

# School Burnout and Career Anxiety of Turkish Adolescent Students

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Cited:

Evcili H. (2023). School Burnout and Career Anxiety of Turkish Adolescent Students. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Research*, 7(16), 417-425, DOI: 10.57135/jier. 1371852

## Abstract

High school is a period when adolescents often experience career anxiety. Career anxiety can increase school burnout, and school burnout can intensify career anxiety. The objective of this study was to identify the relationship between adolescent students' burnout and career anxiety. This is a descriptive study. The 490 voluntary adolescent students studying at a state high school in Turkey constituted the sample of the research. The students have a mean age of 15.77 (SD = 3.46), and 55.3% are female. The total School Burnout Scale (SBS) mean score 96.48 (SD = 12.20) of student, and total Career Anxiety Scale (CAS) mean score 49.56 (SD = 7.48) for the students. Statistically significant positive correlations were found between the total score and subscale scores of SBS and CAS. Female students had statistically lower CAS scores and higher SBS compared to male students. Students whose mothers had a bachelor's/master's degree had lower CAS scores and higher SBS compared to students whose mothers had other education levels. Additionally, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between students' age and SBS total and CAS total scores ( $p < 0.05$ ). It is important for students to take measures to cope with career concerns while also addressing school burnout. Strategies such as stress management techniques, maintaining a balance, effective time management, and creating a supportive environment can help reduce career concerns and cope with school burnout.

**Keywords:** Adolescent, student, career, anxiety, school, burnout.

## INTRODUCTION

Career anxiety is defined as individuals' feelings of worry, stress, or uncertainty regarding their professional lives (Nalbantoğlu Yılmaz and Çetin Gündüz, 2022). Career anxiety is not limited to choices that determine one's career path alone. In addition to career choices, factors such as family pressure, societal expectations, personal goals, past experiences, fear of unemployment, and failures in the career process also trigger career anxiety (Nalbantoğlu Yılmaz and Çetin Gündüz, 2018). Furthermore, factors like a competitive work environment, rapidly changing technology, and economic uncertainty can lead individuals to worry about future job opportunities and success. Career anxiety can have detrimental effects on individuals, including intense stress, anxiety, depression, low motivation, and job dissatisfaction. Additionally, career anxiety can influence individuals' job choices, causing them to avoid taking risks and miss potential opportunities (Ciminli, 2023; Göncü-Akbaş, 2019; Özyürek, 2016).

The high school period, which is one of the most important stages of career development, is a period in which students often experience career anxiety (Nalbantoğlu-Yılmaz and Çetin-Gündüz, 2018). School burnout is frequently observed in students experiencing career anxiety. School burnout is defined as exhaustion related to school demands, developing negative attitudes towards school, decreased school commitment, and feelings of personal inadequacy as a student (Özgen, 2016; Seçer and Gençdoğan, 2012). Factors such as expectations of achieving career goals, intense competition, and high performance expectations increase students' stress levels. These high stress levels make it difficult for students to cope with academic challenges that require continuous effort and can trigger symptoms of school burnout such as long-term stress, emotional

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exhaustion, and loss of motivation (Atalayın, Balkıs, Tezel, Önal, and Kayrak, 2015; Bayrakdar, 2016; Özhan and Yüksel, 2021). Career anxiety causes students to focus on future job success, financial security, employment opportunities, and professional satisfaction. These expectations require students to work intensively to improve their academic performance, gain a competitive advantage, and progress on their desired career path. However, constantly being under this pressure depletes students' energy and diminishes their motivation in the long run. As a result, students experience feelings of burnout, and symptoms such as disengagement from school, lack of interest in classes, and decreased performance may arise (Çapri and Sönmez, 2013; Demir, 2015; Deniz and Karbeyaz, 2018).

