

The Moderating Role of Career Decision Regret in the Effect of Career Adaptability on Burnout

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between career adaptabilities, career decision regret and burnout of teachers. The participants of the study were 269 teachers (151 females and 118 males) who worked in the primary and secondary education institutions of a city located in the Eastern Mediterranean region in Turkey and agreed to participate in the study. The study used Career Decision Regret Scale, Career Adapt-abilities Scale-Short Form and The Burnout Measure-Short Version were used as data collection tools. SPSS package program and the Process Macro 3.5 software were utilized for the analysis of the data. Pearson correlation analysis was utilized to investigate the relationships between career adaptability, career decision regret, and burnout. Process Macro software developed by Hayes (2018) based on linear regression analysis was utilized to test the power of career adaptability and career decision regret on burnout as well as the moderating role of career decision regret on the relationship between career adaptability and burnout. The results of the study showed that career adaptability and career decision regret predicted burnout significantly. Another finding of the study is that career decision regret played a moderating role in the relationship between the teachers' career adaptability and burnout. Findings of the research were discussed and suggestions were made.

Keywords: Career Decision Regret, Career Adaptability, Burnout, Teachers, Moderating Role

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INTRODUCTION

People face constantly changing and unsteady working environments as a result of technological developments, increased globalization, and demographic changes experienced in today's world (Greenhaus et al. 2010). Compared to the past, individuals' career has become less predictable (Lawrence et al. 2015), and people need to adapt to the career-related difficulties in the face of factors such as constantly changing working environments and employment models (Arthur, 1994; Hall et al. 2018; Savickas et al. 2009). This situation makes career adaptability increasingly more important for successful career development (Savickas, 2013).

Career adaptability has been defined as a psychosocial construct that indicates an individual's ability in fulfilling current tasks, showing the expected improvement, becoming ready for the difficulties to be encountered during career transitions, and coping with these difficulties (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Tien & Wang, 2017). Career adaptability is composed of four components called concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Concern refers to recognizing professional tasks, caring about the future, and making plans for the future. Control is an individual's making an effort and taking responsibility for building his/her professional future. Curiosity is a construct that is a source that enables an individual to become more knowledgeable about fulfilling a task and to investigate future scenarios. As for confidence, it refers to the self-efficacy needed for realizing an individual's career goals even when s/he encounters difficulties and obstacles (Savickas, 2013; Savickas et al. 2009; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Career adaptability, one of the top-investigated constructs in the field of occupational psychology (Hirschi et al. 2015; Rudolph et al. 2017), is not limited to an individual's transition from school life to work-life; it is also considered to be an important concept used lifelong (Sharf, 2017). Career adaptability has effects on individuals' career satisfaction (Tolentino et al. 2013), job commitment (Rossier et al. 2012), job stress (Yu et al. 2019), job performance (Ohme & Zacher, 2015), job satisfaction (Dong et al. 2020), and intentions for leaving their job (Dong et al. 2020). In short, career adaptability is a concept that is effective in many fields of an individual's career. On the other hand, fundamental concepts related to the career field such as career satisfaction (Barthauer et al. 2019), commitment (Yetgin & Benligiray, 2019), job stress (Richards et al. 2018), job performance (Koo et al. 2019), job satisfaction (Kara, 2020), and intention for leaving from a job (Lee, 2019) are also associated with workers' burnout. Hence, career adaptability could have effects on burnout (Da Silva et al. 2019).

Burnout is a reaction given to the exposure to stressors for a long time (Maslach et al. 2001). Defined as a psychological syndrome, burnout is addressed in three dimensions including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is a state of excessive emotional wear. Depersonalization is a state of becoming indifferent to the ideals and others. The decrease in personal accomplishment is defined as the decrease in the feelings of sufficiency and productivity in the workplace (Maslach, 1982). Particularly in the teaching profession, which is an emotionally tiring and stressful profession (Kyriacou, 2001), burnout is encountered very commonly (Garrick et al. 2014; Johnson et al. 2005; Maslach et al. 2001). Studies have revealed that the burnout experienced by teachers is associated with job dissatisfaction (Domitrovich et al. 2016), high job absenteeism rates (Wolf et al. 2015), enhancing student motivation (Shen et al. 2015), anxiety, depression, hypertension and even cardiovascular diseases (Roeser et al. 2013). Burnout is also a construct that is associated with the individual's emotions (Akkaya & Serin, 2020; Alarcon et al. 2009; Guan & Jepse, 2020).

