



# Assessment of Psychosocial Risks Faced by Teachers Working in Special Education and Rehabilitation Centers in Terms of Occupational Health and Safety<sup>1</sup>

Sayfa | 1534

# Özel Eğitim ve Rehabilitasyon Merkezlerinde Görev Yapan Öğretmenlerin Karşılaştıkları Psikososyal Risklerin İş Sağlığı ve Güvenliği Açısından Değerlendirilmesi

Sener KABAK , Special Education Teacher, City of Igdir, kabaksener@gmail.com

Okan OZBAKIR , Assist. Prof. Dr., Igdir University, okan.ozbakir@igdir.edu.tr

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This study was created from a part of the non-thesis master's project titled "Assessment of the Psychological Risks of Teachers Working in Special Education and Special Rehabilitation Centers in terms of Occupational Health and Safety" conducted by the first author in 2022-2023 by the second author.





Sayfa | 1535

Abstract. Rehabilitation services are the process of enabling people with disabilities to achieve the highest level of integration into society. In this context, special education teachers are one of the professional groups that play an important role in supporting the education and development of disabled individuals. However, this situation can also expose teachers to a number of psychological risk factors such as workload, stress, and challenging working conditions. Of the risk/stress factors, meeting the special needs of pupils, communication with families and other social factors, as well as burnout syndrome are of the critical stressors. These can adversely affect teachers' mental health and, consequently, their professional performance, which needs to be addressed. In this study the psychosocial problems of teachers working in special education institutions were investigated. According to the research findings, 20% of the teachers believed that spending time with students with disabilities could harm their personal life plans. Of the participants, 74.75% of the participants stated that they did not regret their choice of profession. The study also revealed that 34.7% of them experienced burnout when students with disabilities did not exhibit the required behavioral changes. In addition, 77.6% of the teachers who participated in the study stated that the families of students with disabilities expect them to perform beyond their capacity. The majority of teachers struggle with anxiety about the future and especially concerns about their children being born with disabilities leading to significant problems in their social lives. Additionally, a relationship between their work hours and psychological state has been identified.

**Keywords:** Special education teacher, occupational health and safety, psychosocial risks, burnout.

Öz. Rehabilitasyon hizmetleri, engelli bireylerin toplumla en üst düzeyde bütünleşmelerini sağlama sürecidir. Bu bağlamda özel eğitim öğretmenleri, engelli bireylerin eğitim ve gelişimlerinin desteklenmesinde önemli rol oynayan meslek gruplarından biridir. Ancak bu durum, öğretmenleri iş yükü, stres ve zorlu çalışma koşulları gibi birtakım psikolojik risk faktörlerine de maruz bırakabilmektedir. Risk/stres faktörleri arasında, öğrencilerin özel ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması, ailelerle iletişim ve diğer sosyal faktörlerin yanı sıra tükenmişlik sendromu da kritik stres faktörleri arasında yer almaktadır. Bunlar öğretmenlerin ruh sağlığını ve dolayısıyla mesleki performanslarını olumsuz yönde etkileyebilir ve bu durumun ele alınması gerekir. Bu çalışmada özel eğitim kurumlarında çalışan öğretmenlerin psikososyal sorunları araştırılmıştır. Araştırma bulgularına göre, öğretmenlerin %20'si engelli öğrencilerle zaman geçirmenin kişisel yaşam planlarına zarar verebileceğine inanmaktadır. Katılımcıların %74,75'i meslek seçiminden pişmanlık duymadığını belirtmiştir. Çalışma ayrıca, öğretmenlerin %34,7'sinin engelli öğrenciler gerekli davranış değişikliklerini sergilemediğinde tükenmişlik yaşadığını ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca araştırmaya katılan öğretmenlerin %77,6'sı engelli öğrencilerin ailelerinin kendilerinden kapasitelerinin üzerinde performans beklediklerini ifade etmiştir. Öğretmenlerin büyük çoğunluğu gelecek kaygısı ve özellikle çocuklarının engelli olarak dünyaya gelmesinin sosyal yaşamlarında önemli sorunlara yol açacağı endişesiyle mücadele etmektedir. Bunun yanında, çalışma saatleri ile psikolojik durumları arasında bir ilişki tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Özel eğitim öğretmeni, iş sağlığı ve qüvenliği, psikososyal risk, tükenmişlik.





## Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş. Rehabilitasyon hizmetleri, engelli bireylerin toplumla bütünleşmelerinin en üst düzeyde sağlanması sürecidir. Bu hizmetler sayesinde engelli bireylerin yaşam kaliteleri artırılmakta ve toplumda daha aktif rol almaları sağlanmaktadır. Engelli bireylerin eğitim ve gelişimlerinin desteklenmesinde önemli rol oynayan meslek gruplarından biri de özel eğitim öğretmenleridir. Ancak bu durum, öğretmenleri iş yükü, stres, zorlu çalışma koşulları gibi bir dizi psikolojik risk faktörüne de maruz bırakabilmektedir. Stres faktörleri arasında öğrencilerin özel ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması, ailelerle iletişim ve diğer sosyal faktörlerin yanı sıra tükenmişlik sendromu yer almaktadır. Bu faktörler, öğretmenlerin psikolojik sağlıkları üzerinde olumsuz etkiler yaratabilmekte ve sonrasında mesleki performanslarını olumsuz yönde etkileyebilmektedir. Engelli bireylerin hayatlarını kolaylaştırmak ve haklarını korumak için birçok kurum ve kuruluş faaliyet göstermektedir. Bu kurum ve kuruluşlar, engelli bireylerin temel becerilerinin geliştirilmesinde, mesleki ve toplumsal bütünleşmelerinin artırılmasında ve sosyal haklarının güvence altına alınmasında önemli bir sorumluluk üstlenmektedir.

Yöntem. Yapılan çalışma, temelde tarama ve karşılaştırma modelleri kullanılarak nicel araştırma yöntemlerine yönelik veri toplama, analiz, gözlem, anket ve ölçek gibi araştırma stratejilerine dayandırılmıştır. Araştırma, 05.10.2022 - 25.10.2022 tarihleri arasında Iğdır ili il sınırları içindeki tüm özel eğitim kurumlarında yapılmıştır. Herhangi bir örneklem seçimi yapılmadan araştırmanın evrenini oluşturan 65 özel eğitim öğretmeninin tamamına ulaşılması hedeflenmiş ancak 49 tanesi ankete katılmıştır. Katılımcılar, araştırma evreninin %75,38'ini oluşturmaktadır. Bu araştırma kapsamında iki bölümden oluşan bir ölçek hazırlanmıştır. Birinci bölümde katılımcıların kişisel bilgilerine ve deneyimlerine yönelik sorular yöneltilmiştir. İkinci bölümde, katılımcıların stres ve tükenmişlik düzeylerini ölçmeye yönelik psikososyal durumlarına ilişkin sorular yer almaktadır.

**Bulgular**: Katılımcıların demografik yapısını genel olarak, %53,1'i erkek, %46,9'u kadın, %40,8'i bekar ve %59,2'si evlidir. Ayrıca %34,7'si 25-34 yaşları arasında, %51,1'i 35-44 yaşları arasında ve %8,2'si 45-54 yaşları arasındadır. Çalışma ayrıca, katılımcıların %80'inin beş yıl veya daha az iş tecrübesine sahip olduğunu, %15,5'inin 6-10 yıl, %11'inin 11-15 yıl ve %2,2'sinin 16 yıldan fazla iş tecrübesine sahip olduğu görülmüştür.

Araştırmaya katılan öğretmenlerin %37,5'i ileri düzeyde zihinsel yetersizliği olan bireylerle çalışmanın kişisel yaşamlarını etkilediğini ifade etmiştir. %46,9'u ise engelli bir çocuğa sahip olmaktan korktuklarını dile getirmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte, %26,5'i böyle bir korkusunun olmadığını belirtirken, katılımcıların %77,6'sı engelli öğrencilerin ailelerinin öğrencinin kapasitesinin çok üzerinde performans göstermesi gerektiğine inandıklarını ve %10,2'si böyle bir baskı altında olmadıklarını beyan etmişlerdir. Katılımcıların %36,6'sı öğrenci velilerinden yeterli desteği aldıklarını, %16,7'si gerekli desteği alamadıklarını, %43,8'i ise gerekli desteği aldıklarını ancak yetersiz bulduklarını ifade etmişlerdir.

Öğretmenlerin %20'si engelli öğrencilerle vakit geçirmenin kişisel yaşam planlarına zarar vereceğine inanırken %57'si engelli öğrencilerle zaman geçirmenin özel hayatları üzerinde olumsuz bir etkisi olmadığını ve %23'ü herhangi bir etki olmadığını, ancak kısmi etkiler olduğunu bildirmişlerdir. %4,3'ü zihinsel engelli bireylerle çalışmayı gerektiren bir mesleği seçtiği için pişmanlık duyduklarını ifade ederken %74,75'i bu meslek seçiminden pişmanlık duymadıklarını, %21,3'ü ise kararsız olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. %34,7'si engelli öğrenciler gerekli davranış değişikliklerini göstermediğinde tükenmişlik

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tükenmişlik yaşamadıklarını, %32,7'si ise kısmen tükenmişlik yaşadıklarını beyan etmişlerdir. %38,8'i ağır zihinsel engelli bireylerden şiddet içeren davranışlarla karşılaştığını bildirmişlerdir. Buna karşılık, %38,8'i şiddet içeren davranışlarla karşılaşmadıklarını ve %22,4'ünün nadiren karşılaştıklarını aktarmışlardır. %32,7'si mesleği ile ilgili sağlık sorunu yaşadıklarını bildirmişlerdir. %61,2'si mesleği ile ilgili herhangi bir sağlık sorunu yaşamadıklarını, %6,1'i ise nadiren mesleği ile ilgili sağlık sorunu yaşadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca, %14,3'ü meslekleriyle ilgili diğer çocuklara karşı aleyhte sayılabilecek olumsuz davranışlar geliştirdiklerini beyan etmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte, %61,2'si mesleği

ile ilgili bu tür düşüncelere sahip olmadıklarını, %24,5'i ise kısmen bu tür davranışlarda bulunduklarını

yaşadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Öğrencilerin gerekli davranışı göstermediği durumlarda ise %32,7'si

ifade etmişlerdir.

