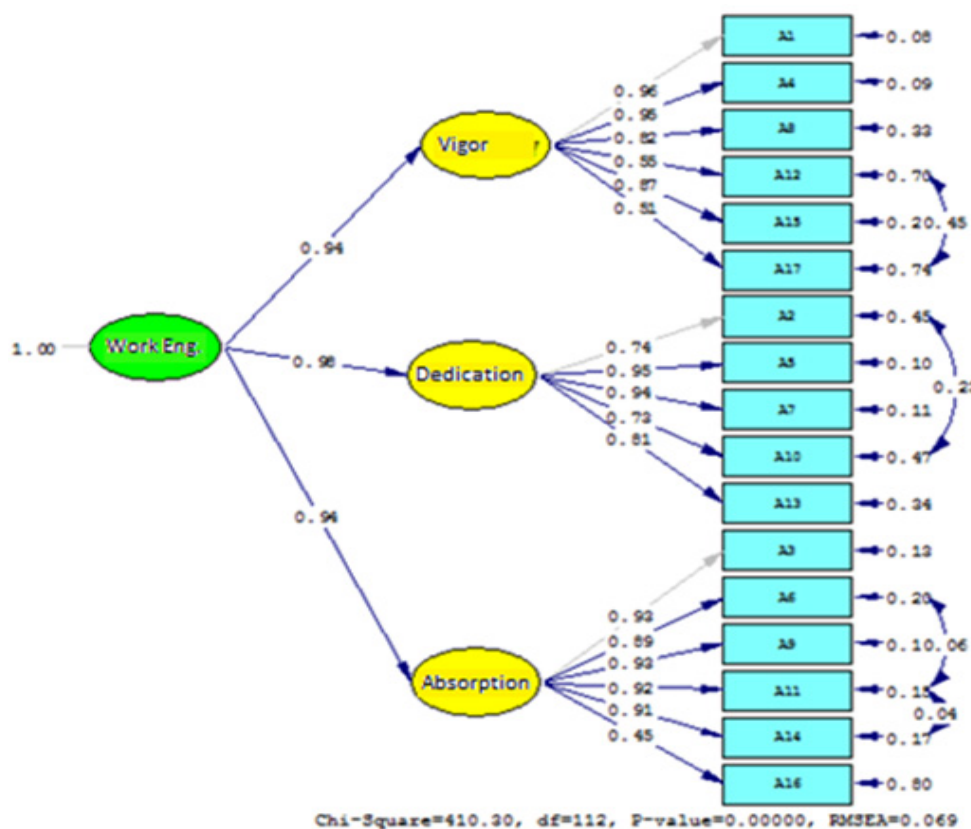


Figure 1. 2<sup>nd</sup> level 3-factor CFA model for Utrecht Work Engagement scale

Reliability analysis results of the total Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and its sub-factors are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Cronbach Alpha reliability results of total Utrecht Work Engagement scale and its sub-factors

	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	Total Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
Number of Items	6	5	6	17
Cronbach $\alpha$	.90	.91	.91	.96

Examining Table 2, it is understood that the total Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and its sub-factors have a high level of reliability and are sufficient because the Cronbach Alpha values are between 0.90 and 1.00 (Tezbasaran, 1997; Ozdamar, 1999).

The “Multipurpose T Scale” developed by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003), which attempts to describe how teachers perceive the organizational trust level at schools, and which was adapted to Turkish by Ozer et al. (2006), was applied to 156 teachers working in a high school. It consists of 3 factors, “trust in colleagues”, “trust in students and parents” and “trust in head teacher/principal” and 20 items. It was concluded that the reliability coefficients for the factors vary between 0.70 and 0.87 and the reliability coefficient for the total scale was calculated as 0.86.

In this research, confirmatory factor analysis and reliability analyses were repeated to validate the structure described above. CFA was applied to demonstrate the validity of the structure with the aim of evaluating whether the 3-factor 20-item structure of the scale was valid or not. In the first CFA, it was found that there was no item having a statistically insignificant t value.

