



Occupational Burnout and Occupational Satisfaction Levels of Teachers Working in Special Education Institutions

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the occupational burnout and occupational satisfaction levels of teachers working in special education institutions. The research population consisted of teachers employed in special education institutions, while the study group comprised 279 special education teachers (129 male and 150 female) actively working in Antalya province, with ages ranging from 21 to 41 years. A personal information form developed by the researchers was used to collect demographic data. The Maslach Burnout Inventory was employed to determine occupational burnout levels, and the Occupational Satisfaction Scale was utilized to assess occupational satisfaction levels. The homogeneity and variance of the obtained data were tested, and analyses were conducted using statistical techniques appropriate to their distribution. The findings revealed no significant differences in occupational burnout dimensions and occupational satisfaction levels based on gender. However, variations related to age and professional experience were found to be statistically significant. A negative relationship was observed between occupational satisfaction and occupational burnout. According to the regression model, the Occupational Satisfaction regression coefficient demonstrated a significant negative relationship. In conclusion, it was determined that teachers' occupational burnout levels increased as their age and professional experience increased. Occupational satisfaction levels, however, did not show a consistent pattern with respect to age and professional experience, displaying a heterogeneous distribution. A negative correlation exists between occupational satisfaction and occupational burnout. This finding indicates that as the occupational burnout of special education teachers increases, their occupational satisfaction decreases.

Keywords: special education, teacher, burnout, occupational satisfaction.

Özel Eğitim Kurumlarında Görev Yapan Öğretmenlerin Mesleki Tükenmişlik ve Mesleki Doyum Düzeyleri

Özet

Bu araştırma ile özel eğitim kurumlarında görev yapan öğretmenlerin mesleki tükenmişlik ve doyum düzeylerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Araştırma evrenini özel eğitim kurumlarında görev yapan öğretmenler, çalışma grubunu

ise Antalya ilinde aktif olarak görev yapan yaşları 21-41 arasında değişen 129 erkek ve 150 kadın olmak üzere toplam 279 özel eğitim öğretmeni oluşturmuştur. Kişisel verilerin elde edilmesinde araştırmacılar tarafından oluşturulan kişisel bilgi formu kullanılırken, mesleki tükenmişlik düzeylerinin belirlenmesinde Maslach Tükenmişlik Ölçeği, mesleki doyum düzeylerinin belirlenmesinde ise Mesleki Doyum Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen verilerin homojenlik ve varyansları test edilmiş, dağılımlarına uygun test teknikleri ile analizleri yapılmıştır. Mesleki tükenmişlik boyutları ve mesleki doyum değerleri arasında cinsiyet faktörüne bağlı bir değişim gözlenmezken, yaş ve mesleki tecrübe faktörlerine bağlı değişimlerin istatistiksel olarak anlamlı olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Mesleki doyum ve mesleki tükenmişlik arasında negatif yönlü bir ilişki olduğu görülmektedir. Regresyon modeline göre, mesleki doyum regresyon katsayısı anlamlı negatif bir ilişki göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, öğretmenlerin yaşları ve mesleki tecrübeleri arttıkça mesleki tükenmişliklerinin de arttığı belirlenmiştir. Mesleki doyum düzeylerinin ise yaş ve mesleki tecrübeye göre tutarlı bir örüntü göstermediği ve heterojen bir dağılım sergilediği görülmüştür. Mesleki doyum ve mesleki tükenmişlik arasında negatif yönlü bir ilişki bulunmaktadır. Bu durum, özel eğitim kurumu öğretmenlerinin mesleki tükenmişlikleri arttıkça mesleki doyumlarının azaldığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: özel eğitim, öğretmen, tükenmişlik, iş doyumunu

INTRODUCTION

Special education, which is developed with special design to respond to the educational needs of individuals with developmental differences, is a privileged field of study. This unique discipline aims to support the inclusion of students with different needs in community life by using educational content, pedagogical approaches and measurement and evaluation techniques that best suit their personal qualities (Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2014). The services offered in this context are structured for people who are evaluated under various descriptive classifications such as mental capacity limitations, hearing and visual impairments, sensory differences, physical difficulties, verbal expression problems, autism spectrum disorders and other specific learning disabilities (Eripek, 2005).

