Contributing and damaging factors related to the psychological capital of teachers: A qualitative analysis

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Over the last two decades, psychological capital has gained prominence in the literature on positive organisational behaviour. However, further investigation is still needed in relation to this issue, particularly in the context of educational organisations. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the contributing and damaging factors relating to the psychological capital of teachers. The researchers followed a qualitative approach and conducted a basic interpretative study to determine the perceptions of 14 teachers, who were selected for participation using a maximum variation approach. Deductive content analysis was then carried out to analyse the raw data. According to the findings, a supportive organisational climate, collaboration, communication, convenient physical conditions of the school, parent engagement, professional characteristics and positive experiences emerged as contributors to teachers' psychological capital. On the other hand, a strict bureaucratic focus and ongoing interference by school principals; inadequate physical conditions of the school; negative attitudes of parents and colleagues; the poor reputation of the teaching profession; and negative experiences of teachers were identified as damaging to psychological capital.

Introduction

In the years following World War II, the tendency of psychology to focus only on the negative aspects of human life, and to support an attitude of pessimism, was raised as a matter of concern. Scholars have noted that accepting the human being as a pathological and unhealthy entity lacking in psychological balance is not only senseless, but also dangerous (Duckworth, Steen & Seligman, 2005). In this respect, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) speculated that striving to develop positive structures of thinking, as opposed to attempting to eliminate negative thoughts, would be more effective in solving daily and professional problems. Amid these criticisms, a new perspective, positive psychology, came to light as a means of focusing on the positive aspects of human life.

This concept, which has had a significant impact in the field of psychology, has also raised some important questions in relation to organisational theory and practice. In this respect, positive psychology suggests that having strong economic capital – referring to the monetary assets of an organisation (Hodgson, 2014) – is not enough to move an organisation forward. Moreover, the educational level and knowledge possessed by the human resources of a business, which has been termed as human capital (Schultz, 1961), as well as its social capital (i.e., the resources arising from relationships and networking within an organisation) (Bourdieu, 1985), can be easily imitated by a competitor. Thus, these assets are not sufficient to provide a business with a competitive advantage (Luthans & Youssef, 2004).

However, in addition to economic, human and social capital, studies in positive psychology have identified a unique and distinctive type of capital, termed *psychological capital*. Luthans and Yousseff (2004) stressed the importance of this construct, noting that since employees possess psychological features, the success of an organisation involves investment in its psychological capital of its human resources.

Psychological capital: A review

Drawing on its roots in positive psychology, the concept of psychological capital encompasses the idea that individuals who interpret situations and events in a positive manner may be more effective members of their organisations than those who do not (Harms & Luthans, 2012). As such, psychological capital is a critical factor in motivation, effective cognitive processing and achievement, entailing the positive evaluation of a given situation and the drive to succeed (Peterson et al., 2011).

In seeking a definition, psychological capital has been accepted as a higher-order core construct comprising the four facets of hope, self-efficacy, optimism and resilience. As Luthans, Yousseff and Avolio (2007) explained:

> Psychological capital is an individual's positive psychological state of development and is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success (p. 3).

Due to these positive psychological features, psychological capital has been established as a predictor of work performance, as well as of the attitudes and behaviours of employees towards their work (Avey et al., 2011). Thus, it may be seen as having an even greater impact on productivity, organisational development and human resource management than the economic, human and social capital types (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007). Furthermore, psychological capital is generally viewed as a state-like (changeable) construct that can be measured by scientific tools (Harms & Luthans, 2012) and improved by systematic developmental efforts (Luthans, Avey & Patera, 2008; Peterson et al., 2011); and thus, investing in the development of psychological capital of its employees may have substantial benefits for an organisation (Luthans, Yousseff & Avolio, 2007).

As mentioned previously, psychological capital is a higher order core construct comprised of four different, yet related dimensions, including self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience. These positive, theory-based constructs are state-like and developable, and they affect the attitudes, behaviours and performance of employees (Luthans, Avey & Patera, 2008). Synder, Rand and Sigmon (2002) explained that the "hope" aspect includes both "the will" to be successful and "the way" to achieve success. Furthermore, hope also impacts the energy an individual may expend on pursuing an objective, as those with high levels of hope may foresee the obstacles in their way and produce alternative paths to

achieve their goals. Self-efficacy, on the other hand, which arises from one's own inner world (Bandura, 1997), comprises the confidence to succeed (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007) and the ability to use one's will to take action through motivational and cognitive resources (Bandura, 2012). In this sense, to be successful, an employee must have not only the competence needed to do his or her work, but also the assumption that he/she will succeed in that work.

