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Work Related Behaviors and Experience Patterns of Physical Education Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to determine work related behaviors and experience patterns of physical education teachers and to analyze them in terms of gender, age, marital status, school level, school type and professional experience variables. A total of 221 physical education teachers, 98 (44.3%) females and 123 (55.7%) males, participated in the study. Work-Related Behavior and Experience Patterns Scale was used in this study. It was found out that 39.8% of the physical education teachers were in the "Type G" healthy group, 15.4 % showed in "Type S" heedless attitude, and 35.3% were "Type A" hyper devotion individuals and 9.5% were in "Type B" exhaustion group. It was found that work related behaviors and experience patterns of physical education teachers vary significantly in terms of gender, age, marital status, school level, school type and professional experience variables at several sub-dimensions.

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Keywords:
Burn-out, occupational health, physical education teachers

Introduction

Physical education and sport have a remarkable role in the formation of healthy societies with their contributions to individual development. A well-organized and effectively followed physical education and sport program can considerably contribute to improve health and happiness of individuals (Krotee & Bucher, 2007). The primary aim of physical education classes in school curricula is to help children and teenagers obtain knowledge, attitudes and skills to participate in physical activities in an active life style and improve these gains (Green, 2008).

In recent years, there have been frequent discussions over how to strengthen physical education classes, which have an important effect on the way and the level an individual participates in physical activity especially in modern societies, within the structure of school (Cale, 2000). In order for the individual development of the students to be healthy within school programs, a good relation between their physical and intellectual performances should be established. Although the importance of this issue has been clearly stated, teachers and directors think that in the competitive atmosphere of academic classes, physical education and physical activities are not appreciated sufficiently (Pirrie & Lodewyk, 2012).

The issue of quality improvement which has an extremely important place in the overall education system (Ulrich, Mengiesen, & Schmidt, 2011) is directly related to the qualities of teachers (Gerçek, Köseoğlu, Yılmaz, & Soran, 2006). However, professional activities of teachers have become more and more complex

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and busier in the last 30 years (Brante, 2009). This has caused teaching to lose prestige as a profession both abroad (Watt & Richardson, 2008) and in Turkey (Erden, 1999) over the past 30 years. In particular, various roles as teachers, trainers and discipline coordinators attributed to physical education teachers in the school appear to be causing questions and complications in comparison with the roles given to other teachers (Fejgin, Ephraty, & Ben-Sira, 1995). In addition, the fact that physical education is at the lowest stage of the hierarchy of the other classes in the school's structure (Fejgin, Ephraty, & Ben-Sira, 1995; Smith & Leng, 2003) may have negative effects on work related behaviors and attitudes of physical education teachers.

Teaching, when compared to others, is one of the most stressful professions (Jepson & Forest, 2006). Those who choose teaching as a profession, which is hard and demanding, undoubtedly face great pressures and demands in terms of their individual energy and abilities (Kieschke & Schaarschmidt, 2008). Previous studies have shown that those working in professions like teaching that directly interact with people are under considerable risk of burnout (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Brudnik, 2009). Intensive pressure generally occurring with work, continuous stress and subsequent "job burnout syndrome" is still a popular research problem today (Muszalska, Krajnik, & Rogiewicz, 2007).

Burnout syndrome is defined as one that can be seen among people working in fields which require high social and ethical responsibility (Bauer et al., 2006). Occurring especially in professional fields which directly serve people and in which the quality of the service provided is affected by human factor, burnout can be defined as deviation of teachers from the meaning and aim of the profession and becoming unable to deal with the people they are serving or as psychologically withdrawing of an individual from the responsibilities of his profession as a result of phenomena like stress and dissatisfaction (Kaçmaz, 2005; Sertöz, 2008).

Due to the importance of teaching as a profession in general, several studies have been carried out to determine work related opinions and attitudes of teachers from different branches in the education system (Çetinkaya, 2009). The aim of the present study was to determine work related behaviors and experience patterns of physical education teachers and to analyze them in terms of gender, age, marital status, school level, school type and professional experience variables.

