

Full Length Research Paper

A comparison of burnout levels of preschool teachers in terms of having integration students in their classes or not

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The aim of the present study is to compare burnout levels of preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes and those who do not. The sample of the study consists of 185 preschool teachers working in Isparta city and town centers. The data of the study were collected using the Burnout Inventory developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) and the personal information form designed by the researchers. The data were analyzed with t-Test using SPSS-20. The results of the study showed no statistically significant difference between the burnout levels of preschool teachers' who have integration students in their classes and those who do not.

Key words: Burnout, integration, preschool teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is an educational process which includes the childhood years from birth to elementary school; and is important in terms of providing rich stimulant environmental opportunities suitable with children's development and individual characteristics and supporting children's physical, mental, emotional and social development (MEB, 1993). Preschool period is when the child starts to explore and know his/her environment, communicate with the environment and gain the behaviors and habits that are appropriate for the cultural structure of the society s/he lives in. During this period, when the critical fundamentals of one's personality are formed, the child requires conscious guidance at home, school and in his/her social life (Şahin,

2005). Those who can offer this guidance to children other than their families are preschool teachers. It is considered that fulfilling preschool teachers' tasks effectively and efficiently is significantly influenced by their burnout levels.

Teaching is among the most stressful professions. Burnout that occurs due to job-related stress and the physiological and psychological problems that come out with burnout decreases quality of the profession of teaching (Tuğrul and Çelik, 2002). Stress caused by such factors as disciplinary problems of students, negative student behaviors, crowded classes, lack of support from others, non-willing appointments, role conflict and role ambiguity, criticism to teachers by the public etc. lead to

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burnout in teachers (Farber, 2000). Teachers' burnout affects not only the teachers themselves but also their students and the employer organization. The stress and burnout experienced by teachers is reflected on their students, students' parents, families and administrators as well (Friedman and Farber, 1992).

Burnout is "a syndrome that occurs by the reflection of feelings of physical exhaustion, long-term fatigue, helplessness and hopelessness with negative attitudes towards work, life and others in individuals who are exposed to intensive emotional demands and have to work face to face with other people (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). There are several burnout models that are intended to explain burnout. Scott Meier's Burnout Model defines burnout with four components *namely reinforcement expectations, outcome expectations, efficacy expectations and contextual processing*. In their burnout model, Perlman and Hartman include four stages *as the stressful situation, individuals' perspective of the stress, reaction to the stress and outcome of the stress* (Sılığ, 2003).

Suran and Sheridan's model defines burnout with four stages being *identity-role ambiguity, identity-role ambiguity, competence-incompetence, efficacy-inactivity and reforming-disappointment*. According to Suran and Sheridan (1985), burnout is the consequence of being unable to resolve the conflicts in each of these stages satisfactorily. In Gaines and Jermier (1983, cited by Kaya, 2010) burnout model, the most important dimension of the process is *emotional exhaustion*, which is the first stage of burnout. This dimension forms a sequential process with the others (*depersonalization and decrease in the feeling of personal achievement*). On the other hand, in the Maslach burnout model used in the present study, Maslach and Jackson (1981) define burnout at 3 stages as *emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and decreased personal achievement*. Emotional exhaustion describes the decrease in an individual's emotional and physical resources and being tired and exhausted. In individuals experiencing emotional exhaustion; tiredness and weariness continue when they get up in the morning as if they had no sleep at all (Maslach et al., 1996; Wright and Bonett, 1997). Depersonalization, the inter-individual dimension of fatigue, refers to individuals' indifference to the people they offer services, having negative reactions towards them and unresponsiveness to work. Individuals going through depersonalization appear to use an offensive language to others, develop rigid rules and believe that others will do harm to them (Maslach et al., 1996). Low personal achievement, on the other hand, describes that the person tends to evaluate himself/herself negatively, his/her feeling of individual competence weakens since they have difficulty fulfilling the responsibilities required by the job. In this case, other people around lose trust in these individuals as well (Maslach et al., 1996; Wright and Bonett, 1997).

Burnout results from several factors. These can be classified as individual factors and organizational factors. Individual factors can be listed as whether a person chooses his/her job on his own or not, his/her desire to do reach perfectness in every task, inability to be relaxed to what happens, possible problems in the individual's personal life, perceived competence etc. Organizational factors, on the other hand, include strict rules, role ambiguity, role conflict, heavy work load, too many expectations from work, financial status, problem solving and communication skills, organizational atmosphere, professional experience, residential area of the workplace, being appreciated or not etc. (Karabıyık-Özipek, 2006).