Emotions have an important role in an individuals' career (Brown et al. 2003). Studies show that while negative emotions have a linear relationship with burnout (Szczygiel & Mikolajczak, 2018; Tian et al. 2019), they have an inverse relationship with career adaptability (Ginevra et al. 2016; Yu et al. 2019). Regret is one of the most frequently mentioned emotions in daily life (Shimanoff, 1984). Regret is defined as the primary negative emotion associated with blaming oneself (Bonifield

& Cole, 2007; Le & Ho, 2020). Hence, the feeling of regret for career decision could be considered to have a moderating role in the relationship between career adaptability and burnout.

This study was conducted with teachers. One of the reasons for conducting the study with teachers is that burnout is very common in the teaching profession (Garrick et al. 2014; Johnson et al. 2005; Maslach et al. 2001) because teachers encounter various stress factors such as increased workload, role ambiguity, lack of social support in the workplace, or difficulties in classroom management (Alarcon, 2011; Chang, 2009; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). Another reason is that there is a need for the identification of the preventive measures and related variables about teacher burnout (Park & Shin, 2020). Teacher burnout is a serious problem and threatens psychological well-being (Park & Shin, 2020). Hence, this study is important as it reveals the effect of career adaptability, a protective factor for teachers (McIlveen et al. 2018), on burnout. In addition, this study is of importance as it is the first study to investigate the effects of teachers' career adaptability on their burnout. Emotions are associated with individuals' burnout (Szczygiel & Mikolajczak, 2018) and career adaptability (Ginevra et al. 2016; Yu et al. 2019). Regret is one of the most frequently expressed emotions in daily life (Shimanoff, 1984). Therefore, this study is also important as it investigates whether the feeling of career decision regret has a moderating effect in the relationship of career adaptability and burnout. Teachers' increasing their career adaptability and decreasing their career decision regret are considered to decrease their burnout. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify the effects of teachers' career adaptability and career decision regret on their burnout. Besides, the findings to be obtained from this study are believed to contribute to future studies on teachers' burnout. This study aimed to find an answer to the question of "Does career decision regret have a moderating role in the relationship between career adaptability and burnout?". In line with this problem, the following hypotheses were tested, and the hypothetical model of the study is presented in Figure 1.

H1: Teachers' career adaptability predicts their burnout significantly.

H2: Teachers' career decision regret predicts their burnout significantly.

H3: Teachers' career decision regret level has a moderating effect on the relationship between their career adaptability and burnout. In other words, when career decision regret is high, career adaptability will have no effects on burnout.

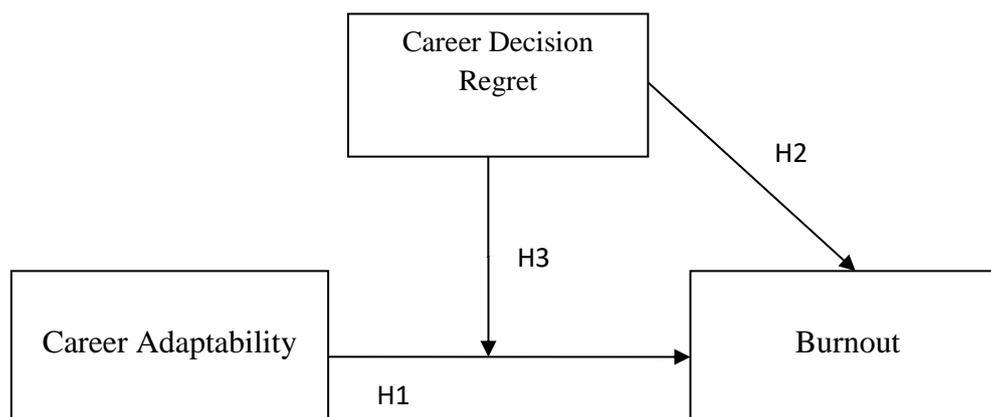


Figure 1 Hypothetical model of the study

METHOD

Participants

The participants of the study were 269 teachers (151 females and 118 males) who worked in the primary and secondary education institutions of a city located in the Eastern Mediterranean region in Turkey and agreed to participate in the study. The teachers' age ranged between 24 and 62 (Mean= 36.38, Sd= 8.26). The working duration of the participating teachers ranged from 1 to 42 years (Mean= 12.91, Sd= 8.75).

