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An Investigation Of Pre-Service Preschool Teachers' Occupational Anxiety Levels In Terms Of Different Variables

Ömer BEYHAN[1]
Nurtuğ BARIŞERİ[2]
Yavuz Selim ŞİŞMAN[3]

[1]Assoc. Prof. Dr., Necmettin Erbakan University, Education Faculty, Educational Science Department, Turkey

obeyhan@konya.edu.tr

[2]Assist. Prof. Dr., Necmettin Erbakan University, Education Faculty, Fine Arts Education Department, Turkey

nahmethan@konya.edu.tr

[3]Lecturer Necmettin Erbakan University, Academy of Foreign Languages, Turkey

yssisman@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

Can we train well-equipped teachers who can achieve expected education quality in schools in these days? Do teacher candidates feel ready for their profession? The occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschool teachers must be observed regularly in order to let them improve their self-confidence about their profession and take precautions to foster their self-confidence. The aim of this study is to determine the occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschool teachers and to investigate

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their anxiety levels in terms of teacher candidates' gender and associate's degree. A questionnaire was used as a data collection tool and quantitative approach was employed in this study. Questionnaires were conducted to 226 4th grade pre-service preschool teachers in Necmettin Erbakan University, Ahmet Keleşoğlu Education Faculty, Program of Preschool Education. Data of the study were collected with the Occupational Anxiety Scale, developed by Cabi & Yalçınalp (2013). Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 21.0 and data were analyzed using the percentage, frequency and Mann Whitney U tests. The study results revealed that the occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschool teachers is not very high and they feel ready to perform their job. The most remarkable finding of the study is that pre-service preschool teachers have very high anxiety levels about finding a position in a public school in the future.

Keywords: occupational anxiety, teacher training, preschool teachers, perception

INTRODUCTION

Education is a very significant factor in terms of countries' development and societies' improvement. Unless education is administered by well equipped, experienced and intelligent teachers, it is not possible to achieve the expected goals. In addition, it is believed that the personality traits and mental health of the teachers have quite vital effects on their behaviors in the class (Gözler, Bozgeyikli, and et.al., 2017; Sürücü & Ünal, 2018). In this respect, the undergraduate education of teachers has a great importance. During their undergraduate education, teacher candidates acquire values and develop attitudes towards their job in addition to pedagogical content knowledge. Positive attitudes gained by pre-service teachers during their undergraduate education will let them do their job precisely, develop positive attitudes

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and behaviors towards their students and transfer the innovations in their field into their teaching environment more easily (Çeliköz & Çetin, 2004).

In order to train the teacher candidates more effectively for real teaching environments, the factors affecting them negatively must be determined and efficient solutions must be found to solve those problems. Anxiety, which is one of the biggest problems for every individual in a society, influences teacher candidates negatively as well (Çelen & Bulut 2015). Because teachers come across various factors which reduce quality of their lives and raise their anxiety levels. Overcrowded classrooms resulting in learning difficulties, teachers' anxiety about being inadequate and teachers' lack of self-confidence about their profession are some of those factors. Besides, it was also determined that the novice teachers have higher level of anxiety than veteran teachers (Wagner, 2009 as cited in Gözler, Bozgeyikli, and et.al., 2017).

It was indicated that anxiety arises generally from genetic and biological factors, teachers, their past experiences and the factors existing in the individual's social environment. Furthermore; individuals with high level of anxiety are more strict, anxious and extremely focused on pleasing the others while moderate level of anxiety has protective, stimulant and motivating effects on the individuals (Özgüven,1994; Cloninger,1988; Kutlu,2001). If anxiety is well-managed by the individual, it helps the individual to endeavor much more to be successful and take precautions against the possible future problems (Akgün, Gönen and et.al., 2007). Therefore, the occupational anxiety levels of pre-service teachers should be moderate and they should have positive attitudes towards their future profession so that those positive attitudes will help them to love their job and be more successful (as cited in Kalemoğlu Varol, Erbaş, Ünlü, 2014:114).

According to Fuller, Bown and Katz, teachers' occupational anxiety levels are connected with some specific periods of time and areas. There are various classifications for those anxiety types. But, in the general sense it is possible to collect

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them under 3 titles like 1) Self-centered Anxiety 2) Profession Centered Anxiety 3) Student-centered Anxiety (Saban, Korkmaz and et al., 2004, 198).

An individual with self-centered anxiety generally has these questions in his mind with regard to his success as a teacher; 1- Is teaching an appropriate job for me? 2- How will I do my job every day? 3- What will the school principle and the other teachers think about me when my classroom is noisy? On the other hand, an individual with profession centered anxiety has the following questions in his mind: 1- How should education and instruction be conducted in different classrooms? 2 – How can I reach to new materials, techniques and ideas related to my subject? 3- Who can help me best in order to be successful as a teacher? And teachers or pre-service teachers with student centered anxieties ask the following questions to themselves: 1- How can I achieve fast and easy learning for all the students? 2- How can I make life-long learning very important for all the students? 3- How can I help the students with special educational needs so that they can maintain their learning out of school, too? (Saban, & Korkmaz and et al., 2004).

