

“Will I be a teacher after I graduate?” Employment anxiety, self-compassion, and life satisfaction among pre-service teachers

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the relations between employment anxiety, self-compassion, and life satisfaction among pre-service teachers. The sample of the study consists of 376 Turkish fourth-year pre-service teachers from a state university, who were selected by stratified purposeful sampling method. The data were collected via the self-compassion scale-short form, the employment anxiety scale, and the satisfaction with life scale. Positive, moderate and significant relationships were found between pre-service teachers' self-compassion and life satisfaction, and negative, moderate and significant relationships were observed between self-compassion and employment anxiety. Path analysis results revealed that self-compassion negatively predicted employment anxiety and positively predicted life satisfaction. Results also showed that employment anxiety had a partial mediating role in the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction. In addition, self-compassion had a stronger effect on life satisfaction than employment anxiety.

Key Words: Employment anxiety, self-compassion, life satisfaction, pre-service teachers

Introduction

University students can be defined as young adults who have escaped from the academic pressure they feel during their high school education, are in the process of developing new friendships and social relationships, have the opportunity to experience new academic and social life, and have future expectations about their careers after graduation (Shin, 2019). University students are faced with problems of adaptation to university life in their first years and with career planning for their future and concerns about finding a job towards their final years (Doğan, 2012; Karataş & Gizir, 2013; Topkaya & Meydan, 2013). As a result, an increase in depression levels and psychological disorders, and a decrease in emotional health occur among university students (Bayram & Bilgel, 2008). Therefore, increasing the life satisfaction of university students can be regarded as important.

One of the most common types of anxiety among university students is unemployment anxiety. Education faculties are one of the places where unemployment anxiety is intensely experienced in universities (Atmaca, 2013). Anxiety experienced by pre-ser-

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vice teachers studying at education faculties reaches its peak in the process of graduation. Many studies conducted with pre-service teachers have shown that they have high levels of assignment-centered anxieties and unemployment anxiety for the future (Akgün & Özgür, 2014; Kaya & Büyükkasap, 2005; Keskin, 2017). The life satisfaction of teacher candidates who approach themselves with understanding, open, caring, and affectionate attitudes and accept that unemployment is a part of life is expected to be more moderate. Therefore, the current study aimed to investigate the relationships between self-compassion, one of the precursors of unemployment anxiety felt by pre-service teachers who have high levels of unemployment anxiety in education faculties, and life satisfaction, one of the consequences of unemployment anxiety. In addition, the mediating role of unemployment anxiety in the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction among pre-service teachers studying at education faculties in Turkey was also investigated in the study.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Self-compassion entails one's understanding of personal inadequacies and failures, being open to the emotions that cause pain and distress, treating oneself with attentive and loving attitudes, and recognizing that negative experiences are a part of life (Neff, 2003a). According to Terry and Leary (2011), self-compassion involves being kind, attentive and caring when confronted with negative experiences. Germer (2009) emphasizes our sense of goodwill towards ourselves. Neff (2003a,b) states that self-compassion consists of a structure comprising i) *self-kindness versus self-judgment*, ii) *common humanity versus isolation* and iii) *mindfulness versus over-identification*. *Self-kindness* entails individuals' effort to understand themselves without prejudice, and a gentle and loving attitude towards their selves rather than harsh self-criticism and self-judgment. *Common humanity* indicates the awareness of individuals that both happy and troubled experiences in life are not unique to their own self, and that all other individuals also go through similar experiences. *Mindfulness* is described as awareness that helps one to accept the existence of troubled and sad feelings in life, but does not allow individuals to identify themselves overly with these feelings (Gunaratana, 1993; Neff, 2003b).

