Description of psychosocial traits of preschool education teachers and investigation of correlations between these traits

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to describe the psychosocial traits of preschool teachers and to investigate the correlations between these traits. Designed according to the relational screening method, participants in this research comprised 102 teachers working in independent preschools and preschool classes linked to primary schools in Canakkale province. To collect psychosocial data, the research used a personal information form, semi-structured interview form, the Empathic Tendency Scale, Ways of Coping Questionnaire, Satisfaction with Life Scale, Burnout Measures– Short Form and Self-Efficacy Scale. Findings obtained in the research showed that having a model (teacher, friend and family) was more effective than other factors in preschool teachers choosing this profession. Nearly, half of the teachers (49%) stated they would choose preschool teaching again if they had the chance, while the remaining teachers stated they would choose a different area of teaching or a different profession (theology, engineering, medicine, etc.).

Keywords: Preschool teachers, psychosocial, life satisfaction, burnout, coping with stress.

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1. Introduction

People are different from each other in many ways. These differences are shaped by traits present from birth interacting with the environment and take the form of psychosocial traits, such as intelligence, interests, learning styles, personality structure, control focus and self-efficacy beliefs. These differences may be reflected in the education and teaching processes in the form of academic success, performance, and judgments about whether a person will be successful or not (Hazir Bikmaz, 2004; Kuzgun & Deryakulu, 2004; Yesilyaprak, 2004).

Teachers play an effective role in preparing individuals for academic and social life. The teaching profession is not just based on transferring information. The thinking styles, emotional responses and habits of teachers are an important model for students (Zembat, 2009). Roles for teachers require continuous updating with studies relating to organisations training teachers and the educational content and duration spent in these organisations. In this context, a variety of studies were performed on teacher training and different models were tested within the historical process. In Turkey, the first organisation training teachers opened in 1,848. Currently, teaching training programs have been updated and since the 1991–1992 educational year teacher training programs were extended to 4-year duration (Oktay, 2016). Updates in teacher training programs aim to strengthen the professional skills of preservice teachers. However, individual differences affect their development in their professional lives (Yazici, 2009). In parallel with updates to undergraduate education by the Council for Higher Education (YOK), the Ministry of National Education began the first official studies about teacher competency in 1999. Studies in 2004 and updated in 2006 determined the 'General Competency for the Teaching Profession'. These competencies comprise 32 sub-areas and 233 performance markers in six basic areas, listed as follows (Ogretmen Yetistirme ve Gelistirme Genel Mudurlugu, 2017):

• Personal and professional values-professional development
• Knowing the student
• Learning and teaching processes
• Monitoring learning and development and assessment
• School, family and social relationships
• Program and content knowledge

Updates in 2017 added general competency content knowledge and content education knowledge instead of determining separate competencies for each area of teaching, creating a single competency text for all teaching areas. Competency in this text is assessed in the scope of three main headings of 'professional knowledge, professional skills and attitudes and values'. Determination of competency related to the teaching profession targets quality and standards in professional performance by teachers. During undergraduate education of teachers, they receive a variety of lessons to attain these competencies. However, the psychosocial traits of preservice teachers affect how well the knowledge and skills in these lessons are applied later.

As the age group for preschool teaching cannot act independently of their family, there are differences in teaching compared to other levels. Expectations of families from preschool teachers are not limited to supporting their children academically. Other supports expected from preschool teachers by families include one-to-one interest, supporting social skills, care, nutrition and safety. Some research findings revealed that currently expectations of families from preschool education differ compared to the past in areas, such as school management, children's development and physical features of the facility (Seyfullahogullari, 2012; Simsek & Ivrendi, 2014; Ulutas Avcu, 2016). The sustained desire and motivation of preschool teachers to meet these professional expectations is associated with traits, such as empathy levels, work satisfaction, burnout and emotional intelligence (Ozturk & Deniz, 2008). The professional and personal behaviour preschool teachers display may positively or negatively affect small children who are vulnerable mentally and emotionally due to their development, age and experience.

The concept of life satisfaction, proposed by Neugarten for the first time in 1961, represents the situation or outcome an individual obtains by comparing their expectations with what they have (Caliskan, Yasul & Ulas 2017; Recepoglu, 2013). Factors affecting life satisfaction of teachers may be listed as economic situation, professional status, environmental conditions of service and expectation levels (Telef, 2011). In general, life satisfaction may be defined as the emotional reaction a person displays to life in work, free time and other non-working time. According to another approach, life satisfaction represents judgements an individual reaches based on their lives in terms of subjective well-being (subjective prosperity) and quality of life (Aydemir, Diken, Yikmis, Aksoy & Ozokcu, 2015). According to Satilmis, Oznacar, Uzunboylu and Yilmaz (2017), life satisfaction is linked to subjective evaluation of expectations desired from life and the degree to which these expectations are met.