In parallel with the changes in social support mechanisms in the process, the education of individuals with special needs has also gained a more inclusive framework over time. As stated in the literature, approaches that were initially dominated by the tendency to remove and segregate individuals from society have been replaced by models that prioritize integrative education and social inclusion (Sailor, 2015). This conceptual and practical transformation has expanded the scope of tasks and areas of responsibility of experts working in the field. As emphasized in prior research, educators in this field are no longer limited to providing cognitive gains, but are also responsible for strengthening students' affective-social development, enabling them to participate more actively in social life, and advancing their independent living competencies (Brownell et al., 2010).

Special education teaching is a challenging profession that requires not only sound knowledge and professional skills but also emotional stability (Brunsting et al., 2014). Special education teaching requires not only content knowledge but also knowledge from many different disciplines such as psychology, medicine, sociology, rehabilitation and technology. Furthermore, individualizing student programs, dealing with behavioral problems, adopting a differentiated approach to improve student achievement, and collaborating much more with parents address the multitude of roles required of special education teachers (Sindelar et al., 2010).

One of the main challenges for special education teachers in the professional process is the complexity of creating and implementing education plans adapted to the unique characteristics of each student. As emphasized in the literature, each student shows significant individual differences in terms of his/her potential areas, openness to development, approaches to learning, interests, and needs. Another challenging aspect of the profession is the process of dealing with behavioral problems. Prior research reveals that children in special education may exhibit various behavioral difficulties arising from their situation or environmental factors (Westling, 2010). Moreover, another challenge that special education teachers have to overcome is the issue of establishing meaningful and sustainable collaboration with family members (Burke & Hodapp, 2014).

Given these complex and demanding responsibilities, special education teachers face unique challenges that can significantly impact their professional well-being. The cumulative effect of these stressors places them

at heightened risk for burnout and may negatively influence their occupational satisfaction. Understanding the interplay between these factors is essential, particularly considering that special education teachers leave the profession at notably higher rates than their general education counterparts, with burnout identified as a key contributing factor (Billingsley, 2004).

This complex and multidimensional task structure may affect the levels of occupational satisfaction and burnout of special education teachers at different levels (Brunsting et al., 2014). Current research reveals that occupational satisfaction and burnout are key variables that have a direct determining role on educators' productivity in the field, the quality of their interactions with students, their willingness to work, and their life standards.

The concept of occupational satisfaction can be described as an emotional state arising from an individual's experiences at work. As emphasized in the literature, this concept has significant effects on educators' classroom activities, students' learning outcomes and the quality of education. In the light of the findings of scientific research, it is understood that educators with high levels of occupational satisfaction, when evaluated together with other variables, can offer more efficient learning processes to their students, enrich their teaching strategies, be more open to pedagogical innovations and develop their professional connections more effectively (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009).

The phenomenon of occupational burnout is considered in the scientific literature as a condition that develops as a result of prolonged exposure to pressures in the work environment. This syndrome is defined as a psychological process that includes symptoms such as a decrease in emotional resources, an increase in professional distance and a decrease in the perception of personal success (Maslach et al., 2001). As noted by researchers, the role of educator constitutes one of the occupational categories with a high level of risk in terms of burnout, due to the necessity of communicating with a large number of different stakeholders in daily practice and the necessity of high emotional investment (Keller et al., 2014). According to scientific data, special education teachers are at increased risk of burnout, especially due to factors such as the obligation to respond to the unique needs of each student, managing challenging behaviors, lack of materials, work intensity, and lack of clarity of task boundaries (Brunsting et al., 2014).

When the literature is examined, it is understood that there is a negative relationship between occupational satisfaction and burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). It is reported that teachers with low occupational satisfaction are likely to experience burnout, while teachers with high occupational satisfaction are more resistant to burnout (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). In addition, various studies have reported that teachers' occupational satisfaction and burnout levels differ in terms of demographic characteristics such as gender, age, professional seniority, educational level, and working conditions such as institution type, class size, and support systems (Avşaroğlu et al., 2005; Girgin & Baysal, 2005).

The high rate of special education teachers leaving the profession is one of the most important problems. Research clearly shows that the retention rate of special education teachers is lower than that of general education teachers (Billingsley, 2004). Occupational satisfaction and burnout are important factors affecting teachers' decisions to stay in the profession. Therefore, determining the factors affecting the occupational satisfaction and burnout levels of special education teachers and taking measures to address these factors are of great importance for the quality and continuity of special education services.