Gilbert (2005) suggests that self-compassion promotes well-being by helping individuals feel cared, attached and emotionally calm when they are exposed to difficulties and troubles. Neff (2003a), on the other hand, states that self-compassion helps one to regulate the incongruous thought and behavior patterns. Research reveals that self-compassion is related to negative psychological outcomes such as depression, stress and anxiety (Ferrari, Hunt, Harrysunker, Abbott, Beath, & Einstein, 2019; MacBeth & Gumley, 2012; Marsh, Chan & MacBeth, 2018). However, studies have shown that self-compassion is also associated with life satisfaction, identity development, happiness and optimism, positive emotions, and greater relationship satisfaction

(Barnard & Curry, 2011; Van Dam, Sheppard, Forsyth & Earleywine, 2011). These findings suggest that individuals' self-compassion can increase their life satisfaction by helping them manage their negative emotions more effectively (Shin, 2019). In particular, self-compassion is an important variable to increase life satisfaction that "refers to cognitive judgments about an individual's life" (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985).

There are various studies that examine the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction (e.g., Açıkgöz, 2019; Wei, Liao, Ku ve Shaffer, 2011; Neff, Pisit-sungkagarn & Hsieh, 2008; Sünbül, 2016; Şahin, 2014; Tel, 2011; Yang, 2016). Neff et.al. (2008) stated that the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction was positive and significant in the Thai student sample (.22), the American student sample (.38) and the Taiwanese student sample (.46). In addition, it was found to increase individuals' life satisfaction (Neff & Germer, 2013). In a study on students between the ages of 11-18, Bluth and Blanto (2015) reported that approximately 41% of student life satisfaction stemmed from self-compassion. In a study on Greek students, self-compassion correlated positively with life satisfaction (.39) (Mantelou & Karakasidou, 2017) and in another study on Japanese students, the relationships between the two variables were found to be positive and significant (.50) (Arimitsu & Hofmann, 2015). In a study comparing the relationship between the self-compassion and life satisfaction of university students in Turkey (.52) and other countries (.16), the relationship was found to be higher for Turkish university students (Deniz, Arslan, Özyeşil & İzmirli, 2012).

Based on all these studies, it can be put forward that there are positive relationships between self-compassion and life satisfaction. It can be claimed that self-compassion is an important predictor of student life satisfaction. In addition, a student with a high level of self-compassion is believed to have high life satisfaction. In other words, students' self-tolerance and self-understanding are expected to affect their life satisfaction positively.

Employment anxiety is another type of emotion that may be affected by self-compassion. Employment anxiety can be described as the feelings and worries of university students that they will not be able to find a job after graduation and that they may be afraid of the potential consequences of unemployment (Cho, 2008). A concept based on the theoretical foundations of psychosocial development theory, learned helplessness theory, the attribution theory of motivation and emotion, and expectancy-value theory, employment anxiety is one of the types of state anxiety. In addition to feelings such as agitation, restlessness, less confidence, grudge and fear in the individual, it can also lead to health problems such as digestive system problems, sleepiness, palpitations and chest tightness (Cho, 2008; Hammarstrom & Janlert, 1997). To a certain extent, it is normal for one to feel anxious about his or her future. There is a dramatic life change in the transition from being a student to being an employee. This is perceived

as a stressful situation for most university students (Humphrey & McCarthy, 1998). In addition, university students talk about the fact that it is getting increasingly difficult for them to find a job it due to various factors like the increasing unemployment rates and the changing nature of jobs, and express their growing concerns about finding a job after graduation (Shin, 2019).

Many studies have emphasized the negative effects of the employment anxiety of university students on their quality of life. High level of employment anxiety increases the level of depression, weakens interpersonal relationships (Cho & Jang, 2010; Murphy & Athanasou, 1999; Tiggemann & Winefield, 1984; Winefield, 1997) and creates the problem of not using time effectively (Feather & Bond, 1983). Employment anxiety has also been associated with increased suicidal thoughts (Han & Cho, 2015; Şen & Varürer, 2019) and hopeless thoughts (Aytaç & Bayram, 2001; Yüksel, 2003) for the future among university students. Kim (2011) reports that employment anxiety is an important thing that makes university students unhappy.

