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English Teacher Candidates' Perceptions Regarding the Occupational Anxiety: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

Identifying and addressing the occupational anxiety levels of teacher candidates during their education is crucial. This involves taking necessary measures to mitigate their concerns and providing supportive guidance. Enhancing the awareness of teacher training institutions about this issue and implementing preventive strategies to reduce occupational anxiety are essential. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore the occupational anxieties of English teacher candidates, identifying the types of occupational anxieties they experience and their views on causes and solutions. Utilizing a phenomenological research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eight candidates from various Turkish universities. Thematic and content analyses revealed anxieties in classroom management, student engagement, workload, professional relationships, and work-life balance. Participants suggested comprehensive classroom management techniques, interactive teaching approaches, mentorship programs, fostering collaboration among teachers, and self-care practices as potential solutions. The study underscores the need for further research to effectively support teacher candidates.

Keywords: English teaching, language, occupational anxiety, phenomenological research, teacher candidates

Introduction

For English teacher candidates, occupational anxiety can be a significant factor in the education process. Teacher candidates, who take on the important task of enhancing students' language skills and increasing their cultural understanding, must cope with challenges they may encounter in the classroom and school environment. Concerns about student success, classroom management, teaching methods, and evaluation processes can affect the occupational anxiety of teacher candidates. However, it is crucial to cultivate qualified teachers for an effective education system. Providing support for teacher candidates during their education and ensuring access to resources tailored to their needs can reduce occupational anxiety and prepare them to become more confident and effective educators.

The teachers are the most crucial component of this system. A crucial part of a nation's future is its teachers. Teaching people who can shape the nation's future is the most significant responsibility that instructors have. Özden (1999) uses these words to describe the most fundamental and significant role that teachers play, as teachers are the future builders of a nation and a community. This attributed significance to teaching has led to the need for the continuous improvement of professional qualifications over time. Erden (1999) asserts that a teacher's professional credentials are based on their knowledge of teaching techniques, culture in general, and the topic at hand. In this particular case, teacher candidates who receive education that emphasizes optimism toward the profession, positive attitudes toward their students, creativity and innovation, and ease of knowledge transfer to the classroom when they become teachers (Çeliköz & Çetin, 2004) are likely to be highly creative and innovative.

Anxiety is a negative state that evokes distress in individuals (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1979). In considering the responsibilities that come with being a teacher, the anxieties of teachers and teacher candidates also increase. Therefore, identifying and eliminating anxiety-inducing factors will not only enhance the productivity of workers in every profession but also positively impact the performance of teachers. Research conducted by Cabı and Yalçınalp (2009) concluded that teacher candidates experience high levels of anxiety. Some anxiety-inducing factors and their characteristics are beneficial to be addressed. For example, the anxieties experienced by prospective teachers regarding the teaching profession are associated with a series of individual characteristics. These include personal beliefs, personal teaching competence, cognition, maturity, environmental conditions, and relationships with mentors (Ralph, 2004). Another important point about occupational anxiety is the views and perceptions of the teachers. In their research conducted in 1999, Ghaith and Shaaban aimed to explain the relationship between teachers' perceptions of teaching anxieties and their perceptions of personal and general competence with teacher characteristics across different schools (Ghaith & Shaaban, 1999). They found that teachers' experience and personal competence negatively influenced their perceptions of teaching anxieties. However, they concluded that gender, the level of education completed, and general competencies had no correlation with anxiety.

Building on the work of Fuller and Parson (1974), Yerger (2011) explored the various types of anxieties that aspiring teachers concentrate on during classroom activities, ultimately analyzing the Early Fielding Experience (EFE) concept.

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In some cases, experience lowers the occupational anxiety level. In Boz's (2008) study, task-related anxieties were found to be highest, while self-related anxieties were observed at the lowest level. Anxiety increased from the first to the second year across all dimensions but decreased from the second to the fifth year. When examined across years, self-related anxieties were significantly lower in the fifth year compared to the second and third years. Also, the identification of teachers' occupational anxieties and efforts toward eliminating these anxieties will lead to an improvement in teacher performance. Wagner (2008) emphasized that the anxiety levels of novice teachers are higher compared to experienced teachers. It is essential to assess the anxiety levels of teacher candidates prior to their professional engagement and to identify the critical points where anxiety peaks, as these are fundamental steps in determining necessary interventions. McCormack's (1996) research, which included 75 Physical Education teacher candidates during their practical internship, utilized the "Teacher Anxiety Inventory" to measure variations in anxiety. This study focused on anxiety levels before and after a four-week internship, selecting candidates from the second, third, and fourth grades, all aged 22. The results indicated a reduction in anxiety related to self, task, and student dimensions post-internship.

