

### AN INVESTIGATION OF PROFESSIONAL ANXIETY LEVELS OF CANDIDATE TEACHERS<sup>1</sup>

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#### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the professional anxiety levels of candidate teachers in respect of some variables. This is a descriptive research which is designed as survey method. The research group consisted of candidate teachers who studied pedagogic education at Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University in the 2016-2017 academic year. The research group of the study was comprised of 523 candidate teachers selected by means of easily accessible sampling method. "Personal Information Form" used to obtain demographic information of the candidate teachers and "Professional Anxiety Scale" were applied as a data collection tool. Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis-H tests were used for data analysis. The research findings suggest that the level of professional anxiety of candidate teachers is low, and the mean of professional anxiety scores does not differ significantly according to gender but significantly differs according to perfectionism of candidate teachers and their empathy ability.

Keywords: Candidate teachers, anxiety, professional anxiety, perfectionism.

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#### INTRODUCTION

A number of studies have been carried out regarding teacher development, which has emerged as a particular area of research in the last decade. Researches on teacher development focus on improving the performance of teachers and even schools. These researches provoke many different debates about the future and quality of the teaching profession (Evans, 2002). Meeting the criteria for teaching profession contributed to making it respected and more effective (Erden, 2005).

Recently rapid changes have occurred and almost all nations have been trying to keep up with these changes. In connection with this, they have attached great importance to raising competent and qualified individuals. Education is considered as the most effective instrument of improving for nations and teachers as the most effective elements of achieving national improvement (Kuran, 2002). The existence of qualified nations depends on qualified citizens in whom they have. Qualifications of the citizens depend on countries' education systems, whose quality relies heavily on the planners, education specialists, and governance. However, the quality of the teacher is regarded as a key factor when considered all. In brief, this means that effective and excellent teachers can change their own nations' destiny (Parvez & Shakir, 2013).

With the increasing emphasis on teacher training in recent years, the competencies specific to their own field have also begun to be acquired, as well as the general competencies that teachers should gain in the teaching profession. The increase in the number of behaviours needed to be acquired by individuals have also increased the burden of educational institutions. And therefore, all countries in the world have undertaken a number of studies on their own education systems in order to train more qualified teachers and have sought to introduce some constant innovations in policies on teacher training (Özbilen, 2012). Many policies have been pursued to improve teacher quality since the early years of the Republic. The teaching profession is defined as "a specialization profession that takes a state's education and teaching, and administrative duties associated with them" in the Basic Law of National Education Number 1739, passed in 1973, regarded as the most important among these. Accordingly, the general expectation of the state from the teachers is summarized as follows: "Teachers are obliged to fulfill these duties in accordance with the aims and basic principles of Turkish National Education" (MEB, 1973). They must have been received essential training and gained professional competence before entering the profession in order for teachers to be able to perform their duties by this law. Moreover, it is obligatory for the teachers to get postgraduate degree before starting the teaching as the teaching profession is becoming increasingly important in some countries. Through graduate education (Özbilen & Günay, 2014), it has intended individuals to acquire scientific process skills, to enhance their professional competencies and to give a scientific point of view. Thus, they can evaluate social events from an academic point of view and offer solutions to them.

Although the postgraduate education of teachers provides an accumulation for them in a professional sense, the training they had received during the undergraduate period is a prerequisite so that they can further this education. Teachers should be well trained in the undergraduate period, also called pre-service period. The quality of a good education is undoubtedly closely linked to the quality of the educators who have been working there. As a matter of fact, Kavcar (1982: 197) stated as "the success of an education system depends on the quality and quantity of the teachers who will operate the system". Three basic elements of an educational institution are its programs, students and teaching staff. 11<sup>th</sup> National Education Council laid down important principles for these three basic elements of institutions that have trained the teacher. Moreover, several problems that have arisen in the field of teacher training have often been explained by the current shortcomings associated with the application of these principles (Sözer, 1989). Undoubtedly, the well-training of teachers depends on the quality of the education received in the pre-service period. The training program forms the basis of pre-service training (Coban, 2010).

They are expected to create behavioural change appropriate for the teaching profession in cognitive, emotional and psychomotor fields through knowledge and skills that candidate teachers have gained throughout their education life (Doğan & Çoban, 2009). Candidate teachers acquire professional values and attitudes as well as field knowledge in the undergraduate period where most of the qualifications in the teaching profession have been obtained (Lasek & Wiesenbergova, 2007). If candidate teachers have positive attitudes towards their profession, they may fulfill their duties religiously, exhibit more positive behaviors towards their students, have curious, creative and innovative characteristics, motivate their students more easily, and can fulfill their professional duties in a warm manner with their students without being strict and prim when they start the teaching (Çeliköz & Çetin, 2004).

