

PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, STRESS COPING BEHAVIORS AND MEDIATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL: SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION CENTERS

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Abstract

High level stress in work place is known to be associated with negative organizational behaviors and bad organizational performance. There are individual and organizational factors influencing stress coping behavior of employees. In this study we explore the impact of employees' perceptions of organizational support on their stress coping capabilities (problem-focused stress coping and emotion-focused stress coping) and whether their psychological capital (PsyCap) plays a mediating role in this relationship using the sample of employees in special education and rehabilitation centers in Turkey. Multivariate statistical analyses show a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and problem-focused stress coping (PFSC), and no significant relationship between POS and emotion-focused stress coping (EFSC). A significant positive association is detected between POS and PsyCap. Accordingly, our findings show that PsyCap plays a partial mediating role in the association between POS and PFSC.

Keywords: stress coping; perceived organizational support; psychological capital; special education and rehabilitation centers; Turkey.

JEL classification: D22; M12; L2.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations can gain significant competitive advantages by implementing different approaches to empower their labor force (Tosi *et al.*, 1990, p. 28). In this process, one of the most important paradigm shifts regarding human factor is the recognition of it as a crucial and strategic resource, which can be developed, instead of regarding it as an ordinary production factor, which can be easily controlled and replaced at any time (Cascio, 1992, pp. 12-13). Managers of contemporary organizations are advised to develop strategies for

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not only realizing the organizational goals but also meeting the economic, social and physiological needs of employees (Robbins and Judge, 2013, p. 13).

Rapid changes in daily living conditions and uncertainties, technological advances and various trends such as globalization and increasing competition lead to stress, which manifest itself the intense and distinguishable feelings of anxiety, nervousness, timidity, restlessness and panic (F. Luthans, 1992, p. 401). Stress as a factor, which has to be managed for the sake of organizational performance has many determinants that influence its prevention, reduction and control. Some of these are personality traits, environmental support, personal psychological state, professional development status, role perceptions, types of conflict management styles and supportive organizational structure (Robbins, 2001, p. 565; Pindek and Spector, 2016).

Organizational support is not only considered as one of the important factors, which bears a close relationship with organizational performance but also as an important determinant in reducing and managing employee stress. Organizational support is described as organization's recognition and appreciation of employees, dealing with their well-being and welfare, and making them aware of this supportive approach. In so doing, perceived organizational support (POS) causes employees to develop positive attitudes towards the organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). Having a mutual trust-based relationship with the organization fulfilling social needs, such as a sense of being cared for and appreciated, provides the support which allows the individual to feel more secure in the workplace. Several studies demonstrate that perceived social and organizational support has a positive impact in decreasing and/or controlling the level of stress perceived by employees (Ganster *et al.*, 1986; Viswesvaran *et al.*, 1999; Stamper and Johlke, 2003).

Personal characteristics along with situational factors have a substantial influence on the processes of stress. The mental or psychological states of employees are considered as key factors in determining personal stress coping behavior. Employees who feel themselves psychologically strong and resilient are expected to be more successful in coping with stress than the ones who feel weak. A relatively new term, psychological capital (PsyCap), which has been attracting the attention of researchers recently (F. Luthans *et al.*, 2007) may play an important role in this process. This concept is inspired by the positive organizational behavior approach that aims to mobilize human resource strengths and focus on measuring, managing and empowering psychological capacities in order to enhance business performance (F. Luthans and Youssef, 2004, p. 152). In some studies, PsyCap is identified as an important factor in preventing and reducing employees' stress levels (F. Luthans *et al.*, 2010).

The importance of positivity and focusing on developing employee strengths, rather than dwelling on the negative and trying to fix employee vulnerabilities and weaknesses, is mostly recognized by contemporary organizations as way to steering and empowering employees in highly competitive and volatile work environment. PsyCap is defined as a person's positive psychological state linked to work. Because of its association with the organizational factors PsyCap is believed to be sensitive to POS (Yamg *et al.*, 2013; L. Liu *et al.*, 2013). We think that POS causes increase in PsyCap and the change in PsyCap influences an employee's way of coping with stress.

The main purpose of the study is to determine whether POS has an effect on employee's way of coping with stress. It also aims to examine whether PsyCap plays a mediating role in the association between POS and employee's way of coping with stress.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Stress and coping with stress

Today stress is one of the major threats to individual and community (Di Martino and Musri, 2001). Stress impairs the physical and mental state of individuals. It has also become one of the biggest preoccupations of private and public organizations in recent times (Dumont and Plancherel, 2001).

In today's highly competitive business environment, stress not only damages the health of employees but also reduces the economic performance of the company. Widespread stress in the business environment causes absenteeism (Ejere, 2010; Hauge *et al.*, 2010), retention problems (DeTienne *et al.*, 2012; Ulrich *et al.*, 2007), poor job performance (Wu, 2011; Hunter and Thatcher, 2007) and inefficient use of resources.