There is research revealing how the attitudes towards teaching affect the life satisfaction of preschool teachers. Some of these studies revealed that as life satisfaction of teachers increases, their democratic attitudes increase and disillusionment attitudes reduce and that emotional burnout and personal failure reduce (Avsaroglu, Deniz & Kahraman, 2005; Ozyurek & Erbay, 2015). Some research revealed a correlation between life satisfaction of teachers and work satisfaction (Buyuksahin-Cevik, 2017). There was a negative and significant correlation found between life satisfaction of teachers and emotional burnout and personal failure (Aydemir et al., 2015). The research revealed that life satisfaction significantly predicts attitudes towards the teaching profession (Recepoglu, 2013).

The self-efficacy concept was first proposed in Bandura (1977) within the social learning concept. Self-efficacy beliefs are defined as the beliefs an individual has related to planning, organising and successfully completing the actions necessary to display a certain performance. Self-efficacy beliefs have different sources, such as direct experience, indirect experience gained from observing social models, verbal persuasion and the emotional and physical status of the individual. Self-efficacy beliefs affect the effort expended by an individual to reach their determined targets, how they face difficulties encountered in achieving their targets and their reaction to failure. As a result, it is important to develop and keep self-efficacy beliefs at high levels (Capri & Celikkaleli, 2008). When the self-efficacy concept is assessed in terms of teachers, it emphasises the knowledge, skills and attitudes teachers are required to have in order to achieve the necessary duties and responsibilities of teaching (Demirtaş, Comert & Ozer, 2011). In this context, the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers may be considered to reflect the effort they will expend while teaching (Kuzgun & Deryakulu, 2004). The research found negative significant correlations between the self-efficacy beliefs of educators with the burnout subdimensions of emotional burnout and depersonalisation and a positive significant correlation with personal success (Karahan & Uyanik Balat, 2011).

According to Badea and Pana (2010), empathy is the meaning attached to other peoples' feelings. It is not experiencing other peoples' feelings. However, we understand the feelings of others through our own experiences. For teachers, empathy is determined to be an important trait to know students and to perform student-centred education, and even to plan appropriate education for the group. Teachers should be both empathic and be clear and precise in their communication with children. They should be able to express themselves well and use their communication skills to ensure cooperation. A teacher with empathic skills shows they value students through their attitude (Durmusoglu Saltali & Erbay, 2013). Clearly teachers need to help children, so it is necessary to ensure an attitude of empathic communication to create healthy communication in relationships between teachers and children. If children are aware their feelings are important to the teacher, they will feel valued and be happy; in the opposite situation children will feel they are not valued (Akbulut & Saglam, 2010; Pala, 2008). There is research revealing that the empathic understanding of preschool teachers affects attitudes towards children. Some of this research showed that preschool teachers who love their profession have higher empathic tendencies than teachers who do not love their profession (Ozyurek & Erbay, 2015). Some studies found that there is a positive and significant correlation between the emotional intelligence and empathic tendencies of preschool teachers (Uyanik Balat, Celebi, Yilmaz & Gumustekin, 2014). The research by Ugurlu (2013) found that the

communication skills and empathic tendency of teachers affected their affection for children and those communication skills and empathic tendencies together increased this affection slightly.

Burnout is stated to be a situation involving feelings of burnout in physiological and emotional areas as a result of dealing with stress due to the nature of a person's occupation. It is observed in workers in professional groups requiring intense communication with others (Karahan & Uyanik-Balat, 2011). Currently, the most common and accepted definition of burnout is the three-component burnout developed by Maslach (1981). According to this definition, burnout is accepted as a three-dimensional concept where emotional burnout, depersonalisation and reduced personal success are observed frequently in workers working face-to-face with other people (Aydemir et al., 2015). Researchers conceptualised the structure of the three different components of burnout. These are emotional burnout, depersonalisation and low personal success (Chan, 2011). When the relevant literature is investigated, as general burnout levels increase, a person's life satisfaction levels fall. Teachers with high life satisfaction levels generally experience low burnout levels in general and in terms of the subdimensions (Aydemir et al., 2015).

Stress affects an individual's quality of life on its own, by negatively affecting an individual mentally and emotionally and causing discomfort to be experienced (Gencturk, 2008). Coping effectively with stress, stated be a disease of modern society lowering productivity by causing emotional tension in individuals, may be explained by stress management (Vatansever Bayraktar & Yilmaz, 2016). Some coping strategies are used to deal with elements causing stress. These include secure approach, hopeless approach, submissive approach, optimistic approach and asking for social support. Studies showed that teachers are exposed to stress in schools and experience excessive fatigue and indicate the need to further research sources of stress (Azeem, 2010; Platsidou & Agaliotis, 2008).

In the relevant literature, there are significant correlations between variables, such as stress in working life and psychological resistance (Maddi et al., 2006), professional burnout (Chung, Shu & Tung, 2009; Liana, Inga & Kristaps, 2011; Sasaki, Kitaoka Morikawa & Nakagawa, 2009; Surgevil, 2005; Veladet & Kallay, 2010; Wallace & Lee, 2010), self-efficacy (Betoret, 2006), emotional dependence (Uzun, 2011), life satisfaction (Buyuksahin-Cevik, 2017), conflict (Gunduz, Tunc & Inandi, 2013) and temperament (Besser & Zeigler-Hill, 2011; Ozdemir, Sezgin, Kaya & Recepoglu, 2011). Additionally, performing more studies will aid in coping with stress and reducing sources of stress and ensure preschool teachers use more effective ways of coping with stress.

