

## THE EFFECT OF PPSE PREPARATION PROCESS ON SOCIAL LIFE BASED ON TEACHER CANDIDATES' VIEWS

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to examine the views of university students studying in different departments (Turkish language, music, science, social studies, preschool and elementary education) of the Education Faculty of Pamukkale University in the 2014-2015 school year on the effect of the Public Personnel Selection Examination (PPSE) on social life. In the study, the "Open-Ended Question Survey on PPSE for Fourth Year Teacher Candidates" developed by the researchers was used. The open-ended question form was administered to the teacher candidates in their free time on a voluntary basis. The data were transferred to the computer environment and exposed to content analysis. The codes and themes were identified by both researchers. These codes and themes were presented in tables and interpreted. As a result of the study, the teacher candidates stated that in the process of preparing for PPSE, the exam negatively affected their budget, communication with the environment, personal relationships and participation in social life. In addition, they asserted that their levels of anxiety and stress increased due to the pressure from their environment and families in this process.

**Keywords:** PPSE, Teacher Candidates, Social Life, Anxiety.

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of teachers and the education system in community development is an undeniable fact. Accordingly, the quality of the education system and teachers trained are of great importance. Developing reasonable educational policies for teachers, as an important part of the education system, to be trained and get appointed would large affect the future of a country. However, it is not possible to say that the Turkish Ministry of National Education and Higher Education Council produce long-term and effective policies. In recent years, getting appointed after graduation seems to be a major problem, or even an obstacle for teacher candidates. In the appointment process of the Ministry, the scores in PPSE, that is described as a selection examination, are considered rather than candidates' grade point averages in their diplomas from education faculties. Particularly, the difference between the number of teacher candidates and the number of teachers needed being large increases the importance of this test. Teacher candidates prepare for a test like a racing horse in their last year at university Having many moral and material problems, teacher candidates buy resource books, go to courses and practice test techniques to prepare for the test. On the other hand, PPSE, which is seen as an important step selecting and appointing teachers, has been a matter of discussion in the education world since its first administration.

Because the teaching profession requires a special talent, it is inevitable to meet a set of criteria to be able to be accepted to this profession. To perform their job in a professional way, teachers need to be equipped with an adequate level of knowledge on their subject area, teaching profession, education system and educational policies (Özden, 2002, 30). The goal of the process of teacher selection should be to select the right teacher having the adequate qualifications. Today, the selection of teacher candidates at every stage has had its place and importance in countries' agenda as in the past (Dilekmen, Ercoşkun&Nalçacı, 2005: 308). In Turkey, to be able to get appointed, teacher candidates have to be successful in the general knowledge, general ability and educational science sections in PPSE. For this reason, as university entrance exam is important in the Turkish education system that is based on tests,

PPSE is that important in determining the future of teacher candidates (Karataş&Güleş, 2013).

Within the past of the tests administered to appoint teachers, the Ministry of National Education administered a "Teaching Proficiency Exam" between the years 1985-1991. After a short period of time, the Centre for Student Selection and Placement (CSSP) administered the "Public Profession Test" in 2001, and then the "Public Personnel Selection Examination" for appointing teaching as of 2002 (Safran, Kan, Üstündağ, Birbudak&Yıldırım, 2014; Yüksel, 2004). Previously, teachers used to be appointed directly, but today they need to take PPSE and obtain a high score. Those who are successful in the exam are appointed within the available positions allotted by the Ministry of Finance. In other words, PPSE comes teacher candidates' way as an important obstacle in entering the profession (Okçu&Çelik, 2011). PPSE results are the primary determinant in the appointment of teacher candidates.

With a regulation in 2002, the Ministry decided that being successful in PPSE was as a prerequisite for teacher appointments (Official Gazette, 2002). A minimum score for each subject area was also set by the Ministry and the applications of those whose PPSE scores were below that minimum score are not accepted. Those whose applications are accepted are sorted based on their scores and teachers are appointed in accordance with the allotted number (Yüksel, 2004).

