



Research Article

Investigation of burnout levels of special education teachers¹

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate burnout levels of teachers working in special education schools according to different variables. 127 teachers from Üsküdar, Kadıköy, Ataşehir and Beykoz districts of the Anatolian side of Istanbul participated to the study. In this survey research the data was collected with the Maslach Burnout Scale. Personal information form for demographical data was also given to the participants. The statistical analyzes of the data was conducted in SPSS software package and the burnout levels of the participants were determined. According to the findings, the burnout levels of the teachers did not differ significantly in terms of gender and seniority variables. However, there is a significant difference in the subscale of emotional exhaustion among teachers with undergraduate and graduate degrees ($t = -2,036, p < .05$). As the level of education increases, the levels of emotional exhaustion of special education teachers increase. Additionally, when the working time in same school was taken into consideration, it was determined that teachers were statistically differentiated in sub-dimensions of emotional exhaustion ($F = 4,781, p < .05$) and depersonalization ($F = 6,961, p < .05$).

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Introduction

The impact of teachers in educational institutions on the quality of education is an important factor for the level of development of a country. We can describe teachers as the cornerstone of education, as they have important duties such as increasing students' motivation, contributing to the learning process and supporting their personal development. Although there are many factors that affect the quality of education, the role of teachers is the most important. Teachers' morale, motivation and efficiency are of great importance in the healthy operation of the education system. Efficiency in educational institutions is also achieved through people. People's emotions, enthusiasm, excitement and morale are very important in creating this productivity. It is very difficult to expect contribution to the workplace from people who are angry, resentful, tired and fed up with life (From Alıç, 1996, cited in Karaköse and Kocabaş, 2006). Everyone wants to be liked and appreciated as a result of the work they do. Being liked and appreciated also helps people develop their self-esteem and confidence (Bentley, 1998 as cited in Yavuz and Karadeniz, 2009: 508). The teaching profession has recently attracted attention regarding the loss of professional value. The reasons for this may include changes in the education system, student behavior problems, and new policies. However, it remains one of the preferred professions (Seferoğlu, Yıldız & Yücel, 2014: 2).

One of the factors that reduce teachers' productivity or performance is burnout. Burnout is a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson, 1981).

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Burnout is more common in teaching than in other professions. The reason for this is that teaching is a profession that requires effort beyond the defined duties, is based on constant communication with people, and eventually leads to burnout. Therefore, it can be said that teaching is one of the at-risk professions with a high probability of experiencing burnout (Baltaş & Baltaş, 1993; Akt, Seferoğlu, Yıldız, & Yücel, 2014). According to Dorman (2003; cited in Seferoğlu, Yıldız, Yücel, 2014), the biggest harm burnout causes to teachers is the possibility of preventing them from continuing their jobs. When teachers begin to experience burnout, negative emotions also arise. Afterwards, they begin to have communication problems with their students and colleagues. As a result, teachers' private lives outside of their profession may be negatively affected and they may experience various problems, especially psychological ones. Burnout is just like an infectious disease; when it is seen in one teacher at a school, it soon begins to be seen in other teachers. Therefore, when the situation is noticed, a solution should be sought immediately (Seferoğlu, Yıldız and Yücel, 2014). High motivation of teachers reflects positively on their performance, while high burnout reflects negatively on their performance. Many factors, both internal and external to the organization, are effective on teacher motivation and burnout. However, it is thought that the communication between school administrators and teachers is an important intra-organizational variable that affects teacher motivation and burnout (Çelik, 2013).

Problem of Study

Teacher burnout is a situation that needs to be focused and studied in order to ensure quality in education and build it on solid foundations. It is considered important to examine the burnout levels of special education teachers, especially those working with disadvantaged students, according to their demographic characteristics. This study aimed to examine the burnout levels of special education teachers according to different demographic variables.

This research was conducted to examine the burnout levels of special education teachers according to their demographic characteristics. The research sought answers to the following questions.