Özeyin&Tokinan (2013) describes ''performance anxiety'' as a common experience affecting the individuals who display performance such as speakers, actors / actresses, musicians, dancers or athletes and being triggered by intense mental and physical disorders. She explains the reasons of musical performance anxiety as physiological, cognitive, and psychological characteristics, previous performance experiences, audiences (family members, friends, teachers etc.), perfectionism, fear of failure, risk of negative evaluation etc.

It was stated that anxiety may affect all the individuals from professionals to the students and it can arise before or during a performance (Gorges and et al., (2007); Lang, (2000). Anxiety may result from family, culture, behavioral, psychodynamic, cognitive or biological characteristics, perfectionism, focusing on oneself in a crowd, professional characteristics etc. (as cited in Özevin&Tokinan, 2013). For instance, a

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youth's feeling of being successful and achieving a good performance in front of a crowd during a musical event may increase his anxiety. Similarly, an event to be performed in front of a crowd (live performance etc.) by an art teacher may affect his anxiety, too.

According to Kurtuldu and Ayaydin's (2010) research, anxiety levels of fine arts students increase as their class level increases.

It was found that when students of music teaching and art teaching are compared, they have equal anxiety levels in terms of profession centered anxiety and self-centered anxiety, but students of music teaching department have higher level of anxiety in terms of student centered anxiety in comparison to art teaching department students.

105 teacher candidates` occupational anxiety levels were analyzed by Temiz (2016). Participants were selected from Nigde University Faculty of Education Pedagogical Formation program in 2013-2014 academic year. Selected candidates were studying at Music, Mathematics, Turkish and Science departments. Findings showed that there is a significant difference between music and mathematics fields in terms of self-centered anxieties. Similarly, significant difference was observed between music and mathematics, and music and science fields in terms of profession-centered anxieties. Student centered anxieties did not show any differences in terms of their fields.

The results show similarities with the findings of Saban and et al.'s (2004) research which is about determining the anxiety levels of Social Sciences Teaching, Science Teaching, Primary School Teaching and Mathematic Teaching departments' candidate teachers.

Can we train well-equipped pre-school teachers to achieve a qualified education in schools while the pre-school education if getting more and more important in these days? Do pre-school teacher candidates feel ready for their

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profession? Findings about pre-school teacher candidates' anxiety levels are getting more and more crucial in order to help them to improve self-confidence about their job and take some precautions to enhance it. The purpose of this study is to determine the occupational anxiety levels of pre-service pre-school teachers and to investigate if their anxiety levels differ in terms of their gender or not. In this context, the answers to the following questions have been sought:

1. What is the level of occupational anxiety of pre-service preschool teachers?
2. Do the occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschool teachers show a significant difference in terms of their gender?

METHODOLOGY

This research aiming to find the occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschool teachers is a quantitative study.

Population and Sampling

The participants of the research composed of 226 4th grade pre-service preschool teachers in Necmettin Erbakan University, Ahmet Keleşoğlu Education Faculty, Program of Preschool Education. 28 questionnaires with missing data were excluded.

Data Collection Tool

The data of the study has been collected by using occupational anxiety scale developed by Cabi&Yalçınalp (2013) which provides an opportunity of examining occupational anxiety levels about teaching profession in more detail. The scale, which has been used to determine the occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschool teachers, consists of 45 items and 8 sub dimensions such as Job Oriented Anxiety, Anxiety of Classroom Management, Anxiety of Interaction with Students, Anxiety of Interaction with Colleagues and Students' Parents, Anxiety of Self-improvement,

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Anxiety of Disharmony, Anxiety of Finding a Position in a Public School, Anxiety of Interaction with School Administrators. The items of the scale are scored on a five-point Likert-type Scale ranging from "1= I am very anxious about" to "5= I am not at all anxious about". Cronbach Alpha consistency coefficients were calculated in order to determine the reliability of the scale and values between .94 and .67 were found (Cabi&Yalçınalp, 2013). In the present study, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients were found to be .95.

Data Analysis

In the present study, descriptive statistics were employed in order to determine the occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschools teachers. Firstly, means and standard deviations of pre-service preschool teachers' answers with regard to each variable were found, and normality and variance homogeneity were checked. The interval coefficients of 4 intervals included in 5 point likert-type scale (5-1 = 4) are (4/5) 0.80. That is, "I am extremely anxious about= 1-1.79", "I am very anxious about=1.80-2.59", "I am somewhat anxious about =2.60-3.39", I am slightly anxious about = 3.40-4.19" and "I am not at all anxious about = 4.20-5" So, it is possible to say that when the score average increases, the level of anxiety decreases. For the data with non-normal distribution, Mann Whitney U test was employed while comparing the total score obtained from the scale in terms of ''gender variable'' with sub-factors' scores.

FINDINGS

Occupational Anxiety Level of Pre-Service Preschool Teachers

The first problem sentence of the study is "What is the occupational anxiety level of pre-service preschool teachers?". In order to find an answer for this problem, descriptive statistic results were analyzed. Table 1 shows arithmetic mean and standard

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deviation values of occupational anxiety level scores of pre-service preschool teachers with regard to the scale's sub-dimensions.

