Why Do Teachers Fear? Investigating Teachers' Perceptions of the Culture of Fear through Mixed Methods Research

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Abstract

This research aims to reveal the source of fears by examining various variables of teachers' perceptions of fear culture. The study employed an explanatory approach of mixed methods research. Quantitative data were obtained through the "Culture of Fear in Schools Scale," while qualitative data were gathered through a semi-structured interview form. Quantitative data were collected from 325 teachers working in primary and secondary schools in Turkey, selected via the simple random sampling method. Qualitative data were collected from 15 teachers selected using the maximum variation sampling method. Many contradictions have emerged between the quantitative and qualitative findings in the study. While quantitative findings show that teachers experience low levels of fear originating from administrators, colleagues, and legal processes, qualitative results show that teachers experience these fears more prominently. In addition, based on the variables of gender, marital status, seniority at the current school, employment status, and professional seniority, a statistically significant difference was found between teachers' perceptions of the culture of fear. In conclusion, the research provides some evidence for a culture of fear in schools. In addition, some critical implications regarding the origin of teachers' perceived fears were discussed for future research, practitioners, and policymakers.

Keywords: Fear, Culture of fear, Teachers, Schools, Mixed-methods

Introduction

Apart from social needs, people also have physiological conditions in social life. The emotional state of people who are in constant interaction with other individuals in the society to meet their social needs may be a critical factor (Cüceloğlu, 2001). As in many living things, the primary emotion considered "the strongest basis of emotional states" in humans is fear (Roseman et al., 1994). Fear, a powerful and disturbing feature, is an innate and learned emotion (Witte, 1998). In relationships with fear, people approach each other with an intense risk sensitivity, and developing intimate relationships becomes difficult. According to Furedi (2014), this situation creates an environment where mutual trust in human relations is lost. People are alienated from each other, and all relationships are evaluated through the prism of risk.

Fear, which can become a part of the culture in educational organizations, i.e., schools, can cause undesirable consequences (Şişman et al., 2010). Because a culture of fear can increase anxiety by posing a potential threat to the trust relationship between school stakeholders, increasing pressure can cause different psychological problems. Besides, it can also lead to uncertainty. Increasing uncertainty, in turn, may cause teachers to exhibit irrational behaviours (Hoy & Miskel, 2010). The acts of administrators frightening teachers and teachers frightening students to maintain school discipline cause a culture of fear (Kahraman, 2019). Teachers working in schools dominated by a culture of fear may experience fear of legal actions that would be taken against them due to their behaviour. Authoritarian managers may wish to retain control, using the threat of legal action. In schools where a culture of fear is dominant, teachers' accountability stems from the fear of punishment by the authority, not from their conscience. These penalties can be psychological, such as reprimand and criticism, or disciplinary actions such as condemnation and warning (Cüceloğlu, 2018). A control-oriented management approach can harm teachers' feelings of security by damaging the school atmosphere. The findings of Hoffman

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et al.'s research (1994) show that as school principals become authoritarian, teachers' perceptions of organizational security decrease. There cannot be a democratic educational environment in schools where administrators use their power and status as an element of fear against teachers.

The studies on the culture of fear mainly focus on *sociology* (Furedi, 2007), *organizational management* (Ashkanasy & Nicholson 2003), and *media* (Chaiuk & Dunaievska, 2020). However, research carried out in schools has remained limited. For example, Yılmaz and Göçen (2015) have found that disciplinary penalties cause fear among students in primary schools. Thompkins (2000), on the other hand, has found in his research that it is possible to reduce fear in schools by increasing security measures. On the other hand, only one such study has been found that directly deals with the culture of fear. However, in that study by Kahraman (2019), the effect of school administrators' management style and organizational change on the culture of fear teachers perceive has been examined with a quantitative approach. In reality, the culture of fear has a complex structure regarding its perception and effects. Therefore, it is thought that quantitative data alone are not sufficient to examine the functioning of the culture of fear in schools in detail. Quantitative data should be analyzed more profoundly by using qualitative methods. Because determining the reasons for teachers' fears can guide education administrators in eliminating or managing fear. The culture of the environment in which teachers work, who have significant contributions in achieving the goals and objectives of schools, affects their motivation, productivity, commitment to their profession, and therefore their emotional state. This situation seriously affects the quality of education and teaching effectiveness (Dilekçi & Nartgün, 2019). It is argued that making schools effective depends on understanding their culture (Hoy & Miskel, 2010). A culture of fear can create anxiety in teachers. To deal with stress, it is important to understand organizational culture (Schein, 1985). Therefore, examining teachers' perceptions of the culture of anxiety may also help to reduce teacher anxiety. For this reason, this research can contribute to the field of education by examining the culture of fear in schools in a holistic and in-depth sense. From this point of view, the study is thought to fill a gap in the literature and shed light on future studies. In this context, this research aims to reveal the source of fears by examining teachers' perceptions of fear culture in terms of various variables. Therefore, the first and third research questions were formed with the positivist paradigm and the second and fourth questions with the constructivist one:

(R1) What are teachers' perceptions of fears stemming from managers, colleagues, and the legal process?
(R2) What are the reasons for teachers' fears of administrators, colleagues, and the legal process?
(R3) Is there a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of the culture of fear based on gender, marital status, seniority at current school, employment status, and professional seniority?
(R4) If there is a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of the culture of fear, what are the reasons based on different variables?

