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ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 106 (2013) 793 – 806

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

4th International Conference on New Horizons in Education

Depression levels of the elementary school teachers

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine depression levels of the elementary school teachers in terms of the following variables: gender, age, marital status, occupational seniority, contractual-tenured-paid working, working in combined or independent classrooms, number of students in the classroom, place of duty, occupational acceptance, occupational satisfaction and finding the occupation appropriate to one's personality.

Universe of the study is composed of all teachers who are working in 186 city center elementary schools and village schools managed under city administration in Erzurum province of Turkey. Sample of the study is composed of 194 classroom teachers who are working in 40 elementary schools that were randomly selected among the schools in the universe of the study. Personal Information Form and the "Beck Depression Inventory" were used as data collection instruments in the research. In view of these findings, no significant difference was observed among the depression levels of the elementary school teachers in terms of gender, age, occupational seniority, marital status, types of classrooms where they teach, their place of duty and type of employment. It was observed that there was a significant difference among the depression levels of the elementary school teachers in terms of number of students in the classrooms, occupational acceptance, occupational satisfaction and finding the occupation appropriate to one's personality.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of The Association of Science, Education and Technology-TASET, Sakarya Universitesi, Turkey.

Keywords: Elementary school teacher, depression

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education can be defined as knowing the story of the universe, Earth, life systems and consciousness as well as recognizing the role of humanity in this story. The primary objective of education is to enable people to fulfill these roles (Langford, 1999). Teachers take on sacred duties of raising individuals for every occupation that the society needs, fulfilling the information need of the society and shaping the future of the nations (Kuran, 2002). Elementary school years constitute an important period in children's physical, psychological and social development. Elementary school teachers are experts who are responsible for education during this period. Teachers are the primary models that students look up to in their socialization process. The teachers, who are taken as models, contribute positive or negative effect to the personality development of the students. A teacher's role and his/her behaviors hold great importance in the classroom. Therefore, teachers have to pay attention to their behaviors. Teachers' support, attention, compassion and love for their students encourage them at the same level as the negative effects that occur when teachers unfairly criticize, punish and humiliate their students. If the teachers experience psychological problems, this devastation increases more in terms of quantity. Depression is one of the most significant psychological problems. Depression is a serious and well-defined psychological problem that has distinctive symptoms and that must be taken seriously. Everyone may experience emotions such as sadness, grief and unhappiness in a period of his/her life. These emotional stages, which are generally temporary and related with the experienced situations, can be occasionally experienced at extreme levels and for a longer time although no clear reason is observed to cause it. Such types of emotions may disrupt individuals' relationship with themselves and the people around them.

Depression manifests itself in some emotional, mental, behavioral and physical symptoms. A depressive mood is the most noticeable symptom of depression. Depressed people are generally unhappy, pessimistic and hopeless. They feel sad and lonely. They may lose interest towards themselves and their surroundings. At times, this depressed mood can be accompanied by symptoms such as tension, uneasiness and extreme skepticism. These people can be ill-tempered from time to time. They occasionally feel apathy; they cannot cry, laugh or feel closeness to anybody (Tuğrul and Sayılğan, 1997).

Researches conducted on the prevalence of depression in Turkey and other countries showed that 20-30% of the general population have one or several of depressive symptoms whereas 10-15% of the general population have symptoms that can be diagnosed as depression and that have to be treated (Köknel, 1989). World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 3-5% of world population (approximately 150-200 million people) have depression symptoms at various levels (Baltaş and Baltaş, 1999). In his research, Dilekmen (2011) found that teachers in Turkey experience some psychological problems and reflect this condition on their students as negative behaviors in six different categories. Yıldırım (2007) found that teacher support reduces stress and depression levels of students. Reynolds, Wallace, Hill & et al. (2001) found that there is a positive relationship between depression and negative self.

