Occupational Resilience Belief Life Satisfaction and Superior Support as the Predictors of the Job Stress in Teachers

Research Article

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of the current study is to determine the extent to which occupational resilience belief, life satisfaction and superior support predict job stress in teachers. The relational survey model was employed in the present study to investigate the relationships between occupational resilience belief, life satisfaction, superior support and job stress. The study group of the current research is comprised of a total of 254 teachers. In the current study, the job stress scale, the life satisfaction scale, the occupational resilience belief scale and the perceived superior support scale were used to collect data. In order to determine the extent to which occupational resilience belief, life satisfaction, superior support, gender and age predict job stress in teachers, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The findings have revealed that while life satisfaction, occupational resilience belief and age negatively and significantly predict job stress in teachers, superior support and gender do not significantly predict job stress in teachers. In other words, with teachers' increasing life satisfaction, occupational resilience belief and age, their job stress decreases.

Keywords:

Occupational resilience, superior support, job stress, life satisfaction, teachers

Introduction

In their daily lives, each individual can be frequently confronted with stressful situations. The differences between them is how stressful situations are perceived and how they affect by individuals. People can exhibit different reactions in stressful situations. While some of these reactions can be healthy, others can be unhealthy.

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In general, stress is caused by the conflict between the external world and the inner world of the individual, which causes emotional and physical pressure. In the adult world, it is inevitable to experience stress (Kotteswari & Sharief, 2014). According to Selye (1936), stress is the non-specific reaction of the individual's body in response to pleasant or unpleasant conditions. Selye (1936) defines the sudden reaction given by the body to protect itself in the face of stress as general adaptation syndrome (cited in Rice, 2000). According to Baltaş and Baltaş (2013), the body gives the “fight or run away” reaction in the presence of stress. individuals run away in stressful situations if they believe that they cannot cope with otherwise, they may choose to fight if they believe that they can cope with. In other words, people exhibit different reactions in stressful conditions.

Teaching has been identified as one of the professions associated with very high levels of occupational stress. Teaching career is difficult and full of challenges in nowadays. Also this stress can bring undesirable results such as less effort and negative effect on students (Acirrt, 2002; Giurian et al., 2011). In teaching profession, distress has been linked to dissatisfaction with job and to negative affective and professional consequences. (Ruma et al., 2010).

Work Stress

Work stress includes physical and emotional reactions that occur when an employee's abilities, resources, and needs do not match with his/her job requirements (Leka, Grifitths & Cox, 2003). The International Labor Organization (ILO, 2016) states that all countries and professional groups, employees and their families are somehow affected by stress. According to the ILO (2016) reports, 40 million people in Europe are affected by work stress; moreover, 30% of the European population is under heavy work stress and most of the stressful jobs are in the education and health sectors. In the same report, it is stated that people who are experiencing intense stress feel unhappy, depressed and anxious.

Work stress affects people in different ways. Especially long-lasting traumatic work stress can disrupt workers' psychology and prevent them from working (Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 2002). One of the most important consequences of job stress is that it negatively affects job performance. Many studies show that there is a negative correlation between job stress and job performance (Cottrell, 2001; Kotteswari & Sharief, 2014; Park, 2007). In addition, there are some studies reporting a connection of job stress with depression (Shields, 2006); chronic health problems and sleep problems (Alves, 2005; Norfolk, 1989), substance abuse (Oginska-Bulik, 2006); burn-out syndrome (Dervişoğlu, 2000; Weisberg, 1994).

The stress experienced in the work environment may impair the balance between the work and private life of the individual. Situations such as the birth of a new child, economic difficulties, divorce etc. in the private life can increase the stress of the individual in the work environment. On the other hand, stress induced by the characteristics of a job can increase the individual's stress in the private life as well (Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 2002). Job-related stress can arise from high or low duty requirements, role conflicts or role ambiguities, poor interpersonal relationships, inappropriate working conditions, low or excessively high wages or characteristics of the organization.

