



## Effect of the “Thank You-T” gratitude education program (TYGEP-T) on gratitude levels of Turkish elementary school teachers<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study is to develop and examine the effectiveness of the “Thank You-T” Gratitude Education Program (TYGEP-T) for Turkish elementary school teachers. TYGEP-T aims to contribute elementary school teachers to develop their skills to recognize and express gratitude and review the school-based activities they can do to make gratitude a part of their “school culture”. A pre-test, post-test, and follow-up experimental design with one treatment and one none-treatment control group were used to examine the effectiveness of the program, with a sample of 23 elementary school teachers. Results revealed that after the TYGEP-T a significant difference appeared between the total gratitude scores of the experimental group and the control group. This difference disappeared in the follow-up test. Moreover, in this study in a more different way than the former studies, the effects of the program on the sub-dimensions of gratitude, Lack of Sense of Deprivation (LOSD), Simple Appreciation (SA) and Appreciation of Others (AO), were examined. In terms of subscale scores, while the program is considered effective in increasing LOSD and AO scores, permanency was only observed in AO scores.

**Keywords:** Gratitude, teachers, gratitude education program

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### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, one of the fields progressively arousing interest in the literature of psychology is the approach of *Positive Psychology*. This approach named as *the “Science of Happiness”* is such a field of study that has a different perspective on human behavior than the traditional psychology trends (Seligman, 2007) and that focuses on those theories and research that make one’s life worth living (Noble and McGrath, 2008). In this field of study, it is focused on people’s positive emotions, thoughts, behaviors and lives instead of their negative emotions, thoughts, behaviors and experiences, and their innate and/or developable character strengths have an important place (Kraakauer, Ruscio, Froh and Bono, 2017; Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson, 2005).

Thanks to the fact that *the positive psychology movement* has also found its place in the field of education under the name of “positive education understanding”, the tendency focusing on students’ and their families’ existing strengths has started to supersede the position of the tendency in the traditional approaches that focuses on students’ and their families’ problems and that seeks solutions for them. While positive education understanding promotes the positive emotions, such as happiness, optimism, hope, subjective well-being (Terjesen, Jacofsky, Froh and Diguseppe, 2004) and the strengths, such as honesty, courage and devoutness (Terjesen et al., 2004), it prevents or decreases problematic behaviors, and thus increases positive behaviors, such as trust in school, school satisfaction, school commitment and motivation (Kraakauer et al., 2017). In this sense, the inclusion of *positive education understanding* in schools’ teaching and guidance programs and practices serves as a preventive function at schools.

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One of the basic elements of positive education understanding is gratitude. In the literature of gratitude, gratitude is mentioned among positive character strengths (Park, Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Seligman et al., 2005) as well as often being defined as a tendency, emotion, mood, attitude, form of coping with difficulties or a moral concept (Emmons and Crumpler, 2000; Emmons and Hill, 2001; Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Emmons, McCullough and Tsang, 2007; Froh, Sefick and Emmons, 2008; McCullough, T-Sang and Emmons, 2004; Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Pohling, Diessner and Strobel, 2018; Sansone and Sansone, 2010).

The person feeling gratitude experiences positive emotions in the face of a financial or spiritual gift or support that he/she received (Emmons, 2009). This person is aware of the fact that he/she was supported or that he/she received support, and knows that he/she received benefit from it, and realizes that the supporter intentionally acts for his/her favor, and appreciates this support coming from another person or being for his/her favor (Emmons, 2009; Froh et al., 2008). In this respect, it is mentioned in the literature that there are three components of gratitude: *intention*, *cost* and *benefit*. The component of intention refers to intentional benefit to opposite party, and the component of benefit refers to giving something, such as labor, money, time, etc., to opposite party while gaining favor to him/her, and the component of benefit refers to the value attached to the benefit provided by other party (Henderson, 2009).

In recent years, in many studies made in relation to the components, development and benefits of gratitude, it is mentioned that there are many benefits of gratitude on people's emotional, social and physical well-being (Arıcıoğlu, 2016; Ayten, Gülüşan, Sevin and Eyyüp, 2012; Bausert, Froh, Bono, Rose and Rose, 2018; Emmons, 2009; Emmons, Froh and Rose, 2018; Emmons et al., 2007; Emmons and Shelton, 2005; Froh et al., 2014; Gottlieb and Froh, 2018; Göcen, 2015; İlbay and Sariçam, 2015; Pohling et al., 2018; Oğuz Duran and Tan, 2013). Therefore, gratitude is seen as one of the building blocks that plays a role in human happiness (Ceaser, 2011; Emmons, 2009; Emmons and Shelton, 2005; Gottlieb and Froh, 2018; Solomon, 2004). In addition to this importance, as it was also emphasized in various studies that the development of gratitude on people started from the early stages of life, the environmental impacts, such as family, organization etc., become important in the development of gratitude (Beckner and Smenner, 1986; Emmons and Shelton, 2005; Greif and Gleason, 1980), and the studies regarding gratitude education to be provided at such organizations gain importance as well.

