

Examination of the Relationship Between Academic Goal Orientation and Possible Selves of the Faculty of Sports Sciences Students

Vesile ŞAHİNER GÜLER^{1*}, Mehmet Behzat TURAN², Çağrı ÇELENK³, Osman PEPE⁴,

¹Erciyes University, Kayseri, Türkiye
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0215-8816>

²Erciyes University, Kayseri, Türkiye
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5332-803X>

³Erciyes University, Kayseri, Türkiye
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2448-3011>

⁴Süleyman Demirel University, Isparta, Türkiye
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8787-2538>

Email: vsl.shnr.18@gmail.com, behzatturan@erciyes.edu.tr, celenkc7@hotmail.com,
osmanpepe@sdu.edu.tr

Type: Research Article (Received: 19.03.2025 – Accepted: 22.10.2025)

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between academic goal orientations and the possible selves of teacher candidates. A total of 384 teacher candidates participated in the study as a sample. The Demographic Information Form, Academic Goal Orientation Scale, and Possible Selves Scale were used as data collection tools. The study found that learning agility and professionalism were positively associated with adaptive teaching behaviors and future-oriented self-perceptions, while avoidance and uncreative teaching tendencies were linked to disengagement and classroom management difficulties. No significant relationship was observed between academic goal orientations and possible selves, indicating that goal orientations alone do not predict preservice teachers' expected or feared professional selves. These findings highlight the importance of reflective practice and experiential learning in teacher education programs to foster professional identity, adaptive teaching behaviors, and growth-oriented self-concepts among preservice teachers.

Keywords: Sports, Students, Learning, Academic goal orientation, Possible selves.

Introduction

Teacher candidates should be trained in a high-quality manner, as they are essential human resources for every country. Teachers working in educational institutions must be competent in their profession and possess a strong perception of professional competence (Alev, 2019; Üstüner et al., 2009). A review of the literature on educational research reveals numerous studies examining the motivational effects of possible selves on key variables such as school attendance, academic initiative, and achievement (Oyserman et al., 2006; Leondari & Gonida, 2008; Yowell, 2002). The expected possible self refers to what an individual believes they can realistically achieve. For teacher candidates, the hoped-for possible self represents their desired professional future, while the feared possible self reflects the version of themselves they are afraid of becoming once they enter the profession (Dalioglu & Adigüzel, 2017). Ibarra (1999) developed a three-stage model of identity development in career processes based on the theory of possible selves. According to this model, individuals first create a repertoire of possible selves both hoped-for and feared by observing role models. They then experiment with temporary selves chosen from this repertoire. Finally, they evaluate their evolving self-perceptions based on internal and external standards. Teacher candidates, as newcomers to the profession, will likely develop many positive possible selves in the near future, such as becoming effective teachers, building strong relationships with students and colleagues, and successfully managing classrooms. However, they may also develop negative possible selves, such as becoming burnt-out, disengaged, or emotionally detached teachers (Hamman & Wood-Harp, 2007). A teacher candidate's possible selves are shaped by the social environment in which they receive their education. For prospective teachers, possible selves represent the versions of themselves they could become, aspire to be, or fear becoming (Cross & Markus, 1991; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Ölçer, 2019; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). Possible selves encompass both desired identities such as "successful me," "creative me," "wealthy me," and "loved me" and feared identities, such as "lonely me," "depressed me," "incompetent me," and "unemployed me" (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The expected possible selves of prospective teachers can have a positive impact on their attitudes toward teaching, their ability to organize course activities, and their overall professional motivation (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989; Hooker & Kaus, 1992).

Educational environments subject students to formative processes with concrete, measurable, and normative characteristics. Students must first achieve specific goals outlined in the curriculum, which are then reflected in lesson plans, and they must engage in certain activities to reach these goals (Wentzel, 2000). The personal goal orientations that teachers develop during their student years shape their goal orientations toward teaching (Chiang, 2004). As students become familiar with the goal structures of the learning environment, they can align their efforts with their own learning processes and personal goal structures to enhance effective learning (Pintrich et al., 2003). Goal orientations are considered an integral part of an individual's cognitive life (Dweck, 1999; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Dick et al. (2001) emphasize that goal setting is one of the most crucial components of the teaching and learning process. A student's success goals answer the question, "Why am I engaging in this learning activity?" In responding to this question, students' goal orientations shape and direct their cognitive approaches, behaviors, and emotions toward learning-related activities (Yeung & McInerney, 2005). Experimental and correlational studies indicate that learning goal orientation is not only associated with cognitive aspects such as thinking and learning but also with an individual's social adaptation in later life, positive self-perception, and overall well-being (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Tan et al., 2016; Cheung & McBride Chang, 2008; Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2021). Goal orientations provide educators