In the literature, there is research about some psychosocial traits of preschool teachers alone or in correlation with other traits. When research about the psychosocial traits of preschool teachers is investigated, preschool teachers had high self-efficacy perceptions (Gomleksiz & Serhatlioglu, 2013), and the type of organization (preschool class, preschool), working duration and self-efficacy perception predicted the burnout levels of preschool teachers (Girgin, 2010; Kan, 2008; Senel & Bulus, 2016). Teachers who do not willingly choose preschool teaching or who do not see it as an appropriate occupation for themselves experience more emotional burnout (Akman, Taskin, Ozden & Cortu, 2013; Girgin, 2010; Kan, 2008). Additionally, work satisfaction of teachers is associated with attitudes towards the profession and self-efficacy levels (Camacho, 2017; Ozyurek & Cavus, 2014). These results are interpreted as indicating that the psychosocial traits of preschool teachers are associated with each other, these traits affect performance in their profession and at the same time professional experience influences psychosocial traits. The research by Durmusoglu Saltali and Erbay (2013) concluded that empathic approaches by preschool teachers were correlated with listening understanding in the class and affection for children. These research findings show that the psychosocial traits of teachers may be reflected in practices in class. Although there are researches about teachers' empathic tendency, life satisfaction, styles of coping with stress and beliefs of self-efficacy, there was no research that examines these characteristics of preschool teachers together. For this reason, it is important to carry out the research which includes all the psychosocial traits of teachers' and their relations with each other. This research aimed to describe the psychosocial traits of preschool education teachers and investigate the correlations between these traits.

2. Method

This research about describing the psychosocial traits of preschool education teachers and investigating the correlations between these traits is a descriptive study from the relational screening model. Sample selection was based on the simple random method.

2.1. Participants

Participants in this study comprised 102 preschool teachers working in Canakkale province in the 2017–2018 educational year. Nearly, all teachers (apart from two males) were female. Additionally, 78 teachers worked in preschools and 24 worked in preschool classes. Of participants, 38 had 1–10 years and 34 had 11–20 years professional experience and most (88.3%) stated their economic status was high and moderate.

2.2. Data collection tools

With the aim of collecting data in this research, a personal information form, semi-structured interview form and the following scale tools were used.

2.2.1. Personal information form and semi-structured interview form

The form was created by the researchers. The form included personal information, such as gender, type of organization and level, along with the following questions:

1. What did you hope for when you entered the preschool education undergraduate program?
2. What was the most effective factor in choosing preschool teaching?
3. If you could choose again, what profession would you choose?
4. When did you last read a book related to your profession—not related to your profession?
5. What resources do you use to solve problems related to children in your professional life?
6. What is the most important factor reducing the effectiveness of your professional practice?

2.2.2. Empathic tendency scale

The empathic tendency scale (ETS) was developed by Dokmen (1988) with the aim of measuring the potential of an individual to form empathy in daily life. It is a Likert type scale comprising 20 questions with each question given points from 1 to 5. When adding points, the answers to questions 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 15 are scored inversely. The lowest points obtained from the scale are 20 with highest points of 100. Total points represent the empathic tendency of participants. High points show high empathic tendency, while low points show low empathic tendency.

Dokmen (1988) obtained reliability data for the test using the test-repeat test method in a 70-person student group at a 3-week interval. The analysis found the reliability of the scale as 0.82. The half-test reliability of the scale between points obtained for odd and even items of participants was 0.86. Validity studies for the ETS were again performed by Dokmen (1988). The ETS test and the 'Understanding Feelings' section of Edward's Personal Preference Schedule were applied to a 24-person participant group and validity for the scale was found to be 0.68.

2.2.3. Ways of coping questionnaire

The Ways of Coping Questionnaire developed by Folkman and Lazarus (1985) is a 66 item, 4-point Likert scale. Adaptation studies by Sahin and Durak (1995) reduced the scale to 30 items. The factor structure of the scale was assessed in three different studies. In the first study, the sample comprised 575 university students, the second study comprised 426 people working in a variety of private and

public banks and the third study comprised 232 people living in Ankara. The results of the analyses identified the scale included five factors for secure approach (items 8, 10, 14, 16, 20, 23 and 26), hopeless approach (items 3, 7, 11, 19, 22, 25, 27 and 28), submissive approach (items 5, 13, 15, 17, 21 and 24), optimistic approach (items 2, 4, 6, 12 and 18) and search for social support (items 1, 9, 29 and 30). Items 1 and 9 on the scale are graded inversely. Three separate studies by Sahin and Durak (1995) found the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficients for the 'Ways of Coping Scale' were 0.49–0.68 for 'optimistic approach', 0.62–0.80 for 'secure approach', 0.64–0.73 for 'hopeless approach', 0.47–0.72 for 'submissive approach' and 0.45–0.47 for 'search for social support'.