In Turkey, studies examining the occupational satisfaction and burnout levels of special education teachers remain limited (Girgin & Baysal, 2005; Aydemir et al., 2015). Although these studies provide valuable insights, most have examined burnout and occupational satisfaction separately or have focused primarily on general education teachers. Consequently, there is a need for studies that examine burnout and occupational satisfaction together and examine the relationship between both variables and the effect of demographic variables. Understanding these relationships in the context of special education teachers in Turkey can contribute both theoretically to the broader literature on teacher well-being and practically by informing the development of targeted interventions and support systems. Such research is essential for addressing teacher retention issues and ultimately improving the quality of special education services. This study was planned to examine the relationship between occupational satisfaction and burnout levels of special education teachers and to investigate the effects of demographic variables on this relationship.

The main purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between occupational satisfaction and burnout levels of special education teachers. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

Do the occupational satisfaction and occupational burnout levels of special education teachers differ according to demographic variables (gender, age, professional seniority)?

Is there a significant relationship between occupational satisfaction and occupational burnout levels of special education teachers?

METHOD

Research Model

In the study, the relational survey model was used with the participation of special education teachers who were selected by convenience sampling method and who accepted to participate in the study completely voluntarily. This research model, which aims to determine the change or degree of more than two variables together, is called the relational survey model (Karasar, 2019).

Research Group

The research group consisted of a total of 279 special education teachers, 129 male and 150 female, aged between 21-41 years, actively working in Antalya Province.

		N	%
Gender	Male	129	46,2
	Female	150	53,8
Age	21-25	60	21,5
	26-30	70	25,1
	31-35	69	24,7
	36 and +	80	28,7
	Years of Service in the Profession	1-5 Years	81
	6-10 Years	63	22,6
	11-15 Years	65	23,3
	16 Years and +	70	25,1
	Total	279	100,0

Table 1 shows the gender, age and years of professional service of the participants. 53.8% of the participants were female and 46.2% were male. In the distribution according to age groups, the highest rate belongs to the group aged 36 and over with 28.7%. Other age groups were also represented in a balanced manner with close ratios. In terms of years of service in the profession, participants with 1-5 years of experience constituted the largest group with 29.0%, while other groups (between 22.6% and 25.1%) were represented at similar rates. This sample consists of 279 participants in total.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form

A personal information form developed by the researchers was used to collect demographic data from participants. The form included questions about gender, age, and years of professional experience in special education.

Maslach Burnout Inventory

The Maslach Burnout Inventory was originally developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) to assess burnout syndrome in human service professionals and was adapted into Turkish by Ergin (1992). The inventory consists of 22 items that measure burnout across three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion (EE) with 9 items, Depersonalization (DP) with 5 items, and Personal Accomplishment (PA) with 8 items. Participants respond to items using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Never" (0) to "Always" (4), indicating the

frequency with which they experience each emotion or feeling. The inventory does not include reverse-scored items. Higher scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales indicate higher levels of burnout, while higher scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale indicate lower levels of burnout (inverse relationship); each subscale is evaluated separately, and the inventory does not yield a single total burnout score. In the Turkish adaptation study by Ergin (1992), the internal consistency reliability coefficients were found to be .83 for Emotional Exhaustion, .65 for Depersonalization, and .72 for Personal Accomplishment, and construct validity was established through factor analysis, confirming the three-factor structure of the original scale. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated as .79 for the overall scale, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Occupational Satisfaction Scale

The Occupational Satisfaction Scale was originally developed in Turkish by Kuzgun et al. (1999) based on Herzberg's "Two-Factor Theory" of occupational satisfaction. The scale consists of 20 items and factor analysis revealed a two-factor structure: "Suitability for Qualifications" with 13 items (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19) and "Desire for Development" with 7 items (items 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 20); however, due to the high variance contribution (36.4%) of the first factor, the scale developers recommended using the scale unidimensionality (Kuzgun & Bacanlı, 2005). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, and the scale includes both positively and negatively worded items, with negatively worded items being reverse scored to ensure consistency in interpretation. Scores on the scale can range from 20 to 100, with higher scores indicating higher levels of professional satisfaction and lower scores reflecting lower levels of satisfaction with one's profession. In the original development study (Kuzgun et al., 1999), factor analysis explained 48.6% of the total variance (36.4% by the first factor and 12.2% by the second factor), and internal consistency reliability coefficients were found to be .91 for the overall scale, .88 for the "Suitability for Qualifications" factor, and .80 for the "Desire for Development" factor (Kuzgun & Bacanlı, 2005). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated as .91, demonstrating excellent internal consistency.