with insights into whether students are motivated to engage with their tasks (Dweck, 1986; Meece et al., 1988). Covington (2000) highlights that university students rely on both social and academic goals, which are linked to educational objectives and processes, to achieve high-quality learning outcomes. Van Dierendonck & Van der Gaast (2013) conducted a study on students' goal orientations and career success, concluding that students with high learning and performance-proving goal orientations experienced greater career success. However, goal orientation also had an impact on students with lower academic qualifications. According to VandeWalle & Cummings (1997), learning and performance goals play a critical role in how individuals interpret their successes and determine the behaviors they exhibit in achievement-related situations. Given its outcome-oriented nature, goal orientation has been increasingly applied in fields such as business, academia, and sports, where learning and performance are key drivers of success (Yperen et al., 2014). VandeWalle & Cummings (1997) classification of goal orientation sub-dimensions learning, proving, and avoiding emphasizes that learning and performance, previously considered as different aspects of the same construct, should be evaluated separately. By dividing performance orientation into proving and avoiding, a three-dimensional model emerged alongside the learning dimension. Learning-approach goal orientation is positively associated with variables such as self-efficacy, perseverance, and persistence in the face of challenges. In contrast, students with a learning-avoidance goal orientation who often exhibit perfectionist tendencies may avoid academic tasks due to fears of failing to meet expectations, forgetting learned material, making mistakes, or acquiring incorrect knowledge (Akın, 2006; Kaplan & Maehr, 2007).

According to DeShon & Gillespie (2005), goal orientation can also be considered an individual difference in education and serves as a reliable predictor of students' academic performance (VandeWalle, 2003). A review of the literature suggests that goal orientations play a crucial role in helping prospective teachers develop the competencies necessary for their profession and build a self-concept that aligns with their career aspirations. Furthermore, a strong goal orientation can enhance motivation, which, in turn, can influence their possible self-concept in the teaching profession. Based on this framework, the study seeks to answer the following research question:

What is the relationship between the academic goal orientations of prospective teachers and their possible selves?

The hypotheses of our study, which examines the relationship between pre-service teachers' academic goal orientations and their possible selves, are as follows:

H1: There is a significant relationship between pre-service teachers' academic goal orientation and their possible selves.

H1a: There is a significant positive relationship between pre-service teachers' academic goal orientations and their expected possible selves.

H1b: There is a significant negative relationship between pre-service teachers' academic goal orientations and their feared possible selves.

Material and Method

Ethics Committee Permission

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Erciyes University Social Sciences and Humanities Ethics Committee (protocol code 242 and date of approval 28.05.2024).

Model of the Research

The relational screening model used in the research aims to find the degree of common variation of two or more variables (Karasar, 2012).

Participants

The simple random sampling method was used to determine the sample group for this study. In this method, each unit in the population has an equal probability of being included in the sample. In other words, all units have the same chance of being selected independently of one another (Ural & Kılıç, 2005).

To create the study sample, a list of classes containing teacher candidates was prepared, and each student was ranked according to their school number. The position of each student on the list represented their assigned number. Numbering was conducted separately for each class. To ensure random selection, separate draw bags were prepared for each class, and students' assigned numbers were placed into the respective bags. A total of 384 participants were selected through a lottery, with 24 students drawn from each of the 16 classes.

Among approximately 1,257 physical education and sports teacher candidates studying in the 2024-2025 academic year, 384 volunteers participated in the study. The study was conducted at Erciyes University, Faculty of Sports Sciences. The inclusion criteria for the study were as follows:

Being a student at the faculty of sports sciences.

Being a pre-service physical education and sports teacher.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

	Group	n	%
		384	100
Gender	Female	177	46.1
	Male	207	53.9
Age	18-20 Years Old	100	26.0
	21-23 Years Old	172	44.8
	24-26 Years Old	99	25.8
	27 Years and Above	13	3.4
Grade	1	94	24.5
	2	116	30.2
	3	142	37.0
	4	32	8.3
General Grade Average (GPA)	2.00-2.50	127	33.1
	2.51-3.00	204	53.1
	3.01 and above	53	13.8
Working Status	Yes	159	41.4
	No	225	58.6
Income	0-5.000 TL	196	51.0
	5001-10.000 TL	80	20.8
	10.001-15.000 TL	34	8.9
	15.001 TL and Above	74	19.3

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of the demographic variables of the participants