Kashani and Sherman (1988) stated the importance of social skills, lack of self-efficacy and mother-father child relationships in depression experiences of children. They stated that depressed people have insufficiencies in self-rewarding, self-assessment and self-monitoring. In his study,

Tennant (1988) stated that negative experiences of children in preschool period are influential in depression, and sources of stress, especially divorce of parents, are significant in explaining the depression in adults. In his study entitled “memoirs of teachers”, Bakır (2005) observed that the depression levels of teachers who work in cities are higher than those of the teachers who work in villages; the depression levels of teachers who work as substitute are higher than those of other teachers; and the depression levels of female teachers are higher than those of male teachers. In their study, Humensky, Kuwabara, Fogel and et al. (2010) concluded that the educational environments, in which there are individuals with depression symptoms, negatively affect the school performance causing negative mood, interaction problems with peers, failure to concentrate on courses and reducing success. Gold, Smith, Hopper and et al. (2010) concluded that creating cognitive awareness can be effective in reducing anxiety, depression and stress of the elementary school teachers.

Many different studies have been conducted on the subject of depression. However, there is not enough number of studies found in terms of these variables in this study that is related with elementary school teachers. This study tested how depression levels of the elementary school teachers differed in terms of the following variables: gender, age, marital status, occupational seniority, contractual-tenured-paidH working, working in combined or independent classrooms, number of students in the classroom, place of duty, occupational acceptance, occupational satisfaction and finding the occupation appropriate to one’s personality.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

The research is a descriptive study conducted in compliance with survey model in terms of variables.

2.2. Universe and Sample

The universe of the study is composed of all teachers who are working in 186 city center elementary schools and village schools managed under city administration in Erzurum province of Turkey. The sample of the study is composed of 194 classroom teachers who are working in 40 elementary schools that were randomly selected among the schools in the universe of the study.

2.3. Data Collection Instrument

Personal Information Form that was prepared by the researcher and the “Beck Depression Inventory” that was developed by Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock & Erbaugh were used as data collection instruments in the research. The Beck Depression Inventory was first formed by Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock & Erbaugh in 1961. It was revised in 1971 reproduced in 1978 (Groth-Marnat, 1990). It is one of the most common studies that are used in clinically determining the symptoms of depression. It was developed in English in 1961. It was used in more than 2000 studies

and translated into many languages. It exhibited intercultural reliability and validity at high levels. Two independent adaptation studies were conducted in Turkey for the Beck Depression Inventory. One of them is the adaptation study entitled “Beck Depression Scale” that was conducted by Buket Tegin (Erkal) (1980). The other is the study entitled “Beck Depression Inventory” that was conducted by Nesrin Şahin (Hisli) (1988-1989). Internal consistency coefficient and item-total score correlations of the scale were examined for reliability studies. In view of the obtained results, internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.93 while its item-total score correlations were observed to range from .45 to .72. Criterion-related validity and structural validity were examined for the validity studies of the scale.

The Beck Depression Inventory is an instrument commonly used in measuring the phase and intensity of depression. It is a scale that is of 4-point Likert type. The inventory, which is composed of 21 questions, measures characteristic behaviors and symptoms of depression. Its implementation takes approximately 10-15 minutes (Groth-Marnat, 1990). This condition increases the practicability of the scale. Reliability: It was obtained in different times with tests that the average internal reliability of the Beck Depression Inventory is 0.86 whereas its internal reliability ranged from 0.73 to 0.92. Similar reliabilities were also obtained for the 13-item short form. Cronbach’s Alpha values of the Beck Depression Inventory exhibit high internal consistency ranging from 0.86 to 0.81.

2. Procedures

The Beck Depression Inventory and the Personal Information Form, which were data collection instruments, were implemented by the researcher in the schools that were identified as the sample of the study. The researcher introduced himself and gave some information about the aim of the research for each implementation. Moreover, teachers were informed on how to answer the inventories, and their questions were answered during the implementation session. The implementation took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete for each teacher. The participants’ answers were checked after the implementation session was over. Measuring instruments, which were answered outside the standards of measuring instruments or left blank, were not included in the evaluation. Upon completion of implementations, all inventories were checked by the researcher. The number of teachers that completed the implementations was observed to be 194. SPSS 17.0 software program was used for the statistical analyses. T-test, Kruskal-Wallis Test, Mann-Whitney U Test, one-way ANOVA, LSD and Dunnett’s T3 tests were used in the analyses.

3. Findings

The data obtained in the research were subjected to statistical processes and the results were given below.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and T Values Regarding the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of Gender

Dependent Variable	Gender	N	\bar{X}	Sd	t	p
Depression	Female	118	8.57	6.78	-.181	.856
	Male	76	8.75	6.08		

No significant difference was found among the mean depression scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of gender ($t_{192} = -.181$ $p = .856$). In view of this result, no significant difference was found among the depression levels of the elementary school teachers in terms of gender.