Considering that gratitude is a trait that can be developed from early ages (Klein, 1999) and is such an emotion, mood, attitude and character strength that can be taught to students at schools and that may become a part of organizational culture (Griffith, 2018; Krakauer et al., 2017; Oğuz Duran, 2015), elementary schools become the ideal organizations for the development of gratitude, and elementary school teachers have big duties in this sense. In elementary schools, educational activities are carried out to contribute to the well-being of students by supporting their physical, emotional, social and moral development. Elementary school teachers at this level work with students both in an early developmental period as having an opportunity to interact with them for a longer period of time compared to the teachers at other levels. For this reason, elementary school teachers have an important position in terms of supporting their students in all areas of development.

First of all, the gratitude levels of the teachers, who have a critical role in the development of positive traits, like gratitude, on students, should be at the level as to set an example in this subject and to provide development/change on their students. In literature, it is seen that there are various benefits in increasing the gratitude levels of teachers (Chan, 2010; Chin-Ting and Yin Yeh, 2014; Howells and Cumming, 2011). For example, as teachers' gratitude levels increase, their trust in school, school satisfaction, and school loyalty increase (Chin-Ting and Yin Yeh, 2014), and their interpersonal relations develop (Howells and Cumming, 2011). Moreover, gratitude helps teachers cope more effectively with the problems and stress that they experience at schools (Chan, 2010). Besides, it is found that teachers with high gratitude levels are happier, and that they find themselves more successful, and that they experience less burnout and emotional fatigue (Chan, 2010).

It is known that the studies to increase gratitude at school have positive effects on teaching. For example, it is stated in the literature that gratitude practices increase students' participation in classes (Howells and Cumming, 2011), and that they play a role in eliminating students' behavioral problems in classrooms (Griffith, 2018; Howells and Cumming, 2011; Krakauer et al., 2017) and that this improves school and classroom atmospheres, and that they make teachers feel as they are better teachers (Griffith, 2018; Howells and Cumming, 2011). Gratitude improves the mutual relations between teachers-students and teachers-other school personnel, and creates a positive cycle in interpersonal relations.

In this sense, improving teachers' gratitude levels can be beneficial for both themselves and all the stakeholders at their schools. As teachers, gratitude levels of which increased, can develop themselves in a personal and professional sense, they also have the potential to develop students in their environment, and their families and other school personnel. Thus, they can play a role in making gratitude a part of *organizational culture* at school, and contribute to the creation of a positive school climate, and gain a society happier and more successful individuals. However, it is seen that the gratitude studies in Turkey are largely carried out on students. In such studies, review of the variables concerning university (Arıçoğlu, 2016; Eliüşük Bülbül, 2018; İlbay and Sarıçam, 2015; Oğuz Duran and Tan, 2013), high school (Gülmeriç, 2017) or elementary school (Göcen, 2015, 2016) students' gratitude levels or implementation of various programs for increasing students' gratitude levels (Eliüşük Bülbül, 2018; Işık Terzi and Ergüner Tekinalp, 2017; Oğuz Duran and Tan, 2013) are discussed. Similarly, the fact that forces of character are also mostly dealt with regard to students (Kabakçı, 2013; Ruch, Weber, Park and Peterson, 2016; Sarı and Yıldırım, 2017) and that the studies for values education are again carried out on students draw attention (Kabakçı, 2016; Öztürk Samur, 2011; Uzunkol and Yel, 2016; Yıldırım, Becerikli and Demirel, 2017). The only study made with teachers in Turkey is the study of adapting the Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullough, Emmons and Tsang, 2002) into Turkish, and it is found in this study that gratitude is positively related to life satisfaction and positive emotion, and that it is negatively related to negative emotion (Yüksel and Oğuz Duran, 2012).

On the other hand, whether gratitude is affected by culture is also a matter of debate in the literature. In fact, it is seen that there are various concepts in different cultures that are similar to gratitude and are confused with gratitude from time to time. For example, "*asking a favor*" often confused with gratitude is an emotion that arises when one feels compelled to respond to a favor and arouses disturbance in general (Goei and Boster, 2005; McCullough, Kilpatric, Emmons and Larson, 2001), or is a feeling of indebtedness in the face of receiving support (Greenberg and Westcott, 1983). Another feeling that was developed in return for favor is "*sumanai*", which is unique to Japanese and is used in this language in the meaning of apologizing and thanking. Sumanai is defined as embarrassment felt because of having put the person doing a favor to trouble and sometimes as guilt (Naito and Washizu, 2015). As is seen, these concepts show that a good situation experienced do not always arouse pleasant feelings, and that they may be perceived in different ways. According to Murayama (1995), a favor to a person is perceived differently even between two cultures (such as Chinese and Japanese), origins of which are Asian. According to Naito and Washizu (2015), there are cultural perception differences in gratitude between the Asian and Western cultures. It is also expressed by different researchers that gratitude is a universal concept in terms of having a positive relationship as favor and strengthening positive social relations, but there are cultural differences in its perception due to social and religious norms in different cultures (Holmes and Tangtongtavy, 1995; Morgan, Gulliford and Kristjánsson, 2014).

Considering all this literature, it is considered significant to develop a gratitude education program for Turkish elementary school teachers and to examine its effectiveness. Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to develop a gratitude education program called "Thank You" and to examine the effect of this program on the gratitude levels of Turkish elementary school teachers. In order to specify that this program is for teachers, the letter T was added to the abbreviation of its name, and the short name of the program is used as TYGEP-T ("Thank You-Teacher" Gratitude Education Program).

