
Orijinal Makale Başlığı:

Examining Primary School Teachers' Coping Styles with Stress According to Different Variables

Makalenin Türkçe Başlığı:

İlköğretim Kurumu Öğretmenlerinin Stresle Başa Çıkma Tarzlarının Çeşitli Değişkenler Açısından İncelenmesi

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Examining Primary School Teachers' Coping Styles with Stress According to Different Variables

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Abstract

The study seeks to explore primary school teachers' coping styles with stress according to such different variables as gender, branch, age, and total teaching experience. A total of 368 teachers employed in 14 primary schools in Ankara participated in the study. "Scale of Coping with Stress" was used to gather data. Independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were performed to analyze the data. The results revealed that teachers used self-confident and optimistic coping styles more than others. Results also indicated that teachers' perceptions of coping styles differed significantly on self-confident subscale according to gender variable and that their perceptions differed significantly on optimistic coping style according to both age and total teaching experience variables.

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Öz

Bu araştırma, ilköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin stresle başa çıkma tarzlarının cinsiyet, branş, yaş ve toplam mesleki kıdem gibi demografik değişkenler açısından incelenmesini amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmaya Ankara ilinde bulunan 14 ilköğretim kurumunda görevli toplam 368 öğretmen katılmıştır. Araştırma verilerinin toplanmasında "Stresle Başa Çıkma Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Araştırma verilerinin analizinde bağımsız gruplar için t-testi ve tek yönlü ANOVA kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları öğretmenlerin kendine güvenli ve iyimser başa çıkma tarzlarını diğerlerine göre daha fazla kullandıklarını göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte araştırma sonuçları, öğretmenlerin stresle başa çıkma tarzlarına ilişkin algılarının kendine güvenli tarz boyutunda cinsiyet değişkenine göre, iyimser tarz boyutunda yaş ve mesleki kıdem değişkenlerine göre anlamlı bir biçimde farklılaştığını göstermektedir.

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Introduction

Workers spend much of their time in organizations. Negative psychological and social environment of organizations has been one of the most important reasons for workers to experience stress (Albertsen, Nielsen, & Borg, 2001). Much worse is the situation considering that workers experience stress in the private life, as well (Cemaloğlu, 2007; Çobanoğlu, 2005; Mearns & Cain, 2003). Sabuncuoğlu and Tüz (2001) argue that workplace stress impacts workers' job performance negatively and results in high turnover rates, burnout, mental disorders, and anxiety.

An avenue of research suggests that teachers experience a high level of stress and extreme fatigue in schools (Austin, Shah, & Muncer, 2005; Boyle, Borg, Falzon, & Baglioni, 1995; Burchielli & Bartram, 2006; Capel, 1991; Van Dick & Wagner, 2001; Erçetin, Hamedoğlu, & Çelik, 2008; Platsidou & Agaliotis, 2008; Tsiakkios & Pashiardis, 2006). Baltaş and Baltaş (2000) also suggest that a higher level of stress may decrease the quality of teachers' life and lead them to avoid building close relationships with their colleagues. A great amount of research effort has also been spent on investigating relationships between teachers' occupational stress and burnout (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Mearns & Cain, 2003; Valadut & Kallay, 2010), self-efficacy (Betoret, 2006), collective efficacy (Klassen, 2010) and perceived social support (Chan, 2002).

Stress experienced by teachers may be considered to be a negative factor on their peer relationships and the teaching quality and capacity of the school (Kyriacou, 1987). Stress in workplace is a factor which negatively affects the organizational atmosphere, as well as the life quality of the individual exposed to stress (Valadut & Kalay, 2010). It has also been emphasized that teachers are exposed to stress due to a variety of reasons external and internal to schools and that this situation hinders the school from attaining its goals (Özdemir, Sezgin, Kaya, & Recepoğlu, 2011). Van Dick and Wagner (2001) report that teachers under heavy stress experience psychological, physiological, and behavioral problems such as work dissatisfaction, hypertension, and absenteeism. They further suggest that long-term stress will eventually lead to psychosomatic and chronic problems which may even develop into coronary heart problems. Furthermore, stressful teachers face a serious exhaustion problem (Mearns & Chan, 2003).

It is arguable that stress in the workplace leads to negative results both for the organization and the individual, and that teachers experience a significant level of stress in schools (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978). Teachers should combat the heavy stress they experience in the workplace. It may be thought that teachers who can successfully fight against stress would contribute well to student learning and achievement. In this regard, stress-coping mechanisms of teachers who participated in the study were examined in terms of their gender, branch, age, and total teaching experience. Kyriacou (2001) further claims that in-depth studies of teachers' coping with stress in school would contribute much to the field. Therefore, it is expected that findings of the current study would constitute an important source of data for policymakers with regards to building a more effective and more positive school climate that promotes learning and teaching.

Workplace Stress

Stress refers to a range of environmental factors that threaten individuals as a whole (Hiebert & Farber, 1984). Workplace stress is associated with the inconsistency between worker's job and his or her competencies, which results in poor mental and physical health (Fako, 2010). Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) state that individuals' locus of control affects their perceptions of stress and that people with external locus of control tend to perceive environment as more dangerous and threatening.