Moreover, while the term "optimism" is frequently interpreted as "looking on the bright side" in daily language usage, Seligman (1998) went further by defining it as the tendency to view positive issues as personal, permanent and pervasive; while negative issues are exterior, temporal and situation-specific. Thereby, an optimistic person accepts the positive aspects of life as autogenous and as establishing self-respect and morale. Optimism also serves as protection from depression, self-recrimination and despair emerging in positive situations (Luthans & Youssef, 2004).

Resilience, on the other hand, refers to the ability to rebound from compelling, uncertain, risky and stressful situations (Masten & Reed, 2002), as well as to thrive and adapt in the face of significant negative or positive change (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007). Therefore, in terms of psychological capital, resilience entails striving not only in negative situations, but also in positive ones, which may also present challenges (Luthans, et al., 2008).

Purpose of the study

While psychological capital is often discussed in the context of business organisations, we believe that it is also highly relevant in education, and it is worth discussing in terms of human resources in schools. In recent years, the work of teachers in both public and private schools has become increasingly complicated (Breslow, 2015), causing high levels of stress, depression, burnout, negative emotions, anger, mental disorders and turnover among teachers (Jalongo & Heider, 2006).

Worldwide, a large number of studies have reported on the high levels of stress among teachers (Chaplain, 2008; Richards, 2012; Zurlo, Pes & Cooper, 2007). They are supported by studies relating to symptoms among teachers of mental disorders (Carlatto & Camara, 2015), depression and anxiety (Borrelli et al., 2014; Ferguson, Frost & Hall, 2012), burnout (Antoniou, Ploumpi & Ntalla, 2013) and turnover (Boe, Cook & Sunderland, 2008). These psychological symptoms have been found to affect classroom and school environments in a negative way (Hanushek, Rivkin & Schiman, 2016; McLean & Connor, 2015; Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2013). For this reason, finding approaches to reduce the intensity of stress and its related symptoms among classroom teachers is a critical issue. In this regard, psychological capital becomes an important concern, as it has been upheld as an effective construct for defending against stress, negative emotions and burnout (Liu et al., 2013). For instance, Shen et al. (2014) found that psychological capital was negatively associated with depressive symptoms among university teachers; while Cheung, Tang and Tang (2011) explored whether psychological capital moderated teachers' emotional labour-

burnout and job satisfaction associations, and found that psychological capital was negatively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. Furthermore, Ganotice et al. (2015) reported that the psychological capital of teachers was linked to adaptive outcomes such as well-being and job performance; and a number of additional studies emphasised the negative relationship of psychological capital to undesirable psychological symptoms in teachers (Fu, 2015; Hansen, Buitendach & Kanengoni, 2015; Mazzetti et al., 2016), as well as a positive relationship to favourable work attitudes and behaviours (Coleman, 2016; Wang, Chen & Hsu, 2014; Yalçın, 2016) and a positive mental state (Williams, Kern & Waters, 2015).

Accordingly, we premised this study on the belief that psychological capital may enhance positive attitudes and behaviours in teachers, while also decreasing the intensity of stress in the workplace and its psychological symptoms. We contend that developing the psychological capital of teachers will support them in meeting the demands of teaching. Therefore, this study was carried out with the aim of gaining greater insight into the factors that contribute to the psychological capital of teachers, as well as revealing the factors related to the school environment that have the potential to damage it. In doing so, we hope to offer suggestions as to how teachers can develop greater self-efficacy, resilience, hope and optimism.

Method

While much of the literature on the contributing and damaging factors relating to psychological capital has been drawn from quantitative research (e.g., Avey, 2014; Newman et al., 2014), a qualitative study is likely to give a deeper understanding of the subject (Neuman, 2006; Patton, 2002), with more detailed information about the antecedents of psychological capital. Therefore, building on the works of Avey (2014) and Newman et al. (2014), we analysed data from semi-structured interviews within the framework of basic interpretative research. This investigative approach seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon or process, along with the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved (Merriam, 2002).