## METHODS

### Research Design

This research is a two-stage study aiming to develop and test the effectiveness of the TYGEP-T. In this direction, following the development of the TYGEP-T based on the relevant literature, the effectiveness of this program was examined using an experimental design with a control group and pre-test, post-test, and follow-up measurement. The independent variable of the study is the TYGEP-T developed by the researchers, and the dependent variable is the gratitude levels of the participant elementary school teachers. In the research, while the TYGEP-T was applied in order to increase the gratitude levels of the participants in the experimental group, no application was made, at that time, to the members of the control group. The pre-tests were applied to the experimental group at the beginning of the first session, and the post-tests were applied at the end of the fifth session. And the pre-tests and the post-tests were applied to the control group in the teachers' room in the same week with the experimental group. Four weeks later following the end of the application, the follow-up measurements were taken from both the experimental and control groups within the same week.

### Participants

This research was carried out on those teachers working at a public elementary school, where the first author worked in the academic year of 2015-2016. After obtaining the necessary permissions, in this subject, from the school administration, the teachers having volunteered to participate in the study (n=23) from those working at this school were randomly (by lot method) assigned to the experimental and control groups of the research. While the experimental group consisted of 11 participants (8 females and 3 males), the control group consisted of 12 participants (7 females and 5 males). No absenteeism or disconnection was experienced in the research. The reason why the female teachers (n = 15) are more by gender in the groups than the male teachers (n = 8) is because of the fact that the male teachers are less at the school. Considering the studies, that were made in Turkey, showing that women prefer the teaching profession more (Baykara Pehlivan, 2008; Ekiz, 2006; Kiraz, Engin Demir, Aksu, Daloğlu and Yıldırım, 2010; Yaman, Yaman and Eskicumalı, 2001) and that elementary school teachers consist mostly of women (Ministry of National Education in Turkey, MONE 2018; Saban, 2003), it was thought that the state of unequal gender distribution in the sample did not pose a problem in terms of representativeness. In this sense, the recent data indicating the distribution of teacher appointments by gender in Turkey are also in a quality to support the fact that female teachers are more in number (MONE, 2018). While the ages of the participant teachers ranged from 26 to 55 ( $\bar{X}=40,04$ ;  $SS= 7,61$ ), their working times at the profession occupation ranged from 3 to 31 ( $\bar{X}=17,87$ ;  $SS= 7,87$ ).

### Data Collection Tool

The Short Gratitude Resentment and Appreciation Test (S-GRAT), a 16-point scale for measuring gratitude tendency is a revised short form of the GRAT (Gratitude Resentment and Appreciation Test), a measuring tool with 44 points and a five-point Likert type developed by Watkins, Woodward, Stone and Kolts (2003). The reasons for revising the scale were reported as; that the negative skewness coefficient was high and that there were some points (For instance: "My favorite time of the year is Thanksgiving.", "I love sitting back and watching snowfall.", "The gifts that I will receive following the December holiday will be neither better nor more than the others.") that were not appropriate for different cultures. During the revision studies, the test was increased from five-point Likert type to nine-point Likert type in order to eliminate the negative skewness, and the points that were found inappropriate for different cultures were removed from the scale. The S-GRAT consists of 3 factors; Lack of Sense of Deprivation (LOSD; 6 points - 2.3.6.10.11 and 15. points), Simple Appreciation (SA; 6 points-4.7.9.12.13. and 16. points), and Appreciation of Others (AO; 4 points - 1.5.8 and 14. points). The participants mark their responses

on a 9-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 9 (Strongly agree). The points 3,6,10,11, and 15. of the scale are inversely scored. The high points taken from the scale show high gratitude tendency.

The Turkish validity and reliability studies of the scale were conducted by Oğuz Duran (2017) with a three-stage study. In the first stage, the scale's three-dimensional structure, appropriate to its original, was confirmed by the confirmatory factor analysis ( $\chi^2/df = 265,15/101$ ; GFI = 0,90; CFI = 0,92, SRMR = 0,07; RMSA = 0,07). In the second stage, in addition to showing significant relationships with the Gratitude Scale of S-GRAT (Watkins et al., 2003) and well-being measurements scores, it was found that it showed internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = 0,77) at a satisfactory level. And in the third stage, the test-retest reliability was calculated at a satisfactory level both for the scale total score ( $r = 0,72$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ) and the subscale scores [ $r = 0,61$  for the subscale LOSD,  $r = 0,71$  for the subscale SA, and  $r = 0,61$  for the subscale AO; ( $p < 0,01$ )]. When the cronbach's alpha values were recalculated for this study, these values were found as 0,69 for the total S-GRAT, and 0,73, 0,68, and 0,68 for the subscales LOSD, SA and AO, respectively. The conformity of the validity and reliability of the findings, obtained at both the three stages of the adaptation study (Oğuz Duran, 2017) and this study, are also supported by different sources in the literature (Can, 2014; Gürbüz and Şahin, 2014; Özdamar, 2002; Şeker and Gençdoğan, 2014; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2015).