Fit index values of the Multipurpose T Scale are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Fit index values related to the reliability study of the Multipurpose T Scale

Fit Index	$\chi^2/ (df)$	RMSEA	SRMR	TLI/NNFI	CFI	NFI
	1683.75/(661)=2.55	0.068	0.064	0.96	0.97	0.96

When the RMSEA and SRMR values are checked in Table 3, it is seen that they are below the 0.08 critical value and this shows that they have an acceptable fit index (Kline, 2010). It is also seen that CFI, NFI and TLI/NNFI values have an excellent fit index (Sumer, 2000). When the fit index values are examined, it is again seen that measurement model is valid, which was established with the total Multipurpose T Scale and its sub-factors. The CFA model for Multipurpose T Scale is presented in Figure 2.

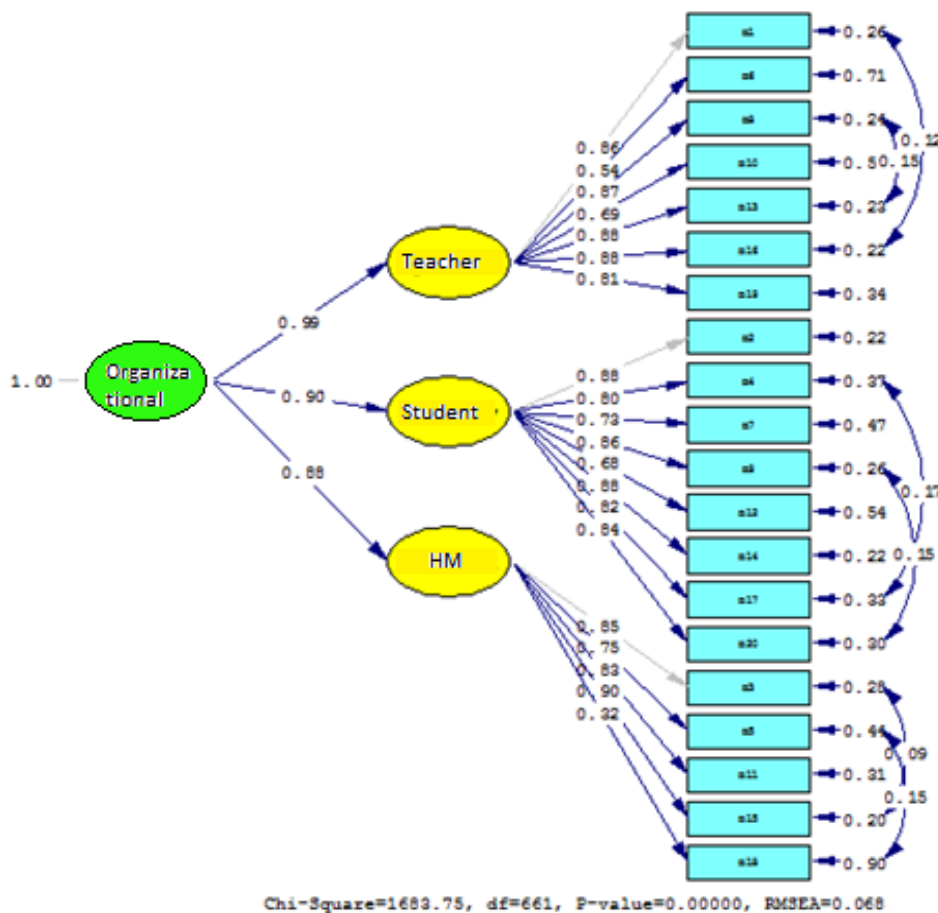


Figure 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> level 3-factor CFA model for Multipurpose T Scale

Reliability analysis results of total Multipurpose T Scale and its sub-factors are seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Cronbach Alpha Reliability Results of Total Multipurpose T Scale and Its Sub-Factors

	Trust in Colleagues	Trust in Students and Parents	Trust in Headteacher	Total Multipurpose T Scale
Number of Items	7	8	5	20
Cronbach $\alpha$	.97	.91	.97	.97

Examining Table 4, it is understood that total Multipurpose T Scale and its sub-factors have a high level of reliability and are sufficient because the Cronbach Alpha values are between 0.90 and 1.00 (Tezbasaran, 1997; Ozdamar, 1999).

## 2.4 Analysis

The statistical package program SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Version 21.0) was used for statistical analyses.

