

The “crabs in a bucket” phenomenon in schools: A focus on secondary school teachers

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Abstract

With this study we aimed to examine secondary school teachers' perceptions of the “crabs in a bucket” phenomenon. Employing a quantitative survey design, the study collected data from 399 secondary school teachers using a Personal Information Form and the Crabs in a Bucket at Schools Scale. Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and standard deviation) and parametric and non-parametric tests were employed for data analysis. The findings indicate that teachers' perceptions of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon were at a moderate level. No statistically significant differences were found based on age, gender, marital status, professional seniority, or years of service at the school. However, significant differences emerged regarding education level and teaching branch. These results suggest that enhancing teachers' and administrators' awareness of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon may help mitigate its negative effects within school environments.

Keywords: crabs in a bucket; school environment; teacher

Introduction

The achievement of educational goals and the effective fulfilment of the fundamental functions of education are directly related to the qualifications of teachers (Cruickshank, Bainer & Metcalf, 1999). Teachers who continuously improve their professional competencies significantly enhance both the quality of education and student outcomes (Van der Sandt & Nieuwoudt, 2003), while also contributing positively to a country's socio-economic development and society's adaptation to contemporary innovations (Demir & Demir, 2021; Eroğlu & Özbek, 2020). In this context, it is important to examine whether teachers, who influence various levels of society (Demir & Demir, 2021; Eroğlu & Özbek, 2020; Van der Sandt & Nieuwoudt, 2003), are affected by the crabs in a bucket phenomenon (Pegues, 2018; Soubhari & Kumar, 2014). This term refers to a narrow-minded and self-serving attitude characterised by the mentality of “if I can't have it, neither can you” whereby individuals intentionally hinder others' progress to maintain or improve their own position. The term “crab mentality” is particularly associated with Filipino culture and is metaphorically derived from the behavior of crabs in a fisher's bucket, where crabs attempting to climb out are pulled back by the others (Aydın & Oğuzhan, 2019). When one crab attempted to climb out, the others would pull it back down (Aaron & Smith, 1992; Soubhari & Kumar, 2014). In essence, the crabs themselves become barriers to each other's escape (Aaron & Smith, 1992; Perry, 2013; Sampath, 1997; Soubhari & Kumar, 2014). Drawing on this metaphor, Basri and Siam (2015) likened individuals striving for self-improvement and professional excellence to crabs in a bucket, arguing that repeated obstruction by others diminishes motivation to success.

Literature Review

The crabs in a bucket phenomenon is used to describe a behavioural condition where individuals attempt to pull down those who outperform them (Soubhari & Kumar, 2014). Some of the definitions in the literature regarding this phenomenon are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 The concept of crabs in a bucket and its definitions

Author	Concept	Definition
Bullock (2013)	Crab mentality	A cultural tendency to want all people to be at the same level and therefore to try to pull down those who succeed, or to attempt to partake of their success and thereby dilute it.
Soubhari and Kumar (2014)	Crab mentality	Selfish, short-sighted thinking that describes an attitude that runs along the lines of “if I can't have it, neither can you.” This term is used specifically to refer to people who pull other people down, denigrating them rather than letting them get ahead or pursue their dreams.
Miller (2019)	Crabs in the barrel syndrome	A particular marginalised community or culture who engage in behaviour that undermine similar others with the intent to discourage a target from obtaining various opportunities for advancement and achievement.
Fettahlioğlu and Alkış Dedeoğlu (2021)	Crab in barrel syndrome	A social trend that emerges as a result of individuals' behaviours aimed at hindering others from being more successful, based on the emotions and thoughts associated with the fear of personal failure.

The metaphor of the crab mentality, characterised by the narrow-minded and selfish notion, describes individuals who engage in behaviour such as mocking, belittling, spreading gossip to damage others' reputations, criticising, undermining morale, and discrediting others' work to hinder their professional advancement (Miller, 2016; Pegues, 2018; Soubhari & Kumar, 2014). Being subjected to such crab-like behaviour may cause individuals to experience negative emotions such as anger, disappointment, and sadness (Miller, 2019), and may lead to workplace stress that contributes to both mental and physical health problems (Soubhari & Kumar, 2014).