Participants and study context

The study group consisted of fourteen participants who were working as teachers in the city of Gaziantep, Turkey. Positioned in the south-eastern region of the country, Gaziantep is an industrial and cosmopolitan city with 1,556 million citizens, most of whom have migrated from the eastern parts of the country. In addition, the city hosts approximately 355,000 officially recorded refugees from Syria. According to the 2015 income statistics issued by the Turkish Statistics Institute (TSI), the income distribution difference between the first quintile and last quintile in Gaziantep is quite high, therefore, there is a significant gap between the students coming from the lower and the higher socio-economic groups. With regard to educational scores, the city is below the national average, and solutions have not yet been found for its educational problems, with respect to either citizens or refugees. Furthermore, the student-classroom and student-teacher ratios are considerably high, at 41 and 26 percent respectively (MoNE, 2016). Gaziantep

was chosen as a focus for this study because, it is well known that classroom teachers are confronted with many problems and often left to solve them through their own means.

In forming the study group, a maximum variation method was applied. The aim of this participant selection method is to reflect the variation of individuals to as great a degree as possible (Patton, 2002). By this means, the researchers aimed to include participants of varying genders, ages, fields and seniorities, as well as from schools at varying socio-economic levels. Detailed information about the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic features of participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Teaching experience (yrs)	Subject field	Socio-economics of school
I1	Male	29	8	Turkish language	Middle
I2	Male	42	18	Primary	Low
I3	Female	45	21	Primary	High
I4	Male	47	22	Social sciences	High
I5	Female	24	2	Primary	Low
I6	Female	27	5	School counsellor	Middle
I7	Male	29	8	Science and tech.	Middle
I8	Male	26	4	Primary	Low
I9	Female	28	6	Mathematics	High
I10	Male	44	23	Primary	Middle
I11	Female	35	14	Primary	Low
I12	Female	32	10	Mathematics	Low
I13	Male	25	2	Physical ed.	Low
I14	Female	40	16	English	Middle

Data collection and instruments

In a basic interpretative study, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002). Therefore, we feel obliged to explain our position in the study to provide reflexivity. Reflexivity is an indispensable element that occurs in relationships with participants involved in social science research. It includes explaining the use of shared language and similar experiences with participants, and the presentation of any shared background with them in the context of the culture or sub-culture being searched (Sullivan, 2002). Both authors have teaching experience in various schools, therefore, they have a shared language about teaching in the Turkish education system and similar experiences with participants. We have shared educational backgrounds with the participants having a bachelor's degree and teaching certificate from one of the education faculties in Turkey. We recognise our position within the studied context and situate ourselves within our research background with respect to psychological capital, positive psychology and stress of teachers. We take a naturalistic approach in our research in order ask questions about life as it is and to objectively present reality.

To collect the data, we prepared a semi-structured interview protocol that included twelve open-ended questions and their follow-ups concerning teachers' opinions with respect to

psychological capital (Appendix A). The interview protocol was developed in accordance with the literature about the antecedents of psychological capital; and expert opinions were obtained. In this process, the researchers particularly considered the research of Avey (2014) and Newman et al. (2014), whose work likewise focused on the antecedents of psychological capital. According to these scholars, the main factors affecting the psychological capital of employees comprise leadership behaviours, the working environment, job characteristics, experiences and personal characteristics. Therefore, we formulated our interview questions around these factors as a means to explore in a detailed way their impact on psychological capital in teachers. After finalising the open-ended questions, a pilot study was performed with two teachers to ensure that the questions could be clearly understood and the questions were then edited accordingly. After that, we conducted interviews with fourteen additional participants at different times. The interviews were conducted in Turkish and translations of quotations were made by the authors. Each interview lasted from 28 to 42 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Analysing the raw data

We analysed the raw data through deductive content analysis, which involves theoretical-based definitions of the aspects of the analysis, classified under main categories and sub-categories (Krippendorf, 2013). We defined our theoretical-based themes as leadership behaviours, working environment, characteristics of the job, experiences of employees and personal characteristics. We then identified data related to these themes from the transcripts and formulated our categories and conceptual codes accordingly. In the process of coding the data, the responses for each question were scrutinised, along with the notes we took during the interviews. Then, we followed the processes of open coding, axial coding and selective coding, respectively.

