

# Hope and mental well-being predictors of teacher candidates in the pandemic: Career adaptation and optimism and academic self\*

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## Abstract

The pandemic process has led to differences in the education process, in many different areas. Along with the obligations and measures brought about by the pandemic process, online education has been included in the process. This situation affected the adaptation, attendance, and career process of the students closely. This study aimed to determine whether teacher candidates' academic-self, career adaptability, and optimism predicted their dispositional hope and mental well-being during the pandemic when they received distance education. The sample consisted of 281 teacher candidates studying at education faculties of state universities in four different Turkey provinces. A convenience sampling method was used. Among the 281 participant students, 199 were female (70.6%), and 83 were male (29.4%). A predictive correlational design was used in the analysis. The data were collected with the Dispositional Hope Scale, Mental Well-being Scale, Matovu Academic-Self Concept Scale, Career Adaptability and Optimism Scale, and a personal information form. The study results indicated a significant relationship between the academic-self, career adaptability and optimism, dispositional hope, and mental well-being of final-year students. Besides, the teacher candidates' academic-self, career adaptability, and optimism significantly predicted their dispositional hope and mental well-being. In this study, the academic and psychological effects of the process were examined simultaneously in the distance education process. It is thought that individual and group studies to increase the level of well-being and hope of senior students in their career planning will be effective.

**Keywords:** Hope, Mental well-being, Academic-self, Career, Teacher candidates, Optimism, Pandemic

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## INTRODUCTION

The pandemic process unexpectedly entered our lives and deeply affected everyone from our lifestyles to our thoughts (Montemurro, 2020). Today, people live with the fear of being infected by the deadly virus, and this uncertainty has negatively impacted psychological well-being and mental health (Ali, Ahsan, Khan, Khan & Hossain, 2020). Lockdowns and social distance rules, which began with the COVID-19 pandemic, are among the primary measures to prevent the spread of the disease. Although these measures were functional to prevent disease transmission, they lead to various mental problems such as depression and anxiety (Otu, Charles & Yaya, 2020). It is emphasized that such mental problems would continue for a while even after the COVID-19 pandemic (Otu et al., 2020; Paredes, Apaolaza, Hartmann, Fernandez-Robin & Yanez-Martinez, 2021). The ongoing pandemic still causes the emergence of mental symptoms in people who do not have any psychological disorders and an increase in the severity of mental problems (Cullen, Gulati & Kelly, 2020). The pandemic has negatively affected mental well-being (Liu & Wang, 2005). Therefore, it becomes essential to investigate the psychological effects of the pandemic in multidimensional terms. As in every field, the changes in the education process have led to a change in the adaptation process of the education community and have also affected the psychological states of the students such as Dispositional Hope, Career Adaptability and Optimism, Academic-self.

## BACKGROUND

### Mental Well-being

The World Health Organization (2014) defines mental well-being as "a situation in which individuals reveal their potential, cope with daily life stressors, work productively and efficiently, and contribute to society." Mental well-being is a critical factor in coping with challenging life events (Surya, Jaff, Stilwell & Schubert, 2017). This concept, which is characterized by positive effects on life, is also influenced by individual, social and environmental factors (Söner & Yılmaz, 2020). Gündoğan (2022) emphasized his research that variety of variables can affect the university students' subjective well being. Traumatic events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have negatively influenced mental well-being due to the changes in environmental conditions such as isolation and social distance (Giallonardo et al., 2020; Satici, Saricali, Satici & Griffiths, 2020). Especially extreme fear and mental disorders due to the pandemic conditions adversely affected mental well-being (Çiçek & Almalı, 2020; Lima et al., 2020; Otu et al., 2020). In this sense, since academic achievement affects mental well-being (Karaçam & Pultur, 2019), it is assumed that academic-self, career adaptation, and optimism can positively impact mental well-being.

### Dispositional Hope

Hope is a fundamental positive psychology concept, which plays a vital role in people's physical and mental reactions to daily life events (Padilla-Walker, Hardy & Christensen, 2011). The level of hope is an important indicator and psychological force that positively affects well-being (Arnau, Rosen, Finch, Rhudy & Fortunato, 2007; Tsukasa & Snyder, 2005). According to Snyder (2000), hope is one's motivation and capacity to achieve a goal. A high level of hope also improves stress-coping skills and promotes resilience. Therefore, hopeful people show high motivation to overcome the adverse effects of stressful life events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and have good mental health (Yıldırım & Arslan, 2020). Hope also helps people see and manage available career options (Korkut, Owen & Niles, 2011). The studies in the literature indicate a significant relationship between hope and career adaptability and optimism (Santilli, Marcionetti, Roachat, Rossier & Nota, 2016; Wilkins, Santilli, Ferrari, Nota, Tracey & Soresi, 2014). Considering that optimism is faith in a promising future and hope is one's motivator for a bright future, it is critical to address these concepts in terms of mental health measures.