G* Power Analizi

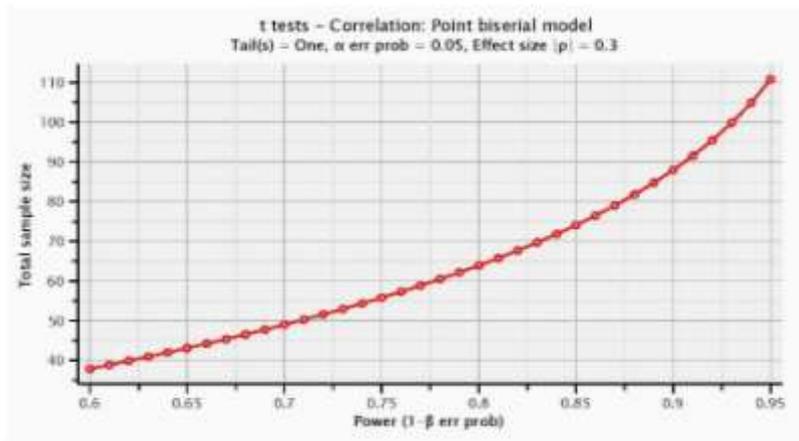


Figure 1. G* power analizi

The G Power 3.1.9.7 program in Figure 1 was used for the sample. The sample size was 111, α value was .05, effect size was 0.3 and power (1- β) was .95. The sample of the study consisted of 384 people (Kang, 2021).

Demographic Information Form

This is a form consisting of 7 questions in total to collect data on the participants' gender, age, grade, general grade point average (GPA), employment status, monthly income and graduate education consideration. The demographic information of the participants was prepared to be used only for scientific purposes in order to define the population of the study.

Academic Goal Orientation Scale

In order to determine the academic goal orientations of university students, the "Academic Goal Orientation Scale" developed by VandeWalle (2001) and adapted to Turkish by Fındıkoğlu & Gürol (2021) was used. As a result of the validity and reliability study, it was determined that the scale had a 13-item internal factor form and that the factor structures were valid. In general, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated separately for 13 items and 3 factors for it. Cronbach's alpha for the 13-item scale was .84, which is a quite sufficient value (Pallant, 2020; Fraenkel et al., 2012). In addition, the confirmatory factor analysis results were determined as SRMR=.076, CFI=.97, GFI=.89. The relevant scale is a seven-point Likert type, and the sub-dimensions of the scale are determined as "Learning" (4 items), "Proving" (4 items), and "Avoiding" (5 items). The internal consistency of the Turkish version of the Academic Goal Orientation Scale was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The overall reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be $\alpha = .84$. Cronbach's alpha values for the subscales were $\alpha = .80$ for the Learning Orientation subscale, $\alpha = .86$ for the Proving Orientation subscale, and $\alpha = .83$ for the Avoiding Orientation subscale. These values indicate that the scale demonstrates a high level of internal consistency.

Possible Selves Scale

The scale was developed by Hamman, et al., (2013) and adapted to Turkish (Dalioglu & Adigüzel, 2015). The New Teacher Possible Selves Questionnaire was developed to measure prospective teachers' potential teacher selves in their first year in the teaching profession. The scale consists of two separate 6-point Likert-type subscales: "expected teacher possible selves" and "feared teacher possible selves." Each subscale is evaluated separately, a total score cannot be obtained from the scales, and each subscale has subdimensions. A high score obtained from the Expected Possible Teacher Selves Scale indicates that prospective teachers

have high levels of positive expectations in their first years in the profession. The lowest score that can be obtained from the overall expected possible teacher selves scale is 9, and the highest score is 54. The lowest possible score for the “professionalism” dimension is 5, and the highest is 30; the lowest possible score for the “learning to teach” dimension is 4, and the highest is 24. The high score obtained from the Feared Possible Teacher Selves Scale indicates that teacher candidates have high levels of fear regarding their first years in the profession. The lowest possible score for the overall Feared Possible Teacher Selves Scale is 9, and the highest is 54. The lowest possible score for the “uncreative teaching,” “inadequate classroom management,” and “being an uninterested teacher” dimensions is 3, and the highest is 18. Two different possible teacher selves scales were used in the study. The Expected Possible Teacher Selves Scale consists of 9 items and includes two sub-dimensions: Professionalism (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.79$) and Learning to Teach (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.68$). The Feared Possible Teacher Selves Scale also consists of 9 items and includes three sub-dimensions: Uncreative Teaching (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.86$), Inadequate Classroom Management (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.81$), and Being an Uncaring Teacher (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.76$). Both scales have demonstrated adequate internal consistency in previous studies.

Data Analysis: The data used in the study were analyzed using the SPSS.25 program. The normality distributions of the obtained data were examined by looking at the skewness-kurtosis coefficient and q-q, p-p pilot graphs. Frequency analysis was used to analyze demographic information. Pearson Correlation test and Regression Analysis were used to analyze the relationship between variables.