### **“Thank You-T” Gratitude Education Program-Teacher (TYGEP-T)**

The theoretical framework of the TYGEP-T prepared for elementary school teachers was prepared by taking the following as a basis; the literature in relation to the definition of gratitude (Emmons, 2009; Emmons and Hill, 2001; Emmons and Shelton, 2005; Watkins, 2014) and its components (Henderson, 2009) and the Gratitude Lessons Plans applied by Froh and his colleagues (<https://sites.google.com/a/pride.hofstra.edu/jeffrey-j-froh/publications>). The curriculum prepared by Froh for to be used at school consists of the lesson plans, which were thought as to apply at school for 8-11 year-old students in the form of approximately 30-minute guidance course hours for a total of five weeks, and the main purpose of this program is to increase the students' gratitude levels. In the program, it is focused on what gratitude means and the components of gratitude, which are intention, cost and benefit, and the methods, such as playing a role and classroom discussion, are used for this (Froh et al., 2014; <https://sites.google.com/a/pride.hofstra.edu/jeffrey-j-froh/publications>). Similarly, the TYGEP-T was prepared as a five-week psycho-education program, but was enriched within the scope of the program considering elementary school teachers' developmental levels and professional needs. The TYGEP-T consists of five sessions, each of which lasts 90 minutes. In the sessions, it was put emphasis on the studies, that teachers can make in their lessons at their school for recognizing and increasing the ways that they express gratitude and their gratitude experiences in collaboration with their colleagues as to create a culture of gratitude at school, and the obstacles that they may encounter during these studies and how they can overcome them, as well as putting emphasis on the definition of gratitude, the benefits that gratitude can provide to teachers (both individually and professionally), and its components (intention, cost, benefit).

The same structure was used in all the TYGEP-T's sessions. According to this, the procedures made in each session were as follows: explaining the session's objectives, summarizing the previous week, playing warm up game, presentation made by the leader for the session's goals, giving homework, and lastly, the application of the termination activity named “Well” (Voltan Acar, 2012).

**Table 1.** *TYGEP-T sessions' goals and activities*

Session	Goals	Activities
1	Meeting Forming group rules Being able to comprehend the meaning and benefits of gratitude Starting to form gratitude lists	Warm up activity named "Road Map" (Çakır, 2011). Power point presentation regarding the definition of gratitude and its benefits Introducing gratitude lists and allocating them to the members Termination activity named "Well" Reminding them of the homework themed gratitude lists
2	Being able to comprehend the components of gratitude (intention, cost, and benefit) Being able to comprehend the ways of expressing gratitude Sharing gratitude lists	Last week's summary Sharing gratitude lists Warm up activity named "Projection Game-Reflection Game" (Voltan Acar, 2012). Presentation regarding the components of gratitude (intention, cost, and benefit) Association of sharings with the theoretical presentation Termination activity named "Well" Reminding them of the homework themed gratitude lists
3	Experiencing gratitude Realizing the feeling of gratitude experienced in daily life Sharing gratitude lists	Last week's summary Sharing gratitude lists Activity named "Empty Room" (Dossick and Shea, 1988). Members' evaluations of the activity in terms of the components of intention, cost, and benefit Termination activity named "Well" Reminding them of the homework themed gratitude lists
4	Being able to express his/her gratitude to the one, to whom he/she feels gratitude Reviewing what kind of studies can be made at school in order to increase gratitude among all stakeholders Sharing gratitude lists	Last week's summary Sharing gratitude lists Reviewing the studies that can be made at school, in relation to gratitude, with the method of question-answer Leader's presentation for what kinds of studies can be made at school in order to increase gratitude among all stakeholders Making the members write a "gratitude message" Planning that the members convey these gratitude messages, that they wrote, to the relevant persons within the next week and giving this as homework Termination activity named "Well" Reminding them of the homework themed gratitude lists
5	Being able to apply gratitude in daily life Leaving the group with positive feelings	Last week's summary Sharing gratitude lists Participants' sharings of their experiences that they had with the persons, to whom they gave their gratitude messages Termination activity named "Love Letters" (Carell, 1993). Filling up Post-Tests Allocating the gifts that the leader had someone specially made as to bear a quality of a participation certificate Thanking and termination

### Data Analysis

Since it was recommended in the literature that nonparametric statistics be used in case the sample size is less than 30 (Ovla, Türkegün, Özdemir, Özcömert and Taşdelen, 2017; Pallant, 2005; Yılmaz and Yılmaz, 2005), the Mann Whitney U Test and the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, among the nonparametric statistics, were used in the data analysis. In all analyzes, the significance level was taken as 0,05. The Mann Whitney U Test was used to compare the experimental and control groups in terms of the significance of the differences between pre-test, post-test and follow-up

test scores. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used to test the significance of the differences between pre-test, post-test and follow-up test scores of both the experimental and control group members. The Research data was analyzed using SPSS 22.0.

## RESULTS

### Results Regarding the Comparison of the Experimental and Control Groups in terms of their S-GRAT Total Scores

The results of the Mann Whitney U Test, that was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the total gratitude scores that the teachers in the experimental and control groups got from the S-GRAT in three measurements (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test), are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Mann Whitney U Test results regarding the total scores of the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test that the teachers in the experimental and control groups got from the S-GRAT

Scale	Groups	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	P
S-GRAT	Pre-test					
	Experimental	11	9,41	103,50	37,50	0,079
	Control	12	14,38	172,50		
	Post-test					
	Experimental	11	17,18	189,00	9,00	0,000*
	Control	12	7,25	87,00		
Follow-Up						
Experimental	11	14,00	154,00	44,00	0,173	
Control	12	10,17	122,00			

\* p<0,05

As is seen in Table 2, at the beginning of the research, no significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups in terms of the S-GRAT total scores ( $z = -1,756$ ,  $p = 0,079$ ). According to this, the experimental and control groups are the same in terms of their total gratitude scores at the beginning of the research. In the post-test, a significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group ( $z = -3,511$ ,  $p = 0,000$ ), but this difference disappeared in the follow-up measurement ( $z = -1,362$ ,  $p = 0,173$ ). Thus, the TYGEP-T was found effective in the post-test in terms of the total gratitude score, but this effect is not permanent.