Data Collection Tools

The CareerDecisionsRegret Scale: The scale was adapted by Erdurcan & Kırdök (2017) to identify individuals' career decision regret levels. It was adapted from the decision regret scale developed by Brehaut et al. (2003). The five-point Likert scale includes options ranging from 0= I totally disagree to 4=I totally agree. The scale is composed of 5 items and one dimension. Items 1, 3, and 5 are coded reversely. After these three items are reversed, the scores obtained from each item are collected and multiplied by 5, which indicates a score between 0 and 100. This score indicates individuals' career decision regret level. The increase in the scores obtained from the scale indicates the increase in career decision regret. Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the original scale was found between .81 and .92. Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found .91 in the adaptation study. This study found Cronbach's Alpha value as .89.

Career Adapt-abilities Scale-Short Form:It is the short form of the 24-item Career Adapt-abilities Scale-International Form developed by Savickas & Porfeli (2012). It was developed by Maggiori et al. (2017), and it aims to measure career adaptability. The scale is composed of 12 items and 4 subscales (concern, control, curiosity, confidence) each of which has 3 items. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was performed by Işık et al. (2018). Increased scores on the 5-point Likert scale indicate an increase in career adaptability. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was performed with high school students, university students, and adult workers. Confirmatory factor analysis results showed that the model worked very well for all these three groups ($\chi^2/df = 2,13-3,38$, GFI = .950-.960, CFI = .941-.966, TLI = .922-.955, RMSEA = .059-.082). Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale ranges from .80 to .91. This study found the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient as .88.

The Burnout Measure-Short Version: The scale was developed by Pines (2005). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was performed by Çaprı (2013). The scale is used for measuring individuals' occupational burnout levels. The 7-point scale has 10 items rated on options ranging from 1=Never to 7=Always. The burnout score is calculated by collecting the score given to each item and dividing it to 10. The scale has one dimension, and increased scores indicate increased occupational burnout. Confirmatory factor analysis results showed that the scale had acceptable goodness of fit values ($\chi^2/df=4,12$, GFI=0.93, CFI=, .90, RMSEA= 0.06, SRMR=0.06). Cronbach's Alpha internal coefficient of the original scale was calculated 0.91. Cronbach's Alpha internal coefficient of the Turkish adaptation was found .90. This study found Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient as .93.

Data Analysis

Data were collected online from teachers (Google Forms) who agreed to participate in the study. Data collection took about 10 minutes. No personal information was required from the participants when the responses were received.

Normal distribution assumptions were first checked, and the data were found to distribute normally. SPSS package program and the Process Macro 3.5 software were utilized for the analysis of the data. Pearson correlation analysis was utilized to investigate the relationships between career adaptability, career decision regret, and burnout. Process Macro software developed by Hayes (2018) based on linear regression analysis was utilized to test the power of career adaptability and career decision regret on burnout as well as the moderating role of career decision regret on the relationship between career adaptability and burnout. Slope analysis was performed to find out in which cases (low-moderate-high) the moderating variable was significant (Aiken & West, 1991). Process Macro software enables to analyze the indirect and moderating effects (Hayes, 2018). The moderating analysis is done to test the hypothesis indicating that the relationship between two variables is affected by a third variable (Hayes et al. 2017). In the moderating variable analysis, by centralizing the continuous variables, the Process Macro software enables to obtain three categories as low, moderate, and high. The centralization of the variable is subtracting the mean from the observation values of the related variable (Gürbüz, 2019). This software makes a linear analysis based on the calculations of the model in the management of the smallest squares (Gürbüz, 2019). In the Process software, which is becoming common, the hypotheses related to the moderating effect are tested according to the confidence intervals obtained through the Bootstrap technique (Gürbüz, 2019). Analyses based on the Bootstrap technique are known to give more reliable and valid results (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007).

FINDINGS

Pearson Moments Multiplication Correlation coefficients and descriptive statistics were calculated to identify the relationships between career adaptability, career decision regret, and burnout. The results are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Correlation values and descriptive statistics between the variables

Variables	1	2	3
1.Career Adaptability	-		
2.Career decision regret	-.43**	-	
3.Burnout	-.28**	.32**	-
Arithmetic mean	52.44	24.48	2.86
Standard Deviation	5.94	25.27	1.28
Coefficient of skewness	-.61	.86	.90
Coefficient of kurtosis	.02	-.25	.30

** $p < .01$

As it is demonstrated in Table 1, burnout has a significant relationship negatively with career adaptability ($r = -.28, p < .01$) and positively with career decision regret ($r = .32, p < .01$). Besides, a negative, significant relationship was found between career adaptability and career decision regret ($r = -.43, p < .01$).