The relationship between career anxiety and school burnout can reinforce each other. While career anxiety increases school burnout, school burnout can intensify career anxiety even further. This situation can create a negative cycle in students, as anxiety and feelings of burnout trigger each other, further reducing motivation and making it harder to achieve success (Aypay, 2012; Çapulcuoğlu and Gündüz, 2013; Fiorillia, De Stasio, Di Chiacchiob, Pepec, and Salmela-Aro, 2017). Therefore, it is important for students to take measures to cope with career anxiety while also addressing school burnout. Strategies such as stress management techniques, maintaining balance, effective time management, and creating a supportive environment can help reduce both career anxiety and school burnout. It is also crucial for students to understand themselves, clarify their goals, and seek professional help when needed (Demir, 2015; Deniz and Karbeyaz, 2018; Özgen, 2016; Salmela-Aro, Savolainen, and Holopainen, 2009; Seçer and Gençdoğan, 2012). At this point, the first step is to identify situations where students experience school burnout and career anxiety. The data obtained can be used to contribute to the development of interventions that focus on students' needs.

### ***Purpose of the Research***

The aim of this study is to examine school burnout and career anxiety among adolescent high school students based on various variables.

## **METHOD**

### ***Population and Sampling***

This is a descriptive study. The study was conducted in a high school located in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey during the academic year 2022-2023. The population of the study consisted of 841 students enrolled in a public high school during the academic year 2022-2023. Considering the known population, the sample size was calculated as 386 with a 95% confidence level ( $\alpha=0.05$  error) using the formula for examining the frequency of occurrence of the event. Subsequently, a certain number of students were selected from each class through simple random sampling method to be included in the research. The sample of the study consisted of 490 students who were willing to participate and completed the data collection instruments in their entirety.

### ***Data Collection Tools***

The data of the study were collected with three separate data collection tools: Personal Information Form, Secondary School Burnout Scale and Career Anxiety Scale.

#### ***Personal Information Form***

The questionnaire consists of 10 questions aimed at determining some socio-demographic characteristics of the students, such as age, grade, family type, income status, and parents' educational background.

#### ***School Burnout Scale (SBS)***

The scale was developed by Aypay (2012) with the aim of determining the levels of school burnout among secondary school students. It is a 4-point Likert-type scale consisting of 34 items and 7 subscales, evaluated on a rating scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Scale subdimensions: Loss of Interest to School (LIS), Burnout from Studying (BFS), Burnout from

Family (BFF), Burnout from Homework (BFH), Burnout from Teacher Attitudes (BFTA), Need to Rest and Time for Fun (NRTF), and Feeling of Insufficiency at School (FIS). High scores obtained by an individual in each subscale indicate that the individual experiences the corresponding type of burnout. Additionally, the scale provides a total burnout score, which represents the overall level of burnout. Cronbach Alpha values for the sub-dimensions of SBS were as follows, respectively; .67-.86. In this study, Cronbach Alpha values for the sub-dimensions of SBS were as follows, respectively; .76-.80.

#### *Career Anxiety Scale (CAS)*

This scale developed by Çetin-Gündüz and Nalbantoğlu-Yılmaz (2016), is a 5-point Likert type instrument including 14 items and two factors: the anxiety related to the effect of family and the choice of profession. Low scores indicate low career anxiety, and high scores indicate high career anxiety. For “the effect of family” subdimension, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.877, and McDonald  $\omega$  coefficient was 0.88. For the “the choice of profession” sub-dimension, it was measured 0.876 and 0.88, respectively. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the career anxiety subscale related to family influence was found to be .84, and the reliability coefficient for the career anxiety subscale related to career choice was .82.

#### **Process**

This study adheres to the ethical standards of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) responsible for human experiments (national institutional) and the 1975 Helsinki Declaration revised in 2008, which governs the conduct of research involving human subjects. In order to protect the rights of the participants within the scope of the research, the ethical principles were met before collecting the research data: the “Informed Consent” principle by explaining the participants the purpose of the study, the “Privacy and Protection of Privacy” principle by telling them that the information to be collected would be kept confidential, and the “Respect for Autonomy” principle by including those who wanted to participate voluntarily. This study has obtained informed consent from the participants. The data collection tools created using Google Form were delivered to the students online. Students who read and approved the information page about the subject and purpose of the study accessed the data collection tools. Google form links were sent to the students through the WhatsApp groups of the student classes.