Subproblems;

- Is there a difference in the burnout levels of special education teachers according to gender?
- Is there a difference in the burnout levels of special education teachers according to their years of work in the profession?
- Is there a difference in the burnout levels of special education teachers according to their educational status?
- Is there a difference in the burnout levels of special education teachers according to the years of work at the school?

Method

Research Model

In this research, the relational survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, was used. Relational screening model is a research model that aims to determine the existence and/or degree of co-variation between two or more variables (Karasar, 2009).

Sample

In this research, they were randomly selected among the special education teachers working in special education schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in the districts of Üsküdar, Kadıköy, Ataşehir and Beykoz on the Anatolian side of Istanbul. A total of 127 teachers participated in the study. The characteristics of the study group are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Variables		N	%
Gender	Female	88	69,3
	Male	39	30,7
Education level	Undergraduate education	68	53,5
	Graduate education	59	46,5
Seniority	1-5 years	16	12,6
	6-10 years	26	20,5
	11-15 years	28	22,0
	16-20 years	27	21,3
	21+years	30	23,6
Seniority in the school	1-5 years	44	34,6
	6-10 years	24	18,9
	11-15 years	22	17,3
	16-20 years	20	15,7
	21+years	17	13,4
Total		127	100

Data Collection Tools

Maslach Burnout Scale and Personal Information Form were used to collect data in this study.

Maslach Burnout Scale

Maslach and Jackson (1981) developed the original Maslach Burnout Scale, and Ergin (1992) translated it into Turkish and conducted validity and reliability studies. The scale consists of 22 items; There are nine items in the Emotional Exhaustion dimension, five items in the Depersonalization dimension, and eight items in the Feeling of Personal Failure dimension. The scale is a five-point Likert type and the answers are given as "Never, Very rarely, Sometimes, Mostly and Always". The Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization dimensions consist of positive items, while the Feeling of Personal Failure dimension consists of negative items. A score cannot be obtained from the sum of the items of the scale, but the scores of the sub-dimensions are evaluated separately (Ergin, 1992, cited in Erdemoğlu-Şahin, 2007).

Personal Information Form

The personal information form developed by the researcher includes four questions to determine the teachers' gender, educational background, professional seniority and working hours at their school.

Data Analysis

SPSS program was used to analyze the data. In statistical analysis, the significance level was accepted as .05. In the study, firstly, the frequency and percentage distributions of gender, education level, professional seniority and working hours at school were examined. Independent samples t-test was used to determine whether teachers' burnout levels varied according to their gender and educational background. One-way analysis of variance test was used to determine whether burnout levels varied according to professional seniority and length of time working at school.

Results

This section includes the findings of the analyzes conducted to determine whether the burnout levels of special education teachers differ according to their gender, education level, length of service and time spent in school.

The findings of the t-test in independent groups conducted to determine whether the burnout levels of special education teachers differ according to gender are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 . t-Test results of participants' burnout levels according to gender

Dimensions		N	\bar{X}	ss	t	p
Personal Failure	Female	88	1,69	,76	-1,256	,211
	Male	39	1,87	,68		
Emotional Exhaustion	Female	88	1,58	,81	-1,773	,079
	Male	39	1,84	,59		
Depersonalization	Female	88	1,62	,98	-,019	,985
	Male	39	1,63	,81		

According to Table 2, there is no significant difference between male and female teachers in terms of the average scores obtained from the personal failure, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Scale ($p > .05$). It can be said that gender is not a variable affecting burnout in special education teachers.

The findings of the t-test in independent groups, which was conducted to determine the differentiation of special education teachers' burnout levels according to the education variable, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. t-Test results of participants' burnout levels according to education level

Dimensions		N	\bar{X}	ss	t	p
Personal Failure	Graduated	68	1,65	,72	-1,629	,106
	Postgraduate	59	1,86	,75		
Emotional Exhaustion	Graduated	68	1,54	,80	-2,036	,044
	Postgraduate	59	1,81	,68		
Depersonalization	Graduated	68	1,53	,99	-1,170	,244
	Postgraduate	59	1,73	,84		

According to Table 3, there is no significant difference between male and female teachers in terms of the average scores they obtained from the personal failure and depersonalization dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Scale ($p > .05$). However, there is a significant difference between undergraduate and graduate teachers in terms of the average score they received from the emotional exhaustion dimension ($p < .05$). Emotional exhaustion levels of postgraduate graduates are higher than undergraduate graduates.