Methods

Participants

The study was carried out with the voluntary participation of all physical education teachers working at all private and state, primary and secondary schools in the districts of Narlıdere, Bornova, Konak, Güzelbahçe and Karşıyaka in Izmir.

Table 1. Demographics of study sample

	n	%
Gender		
Female	98	44.3
Male	123	55.7
Age		
35 years old and below	53	24.0
36 – 45 years old	91	41.2
46 years old and over	77	34.8
Marital status		
Married	179	80.0
Single	42	19.0
School Level		
Primary	104	47.1
Secondary	117	52.9
School Type		
Public	134	60.6
Private	87	39.4
Experience		
10 years and below	48	21.7
11-20 years	93	42.1
21 years and over	80	36.2

A total of 221 physical education teachers, 98 (43%) females and 123 (55.7%) males, participated in the study. Average age of the participating physical education teachers was 41.95±8.03 and average service period was 17.61±8.53. While 179 (81%) of the teachers in the sample group of the study were married, 42 (19%) of them were single. 134 (60.6%) of the participating teachers work in state schools and 87 (39.4%) in private schools. 104 (47.1%) teachers work at primary schools and 117 (52.9%) of them work at secondary schools (Table 1).

Instrument

Work-Related Behavior and Experience Pattern Scale developed by Schaarschmidt and Fischer (1997) in order to analyze individual psycho-social behaviors and experiences consists of 66 items explaining work related attitudes, experiences and opinions. Work-Related Behavior and Experience Pattern Scale consists of 11 sub dimensions aiming at evaluating work related state of health being subjective significance of work, professional ambition, tendency to exert, striving for perfection, emotional distancing, resignation tendencies, offensive coping with problems, balance and mental stability, satisfaction with work, satisfaction with life and experience of social support. These sub dimensions all together display behaviors towards profession and four different lifestyle models. These are; Type "G" (Gesundheit – Beautiful Health), Type "S" (Schonung– Heedless Attitude), Type "A risk group" (Risiko i.der Selbstüberforderung – Hyper devotion), Type "B risk group" (Burnout – Exhaustion) lifestyle models.

Those who are in "Type G" the "healthy" type have positive attitudes towards their profession. These individuals, besides being ambitious and assertive in their jobs, are those who can maintain their enthusiasm for their profession. Individuals in "Type S" the 'heedless attitude' group, despite not having very strong commitment to their profession, they are content with their lives outside the job. Individuals in "Risk Type A" the "Hyper devotion" type are those who cannot distance emotionally due to their excessive professional commitment and therefore have low levels of job satisfaction. Those in "Risk Type B" the "Exhaustion" group have low resistance to professional stress, extremely limited job satisfaction and a tendency to give up (Schaarschmidt & Fischer 2003; Schulz et al., 2011).

All items are answered on a five-point Likert scale (from "I totally agree [5]" to "I don't agree at all [1]") (Schaarschmidt & Fischer, 1997; Schaarschmidt & Fischer 2003). Fit indexes' values obtained from confirmatory data analysis that was done within the scope of adaptation of the scale into Turkish ($\chi 2$ /df= 2.19; RMSEA = 0.056 and SRMR= 0.073) and internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's α = between .72 and .85) approve the validity and reliability of the scale as an instrument of evaluation (Gençer, Boyacıoğlu, Kiremitci, & Doğan, 2010).

Process

Following the approval of the mayor, necessary permissions were taken from Izmir Provincial Directorate for National Education and the study was initiated. The data were obtained through face to face interviews done by the researchers with physical education teachers working in private and state schools in the districts of Izmir. Frequency and percentage calculations and independent sample t-test and one way ANOVA analyses regarding inter-group comparisons of the data were carried out using SPSS 13.0 statistical package program.

Results

When the distributions of physical education teachers by their life style models; it was found that 39.8% are in "Type G" healthy group, 15.4% in "Type S" heedless attitude group, 35.3% are "Risk Type A" hyper devotion individuals and 9.5% are in "Risk Type B" exhaustion group. Distributions of frequency and percentages of physical education teachers' four different life style models and their genders, age groups, marital status, school level, school type, experience comparisons are given in Table 2.