The pressures from life, work and social environment, may have an adverse impact on teachers' mental health, and the probability that psychological disorder occurs in this occupation goes far higher than that of general population. Teachers' occupation stress is more likely to harm their physical and

mental health, thereby degrading their teaching quality, behaviors and life satisfaction (Lasalvia & Tansella, 2011; Wang et al., 2015). According to Duxbury and Higgens (2013) teachers are more likely to report a depressed mood, be less committed to their organization, and have lower job satisfaction than other professional groups. Teacher stress impacts teacher absenteeism and work-related illnesses.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is one of the important concepts that can be related to individuals' job stress. According to Diener (2000), life satisfaction is one of the basic elements that people should have in order to be happy in their lives and to make their lives meaningful. Subjective well-being consists of three elements: positive emotions, negative emotions and life satisfaction. Life satisfaction constitutes the cognitive dimension of subjective well-being. According to Haybron (2004), life satisfaction includes an individual's overall evaluation of his/her life in line with his/her own criteria. Life satisfaction refers to the situation or result arising from the person's comparison of his/her possessions with his/her expectations. Life satisfaction of people as a whole refers to the sum of their evaluations about situations such as family, environment, and working life (Suldo, Riley & Shaffer, 2006). For this reason, it is thought that how teachers evaluate their working life is related to their life satisfaction (Kumar et al., 2013; Türker and Çelik, 2019; Ünüvar and Tagay, 2015).

Occupational Resilience

Due to the rapid changes encountered in the current century, new ways are sought to cope with the difficulties confronted with in professional life. These ways also affect the individual's success in personal and business life. There are three key attitudes important for psychological resilience in business life: commitment to profession, challenge and control. When an individual finds his/her profession important and valuable, he/she can use all his/her attention, imagination and effort to strive in this profession. If he/she believes that he/she is competent in his/her job, he/she will not be affected negatively by the consequences of changes in his/her working life. Hence, he/she can struggle with negative external forces. In other words, he/she can challenge negative situations. Such people view stressful life situations in the workplace as opportunity for personal growth, not as a threat, as they believe in change rather than stativity (Maddi, Harvey, Khoshaba, Fazel, Resurreccion & 2009). Harland, Harrison, Jones, and Palmon (2005) described psychological resilience factors in professional life as follows; *external support* such as good role-models and family, *internal strengths* such as empathy ability, goal presence and optimism and *interpersonal problem-solving skills* such as seeking help when needed and using new ideas. As stated by Tait (2008), the common opinion in the literature is that while risk factors increase psychological stress, protective factors reduce the effect of the problems experienced.

Although many studies have been conducted over the years regarding the stress experienced by teachers in working life, research on teacher resilience has just started in recent years (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011). Bobek (2010) defined teacher resilience as "teachers' adaptation to different conditions and the ability to face negative conditions." In another definition, teacher resilience is described as "the quality that enables a teacher to maintain his/her commitment to teaching despite difficult conditions and repetitive obstacles" (Brunetti, 2006 p.813). In line with these definitions, the teaching profession resilience belief is defined in the current study as the belief that one can adapt to the difficult conditions of teaching profession, cope with obstacles and maintain his/her commitment to the profession.

Various studies have been conducted to determine the qualities possessed by psychologically resilient teachers. Stanford (2001) found that people with high professional resilience have high job satisfaction and can receive support from people around them in school and private life. Patterson, Collins, and Abbott (2004) observed that teachers who can cope with difficulties at school in a healthy way have the characteristics of making decisions based on values, caring about their professional development, solving problems by taking responsibility, seeking help from colleagues and friends, and being flexible. Brunetti (2006) defined these teachers as people who are devoted to their profession and gain strength from difficulties. Tait (2008) determined the indicators of teacher resilience as optimism, being able to adapt to troubled situations, showing reactions, being flexible, establishing supportive relationships, having problem solving skills, making plans, asking for help, acting independently, having goals and determination and taking risks. Beltman, Mansfield, and Price (2011) reviewed 50 studies on teacher resilience and they determined that the following characteristics are possessed by teachers who can cope with adverse conditions in a healthy way; altruism, strong intrinsic motivation, perseverance, optimism, sense of humor, emotional intelligence, patience, flexibility, risk taking, self-efficacy belief, internal locus of control, problem solving ability, ability to seek help, ability to overcome failure, interpersonal skills, self-confidence in professional competence, creativity, self-assessment, professional goals, effort for professional development and standing on one's own feet.

In the literature, it is suggested that teachers' occupational resilience can be particularly affect their professional performance. There are studies showing that the health and performance of individuals, especially those who experience intense stress, have a negative effect on their resilience (Maddi, 2002). For example, Knight (2007) suggests that teachers with high levels of resilience will be more comfortable in meeting students' social and emotional needs. These teachers will focus on their students' strengths rather than their inadequacies, and that they will cope more easily with the stress of teaching. As a result, as Bobek (2010) points out, teachers' occupational resilience will improve as they develop their competence of adapting to changing conditions, handling events with a positive and flexible approach, evaluating negative situations correctly, learning from previous experiences, establishing positive interactions and ways of coping and reaching appropriate solutions.