2.2.4. Satisfaction with life scale

The scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985, p. 72) with the aim of determining the life satisfaction of individuals with adaptation to Turkish by Koker (1991) and the reliability of the scale found to be 0.85. Later, the validity and reliability studies for the scale were performed by Dagli and Baysal (2016). An attempt was made to determine the reliability of the scale with the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient and the test-repeat test technique. The consistency coefficient for the whole scale was calculated as $r = 0.88$. According to the results, the scale has high internal consistency. To test the test-repeat test reliability of the scale, the Turkish form was applied to a 47-person teacher group at a 2-week interval and the correlation coefficient between the two applications was identified as $r = 0.97$ ($p = 0.000$). According to this result, the test-repeat test reliability coefficient of the scale is sufficient. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to investigate the structural validity of the scale. The CFA results for the distribution of items on the scale were identified to be the same as the distribution on the original scale. The scale has 5-point Likert responses from 'definitely disagree' to 'definitely agree'. Points that can be obtained on the scale vary from 5 to 35. High points on the scale represent high life satisfaction.

2.2.5. Burnout measure—short form

The 21-item Burnout Measure by Pines and Aronson (1988) was adapted to a 10-item short form by Pines (2005). The scale measures levels of professional burnout and has seven degrees (1 never to 7 always). The internal consistency coefficients of the scale calculated with data from different ethnic, professional and student groups varied from 0.85 to 0.92. The validity and reliability studies of the Turkish adaptation of the scale were performed by Capri (2013). Capri (2013) reported the test-repeat test reliability coefficient for a 4-week interval was 0.88 with internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.91.

2.2.6. Self-efficacy scale

The scale comprises 23 items and was developed by Sherer et al. (1982). The scale had a two-factor structure of general self-efficacy (explained variance 26.5%, Cronbach alpha = 0.86) and social self-efficacy (explained variance 8.5%, Cronbach alpha = 0.71). As items in the first factor do not indicate a specific behavior area, it was appropriate to name this factor 'general self-efficacy'. The social self-efficacy factor reflects expectations of efficacy in social situations. In this study the scale has a Likert format with answers to the question 'how well does this describe you?' varying in five degrees from 'not at all' to 'very well'. Points for each question vary from 1 to 5. This study chose to use the commonly used 17-item General Self-Efficacy Scale (Magaletta & Oliver 1999). Adaptation to Turkish was completed by Yildirim and Ilhan (2010). Items 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16 and 17 are scored inversely. The total points for the scale vary from 17 to 85, with increased points showing increased self-efficacy beliefs.

2.3. Collection of data

Teachers included in the study group had personal information, life satisfaction, professional burnout, empathic tendency levels, coping with stress and self-efficacy assessed by filling in the scales.

After receiving permission from the Provincial Directorate of National Education, school principals were met and preschool teachers were reached.

2.4. Analysis of data

In line with the aims of the research the assumption of normality was investigated by kurtosis and skewness coefficients. Values were found to be distributed between −1.5 and +1.5. This result indicates these values abide by the assumption of normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The *t*-test was used to determine whether life satisfaction, professional burnout, empathic tendency levels, stress coping styles and self-efficacy varied according to the experience. Descriptive analysis was performed for the mean points of the life satisfaction, professional burnout, empathic tendency levels, coping with stress style and self-efficacy beliefs of teachers. The answers given by participants to interview questions had percentage and frequency analysis performed, with multiple regression analysis used for prediction of professional burnout and life satisfaction. The regression analysis was based on the Forward method. This method places the independent variables into the model according to the correlation power for the dependent variable. After measuring the effect of every variable entering the model, variables that do not significantly affect the model are removed (Kalayci, 2010). Additionally, the Pearson moments multiplication correlation coefficient was used to calculate the correlations between life satisfaction, professional burnout, empathic tendency level, coping with stress style and self-efficacy beliefs. Level of significance was taken as less than 0.05 in the research.

3. Results

In this section, findings obtained within the scope of the research are given. Within the scope of the research, initially, normality of distribution was examined and normality test results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage and frequency analysis of responses to questions on the interview form

Question: What did you hope for when you entered the preschool education undergraduate program?		
Expectations from preschool education undergraduate program	*f*	%
High notes	5	4.9
Diploma	8	7.8
Be a good teacher	77	75.5
Child development	12	11.8
Total	102	100
Question: What was the most effective factor in choosing preschool teaching?		
Effective in choosing profession	*f*	%
Models for me	52	51.0
Family	28	27.5
Not enough points	5	4.9
Concern about appointment and career	13	12.7
Friend effects	4	3.9
Total	102	100
Question: If you could choose again, what profession would you choose?		
Chance to choose again	*f*	%
Preschool again	50	49.0
Other teaching area	12	11.8

Other (medicine, law, theology, fine arts, engineering, sports sciences, literature, science)	40	39.2
Total	102	100

Question: When did you last read a book related to your profession?