### Career Adaptability and Optimism

Career adaptation is characterized by "one's self-regulatory powers and capacities to solve unfamiliar, complicated and challenging problems due to professional development issues, occupational transitions

and work traumas" (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Thus, career adaptation can be defined as one's adaptation abilities, including making a new career plan due to unexpected life events. People with high career adaptability and optimism have positive and promising career plans for the future (Rottinghaus, Day & Borgen, 2005). Individuals are likely to perform better in their jobs if they can adapt to career-related changes (Delle & Searle, 2020). Career optimism is positively correlated with career adaptability, which overlaps with the previous research (Aspinwall, Richter & Hoffman, 2001; Rottinghaus et al., 2005). Learning experiences improve career adaptability and career optimism (McLennan, McIlveen & Perera, 2017). Career adaptability and optimism psychologically affectors play a role in adaptation to life (Ali et al., 2020). Studies in the literature show that positive psychological characteristics such as hope, optimism, and resilience are positively correlated with career adaptability (Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2016). Especially during the pandemic and distance education, the improvements in teacher candidates' resilience is one of the critical issues that should be addressed to help them have hopeful perspectives even under challenging conditions and not lose faith in themselves and their future careers.

### **Academic-self**

Academic-self refers to a student's perception of his/her capacity to be academically successful (Brunner, Keller, Hornung, Reichard & Martin, 2009). It is one of the most important educational outcomes related to students' academic beliefs, abilities, and capacities. Students are expected to be self-confident and self-sufficient individuals at the end of formal education (Becker & Neumann, 2016). Academic-self is a multidimensional concept considering and evaluating both personal and cognitive abilities and academic success (Harter, 2012). In many areas, such as educational, social, and developmental, individuals are expected to have a high academic-self (Marsh & Martin, 2011). Besides, a high academic-self is a vital source of power for students in education (Trautwein & Möller, 2016). In this respect, the improvable aspect of academic-self is an important skill to achieve success. According to O'Mara and colleagues (2006), to improve academic-self, students need to think that they cannot be talented in all fields but can gain competence in a specific field and make efforts to improve it. Additionally, they stated that academic-self could be developed indirectly by focusing on different factors such as self-efficacy and values.

### **Current Study**

As a result of the dramatic changes in many aspects of life during the pandemic, there have been considerable changes in education and training policies. For instance, right after the emergence of the pandemic, students started online and distance education instead of face-to-face education (Churiyah, Sholikhan, Filianti & Sakdiyyah, 2020). In distance education, teachers and students have online courses (Griffiths, 2016). University students are also one of the negatively affected groups (Coyle, Ghazi & Georgiou, 2020). Determining the factors that motivate teachers is very important for professional sustainability (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2013). In this sense, McLennan and colleagues (2017) stated that prospective teachers who have high career adaptability and optimism could easily cope with their problems in the first years of their careers.

Needs have also changed with the developing and changing conditions. Therefore, employees' coping skills and capacity to change are essential for adaptation to new working conditions (Grant & Parker, 2009; Parker & Collins, 2010). The COVID-19 pandemic particularly has disrupted the national and global economy and led to severe unemployment rates (Wen, Chen, Li & Gu, 2020). In this respect, the pandemic interventions and measures should include serious steps to manage the current and future conditions (Otu et al., 2020). In the literature, many researchers examined the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental well-being (Ali et al., 2020; Blasco-Belled, Tejada-Gallardo, Torrelles-Nadal & Alsinet, 2020; Coyle et al., 2020; Otu et al., 2020; Paredes et al., 2021) and dispositional hope (Yıldırım & Arslan, 2020). However, no study directly addressed its effects on academic-self, career adaptability, and optimism, which can be considered the uniqueness of the current study aiming to determine if the academic-self, career adaptation, and optimism predicted dispositional hope and mental well-being of teacher candidates who received distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose,

the aim of this study is to examine the relationships between students' Mental Wellbeing, Dispositional Hope, Career Adaptability and Optimism and Academic-self levels in the distance education process. No study in the literature examined the given four concepts simultaneously. The study would guide future researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in terms of the studies and interventions for improving mental well-being and hope.

