



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND UNEMPLOYMENT ANXIETY IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER CANDIDATES

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Abstract:

This research was carried out to investigate the causes of burnout levels that may exist in prospective physical education teachers before graduation and to examine the relationship between unemployment anxiety and burnout. The population of the research consists of students from the Physical Education Teaching Department of the Faculty of Sport Sciences in Turkey. The sample consisted of 651 volunteer students selected by random method. The study data were obtained through the Personal Information Form, Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Form and Sociometric Questions Scale on Unemployment Anxiety. The sample group of this study consisted of 651 pre-service teachers who continued their education in the fourth grade in the autumn term of the 2023-2024 academic year at Çukurova University, Mersin University and Gaziantep University Faculty of Sport Sciences. The data obtained were analysed using SPSS 25.0 package programme and the significance level was determined as 0.05. According to the findings obtained as a result of the study, it shows that unemployment anxiety is higher in female pre-service teachers than in male pre-service teachers, while unemployed pre-service teachers have higher scores in terms of both burnout and unemployment anxiety.

Keywords: physical education, university student, burnout, anxiety, unemployment

1. Introduction

Physical education and sports are important fields of education and activity that support individuals' physical, mental and social development. Physical education enables individuals to lead a healthy life through physical movement and learn values such as discipline, endurance and teamwork through sports (Gümüş & İnce, 2022). In addition, sports offer multifaceted benefits such as improving individuals' social relations,

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enabling them to gain self-confidence and increasing their stress management skills (Demir, 2021). In the education system, physical education aims for individuals to gain motor skills, learn social values and adopt a healthy lifestyle through physical activities (Şahin & Akyol, 2020).

Physical education and sports are not only limited to individual benefits, but also contribute to the spread of physical activity culture at the social level. Encouraging physical activity, especially in young individuals, helps to reduce physical health problems and increase social cohesion in the long term (Yıldız & Çelik, 2023). At the same time, sports activities are an important tool that strengthens individuals' sense of social belonging and contributes to their personal development (Kaya, 2019).

Burnout is defined as a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion that occurs as a result of chronic stress experienced by individuals in the work environment. Burnout, which was conceptualised for the first time by Maslach and Jackson (1981), is examined in three basic dimensions: emotional exhaustion, in which the individual feels emotionally exhausted; depersonalisation, in which the individual develops a negative attitude towards his/her job or the people he/she serves; and decrease in personal achievement, in which the individual loses his/her professional competence and sense of achievement (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). This situation is especially common in occupational groups with high workloads and requiring emotional labour (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

The main causes of burnout syndrome include individuals' difficulty in coping with high demands in the workplace, inadequate social support, role ambiguity and workplace conflicts (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Studies reveal that occupational burnout negatively affects not only the individual's performance but also his/her physical and mental health (Hakanen & Bakker, 2017). Individuals experiencing burnout may develop a loss of motivation, lack of self-confidence and negative attitudes towards business life. As a result, the tendency to quit and individual job failure increases (Shirom, 2003).

Occupational anxiety is a state of anxiety that individuals feel in the face of uncertainties and difficulties they face in business life. The risk of unemployment, uncertainties in career planning, decline in the perception of professional competence and negative conditions in the work environment are among the main causes of occupational anxiety (Korkut, 2018). Studies show that occupational anxiety increases burnout levels and reduces the quality of life of individuals by disrupting their emotional balance (Aydın & Kaya, 2020). Especially in periods of intense economic uncertainties, occupational anxiety can seriously affect both the physical and psychological health of individuals. The relationship between occupational burnout and anxiety is directly related to individuals' ability to cope with stressors in work life and their social support systems. For example, individuals with a strong social support network may be more resilient in the face of occupational anxiety and burnout, while lack of support may exacerbate these situations (Gündoğdu, 2019). It is stated that individuals with high burnout levels are more at risk of stress factors such as unemployment anxiety (Demir & Arslan, 2021). Occupational burnout is defined as the emotional and physical fatigue that

individuals face in their professional lives, as well as a decrease in the sense of personal achievement. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), burnout occurs as a result of chronic stress in the work environment and is analysed in three basic dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a decrease in personal achievement. Unemployment anxiety is defined as the state of anxiety and stress that individuals feel in the face of economic and social uncertainties. It is stated that unemployment anxiety increases burnout, decreases the self-efficacy perception of individuals and decreases the quality of life (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

The anxieties experienced by prospective teachers are especially focused on the fear of unemployment and professional competence. Uncertainties in teacher employment in the education system negatively affect the psychological well-being of pre-service teachers (Gündüz, 2018). In addition, it is emphasised in the literature that pre-service teachers have high levels of professional burnout, and unemployment anxiety further increases this burnout (Aydın, 2020). Studies show that unemployment anxiety decreases pre-service teachers' professional motivation and creates a sense of uncertainty about the future (Öztürk, 2019). In addition, it is stated that these anxieties, which are felt before starting professional life, negatively affect the professional development processes of the candidates (Kara & Aktaş, 2021). As a result, the burnout and unemployment anxiety experienced by prospective teachers reveals that educational processes and teacher training policies should be handled more carefully.