The results obtained from the analysis done for the independent variable of gender show that the difference between male and female teachers' average scores on balance and mental stability, satisfaction with work, experience of social support ($p<.05$) and satisfaction with life ($p<.01$) sub dimensions is significant. It was found that there are significant differences between average scores of single and married

physical education teachers obtained from resignation tendencies, balance and mental stability, satisfaction with life, experience of social support (p<.05) and striving for perfection (p<.01) sub dimensions (Table 3).

Table 2. Experience pattern on physical education teachers

	n	Tip G Healthy	Tip S Heedless Attitude	Risk Tip A Hyper devotion	Risk Tip B Exhaustion
General	221	88 (%39.8)	34 (%15.4)	78 (%35.3)	21(%09.5)
Gender					
Female	98	34 (%34.7)	21(%21.4)	36(%36.7)	7(%07.2)
Male	123	54 (%43.9)	13(%10.6)	42(%34.1)	14(%11.4)
Age					
≤35 years old	53	19(%21.6)	4(%11.8)	24(%30.8)	6(%28.6)
36-45 years old	91	41(%46.6)	15(%44.1)	26(%33.3)	9(%42.9)
≥46 years old	77	28(%31.8)	15(%44.1)	28(%35.9)	6(%28.6)
Marital status					
Married	179	67(%37.4)	27(%15.1)	66(%36.9)	19(%10.6)
Single	42	21(%50.0)	7(%16.7)	12(%28.6)	2(%04.7)
School level					
Primary	104	52(%50.0)	11(%10.6)	32(%30.8)	9(%08.6)
Secondary	117	36(%30.8)	23(%19.7)	46(%39.3)	12(%10.2)
School type					
Public	134	50(%37.3)	23(%17.2)	50(%37.3)	11(%08.2)
Private	87	38(%43.7)	11(%12.6)	28(%32.2)	10(%11.5)
Experience					
≤10 years	48	21(%23.9)	4(%11.8)	20(%25.6)	3(%14.3)
11-20 years	93	40(%45.5)	13(%38.2)	31(%39.7)	9(%42.9)
≥21 years	80	27(%30.7)	17(%50.0)	27(%34.6)	9(%42.9)

Table 3. Means, standard deviations and t-test results for gender and marital status of paired samples

Work-Related Behavior	Gender			Marital status		
	Female (n=98)	Male (n=123)	t	Single (n=42)	Married (n=179)	t
Subjective significance of work	3.32±.59	3.23±.57	1.09	3.24±.43	3.28±.61	-.46
Professional ambition	3.25±.77	3.40±.61	-1.53	3.40±.56	3.31±.71	.90
Tendency to exert	3.26±.66	3.31±.63	-.55	3.32±.49	3.28±.68	.39
Striving for perfection	3.90±.54	3.83±.68	.94	4.10±.61	3.81±.61	2.77**
Emotional distancing	3.07±.53	2.94±.59	1.65	3.09±.50	2.98±.58	1.25
Resignation tendencies	2.27±.69	2.26±.64	.13	2.04±.64	2.32±.65	-2.52*
Offensive coping with problems	3.76±.64	3.66±.64	1.14	3.71±.68	3.71±.64	.04
Balance and mental stability	3.69±.63	3.88±.56	-2.37*	3.98±.56	3.75±.60	2.37*
Satisfaction with work	4.02±.56	3.85±.66	2.10*	4.08±.62	3.89±.62	1.79
Satisfaction with life	3.91±.60	3.65±.58	3.32**	3.60±.56	3.80±.60	-2.05*
Experience of social support	3.74±.69	3.52±.52	2.61*	3.39±.45	3.67±.63	-3.39*

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

Significant differences were found between primary and secondary school physical education teachers in terms of their scores on subjective significance of work, striving for perfection, emotional distancing and satisfaction with work sub dimensions (p<.05). As for physical education teachers working at private and state schools, a significant difference was found only on offensive coping with problems (p<.01) sub dimension (Table 4).