Data Analysis

Normality distribution, oneway-anova, correlation analysis and simple regression analysis were used to analyze the data. Firstly, the normality of the data was analyzed by examining the Skewness-Kurtosis values and Shapiro-Wilk test. Data were considered normally distributed if skewness and kurtosis values fell within the range of ± 1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013) and the Shapiro-Wilk test yielded non-significant results ($p > .05$). Based on these criteria, it was determined that the data were normally distributed. Then, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to examine the differences between the groups and post-hoc analyses were performed and Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the variables. Finally, simple regression analysis was performed to examine the relationship between one dependent variable and one independent variable. Microsoft Excel 2021 was used for data organization and processing, and SPSS 27.0 package program was used for statistical analysis. A value of $p < 0.05$ was accepted for significance level.

Ethical approval and institutional permission

In order to conduct the research, ethical approval was received from Selcuk University Ethics Committee (Decision number: 216, Meeting Date: 28.05.2025).

FINDINGS

Table 2. Gender-related changes in occupational burnout and occupational satisfaction

	Gender	n	x	Sd	t	p
Emotional Exhaustion	Male	129	19,57	4,29	1,397	0,159
	Female	150	20,35	4,93		
	Total	279	19,99	4,66		
Sensitization	Male	129	11,01	2,67	1,092	0,27
	Female	150	11,39	3,15		
	Total	279	11,22	2,94		
Personal Success	Male	129	18,22	3,17	0,119	0,905
	Female	150	18,17	2,91		
	Total	279	18,19	3,03		
Occupational Burnout General	Male	129	44,16	7,8	1,237	0,215
	Female	150	45,36	8,36		
	Total	279	44,8	8,12		
Occupational Satisfaction General	Male	129	69,68	17,05	1,345	0,176
	Female	150	72,31	15,37		
	Total	279	71,1	16,19		

As can be seen in Table 2, no statistical change was observed in the dimensions of professional satisfaction and professional burnout depending on the gender variable.

Table 3. Changes in occupational burnout and occupational satisfaction based on age variable

	Age	n	x	Sd	F	p	Tukey
Emotional Exhaustion	21-25	60	18,63	3,69	3,88	,009*	a>d c>a
	26-30	70	19,37	4,34			
	31-35	69	20,72	4,92			
	36 and +	80	20,92	5,06			
Depersonalization	21-25	60	10,41	2,41	3,80	,011*	c<d
	26-30	70	10,75	2,95			
	31-35	69	11,73	3,05			
	36 and +	80	11,76	3,04			
Personal Success	21-25	60	17,71	2,99	1,56	,198	-
	26-30	70	17,82	3,07			
	31-35	69	18,53	3,16			
	36 and +	80	18,57	2,84			
Occupational Burnout General	21-25	60	42,11	6,75	5,13	,002*	a<c a<d
	26-30	70	43,52	7,78			
	31-35	69	46,30	8,11			
	36 and +	80	46,63	8,70			
Occupational Satisfaction General	21-25	60	71,61	18,06	2,46	,062	a<c b<c
	26-30	70	74,31	13,52			
	31-35	69	67,00	17,44			
	36 and +	80	71,42	15,27			

*p<0.05 Statistical change between groups

As seen in Table 3, while no statistical change was observed in the personal achievement dimension depending on the age factor, a significant difference was found in the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization dimensions and total values of occupational burnout ($p < 0.05$). When professional satisfaction values were analyzed, it was determined that the change observed depending on the age factor was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4. Changes in occupational burnout and occupational satisfaction based on occupational experience factor