Employment anxiety represents one of the biggest emotional stresses of many university students in Turkey (Anık & Özkan, 2016; Canbaz, Sünter, Aker & Pekşen, 2007; Erdayı, 2009; Kaya & Varol, 2004; Özcan, 2019; Tayfun & Korkmaz, 2016; Taşğın, Bozgeyikli & Boğazlıyan, 2017). Employment anxiety, which draws attention as a social problem, is felt most among pre-service teachers (Akgün & Özgür, 2014; Kaya & Büyükkasap, 2005; Keskin, 2017; Kiraz ve Kurul, 2018; Şahin, 2011). The concerns faced by pre-service teachers reach their climax at the graduation stage with concerns about appointment and employment (Atmaca, 2013; Çınkır & Kurum, 2019). In many studies conducted with prospective teachers, it has been determined that pre-service teachers have high appointment-based anxiety and high level of employment anxiety for the future (Akgün & Özgür, 2014; Kaya & Büyükkasap, 2005; Keskin, 2017).

The number of pre-service teachers who applied for the Public Personnel Selection Examination [KPSS], which is a central examination to become a teacher, was 359,952 in 2019 (Student Selection and Placement Center [OSYM, 2019], and only 19.956 pre-service teachers were appointed (Ministry of National Education [MEB, 2019]. This rate is approximately 5.54%. Unemployed pre-service teachers who have not been appointed consent to go to the KPSS course to prepare for the next exam and to be a cheap labor force in the private sector that is related or unrelated to their field of expertise (Demirer, 2012). After all, pre-service teachers “give up” everything they value in their lives (e.g., relationships, marriage and children) because of unemployment and low salaries. They need their families even for accommodation and pocket money. Prospective teachers who have not been appointed and cannot participate in the educational process have problems in using time effectively and in their social relations, and feel “worthless” and “useless”. Emotions such as not enjoying life, experiencing nutritional and accommodation problems, sleep disorders, enduring sadness

and feeling insignificant become part of individuals' lives (Gümüş & Çetin, 2014). This, in turn, may affect pre-service teachers' life satisfaction negatively. In accordance with all these views, it can be stated that employment anxiety significantly affects the lives of pre-service teachers and that it requires a better understanding.

In line with the literature, this study, which examines the role of employment anxiety in the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction, is believed to contribute to the related literature. The literature indicates that anxiety is an important predictor of life satisfaction (Devrimci-Ozguven, Kundakci, Kumbasar, & Boyvat, 2000; Lepp, Barkley, & Karpinski, 2014; Naseem & Munaf, 2017; Serin et al., 2010). Although there are studies in the literature showing that variables such as work exhaustion, work engagement (Babenko, Mosewich, Lee & Koppula, 2019) and hope (Yang, Zhang & Kou, 2016) have a mediating role in the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction, there is a limited number of studies revealing the mediating role of employment anxiety in this relationship (Shin, 2009).

Shin (2009) reported that South Korean university students' employment anxieties had a mediating role in the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction and also found that these relationships did not depend on the students' level of self-esteem. However, although it is possible to come across several studies on prospective teachers' employment anxiety, self-compassion and life satisfaction, there are no studies investigating the relationships between the relevant variables from the perspectives of pre-service teachers. It is essential to identify and recognize the pre-service teachers with high levels of employment anxiety in education faculties and the precursors (self-compassion) and consequences (life satisfaction) of employment anxiety displayed by the pre-service teachers. The reason for this is that pre-service teachers with high employment anxiety tend to take a more negative approach to achieving their goals and have low motivation. As a result, the pre-service teachers' tendency to be satisfied with what they have achieved in their lives may further decrease. For this reason, this research assumes that self-compassion helps individuals to sustain their life satisfaction by making it easier for them to define their life satisfaction and by working towards their goals with higher motivation even when they face various difficulties, obstacles and anxieties in their lives. In addition, because an individual with a high self-compassion has a balanced approach to negative experiences, he sees his problems, weaknesses and deficiencies thoroughly, but still approaches him/herself with compassion and understanding instead of a critical and strict attitude. Self-compassion acts as a buffer against negativities in life and enables an individual to develop positive feelings for him/herself, even if life goes badly. In line with all these explanations, the employment anxiety of prospective teachers is expected to mediate the relationships between self-compassion and life satisfaction (Leary, Tate, Adams, Allen & Hancock, 2007).

Based on previous research on self-compassion, anxiety and life satisfaction, the following hypotheses are tested in the present study: 1) There are significant rela-

tionships between self-compassion, employment anxiety and life satisfaction, and 2) Employment anxiety has a significant mediating role in the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction.