The moderating role of career decision regret in the effect of career adaptability on their burnout was tested using regression analysis based on the bootstrap method. The Bootstrap method is claimed to give more reliable results compared to the traditional method of Baron & Kenny (1986) (Gürbüz, 2019; Hayes, 2018; Preacher et al. 2007). The analyses were performed with Process Macro developed by Hayes (2018). The option indicating 5000 resamplings was preferred with the bootstrap technique in the analyses. Mediating and moderating effect analyses performed using the Bootstrap technique indicated that the values at 95% confidence interval should not include the value of zero (0) as a result of the analysis so that the research hypothesis can be supported (MacKinnon et al. 2004). Table 2 demonstrates the regression analysis results. According to the results in Table 2, career adaptability included in the regression analysis and the career decision regret variables explained approximately 15% of the change in the burnout ($R^2 = .150$). It was found that while career adaptability had negative effects on burnout ($b = -.0397, p < .01$), career decision regret had positive ($b = .0146, p < .001$) and significant effects. The interactional effect (moderating effect) of career adaptability and career decision regret on burnout was found to be significant ($b = .0012, p < .05$).

Table 2 Regression analysis results demonstrating the moderating effect (N = 269)

Variables	<i>b</i>	<i>S.H.</i>	<i>t</i>
Fixed	2.939*** [2.783, 3.095]	.0794	37.03
Career Adaptability (<i>X</i>)	-.0397** [-.0664, -.0130]	.0136	-2.93
Career decision regret (<i>W</i>)	.0146*** [.0081, .0211]	.0033	4.45
<i>X.W</i>	.0012* [.0002, .0022]	.0005	2.42

$R = .388$, $R^2 = .150$; *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. *S.D.* : Standard Deviation. Values in parenthesis are confidence intervals. Standardized beta coefficients (*b*) were reported.

The effects of the moderating variables as a result of the slope analysis are demonstrated in Figure 2. An analysis of the details of the moderating effect showed that the effect of the career adaptability on burnout increased even more when career decision regret was moderate ($b = -.0451$, $p < .01$) and low ($b = -.0694$, $p < .01$). This relationship was even stronger in cases when career regret was low. On the other hand, when career decision regret was high, the effect of career adaptability on burnout was not significant ($b = -.0088$, $p = .63$). In conclusion, the effect of career adaptability on burnout was higher when career decision regret was low, which indicates that the relationship between career adaptability and burnout was moderated by career decision regret.