	Experience	n	x	Sd	F	p	Tukey
Emotional Exhaustion	1-5 Years	81	18,91	4,21	2,658	,049	d>a
	6-10 Years	63	19,88	4,97			
	11-15Years	65	20,41	4,47			
	16 Years and +	70	20,94	4,84			
Depersonalization	1-5 Years	81	10,61	2,76	1,862	,136	-
	6-10 Years	63	11,34	3,17			
	11-15Years	65	11,29	2,85			
	16 Years and +	70	11,71	2,94			
Personal Success	1-5 Years	81	17,64	3,03	1,430	,234	-
	6-10 Years	63	18,60	2,70			
	11-15Years	65	18,23	3,28			
	16 Years and +	70	18,42	3,02			
Occupational Burnout General	1-5 Years	81	42,71	7,56	2,812	,040	d>a
	6-10 Years	63	45,19	8,57			
	11-15Years	65	45,40	7,91			
	16 Years and +	70	46,31	8,18			
Occupational Satisfaction General	1-5 Years	81	75,39	16,60	2,952	,033	a<c
	6-10 Years	63	70,61	18,19			
	11-15Years	65	68,40	13,70			
	16 Years and +	70	69,05	15,24			

*p<0.05 Statistical change between groups

As can be understood from Table 4, while no statistical change was observed in the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization depending on the factor of professional experience, it was determined that the change between the dimension of emotional exhaustion and general professional burnout values was statistically significant (p<0.05), and that there was a statistical change between professional satisfaction values depending on the factor of professional experience (p<0.05).

Table 5. Correlation Analysis Results between the Research Scale and Sub-Dimensions

		Occupational Satisfaction	Occupational Burnout
Occupational Satisfaction	r	1	
	p		
Occupational Burnout	r	-,329**	1
	p	,000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As seen in Table 5, there is a negative correlation between professional satisfaction and professional burnout (p < 0.001). This finding reveals that as the level of professional satisfaction increases, the level of professional burnout decreases, or conversely, as professional satisfaction decreases, burnout increases.

Table 6. Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results of the Research Scales

Variable	B	SE	β	T	P
Constant	2,800	,101	-	27,631	0,000
Occupational Satisfaction	-,156	,028	-,320	-5,613	0,000

R: ,320, R²: ,102 p<.01

Fixed Variable: Occupational Burnout

According to Table 6 regression model, the regression coefficient of Occupational Satisfaction is (B = -0.156), indicating a significant negative relationship (p < .01). This result reveals that a one-unit increase in

Occupational Satisfaction scores is associated with a 0.156-unit decrease in Occupational Burnout. The standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = -0.320$) indicates that the effect of Occupational Satisfaction on the dependent variable is moderate. The explanatory rate of the model ($R^2 = 0.102$) is stated as 10.2%, which means that 10.2% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the Occupational Satisfaction variable. The overall significance level of the model ($p < .01$) also supports these findings. These data show that Occupational Satisfaction has a statistically significant and negative effect on Occupational Burnout.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, which aims to examine the professional burnout and satisfaction levels of teachers working in special education institutions, it can be said that the sample group consisting of 279 participants has a balanced and inclusive structure in terms of both demographic diversity and professional experience. This diversity provides a strong basis for the generalizability of the research results.

In our study, no gender-related change was observed between occupational burnout dimensions and occupational satisfaction values (Table 2). Yıldız et al. (2024) reported that burnout levels of special education teachers increased with increasing age, years of service and number of students. Akıncı (2016) and Nichols and Sosnowsky (2002) did not report a statistical change in the professional burnout levels of special education teachers depending on the gender factor. In the literature, there are studies that evaluate the relationship between professional burnout and gender factor in different ways. While some studies report differences depending on the gender factor (Girgin and Baysal 2005; Otacıoğlu 2008; Karahan and Balat 2011; Sezer 2012; Filiz, 2014; Seferoğlu et al. 2014; Acar and Karaslan 2018; Berk and Aliyev 2022), while other studies reported no change due to this factor (Akıncı, 2016; Ardiç & Polatçı, 2008; Avşaroğlu et al., 2005; Aydemir, 2013; Cemaloğlu & Erdemoğlu Şahin, 2007; Chan, 2007; Çağlar & Demirtaş, 2011; Çavuşoğlu, 2005; Çelik & Üstüner, 2018; Çelikkaleli, 2011; Çimen et al., 2012; Dolunay, 2001; Girgin, 2010; İkiz, 2010; Kargün et al., 2012; Kırılmaz et al., 2003; Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002; Soyer et al., 2009; Şahin & Şahin, 2012; Tomic et al., 2004; Yıldız Kırılmaz et al., 2003; Yılmaz, 2018). The findings of our study overlap with the homogeneous structure observed in the literature depending on the gender factor.