Methodology

Research model

The current study aimed to test the independent theoretical model by examining (1) the direct effect of self-compassion on pre-service teachers' life satisfaction and (2) the indirect effect through the mediating role of employment anxiety. Self-compassion was regarded as the predictor variable while life satisfaction was treated as the predicted variable and employment anxiety as the mediator variable within incorporated a correlational research design, in which it is assumed that at least two factors occur together according to a pattern or act in unison.

Population and sampling

The target population of the research is 716 fourth-year pre-service teachers attending different academic programs within the faculty of education of a public university in the south of Turkey in the academic year 2019–2020. Given the impossibility of reaching all students, the current study has been carried out on a sample formed from the target population using “stratified purposeful sampling” methods. As a result of the computations, considering 5% confidence interval and 5% error margin, the minimum sample size that represents the universe of 716 units was found to be 254 (Baş, 2013). However, considering possible problems while completing the survey, the data collection instrument was administered to 410 participants. 376 were returned fully completed. 269 of the participants (72%) in the sampling were female, and 105 (28%) male. Participants ranged in age from 18–33 (mean age: 20.95 years, SD = 5.04). The distribution of the participants according to the departments is as follows: English Language Education (n=59, %15.7), Guidance and Psychological Counseling (n=47, %12.5), Turkish Education (n=42, %11.2), Social Studies Education (n=19, %5.1), Preschool Education (n=50, %13.3), Science Education (n=60, %16), Elementary Mathematics Education (n=57, %15.2), and Classroom Education (n=59, %15.7).

Public Personnel Selection Examination Exam

In Turkey, the number of graduates of education faculties exceeds the number of teaching posts available at schools. Hence, it is compulsory to take an examination for teachers who wish to be appointed at public schools. a Public Personnel Selection Examination [KPSS], which is a central exam, is held by the student selection and placement center [ÖSYM] in Turkey. With the new regulations made in 2002, it became obligatory for all pre-service teachers who want to work for the state and who

have the necessary qualifications to take this exam. The KPSS exam consists of four sections: “General Culture”, “General Ability” and “Educational Sciences”, and “Field Knowledge”. According to this exam, candidates from each branch are ranked based on their scores. According to this ranking, as many appointments are made as required by the Ministry of National Education for each branch.

Data collection instruments

The data for this study were collected using three scales: the Self-Compassion Scale-Short Form (SCS-SF) (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011), which aims to assess how often pre-service teachers take on a self-compassionate perspective; the Employment Anxiety Scale (EAS) (Ersoy-Kart & Erdost, 2008), which aims to determine the employment anxiety of university students; and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985), which aims to assess pre-service teachers’ global life satisfaction.

The Self-Compassion Scale-Short Form

The SCS-SF developed by Raes, et.al. (2011) and Turkish adaptation study was conducted by Yıldırım and Sarı (2018) was used to assess how often people take on a self-compassionate perspective. This 5-point, Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 =almost never to 5 =almost always) has a total of 12 items. The scale explained 34.89 % of total variance as a result of EFA. CFA was run to verify the factor structure for the construct validity of the study. Goodness of fit indexes were calculated [$\chi^2= 218.69$, $df=50$, $\chi^2/df= 4.37$ $P<0.001$], RMSEA = 0.095, GFI = 0.91, AGFI = 0.86, NFI = 0.83, NNFI= 0.82 and CFI = 0.86]. The standardized coefficients that resulted from the CFA and that showed factor relationships with the items were between .27 and .72. Previous studies have reported Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .87 (Raes, et.al., 2011), .75 (Yıldırım & Sarı, 2018), .88 (Solmazer, 2018). In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was found to be $\alpha = .828$ for the all items.