In Turkey, students have been entering the university through a difficult period. However, entering higher education does not end off individuals' worries. It has been followed by periods such as completion of education, anxiety for the future and not being able to have an employment after graduation especially in senior students and starting of unemployment period. Choice of a job, unemployment anxiety, and the various responsibilities that must be taken may create a number of negative feelings and thoughts in the individuals, and drive them to desperation. Anxiety is one of the most important of these feelings and thoughts (Tümerdem, 2007). Işık (1996) defines anxiety as "the possibility of a danger arising from the inner and outer world, or a feeling experienced in the face of any situation that is perceived and interpreted by the person as dangerous", Temiz (2011) describes it as "a vague state of fear that is not known what the problem is". Cüceloğlu (1997) also emphasized that anxiety includes feelings of sadness, distress, fear, failure, and judgment, and that the inability to predict what will happen in the future is the most important factor that causes anxiety over the individuals. From this point of view, professional anxiety is also about the negative feelings that individuals have developed against their own professions.

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The inability of individuals to know what the fate of their profession will be in the future causes great hardship and professional anxiety for them. Akgün and Özgür (2014) stated that a number of innovations and changes made in the education system and negative developments led to appearance of the professional anxiety over the candidate teachers. Sinclair and Ryan (1987) noted that teachers with higher levels of anxiety get lower scores of student assessments, which negatively affects teaching profession. Peker (2009) states anxiety concerning teaching mathematics is a frequent fear of pre-service teachers. To reduce the anxiety level Cady and Rearden (2007) explains that learning experiences in mathematics and science methods courses should involve collaboration, experimentation, synthesis, and analysis of information, similar to what reform documents compel preservice teachers to model in their future classrooms. Czerniak and Haney (1998) explains that high efficacious teachers tend to have less anxiety towards science teaching are more likely to use open-enden inquiry and student directed teaching strategies, and are more confident about teaching elementary science effectively. Capel (1997) and Korthagen, Loughran and Russell (2006) mentioned the significance of being monitored the candidate teachers by their colleagues and giving them some feedback, in order to increase their performance and reduce their anxieties regarding their professional development. Gümrükçü-Bilgici and Deniz (2016), Çelen and Bulut (2015), Özen, Yıldız and Yıldız (2013), Dursun and Karagün (2012), Çubukçu and Dönmez (2011), Kurtuldu and Ayaydın (2010) have carried out the studies regarding professional anxiety experienced by the candidate teachers.

These studies aimed to introduce new regulations on the education system concerning the likely outcomes in order for the candidate teachers receiving education at Faculty of Education to be well qualified. Previous studies revealed that some variables such as gender, economic status, and parenting education had an effect on the professional anxiety of candidate teachers.

Teachers encounter many potentially anxiety in their everyday professional lives over which they have little or no control or power such as behaviours and lives outside of school, school board and government initiatives, job security, and promotion (Ferguson, Frost & Hall, 2012). In this context teachers may reduce professional anxiety level by their beliefs of personel abilities to plan, organize, and carry out activities required to attain given educational goals (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). In this regard, this study aimed to determine the levels of professional anxiety of candidate teachers according to some variables that had not previously been investigated further.

#### Purpose of the Study

This study aims to determine professional anxiety over the candidate teachers and determine whether their professional anxiety differ according to the independent variables which had not previously been investigated. In this context, professional anxiety levels of the candidate teachers in terms of various variables are invastigated. In accordance with this purpose, the answers of the following questions have been searched:

1. What are the professional anxiety level of the candidate teachers?

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2. Does their professional anxiety significantly differ according to the gender, perfectionism and the ability to establish empathy?

#### Limitations of the Study

These limitations include:

A) The study was carried out at Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University,

B) Certain departments were selected as the research sample,

#### METHODOLOGY

#### **Research Model**

Having attempted to examine the professional anxiety levels of candidate teachers in terms of various variables, this descriptive study has been conducted in accordance with the survey model. Survey models are research approach that aims to describe the situation as it is (Karasar, 2009).

#### **Research Group**

The research group consisted of candidate teachers who have been continuing their education in Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University. 523 candidate teachers who were chosen from the population via easy accessible sampling method formed the research sample. The research data were collected from the candidate teachers who have been receiving education during the fall semester of the 2016-2017 academic year. Table 1 shows statistical on candidate teachers' gender, perfectionism and ability to establish empathy.