Findings

The findings are reported according to six themes classified as contributing to psychological capital, and five classified as damaging. Each theme has been presented under the related categories; sub-categories are also reported wherever possible. In relation to both the damaging and the contributing factors, the themes that emerged included the attitudes and behaviours of principals, the workplace settings of teachers, the nature of the teaching profession, teaching experiences, and personal traits of teachers. An additional theme considered among the contributing factors was categorised as personal and professional development activities of teachers.

Attitudes and behaviours of principals

The findings of the study indicate that supportive principals were a key factor in the psychological capital of teachers. In this respect, teachers expected that principals would support them by providing resources and materials, giving them psychological and moral support, and guiding them professionally. For instance, one teacher (I14) commented that *"The principal should provide teachers who are struggling with psychological and material support."*

Besides, positive traits of principals such as patience; friendliness; understanding; flexibility; respect; trust; positive feedback; ensuring cooperation with families and the environment; providing intramural coordination; and transformational leadership qualities were indicated as having a positive impact on teachers' psychological capital.

On the other hand, principals taking a bureaucratic approach or frequently criticising teachers in a negative manner were seen as damaging to psychological capital. In this respect, one of the interviewees focused on the burdens of bureaucracy, noting that "*If I am dealing with challenges, I don't need drudgery. Continual paperwork is putting me in a bind*" (I10). Another teacher complained about criticism from the principal: "*He said to me once that 'Other teachers can teach effectively, but you cannot!' I feel like I am being accused, and that causes me to lose my motivation*" (I7). Additional damaging factors included disregard for teachers, failure to acknowledge their good work, poor communication, frequent interfering in teachers' work, authoritarian behaviour and spreading fear in school, approaching teachers unfairly and demanding perfection (see Table 2).

Table 2: Attitudes and behaviours of principals

Theme	Category (contributing)	Sub-category (contributing)	f	Category (damaging)	f
Attitudes and beha-viours of principals	Supporting	• Source and material support	13	• Bureaucratic approach	8
		• Psychological and moral support	6	• Negative criticism	7
		• Vocational guidance	2	• Disregarding	5
	Positive traits	• Patience	5	• Lack of communication	5
		• Friendliness	4	• Perpetual interference	4
		• Understanding	3	• Authoritarianism	3
		• Flexibility	3	• Unfair behaviours	2
		• Respect	2	• Perfectionism	2
		• Trust	1		
	Positive feedback	–	12		
	Cooperation	• Ensuring relationships with family	4		
		• Ensuring relation-ships with environment	3		
		• Ensuring intramural coordination in school	3		
	Transformational leadership	• Communicating	4		
		• Delegating	3		
		• Having a vision	2		

Workplace settings in schools

Colleague and the workplace setting were found to be critical factor in teachers' psychological capital. Environments that featured interdependence, good communication,

goal congruence, teamwork, shared experiences and well-qualified colleagues had a positive impact on the development of psychological capital. Here, one of the interesting findings concerning colleagues in the workplace related to rivalry. On the one hand, participant I1 expressed the belief that rivalry makes colleagues better, commenting that "*Rivalry will make both my colleagues and me more qualified, willing and determined, so that I can feel more effective and resilient.*" Negative organisational behaviours like gossiping, self-seeking, tension, unfair comments and complaining were expressed as the most significant damaging factors. Another teacher explained that the "*Teachers' lounge is a place that is independent from students or administrators. Gossiping or backbiting there has an adverse effect on my performance and psychological state*" (I4). Referring to complaints, another teacher mentioned that "*When you step into the teachers' lounge, you hear everyone complaining about something one way or another. There may be some poor aspects [of the job], but complaining will not help*" (I10).

Other damaging factors relating to colleagues included indifference to the problems of the school (coded as nonchalance), isolation of a teacher, a lack of communication between teachers, too much conversation about politics, and female teachers. The finding about the female teachers was especially noteworthy. As one teacher remarked, "*There are ten teachers in our school, and all of them are females. Ten different females and ten different feelings. Naturally, there are some negative effects on both students and on one another*" (I12). On the other hand, a teacher working in a low-level socio-economic environment asserted that, "*We would believe ourselves to be more successful if we had a workplace with well-developed computer labs and playgrounds in which we could perform cultural and social activities*" (I10). Yet problems relating to access to equipment, overcrowded classrooms, and in some cases, even heating problems, were considered as detrimental to psychological capital. Another of the teachers, I2, drew addition to this issue, stating that, "*For example, there are limited and small playgrounds for students to decompress. This is reflected in the classroom and forces us to deal with intimidation.*" The findings also demonstrated that, while concerned and involved parents who participated in school activities and helped teachers to solve problems had a positive impact on psychological capital, lack of interest, negative reactions and overindulgence of parents may be damaging (see Table 3).