One of the most significant factors affecting teachers' burnout is their relationship with students. Individual differences of students and the effect of these differences on the teacher may influence teachers' state of burnout. When students' development occurs within normal limits, it generally does not pose a problem; however, students, who significantly differ from those that develop normally, may affect their teacher's burnout negatively. These students who are significantly different from normally developing students are called students with special education needs (Akçamete, 2010). One of the educational approaches designed for students with special education needs is integration.

Although different definitions are made in the related literature for integration; the Regulation for Special Education Services (2006) by the Ministry of National Education defines it as a method that allows "Individuals with special education to continue their education with their peers who do not have disabilities by providing supportive educational services at state and private institutions of kindergarten, elementary, secondary and non-formal education.

In accordance with the Item 7 included in the section titled preschool education of the Decree Law No 573 on special education published in the official gazette dated 06/06/1997 and numbered 23011 (repeated); preschool education was made obligatory to be provided at special education schools and other preschool education institutions considering the developmental and individual characteristics of children with special education needs, and children who need special education started to receive integrated education at preschool education institutions. When the integration of children with special needs into preschool education institutions was made obligatory, tasks and responsibilities (such as designing individualized education plans, developing suitable materials for children with special needs etc.) of preschool teachers increased as well, and new factors were added to those affecting teachers' burnout levels.

The review of the studies carried out on teachers' burnout levels in and out of Turkey showed that some studies have examined burnout in teachers at elementary, secondary, high schools and universities

Table 1. Characteristics of the study sample.

Parameter	N
Gender	
Female	181
Male	4
Type of school	
Kindergarten	85
Nursery class	100
Place of duty	
City Center	120
Town Center	65

(Byrne, 1991; Sermon, 1994; Girgin, 1995; Embich, 2001; Gençay, 2007); while others investigated teachers' burnout experiences together with their professional self-efficacy perceptions (Brouwers and Tomic, 2000). Some studies were carried out on the relationship between teachers' burnout levels and student behaviors (Hastings and Bham, 2003), and some looked at teachers' burnout levels and their job satisfaction (Koustelios and Nikolaos, 2005).

When the studies conducted on preschool teachers' burnout levels in the Turkish and international literature were reviewed, on the other hand, it was seen that preschool teachers' burnout levels were examined in some studies (Tuğrul and Çelik, 2002; Kapıkıran, 2003; Noble and Macfarlane, 2005; Deniz-Kan, 2008; Akman et al., 2010; Yılmaz-Toplu, 2012; Rentzou, 2013), some investigated preschool teachers' job satisfactions together with their burnout levels (Öztürk, 2006; Tsigilis, Zachopoulou and Grammatikopoulos, 2006; Akkurt, 2008; Gürbüz, 2008; Teltik, 2009), some others compared levels of burnout and hopelessness in preschool teachers (Yıldırım, 2007) while some studies looked at the relation between preschool teachers' empathic tendencies and burnout levels (Özmen, 2010). One study examined the relation between teachers' burnout levels and their evaluation of undesirable behaviors in children (Demirhan-Harmanda, 2011), one examined the predictive power of teachers' self-efficacy perceptions on their burnout levels (Şenel, 2014) while another study was carried out to determine the relation between teachers' burnout levels and their classroom management skills (Adıgüzel, 2016). However, no study has been found concerning the effect of the integration student on the teacher's burnout level in the literature, which brought about the need for the present study.

Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to compare burnout levels of preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes and those who do not. To this

end; answers were sought for the following questions: Do the preschool teachers': (1) emotional exhaustion levels, (2) depersonalization levels, and (3) less personal accomplishment levels vary by having integration students in their classrooms or not?

RESEARCH MODEL

In order to compare the burnout levels of teachers who have integration students in their classes with those who do not; the present study employed the correlational survey model, which is one of the general survey models that investigates the existence and/or the degree of a correlation between two or more variables (Karasar, 2012).

Study sample

The sample of the study consists of 185 preschool teachers who were working at kindergartens and nursery classes within Isparta city and town centers in the 2011/2012 academic year. The details of the sample are presented in Table 1. According to Table 1, of the 185 preschool teachers, 181 are female and 4 are male teachers; 85 of the teachers work at independent kindergartens while 100 preschool teachers work at the nursery classes of elementary schools; 120 preschool teachers work in the city center whereas 65 of them have their schools in town centers.