Culture of Fear

Fear is a highly negative emotional arousal caused by perceiving a personal threat (Witte, 1998). With the beginning of attempts to analyze fear, which is a part of daily social relations, at a macroscopic level, the existence of a "culture of fear" has begun to be advocated in contemporary societies (Tudor, 2003). Although their socio-cultural environment has significantly shaped all fears, fears experienced and expressed over a long period will be more susceptible to socially molded processes of reinforcement and routinization. Although all fears are shaped significantly by their socio-cultural environment, fears experienced and expressed over a long time will be more susceptible to socially molded reinforcement and routinization processes, leading to a culture of fear (Cüceloğlu, 2001).

The culture of fear in schools can be defined as the culture formed due to fears arising from teachers' experiences and relationships in schools (Çelik & Kahraman, 2019). The culture of fear in organizations can generally be caused by organizational change, risk-taking, making mistakes, success, uncertainty, and contradicting group decisions (Appelbaum et al., 1998). However, many factors can cause the emergence and spread of a culture of fear in schools. On top of these factors are the fear-based management approach of school principals, the environment of uncertainty and insecurity brought about by fear, teachers' negative attitudes and behaviours towards their colleagues, and the fears arising from legal processes related to the teaching profession. In this context, the culture of fear in schools has been examined in three main dimensions (Çelik & Kahraman, 2019), namely "fear of the manager," "fear of colleagues," and "fear of the legal process." The first dimension of the study, the fear of managers, is the administrators' fear, whom teachers see as powerful and authority in school. The second dimension, the fear of colleagues, is the fear of other teachers in the same school. The third dimension, the fear of the legal process, is the fear arising from legal processes such as disciplinary investigation or punishment for teachers' behaviours at school.

Method

Research Design

In the study, an explanatory approach of the mixed-methods research was employed. The dominant quantitative research in this model is supported by qualitative data (Creswell et al., 2003). The justification for using the mixed method is that the quantitative findings on the fear culture, which has a complex structure, will reveal the overall picture of the problem. At the same time, the qualitative data will provide a deeper understanding of the causes of the quantitative findings. While the survey design was used in the quantitative section of the study, the phenomenology design was employed in the qualitative section. Phenomenology investigates how individuals perceive and transfer their experiences individually or in groups (Patton, 2005). In this research, we used phenomenology in the qualitative part, as we focused on the fear experienced by teachers.

Participants

The study sample consisted of 302 teachers selected by the simple random sampling method at 38 primary and secondary schools in Mardin, located in the southeast of Turkey. Of the teachers, 40.9% were female and 59.1% were male; 49.8% were married and 50.2% were single; 12.9% had less than one year of seniority, 32.9% had 1-5 years, 36% had 6-10 years, 10.5% had 11-15 years, and 7.7% had 16 years or more. In the qualitative part of the research, the study group consisted of 15 teachers representing different features with the maximum variation sampling method. The demographics of those in the study group are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Study group

Code	Gender	Marital status	Professional seniority	Seniority at the current school	Employment status
T1	Female	Single	3 years	3 years	Contracted
T2	Male	Single	<1 year	<1 year	Contracted
T3	Male	Single	7 years	3 years	Tenured
T4	Female	Single	<1 year	<1 year	Contracted
T5	Female	Married	12 years	3 years	Tenured
T6	Male	Married	12 years	5 years	Tenured
T7	Female	Single	3 years	3 years	Contracted
T8	Male	Married	5 years	5 years	Tenured
T9	Female	Single	6 years	2 years	Tenured
T10	Female	Married	8 years	5 years	Tenured
T11	Female	Single	<1 year	<1 year	Paid
T12	Male	Married	<1 year	<1 year	Paid
T13	Male	Married	16 years	5 years	Tenured
T14	Male	Married	12 years	2 years	Tenured
T15	Male	Married	23 years	6 years	Tenured

Of the participants, seven are women, eight are men, seven are single, and eight are married. The seniority of teachers in the current school is up to six years. While the seniority of four teachers is less than one year, the seniority of the others varies between three and twenty-three years. While two of the teachers are paid, four are contracted, and nine are tenured staff.

Data Collection Tools

In the research, the "Culture of Fear in Schools Scale (CFS)" developed by Çelik and Kahraman (2019) was used. Explanatory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were performed within the scope of validity. As a result of EFA, the scale consisted of 3 factors (fear of manager, fear of colleagues, fear of legal process) and 18 items in total. The total variance of the scale explained is 64.66%. In the quantitative part of this study, the fit indices obtained in CFA (χ^2/df = 2.52, GFI = .90, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06) were acceptable (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranged between 0.80 and 0.92. For this study (see Table 2), Cronbach's Alpha coefficients (ranged between 0.84 and 0.94) were high level (Taber, 2018). The scale is rated 5-point Likert as "1: Never"-"5: Always". A semi-structured interview form was employed as a qualitative instrument. This form was prepared in line with the participant's experiences and the data obtained from the scale and expert views (Cresswell, 2013).

