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Subjective well-being and fear of Covid-19 in teachers

Öğretmenlerde öznel iyi oluş ve Covid-19 korkusu

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between primary school teachers' fear of the new type of coronavirus (COVID-19) and their subjective well-being. The research was carried out with the relational survey model, one of the quantitative research methods. The participants of the employee survey consist of 224 primary school teachers who were teaching in public primary schools in İstanbul in the 2020–2021 academic year and were determined by the convenience sampling method. In the study, the data were obtained with the COVID-19 and subjective well-being scales. Simple linear regression analysis and Pearson product-moment correlation analysis were used in the analysis of the data obtained in the study. According to the research findings, it was determined that there are significant relationships between the fear of having COVID-19 and subjective well-being. In addition, it was found that fear of having COVID-19 was a significant predictor of subjective well-being.

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ilkököl öğretmenlerinin yeni tip koronavirüs (COVID-19) korkusu ile öznel iyi oluşları arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektir. Araştırma, nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan ilişkisel tarama modeli ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmanın katılımcılarını 2020-2021 eğitim-öğretim yılında İstanbul ilinde ilköğretim okullarında görev yapan ve kolay ulaşılabilir örnekleme yöntemi ile belirlenen 224 sınıf öğretmeni oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada veriler COVID-19 olma korkusu ve öznel iyi oluş ölçeği ile elde edilmiştir. Çalışmada elde edilen verilerin analizinde Basit Doğrusal Regresyon Analizi ve Pearson Momentler Çarpımı Korelasyon Analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma bulgularına göre, COVID-19 korkusu ile öznel iyi oluş arasında anlamlı ilişkiler olduğu belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca, COVID-19 korkusunun öznel iyi oluşun anlamlı bir yordayıcısı olduğu belirlenmiştir.

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INTRODUCTION

Pandemic, a term that has been used often recently, is expressed as an epidemic that spreads out of a particular region and begins to affect a large population and even the entire human race (Aslan, 2020). Epidemics cause massive deaths by infecting millions of people around the world. Today, the SARS-CoV-2 infection epidemic, which first appeared in Wuhan, one of the largest cities in China's Hubei province, was officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020 because it caused more than 4000 deaths. (WHO, 2020). The pandemic has dramatically affected affected countries' economies and education systems, especially the health systems around the world (Gedik & Erol, 2022). In most parts of the world, governments have implemented quarantine in many areas in order to control the global epidemic, and face-to-face education activities have been suspended. According to UNESCO, more than 100 countries have implemented restrictions that affect more than half of the world's student population. Therefore, more than 1.5 billion students have remained away from face-to-face education (UNESCO, 2020). The closure of schools due to the pandemic and irregular and interrupted education causes great anxiety, fear, and worry in society, especially for students (Erol & Erol, 2020) and teachers (Çiçek et al. 2020).

COVID-19 Fear

Fear is a functional emotion that ensures the survival of the individual (Öhman, 2008). At the same time, fear is defined as an unpleasant situation triggered by the perception of threatening stimuli (De Hoog et al. 2008). In times of crisis, individuals experience the most fear. However, when experienced excessively, fear can result in maladaptive behaviors (Lum & Tambyah, 2020; van Meurs et al. 2014). The unavoidable increases in the number of positive cases and deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic caused fear in individuals (Pakpour & Griffiths, 2020). As a result, individuals develop both rational and irrational fears about having the disease, dying, losing a loved one, and harming others by transmitting the disease to others (Montemurro, 2020; Ornell et al. 2020).

The unavoidable increases in the number of positive cases and loss of lives lead to fear, which is a psychological aspect of the COVID-19 epidemic. Such thoughts threaten people's physical health and lives, increase their stress levels, and trigger various psychological problems such as anxiety and depression (Harper et al. 2020). Studies indicate that natural disasters such as earthquakes and pandemics cause stress, major depression, sleep disorders, and severe mental disorders (Zhang et al. 2020; Yıldırım et al. 2021). Similarly, the fear and panic about the current COVID-19 pandemic can lead patients, their families, and other contacts to experience stigma and social exclusion. In this case, it can cause the individual to develop mental health prob-

lems such as adjustment disorder and depression (Zhang et al. 2020). In addition, it is emphasized that this epidemic causes fear, helplessness, and anxiety in people, since the discussions about the treatment process, effective vaccines, and the ways of transmission of the virus cannot reach a clear conclusion, and these emotions negatively affect people's behavior (Ho et al. 2020). Similarly, it was found that intolerance to uncertainty significantly predicted fear of COVID-19 (Çarkıt, 2021). A negative relationship was found between fear of COVID-19 and life satisfaction in the literature. It is stated that COVID-19 causes fear and many negative emotions in individuals and affects individuals' quality of life and happiness (Artan et al. 2021).

