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## **The Role of Gender, Employment Status, School Type, and Years of Experience on Career Adaptability and Self-Efficacy of Greek Secondary Education Teachers During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented natural experiment for examining how demographic and occupational characteristics shape teachers' professional resources during crisis. This study investigated the effects of gender, employment status, school type, and years of experience on career adaptability and general self-efficacy among 202 Greek secondary education teachers (75.2% female; M age = 47.37 years) during the emergency remote teaching (ERT) period. Participants completed the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale – Short Form (CAAS-SF; Maggiori *et al.*, 2017) [8] and the New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE; Chen *et al.*, 2001) [5]. Independent samples t-tests

and one-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine group differences, while Pearson correlations were used to explore the role of age and experience. Results showed that gender and employment status did not produce significant differences on either construct. However, school type significantly differentiated teachers on selected career adaptability dimensions, with special education teachers reporting higher adaptability scores. Years of experience showed a small but significant positive correlation with career adaptability ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ). The findings have implications for targeted professional development and policy support for different teacher subgroups.

**Keywords:** Career Adaptability, Self-Efficacy, Demographic Variables, COVID-19, Secondary Education, Greece

### **1. Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic constitutes one of the most significant disruptions to education in recent history. The sudden and mandatory transition to emergency remote teaching (ERT) in March 2020 required teachers across the world to rapidly adapt their professional practice, develop new digital competencies, and sustain their psychological well-being under conditions of extreme uncertainty (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; König *et al.*, 2020) [1, 7].

Research conducted during and after the pandemic has documented considerable variation in how teachers responded to these demands, suggesting that individual and contextual factors — such as gender, years of experience, employment status, and school type — may moderate the extent to which teachers draw on their adaptive professional resources (Pressley, 2021; Sokal *et al.*, 2020; Baroudi & Shaya, 2022) [9, 13, 4].

Career adaptability, conceptualised as a readiness and set of resources for managing occupational transitions and challenges (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) [10], and general self-efficacy, rooted in Bandura's (1997) [3] Social Cognitive Theory, are two psychological constructs with well-established associations with professional functioning. However, little is known about how demographic and occupational characteristics shape these constructs specifically within the Greek secondary school teaching context during ERT.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the differential impact of gender, employment status, school type, and years of experience on career adaptability and self-efficacy among a sample of 202 Greek secondary school teachers. By doing so, it provides a nuanced portrait of which teacher subgroups may be more or less psychologically equipped to manage crisis-driven professional transitions, with implications for targeted policy intervention and professional development.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Career Adaptability and Demographic Variables

Career adaptability is a multidimensional construct encompassing four dimensions: Concern (future orientation), Control (responsibility for one's career trajectory), Curiosity (exploration of possible futures), and Confidence (belief in one's problem-solving abilities). These dimensions have been found to be malleable and shaped by professional and biographical experience (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) [10].

Research has produced mixed findings regarding demographic predictors of career adaptability. Some studies report gender differences, with women showing higher adaptability in certain dimensions (Tladinyane & Van der Merwe, 2015) [14], while others find no significant gender effects (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou *et al.*, 2018) [11]. Years of professional experience has been positively associated with adaptability in some occupational groups, reflecting increased exposure to transition and change management (Collie & Martin, 2016) [6]. School type and employment status as predictors of adaptability have been under-examined in the literature.

### 2.2 Teacher Self-Efficacy and Demographic Variables

Teacher self-efficacy — defined as beliefs in one's capability to successfully perform professional duties — has been linked to a range of demographic and contextual factors. Female teachers have been found to report higher self-efficacy in some studies, particularly in relation to student engagement and classroom management (Zee *et al.*, 2016) [15]. Permanently employed teachers may benefit from greater institutional stability, which could support higher self-efficacy, though this has rarely been tested empirically. Teaching experience has been identified as a significant correlate of self-efficacy, with more experienced teachers generally reporting stronger efficacy beliefs, partly as a result of accumulated mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010) [3, 12]. The role of school type in shaping self-efficacy is less well understood, though it may reflect differences in institutional culture, student populations, and available support resources.