Superior Support

There are many effects of superior support on the work life of employees because managers are the people that employees work in close contact with. Employees usually get feedback from their managers and this feedback determines their sense of failure or success. Managers control many aspects of employees' lives at work such as: leave permission, rewards, penalty or reprimand, counselling and guidance (Garip, 2013). Managers have the responsibility to evaluate and direct the performance of their subordinates and act as representatives of the organization. As a result of this, employees will regard managers as indicators of support of the organization on the basis of their positive or negative guidance (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Superior support is an important resource for employees to be successful in their jobs and to do their jobs effectively. Superior support sends an important message to the employees, and thus increases the positive views of the organization and strengthens the employees' commitment to the organization. Otherwise, the lack of superior support causes the resources to decline and the employees to question the organization and which may cause the employees and the organization to fall apart in the long run (Lambert et al., 2015). When a supportive manager shows empathy and understanding of employees' obligations related to the work-family relationship, it increases the psychological dispositions of individuals in coping with stress, thus reducing conflict and problems in their workload (Goh et al., 2015). Strong support provided by managers increases the job

satisfaction and performance of employees in organizations, reduces the effects of stress and provides a better working environment (Ynag et al., 2015).

Teachers develop general views on the extent to which their contribution to the school is appreciated by school administrators and to what extent administrators pay attention to their well-being (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski & Rhoades, 2002). Perceived administrative support is also considered as the assurance that the administrator will provide assistance when needed so that teachers can effectively perform their jobs and cope with stressful situations (Randall et al., 1999).

In the current study, it is aimed to determine to what extent professional resilience belief, life satisfaction, superior support, age and gender predict teachers' job stress. Stress has become very common in daily life and has become a part of life. Stress cannot be avoided but can be coped with. It is a fact that stress in work life affects people negatively in every sense (Kotteeswari & Sharief, 2014). Healthy work environment for teachers is very important both for the education and emotional life of students and for teachers' own health too. The results of this study are expected to contribute to both the field of teaching profession and researchers. Identifying the predictors of teachers' work stress may lead to new studies. It can help to realize the problems in the education system.

Method

Design of the study

The relational survey model was employed in the present study to investigate the relationships between occupational resilience belief, life satisfaction, superior support and job stress. The dependent variable of this study was job stress and the independent variables were occupational resilience, superior support, age and gender.

Study Group

The study group of the current research is comprised of a total of 254 teachers (131 females and 123 males). The ages of these teachers vary between 24 and 60. Of the participants, 34 are primary school teachers, 91 are secondary school teachers and 129 are high school teachers. 104 teachers for 0-5 years, 94 teachers for 5-10 years, and 56 teachers for 10 years or more work at the same school. The study group was determined using convenient sampling method. The convenient sampling method enables the application of a questionnaire to the participants that are within the reach of the researcher (Balci, 2001).

Data Collection Tools

Job Stress Scale

The job stress scale developed by House and Rizzo (1972) to measure job stress was used to collect data. This scale measures psychological and psychosomatic symptoms of stress experienced by employees in the workplace. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Efeoğlu (2006). This is a five-point Likert scale consisted of seven items. Higher scores taken from the scale indicate increasing job stress. In the studies using the job stress scale, Cronbach alpha values ranging from 0.71 to 0.89 have been found (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1998; Kacmar, 1999; Güler, 2016). Job stress has been found to be

positively correlated with role uncertainty, work-family life conflict, family-induced stress, intention to quit and poor physical health (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1998; Sanchez & Brock, 1996).

Perceived superior support scale. The scale developed by Kottke and Sharafinski (1988) was translated and adapted to Turkish by Özdemir (2010). The scale is a five-point Likert scale consisted of 14 items and a single dimension. In the reliability analysis of the scale in this study, Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.96.

Life Satisfaction Scale: The scale developed by Diener, Emmons and Griffin (1985) was adapted to Turkish by Köker (1991). In the scale, there are seven items related to life satisfaction and each item is responded on a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1: completely unsuitable to 7: very suitable). The scale aims to measure general life satisfaction at all ages, from adolescents to adults. As a result of the item analysis of the scale, the correlation was found to be sufficient and the test-retest reliability coefficient was found to be .85. In the study conducted by Yetim (1993), the Cronbach alpha value was found to be .86 and the reliability coefficient determined with test-retest method was calculated to be .73. Higher scores taken from the scale indicate higher life satisfaction. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha value of the scale was found to be .92.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher using the scales explained the purpose and the procedure to the participants. Each participant received a voluntary participation form and the data collected only came from voluntary participants. The administration of the scales lasted for about 30 minutes. The author declares that she has carried out the research within the framework of the Helsinki Declaration and with the volunteer participation. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. All participants were debriefed in the research process. Before the data were collected, ethical approval was obtained from Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee, dated 03.04.2019 and numbered 79.