After graduation, uncertainties such as whether to be appointed to a position or to work in the private sector can also increase anxiety. The study by Teke and Koç (2017), conducted during the 2016–2017 Academic Year with 377 teacher candidates, aimed to assess their occupational anxiety levels. Analyzing data using the "Job Oriented Anxiety" sub-dimension of the Occupational Anxiety Scale, the research found no significant gender or high school type differences but identified variations across grades and departments. Teacher candidates expressed concerns about post-graduation job placement, knowledge transmission, and establishing authority in the classroom.

Studies conducted on teacher candidates from different departments indicate that the levels of occupational anxiety may vary. The study by Kara and Yılmaz-Güngör (2015) explored the occupational anxiety of teacher candidates, categorizing it into self-centered, task-centered, and student-centered concerns. Conducted at Anadolu University, it focused on students in Foreign Language Teaching, Primary Education, and Fine Arts Education. The findings indicated that Mathematics Teaching Program students had higher self-centered anxiety, while task-centered anxiety levels differed significantly among programs. Students in Social Studies Education, Mathematics Teaching, and Primary School Education experienced more student-centered anxiety. The study also investigated the solutions teacher candidates proposed to overcome task-centered anxiety and cope with anxiety-inducing problems.

Significance of the Study

This study recognizes the significance of occupational anxiety in the education process, particularly for English teacher candidates. As they play a crucial role in enhancing language skills, understanding and addressing their anxieties are paramount.

Anxiety is recognized as a negative state that can evoke distress in individuals. Identifying and eliminating anxiety-inducing factors is not only crucial for enhancing productivity in various professions but also positively impacts the performance of teachers. This aligns with the overall improvement of the education system. This study draws attention to the variability in occupational anxiety levels among teacher candidates from different departments. Understanding these variations is essential for tailoring support and resources to meet the specific needs of teacher candidates across diverse disciplines. Also, the study explores solutions proposed by teacher candidates to overcome occupational anxiety and cope with anxiety-inducing problems, contributing valuable insights to the development of effective support mechanisms and interventions. Furthermore, this research highlights the importance

of early intervention and continuous support during teacher training. Providing teacher candidates with tools and strategies to manage anxiety can lead to more confident and effective educators. By addressing these anxieties proactively, teacher training programs can foster a more supportive and productive learning environment. Additionally, the study emphasizes the need for comprehensive approaches that include psychological support, practical training in classroom management, and peer mentoring. These measures can significantly reduce the stress and anxiety associated with teaching, thereby improving the overall quality of education.

Therefore, in this study, the aim is to comprehensively examine the occupational anxieties of English teacher candidate students and their underlying causes. The demographic characteristics of the group, occupational anxieties related to teaching, and the qualitative analysis of the relationships between these aspects are intended to be explored. In line with this objective, the study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. How do English teacher candidates describe their occupational anxieties?
2. How do English teacher candidates describe the underlying reasons for these occupational anxieties?
3. What are the suggestions from English teacher candidates to alleviate these occupational anxieties?

Methods

Research Design

In this study, the qualitative research design of "phenomenology" has been employed. The phenomenology design focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but lack an in-depth and detailed understanding. Phenomenology provides a suitable research framework for investigating phenomena that are not entirely unfamiliar yet not fully comprehended (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 72). Data were collected in the study using a semi-structured interview form.

The application of qualitative research methods is gaining popularity. The notion that the quantitative tradition represents the only effective research methodology is contested by proponents of phenomenology, a relatively recent school of thought. They contend that measuring events exclusively in accordance with their acknowledged reality is inappropriate and that instead, attention should be paid to how participants interpret their daily experiences (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Husserl (1952–1980), a well-known phenomenologist, attacked psychology for trying to solve human problems using natural science techniques. According to him, people's responses to outside stimuli are not only spontaneous; rather, they are determined by how these stimuli are seen by the individual. Husserl came to the conclusion that researchers who just consider physical, external stimuli miss crucial factors and disregard context, which results in a highly artificial situation (Laverty, 2003).

This qualitative research method aims to explore and understand the lived experiences of individuals, focusing on the essence of these experiences. The steps, contents, and adjustment of the phenomenological research design for this study can be seen in Table 1.

By following these steps, the phenomenological research design of the current study aims to provide a deep understanding of the phenomenon from the perspective of those who have lived it, revealing the meanings and essences of their experiences.

