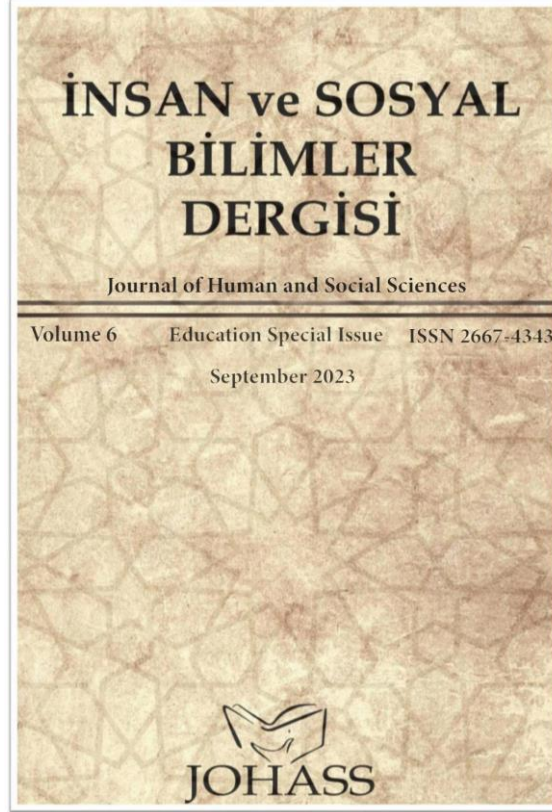


JOURNAL OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (JOHASS)



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**Psychological Well-Being Levels of Social Studies Teachers During the
Pandemic Process***

**These research data were presented as an oral presentation at the 3rd International Young Researchers Student Congress and received the best second presentation prize.*

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Article Type: Research Article

Received: 6.09.2023

Revision received: 18.09.2023

Accepted: 26.09.2023

Published online: 28.09.2023

Citation: Ersoy, F., & Baltacı, K. (2023). Psychological well-being levels of social studies teachers during the pandemic process. *Journal of Human and Social Sciences*, 6(Education Special Issue), 564-586.

Psychological Well-Being Levels of Social Studies Teachers During the Pandemic Process*

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Abstract

Education in Türkiye faced disruptions because of the Covid-19 pandemic, just like many other global instances. Many people were confined to their homes to avoid transmitting the virus. School education was suspended for an extended period and shifted to online platforms. During this process, teachers played a vital role in ensuring the healthy continuation of education and maintaining student motivation. Concurrently, they worked with others in society to mitigate the pandemic's adverse effects on education and life. Teachers' efforts relate to the concept of psychological well-being (PWB). The objective of our research was to assess the PWB of Turkish social studies teachers amidst the pandemic. Utilizing a correlational survey methodology, voluntary responses were received from 161 social studies educators across Türkiye. Information was gathered through the Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS) and a demographic details form. Findings indicated that there was negligible variation in teachers' PWB based on age and gender. However, a significant difference emerged based on professional seniority.

Keywords: Pandemic, education, social studies, teachers, psychological well-being (PWB)

Research Article

Received: 6.09.2023

*Revision received:
18.09.2023*

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*Published online:
28.09.2023*

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Introduction

Humanity has faced many epidemics throughout history. Epidemic disease refers to the rapid spread of a particular disease among a group of people (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Health, 2020; Turkish Language Institute [TLI], 2021). Unlike conventional pandemics, Covid-19 has crossed continents in transmission. The World Health Organization (WHO) first classified the outbreak, which began with the Covid-19 virus on January 30, as a public health emergency. With the continuous spread of the virus on a global scale, WHO declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020). On the very same date, Türkiye started to work within the scope of the pandemic measures. The Scientific Advisory Board of the Ministry of Health held meetings and took measures (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Health, 2021). The virus causing the disease spread rapidly due to human mobility despite the precautions taken in the process.