Tartışma. Çalışmada engelli öğrencilerin ailelerinin başarıya yönelik toplumsal beklentilerinin yüksek olduğunu katılımcıların %77,6'sının engelli öğrencilerin ailelerinin öğrencinin kapasitesinin çok üzerinde performans göstermesi gerektiğini ifade etmesiyle ortaya koymuştur. Bu tür beklentiler eğitim sürecinde hem öğrenciler hem de aileleri üzerinde baskı oluşturabilmektedir. Başarı beklentilerinin gerçekçi olması gerekir. Engelli öğrencilerle çalışmanın öğretmenlerin yaklaşık %20'sinin kişisel yaşamlarını etkileyebileceğini göstermektedir. Ancak %57 gibi büyük bir oranla öğretmenler bu durumdan daha az etkilenmekte veya hiç etkilenmemektedir. Engelli öğrencilerle çalışan öğretmenlerin iş yükü fazladır ve bu nedenle özel hayatlarına ayırabilecekleri zamanları kısıtlıdır. Engelli öğrencilerin davranış değişiklikleriyle çalışmanın zor ve yorucu olabileceğini göstermekle birlikte bazı öğretmenler bu durumdan daha az etkilenmekte veya hiç etkilenmemektedir. Öğrencilerdeki uyumsuz davranışlar öğretmenler arasında tükenmişliğe yol açabilir. Bu nedenle okulların ve öğretmenlerin öğretmenlere uygun iş yükü ve desteği sağlaması gerekmektedir. Ayrıca, öğretmenlere stres yönetimi ve öz bakım becerileri konusunda eğitim verilmesi de faydalı olabilir. Engelli öğrencilerle çalışan öğretmenlerin iş yükü fazladır ve bu nedenle özel hayatlarına ayırabilecekleri zamanları kısıtlıdır. Bu nedenle öğretmenlerin iş-yaşam dengesinin farkında olmaları ve zamanlarını etkin bir şekilde yönetmeleri gerekmektedir.

Öğretmenlerin bir insan olarak meslekleriyle ilgili olumsuz davranışlar geliştirebildiklerini araştırma göstermektedir. Bu davranışlar öğrencilere zarar verebilir ve öğretmen-öğrenci ilişkisine zarar verebilir. Öğretmenlerin meslekleriyle ilgili olumsuz davranışlar geliştirmelerini önlemek için stres yönetimi, öfke kontrolü, empati gibi konularda eğitim almaları faydalı olabilir. Ayrıca okullar, öğretmenlerin psikolojik ihtiyaçlarına karşı daha duyarlı olmalı ve onlara destek sağlamalıdır. Ayrıca öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimlerine de öncelik vermeleri ve kendilerini sürekli yenilemeleri gerekmektedir. Öğretmenlerin mesleklerinde başarılı olmaları ve öğrencileri üzerinde olumlu etki bırakabilmeleri için mesleki gelişimlerini sürdürmeleri ve yeniliklere açık olmaları gerekmektedir.

**Sonuç.** Özel eğitim ve rehabilitasyon merkezlerinde görev yapan öğretmenlerin mesleklerinin zorluğundan kaynaklanan psikolojik sorunlar yaşadıklarını göstermektedir. Araştırma sonuçları özel eğitimde görev yapan öğretmenlerin tükenmişlik sendromu yaşama riskinin yüksek olduğunu göstermektedir. Özellikle tükenmişlik sendromunun boyutları cinsiyet, aileden destek alıp almama, mesleğin sosyal yaşam üzerindeki etkisine ilişkin algı gibi çeşitli faktörlere bağlı olarak değişmektedir. Tükenmişlik sendromu, stresli ve yoğun bir iş ortamında çalışanların karşılaştığı yaygın bir sorundur ve rehabilitasyon merkezlerinde görev yapan öğretmenler bu durumla sıklıkla karşılaşabilmektedir.