The Participants

The purpose of using the convenience sampling method in determining the participants of the study is to expedite the research and make it more practical. In the convenience sampling technique,

Table 1.
Adapted Steps of Phenomenological Research Design

Steps	Contents	Adjustments
1. Identifying the phenomenon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting the specific experience or phenomenon to be explored Ensuring that the research question aligns with understanding the essence of this phenomenon 	Phenomenon of the study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether English teacher candidates experience occupational anxieties, identify the existing occupational anxieties if any, and convey the participants' views on the causes and solutions
2. Bracketing (Epoche)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers set aside their own preconceptions and biases to approach the study with an open mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing purely on the participants' experiences
3. Select participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing participants who have experienced the phenomenon The sample size is usually small, allowing for in-depth exploration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Students from the English Language Education departments of various universities in Turkey
4. Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using in-depth interviews, open-ended questions, and sometimes participant observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured interview forms were employed to gather rich, descriptive data
5. Data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transcribing the interviews and thoroughly reading the transcripts Identifying significant statements related to the phenomenon Grouping these statements into themes to uncover the essence of the participants' experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The responses through forms were read carefully Key statements related to the phenomenon were identified These statements were grouped into themes to reveal the core essence of the participants' experiences
6. Describe the essence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing a detailed description of the phenomenon, capturing the core essence of the experiences shared by participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including both individual experiences and the overall essence derived from the data
7. Validation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the findings accurately represent the participants' experiences Participants may be asked to review the findings to confirm their validity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experts were asked to review the findings to confirm their validity
8. Report findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presenting a comprehensive narrative of the phenomenon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussing the themes and the essence, providing insights into the lived experiences of the participants

the researcher selects a situation that is close and easily accessible (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011), and individuals easily accessible form the study group (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 99). The study group consists of 8 students from the English Language Education departments of various universities in Türkiye.

Participants consist of 50% female and 50% male English teacher candidates. The average age is 20, with an age range between 19 and 22. 60% of the participants are in the third year, while the rest are in the second year.

Data Collection Tools

In this research, a semi-structured interview form was utilized as the data collection tool. The interview form, prepared through a literature review, encompasses five questions.

The interview form is divided into two sections. The first section includes questions aimed at determining demographic information about the participants (gender, age). The second section consists of five questions focusing on participants' views and expectations regarding their occupational anxieties. The questions in the interview form were removed.

Process

The data were gathered from 8 students enrolled in English Language Education departments at various universities in Turkey using a semi-structured interview form administered through Google Forms. Before administering the main survey, a pilot study was conducted to test the clarity and effectiveness of the semi-structured interview form. Five volunteer participants, who were not part of the main study group, were selected for this pilot. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the interview questions, ensuring they were clear and elicited the desired depth of response. This step was crucial in enhancing the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument. Participants were given clear instructions on how to complete the interview forms, emphasizing the importance of honest and reflective responses. To encourage candor, participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and informed that their identities would remain anonymous throughout the study. The interviews were

conducted over a two-week period, ensuring ample time for thoughtful and thorough responses.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the qualitative data in the current study. Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight the flexibility and accessibility of thematic analysis, noting that "it offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). They argue that thematic analysis provides a rich and detailed account of data, making it a valuable tool for researchers seeking to explore patterns and themes in qualitative data. This method enabled a systematic and flexible approach to analyzing textual information, allowing for the identification and interpretation of complex patterns within the data. Through thematic analysis, rich and detailed insights into the research topic were obtained, contributing to a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences.

Initially, the data was thoroughly read and re-read to ensure immersion and familiarity with two experts from the field. During this phase, initial notes and ideas were documented and compared to the author's notes. Subsequently, interesting features of the data were systematically coded across the entire dataset, and meaningful groups were formed through these codes. Following the coding process, the codes were collated into potential themes, with all relevant data gathered for each theme. These themes were then reviewed to ensure they accurately reflected the coded extracts and the entire dataset, resulting in the generation of a thematic map of the analysis. Each theme was refined to capture its essence, and sub-themes were identified where necessary. Finally, a detailed account of the analysis was produced, including compelling examples and evidence to support the identified themes. The themes were discussed in relation to the research question and existing literature, providing a comprehensive interpretation of the data.

The analysis and interpretation of research data followed a structured procedure. Each interview form was systematically coded as S1, S2, and so forth, with the abbreviation "S" denoting individual students throughout the subsequent data analysis within the findings section.

Rigorous scrutiny of responses ensued, wherein expressions were meticulously classified and coded based on their thematic relevance, while maintaining fidelity to the essence of the data. Notably, attention was directed towards discerning the frequency of expressions during the coding process. Themes emerged from the clustering of similar expressions, coupled with a keen consideration of their nuanced differences.