In our study, it was determined that occupational satisfaction values did not show a statistical change depending on the gender factor. While there are a limited number of studies reporting that occupational satisfaction differs depending on gender (Sünter et al., 2006; Berk & Aliyev, 2022), studies indicating that there is no change depending on the factor of occupational satisfaction (Acar & Karaslan, 2018; Avşaroğlu et al., 2005; Çimen et al., 2012; Ertürk & Keçecioğlu, 2012; Fields & Blum, 1997; Kağan, 2005; Kıvılcım, 2004; Yılmaz, 2018) are relatively more and overlap with our study findings. In our study, the reason why occupational burnout dimensions and occupational satisfaction values exhibited a homogeneous and stable structure depending on the gender factor can be seen as the gradual convergence of the roles and statuses of men and women in the social structure.

When the changes depending on the age variable were examined; it was found that teachers aged 31-35 years had lower values of professional satisfaction than teachers aged 21-25 years and 26-30 years and this change was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$; table 3). In the dimension of emotional exhaustion, teachers aged 21-25 years had lower values than teachers aged 31-35 years and teachers aged 36 and over, in the dimension of depersonalization, teachers aged 31-35 years had lower values than teachers aged 36 and over ($p < 0.05$), and there was no change in the dimension of personal achievement depending on the age factor (table 3). When the professional burnout values of the teachers are analyzed, it is observed that the burnout values increase with the increase in age, and the teachers in the 21- 25 age group have statistically lower values than the teachers aged 31-35 and over 36 ($p < 0.05$; table 3).

Kıral and Diri (2016) reported that there was no statistical difference in emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment dimensions, but in depersonalization, teachers under the age of 30 had higher values than teachers aged 31-35 and 36-40. Tuna (2010) reported that teachers aged 46 and over had higher values in the emotional exhaustion sub-dimension, while there was no significant difference in the depersonalization and personal accomplishment dimensions. Sığırı and Basım (2006) state that the increase in the length of service will increase the status and expectations and this will positively affect occupational satisfaction. Berk and Aliyev (2022) state that teachers' professional burnout and occupational satisfaction show statistical changes

according to age and professional seniority variables. This result is similar to our research findings in this respect. In the literature, it is possible to come across studies indicating that age is a factor affecting burnout (Torun 1995; Sucuoğlu et al. 1996; Tümkeya 1996; Tuğrul and Çelik 2002; Karabey, 2005). Atabay (2020) emphasized that as the age of kindergarten teachers increases, their emotional exhaustion levels also increase. This finding is noteworthy in terms of overlapping with the change in the emotional exhaustion dimension determined in our study.

Cemaloğlu and Erdemoğlu Şahin (2007) reported that more experienced teachers had statistically significantly higher values in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions compared to other teachers, but there was no statistical change in personal accomplishment dimension. In addition, it was reported that teachers with 26 years of experience and above had higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, while the change in the dimension of personal accomplishment did not create a significant difference. In this respect, our research findings are in parallel with the studies of Cemaloğlu and Erdemoğlu Şahin (2007). In the literature, there are findings that teachers who are new to the profession have higher levels of burnout (Çelik & Yılmaz, 2015), as well as studies reporting that burnout is experienced in the later years of the profession (Sezer, 2012). Aging is a process defined by the experience and knowledge gained over time. As individuals get older, they should stand out with their experience and knowledge in their professional and daily lives.

Aging gains value through the process of acquiring new experiences, seizing learning opportunities and individual development. Our research findings are in line with the heterogeneous structure of the concept of age. The conviction that the factor affecting burnout and occupational satisfaction is not "getting older" but "getting older" has been strengthened.

It was determined that as the professional experience of the teachers increased, their professional burnout values also increased, and the change between the averages of teachers with 16 years of professional experience and above and teachers with 1-5 years of professional experience was statistically significant ($p<0.05$; table 4). In the dimension of emotional exhaustion, it was determined that teachers with 16 years and more professional experience had a statistically higher mean value than teachers with 1-5 years of professional experience ($p<0.05$; table 4). While no statistical change was observed between the dimensions of desensitization and personal achievement depending on the factor of professional experience, it was determined that teachers with 1-5 years of professional experience had a higher average value in the general average values of professional satisfaction compared to other age groups, and the value between teachers with 11-15 years of experience was statistically significant ($p<0.05$; table 4).