Second level 3-factor confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out to find out the validity of the two scales for the new participant group, which were previously validated and found reliable for the purpose of the research. The chi-square statistic, error indexes (RMSEA, SRMR), fit indexes (NFI, NNFI, CFI) were used to determine the validity of the measurement model.

Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis was used to evaluate the reliability coefficients of the total of the scales and their sub-factors.

The normality of the score distributions obtained from the scales and their sub-factors was evaluated by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test and the homogeneity by the Levene Homogeneity Test and it was found that the p value obtained for all values was above the critical value, 0.05, and the score distribution was normal and test variations were homogeneous. It is understood that the measurement process was at an equally spaced scale level and continuous. As a result of the analyses, it is seen that parametric test assumptions were obtained.

The correlation between the scores obtained for the total of the scales and their sub-factors was examined by Pearson Correlation Analysis.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Elementary Teachers' Perception Levels of Organizational Trust and Work Engagement

Table 5. Descriptive statistics related to elementary school teachers' perception levels of organizational trust and work engagement

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Standard Deviation
Organizational Trust	559	20.00	99.00	67.59 (3.38)	15.73
Work Engagement	559	17.00	85.00	63.88 (3.76)	12.84

(Median Based on Item  $67.59/20=3.38$ ;  $63.88/17=3.76$ )

Criteria: 1-1.80 = very low; 1.81-2.61 = low; 2.62-3.42 = moderate; 3.43-4.23 = high; 4.24-5.00 = very high

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that the elementary school teachers' perception levels regarding organizational trust was 67.59 (15.73). Considering the score of 3.38 obtained as a result of dividing the teachers' perceptions of organizational trust into a number of items, it is found that organizational level perceptions are at a "moderate" level (2.62-3.42).

It is seen that elementary school teachers' perception levels regarding work engagement is 63.88 (12.84). Considering the score of 3.76 obtained as a result of dividing the teachers' perception levels regarding work engagement into a number of items, it is found that teachers' perceptions regarding work engagement are at a "high" level (3.43-4.23).

### 3.2 The Relationship between Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Organizational Trust and Perceptions of Work Engagement

Table 6. Pearson correlation analysis results of the relationship between elementary school teachers' perceptions of organizational trust and perceptions of work engagement

		Total Work Engagement Scale
Organizational Trust Perceptions	r	.71(**)
	p	.000
	r <sup>2</sup> (Explanation Variance)	0.50

\*\*p<.01

When Table 6 is examined, it is seen that there is a positive, high level of significant relationship between elementary school teachers' perceptions of organizational trust and perceptions of work engagement.

### 3.3 The Relationship between Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Trust in Their Colleagues and Perceptions of Work Engagement Related to the Total Work Engagement Scale and Its Sub-Factors "Vigor, Dedication and Absorption"

Table 7. Pearson correlation analysis results of the relationship between elementary school teachers' perceptions of trust in their colleagues and perceptions related to the total work engagement scale and its sub-factors

		Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	Total Work Engagement Scale
Trust in Colleagues	r	.65(**)	.63(**)	.67(**)	.68(**)
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000
	r <sup>2</sup> (Explanation Variance)	0.42	0.40	0.45	0.46

\*\*p<.01

Examining Table 7, it is seen that there is a significant relationship which is positive at above a moderate level between teachers' perceptions of trust in their colleagues and perceptions of vigor according to  $r_{(559)}=.65$ ,  $p=.000$ ; there is a significant relationship which is positive at above the moderate level between teachers' perceptions of trust in their colleagues and perceptions of dedication according to  $r_{(559)}=.63$ ,  $p=.000$ ; there is a significant positive relationship which is close to a high level between teachers' perceptions of trust in their colleagues and perceptions of absorption according to  $r_{(559)}=.67$ ,  $p=.000$ ; there is a significant relationship which is positive at close to a high level between teachers' perceptions of trust in their colleagues and perceptions of work engagement according to  $r_{(559)}=.68$ ,  $p=.000$ .