Nature of the teaching profession

Most of the interviewees believed that teaching is a profession that touches on students' lives. In this regard, a large proportion of the participants commented that when they thought about teaching as serving humanity and making a difference in students' lives, they became more willing to put in extra effort, as well as feeling more resilient and hopeful. One interviewee, for instance, reported that "*Believing that I can change something in people's lives makes me think that life is full of good things, and I can be successful no matter what the challenge*" (I3). Moreover, when teachers observed positive outcomes of their teaching, they believe more strongly in their job. In this sense, the belief that teaching is a sacred undertaking and that teachers are responsible to society affected the teachers' psychological capital in a positive way.

Table 3: Workplace settings

Theme	Category (contributing)	Sub-category (contributing)	f	Category (damaging)	Sub-category (damaging)	f
Work-place sett-ings	Colleagues	• Interdependence	11	Colleagues	• Negative organisational behaviours	7
		• Communication	8		• Nonchalance	6
		• Goal congruence	5		• Isolation	5
		• Teamwork	3		• Schism	4
		• Sharing experience	2		• Lack of communication	3
		• Qualified colleagues	1		• Talking about politics	3
		• Rivalry	1		• Female teachers	1
	Physical condition	• Sufficient resources and equipment	5	Parents	• Unconcerned parents	7
		• Convenient school building	3		• Negative reactions	4
					• Over-indulgent parents	1
					• Lack of communication	1
		• Clean and hygienic school	3	Physical condition	• Lack of equipment	7
					• Crowded classrooms	3
					• Heating problems	2
	Parents	• Concerned parent	7	Environ-mental factors	• Low socio-economic status	5
		• Caring parents	3			
	Environ-mental factors	• High economic income	5			

Low pay, heavy workloads and the appointment process, on the other hand, were seen as the most damaging aspects for psychological capital. One teacher focused on income levels, stating that, *"Teachers' low income in Turkey makes me anxious about the future. The cost of living is increasing"* (I5). Another teacher remarked about a different issue -- the centralised appointment policies for teachers -- noting that *"We cannot be appointed to any place we want. In this respect, sometimes I wish I had not chosen this job. It makes me anxious about the future"* (I2). A related issue concerned the poor reputation of the teaching profession, as teachers often felt that their work was not accepted as valuable. Additionally, always doing the same things caused a sense of monotony, as well as a high risk of exhaustion and dissatisfaction; thus, these constituted further damaging factors for teachers' psychological capital (see Table 4)

Teaching experiences

With respect to teaching itself, positive experiences were highly valued in terms of psychological capital. For instance, when teachers helped their students to succeed, overcome problems, and learn from their own experience, their psychological capital increased. For example, I8 commented, *"When I see my students climb the corporate ladder, I feel pleasure, and that helps me to bounce back."*

Table 4: Nature of teaching profession

Theme	Category (contributing)	f	Category (damaging)	f
Nature of teaching profession	• Serving humanity	9	• Economic problems	6
	• Outcomes of education	8	• Work load	6
	• Holiness of profession	6	• Appointment politics	6
	• Responsibility to society	4	• Becoming disreputable in profession	5
			• Monotony	3
			• Exhaustion	3
			• Dissatisfaction	2

An unexpected finding relating to teaching experiences was that working under harsh conditions could be a contributing factor to psychological capital. A teacher who was assigned to a low-level socio-economic school explained that, "*The experiences I have gained while working in harsh conditions, where there are insufficient resources and difficult situations, put me to the test, which made me more capable and enhanced my strength to stand*" (I11). On the contrary, some of the teachers mentioned that difficulties with students and parents, disagreements with administrators in some aspects of school life, and working in obligatory service regions did not support them in developing psychological capital. For example, a teacher working in an obligatory service region explained that, "*One of my students threw a razor blade at another student. I was frightened, and I wanted to walk out and leave the job*" (I11). (see Table 5)

Table 5: Teaching experiences

Theme	Category (contributing)	Sub-category (contributing)	f	Category (damaging)	Sub-category (damaging)	f
Teaching experiences	Positive experiences	• Making students successful	8	Negative experiences	• Troubles with students	7
		• Overcoming the problems	3		• Troubles with parents	6
		• Learning by experiences	3		• Disagreements with administrators	5
	Connection with alumni		4		• Working in obligatory service regions	3
	Working under harsh conditions		1			