Data Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was run to determine the extent to which occupational resilience belief, life satisfaction, superior support, gender and age predict job stress in teachers. Prior to the regression analysis, the means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the variables were calculated. In order to test whether each variable satisfies the normality assumption, kurtosis and skewness coefficients were checked. For each of the variables, Kurtosis and skewness coefficients were found to be within the reference value range of -1.0 and +1.0. Thus, it can be said that the data are distributed normally (Büyüköztürk, Çokluk & Şekercioğlu, 2011). In order to test the autocorrelation in the determined model, the Durbin Watson value was checked and this value expected to be between 1.5 and 2.5 (Kalaycı, 2006) was found to be 1.72. Thus, as there was no autocorrelation in the model, the regression assumption was satisfied. Simple (binary) correlations between variables were examined to check if there was a multicollinearity problem. As a result of the analysis, it was seen that all of the binary correlation values between variables were lower than .90 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Thus, it was concluded that there is no multicollinearity problem between the variables.

Moreover, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and condition index (CI) values were also checked to determine whether there is a multicollinearity problem in the data set; for all the items, VIF values

were found to be lower than 10 and CI values were found to be lower than 30 (Field, 2009). Thus, it can be said that there is no multicollinearity problem between the variables.

In the current study, job stress among teachers was determined as the dependent variable while life satisfaction, occupational resilience, superior support, gender and age were determined as the independent variables. Gender was coded as 1 for females and 0 for males and was taken as the dummy variable. In the statistical analyses, SPSS 20.0 program package was used and the significance level was set to be .05.

Findings

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if teachers' occupational resilience beliefs, life satisfaction, perceived superior support, gender and age predict their job stress. Prior to the regression analysis, Pearson correlation coefficients between the dependent and independent variables were calculated to determine whether there was the multicollinearity problem between the dependent and independent variables and the results are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation between Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Job Stress	-				
2. Life satisfaction	-.272**	-			
3. Occupational resilience	-.351**	.218**	-		
4. Superior Support	-.047	.070	.159*	-	
5. Age	-.128*	-.034	.032	.131*	-
M	.51	26.93	113.75	55.05	39.80
SD	.50	4.94	10.52	12.48	8.00
Skew.	.29	-.35	-.47	-.41	-.83
Kurt.	-.30	.14	-.46	-.45	.20

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

As can be seen in Table 1, there is a negative and significant correlation between the teachers' job stress and life satisfaction ($r = -.272$, $p < .01$), occupational resilience ($r = -.351$, $p < .01$) and age ($r = -.128$, $p < .05$). Moreover, there is a positive and insignificant correlation between job stress and superior support ($r = .047$, $p > .05$).

The fact that these correlations in the constructed model do not cause the problem of multicollinearity in the model (lower than .90). The results obtained from the multiple linear regression analysis conducted to determine if life satisfaction, occupational resilience, perceived superior support and age significantly predict job stress in teachers are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Job Stress among Teachers

Variables	B	sh	β	t	p
Job Stress					
Life satisfaction	-.296	.084	-.209	-3.53	.00**

Occupational resilience	-.201	.040	-.302	-.5.05	.00**
Superior Support	.015	.033	.028	.466	.64
Age	-.120	.051	-.137	-2.33	.02*
Gender	-.620	.828	-.044	-.749	.45
R=.426 R ² =.182 R ² _{ch} = .165 F= 11.020					

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Life satisfaction, occupational resilience, superior support, age and gender were found to predict nearly 18% of the total variance ($R=.426$ $R^2=.182$ $F_{(5,254)}=11.020$ $p<.01$). When Table 2 including the results of t-test related to the significance of the regression coefficients is examined, it is seen that life satisfaction ($t=-3.53$, $p<.01$), occupational resilience ($t=-5.05$, $p<.01$) and age ($t=-2.33$, $p<.05$) are significant predictors of job stress among teachers negatively. According to the standardized regression coefficient (β), the relative order of importance of the predictor variables on job stress in teachers is as follows: occupational resilience ($\beta=-.302$), life satisfaction ($\beta=-.209$) and age ($\beta=-.137$).