## METHOD

### Research Model

Predictive correlational analysis was performed in this study to describe the relationships between academic-self, career adaptation, optimism, dispositional hope, and mental well-being. The predictive correlational analysis is used to determine the predictive power of the unknown variable considering the familiar variables following the analysis of the correlations between continuous variables. Predictive correlational variables are divided into two groups by the number of variables. If the predicted variable has more than one predictor, it is called multi-factor variable analysis (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Since the two variables -academic-self and career adaptability and optimism- were considered the predictors of the dispositional hope and mental well-being of teacher candidates receiving distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic, a multi-factor variable analysis was performed in the study.

### Research Group

A convenience sampling method (Fraenkel et al., 2012) was used to determine the study group of this research. With this method, it was ensured that every volunteer individual who was a teacher candidate participated in the study. The data of the study were collected from university students studying at the education faculties of some universities from Turkey with this sampling method. Since the data was collected during the pandemic period, it was collected online. The sample consisted of 282 final-year students at the education faculties of state universities in different provinces of Turkey. Among the participants, 70.6% were female and 29.4% were male. Besides, 31.6% were at the Department of Turkish Teaching, 28.7% were at the Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, 16% were at the Department of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge, 7.1% were at the Department of Mathematics Instruction, 6.4% (n = 18) were at Department of Primary School Teaching, 4.6% were at Department of Social Studies Education, 2.8% were at Department of Preschool Education, and 1.4% at Art and Physical Education Departments.

### Data Collection Tools

"The Mental Well-being Scale," "Dispositional Hope Scale," "Matovu Academic-self Scale" and "Career Adaptability and Optimism Scale" were used in this study. Besides, the researchers prepared a personal information form, including the variables of gender and department.

### The Mental Well-being Scale

It was developed by Tennant and colleagues (2007) to measure the mental well-being of individuals living in England. The scale consists of 14 positive items, including the concepts of "subjective well-being" and "psychological well-being." The scale was adapted to Turkish by Keldal (2015). The exploratory factor analysis was performed to determine the structural validity and revealed a one-factor structure explaining 51% of the total variance. The confirmatory factor analysis results showed the fit indices as follows:  $\chi^2/df = 3.71$ , RMR = .05, NNFI = .95, RFI = .93, CFI = .96. The reliability studies were conducted on individuals 16 and older. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient of the original scale was .89. It was measured at .95 in the current study.

### Dispositional Hope Scale

This tool was developed by Snyder and colleagues (1991) to determine the hope levels of individuals aged 15 and over. It was adapted to Turkish by Tarhan and Bacanlı (2015) on a sample group of university

students. There are 12 items and two sub-dimensions in the scale: alternative ways of thinking and actuating thinking. In the adaptation study, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient was .81 for the actuating thinking sub-dimension, .78 for the alternative ways thinking sub-dimension, and .86 for the total score. According to the test-retest reliability results conducted on university students, the internal consistency coefficient was .84. The confirmatory factor analysis results revealed the fit indices as follows: (GFI = .96, AGFI = .92, RMR = .08, NNFI = .94, RFI = .90, CFI = .96 and RMSEA = .077). They were valid ranges. For the current study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .91 for alternative ways thinking sub-dimension, .81 for actuating thinking sub-dimension, and .93 for the total score.

### **Matovu Academic-Self Concept Scale**

This scale was developed by Liu and Wang (2005) and later revised by Matovu (2014) to determine university students' academic-self. It was adapted to Turkish by Cantekin and Gökler (2019). It is a 7-point Likert-type scale consisting of 20 items and two sub-dimensions: academic confidence and academic effort. The item factor loadings ranged between .722 and .963 in the original scale. In the adaptation study, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient was .93. The confirmatory factor analysis results indicated valid fit indices ( $\chi^2/df= 2.04$ , CFI = 0.90, GFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.05). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was measured .81 for the total scale; .68 for the academic confidence sub-dimension; and .69 for the academic effort sub-dimension.