Personal traits

Although psychological capital is a state-like (changeable) construct, there are some personal traits that can affect it. For example, the teachers reported patience, helpfulness, conscientiousness, good communication skills, high tolerance, mercy, determination, covetousness, and inventiveness as contributor traits. Among these, the most important personal trait was found to be patience. One teacher remarked that, "*If you don't have patience and tolerance and accept people as they are, you cannot maintain this job in the long term*" (I6). With respect to damaging traits, excessive sensitivity was seen as the most important, and

the teachers accepted that being oversensitive decreased their level of psychological capital; as I6 admitted, "*Being sensitive sometimes causes one to go beyond the professional arena; this burns me out.*" Other personal traits, such as getting tired quickly, responding immediately and rashly to certain situations and events, being afraid of taking risks, being egotistical, and being too ambitious, were also seen as damaging to psychological capital (see Table 6).

Table 6: Personal traits

Theme	Category (contributing)	f	Category (damaging)	f
Personal traits	• Patience	8	• Sensuality	6
	• Helpfulness	6	• Getting tired quickly	2
	• Conscientiousness	5	• Immediate response to events	2
	• Communication skills	5	• Being not able to take risks	1
	• Tolerance	4	• Ego	1
	• Mercy	3	• Ambition	1
	• Determination	2		
	• Covetousness	1		
	• Inventiveness	1		

Personal and professional development activities as contributors

Among the other findings, the teachers also attached importance to professional development seminars with respect to their psychological capital. Additionally, they mentioned personal developmental activities such as reading books, attending artistic and sports events, carrying out research for their professional effectiveness and studying for a master's degree as contributing factors. One interviewee (I1) emphasised this by reporting that "*Reading different books, going to the cinema or theatre, attending conferences and seminars and doing sports with friends make me feel more competent*" (see Table 7).

Table 7: Personal and professional development activities as a contributor to psychological capital

Theme	Category (contributing)	f
Personal and professional development activities	• Professional development seminars	7
	• Reading books	6
	• Artistic activities	5
	• Research for professional efficiency	4
	• Sport activities	4
	• Postgraduate education	2

Discussion

In this study, the researchers explored the contributing and damaging factors with respect to teachers' psychological capital. Avey (2014) and Newman, et al. (2014 had categorised the antecedents of psychological capital as leadership behaviour, supportive organisational environments, negative work life and experiences, ethnic identity and gender, perceived

external prestige, leadership style, job characteristics and individual differences. In light of these studies, the researchers in the present case executed a qualitative study aimed at understanding in a detailed way the factors that contribute to teachers' psychological capital.

Concerning school management or leadership, support from the principal was accepted by the participants as a paramount factor. Similarly, Süral-Özer et al. (2013) found that a supportive organisational climate affects psychological capital and job satisfaction in a positive way; and as leaders are a main component of the organisational climate, it is important that they maintain a supportive attitude. This issue has also been cited by Luthans, et al. (2008), who noted that support is closely associated with employees' positive thoughts about the organisation and with their job performance. On the other hand, a bureaucratic approach by school leaders was viewed by the participants as a damaging factor, as school principals who focus acutely on paperwork, rules and hierarchy ignore the psychological and spiritual individuality of teachers, causing a decrease in psychological capital. Likewise, bureaucratic behaviours such as spotlighting formal processes, engaging only with regulations, and being normative and authoritative affects teachers' self-efficacy adversely. This supports the contention of Karaman, Yücel and Dönder (2008) that the atmosphere in schools with a high focus on bureaucracy was deficient and endangered the psychological condition of teachers.

The findings also demonstrate that positive approaches by school leaders contributed to the teachers' psychological capital, in accord with Cameron (2013), who noted that positive school leaders are vital for both individuals and organisations in reaching their maximum potential, conserving energy, and attaining goals that had been accepted as impossible at the first glance. Likewise, Tombaugh (2005) asserted that leaders with a positive approach accept problems as challenges, orient themselves toward success, and show appreciation for effective work in challenging settings. Therefore, approaching teachers in a positive manner can be helpful for increasing the level of psychological capital. Positive feedback from administrators is also effective in enhancing teachers' psychological capital, particularly the aspect of self-efficacy. However, negative and unfair criticism from leaders and an expectation of perfection were noted in this case as having the opposite effect. This finding reflects the assertion by Özgan, Bozbayındır and Yalçın (2011) that perfectionist school managers cause teachers to feel anxiety and stress, as well as precipitating communication problems, which can also damage teacher's psychological capital.