The results of the one-way ANOVA test, which was conducted to determine the differentiation of burnout levels of special education teachers according to their length of service, are given in Table 4.

Table 4. ANOVA test results of participants' burnout levels according to their seniority

Dimensions		N	\bar{X}	ss	t	p
Personal Failure	1-5 years	16	2,02	,80	1,581	,184
	6-10 years	26	1,76	,60		
	11-15 years	28	1,49	,74		
	16-20 years	27	1,72	,86		
	20 + years	30	1,86	,68		
Emotional Exhaustion	1-5 years	16	1,36	,80	1,859	,122
	6-10 years	26	1,50	,59		
	11-15 years	28	1,92	,91		
	16-20 years	27	1,66	,83		
	20 + years	30	1,74	,58		
Depersonalization	1-5 years	16	1,13	,93	2,359	,057
	6-10 years	26	1,52	,88		
	11-15 years	28	1,97	1,03		
	16-20 years	27	1,55	,95		
	20 + years	30	1,72	,74		

Table 4 shows the scores obtained from the personal failure, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Scale among teachers whose service period is one-five years, six-ten years, eleven-fifteen years, sixteen-twenty years and twenty-one years and above. There is no significant difference in terms of their averages ($p > .05$).

The findings of the one-way ANOVA test, which was conducted to determine the differentiation of special education teachers' burnout levels according to the length of time they worked in the institution, are included in Table 5.

Table 5. ANOVA test results of participants' burnout levels according to their seniority in school

Dimensions		N	\bar{X}	ss	t	p	
Personal Failure	1-5 years	44	1,65	,77	1,138	,342	-
	6-10 years	24	1,81	,59			
	11-15 years	22	1,58	,77			
	16-20 years	20	1,88	,82			
	20 + years	17	2,00	,68			
Emotional Exhaustion	1-5 years	44	1,30	,72	1,859	,001	A<C
	6-10 years	24	1,71	,47			
	11-15 years	22	1,96	,87			
	16-20 years	20	1,83	,91			
	20 + years	17	1,96	,47			
Depersonalization	1-5 years	44	1,19	,91	6,961	,000	A<D
	6-10 years	24	1,48	,78			
	11-15 years	22	1,73	,94			
	16-20 years	20	2,17	,98			
	20 + years	17	2,18	,39			

A: 1-5 years B: 6-10 years C: 11-15 years D: 16-20 years E: 20 + years

In Table 5, there is no significant difference in the mean scores obtained from the personal failure dimension of the Maslach Burnout Scale among teachers whose working period in the institution is 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years and 20 + years ($p > .05$).

There is a significant difference between the groups in terms of emotional exhaustion ($p < .05$). Bonferroni test was performed as a post-hoc test to determine the source of the difference. According to this test result, the emotional exhaustion levels of teachers who have been working at the institution for one to five years are significantly lower than those who have been working at the institution for eleven to fifteen years and those who have been twenty-one and over ($p < .05$). There is no significant difference between other study groups ($p > .05$).

There is also a significant difference between the groups in the depersonalization sub-dimension ($p < .05$). Bonferroni test was performed as a post-hoc test to determine the source of the difference. According to this test result, the depersonalization levels of teachers who have been working in the institution for one to five years are significantly lower than those who have been working at the institution for sixteen to twenty years and those who have been twenty-one and over ($p < .05$). There is no significant difference between other study groups ($p > .05$).

Conclusion and Discussion

In this section, the findings of the research conducted to determine whether the burnout levels of special education teachers differ according to their gender, education level, length of service and time spent in school will be discussed and some suggestions will be given.