### Results Regarding the Comparison of the Experimental and Control Groups in terms of their S-GRAT Subscale Scores

The results of the Mann Whitney U Test, that was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the scores that the teachers in the experimental and control groups got from the three subscales of the S-GRAT in three measurements (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test), are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Mann Whitney U Test results of the means of the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test that the elementary school teachers in the experimental and control groups got from the subscales of the S-GRAT

Scale	Groups	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	p
LOSD	Pre-test					
	Experimental	11	9,36	103,00	37,000	0,074
	Control	12	14,42	173,00		
	Post-test					
	Experimental	11	15,32	168,50	29,500	0,024
	Control	12	8,96	107,50		
Follow-Up						
Experimental	11	11,18	123,00	57,000	0,571	
Control	12	12,75	153,00			
SA	Pre-test					
	Experimental	11	9,23	101,50	35,500	0,059
	Control	12	14,54	174,50		
	Post-test					
	Experimental	11	14,05	154,50	43,500	0,161
	Control	12	10,13	121,50		
Follow-Up						
Experimental	11	13,64	150,00	48,000	0,260	
Control	12	10,50	126,00			
AO	Pre-test					
	Experimental	11	12,64	139,00	59,000	0,665
	Control	12	11,42	137,00		
	Post-test					
	Experimental	11	16,18	178,00	20,000	0,004
	Control	12	8,17	98,00		
Follow-Up						
Experimental	11	16,68	183,50	14,500	0,001	
Control	12	7,71	92,50			

\* p <0,05

As is seen in Table 3, at the beginning of the research, no significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups in terms of the subscale scores of LOSD ( $z = -1,788$ ,  $p = 0,074$ ), SA ( $z = -1,886$ ,  $p = 0,059$ ) and AO ( $z = -1,433$ ,  $p = 0,665$ ). According to this, the experimental and control groups are similar in terms of the three subscale scores at the beginning of the research. In the post-test, a significant difference occurred between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group at the level of 0,05 in terms of the subscale scores of LOSD ( $z = -2,250$ ,  $p = 0,024$ ) and AO ( $z = -2,872$ ,  $p = 0,004$ ), and this difference has been permanent only for the subscale AO ( $z = -3,201$ ,  $p = 0,001$ ) in the follow-up measurement. In terms of the subscale scores of SA, there was no significant difference between the two groups either in the post-test ( $z = -1,402$ ,  $p = 0,161$ ) or in the follow-up measurement ( $z = -1,127$ ,  $p = 0,260$ ). Thus, the TYGEP-T was found effective in increasing the subscale scores of LOSD and AO, but it has showed a permanent effect only when it comes to the scores of AO. And in terms of the subscale SA, no significant effect of the program was found. According to this, the fact that the TYGEP-T has a permanent significant effect on AO, one of the sub-dimensions of gratitude, can be explained with the theoretical informings to the teachers participating the program, group activities, writing gratitude lists and notes, and the opportunity to reinforce all their skills that



they have learned by interacting with the teachers in the other experimental group, with whom they work at the same school, in the periods out of the education time. And the fact that the program has created no significant difference in the sub-dimension SA, which is relevant to the activities, such as enjoying the moment and becoming happy with little things, can be explained with the fact that, while a statistically significant progress was seen in the experimental group in this scale, a change was experienced even though it did not reach a statistical significance in the control group simultaneously. This situation can make us think that the sub-dimension AO is such a sub-dimension of gratitude that can be ensured in the easiest way.

### Comparisons Between the Experimental Group's Pre-test, Post-test, and Follow-Up Measurements

The findings of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, which was conducted in relation to whether the total gratitude scores and the gratitude subscale scores of the elementary school teachers in the experimental group showed a significant change in three measurements (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test), are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Wilcoxon Test result for the S-GRAT total score and the scores of LOSD, SA and AO of the experimental group in the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test

Score	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Follow-Up	Post-test	Follow-Up
	Z	P	Z	P	Z	P
S-GRAT	-2,936	0,003*	-2,936	0,003*	-2,395	0,017*
LOSD	-2,536	0,011*	-1,783	0,075	-1,889	0,059
SA	-2,938	0,003*	-2,628	0,009*	-,512	0,609
AO	-2,809	0,005*	-2,530	0,011*	-,319	0,750

\* p < 0,05

As is seen in Table 4, it was seen a significant difference in both the total gratitude scores (z= -2,936, p= 0,003) and the three subscale scores (z= -2,536, p= 0,011, z= -2,938, p= 0,003, z= -2,809, p= 0,005) of the elementary school teachers in the experimental group compared to their scores before the experiment. According to this, the TYGEP-T is an effective program in terms of increasing the participants' total gratitude score and subscale scores after the experiment. Even though it was seen a significant decrease between the total gratitude score's post-test/follow-up measurements (z= -2,395, p= 0,017) measured by the S-GRAT (there is a decrease in the effect of the program), the fact that it was found significant differences between the pre-test and follow-up measurements (z=-2,936, p= 0,003) has shown the permanence of the positive effect of the program on the total gratitude tendency. In terms of the three subscale gratitude scores, while it was found no significant difference between the experimental group's pre-test and follow-up measurements in the sub-dimension LOSD, it was found a significant difference in the sub-dimensions SA and AO. Thus, even though the experimental group members' scores of LOSD were not found different at a significant level than the pre-test in the follow-up measurement, they were found high at a significant level compared to the pre-test in terms of the scores of SA and AO.