Kargün et al. (2012) reported that length of service has no effect on occupational satisfaction, and Korkmaz et al. (2019) reported that occupational satisfaction decreases and burnout increases as professional seniority increases. Some studies suggest that the factor of professional seniority has no effect on occupational satisfaction (Taşdan & Tiryaki, 2008; Adıgüzel et al. 2011; Koruklu et al. 2013). Occupational satisfaction is not related to how long we work at a job, but how much we love and feel that job and how much we internalize it. Therefore, our research findings and the unstable structure observed in the literature can be explained by the fact that the variable related to the length of service cannot determine the effect of the variable on occupational satisfaction alone.

Cemaloğlu and Erdemoğlu Şahin (2007) reported that senior teachers have high levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. This finding is similar to our research findings in this respect. It is reported that more senior teachers' experience in the profession has a decreasing effect on burnout (Ardıç & Polatçı, 2008). In some studies, it is seen that professional burnout is higher in teachers with five years or more seniority than in teachers with more seniority (Otacıoğlu 2008; Ardıç & Polatçı 2008). Girgin (2010) reported that the length of time in the profession increases burnout. Apart from these studies, it is also possible to come across studies that do not report changes depending on the years of service factor (Mistan 2017; Çelik and Üstüner 2018). Different results have been reached in the literature on the effect of professional seniority on burnout, and this study shows that it is difficult to determine the change of the years of service factor on professional burnout in a precise way.

In our study, negative relationship was found between occupational burnout and occupational satisfaction ($p < 0.001$; table 5). Studies reporting a negative correlation between occupational burnout and occupational satisfaction (Yılmaz and Aslan 2018; Çelik and Kılıç 2019; Kargün et al. 2012; Derinbay 2012; Mistan 2017) are important in terms of supporting our research findings. Acar and Karaaslan (2022) observed a negative relationship between professional burnout levels and life satisfaction of teachers working in Special Education and Rehabilitation Centers (SERCs). Similarly, Yavuz (2019) reported a negative relationship between professional burnout levels and life satisfaction of teachers working in Special Education and Rehabilitation Centers. These results are valuable in terms of reaching the same result in different sample groups on the same subject.

A significant negative relationship was found between Vocational Satisfaction and the dependent variable ($B = -0.156$, $p < 0.01$; Table 6). A one unit increase in Professional Satisfaction scores is associated with a 0.156 unit decrease in the dependent variable score. The strength of this effect is moderate ($\beta = -0.320$). Moreover, the model explains 10.2% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.102$) and the overall significance level ($p < 0.01$) supports these findings. Berk and Aliyev (2022) examined the relationship between professional burnout and occupational satisfaction levels of teachers teaching children with special needs and typically developing children, and found that there was a significant negative relationship between professional burnout and occupational satisfaction. At the same time, it was stated that teachers' occupational satisfaction explained 27% of the total variance of professional burnout. Yıldız et al. (2024) reported that the occupational burnout level of special education teachers was high and occupational satisfaction level was moderate. These findings obtained by Berk and Aliyev (2022) and Yıldız et al. (2024) are in parallel with our research results. The significant negative relationship between occupational satisfaction and the dependent variable is noteworthy in terms of having a moderate effect and being consistent with the relevant literature.

Depending on our research findings; while no change was observed between the dimensions of professional burnout and professional satisfaction values depending on the gender factor, it was determined that the changes depending on the factors of age and professional experience were statistically significant. It can be said that as the age and professional experience of teachers increase, their professional burnout increases, age and professional experience exhibit an unstable and heterogeneous structure in professional satisfaction values, there is a negative correlation between professional satisfaction and professional burnout, and as the professional burnout of special education institution teachers increases, their professional satisfaction decreases.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, data were collected only from special education teachers in Antalya province, which may limit generalizability to other regions of Türkiye. Second, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences about the relationships between variables. Third, the reliance on self-report measures may introduce social desirability bias. Finally, the study examined only demographic variables and did not explore other potentially relevant factors such as administrative support, classroom resources, or student characteristics.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, several practical recommendations can be made. Educational administrators should prioritize creating supportive work environments, providing adequate resources, and recognizing teachers' efforts to enhance occupational satisfaction and reduce burnout. Professional development programs focusing on stress management and coping strategies may be beneficial for special education teachers. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine causal relationships, include diverse samples from different regions, and investigate additional variables such as organizational climate and social support systems. Qualitative studies exploring the lived experiences of special education teachers would provide valuable insights into the specific challenges they face and inform the development of targeted interventions.

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