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Inhibitors of Teachers' Career Adaptability: Burnout and Loneliness in Work Life

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to investigate teachers' career adaptability in relation to burnout and loneliness in work life. The current study was conducted on 76 male and 168 female teachers having been working at least for five years in the Ministry of National Education. The data of the study were collected by using "The Burnout Scale", "The Career Adaptability Scale" and "The Scale of Loneliness in Work Life". In the analysis of the collected data, the path analysis technique was used. The findings of the study have revealed that the teachers' experience of burnout decreases their career adaptability ($\beta = -0.29$, $t = -4.64$; $p < 0.01$). Similarly, the loneliness experienced in the professional life was found to be decreasing the teachers' career adaptability ($\beta = -0.40$, $t = -6.37$; $p < 0.01$). In addition, a positive and significant correlation was found between burnout and loneliness in the professional life ($\beta = 0.48$, $t = 8.13$; $p < 0.01$). The results of the current study show that there are significant relationships between teachers' career adaptability and burnout and loneliness in work life.

Note: This study was presented as an oral presentation at the 1st International Educational Research and Teacher Education Congress.

Keywords: Teachers, career adaptability, burnout, loneliness in work life

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Introduction

It is important that teachers' characteristics and personality structures should be adaptable with their work. In the psychology literature, the adaptability of individuals' career and self is expressed as career adaptability (Savickas, 2005). Career adaptability is defined as the psycho-social structure that provides resources for individuals to overcome career development tasks, career transitions and career barriers in their career development processes (Savickas, 2013). Zikic and Klehe (2006) define career adaptability as individuals' making explorations about themselves and their professions and having plans related to their careers. Career adaptability is dimensioned as a structure consisting of two sub-components by Zikic and Klehe (2006). While the first of these components is career exploration, the other is the career plan. There are factors that affect the career adaptability of individuals positively and negatively. Negative factors may include burnout and loneliness in work life.

Relationship between Career Adaptability and Burnout

Burnout is one of the important concepts that express the negative side of individuals' career lives (Pines and Aronson, 1988). There are two important definitions of burnout in the literature. One of them is made by Maslach (2003). According to Maslach (2003), burnout is a long-term state of tension that occurs as a result of inadaptability between the situation at work and individuals working in response to stressful factors in individuals' work lives. The second one is the definition made by Pines and Aronson (1988). Pines and Aronson (1988) define burnout as a state of mental, emotional and physical exhaustion caused by the activation of the feelings of lack of energy, loss of purpose, and despair, helplessness, constant stress, and being trapped. Maslach & Jackson (1981) treat burnout as a three-dimensional process. First of these dimensions is emotional exhaustion. The second one is depersonalization. The last one is personal success. There are important and significant relationships between career adaptability and burnout.

When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that there are many studies that deal with the relationship between burnout and career adaptability indirectly rather than directly. In these studies, the relationships between job commitment and burnout and career adaptability have generally been addressed (Hyvönen, Feldt, Salmela-Aro, Kinnunen and Mäkikangas, 2009; Lu, Lu, Gursoy and Neale, 2016; Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori and Dauwalder, 2012; Salmela-Aro, Tolvanen and Nurmi, 2011). In addition, there are studies examining the relationships between job stress and career adaptability as a path to burnout. For example, Fiori, Bollmann and Rossier (2015) examined the effect of career adaptability on job stress of university students. Jiang (2016) dealt with the relationships between career adaptability of the employees and the routines forming within the scope of work. Johnston, Luciano, Maggiori, Ruch and Rossier (2013) discussed the relationships between career adaptability and job stress on German-speaking working adults. In their study, Diri and Kiral (2016) stated that the middle school teachers who chose their profession unwillingly experienced more burnout than the middle school teachers who chose their profession willingly.

On the other hand, although their number is small, there are some studies examining the relationships between career adaptability and burnout. For example, in the study by Harry and Coetzee (2013), the relationships between career adaptability and burnout were examined. In addition, the Career Construction Theory argues that the loss of adaptive resources causes individuals to experience burnout (Savickas, 2005; Savickas, 2013). Consequently, in this study, based on the aforementioned research findings and the explanations offered by the Career Construction Theory, burnout is accepted as an important variable that predicts career adaptability.