Findings

Table 2. Normality of scale scores

Sub-Dimension	N	Min.	Max.	X	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Learning	384	1	7	4.72	1.20	-.32	.06
Proving	384	1	7	4.36	1.44	.30	-.50
Avoiding	384	1	7	3.56	1.17	.12	.04
Professionalism	384	1.80	6	4.63	.97	-.57	-.28
Learning to teach	384	1.25	6	4.60	.97	-.81	.39
Uncreative teaching	384	1.33	6	3.40	1.16	.30	-.95
Inadequate classroom management	384	1	6	3.15	1.35	.26	-.82
Being an uninterested teacher	384	1	6	3.22	1.19	.20	-.93
Academic Goal Orientation	384	2.38	6.46	4.16	.56	.05	.95
Expected Possible Self	384	1.67	6.00	4.62	.91	.63	.03
The Feared Possible Self	384	1.22	5.67	3.26	1.10	.27	-.87

Table 2 shows the data on the normal distributions of the sub-dimensions of the scales. The findings show that all scale scores are normally distributed.

Table 3. The relationship between scale scores

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Learning ¹	4.72	1.20	1										
Proving ²	4.36	1.44	.25**	1									
Avoiding ³	3.56	1.17	-.23**	-.58**	1								
Professionalism	4.64	.97	.14	.07	-.19	1							

4			**	**									
Learning to teach⁵	4.60	.97	.13*	.03	-.12*	.75**	1						
Uncreative teaching⁶	3.40	1.16	-.03	.00	.01	.05	.02	.1					
Inadequate classroom management⁷	3.16	1.35	.02	.05	-.03	.01	.03	.60**	1				
Being an uninterested teacher⁸	3.23	1.18	.03	.11*	-.09	.04	.01	.74**	.73**	1			
Academic Goal Orientation⁹	4.17	.56	.68**	.49**	.20**	-.01	-.02	-.01	.03	.04	1		
Expected Possible Self¹⁰	4.62	.91	.14**	.06	-.17**	.95**	.92**	.04	.02	.03	.00	1	
The Feared Possible Self¹¹	3.26	1.10	.01	.06	-.04	.03	.02	.87**	.89**	.92**	.02	.03	1

p<0.05*, p<0.01*, N=384. 1=Learning; 2=Proving; 3=Avoiding; 4=Professionalism; 5=Learning to teach; 6=Uncreative teaching; 7=Inadequate classroom management; 8=Being an uninterested teacher,9=Academic Goal Orientation, 10= Expected Possible Self, 11= The Feared Possible Self.

Fisher Z transformations for correlations between scale sub dimension scores in Table 3 were calculated as follows: A correlation between Learning and Proving scores (r=.25, p=.00) resulted in a Z score of .25. A correlation between Learning and Avoiding scores (r=-.23, p=.00) resulted in a Z score of .23. A correlation between Learning and Professionalism scores (r=.14, p=.01) resulted in a Z score of .14. A correlation between Learning and Learning to teach scores (r=.13, p=.01) resulted in a Z score of .13. A correlation between Learning and Uncreative teaching scores (r=-.03, p=.56) resulted in a Z score of .03. A correlation between Learning and Inadequate classroom management scores (r=.02, p=.76) resulted in a Z score of .02. A correlation between Learning and Being an uninterested teacher scores (r=.03, p=.53) resulted in a Z score of .03. Learning and Academic Goal Orientation scores (r=.68, p=.00) resulted in a Z score of .83. Learning and Expected Possible Self scores (r=.14, p=.00) resulted in a Z score of .14. Learning and The Feared Possible Self scores (r=.01, p=.89) resulted in a Z score of .01.

A correlation between Proving and Avoiding scores (r=-.58, p=.00) resulted in a Z score of .66. A correlation between Proving and Professionalism scores (r=.07, p=.19) resulted in a Z score of .07. A correlation between Proving and Learning to teach scores (r=.03, p=.55) resulted in a Z score of .03. A correlation between Proving and Uncreative teaching scores (r=.00, p=.98) resulted in a Z score of .00. A correlation between Proving and Inadequate classroom management scores (r=.05, p=.35) resulted in a Z score of .05. A correlation between Proving and Being an uninterested teacher scores (r=.11, p=.03) resulted in a Z score of .11. A correlation between Proving and Academic Goal Orientation scores (r=.49, p=.00) resulted in a Z score of .54. A correlation between Proving and Expected Possible Self scores (r=.06, p=.28) resulted in a Z score of .06. A correlation between Proving and The Feared Possible Self scores (r=.06, p=.24) resulted in a Z score of .06.

A correlation between Avoiding and Professionalism scores (r=-.19, p=.00) resulted in a Z score of .19. A correlation between Avoiding and Learning to teach scores (r=-.12, p=.02) resulted in a Z score of .12. A correlation between Avoiding and Uncreative teaching scores (r=.01, p=.80) resulted in a Z score of .01. A correlation between Avoiding and Inadequate classroom management scores (r=-.03, p=.61) resulted in a Z score of .03. A correlation between Avoiding and Being an uninterested teacher scores (r=-.09, p=.07) resulted in a Z

score of .09. A correlation between Avoiding and Academic Goal Orientation scores ($r=.20$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of .20. A correlation between Avoiding and Expected Possible Self scores ($r=-.17$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of .17. A correlation between Avoiding and The Feared Possible Self scores ($r=-.04$, $p=.44$) resulted in a Z score of .04.