Situation	*f*	%
Last 6 months	67	65.7
Last 1 year	22	21.6
Longer	13	12.7
Total	102	100

Question: When did you last read a book not related to your profession?

	f	%
Last 6 months	75	73.5
Last 1 year	18	17.6
Longer	9	8.8
Total	102	100

Question: What resources do you use to solve problems related to children in your professional life?

	f	%
Colleagues	66	64.7
Current books	7	6.9
Experts	14	13.7
School management	5	4.9
Internet	10	9.8
Total	102	100

Question: What is the most important factor reducing the effectiveness of your professional practice?

	f	%
School	9	8.8
Family	44	43.1
Problematic children	20	19.6
Physical	6	5.9
Second teachers	4	3.9
Class size	19	18.6
Total	102	100

According to Table 1, most preschool teachers aimed to be good teachers (75.5%) when they entered preschool teaching undergraduate programs. According to Table 1, the effect of family, friends and people around them who were models was determinant in selection of preschool teaching by participants (82.4%), with concern about profession and attaining points less effective (17.6%) in choosing this profession. According to Table 1, 50% of teachers would choose preschool teaching if they could choose again, while 12% would choose another area of teaching and 40% would choose professions outside of preschool teaching or teaching (medicine, law, theology, fine arts, engineering, sports sciences and literature). According to Table 1, most teachers had read books related and not related to their field in the last 6 months (67% in the field, 75% outside the field). First place in solving problems teacher's experienced related to children were colleagues (66%), followed by experts (14%), the internet (10%) and current books (7%). Factors reducing efficacy of professional applications by teachers were mainly family (44%), problematic children (20%) and class sizes (19%).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics related to empathic tendency, coping with stress, satisfaction with life, professional burnout and self-efficacy beliefs

Variables	n	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. D.
Empathic tendency	102	51.00	92.00	74.3922	8.80049
Life satisfaction	102	9.00	25.00	17.9216	3.69556
Professional burnout	102	11.00	58.00	26.0588	8.67433
Self-efficacy belief	102	22.00	85.00	63.5882	12.57717
Coping with stress – total	102	64.00	116.00	93.6471	8.55923
Coping with stress – secure approach	102	13.00	35.00	28.3529	4.17595
Coping with stress – hopeless approach	102	9.00	33.00	20.0784	5.52884
Coping with stress – submissive approach	102	6.00	24.00	13.8235	4.10605
Coping with stress – optimistic approach	102	8.00	25.00	18.6961	3.03703
Coping with stress – search for social support	102	6.00	20.00	12.6961	2.37891

When Table 2 is investigated, the mean points for empathic tendency were 74.39, with mean points for coping with stress 93.64, mean points for the subdimensions of coping with stress 28.35 for secure approach, 20.07 for hopeless approach, 13.82 for submissive approach, 18.69 for optimistic approach and 12.69 for search for social support, mean life satisfaction points of 17.92, mean professional burnout points of 26.06 and mean self-efficacy belief points of 63.59.

Table 3. Multiple linear regression analysis results related to prediction of life satisfaction of teachers

Predictive variables	B	Std. E	ß	t	p	Two-way r	Partial R
(Fixed)	9.117	6.184		1.474	0.144		
Empathic tendency	0.082	0.048	0.196	1.704	0.092	0.382	0.176
Coping with stress – secure approach	0.182	0.128	0.206	1.421	0.159	0.427	0.147
Coping with stress – hopeless approach	−0.137	0.086	−0.205	−1.595	0.114	−0.381	−0.165
Coping with stress – submissive approach	−0.027	0.111	−0.030	−0.243	0.809	−0.326	−0.025
Coping with stress – optimistic approach	−0.063	0.159	0.052	0.396	0.693	0.336	0.041
Coping with stress – search for social support	−0.158	0.150	0.102	1.055	0.294	0.084	0.110
Self-efficacy belief	−0.006	0.031	−0.020	−0.189	0.851	0.086	−0.020
Professional burnout	−0.034	0.042	−0.080	−0.800	0.426	−0.222	−0.084

$R = 0.53$ $R^2 = 0.29$
$F = 3.64$ $p = 0.00^*$

$^*p < 0.05.$

According to the regression analysis results in Table 3, there was a low-level significant correlation between professional burnout, empathic tendency, coping with stress and self-efficacy beliefs of teachers ($R = 0.53$, $R^2 = 0.29$, $F = 3.64$, $p < 0.01$). Together these independent variables explain 29% of the total variance in life satisfaction. When the points related to the significance of the regression

coefficients are examined, the contribution of the independent variables to the model was not found to be significant.

Table 4. Multiple linear regression analysis results related to prediction of professional burnout levels of teachers

Predictive variables	B	Std. E	ß	t	p	Two-way r	Partial R
(Fixed)	18.118	15.281		1.186	0.239		
Empathic tendency	−0.059	0.120	−0.060	−0.493	0.623	−0.170	−0.052
Coping with stress—secure approach	0.604	0.313	0.291	1.930	0.057	−0.097	0.198
Coping with stress—hopeless approach	0.617	0.205	0.394	3.013	0.003	0.417	0.301
Coping with stress—submissive approach	0.184	0.272	0.087	0.679	0.499	0.265	0.071
Coping with stress—optimistic approach	−0.461	0.388	−0.162	−1.189	0.237	−0.199	−0.124
Coping with stress—search for social support	−0.136	0.371	−0.037	−0.366	0.715	0.020	−0.038
Self-efficacy belief	−0.206	0.257	−0.088	−0.800	0.426	−0.222	−0.084
Life satisfaction	0.008	0.041	0.022	0.199	0.843	−0.091	0.021
$R = 0.46$ $R^2 = 0.21$							
$F = 2.49$ $p = 0.01**$							

*$p < 0.05$.