After Türkiye's initial Covid-19 diagnosis on March 11, 2020, a quick decision halted academic activity in all institutions. The pandemic prevented a prompt return to classrooms. To ensure uninterrupted learning, alternative online teaching methods were introduced (Eken et al., 2020). As of March 16, 2020, the education process at schools, which was suspended, was continued with the television channels prepared in accordance with the educational content and the distance education system created through EİN (Education and Information Network [EBA]) as the number of COVID cases increased (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2020).

As distance education became prevalent amidst this health crisis, educators encountered various challenges. Some of these problems include not having the necessary knowledge to prepare content for the distance education system, technical difficulties, the intertwining of home and work life with home education (Karadeniz & Zabcı, 2020), lack of infrastructure, system access problems, problems with the EİN platform (Demir & Özdaş, 2020; İmamoğlu & Siyimer İmamoğlu, 2020), students' loss of motivation and health problems (Fidan, 2020), and the lack of emotional transfer, communication and interaction (Balaman & Hanbay Tiryaki, 2021). Additionally, teachers who were away from their classrooms and learners grappled emotional difficulties of the process, e.g. longing, anxiety and grief. In addition, the uncertainties and changing programs in the process and the high expectations of parents have increased the stress level of teachers (Karadeniz & Zabcı, 2020).

As Huppert (2009) notes, there is not always happiness and well-being in life. There are also current and past experiences that cause pain. Experiences related to these experiences should be managed effectively as a natural part of the PWB process. Continuous negative emotions affect

daily life after a while. If this situation is not managed well, it negatively affects the PWB of the individual. Therefore, the teacher's ability to cope with the negativities experienced during the pandemic process is closely related to PWB. PWB is the state of having the necessary struggle determination and strength to establish a delicate balance between life concerns and social interests and to use one's potential in this regard effectively (Ryff, 1989). Satisfaction with life and the meaning it adds to life are explained by an individual's PWB (Arslan & Tura, 2022).

Ryff's (1989) Multidimensional Psychological Well-Being Model is a helpful benchmark for examining an individual's PWB. This model has six dimensions: Environmental Mastery, Positive Relationships with others, Self-Acceptance, Personal Growth, Autonomy and Purpose in Life. Ryff (1989) briefly explains these dimensions, which are very important in the PWB of the individual (p.1071):

Environmental Mastery: It pertains to the capability of selecting or shaping one's environment that align with this individual's psychological state, and to change the world in which he/she lives through mental and physical activities.

Positive Relationships with others: It is the ability of an individual to establish loving, secure, positive relationships with other people around him/her. Such people usually have empathy, friendship and compassion towards others.

Self-Acceptance: Self-acceptance refers to the development of positive feelings towards oneself and acceptance of one's past life, friendship and compassion.

Personal Development: It is the realization of one's own potential, being open and willing to experiences for self-improvement and continuing to develop one's potential.

Autonomy: The ability to control one's own behavior without being subjected to environmental impositions, independence, self-regulation and evaluation.

Purpose in Life: It involves an individual's assimilation of beliefs that instill direction and meaning in life.

All these dimensions express the characteristics related to PWB of a person. An individual's PWB plays an important and guiding role in working life. At the same time, people who live a productive and functional life in their working life have a high level of PWB (Demirci & Şar, 2017). Therefore, PWB affects teachers to maintain their working life efficiently and functionally. For a superior educational experience, educators need to have a high level of PWB for a quality education process (Telef, 2013). Since 2020, it is thought that the negativities of the pandemic process we have experienced have affected teachers in terms of PWB. Concluding this phase, assessing the PWB status plays a crucial role in ensuring educator wellness and enhancing effective educational practices.

There are many scientific studies in which PWB is studied in terms of different predictors (Palak & İra, 2022; Kındıroğlu & Yaşar Ekici, 2019; Sezer, 2022; Zhao, 2023). These research identified a strong correlation between one's PWB and their personal development, which establishes positive relationships with other people (Göcen, 2019); self-efficacy (Cansoy et al., 2020); values such as achievement, self-direction, compliance and security, benevolence (Telef et al., 2013); positive leadership perception (İnce & Demirhan, 2022); perception of managerial support (Ertürk et al., 2016); discovering life's meaning and purpose, orientation towards personal development, social support (Arslan & Tura, 2022); perception of success, academic optimism, physical self-esteem (Karaçam & Pular, 2019) and psychological resilience (Başaran et al., 2020; Kımter, 2020). The acquisition of all these elements, skills and values that support the PWB of the person occurs significantly in the education process. Many contents that support the PWB are included in the scope of social studies education.

