Abstract
The concept of voluntary simplicity (VS) represents voluntarily limiting using all kinds of resources and adoption of a nonmaterialistic lifestyle. In order to be able to understand the behavior of VS, this very important movement in terms of the future of our World and currently dominant consumer society, its relationship with various factors needs to be studied. From this point of view, the study aims to reveal the relationship between voluntary simplicity and specific factors such as green values, tendency to frugality, materialistic values, compulsive buying behaviour and impulse buying. This research shows the results of an exploratory study on 463 individuals (class teachers) in Tekirdag, Turkey. Firstly, factor analysis was conducted in order to classify the voluntary simplicity behaviour scale and five factors emerged. These factors can be interpreted as (1) self-determination, (2) self-sufficiency, (3) recycling, (4) ecological awareness, and (5) indifference to TV/Ads. Later, the model of study was tested by computing Pearson correlation coefficients. As a result of correlation analysis, the findings indicated that there were meaningful relationships among the variables of the study. Considering the findings, it could be realized that green values and tendency to frugality positively correlated with voluntary simplicity while impulse buying, obsessive buying and personal materialism negatively correlated with it (p<.01). The findings also indicate that frequency of voluntary simplicity behaviours is not of a high level. The findings and results of this study are thought to provide significant contributions to literature.

Keywords: Voluntary Simplicity, Turkey, Class-Teacher, Materialism, Green Values, Frugality

Introduction
Various problems such as overconsumption, hyperconsumption, environmental degradation, and injustice regarding income distribution are probable outcomes of consumption behaviour and lifestyle that need to be understood in order to reduce consumption levels and encourage eco-friendly consumption. One of the possible solutions to the problems caused by overconsumption is to promote voluntary simplicity behaviours and a voluntary simplicity lifestyle.

The idea of privileging the non-material over the material to increase satisfaction, quality and meaning in life is not new and resonates with many ancient philosophies and religious tenets (Oates et.al., 2008). For example, Socrates’ “golden mean” and the Tao proverb, “the richness of our life is not measured by our possessions but by our experience, through our graciousness and generosity in the world and toward ot-
her people” advocate simplicity. The term “voluntary simplicity” (VS) was suggested first by Gregg (1936). There are a wide range of definitions of voluntary simplicity. Examples of these are as follows:

- According to Gregg (1936), voluntary simplicity means singleness of purpose, sincerity and honesty within, as well as avoidance of exterior clutter, of many possessions irrelevant to the chief purpose of life.

- According to Elgin and Mitchell (1977), voluntary simplicity is a lifestyle, living more choicefully and directly.

- According to Leonard-Barton and Rogers (1980), voluntary simplicity is the degree to which an individual consciously chooses a way of life intended to maximize the individual’s control over his/her own life.

- According to Etzioni (1998), voluntary simplicity is choosing free will to limit expenditures on consumer goods and services and to cultivate nonmaterialistic sources of satisfaction and meaning.

- According to Craig-Less and Hill (2002), voluntary simplicity is a lifestyle that involves the practice of austerity and frugality, concerned with individual mental and spiritual well-being and environment.

- According to Zavestoski (2002), voluntary simplicity is both a belief system and a practice that includes cultivating self-reliance and developing one’s intellect.

- According to McDonald et al. (2006), voluntary simplifiers are individuals who have freely chosen a frugal, anticonsumer lifestyle that features low resource use and environmental impact.

Though there are a lot of studies regarding voluntary simplicity behaviour, there is not a clear understanding of it due to a lack of variety and meaningful findings of past studies. Therefore, our study was aimed at studying the relationship between voluntary simplicity and a number of different factors.

There are various factors such as personality, materialistic values, green values, frugality, impulse buying and obsessive buying tendency that negatively/positively affect voluntary simplicity behaviour and simplicity lifestyle. Though there are a lot of studies regarding voluntary simplicity behaviour, there isn’t a clear description due to lack of variety and meaningful findings of past studies and it is necessary to reveal the relationship between affecting factors and voluntary simplicity behaviour.

According to Richins (1987), “materialism is the idea that goods are a means to happiness; that satisfaction in life is not achieved by religious contemplation or social interaction, or a simple life, but by possession and interaction with goods”. In this context, materialistic/non-materialistic values may affect the voluntary simplicity behaviours as materialists have a tendency to measure self and others around in terms of quantity and quality of possessions and rely on physical possessions, in comparison to the anticonsumerism movement (Richins & Rudmin, 1994). Materialist values and their outcomes (buying) seem to be the opposite to voluntary simplicity behaviours and, while this relationship is logical, it deserves more study. As a matter of fact, Craig-Less and Hill (2002) stated that “given the current rhetoric about voluntary simplifiers, intuitively one would suspect a link between the lifestyle choice and materialism but so far there have been no studies expressly investigating a link”. That statement was made 12 years ago and is still true to this day.

According to De Young (1996), frugality is prudently using resources, and an avoidance of waste. In other words, frugality is a way of reducing consumption behaviour, while materialism is acquiring more material goods. Therefore, the relationship between the tendency to frugality of people and voluntary simplicity behaviours needs to be studied further.