Trustworthiness and Validity

Reliability in content analysis assumes paramount importance. Without it, the derived measurements lack substantive meaning (Neuendorf, 2002). Ensuring reliability in qualitative research mandates consistency in coding and theme identification across different analysts. Involving multiple analysts in the classification process not only enriches the evaluation of study reliability but also validates the findings (Weber, 1990). To ascertain internal reliability, the formula advocated by Miles and Huberman (1994)—reliability = agreement / agreement + disagreement—was applied, yielding a commendable consistency rate of 0.75 among researchers. As per Miles and Huberman's criteria, a reliability agreement rate exceeding 70% signifies an acceptable threshold. Consequently, the internal reliability of this study stands fortified.

Subsequent to coding, expressions sharing common thematic attributes were tallied, and their frequencies computed as percentages relative to the total respondent pool. Striving for utmost objectivity, the presentation of expressions refrained from incorporating researcher's subjective viewpoints, thus enhancing the study's external validity. Findings and interpretations were candidly shared with participants to solicit their corroboration. Additionally, seeking both participant validation and expert opinion in crafting questions, refining codes, and crystallizing themes further bolstered the research's internal validity. Triangulation was also employed by comparing the thematic findings with existing literature and theories, which further strengthened the validity of the results (Nowell et al., 2017). Member checking was also conducted, wherein participants were asked to review the identified themes and provide feedback on their accuracy and relevance to their experiences. This step ensured that the themes genuinely represented the participants' perspectives. Furthermore, a detailed audit trail was maintained, documenting each step of the analysis process, including coding decisions and theme development. This transparency allowed for the findings to be traceable and reproducible, enhancing the study's credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethics and Permission and Consent

Research permissions were obtained from the Committee of Ethics at Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University (Approval no: 428774, Date: 04.04.2024). Written informed consent was obtained from the participants who agreed to take part in the study.

Results

The views of the teacher candidates about the reasons for choosing the English Language Teaching department are presented in Table 2.

The following responses, for example, highlight the candidate's intrinsic motivation and deep connection to the English language, its literature, and its cultural significance. The candidate expresses a lifelong interest in English, indicating a genuine enthusiasm for the subject matter. Teaching English is seen as an avenue to not only share this passion but also to inspire others to recognize and value the beauty inherent in language and literature. By engaging students in the exploration of English language and culture, the candidate aims to foster a similar appreciation and understanding among their future students. This response reflects a strong sense of purpose and commitment to teaching English as a means of imparting knowledge and instilling a love for the subject in others.

Table 2.
Why ELT?

Themes	Explanations
Motivation	Personal interest and passion: Students' natural interest and passion for the English language and culture Desire to teach: Motivation stemming from the excitement of teaching the English language, imparting knowledge to students, and guiding them Language proficiency: Desire to utilize their English language skills and proficiency in choosing their profession
Career opportunities and advancement:	Career prospects: The wide range of career opportunities offered by English language teaching and the potential for advancement in this field Cultural interaction: The richness of cultural interaction and international relations provided by English language teaching
Social contribution and interaction	Community service: The opportunity provided by English language teaching to contribute to society and impart valuable skills to students Student interaction: Personal and societal satisfaction derived from working with students and enhancing their language skills

S2: I've always been drawn to the English language, its literature, and its cultural significance. Teaching English allows me to share my passion with others and inspire them to appreciate its beauty...

S6: Teaching English is not just a career choice for me; it's a calling. The opportunity to instill a love for language and literature in others, and to witness their growth and understanding, is what truly motivates me. Every day, I wake up excited to inspire and empower my students to reach their full potential...

In the following response, the student reflects on the various career opportunities and avenues for advancement available in the field of English teaching. They acknowledge the importance of continuous professional development and the pursuit of specialized training or certifications to enhance their skills and qualifications. The student also highlights the significance of taking proactive steps, such as networking and seeking leadership roles, to advance their career. Overall, the response demonstrates the student's awareness of the opportunities for growth in the teaching profession and their commitment to pursuing a rewarding and impactful career path in English education.

S3: I see numerous opportunities to advance my career, such as pursuing specialized training and certifications, engaging in continuous professional development, and seeking leadership roles within educational institutions. However, I also recognize that career advancement may require perseverance, dedication, and a proactive approach to networking and skill development...