According to the regression analysis results in Table 4, there were low-level significant correlations between professional burnout and empathic tendency levels, coping with stress styles and self-efficacy belief points for teachers ($R = 0.46$, $R^2 = 0.21$, $F = 2.49$, $p < 0.05$). Together the independent variables explain 21% of the total variance related to burnout. When t points related to the significance of regression coefficients are examined, only the hopeless approach to coping with stress was observed to be a significant predictor of burnout.

Table 5. Correlation analysis results for empathic tendency, coping with stress, life satisfaction, burnout and self-efficacy ($n = 102$)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Empathic tendency	1									
2. Secure approach	0.545**	1								
3. Hopeless approach	−0.390**	−0.427**	1							
4. Submissive approach	−0.357**	−0.487**	0.607**	1						
5. Optimistic approach	0.480**	0.655**	−0.424**	−0.277**	1					
6. Search for social support	−0.060	0.039	0.186	0.076	−0.014	1				
7. Coping with stress style	−0.004	0.222*	0.630**	0.557**	0.263**	0.448**	1			
8. Life satisfaction	0.382**	0.427**	−0.381**	−0.326**	0.336**	0.084	−0.052	1		
9. Professional burnout	−0.170	−0.097	0.417**	0.265**	−0.199*	0.020	0.284**	−0.222*	1	
10. Self-efficacy belief	0.201*	0.259**	−0.309**	−0.323**	0.281**	0.246*	−0.197*	0.086	−0.091	1

**$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.

When Table 5 is investigated, there appear to be significant correlations between the life satisfaction, professional burnout, empathic tendency levels, coping with stress styles and self-efficacy belief points of preschool education teachers. For professional burnout, there was a positive moderate correlation with the hopeless approach subdimension of coping with stress (*r* = 0.41), and a negative low-level correlation with the optimistic subdimension (*r* = −0.19). For life satisfaction, there was a positive moderate correlation with empathic tendency (*r* = 0.38), and a negative low-level correlation with burnout (*r* = 0.26). For life satisfaction, there were positive moderate correlations with the secure approach of coping with stress (*r* = −0.42) and the optimistic approach subdimension (*r* = 0.33) and a negative moderate correlation with the hopeless approach subdimension (*r* = −0.38) and the submissive approach subdimension (*r* = −0.32). For self-efficacy beliefs, there was a positive low-level correlation with empathic tendency (*r* = 0.20), and positive low-level correlations with the coping with stress styles of secure approach (*r* = 0.25), optimistic approach (*r* = 0.28) and search for social support (*r* = 0.24) while there were negative moderate correlations with the subdimensions of hopeless approach (*r* = −0.30) and submissive approach (*r* = −0.32).

These findings may be interpreted as showing that as life satisfaction of teachers increases, professional burnout reduces, and when coping with stress they use the secure approach, optimistic approach and search for social support more often and use the hopeless approach and submissive approach less. The findings also indicate that as professional burnout increases, the hopeless and submissive approaches increase to cope with stress and that as self-efficacy beliefs increase the use of hopeless and submissive approaches to coping with stress reduce.

Table 6. Independent samples *t*-test analysis

Variables		n	$\overline{\text{X}}$	ss	$Sh_{\overline{x}}$	*t* test *t*	*t* test Sd	*p*
Empathic tendency	1–10 years	68	73.5735	9.26769	1.12387	−1.334	100	0.185
	11–20 years	34	76.0294	7.64946	1.31187			
Coping with stress – secure	1–10 years	68	92.4853	8.72720	1.05833	−1.727	100	0.087
	11–20 years	34	95.9706	7.82570	1.34210			
Coping with stress – hopeless	1–10 years	68	27.8529	4.60131	0.55799	0.441	100	0.660
	11–20 years	34	29.3529	2.97344	0.50994			
Coping with stress – submissive	1–10 years	68	20.2500	5.42624	0.65803	−0.714	100	0.477
	11–20 years	34	19.7353	5.79607	0.99402			
Coping with stress – optimistic	1–10 years	68	13.6176	3.98516	0.48327	−0.991	100	0.324
	11–20 years	34	14.2353	4.36972	0.74940			
Coping with stress – search for social support	1–10 years	68	18.4853	3.14568	0.38147	−2.570	100	0.012
	11–20 years	34	19.1176	2.80438	.48095			

Life satisfaction	1–10 years	68	17.7941	3.85777	.46782	−0.491	100	0.625
	11–20 years	34	18.1765	3.38867	.58115			
Professional burnout	1–10 years	68	26.4706	8.95006	1.08535	0.676	100	0.500
	11–20 years	34	25.2353	8.16147	1.39968			
Self-efficacy beliefs	1–10 years	68	63.2059	12.30163	1.49179	−0.432	100	0.666
	11–20 years	34	64.3529	13.26623	2.27514			

When Table 6 is investigated, it may be said that empathic tendency, life satisfaction, professional burnout and self-efficacy beliefs significantly differed according to the experience variable (t = −1.33, −1.97, −0.49, 0.68, −0.43; $p > 0.05$). The coping with stress subdimension of search for social support appeared to differ in favour of teachers with 11–20 years of professional experience (t = −2.57; $p < 0.05$).