Scanning studies focusing on the source of the stress in the business environment; Robbins and Judge (2007, p. 667) discuss that the causes of work stress are derived from environmental, organizational and personal factors. This process, with the effect of individual differences, causes employees' responses namely physiological (increase of blood pressure, heart diseases), psychological (anxiety, depression and job dissatisfaction), and behavioral (absenteeism, reduction in production, turnover). Cooper and Dewe (2004, p. 97) report that working conditions and job requirements, the level of job control, organizational support, personal relationships, role ambiguity and organizational change are the potential factors related to stress at modern workplace. Besides the efforts in the literature urging to define the sources of stress, various strategies used to manage and reduce stress level at workplace are also explored.

Strategies used to cope with stress at work are often considered in two dimensions as individual and organizational (e.g. Steers, 1981; Callan, 1993). Problem-focused and emotion-focused stress coping behaviors (Lazarus and Folkman, 1986), mental and physical relaxation exercises, and healthy eating (Baltas and Baltas, 2012, p. 206), counseling and psychotherapy, time management (Tosi *et al.*, 1990, p. 367) and providing social support (F. Luthans, 1992, p. 416) can be given as examples for individual strategies. On the other hand, regulation of physical working conditions (Makhbul *et al.*, 2011), participatory management approach and supportive organizational climate (Chen and Lim, 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2009), training seminars (Lindquist and Cooper, 1999), prevention of role uncertainties and role conflicts (Tosi *et al.*, 1990, pp. 368-369; Robbins, 2001, p. 572) and the improvements in human resources management (Weinberg *et al.*, 2010, p. 233) are examples for organizational strategies used to cope with stress.

Problem-focused stress coping (PFSC) and emotion-focused stress coping (EFSC) strategies developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1986) are of importance for individual preferences on stress coping. PFSC is the problem-focused approach, which comprises the solution-oriented behaviors actively dealing with a situation that causes stress. PFSC behaviors are related to individually-adapted cognitive behaviors in order to address the sources of stress through self-behavior modification or altering environment associated with the problem, and comprise some practices such as planful problem-solving, positive reappraisal, confrontive coping, and instrumental support seeking (Folkman *et al.*, 1979; Munz *et al.*, 2001).

EFSC approach which is used to reduce the negative tension created by stress. Intellectual efforts such as emotional control and changing thoughts methods used in the

emotion-focused approach, also referred to as the passive approach (Lazarus, 1993). EFSC allude to the behavioral orientation toward administering and/or altering an individual's emotions caused by stress, instead of the source of stress (Folkman *et al.*, 1979). Social support-seeking, escape-avoidance, emotional discharge, self-control, accepting responsibility, etc. can be listed as examples (Folkman and Lazarus, 1988; Munz *et al.*, 2001).

2.2 Perceived organizational support

There are some mutual obligations between employees and the organization, which exist but are not specifically expressed. The employees tend to start a mutual interaction and exchange process from the moment the organization begins to appreciate and acknowledge their individual goals and performance (Blau, 1964).

POS has been defined as employees' awareness of being valued by the organization and of its concern for their welfare (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1997). In other words, it means employee's feeling of confidence that the organization will perform actions that will result in positive outcomes and will support them in times of difficulty. It also helps to ensure effective performance in stressful circumstances (George *et al.*, 1993).

Organizational support is based on reciprocity. Firstly, the employee feels that the organization is concerned with his welfare and well-being, then compelled to reciprocate and finally contributes to improvements in organizational performance (Levinson, 1965). As long as an individual enjoys benefits offered by the organization, e.g. training and career opportunities, and is respected and consulted because of his/her experience and knowledge, he or she feels obliged to contribute to the success of the organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001). This sense of obligation motivates an individual to contribute more, and finally, his/her commitment to the organization increases and leads to higher level of organizational performance (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003).

In the literature, there is much research into identifying the factors affecting organizational support perception. According to Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), the factors forming the organizational support perception are procedural justice, working conditions, supervisor support and the opportunities offered employees by the organization.

The organization's and manager's interest in the welfare of employees leads to many positive organizational behavior in the business environment. Several research papers focusing on the effect of POS on employees' behaviors report that it increases organizational commitment and reduces intention to leave (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1990). In their meta-analysis Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) report that POS increases job satisfaction and job performance, creates happy and cheerful employees and increases employees' inclination to remain in the job. It is claimed in some studies that POS reduces work stress (Foley *et al.*, 2005; Leung *et al.*, 2008; Richardson *et al.*, 2008; Sawang, 2010).