Table 1. Statistical Information on Candidate Teachers' Gender, Perfectionism and Ability to Establish Empathy

Candidate Teachers'	Variables	Number	%
	Female	348	66.5
Gender	Male	175	33.5
	Total	523	100
	Never	12	2.3
	Seldom	35	6.7
Perfectionism	Sometimes	128	24.5
	Often	223	42.6
	Always	125	23.9
	Total	523	100
	Never	3	0.6
	Seldom	6	1.1
Ability to Establish Empathy	Sometimes	50	9.6
	Often	268	51.2
	Always	196	37.5
	Total	523	100

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Table 1 shows that 66.5 % of the candidate teachers participating in the research were female and 33.5% were male. Data on their perfectionism in Table 1 indicate that 2.3 %, 6.7 %, 24.5%, 42.6 % and 23.9 % of them were never, seldom, sometimes, often and always perfectionist, respectively. Data on their ability to establish empathy in Table 1 suggests that 0.6 %, 1.1 %, 9.6 %, 51.2 % and 37.5 % of them could never, seldom, sometimes, often and always empathize with, respectively.

#### **Data Collection Tools and Data Analysis**

Research data the personal characteristics of the candidate teachers were collected using "Personal Information Form". Personal Information Form was used to determine variables such as the candidate teachers' gender, perfectionism and ability to establish empathy. "Professional Anxiety Scale" developed by Cabi and Yalçınalp (2013) was applied to obtain data on professional anxiety levels of candidate teachers. Cabi and Yalçınalp (2013) have first taken the views of 152 candidate teachers studying secondary school teacher education graduate degree program at Başkent University. By analyzing these views 39 items, by reviewing literature 10 items and by suggestions of field experts 5 items are added to scale and 54 item draft scale is formed. To collect the data for developing scale Cabi and Yalçınalp (2013) have taken the views of 283 students studying at Başkent University undergraduate and graduate degree.

The Professional anxiety Scale consists of 45 items and 8 sub-dimensions in the format of a typical five-point Likert being responded and scored in the way that (1) I worry too much, (2) I worry rather, (3) I worry partially, (4) I worry less and (5) I never worry. Obtained from each dimension of the scale, low scores mean that the anxiety level of the relevant dimension is low and high scores mean that the anxiety level of the relevant dimension is low and high scores mean that the anxiety level of the relevant dimension is low and high scores mean that the anxiety level of the relevant dimension is high. Cabi and Yalçınalp (2013) while developing scale Principal Component Analysis carried out on construct validity of scale revealed that eight factors explain 65.724% of the total variance. Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used as the reliability criterion of the scale. Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the eight factors were found varies between 0.67 and 0.94 while the total reliability coefficient estimated from all the scale was 0.95. Further to that, it was found that Total Item Correlations of all the items present in all dimensions of the scale ranged between 0.23 and 0.71. According to validity and reliability results of the scale in this research, construct validity (KMO) value is .962 and Bartlett's test's result is 19870.766 (p<.000). Additionally the scale has 6 sub-dimentions and the factor load of the sub-dimensions varies between .50 and .88. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value of the scale is ( $\alpha$  =.97).

The p-value 0.05 was considered significant. A One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to determine whether the data are normally distributed. Levene test was also used to show homogeneity of the data. Analysis results showed that the data do not follow a normal distribution. Based on this, the average scores being the descriptive statistics were considered to determine the levels of professional anxiety of candidate teachers. Mann-Whitney U test was executed to examine professional anxiety scores in terms of the variable gender. Kruskal-Wallis H test was performed in terms of the personal characteristic, perfectionism, and the ability to establish empathy.

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#### **FINDINGS (RESULTS)**

This section includes findings obtained by statistical analysis of research data. Table 2 below shows statistics on the total score of professional anxiety of candidate teachers.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Related to the Total Scores of Professional Anxiety of Candidate Teachers

	Ν	Min	Max	Ń	SS
Level of Professional Anxiety	523	1	5	2.19	.866

Table 2 shows that professional anxiety levels of candidate teachers were 2.19 out of 5. This result can be interpreted in the way that candidate teachers have the low level of professional anxiety. Table 3 below presents the analysis results of professional anxiety scores of candidate teachers according to the gender.