#### **Analysis of Data**

SPSS for Windows 22.0 (IBM Corp. 2013) computer statistical package was used for all statistical procedures. In addition to descriptive statistical analysis (Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency, Minimum, Maximum), Student's t-test, One-way ANOVA test, Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to evaluate the relationships between parameters. The results were evaluated bidirectionally at 95% confidence interval and significance level  $p < 0.05$ .

#### **RESULTS**

The students have a mean age of 15.77 (SD = 3.46). Among the students, 55.3% are female, while 37.5% are in the 10th grade. In terms of family structure, 81.0% of the students come from nuclear families, and 94.4% live in the city center. Only 15.9% of the students' mothers have a bachelor's or postgraduate degree, while 27.9% of their fathers have the same educational level. Regarding income status, 63.2% of the students define their income level as “moderate.” 48.4% of the students stated that they had chosen the profession they wanted to do in the future.

The mean scores of the students on the SBS subscales were as follows: Total Burnout Score: 96.48 (SD = 12.20), Loss of Interest to School (LIS): 4.42 (SD = 2.12), Burnout from Studying (BFS): 3.52 (SD = 2.48), Burnout from Family (BFF): 12.04 (SD = 6.12), Burnout from Homework (BFH): 14.04 (SD = 7.10), Burnout from Teacher Attitudes (BFTA): 13.82 (SD = 7.06), Need to Rest and Time for Fun (NRTF): 13.48 (SD = 6.56), and Feeling of Insufficiency at School (FIS): 12.52 (SD = 5.38) (Table 1). The participants' mean scores on the CAS subscales were as follows: Total Career Anxiety Score: 49.56 (SD = 7.48), the effect of family: 3.75 (SD = 2.18), and the choice of profession:

6.42 (SD = 3.76) (Table 1). It was determined that students experienced "career anxiety" and "school burnout" above the average.

Table 1. Total and sub-dimension mean scores of the SBS and the CAS

Scale Total and Sub-Dimensions	Scale Min – Max Score	$\bar{X}$ (sd)
<b>SBS</b>		
Loss of Interest to School (LIS)	6-24	4.42 (2.12)
Burnout from Studying (BFS)	6-24	3.52 (2.48)
Burnout from Family (BFF)	5-20	12.04 (6.12)
Burnout from Homework (BFH)	5-20	14.04 (7.10)
Burnout from Teacher Attitudes (BFTA)	4-16	13.82 (7.06)
Need to Rest and Time for Fun (NRTF)	4-16	13.48 (6.56)
Feeling of Insufficiency at School (FIS)	4-16	12.52 (5.38)
<b>Total</b>	34-136	96.48 (12.20)
<b>CAS</b>		
The effect of family	5-25	3.75 (2.18)
The choice of profession	9-45	6.42 (3.76)
<b>Total</b>	14-70	49.56 (7.48)

**Abbreviations:** SBS: Secondary School Burnout Scale; CAS: Career Anxiety Scale;  $\bar{X}$ : mean; sd: standard deviation

Statistically significant positive correlations were found between the total score and subscale scores of SBS and CAS ( $p < 0.05$ ; Table 2). "The level of the relationship between variables can be interpreted as weak when the correlation coefficient is between 0-0.29, moderate when it is between 0.30-0.64, strong when it is between 0.65-0.84, and very strong when it is between 0.85-1 (Ural and Kılıç, 2013)."