2.3 Psychological capital

The human factor has become more of an issue for gaining and sustaining competitive advantage in today's business world. Organizational PsyCap, which has become a subject of social science research in recent years, brings a different perspective to the organizational behavior domain (F. Luthans and Youssef, 2004). Organizations' challenge to motivate and steer employees in today's competitive work environment makes them recognize the value of positivity and focus on developing their employee strengths, rather than dealing with the

negative and striving to fix employee vulnerabilities and weaknesses. This understanding suggests a more positive approach regarding occupational stress instead of negative perspective (Avey *et al.*, 2009).

Before examining the concept of PsyCap, it is useful to consider the role of “positive psychology” in the development of this phenomenon. Seligman (1998) has stressed the importance of things that make people happy and that of positive thinking rather than the individual defects and problems. He has also come up with the concept of “positive psychology” which is thought to have benefits in many issues for developing positive behaviors. According to F. Luthans and Youssef (2004), it is necessary in the positive psychological approach to focus on “what is right?” and “how to develop?” rather than “what is wrong with the people?”

Positive organizational behavior has been defined as “the study and applications of positively oriented human resources strengths and psychological capacity that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today’s workplace” (F. Luthans, 2002, p. 59). In order to increase personal and organizational performance, situational characteristics, which are changeable and open to development should be focused on rather than personal traits that are fixed or difficult to change (Avey *et al.*, 2010).

There is a need to explain the situational characteristics mentioned above. There have been debates on state versus trait distinction in psychology over the years. Although states and traits are recognized as independent constructs, it is also claimed that they fall along a continuum from the trait end, which is not conducive to be easily developed, to the state end, which is much more developable. A summary definition for this concept is presented as follows (F. Luthans *et al.*, 2010):

“1. At one extreme would be relatively pure states, which are momentary and very changeable, representing feelings (e.g., pleasure, moods, and happiness).

2. Next would come state-like constructs, which are more malleable and open to development, representing the positive psychological resources found in PsyCap (e.g., efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism).

3. Then moving along the continuum would be trait-like constructs, which are more fixed and difficult to change, representing personalities and strengths (e.g., Big Five personality dimensions, core self-evaluations, and character strengths and virtues).

4. Then would be the other extreme of relatively pure traits, which are very fixed and very difficult to change (e.g., intelligence, talents, and heritable characteristics).”

At this point, F. Luthans and Youssef (2004) have specified that state-like (as opposed dispositional, fixed, and trait-like) variables can be improved in employees through organizational measures and managerial skills. Moreover, they denote that the performance and efficiency of employees in today’s organizations can be improved by positive organizational behavior. Thereby, the concept of PsyCap has been added to the existing capital types of today’s competitive business environment. PsyCap is defined as “an individual’s positive psychological state of development that 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 (resiliency) to attain success.” (F. Luthans and Youssef, 2007).

The classical capital factors try to answer the questions as follows: human capital, “what information do you have?”; social capital, “how are your social relationships and

companions?” or “who do you know?” and economical capital, “what do you have?”. Unlike them, PsyCap tries to answer the questions of “who are you?, which characteristics of you are strong?, which characteristics of you can be positively developed?” and aims to improve them. Unlike other stable mental characteristics, the abovementioned psychological state can be changed and developed by experience and training (F. Luthans and Youssef, 2004). In a longitudinal study conducted by F. Luthans *et al.* (2010), it is demonstrated that PsyCap can be developed through a specific educational process.

According to F. Luthans *et al.* (2010) there are four key factors leading to formation of PsyCap namely *self-efficacy* (having confidence on personal abilities and efforts to achieve a specific goal in a specific situation), *optimism* (having a positive perspective to succeed now and in the future), *hope* (having the habit of moving ambitiously towards the target for success and searching for alternative ways) and *resiliency* (having ability to cope with stress, conflict, failure, change or increase in responsibility). These factors, through appropriate practices, may provide an individual and organizational performance boost (F. Luthans, 2012).

In empirical research, it has been considered that PsyCap may be closely related to the results of several organizational behaviors. The meta-analysis of Avey *et al.* (2011) including 51 independent samples representing a total of 12,567 employees, emphasizes that PsyCap and positive behaviors of employees’ (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, psychological well-being); positive attitudes of employees’ (organizational citizenship) and performance are positively associated, and PsyCap is negatively associated with employees’ negative attitudes (organizational cynicism, tendency to leave, work stress and anxiety) and negative behaviors (manufacturing defect rates).

Walumbwa *et al.* (2014) report a significant relationship between both collective PsyCap with group level performance and citizenship behavior utilizing the data collected from 146 intact groups from a large financial institution. Peterson *et al.* (2011) report a causal relationship such that prior positive PsyCap leads to two types of subsequent performance outcomes (supervisor-rated performance and financial performance) based on their analysis using longitudinal data from a large financial service organization. B. C. Luthans *et al.* (2012) note that PsyCap has a predictive power on undergraduate business students’ academic success and provide implications concerning PsyCap training for business student development, retention and success in their empirical work.