### **Career Adaptability and Optimism Scale**

The scale was developed by Erdoğmuş (2011) and included 18 items and one dimension. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was .93 in the first development phase of the scale and .94 in the second phase with a different sample. The item factor loading ranged between .38 and .72. The scale's construct validity was checked, and the exploratory factor analysis results explained 52% of the variance. The confirmatory factor analysis showed good fit indices [ $\chi^2/df= 2.65$ , CFI = 0.93, GFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.04]. High scores in the scale refer to easy adaptation and high optimism and resilience levels during career transitions. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .95 for this study.

### **Data Analysis**

There were no missing data as they were collected online. The data were analyzed with SPSS. The Mahalanobis distance method was used to determine the extreme values. The analysis was completed with 282 data after eliminating 15 data that did not meet the criterion. Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between mental well-being, dispositional hope, career adaptability and optimism, and academic-self. Standard multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the effect of career adaptability and optimism and academic-self on dispositional hope and mental well-being. Autocorrelation, normality, variance amplification, tolerance values, and whether the correlational relationship assumptions between the predictor and the predicted variables were met were checked to perform the standard multiple regression analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West & Leona, 2002). Firstly, the normality assumptions were examined. As seen in Table 1, the values showed a normal distribution between +2 and -2 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Then, the autocorrelation between variables was examined using the Durbin-Watson d value. It was measured at 1.517 for dispositional hope and 1.877 for mental well-being (1.0-3.0). Thirdly, the variance amplification and tolerance values were analyzed and measured 1.137 for variance amplification and .879 for the tolerance value, which was in the expected ranges (Field, 2005). These findings indicate no multiple correlations between variables. Lastly, the relationship between the predictor and the predicted variables was calculated between .142 - .489 (Büyükoztürk, 2021). After all the assumptions were met, standard multiple regression analyzes were performed.

### Ethical Considerations

In this study, data were collected from a total of 282 participants. Using convenience sampling, participants were recruited in the research on a voluntary basis. The link to the survey was posted via online platforms to the students between 1 May 2021 and 10 June 2021. Study procedures were designed considering the Declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent forms were obtained from the participants. Since the data was collected online and responding to all the items was required, there was no missing data. Necessary permission was obtained from the authors of the original scales. Ethical approval was granted by Gaziantep University Ethics committee. (Ethics Number: 39381).

## FINDINGS

In the findings section of this study, the mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, and skewness values of the research variables were evaluated. Then, correlational relations between the variables of the research were examined. Finally, regression analysis findings are included in determining the predictive level of academic self, career adjustment, and optimism on mental well-being.

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis values regarding participants' mental well-being, dispositional hope, career adaptability and optimism, and academic-self scores.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>1. Alternative ways of thinking</b>	282	25.03	6.365	-1.482	1.747
<b>2. Actuating thinking</b>	282	22.85	6.16	-1.052	.533
<b>3. Academic confidence</b>	282	51.25	9.16	-.298	-.347
<b>4. Academic effort</b>	282	46.96	9.92	-.144	-.609
<b>5. Mental well-being</b>	282	52.14	12.07	-.909	.838
<b>6. Dispositional hope</b>	282	47.89	12.05	-1.305	1.203
<b>7. Academic-self</b>	282	97.96	17.37	-.252	-.231
<b>8. Career adaptability and optimism</b>	282	71.59	12.64	-.798	.936

According to the data in Table 1, it is seen that the kurtosis and skewness values of the variables of the research show a normal distribution between -2 and +2 values (Pallant, 2001). These values obtained show that the data are suitable for regression analysis. Pearson correlation analysis was performed to determine the relationship between mental well-being, dispositional hope, career adaptability and optimism, and academic-self, and the findings are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Correlational Relationships Between Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>1. Alternative ways of thinking</b>	1							
<b>2. Actuating thinking</b>	.852**	1						
<b>3. Academic confidence</b>	.373**	.417**	1					
<b>4. Academic effort</b>	.345**	.369**	.656**	1				
<b>5. Mental well-being</b>	.389**	.475**	.467**	.425**	1			
<b>6. Dispositional hope</b>	.963**	.961**	.410**	.371**	.448**	1		
<b>7. Academic-self</b>	.394**	.431**	.902**	.917**	.489**	.428**	1	
<b>8. Career adaptability and optimism</b>	.117	.157**	.305**	.244**	.381**	.142*	.300**	1