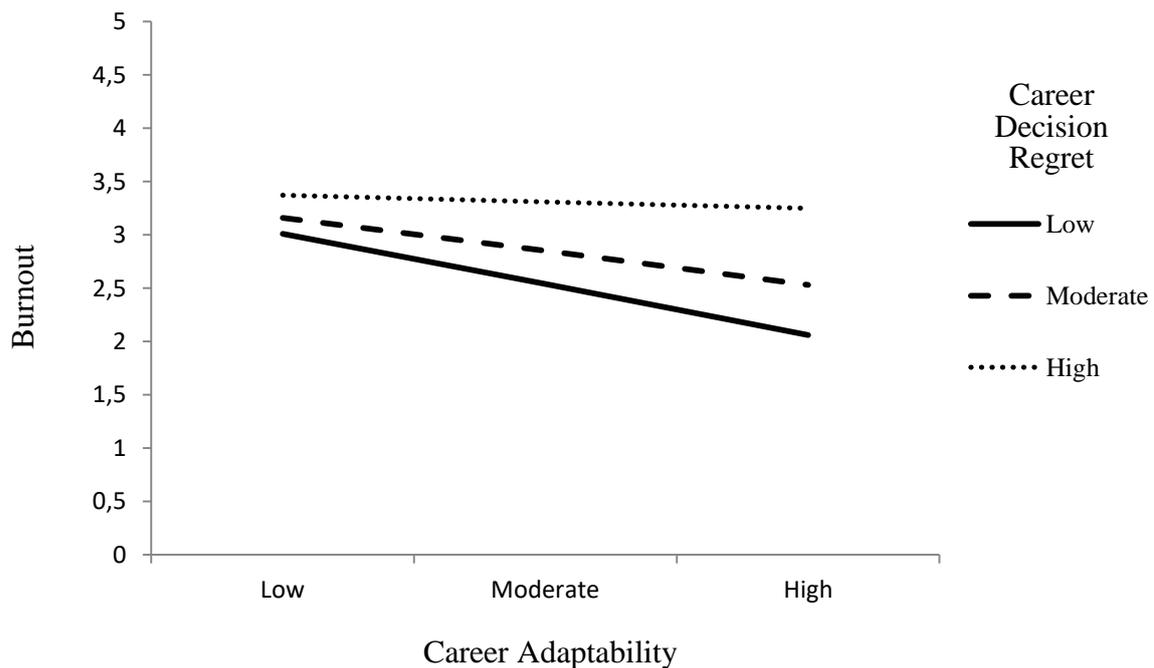


Figure 2 The figure of the moderating effect of career adaptability

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated how much teachers' career adaptability and career decision regret predicted their burnout. The study also tested the moderating role of career decision regret on the relationship between teachers' career adaptability and burnout. The results of the study showed that career adaptability and career decision regret predicted burnout significantly. Another finding of the

study is that career decision regret played a moderating role in the relationship between the teachers' career adaptability and burnout. It was found that career adaptability had effects on burnout when career decision regret was low and moderate; however, career adaptability did not have effects on burnout when career decision regret was high.

The primary finding of the study was that career adaptability predicted burnout negatively. An analysis of the literature indicated no studies that investigated the effects of career adaptability on burnout. However, career adaptability are reported to have effects on the factors such as stress (Yu et al. 2019), career satisfaction (Tolentino et al. 2013), and job satisfaction (Dong et al. 2020). On the other hand, factors such as stress (Richards et al. 2018), career satisfaction (Barthauer et al. 2019), and job satisfaction (Kara, 2020) are among the important predictors of burnout. In this regard, career adaptability are considered to have effects on burnout.

Another finding of the study was that career decision regret predicted burnout positively. Career decision regret was reported to be an important predictor of burnout in the study conducted by Tian et al. (2019). This finding is in line with the finding in the present study. Regret is one of the emotions to be experienced as a result of the decision for the choice of profession (Erducan & Kırdök, 2017), and it is defined as a negative emotion (Le & Ho, 2020). Negative emotions have a linear relationship with burnout (Szczygiel & Mikolajczak, 2018; Tian et al. 2019). This factor is considered to lead to the fact that career decision regret had effects on burnout.

One of the purposes of this study was to investigate the moderating role of career decision regret on the relationship between career adaptability and burnout. The analysis results showed that career decision regret had a moderating role in the relationship between career adaptability and burnout. When the career decision regret was high, career adaptability were found to have no significant effects on burnout. When career decision regret was low and moderate, career adaptability had effects on burnout.

Career adaptability improves with the actions such as being interested in the future, doing professional research, receiving professional trainings, taking career-related responsibilities, and searching for career opportunities (Savickas, 1997; Savickas, 2002; Savickas, 2013). Emotions, on the other hand, have effects on individuals' actions, and they make them take action (Goleman, 2009; Yanık et al. 2017). Regret is one of the most frequently mentioned (Shimanoff, 1984) emotions in daily life, and it is defined negatively (Bonifield & Cole, 2007; Le & Ho, 2020). Hence, individuals who experience a high level of career decision regret might have low motivation for realizing the actions that might improve their career adaptability. This might weaken their career adaptability and cause them to have no effects on their burnout.

This study has a number of limitations. It was conducted with teachers working in a city located in the Eastern Mediterranean region in Turkey. For the generalizability of the results, similar studies should be conducted with teachers working in different regions and cities from different cultures. This study was conducted with teachers. However, career adaptability is an effective and important factor in all working people's life (Sharf, 2017). On the other hand, burnout is not only experienced in professions like teaching, a human-centered profession that requires face to face interaction (Maslach & Leiter, 1997), but also in other professions. Therefore, similar studies could be performed with workers in other professions that do not require face to face interaction. Besides, the age and working duration means of the participants in this study could have effects on the burnout levels. Therefore, these factors should be taken into consideration when generalizations are made about the study.

Based on the results obtained in this study, some recommendations can be made for the research and practice areas. This study investigated the moderating role of regret, which is defined as a negative emotion, on the relationship between career adaptability and burnout. An investigation of the moderating effect of future visions reflecting positive attitudes about the future on the relationship

between career adaptability and burnout could be of importance in terms of its contribution to the literature. It could be beneficial to conduct studies that might reveal the causes of career decision regret, which has effects on teachers' burnout. Due to the high levels of career decision regret, emotion regulation programs can be designed for teachers who experience no effects of career adaptability on their burnout so that they can have control over their emotions of regret. Teachers' career adaptability could be increased through in-service trainings.

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