Social studies education aims to educate the individual as a whole with his/her material and spiritual orientations. The development of many qualities that support PWB such as effective communication, self-confidence, empathy, self-esteem, self-respect, and willpower is realized within the scope of social studies (Ersoy, 2021; MoNE, 2023). Considering the many negative experiences of the pandemic process, the PWB level of social studies teachers in the field of social science education are the central subject of our research. Our research aims to interrogate how the mental health of social studies educators fluctuated during the pandemic, considering different factors. The difficulties of the pandemic process for teachers, the lack of a study on PWB, which is extremely important in coping with these difficulties, and the importance of PWB in education made this research considerably necessary. Along with making an original contribution to the literature on the subject, the study may contribute to the Ministry of National Education in its decisions to be taken in possible future pandemics by presenting data collected during the pandemic process. The research is also expected to form the basis for replication studies after the pandemic. The research question is as follows: Do factors like age, gender, and years in the profession lead to significant differences in the PWB of social studies teachers, and how do these variables influence their PWB levels?

Hypotheses

During the pandemic,

1. The PWB scores of teachers in social studies are elevated based on the overall score and their total sub-scale scores.
2. The PWB levels of teachers in social studies differ significantly based on gender.
3. The PWB levels of teachers in social studies differ significantly based on age.

4. Professional seniority impact the PWB levels of teachers in social studies significantly.

Each stated hypothesis was evaluated both for the overall scale and for its specific sub-dimensions (environmental mastery, Positive Relationships with others, self-acceptance, personal development, autonomy, purpose in life).

Method

Model

The study utilized a survey model with the objective of assessing the levels of psychological well-being among social studies teachers who remained active in their profession throughout the pandemic. Furthermore, the research intended to determine if significant differences were present in the PWB scores of social studies teachers, based on variables such as gender, age, and professional seniority (Tekbıyık, 2014).

Sample and Population

Research participants were social sciences teachers from middle schools throughout the country. Our subset for investigation specifically targeted teachers in social studies, selected based on specific criteria from the purposeful sampling approach. The specialization of these teachers and their active engagement during the health crisis set the criteria for inclusion. A total of 161 social studies teachers from middle schools across Türkiye participated voluntarily in the online platform. Given that the number of participants was eight times greater than the number of scale items, and considering that a sample size ranging from 30 to 500 has been deemed sufficient in numerous studies for explaining the research, the participation of 161 voluntary social studies teachers was considered adequate (Büyüköztürk et al., 2011). The characteristics of social studies teachers who voluntarily participated are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Profiles of Participating Social Studies Teachers

Variables		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Female	77	47,8
	Male	84	52,2
Age	21-27 years old	43	26,71
	28-34 years old	47	29,19
	35-41 years	39	24,22
	42-48 years old	25	15,53
	49 and above	7	4,35

Professional seniority		
1-5 years	72	44,7
6-10 years	33	20,5
11-15 years	22	13,7
16-20 years	15	9,3
21 and above	19	11,8
TOTAL	161	100

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form: The form includes queries formed by the researchers to gather personal information from teachers in social studies involved in the research. There are three items and sub-options of these items prepared to determine the information about the gender, age and professional seniority of the teachers.

Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS): Created by Ryff (1989) to evaluate individual PWB, this instrument was employed to ascertain the SWB levels of educators. The scale's original version encompasses six dimensions, with 14 items in each, totaling 84 items. The scale was revised by Ryff and Keyes (1995) to increase the usefulness of the scale and a short form was created. Adapted into Turkish by Akin (2008), Cenkseven (2004) and İmamoğlu (2004), the scale demonstrated high validity and reliability in both its original and adapted versions. Akin (2008) explained the internal consistency values of the scale sub-dimensions with values ranging from .87 to .96. Cenkseven (2004) averred that the reliability values of the scale in its original form ranged between .83 and .91. In the adaptation study, he reported internal consistency values of .93 for the overall scale, with values between .74 to .83 for its individual components. In validity studies, each sub-dimension provided a significant correlation at .01 level with the whole scale. İmamoğlu (2004) reported the Cronbach Alpha value of the scale as .79 and Yeniçeri (2013) as .69. In the current study, Cronbach's Alpha value was .68 for the whole scale. This value ranged between .632-.704 for the sub-dimensions of the scale (environmental mastery .632, Positive Relationships with others .703, self-acceptance .633, personal development .704, autonomy .659, purpose in life .634). The scale, adapted into Turkish by İmamoğlu (2004), comprises 18 items across 6 dimensions and can be utilized with either a 5-point or 7-point Likert type. This tool was employed for data collection in this study after securing the required permissions from the researcher and obtaining ethics committee approval from MAKU Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee, under the decision number 2021/259 dated 02.06.2021.

Data Collection Process

Prior the process of collecting the research data, ethics committee approval was obtained and the PWBS was digitized by moving the scale into an online platform. The invitation to

participate in the study was shared on various social media platforms where social studies teachers were present. Teachers were encouraged to join the study during their free time, so as not to disrupt education. Volunteer social studies teachers were first given general information about the study online. Participants' personal information was kept confidential. Teachers were not asked for their names during the research. Each teacher's response was coded as K1, K2. From the reliability analysis of the gathered data, a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.686 was determined.

Data Analysis

Prior to conducting the analyses for the study, the dataset was meticulously scrutinized for any missing or erroneous entries. Upon review, it was determined that the dataset was complete and free from errors, thereby making it suitable for further analysis. The quantitative data, collected from participants' responses via the PWBS in a digital format, were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 software. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was computed to assess the scale's reliability. While the assumption of normal distribution necessitates that significant values should exceed 0.05 as per the normality test, this criterion was not met in the present data. As a result, non-parametric tests were used, with the Mann-Whitney U test serving as a substitute for the T-test and the Kruskal-Wallis test replacing ANOVA.

Compliance with Ethical Standard

The ethical approval for this research was granted by the Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee of Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, with the decision number GO 2021/260 on June 2, 2021.

Findings

The findings identified in this study, which examines the psychological well-being levels of social studies teachers, are presented below.

Findings on Social Studies Teachers' Level of PWB

Based on the main research question, the findings concerning the PWB levels of social studies teachers during the pandemic period are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Scores Related to the PWB Levels of Social Studies Teachers During the Pandemic Period

Scale Subdimension	Mean score	Standard deviation	Number of participants
Autonomy	13,9255	2,28734	161
Environmental Mastery	13,8944	2,10239	161
Purpose in Life	10,1988	2,17319	161
Self-Acceptance	12,3540	2,38068	161
Positive relationships with others	9,6584	1,92063	161
Personal growth	14,2609	1,83208	161
PWBS Total Score	74,2919	6,46784	161
Lowest and highest total scale score = 18-126			
Lowest and highest mean score from the subscale = 3-21			

The total score in Table 2 can be considered high for the PWB levels of social studies teachers during the pandemic period since the mean score is 74.29 points, which is near the maximum score achievable on the scale. Thus, it can be stated that the study's initial hypothesis is confirmed. However, the noticeably high standard deviation in the total score indicates that the PWB levels of the participating social studies teachers may have varied among the teachers. A detailed analysis within the context of the scale's subdimensions illustrates that the social studies teachers recorded the lowest average score of 9.65 in the 'Positive Relationships with others' category, compared to the average scores of other dimensions related to PWB. Conversely, the highest average score was registered at 14.26 in the 'Personal Development' category. Therefore, in relation to the pandemic period, social studies teachers scored higher in the 'Personal Development' subdimension and lower in the 'Positive Relationships with others' subdimension compared to the other dimensions of the scale.