The Relationship between Career Adaptability and Loneliness in Work Life

Loneliness may be one of the factors affecting the career adaptability of people who are social entities. Loneliness in work life is a different concept than general loneliness. The concept of general loneliness is a subjective mood arising from the inadequacy of social relations (Chadsey-Rusch et al., 1992). Loneliness in the workplace that occurs only in work life consisted of both quantitative and qualitative deficiencies of the relations in the workplace (Wright, Burt, & Strongman, 2006). Loneliness in work life is explained in two dimensions. One of these dimensions is social relationship. The second dimension is emotional deprivation (Weiss, 1973). Social relationship corresponds to the quantitative dimension of loneliness in work life, and emotional deprivation corresponds to the qualitative dimension of loneliness in work life.

In the literature, there are no studies examining the relationship between loneliness and career adaptability in work life. However, there are studies in the literature that address the relationships between loneliness and career adaptability indirectly on different sample groups. For example, Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier (2013) compared the relationships between career adaptability and the concepts of job insecurity and job tension on working and non-working individuals. Ohme and Zacher (2015) examined the relationship between workers' career adaptability and job performance rates. Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori, and Dauwalder (2012) evaluated the relationships between career adaptability and employee commitment in their study on a diverse sample group, mostly consisted of employees, job seekers, students, private income owners and retirees who did not specify their professional status. Duffy, Douglass and Autin (2015) examined the relationships between undergraduate students' work will and career adaptability. Fiori, Bollmann and Rossier (2015) investigate the relationships between job stress and job satisfaction and career adaptability in their study conducted on individuals of working age. Given the delineations above, it is assumed in the current study that loneliness in work life is an important variable predicting career adaptability.

The Relationship between Burnout and Loneliness in Work Life

When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that there is no study investigating the relationship between burnout of teachers and their loneliness in their work life. However, there are studies indirectly investigating the relationships between burnout and loneliness in work life generally within the framework of the concept of job satisfaction in the literature. For example, Ertürk and Keçecioglu (2012) examined the relationships between teachers' burnout and job satisfaction. In their study, Diri and Kırıl (2016) investigate the effect of middle school teachers' job satisfaction on their professional burnout levels. Hakanen, Bakker, Wilmar and Schaufeli (2006) addressed the relationships between teachers' burnout and their participation in work. Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt and Vanroelen (2014) examined the relationships between burnout and interpersonal relationships and workload in their study conducted on senior teachers. Given the delineations above, it is assumed in the current study that burnout is an important variable predicting loneliness in work life.

Individuals' experiencing burnout in their professional lives has many negative outcomes. One of these negative outcomes is the decreasing efficiency in individuals' job performance. Another negative outcome is increasing absence of individuals in their workplace. Moreover, burnout also negatively affects individuals' spiritual health (Angerer, 2003; Fiorilli, De Stasio, Di Chiacchio, Pepe and Salmela-Aro, 2017; Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli, 2006). In addition to these, loneliness is an important indicator of physical and spiritual health. In the existing research, people experiencing a high level of loneliness have been reported to more likely suffer from cardiovascular diseases (Xia & Li, 2018). As a result of increasing loneliness, individuals' cognitive functions have also been reported to deteriorate (Zhong, Chen & Conwell, 2016). On the other hand, loneliness in work life has negative effects in terms of both individual and work organization. For example, individual loneliness in the workplace reduces individuals' work values. It also causes the deterioration of the job performance of individuals. In terms of work organization, loneliness in the workplace negatively affects individuals' work organization atmosphere and work organization supports (Anand and Mishra, 2019). It is seen that there are no studies examining the effects of either burnout or loneliness on teachers' career adaptability.

It seems important to conduct studies on factors affecting career adaptability because increasing career adaptability fosters individuals' career decision-making abilities (Duffy, Douglass and Autin, 2015), professional awareness (Rottinghaus, Buelow, Matyja & Schneider, 2012), life satisfaction (Ginevra et al., 2018), self-efficacy (McLennan, McIlveen, & Perera, 2017), career optimism (Duffy & Raque-Bogdan, 2010), job commitment (Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori & Dauwalder, 2012), job performance (Haibo, Xiaoyu, Xiaoming, and Zhijin, 2018), willpower in the workplace (Duffy, Douglass & Autin, 2015), job-related self-efficacy (Jiang, Hu & Wang, 2018), job satisfaction (Fiori, Bollmann and Rossier, 2015), development in the workplace (Jiang, 2017) and self-esteem (Eryılmaz and Kara, 2016a). Moreover, increasing career adaptability reduces individuals' job stress (Fiori, Bollmann and Rossier, 2015), job insecurity and job-related frustration (Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi and Rossier, 2013), monotony in the workplace (Shabeer, Mohammed, Jawahar, & Bilal, 2019), career concerns (Shin & Lee, 2019), attachment anxiety (Ramos & Lopez, 2018) and career barriers (Eryılmaz and Kara, 2018).