Data Collection and Analytical Approach

The research was deemed ethically appropriate by the university. We collected the data in the 2020-2021 academic year. First of all, we informed the school principals and teachers about the research. We collected data online through emails or social media applications. Participation was based on voluntary. The interviews were conducted face to face and lasted between 30-45 minutes. The audio interview was recorded with the teachers' permission, and the data were transcribed.

Quantitative data of the study were analysed using SPSS software. The skewness coefficients of the CFS ranged between .12-1.96 and the kurtosis coefficients between -1.07-1.93. Descriptive statistics primarily interpreted the data. A t-test was used to test the difference between group means because the data were distributed close to normal (Kline, 2011). However, the difference in variables with at least three subgroups was tested with Welch ANOVA as the variances were not equal. Games-Howell was applied to determine the source of the difference in Welch ANOVA. The study also examined the effect size (Green & Salkind, 2005). The construct validity of CFS was tested with AMOS software.

We collected the qualitative data by audio recordings that have been written and edited. Qualitative data were analyzed using the descriptive analysis method, and direct quotations were used to add a remarkable feature to the participants' opinions. Teachers' views were given under the code names. After analysing the data in the qualitative part of the study, we employed member checking. To increase external validity, we explained the research process and what has been done in detail. To increase reliability, we gave all results directly without any comments. During the data editing, we examined each interview form and compared them. We read the document and revised it (Patton, 2005).

Results

First, the quantitative results are presented in tables and interpreted, and then the qualitative ones are included.

Results regarding the First Two Research Questions of the Study

The mean and standard deviation values regarding CFS dimensions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Dimension	*Mean*	*SD*	*a*
Fear of manager	1.90	.93	.94
Fear of colleagues	1.73	.89	.84
Fear of the legal process	1.74	.89	.87

In Table 2, teachers experienced *fear of manager* (M = 1.90, SD = .93) at a lower level. Based on the quantitative findings, the teachers were asked this question, "Are you afraid of your principal in your school? Why?". The opinion emphasized by T1, who stated that she had experienced fear arising from the school principal's personality traits, is as follows:

> "I have feared since my school principal is a little panicked. It creates a perception that we will get big penalties if we don't do some tasks. I am afraid that he will impose a sanction on me if I make a mistake in any situation (T1)."

The opinion of T4, who stated that she would experience fear in case of any problems while carrying out her duties and responsibilities, is as follows:

> "If I experience any disruption in the work that we need to do and if I cause this disruption, I feel uneasy. I'm a person who always aims to fulfill his responsibilities and do his work on time, and when I can't do it on time, I have both a fear of myself and a fear of our principal (T4)."

Pointing out that she experiences fear when she thinks differently with the school principal, T10 expresses her views as follows:

"…I think that if I contradict the school administration or make an opinion against them, I will most probably face a bad situation. I can easily say this because I have seen it from my friends who thought differently and had problems (T10)."

The opinion of T3, who said that he felt that the school principal was constantly watching him, and therefore experienced insecurity and fear, is as follows:

" Sometimes I am afraid of my principal. Especially when I am on duty during breaks, I immediately feel obliged to say that I am on duty when the principal passes by. Because at that moment, the principal passes by the door or indicates that I am late for class (T3)."

Contrary to the quantitative findings, in the qualitative findings, it was seen that the teachers perceived the fears from the administrator prominently. In Table 2, teachers' perceptions of fear of colleagues are very low (M = 1.73, SD = .89). Based on the quantitative finding, the teachers were asked this question; "Do you see your colleagues as a threat? Why?" Stating that he did not experience fear from his colleagues, T15 associated this situation with cooperation with his colleagues, sincere relationships based on trust, and shared values in the following words:

"I do not see my colleagues as a threat. This school is like our second home. We should support and help each other throughout the time we work together. Here, too, we have such a working environment. Here, everyone works completely focused on education and the success of students (T15)."

T3 emphasized that the negative attitudes and behaviours of his colleagues caused him to experience fear as follows:

"Unwelcome situations such as gossiping among teachers, complaining about each other, constantly comparing ourselves to each other, making negative comments about ourselves when we make mistakes, or reporting these mistakes to school administrators, harm us morally and make us feel threatened (T3)."

T5, who emphasized that a school environment where cooperation between colleagues is not strong and experiences are not shared pose a threat; her opinion is as follows:

"I have fear from time to time due to my colleagues. This situation relates to my colleagues' approach to me and right or wrong to their profession. For example, if colleagues are jealous of each other, if they look at each other as an enemy, if they say, "I'm doing it, you do less, so that all successes become mine," in short, if they act selfishly, I think this is a threat (T5)."

T2 expressed his dissatisfaction with the fact that his colleagues would know that he had different political views, especially at school:

"…Today, you can be tagged because of your political views in your environment. However, this may cause my colleagues to have prejudices about me. In other words, I am worried that my political views will not be respected, and I am afraid that when I make a mistake, my friends who disagree with me will judge me and will use this situation against me (T2)."