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#### DOKUZ EYLÜL ÜNİVERSİTESİ EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ

Batı Anadolu Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi, (2023), 14 (2), 1534-1552. Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences, (2023), 14 (2), 1534-1552. Araştırma Makalesi / Research Paper





Öğretmenlerin büyük çoğunluğu gelecek kaygısı ve özellikle çocuklarının engelli doğması kaygısı ile mücadele etmekte ve bu durum sosyal yaşamlarında önemli sorunlara yol açmaktadır. Ayrıca çalışma saatleri ile psikolojik durumları arasında bir ilişki tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Özel eğitim öğretmeni, iş sağlığı ve güvenliği, psikososyal risk, tükenmişlik

Sayfa | 1538





#### Introduction

Disability is a major issue that is faced by many societies all over the world. According to the World Health Organization, 10% of the population in developed countries and 12% of the population in developing countries have a disability. In Turkey, it is estimated that between 7.5 and 8.5 million people are living with a disability (Eren, 2010), highlighting the prevalence of this problem in the country. Disability is not only a human issue but also has social and economic dimensions (Yusuf, 2016). People with disabilities have the right to same opportunities as other members of society. It is essential to guarantee these rights, to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and to strengthen social cohesion (Özmete & Gök, 2015). Both government institutions and civil society organizations address the issue of disability in Turkey. To respect and protect the rights of people with disabilities, many laws and regulations have been enacted. However, much more needs to be done to make the lives of people with disabilities easier and more comfortable. In taking steps to make life easier for people with disabilities, other members of society should play an important role. Disability is not only a concern for the disabled person but also for their families. It can be a huge burden for families to care for and support people with disabilities. It is therefore necessary for society to try to make life easier for people with disabilities and to provide them with support (Gültekin & Sezer, 2017). The issue of disability is a top priority for society, and respecting the rights of people with disabilities, working to make their lives easier and raising public awareness are crucial for a better future (Kesgin, 2014). In addressing the issue of disability, special education and rehabilitation services are crucial. These services are necessary to develop the basic skills of people with disabilities, to increase their psychosocial and vocational independence and to ensure their social integration (Yusuf 6 Güldane, 2013).

In Turkey, a number of laws and regulations, including the Constitution, support the work in the field of disability. Article 61 of the 1982 Constitution states that the state should take measures to protect people with disabilities and ensure their social integration. In addition, Law No. 5378 contains a comprehensive set of provisions on special education and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. The law aims to prevent disability, solve health, education, rehabilitation, employment, care, and social security problems of people with disabilities, and provide measures for their comprehensive development and integration into society (Çitil & Üçüncü, 2018). As a result, many projects and programs for people with disabilities have been implemented, especially in recent years, to improve access to special education and rehabilitation services. Participation in education has increased, special education institutions and classrooms have been established, and incentives have been provided for the participation of people with disabilities in the workforce. However, there is a need for more awareness and work in the field of social inclusion and rights of people with disabilities. In order for people with disabilities to participate fully in society without discrimination, other members of society should also be aware of this issue (Celen, 2023). Compliance with legislation can only be achieved through the responsibility of institutions and organizations providing services to people with disabilities. These responsibilities also include special education and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities.

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Sayfa | 1540

In addition to the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services, private organizations that provide special education and rehabilitation services also play a significant role in fulfilling these responsibilities. These organizations provide support for the development of basic skills, vocational training, participation in social activities, and integration into society for people with disabilities. At this point, special education teachers are professionals who identify the learning deficiencies of people with disabilities who need emotional and physical support, strive to reveal and advance their abilities, and are in constant communication with parents. While developing teaching strategies appropriate to the needs of people with disabilities, they also use various methodologies to support students' academic and emotional development and strengthen student-parent collaboration. The World Health Organization defines rehabilitation services as "the process of assisting disabled individuals to develop or strengthen their physical, social and psychological abilities. "The word "rehabilitation" comes from Latin and means "to strengthen, to skill" and "to settle down, to become useful" (Korucu, 2005). Special education and rehabilitation services are designed to help people with disabilities achieve their own level of self-sufficiency and functionality. These services are important in helping people with disabilities to live more independently and to adapt to society (Karakoç, 2011). The United Nations Standard for Rehabilitation Services requires countries to meet the necessary standards for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities. The aim of these standards is to meet the medical, psychological, social and vocational needs of people with disabilities (Mcdowell, 2010). Rehabilitation consists of three stages carried out after the patient's active medical treatment. The first stage is medical treatment, while the other two stages involve training the individual according to their existing potential or compensating for lost functions (Maslach, 1993). The main aim of rehabilitation is to enable disabled individuals to actively participate in society. Thus, rehabilitation services aim to make disabled individuals both physically and psychologically stronger and independent.

Having a child with a disability can be an emotional as well as a physical challenge for parents. While it is normal for parents to experience stress in such situations, special education teachers can also experience stress, burnout, moral fatigue, and regret (Maslach, 2001). In this regard, the role of the special education teacher is crucial. If the child does not receive the necessary attention from their parents to develop a sense of basic security, they may also have difficulty forming social relationships (Kahraman & Çetin, 2015). At this point, it becomes quite challenging for the special education teacher to support the child's development, and education becomes even more stressful. Excessive stress can lead to burnout in special education teachers, as well as serious illnesses such as depression. Psychological, health and social problems are associated with burnout (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1981). Subsequently, the stress and pressure of such situations can also have an impact on teachers' work performance. They therefore need to overcome these problems by seeking support from colleagues or using career counselling services (Anbar & Eker, 2008).