The Employment Anxiety Scale

The pre-service teachers’ employment anxiety level was measured by EAS developed by Ersoy-Kart and Erdost (2008). This 5-point, Likert-type scale consists of one-factor with a total of 12 items. As a result of the explanatory factor analysis (EFA) performed for this study, the 9th and 12th items found in the scale were removed from the scale because the item-total test correlation value is less than .20. Consequently, in this study, EAS consisted of 10 items. The scale explained 35.30% of total variance as a result of explanatory factor analysis (EFA). CFA was run to verify the factor structure for the construct validity of the study. Goodness of fit indexes were calculated [$\chi^2= 129.41$, $df=35$, $\chi^2/df= 3.69$ $P<0.001$], RMSEA = 0.089, GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.89, NFI = 0.85, NNFI= 0.86 and CFI = 0.89]. The standardized coefficients that resulted from

the CFA showed factor relationships with the items were between .21 and .73. Previous studies have reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .63 (Kara, Altınok, & Şahin, 2019). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients was found to be $\alpha = .786$ for all items.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The SWLS was developed by Diener et al. (1985) and the Turkish version (Yetim, 1991) was used to assess participants' global life satisfaction. This 7-point, Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) consists of five items. The scale explained 62.18% of total variance as a result of explanatory factor analysis (EFA). CFA was run to verify the one-factor structure. Goodness of fit indexes were calculated [$\chi^2 = 9.65$, $df = 5$, $\chi^2/df = 1.93$, $P < 0.001$], RMSEA = 0.052, GFI = 0.99, AGFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.99, NNFI = 0.99 and CFI = 0.99]. The standardized coefficients that resulted from the CFA showed factor relationships with the items were between .63 and .81. Diener et al (1985) determined the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scale as $\alpha = .87$ and Yetim (1991) determined the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scale as $\alpha = .78$. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be $\alpha = .845$ for the overall scale.

Data analysis

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between self-compassion, employment anxiety and life satisfaction, and to examine whether employment anxiety is a mediating path from self-compassion to life satisfaction. For this purpose, first, descriptive statistics for the variables were obtained. Second, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used. Since the variables in the developed model (self-compassion, employment anxiety and life satisfaction) are formulated with theoretical concepts and structures that cannot be measured and seen directly, the variables in this theoretical structure are tried to be explained via some indicators. In testing the theoretical model of the research, structural equation modelling was chosen to combine the measurement error in both latent and observed variables (see Figure 1, Figure 2)

Creating the theoretical models

Two theoretical models were tested in this study: (a) the effect of self-compassion on life satisfaction, and (b) the effects of self-compassion and employment anxiety on life satisfaction.

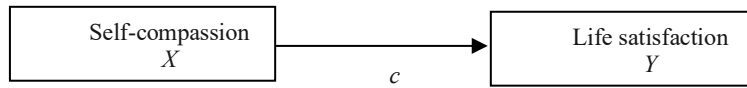


Figure 1: Model A

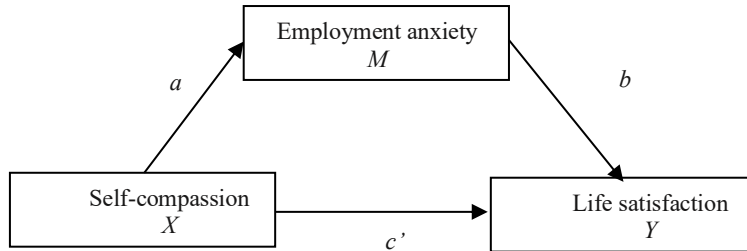


Figure 2: Model B

Notes: (a) Model A: The relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction; (b) Model B: The mediating role of employment anxiety between self-compassion and life satisfaction

In the first theoretical model (Model A), the measurement components were (i) self-compassion, the external variable of the model, consisting of 12 observable variables (the items of SCS-SF: 12 item), and (ii) life satisfaction, the internal variable of the model, consisting of five observable variables (the items of SWLS: 5 items) (Figure 1).

In the second theoretical model (Model B), the structural equation component formulates the relationships between the latent variables: self-compassion the external variable of the model, consisting of 12 observable variables (the items of SCS-SF: 12 item), is assumed to have effects on life satisfaction the internal variable of the model, consisting of five observable variables (the items of SWLS: 5 items) via employment anxiety the mediating variable of the model, consisting of 12 observable variables (the items of EAS: 12 items). The relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction was predicted to decrease statistically with the inclusion of employment anxiety, which was the mediator variable, in the analysis (Figure 2).