 Table 3. Mann-Whitney U Test Results of Professional Anxiety Scores of Candidate Teachers According to the

 Gender

Variable	Group	Ν	Mean rank	Rank sum	U	Z	р
	Female	348	259.48	90297.50	29571.500	539	.590
Gender	Male	175	267.02	46728.50			
	Total	523					

Table 3 indicates that there is no significant difference between professional anxiety scores of male and female candidate teachers (p> .05). The analysis results of professional anxiety scores of candidate teachers according to the perfectionism are given in Table 4 below.

 Table 4. Kruskal Wallis Test Results of Professional Anxiety Scores of Candidate Teachers According to the

 Perfectionism

Variable		Ν	Mean Rank.	Sd.	$x^2$	р
	Never	12	327.04	4		.045
Perfectionism	Seldom	35	268.50			
Perfectionism	Sometimes	128	286.59		9.717	
	Often	223	258.34			
	Always	125	235.28			

According to Table 4, there is a significant difference between the perfectionism levels of candidate teachers and their professional anxiety scores (p < .05). Having performed to determine that this difference arises from which paired groups, Mann-Whitney U test results are presented in Table 5 below.

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Table 5. Mann-Whitney U Test Results of Professional Anxiety Scores of Candidate Teachers Accordin	ig to the
Perfectionism	

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Perfectionism	Ν	Mean rank	Rank sum	U	р
Sometimes	128	138.66	17748.50		
Always	125	115.06	14382.50	6507.500	.010

Table 5 shows that there is a statistical difference between the professional anxiety scores of teacher candidates whose perfectionism is "sometimes" and those whose perfectionism is "always" (p <.05). This difference shows that professional anxiety levels of teacher candidates whose perfectionism is "sometimes" are higher than that of candidate teachers with "always". Table 6 below presents the analysis results of professional anxiety scores of candidate teachers according to the ability to establish empathy.

 Table 6. Kruskal Wallis Test Results of Professional Anxiety Scores of Candidate Teachers According to The

 Ability to Establish Empathy

Variable		Ν	Mean rank	Sd.	$x^2$	р
	Never	3	145.67			
Ability to Establish	Seldom	6	290.25			
Establish Empathy	Sometimes	50	298.88	4	14.099	.007
Linpathy	Often	268	276.28			
	Always	196	233.98			

Table 6 indicates that professional anxiety scores of candidate teachers differed significantly in the ability to establish empathy (p < .05). Having conducted to determine that this difference is due to which paired groups, results of Mann-Whitney U test are given in Table 7 below.

 Table 7. Mann-Whitney U Test Results of Professional Anxiety Scores of Candidate Teachers According to the

 Ability to Establish Empathy

	Group	Ν	Mean rank	Rank sum	U	Z	р
-	Sometimes	50	147.71	7385.50			
Level of	Always	196	117.32	22995.50	3689.500	-2.696	.007
Professional Anxiety	Often	268	248.35	66558.50			
	Always	196	210.82	41321.50	22015.500	-2.978	.003

Table 7 shows that professional anxiety scores of the teacher candidates with whom could sometimes empathize differed significantly compared with the teacher candidates with whom are always able to empathize, and that those of the teacher candidates with whom could often empathize differed significantly when compared to the teacher candidates with whom are always able to empathize (p <.05). According to this difference, the group with high score of mean rank had higher level of professional anxiety than another group in the paired comparison.

#### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this study candidate teachers' professional anxiety levels are investigated in terms of certain variables. According to the research findings, candidate teachers had low professional anxiety. It has been considered that individual characteristics of the teacher candidates participating in the research would have the impact on this finding. This result is in part parallel to other research results since Temiz (2016) found that candidate teachers had very low level of professional anxiety. Research on candidate physical education teachers (Çelen & Bulut, 2015) and candidate teachers (Doğan & Esen-Çoban, 2009) have demonstrated that they had the low anxiety about the teaching profession. Moreover, Akgün and Özgür (2014) reported that professional anxiety of candidate information technology teachers were less than moderate level. According to the research results, there was no statistically significant difference between professional anxiety scores of male and female candidate teachers. This means that gender differences does not have any effect on teaching profession anxiety does not develop related to the gender. Male and female teachers both have similar profession anxiety and might experience similar anxiety sources as profession.