2. Method

In this section, information about the research model, study group, data collection tools, data analysis and research ethics will be presented.

2.1 Research Model

In this research, the relational survey model was used. The relational survey model is used to indicate the occurrence of a situation or event in the research and, at the same time, to find the interaction, effect and degree of interaction between the variables that cause this situation (Karasar, 2020).

2.2 Universe and Sample

The purposive sampling method, one of the non-probability sampling methods, was used in the study. The purposive sampling method is defined as a sampling group in which subjects who are considered suitable for the research and have certain characteristics are included in the research (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2016). In this context, the study population consists of students from the Physical Education Teacher Training Department of the Faculty of Sport Sciences in Turkey.

The study group of the research consists of 651 volunteer pre-service teachers who continue their education in the fourth grade in the autumn term of the 2023-2024 academic year at the Faculty of Sport Sciences of Çukurova University, Mersin University

and Gaziantep University since they have the Department of Physical Education Teaching within the Faculty of Sport Sciences.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

Socio-demographic information form, Maslach Burnout Scale and Sociometric Questions about Unemployment Anxiety scale were used as data collection tools in the study.

2.4 Socio-Demographic Information Form

A total of eight items were included in the personal information form created by the researcher by considering the relevant literature. These are: gender, age, university type, employment status, place of residence, smoking, doing licensed sports and gambling game type.

2.4.1 Maslach Burnout Scale - Student Form

It was developed by Maslach and Jackson in 1981 to determine the burnout level. The Turkish validity and reliability study of the scale was conducted by Ergin in 1992. The five-point Likert-type scale consists of a total of 22 items and is evaluated in three sub-dimensions: "emotional exhaustion", "depersonalisation", and "personal accomplishment". The emotional exhaustion sub-dimension consists of 9 items, and the score range is 0-36. A high score indicates a high level of emotional exhaustion. Depersonalisation sub-dimension consists of 5 items, and the score range is 0-20. High scores indicate that more insensitivity is experienced. The personal achievement sub-dimension consists of 8 items and is reverse-coded. The score range of this sub-dimension is 0-32. High scores indicate that a decline in personal achievement is experienced more often (Ergin, 1992).

2.4.2 Sociometric Questions on Unemployment Anxiety

It was developed by Ersoy-Kart and Erdost (2008) to determine the unemployment anxiety of university students. There are 12 items on the scale, each of which is scored as a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5). The scale has a unidimensional structure, and an increase in the scores obtained from the scale means an increase in unemployment anxiety. The internal consistency coefficient was not specified for the original form. For this study, the internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .61.

Table 1: Mean Scale Scores of the Participants

Scale-Factor	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Skewness	Kurtosis
Emotional Exhaustion	0,90	-0,54	-0,59
Depersonalisation	0,70	-0,28	-0,50
Personal Success	0,61	-1,02	-1,49
Unemployment Anxiety Scale	0,89	-0,64	-0,17

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the skewness and kurtosis values of the scale and sub-dimensions used in the research are between -2 and +2, which is suitable for normal distribution. It has been determined that the data obtained are normally distributed (George & Mallery, 2019) since the skewness and kurtosis values are between -2 and +2. Since it was determined that the data showed normal distribution, parametric tests were applied.

2.5 Data Collection and Analysis

The analysis of the research findings was made with the SPSS 25.0 package programme. Frequency analyses of the demographic characteristics of the students participating in the study were made. In order to determine the normal distribution of the data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were performed, and it was determined that the skewness and kurtosis values were between ± 2 (George & Mallery, 2010). Parametric tests were applied to the data to show normal distribution. According to the results obtained, independent groups t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for multiple comparisons between different variables and Tukey test were used to determine the source of differences. Whether the burnout levels of the students in the study predicted the sub-factors of the reasons for experiencing unemployment anxiety was tested by simple regression analysis.

3. Findings

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Distributions
Regarding the Demographic Information of the Participants

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Woman	264	85,06
Male	387	14,94
Age		
17-20	224	28,92
21-24	312	40,15
25 and above	115	30,92
Do you work?		
Working	377	65,08
Not working	274	34,92

When we look at the demographic characteristics, 264 of the students participating in the study are female, and 387 are male. While 224 of the students are between the ages of 17-20, 312 of them are between the ages of 21-24 and 115 of them are 25 years old and above. While 377 of the students participating in the study were working, 274 were not working.