### 3.4 The Relationship between Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Trust in Students and Parents and Perceptions of Work Engagement Related to the Total Work Engagement Scale and Its Sub-factors "Vigor, Dedication and Absorption"

Table 8. Pearson correlation analysis results of the relationship between elementary school teachers' perceptions of trust in students and parents and perceptions related to total work engagement scale and its sub-factors

		Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	Total Work Engagement Scale
Trust in Students and Parents	R	.56(**)	.58(**)	.61(**)	.61(**)
	P	.000	.000	.000	.000
	r <sup>2</sup> (Explanation Variance)	0.31	0.34	0.37	0.37

\*\*p<.01

When Table 8 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant relationship which is positive at a moderate level between teachers' perceptions of trust in students and parents and perceptions of vigor according to  $r_{(559)}=.56$ ,  $p=.000$ ; there is a significant relationship which is positive at a moderate level between teachers' perceptions of trust in students and parents and perceptions of dedication according to  $r_{(559)}=.58$ ,  $p=.000$ ; there is a significant relationship which is positive at a little bit above a moderate level between teachers' perceptions of trust in students and parents and perceptions of absorption according to  $r_{(559)}=.61$ ,  $p=.000$ ; there is a significant relationship which is positive at a little bit above a moderate level between teachers' perceptions of trust in students and parents and perceptions of work engagement according to  $r_{(559)}=.61$ ,  $p=.000$ .

### 3.5 The Relationship Between Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Trust in Head teacher and Perceptions of Work Engagement Related to The Total Work Engagement Scale and Its Sub-Factors Vigor, Dedication and Absorption"

Table 9. Pearson correlation analysis results of the relationship between elementary school teachers' perceptions of trust in head teacher and perceptions related to total work engagement scale and its sub-factors

		Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	Total Work Engagement Scale
Trust in Headteacher	R	.68 (**)	.57(**)	.67(**)	.67(**)
	P	.000	.000	.000	.000
	r <sup>2</sup> (Explanation Variance)	0.46	0.32	0.45	0.45

\*\*p<.01

When Table 9 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant relationship which is positive at close to a high level between teachers' perceptions of trust in the head teacher and perceptions of vigor according to  $r_{(559)}=.68$ ,  $p=.000$ ; there is a significant relationship which is positive at a moderate level between teachers' perceptions of trust in the head teacher and perceptions of dedication according to  $r_{(559)}=.57$ ,  $p=.000$ ; there is a significant relationship which is positive at close to a high level between teachers' perceptions of trust in the head teacher and perceptions of absorption according to  $r_{(559)}=.67$ ,  $p=.000$ ; there is a significant relationship which is positive at close to a high level between teachers' perceptions of trust in the head teacher and perceptions of work engagement according to  $r_{(559)}=.67$ ,  $p=.000$ .

## 4. Discussion, Result and Suggestions

### 4.1 Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine the relationship between elementary school teachers' perceptions of work engagement and perceptions of organizational trust. In the national and international literature, there are no studies examining the relationship between work engagement and organizational trust in teachers and this was the main reason for conducting this study. However, it was determined that there is research examining the relationship between work engagement and organizational trust in teachers and other concepts and variables in the accessible literature. Among this research, in a study in which Tschannen-Moran (1998) examined the relationship between trust and cooperation in primary schools, it was determined that trust is a factor that directly affects the level of cooperation between teachers, parents and students. In a study in which he examined the relationship between organizational change and organizational trust in schools, Lenz (2006) emphasizes that good communication between teachers and teachers' trust in the system of education will make work to reform educational institutions more successful. In research conducted by Caglar (2011), it was determined that there was a low level of negative relationship between organizational trust and level of burnout. In Yildiz's (2013) research, it was found that there was a positive, high level of relationship between teachers' perceptions of organizational justice and perceptions of organizational trust related to their schools. In research by Egriboyun (2014), it was found that there is a positive moderate level of relationship between teachers' perceptions of organizational trust and perceptions of organizational commitment. In the research conducted by Yilmaz (2015), it was determined that in a general sense there was a positive and weak relationship between teachers' perceptions of trust in the school and understanding of school consciousness.

In the research conducted by Tak and Ciftcioglu (2008), which is one of the research studies examining the relationship between work engagement and other variables in teachers, it was found that there is no direct causal relationship between teachers' professional commitment and intent to remain in the organization. In the research conducted by Shukla (2014), it was determined that there was a positive very high level of relationship between primary school teachers' work engagement and job satisfaction levels. In the research that Tummyaka and Ustu (2016) conducted on primary school teachers, it emerged that there was a negative high level of significant relationship between professional commitment and all dimensions of burnout.