Findings on Gender Differences in the PWB of Social Studies Teachers

In light of the study's second hypothesis, findings related to whether there is a significant difference in the PWB levels of social studies teachers during the pandemic, based on the gender variable, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Mann-Whitney U Test Assessing Gender Differences in PWB among Social Studies Teachers During the Pandemic

	Autonomy	Environmental mastery	Purpose in life	Self-acceptance	Positive relationships with others	Personal growth	Total score
Mann-Whitney U	3006,000	3143,000	3159,000	2792,000	2832,500	2691,500	3219,500

Wilcoxon W	6009,000	6146,000	6162,000	5795,000	6402,500	6261,500	6222,500
Z	-,785	-,314	-,258	-1,514	-1,390	-1,884	-,049
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,432	,754	,797	,130	,165	,060	,961

a. Group variable: Gender

The figures in Table 3 related to the entire scale and all subdimensions show that there is no significant difference between teachers' PWB and the gender variable; thus, the second hypothesis has been rejected. From these results, it is evident that the PWB levels of social studies teachers during the pandemic are not significantly influenced by gender. Mean scores of the scale's subdimensions are given in Table 4.

Table 4

Mean PWB Scores of Social Studies Teachers by Gender During the Pandemic

Scale subdimension	Gender	N	Mean score
Autonomy	Female	77	78,04
	Male	84	83,71
Environmental Mastery	Female	77	79,82
	Male	84	82,08
Purpose in Life	Female	77	80,03
	Male	84	81,89
Self-acceptance	Female	77	75,26
	Male	84	86,26
Positive relationships with others	Female	77	86,21
	Male	84	76,22
Personal growth	Female	77	88,05
	Male	84	74,54
PWBS Total score	Female	77	80,81
	Male	84	81,17
	Total	161	78,04

Lowest Possible Total Score from the Scale= 18

Highest Possible Total Score/Full Score from the Scale= 126

Data in Table 4, related to the mean scores according to the gender variable, show that men have higher scores than women in the following subdimensions: Autonomy with a score of 83.71, Environmental Mastery with 82.08, Purpose in Life with 81.89, and Self-Acceptance with 86.26. Conversely, women scored higher than men in the Positive Relations with Others subdimension with 86.21, and in the Personal Growth subdimension with 88.05. Regarding the total score on the PWBS, it is possible to say that men have a higher score by a difference of 0.36 points compared to women. However, this difference did not yield a statistical difference.

Findings on Age-Related Differences in the PWB of Social Studies Teachers

Aligning with the study’s third hypothesis, Table 5 presents findings on age-related differences in the PWB levels of social studies teachers during the pandemic.

Table 5

Kruskal-Wallis Test Assessing Age-Related Differences in PWB among Social Studies Teachers during the Pandemic

	Autonomy	Environmental mastery	Purpose in life	Self-acceptance	Positive relationships with others	Personal growth	Total score
Kruskal-Wallis H	9,145	3,690	1,674	6,480	3,224	2,371	7,074
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	,058	,450	,795	,166	,521	,668	,132

a. Group variable: Age

Table 5 reveals no statistically significant differences in PWB levels among social studies teachers based on age, thereby rejecting the third hypothesis. Thus, age does not appear to influence the PWB of social studies teachers during the pandemic. Ranked mean scores for different age groups are provided in Table 6.

Table 6

Mean PWB Scores of Social Studies Teachers, Stratified by Age during the Pandemic

Scale subdimension	Age	N	Mean Score	Scale subdimension	Age	N	Mean Score
Autonomy	21-27	42	67,29	Self-acceptance	21-27	42	65,65
	28-34	48	92,29		28-34	48	86,18
	35-41	39	80,37		35-41	39	86,95
	42-48	27	77,43		42-48	27	87,56
	49-+	5	112,00		49-+	5	78,40
	Total	161			Total	161	
Environmental mastery	21-27	42	82,13	Positive relationships with others	21-27	42	77,29
	28-34	48	78,23		28-34	48	80,80
	35-41	39	79,56		35-41	39	90,53
	42-48	27	79,24		42-48	27	71,87
	49-+	5	118,80		49-+	5	89,10
	Total	161			Total	161	
Purpose in life	21-27	42	74,38	Personal growth	21-27	42	77,13
	28-34	48	82,29		28-34	48	86,71
	35-41	39	86,73		35-41	39	84,60
	42-48	27	82,15		42-48	27	74,22
	49-+	5	73,30		49-+	5	67,20
	Total	161			Total	161	