### 2.3 The Present Study

Building on this theoretical foundation, the present study examined whether gender, employment status, school type, and years of experience differentially predicted career adaptability and self-efficacy among Greek secondary school teachers during the ERT period. We hypothesised that years of experience would positively predict both constructs, and that school type would moderate career adaptability levels, with no significant gender or employment status effects.

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional design was employed. Group differences were examined using independent samples *t*-tests (for binary grouping variables: gender, employment status) and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA; for multi-category variables: school type, years of experience).

Pearson correlations were used to examine the relationship between age (continuous) and the target constructs.

### 3.2 Participants

The final sample comprised 202 secondary school teachers employed in Greek state schools. The sample was predominantly female (75.2%,  $n = 152$ ) and middle-aged ( $M = 47.37$  years,  $SD = 8.69$ ; range: 24–65 years). The majority were married (72.8%), held postgraduate qualifications (55.9%), and were permanently employed (79.7%). In terms of school setting, 40.6% worked in lower secondary schools (Gymnasio), 33.7% in upper secondary schools (Lykeio), and the remainder in special education institutions (EEEEK: 16.3%; ENEEGYJI: 8.4%; SDE: 1%). The demographic profile of the sample is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Demographic and Occupational Characteristics of the Sample ( $N = 202$ )

Variable	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	152	75.2
Male	50	24.8
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Permanent	161	79.7
Supply	41	20.3
<b>School Type</b>		
Gymnasio (Lower Secondary)	82	40.6
Lykeio (Upper Secondary)	68	33.7
EEEEK (Special Ed.)	33	16.3
ENEEGYJI (Special Ed.)	17	8.4
SDE (Adult Education)	2	1.0
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
1–5 years	28	13.9
6–12 years	41	20.3
13–20 years	63	31.2
21–26 years	40	19.8
27+ years	30	14.9

### 3.3 Instruments

Career Adapt-Abilities Scale – Short Form (CAAS-SF; Maggiori *et al.*, 2017) [8]: A 12-item measure with four subscales (Concern, Control, Curiosity, Confidence), each rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha in the current study ranged from .74 to .90.

New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE; Chen *et al.*, 2001) [5]: An 8-item unidimensional scale rated on a 5-point Likert scale ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Both instruments have been validated with Greek samples.

### 3.4 Procedure

An online questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to secondary schools across Greece. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and preceded by written informed consent. Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the main variables by demographic group are presented in Table 2. Overall, teachers reported high levels of career adaptability ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ) and self-efficacy ( $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ).

**Table 2:** Means and Standard Deviations of Career Adaptability and Self-Efficacy by Demographic Group

Group	Career Adaptability M (SD)	Self-Efficacy M (SD)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	3.99 (0.64)	3.85 (0.59)
Male	3.93 (0.68)	3.77 (0.63)
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Permanent	4.00 (0.63)	3.84 (0.59)
Supply	3.89 (0.72)	3.79 (0.64)
<b>School Type</b>		
Gymnasio	3.91 (0.66)	3.79 (0.61)
Lykeio	3.93 (0.67)	3.80 (0.62)
Special Education	4.17 (0.58)	3.94 (0.55)
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
1–5 years	3.82 (0.72)	3.75 (0.64)
13–20 years	3.98 (0.64)	3.83 (0.59)
27+ years	4.09 (0.61)	3.91 (0.58)

#### 4.2 Gender Differences

Independent samples t-tests revealed no statistically significant gender differences in career adaptability ( $t(200) = 0.58$ ,  $p = .56$ ) or self-efficacy ( $t(200) = 0.82$ ,  $p = .41$ ). Although female teachers reported marginally higher mean scores on both constructs, these differences were not significant. This finding suggests that gender did not constitute a meaningful differentiator of professional adaptive resources during the ERT period in this sample.