If the findings obtained from the standard multiple regression analysis are summarized, it can be said that while life satisfaction, occupational resilience and age negatively predict job stress among teachers, superior support and gender do not significantly predict job stress among teachers. In other words, with teachers' increasing life satisfaction, occupational resilience and age, their job stress decreases.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results of the current study, it is seen that teachers with high level of occupational resilience have less job stress. As it stands, occupational resilience is the capacity to overcome difficulties and to demonstrate the personal strength required to cope with difficulties. Resilience is the process of dealing with destructive and stressful life events and can vary from person to person, from time to time (Boniwell & Ryan, 2012).

Personal and environmental factors affect resilience and it is known that professional resilience in teachers is very important in the education system. In the existing resilience models, it is stated that resilience is a factor that neutralizes exposure to risk. Negative experiences prepare the individual for the next challenge (Gu & Day, 2013; Ledesma, 2014; O'Leary, 1998). When the literature is examined, it is seen that occupational resilience has positive effects for novice teachers (Doney, 2013; Hong, 2012), professional resilience is effective in training students with high self-efficacy (Bouillet, Ivanec & Miljevi-Riiki, 2014), and teachers' occupational resilience alleviates the negative effects of stress and burnout (Lai-Kaen Lo, 2014). Castro, Kelly, and Shin (2010) determined that teachers with high levels of resilience are teachers who can seek help, solve problems and manage difficult relationships. In the current study, it was also found that the most important variable that predicts teachers' job stress at the highest level is occupational resilience. It can be said that this result concurs with the literature.

Another important result obtained in the current study is that teachers with high life satisfaction have lower levels of job stress. Life satisfaction consists of individual's own subjective judgments and emotions. In this process, the individual is expected to evaluate his/her own life rationally and his/her life satisfaction is affected by many factors. It is also known that job satisfaction and life satisfaction are closely related concepts (Bano & Malik, 2014). Blegen (1993) found that age, autonomy, commitment, communication, justice, locus of control, stress, and experience are associated with life satisfaction. In

the same study, it was determined that stress and commitment have the strongest relationship with life satisfaction. Rode (2004) stated that administrative support, student behavior, school environment, relationship with parents and autonomy affect job satisfaction and that individuals who are satisfied with their jobs tend to be satisfied with their lives. Similar to the result of the current study, there are studies demonstrating that life satisfaction is related to job stress (Bano & Malik, 2014; Barke, 2003; Kumar-Dey and et al., 2013).

According to another result of the current study, the older teachers are, the more job stress decreases. This can be explained by the increase in the work experience of teachers with their age. Day & Gu (2010) stated that the first years of the profession are difficult for teachers and teachers have more adaptation problems in their first years. Antoniou, et al. (2006) found that young teachers have higher levels of emotional exhaustion and disengagement from the profession; Byrne (1991) determined that young teachers experience more burnout and depersonalization. It was also stated that the reason for this may be that young teachers have difficulties in activating appropriate coping mechanisms to reduce professional stress. In the current study, it was concluded that older teachers experienced less job stress confirming other studies in the literature.

Interestingly, perceived superior support does not significantly predict teachers' job stress. Teachers are the ones who carry out many studies in educational settings and it is known that teachers frequently cooperate with the school administrators in this process. There are studies in the literature reported that superior support is related to job stress (Balaban, 2000; Küçükköy, 2006). However, In the current study, it was found that superior support does not significantly predict teachers' job stress. Göksoy and Argon (2014) stated that, due to the lack of institutional support for teachers in schools, teachers develop personal solutions instead of institutional support and receive support from their colleagues and families. It is thought that such a result may have been achieved as teachers do not fully conceive the scope of superior support in schools. In addition, there are studies stating that teachers think differently about the competencies of administrators and that some teachers do not see school administrators as a leaders (Yolcu & Bayram, 2015) and this is due to the appointment and selection criteria of administrators in Turkey (Tekişik, 1995). This can be the reason why superior support does not significantly predict job stress.

Finally, according to the results of the study, the gender variable did not significantly predict teachers' job stress. Research on teachers' gender and job stress has not been conclusive. For example, Kantas (2010) determined that female teachers are more affected by the negative environment at school and they experience more job stress. However, there are also studies showing that teachers' job stress levels do not vary significantly depending on gender (Abacı, 2004; Altınok, 2009; Çardak, 2002; Çivilidağ, 2003).

The results obtained in the current study are limited to the teachers in the study group. Similar studies can be conducted with larger groups of teachers. It may also be suggested to conduct qualitative studies to investigate teachers' job stress. In addition, it will be important to include activities that will increase the occupational resilience and life satisfaction of teachers in terms of reducing job stress. It is thought that the support activities to be offered to novice teachers will reduce the job stress of young teachers.

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