A correlation between Professionalism and Learning to teach scores ($r=.75$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of .97. A correlation between Professionalism and Uncreative teaching scores ($r=.05$, $p=.38$) resulted in a Z score of .05. A correlation between Professionalism and Inadequate classroom management scores ($r=.01$, $p=.83$) resulted in a Z score of .01. A correlation between Professionalism and Being an uninterested teacher scores ($r=.04$, $p=.44$) resulted in a Z score of .04. A correlation between Professionalism and Academic Goal Orientation scores ($r=-.01$, $p=.92$) resulted in a Z score of .01. A correlation between Professionalism and Expected Possible Self scores ($r=.95$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of 1.83. A correlation between Professionalism and The Feared Possible Self scores ($r=.03$, $p=.50$) resulted in a Z score of .03.

A correlation between Learning to teach and Uncreative teaching scores ($r=.02$, $p=.73$) resulted in a Z score of .02. A correlation between Learning to teach and Inadequate classroom management scores ($r=.03$, $p=.59$) resulted in a Z score of .03. A correlation between Learning to teach and Being an uninterested teacher scores ($r=.01$, $p=.81$) resulted in a Z score of .01. A correlation between Learning to teach and Academic Goal Orientation scores ($r=-.02$, $p=.77$) resulted in a Z score of .02. A correlation between Learning to teach and Expected Possible Self scores ($r=.92$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of 1.59. A correlation between Learning to teach and The Feared Possible Self scores ($r=.02$, $p=.67$) resulted in a Z score of .02.

A correlation between Uncreative teaching and Inadequate classroom management scores ($r=.60$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of .69. A correlation between Uncreative teaching and Being an uninterested teacher scores ($r=.74$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of .95. A correlation between Uncreative teaching and Academic Goal Orientation scores ($r=-.01$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of .01. A correlation between Uncreative teaching and Expected Possible Self scores ($r=.04$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of .04. A correlation between Uncreative teaching and The Feared Possible Self scores ($r=.87$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of 1.33.

A correlation between Inadequate classroom management and Being an uninterested teacher scores ($r=.73$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of .93. A correlation between Inadequate classroom management and Academic Goal Orientation scores ($r=.03$, $p=.56$) resulted in a Z score of .03. A correlation between Inadequate classroom management and Expected Possible Self scores ($r=.02$, $p=.70$) resulted in a Z score of .02. A correlation between Inadequate classroom management and The Feared Possible Self scores ($r=.89$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of 1.42.

A correlation between Being an uninterested teacher and Academic Goal Orientation scores ($r=.04$, $p=.47$) resulted in a Z score of .04. A correlation between Being an uninterested teacher and Expected Possible Self scores ($r=.03$, $p=.57$) resulted in a Z score of .03. A correlation between Being an uninterested teacher and The Feared Possible Self scores ($r=.92$, $p=.00$) resulted in a Z score of 1.59.

A correlation between Academic Goal Orientation and Expected Possible Self scores ($r=.00$, $p=.94$) resulted in a Z score of .00. A correlation between Academic Goal Orientation and The Feared Possible Self scores ($r=.02$, $p=.64$) resulted in a Z score of .02.

A correlation between Expected Possible Self and The Feared Possible Self scores ($r=.03$, $p=.55$) resulted in a Z score of .03.

After the transformed correlation coefficients, the direction and strength of the relationships between the variables were determined through these Z scores.

Table 4. Regression analysis of participants' academic goal orientation and possible selves scales

		β (Standardized)	β (Unstandardized)	S.E	t	p
Academic Goal Orientation	Professionalism	-.04	-.02	.05	-.47	.64
	Learning to teach	.04	.02	.04	.54	.59
	Uncreative teaching	-.08	-.04	.05	-.77	.44
	Inadequate classroom management	.07	-.03	.06	.52	.60
	Being an uninterested teacher	.03	.02	.09	.17	.87
R= .07, R2=.01, Adj.R2= -.01, F= .35, p= .88				Mean= -1,20E10 ⁻¹⁵		
				Std. Dev. = 0,993		
				N= 382		

Table 4 shows the results of the regression analysis between the participants' academic goal orientations and the possible selves scale. According to the analysis results, the sub-dimensions of academic goal orientation professionalism ($\beta=-.04$, $p=.64$), learning to teach ($\beta=.04$, $p=.59$), lack of creativity ($\beta=-.08$, $p=.44$), inadequate classroom management ($\beta=.07$, $p=.60$), and being a disinterested teacher ($\beta=.03$, $p=.87$) did not predict the possible selves scale.