From an organisational perspective, this phenomenon results in negative outcomes such as decreased productivity, motivation, and job quality; violations of organisational norms such as respect and collaboration; increased discourteous behaviour; and higher personnel management costs (Miller, 2019; Pegues, 2018; Soubhari & Kumar, 2014). Consequently, the presence of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon in an organisation imposes various psychological, social, and economic burdens on the affected individuals and the organisation (Miller, 2019; Pegues, 2018; Soubhari & Kumar, 2014).

An examination of the literature on the crabs in a bucket phenomenon reveals that several studies have been conducted in the field of organisational behaviour, particularly focusing on matters such as motivation, absenteeism, and job stress (Aydın & Oğuzhan, 2019; Miller, 2019; Pegues, 2018; Soubhari & Kumar, 2014). However, the scarcity of research on this phenomenon in educational organisations is noteworthy. Existing studies have primarily examined the crabs in a bucket phenomenon in relation to variables such as job stress and student achievement (Soubhari & Kumar, 2014), and research focusing specifically on teachers remains limited to only a few studies (Çavuş & Sarpkaya, 2021; Soubhari & Kumar, 2014). In this context, investigating the phenomenon in school settings is considered essential. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, no study has yet explored this phenomenon among middle school

teachers. Therefore, this research is regarded as an original contribution that fills a gap in the literature on the crabs in a bucket phenomenon in education and underscores the importance of addressing this issue in educational organisations.

With this study we aimed to examine secondary school teachers' perceptions of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon. Accordingly, the following research questions were posed:

- 1) What are the levels of teachers' perceptions of the "crabs in a bucket" phenomenon in schools?
- 2) Do teachers' perception levels regarding the "crabs in a bucket" phenomenon differ significantly in respect of variables such as age, gender, marital status, educational background, professional seniority, subject branch, and length of service at their schools?

Methodology

The Research Model

In this study, a cross-sectional survey design, one of the quantitative research methods, was employed. A cross-sectional survey design is a non-experimental research design in which data are collected from a targeted population—or a representative sample of that population—at a single point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since this study sought to examine teachers' perceptions of the 'crabs in a bucket' phenomenon in schools, a cross-sectional survey design was deemed appropriate, as it enables the description of the sample group, the depiction of the current situation, and the drawing of inferences from the sample to the broader population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gliner et al., 2009).

A multistage sampling procedure was used to recruit participants. The population consisted of all teachers working in public secondary schools in Istanbul, Türkiye. First, Ataşehir and Ümraniye, two districts on the Anatolian side of Istanbul, were randomly selected. Subsequently, teachers working in public secondary schools in these districts were invited to participate in the study, and 399 teachers who volunteered to participate during the 2021–2022 academic year were included in the sample. The demographic characteristics of the participating teachers are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of the participating teachers

Variable	Variable groups	N	%	Variable	Variable groups	N	%
Age	22–28	36	9.0	Professional seniority	1–5 years	42	10.5
	29–35	133	33.3		6–10 years	131	32.8
	36–42	120	30.1		11–15 years	80	20.1
	43–49	70	17.5		16–20 years	62	15.5
	50–65	40	10.0		21 years and more	84	21.1
	Total	399	100		Total	399	100
Gender	Female	267	66.9	Marital status	Single	104	26.1
	Male	132	33.1		Married	295	73.9
	Total	399	100		Total	399	100
Education level	Bachelor's degree	335	84.0	Branch	Science	69	17.3
	Master's degree	64	16.0		English	55	13.8
	Total	399	100		Mathematics	69	17.3
Years of service at the school	1–3 years	140	35.1		Turkish grammar	63	15.8
	4–6 years	138	34.6		Social studies	38	9.5
	7–9 years	78	19.5		Religious	30	7.5
	10 years and more	43	10.8		Other areas*	75	18.8
	Total	399	100		Total	399	100

Note. *The “Other areas” comprises physical education and sports, guidance, technology and design, music and visual arts.

