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## HOW TEACHERS' SOCIAL CAPITAL AFFECTS THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT VIA TEACHER COLLABORATION

**Mehmet Tufan YALÇIN**

*Dr., Ministry of National Education, Karaman, Türkiye, tufan.yalcin@hotmail.com*

*ORCID: 0000-0001-8386-2308*

**Ömür ÇOBAN**

*Associate Professor, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Karaman, Türkiye, cobanomur@gmail.com*

*ORCID: 0000-0002-4702-4152*

**Cahide KİBAROĞLU**

*Doctorate, Yozgat Bozok University, Yozgat, Türkiye, cdslitas@gmail.com*

*ORCID: 0000-0002-7976-7145*

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### ABSTRACT

Teacher-related variables play an important role in the effectiveness and efficiency of educational organizations. This study addressed the relationship between teachers' social capital and organizational commitment. It also investigated whether teacher collaboration had a mediating role between social capital and organizational commitment. The study adopted a correlational survey model. The sample consisted of 422 teachers from 50 provinces in Turkey. Data were collected using the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, the Teacher Collaboration Scale, and the Social Capital Scale. The results of the study showed that social capital directly affected organizational commitment. The results also indicated that teacher collaboration had a mediating role between social capital and organizational commitment. Teacher-related variables make schools more effective. Collective school settings and social capital promote a collaborative school culture where teachers can develop skills that help them tackle educational issues and advance student outcomes. Policy-makers should develop activities to improve teachers' social capital.

**Keywords:** Social capital, teacher collaboration, organizational commitment, mediating role.

## INTRODUCTION

Organizational theories are based mainly on organizational efficiency and effectiveness and human capital is an important factor that ensures efficiency and effectiveness in organizations (Armstrong, 2009; Nesterova & Sabirianova, 1998; Shultz, 1968). In this context, teachers have a key role to affect the efficiency and effectiveness of schools. Recent research on teachers mainly focused on social capital, organizational commitment and teacher cooperation Day, 2002; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hoy & Miskel, 2010; Mattar, 2012). This situation reveals the necessity of understanding the relationships between concepts.

Teachers' professional commitment has a key role in the effectiveness of educational organizations. Teachers with professional commitment are likely to have better performance in teaching and learning processes (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021; Hallinger & Lu, 2014). Research shows a positive correlation between organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Banjarnahor et al., 2018; Ting, 2011), motivation (Bahrami et al., 2016; Posey et al., 2015), work attendance (Thatcher, Stepina & Boyle, 2003), teaching quality (Ebmeier, 2003), school improvement (Cooper, 2010), and student outcomes (Caprara et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2020; Domsch, 2009; Goddard et al., 2004). Teachers with low organizational commitment are more likely to exhibit low performance and quit their job (Geijsel et al., 2003).

Collective teacher efficacy and teacher cooperation affect teachers' organizational commitment (Cooper, 2010; Çoban & Atasoy, 2020; Ling & Mackenzie, 2001). Teachers who collaborate to achieve common organizational goals and improve organization efficiency become more committed to the organizations they work for (Graham, 1996). Firestone and Pennels (1993) found that teacher collaboration significantly affected teachers' organizational commitment. Sezgin (2010) reported that teamwork, colleague support, and collaborative tasks increased teacher commitment. Beattie (2002) argues that the culture of collaboration contributes to teacher commitment. Mantle-Bromley (1998) also maintains that collaborative professional development affects organizational commitment positively.

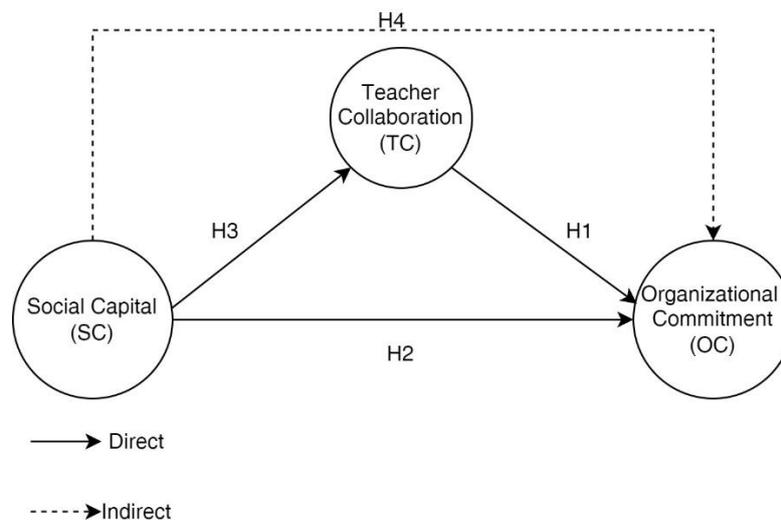
Commitment-based and professional solidarity organizational culture and social capital are also critical for cooperation and interaction among teachers (Antinluoma et al., 2018; Conrady, 2013; Parlar et al., 2020). Research shows that organizations with high social capital have high cooperation levels (Cohen & Prusak, 2001; Putnam, 1993). Therefore, we can argue that teachers who work for schools with high social capital are more likely to collaborate.