Data collection

The data of the study were collected using the personal information form designed by the researchers and the Burnout Inventory developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) from preschool teachers working at independent kindergartens and nursery classes of elementary schools dependent on the Ministry of National Education located within Isparta city and town centers.

The personal information form developed by the researchers consists of two sections. The first section contains questions concerning personal information (gender, age, length of service, educational background etc.) while questions on the characteristics of students with special needs and integration practices are included in the second section.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory, which was developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) and adapted to Turkish by Ergin (1982), was used as the second data collection tool in order to determine the burnout levels of the individuals participating in the study.

In the first reliability study carried out by Ergin (1992) on the scale, Cronbach Alpha coefficients were found as Emotional exhaustion 0.83, Depersonalization 0.65 and Personal Achievement 0.72.

In the second reliability study of the scale, on the other hand, test-retest reliability coefficients were emotional exhaustion.83, depersonalization.65 and personal achievement.72 (Teltik, 2009).

In order to enable the analysis of the data on the SPSS computer program, the present study used grading as 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = usually, and 5 = always.

The scale presents emotional exhaustion in items 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16 and 20; depersonalization in 5, 10, 11, 15 and 22 and less personal accomplishment in items 4, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19 and 21. Items of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are scored directly whereas less personal accomplishment items can be scored either directly or reversely. When this sub dimension is scored directly, it is referred as "personal achievement"; when

Table 2. T-test on emotional exhaustion levels of preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes and those who do not.

Integration students	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	p
Yes	53.51	20.43	6.22	183	0.656	0.51
No	132	19.84	5.16			

Table 3. T-test on depersonalization levels of preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes and those who do not.

Integration students	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	p
Yes	53	7.35	2.32	183	0.438	0.66
No	132	7.18	2.53			

reverse-scored, on the other hand, it is “less personal accomplishment”. The present study used reverse scoring.

The lowest and highest possible scores on the scale are as follows:

Emotional exhaustion: 9-45

Depersonalization: 5-25

Less personal accomplishment: 8-40

Data analysis

The data obtained from the study were entered into the computer through SPSS-20 (Statistical Packages for The Social Sciences).

The data were tested for normal distribution by looking at the coefficient of skewness. A skewness coefficient within ± 1 limits is interpreted as the data is distributed normally in analyses. The coefficients of skewness of the burnout inventory were found as 0.560 for emotional exhaustion, 1.243 for depersonalization and 0.860 for less personal accomplishment. According to these findings; since emotional exhaustion and less personal accomplishment fall within the ± 1 levels and the score obtained for depersonalization is very close to ± 1 , the data were accepted as normally distributed.

The data obtained were analyzed using t test to see whether the difference between the two correlated sample means was significantly different from zero (each other) or not in order to compare the burnout levels of teachers who have integration students in their classes and those who do not (Büyükoztürk, 2012).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to Table 2, of the 185 preschool teachers that participated in the study, 53 had integration students in their classes while no integration student was present in the classes of 132 teachers. When the findings obtained from the study are compared relatively; it can be seen that the emotional exhaustion levels of the preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes ($\bar{x} = 20.43$) is higher than the emotional exhaustion levels of the teachers who do not have integration students in their classes ($\bar{x} = 19.84$). When the difference between the means is examined in terms of statistical significance; it is seen that emotional exhaustion levels of preschool teachers do not show a statistically significant difference

in terms of having integration students in their classes or not ($t_{(183)} = 0.656$, $p > 0.05$).

According to Table 3, of the 185 preschool teachers that participated in the study, 53 had integration students in their classes while no integration student was present in the classes of 132 teachers. The findings show that depersonalization levels of the preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes ($\bar{x} = 7.35$) and those of the teachers who have no integration students ($\bar{x} = 7.18$) are very close to each other. However, when the findings obtained as a result of the study are compared relatively; it can be seen that depersonalization levels of the preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes are higher than those of the preschool teachers who do not have integration students in their classes. When the difference between the means is examined in terms of statistical significance; it is seen that no statistically significant difference exists in the preschool teachers' depersonalization levels in terms of having integration students in their classes or not ($t_{(183)} = 0.438$, $p > 0.05$).