COVID-19 and Subjective Well-Being

The science of positive psychology uses the concept of happiness to explain positive experiences. Happiness is also known as "subjective well-being" in the literature (Diener, 2000). This concept was first put forward by Bradburn (1969). Bentham defines happiness as the sum of the joy, pleasure, and pain of life (Veenhoven & Dumludağ, 2015). It is possible to express happiness or subjective well-being as the superiority of positive thoughts and feelings about the life of the individual (Myers & Diener, 1995). Subjective well-being is related to the individual's evaluation of his own quality of life and reaching personal goals, positive expectations about his life, and the meanings attributed to them (Veenhoven, 1991). Subjective well-being includes a general evaluation of the individual's feelings and thoughts about his or her life, happiness, peace, pleasure, and life satisfaction (Çiçek, 2021; Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2003). Subjective well-being is concerned with how and why individuals evaluate their lives in positive ways (Diener, 1984). Subjective well-being includes many elements such as life satisfaction, family satisfaction, the absence of depression and distress, positive emotions, and emotional states (Yetim, 2001).

With the recent worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, people are faced with lower subjective well-being and a number of stressors. These factors are economic difficulties, job loss, increased health risks, uncertainties, reduced social contacts outside the home, increased TV watching time, and fewer opportunities for physical activity (Möhring et al. 2021). In addition, studies have found that factors that negatively affect mental health, such as stress, depression, and anxiety, also negatively affect individuals' subjective well-being and perceived quality of life (Genç & Arslan, 2021).

It has been observed that there has been a decrease in individuals' level of life satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. These decreases were observed below the previous levels even after quarantine (Cheng et al. 2020). In another study, it was shown that while the psychological well-being scores of health workers did not differ according to gender, depression and stress scores were significantly higher in women (Ceri ve Çicek, 2021). In the research

of Helliwell et al. (2021) on world happiness during the COVID-19 process, it was found that anxiety and sadness increased significantly between 2017–2019 and 2020. In the Gallup World Survey, the frequency of stress increased in 2020 (Helliwell, 2021). Subjective well-being is critical for individuals to cope with difficulties in uncontrollable life events. In this process, teachers were also adversely affected during the transition to distance education and the adaptation to the new normal, with educational institutions' break from face-to-face education. However, there is limited information on the effects of stress on life satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic (Shamblaw et al. 2021). Based on the contexts expressed in the literature, this study aims to examine the relationship between primary school teachers' fear of having COVID-19 and their subjective well-being.

METHOD

The Model of the Research

In this study, the relationship between primary school teachers' fear of COVID-19 and their subjective well-being was investigated within the scope of relational screening, one of the quantitative study designs. Studies that examine the relationships and connections between different variables are called relational research (Büyükoztürk et al. 2017). Survey studies can be analyzed in two ways: cross-sectional and longitudinal. This study this study has a cross-sectional survey design cross-sectional survey research. Christensen, Burke, Johnson, & Turner (2015) consider the cross-sectional survey as data collected once from the participants in the sample in a relatively short time.

Participants of the Study and Study Environment

The participants of the study consist of 224 primary school teachers, 111 women (49.56%) and 113 men (50.4%), who are primary school teachers in Istanbul and selected through convenience sampling method. The average professional seniority of the participants was found to be ten years. While the youngest of the participants were 26 years old, the oldest was 61. The accessible sampling method can be used to minimize the loss of time, effort, and cost, and to add speed and practicality to the research (Patton, 2015). The research was carried out in the distance education process in the 2020-2021 academic year. Teachers in the research work in economically disadvantaged areas.