Due to the nature of their profession, teachers working in rehabilitation centers are required to control all behaviours of special students. In addition to these pressures, there are also very specific and diverse needs of the students. Teachers who are frequently confronted with these situations may experience a conflict between approach and avoidance (Arı & Bal, 2008). The situation in which a person becomes aware of something after an event or situation and feels dissatisfaction or sadness

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education teachers do with their students, unrealistic expectations about the student's cognitive abilities and the family's attempts to intervene can lead to psychological conflict among special education teachers (Ardic & Polatci, 2009). Due to the aforementioned reasons, it is important to investigate the psychosocial risks associated with the profession of special education teachers. It is likely that such research will contribute to the mitigation of the potential risks faced by the professionals concerned and the demand from families. In this context, the present study was addressed to examine the impact of the behavior of parents of children receiving special education on

because of an action or inaction is called moral fatigue. This can affect many areas of daily life and work, causing both simple and complex problems (Ari & Bal, 2008). In addition, in the work that special

dealing with professional challenges.

Ethical Aspects of the Research

With the decision of Iğdır University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee dated 18.04.2023 and numbered 2023/8, there was no drawback in conducting this study. Participants were included in the study on a voluntary basis.

teachers' psychological health, teachers' attitudes towards the profession, the coping skills and ability of special education and rehabilitation service providers to maintain their psychological health while

#### **Material Method**

#### **Participants and Data Collection Tools**

The research was conducted between 05.10.2022 and 25.10.2022 in all private educational institutions within the provincial borders of Iğdır province. Forty-nine special education teachers participated in the survey, although the aim was to reach all 65 special education teachers in the study population without sampling. The number of participants represents 75.38% of the research population. Regarding data collection, we have used quantitative research methods, using survey and comparative models. "The screening model" has been widely used to identify the psychosocial risks associated with the job among teachers in special education (Bayındır Koçak & Gökler, 2018; Kardeş & Taşkın, 2020; Dinç, G. 2018). In this regard, a scale including two sections was prepared for this study (Table 1). In the first part, questions were asked about the personal information and experiences of the participants (Kaya et al., 2014; Aydın & Egemberdiyeva, 2018). The second part is designed to measure the level of stress and burnout (Girgin & Baysal, 2005) of the participants and includes questions related to their psychosocial state. In this study, a scale of 15 items was developed by examining the relevant legislation, conducting a literature review (Baysal, 1995; Girgin, 2010) and taking into account the opinions of special education teachers and experts. This scale consists of questions measuring special education teachers' psychosocial status. The solicitation of expert opinion during the survey is an important method of ensuring the validity of the scope of the questionnaire (İnce & Şahin, 2015; Duygun, 2001). The data obtained were expressed as percentages and discussed on the basis of these percentages.

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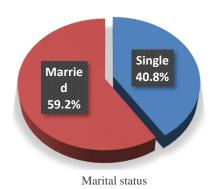
Table 1. The questions directed to the participants along with the present study

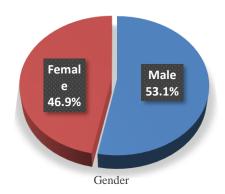
Sayfa | 1542

Questions	Assessments		
Gender?	Male Female		nale
Marital status?	Married	Married Single	
Your age?	25-34	35-44	45-54
How many years of experience do you have in the teaching profession in the rehabilitation center?			
Do you have enough knowledge, skills and experience as a field teacher of intellectual disabilities or a classroom teacher of intellectual disabilities?			
Does teaching with students with severe intellectual disabilities affect your personal life?			
Do you feel the fear of 'will my child become disabled' because of your professional life?			
Do your parents expect your students to achieve much more than their capacity?			
Do the parents provide you with the necessary support?	Yes	No	Partly
Does spending time with students with disabilities negatively affect your life plans?	, 65	7.0	, areiy
Do you regret choosing a profession that requires working with individuals with intellectual disabilities?			
Do you feel burnout when your student fails to acquire the necessary behavior change?			
Have you encountered violent behavior from your students with severe intellectual disabilities?			
Have you experienced health problems caused by your profession?			
Have you ever had thoughts arising from your profession that could negatively affect			
the behavior of your children or other children around you?			

#### **Results and Discussion**

Demographic profile of the participants was as follows. Of the participants, 53.1% were male and 46.9% were female, 40.8% were single and 59.2% were married (Figure 1). In addition, 34.7% were aged 25 to 34, 51.1% were aged 35 to 44 and 8.2% were aged 45 to 54. The study also found that 80% of participants had five years or less of work experience, 15.5% had 6-10 years of experience, 11% had 11-15 years of experience and 2.2% had more than 16 years of experience (Figure 2.).





Kabak, S. & Ozbakir, O. (2023). Assessment of psychosocial risks faced by teachers working in special education and rehabilitation centers in terms of occupational health and safety. Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences, 14(2), 1534-1552.





Figure 1. Demographic profile of the participants

Only 52.1% of respondents were of the opinion that they had sufficient experience in their field, while 16.7% had insufficient experience. In addition, 31.3% said they had some experience, but not enough (Figure 3.).