Various theoretical explanations burnout theory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), social comparison theory (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2017), career construction theory (Savickas, 2013) and work adaptability theory (Davis and Lofquist, 1984) in the literature indicate that parallel to increasing burnout of teachers, they become alienated to their job and thus their loneliness increases. Increasing loneliness and burnout makes it difficult for individuals to adapt to their jobs and workplaces (Anand and Mishra, 2019; Schaufeli & Buunk, 2017; Savickas, 2013). These theoretical explanations need empirical verification. In conclusion, the purpose of the current study is to examine the mediator role of teachers' loneliness in work life in the relationship between burnout and career adaptability with a path analysis. To this end, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Teachers' burnout is a significant predictor of their career adaptability.
2. Teachers' loneliness in their work life is a significant predictor of their career adaptability.
3. Teachers' burnout is a significant predictor of their loneliness in their professional life.
4. Teachers' loneliness in their work life has a mediator role in the relationship between their burnout and career adaptability.
- 5.

Method

Research Model

The current study employed the causal-comparative design. The causal-comparative design is preferred when cause and effect relationships are established between variables (Neuman, 2007). In the current study, the cause variables are burnout and loneliness in work life while the effect variable is career adaptability. In the current study, three conditions of the causal-comparative design are satisfied. These three conditions are time sequence, associating and eliminating alternatives. These conditions are explained below:

1. Time sequence: This is a condition related to precedence of the effect by the cause. In the current study, the information obtained from the literature showing that burnout and loneliness in work life affect career adaptability is the indication that this condition has been satisfied.
2. Associating: This is a condition requiring the simultaneous occurrence of at least two variables. In the current study, this condition has been satisfied with the findings of the regression between the variables.
3. Eliminating alternatives: Eliminating alternatives refers to not constructing fake relationships. The fake relationship is a relationship explained by a hidden cause having a causal relationship but not recognized. In the current study, the condition of eliminating alternatives has been satisfied through a hypothetical model which will be tested with path analysis (Neuman, 2007).