### Comparisons Between the Control Group's Pre-test, Post-test, and Follow-Up Measurements

The findings of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, which was conducted in relation to whether the total gratitude scores and the subscale gratitude scores of the elementary school teachers in the control group showed a significant change in three measurements (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test), are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Wilcoxon Test result for the S-GRAT total score and the scores of LOSD, SA and AO of the control group in the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test

Score	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Follow-Up	Post-test	Follow-Up
	Z	P	Z	P	Z	P
S-GRAT	-1,574	0,116	-1,336	0,181	-,550	0,582
LOSD	-1,791	0,073	-,494	0,621	-,944	0,345
SA	-,119	0,905	-1,008	0,314	-,767	0,443
AO	-,717	0,474	-1,737	0,082	-2,018	0,044*

\* p <0,05

As is seen in Table 5, when the total gratitude scores and the subscale scores, in all three measurements, of the elementary school teachers in the control group were compared, the only significant difference was found between the post-test and follow-up measurements ( $z = -2,018$ ,  $p = 0,044$ ) in the subscale AO. The control group members' scores of AO have shown a significant decrease in the period after the experiment to the follow-up measurement.

## DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

In this research, the TYGEP-T, a psycho-education program aiming to increase elementary school teachers' gratitude tendency, was developed, and its effectiveness was tested. The findings have showed that the TYGEP-T was an effective tool in increasing elementary school teachers' gratitude level. This result is consistent with the findings, mentioned previously in the literature, of those studies showing that gratitude education is effective on students (Eliüşük Bülbül, 2018; Emmons and Crumpler 2000; Froh, Bono and Emmons, 2010; Froh, Kashdan, Ozimkowski and Miller, 2009; Froh et al., 2008; Froh, Yurkewicz and Kashdan, 2009; <https://sites.google.com/a/pride.hofstra.edu/jeffrey-j-froh/publications>; Koo, Algoe, Wilson and Gilbert, 2008; Ma, Kibler and Sly, 2013; Sheldon and Lyubomirsky, 2006) or adults (Bartlett and DeSteno, 2006; Frias, Watkins, Webber and Froh, 2010; Geraghty, Wood and Hyland, 2010; Hill, Allemand and Roberts, 2013; Kam, 2015; Kashdan, Uswatte and Julian, 2006; Killen and Macaskill, 2015; McCullough et al., 2002; McCullough et al., 2004; Pohling et al., 2018; Wood, Joseph and Linley, 2007; Wood, Joseph, Lloyd and Atkins, 2009; Wood, Maltby, Gillett, Linley and Joseph, 2008; Szczeny, 2014) at various ages, in general, and of those studies showing its positive effects specially on teachers (Chan, 2010; Chin-Ting and Yin Yeh, 2014; Howells and Cumming, 2011). In addition, there are several reasons highlighting the findings of this study among all these findings in the literature. First of all, unlike the gratitude education studies carried out on students in Turkey, this study can be considered as important in terms of the fact that it aims to let teachers gain awareness in relation to gratitude level for the first time and to develop their skills in this subject. It can be thought that an education, by which elementary school teachers review the studies that they can make for developing gratitude at their school together with the students, administrators, teachers, and parents in their school, as well as increasing their own gratitude level, will indirectly contribute to the formation of a positive school climate and for gratitude to become a part of school culture. Moreover, the fact that this study can serve as an example for school-based gratitude studies to be conducted, in future, with school's different stakeholders, such as students, administrators, parents etc., can be considered as an important contribution to the literature.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that, in experimental studies, the measurements were generally carried out with the Gratitude Scale (McCullough et al., 2002), which is another measurement tool for measuring gratitude tendency, and that these studies are effective in terms of increasing the total gratitude score (Chan, 2010; Kam, 2015; Eliüşük Bülbül, 2018; Kashdan et al., 2006, Killen and Macaskill, 2015; McCullough et al., 2004; Oğuz Duran and Tan, 2013). In this research, the S-GRAT, which is widely used in the world and is one of the two gratitude scales but its adaptation to Turkish has just recently made, was used. In the study, similar to the studies conducted with the Gratitude Scale, it is also found in the measurements conducted with S-GRAT that the program has a significant and positive effect in favor of the experimental group teachers in terms of the total gratitude score. In terms of the total score, it is found in the follow-up

measurements conducted four weeks after the program that the TYGEP-T could not sustain its effect. However, when looking at the findings related to the effects of the program in terms of the sub-dimensions of the S-GRAT, while it is seen that it is effective in increasing the experimental group members' level of LOSD and AO compared to the control group of the TYGEP-T, it is found that it has no effect at the level of SA. Furthermore, when it is compared to the program's control group in the follow-up measurement, it is found that it sustains the significant difference that it created on the teachers in the experimental group at the AO level but not at the level of LOSD. According to this, it can be said that the TYGEP-T is mostly effective and permanent on teachers in developing the appreciation of others. It is thought that these examinations at the level of the sub-dimension scores of this research provide with more detailed data to the literature beyond a general gratitude level in relation to the effects of a gratitude education program.