3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Stress is believed to be a relationship between individuals and their environment (Lazarus and Folkman, 1986). It is reported that there is a negative relationship between POS and work stress (Vagg and Spielberger, 1998; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Foley *et al.*, 2005; Leung *et al.*, 2008; Richardson *et al.*, 2008; Sawang, 2010). Eisenberger *et al.* (2010) report that one of the important psychological results of POS is a reduction in job stress through easing off in situations, a decrease in psychological tiredness, burnout, anxiety, headaches, absenteeism and an increase in job performance.

When it comes the relationship between POS and the ways of coping with stress, we encountered only one research (to our knowledge) conducted in China on construction workers, exploring the impact of organizational support applications, namely financial support, career development and various work environment rehabilitations and improvements on employees’ stress coping strategies, shows that employees use both PFSC

and EFSC strategies but the ones having higher POS practice more PFSC than EFSC strategies. Employees with higher POS try to cope directly with the problem, give effort towards better time management, strive to improve their managerial and professional skills, show the behavior of consulting with senior and experienced employees. Employees with lower POS, instead of dealing directly with the problem, focus on more EFSC behaviors such as doing physical exercise, listening to music, reading books and watching movies, crying, eating too much, increasing smoking and alcohol consumption, oversleeping, going walks, scolding others, thinking/doing irrelevant things, avoiding phone calls, refusing stressful tasks, increased absenteeism and/or attending social gatherings with family and friends (Chan *et al.*, 2012).

PFSC is considered associated with positive aspects such psychological well-being (Haynes and Love, 2004), higher organizational and employee performance (Leung *et al.*, 2006), reducing stressors' impacts (Black, 1990) and organizational effectiveness (Mendenhall *et al.*, 2002). EFSCS is believed to be negatively related to organizational and employee performance (Leung *et al.*, 2006), employees' socio-cultural (Selmer and Leung, 2007) and work adjustment and subjective well-being (Selmer, 2000).

Although those two ways of coping with stress are more or less used by individuals. We believe that employee's preferences on the ways of coping with stress are sensitive to their POS. Thus, we posit the following research hypotheses according to the insight obtained from the theoretical framework.

H1: *There is a significant and positive association between POS and PFSC behaviors.*

H2: *There is a significant and negative association between POS and EFSC behaviors.*

Encouraging employees, supportive work environment causes them to have positive feelings towards organization (Cetin *et al.*, 2013). According to Ozdevecioglu (2003); in a supportive organization continuously keeping the communication channels open and maintaining positive relations will provide a positive organizational climate and increase employees' motivation. Thus, considering POS is related to PsyCap, we formulate the following hypothesis.

H3: *There is a significant and positive association between POS and PsyCap.*

PsyCap is a critical resource for employees to overcome the stressful situations they face in workplaces; thereby it minimizes the symptoms of stress (Avey *et al.*, 2009). In a survey of 428 employees working in the life insurance sector in Taiwan, it is found that PsyCap plays a mediating role between perceived supervisor support and job performance (Y. Liu, 2013). In another survey based on data collected from 1428 male correctional officers in China, it is reported that POS reduces the symptoms of depression, and PsyCap plays a mediating role in this association (L. Liu *et al.*, 2013). These results mentioned above make us consider the possibility of PsyCap playing a mediating role in the association between POS and stress coping behaviors of employees. Thus, in the light of above mentioned references, we propose the following hypotheses.

H4: *There is a significant and positive relationship between PsyCap and PFSC behaviors.*

H5: *There is a significant and negative relationship between PsyCap and EFSC behaviors.*

H6: *PsyCap plays a mediating role between POS and PFSC behaviors.*

H7: *PsyCap plays a mediating role between POS and EFSC behaviors.*

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Population and sample

Today, work stress is intensively felt in almost all sectors. On the basis that work stress is likely to be significantly higher in service sector organizations, especially among employees of special education and rehabilitation centers (SERC) (Billingsley and Cross, 1992; Billingsley *et al.*, 1995) serving learning disabled individuals at schooling age (0-29 years) have been chosen as the subjects of the study.

Special education teachers, pre-school teachers, physiotherapists, and psychologists are employed in these institutions. Master-trainers (assistant teachers), clerks, service personnel, and servants also support them. All of those employees spend almost their whole time looking after mentally disordered individuals- that is to say their job is quite difficult and stressful.

Employees of SERCs in Malatya, Elazığ, Tunceli, and Bingöl provinces constitute the population of the study. These four provinces comprise Middle Eastern Anatolia sub-region and considered as having common strengths and weaknesses (Sengül *et al.*, 2013). Totally, there are 1088 employees working for 35 SERCs in Middle Eastern Anatolia sub-region. We assume that the characteristics of SERCs in these four provinces are homogenous.