Data Collection Tools

The data were collected using a Personal Information Form and the “Crabs in a Bucket at Schools Scale,” developed by Çavuş and Sarpkaya (2021). The scale consists of 27 items across two dimensions: individual factors and organizational factors. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, and 27 are reverse-coded. These items were reverse-scored prior to calculating the subscale and total scores, so that higher scores consistently indicated higher levels of perceived crabs in a bucket phenomenon. In the original scale development study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were reported as .948 for the individual factors dimension, .924 for the organizational factors dimension, and .949 for the overall scale (Çavuş & Sarpkaya, 2021).

Data Analysis

The participants' perception levels of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon were analysed descriptively using statistical measures such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Differences in teachers' perception levels regarding demographic variables were examined using parametric tests, including independent samples *t*-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), based on data normality. When parametric assumptions were not met, non-parametric tests, such as the Mann-Whitney *U* test, were employed. Bonferroni post-hoc tests were conducted to identify specific group differences when ANOVA indicated significant effects. In cases where the homogeneity of variances assumption was

violated, alternative tests, such as the Brown-Forsythe and Welch tests, were applied to ensure the accuracy of results. Analyses yielded consistent findings, with ANOVA results confirmed by the Brown-Forsythe and Welch tests, as needed. All quantitative analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in compliance with established ethical research standards. Prior to the data collection process, approval was obtained from the Marmara University/Education Sciences Institute Ethics Committee (Approval No: 9-6, Date: 12.11.2021). Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Teachers were informed about the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and their right to withdraw without penalty at any time. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no identifying information was collected, and the data were used solely for academic purposes.

Findings

Results Related to Sub-problem 1

In line with the first sub-problem of the study, descriptive statistics were used to analyse teachers' perception levels of the scale, both overall and in terms of its individual and organisational factors sub-dimensions. Descriptive statistics for teachers' perception levels of the overall scale and its sub-dimensions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics of teachers' perception levels of the overall scale and its individual and organisational factors sub-dimensions

Sub-dimension	Item number	Item	$\bar{x}$	s
Individual factors sub-dimension	6	At my school, there are teachers who do not respect differences between individuals.	3.19	1.23
	2	At my school, there are teachers who gossip about me.	3.04	1.24
	5	At my school, there are teachers who compare me with themselves.	2.90	1.25
	14	At my school, there are teachers who do not like my administrator to appreciate me.	2.76	1.25
	10	At my school, there are teachers who do not want me to do what they cannot do.	2.75	1.24
	4	At my school, there are teachers who compete with me.	2.72	1.23
	9	At my school, there are teachers who are jealous of me when I achieve success.	2.67	1.19
	11	At my school, there are teachers who do not support me when I have a failure.	2.65	1.17
	3	At my school, there are teachers who underestimate my ideas.	2.63	1.16
	8	When I have a suggestion about the functioning of the school, I immediately face opposing ideas.	2.61	1.13
	1	At my school, there are teachers who unfairly criticise what I do.	2.59	1.19
	7	At my school, there are teachers who do not give satisfactory answers to my questions on purpose.	2.55	1.17
	13	At my school, there are teachers who try to stop me when I present something new.	2.45	1.14
	12	At my school, there are teachers who blame me for the problems I experience.	2.40	1.08
	15	At my school, there are teachers who try to hinder my professional development.	2.19	1.02
Organisational factors sub-dimension	19	Our school has a strong culture.	2.61	1.06
	25	At my school, there is an environment of trust where I can easily share my ideas.	2.39	.98
	17	The school administration does not take my expectations into consideration.	2.37	1.08
	22	I do not receive institutional support in my school-related work.	2.28	.89
	21	At my school, I am appreciated for what I do.	2.26	.85
	20	My suggestions about the functioning of the school are taken into consideration by the school administrators.	2.26	.91
	26	At my school, personal development is supported.	2.26	.88
	23	I face institutional barriers to accessing facilities at my school.	2.20	.95
	16	Good communication among teachers is supported by the school administration.	2.20	1.05
	27	At my school, we are supported to improve ourselves through in-service training.	2.16	.85
	24	At my school, my work is devaluated.	2.16	.94
	18	Cooperation among teachers is supported by the school administration.	2.09	.91

As shown in Table 3, the statement most strongly endorsed by the teachers was “At my school, there are teachers who do not respect differences between individuals” ($\bar{x} = 3.19$; moderate), followed by “At my school, there are teachers who gossip about me” ($\bar{x} = 3.04$; moderate) and “At my school, there are teachers who compare me with themselves” ($\bar{x} = 2.90$; moderate). The statement perceived at the lowest level was “Cooperation among teachers is supported by the

school administration” ($\bar{x} = 2.09$; low).