Workplace stress is also common in teaching profession (Arikewuyo, 2004; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Teacher stress denotes to teachers' feeling anger, anxiety, depression, and misery (Kyriacou, 2001). Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) categorize teacher stress factors into two distinct groups: (1) physical factors such as crowded classrooms and (2) psychological factors such as adversarial

relationships among colleagues. These factors contribute to the amount of stress that teachers experience in schools. These factors also require for a number of effective activities to prevent teachers from experiencing stress.

A careful investigation of the factors resulting in teacher stress indicate that excessive workload, school administrators' competing demands from teachers, and crowded classrooms are primary sources for teacher stress. Furthermore, negative workplace conditions, scarcity of sources, and conflicts between school and society are among the primary reasons for teachers to feel stressful (Pithers & Soden, 1998). Kyriacou and Harriman (1993) argue that new role descriptions for teachers, new workplace rules, changes in teacher and students profiles, teachers' appointment to other schools may well be some other sources of excessive teacher stress. Travers and Cooper (1996) point that deviant student behaviors, unmotivated students, limited amount of organizational and social support, and ineffective communication result in teacher stress. Pithers and Soden (1999) also state that teachers' anxiety on being evaluated by inspectors, negative relationships with colleagues and fear of not coping with change effectively seem among various potential reasons for teacher stress. Thus, it is possible to suggest that teacher stress may stem from a range of factors.

Evidence from literature (Işıkhan, 2004; Lambert, McCarthy, O'Donnell and Wang, 2009) reveals that stress has a number of potential negative effects for both individual and organization. As stated by Işıkhan (2004), stress may damage individuals' mental health and may negatively affect workplace environment. Lambert et al. (2009) also argue that student learning may decrease and deviant student behaviors may become more prominent in a stressful school environment. Considering various stress factors for teachers and their potential negative effects for both teachers and school, it seems necessary for teachers to cope with stress in order to contribute well to the primary purposes of school.

Coping with Stress

Coping with stress refers to individuals' cognitive and behavioral efforts to equate internal and external demands (Lazarus, 1990, 1993). Oxland, Miller-Lewis and Wade (2004) point out that the number of studies focusing on coping styles has recently increased just after relationships between coping styles and psychological and physical health have been discovered. A line of scholars (Lazarus, 2006; Şahin & Durak, 1995) also call attention to the negative physical and mental effects of stress on individuals. In this regard, coping with stress plays a potential role to prevent individuals from negative effects of stress. In other words, considering that workplace stress is indispensable phenomenon and leads to some psychological and physical problems such as high anxiety, depression, and heart attacks; and what people do to avoid stress or to minimize its negative effects becomes crucial (Baugher & Roberts, 2004).

Folkman and Lazarus (1980) focus on two main coping styles in their coping model. The first style is *problem-oriented* which aims at changing the present negative situation into better. The second style is *emotion-oriented* which is associated with individuals' managing their feelings effectively. Problem-oriented coping style concentrates on factors that lead to stress. This coping style is based on the assumption that individuals can change the factors producing stress by using effective coping styles to change their relationships with environment. Emotion-oriented coping style denotes to individuals' understanding and interpreting events around them. According to this coping style, people avoid thinking about stress factors and try not to combat until they bother them (Lazarus, 1993). The coping model of Folkman and Lazarus has been criticized in that it cannot make a reasonable explanation when the coping style that individuals use to combat with stress does not work. In such a situation, stress factors continue to threaten people's mental and physical health. Therefore, a new dimension has been added to the model titled *meaning oriented* coping style which refers to building positive emotions towards stress factors and motivating people to combat with stress more effectively (Folkman, 2008). In other words, the main purpose of people using meaning-oriented coping style is to manage stress factors effectively by describing their own beliefs, values, and aims (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000).

Kyriacou (2001) also classifies teachers' coping strategies into two: *direct action techniques* and *palliative techniques*. Direct action techniques include teachers' behaviors aiming at removing stress factors. These techniques call for teachers to determine stress factors clearly. On the other hand, palliative techniques are associated mainly with decreasing stress instead of combating with stress factors.

In Turkey, Şahin and Durak's (1995) research on coping styles is of critical importance in that these scholars produced "The Scale of Coping with Stress" which comprised of 5 subscales titled *self-confident*, *optimistic*, *helpless*, *submissive* and *seeking social support* coping styles. *Self-confident style* means that individual tries to combat with the current negative situation, believes in herself or himself, and feels strong. *Optimistic style* refers to individuals' controlling themselves and taking a positive attitude in a stressful situation. *Helpless style* describes a belief of failure in managing a stressful situation. An individual using helpless coping style perceive himself as the main source of problems and does not produce effective solutions. In *submissive style*, the individual agrees to face the problems arousing in a stressful situation and takes the fatalistic point of view. *Seeking social support style* denotes to the need for receiving help from others to determine the stress factors.