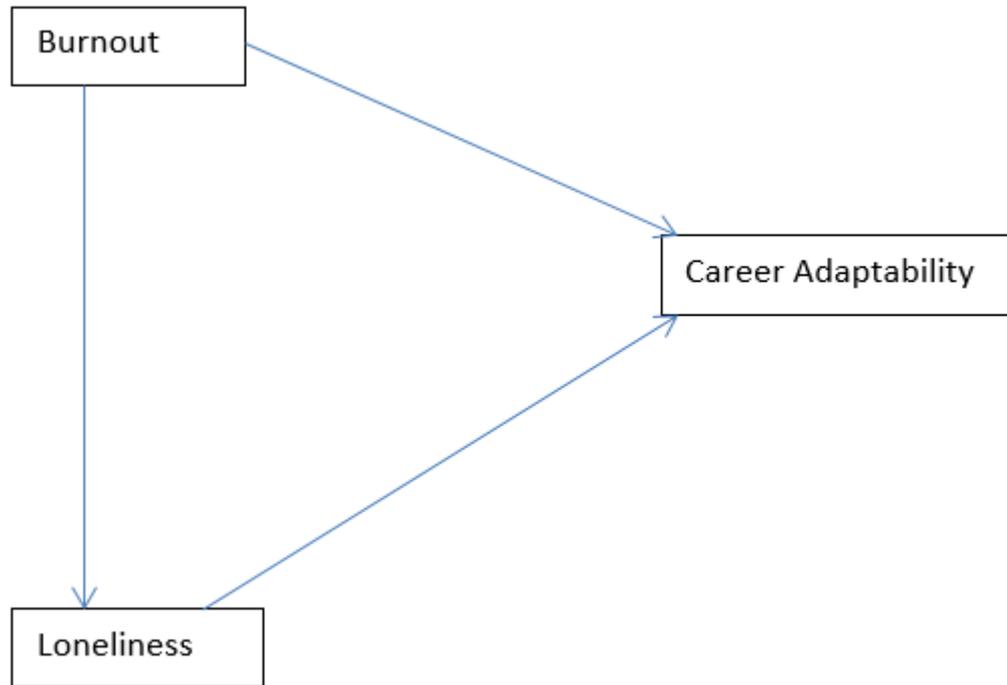


Figure 1. *Hypothetical Model*

Study Group

A total of 209 teachers working in state schools of the Ministry of National Education participated in the current study. Of the participating teachers, 68 are males (32.5%) and 141 are females (67.5%) and their ages range from 22 to 62 (\bar{X} =35.36, S_s =8.40).

Data Collection Tools

Career Adaptability Scale (CAS): The scale was developed by Eryılmaz and Kara (2016b). The scale is a five-point Likert scale having two sub-dimensions called career exploration and career plan and 10 items. As a result of the reliability (internal consistency coefficient) study, the internal consistency values of the scale were found to be varying between 0.71 and 0.85. In the validity study, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were used. In the results of the EFA, the explained variance value was found to be 55.87%. Moreover, the goodness-of-fit values calculated for the scale were found to be varying between 0.90 and 0.98 (Eryılmaz and Kara, 2016b). As a result of the reliability analysis conducted in the current study, the internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale was found to be 0.77.

Burnout Scale (BS): The scale was developed by Pines and Aronson (1988). The scale was adapted to Turkish by Çapri (2006), who conducted the validity and reliability studies of the scale. The scale has three sub-dimensions called emotional burnout, physical burnout and mental burnout and 21 items. In the reliability study, the internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.93. In the reliability analysis conducted in the current study, the internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale was found to be 0.91.

Loneliness in Work Life Scale (LBL): The scale was developed by Wright (2005). Its Turkish adaptation and validity and reliability studies were conducted by Doğan, Çetin and Sungur (2009). The scale has two sub-dimensions called emotional deprivation and social relationship and 16 items. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale is 0.90. In the current study, the internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale was found to be 0.79.

Data Analysis

First preliminary analyses were conducted in the analysis of the collected data. For this purpose, normality, homogeneity of the variance (levene test), autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson test) and multicollinearity (VIF, tolerance and conditional index) were checked (Field, 2013; Finney ve DiStefano, 2006; Kline, 2015). Within the content of the normality test, skewness and kurtosis were examined. In the current study, the skewness values were found to be varying between -.89 and .45 and the kurtosis values were found to be varying between -.63 and 1.82. These results show that the normality assumption of the data is satisfied (Finney ve DiStefano, 2006). Moreover, levene test was conducted for the homogeneity of the variance. As a result of this test, p value was found to be between .14 and .91 and p value was found to be higher than .05. These findings show that the data are distributed homogenously (Field, 2013). In addition, in order to determine whether there is an autocorrelation problem, Durbin-Watson test was used. As a result, Durbin-Watson value was found to be 1.95. These results show that there is no autocorrelation problem (Field, 2013). Finally, it was investigated whether there is a multicollinearity problem. For this purpose, VIF, tolerance and conditional index values were checked. In the current study, VIF value was found to be not higher than 5-10; the tolerance value was found to be not converging to 0 and the conditional index value was found to be not bigger than 30. These results show that there is no multicollinearity problem between the variables (Kline, 2015). All these findings indicate that it is suitable to use the path analysis technique with the observed variables for data analysis in the current study. As a conclusion, in the current study, first descriptive analyses, Pearson moment-product correlation analysis and finally path analysis with the observed variables were used in the data analysis.

Findings

In the data analysis process of the current study, first descriptive statistics and pearson product-moment correlation values were examined. Then, the goodness-of-fit values and finally the standardized path coefficients were evaluated. In Table 1 below, the between-variables descriptive statistics and pearson product-moment correlation values are presented.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Values

Variables	Mean	Sd	1	2	3
Burnout	54.41	22.16	1	,476**	-,466**
Loneliness in work life	30.69	11.06		1	-,546**
Career adaptability	41.18	6.28			1

Note: *p< 0.05; **p< 0.01

As can be seen in Table 1, there are statistically significant correlations between all the variables. The highest correlation was found between loneliness in work life and career adaptability (r= -.54, p<.01) as positive and medium while the lowest correlation was found between burnout and career adaptability (r= -.46, p<.01) as positive and medium. On the other hand, the goodness-of-fit values for the path model to be tested are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Findings about Model Fit