According to Table 4, of the 185 preschool teachers that participated in the study, 53 had integration students in their classes while no integration student was present in the classes of 132 teachers. When the findings obtained from the study are compared relatively, it is seen that less personal accomplishment levels of preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes ($\bar{x} = 15.07$) are higher than less personal accomplishment levels of preschool teachers who do not ($\bar{x} = 14.93$). When the difference between the means is examined in terms of statistical significance; it can be seen that no statistically significant difference exists in the preschool teachers' less personal accomplishment levels in terms of having integration students in their classes or not ($t_{(183)} = 0.236$, $p > 0.05$).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The aim of the present study was to compare burnout levels of preschool teachers who have integration students

Table 4. T-test on less personal accomplishment levels of preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes and those who do not.

Integration students	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	p
Yes	53	15.07	3.50	183	0.236	0.81
No	132	14.93	3.84			

in their classes and those who do not. The study has found that there is no statistically significant difference between emotional exhaustion levels of the teachers who have integration students in their classes and those who do not and that both groups of teachers have moderate levels of emotional exhaustion. In other word, it could be asserted that students with special needs who are included in integration practices do not have any effect on preschool teachers' emotional exhaustion. One finding of the study is parallel with Özmen's (2010) finding stating that preschool teachers who have no integration students in their classes had moderate levels of emotional exhaustion and Teltik's (2009) finding suggesting that emotional exhaustion levels of preschool teachers are at moderate levels. However, this finding obtained from the study differs from the findings presented by Öztürk (2006), Akkurt (2008), Deniz-Kan (2008), Gürbüz (2008), Akman et al. (2010), Demirhan-Harmanda (2011), Yılmaz-Toplu (2012), Şenel (2014) and Adıgüzel (2016), which showed low emotional exhaustion levels for preschool teachers and from Özmen's (2010) finding that revealed low emotional exhaustion levels for preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes.

Another finding of the study is that there is no statistically significant difference between depersonalization levels of the teachers who have integration students in their classes and those who do not and that both groups of teachers have low levels of emotional exhaustion. In other word, it could be stated that students with special needs who are included in integration practices do not have any effect to increase preschool teachers' depersonalization levels. This finding obtained from the present study contradicts with Özmen's (2012) finding which suggests that preschool teachers who do and do not have integration students in their classes have moderate levels of depersonalization while it is parallel with the findings that show low levels of depersonalization for preschool teachers in the studies carried out by Öztürk (2006), Akkurt (2008), Deniz-Kan (2008), Gürbüz (2008), Teltik (2009), Akman et al. (2010), Demirhan-Harmanda (2011), Yılmaz-Toplu (2012), Şenel (2014), and Adıgüzel (2016).

It has also been found as a result of the study that there is no statistically significant difference between less personal accomplishment levels of the teachers who have integration students in their classes and those who do not and that both groups of teachers have low levels of less personal accomplishment. In other word, it could be stated that students with special needs who are

included in integration practices have no effect on preschool teachers' less personal accomplishment levels. This finding obtained from the study is parallel with the findings revealed by the studies conducted by Akkurt (2008), Deniz-Kan (2008), Gürbüz (2008), Teltik (2009), Akman et al. (2010), Demirhan-Harmanda (2011), Yılmaz-Toplu (2012) Şenel (2014) and Adıgüzel (2016), which stated low levels of less personal accomplishment for preschool teachers whereas it contradicts with Özmen's (2010) findings that preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes have high levels of less personal accomplishment and those who have no integration students have moderate levels of less personal accomplishment; and with Öztürk's (2006) study which found that preschool teachers have high levels of less personal accomplishment.

As a result of the study, no statistically significant difference was found in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and less personal accomplishment levels between preschool teachers who have integration students in their classes and those who do not. According to these findings obtained from the study, it has been found that integration students do not increase burnout levels of preschool students.

This is considered to result from the fact that preschool teachers can determine common objectives in such developmental areas as self-care skills, cognitive development, language development, psycho-motor development, social-emotional development for both normally developing students and students with special needs, that students with special needs do not cause extra work load for the teacher and this in turn does not affect the teachers' burnout levels negatively.

Based on the results of the present study the following recommendations can be made for future studies:

1. The relation between the integration student and teachers' burnout can be studied by providing teachers with supportive services.
2. Studies could be carried out on different factors (age, gender, length of service, school of graduation etc.) that affect preschool teachers' burnout in different cities.
3. According to the type and level of disability, the effect of the preschool student on teachers' burnout can be investigated.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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