Table 1 : Descriptive statistics data of the occupational anxiety level scores of pre-service preschool teachers

Factors	n	X	SS
Job Oriented Anxiety	226	3,78	,820
Anxiety of Classroom Management	226	3,55	,908
Anxiety of Interaction with Students	226	3,63	,991
Anxiety of Interaction with Colleagues and Students' Parents	226	**3,98**	,869
Anxiety of Self-improvement	226	3,75	1,171
Anxiety of Finding a Position in a Public School	226	**2,20**	1,003
Anxiety of Disharmony	226	3,65	1,081
Anxiety of Interaction with School Administrators	226	3,57	,876
TOTAL	226	**3,52**	,683

The mean of pre-service preschool teachers' occupational anxiety score is 3, 52. Since this value corresponds to the scale's "I am slightly anxious about" article, we might say that our students are not very anxious about practicing their profession. In terms of scale's sub-dimensions, it was found that "Anxiety of Finding a Position in a Public School" article has the lowest mean as "2,20". Since this value corresponds to the scale's "I am very anxious about" article, we might say that our students are most anxious about finding a position in a public school. In terms of scale's sub-dimensions, the highest mean score "3,98" belonged to "Anxiety of Interaction with Colleagues and Students' Parents" article. Since this value corresponds to the scale's "I am slightly

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anxious about" article, we can say that our students are least anxious about the interaction with their colleagues and students' parents.

Differences in Pre-Service Preschool Teachers` Occupational Anxiety Levels According to Their Gender

The second problem sentence of the study is if occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschool teachers show a significant difference in terms of their gender.

Mann-Whitney U test was employed in order to analyze the data with non-normal distribution in order to find if there is a significant difference in occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschool teachers in terms of gender variable, and the results were shown in the Table 2.

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U test results of occupational anxiety scores of pre-service preschool teachers in terms of gender variable

Factor	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank	Mann-Whitney U	p
Job Oriented Anxiety	Female	183	111,38	20382,00	3546,000	,31
	Male	43	122,53	5269,00		
Anxiety of Socio-economic status	Female	183	113,39	20750,50	3914,500	,95
	Male	43	113,97	4900,50		
Anxiety of interaction with students	Female	183	113,13	20703,00	3867,000	,86
	Male	43	115,07	4948,00		
	Female	183	110,88	20291,00		

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Anxiety of Interaction with Colleagues and Students' Parents	Male	43	124,65	5360,00	3455,000 ,21	
Anxiety of Self-improvement	Female	183	109,99	20128,50	3292,500	,09
	Male	43	128,43	5522,50		
Anxiety of Finding a Position in a Public School	Female	183	112,73	20629,50	3793,500	,71
	Male	43	116,78	5021,50		
Anxiety of Disharmony	Female	183	239,09	58339,00	3789,500	,70
	Male	43	285,47	80789,00		
Anxiety of Interaction with School Administrators	Female	183	258,41	63052,00	3674,500	,49
	Male	43	268,82	76076,00		
TOTAL Occupational Anxiety	Female	183	113,39	20750,50	3696,000 ,53	
	Male	43	113,97	4900,50		

There is no significant difference between the occupational anxiety score means of pre-service preschool teachers in terms of gender variable. According to the findings of the present study, while female and male students' total occupational anxiety score means (Female=113,39; male=113,97) are very close to each other, a slight difference has been found in favor of male students. Therefore, we can say that

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male students are slightly more anxious than female students. That slight difference is in favor of male students in terms of all sub dimensions.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this study, it was aimed to determine the occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschool teachers and compare their occupational anxiety levels in terms of different variables. At first, the occupational anxiety levels of pre-service preschool teachers were determined. In the light of findings, we can say that occupational anxiety level of the pre-service teachers is not very high and they feel ready to practice their profession. That result is confirming the findings of Temiz (2016). Especially art and physical education teachers', who present individual performance, individual anxiety levels are found to be higher than the others (Köse, 2006). Practicing a performance alone in front of a crowd might be the main reason of that anxiety. Teachers of subjects, which are suitable for employing cooperative learning techniques, have more anxiety of interaction with students. The most striking result about pre-service preschool teachers is that they have very high level anxiety of finding a position in a public school.

That type of anxiety comes into prominence in researches about occupational anxiety. That situation matches up with the problem of unemployment among the young population in our country. In terms of gender variable, female and male students' occupational anxiety levels are very close to each other and there is no significant difference between male and female students about feeling ready to practice their profession.

In accordance with the findings of the study, seminars about teaching profession and its importance can be conducted in order to decrease the occupational anxiety levels of the students in their faculties apart from their present curriculum and

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hidden curriculum. Then, Ministry of National Education can conduct a needs analysis about personnel requirement and decrease the number of students to be accepted to the teacher training programs in order to decrease the pre-service teachers' anxiety of finding a position in a public school. Furthermore, future qualitative studies can be conducted in order to examine the reasons of this research's results. A new research can be done with larger study groups.

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