In the literature on teachers' acceptance to the profession, the criteria and systems that are followed in Turkey seem to be also used with respect to teacher training in the world in general. Most countries take precautions to improve the qualifications of the teachers that they appoint or employ. Exams similar to the Public Personnel Selection Examination (PPSE) that has been administered for quite a long time in Turkey can be seen in Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Luxembourg, and some states of the USA. These exams are sometimes paper-based, or can be based on interviews as in Belgium, Greece, Holland and Portugal. The exam that is used in Turkey is a central examination administered by CSSP. However, in many developed European countries, central examinations are rare because education is tied to local administrations. For example, whereas teacher candidates are employed in England by the schools that they applied through interviews, the situation is different in France. In France, the "Teacher Training Institutes" found within each university conduct a progressive set of exams consisting of a written exam, a sample lesson teaching and interviews measuring interests and attitudes towards the profession. A central examination, similar to the one in Turkey, is administered in the USA. This examination, which is called the National Teacher Examination, consists of three main sections including a pre-profession skill test (i.e. equal to the general culture and general ability sections of PPSE), subject area test (i.e. towards the subject area of teachers) and teaching knowledge and skills test (i.e. equal to the educational science section of PPSE). Although the examination is central in the USA, the teacher assignment or employment is not central. Each state set its own employment conditions and employ teachers by evaluation different sections of the exam differently. PPSE in Turkey and NTE in the USA have similarities in many aspects (Konca, 2010).

One of the main characteristics of PPSE is that it ensures the supply and demand balance in teacher employment. However, it also creates competition among teacher candidates. Teacher candidates' having anxiety related to PPSE and needing support from different organisations to be successful in the exam led to the emergence of private courses that help them prepare for PPSE (Atav&Sönmez, 2013; Karataş&Güleş, 2013; Kuran, 2012; Orbay&Öner, 2006). The fact that the variety of question types increased in the course of time also triggered the spread of private courses (Karataş&Güleş, 2013). Accordingly, the private courses towards PPSE became widespread across Turkey. Therefore, teacher candidates have difficulties in preparing for the exam in their final year as well as making payments for these private courses.

According to the data of Education and Science Employees Syndicate (Egitim Sen), while 22.814 teacher candidates among 127.973 taking the KPSS exam were employed in 2003, this rate of 40.922 out of 263.055 in 2013 (Egitim Sen, 2013). As is seen, in 2013, around 222.000 teacher candidates were unemployed after taking the exam. In 2014, 221.492 teacher candidates took PPSE. Among these teacher candidates, 132.743 applied for assignment, and 39.64 were assigned as teachers (Tarhan, 2015: 142). PPSE being obligatory for teacher assignment and not all teacher candidates being able to be assigned as teachers increase the psychological and financial problems that teacher candidates experience in the process of preparing for PPSE. The idea of failing in the exam and not being able to be assigned as a teacher causes a set of disturbances in individuals. Factors such as heavy work load, pressure from the environment and family, not being able to spare time for social life and financial problems are some of the reasons that increase anxiety levels of teacher candidates. To contribute to the solution of these problems and provide a scientific insight to the decisions to be taken for teacher appointment policies, this study was regarded as necessary. The aim of the study is to determine the effect of the process of preparing for PPSE on social life based on the views of teacher candidates studying their fourth year at an education faculty. In life with this aim, two research questions were addressed in the study:

1. How does the process of preparing for PPSE affect teacher candidates' social and personal life based on their views?
2. How does the process of preparing for PPSE affect teacher candidates' relationship with their families based on their views?

## **METHOD**

In the study, case study design, a qualitative research method, was used. Case study aims at revealing existing samples of experiences with a question of how (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Among the case study designs, holistic single case design was used, and the views of the teacher candidates regarding the effects of the PPSE preparation process on them were examined. In single case designs, there is a single analysis unit (an individual, an institution, a program, a school, etc.) (Yıldırım&Şimşek, 2013).