It is no doubt that individuals can choose a number of ways or strategies to combat with stress. It is also possible to suggest that a proper strategy to overcome stress heavily depends on the situation itself. As noted by Lazarus (1999, 2006), there is no single most effective way of fighting against stress. In this regard, this study seeks to explore primary school teachers' coping styles according to some demographic variables. Consequently, this study aims at addressing the following questions:

- 1) What are primary school teachers' perceptions of coping styles?
- 2) Do teachers' perceptions of coping styles change significantly according to gender, branch, age, and total teaching experience?

Method

Procedure and Participants

This descriptive study investigated primary school teachers' perceptions of coping styles with stress according to gender, branch, age, and total teaching experience variables. A questionnaire with two parts was used to gather data. The first part elicited information regarding the demographic variables of gender, branch, age, and total teaching experience. In the second part of the questionnaire, Scale of Coping with Stress (SCS) was administered to determine teacher coping styles. The questionnaires were distributed to teachers by the researchers and necessary instructions and explanations were printed at the top of the questionnaire. Participant primary school teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire on a voluntary basis and anonymously.

A total of 368 teachers were randomly selected from 14 primary schools in Ankara as the study sample. The sample included 182 female and 186 male teachers. The participants were 151 (41%) classroom teachers and 217 teachers (59%) who specialized in various subjects. Their ages ranged from 21 to 61 with a mean of 32.90 ($SD = 7.66$). The mean of total teaching experience was 9.51 ($SD = 7.75$).

Instrumentation

Scale of Coping with Stress (SCS)

This scale was developed by Şahin and Durak (1995). It included 30 items in 5 subscales titled *self-confident*, *optimistic*, *helpless*, *submissive*, and *seeking social support*. Each item was answered on a rating scale from 0 to 3. Higher scores derived from each subscale denote that teachers use that coping style more than others. Internal consistency coefficients calculated for items ranged from .45 to .80

(Şahin & Durak, 1995). In this study, we also calculated internal coefficients related to SCS and found it .80 for self-confident style, .67 for optimistic style, .65 for helpless style, .64 for submissive style, and .38 for seeking social support.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted mainly in two parts. The data of the study was first analyzed in terms of missing, incorrect, and inconsistent value. In the second part, sub-problems were analyzed. Arithmetic mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each subscale and analyses were performed on factor scores. t-test and one-way ANOVA were also performed to determine primary school teachers' perceptions of coping styles according to demographic variables.

Results

The means and standard deviations for all primary school teachers participated in this study are given in Table 1.

Table 1.
Primary School Teachers Perceptions of Coping Styles with Stress.

| <i>Subscales of SCS</i> | \bar{X} | S |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Self-confident | 2.05 | .52 |
| Optimistic | 1.81 | .51 |
| Helpless | 1.09 | .45 |
| Submissive | .93 | .51 |
| Seeking social support | 1.68 | .47 |

Table 1 indicates that self-confident style was the highest rated subscale (\bar{X} = 2.05), while submissive style was the least (\bar{X} = .93) according to primary school teachers' perceptions. In other words, teachers more often prefer self-confident style to cope with the stress they experience. Table 2 illustrates t-test results for teachers' perceptions of coping styles according to gender variable.

Table 2.
t-Test Results for Teachers' Perceptions of Coping Styles According to Gender Variable.

| <i>Subscale s of SCS</i> | Male (n = 186) | | Female (n = 182) | | t | p |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|------|-----|
| | \bar{X} | S | \bar{X} | S | | |
| Self-confident | 1.98 | .54 | 2.12 | .50 | 2.54 | .01 |
| Optimistic | 1.78 | .51 | 1.86 | .52 | 1.49 | .14 |
| Helpless | 1.11 | .47 | 1.09 | .42 | -.36 | .72 |
| Submissive | .95 | .51 | .91 | .51 | -.88 | .38 |
| Seeking social support | 1.66 | .47 | 1.70 | .47 | .66 | .51 |

As can be seen from Table 2, female primary school teachers perceive self-confident (\bar{X} = 2.12), optimistic (\bar{X} = 1.86), and seeking social support (\bar{X} = 1.70) dimensions of coping styles more positively than males, whereas male participants used helpless (\bar{X} = 1.11) and submissive (\bar{X} = .95) coping styles more often than females did. However, the only significant difference between male and female participants' perceptions occurred on the self-confident coping style [$t_{(366)} = 2.54, p > .05$]. Table 3 indicates t-test results for teachers' perceptions of coping styles according to branch variable.

Table 3.
t-Test Results for Teachers' Perceptions of Coping Styles According to Branch Variable.

| Subscale <i>s</i> of SCS | Classroom Teachers (<i>n</i> = 151) | | Branch Teachers (Specialized in any subjects) (<i>n</i> = 217) | | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--------------------------|---|----------|--|----------|----------|----------|
| | \bar{X} | <i>S</i> | \bar{X} | <i>S</i> | | |
| Self-confident | 2.07 | .54 | 2.04 | .52 | .55 | .58 |
| Optimistic | 1.85 | .52 | 1.79 | .51 | 1.04 | .30 |
| Helpless | 1.08 | .40 | 1.11 | .48 | -.56 | .58 |
| Submissive | .92 | .51 | .94 | .51 | -.48 | .63 |
| Seeking social support | 1.67 | .48 | 1.69 | .46 | -.38 | .70 |

As can be referred from Table 3, there were no significant differences between primary school teachers' perceptions of self-confident [$t_{(366)} = .55, p > .05$], optimistic [$t_{(366)} = 1.04, p > .05$], helpless [$t_{(366)} = -.56, p > .05$], submissive [$t_{(366)} = -.48, p > .05$], and seeking social support [$t_{(366)} = -.38, p > .05$] subscales according to branch variable. Table 4 presents ANOVA results for teachers' perceptions of coping styles according to age variable.