The questionnaires were sent via e-mail and invalid responses were excluded and the analysis was based on 307 questionnaires. As the result of sample size calculations, the minimum number of sample has been found as $n=278$ for $N=1088$ with a ± 0.05 sampling error (Naing *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, the sample volume ($307 > 278$) is evaluated to have the ability to represent the population. Demographic statistics show that 43.3% of the participants are male, 56.7% are women, 59.3% are single and 40.7% are married; 64.5 % have bachelor's degrees, 24.1% are primary school graduates, 10.4% have pre-bachelor's degrees, and 1% have master's degrees; 53.7% are teachers of the mentally disordered individuals, 19.2% are master-trainers, 18.2 % are others (servants, service personnel, clerks), 4.2% are psychologists, 2.6% are physiotherapists, 2% are managers. 48.9% have 2-5 years, 33.2% have less than 1 year, 16% have 6-10 years and 2% have more than 10 years work experience.

4.2 Research scales

Ways of Coping with Stress Scale. The “Ways of Coping” with stress scale was developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1986). This 66-item inventory of coping with stress has been translated into Turkish and reduced to 30 items by Sahin and Durak (1995). This brief form with answers following 5-point Likert type scale ranging from “1=Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” is employed in our study. There are five factors in this scale, namely submissive and helplessness approaches constituting EFSC and social support, optimism and self-efficacy approaches composing PFSC behaviors.

The Perceived Organizational Support Scale. The 36-item-scale, developed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) in order to measure perceived organizational support of employees, has been studied to validate and reduced to 10 items (one factor) by Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel (2009). The latest version of the scale, which is adapted to Turkish by Turunç and Çelik (2010) has been used in this study. The answers of the items follow the 5-point Likert type scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree).

Psychological Capital Scale. The Psychological Capital Scale, which was developed by F. Luthans *et al.* (2007) and consists of 24 items, has been used in this study. The scale has been translated into Turkish and its validity and reliability has been reported by Cetin and Basim (2012). 5-point-Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) has four factors namely optimism, self-efficacy, hope and resilience.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Explanatory factor analysis

Explanatory Factor Analysis (EFA) is conducted to examine the structural validity of the data collected for three scales. Before the analysis, KMO and Bartlett's tests are employed. Data are found to be appropriate ($KMO > .60$; $p < .001$) for factor analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001, p. 589). Then, the factors in the analysis are examined using correlation analysis and it is found that the factors are uncorrelated. So that, for those three scales Component Matrix has been rotated using Varimax method, which is widely used in the literature, in order to obtain interpretive and significant factors. It is seen that the majority of factor loadings are greater than .50 and the subtraction of factor loadings loaded in more than one factor are greater than .1.

For ways of coping with stress scale, questions 1, 3, 12, 18 and 30 were removed from the model since they loaded on multiple factors. Factor loadings, contributed to five factors like previous studies, have been ranged between .66 and .84. By the factors obtained, it was found that 64.371% of total variance is explained and the scale supports the structural validity. The results of factor analysis of POS scale reveal that the factor loadings, in which the items are gathered under one factor, ranges between .64 and .81, as expected, and 58.334% of the total variance is explained and the scale supports the structural validity. For PsyCap scale factor analysis shows that items are located in four factors and the factor loadings range between .53 and .79, and 62.648% of the total variance is explained and the scale supports the structural validity.

5.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis is conducted in order to examine the factor structures of the scales. The results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis are presented in Table no. 1.

Table no. 1 – The results of confirmatory factor analysis

Parameters		Abbrevia- tion	Perfect fit	Acceptable fit	EFSC	PFSC	POS	PC
Fit Index	Goodness of fit index	GFI	$\geq .95^a$	$.90 \leq GFI \leq .95^a$	.955	.958	.971	.914
	Adjusted goodness of fit index	AGFI	$\geq .90^b$	$.85 \leq AGFI \leq .90^a$	.932	.927	.944	.888
	Comparative goodness of fit index	CFI	$\geq .97^a$	$.95 \leq CFI \leq .97^a$	.983	.974	.989	.972
	Non-normal fit index	NNFI	$\geq .90^b$	$.90 \leq NNFI \leq 1.00^b$	.978	.962	.983	.966
	Normal fit index	NFI	$\geq .95^a$	$.90 \leq NFI \leq .95^a$	.958	.948	.974	.921
	Root-square-mean error of approximation	RMSEA	$\leq .05^c$	$.05 \leq RMSEA \leq .10^a$	.043	.054	.046	.041
	Minimum discrepancy	CMIN/SD	$\leq 2^d$	$2 \leq CMIN/SD \leq 3^a$	1.556	1.907	.96	1.508

	Parameters	Abbrevia- tion	Perfect fit	Acceptable fit	EFSC	PFSC	POS	PC
χ^2 test	Sample size	N	p ≤ 0.05		307	307	307	307
	Degrees of freedom	SD			60	45	48	232
	χ^2	χ^2			93.360	85.810	46.237	349.86
	Probability	p			$p_1 = .004$	$p_2 = .000$	$p_3 = .016$	$p_4 = .000$

Note: (a): Schermelleh-Engel *et al.* (2003); (b): Hu and Bentler (1995, p. 77); (c): Steiger (1990); (d): Marsh and Hocevar (1985); Ullman (2001, p. 654).