	21-27	42	66,35
	28-34	48	88,00
PWBS Total score	35-41	39	88,94
	42-48	27	77,15
	49-+	5	95,80
	Total	161	

Lowest possible total score from the scale = 18
 Highest possible total score/Full score from the scale = 126

Table 6 comprehensively presents age-stratified responses from social studies teachers across various PWB subdimensions. Teachers aged 49 and above obtained the highest mean scores in Autonomy (112.00) and Environmental Mastery (118.80). The age group 35-41 achieved the highest mean scores in Purpose in Life (86.73) and Positive Relationships with others (90.53). The 42-48 age group scored highest in Self-Acceptance (87.56), while the 28-34 age group led in Personal Growth (86.71). The highest total scale score (95.80) was recorded among teachers aged 45 and above.

The findings suggest that the age variable does not create a significant difference in the PWB levels of social studies teachers. However, considering the total scores from the scale and the mean scores of the subdimensions, it is observed that social studies teachers aged 21-27 have lower mean scores in the PWB scale compared to other age groups.

Findings on Professional Seniority-Related Differences in the PWB of Social Studies Teachers

Aligning with the study’s fourth hypothesis, Table 7 presents findings on professional seniority-related differences in the PWB levels of social studies teachers during the pandemic.

Table 7

Kruskal-Wallis Test Assessing Professional Seniority-Related Differences in PWB among Social Studies Teachers during the Pandemic

	Autonomy	Environmental mastery	Purpose in life	Self-acceptance	Positive relationships with others	Personal growth	Total score
Kruskal-Wallis H	1,702	4,946	15,331	11,241	11,039	3,539	15,493
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	,790	,293	,004	,024	,026	,472	,004

a. Group variable: Professional seniority

Table 7 indicates a significant relationship between PWB and professional seniority across the scale as a whole. Subdimensional analysis reveals significant disparities in 'Purpose in Life,' 'Self-Acceptance,' and 'Positive Relationships with others,' but not in 'Autonomy,' 'Environmental Mastery,' or 'Personal Growth.' Given the significance level below 0.05, the fourth hypothesis is confirmed.

The data in Table 7 substantiate that professional seniority significantly influences the PWB of social studies teachers during the pandemic. Notably, significant disparities exist in the 'Purpose in Life,' 'Self-Acceptance,' and 'Positive Relationships with others' subdimensions. Ranked mean scores for groups with differing professional seniority are listed in Table 8.

Table 8

PWB Scores of Social Studies Teachers by Professional Seniority during the Pandemic

Scale subdimension	Professional seniority	N	Mean score
Purpose in life	1-5 years	72	67,65
	6-10 years	33	97,97
	11-15 years	22	82,70
	16-20 years	15	106,73
	Over 21	19	79,82
	Total	161	
Self-acceptance	1-5 years	72	67,91
	6-10 years	33	96,88
	11-15 years	22	88,84
	16-20 years	15	86,70
	Over 21	19	89,45
	Total	161	
Positive relationships with others	1-5 years	72	72,65
	6-10 years	33	97,56
	11-15 years	22	72,50
	16-20 years	15	102,50
	Over 21	19	76,74
	Total	161	
PWBS Total score	1-5 years	72	68,11
	6-10 years	33	100,35
	11-15 years	22	79,61
	16-20 years	15	105,60
	Over 21	19	78,42
	Total	161	

Lowest possible total score from the scale = 18
 Highest possible total score/full score from the scale = 126

As illustrated in Table 8, the overall scores on the PWB Scale (PWBS) for social studies teachers are notably diminished in the initial years of their career, as opposed to subsequent years. Specifically, teachers with 1-5 years of professional seniority exhibit the lowest mean scores in 'Purpose in Life' (67.65) and 'Self-Acceptance' (67.91) subdimensions.