Craig-Less and Hill (2002) have found that underlying motives for exhibiting voluntary simplicity behaviours are environmental, spiritual and self-oriented. Considering the voluntary simplicity behaviours, it could be seen that some of the behaviours were eco-friendly consumption behaviour (environmental dimension of VS) and might be a behavioural reflection of environmental or green values that prompt one to reveal broader attitudes towards socially responsible behaviour or environmental consciousness (Haws et al., 2014). In this respect, the relationship between voluntary simplicity behaviour and green values that constitute the “environmental” motive of voluntary
simplicity behaviours needs to be carefully studied because consumers with stronger green values are supposed to make decisions consistent with environmental voluntary simplicity behaviours.

Compulsive buying was defined as “a tendency to be preoccupied with buying that is revealed through repetitive buying and a lack of impulse control over buying” and compulsive buying has two dimensional contracts including obsessive-compulsive buying and impulse buying (Ridgway et al., 2008). Considering the scope of voluntary simplicity, impulse buying and obsessive buying appear as opposing arguments and direct one to reverse the direction of voluntary simplicity behaviour.

Five hypotheses were determined in the light of the foregoing explanations:

\[ H_1 \]: There are positive relationships between green values of individuals and frequency of voluntary simplicity behaviours.

\[ H_2 \]: There are positive relationships between the tendency to frugality of individuals and frequency of voluntary simplicity behaviours.

\[ H_3 \]: There are negative relationships between materialistic values of individuals and frequency of voluntary simplicity behaviours.

\[ H_4 \]: There are negative relationships between impulse buying behaviours of individuals and frequency of voluntary simplicity behaviours.

\[ H_5 \]: There are negative relationships between obsessive buying behaviours of individuals and frequency of voluntary simplicity behaviours.

\[ \text{Note: VS: Voluntary simplicity; GV: Green values; F: Frugality; PM: Personal Materialism; IB: Impulse buying; OB: Obsessive buying} \]

\[ \text{Figure 1. Model of Study} \]
Method

This study was focused on class teachers because class teachers are shaping society by teaching fundamental individual values and behaviour and we believe that class teachers are mirrors that reflect the future of any society. The population and sample of the study were 463 class teachers working in Tekirdag, Turkey. This study was undertaken to explore the relationship between some factors (green values, tendency to frugality, personal materialistic values, impulse buying behaviour, and obsessive buying behaviour) and voluntary simplicity lifestyle by adopting a descriptive and connective research model. The model for the study is shown in Figure 1. From the data collected from a total of 463 people that responded to the questionnaire, the model and hypotheses were tested using Pearson Correlation Analysis and the findings and results are presented and commented on in the Results part of the study.

The main aim of the study is to analyse the relationship between specific factors and the frequency of voluntary simplicity behaviour. A questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument and there were six scales, and three demographic questions (sex, age group and income level). The scales are: voluntary simplicity behaviours (VS), materialistic values (Rishins, 1987), tendency to frugality (Lastovicka et al. 1999), impulse buying behaviour (Ridgway et al., 2008), obsessive buying behaviour (Ridgway et al., 2008) and green values (Haws et al., 2014). Frequency of behaviours in all scales were measured by using a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The scale of Leonard-Barton (1981), based on the 9-item voluntary simplicity index of Mitchell and Elgin (1977), contains 18 items. Hunke (2005) used 21 practices associated with voluntary simplicity to measure the evaluation of voluntary simplicity lifestyle which was drawn from a review of the simplicity literature and content analysis of on-line forums. Finally, the scale of Iwata (2006), based on the scale used by Ebreo et al. (1999), had 22 items. In this study, the scale of voluntary simplicity behaviours including 27 behaviours was composed by searching past studies (Leonard-Barton, 1981; Hunke, 2005; Iwata, 2006), and the dimensions of voluntary simplicity scale were identified by using factor analysis.

Factor analysis was applied to the all practices with the use of principle components analysis and Varimax rotation. Five factors were created with eigenvalues of at least 1.0 Variables with factor load .40 and above were included in the factor analysis and three variables were excluded due to having a factor load below .40 (KMO:.857; p<0.01). Created factors explain 68.75% of the variance. These factors were labelled, with the help of past studies: “Self-Determination”, “Self Sufficiency”, “Recycling”, “Ecological Awareness” and “Indifference to TV/Ads.” The “Self-determination” dimension of voluntary simplicity included the behaviours 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, while 1, 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9 were under “self-sufficiency”; 3 and 4 under “recycling”; 23, 24, 26 and 27 under “ecological awareness”; and finally, 22 and 25 under “indifference to TV/Ads”.