Note: \*p <.05, \*\*p <.01

As can be seen in Table 2, there was a moderately positive significant correlation between mental well-being and dispositional hope total scores ( $r = .448, p <.01$ ) and between the alternative ways thinking ( $r = .389, p <.01$ ) and actuating thinking ( $r = .475, p <.01$ ). A similar moderate correlation was also found

between the mental well-being and academic-self-total score ( $r = .489, p < .01$ ), and between academic confidence ( $r = .410, p < .01$ ) and academic effort ( $r = .371, p < .01$ ). Finally, there was a moderately positive significant relationship between mental well-being and career adaptability and optimism ( $r = .381, p < .01$ ). Similar correlations were found between dispositional hope and academic-self-total score ( $r = .428, p < .01$ ), and between academic confidence ( $r = .410, p < .01$ ) and academic effort ( $r = .371, p < .01$ ). In addition, there was a low positive and significant correlation between dispositional hope and career adaptability and optimism ( $r = .142, p < .01$ ). Finally, a moderate positive and significant relationship was found between career adaptability and optimism, academic-self-total score ( $r = .300, p < .01$ ) and academic confidence ( $r = .305, p < .01$ ) and academic effort ( $r = .244, p < .01$ ).

A standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the academic-self and career adaptability and optimism predicted teacher candidates' mental well-being who received distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis results are shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3.** Prediction of Mental Well-Being by Multiple Regression

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE<sub>B</sub></b>	<b>β</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>VIF</b>
<b>(Constant)</b>	6.513	4.283		1.521	.129		
<b>Academic-self</b>	.287	.037	.412	7.851	.000	.910	1.099
<b>Career Adaptability and Optimism</b>	.245	.050	.257	4.888	.000	.910	1.099

$R^2 = .300$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .295$ ;  $F_{(2,279)} = 59.653$

Note: Dependent variable = Dispositional Hope, SE<sub>B</sub>: Standard error

There was a moderate and significant correlation between teacher candidates' mental well-being, academic-self, career adaptability, and optimism ( $R=0.547, R^2=0.300, p < .05$ ). In this regard, the given variables -academic-self, career adaptability, and optimism- explained 30% of the variance in prospective teachers' mental well-being. The standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ) indicated that the order of relative importance of the predictor variables on mental well-being was academic-self, career adaptation, and optimism. The t-test results regarding the significance of the regression coefficients revealed that academic-self and career adaptability, and optimism were significant predictors of mental well-being.

A standard multiple regression analysis was applied to determine teacher candidates' academic-self and career adaptability and optimism levels, which were the predictors of dispositional hope. The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Prediction of Dispositional Hope by Multiple Regression

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE<sub>B</sub></b>	<b>β</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>VIF</b>
<b>(Constant)</b>	18.098	4.618		3.919	.000		
<b>Academic-self</b>	.294	.039	.424	7.471	.000	.910	1.099
<b>Career Adaptability and Optimism</b>	.014	.054	.014	.254	.800	.910	1.099

$R^2 = .183$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .178$ ;  $F_{(2,279)} = 31.331$

Note: Dependent variable = Dispositional Hope, SE<sub>B</sub>: Standard error

As shown in Table 4, there was a moderate and significant correlation between teacher candidates' dispositional hopes and academic-self, career adaptability, and optimism ( $R=0.428, R^2=0.183, p < .05$ ). The given variables explained about 18% of the variance in the dispositional hopes. The standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ) indicated that the order of relative importance of the predictor variables on dispositional hope was academic-self, career adaptation, and optimism. The t-test results regarding the significance of the regression coefficients revealed that academic-self was a significant predictor of dispositional hope, but career adaptability and optimism were not significant predictors of dispositional hope.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to determine whether teacher candidates' academic-self, career adaptability, and optimism predicted their dispositional hope and mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic when they received distance education. The results showed statistically significant correlations between teacher candidates' dispositional hope and career adaptability and optimism levels and between their academic-self and mental well-being. As they had a high level of academic-self, mental well-being, career adaptability, and optimism, they had high levels of hope. Besides, academic-self and career adaptability and optimism were significant predictors of mental well-being. Academic-self was a significant predictor of dispositional hope, but career adaptability and optimism were not significant predictors of dispositional hope.