Table 4. Means, standard deviations and t-test results for school level and school type of paired samples

Work-Related Behavior	School Level			School Type		
	Primary (n=104)	Secondary (n=117)	t	Public (n=134)	Private (n=87)	t
Subjective significance of work	3.19±.62	3.35±.53	-2.09*	3.29±.63	3.24±.50	.67
Professional ambition	3.37±.66	3.30±.71	.80	3.28±.67	3.40±.71	-1.23
Tendency to exert	3.35±.65	3.24±.64	1.31	3.33±.62	3.22±.68	1.28
Striving for perfection	3.96±.54	3.77±.67	2.26*	3.86±.59	3.85±.67	.11
Emotional distancing	3.10±.54	2.91±.58	2.50*	3.05±.54	2.91±.60	1.73
Resignation tendencies	2.26±.68	2.27±.64	-.12	2.31±.65	2.20±.68	1.26
Offensive coping with problems	3.74±.54	3.68±.72	.75	3.62±.63	3.85±.64	-2.64**
Balance and mental stability	3.88±.60	3.73±.59	1.88	3.79±.61	3.80±.60	-.09
Satisfaction with work	4.02±.57	3.84±.66	2.13*	3.94±.61	3.90±.65	.49
Satisfaction with life	3.77±.61	3.75±.60	.27	3.75±.60	3.79±.61	-.46
Experience of social support	3.68±.63	3.57±.58	1.30	3.56±.63	3.72±.56	-1.97

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

Table 5. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for age groups

Work-Related Behavior	n	Mean ± sd.	F	Multiple comparisons
Subjective significance of work				
≤35 years old	53	3.19±.53	0.939 (p=.393)	
36-45 years old	91	3.26±.55		
≥46 years old	77	3.33±.63		
Professional ambition				
≤35 years old	53	3.53±.65	3.176* (p=.044)	*1 > 3 (p=.043)
36-45 years old	91	3.29±.75		
≥46 years old	77	3.23±.59		
Tendency to exert				
≤35 years old	53	3.11±.66	3.491* (p=.032)	*1 < 3 (p=.025)
36-45 years old	91	3.27±.69		
≥46 years old	77	3.41±.55		
Striving for perfection				
≤35 years old	53	3.83±.63	3.573* (p=.030)	*2 > 3 (p=.023)
36-45 years old	91	3.98±.56		
≥46 years old	77	3.73±.65		
Emotional distancing				
≤35 years old	53	2.78±.59	5.122** (p=.007)	*1 < 2 (p=.030) **1 < 3 (p=.006)
36-45 years old	91	3.03±.53		
≥46 years old	77	3.09±.54		
Resignation tendencies				
≤35 years old	53	2.31±.71	1.158 (p=.316)	
36-45 years old	91	2.18±.62		
≥46 years old	77	2.32±.66		
Offensive coping with problems				
≤35 years old	53	3.73±.72	0.816 (p=.443)	
36-45 years old	91	3.75±.62		
≥46 years old	77	3.63±.59		
Balance and mental stability				
≤35 years old	53	3.81±.64	0.877 (p=.417)	
36-45 years old	91	3.84±.64		
≥46 years old	77	3.72±.51		
Satisfaction with work				
≤35 years old	53	3.82±.69	1.456 (p=.235)	
36-45 years old	91	4.00±.61		
≥46 years old	77	3.89±.57		
Satisfaction with life				
≤35 years old	53	3.72±.69	2.117 (p=.123)	
36-45 years old	91	3.85±.55		
≥46 years old	77	3.67±.57		
Experience of social support				
≤35 years old	53	3.64±.57	2.085 (p=.127)	
36-45 years old	91	3.69±.66		
≥46 years old	77	3.51±.54		

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

Work related behaviors of physical education teachers in terms of their age groups showed significant differences on professional ambition, tendency to exert, striving for perfection (p<.05) and emotional distancing (p<.01) sub dimensions. Within group differences are shown in Table 5 below.