Testing the models

When testing the theoretical structural equation models created within the scope of the research, attention was paid to the fact that the goodness of fit indices RMSEA and SRMS values were less than .10 and GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI values were greater than .90. In addition, the criterion that the ratio of chi-square (χ^2) compliance test to the degree of freedom (χ^2 / sd) was between 1-5 was used (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger & Müller, 2003; Sümer, 2000). All statistical analyses were conducted using

SPSS version 21.0, LISREL version 8.51 and p values $<.05$ were considered statistically significant.

Findings

Descriptive statistics and Correlations

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients between self-compassion, employment anxiety and life satisfaction.

Table 1.

The Correlation Matrix between Self-Compassion, Employment Anxiety and Life Satisfaction (n= 376)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Self-compassion (SC)	3.90	1.35	1	-.42*	.40*
2. Employment Anxiety (EA)	2.71	.60		1	-.32*
3. Life satisfaction (LS)	3.29	.58			1

* $p<.01$

It was seen that the highest mean score belonged to the perception of self-compassion [$M=3.90$, $SD= 1.35$] and the lowest mean score to the perception of employment anxiety [$M=2.71$, $SD= .60$]. When the correlation coefficients were considered, a significant, negative and moderate level relationship were found between self-compassion and employment anxiety ($r = -.42$). While there is a significant, positive and moderate level relationships between self-compassion and life satisfaction ($r = .40$), there is a significant, negative and moderate level relationships between employment anxiety and life satisfaction ($r = -.32$). As expected, self-compassion was positively correlated with life satisfaction, and employment anxiety was negatively correlated with self-compassion and life satisfaction and employment anxiety (all $p<.01$).

Path analysis

Regarding the theoretical models created in relation to the causal relationships between self-compassion, employment anxiety and life satisfaction, the goodness-of-fit indices of the simultaneous contributions of each latent and observable variable of the theoretical models to the total models are given in Table 2.

Table 2.
Goodness of Fit Parameters for Models (n= 376)

Independent variable	Dependent variable				Mediator variable	β (λ)	t	Full model R2	
SC (Model A)	LS				EA	.49	7.96*	.24±	
	χ^2	df	χ^2 /df	RMSEA		GFI	AGFI	NNFI	CFI
	505.22	117	4.31	.094		.86	.82	.83	.85
SC (Model B)	LS				EA	.42	5.95*	.25±	
	χ^2	df	χ^2 /df	RMSEA		GFI	AGFI	NNFI	CFI
	1113.05	321	3.46	.081		.82	.79	.80	.82

* $p < .001$

The resulting significant standardized parameter estimates were presented in Table 2. In *model A*, goodness of fit parameters were calculated as $\chi^2 = 505.22$; $df = 117$; $\chi^2 / df = 4.31$; $GFI = .86$; $AGFI = .82$; $NNFI = .83$; $CFI = .85$; and $RMSEA = .094$; all paths were significant, and the fit indexes are acceptable (Schermelleh-Engel, et.al, 2003; Sümer, 2000). It can be mentioned that the direct effect of self-compassion on life satisfaction is significant and positive ($\beta = .49$; $t = 7.96$). Self-compassion explained a combined 24% of the variance in life satisfaction in model 1.

In *model B*, goodness of fit parameters were calculated as $\chi^2 = 1113.05$; $df = 321$; $\chi^2 / df = 3.46$; $GFI = .82$; $AGFI = .79$; $NNFI = .80$; $CFI = .82$; and $RMSEA = .081$. However, according to the t-test analysis conducted to determine whether the relationships in the model were significant, the indirect effect of self-compassion on life satisfaction was significant and positive ($\beta = .42$, $t = 5.95$, $p < .05$). In addition, self-compassion affected employment anxiety negatively and significantly ($\beta = -.50$, $t = -7.26$, $p < .05$). When the indirect effect of employment anxiety on life satisfaction is examined, a significant and negative effect was observed ($\beta = -.13$, $t = -1.97$, $p < .05$).