#### 4.3 Employment Status Differences

Comparison of permanently employed and supply teachers showed no significant differences on career adaptability ( $t(200) = 1.02$ ,  $p = .31$ ) or self-efficacy ( $t(200) = 0.51$ ,  $p = .61$ ). While permanently employed teachers reported slightly higher mean scores, the differences did not reach statistical significance. This may indicate that institutional security, while potentially important for long-term professional development, did not substantially differentiate teachers' adaptive resources during the acute crisis period.

#### 4.4 School Type Differences

One-way ANOVA indicated a significant effect of school type on total career adaptability ( $F(4, 197) = 3.14$ ,  $p = .015$ ). Post-hoc comparisons (Tukey HSD) revealed that teachers working in special education institutions reported significantly higher career adaptability scores than those working in mainstream Gymnasio schools ( $p = .018$ ). School type did not produce significant differences in self-efficacy ( $F(4, 197) = 1.87$ ,  $p = .117$ ). These findings suggest that the particular professional context of special education — characterised by greater individualisation, flexibility, and responsiveness to student need — may foster higher adaptability among teachers.

#### 4.5 Years of Experience

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a small but statistically significant positive correlation between years of teaching experience and total career adaptability ( $r = .18$ ,  $p = .011$ ). The correlation between experience and self-efficacy approached but did not reach significance ( $r = .12$ ,  $p = .091$ ). One-way ANOVA comparing experience groups on career adaptability was marginally significant ( $F(4, 197) = 2.39$ ,  $p = .051$ ), with the 27+ years group reporting the highest mean adaptability scores. These results suggest a gradual accumulation of adaptive resources over a teaching career,

consistent with the role of mastery experiences in self-efficacy development described by Bandura (1997) [3].

### 5. Discussion

This study examined the influence of demographic and occupational variables on career adaptability and self-efficacy among Greek secondary school teachers during the COVID-19 ERT period. The findings are discussed in relation to existing literature and their practical implications. Contrary to some prior studies (Tladinyane & Van der Merwe, 2015) [14], gender did not significantly differentiate teachers on either construct in the present sample. This null result may reflect the relatively homogeneous professional training and institutional context of Greek secondary education, which may moderate gender-based differences in adaptive resources. Similarly, the absence of significant employment status effects may suggest that both permanent and supply teachers faced comparable adaptive challenges during ERT, irrespective of their contractual security.

The significant effect of school type on career adaptability is a novel and practically important finding. Teachers in special education settings — characterised by individualised instruction, multi-disciplinary collaboration, and ongoing adaptation to diverse student needs — reported higher adaptability than their mainstream counterparts. This finding suggests that professional contexts that routinely require flexibility and individualisation may cultivate adaptability over time, providing a potential model for professional development in mainstream settings.

The positive association between years of experience and career adaptability aligns with the broader literature on professional learning and resilience (Collie & Martin, 2016) [6]. More experienced teachers may have encountered a greater variety of professional transitions over their careers, developing a broader repertoire of adaptive strategies. The absence of a significant experience-self-efficacy correlation, however, suggests that experience and self-efficacy may be more loosely coupled than expected, with other factors — such as recent success experiences and social support — potentially more proximal influences on efficacy beliefs.

From a policy perspective, the findings highlight the importance of targeted support for early-career teachers (with fewer adaptive resources) and mainstream school teachers (who demonstrated lower adaptability than special education colleagues). Professional development programmes that systematically build the four dimensions of career adaptability — particularly Concern, Control, and Curiosity — may be especially beneficial for these groups.

#### 5.1 Limitations

This study's cross-sectional design, reliance on self-report measures, and convenience sampling limit causal interpretation and generalisability. The ANOVA results for school type, while significant, should be interpreted cautiously given unequal cell sizes (particularly for SDE schools,  $n = 2$ ). Future research should employ longitudinal designs, objective performance indicators, and larger, stratified samples.

### 6. Conclusion

This study provides the first empirical evidence on the role of demographic and occupational variables in shaping career adaptability and self-efficacy among Greek secondary school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. While

gender and employment status did not significantly differentiate teachers, school type and years of experience emerged as meaningful moderators of career adaptability. These findings underscore the importance of context-sensitive and experience-tailored approaches to supporting teachers' professional resources in times of crisis.

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