For Social Contribution and Interaction, the student emphasizes the importance of making a positive impact on society through English education. They express a desire to foster inclusivity and diversity in their classroom, creating an environment where students feel valued and respected regardless of their background. Additionally, the student highlights the role of collaborative learning and interactive teaching methods in promoting social interaction among students. By facilitating meaningful discussions and group activities, they aim to cultivate critical thinking skills and encourage students to engage with diverse perspectives. Overall, the response reflects the student's commitment to promoting social cohesion and facilitating meaningful interactions within the educational setting.

S1: I believe that teaching English provides a platform to contribute positively to society. By fostering an inclusive and diverse environment in my classroom, I aim to empower students to feel valued and respected regardless of their backgrounds...

S3: Encouraging open dialogue and mutual respect among students can cultivate empathy and understanding, leading to a more cohesive and compassionate community. As an aspiring English teacher candidate, I see this as an opportunity to instill not only language skills but also essential values that promote social harmony and cooperation...

The views of the teacher candidates about the sufficiency of the courses are presented in Table 3.

S4: Yes. The curriculum covers a wide range of topics, including teaching methodologies, linguistics, literature, and language proficiency. I appreciate how the courses provide a solid foundation for understanding both theoretical and practical aspects of teaching English...

S7: I don't think the courses related to my professional life in our current educational program are sufficient. While we do cover important topics like grammar and language, there's a lack of emphasis on practical teaching skills like technology. We need more opportunities for classroom observation and teaching practice to feel adequately prepared for real-world teaching scenarios...

S5: I'm somewhat undecided about whether the courses related to my professional life in our current educational program are sufficient. On one hand, I appreciate the diverse range of topics covered in the curriculum. However, I feel that certain areas, like technology integration in language teaching, could be more robust. Overall, there's room for improvement, but I also recognize the value of the courses we have...

Based on the student responses provided above, it can be inferred that, in line with the categories and explanations given in Table 2, students have provided responses in three categories. However, 60% of these responses are positive.

The potential problems that the teacher candidates anticipate encountering in their future profession and the reasons for these problems are presented in Table 4.

Table 3.
Are the Courses Sufficient?

Themes	Explanations
Adequate	Some students felt that the courses offered in their current educational program adequately prepare them for their professional life. They mentioned comprehensive courses in teaching methods, grammar, literature, and language skills as reasons for their satisfaction with the program
Insufficient	Other students expressed dissatisfaction, feeling that the courses related to their professional life are inadequate. They highlighted a lack of practical teaching experience or insufficient emphasis on current teaching techniques as reasons for their dissatisfaction. These students suggested the addition of more hands-on courses or courses supported by teaching materials to improve the program
Undecided	Some students did not have a clear opinion about the adequacy of the educational program. They found some courses useful but felt that others were lacking. These students suggested improvements in certain areas of the program while expressing overall satisfaction

Table 4.
The Potential Problems and the Reasons

Themes (Problems)	Codes (Reasons)
Classroom management	Lack of discipline among students Large class sizes lead to difficulty in managing behaviour Inadequate support from school administration
Student engagement and learning	Individual differences in student abilities and learning styles Limited resources and materials for interactive teaching methods Challenges in maintaining student motivation and interest
Curriculum and assessment	Pressure to cover extensive curriculum within limited time Difficulty in designing effective assessments to measure student progress Balancing standardized testing requirements with meaningful learning experiences
Professional relationships and support	Limited collaboration and communication among colleagues Inadequate mentorship and guidance for novice teachers Challenges in building positive relationships with parents and stakeholders
Personal well-being and work–life balance	High levels of stress and burnout due to workload and expectations Difficulty in maintaining a healthy work–life balance Emotional fatigue from dealing with student and administrative issues

These categories encompass a range of potential problems that teacher candidates may encounter in their future profession, along with the underlying reasons for these challenges.

S2: I'm worried about managing a classroom with so many different personalities. It's hard to know how to handle disruptive students without causing more disruptions....

S6: I'm concerned that some students might not be interested in learning English, and it'll be tough to keep everyone engaged. Plus, with limited resources, it's hard to make lessons exciting....

S8: I feel overwhelmed by the amount of material we have to cover in such a short time. And figuring out how to assess students fairly while still meeting all the requirements is daunting....

S1: I'm not sure how to build relationships with other teachers or get the support I need from them. And without a mentor, I worry about navigating all the challenges of teaching on my own....

S3: I'm already feeling stressed just thinking about the workload. Balancing teaching with my personal life seems impossible, and I'm afraid of burning out before I even start....