The result that the participant teachers' perceptions of organizational trust are at a "moderate" level is consistent with the results of some studies in the literature. In the research conducted by Ozer et al. (2006), Samanci (2007), Cokluk-Bokeoglu and Yilmaz (2008), Cerit (2009) and Yilmaz (2015), it was found that teachers' organizational trust was at a moderate level. In the research carried out by Yilmaz (2006a), Yilmaz (2006b), Polat (2007), Yuksel (2009); Arslan (2009), Artuksi (2009), Bas and Senturk (2011) Ozturk and Aydin (2012), Yildiz (2013) and Aydug (2014), it was found that teachers' organizational trust was at a high level.

Teachers' organizational trust related to their schools should be at a greater than moderate level because a high level of organizational trust will raise the performance and the productivity of the teacher and that factor will bring success with it (Samanci, 2006). When there are teachers who have high level of confidence in their schools and possess shared expectations and goals, this can impact positively on the quality of education and the effectiveness of the school (Hoy; Tarter; Witkoskie, 1992; Tarter; Sabo; Hoy, 1995; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Relations based on trust in an organization can create employees who trust in their headteachers and organizations, engage in their organizations emotionally, define themselves through their organizations, achieve job satisfaction and never consider leaving their organization (Demircan & Ceylan, 2003). The high level of trust that teachers have in their organizations and that organizations have in their stakeholders will keep performance and productivity high and help teachers work in a committed way; this will raise the quality of education.

The result that participant teachers' perceptions of work engagement are at a "high" level is consistent with the results of other research in the literature. In the research they conducted, Tummyaka and Ustu found that teachers' work engagement was at a high level.

Society has handed the responsibility of preparing new generations for the future to teachers, through the teaching-learning process. Teachers who are engaged in their work should take different innovative teaching methods into consideration for effective learning and internalize these. However, only teachers who feel engaged in their work are able to consider and internalize these methods (Shukla, 2014). Work engagement is also a requirement for professional success (Goulet & Singh, 2002). It is possible to state that the most innovative and open-minded teachers are those who have a high level of work engagement.

In this research, it has been determined that there is a positive, high level of significant relationship between elementary school teachers' perceptions of work engagement and perceptions of organizational trust. Thus, it is possible to say that a teacher with a high level of organizational trust will be more likely to be engaged in her/his work and that teachers

should have a high level of organizational trust to have a high level of work engagement.

#### 4.2 Result

This research concluded that there is a positive, high level of significant relationship between participant teachers' perceptions of work engagement and perceptions of organizational trust.

In the research, the findings below were obtained with relation to the participant teachers:

- Their perceptions of work engagement are at a high level and their perceptions of organizational trust are at a moderate level
- There is a significant relationship which is positive and close to a high level between their perceptions of trust in their colleagues and their perceptions of work engagement; there is a significant relationship which is positive and above a moderate level between their perceptions of vigor and perceptions of dedication; there is a significant relationship which is positive and close to a high level between their perceptions of absorption.
- There is a significant relationship which is positive and a little bit above a moderate level between their perceptions of trust in students and parents and perceptions of work engagement; there is a significant relationship which is positive and at a moderate level between their perceptions of vigor and perceptions of dedication; there is a significant relationship which is positive and a little bit above a moderate level between their perceptions of absorption.
- There is a significant relationship which is positive and close to a high level between their perceptions of trust in the headteacher and perceptions of work engagement; there is a significant relationship which is positive and close to a high level between their perceptions of vigor and perceptions of absorption; there is a significant relationship which is positive and at a moderate level between their perceptions of dedication.

#### 4.3 Suggestions

- Studies could be conducted for determining the variables affecting the perceptions of work engagement and organizational trust in teachers. The reasons why the perception of organizational trust in teachers decreases could be researched.
- The same relational research could be conducted on primary school and high school teachers.
- Research could be conducted to examine the relationship between perceptions of work engagement and organizational trust in teachers in terms of demographic variables.
- The number of research studies related to the perception of work engagement in teachers could be increased.

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