Data Collection Tools

Fear of COVID Scale: The fear of the COVID scale is a 7-item, 5-point Likert-type scale with a single dimension (Ahorsu et al. 2020). Factor loads (.66–.74) and adjusted item-total correlation (.47–.56) of the COVID-19 scale were found to be within acceptable limits. Internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the scale ($\alpha = .82$ and ICC = .72) were also found to be at a good level in terms of the agreement. It can also be said that the Fear of COVID-19

Scale is positively associated with perceived vulnerability, hospital anxiety, and depression (Ahorsu et al. 2020). The Turkish adaptation studies of this scale were carried out by Satıcı et al. (2020). The study was conducted with a total of 1304 participants, aged between 18 and 64, from 75 provinces in Turkey. It was determined that the Turkish version of the scale had good construct validity and reliability. In addition, the Cronbach Alpha of the fear of COVID-19 scale was determined as .86. For this study, the scale's Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was determined as .87.

Subjective Well-Being Scale: The scale was developed by Renshaw, Long, and Cook (2015). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was made by Ergün and Nartgün (2017). The adaptation study for the scale was carried out with 544 teachers. The 8-item scale consists of 2 sub-dimensions: school engagement and teaching efficacy. The scale's construct validity was tested with exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The exploratory factor analysis revealed that the items were collected in 2 sub-dimensions as in the original scale. As a result of confirmatory factor analysis, it was seen that the fit indices were at the desired level ($\chi^2 = 56.01$, $sd = 18$, $RMSEA = .075$, $NFI = 0.97$, $NNFI = 0.96$, $CFI = 0.98$, $GFI = .096$, $AGFI = 0.93$, $GFI = 0.96$, $SRMR = 0.04$). The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .82. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale for this study was determined as .84.

Data Collection Process

The data in the study were obtained from primary school teachers working in various districts of Istanbul (Esenyurt, Esenler, Güngören, and Zeytinburnu). The teachers participating in the study were selected voluntarily. Before the data collection process began, the permission of the Ministry of National Education and the ethics committee was obtained. In addition, teachers were asked to fill in the participant consent form. Teachers whose consent was not obtained were not included in the study. Scale forms were sent to teachers in digital format. Teachers were asked to mark the scale item that best reflected them.

Analysis of Data

Before starting the analysis of the data obtained in the study, the assumption of normality was examined with the coefficients of kurtosis and skewness. It was determined that the fear on the COVID-19 scale ranged from -.36 to -.07, while the subjective well-being scale ranged from -.42 to -.05. Fidell and Tabachnick (2013) state that kurtosis and skewness values between -1.5 and +1.5 will meet the normality assumption. In line with this criterion, it is possible to say that the data sets to be used in the study showed a normal distribution. Accordingly, a t-test, simple linear regression analysis, and Pearson product-moment correlation analysis were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

In this section, we present the findings of the research. We presented the findings in the context of the research problem and the data obtained. We present these findings below.

Within the framework of the findings of the study, first of all, primary school teachers' fear of having COVID-19 and their subjective well-being levels were examined with the t-test according to the gender variable, and the results are presented in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, it was determined that teachers' fears of having COVID-19 ($t=.776$; $p>.05$) and subjective well-being levels ($t=.425$; $p>.05$) did not show a significant difference according to the gender variable. In addition, the level of relationship between teachers' subjective well-being and fears of COVID-19 was examined by Pearson correlation analysis, and the results are presented in Table 2.

As seen in Table 2, there is a moderately positive correlation between teachers' fear of COVID-19 and subjective well-being, school engagement ($r=.34$) sub-dimensions, and teaching efficacy ($r=.63$) sub-dimensions. In addition, a moderate positive correlation was found between fear of COVID-19 and subjective well-being total scores ($r=.63$). When standardized regression coefficients are examined, fear of COVID-19 explains 40% of subjective well-being ($R=.63$ and $R^2=.40$).

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION AND DISCUSSION

When the literature is reviewed it is seen that many studies have been conducted on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on men and women (Cihangir-Çankaya, 2009; Duman, 2020; Osmanoğlu & Kaya, 2013). Similar to the findings of this study, Osmanoğlu & Kaya (2013) stated that pre-service teachers' psychological well-being scores. Cihangir-Çankaya (2009) stated that subjective well-being scores did not differ according to the gender variable. In addition, Duman (2020) stated in his study that university students' fears of having COVID-19 did not differ significantly according to the gender factor. Therefore, we can say that some study findings in the literature support our findings.