Model	RMSEA	NFI	NNFI	CFI	IFI	GFI	AGFI	χ^2 / sd
Path model	0.076	0.95	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.95	0.90	2.33

Table 2 shows the goodness-of-fit indices for the model generated as a result of the path analysis. When these goodness-of-fit values calculated with this path analysis were examined, a path model whose RMSEA value is 0.076, χ^2 is 55.94 and degree of freedom is 24 and fit indices ranging from 0.90 and 0.97 was obtained. This path model is shown in Figure 2.

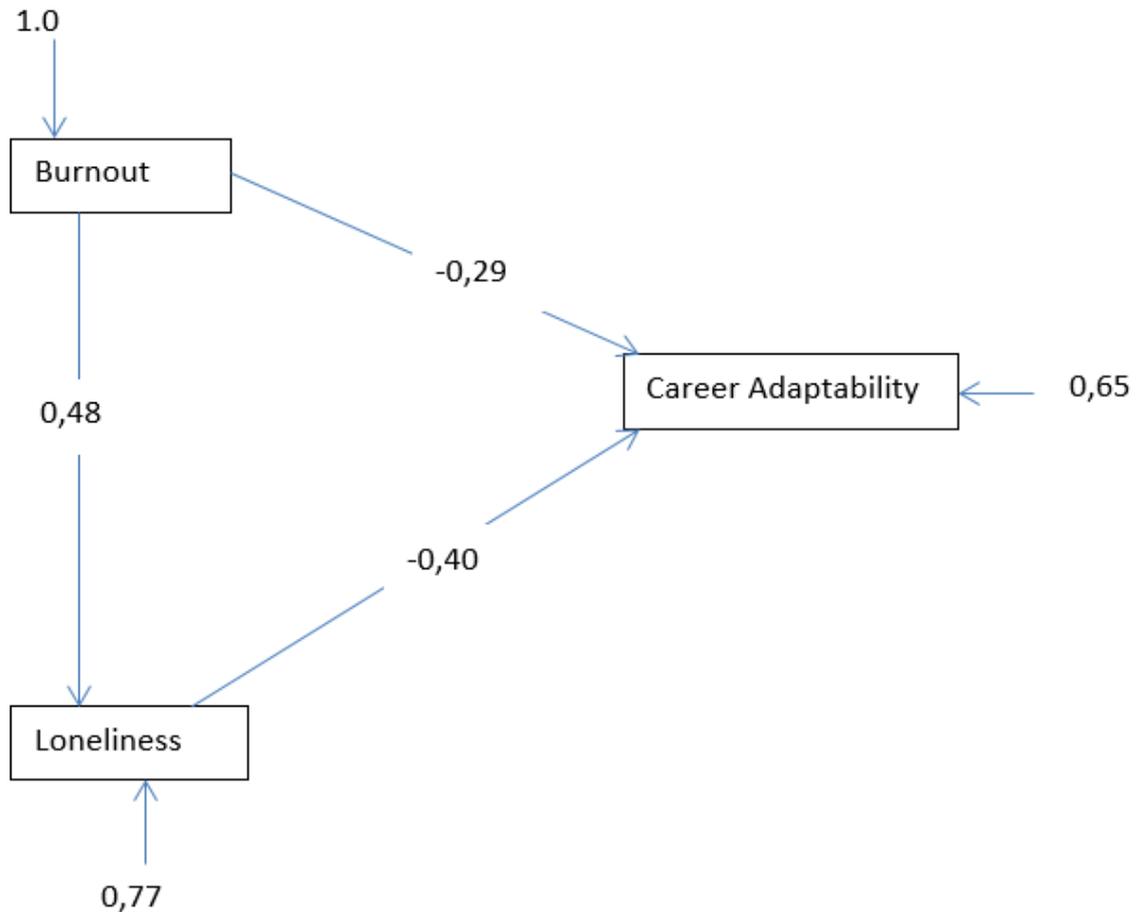


Figure 2. Standardized path coefficients

Figure 2 presents the standardized path coefficients. Here it is seen that one unit increase in burnout leads to 0.48 unit increase in loneliness in work life ($t = 8.13$; $p < 0.01$). Moreover, one unit increase in burnout leads to 0.29 unit decrease in career adaptability ($t = -4.64$; $p < 0.01$). In addition, one unit increase in loneliness in work life leads to 0.40 unit decrease in career adaptability ($t = -6.37$; $p < 0.01$). It was concluded that the mediator role of loneliness is not complete but partial. As a result, the mediator effect of loneliness in work life in the relationship between the teachers' burnout and career adaptability was found to be -0.19. The total effect of burnout was found to be -0.48.