Table 2. Correlation Of Total and Sub-Dimension Scale Scores

SBS	CAS					
	The effect of family		The choice of profession		Total	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Loss of Interest to School (LIS)	0.270	0.001	0.745	0.001	0.214	0.001
Burnout from Studying (BFS)	0.846	0.001	0.340	0.001	0.256	0.001
Burnout from Family (BFF)	0.240	0.001	0.510	0.001	0.346	0.001
Burnout from Homework (BFH)	0.440	0.001	0.372	0.001	0.658	0.001
Burnout from Teacher Attitudes (BFTA)	0.654	0.001	0.416	0.001	0.416	0.001
Need to Rest and Time for Fun (NRTF)	0.442	0.001	0.338	0.001	0.326	0.001
Feeling of Insufficiency at School (FIS)	0.306	0.001	0.372	0.001	0.632	0.001
<b>Total</b>	0.452	0.001	0.486	0.001	0.426	0.001

**Abbreviations:** SBS: Secondary School Burnout Scale; CAS: Career Anxiety Scale; r: Pearson's correlation coefficient

Female students had statistically lower CAS and higher SBS scores compared to male students. Students in the 9th grade had lower CAS and higher SBS scores compared to students in other grades. Students from nuclear families had lower CAS and higher SBS scores compared to students from extended families. Students whose mothers had a bachelor's/master's degree had lower CAS and higher SBS scores compared to students whose mothers had other education levels. Students who described their income status as high had lower CAS and higher SBS scores compared to students who described their income status as low. Students living in the city center had lower CAS and higher SBS scores compared to students living in rural areas. Additionally, there was a statistically significant positive moderate level correlation between students' age and SBS total and CAS total scores ( $p < 0.05$ ; Table 3).

Table 3. Total and sub-dimension mean scale scores according to some characteristics

Characteristics	CAS	SBS
	Total	Total
	$\bar{X}$ (sd)	$\bar{X}$ (sd)
<b>Sex</b>		
Female (n=271)	46.12 (5.86)	86.12 (12.02)
Male (n=219)	52.10 (6.86)	96.42 (10.26)
<b>t / p</b>	<b>1.210 / 0.042</b>	<b>0.526 / 0.006</b>
<b>Grade</b>		
9. class (n=133)	49.10 (6.28)	80.42 (14.12)
10. class (n=184)	51.21 (6.62)	83.80 (16.10)
11. class (n=133)	51.14 (5.16)	84.16 (12.10)
12. class (n=43)	53.18 (5.00)	92.10 (11.18)
<b>F / p</b>	<b>3.426 / 0.006</b>	<b>4.252 / 0.048</b>
<b>Family Type *</b>		
Nuclear family (n=397)	50.10 (6.42)	96.14 (13.02)
Extended family (n=64)	53.18 (5.48)	102.60 (14.10)
<b>t / p</b>	<b>2.120 / 0.038</b>	<b>0.120 / 0.004</b>
<b>Maternal Educational Level</b>		
Primary school and below (n=175)	53.11 (6.14)	96.62 (13.00)
Secondary / high school (n=237)	52.20 (6.20)	94.60 (12.24)
Undergraduate postgraduate (n=78)	49.64 (5.48)	86.06 (14.84)
<b>F / p</b>	<b>3.410 / 0.012</b>	<b>4.220 / 0.040</b>
<b>Paternal Educational Level</b>		
Primary school and below (n=82)	51.02 (6.10)	83.82 (16.12)
Secondary / high school (n=271)	52.18 (6.42)	85.18 (16.06)
Undergraduate postgraduate (n=137)	51.26 (5.40)	83.48 (16.40)
<b>F / p</b>	<b>5.022 / 0.486</b>	<b>2.212 / 0.260</b>
<b>Financial Status</b>		
High (n=156)	50.28 (6.04)	78.26 (16.20)
Moderate (n=310)	50.17 (5.18)	82.30 (15.52)
Low (n=24)	53.06 (6.14)	94.20 (16.44)
<b>F / p</b>	<b>3.058 / 0.036</b>	<b>4.852 / 0.045</b>
<b>Place of Living</b>		
City center (n=463)	49.96 (5.36)	95.20 (12.02)
Village town (n=27)	52.18 (6.42)	102.10 (13.48)
<b>t / p</b>	<b>2.012 / 0.010</b>	<b>3.218 / 0.032</b>
<b>Choice of Profession</b>		
Yes	48.16 (5.02)	94.12 (11.06)
No	51.10 (6.40)	99.18 (13.40)
<b>t / p</b>	<b>2.002 / 0.042</b>	<b>2.208 / 0.033</b>
	r (p)	r (p)
<b>Age</b>	<b>0.685 (0.001)</b>	<b>0.556 (0.026)</b>