Table 4.
ANOVA Results for Teachers Perceptions of Coping Styles According to Age Variable.

| Subscales of SCS | 21-30 (<i>n</i> = 185) | | 31-40 (<i>n</i> = 123) | | 40 years old and more (<i>n</i> = 60) | | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> | Sig. Dif. |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|--|----------|----------|----------|--------------|
| | \bar{X} | <i>S</i> | \bar{X} | <i>S</i> | \bar{X} | <i>S</i> | | | |
| Self-confident | 2.01 | .51 | 2.11 | .51 | 2.07 | .59 | 1.39 | .25 | |
| Optimistic | 1.75 | .51 | 1.89 | .50 | 1.87 | .52 | 3.41 | .03 | 1-2* |
| Helpless | 1.10 | .47 | 1.08 | .44 | 1.14 | .41 | .40 | .67 | |
| Submissive | .93 | .49 | .95 | .53 | .90 | .51 | .17 | .84 | |
| Seeking social support | 1.70 | .50 | 1.67 | .45 | 1.63 | .43 | .59 | .55 | |

As can be seen from Table 4, teachers' perceptions of coping styles differed significantly according to age variable on optimistic style [$F_{(2, 365)} = 3.41, p < .05$]. On the other hand, teachers' perceptions did not differ significantly on self-confident [$F_{(2, 365)} = 1.39, p > .05$], helpless [$F_{(2, 365)} = .40, p > .05$], submissive [$F_{(2, 365)} = .17, p > .05$], and seeking social support [$F_{(2, 365)} = .59, p > .05$] subscales. Tukey test results also illustrated that significant differences on optimistic styles subscale occurred between 21-30 and 31-40 years old teachers. In other words, 31-40 years old teachers prefer optimistic coping style more often than 21-30 years old teachers. Table 5 refers ANOVA results for teachers' perceptions of coping styles according to total teaching experience variable.

It is clear from Table 5 that teachers' perceptions of coping styles with stress differed significantly according to total teaching experience variable on optimistic style [$F_{(2, 365)} = 3.58, p < .05$]. However, teachers' perceptions did not differ significantly on self-confident [$F_{(2, 365)} = .70, p > .05$], helpless [$F_{(2, 365)} = .26, p > .05$], submissive [$F_{(2, 365)} = .07, p > .05$], and seeking social support [$F_{(2, 365)} = .34, p > .05$] subscales. LSD results also showed that significant differences on optimistic style subscale occurred between teachers of 1-10 years of teaching experience and teachers of 11-20 years of teaching experience and teachers of 1-10 years of teaching experience and teachers having 21 years or more years of teaching experience. In other words, the higher the total teaching experience of primary school teachers, the more they prefer to use optimistic style to cope with stress.

Table 5.
ANOVA Results for Teachers Perceptions of Coping Styles According to Total Teaching Experience Variable

| Subscales of SCS | 1-10 (n = 245) | | 11-20 (n = 89) | | 21 years and more (n = 34) | | F | p | Sig. Dif. |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|-------------------------------|-----|------|-----|--------------|
| | \bar{X} | S | \bar{X} | S | \bar{X} | S | | | |
| Self-confident | 2.03 | .52 | 2.10 | .55 | 2.08 | .51 | .70 | .50 | |
| Optimistic | 1.77 | .50 | 1.89 | .57 | 1.96 | .41 | 3.58 | .03 | 1-2* 1-3* |
| Helpless | 1.10 | .47 | 1.08 | .40 | 1.14 | .45 | .26 | .77 | |
| Submissive | .92 | .51 | .94 | .50 | .95 | .50 | .07 | .93 | |
| Seeking social support | 1.69 | .47 | 1.66 | .50 | 1.64 | .41 | .34 | .72 | |

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated primary school teachers' coping styles in terms of gender, branch, age, and total teaching experience variables. The results evidenced that the demographic variables were associated with coping with stress. This study further focused on determining the coping styles that primary school teachers choose to use. The findings illustrated that the teachers more often preferred self-confident style to cope with stress. However, it was found that the teachers in the study rarely preferred submissive style to cope with stress. The findings from a similar study conducted by Özdemir et al. (2011) reported that seeking social support was the most preferred coping style used by teachers whereas submissive style was the least. It is therefore possible to suggest that this finding is in partial agreement with the findings of the current study. Lewis (1999), on the other hand, evidenced that the most common style of coping preferred by teachers was conversation and mutual support. As stated by Şahin and Durak (1995), confident style in coping with stress was associated with the individual's awareness of the atmosphere he/she was in. The individual must also find the inner strength to cope with stress. Congruent with this argument, Parmaksız and Avşaroğlu (2012) found out that there was a positive correlation between some subscales of the self-respect parameter and some subscales of coping styles employed by prospective teachers, namely, between the subscales A) self-worth, B) self-confidence, C) success, D) productivity in the prior category and the subscales I) confidence, II) optimism, III) seeking social support in the latter. To put in other words, teachers who employ attitudes and behaviors that are healthier and more positive (such as confidence, optimism, and seeking social support) have a higher sense of self-worth, self-confidence, self-reliance, success, and productivity. In this regard, it may be concluded that the adoption of more confident styles in coping with stress is a positive outcome.