Table 2. The Relationship Between Subjective Well-Being and Fear of Covid-19 (N=224)

| Variables | r |
|--|------|
| Fear of COVID-19/School Engagement | .34* |
| Fear of COVID-19/Teaching Proficiency | .63* |
| Fear of COVID-19/Subjective Well-Being | .63* |
| R=.63 | |
| R ² =.40 | |
| *p<.05. | |

Despite the studies supporting the findings of this study in the literature, there are studies showing that there is a significant difference between men and women (Allen et al. 2020; Bakioğlu, Korkmaz & Ercan, 2020; Cenkseven & Akbaş, 2007; Ceri & Çicek, 2021; Oppenheim, 2020). Cenkseven and Akbaş (2007) emphasized in their study that the subjective well-being levels of men and women differ. This difference between men and women is also supported by other studies in the literature. In many families, it has been observed that women take on the burden of childcare and home education during closures (Oppenheim, 2020). For this reason, female teachers' anxiety was found to be higher than male teachers' (Allen et al. 2020). In addition, Bakiolu, Korkmaz, and Ercan (2020) found that the fear of COVID-19 was significantly higher in women in their study with adults. In another study, it was shown that while the psychological well-being scores of health workers did not differ according to gender, depression and stress scores were significantly higher in women (Ceri & Çicek, 2021). According to these findings, we can state that our study does not overlap with some studies in the literature. The different gender results revealed in studies conducted in the literature indicate that more research on this subject is needed.

Subjective well-being supports teachers' motivation and school development (De Neve et al. 2013; Dilekçi & Limon, 2020). Anxiety about being COVID-19 can prevent this development. In this respect, it can be said that there is a relationship between the anxiety of being COVID-19 and subjective well-being. The findings of our study indicate that the fear of having COVID-19 is closely related to

Table 1. Fear of COVID-19 and Subjective Well-Being by Gender

| Variables | Gender | N | Mean | Sd | Sh | t | df | p | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-----|-------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----------------------|--------|-----|-------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|
| Fear of COVID-19 | Female | 111 | 24.59 | 5.39 | .51 | .776 | 222 | .261 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Male | 113 | 24.07 | 4.69 | .44 | | | | Subjective Well-being | Female | 111 | 24.23 | 3.99 | .38 | .425 | 222 | .215 | Male |
| Subjective Well-being | Female | 111 | 24.23 | 3.99 | .38 | .425 | 222 | .215 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Male | 113 | 24.03 | 2.92 | .27 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

subjective well-being. According to our results, it was determined that there was a moderately positive correlation between teachers' fear of COVID-19 and their subjective well-being total score, school engagement sub-dimension, and teaching proficiency sub-dimensions. It is also emphasized in many studies that the fear of COVID-19 negatively affects the lives of individuals (Allen et al. 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. 2021). For example, Allen et al. (2020) stated that psychological health deteriorated among teachers during the pandemic. At the same time, a sudden increase in teachers' anxiety was found after schools switched to distance learning in the UK (Allen et al. 2020). Similarly, German teachers had "moderate" to "high" stress levels, and another study conducted in Spain revealed that a quarter of teachers experienced "severe" to "extremely severe" stress and anxiety (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. 2021). It is possible to say that the fear of COVID-19 affects teachers psychologically and supports the results of this study.

Our study has some limitations. In the study, fear of COVID-19 was examined with a single variable, subjective well-being. In addition, the fear of COVID-19 of the participating teachers was examined with a quantitative scale, but in-depth qualitative interviews were not conducted. Considering the limitations and findings of the study, we can make the following suggestions: Based on the finding that teachers' fear of COVID-19 can affect their subjective well-being, it is considered important to implement teachers' psychological support programs. Studies on this subject can be carried out with larger samples. In addition, this study can be examined in depth with qualitative methods, and the sources of teachers' fear of COVID-19 can be revealed. In this study, the fear of COVID-19 was examined in the context of special well-being. In future studies, fear of COVID-19 can be examined in the context of various variables such as life satisfaction and stress.

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