Table 3: t-Test Results According to the Gender
Variable of the Prospective Teachers Participating in the Study

		Gender	N	X	S.S.	t	p
Burnout Scale	Emotional Exhaustion	Woman	176	3.80	0.66	- 1.24	.218
		Male	253	3.89	0.62		
	Depersonalisation	Woman	176	3.87	0.82	- 0.58	.561
		Male	253	3.92	0.81		
	Personal Success	Woman	176	3.90	0.63	1.40	.163
		Male	253	3.80	0.64		
Unemployment Anxiety Scale	Woman	176	4.23	0.58	2.63	.009	
	Male	253	4.01	0.71			

As a result of the independent sample t-test analysis conducted to determine the burnout levels and unemployment anxiety levels of prospective teachers, no statistically significant difference was found in the sub-dimensions of the Burnout level scale ($p>0.05$). A statistically significant difference was found according to the scores of the Unemployment Anxiety scale ($p<0.05$). It is noticeable that the mean scores of female pre-service teachers are higher than male pre-service teachers. It can be said that female pre-service teachers experience unemployment anxiety more.

Table 4: One-way Analysis of Variance Results According
to the Age of the Pre-service Teachers Participating in the Study

		Age	N	X	S.S.	f	p
Burnout Scale	Emotional Exhaustion	17-20	185	4,20	0,57	0,292	0,747
		21-24	118	4,23	0,63		
		25 and above	126	4,27	0,81		
	Depersonalisation	17-20	185	3,92	0,74	1,037	0,356
		21-24	118	3,82	0,90		
		25 and above	126	3,87	0,85		
	Personal Success	17-20	185	3,80	0,88	0,586	0,567
		21-24	118	3,79	0,77		
		25 and above	126	3,94	0,64		
Unemployment Anxiety Scale	17-20	185	3,81	0,76	1,844	0,165	
	21-24	118	3,71	0,85			
	25 and above	126	3,92	0,89			

When the findings related to the age variable of the pre-service teachers are analysed in Table 4, the scores of the pre-service teachers who participated in the study according to their ages from the burnout level and unemployment anxiety scales did not show a statistically significant difference ($P>0.05$).

Table 5: t-Test Results of the Prospective Teachers Participating in the Study According to the Type of Sport Variable

		Study	N	X	S.S.	f	p
Burnout Scale	Emotional Exhaustion	Working	231	3,88	1,04	0,579	0,561
		Not working	198	3,92	0,89		
	Depersonalisation	Working	231	3,76	1,04	1,831	0,027
		Not working	198	4,18	0,72		
	Personal Success	Working	231	3,75	0,88	-	0,302
		Not working	198	3,89	0,77		
Unemployment Anxiety Scale	Working	231	3,94	0,64	2,691	0,005	
	Not working	198	4,15	0,71			

As a result of the independent sample t-test analysis conducted to determine the burnout levels of Physical Education Teacher Candidates, a statistically significant difference was found in the Depersonalisation sub-dimension ($p < 0.05$). It is noticeable that the burnout levels of unemployed pre-service teachers are high. There was no statistically significant difference in Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Achievement sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$). A statistically significant difference was found according to the Unemployment Anxiety scale scores ($p < 0.05$). It is noticeable that the mean scores of unemployed pre-service teachers are higher than those of employed pre-service teachers. It can be said that unemployed pre-service teachers experience unemployment anxiety more.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Analysis Results Between Burnout and Unemployment Anxiety

	Loneliness	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalisation	Personal Success	Unemployment Anxiety
Burnout	1				
Emotional Exhaustion	,583**	1			
Depersonalisation	,557**	,823**	1		
Personal Success	,540**	,811**	,942**	1	
Unemployment Anxiety	,578**	,914**	,963**	,970**	1

$p < 0.05$ * Low-level relationship between 0.000-0.300, moderate relationship between 0.300-0.700, strong relationship between 0.701-1.00.

As a result of the Pearson correlation test in Table 6, it is seen that there is a moderately significant and positive relationship between Unemployment Anxiety and Burnout ($r = ,578$); there is a moderately significant and positive relationship between Personal Achievement and Burnout ($r = ,540$); there is a moderately significant and positive relationship between Depersonalisation and Burnout ($r = ,557$); there is a moderately significant and positive relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Burnout ($r = ,583$). We can say that there is a significant positive relationship between students' burnout levels and the causes of unemployment anxiety at a moderate level.

4. Discussion

This study was conducted to understand the relationship between burnout and unemployment anxiety levels of pre-service physical education teachers. The findings of the study show that unemployment anxiety is higher in female pre-service teachers than in male pre-service teachers, while unemployed pre-service teachers have higher scores in terms of both burnout and unemployment anxiety. These results seem to be consistent with the findings in the existing literature.