In Table 2, teachers' perceptions of fear of legal process are very low (M = 1.74, SD = .89) Based on this, the teachers were asked this question, "Are you afraid of being punished or being subject to disciplinary investigation as a result of your behaviour at your school? Why?" Stressing that the fear of losing one's job and financial worries, as a result, is a severe factor in his fear, T3's opinion is as follows:

"I am afraid of being punished legally or being fired from my profession because I will have financial difficulties. Because my job is my livelihood. I don't have any other income, and if I lose this job, I will be in trouble. At the same time, I support my family, and if I have problems with my job, my family will be negatively affected. So I am always afraid of being punished (T3)."

T14, who pointed out that making a mistake may result in punishment, and therefore he may experience fear, his opinion is as follows:

"Every teacher has fears from legal processes. Because doing things incompletely or wrong may lead to some penalties and sanctions (T14)."

Results regarding the Third and Fourth Questions of the Study

The *t*-test values of teachers' perceptions of the culture of fear in schools based on gender are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings on gender

Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Fear of manager	1. Female	133	1.76	.79	323	-2.47	.01*
	2. Male	192	2.00	1.00			
Fear of colleagues	1. Female	133	1.58	.74	323	-2.75	.00*
	2. Male	192	1.84	.97			
Fear of legal process	1. Female	133	1.63	.63	323	-2.76	,04*
	2. Male	192	1.82	.91			

* *p* < .05

A significant difference was found in the dimensions of *fear of manager* [t(323) = -2.47, *p* = .01], *fear of colleagues*, [t(323) = -2.75, *p* = .00] and *fear of legal process* [*t*(323) = -2.76, *p* = .04] concerning *gender*. Calculated effect sizes ($d_{manager}$ = -.27, $d_{colleague}$ = -.31, d_{legal} = -.31) indicate that the differences are moderate. Perceptions of men (*M* = 2.00, *SD* = 1.00) are higher than women's perceptions (*M* = 1.76, *SD* = .79). Based on the quantitative findings, the teachers were asked "Do you think female teachers or male teachers experience more fear at school? Why?" The opinion of T4, who stated that female teachers experience more fear, is as follows:

"I think male teachers are more comfortable because they have a closer relationship with the school principal. However, female teachers approach the school principal more distantly and more nervously. Perhaps women would feel more comfortable if the school principal was a woman (T4)."

T6, who stated that the fact that women were raised in a culture of fear in social life caused them to experience more fear in their business life as well, his opinion is as follows:

"Female teachers fear more. Because they behave more naively and passively owing to their being emotional by nature, that's why I think the pressure on women is more. The reason for this is a situation related to the upbringing of women in society (T6)."

Reinforcing these statements, T7 also stated that female teachers experience more fear due to the patriarchal social structure in the following words:

"I think women fear more. Because, as in every part of the society, the school principal sometimes thinks that he can make women accept certain things more easily due to the gender inequality in the society. In this sense, I think that women are more afraid (T7)."

Pointing out that male and female teachers have different attitudes towards the problems they encounter at school and towards their solution strategies, T11's opinion is as follows:

"I think women are more afraid. Because men defend themselves better, they are more assertive, whereas women, being more polite and sensitive, stay passive when they have problems. Unfortunately, this also causes them to face harsh reactions (T11)."

When the qualitative findings are examined, contrary to the quantitative results, female teachers perceive fear at a higher level. The *t-test* values of teachers' perceptions of the culture of fear in schools based on their marital status are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Findings on marital status

Dimension	Marital Status	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Fear of manager	1. Married	162	2.02	1.01	323	2.25	.02*
	2. Single	163	1.79	.83			

Fear of colleagues	1. Married	162	1.68	.87	323	-1.11	.26
	2. Single	163	1.79	.91			
Fear of the legal process	1. Married	162	1.71	.89	323	-.68	.49
	2. Single	163	1.78	.88			

* *p* < .05

A significant difference was found in the dimension of *fear of manager* [t(323) = 2.25, *p* = .02] concerning *marital status*. The difference is moderate according to the effect size (d = .24). Perceptions of married teachers are higher (*M* = 2.02, *SD* = 1.01) than those of single teachers (*M* = 1.79, *SD* = .83). Based on the quantitative findings, the teachers were asked: "Do you think married teachers experience more fear at school than single teachers? Why?" Regarding the question, T9 emphasized the negligent behaviour of married teachers due to their spouses, children, and other house responsibilities. Her opinion is as follows:

> "If we consider that married people have more duties and responsibilities, I think they will be more worried because of the possibility of neglecting the rules. If a teacher has a family and children, their responsibilities increase, so their professional duties can also be a bit difficult for them (T9)."

T15, who emphasized that with the increase in financial concerns for married teachers, the fear of losing one's profession also increases, his opinion is as follows:

> "I think married teachers experience more fear. Because they have more responsibilities in their private lives, their profession is vital for their spouses and children, and themselves (T15)."

T13, who draws attention to the negative approach of the school administration to single teachers, mainly during the candidate teaching process, expressed his views as follows:

> "Single teachers are younger and inexperienced due to their age. Therefore, most single and especially candidate teachers are terrified. Because at the end of the candidacy process, the school principal gives them a performance grade, which is an essential criterion for successfully passing the candidacy process (T13)."