Conversely, teachers within the 16-20 years of seniority bracket attain the highest mean score in 'Purpose in Life' (106.73), and those with 6-10 years in 'Self-Acceptance' (96.88). In the 'Positive Relationships with others' subdimension, educators with 1-5 years of seniority score lower (72.65) compared to their counterparts with 6-10 years (97.56). The data further elucidate that the lowest overall score (68.11) corresponds to teachers within the 1-5 years seniority range, whereas the highest overall score (105.60) is associated with those having 16-20 years of seniority.

Discussion and Results

This study has investigated the psychological well-being of social studies teachers during the pandemic. In addition to assessing scores obtained from the PWBS, the study probes the statistical significance between PWB and demographic variables such as gender, age, and Professional Seniority. Results have revealed that the mean PWB level of social studies teachers during this pandemic era is above the scale's average. No statistically significant differences were discerned concerning gender and age variables. A notable variance, however, was evident in relation to Professional Seniority, where teachers with 16-20 years of Professional Seniority have a higher level of PWB during the pandemic compared to other seniority groups.

The total PWBS score for the participating social studies educators stands at 74.29, which is deemed significantly above average vis-à-vis the scale's maximal score of 126. This substantiates the first hypothesis of the study, indicating an above-average level of PWB among social studies teachers during the pandemic. This aligns with previous research by Cansoy et al. (2020), Lipińska-Grobelny and Narska (2021), and İnce and Demirhan (2022) and Neyişi and Yılmaz (2022), all of whom corroborate elevated PWB levels among educational professionals. Karadeniz and Zabcı (2020) further add nuance by illustrating that elementary teachers experience significantly higher stress levels than high school teachers, whilst preschool educators manifest markedly elevated well-being levels. All these studies, along with some other existing studies (Warrier et al., 2021; Zakaria et al., 2021), corroborate our findings. However, a study conducted by Onuray Eğilmez (2022) found that teachers scored below average in terms of PWB. This is thought to be due to the fears teachers experienced during the pandemic period.

The social studies teachers scored the lowest on the 'Positive Relationships with others' sub-dimension and the highest on the 'Personal Growth' sub-dimension, according to the average scores from the PWBS. This aligns with Göcen's (2019) study, which identified a significant high-level relationship between these two sub-dimensions and overall PWB. However, the scores related to the 'Purpose in Life' and 'Positive Relationships with others' sub-dimensions were found to be below the average achievable score for these categories. This draws attention to challenges in teachers' purpose in life and relationships during the pandemic. The amalgamation of work and home environments during the pandemic, coupled with the stress of infection risk and social restrictions, likely negatively affects teachers' sense of purpose and relationships.

Arslan and Tura (2022) have found a positive relationship between teachers' PWB and their life purposes. Warriar et al. (2021) found that autonomy, self-acceptance, and positive relationships with people; Nika and Bashir (2023) determined that environmental mastery, autonomy, and self-acceptance sub-dimensions contributed more to PWB. Ünal and Dulay (2022) highlighted the disbalance in work-life equilibrium during the pandemic, underscoring the difficulty teachers face in maintaining this balance. Koçyiğit and Yılmaz (2023) discovered a decrease in life satisfaction among teachers, attributing it to 'Zoom fatigue' induced by remote teaching. All these factors potentially undermine teachers' psychological resilience, reducing their coping abilities and diminishing their scores in life purpose. According to Güler and Yöndem (2021), when psychological resilience levels drop, individuals' capacity to cope with challenges wanes, and burnout levels increase. McMakin et al. (2022) spotted a low level of secondary traumatic stress and a moderate level of burnout among teachers during this period. Although our study does not delve into the trauma aspect, the low scores indicate that further scrutiny is warranted concerning the impact of the pandemic on teachers' life purposes and relationships.