Sayfa | 1543

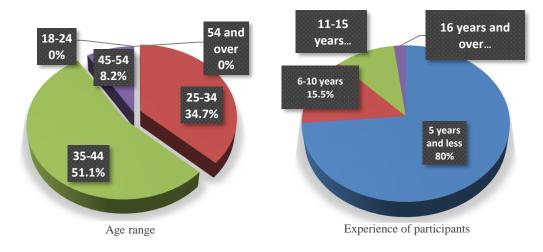


Figure 2. Demographic status and experience of the participants

These results suggest that the level of training and experience of teachers working in rehabilitation centers needs to improve further. Teachers need to know how much they are trained and experienced. Those who are aware that their training or experience is inadequate should be encouraged to continue to develop and train in areas where they need to (Camadan et al., 2011). In the previous reports, the importance of the trained/experienced was reported to be associated with acquirement of the skill needed for the Special Education Needs student (Kara, 2017).

The results of the study revealed that 37.5% of the teachers reported that their work with people with severe intellectual disabilities had an impact on their personal lives. On the other hand, 33.3% reported no effect on their personal lives, while 29.2% said that their personal life was partially affected by working with severely intellectually disabled students (Figure 3.). These results show that working with people with severe intellectual disabilities can have a significant impact on the personal lives of teachers. However, it should be noted that this may differ for each teacher (Girgin & Baysal, 2005). Therefore, center managers should be concerned about the balance between teachers' workload and teachers' working hours (Karasu & Mutlu, 2014). Teachers also need to be psychologically supported and helped to cope with stress (Arşit, 2019), as reported in a quite number of studies (Atmaca & Uzuner, 2020; Sargin & Hamurcu, 2010; Girgin & Baysal, 2005).

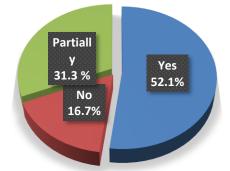
experience as a special education teacher for student with severe intellectual disabilities? individuals with intellectual disabilities or as a special education classroom teacher for individuals with intellectual disabilities?

Do you have sufficient knowledge, skills, and Has your personal life been affected by teaching a

Kabak, S. & Ozbakir, O. (2023). Assessment of psychosocial risks faced by teachers working in special education and rehabilitation centers in terms of occupational health and safety. Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences, 14(2), 1534-1552.







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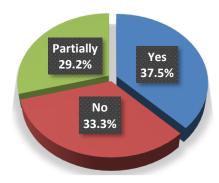
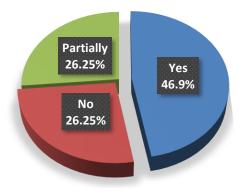


Figure 3. Whether knowledge, skills, and personal life are affected by teaching

In the survey, 46.9% of respondents had a fear of having a child with a disability. Meanwhile, 26.5% reported having no such fears, and another 26.5% expressed not having any specific fears but having concerns (Figure 4.). These results show that there is a fear in society of having a child with a disability. However, since this fear is based on a probability that may or may not occur, it is debatable to what extent it is realistic. Fear of having a child with a disability has become an important issue, especially between healthcare professionals and expectant mothers during pre-pregnancy and pregnancy periods. For this reason, it is important to inform the parents of health care professionals and to share reliable sources of information and experience (Özsoy et al., 2006). According to the survey, 77.6% of the respondents believe that the families of disabled students should work much harder than the student is able to. Meanwhile, 10.2% said they were not pressured and a further 12.2% said they were expected but not pressured (Figure 4.).

Do you experience the fear of "Will my child have a disability?" due to your professional career?

Do your students' parents have expectations of their children that are way beyond their abilities?



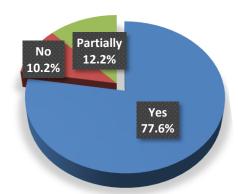


Figure 4. The fear of a child being disabled and parents' expectations

These results suggest that there are high societal expectations for the success of the families of students with disabilities. During the educational process, such expectations can put pressure on both students and their families (Yıkmış & Ozbey, 2009). Success expectations need to be realistic. It should

Kabak, S. & Ozbakir, O. (2023). Assessment of psychosocial risks faced by teachers working in special education and rehabilitation centers in terms of occupational health and safety. Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences, 14(2), 1534-1552.





not be forgotten that disabled students have different capacities and abilities (Sargin & Hamurcu, 2010). Therefore, families and teachers should have as a priority the discovery of the natural talents of the students and their support in this direction. In addition, the education of students with disabilities must not only focus on academic success, but also on their social, emotional and psychological needs (Yazıcı & Durmuşoğlu, 2017). Thus, disabled students can reach their full potential and express themselves to the best of their ability.