Gender

As a result, the burnout levels of special education teachers were determined as personal failure ($t = -1.256$, $p > .05$), emotional exhaustion ($t = -1.773$, $p > .05$) and depersonalization ($t = -0.19$, $p > .$) according to gender. It was determined that it did not differ from the 05) sub-dimensions. Accordingly, gender is not a variable affecting the burnout level of special education teachers. The findings are incompatible with Ergin (1992) and Şanlı and Tan (2017), who reported that depersonalization scores differ significantly according to the gender variable. However, it is compatible with Özer (1998) study. This suggests that the gender variable may affect teachers' burnout levels in different ways under various conditions. The gender variable may affect the level of burnout through factors such as success or job satisfaction. education level

As a result, it was determined that the burnout levels of special education teachers did not differ from the sub-dimensions of personal failure ($t=-1.629$, $p>.05$) and depersonalization ($t=-1.170$, $p>.05$) according to the variable of education period. However, there is a significant difference between undergraduate and graduate teachers in the emotional exhaustion sub-dimension ($t= -2.036$, $p<.05$). Emotional exhaustion levels of postgraduate graduates are higher than undergraduate graduates. Accordingly, it can be said that as the level of education increases, the emotional burnout levels of special education teachers increase.

Seniority

It was determined that the burnout levels of special education teachers did not differ from the sub-dimensions of personal failure ($F=1.581$, $p>.05$), emotional exhaustion ($F=1.859$, $p>.05$) and depersonalization ($F= 2.359$, $p>.05$) according to the length of service variable. . Accordingly, length of service is not a factor affecting the burnout level of special education teachers.

Sucuoğlu and Koluğlu-Aksaz (1996) in their study with special education teachers, according to teachers' burnout levels; There was no significant difference between the variables of length of service at school and type of school and the sub-dimensions. However, a significant relationship was found between gender, marital status and professional seniority variables and the depersonalization dimension (Sucuoğlu and Koluğlu-Aksaz, 1996; Girgin, 1995).

Working experince at special education school

There is no difference in the personal failure ($F=1.138$, $p>.05$) sub-dimension of special education teachers' burnout levels according to the variable of working time in the institution. However, statistically significant differences were determined in the emotional exhaustion ($F=4.781$, $p<.05$) and depersonalization ($F= 6.961$, $p<.05$) subscales. Accordingly, the emotional exhaustion levels of teachers who have been working at the institution for 1-5 years are significantly lower than those who have been working at the institution for eleven-fifteen years and those who have been twenty-one and over ($p<.05$). In addition, the depersonalization levels of teachers who have been working at the institution for one to five years are significantly lower than those who have been working at the institution for sixteen to twenty years and those who have been twenty-one and over ($p<.05$). While this result differs from the findings of the Şanlı and Tan (2017) study, it supports the findings of the Ensari and Tuzcuoğlu (1995) and Torun (1995) studies. According to these researchers' perceptions of teachers regarding burnout; determined a statistically significant difference between the length of time working at school and the type of school and the dimensions of the burnout scale.

Recommendations

- While receiving a master's degree is generally a positive and desirable feature, it should be investigated why emotional burnout increases as the level of education increases and the relevant factors should be eliminated. One reason for this situation may be that the expectations of teachers with increased education were not met.
- Special arrangements should be made for teachers with master's degrees and they should be made to feel that their efforts are valuable and that their expertise will be appropriately evaluated in various fields. Thus, emotional burnout levels can be reduced.
- It has been observed that teachers who have worked in the institution for eleven to fifteen years and twenty-one years and above have high perceptions of emotional exhaustion. According to this result; Studies and training can be conducted to increase the emotional exhaustion levels of teachers who have been working in the institution for eleven-fifteen years and twenty-one years and above.
- It has been observed that teachers who have worked in the institution for eleven to fifteen years and twenty-one years or more have high perceptions of depersonalization. According to this result; Studies and training can be carried out to increase the sensitivity levels of teachers who have been working in the institution for eleven to fifteen years and twenty-one years and above.

- Emotional burnout and depersonalization have a high impact on teachers' general burnout levels. Studies to improve teachers' emotional burnout and depersonalization levels will also positively affect teachers' general burnout levels.

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