Table 2

Mean Ranks and Kruskal-Wallis Test Values Regarding the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of Age Groups

Dependent Variable	Age Group	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Depression	20-29	173	16.40	4.374	.224
	30-39	88	15.62		
	40-49	66	16.20		
	50-59	222	14.58		
	Total	559	15.85		

No significant difference was found among mean ranks of the depression scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of age groups ($\chi^2_{(3)} = 4.374$, $p = .224$).

Table 3

Mean Ranks and Kruskal-Wallis Test Values Regarding the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of Occupational Seniority

Dependent Variable	Occupational Seniority	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Depression	1-5 years	33	101.08	7.	.198
	6-10 years	60	110.74		
	11-15 years	45	87.69		
	16-20 years	33	95.27		
	21-25 years	12	85.46		
	26 years or more	11	74.50		
	Total	194			

No significant difference was found among mean ranks of the depression scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of occupational seniority ($\chi^2_{(5)} = 7.320$, $p = .198$).

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations and T Values Regarding the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of Marital Status

Dependent Variable	Marital Status	N	\bar{X}	Sd	t	p
Depression	Single	41	9.00	6.63	.393	.694
	Married	153	8.54	6.48		

No significant difference was observed among the depression scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of marital status ($t_{192} = .393$, $p = .694$).

Table 5

Mean Ranks and Mann-Whitney U Test Values Regarding the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of the Types of Classrooms Where They Teach

Dependent Variable	Type of Classroom	N	Mean Rank	U	p
Depression	Combined	18	107.17	1410.000	.442
	Individual	176	96.51		
	Total	194			

No significant difference was observed among mean ranks of the depression scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of the types of classrooms where they teach ($U_{192} = 1410.000$, $p = .442$).

Table 6

Mean Student Number Groups and Standard Deviation of the Classrooms Where Elementary School Teachers Teach

Student Number Group	N	\bar{X}	Sd
20 or fewer	52	9.21	6.89
21-30	100	9.50	6.25
31-40	42	5.76	5.88
Total	194	8.64	6.50

One-Way ANOVA was conducted in order to find whether or not there was a significant difference among mean depression scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of student number groups of the classrooms where they teach, and the results of this analysis were given in Table 7.

Table 7

ANOVA Regarding the Difference Among the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of Student Number Groups of the Classrooms Where They Teach

	Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean Square	F	p
Intergroup	449.527	2	224.763	5.566	.004
Intragroup	7712.932	191	40.382		
Total	8162.459	193			

It was observed that there was a significant difference among mean depression scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of student number groups of the classrooms where they teach ($F(2-193)= 5.566, p=.004$).

In view of the Post-Hoc analysis (LSD) that was conducted in order to detect from which groups that the difference resulted, the depression scores of the elementary school teachers who teach 20 and fewer ($p=.010$) and 21-30 ($p=.001$) student number groups were found significantly higher than the depression scores of the elementary school teachers who teach 31-40 student number group.

Table 8

Mean Ranks and Mann-Whitney U Test Values Regarding the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of Place of Duty

Dependent Variable	Place of Duty	N	Mean Rank	U	p
Depression	Village	26	103.92	2017.000	.530
	City Center	168	96.51		
	Total	194			

No significant difference was observed among the depression levels of the elementary school teachers in terms of place of duty.

Table 9

Mean Ranks and Mann-Whitney U Test Values Regarding the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of Types of Employment

Dependent Variable	Type of Employment	N	Mean Rank	U	p
Depression	Contractual	9	88.39	750.500	.618
	Tenured	185	97.94		
	Total	194			

No significant difference was found among mean ranks of the depression scores the elementary school teachers in terms of types of employment ($U_{(192)} = 750.500$, $p = .618$).

Table 10

Mean Ranks and Kruskal-Wallis Test Values Regarding the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of Their Acceptance of Teaching Occupation

Dependent Variable	Occupational Acceptance	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Depression	Low Level of Acceptance	16	140.53	15.243	.000
	Acceptance	87	103.21		
	High Level of Acceptance	91	84.48		
	Total	194			

A significant difference was found among mean ranks of the depression scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of accepting teaching occupation ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 15.243$, $p = .000$).