Discussion

In the current study, the teachers' career adaptability was investigated in relation to burnout and loneliness in work life. The findings of the current study have revealed that with increasing levels of burnout and loneliness in work life, the teachers' level of career adaptability decreased. On the other hand, loneliness in work life was found to have a partial mediator effect in the relationship between burnout and career adaptability.

While there are studies investigating burnout of teachers in terms of different variables (Turhan, Karabatak & Şengür, 2018; Tümkaya, 2016), no study investigating its relationship with career adaptability was found in the literature. Similarly, while teachers' loneliness in their professional lives have been investigated in terms of some variables (Nartgün & Demirer, 2016; Gafa & Dikmenli, 2019), there is no study investigating its relationship with career adaptability. Thus, as the current study investigates all these variables in a holistic manner, it is thought to make important contributions to the literature.

There are no empirical studies explaining the role model preventing career adaptability investigated in the current study. However, some theoretical explanations and assumptions seem to explain the path model addressed in the current study. For example, the Career Construction Theory sees adaptability competences as a factor that increases individuals' career adaptability. Individuals' not using or not being able to use adaptability competences decreases their level of adaptability. Yet, there are some conditions that prevent people from using their adaptability competences (Savickas, 1997; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). In this regard, burnout and loneliness in work life can be seen as barriers to individuals' career adaptability. Another theory that can be capitalized on in this regard is the theory of work adaptability. This theory is focused on the harmony between the individual and his/her environment. The similarities between the characteristics of the person and the environment increase his/her job satisfaction (Davis and Lofquist, 1984). When the demands of the job are above the individuals' capacities, they experience burnout by being in the inappropriate work environment (Hakanen, Bakker, Wilmar and Schaufeli, 2006). Increasing burnout causes individuals to become more incompatible in terms of their career by being alone in their work lives. According to Savickas (1997), this process means that individuals cannot use their career adaptability (due to burnout and loneliness in work life), which is one of individuals' coping sources.

In the current study, it was found that loneliness in work life has a partial mediator effect in the relationship between burnout and career adaptability. Although there are no empirical studies directly explaining this, there are various theories to explain it. One of the important theories supporting this finding of the current study is the social comparison theory. According to this theory, people are divided into two groups. While one of them is the community-oriented people, the other is the people tend to stay away from the community. In groups where there are individuals staying away from social relationships, relationships are generally unbalanced and this results in these people's experiencing burnout. And experiencing burnout makes people lonely in their professional lives (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2017). Increasing burnout and loneliness in work life negatively affect people's career adaptability. Further research can divide teachers who are experiencing burnout into two groups as the community-oriented teachers and the teachers who tend to stay away from community and the model addressed in the current study can be tested on these groups. In this way, the assumptions of the theory are directly tested.

We can also logically consider the partial mediator effect of loneliness in work life in the relationship between burnout and career adaptability. In this connection, the reason for the relationship between burnout and loneliness in work life can be sought in the nature of burnout. It is stated that individuals experiencing burnout are alienated to themselves and their environment. This increasing alienation causes individuals to experience loneliness in their work life (Anand & Mishra, 2019; Schaufeli & Buunk, 2017). Increasing burnout and loneliness in work life negatively affect individuals' career adaptability.

In light of the findings of the current study, various suggestions can be made. First of all, it should not be forgotten that burnout and loneliness in work life are important factors inhibiting career adaptability. Psychological variables in this model should also be regulated in developing teachers' career adaptability. At this point, individuals who provide mental health services to teachers should pay attention to this issue. Teachers are not machines. As a person, there may be a possibility of their feeling exhausted in their teaching processes and their feeling lonely in their work life. Parents and other individuals and institutions having expectations from teachers should empathize with teachers at this point. Career adaptability can be supported by preventing teachers' burnout and loneliness in work life with personal and institutional arrangements. At this point, especially preventive and developmental activities can be done.

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