Work related behaviors of physical education teachers in terms of their experiences in service showed significant differences on professional ambition, tendency to exert, experience of social support (p<.05) and striving for perfection (p<.01) sub dimensions (Table 6).

Table 6. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for service experience groups

Work-Related Behavior	n	Mean ± sd.	F	Multiple comparisons (Tukey HSD)
Subjective significance of work				
≤10 years	48	3.23±.53	0.157 (p=.855)	
11-20 years	93	3.26±.57		
≥21 years	80	3.29±.61		
Professional ambition				
≤10 years	48	3.51±.61	3.393* (p=.035)	*1 > 3 (p=.031)
11-20 years	93	3.36±.73		
≥21 years	80	3.19±.64		
Tendency to exert				
≤10 years	48	3.08±.57	3.119* (p=.046)	*1 < 3 (p=.048)
11-20 years	93	3.32±.70		
≥21 years	80	3.36±.60		
Striving for perfection				
≤10 years	48	3.89±.61	4.769** (p=.009)	**2 > 3 (p=.007)
11-20 years	93	3.98±.58		
≥21 years	80	3.69±.63		
Emotional distancing				
≤10 years	48	2.86±.68	2.437 (p=.090)	
11-20 years	93	2.98±.53		
≥21 years	80	3.08±.51		
Resignation tendencies				
≤10 years	48	2.17±.67	0.611 (p=.544)	
11-20 years	93	2.30±.61		
≥21 years	80	2.27±.70		
Offensive coping with problems				
≤10 years	48	3.80±.68	1.318 (p=.270)	
11-20 years	93	3.73±.63		
≥21 years	80	3.62±.61		
Balance and mental stability				
≤10 years	48	3.95±.67	2.359 (p=.097)	
11-20 years	93	3.77±.63		
≥21 years	80	3.72±.49		
Satisfaction with work				
≤10 years	48	3.87±.66	1.640 (p=.196)	
11-20 years	93	4.01±.64		
≥21 years	80	3.85±.58		
Satisfaction with life				
≤10 years	48	3.75±.65	0.991 (p=.373)	
11-20 years	93	3.82±.57		
≥21 years	80	3.69±.59		
Experience of social support				
≤10 years	48	3.78±.54	3.519* (p=.031)	*1 > 3 (p=.026)
11-20 years	93	3.64±.65		
≥21 years	80	3.49±.56		

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

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings regarding low burnout levels (9.5%) of the participating physical education teachers support the results of the studies carried out with physical education teachers in Turkey (Karademir, Çoban, Kafkas, Mendes, & Acak, 2009; Alkan, Yıldız, & Bakır, 2011, Türkçarpar, 2011). Moreover, studies carried out in different countries like Greece (Kantas & Vassilaki, 1997; Koustelios, 2003; Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005; Tsigilis, Zournatzi, & Koustelios, 2011), Israel (Fejgin, Ephraty, & Ben-Sira, 1995), Singapore (Smith & Leng, 2003) and Italy (Carraro, Scarpa, Gobbi, Bertollo, & Robazza, 2010) show that burnout levels of physical education teachers are low.

Contrary to the researchers (Jepson & Forest 2006; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Brudnik, 2009) who consider the profession of teaching as extremely stressful and vulnerable to burnout syndrome, low levels of burnout in physical education teachers may be due to their lack of competence to fulfill the requirements of the profession or to their professional abilities to cope with stress. In addition, schools' sports facilities failure to reach the ideal standards and that students and parents do not pay adequate attention to physical

education classes may also cause teachers not to attach necessary importance to their professional activities. However, as the findings concerning the burnout levels of physical education teachers are similar to previous studies on burnout levels of teachers in Turkey (Gençer, Boyacıoğlu, Kiremitci, & Doğan, 2010; Kırılmaz, Çelen, & Sarp, 2000; Kayabaşı, 2008; Karakelle & Canpolat, 2008; Babaoğlan, Altun, & Çakan, 2010), the idea that teachers fail to meet the requirements of their profession gains prominence.