There was a positive and significant correlation between dispositional hope and career adaptability and optimism. There are some studies with similar results in the literature. Büyükgöze-Kavas (2016) emphasized significant relationships between career adaptability, hope, resilience, and optimism. She said that more hopeful students are more adaptable in their careers. Rivera and colleagues (2021), in their study on hospitality students during the COVID-19 process, revealed that there is a positive relationship between career adaptability and hope. Çelik (2020), in his study on university students, found a significant relationship between career adaptability and perceived hope. Santilli and colleagues (2016), in their studies on Swiss and Italian teenagers, revealed a significant and positive relationship between career adaptability, hope, and optimism. In their study on adolescents, Jia and colleagues (2020) found that career adaptation promoted hope. In light of the literature findings, it can be inferred that individuals with high hopes have a high level of career adaptability and optimism. Considering the ambiguities, losses, and changes in daily routine due to the pandemic, it is very likely that the pandemic has adversely affected mental health. In this respect, being hopeful even under such challenging life conditions is an essential skill that can keep people alive. The obligatory changes in education and the introduction of distance education have increased students' concerns about their health and future careers. Therefore, it is possible to say that people with high levels of hope have high career adaptability and optimism during the pandemic.

Another result of the study refers to the significant correlation between academic-self and mental well-being. Academic-self was a significant predictor of mental well-being. In the literature, Demirtaş (2019) indirectly found a meaningful correlation between academic self-efficacy and mental well-being. Asghari and colleagues (2014) revealed that there is a significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and psychological well-being. García-Álvarez and colleagues (2021) have revealed that academic self-efficacy of university students has a protective function for psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic process. In this sense, the current study, which described academic-self correlational and predictive relations, would guide future research. A sharp decrease in students' academic self-beliefs was an expected consequence of the pandemic as it led to drastic changes in the education system. The pandemic also increased academic anxiety among students who had to continue education under challenging conditions. The suspension of face-to-face education and the less motivating nature of distance education negatively affected students' well-being. The students with high mental well-being are also hopeful in academic terms, even if they face challenging events. Therefore, it can be suggested that mental well-being is an essential source of power that is useful under extraordinary conditions.

Another finding was the predictive power of academic-self on dispositional hope. Atik and Atik (2017) concluded that academic self-efficacy was a critical predictor of dispositional hope and that students with high levels of hope had firm academic self-efficacy beliefs. No study in the literature reports that career adaptability and optimism are not significant predictors of dispositional hope. In this sense, it is recommended to carry out studies on the relationships between career adaptability and optimism, which have not been studied much in the literature. Like every student, teacher candidates have been



negatively affected by the education system changes during the pandemic, so increasing the level of hope would promote their academic-self. It also refers that the pandemic has equally influenced everybody. Final-year students might experience more anxiety than other graders; however, instead of contemplating the pandemic's negative consequences, acceptance as a temporary situation and being hopeful play a vital role in coping. Therefore, it can be suggested that hope also triggers academic self-efficacy.

### Limitations

This study is limited to the students of the faculty of education teaching department. In addition, the participants are final-year students of the four state universities. In this respect, four-state students may be more anxious. This is another limitation of the study. Research results were limited to the data that were collected online and from a non-clinical sample. Besides, they were limited to the participants' answers to the self-report tools.

The COVID-19 pandemic process has deeply affected each age group. Especially the students studying at the university were faced with uncertainty and future anxiety in these ongoing negative conditions. Even if things return to normal, changing and transforming conditions will affect the career adjustment of individuals. In this respect, this study aimed to reveal the resources that students have and the power to cope with the negative life event and uncertainty and anxiety at the time of the crisis, with this study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic process. There are not many studies dealing with career adaptability and optimism. In this respect, even if the COVID process is over, it is thought that learning other related factors that affect students' career adjustment will fill the gap in the literature.

For future studies in light of the findings obtained from the study, this study, which was made for four state students of universities, can be done in the other states of the university. This study, which was applied on education faculty students, can be applied to different faculties. High school students go through a very difficult and stressful period as they prepare for the university exam. Earlier intervention studies can be carried out by applying this study to high school students. Studies that increase the level of mental well-being, academic self, and hope can be expanded. In recent years, the level of career adaptability and optimism can be increased by adding theoretical and practical studies on these factors (well-being, hope, academic self) related to the content of "Career Planning" courses in universities.

### Statement of Researchers

**Researchers' contribution rate statement:** All authors contributed to the research equally.

**Conflict statement:** There are no conflicts of interest between the authors.

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