Another contributing factor to the teachers' psychological capital in the current study involved cooperation, both with administrators and among colleagues. The teachers reported that solidarity between colleagues and administrators helped them to overcome obstacles and to gain self-confidence through the power of teamwork. In this sense, Nigah, Davis and Hurrell (2012) emphasised that socialisation in an organisation and support for newcomers provides an increase in psychological capital, as well as in performance. Additionally, Kurz and Knight (2004) indicated that teachers' individual efficacy is correlated to collective efficacy among colleagues, which requires collaboration, while on the contrary, schism or isolation instead of solidarity damages teachers'

psychological capital. For example, different groups emerging as a consequence of intramural conflict may result in a lack of communication and decreased cooperation. As Yeşilyurt (2009) explained, schism in schools affects teachers adversely and decreases the possibility of success. Likewise, solitary teachers struggling to survive in challenging settings on their own experience low resilience over time. Individuals require the help of colleagues to overcome difficulties in professional life (Werner, 1995), and thus, being alone in the workplace has a negative impact on psychological capital, especially on resilience.

With respect to school principals, the transformational leadership components of communication, vision and delegating were expressed as having a positive impact on psychological capital, as with Jha's (2014) assertion that transformational leaders create a vision by prioritising followers' capacity, competence and individuality. While creating such a vision, leaders apply powerful communication skills, which shapes the thoughts of followers; furthermore, delegating responsibilities increases trust (Yang, 2014). These behaviours have also been emphasised by McMurray, Pirola-Merlo and Santos (2010), who documented a positive relationship between transformational leadership and psychological capital.

In the context of the workplace, the teachers in this study gave importance to colleagues and their attitudes and behaviours; the most critical among these, as already noted, was reported as cooperation and solidarity in school. However, other workplace aspects such as the physical condition of the school and the attitudes of parents were also expressed as influential factors in psychological capital development. These findings reflect those of Çelik and Kök (2007), who pointed to the status of physical variables in schools, their existence or absence, and how they are used as affecting both students' and teachers' progress.

A further finding relating to the workplace suggests that involvement of parents in school processes and their sensitivity to problems related to the classroom and the school have a positive impact on teachers' beliefs in success, their thoughts about the future and their capacity to overcome challenges. However, insufficient physical conditions, inadequate equipment, crowded classrooms and heating problems were reported as having an adverse effect, which is supported by Afework and Asfaw's (2014) and Earthman and Lemasters's (2009) studies.

Aside from these issues, uninvolved parents who have no opinions about the educational process were seen as reducing the motivational levels of both students and teachers. This finding reflects that of Arslanargun (2007), who noted that when teachers observe that parents do not care about school, they may become indifferent to their responsibilities, as well; or they may feel that they have been left to deal with every problem with their own, which leads to burnout and damages psychological capital.

Another damaging factor involved negative organisational behaviours such as gossiping, unfair criticism, complaining and conflict. Such behaviours in the school environment were seen by the participants as impairing teachers' ability to focus on their objectives and

limiting their success. This finding echoes the work of Arabacı, Sünkür and Şimşek (2012), who indicated that teachers exposed to gossip experienced sadness, anger, alienation from the organisation and psychological erosion. These experiences are stress-induced and liable to reveal psychological exhaustion, which are indicated as detrimental for psychological capital (Avey, Luthans & Jensen, 2009).