Abbreviations: SBS: Secondary School Burnout Scale; CAS: Career Anxiety Scale; r: Pearson's correlation coefficient;  $\bar{X}$ : mean; sd: standart deviation; \* Divorced families were not included in the statistical analysis.

## CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

This research aims to address the relationship between career anxiety and school burnout in high school students. In this section, the findings will be compared to the literature to contribute to existing research. It can be stated that the possible effects of school burnout on career anxiety have not been sufficiently addressed in the literature. Taking into consideration the findings that depression predicts school burnout (Çapri and Sönmez, 2013; Salmela-Aro, Upadyaya, Hakkarainen, Lonka, and Alho, 2017; Seçer and Şimşek, 2015) and that school burnout can also lead to depression (Fiorillia et al., 2017; Salmela-Aro et al., 2017), investigating the relationship

between school burnout and anxiety is crucial. In our study, a positive moderate level relationship was found between students' career anxiety and school burnout. It was determined that as career anxiety increases, school burnout also increases. In a study conducted by Koçak and Seçer (2018), positive and significant relationships were detected between school burnout and depression and anxiety. Additionally, school burnout was found to be a significant predictor of depression and anxiety. Studies on school burnout also revealed significant correlations between burnout and depression (Fiorillia et al., 2017; Salmela-Aro et al., 2017).

There are findings in the literature indicating relationships between career anxiety, school burnout, and gender. However, due to the lack of consistency in these relationships and the influence of different factors, drawing a definitive conclusion is challenging. Gender can be considered as a variable in the relationship between career anxiety, school burnout, and gender. In our study, male students were found to have higher levels of career anxiety and school burnout compared to female students. Male students may have concerns related to succeeding in the business world, achieving financial goals, and making career choices, which can influence school burnout (Akbaş and Okutan, 2019). However, some studies show that career anxiety is higher among female students compared to male students (Ge, Conger and Elder, 2001; Jose and Ratcliffe, 2004; Matud, 2004). Female students may also have a tendency to experience career anxiety due to factors such as concerns about future employment, career choices, and societal expectations. This can increase the risk of school burnout. Similar findings are evident in studies on the relationship between school burnout and gender. For example, some studies have shown that the levels of school burnout among female students are higher compared to male students. This may indicate that female students experience more academic and social pressure and therefore experience school burnout more frequently (Akıl and Yazar, 2014; Atalayın et al., 2015; Bayrakdar, 2016; Demir, 2015). However, other studies have shown that the levels of school burnout among male students can be similar or even higher than female students (Çapulcuoğlu and Gündüz, 2013; Deniz and Karbeyaz, 2018; Akıl and Yazar, 2014; Balkıs et al., 2011; Çapri and Sönmez, 2013; Özgen, 2016; Seçer and Gençdoğan, 2012). It has been noted that male students may also experience school burnout due to factors such as academic pressure, social expectations, and concerns about the future. As a result, it can be said that there are relationships between career anxiety, school burnout, and gender. However, these relationships are complex and multifaceted. Gender should be considered as a factor to understand these relationships, but it is not sufficient on its own.