The current study investigated whether the coping styles adopted by teachers displayed any statistically significant difference according to gender variable. The findings of the present study revealed that the coping perceptions of teachers showed significant difference according to gender only for the self-confident style. This means that female teachers employed the confident style on a more significant level and more frequently than male teachers did. In other words, the confident style which represents a stronger and more active attitude in coping is preferred more often by female teachers than males. Karakuş and Dereli (2011) highlighted that the gender variable was not a significant factor in the employment of coping mechanisms among prospective teachers. This finding contradicts to the findings of the current study. In another study on prospective teachers, prospective teachers' perceptions displayed a significant difference in terms of the following stress-coping subscales as escape-abstraction, active planning, and acceptance-cognitive rebuilding. Other subscales were not significantly different (Avşaroğlu & Taşğın, 2007). Contradictory findings from several studies refer to the need for further studies to better understand the relationship between demographics and the coping styles.

The current study examined stress-coping mechanisms employed by teachers with respect to the variable of branch. The findings indicated that among primary school teachers, perceptions of stress-coping mechanisms did not show significant difference according to branch variable. In other words, classroom teachers and teachers in various branches have similar perceptions of the coping styles. Several prominent factors that cause teachers to feel stress in schools are work overload, crowded classrooms, higher expectations from the school administration, negative work conditions (Pithers & Sode, 1988), changes in the student profile, teachers transferred to new schools and given new role definitions (Kyriacou and Harriman, 1993), negative student behavior, and the inefficiency of the intra-organizational communication process (Travers & Cooper, 1996). Considering that these factors have an impact on all the teachers who work in the same school, this finding of the study may seem congruent with the expectations.

This study further investigated whether perceptions of the stress-coping styles adopted by teachers displayed any statistically significant difference according to the variable of age. The findings of the study demonstrated that primary school teachers' perceptions of stress-coping styles varied significantly only in the optimistic style. On the other hand, this study indicated that teachers in the 31-40 age group had a significantly more positive perceptions of the optimistic style than those in the 21-30 group in terms of coping with stress. We may add, however, that teachers who were 41 years old or over had similar perceptions of the optimistic style when compared to teachers in the 31-40 age group. We may conclude from the findings of the study that younger teachers use the optimistic style less than older teachers. The optimistic style has more to do with the individual controlling his/her emotions and adopting a positive attitude under stress. People who adopt the optimistic style of coping with stress are expected not to dwell too much upon the stress-inducing factor, to adopt a calmer attitude against such factors, and to display tolerance (Şahin & Durak, 1995). In this sense, we may think that older teachers have come to embrace the optimistic style with the maturity their age brings.

Finally, this study explored that primary school teachers' perceptions of stress-coping styles varied significantly only in the optimistic style according to total teaching experience variable. To put it in other words, primary school teachers from different years of experience displayed similar perceptions about the following subscales of stress-coping as self-confident, helpless, submissive, seeking social support. Upon examining the findings of the study, it is possible to suggest that the significant differences which occurred in the optimistic style were in favor of teachers who had higher teaching experience [between both teachers who had 1-10 and 11-20 years of experience, and teachers who had 1-10 and 21 or more years of experience]. In other words, teachers with 11-20 or 21 or over years of experience had more positive perceptions of the optimistic style than those with 1-10 years of teaching experience. However, it was also seen that teachers with 21 or over years of experience had more positive perceptions of the optimistic style than those with 11-20 years (even though the difference was not statistically significant). We may therefore infer from the findings of the study that the higher the teaching experience, the more positive the attitude towards the optimistic style would be. It has already been known that people who adopt an optimistic style are in a calmer and more temperate attitude towards the stress-inducing situation they are in (Şahin & Durak, 1995). In this regard, we may conclude that teachers with longer years of teaching experience are capable of being calmer when facing stress and are more likely to evaluate only the positive aspects of events.

In conclusion, the significant relationships which existed between demographic variables and coping with stress indicate that demographic variables are important in terms of coping with stress and that teachers may exemplify significant differences in stress-coping styles with respect to their demographic variables. To summarize, the findings of the study revealed that the most common style of coping with stress among primary school teachers was the confident style whereas the submissive style was the least common. Even though perceptions of coping with stress did not change significantly according to the branch variable, the gender variable produced statistically significant differences in the confident style. The variables of age and total teaching experience, on the other hand, produced significant differences in the optimistic style.