First of all, the finding that unemployment anxiety is higher in female pre-service teachers supports the studies that show that women tend to experience more stress and anxiety in unemployment situations. For example, Çelik and Güler (2020) stated that female individuals feel unemployment anxiety more intensely than men, and this may negatively affect their psychological well-being. In this context, it can be said that female pre-service teachers' perceptions of job security and professional expectations may be more fragile. In the study conducted by Gündüz and Akin (2018), it was stated that female individuals experience a lack of job security and fear of unemployment more than men. In particular, it was emphasised that the pressure of economic independence created by gender roles on women causes women to experience higher levels of anxiety in case of unemployment. This situation may also be valid in the context of physical education teacher candidates' career expectations. Similarly, a study conducted by Özdemir and Arslan (2020) showed that the anxiety experienced by female individuals in case of unemployment is more intense, and this anxiety negatively affects their professional motivation. This finding suggests that the high level of unemployment anxiety of female pre-service teachers in our study may be related to professional and psychological expectations. In addition, in a study conducted by Polat and Yücel (2017), it was stated that unemployment anxiety of female pre-service teachers emerged as a result of discrimination against women in the labour market and limited employment opportunities. These results support that concerns about job security in the field of physical education have become more prominent for female pre-service teachers.

The fact that the burnout levels of unemployed pre-service teachers are higher is a point frequently emphasised in the literature. Ergin and Kara (2020) stated that the lack of professional attachment and economic uncertainties are factors that increase burnout. The fact that the depersonalisation levels of unemployed pre-service teachers are higher than those of their employed colleagues points to the importance of professional attachment and work environment in reducing personal burnout.

The correlation results of the study showed that there was a moderate positive relationship between burnout and unemployment anxiety. This finding supports the existing studies stating that unemployment anxiety can increase individuals' burnout levels. Tosuntaş *et al.* (2018) stated that unemployment anxiety triggers emotional burnout in individuals, and this situation has negative effects on social and professional roles. In the study of Çapri *et al.* (2010), it was stated that unemployment increases the

feeling of burnout in individuals and leads to high scores, especially in the depersonalisation dimension (Çapri, Gündüz & Gökçakan, 2010).

Similarly, the results of the unemployment anxiety scale showed that unemployed pre-service teachers experienced higher levels of anxiety. This can be explained by the increased anxiety levels of unemployed individuals due to the feeling of uncertainty about the future and financial insecurity. Another study also supports this finding; Öztürk and Ay (2019) reported that unemployed individuals experienced higher levels of anxiety compared to employed individuals (Öztürk & Ay, 2019).

The lack of a significant difference in the emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment sub-dimensions may be related to the characteristics of the sample group of the study and the individuals' own internal coping mechanisms. Research shows that individuals' burnout levels are shaped not only by unemployment but also by individual differences (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

The relationship between personal achievement perception and burnout is also noteworthy. The findings reveal that the perception of personal accomplishment shows a positive relationship with burnout, and therefore, the perception of personal accomplishment may decrease when an individual's unemployment anxiety is high. Aydın (2020) emphasised that low perception of personal accomplishment may have an increasing effect on both burnout levels and unemployment anxiety of individuals.

According to the results of Table 6, there is a moderately significant and positive relationship between burnout and unemployment anxiety. This finding shows that burnout increases as individuals experience unemployment anxiety, and both situations are interrelated. There are similar results in the literature. For example, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) stated that the increase in burnout levels is closely related to individuals' feelings of economic and occupational insecurity (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). It is frequently emphasised in the literature that unemployed individuals' anxiety about the future increases' burnout dimensions such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation.

The positive correlation between personal achievement and burnout ($r=.540$) indicates that burnout may increase when individuals' perception of achievement is low. In Maslach and Jackson's (1981) burnout model, a decreased perception of personal accomplishment is accepted as an important dimension of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). This result shows that unemployment may negatively affect individuals' self-efficacy perceptions, and this may trigger other dimensions of burnout.

The moderate positive relationships between emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and burnout ($r = ,583$ and $r = ,557$) support that these dimensions, which are the main components of burnout, are consistently related to each other. In particular, the effect of unemployment anxiety on depersonalisation indicates that individuals may increase their tendency to detach from social relations and become apathetic. This emphasises the importance of psychological support and social engagement strategies during unemployment (Hakanen & Bakker, 2017).

As a result, this study shows that the relationship between unemployment anxiety and burnout is influenced by factors such as individuals' level of occupational attachment, gender differences and perceptions of personal achievement. In line with other studies in the literature, these results reveal that unemployment anxiety is a factor that increases the burnout levels of pre-service teachers. Considering that especially female individuals and unemployed pre-service teachers are more vulnerable to such anxiety, it is recommended to develop special support programmes for these groups.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Yasar Yasar holds a bachelor's degree in Recreation from Kocaeli University, a master's degree from Uludag University, and a PhD from Çukurova University, Turkey.

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