Within the individual factors sub-dimension of the scale, teachers most strongly agreed with the statement, “At my school, there are teachers who do not respect differences between individuals” ($\bar{x} = 3.19$; moderate). This was followed by “At my school, there are teachers who gossip about me” ($\bar{x} = 3.04$; moderate) and “At my school, there are teachers who compare me with themselves” ($\bar{x} = 2.90$; moderate). The statement perceived at the

lowest level was “At my school, there are teachers who try to hinder my professional development” ($\bar{x} = 2.19$; low).

In respect of the organisational factors sub-dimension of the scale, teachers reported the highest level of agreement with the statement, “Our school has a strong culture” ($\bar{x} = 2.61$; moderate). This was followed by “At my school, there is an environment of trust where I can easily share my

ideas” ($\bar{x} = 2.39$; moderate) and “The school administration does not take my expectations into consideration” ($\bar{x} = 2.37$; moderate). The statement perceived at the lowest level was “Cooperation among teachers is supported by the school administration” ($\bar{x} = 2.09$; low).

Descriptive statistics of teachers’ perceptions of the overall scale and its sub-dimensions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics of teachers’ perceptions of the overall scale and its sub-dimensions

Sub-dimension	The number of items	$\bar{x}$	s
The overall scale	27	2.49	.69
Individual factors sub-dimension	15	2.67	.94
Organisational factors sub-dimension	12	2.27	.62

Table 4 shows that the perception levels for the overall scale ($\bar{x} = 2.49$; moderate), individual factors sub-dimension ($\bar{x} = 2.67$; moderate), and organisational factors sub-dimension ($\bar{x} = 2.27$; moderate) were at a moderate level. However, we found that the perception level of the individual factors sub-dimension was higher than that of the organisational factors sub-dimension.

Results Related to Sub-problem 2

In line with the second sub-problem of this study, teachers’ perceptions of the scale, overall and across its sub-dimensions, were analysed in respect of age, gender, marital status, education level, professional seniority, branch, and years of service at the school.

The results of the ANOVA test conducted to determine whether teachers’ perceptions of the overall scale and its sub-dimensions differed regarding the age variable are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Comparison of teachers' perceptions related to the overall scale and its sub-dimensions regarding the age variable (ANOVA)

Variable	Sub-dimension	Source of variance	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Significant difference
Age	The overall scale	Between groups	3.814	4	.953	1.967	.099	---
		Within groups	190.986	394	.485			
		Total	194.800	398				
	Individual factors sub-dimension	Between groups	7.185	4	1.796	2.013	.092	---
		Within groups	351.514	394	.892			
		Total	358.699	398				
	Organisational factors sub-dimension	Between groups	1.608	4	.402	1.014	.400	---
		Within groups	156.250	394	.397			
		Total	157.858	398				

Note. $p < .05$.

Table 5 shows that teachers' perceptions of the overall scale [$F(4, 394) = 1.967, p > .05$], as well as the individual [$F(4, 394) = 2.013, p > .05$] and organisational [$F(4, 394) = 1.014, p > .05$] factors, did not differ significantly regarding age. Furthermore, because the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met for the overall scale, the robust Brown-Forsythe and Welch tests were conducted to assess group differences

(Lix, Keselman & Keselman, 1996). The findings indicate that the Brown-Forsythe ($p = .09$) and Welch ($p = .10$) tests yielded results consistent with those of the ANOVA ($p = .09$).

The results of the independent samples *t*-test conducted to determine whether teachers' perceptions of the overall scale differed regarding gender are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Comparison of teachers' perceptions of the overall scale regarding gender (*t*-test)

Sub-dimension	Gender	<i>N</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>s</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
The overall scale	Female	267	2.51	.67	397	.478	.633
	Male	132	2.47	.74			

Note. $p < .05$.

As shown in Table 6, teachers' perceptions of the overall scale did not differ by gender [$t(397) = .478, p > .05$]. Similarly, as presented in

Table 7, the Mann-Whitney *U* test results indicate that teachers' perceptions of the sub-dimensions of the scale also did not differ regarding gender.