The opinion of T6, who draws attention to the support that married teachers receive from their spouses, is as follows:
> "Single teachers experience more fear. Because in married teachers there is someone in their lives who gives them confidence. A second person supports them in every way (T6)."

T12, who emphasizes that single teachers, since they are mainly new to the profession, can be uneasy while solving the problems they encounter, his opinion is as follows:

> "I think single teachers are more afraid. Because usually, single teachers are young and just starting. Since they are inexperienced and in the first years of their profession, making mistakes is higher in every sense. But since married teachers have attained a certain age, I think they are more comfortable in this regard (T12)."

Besides coherent qualitative and quantitative findings in the marital status variable, there are also conflicting ones. The Welch ANOVA test values according to *seniority at the current school* are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Findings on seniority at the current school

| Dim | Seniority at the current school | N | Mean | SD | Homogeneity | | df1 | df2 | F | p | Dif. |
					Levene	p					
Fear of manager	< 1 year	94	1.80	.90	5.83	.00	3	116.58	3.19	.02*	1-3 2-3
	1-3 years	114	1.79	.77							
	4-6 years	85	2.20	1.10							
	> = 7 years	32	1.81	.90							
Fear of colleagues	< 1 year	94	1.83	.97	1.20	.01	3	118.36	.66	.57	-
	1-3 years	114	1.69	.81							
	4-6 years	85	1.73	.90							
	> = 7 years	32	1.60	.88							

		N	Mean	SD		dfl	df2	F	p	Dif.
Fear of legal process	< 1 year	94	1.88	.96						
	1-3 years	114	1.68	.80	4.81	.00	3	130.79	4.09	.00*	1-4
	4-6 years	85	1.80	.97							3-4
	>= 7 years	32	1.40	.59							

*: *p* < .05

A significant difference was found in the dimensions of *fear of manager* (Welch F(3, 116.58) = 3.19), and *fear of legal process* (Welch F(3, 118.36) = .66) concerning *seniority at the current school*. Effect sizes ($d_{manager}$ = -.03, d_{legal} = -.02) indicate that the differences are moderate. Based on the quantitative findings, the teachers were asked, "As your seniority at your school increases, does your level of fear change? Why?" Regarding the question, T2 states that the level of fear would decrease with the increase in the experience. His opinion is as follows:

> "We gain experience as our seniority increases, which makes us more comfortable. Because I see that experienced teachers in our school are more comfortable and less afraid than newcomers (T2)."

The opinion of T3, who emphasizes that anxiety decreases with seniority in the current school, drawing to the adoption of common goals and values in the school and the development of relationships, is as follows:

> "As my seniority at my school increases, my level of fear decreases as I get used to the school culture better. Because I am getting more and more familiar with the rules and functioning of the school, knowing the students, parents, teachers I work with, and the school administration better. The increase in my professional experience reduces my fears. As time goes on, I develop more sincere relations with my colleagues, and because I learn about my legal rights and responsibilities better, my fears are lessened (T3)."

The opinion of T15, who stated that as the length of service increases at school, teachers' sense of "belonging to their institution" also increases, and they identify themselves with their school, is as follows:

> "As your seniority at the school increases, you like the school more, and you get used to that institution more. Your commitment to school increases, your positive attitude towards your job increases. You feel more comfortable at work and school (T15)."

The Welch ANOVA test values according to employment status are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Findings on employment status

Dim	Employment status	N	Mean	SD	Homogeneity		df1	df2	F	p	Dif.
					Levene	p					
Fear of manager	Tenured	210	2.01	1.00							
	Contracted	97	1.71	.74	7.68	.00	2	47.33	4.48	.01*	1-2
	Paid	18	1.70	.84							
Fear of colleagues	Tenured	210	1.74	.91							
	Contracted	97	1.77	.91	4.49	.01	2	61.75	5.75	.00*	1-3
	Paid	18	1.37	.42							2-3
Fear of legal process	Tenured	210	1.76	.94							
	Contracted	97	1.73	.81	1.56	.01	2	50.32	.80	.45	-
	Paid	18	1.55	.64							

*: *p* < .05

According to the employment status, a significant difference (*p* < .05) was found in the dimensions of *fear of manager* (Welch F(2, 47.33) = 4.48) and *fear of colleagues* (Welch F(2, 61.75) = 5.75). Effect sizes ($d_{manager}$ = -.02, $d_{colleagues}$ = -.01) indicate that the differences are moderate. Based on the quantitative findings, the teachers were asked, "Does your employment situation cause you to experience fear in your school? Why?" Regarding the question pointing out that the negative attitudes and approaches of school administrators towards contracted

teachers may create an element of fear, T7's opinion is as follows:

> "Due to the contract, our dismissal is based on easier terms. In addition, both the frequent warnings of our school administrators such as 'You are a contracted teacher, be careful' and the lack of legal rights compared to tenured teachers cause us to be more afraid and uneasy (T7)."

The opinion of T2, who stated that contracted teachers experience more fear than tenured teachers due to the lack of personal rights, is as follows:

> "I am a contracted teacher. We are more worried than the tenured ones. Tenured teachers have more legal rights. Because for tenured teachers, the fear of losing their job is less (T2)."