Higher scores of female physical education teachers than male physical education teachers in the characteristic "subjective well-being" feature (Schaarschmidt & Fischer 2003) consisting of satisfaction with work, satisfaction with life, experience of social support sub dimensions support the results of the study carried out by Dilmaç and Bozgeyikli (2009) with pre-service teachers. This difference may be due to the fact that females chose the profession of teaching more enthusiastically than males did. Yılmaz and Şahin (2009) state that life satisfaction levels of female primary school teachers in Turkey are higher than those of male teachers.

Positive support of a more organized social circle brought by marriage and increasing life satisfaction in accordance may be the reason for higher scores of married physical education teachers than single physical education teachers on experience of social support and satisfaction with life sub dimensions. According to Özdemir (2007), teachers getting social support from their spouses may be more resistant to stress and burnout. Low scores of single physical education teachers on these dimensions increase their efforts to perform better individually and their capacity to struggle against difficulties; and strengthen their psychological determination in to this end. This may be a reason for the fact that single physical education teachers had higher scores on striving for perfection and balance and mental stability sub dimensions than married teachers and lower scores on resignation tendencies sub dimensions.

High school physical education teachers work with adolescents. These teachers do not deal with course subjects but they also face adolescence problems of their students. It may be presumed that this requirement of high school physical education teachers decreases their job satisfaction levels. Teachers spend most of their time at school with their students rather than their colleagues (Martin, Sass, & Schmitt, 2012). During this time, teachers deal not only with the education of students but also with their social and psychological problems. Dealing with the problems of adolescent students increases the share of job in private life and may therefore affect the ability of work related psychological relaxation negatively. Since primary level physical education classes consist mainly of educational games, the class becomes more interesting for children. Moreover, the fact that primary school students do not have concerns about exams at that age increases their interest in physical education classes. High interest of students in the course increases teachers' individual performance in working for better and their job satisfaction. Unlike adolescents, small children do not have personal problems about their development, which increases physical education teachers' focus on their profession and their chances for work related psychological relaxation.

The fact that private school directors regard success in sports activities both inside and outside the school as a means of advertising may cause a target-driven pressure on physical education teachers. It could also be asserted that physical education teachers working at private schools have higher levels of concern about job security in comparison with teachers working under the guarantee of the state. For these reasons, private school physical education teachers are considered to have got significantly higher scores on offensive coping with problems sub dimensions than state school teachers.

The fact that younger physical education teachers (≤35 years old) with less professional experience (≤10 years) had significantly higher scores on professional ambition sub dimensions maybe interpreted as these teachers put more effort and ambition in order to prove themselves and realize their goals at the beginning of their careers. Zimmermann et al. (2012) state that young teachers are expected to be motivated to this end and to devote themselves to their professions. Relatively old teachers (≥46 years old) with more professional experience (≥21 years) may have had high scores on tendency to exert sub dimension thank to their experiences in the profession. Relatively young (36-45 years old) and experienced physical education teachers had high scores on (11-20 years) striving for perfection sub dimensions, which may show that these teachers have certain expectations for their careers and try to perform in the best way in order to meet these expectations.

The fact that physical education teachers with less experience (≤10 years) had significantly higher scores than those with more experience (≥21 years) on experience of social support sub dimension may be because these teachers get more help and support both from their social circles and colleagues. Previous studies have shown that support from colleagues may be useful for a teacher's protection against burnout (Brouwers, Tomic, & Boluijt, 2011).

In conclusion, it has been found that, as in many other countries, burnout levels of physical education teachers are low in Turkey. The main reason for this problem may be the fact that physical education teachers do not meet the requirements of their profession properly. It is important that the reasons why physical education teachers do not meet the requirements of their profession are studied. At this point, it is considered that studying the relations between teacher burnout and issues like teacher competency, motivational and organizational atmosphere will contribute to the effectiveness of the profession.

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