Table 7 Comparison of teachers' perceptions of the scale sub-dimensions regarding gender (Mann-Whitney *U*)

Sub-dimension	Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
Individual factors sub-dimension	Female	267	200.72	53593.50	17,428.50	.858
	Male	132	198.53	26206.50		
Organisational factors sub-dimension	Female	267	204.59	54626.50	16,395.50	.257
	Male	132	190.71	25173.50		

Note. $p < .05$.

As shown in Table 7, teachers' perceptions of the scale's sub-dimensions, individual ($U = 17,428.50, p > .05$) and organisational ($U = 16,395.50, p > .05$) factors, did not differ regarding gender.

The results of the independent samples *t*-test conducted to determine whether teachers' perceptions of the overall scale and its sub-dimensions differed regarding marital status are presented in Table 8.

Table 8 Comparison of teachers' perceptions of the overall scale regarding marital status (*t*-test)

Sub-dimension	Marital status	<i>N</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>s</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
The overall scale	Single	104	2.45	.73	397	-.800	.424
	Married	295	2.51	.68			

Note. $p < .05$.

As shown in Table 8, teachers' perceptions of the overall scale did not differ by marital status [$t(397) = -0.80, p > .05$].

The results of the Mann-Whitney *U* test conducted to determine whether teachers' perceptions of the scale's sub-dimensions differed regarding marital status are presented in Table 9.

Table 9 Comparison of teachers' perceptions of the scale sub-dimensions regarding marital status (Mann-Whitney *U* test)

Sub-dimension	Marital status	<i>N</i>	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
Individual factors sub-dimension	Single	104	186.90	19,438	13,978	.178
	Married	295	204.62	60,362		
Organisational factors sub-dimension	Single	104	208.29	21,662	14,478	.394
	Married	295	197.08	58,138		

Note. $p < .05$.

Table 9 shows that teachers' perceptions of the scale, including both the individual ($U = 13,978, p > .05$) and organisational ($U = 14,478, p > .05$) factors sub-dimensions, did not differ significantly based on marital status.

The results of the independent samples *t*-test conducted to determine whether teachers' perceptions of the scale differed regarding their education level are presented in Table 10.

Table 10 Comparison of teachers' perceptions of the overall scale regarding education level (*t*-test)

Sub-dimension	Education level	<i>N</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>s</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
The overall scale	Bachelor's degree	335	2.44	.68	397	-	.000
	Master's degree	64	2.80	.67		3.922	

Note. $p < .05$.

The results presented in Table 10 indicate that teachers' overall scale perceptions differed significantly by education level, ($t_{(397)} = -3.92$, $p < .05$). Specifically, teachers with a bachelor's degree ($\bar{x} = 2.44$) had statistically significant lower scores on the overall scale compared to those with postgraduate qualifications ($\bar{x} = 2.80$). The

calculated effect size ($d = 0.50$) suggests that this difference is of moderate magnitude (Green & Salkind, 2005).

The results of the Mann-Whitney *U* test conducted to determine whether teachers' perceptions of the scale sub-dimensions differed regarding education level are presented in Table 11.

Table 11 Comparison of teachers' perceptions of the scale sub-dimensions regarding education level (Mann-Whitney *U*)

Sub-dimension	Education level	<i>N</i>	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
Individual factors sub-dimension	Bachelor's degree	335	190.37	63774	7494	.000
	Master's degree	64	250.41	16026		
Organisational factors sub-dimension	Bachelor's degree	335	195.03	65333.50	9053.50	.048
	Master's degree	64	226.04	14466.50		

Note. $p < .05$.

Table 11 shows that teachers' perception levels of the scale sub-dimension related to individual factors differed regarding education level ($U = 7494$, $p < .05$); the scores of teachers with bachelor's degrees ($\bar{x} = 190.37$) were statistically significant lower than those of postgraduate teachers ($\bar{x} = 250.41$), with a small effect size ($r = .19$) indicating a low-level difference (Cohen, J, 1992). Perception levels of the sub-dimension related to organisational factors also differed by education level ($U = 9053.50$, $p < .05$); the scores of teachers

with bachelor's degrees ($\bar{x} = 195.03$) were statistically significant lower than those of postgraduate teachers ($\bar{x} = 226.04$), with a small effect size ($r = .09$), indicating a low-level difference (Cohen L, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

The results of the ANOVA test conducted to determine whether there were differences in teachers' perceptions of the overall scale and its sub-dimensions based on professional seniority are presented in Table 12.