According to the survey, 36.6% of the participants said that they received sufficient support from the parents of the students. Meanwhile, 16.7% said they did not receive the support they needed and 43.8% said they received the support they needed but felt it was inadequate (Figure 5.). These results demonstrate that teachers agree on the importance of parental support in the education of disabled students. A strong foundation of communication between parents and their children with disabilities plays a critical role in the child's educational process. In this communication, parents' understanding of their child's needs and recognition of their child's deficits allows them to support educational programs more effectively. This can help teachers to better understand the individual needs of the child and guide the learning process more effectively (Yazıcı & Durmuşoğlu, 2017). However, it has been observed that some teachers do not receive sufficient support from parents or consider the support they receive as inadequate.

Parental support is crucial in the education of disabled students (Başal & Batıt, 2002). In order to ensure that parents contribute more to their children's education, schools and teachers should increase communication with them (Bengisoy & Yılmaz, 2019). Active parental involvement can help students succeed and reach their full potential at every stage of their education (Şeker, 2013). In addition, the provision of advice and guidance to parents in terms of education and support is also very important. Resources such as parent education programs, seminars and special counseling services can help parents become more involved in their children's education and understand them better (Çattık, 2016).

According to the survey, 20% of the participants felt that spending time with disabled students was detrimental to their own personal plans for their lives. Meanwhile, 57% reported no negative impact on their private lives from spending time with disabled students, and 23% reported no impact but partial effects.

Kabak, S. & Ozbakir, O. (2023). Assessment of psychosocial risks faced by teachers working in special education and rehabilitation centers in terms of occupational health and safety. Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences, 14(2), 1534-1552.

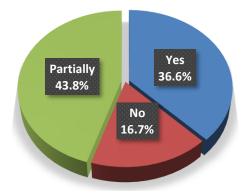
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the support you need?

Do the parents of the students provide you with Does it have a negative effect on your life plans to spend a lot of time with disabled students?



Sayfa | 1546

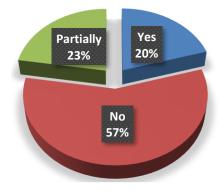


Figure 5. The Impact of parental support on Students' Plans

These results show that work with disabled students can have an impact on the personal lives of teachers (Girgin & Baysal, 2005).

However, some teachers are less concerned or completely unaffected. Teachers who work with students with disabilities have a heavy workload and, as a result, they have only a limited amount of time to devote to their personal lives (Arslan & Aslan, 2014). Teachers must therefore be aware of the importance of work-life balance and effective time management (Baysal, 1995). Creating special areas for disabled students in schools and rehabilitation centers can help teachers feel more comfortable when working with students and maintain a work-life balance (Atmaca & Uzuner, 2020).

According to the survey, 4.3% of respondents regretted having chosen a career that requires working with people with intellectual disabilities. Meanwhile, 74.75% said they had no regrets about their career choice and 21.3% were undecided because their career choice required them to work with people with intellectual disabilities (Figure 6.) These results show that the impact of working with people with intellectual disabilities on the choice of a career is a complex one. While for some people working with people with intellectual disabilities may be an appropriate career choice, others may have regrets. In terms of career and social life, working with people with intellectual disabilities can be an important opportunity. However, qualities such as sensitivity, patience and dedication are required of those working in this (Özyürek, 2008). Additionally, it is important to have specialized training and experience in this area for those who work with people with intellectual disabilities (Diken & Sucuoğlu, 1999). Working with people with intellectual disabilities can be both a challenge and a rewarding experience. Therefore, individuals considering a career in this field need to assess themselves and their abilities, obtain appropriate training and progress towards their career goals accordingly (Nüket & Çiçek, 2019).

According to the survey, 34.7% of those surveyed said that they felt burnt out when disabled students did not show the necessary behavioral changes. Meanwhile, 32.7% said they did not

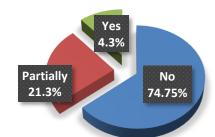
Kabak, S. & Ozbakir, O. (2023). Assessment of psychosocial risks faced by teachers working in special education and rehabilitation centers in terms of occupational health and safety. Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences, 14(2), 1534-1552.





experience burnout when students did not show the required behavior, and 32.7% said they experienced partial burnout (Figure 6.).

Do you have any regrets about your choice of When your student fails to make the necessary career involving work with people with behavioural changes, do you feel burnt out? intellectual disabilities?



Sayfa | 1547

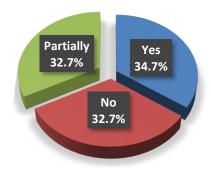


Figure 6. Feelings of regret and burnout

These results show that it can be difficult and exhausting to work with the behavioral changes of students with disabilities. However, there are teachers who are less affected by this situation or who are not affected at all. Maladaptive student behavior can be a contributor to teacher burnout (Şahin & Şahin, 2012). This means that schools need to ensure that teachers are properly resourced and supported. Additionally, training teachers to manage stress and learn how to care for themselves can also be beneficial (Dinç, 2018).