The model was generally not significant ($F=.35$, $p=.88$). Furthermore, the explanatory power of the model was quite low ($R=.07$, $R^2=.01$, $Adj. R^2=-.01$). These results indicate that academic goal orientation was not a significant predictor of possible selves.

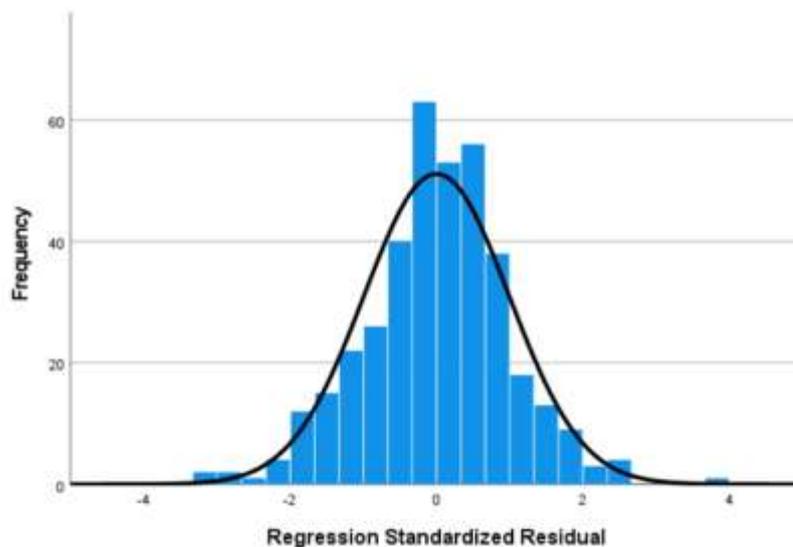


Figure 2. Histogram graph of regression analysis of participants' academic goal orientation and possible selves scales

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between preservice teachers' academic goal orientations and their possible selves, alongside the interrelations among the sub-dimensions

of learning agility, professional attitudes, and teaching behaviors. The findings revealed a complex pattern of associations that offer insights into both motivational and professional development processes.

The Fisher Z transformations indicated that correlations among the scale sub-dimensions varied in direction and strength. A moderate positive correlation was observed between Learning and Proving ($Z=.25$), suggesting that individuals who are eager to learn also tend to demonstrate their competence through goal-oriented behaviors, consistent with previous research emphasizing learning agility as a driver of proactive engagement (De Meuse et al., 2017; Dai & De Meuse, 2020). Conversely, Learning and Avoiding exhibited a negative correlation ($Z=.23$), supporting evidence that avoidance-oriented behaviors hinder reflective thinking and adaptive learning processes (Martin et al., 2013). Weak positive correlations between Learning and both Professionalism ($Z=.14$) and Learning to Teach ($Z=.13$) suggest modest links between learning tendencies and professional or pedagogical development.

Strong positive associations emerged between Professionalism and Learning to Teach ($Z=.97$), as well as between Professionalism and Expected Possible Self ($Z=1.83$). These results indicate that teacher candidates who demonstrate professional responsibility also envision themselves as effective future educators, aligning with prior findings that professional identity strengthens goal clarity and achievement expectations (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Hong et al., 2017). Additionally, high correlations among Uncreative Teaching, Inadequate Classroom Management, and Being an Uninterested Teacher (Z values between .93 and 1.59) highlight how deficits in creativity and classroom management relate to disengagement and reduced motivation, echoing previous studies linking low reflective thinking and limited learning agility to less adaptive teaching practices (Korthagen, 2017; Farrell, 2013).

With regard to the study hypotheses, H1, H1a, and H1b, the results showed no significant relationship between preservice teachers' academic goal orientations and their possible selves. Specifically, there was no empirical support for a positive association with expected possible selves (H1a) or a negative association with feared possible selves (H1b). This finding suggests that, within this sample, academic goal orientations alone are insufficient to predict how preservice teachers imagine their desired or feared future selves.

The absence of a significant relationship may be explained by the cognitive nature of goal orientations, which operate primarily at the motivational level, while the activation of possible selves appears to require deeper affective, experiential, and self-regulatory processes (Efthymiadou et al., 2025). Possible selves are dynamic and context-dependent constructs shaped through reflective practice, social interaction, and professional experience (Rushton et al., 2023; de Bruin, 2025). Since participants had limited teaching experience, their professional self-concepts may not yet have been fully formed. As Pinto et al. (2023) noted, possible selves evolve through contextual challenges and experiential learning, emphasizing the need for reflective engagement to connect academic goals with professional identity formation.

Overall, these findings indicate that while learning agility and professional attitudes are meaningfully related to adaptive teaching behaviors and future-oriented self-perceptions, academic goal orientations may require mediating factors such as reflective thinking, self-regulation, or experiential learning to influence possible selves. Integrating such variables into future research and teacher education programs could strengthen the link between motivation, professional development, and identity formation, ultimately supporting the cultivation of adaptive and growth-oriented preservice teachers.