As a result of this study, it is seen that the TYGEP-T has a positive effect on LOSD as well, even though it could not sustain its permanence. The subscale LOSD consists of the points, such as "Life has been always good to me.", "Nothing is big enough for all, and I never get my share.", "I don't think that I got all the good things that I deserved in life.", and "I've come across more bad things in my life than I deserved.". These points are about experiencing deprivation or thinking of being hard done by someone. It can be said in the Turkish culture that people tend to say "thank goodness" instead of expressing that they are deprived of something or complaining about life. The religion Islam emphasizes the importance of gratitude and the badness of complaining and ungratefulness (Ayten, 2012; Ekşi, 2001; İbragimov, 2018). In this sense, it was thought that the teachers having participated in the study could be more easily convinced to focus on gratitude instead of thinking about their deprivation. However, this effect has not been permanent. In the circumstances, although teachers find it reasonable to focus on being grateful and embrace it easily, they can forget about it when they face the negativities of daily life, and therefore, it can be thought that, in order for their gratitude to be permanent in this field, they need to make it more permanent by means of longer lasting intervention methods.

In this study, it is found that the TYGEP-T is mostly effective, and able to sustain its effect, on the subscale AO. This subscale measures the gratitude felt towards other people. The subscale AO consists of the points, such as "If there hadn't been many people's help, I couldn't have been in the position that I am today.", "Even though it is important to enjoy the achievements, it matters for me not to forget what kind of contributions other people have made to such achievements." and "I'm deeply grateful to other people for what they have done for me." According to this, in the TYGEP-T, the teachers progressed in the appreciation of others with intra-group activities, in addition to theoretical informings, by participating in 5 sessions, and on the other hand, they did their homework for 4 weeks in the way of writing gratitude lists and giving their gratitude notes to others. Furthermore, the teachers working at the same school have also got an opportunity to reinforce their skills and support each other when they interacted with each other in the periods out of the education time.

It seems possible that that the TYGEP-T sustains its effect on the sub-dimension AO can also be explained with the concept of self-compassion. Self-compassion can be defined as for an individual to be open to the feelings causing him/her to pain and suffer, his/her approach to himself/herself with elaborate and kind attitudes, for him/her to be understandable to his/her inadequacies and failures, and his/her acceptance of his/her negative experiences as a natural process of human life (Neff, 2003). There are three main components of self-compassion (Neff, 2003). One of these components is to be conscious of sharings. Here, a person realizes that positive or negative experiences of life are not unique to him/her, and that other people have similar experiences too. In this case, it is possible that the interpersonal gratitude of those people, who feel that they are not alone in life, increases. The second component of self-compassion is self-kindness, in which a person tries to understand himself/herself without prejudice and treats himself/herself kindly. In the circumstances, the gratitude level felt by those people, who approach themselves without prejudice, towards other people may increase. And in consciousness, the third component of self-compassion, a person is able to balance his/her emotions causing him/her to pain and suffer without exaggeration, and does not spiritually make

himself/herself miserable (Neff, Kirkpatrick and Rude, 2005; Neff and McGehee, 2010). In this case, it can be said that those people, who have spiritually good emotions, will have positive feelings towards other people, and that their interpersonal gratitude levels will increase. It can be thought that the teachers, who have received gratitude education, have spiritually become better thanks to this program, and that they have started to have good feelings towards other people, and that, thus, they are able to feel more gratitude to others.

It is thought that that the TYGEP-T sustains its effect on the sub-dimension AO can also be explained with the concept of collectivist culture. Collectivist culture can be defined as for people to feel that they belong to strong and bound groups from the moment that they were born and throughout their lives, and to commit themselves to their groups with loyalty (Ton, 2008). While collectivism is also referred to as the form of associative self (Triandis, 1995), an individual's behavior is in accordance with certain patterns in this culture. In various research, it is stated that Turkey is of collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1984; Oyserman, Coon and Kemmelmier, 2002). In this sense, it can be expected in Turkey belonging to a collectivist culture that people progress more in the sub-dimension AO, the sub-dimension of appreciation of others, beyond the sub-dimension of lack of sense of deprivation and simple appreciation of gratitude. Consequently, it is seen in this research that the TYGEP-T is such a program that is mostly effective for developing elementary school teachers in the sub-dimension AO.