In the current study, employment anxiety was determined as the mediator variable in the relationship between the self-compassion perceptions of pre-service teachers and their life satisfaction. When the effect of employment anxiety was examined as the mediator variable (Sobel test = 5.26496618, $p < .05$; Aroian test = 5.2435352, $p < .05$; Goodman test = 5.28666209, $p < .05$), its indirect effect on the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction was found to be significant, positive and moderate ($\beta = .42$, $t = 5.95$, $p < .05$). In other words, employment anxiety had a partial mediator role in the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction. Accordingly, it can be suggested that the employment anxiety levels of the pre-service teachers decrease and their life satisfaction levels increase depending on their perceptions of self-compassion. The findings of the research indicate that the developed model is supported. In summary, the self-compassion perceptions of the pre-service teachers had a

direct, negative and significant effect on their life satisfaction levels. At the same time, the self-compassion perceptions of the pre-service teachers indirectly and moderately affected their life satisfaction levels through their employment anxiety levels. The direct effect ($\beta = .49, p < 0.01$) of self-compassion on life satisfaction was greater than the indirect effect ($\beta = .42, p < 0.01$).

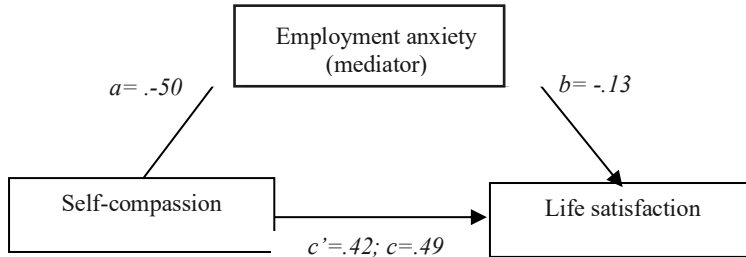


Figure 3: The Structural Equation Model (The Mediating Role of Employment Anxiety between Self-Compassion and Life Satisfaction)

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study investigated the significant relationships between the pre-service teachers' self-compassion attitudes, perceptions of employment anxiety and life satisfaction, and the mediating role of employment anxiety in the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction.

Positive and significant relationships were found between the self-compassion attitudes and life satisfaction of the pre-service teachers. The results were obtained as expected, supporting the previous findings that show self-compassion was related positively to life satisfaction (Arimitsu & Hofmann, 2015; Hope, Koestner & Milyavskaya, 2014; Neff et.al, 2008; Neff, 2013a; Omay, 2019; Sünbül, 2016; Şahin, 2014; Yang, Zhang & Kou, 2016). This may suggest a close relationship between individuals' satisfaction and happiness in their entire lives and their compassionate and understanding behaviour towards their selves. Individuals who treat themselves with positive and courteous attitudes and who have a balanced and non-judgmental viewpoint with their constraints and difficulties evaluate their lives from a more universal perspective (Yang, Zhang, & Kou, 2016). Therefore, life satisfaction levels of pre-service teachers who have a kind and polite attitude towards themselves may also increase.

There are negative and significant relationships between the pre-service teachers' self-compassion attitudes and employment anxiety. This finding is in line with the research findings which indicate that self-compassion reduces negative emotions such as anxiety, stress and depression (Jang & Jin, 2019; Mounsey, Vandehey & Diekhoff, 2013; Ferguson, Frost & Hall, 2012; Peng, Hu, Dong, Zhang, Liu & Sun, 2010, Shu & Tang, 2008). Individuals with a high level of self-compassion tend to cope with failure more consistently (Nef, Hsieh & Dejitterat, 2005). They are also more likely to

try again when they fail (Neely et.al., 2009). As a result, it can be suggested that pre-service teachers with a high level of self-compassion feel lower levels of employment anxiety.