Examining the findings in Table no. 1, since $p_1 = .004$; $p_2 = .00$; $p_3 = .016$; $p_4 = 0.00 \leq p = 0.05$ respectively in χ^2 trials of samples, it can be claimed that the models are significant at the 95% confidence interval and determined structures about the scales conducted on the samples are fit and acceptable due to the values obtained from fitness indices.

5.3 Common method bias

In order to check if there is a common method bias in our data, we employ Harman's Single-Factor Test, Common Latent Factor and Common Marker Variable techniques, which are widely used in the literature (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). We examine the unrotated factor solution of Harman's Single-Factor Test to determine the number of factors that are necessary to account for the variance in the variables. A single or one general factor, which represents the majority of the covariance (25.68%), does not emerge. Additionally, in Common Latent Factor and Common Marker Variable techniques, the common heuristic values (3.06% and 7.57% respectively) are less than the threshold value (50%). Namely, the results do not indicate substantial common method bias.

5.4 The analysis of the independent variables' effects on the dependent variable

A correlation analysis was performed to determine the variables' relationships with each other. As hypothesized, a significant and positive relationship was found between the employees' level of POS and PC ($r = .342$, $p < .01$), between their level of POS and PFSC ($r = .245$, $p < .01$) and between their level of PC and PFSC ($r = .324$, $p < .01$). EFSC was found to be uncorrelated with all other variables. Age and education level of employees and the size of SERC in which an employee work (number of employees) are also scrutinized as control variables in the correlation analysis. These three control variables were found to be uncorrelated with all other variables. The means, standard deviations, and results of the bivariate correlations can be seen in Table no. 2.

Table no. 2 – Correlations

Variables	Mean	Std. err.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	28.55	5.24	-						
2. Education	2.42	.86	-.07	-					
3. Center Size	2.24	.80	-.02	.07	-				
4. POS	2.73	.83	-.05	.01	.07	-			
5. PC	3.84	.59	-.04	-.05	.09	.342**	-		
6. PFSC	3.81	.62	-.06	-.02	.08	.245**	.324**	-	
7. EFSC	2.73	.83	.04	-.02	-.09	-.08	-.06	-.03	-

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

We employ Kruskal Wallis test to see the sensitivity of our research variables to four different provinces and cannot detect any sensitivity in POS ($p=.264>.05$), PFSC ($p=.234>.05$), EFSC ($p=.312>.05$) and PsyCap ($p=.162>.05$) regarding the different provinces.

We perform a multiple linear regression analysis in order to examine relationships between dependent and independent variables. Factor scores produced by EFA and encouraged to be used as variables in the regression model (Johnson and Wichern, 2002, p. 511) were used in further analyses. Before conducting multiple linear regression analysis, it is necessary to test the basic assumptions such as normality and multicollinearity. We used the One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test to examine the normality of the variables and found that all variables are normally distributed at 95% confidence interval since $p>\alpha=0.05$ for all variables. In addition, we tested the multicollinearity of the variables and saw that there was no multicollinearity since none of the VIF values was greater than 10 or none of the Tolerance values was smaller than .2 (Hair *et al.*, 2009, p. 193).

Table no. 3 – The regression analyses summary

Hypothesis	β	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Err.	F	p	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Supported/ Rejected
H ₁	.245	.06	.057	.452	19.53	.000	POS	PFSC	SUPPORTED
H ₂	.081	.007	.003	.705	2.00	.158	POS	EFSC	REJECTED
H ₃	.342	.117	.114	.470	40.31	.000	POS	PC	SUPPORTED
H ₄	.324	.105	.102	.441	35.79	.000	PC	PFSC	SUPPORTED
H ₅	.06	.004	.000	.706	1.14	.285	PC	EFSC	REJECTED

In this context, summary of the regression analyses results for the first five hypotheses are shown in Table no. 3. Hypothesis 1 and 2 predict a positive relationship between POS, PFSC and EFSC respectively. We found full support for Hypothesis 1, as POS is positively related to PFSC ($\beta=.245$; $p<.01$) but no support for Hypothesis 2, as POS is not related to EFSC ($\beta=.081$; $p>.1$). Next, Hypothesis 3 predicts a positive relationship between POS and PsyCap. We detect full support for this hypothesis as POS is positively related to PsyCap ($\beta=.342$; $p<.01$). Hypothesis 4 and 5 predict a positive relationship between PsyCap and PFSC and a negative relationship between PsyCap and EFSC. We find full support for Hypothesis 4, as PsyCap is positively related to PFSC ($\beta=.324$; $p<.01$) but no support for Hypothesis 5, as PsyCap is not related to EFSC ($\beta=.060$; $p>.1$).