Regarding case study as a method, Creswell (2007) described it as a qualitative research approach in which the researcher deeply examines one or more cases that are limited in time. Themes based on a case or cases are formed through data gathering tools including many sources (observations, interviews, visual-audio, documents, reports).

### **Participants**

The participants of the study were 81 undergraduate students studying their fourth year at the Education Faculty of Pamukkale University in the fall term of the 2014-2015 academic year. The distribution of students across departments is as follows: Social Studies Education (n=18), Preschool Education (n=13), Elementary Education (n= 16), Science Education (n=11), Turkish Language Education (n=13) and Music Education (n=10).

### **Data Gathering Tool**

In the study, the "Open-Ended Question Survey on PPSE for Fourth Year Teacher Candidates" developed by the researchers was used to gather the research data. A literature review was conducted while preparing the form, and the questions were formed accordingly. The open-ended questions were consulted to the views of four faculty members who were experts in the area. The survey was finalized based on the feedback received from the experts

with an personal information form added. The form administered to the teacher candidates consisted of three open-ended questions and a personal information form.

### Data Gathering and Analysis

The open-ended question survey was administered to the teacher candidates in their free time on a voluntary basis. Prior to the analysis of the data gathered through the interviews with the teacher candidates, they were transcribed and transferred to the computer environment. The surveys administered to the participants were examined one by one, and it was checked whether the surveys were filled in accordance with the instructions stated. The survey forms were given a number starting from 1. The data were then analysed by both researchers. To determine the consistency of the codes identified during the examinations, an agreement percentage was calculated. To calculate the reliability coefficient for each question, the formula  $(\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Agreement}}{\text{Disagreement} + \text{Agreement}} \times 100)$  was used. The reliability coefficient for the first question was 92, for the second question 82, and for the third question 88. The codes that were related were combined, and the themes were formed. Quotations were gathered under similar statements to explain the codes, and these were presented in tables.

### FINDINGS

In this section of the study, the findings obtained from the analysis of the data were presented in tables and interpretations were made. As a result of the analyses, the themes "Social Problems Experienced in the Process of Preparing for the Exam" and "Relationship with Families" were revealed. The participants were firstly asked how PPSE affected their social life, and based on their answers, the theme "Social Problems Experienced in the Process of Preparing for the Exam" and the codes under this theme are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Themes, Codes and Frequencies Revealed from the Data**

Themes	Codes	Number and Percentage of Those Who Stated Views on Codes
1. Theme: Social and Personal Life	1. Limitation of Social Life	29 (%36.70)
	2. Inhibition of Personal Development	22 (%27.84)
	3. Psychology of Loneliness	21 (%26.58)
	4. Not being affected	7 (%8.86)
2. Theme: Relationship with Families and Finance	1. Pressure from Family	25 (%30.86)
	2. Financial Problems	40 (%49.38)

As is seen in Table 1, the theme "social and personal life" was revealed based on the codes "limitation of social life, inhibition of personal development and psychology of loneliness". Most of the teacher candidates (n=29, 36,70%) stated that PPSE limited their social life. The rate of those who said their personal development was negatively affected

were also high (n=22, 27,84%). The teacher candidates (n=21 26,58%) expressed that in the process of preparing for PPSE, they were in a psychology of loneliness due to studying and this negatively affected their communication with their social environment. The rate of the participants who said they were not affected by the preparation process (n=7, 8,86%) was lower than the that of others.

Similarly, as is seen in Table 1, the theme "relationship with families and finance" theme was revealed based on the codes "pressure from family" and "financial problems". Within the code "pressure from family", 25 teacher candidates (30,86%) stated that they had various problems related to their families in the process of preparing for PPSE. The participants had difficulties with their families and the immediate environment of their families due to reasons such as the stress of preparing for the exam and the possibility of not being able to be appointed. This situation also made the preparation process harder. Within the code "financial problems", 40 teacher candidates (49,38%) stated a view. Situations such as having difficulty in making payments for the course, regarding the expenses in PPSE preparation process as meaningless, and not being able to meet their own needs due to the test fees caused disturbance in the participants.