The responses provided by the teacher candidates highlight some common concerns and challenges that they anticipate facing in their future profession as English teachers. These concerns range from classroom management issues, such as handling disruptive behavior and engaging all students, to worries about the workload and work–life balance. Additionally, the candidates express uncertainties about building professional relationships with colleagues and receiving necessary support, especially in the absence of a mentor. These reflections shed light on the multifaceted nature of teaching and underscore the importance of comprehensive support systems and resources for novice teachers as they embark on their teaching careers.

The answers about the anxieties of the teacher candidates concerning the reasons, are presented in Table 5.

S5: I'm worried about managing a classroom with so many different personalities. It's hard to know how to handle disruptive students without causing more disruptions...

S3: I'm concerned that some students might not be interested in learning English, and it'll be tough to keep everyone engaged. Plus, with limited resources, it's hard to make lessons exciting....

S1: I feel overwhelmed by the amount of material we have to cover in such a short time. And figuring out how to assess students fairly while still meeting all the requirements is daunting.

S6: I'm not sure how to build relationships with other teachers or get the support I need from them. And without a mentor, I worry about navigating all the challenges of teaching on my own....

S8: I'm already feeling stressed just thinking about the workload. Balancing teaching with my personal life seems impossible, and I'm afraid of burning out before I even start....

These responses shed light on the multifaceted nature of anxieties prevalent among prospective teachers as they anticipate their professional journey. From apprehensions regarding classroom dynamics and student engagement to the weight of curriculum coverage, assessment methods, and the cultivation of professional networks, each candidate grapples with distinct challenges. Moreover, the pervasive concern regarding the equilibrium between professional obligations and personal well-being underscores the demanding milieu intrinsic to the teaching vocation. Comprehensive comprehension and strategic mitigation of these anxieties are imperative for fostering resilience and efficacy among teacher candidates, thereby facilitating their transition into the teaching profession with confidence and preparedness.

The suggestions to reduce the teacher candidates' occupational anxiety are presented in Table 6.

S2: I think if we learn different strategies for managing diverse classrooms, it could really help. Maybe having workshops or practical sessions where we can role-play different scenarios would be useful... I believe using more interactive methods like group activities or multimedia presentations can make lessons more interesting. Also, finding creative ways to use the resources we have could keep students engaged....

Table 5.
The Anxieties and the Reasons of the Teacher Candidates

Themes (Dimensions of Anxiety)	Codes (Reasons)
Classroom management anxiety	Concerns about handling disruptive behavior, maintaining student engagement, and managing diverse personalities
Student engagement anxiety	Fear of encountering students uninterested in learning English, challenges in making lessons exciting due to limited resources
Workload and assessment anxiety	Feeling overwhelmed by the amount of material to cover in a short time, and uncertainty about assessing students fairly while meeting all requirements
Professional relationship anxiety	Uncertainty about building relationships with other teachers, and concerns about receiving support and guidance without a mentor
Work-life balance anxiety	Stress related to balancing teaching responsibilities with personal life, fear of burning out due to the demanding workload

Table 6.
The Suggestions for Reducing Occupational Anxiety

Themes	Codes (Suggestions)
Classroom management strategies	Implementing comprehensive classroom management techniques Addressing diverse student behaviours effectively
Engaging teaching methods	Incorporating interactive teaching approaches Maintaining student interest and participation despite limited resources
Support and guidance	Providing additional support for managing workload. Ensuring fair assessment practices
Mentorship and collaboration	Establishing mentorship programs. Fostering collaboration among teachers
Work-life balance	Promoting time management techniques. Encouraging self-care practices to prevent burnout

S7: Having more support from our professors or mentors would be great, especially when it comes to managing the workload. Maybe they could provide extra resources or tips on how to handle everything....

S1: I feel like having a mentor, especially someone who's been through similar experiences, would be really beneficial. They could provide guidance and advice on how to navigate the challenges of teaching....

S4: Finding a balance between teaching and personal life is crucial. Maybe having workshops on time management or self-care could help us avoid feeling overwhelmed and prevent burnout....

As a result of the suggestions of teacher candidates, effective classroom management strategies are essential for maintaining a conducive learning environment. By learning and implementing various techniques such as positive reinforcement, clear communication, and proactive behavior management, teachers can create a structured and engaging classroom where students can thrive academically and socially. Furthermore, engaging teaching methods are vital for capturing students' interest and facilitating their learning process. Incorporating interactive activities, real-life examples, and technology into lessons can enhance student engagement and promote active participation. By fostering a dynamic and stimulating learning environment, teachers can inspire curiosity and enthusiasm among their students. Adequate support and guidance from experienced educators and mentors are invaluable resources for teacher candidates. By offering mentorship programs, professional development workshops, and ongoing feedback, educational institutions can empower teacher candidates to navigate challenges effectively and develop their teaching skills with confidence. Mentorship and collaboration opportunities are crucial for fostering professional growth and development among teacher candidates. Moreover, by pairing novice teachers with experienced mentors, educational institutions can provide valuable guidance, share practical insights, and offer emotional support throughout the transition into teaching careers. Collaboration with colleagues also promotes idea-sharing, problem-solving, and continuous improvement within the teaching community. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential for preventing burnout and sustaining long-term career satisfaction. Educational institutions can support teacher candidates in achieving work-life balance by promoting self-care practices, encouraging time management strategies, and providing resources for managing workload effectively. By prioritizing personal well-being and setting boundaries, teachers can enhance their overall job performance and quality of life.