In light of the study results, it might be suggested that further studies should concentrate more on school-based social and cultural activities which would boost teachers' self-esteem in order to cope with stress more effectively. It might be possible to increase their self-confidence especially by encouraging their participation in decision-making processes and school-based activities. It is also thought that the creation of an efficient network of communication between teachers and the school administration might increase awareness of the stress-inducing factors in both parties, which would in turn make a positive contribution to the stress-coping process. Furthermore, it is possible to investigate the approaches or techniques used by teachers in coping with stress in further studies which would employ different methods of research (quantitative, mixed, etc.) and draw different samples. It is expected that studies to analyze the viewpoints that all involved parties (administrators, teachers, students, parents, etc.) have about stress-inducing factors and to associate the styles employed by the relevant parties with different variables would make a significant contribution to the field.

Geniş Özet

Giriş

Bireyler zamanlarının büyük bir kısmını örgütlerde geçirmektedirler. Örgütlerin psiko-sosyal çalışma ortamının olumsuz olması, işgörenlerin stres yaşamalarına neden olmaktadır (Albertsen, Nielsen ve Borg, 2001). İş ortamında ortaya çıkan strese işgörenlerin özel hayatlarında yaşadıkları stres de eklenince sonuç hem birey hem de örgüt açısından olumsuz olabilmektedir (Cemaloğlu, 2007; Çobanoğlu, 2005; Mearns ve Cain, 2003). Sabuncuoğlu ve Tüz (2001) iş yerinde yaşanan stresin örgütsel performansı olumsuz yönde etkilediğini, işe devamsızlığa ve işgörenlerin davranış bozuklukları, kaygı, depresyon ve tükenmişlik yaşamalarına neden olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.

Yapılan çalışmalar öğretmenlerin okulda strese maruz kaldıklarını ve aşırı yorgunluk yaşadıklarını göstermektedir (Austin, Shah ve Muncer, 2005; Boyle, Borg, Falzon ve Baglioni, 1995; Burchielli ve Bartram, 2006; Capel, 1991; Van Dick ve Wagner, 2001; Erçetin, Hamedoğlu ve Çelik, 2008; Platsidou ve Agalotis, 2008; Tsiakkios ve Pashiardis, 2006). Yüksek düzeyde hissedilen stres, işgörenlerin yaşam kalitesini düşürebilmekte ve meslektaşlarıyla yakın ilişkiler kurmaktan çekinmelerine neden olmaktadır (Baltaş ve Baltaş, 2000). Alanyazında iş yerinde yaşanan stres ile tükenmişlik (Abel ve Sewell, 1999; Mearns ve Cain, 2003; Valadut ve Kallay, 2010), özyeterlik (Betoret, 2006), kolektif etkililik (Klassen, 2010) ve sosyal destek algısı (Chan, 2002) gibi birçok değişken arasında ilişki bulunmuştur.

Öğretmenlerin yaşadığı stres, meslektaşlarıyla ilişkilerini, öğretimin kalitesini ve okul kapasitesi olumsuz yönde etkileyen bir faktördür (Kyriacou, 1987). Öğretmenler okulun dışından ve içinden kaynaklanan bir dizi etmen nedeniyle strese maruz kalırlar ve bu durum okulun amaçlarına ulaşmasını engelleyebilir (Özdemir, Sezgin, Kaya ve Receptoğlu, 2011). İş yerinde algılanan stres hem örgüt hem de birey için olumsuz sonuçlar doğurabilir ve öğretmenler de okulda ciddi bir düzeyde strese maruz kalmaktadırlar (Kyriacou ve Sutcliffe, 1978). Bu bakımdan, Kyriacou (2001) öğretmenlerin okulda yaşadıkları strese ilişkin daha fazla çalışma yapılmasının alana katkı sağlayacağını ifade etmektedir.

Stres, bir bütün olarak bireyi tehdit eden çevresel faktörlerin bir bileşimi olarak ele alınabilir (Hiebert ve Farber, 1984). İşyerinde stres ise işgörenin yaptığı iş ile becerilerinin uyumaması anlamına gelmektedir ve bu durum işgörenin zihinsel ve fiziksel sağlığını olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir (Fako, 2010). İş yerinde stres öğretmenlik mesleğinde de sıklıkla görülmektedir (Arikewuyo, 2004; Stoeber ve Rennert, 2008). Olumsuz çalışma koşulları, kaynakların kıtlığı ve okul ve toplum arasında gerçekleşen çatışmalar, öğretmenlerin iş yerinde stres yaşamalarına neden olan öncül etmenler arasında sayılabilir (Pithers ve Soden, 1998). Kyriacou ve Harriman (1993) öğretmenlerin yeni rol tanımlarının, yeni okul kurallarının, öğretmen ve öğrenci profilindeki değişimlerin ve öğretmenlerin farklı okula tayin olmalarının, stres yaşamalarına neden olan diğer faktörler arasında olabileceğini ifade etmektedirler. Travers ve Cooper (1996) ise öğretmenlerin stres yaşamalarına neden olan faktörler arasında olumsuz öğrenci davranışlarının, motivasyonu düşük öğrencilerin, örgütsel ve sosyal desteğin sınırlı oluşunun ve okul içindeki iletişimin etkisiz olmasının önemli rolü olduğunu bildirmektedir. Bazı araştırmalardan (Işıkhani, 2004; Lambert, McCarthy, O'Donnell ve Wang, 2009) elde edilen bulgular da iş yerinde yaşanan stresin hem birey hem de örgüt açısından olumsuz sonuçlar doğurduğunu kanıtlamaktadır. Işıkhani'nin (2004) da belirttiği gibi, stres bireylerin zihin sağlığına zarar vermekte ve işyerindeki çalışma ortamını olumsuz yönde etkileyebilmektedir.