4. Discussion and conclusion

The descriptive data obtained in this research show that one of the primary targets of teachers as they enter the preschool teaching profession is to be a good teacher. Additionally, having a model (teacher, friend and family) was more effective in teachers selecting this profession. Teachers stated that the most significant obstacles preventing their efficiency in professional practice were families and problematic children. It is noteworthy that teachers found the obstacles preventing their efficiency in professional practice were attributed to sources outside themselves, rather than with their own professional knowledge, skills or experience. In answer to the question of 'if you could choose again, what profession would you choose?' 49% of teachers responded that they would choose preschool teaching again, while 51% said another area of teaching or another profession (medicine, engineering, sports, theology, etc.). Most teachers were understood to have read books in the last 6 months (67% in their area, 75% outside their area). When teachers experienced problems related to children, they first asked their colleagues (66%) when solving these problems.

When mean coping with stress styles of teachers are investigated, mean points for healthy coping styles, such as self-confidence, optimism and search for social support were observed to be higher than the mean points for the unhealthy styles of hopeless and submissive approaches. These findings are consistent with findings in previous research (Bilge & Saltuk, 2007; Madenoglu, 2010; Vatansever Bayraktar & Yilmaz, 2016; Yerlikaya, 2007). According to the data, for coping with stress styles adopted by preschool teachers, first place is for the self-confident approach and last place is for the search for social support approach. Similar studies by Madenoglu (2010) and Vatansever Bayraktar and Yilmaz (2016) concluded that the self-confident approach was used most when teachers were coping with stress, while the search for social support was used least.

At the end of the research, there were significant correlations between the life satisfaction, professional burnout, empathic tendency levels, styles of coping with stress and self-efficacy beliefs of preschool teachers. As the life satisfaction of preschool teachers increases, professional burnout reduces, empathic tendencies increase, the self-confident, optimistic and search for social support approaches are used to deal with stress more and the hopeless and submissive approaches are used less. Studies investigating empathic skills as a subdimension of emotional intelligence identified a positive correlation between life satisfaction and empathic tendencies (Kirtil, 2009; Kocak & Icmenoglu, 2012; Ozdemir, 2015; Uyanik Balat et al., 2014). Another similar study by Ardahan (2012)

found a positive correlation between empathic sensitivity and life satisfaction. As a result, teachers in organizations where school administrators have positive assessments and perceptions about work and life, will be positively affected in approaches to the parents of children and will use their empathic tendencies more effectively.

In accordance with the literature, negative significant correlations between life satisfaction and general burnout and burnout subdimensions were revealed in the research findings. Similar research concluded that there is a negative significant correlation between professional burnout among teachers and life satisfaction (Avsaroglu et al., 2005; Aydemir et al., 2015; Sahin, 2008; Telef, 2011). These results support the findings. Psychological situations like stress and burnout have a significant effect on the quality of life of individuals. In this context, situations like burnout which affect quality of life can be said to be associated with teacher's life satisfaction. Findings from research by Celik and Ustuner (2018) found burnout among teachers predicted life satisfaction. The findings support these study results. Burnout, which may be assessed as a negative effect, is considered to be effective on the life satisfaction of teachers. Studies of teachers with high life satisfaction found more contribution to the development of children. Teachers experiencing burnout are stated to display negative attitudes and behavior towards children and negatively affect the atmosphere in the classroom and learning outcomes. The research determined that as the satisfaction of preschool teachers increases, democratic attitudes increase and uncaring attitudes reduce (Ozyurek & Cavus, 2014; Ozyurek & Erbay, 2015; Recepoglu, 2013; Tekerci, 2008). In addition, work fills an important place in an individual's life in terms of time and activities. Employees spend the majority of time in the day at work. In this context, work-based environmental conditions affect the positive/negative affect and life satisfaction of individuals. Avsaroglu et al. (2005) found a negative correlation between life satisfaction of teachers and emotional burnout and personal failure and a positive correlation between life satisfaction and work satisfaction. However, they did not identify a significant correlation between life satisfaction and desensitization. Sahin (2008) found a negative significant correlation between life satisfaction of teachers and emotional burnout.

According to another finding in the research, as the professional burnout of preschool teachers increases, hopeless and submissive approaches to dealing with stress increase, while as professional burnout reduces, there is an increase in the optimistic approach. Additionally, the research results found that as empathic tendencies increase, professional burnout reduces and the use of hopeless and submissive approaches to dealing with stress reduces. The results of the research show that the hopeless approach to dealing with stress is a significant predictor of burnout. Similar research findings are observed in similar studies. According to results in the relevant literature, as the perceived stress levels of teachers increase, the emotional burnout increases. However, burnout does not change according to the type of organisation of employment (Ekici, 2017). As the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers increase, the use of hopeless and submissive approaches to dealing with stress reduces, while the self-confident and optimistic approaches to dealing with stress and empathic tendencies were identified to increase.