Discussion

This research sheds light on the occupational anxieties experienced by English teacher candidates and offers valuable insights into their

perspectives, concerns, and suggestions for overcoming these challenges. The findings revealed that teacher candidates encounter various occupational anxieties related to classroom management, student engagement, workload, professional relationships, and work–life balance.

As supported by this study, successful teachers possess the qualities of a skilled educator (Demirel, 2004). Effective classroom management, for instance, presupposes that the teacher is capable of assisting when error arises and can obtain the cooperation of the students in order to minimize it. It also presupposes that meaningful academic activities take place almost daily and that the overall goal of the classroom management system is to maximize student engagement in these activities rather than just minimize misconduct (Brophy, 1988). In their investigation, Harmandar et al. (2000) likewise came to similar conclusions. They claimed that during their time in school, the student teachers learned a variety of skills, including how to assess and evaluate students, gain knowledge and skills related to teaching, boost their confidence, observe how to inspire students for a lesson, watch a teacher teach a lesson, use a board and teaching materials, prepare annual, unit, and daily plans and recognize their value in the teaching process, and realize that students should participate actively in their education. Boz (2008) further found that practical experiences in classroom management reduce anxiety over time, especially when teacher candidates are exposed to diverse classroom environments.

In addition, the teacher candidates expressed anxiety about the workload, as Mohammadian et al. (2015) found that teachers had a higher mean mental workload outcome, which may have an adverse effect on their standard of life as well as the quantity and quality of their educational experience. Also, there is a consensus that support and professional cooperation among teachers lowers their stress and anxiety. In the study by Wolgast and Fisher (2017), the findings showed that decreased perceived stress was inversely linked to regular collaboration among instructors to accomplish the shared objective of lesson planning through help from their peers. These results might be utilized to support school principals in fostering teacher collaboration, which would lower stress levels and raise teaching standards. According to Klusmann et al. (2008), supportive school structures would lessen students' perceptions of stress and hence enhance the quality of education. Support from colleagues does not result in less cooperation, as previously mentioned (Lossen et al., 2013).

Another anxiety is student engagement, as stated by the teacher candidates in this study; however, there are previous studies that mentioned the solutions similar to those of the teacher candidates. For example, Griffiths et al. (2012) conducted a literature analysis and found that the integration of instructional tactics by teachers that foster collaboration over competition and create an environment of mutual respect led to increased engagement in the classroom. In addition, Kelly and Turner (2009) support emphasizing cooperation over competition, especially with low-achieving students. They conclude that when cooperation is prioritized, low-achieving students' engagement is not significantly impacted by the classroom exercise framework (i.e., if teachers use class-wide versus small-group or individualized modes of instruction). Axup and Gersch (2008) further highlight that understanding and addressing challenging student behaviors is critical for maintaining engagement and reducing teacher stress.

Future title of position, kind of being appointed, academic program they teach in, and type of supporting institution all have a direct and substantial impact on how well they are able to combine work and life (Punia & Kamboj, 2013), since English teacher candidates experience occupational anxiety regarding work–life balance. Also, over the course of their professional lives in higher education institutions, the main effects of work–life balance on teachers' well-being were sex

disparity, anxiousness and stress levels at work, career advancement, school workload, time limit regulation, and program efficacy variables (Franco et al., 2021). Previous studies have addressed solutions to the anxieties expressed by teacher candidates in this study, highlighting the importance of addressing these occupational concerns to ensure the well-being and effectiveness of teacher candidates as they prepare for their teaching careers. For instance, achieving work–life balance involves skillfully balancing paid employment with meaningful activities such as volunteering, further education, spending time with family, and engaging in sports. Empirical evidence indicates that achieving a better equilibrium between professional and personal life can yield significant advantages for both school administrators and the teachers. It can support the development of prosperous and robust communities. In a world where obligations and responsibilities sometimes conflict, work–life balance has emerged as a key concern in the workplace (Dhas & Karthikeyan, 2015).