Stresle baş etme, içsel ve dışsal talepleri dengelemek için bireyin bilişsel ve davranışsal çabalarını ifade etmektedir (Lazarus, 1990, 1993). Oxland, Miller-Lewis ve Wade'ye (2004) göre, yapılan çalışmalarda stresle baş etme ile psikolojik ve fiziksel sağlık arasında ilişkilerin saptanmasıyla birlikte son zamanlarda insanların stresle nasıl mücadele ettiklerini araştıran çalışmaların sayısında ciddi bir artış görülmektedir. Aynı zamanda bir dizi araştırmacı (Lazarus, 2006; Şahin ve Durak, 1995) stresin bireyler

üzerindeki olumsuz fiziksel ve zihinsel etkilerine vurgu yapmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, işyerinde yaşanan stres kaçınılmaz bir durum olarak ele alındığında ve işyerinde yaşanan stresin aşırı düzeyde kaygı, depresyon ve kalp krizine yol açtığı düşünüldüğünde, insanların stresle başa çıkmak ya da stresin olumsuz etkilerini en aza indirmek için neler yaptıkları önem kazanmaktadır (Baugher ve Roberts, 2004).

Folkman ve Lazarus (1980) tarafından ortaya konan stresle baş etme modelinde iki temel baş etme yaklaşımı üzerinde durulmuştur. Bunlardan ilki mevcut olumsuz durumu değiştirmeyi hedefleyen *problem-odaklı* (problem-oriented) baş etme yaklaşımı, diğeri de bireyin duygularını yönetmesiyle ilgili *duygu odaklı* (emotion-oriented) baş etme yaklaşımıdır. Problem-odaklı baş etme yaklaşımında doğrudan strese neden olan etmene odaklanılmaktadır. Daha sonra bu modele stres yaratan etmenlere karşı olumlu duygular geliştirmeye dayanan ve stres yaratan durumla ilgili olarak bireyi motive eden anlam-odaklılık (meaning-oriented) boyutu eklenmiştir (Folkman, 2008). Başka bir ifadeyle, anlam-odaklı stresle başa çıkma yaklaşımını kullanmayı tercih eden bireylerin temel amacı kendi inanç, değer ve amaçlarını tanımlayarak stres yaratan etmenleri etkili bir biçimde yönetmektir (Folkman ve Moskowitz, 2000). Lazarus'un (1999, 2006) da belirttiği gibi, stresle başa çıkmada tek ve en etkili bir yol bulunmamaktadır. Bu bakımdan, mevcut araştırma ilköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin stresle başa çıkma tarzlarına ilişkin algılarının bazı demografik değişkenler açısından incelenmesini amaçlamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, mevcut araştırmada aşağıdaki sorulara yanıt aranmıştır:

- 1) İlköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin stresle başa çıkma tarzlarına ilişkin algıları nedir?
- 2) İlköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin stresle başa çıkma tarzlarına ilişkin algıları cinsiyet, branş, yaş ve toplam mesleki kıdem değişkenlerine göre anlamlı bir farklılık göstermekte midir?

Yöntem

Bu araştırmanın örneklemini, Ankara ilinde 14 ilköğretim kurumunda görev yapan toplam 368 öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Örneklemini oluşturan öğretmenlerin 182'si kadın, 186'sı erkektir. 151 katılımcı sınıf öğretmeni, 217 katılımcı ise branş öğretmeni olarak görev yapmaktadır. Katılımcıların yaşları 21 ile 61 arasında değişmekteyken ortalama kıdemleri 9.51'dir. Bu araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak Şahin ve Durak (1995) tarafından geliştirilen "Stresle Başa Çıkma Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Ölçek 5 alt ölçekte (kendine güvenli, iyimser, çaresiz, boyun eğici, sosyal destek arayan) gruplanan toplam 30 maddeden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmada ilköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin stresle başa çıkma tarzlarına ilişkin algılarının demografik değişkenlere göre anlamlı bir biçimde farklılaşmış farklılaşmadığını belirlemek amacıyla bağımsız gruplar için t-testi ve tek yönlü ANOVA kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular

Araştırma bulguları ilköğretim kurumlarında görev yapan öğretmenlerin en sık kullandıkları stresle başa çıkma tarzının kendine güvenli yaklaşım ($\bar{X}= 2.05$), en az sıklıkla başvurdukları stresle başa çıkma tarzının ise boyun eğici tarz ($\bar{X}= .93$) olduğunu göstermektedir. Araştırma bulgularına göre, kadın öğretmenler kendine güvenli ($\bar{X}= 2.12$), iyimser ($\bar{X}= 1.86$) ve sosyal destek arayan ($\bar{X}= 1.70$) stresle başa çıkma tarzlarını erkek öğretmenlere göre daha olumlu bir biçimde algılamaktadırlar. Erkek öğretmenler ise çaresiz ($\bar{X}= 1.11$) ve boyun eğici ($= .95$) başa çıkma tarzlarını daha fazla tercih etmektedirler. Ayrıca araştırma bulguları branş değişkenine göre ilköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin kendine güvenli [$t_{(366)} = .55, p > .05$], iyimser [$t_{(366)} = 1.04, p > .05$], çaresiz [$t_{(366)} = -.56, p > .05$], boyun eğici [$t_{(366)} = -.48, p > .05$] ve sosyal destek arayan [$t_{(366)} = -.38, p > .05$] başa çıkma tarzlarına ilişkin algılarında anlamlı bir farklılaşmanın gerçekleşmediğini göstermektedir. Bu araştırmadan elde edilen bir diğer bulgu, ilköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin iyimser başa çıkma tarzına ilişkin algılarının yaş değişkenine göre anlamlı bir biçimde farklılaştığı yönündedir [$F_{(2, 365)} = 3.41, p < .05$]. Son olarak araştırma bulguları öğretmenlerin stresle başa çıkma tarzlarına ilişkin algılarının toplam mesleki kıdem değişkenine göre iyimser tarz boyutunda anlamlı bir biçimde farklılaştığını göstermektedir [$F_{(2, 365)} = 3.58, p < .05$].

Tartışma ve Sonuç

Bu araştırmada ilköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin stresle başa çıkma tarzlarına ilişkin algılarının cinsiyet, branş, yaş ve toplam mesleki kıdem değişkenine göre anlamlı bir biçimde farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığı incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları demografik değişkenlerin stresle başa çıkmayla ilişkili bir faktör olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu araştırmada aynı zamanda öğretmenlerin stresli durumlarda hangi başa çıkma tarzını kullandıkları belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, ilköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin stresli durumlarla mücadele etmede kendine güvenli yaklaşımı daha sıklıkla tercih ettiklerini göstermektedir. Lewis (1999) ise yaptığı araştırmada öğretmenler tarafından stresle mücadelede en çok kullanılan unsurların karşılıklı diyalog ve destek olduğunu bulgulamıştır. Parmaksız ve Avşaroğlu (2012) ise öğretmen adayları üzerinde yaptıkları bir araştırmada kendine saygının bazı boyutları ile stresle başa çıkma arasında pozitif yönde ilişkilerin olduğunu saptamışlardır.

Mevcut araştırmada ilköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin stresle başa çıkma tarzlarına ilişkin algılarının cinsiyet değişkenine göre anlamlı bir biçimde farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığı incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları, öğretmenlerin stresle başa çıkma tarzlarının cinsiyet değişkenine göre yalnızca kendine güvenli yaklaşım boyutunda anlamlı bir biçimde farklılaştığını göstermektedir. Karakuş ve Dereli (2011) cinsiyet değişkeninin öğretmen adaylarının stresle başa çıkmalarında etkili bir değişken olmadığını ortaya koymuşlardır. Öğretmen adayları üzerinde yapılan başka bir çalışmada ise öğretmen adaylarının stresle başa çıkma tarzlarına ilişkin algılarının kaçma-soyutlama, aktif planlama ve kabul-bilişsel yeniden yapılan boyutlarında anlamlı bir biçimde farklılaştığı ortaya konmuştur (Avşaroğlu ve Taşgın, 2007). Bu araştırmanın bulguları, ilköğretim kurumu öğretmenlerinin stresle başa çıkmaya ilişkin algılarının yalnızca iyimser boyutta anlamlı bir biçimde farklılaştığını göstermektedir.

Bu araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular ışığında, konuya ilişkin yapılacak ardıl çalışmaların öğretmenlerin stresle başa çıkma noktasında kendilerine daha fazla güvenmelerini sağlayacak okul-tabanlı sosyal ve kültürel etkinliklere yoğunlaşmaları gerektiği söylenebilir. Bununla birlikte, öğretmenlerin karar süreçlerine ve okul-tabanlı etkinliklere katılımları sağlanarak kendilerine olan güvenleri artırılabilir. Aynı zamanda öğretmenler ve okul yönetimi arasında kurulacak etkili iletişim ağlarının, stres oluşturan etmenlere yönelik farkındalığı artırarak stresle başa çıkma sürecini desteklemesi beklenebilir. Bununla birlikte, gelecek araştırmalarda farklı araştırma metodları (nitel, karma vb.) kullanılarak ve farklı örneklemelerde çalışılarak öğretmenlerin stresle başa çıkmada kullandıkları yaklaşım ve tekniklerin neler olduğu incelenebilir. Okula ilişkin farklı paydaşların (yöneticiler, öğretmenler, öğrenciler, aileler vb.) okulda stres yaratan etmenlere ilişkin görüşlerinin incelenmesinin alana ciddi bir katkı sunabileceği düşünülmektedir.

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