Table 12 Comparison of teachers' perception levels of the overall scale and its sub-dimensions by professional seniority (ANOVA)

Variable	Sub-dimension	Source of variance	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Significant difference
Professional seniority	The overall scale	Between groups	3.502	4	.876	1.803	.127	---
		Within groups	191.298	394	.486			
		Total	194.800	398				
	Individual factors sub-dimension	Between groups	6.975	4	1.744	1.953	.101	---
		Within groups	351.723	394	.893			
		Total	358.698	398				
	Organisational factors sub-dimension	Between groups	1.405	4	.351	.885	.473	---
		Within groups	156.452	394	.397			
		Total	157.857	398				

Note. $p < .05$.

Table 12 shows that teachers' perception levels on the overall scale [$F(4, 394) = 1.803, p > .05$], as well as on the individual [$F(4, 394) = 1.953, p > .05$] and organisational [$F(4, 394) = 0.885, p > .05$] factors, did not differ significantly by professional seniority. In addition, for the organisational factors dimension, robust tests such as the Brown-Forsythe and Welch tests were applied to verify the

assumptions of the ANOVA. The results indicated that the Brown-Forsythe test ($p = .46, p > .05$) and the Welch test ($p = .51, p > .05$) supported the findings of the ANOVA ($p = .43, p > .05$).

The results of the ANOVA test for teachers' perceptions related to the overall scale and its sub-dimensions based on the branch variable are presented in Table 13.

Table 13 Comparison of teachers' perceptions of the scale for the overall scale and sub-dimensions by branch variable (ANOVA)

Variable	Sub-dimension	Source of variance	SS	df	MS	F	p	Significant difference
Branch	The overall scale	Between groups	3.666	6	.611	1.253	.278	---
		Within groups	191.135	392	.488			
		Total	194.801	398				
	Individual factors sub-dimension	Between groups	4.492	6	.749	.829	.548	---
		Within groups	354.206	392	.904			
		Total	358.698	398				
	Organisational factors sub-dimension	Between groups	5.133	6	.856	2.196	.043	2-7*
		Within groups	152.724	392	.390			
		Total	157.857	398				

Note. * $p < .05$.

The results in Table 13 indicate that teachers' perceptions of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon differed significantly according to their branch only for the organizational factors subscale, $F(6, 392) = 2.196, p = .043, \eta^2 = .03$. No statistically significant differences were found for the overall scale or the individual factors subscale. Bonferroni post hoc comparisons indicated that teachers in the "Other areas" category reported significantly lower organizational factors scores than teachers in

English. This finding suggests that differences across teaching branches were limited to perceptions of organizational factors rather than the phenomenon as a whole or its individual factors dimension.

Table 14 presents the results of the ANOVA test conducted to determine whether teachers' perception levels of the overall scale and its sub-dimensions differed regarding their years of service at the school.

Table 14 Comparison of teachers' perceptions of the scale overall and sub-dimensions regarding their years of service at the school (ANOVA)

Variable	Sub-dimension	Source of variance	SS	df	MS	F	p	Significant difference
Years of service in the school	The overall scale	Between groups	.708	3	.236	.480	.696	---
		Within groups	194.093	395	.491			
		Total	194.801	398				
	Individual factors sub-dimension	Between groups	1.829	3	.610	.675	.568	---
		Within groups	356.870	395	.903			
		Total	358.699	398				
	Organisational factors sub-dimension	Between groups	.616	3	.205	.516	.672	---
		Within groups	157.242	395	.398			
		Total	157.858	398				

Note. $p < .05$.

As shown in Table 14, teachers' perception levels for both the overall scale ($F[3, 395] = .480, p > .05$) and its sub-dimensions, individual ($F[3, 395] = .675, p > .05$) and organisational factors ($F[3, 395] = .516, p > .05$), did not differ in respect of their years of service at the school.