In the first model established to determine the direct impact of self-compassion on life satisfaction, self-compassion was included as the independent variable and life satisfaction as the dependent variable. Research results found that self-compassion was a positive predictor of life satisfaction. Accordingly, the life satisfaction levels of pre-service teachers with a high level of self-compassion may increase. Neff and Vonk (2009) maintain that high levels of self-compassion in individuals are associated with positive emotions such as increased happiness and optimism as well as decreased anxiety, depression, and fear of inadequacy and failure. When self-compassionate individuals fail or encounter an imperfection, they can accept their mistakes, change their inefficient behaviour, and take on new challenges. In this respect, self-compassion is predicted to contribute to the life satisfaction of individuals. Neff, Hseih and Dejitthirat (2005) have revealed that individuals with self-compassion have the motivation and high life satisfaction not to get social approval from others, but to learn and improve themselves. Considering that individuals with high levels of self-compassion are sensitive to themselves and other people, individuals with high self-compassion may also have high levels of life satisfaction.

In the second model, which was created to determine the mediation of employment anxiety between self-compassion and life satisfaction, self-compassion was included as the independent variable, life satisfaction as the dependent variable, and employment anxiety as the mediator variable. Research results revealed that employment anxiety had a partial mediating role between self-compassion and life satisfaction. In other words, how satisfied individuals' overall life satisfaction is not only directly influenced by their level of self-compassion, but also indirectly by their level of employment anxiety. In addition, the mediating role of employment anxiety between self-compassion and life satisfaction reduces the strength of the direct relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction. Accordingly, as the self-compassion levels of pre-service teachers increase, their life satisfaction levels will increase, but their employment anxiety levels will decrease. This finding of the study is in line with a previous study, which found that self-compassion had a negative relationship (-.20) with employment anxiety and a positive relationship (.12) with life satisfaction among South Korean university students (Shin, 2019). Although the direction of the relationships in this research is similar to the study of Shin (2019), there are differences in the level of the relationships. Cultural differences could explain the reason for this. In subsequent studies, research could be carried out for cross-cultural comparisons.

The study also indicated that high level of employment anxiety brought about less satisfaction with life, which is in line with previous research findings (Şahin, 2008; Gençay, 2009; Turaç & Donar, 2017). Despite the consistent results revealing the rela-

tionship between self-compassion and life satisfaction, little is known about the mechanisms underlying this relationship (Arimitsu & Hofmann, 2015; Yang, Zhang & Kou, 2016; Shin, 2019). The current study aimed to contribute to the existing literature by examining the role of another potential mediator variable in the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction. In this research, the effects of self-compassion on the life satisfaction of pre-service teachers were determined through employment anxiety; the relationships with the effects of the dimensions that constituted self-compassion could not be examined in detail. Therefore, there is a need for future research to examine how different aspects of self-compassion contribute to the well-being of the individual. In the study, self-compassion was assessed by a one-dimensional measure. Unlike the majority of the research on self-compassion, the current study confirmed the one-factor structure (SCS-SF), which contributes to discussions on self-compassion in the literature. However, in order to obtain more evidence on the one-factor structure of the SCS-SF, further research appears to be warranted.

Limitations and implications

The current study has a number of limitations. First, findings showed that the relationships between pre-service teachers' self-compassion, employment anxiety and life satisfaction were positive, and the relationships between their self-compassion attitudes and employment anxiety were negative. Therefore, the interpretations of the causal relationship between these three variables should be discussed carefully. Future studies are also needed to study this via experimental designs. Second, findings also showed that self-compassion had a positive and indirect effect on life satisfaction, and that employment anxiety had a mediating role. This suggests that self-compassion plays a role in reducing employment anxiety and increasing life satisfaction. Thus, this study provides empirical evidence for the hypothesis that mediates the positive relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction. Finally, the pre-service teachers in the study group were selected from Turkey. There is a need for future research to expand the generalizability of the existing findings and to examine research findings in other cultures.

In the light of all these research findings, it is believed that this study, which addresses the relationships between self-compassion, employment anxiety and life satisfaction, will contribute to the related literature. In addition, when national and international literature is considered in general, correlational studies addressing employment anxiety are limited. Therefore, it is considered important for the generalizability of the findings to carry out research on employment anxiety in faculties with different academic units and to conduct further correlational studies. Because the current study was conducted on pre-service teachers, it is expected to make an important contribution to the literature and enable the understanding of social dynamics in the faculties of education. Finally, it is also possible to address the precursors that cause employment

anxiety and its effects. It is recommended for further research to examine ways to alleviate the negative impact of employment anxiety and improve results.

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