### Findings for the First Research Question and Interpretations

The teacher candidates' views related to the codes "limitation of social life, inhibition of personal development, psychology of loneliness, and not being affected" under the theme "social and personal life" are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Views related to the codes "limitation of social life, inhibition of personal development, psychology of loneliness, and not being affected" under the theme "social and personal life"

Codes	Teacher Candidates' Views	f	%	Total frequency and Percentage
<b>Limitation of social life</b>	The high level of stress caused by the fear of unemployment negatively affects our social life.	7		29 (36.70%)
	Thinking that I have to study hard for PPSE causes limitations in my social life.	5		
	PPSE has totally captured me. I sometimes want to do things like going out and have fun, but I give up when I think of PPSE.	3		
	My success in PPSE determining the future of my life led me to isolate myself from social life.	3		
	I want to have a social life, but it seems weird when my friends study and I don't. That's why I study hard.	3		
	I can't take part in social activities because I prepare for the exam. We can't be free like in our first years at university.	2		
	Because PPSE is a milestone in my life, I study more and go out less.	3		
	I feel self-reproach when I spend time outside, so I gave a break to my social life.	3		

<b>Inhibition of Personal Development</b>	I study for the exam instead of using my time in courses to develop my skills.	7	22 (27.84%)
	I can't find the time for my social life because of studying. Even if I participate in a social activity, I feel uncomfortable because I spend time outside and don't study.	5	
	I can't find time for myself because of studying for PPSE.	3	
	I reduced the time I spend for social activities.	5	
	I can't find the time for reading, concerts and university clubs because of studying.	2	
<b>Psychology of loneliness</b>	Our behaviours towards the people around us changed due to stress. I have less friends who want to see me.	5	21 (26.58%)
	You have poor communication, chats, sincereness and environment. I couldn't get along with my friends.	7	
	I have a life away from my family because I prepare for the exam.	7	
<b>Not being affected</b>	I allot the time that I would spend with my friends or family to PPSE. I have a life to myself.	4	7 (8,86%)
	Because I'm not a person with a busy social life, it didn't affect me much. I can do what I used to do before.	4	
	PPSE contributes to teacher candidates' development in terms of its content. That's why I enjoy and motivate myself while studying. It doesn't affect my social life negatively.	3	

As is seen in Table 2, as the anxiety of unemployment experienced in the process of preparing for PPSE affected teacher candidates' inner world as well as causing problems with their friends. With respect to the teacher candidates' views in all the codes under the theme of social life, the situations that were mostly mentioned included those such as "studying hard, stress due to the process of preparing for the exam, pressure from the family and environment, not being able to allot time for social activities, loneliness, and guilty conscious because of not being able to do what they want" As can be seen in the quotations, teacher candidates go through a busy work pace to prepare for PPSE. Most of the participants stated that PPSE negatively affected their interaction with their environment, social relationships and participation to social activities. Twenty-nine teacher candidates (36,70%) asserted that the process of preparing for the exam limited their social life. Twenty-two teacher candidates (27,84%) said that they were away from the activities that wanted to participate due to the busy work pace, the fear of unemployment, and pressure from family and environment. Whereas 21 participants (26,58%) thought that PPSE destroyed the communication with friends and reduced the sincerity, four participants (5,06%) asserted that they allotted the time that they would spend with family and friends to PPSE.

### Findings for the Second Research Question and Interpretations

The codes "family pressure and financial problems" were identified to answer the second research question, and the theme "family relationship and finance" was revealed. The teacher candidates' views on these codes are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Views on the codes "family pressure and financial problems" under the theme "family relationship and finance"**