In addition to the scale of VS, there are five more scales in the study. The original scale of materialistic values used by Rishins (1987) contains 6 statements, the first four reflect the personal materialism factor and the last two reflect the general materialism factor. In this study, we excluded the last two statements associated with general materialistic values, as we preferred to measure personal materialism. To measure the tendency to frugality of people, a unidimensional frugality scale was developed by Lastovicka et al. (1999) and contains 8 items. A compulsive buying index (CBI) was developed by Ridgway et al. (2008), and consists of two dimensions; obsessive compulsive buying dimension and impulse buying dimension. The CBI has 6 items; the first three statements relate to obsessive-compulsive buying and the last three statements relate to impulse buying behaviour. Finally, the unidimensional scale of green consumer values developed by Haws et al. (2014) includes 6 items and consists of scores and results of exploratory factor analysis on 58 items derived from a review of previous literature and open-ended comments from consumers.

Results

The research model and hypotheses were tested by using Pearson Correlation Analysis and the findings are summarised in Figure 2 utilising a daisy metaphor.
The figure consists of six parts that reflect the relationship between the various factors and voluntary simplicity behaviours as a cumulative (Part VI) and five subtypes of voluntary simplicity (Parts I, II, III, IV, V) which emerged in the factor analysis. Circles consisting of dashed lines in the figure indicate that the variable is unrelated to voluntary simplicity behaviours or subtype of voluntary simplicity. The findings in Part VI of the figure indicate that there are meaningful relationships among the variables of the

![Figure 2. Directions and Intensity of Relationship Among the Variables of Study](image)

Note: VSTOTAL: Voluntary simplicity; GV: Green values; F: Frugality; PM: Personal Materialism; IB: Impulse buying; OB: Obsessive buying; VS1: Self-determination; VS2: Self-sufficiency; VS3: Recycling; VS4: Ecological awareness; VS5: Indifference to TV/Ads.
study. Considering the findings in Part VI, it emerged that green values and tendency to frugality are positively related to voluntary simplicity behaviours, as personal materialistic values, impulse buying behaviour and obsessive buying behaviour are negatively related to voluntary simplicity behaviours. In other words, all the research hypotheses are supported.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

While increased consumption is accepted as necessary to reach economic and social welfare, the concept of voluntary simplicity calls for changing the levels and patterns of consumption which often require complementary changes of behaviour. However, so far, there has been a significant lack of change in behaviour that conceives ways of shifting from a material-intensive consumption pattern to a society exhibiting voluntary simplicity behaviours. In the contrary movement to high level consumption in developed and developing countries which disregards the carrying capacity of nature and features material-intensive consumption in order to increase quality of life, voluntary simplicity requires voluntary (not compulsory) changes of behaviour. In this context, nobody has to change his/her behaviour, consumption style and point of view regarding consumption and quality of life. So, efforts need to concentrate on encouraging people to adopt voluntary actions by making them aware of the importance of this movement in terms of the future of our planet, children, and nature.

There are various factors such as personality, materialistic values, green values, frugality, impulse buying and obsessive buying tendency that negatively/positively affect voluntary simplicity behaviour and simplicity lifestyle, and it is necessary to reveal the relationship between affecting factors and voluntary simplicity behaviour so that we can help to solve the problem of consumption and explain the phenomenon of the voluntary simplicity movement. As mentioned earlier, the main aim of the study was to analyse the relationship between the voluntary simplicity lifestyle and some factors (green values, tendency to frugality, personal materialistic values, impulse buying behaviour, and obsessive buying behaviour). As a result of collecting data from a total of 463 people, correlation analysis indicated that there were meaningful relationships among the variables. In other words, green values and tendency to frugality were positively related to voluntary simplicity behaviours, while personal materialistic values, impulse buying behaviour, and obsessive buying behaviour were negatively related to voluntary simplicity behaviours, confirming the research hypotheses. In addition to analysing the voluntary simplicity behaviours as a whole, the behaviours were analysed as subtypes by conducting a factor analysis. As a result of factor analysis and correlation analysis, it was found that green values are related to all subtypes of voluntary simplicity behaviours (self-determination, self-sufficiency, recycling, ecological awareness, and indifference to TV/Ads). As for the other variables (tendency to frugality, personal materialistic values, impulse buying, and obsessive buying) which are researched relationships between voluntary simplicity behaviours; personal materialistic values were negatively related to only “self-determination”; tendency to frugality was positively related to “self-determination”, “recycling”, “ecological awareness”, and “indifference to TV/Ads”; impulse buying was negatively related to “self-determination”, “recycling”, and “ecological awareness”; and finally, obsessive buying was negatively related to “self-determination”, self-sufficiency”, and “recycling”. In light of those findings, it could be stated that green values are the most important factor in terms of the relationship with voluntary simplicity behaviour. Therefore, green values have an important role to play in promoting a “voluntary simplicity movement”.

Lastly, according to findings of past studies, voluntary simplifiers are generally in the high income bracket and are well educated (Etzioni, 1998; Zavestoski, 2002; Craig-Less & Hill, 2002). As a result of this study, it was found that the frequency of voluntary simplicity behaviour is statistically significantly higher in high-age groups than in low-age groups. As a result of T-test and ANOVA, it was found that there was not a significant mean difference of voluntary simplicity behaviours according to participants’ sex and level of income.
References