In the research, while it is seen that the TYGEP-T did not cause a significant difference between the experimental and control group members in the post-test and follow-up measurements in the sub-dimension SA, when looking at the score comparisons of the experimental group members in the three measurements, it is seen that it caused significant differences between both the pre-test and the post-test, and the pre-test and the follow-up measurements. In other words, it is seen a significant change in the teachers participating in the program in the sub-dimension SA, and this change has been permanent. However, even though this score increase in the experimental group does not reach a significant level, as it is seen even in the control group, and due to the fact that the two groups do not indicate a significant difference in the said measurements in terms of their SA scores, it is found that the TYGEP-T does not have a significant effect on this sub-dimension. When looking at the scale points used to measure the sub-dimension SA of gratitude, it is seen that this sub-dimension consists the points, such as "I am often surprised by the beauties of nature.", "I enjoy watching the leaves change their color every autumn.", "Taking a break and enjoying are important to me.", and "Enjoying little things in life is important to me.". According to this, it is understood that it is seen a significant change in the scores of the participants participating in the TYGEP-T as they spared time for the activities, such as enjoying the moment and becoming happy with little things, through the program. However, even though the change in the sub-dimension SA could not reach a significant level, as it is also seen in the control group members, it is thought that this sub-dimension is such a sub-dimension of gratitude that can be ensured in the easiest way.

When looking at the effects of the TYGEP-T in all three measurements in terms of the S-GRAT total score and the scores of LOSD, SA, and AO of the elementary school teachers in the experimental group, it is seen that, while the total scores of the experimental group members increase at a significant level from the pre-test to the post-test, they decrease at a significant level from the post-test to the follow-up, but that consequently it still stands high at a significant level in the period from the pre-test to the follow-up measurement. While it is seen an increase at a significant level for all of the score types of LOSD, SA and AO in the experimental group, it is not seen a significant change between the post-test and the follow-up test in any sub-dimension. However, it is seen a significant change between the pre-test and the follow-up test in the sub-dimension of both SA and AO. In addition, even though the scores do not reach a significant level, it draws attention that they decreased after the post-test for the total S-GRAT, LOSD and SA, and that they increased again in the follow-up measurement in the sub-dimension AO. While this fluctuation happened in the experimental group's scores, it is seen in the control group that, even though they do not reach a significant level, there occurred a decline in the post-test for both the total and subscale scores, and that this decline reached a significant level from the post-test to the

follow-up only in the sub-dimension AO. The fact that the experimental group's gratitude scores increased while the control group's gratitude scores decreased has made us think that it confirms that the TYGEP-T has a significant and positive effect on the participant teachers' gratitude level, and that the program functions protectively for teachers in the period that can be regarded as tiring and compelling in the sense of profession. Because, completing the program and taking the follow-up measurements have come up to the end of the term in terms of the academic calendar. This period is such a period, in which workload and tiredness increase with regards to teachers. In this regard, it is thought that teachers regressed in all sub-dimensions, particularly in the sub-dimension of appreciation of others, with the effect of the end-of-term tiredness, but that the teachers participating in the program got over this period more positively. The fact that the effect arising out of the TYGEP-T is not long lasting seems also consistent with the literature stating that the effect of the permanence of gratitude applications is generally low (Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Froh et al., 2008). According to this, as a result of this research, even though different factors are at stake as grounds, it can be said that the positive effect arising out of the TYGEP-T does not last long, in general.

Discussing some of the limitations of this research indicating the effectiveness of the TYGEP-T along with the measures that can be taken against them are of importance with respect to guiding the studies aiming to develop gratitude at teachers from now on. At first, in this research, the effectiveness of the TYGEP-T is based on the comparison of an experimental group's scores with a control group's scores. Including a placebo control group in the future research will provide with stronger results for determining the program's effectiveness. Moreover, this research has been carried out only with the Turkish elementary school teachers working in a public school. This situation limits the generability of the findings. Therefore, it will be beneficial that the research be carried out on teachers in different cities and schools. As another limitation, in this study, the experimental and control groups were selected from the same school in order to have access to the participants more easily and to use time effectively. It can be thought that that the participants in the same environment interact with each other constitutes a limitation in terms of measuring the aforementioned program's effectiveness. In this regard, it can be recommended for the next studies that the experimental and control groups be selected from different schools.

Furthermore, in this research, since 15:15, the time of getting out of school, was specified as the most appropriate period of time for all the teachers participating in the TYGEP-T, the program was applied following this time. As this situation caused the teachers to participate in the sessions as tired, this might have limited the effectiveness of this program applied. In this sense, it can be recommended for the next studies that the education arranged for teachers in the experimental group be provided in a period of time that teachers are fresher, such as weekend if possible.

While the program applied in this research is found effective, starting from the finding that it has no permanence, it is thought that, in the next studies, the program's effectiveness will increase more, and that it will be ensured that all school stakeholders can use gratitude more effectively in their daily lives by means of ensuring that the administrators, other teachers, students, parents and auxiliary staff at the school, where gratitude education will be applied, are also informed about the subject. Therefore, the gratitude programs can be prepared not only for teachers, but also school administrators, students and parents, or those programs that include all these can be taken into consideration. Basically, it is thought that, for gratitude studies to increase and have sustainable effects, it is important to act in unison on the basis of organization. For this reason, it can be recommended that projects be made for teachers at the level of school, district and city.

Finally, grounding on the finding of both this research and the various gratitude education research in the literature regarding that the effectiveness of this education in this field is short lasting, it can be recommended that, for the participants to transfer their skills in relation to gratitude to their daily lives and for ensuring that gratitude becomes a part of school culture, the aforementioned organization based gratitude projects be carried out, and then, their follow-up studies be also made by extending them over a longer period of time (such as 6 months later etc.)

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