The opinion of T11, who stated that paid teachers' rights are insufficient and that they are afraid because of worries about their future, is as follows:

> "I work as a paid teacher. I am not afraid of the school administration or my colleagues. On the contrary, they have helped me a lot. However, in the legal sense, first and foremost, I have concerns about the future. I don't have job security; knowing that I work temporarily and then thinking I will be unemployed again scares me. So, I may have to quit my job at any time. Even this causes a person always to experience fear (T12)."

Qualitative findings show that contracted and paid teachers experience fears of the legal process more than tenured teachers. The Welch ANOVA test values based on professional seniority are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Findings on professional seniority

Dim	Professional seniority	N	Mean	SD	Homogeneity Levene	p	df1	df2	F	p	Dif.
Fear of manager	< 1 year	42	1.78	.86	6.13	.00	4	90.20	3.01	.02*	2-3
	1-5 years	107	1.70	.71							
	6-10 years	117	2.10	1.05							
	11-15 years	34	1.96	.96							
	>= 16 years	25	1.98	1.06							
Fear of colleagues	< 1 year	42	1.92	.96	3.24	.01	4	96.03	2.96	.02*	1-2 1-4 3-4
	1-5 years	107	1.57	.81							
	6-10 years	117	1.89	.98							
	11-15 years	34	1.51	.63							
	>= 16 years	25	1.68	.81							
Fear of legal process	< 1 year	42	1.89	.95	2.94	.02	4	92.43	1.59	.18	-
	1-5 years	107	1.60	.75							
	6-10 years	117	1.85	.98							
	11-15 years	34	1.62	.86							
	>= 16 years	25	1.73	.84							

*: $p < .05$

A significant difference ($p < .05$) was found in the dimensions of *fear of manager* (Welch $F(4, 90.20) = 3.01$) and *fear of colleagues* (Welch $F(4, 96.03) = 2.96$) concerning *professional seniority*. Effect sizes ($d_{manager} = -.03$, $d_{colleagues} = -.03$) show that the differences are moderate. Based on the quantitative findings, the teachers were asked, "Is there any change in your level of fear as your professional seniority increases? Why?" Regarding the question, T10 emphasized that the fears of experienced teachers have decreased because the approach of school administrators and colleagues towards them is more positive:

> "…When you become an experienced teacher, the school principal's approach also changes. They show more oppressive management towards the teachers who start their duty new, but they approach more sensitively towards experienced teachers and are more careful when

communicating. If you are experienced, your colleague's approach to you also changes; they behave more respectfully and value your opinions more (T10)."

T6 stated that as professional seniority increases, his experience also increases, he is more aware of his legal rights and responsibilities. Accordingly, his fears decrease, his opinion is as follows:

"As my professional seniority increases, I feel more confident. Because when you are in the business, as the years pass, you both get to know the laws, regulations, administrations, and people better, learn how to behave, and people start to respect you. This, in turn, gives a person confidence (T6)."

T8, who emphasizes that with the increase in your professional seniority, knowing the school culture affects reducing your fears, his opinion is as follows:

"As our professional seniority increases, we gain more experience in every sense. We understand students and parents better, we get to know them, and we adapt more easily to the socio-cultural environment of the school. In addition, we learn the culture and customs of the school thoroughly. In this sense, I can say that as seniority increases, our level of fear decreases (T8)."

Expressing the fears he experienced in the first year of his professional life due to the candidate teaching process, T2's opinion is as follows:

"I am afraid legally because I am a candidate teacher. For example, I do not want to participate in the national exams. Because I am a candidate teacher yet and if I make a mistake, I have a fear of being fired from teaching (T2)."

Discussion

In this study, we investigated teachers' perceptions of the culture of fear in schools and the reasons for this, using mixed methods. We discussed the results in light of the relevant literature. Although it is seen in the research that the fear of managers has the highest average, it isn't the case. It is lower than expected. In his study, Kahraman (2019) also found that teachers have an intense fear in schools. In addition, Sincer and Atanur Baskan (2017) also found that academics' perceived levels of fear were low. Contrary to the quantitative findings, the qualitative findings show that teachers experience fear due to school principals' oppressive and authoritarian management style. This finding can be explained by the fact that school principals want to pressure teachers by using their legal power. Argon (2015) concludes that the factors that affect teachers' emotional states in schools the most are the characteristics of administrators, administrative processes in the school, supporting and valuing employees, and communication with administrators. School principals' adoption of a strict and authoritarian management approach may create fear and insecurity in teachers. Some research findings have shown that the oppressive attitude of principals can induce teachers to exhibit negative attitudes. For example, in the study of Karadaş and Özer (2021), a negative correlation is found between school principals' autocratic, disinterested, and oppositional management style and trust in the principal.

On the other hand, Sarıer and Uysal (2020) state that as school principals' autocratic leadership behaviours increase, teachers' level of exhibiting negative attitudes has also increased. It is also seen that school principals do not adopt a democratic and justice-based management approach, and they cannot provide a safe and sincere working environment to their employees. School principals, who have principal imperative behaviours, control every move of teachers in school, all their work, and transactions, to the smallest detail, and constantly follow them closely (Hoy & Tarter, 1997). School principals, who are primarily effective and responsible for achieving the goals of the schools, want to be aware of all the processes in the school. However, if they give the teachers the feeling that they are constantly being watched, they may cause teachers to feel insecure and fearful. It is common for teachers who feel under constant surveillance and are being watched to experience fear. Teachers may think that school principals do not trust them, and they are kept under continuous supervision. Even if there is no tangible element of fear, teachers who do not feel psychologically comfortable may cause them to fear. Therefore, some managerial attitudes and behaviours of school principals can create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity.