A further factor expressed as affecting psychological capital was the characteristics of the job (Avey, 2014). In this sense, teaching is a profession that touches human lives, directs new generations and builds toward the future (Karataş, 2013). According to the findings of this study, these positive realisations motivated teachers to be more effective, instilled hope, provided resilience and encouraged them about the future, as the motivation of feeling responsible to society made them more determined to reach their objectives. On the other hand, some of the characteristics of the teaching profession were also viewed by the participants as damaging to psychological capital, including economic assurance, excessive workloads and the reputation of the profession. In this sense, the teachers stated that it was difficult to live on a limited income, which left them unable to focus on their jobs. Tösten (205) emphasised this concern, stating that teachers who accept their income level as normal have greater psychological capital than those who are dissatisfied by their salary. Considering that professional development activities are crucial for teachers' efficacy and performance in challenging work settings, it can be concluded that economic circumstances are an important determinant for psychological capital. Furthermore, as with economic problems, an excessive workload hinders teachers from focusing on their real work and creates stress, an issue also reported by Jensen (2008) as damaging to psychological capital. Additionally, the poor reputation of the teaching profession was noted as adversely affecting the participants' psychological capital, which reflects Mathe and Scott-Hansel's (2012) contention that employees' opinions of how their job is perceived by external society has an impact on their psychological well-being.

A further issue that affected the perception of psychological capital in this case related to life and work experiences; and in this sense, positive experiences of teachers with respect to their students were most crucial. According to the findings, teachers who had helped their students to save themselves from difficult situations or who had survived challenging circumstance and learned from them had a higher level of psychological capital. Likewise, Newman et al. (2014) reported that positive life experiences contribute to psychological capital, while negative experiences led to self-doubt and a decrease in positive perspective. In a similar manner, Bandura (1997) noted that self-efficacy was affected by the perception of one's work as successful or unsuccessful.

A final issue contributing to teachers' psychological capital relates to teachers' professional and personal development. As reported by the teachers in this case, professional development activities such as seminars had a positive impact on their self-efficacy and resilience. Furthermore, reading different kinds of books helped them to develop their psychological capital, as with Kaya, Balay & Demirci's (2014) finding that teachers reading 3 to 5 books monthly have a higher level of psychological capital than those who read only 1 to 2 books. Although postgraduate education was revealed as having less importance with respect to psychological capital in this case, Keser (2013) found in his

research that school principals with a higher level of psychological capital have postgraduate degrees.

Conclusion

Psychological capital is affected by many factors; and as such, the researchers suggest that these should be considered in the preparation of professional development programs intending to increase work performance of teachers and their positive attitudes to teaching. However, there is a need for more research to understand the steps we can take to develop psychological capital. Therefore, quantitative analysis for each of the categories or sub-categories that emerged in our qualitative analysis should be tested to determine whether there is significant relationship between these factors and the psychological capital of classroom teachers.

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Appendix A: Interview questions

Follow-up questions are italicised. Translated from Turkish.

1. How do you want your school administrators to behave in your pursuit of a challenging goal?
   Suppose that you meet with an obstacle in your professional life. Which attitudes of your school principal will lead you to reach your goal without fail, using different methods?
2. How can a school principal affect your belief that you are professionally competent or that you can succeed in the future?
   Which of your school principal's reactions can change your views on how successful you will be? / Which of your school principal's responses lead you to question your professional competence?
3. Do you think your working environment affects your success? How would you like your work environment to be for coping with school problems and succeeding?
   What are your expectations from your co-workers? / Does the school's physical condition affect you? / What effect can parents and other stakeholders have in this sense? / Can the socio-economic environment of your school affect you?
4. Suppose that you are in a challenging situation. How should your work environment be to recover quickly and continue working for your goal?
   How can approaches of your co-workers/parents/socio-economic environment of the school affect you?
5. What might be the factors in your working environment that affect your belief in yourself in your professional life, either positively or negatively?
6. What might be the characteristics of the teaching profession that push you to continue in your way or produce alternative ways when you encounter difficult situations?
   What characteristics of your profession convinces you to continue in your professional life? / Which characteristics of your profession may cause you to quit the struggle?
7. Are there any factors in your profession that cause you to feed your positive thoughts for the future?
   How does your profession's place in society affect you? / How does your profession's economic or personal rights affect you? / How can your profession shape your thoughts about the future at all?

8. Which of your personal and professional backgrounds can make you feel more proficient in your profession?
   Do you have any hobbies? / Are you studying for a graduate degree? / If yes, how can they make you feel more proficient in your profession? / What kind of training would be beneficial to feel more proficient in your profession?
9. What experiences in your profession you have until now have positively or negatively affected your view of the profession? Would you give examples about your experiences with parents, other teachers and students?
10. Do you have any experience ensuring you to continue working even if there is a challenging situation?
11. Do you feel competent in your profession? Why?
12. What do you think about your stronger or weaker characteristics in school or teaching? How do these characteristics affect your attitudes towards your profession?

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