Codes	Teacher Candidates' Views	f	%	Total frequency and Percentage
<b>Pressure from Family</b>	I have problems with my family because they pressure me to prepare for the exam.	8	9.87	25 (30.86%)
	It will be hard to face my family if I don't get the score I need in PPSE.	7	8.64	
	I will be in a bad position against the environment of my family (e.g. relatives, friends) if I fail in PPSE.	5	6.17	
	My family's expectation that I will be successful in the exam increases my anxiety even more.	3	3.70	
	I feel uncomfortable when my family tells me to study even though I do.	2	2.46	
<b>Financial Problems</b>	Studying for PPSE caused financial problems in my life.	10	12.34	40 (49,38%)
	I could do better things with the money I paid to the private course.	8	9.87	
	My family both pays for my private course and sends me pocket money. I feel bad against my family.	7	8.64	
	The book expenses also give me a hard time apart from the course expenses.	4	4.93	
	If a teacher candidate has financial difficulties, his/her preparation for PPSE and employment gets even more difficult.	3	3.70	
	I had to work to pay for the course fee.	3	3.70	
	Spending money for PPSE decreased my life quality. I can't spare money for the things I want to do.	2	2.46	
	I think I waste my money by preparing for PPSE.	2	2.46	
I can't find a source to pay for my course fee.	1	1.23		

As is seen in Table 3, 25 teacher candidates (30,86%) stated that they "had problems their families in the process of preparing for PPSE". Eight teacher candidates (9,87%) said "they had pressure from their families", seven candidates (8,64%) said "they would feel bad against their families", five candidates (6,17%) said "they would be in a difficult position if they fail in the exam", three candidates (3,70%) said "the pressure from their families to be successful in the exam caused stress", and two candidates said "they had problems with their

families regarding their studying performance". When the the code "family pressure" was examined, the teacher candidates were found to have problems regarding the probability of being successful in the exam with their families. The quotations show that the teacher candidates not only had negative feelings related to their family but also the environment of their family. They stated that "they would have problems in many aspects if they failed the exam".

Forty teacher candidates (49,38%) stated that they stated views related to the financial problems they had in the process of preparing for PPSE. Remarkably, 10 teacher candidates (12,34%) asserted that "they had financial problems in the process of preparing for PPSE". On the other hand, eight participants (9,87%) said "they could do better things with the money they paid to the course", seven participants (8,64%) said "they were uncomfortable because their family both paid for the course fee and gave them pocket money", four participants (4,93%) said "the books that they bought for PPSE challenged them economically", three participants (3,70%) said "preparing for PPSE was difficult for teacher candidates with financial problems", three participants (3,70%) said "they had to work to pay the course fee", two participants (2,46%) said "their life quality decreased because of paying the course fee", two participants (2,46%) said "the money spend for PPSE was meaningless", and one participant said "they could find a source to pay the course fee". When the quotations regarding the code "financial problems" were examined in overall, the teacher candidates were found to have financial problems due to preparing for PPSE (e.g. course fees and buying books). Families supporting teacher candidates financially also caused difficulties for them. Moreover, some teacher candidates had to work to overcome the difficulties stemming from the process of preparing for PPSE. They thought they could spend the money they invested in the process of preparing for PPSE more meaningfully. The teacher candidates and their families experienced serious financial problems due to PPSE in students' final year at university.

## RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

With regard to the process of preparing for PPSE, the teacher candidates referred to situations such as "studying hard, stress due to the process of preparing for the exam, pressure from the family and environment, not being able to allot time for social activities, not being able to spend enough time with friends, and thus the feeling of loneliness, or guilty consciousness when they participate in social activities". The process of preparing for PPSE causing various difficulties and the fear of unemployment worn out the candidate psychologically. According to the results of the study, 51 teacher candidates (64,54%) stated that PPSE negatively affected their communication with their environment, personal development and participation in social activities. Twenty-one teacher candidates (26,58%) asserted that they had a life away from their family and friends because of the heavy study load in the process of preparing for PPSE. Karadeniz and Demir (2010) also revealed similar findings in their study. They reported that teacher candidates preparing for PPSE were born out psychologically because of the exam, and the preparation process negatively affected their participation in social, sports and arts activities. This result is consistent with the study of Sezgin and Duran (2011). They reported that PPSE negatively affected most participants' communication with the environment and social relationships. On the other hand, seven teacher candidates (8,86%) emphasized that due to not having a social life at university, the heavy coursework did not influence their social life. Based on the data, it was found that the heavy work load and the idea of getting a high score and get appointed negatively affected teacher candidates' participation in social activities.