According to the survey, 38.8% of respondents reported experiences of violent behaviour from students with more severe mental disabilities. Meanwhile, 38.8 % said they never encountered violent behaviour and 22.4 % said they rarely encountered it (Figure 7.). These results suggest that there are certain risks involved in working with people with severe mental retardation. Violent behaviour in particular can be a source of stress, anxiety and burnout for teachers (Cemaloğlu & Şahin, 2007). Teachers should seek support from experts in the field if they are exposed to violent behavior from people with severe mental disabilities (Girgin & Baysal, 2005). In addition, schools and rehabilitation centers need to train teachers to be aware of this type of situation and to provide a safe working environment (Özyürek, 2008). Teachers should remain calm when they are confronted with violent behaviour and should have the necessary skills to deal with such situations (Göç, 2021). Teachers also need to be trained in self-care and to use techniques to help manage stress (Mistan, 2017).

According to the survey, 32.7% of those surveyed reported having experienced work-related health problems. Meanwhile, 61.2% said they had no work-related health problems and 6.1% said they rarely had work-related health problems (Figure 7.). Those findings might be critical predictors concerned with the negative impacts of the profession considered on the human health. In particular, the risk of work-related health problems is higher for people in physically demanding jobs (Camkurt, 2007). It is important to be aware of how occupations affect human health and to take preventative

Kabak, S. & Ozbakir, O. (2023). Assessment of psychosocial risks faced by teachers working in special education and rehabilitation centers in terms of occupational health and safety. Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences, 14(2), 1534-1552.



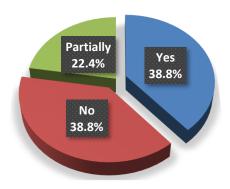


measures. Employers must make the health of their workers a priority and take appropriate measures to ensure safety (Selahattin, 2015). Employees must also be aware of health and safety regulations in the workplace and the correct use of protective equipment (İnciroğlu, 2014).

Sayfa | 1548

Have you encountered violent behaviour from your severely disabled students?

Have you experienced health problems related to your profession?



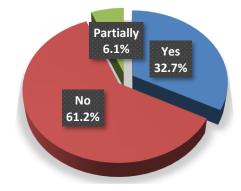


Figure 7. Violence and health problems

According to the survey, 14.3% of those surveyed reported that they had developed negative professional-related behaviors that could be considered unfavorable to other children. Meanwhile, 61.2% of respondents said they did not have such thoughts in relation to their job and 24.5% said they sometimes engaged in such behavior (Figure 8.).

Have you ever had thoughts in connection with your job that could have a negative effect on the behaviour of your children or of other children in your environment?

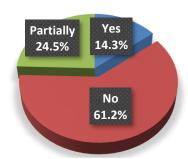


Figure 8. Status of behavioral changes

These results are an indication that teachers, being human beings, can develop negative behaviors in relation to their profession. These behaviors can be harmful to students and to the relationship between teacher and student (Akdoğan, 2010). To prevent teachers from developing negative professional behaviours, it may be beneficial for them to receive training on issues such as stress management, anger control and empathy (Baltacı & Demir, 2012). Schools also need to be more sensitive to teachers' psychological needs and ensure that they are supported (Arslan & Aslan, 2014). Teachers should also priorities and continually renew their professional development. To be successful

Kabak, S. & Ozbakir, O. (2023). Assessment of psychosocial risks faced by teachers working in special education and rehabilitation centers in terms of occupational health and safety. Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences, 14(2), 1534-1552.





in their profession and have a positive impact on their students, teachers need to continue their professional development and remain open to innovations.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations: The Way Ahead**

Sayfa | 1549

The results of the study indicate that teachers working in special education and rehabilitation services generally have a positive attitude towards their profession and are satisfied with their jobs. However, professional problems encountered by teachers and their negative effects are also reported in the study. It was also found that as teachers' levels of professional experience increased, they were better able to cope with professional problems and had a more positive impact on students' levels of development. We have also found that the behavior of the parents, either in a positive or in a negative way, could be a critical predictor with regard to the impact on the psychological health of the teachers. The findings of the present study revealed the potential impacts of factors including teachers' attitudes and professional experience related to their profession, students' developmental levels, and parental behavior on the psychological health of teachers. Accordingly, corresponding to those critical findings; we strongly recommend that appropriate measures be taken to develop coping skills for professional problems encountered by teachers working in special education and rehabilitation services and to protect their psychological health.

Mental resilience is an important concept that aims to create a happy and healthy society by protecting the physical, mental and social health of individuals. The number of people with disabilities in our country is quite high, and these people are in need of education and medical care. In this context, special Educational Needs Teachers are an important group who help to educate and support these individuals as they grow and develop. However, those teachers can also face psychological risk factors such as workload, stress, challenging working conditions, and other factors. For this reason, it is important to take care of the psychological health of the special needs teacher and to try to eliminate the risk factors. Improving the living standards of the teachers, eliminating risks in the educational environment and making their work easier will contribute to a healthier classroom environment. Efforts should be made to develop special education teachers' coping skills with professional stress and fatigue, to reduce workload, to create a supportive working environment and to encourage them to use psychological counseling services. In this way, it is possible to protect the mental health of special needs teachers and to create a healthier environment in the classroom.





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Sayfa | 1550

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