Another result of the research is that as years of experience increase, empathic tendencies increase. A similar study by Kidem (2015) revealed that as age of experience and education increased, empathic skills increased. Contrary to this, research by Akbulut and Saglam (2010) did not identify a significant correlation between years of experience and empathic tendency. According to another finding in the research, the search for social support among coping with stress subdimensions significantly differed for teachers with 11–20 years of professional experience (t = −2.57; p < 0.05). This situation shows that length of employment is an important variable in coping with stress, and that as the working duration increases the search for social support, self-confident and optimistic approaches to coping with stress increase. When the coping with stress styles of teachers are investigated, mean points for healthy coping styles, such as self-confidence, optimism and search for social support, were observed to be higher than the mean points for the unhealthy styles of hopeless and submissive approaches. These findings are consistent with findings in previous studies (Bilge & Saltuk, 2007; Kazarian & Martin, 2004; Ozdemir et al., 2011; Yerlikaya, 2007). Contrary to this, there

was no significant variation in empathic tendency, life satisfaction, professional burnout and self-efficacy beliefs according to the years of experience.

There are inconsistent results dealing with teacher burnout in terms of the variable of years of experience. Some research identified no significant difference, some identified that teachers experience more burnout with longer service durations. The high professional burnout of teachers with longer service durations may be affected by more years of experience, and hence more experience of organizational, professional and personal problems. In a similar study, Celik and Ustuner (2018) emphasised that burnout levels did not significantly differ according to variations in years of experience. They identified that teachers with longer service had higher professional burnout. Similarly, a study by Karahan and Uyanik Balat (2011) investigated burnout levels among educators according to duration or employment in the profession and identified that educators with 11–15 years of experience had higher emotional burnout compared to teachers with 16 years or more experience. Educators with 1–5 years, 6–10 years and 11–15 years' experience perceived they had significantly higher burnout for the personal success subdimension compared to educators with 16 years or more experience. These research findings revealed that professional burnout did not significantly differ according to years of experience. A study by Aydemir et al. (2015) obtained similar findings.

At the end of the research, the life satisfaction levels of teachers did not significantly differ according to years of experience. The relevant research findings support this result (Aydemir et al., 2015; Celik & Ustuner, 2018; Firat & Cula, 2016; Telef, 2011). Another conclusion reached in the research is that the self-efficacy perception levels of preschool teachers did not significantly differ according to the years of experience. Studies by Akdag and Walker (2005), Karahan and Uyanik Balat (2011) support these findings. Similarly, research about class teachers did not identify differences between teacher opinions in terms of time spent in the profession (Gotch & French, 2013). A study by Yilmaz and Bokeoglu (2008) concluded there was no significant difference in teacher opinions related to self-efficacy according to the professional experience variable. A study by Ustuner, Demirtas, Comert and Ozer (2009) revealed that teacher perceptions related to self-efficacy did not significantly differ according to professional experience. In similar studies Yilmaz, Tomris and Kurt (2016) and Gomleksiz and Serhatoglu (2013) identified that the self-efficacy perceptions of preschool teachers did not differ according to years of experience. Accordingly, it can be said the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers do not differ according to professional experience and working duration is not effective on self-efficacy beliefs. Contrary to this, other research identified a correlation between teacher competency and duration of experience in the profession (Cheuung, 2006). Another study concluded that as professional experience increased, self-efficacy beliefs increased (Fives & Buehl, 2010).

The research identified that preschool teachers with 11 years or more experience had higher self-efficacy compared to preschool teachers with 1–10 years' experience. Similarly, Gencturk (2008) found that primary school teachers with 11 years or more experience had higher self-efficacy compared to primary school teachers with 1–5 and 6–11 years' experience. The research by Yilmaz, Tomris & Kurt concluded that as professional years of experience increase, self-efficacy beliefs increase. A study by Senol and Ergun (2015) examined mean self-efficacy points according to professional years of experience for preschool teachers and found that preschool teachers with 16 years or more professional experience had higher self-efficacy beliefs for all subdimensions and general self-efficacy compared to teachers with less professional experience.

In conclusion, there were significant correlations found between life satisfaction, professional burnout, empathic tendency levels, styles of coping with stress and self-efficacy beliefs for preschool education teachers. Life satisfaction of teachers can be said to have a significant effect on professional burnout, self-efficacy and empathy. In this framework, precautions to reduce teacher burnout will simultaneously affect the life satisfaction of teachers. In Turkey, intervention programs to increase awareness of teachers, reduce burnout and increase self-efficacy and empathic tendencies may be performed. These types of studies will indirectly contribute to life satisfaction of teachers. Different research may deal with personality traits of teachers and environmental conditions of the school along

with professional burnout and life satisfaction. Hence, correlations between variables will be revealed more clearly. With the aim of facilitating teachers coping with stress, it is recommended to ensure more support from colleagues and administrators in school by increasing social and cultural activities.

The results of the research reveal that if the teachers were given the chance to choose their profession, half of them would choose a different area of teaching or a different profession. It is recommended to examine the causes of this situation in detail with a qualitative research. In addition, results indicate that there were significant correlations among psychosocial characteristics of preschool education teachers. The role of these characteristics in predicting children's self-regulation skills, social emotional adjustment and academic skills can be investigated.

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