5.5 The analysis of the mediating effect

Zhao *et al.* (2010) claim that Baron and Kenny (1986) classification of full, partial, and no mediation are misleading researchers. They suppose three patterns consistent with mediation and two with nonmediation as complementary mediation (mediated effect ($a \times b$) and direct effect (c) both exist and point at the same direction), competitive mediation (mediated effect ($a \times b$) and direct effect (c) both exist and point in opposite directions), indirect-only mediation (mediated effect ($a \times b$) exists, but no direct effect), direct-only nonmediation (direct effect (c) exists, but no indirect effect), and no-effect nonmediation (neither direct effect nor indirect effect exists). Zhao *et al.* (2010) also state that the test announced by Preacher and Hayes (2004) is almost always more powerful than Sobel's by presenting SAS and SPSS syntax for an alternative "bootstrap". They also recommend that the bootstrap test of the indirect effect should be conducted for examining mediation effect instead of the Baron- Kenny "three tests + Sobel" steps.

In order to analyze the mediating effect we perform “bootstrap test” proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2004, 2008). The test result is presented in Table no. 4 and Table no. 5.

Table no. 4 – SPSS output of bootstrap script testing indirect effect (a1xb1)

Direct effect of X on Y	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
	.1790	.0318	5.6341	.0000	.1165	.2415
Indirect effect of X on Y	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI		
PsyCap	-.0186	.0086	-.0412	.0058		
Normal Theory Tests for	Effect	SE	Z	p		
Indirect effect	-.0186	.0082	-2.2778	.0227		

Note: Y=EFSC, X=POS, M= PsyCap; Sample size: 307; Number of bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000; Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.00; All SE for continuous outcome models are based on the HC3 estimator; The script written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. (www.afhayes.com) is used. Documentation available in Hayes (2013).

As it can be seen in Table no. 4, the mean indirect effect from the bootstrap analysis is negative ($a_1 \times b_1 = -0.0186$) and significant ($p=0.0227$) with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (-0.0405 to -0.0054). The direct effect of independent variable (POS) on dependent variable (PFSC) is c_1 (0.179) and significant ($p = 0.000$). As Zhao *et al.* (2010) stated, if $a_1 \times b_1 \times c_1$ (-0.0033) is negative, it refers that there is competitive mediation. This means that mediator identified is consistent with the hypothesized theoretical framework. Thus, H_6 has been supported.

On the other hand, as it is shown in Table no. 5, ($a_2 \times b_2$) is -.0056 and insignificant ($p=.4295$). The direct effect of independent variable (POS) on dependent variable (EFSC) is c_2 (.1240) and significant ($p=.0207$). It means that direct effect (c_2) exists, but no indirect effect. Thus, H_7 is not supported.

Table no. 5 – SPSS output of bootstrap script testing indirect effect (a2 x b2)

Direct effect of X on Y	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
	.1240	.533	2.3263	.0207	.0191	.2288
Indirect effect of X on Y	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI		
PsyCap	-.0056	.0073	-.244	.0051		
Normal Theory Tests for	Effect	SE	Z	p		
Indirect effect	-.0056	.0071	-.7900	.4295		

Note: Y=EFSC, X=POS, M= PsyCap; Sample size: 307; Number of bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000; Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.00; All SE for continuous outcome models are based on the HC3 estimator; The script written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. (www.afhayes.com) is used. Documentation available in Hayes (2013).

6. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we investigate the impact of POS on stress coping behaviors (PFSC and EFSC) and we also examine the mediating role of PsyCap on the association (if there is) between POS and stress coping behaviors.

Billingsley and Cross (1992) report that the special education field loses many teachers to general education in their study based on the data collected from general and special education teachers in the United States. Similarly, Boe *et al.* (1998) claim that a higher percentage of special educators transfer to general education than the reverse in their analysis based on a population of general and special education teachers in the United States. Additionally, in a study of Alaska teachers, Schnorr (1995) suggests that general education teachers who hold both general and special education certification mostly are not interested in transferring to special education. The nature of the field probably has created a repelling impact even on the individuals who were trained as the experts. Special education teachers, pre-school teachers, physiotherapists, psychologists are employed at the special education and rehabilitation centers, which were established for the development of mentally disabled individuals at education and rehabilitation ages. Master-trainers, clerks, service personnel and servants also work to help them. All of these employees spend almost all their work time caring for these mentally disordered individuals -that is to say their job is quite difficult and stressful.