Considering a tendency of the male and female teachers towards the teaching profession, however, it can be claimed that this profession is progressing towards becoming a female profession (Erginer & Saklan 2017). A great difference in favor of women between men and women distribution in the Faculties of Education is a strong indication of this situation. Gümrükçü-Bilgici and Deniz (2016) also found that task-centered anxiety scores, which were determined as one of the sub-dimensions of the professional anxiety level of the male preschool candidate teachers, were higher than those of the female counterparts. Furthermore Singh (2011) & Özen, Yıldız & Yıldız (2013) have shown that anxiety levels of male teacher candidates were higher than those of female counterparts. Similarly, research on candidate social sciences teachers (Uygun, Avaroğulları & Oran, 2016) and candidate teachers of mentally handicapped students (Aydın & Tekneci, 2013) have indicated that male teachers were more anxious than female ones.

Another result of the present study is that professional anxiety levels of candidate teachers differed significantly in their perfectionist status. Accordingly, it has become clear that professional anxiety of candidate teachers who sometimes regard themselves as a perfectionist was higher than those of candidate teachers who always consider themselves as a perfectionist. The reason for this can be considered that candidate teachers who do not always want to reach perfection in their work and cannot go beyond ordinary situations are more likely to encounter any crisis or risk. For example, Burns, Dittmann, Nguyen, and Mitchelson (2000)

also found a positive relationship between perfectionism and alert and coping style. Thus, keeping in mind that the work done is education, complete fulfillment of the responsibilities taken during performing a profession can undoubtedly prevent from suffering from inexperience and lead to a leadership and a guiding attitude. Tortop and Eker (2013) argue in their research on perfectionism that considerable effort will be made to seek and reach specific standards through the development of perfectionistic thinking. They state that certain dynamic processes are necessary for these standards to be established and that it about beliefs essential to lead people to learn something new. Bulut (2014) also reported that depending on some improvements in the order perception considered to be one of the perfectionist personality traits, candidate teachers could reduce their academic procrastination behaviors composed of academic duties such as completing homework, project preparation, project delivery in time and preparing for examinations. In a research conducted by Saracaloğlu, Saygi, Yenice, and Altin (2016), it has been concluded that their academic achievement averages have increased when the perfectionistic level of candidate teachers goes up. However, some studies have also proved that perfectionist behaviors might have some negative effects. Yeşilyaprak (2013) also stated that students educated by teachers who have an understanding of perfectionism could exhibit behaviors such as feeling inadequate themselves, being in search of perfection, experiencing intense feelings of despair and desperation, paying more attention to others' thoughts than their own thoughts and constantly competing with others.

The last finding of the present study is that professional anxiety levels of candidate teachers differed significantly according to the ability to establish empathy. Accordingly, it has become evident that professional anxiety scores of the teacher candidates with whom could sometimes empathize were higher compared with the teacher candidates with whom were always able to empathize, and that professional anxiety scores of the teacher candidates with whom could often empathize were higher than those of the teacher candidates with whom were always able to empathize. Thus, it has been revealed once more how important an ability to establish empathy could be. The teachers who can empathize in the education and training process would surely be able to communicate more healthily with their students and understand their feelings and thoughts more easily since empathy is the capacity to feel or understand what another person is experiencing from within other person's frame of reference more closely by putting oneself in another's place in the face of the events being encountered. Teachers who perform fondly, willingly and voluntarily educational activities would be able to spend friendly time with their students by protecting fine line between them. Uğurlu (2013) indicated that empathic tendency levels of teachers affected their child-loving levels. Consistent with our findings, thus, it seems very normal that candidate teachers who feel inadequate themselves when establishing empathy have higher professional anxiety. In addition, Guzzetta (1976) had emphasized that empathetic individuals were more successful in many interpersonal relationships, including professional, family and friendship ones. Pala (2008) has also emphasized that the teacher candidates with the low level of empathic tendencies, which is a determinative factor in understanding their students when they start their career, could develop through various active teaching techniques. Furthermore, the author states that, in particular, primary

school teachers should encourage students to empathize via both family members, classmates, and other acquaintances by cooperating with their students' parents.

#### SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions can be made depending on the research results:

It is important for candidate teachers to make the right decisions before choosing the department where they will receive education in order not to experience a high level of anxiety for the profession before starting teaching. In this respect, the teaching profession should be introduced correctly to university students in the secondary education and subsequent educational institutions and necessary motivation for the profession should be provided to them.

Since candidate teachers who understand the importance of education would work meticulously, they should be monitored by advisors carefully during school experience courses, feedback should be received from them, and they should be followed during the lecturing by going to the schools personally.

This issue should be overemphasized in the lessons taken during the undergraduate period in order to establish empathy and manage it properly.

Researchers should determine the factors influencing candidate teachers' low level of professional anxiety and it is important to implement programs keeping professional anxiety level of candidate teachers at medium level.

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