In the dimension of *fear of colleagues*, the teachers did not experience fear of their colleagues. In the study's qualitative findings, it was seen that the importance given to cooperation among colleagues, sincere relations based on trust, and shared common values came to the fore as the reason for this situation. However, it is

noteworthy that some stated that they experienced fear from colleagues. The feeling of competition among teachers harms relations; the threat of exclusion due to the lack of tolerance and respect for different views and opinions among teachers causes them to experience fear of colleagues. A study carried out by Chen (2016) indicates that teachers' interactions with their colleagues affect their emotions, and teachers are emotionally attached to their colleagues. Also, they feel optimistic about cooperating with their colleagues and getting support from them, but the competition among them is an aspect of teachers' fear and negatively affects their emotions. Another notable finding is that teachers feel anxiety when their words or behaviour are not respected in schools where there is no trust among colleagues. Moreover, their expectation of encountering a negative situation increases.Therefore, it is crucial for the employees of an organization to mutually trust each other to work more effectively towards reaching the determined goals (Mayer et al., 1995). In her study, Tschannen-Moran (2001) concluded that teachers' trust in their school colleagues positively affects cooperation. Teachers who trust each other can overcome challenges in school and reduce their fear of colleagues. In this context, colleagues at school need to cooperate based on trust.

While male teachers experienced more fear than females in all dimensions of CFS, the opposite was found in the qualitative part of the study. In the qualitative detail, the teachers explained the reasons for this situation; they saw patriarchal social structure, gender roles, gender-based segregation, gender-based stereotypes, and women's sensitive structure as the reasons for this situation. The fact that women experience more fear shows that their upbringing in a culture of fear in social life is also reflected in their business life. In the feminist theoretical approach, while women's limited participation and secondary position in working life are analysed, the concepts of gender and patriarchy come to the fore. The idea of gender emphasizes the sexual division of labour and social relations between the biological sexes. In this division of labour, while women have responsibilities such as house and child care, men are expected to take care of the livelihood of the house (Hartman, 1981).

The patriarchal system gives superiority to men in social relations that develop in society and makes men stronger (Hartman, 1979). On the other hand, patriarchy defines a set of social relations that include hierarchical relations and male-to-male solidarity that have a material basis and enable men to dominate women. Another critical point in the qualitative findings is behavioural differences between male and female managers. This difference has been seen as an essential factor affecting the relations between stakeholders in the school. The participants stated that school principals are primarily male, and this causes female teachers to experience more fear. The fact that female school principals attach importance to creating a more democratic and collaborative environment in their schools and adopting a sharing and participatory leadership style instead of coercive power in management processes may have been influential in the emergence of this result. Findings from the research have provided evidence supporting this situation. For example, Kawana (2004) stated that female school administrators are more involved, organized, and relationship-oriented. Similarly, Adams and Hambright (2004) concluded that female school administrators are more supportive, sensitive, understanding, creative, and innovative. Durrah (2009), on the other hand, revealed that female managers are seen as sincere leaders by creating a team spirit.

The perception of married teachers was higher than that of single teachers in *fear of the manager* dimension of CFS. In the qualitative findings, married teachers have more responsibilities, and deep financial concerns were the main reason. However, there are also qualitative findings that contradict the quantitative results. It is understood that single teachers experience more fear because they are generally young and inexperienced and because school administrators' approach to them is not constructive. Since single teachers are primarily new to the profession and do not have enough experience, they may have difficulty solving their problems compared to married teachers. The negative approach of the school administration primarily to single teachers during their candidate teaching process may have caused them to experience more fear. Another remarkable finding in the study is that it has been seen that marriage saves the individual from loneliness, and the social and emotional support that employees receive from their spouses affects their levels of psychological well-being positively. In this way, married teachers can be stronger and more resilient in dealing with difficulties in their work lives. The positive effect of the social and emotional support that married teachers receive from their spouses on their psychological state may have reduced their fears. Research findings also support this. In the literature in studies examining the relationship between marriage and psychological well-being (Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006), sharing economic resources and emotional support of individuals with their spouses generally have positive aspects. Married individuals have a higher level of psychological well-being compared to unmarried individuals. However, married teachers are more likely to act negligently in their business than single teachers due to their spouses, children, and other household responsibilities. Also, teachers are more likely to experience the fear of losing their profession due to the increase in financial concerns and the responsibilities brought by marriage.