Discussion

In this study we examined secondary school teachers' perceptions of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon. Participants' responses to the Crabs in a Bucket at Schools Scale indicate the highest levels of agreement with statements suggesting that some

teachers in their schools did not respect individual differences; that colleagues' achievements provoked jealousy; that teachers were frequently compared and subjected to competition by peers; and that some teachers often disapproved recognition by school administrators. Consequently, the findings suggest that some teachers had experienced negative behaviour from their peers, which may have had adverse effects on the individuals and the organisation. From an organisational perspective, the presence of such negative emotions and behaviour among teachers can have detrimental consequences for the functioning of the school. In research on high school teachers, Çavuş (2021) observed similar patterns with teachers reporting high levels of agreement regarding colleagues' lack of respect, engagement in gossip, jealousy, and competitive attitude. Aydın and Oğuzhan (2019) found that emergency healthcare workers also perceived crab behaviour associated with self-centeredness, jealousy, ambition, and selfishness. Studies by Pegues (2018) and Soubhari and Kumar (2014), which explored related concepts, are consistent with these findings. Furthermore, research by Akyürek (2020), Arabacı, Sünkür and Şimşek (2012), Kılıç, Şahin, Albayrakoglu and Arseven (2016), Levent and Türkmenoğlu (2019), and Yavuz and Levent (2021) similarly support these results.

It was also found that teachers reported moderate levels of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon on the overall scale and its subdimensions. Moreover, teachers reported relatively higher scores on the individual factors subscale than on the organizational factors subscale. These findings are broadly consistent with previous research on the crabs in a bucket phenomenon and related concepts, such as workplace exclusion (Çavuş, 2021) and workplace aggression (Coşkun, 2019; Nanto & Özcan, 2016).

We also concluded that the perception levels of the participating teachers regarding the overall scale and its sub-dimensions did not differ significantly based on age, gender, marital status, professional seniority, or years of service at the school. Consistent with this finding, Çavuş (2021) reports that high school teachers' perception levels did not differ significantly in relation to variables such as age, gender, marital status, and education level in their study on the crabs in a bucket phenomenon. The literature also includes studies that have reported similar results regarding related concepts (Aracı & Okçu, 2017; Aras, 2012; Cansever, 2017; Coşkun, 2019; Hacicaferoğlu, 2013; Kayış, 2019; Öğretmen, 2013; Özkara & Tunç, 2020; Uğurlu, Çağlar & Güneş, 2012; Yıldız & Kul, 2018), as well as others that have yielded differing results (Akpınar, 2016; Boydak Özcan & Nanto, 2017).

Teachers with postgraduate education reported significantly higher scores on the overall scale and

both subdimensions than teachers with a bachelor's degree. One possible explanation is that teachers with postgraduate qualifications may be more likely to pursue professional advancement, which could increase their sensitivity to interpersonal competition or perceived obstruction. However, this interpretation should be considered tentative, as professional advancement and sensitivity to interpersonal competition were not directly examined in the present study. In contrast, Çavuş's (2021) study found no significant differences in high school teachers' perceptions of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon based on educational background. Similar findings were reported in studies examining related concepts (Akpınar, 2016; Boydak Özcan & Nanto, 2017; Emiroğlu, 2017).

Conclusion

Considering the research findings, teachers reported moderate levels of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon on the overall scale and its two subdimensions. Although no significant differences were found according to age, gender, marital status, professional seniority, or years of service at the current school, significant differences emerged according to educational level and branch. Teachers with postgraduate education reported higher scores on the overall scale and both subdimensions than those with a bachelor's degree, while differences by branch were observed only for the organizational factors subscale. From an organizational perspective, these findings highlight the relevance of understanding how interpersonal and organizational dynamics may shape teachers' perceptions of the crabs in a bucket phenomenon. Accordingly, increasing awareness among school administrators and teachers may contribute to the development of organizational practices that promote collegial relationships, professional collaboration, and a supportive school environment.

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Authors' Contributions

FL conceptualised and supervised the study, designed the methodology, and critically revised the manuscript. YÜ conducted the data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Both authors contributed to the writing of the manuscript, approved the final version, and accepted responsibility for its content.

Notes

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