Family economic status can be another factor that influences a child's career anxiety. Having a higher income level in the family provides individuals with the opportunity to receive education in their desired professions and career fields (Kuzgun, 2014; Aytaç and Keser, 2017). If the family is economically stable, the child may develop a belief that they will be financially secure in the future, which can reduce career anxiety. In this study, it was found that those who described their income status as good had lower levels of career anxiety and school burnout compared to those who described their income status as poor. Some studies in the literature also indicate that the level of anxiety and difficulty in making career decisions are influenced by the family's income level. Students from lower-income families tend to experience more anxiety compared to students from higher-income families (Şanlı Kula and Saraç, 2016; Ayyıldız, 2015; Gökçe and Traş, 2017; Akbaş and Okutan, 2019). The expectation of lower-income families for their students to enter the workforce as soon as possible and the students' inability to express themselves correctly regarding the professions they want to choose can lead to career anxiety due to the influence of the family.

Parents' educational level can have an impact on children's career anxiety and school burnout experiences. Numerous studies have shown that parents having a higher educational level positively influences children's career anxiety. Parents with higher education tend to provide children with more resources and support. This situation can help children develop better awareness and planning abilities regarding their future career choices and job concerns. Similarly, parents having a lower educational level can negatively affect the level of career anxiety in

children. Limited resources and support can lead children to encounter uncertainties about the future and experience job-related concerns. Particularly, the mother plays a significant role as a role model for children. The mother's attitudes towards her own career, work discipline, and motivation can influence the child's career expectations. If the mother serves as a successful career model, the child may have lower career anxiety and develop more self-confidence. Likewise, if the mother faces difficulties in her career or experiences career dissatisfaction, the child's career anxiety may increase. Additionally, mothers with higher educational levels generally provide more support during their children's educational journey. This support can assist children in setting and achieving career goals, thereby developing more self-confidence. Moreover, the mother can help the child enhance their coping skills, which can reduce school burnout. In this study, it was found that individuals whose mothers had an undergraduate/graduate education level had lower levels of career anxiety and school burnout compared to those with different educational levels. Another study revealed that elementary school students whose mothers had a primary education level experienced higher levels of career anxiety than those whose mothers had a university education level (Akbaş and Okutan, 2019).

Uncertainty is a common source of anxiety among individuals who have not made career choices. They experience uncertainty about how their careers will shape up, employment opportunities, market demand, salary levels, and other related matters. However, when a person makes a career choice, they reduce the uncertainties that concern them and establish a clearer direction. By making a career choice, an individual directs themselves towards a specific field and sets a career goal. This allows them to take steps towards acquiring the necessary skills, advancing, and achieving success in that profession. As uncertainty gives way to specific goals and plans, career anxiety diminishes. In this study, students who have made decisions about their desired future careers were found to have lower levels of career anxiety and school burnout. Some studies have also shown that students who have made career decisions experience less career anxiety compared to those who haven't, while students who have not yet chosen a field of study experience higher levels of career anxiety (Campagna and Curtis, 2007; Nalbantoğlu-Yılmaz and Çetin-Gündüz, 2018; Ciminli, 2023). Based on the data, it can be inferred that individuals who have not conducted career exploration experience more uncertainty about the future, which in turn contributes to increased anxiety.

In our study, a positive moderate level relationship was found between students' career anxiety and school burnout. It was determined that as career anxiety increases, school burnout also increases. Factors such as gender, grade level, family type, maternal education level, family income level, and place of residence were found to have an impact on career anxiety and school burnout. Measures can be taken to help high school students cope with career anxiety and school burnout. Firstly, students should be provided with information about career anxiety and school burnout, emphasizing that these are common issues and that others have had similar experiences. This can increase students' awareness of the subject. Additionally, it is important to create a supportive and safe school environment that meets students' emotional needs. Providing students with a space to express themselves, collaborating with parents to provide emotional support, teaching stress management strategies, relaxation techniques, and promoting healthy lifestyle habits can help reduce career anxiety and school burnout. Offering career counseling and guidance services to students, providing guidance in career choices, and seeking to understand their concerns about the future are other alternative approaches that can be used to reduce career anxiety.

#### **FUNDING STATEMENT**

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not for profit sectors.

#### **CONFLICT of INTEREST**

There is no conflict of interest.

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