Twenty-five teacher candidates (30,86%) stated that they had various problems related to pressure from their families in the process of preparing for PPSE. The situations that the candidates mostly encountered regarding the pressure from family were families pressuring them to prepare for the exam (n=8, 9,87%) and a psychological process that they would experience when they failed the exam (n=7, 8,64%). The teacher candidates felt themselves bad towards their family and also the environment of their family in the process of preparing for the exam. Failing the exam was a situation for the participants that was highly negative and needed to give an account of. The findings revealed are consisted with previous research. Gündoğdu, Çimen and Turan (2008) aimed to identify teacher candidates' views on PPSE in a study with third and fourth year students from different departments of an education faculty. A questionnaire was used as the data gathering tool, and the teacher candidates were found to be afraid of the pressure from their family and environment when they would not be get appointed as a result of PPSE. Sezgin and Duran (2011) investigated the effects of PPSE on social life in a study with 47 teacher candidates graduated from the social studies and Turkish language teaching departments of an education faculty and took the exam the same year. According to the results of the study based on semi-structured interviews, 35 teacher candidates (74%) stated that their relationships with family and friends weakened in the process of preparing for the exam. Temur, Özkan, Atlı and Zırhlıoğlu (2011) aimed to identify teacher candidates' level of anxiety regarding PPSE in a study with 250 participants of fourth year students from nine different departments of an education faculty. At the end of the study, a significant relationship was revealed between parents' attitudes and teacher candidates' levels of anxiety towards PPSE.

According to the 40 teacher candidates (49,38%) participated in the study, serious financial problems were experienced to pay for the expenses came up in the process of preparing for PPSE. These financial problems affected the candidates as well as their families. The candidates (n=8, 9,87%) thought that they could have a better life with the money they spent to prepare for PPSE. Families paying for their course fee caused the candidates feel bad towards them (n=7, 8,64%). As the teacher candidates had difficulty in paying the course fee, they also found it difficult to pay for book expenses (n=4 4,93%), and some of them had to work (n=3, 3,70%). This situation creates inequality of opportunities in terms of preparing for the exam. Preparing for PPSE brings many financial problems for the teacher candidates. This preparation process that candidates go through in their last year at university and the expenses in this process can be meaningless for them. These expenses could be used for more meaningful activities such as cinema, personal development, music and books. This result support the results of Gündoğdu, Çimen and Turan (2008). In their quantitative study with teacher candidates, the researchers found that the candidates experienced financial problems in the process of preparing for the exam. In a quantitative study with 539 teacher candidates, Karataş and Güleş (2013) found that there was a need for support activities such as courses and seminars while preparing for PPSE. On the other hand, what kind of problems teacher candidates experience in the process of preparing for PPSE seems to be a topic that has not been widely studied in the literature. Of course, teacher candidates experience problems such as anxiety, worry and stress in the preparation process. However, the fact that the reasons behind these problems could be financial deficiencies. Unfortunately, private courses turning the PPSE preparation process to an opportunity and directing teacher candidates to these places to prepare for the exam is a reflection of capitalism on life.

The following suggestions are offered based on the results of the current study: Teacher candidates start studying for PPSE mostly in their fourth year at faculty. Studying hard in the last months is not enough to be successful in the exam. For success, there is a need for preparation in a longer period and in a planned way, and practices should be implemented to overcome test anxiety. Expanding this process throughout the last two years would make

them spend more time for their social lives. In addition, consciousness-raising programs should be organised so that families can support teacher candidates in this process. Families should be informed about the content of PPSE. Psychological Counselling and Guidance departments of universities should support teacher candidates in the preparation process. The financial problems experienced by teacher candidates in the process of preparing for PPSE and their reflections on the candidates should be comprehensively investigated by researchers. Inequality of opportunities due to financial problems should be examined from a scientific perspective by both educators and economy specialists.

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