In view of the conducted Dunnett's T3 analysis, the depression scores of the elementary school teachers who had low level of occupational acceptance were found significantly higher than the depression scores of the elementary school teachers who had high level of occupational acceptance ($p = .000$).

Table 11

Mean Ranks and Kruskal-Wallis Test Values Regarding the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of Their Satisfaction with Teaching Occupation

Dependent Variable	State of Satisfaction	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Depression	No Satisfaction	11	152.27	28.842	.000
	Low Level of Satisfaction	26	134.73		
	Satisfaction	97	92.30		
	High Level of Satisfaction	60	79.73		
	Total	194			

A significant difference was found among mean ranks of the depression scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of satisfaction with teaching occupation ($\chi^2_{(3)} = 28.842$, $p = .000$).

In view of the conducted Dunnett's T3 analysis, the depression scores of the elementary school teachers who were not satisfied with teaching occupation were found significantly higher than the depression scores of the elementary school teachers who were satisfied with teaching occupation ($p = .021$) and the elementary school teachers who had high level of satisfaction with teaching occupation ($p = .007$). Furthermore, it was observed that the depression scores of the elementary school teachers who had low level of satisfaction with teaching occupation were found significantly higher than the depression scores of the elementary school teachers who were satisfied with teaching occupation ($p = .005$) and the elementary school teachers who had high level of satisfaction with teaching occupation ($p = .000$).

Table 12

Mean Ranks and Kruskal-Wallis Test Values Regarding the Depression Scores of the Elementary School Teachers in Terms of Finding the Teaching Occupation Appropriate to Their Personalities

Dependent Variable	Appropriateness to Personality	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Depression	Low Level of Appropriateness	29	130.36	14.494	.001
	Appropriateness	101	97.51		
	High Level of Appropriateness	64	82.59		
	Total	194			

A significant difference was found among mean ranks of the depression scores of the elementary school teachers in terms of finding the teaching occupation appropriate to their personalities ($\chi^2_{(2)}=14.494$, $p=.001$).

In view of the conducted Dunnett's T3 analysis, the depression scores of the elementary school teachers who found the teaching occupation slightly appropriate to their personalities were found significantly higher than the depression scores of the elementary school teachers who found the teaching occupation appropriate to their personalities ($p=.024$) and the elementary school teachers who found the teaching occupation very appropriate to their personalities ($p=.002$).

4. Discussion

No significant difference was found among the depression levels of the elementary school teachers in terms of gender, age, occupational seniority, marital status, types of classrooms where they teach, place of duty and types of employment. This condition showed that the stated variables did not diversify the depression of the elementary school teachers. This also showed that the stated variables affected the depression levels of the teachers similarly. Furthermore, the fact that the responsibilities and working conditions of the teachers were the same in terms of the stated variables might have been influential on this result.

It was observed that compared to other elementary school teachers, there was a positive significant difference in the depression levels of the teachers who accepted their occupation; who were satisfied with their occupation; who found this occupation appropriate for their personalities; and who had a low number of students in the classrooms where they teach. Reynolds, Wallace, Hill & et al. (2001) found a positive relationship between depression and negative self. In their study, Humensky, Kuwabara, Fogel and et al. (2010) concluded that the individuals with depression symptoms negatively affect educational environments while causing negative mood, experiencing interaction problems with their peers, failure to concentrate on courses and reducing success. When these results are taken into consideration, it can be stated that the teachers, who work in crowded classrooms, who perform their occupation unwillingly, who are not satisfied with their occupation and who do not find this occupation appropriate for their personalities, will experience more depressive symptoms, may hurt students more and may have negative self-perceptions. Making occupational improvements by paying attention to the results regarding the stated variables can positively affect the related disadvantaged groups. Gold, Smith, Hopper and et al. (2010) concluded that creating cognitive awareness can be effective in reducing anxiety, depression and stress of the elementary school teachers. When this research result is taken into consideration, studies must be conducted, which will increase cognitive awareness in reducing depression states of the teachers who work in crowded classrooms; who perform their occupation unwillingly; who are not satisfied with their occupation; and who do not find this occupation appropriate to their personalities.

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