According to the findings of this study, learning agility and professional attitudes of preservice teachers are meaningfully associated with adaptive teaching behaviors and future-oriented self-perceptions. Teacher candidates with higher learning and professionalism tendencies tend to envision themselves as effective educators, while avoidance and uncreative teaching tendencies are linked to disengagement and challenges in classroom management.

However, the study revealed no significant relationship between academic goal orientations and possible selves, indicating that goal orientations alone may not be sufficient to shape preservice teachers' desired or feared professional selves. This suggests that deeper cognitive and experiential factors such as reflective thinking, self-regulation, and learning experience may play a key role in connecting academic motivation to the development of adaptive possible selves.

These findings highlight the importance of integrating reflective and experiential learning opportunities in teacher education programs to foster professional identity, adaptive learning orientations, and growth-oriented self-concepts among future educators.

Limitations of the Study

The research focuses exclusively on pre-service physical education and sports teachers.

Only pre-service teachers studying at Erciyes University, Faculty of Sports Sciences were included.

The study relied solely on the Demographic Information Form, the Academic Goal Orientation Scale, and the Possible Selves Scales as data collection tools.

Suggestions

Based on the study findings, teacher education programs should incorporate reflective practices and experiential learning opportunities to help preservice teachers develop adaptive teaching behaviors and strengthen their professional identity. Emphasis should be placed on fostering learning agility and professionalism while addressing avoidance and uncreative teaching tendencies through targeted interventions and mentoring. Additionally, integrating self-regulation and motivational strategies can support preservice teachers in translating their academic goals into future-oriented, growth-focused possible selves.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank all pre-service teachers for their contributions to the research.

REFERENCES

- Alev, S. (2019). Öğretmenlerin öz yeterlik kavramına ilişkin algıları. *Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 14(20), 958-974.
- Akın, A. (2006). 2x2 başarı yönelimleri ölçeği: Geçerlik ve güvenirlik çalışması. *Sakarya Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 12, 1-14.
- Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge journal of education*, 39(2), 175-189.
- Cheung, C. S., & McBride-Chang, C. (2008). Relations of perceived maternal parenting style, practices, and learning motivation to academic competence in Chinese children. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 54(1), 1-22.
- Chiang, E. S. (2004). Pre-service teachers' goal orientations across the contexts of teaching and learning (Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi). University of Florida, USA.
- Covington, M. V. (2000). Goal theory, motivation, and school achievement: An integrative review. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51, 171-200.
- Cross, S., & Markus, H. (1991). Possible selves across the life span. *Human Development*, 34(4), 230-255.
- Dalioğlu, S. T., & Adıgüzel, O. (2015). “Öğretmen Adayları Olası Benlikler Ölçeği”ni Türkçe’ye uyarlama çalışması. *Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 14(53), 173-185.
- Dalioğlu, S., & Adıgüzel, O. C. (2017). The relationship between teacher candidates' possible selves, self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching. *Mersin Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi 1 Dergisi*, 13(2).
- de Bruin, L. R. (2025). Identity formation and possible selves of early career instrumental music teachers: A qualitative study. *Psychology of Music*.
- De Meuse, K. P., Dai, G., & Hallenbeck, G. S. (2017). Learning agility: A science for developing leaders. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 10(3), 258–266
- DeShon, R. P., & Gillespie, J. Z. (2005). A motivated action theory account of goal orientation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(6), 1096-1127.
- Dick, W., Carey, L., & Carey, J. O. (2001). *The systematic design of instruction* (5. bs.). Longman.
- Dweck, C. S. (1986). Motivational processes affecting learning. *American Psychologist*, 41(10), 1040-1048.
- Dweck, C. S. (1999). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development*. Taylor & Francis.
- Efthymiadou, E., Papantoniou, G., & Stasinopoulos, V. (2025). Academic possible selves, motivational beliefs, and self. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(2), 158.
- Farrell, T. (2013). *Reflective practice in ESL teacher development groups: From practices to principles*. Springer.
- Fındıkoğlu, F., & Gürol, M. (2021). Academic goal orientation: New insights and cultural adaptation of academic goal orientation questionnaire into the Turkish language. *Georgia Educational Researcher*, 18(1), 71-102.

- Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2012). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (8th ed.). McGraw Hill.
- Hamman, D., & Wood-Harp, C. (2007). Possible selves theory and why new teachers leave. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 2(1), 1-3.
- Hamman, D., Coward, F., Johnson, L., Lambert, M., Zhou, L., & Indiatsi, J. (2013). Teacher possible selves: How thinking about the future contributes to the formation of professional identity. *Self and Identity*, 12(3), 307-336.
- Hamman, D., Wang, E., & Burley, H. (2013). What I expect and fear next year: Measuring new teachers' possible selves. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 39(2), 222-234.
- Hong, J. I., Greene, B., & Lowery, J. (2017). Multiple dimensions of teacher identity development from pre-service to early years of teaching: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Education for teaching*, 43(1), 84-98.
- Hooker, K., & Kaus, C. (1992). Possible selves and health behaviors in later life. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 4, 390-411.
- Ibarra, H. (1999). Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(4), 764-791.
- Kaplan, A., & Maehr, M. L. (2007). The contributions and prospects of goal orientation theory. *Educational Psychology Review*, 19(2), 141-184.
- Karasar, N. (2012). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemi* (24. baskı). Nobel Yayıncılık.
- Kang, H. (2021). Sample size determination and power analysis using the G* power software. *Journal of Educational Evaluation for Health Professions*, 18.
- Korthagen, F. (2017). Inconvenient truths about teacher learning: Towards professional development 3.0. *Teachers and teaching*, 23(4), 387-405.
- Leondari, A., & Gonida, E. N. (2008). Adolescents' possible selves, achievement goal orientations, and academic achievement. *Hellenic Journal of Psychology*, 5, 179-198.
- Linnenbrink, E. A., & Pintrich, P. R. (2002). Achievement goal theory and affect: An asymmetrical bidirectional model. *Educational Psychologist*, 37, 69-78.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41, 954-969.
- Markus, H., & Ruvolo, A. (1989). Possible selves: Personalized representations of goals. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Goal concepts in personality and social psychology*. Erlbaum.
- Martin, A. J., Nejad, H. G., Colmar, S., & Liem, G. A. D. (2013). Adaptability: How students' responses to uncertainty and novelty predict their academic and non-academic outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 728.
- Meece, J. L., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Hoyle, R. H. (1988). Students' goal orientations and cognitive engagement in classroom activities. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80(4), 514-523.
- Oyserman, D., Bybee, D., & Terry, K. (2006). Possible selves and academic outcomes: How and when possible selves impel action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91(1), 188-204.
- Ölçer, S. (2019). Öğretmen adaylarının gelecek öğretmenlik performansına ilişkin beklenen ve korkulan olası benlikleri. *Kastamonu Education Journal*, 27(5), 1841-1864.

- Pallant, J. (2020). *SPSS survival manual: A step-by-step guide to data analysis using SPSS version 15* (3rd ed.). Open University Press.
- Pinto, T. D., Pardo, V. E., Adamski, J., Barnes, N., & Fives, H. (2023). Examining Teacher Identity and Possible Selves during a Worldwide Pandemic. *Journal of Research in Education*, 32(2), 124-149.
- Pintrich, P. R., & Schunk, D. H. (2002). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications*. Prentice Hall.
- Pintrich, P. R., Conley, A. M., & Kempler, T. M. (2003). Current issues in achievement goal theory and research. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 39, 319-337.
- Rushton, E. A., Rawlings Smith, E., Steadman, S., & Towers, E. (2023). Understanding teacher identity in teachers' professional lives: A systematic review of the literature. *Review of Education*, 11(2), e3417.
- Sánchez-Cardona, I., Ortega-Maldonado, A., Salanova, M., & Martínez, I. M. (2021). Learning goal orientation and psychological capital among students: A pathway to academic satisfaction and performance. *Psychology in the Schools*, 58(7), 1432-1445.
- Tan, K. W., Au, A. K., Cooper-Thomas, H. D., & Aw, S. S. (2016). The effect of learning goal orientation and communal goal strivings on newcomer proactive behaviours and learning. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 89(2), 420-445.
- Ural, A., & Kılıç, İ. (2005). *Bilimsel araştırma süreci ve SPSS ile veri analizi* (1. baskı). Detay Yayıncılık.
- Üstüner, M., Demirtaş, H., Cömert, M., & Özer, N. (2009). Ortaöğretim öğretmenlerinin öz-yeterlik algıları. *Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 9(17), 1-16.
- Van Dierendonck, D., & Van der Gaast, E. (2013). Goal orientation, academic competences and early career success. *Career Development International*, 18(7), 694-711.
- VandeWalle, D. (1997). Development and validation of a work domain goal orientation instrument. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 57(6), 995-1015.
- VandeWalle, D. (2001). Goal orientation: Why wanting to look successful doesn't always lead to success. *Organizational Dynamics*, 30(2), 167-171.
- VandeWalle, D. (2003). A goal orientation model of feedback-seeking behavior. *Human Resource Management Review*, 13(4), 581-604.
- Wentzel, K. R. (2000). What is it that I'm trying to achieve? Classroom goals from a content perspective. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 105-115.
- Yeung, A. S., & McInerney, D. (2005). Students' school motivation and aspiration over high school years. *Educational Psychology*, 25(5), 537-554.
- Yowell, C. M. (2002). Dreams of the future: The pursuit of education and career possible selves among ninth grade Latino youth. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(2), 62-72.