The absence of mentorship and support systems significantly contributes to the occupational anxieties of English teacher candidates. Bressman et al. (2018) highlight the importance of mentorship in providing guidance, feedback, and emotional support to novice teachers. Establishing robust mentorship programs can help alleviate anxieties by offering a support network that addresses both professional and personal challenges. Ghaith and Shaaban (1999) also emphasized that mentorship and perceived competence are inversely related to teaching anxieties, suggesting that enhancing teacher candidates' confidence through mentorship can reduce anxiety. Also, the diverse nature of student behaviour (Axup & Gersch, 2008) and limited resources (Miles, 1995) are additional factors contributing to occupational anxiety. Teacher candidates need to develop strategies for managing diverse classrooms and advocating for adequate resources. Ralph (2004) found that environmental conditions and relationships with mentors significantly impact teaching anxieties, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems. Training programs should include modules on classroom diversity and resource management to better prepare candidates for these challenges. Moreover, the pressure to cover an extensive curriculum is another significant source of anxiety for teacher candidates. Putwain and von der Embse (2019) discuss the impact of curriculum pressure on teacher stress and student outcomes. Teacher training programs should emphasize the importance of prioritizing essential content and using flexible teaching strategies to manage curriculum demands effectively. Fuller and Parsons (1974) also noted that concerns about curriculum coverage are prevalent among teacher candidates, suggesting the need for targeted interventions to address these concerns.

In conclusion, addressing the occupational anxieties of English teacher candidates is essential for preparing confident and effective educators. By understanding and addressing these concerns, teacher education programs can better support candidates in developing the skills and resilience needed for successful teaching careers.

Conclusion

Effective classroom management strategies, engaging teaching methods, adequate support and guidance, mentorship, collaboration opportunities, and promoting work–life balance emerge as key recommendations for alleviating occupational anxieties among teacher candidates.

Furthermore, the research highlights the significance of tailored support mechanisms and interventions to meet the specific needs of teacher candidates across diverse disciplines. By providing comprehensive support during their education and ensuring access to resources tailored to their needs, educational institutions can play a vital role in reducing occupational anxiety and preparing teacher candidates to become confident and effective educators.

In conclusion, this study contributes to our understanding of the challenges faced by English teacher candidates and offers valuable insights into potential strategies for addressing these challenges. By acknowledging and addressing occupational anxieties, educational institutions can empower teacher candidates to navigate the complexities of the teaching profession with confidence and resilience.

Recommendations

1. **Enhanced Support Systems:** Develop comprehensive support systems, including mentorship programs, peer collaboration opportunities, and professional development resources, to support teacher candidates throughout their training and early career stages.
2. **Focus on Work–Life Balance:** Promote strategies for achieving work–life balance, such as time management training, stress reduction techniques, and institutional policies that support teachers' personal and professional needs.
3. **Diverse Classroom Management:** Incorporate training on managing diverse classrooms and advocating for adequate resources into teacher education programs to better prepare candidates for real-world challenges.
4. **Curriculum Management:** Emphasize flexible teaching strategies and the prioritization of essential content in teacher training programs to help candidates manage curriculum pressures effectively.

Limitations

1. **Sample Size and Diversity:** A larger, more diverse sample could provide a broader understanding of occupational anxieties.
2. **Geographic and Cultural Context:** Educational systems, cultural norms, and institutional supports vary widely, and the anxieties experienced by teacher candidates in other countries or regions may differ.
3. **Cross-Sectional Design:** Longitudinal studies tracking changes in anxieties over time and throughout different stages of teacher education and early career phases could provide deeper insights into how these anxieties evolve and what factors contribute to their resolution or persistence.
4. **Lack of Quantitative Data:** While the qualitative approach provided rich, detailed insights into the participants' experiences, the absence of quantitative data limits the ability to measure the prevalence and intensity of occupational anxieties among a larger population of teacher candidates. Integrating quantitative methods could help quantify the extent of the identified issues and support the qualitative findings.
5. **Focus on English Teacher Candidates:** The study specifically targeted English teacher candidates, which may not reflect the occupational anxieties of candidates in other subject areas. Future research could explore whether similar anxieties are present across different disciplines and how subject-specific challenges impact teacher candidates.

By acknowledging these limitations, future studies can build on this research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the occupational anxieties experienced by teacher candidates and to develop more effective support strategies tailored to their needs.

Availability of Data and Materials: The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval was received for this study from the ethics committee of Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University (Approval no: 428774, Date: 04.04.2024).

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