In *fear of the manager* and *fear of the legal process* dimensions of CFS, teachers' perceptions of the culture of fear decreased as their seniority in the current school increased. The qualitative findings confirm the quantitative

results. The increase in seniority, development of relations with school administration, the increase of sincerity among teachers, and the increase in organizational commitment provide the development of some positive outputs for teachers. Depending on these reasons, it is understood that teachers' perceived fears decrease. However, Kahraman's (2019) finding contradicts the current finding. In the study as mentioned earlier, as the seniority in the current school increases, the level of fear experienced by teachers also increases. This contradiction could be due to the differences in the management style of the administrators depending on their working hours at the same school.In addition, the fact that new teachers do not have sufficient knowledge about school management may have been effective in not experiencing fear. With the increase in seniority at the current school, a better understanding of the internal and external dynamics concerning the school, the adoption of shared goals and values in the school, and the development of relations between administrators and teachers may have had an effect that reduced fears. In addition, teachers' increased commitment to the school and identification with their school over time may have reduced their anxiety. On the other hand, teachers' professional seniority increased as their seniority at their current school increased. In the study, teachers' perceived anxiety decreased with increased seniority.As the reason for this situation, teachers stated that they made fewer mistakes by emphasizing experience. They also stressed that their fears decreased as they became more aware of their legal rights and responsibilities.

The perceptions of contracted teachers in *fear of the manager* dimension of CFS are higher than tenured teachers. In the dimension of *fear of colleagues*, the perceptions of paid teachers were lower than those of tenured and contracted teachers. Hence, qualitative results do not confirm quantitative findings. It is understood that the lack of personal rights of contracted teachers compared to tenured teachers and administrators' negative attitudes and behaviours towards them cause them to be more afraid. Another employment type of teacher in Turkey is paid teaching practice. Paid teachers are worried because they do not have job security, their wages are low, and they have concerns about being fired from their jobs at any time. There is a tenured/contracted/paid distinction among teachers, and teachers have different rights, which can negatively affect teachers' emotional states.

Conclusion and recommendations

This research has provided some evidence for the existence of a culture of fear in schools. The findings show that teachers experience fears of administrators, colleagues, and legal processes in schools. Besides, this research also provides important implications about the causes of the culture of fear perceived by teachers. Many contradictions have emerged between the quantitative and qualitative findings in the study. We think these contradictions are closely related to the research subject's culture of fear. We believe that the teachers may have felt fear while answering the scale, worrying that their answers might be seen. However, thanks to the reliable and sincere interview environment we provided in qualitative interviews, we consider that teachers have expressed their views well. Even the fact that different findings were obtained from other methods may indicate a culture of fear in schools. In this context, we discuss some implications for practitioners and policymakers.

The management style adopted by the school principals and the human relations is the determining factor on the fears experienced by the teachers. Therefore, school principals should adopt a democratic and cooperative management style that emphasizes human connections and is based on justice. On the other hand, in order to reduce the fear of colleagues, the school administration should create a sincere environment among colleagues based on cooperation and trust. Moreover, a domain should be able to share its knowledge and experience easily. In order to reduce teachers' fear of the legal process, it is important to give priority to the reward system over the punishment system. It should not be forgotten that teachers often act illegally because they do not know it.Therefore, continually keeping the inquiry as an option will threaten teachers. Instead, teachers with low professional seniority must be informed about formal processes. Suppose administrators guide and direct teachers, especially in the first years of the profession, ensure their participation in decisions, and seek their opinions. In that case, their trust in their administrators can increase, and their fears can reduce. In the study, female teachers' fear of managers, colleagues, and legal processes is higher than male teachers. School management and male teachers should avoid a sexist approach and not show a harsh attitude towards female teachers. In the study, it has also been seen that the rareness of female school principals leads female teachers to fear. Therefore, policymakers should encourage female teachers and even implement positive discrimination in selecting principals for schools. It has been concluded that married teachers cope better with the difficulties at school with the support from their spouses. In this context, unmarried teachers should also be provided social and emotional support to help reduce their fears. In Turkey, teachers are employed on this threefold basis: permanent -under contract - paid. During the research, it was found that this difference causes anxiety among paid and contracted teachers. In this regard, both school stakeholders and policymakers have important roles to play in. School management should not discriminate between teachers working in different frameworks.

Teachers should also pay attention to this. Particularly, exclusionary and hurtful attitudes towards paid teachers should be avoided. At the same time, policymakers need to first improve paid teachers' economic and social rights. Even paid teaching should be abolished if the conditions are favourable. On the other hand, the distinction of tenured-contracted-paid should be eliminated, and a consistent form of employment should be introduced.

Limitations and future research

The first limitation is that there are limited studies on the culture of fear in schools. Therefore, the research results could not be adequately correlated with different results. Future research must focus more on the culture of fear in schools. In addition, the relationships between the culture of fear and various organizational variables should be researched. Moreover, the factors that may help teachers reduce their fears can be investigated. Secondly, the study is conducted in a province and only involves primary and secondary school teachers. Future research can be carried out with teachers working in different cities and at various school levels. In this way, we think it will be beneficial to compare and diversify research results. Third, only the fears of the manager, colleagues, and legal process were addressed. This limitation is related to the scale applied. It is essential that future research also focuses on fears experienced by teachers from students and parents. For this, different scales need to be developed.

Author (s) Contribution Rate

1. Author: 60%, 2. Author: 40%

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Ethical Approval

The research was deemed ethically appropriate by the decision of the Ethics Committee of Mardin Artuklu University with the number 2021/2-3.

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