The tests conducted in accordance with the study's second hypothesis have revealed that gender does not significantly affect PWB across all sub-dimensions and the scale as a whole. There is no significant difference between genders in terms of PWB. This result aligns with studies that indicate no variation in teachers' PWB based on gender (Arslan & Tura, 2022; Yakut & Yakut, 2018). Also, many more studies confirming the conclusion that the gender variable does not affect the PWB of teachers (Katsantonis, 2020; Singh & Sharma, 2023; Onuray Eğilmez, 2022; Warriar, 2021). However, there are alternative studies asserting that the gender factor does influence teachers' PWB (Cenkseven & Akbaş, 2007; Doğan &

Aslan, 2022). For instance, Ertürk et al. (2016) identified a significant difference in PWB between teachers of different genders, noting higher scores for female teachers compared to males. In contrast, Şerbetçioğlu (2019) discovered that male teachers had higher average scores in PWB compared to female teachers. Additionally, Stapleton (2022) reported that men were better at coping with problems. Therefore, while the current study suggests gender neutrality in PWB among teachers, it is essential to acknowledge the varying perspectives presented in the existing literature.

Tests carried out following the study's third hypothesis indicate that neither the sub-dimensions nor the overall scale reveal a significant effect of age on PWB. Among the participating social studies teachers, no significant difference is found in PWB during the pandemic based on age. This finding diverges from the study by Ertürk et al. (2016), which identified significant differences in teachers' PWB across age groups. That study found higher PWB values for teachers aged 30 and below compared to those 41 and above. Stapleton (2022) also reported that individuals between the ages of 25-42 were better at coping with psychological issues compared to those aged 45 and above.

In contrast, tests aligned with the study's fourth hypothesis have concluded that both the sub-dimensions and the overall scale reveal a significant effect of Professional Seniority on PWB. A significant difference in the PWB levels of participating social studies teachers during the pandemic is observed based on their Professional Seniority, thereby confirming the fourth hypothesis. A study by Karadeniz & Zabcı (2020) found that as teachers' Professional Seniority years increased, their levels of PWB also rose. According to the study, teachers with greater Professional Seniority experienced reduced stress perceptions and fewer negative emotions. Especially teachers with 11 or more years of Professional Seniority appeared to handle challenges more calmly. The study suggests that these teachers' experiences significantly contribute to this outcome. However, in contrast to these findings, Doğan and Aslan (2022) and Ertürk et al. (2016) found no significant difference in teachers' PWB based on Professional Seniority.

Recommendations

From the insights gained in studying the PWB levels of social studies teachers during the pandemic from multiple angles, the following suggestions can be emphasized: Initially, the study's sample is limited to social studies teachers. Therefore, researchers could consider

examining the PWB levels of teachers from different disciplines in post-pandemic periods as well. Additionally, a quantitative study was preferred in this study has investigated the relationships between PWB and variables like gender, age, and professional seniority. Future research could focus on different variables and qualitative details related to teachers' PWB.

Moreover, the research indicates that professional seniority is an effective variable in PWB. Thus, institutions engaged in educational research, led by the Ministry of National Education and faculties of education, could organize developmental activities related to sharing professional experience among teachers and prospective teachers. For example, activities could include tea-time chats between novice and experienced teachers, inviting a veteran teacher to the school for discussions, conducting Zoom meetings, teacher conferences, or hosting a senior teacher in the faculty to meet with teacher candidates.

Next, given the below-average scores in the 'Purpose in Life' and 'Positive Relationships with others' dimensions, and their importance in human life, motivational enhancing activities could be designed for teachers. For instance, initiatives like social activities, psychological support, hobby creation, and rewards for social projects could provide the necessary support. Finally, education policymakers could consider launching projects focused on enhancing the quality of education and teachers, evaluating different planning and support proposals aimed at increasing teachers' PWB.

Compliance with Ethical Standard

The ethical approval for this research was granted by the Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee of Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, with the decision number GO 2021/260 on June 2, 2021.

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