Furthermore, these institutions are also profit-seeking businesses. The main purpose of the investors of the special education institutions is to maintain their existence in the sector, which there is intense competition. For the reasons stated above, it has been assessed that work stress can be quite intense in this sector and PsyCap components are important because the work involves a lot of face-to-face communication. These considerations have been taken into account for sample selection.

Examining the effect of POS on stress coping in the study, firstly it is found that there is a significant positive relationship between employees' POS and PFSC behaviors. Consistent with this finding, the studies in the literature reveal a generally a negative correlation between POS and work stress (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Foley *et al.*, 2005; Leung *et al.*, 2008; Richardson *et al.*, 2008; Ejere, 2010; Sawang, 2010). They indirectly support our finding in such a way that PFSC as a strategy directly addressing the cause of stress is expected to be influential in reducing stress in a workplace. Thus, PFSC behavior can be located as a variable between POS and work stress.

An attempt has been made to determine whether PsyCap has a mediating effect in association between POS and PFSC. According to the analysis results in this context, it is found that PsyCap plays a partial mediating role between POS and PFSC.

EFSC is found to have a negative but insignificant correlation with POS and PsyCap variables. Although the directions of the associations are in line with our theoretical expectations, the results of the analyses are not robust enough not support our hypotheses. We expected that employees, sensing higher level of POS, develop significantly lower level of EFSC behaviors since they feel themselves more supported and empowered by the organization. We also expected the employees developing more EFSC behaviors show less PsyCap scores. Individuals who show EFSC behaviors mostly try to avoid touching the real cause of the stress. They prefer to implement short-term palliative measures to reduce the impact of the stressor. As a recommendation for future research, we suggest that the association between POS, PsyCap and EFSC behaviors can be examined in different industries and cultures in order to provide empirical evidence for the hypotheses proposed in this study.

In this study, some factors, which can reduce the material and spiritual losses of the special education field/businesses due to work stress have been examined with the aim of providing the findings available to the management of these institutions and also for the researchers. In this context, alternative solutions have been sort out for contemporary

businesses and managers to enhance their effectiveness in reducing work stress and helping employees to cope with stress through dealing directly with the stressor. In order to reduce the effect of work stress, indirectly increase the performance and reduce expenses (health, compensation, loss of workforce), the managers at all levels of the organization should strive for improving POS. To that end, they should be convinced about getting interested in their subordinates' problems and showing their support in all circumstances, an supportive organization culture should be created and be felt by employees, subordinates should be given the opportunity of achieving small successes through training and developing themselves and aspired to accomplish more complex tasks by increasing their self-confidence. Starting from the top management, an optimistic approach in other words positive psychology should be adapted at all levels as an important part of organizational culture.

Those above mentioned measures are not only useful for reducing the overall stress level in workplace but also effective in employees' choices of stress coping strategies. Although the findings of this study does not support our hypothesis which is proposing a negative and significant association between POS and EFSC, they supports that higher POS can increase PFSC behaviors of employees meaning that if an organization provides higher level of organizational support and if this effort is sensed by employees, the employees, encouraged by organization, will probably practice PFSC rather than EFSC behaviors. Because PFSC behavior focuses on the stressor directly, the expected outcome of this strategy is the elimination of stressor, and can be regarded as long term and sustainable way of addressing the issue, which is good for individuals and organizations.

Besides, POS is considered a significant antecessor of PsyCap representing a widespread positive state of psychology in an organization. It can be concluded that organizations should invest on POS in order to increase PsyCap level of employees. PsyCap is also found to have a significant and positive impact on PFSC behaviors of employees. It is also discovered that it has negative and insignificant impact on EFSC. PFSC behavior is considered as an opportunity for organizations regarding its positive impact on improving the human resources.

The one of the main contributions of this study is that the perceived organizational support increase individuals' problem focused behaviors and the psychological capital plays a mediating role in this association in positive direction. It also contributes as the first research addressing those three particular variables on the sample of special education and rehabilitation center employees.

Findings of this study provides solid recommendations for special education and rehabilitation centers managers which can be influential in supporting especially problem focused stress coping efforts of their employees working in quite stressful conditions through both improving organizational psychological capital and increasing organizational support.

This research has limitations. Data are cross-sectional. The sample space of the study consists of only the special education and rehabilitation centers in Malatya, Elazığ, Tunceli, and Bingöl provinces in Turkey. The findings belong to this sector. They might not resemble the studies in other sectors, and inferences may vary with regional and cultural differences. Thus, causality and temporal sequences should be cautiously generalized.

For future work, conducting research in different industries, cultures and nations with the same concept is considered to be useful to test the general applicability of our findings. Meanwhile, longitudinal work may be beneficiary in order to see more accurate causal relationships between stress coping strategies of employees, POS and PsyCap over time.

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