There is a large body of research on the effect of teachers' social capital on educational organizations (Demir, 2021). Additionally, Yen and friends (2014) worked on academicians and pointed out that social capital, especially collaboration, has a strong positive impact on commitment. The higher the social capital level of teachers, the higher the cooperative relationships among them (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). These collaborative practices lead them to strong organizational commitment (Holtom & O'Neill, 2004; Lee et al., 2004). Hence, we think that if teachers build social capital, they cooperate more and become more committed to the schools they work for.

This study also aimed to determine how Berkovich and Bogler's model (2021), which has been tested in western countries, works in non-western countries, such as Turkey. This study provided a comprehensive framework to develop organizational commitment within its sociocultural contexts and school-based reality. This is the first study to design a model with three variables (social capital, teacher collaboration, and organizational commitment). In this context, educational administrators will be able to develop policies to improve teachers' social capital. Teachers in countries with a central management approach (e.g., Turkey) may not have enough commitment for two reasons. First, rewards for external motivation (salary, career advancement, et.) are not functional. Second, there is no performance-based salary system. Therefore, educational administrators and decision-makers have no clue as to how to increase teacher commitment. Low-commitment teachers are less likely to attain organizational goals and improve organizational effectiveness (Celep, 2020). This study investigated whether teacher collaboration played a mediating role between teachers' social capital and organizational commitment.

### Theoretical Framework

This study designed a theoretical framework based on the recent literature on educational management and leadership (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Model

The following part focuses on the variables and their theoretical and empirical backgrounds and provides a basis for each hypothesis. The conceptual model was based on earlier research that suggests that social capital is directly related to organizational commitment and that teacher collaboration plays a mediating role between organizational commitment and social capital (Yen et al., 2014). Relational factors affecting teachers' organizational commitment are socio-affective factors (e.g., teacher collaboration) that positively affect teachers' organizational commitment (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021). Unlike Berkovich and Bogler's model, our model included social capital as the independent variable. Berkovich and Bogler (2021) also recommend that future researchers design elaborated research models to contribute to the current literature on organizational

commitment. Our model had four hypotheses. Three hypotheses focused on the direct relationship between social capital, teacher collaboration, and organizational commitment. One hypothesis focused on the indirect relationship between social capital and organizational commitment:

H<sub>1</sub>: Teacher collaboration has a positive effect on organizational commitment.

H<sub>2</sub>: Social capital has a positive effect on organizational commitment.

H<sub>3</sub>: Social capital has a positive effect on teacher collaboration.

H<sub>4</sub>: Teacher collaboration has a positive and indirect effect on organizational commitment.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Organizational Commitment***

Although commitment is defined differently, all definitions focus on bonding or linking one to an organization, even in difficult times (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021). In their definition, Hallinger and Lu (2014) emphasized affective engagement and attitudes toward organizational goals and targets. Research focuses on professional commitment with three dimensions: continuance, normative, and affective (Meyer et al., 2002). However, this study conceptualized affective commitment based on Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). Lodahl and Kejner define professional commitment as “the degree to which a person’s work performance affects his self-esteem,” while they define affective commitment as “strong psychological ties to their organization” (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226). In the context of education, affective commitment is a teacher's emotional commitment to his/her profession, school, and course objectives (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Teachers with affective commitment put extra effort into their work and stay at school for institutional goals (McInerney et al., 2015). In other words, they have a sense of belonging to their schools and show high performance beyond their role definition (McInerney et al., 2015, p. 926). Teachers with affective commitment produce positive and desired outcomes and show high performance (Ng & Feldman, 2011; Setyaningsih & Sunaryo, 2021). In addition, organizational commitment is critical to understanding performance, such as lateness, absenteeism, turnover, burnout, etc. (Geijsel et al., 2003; Yu, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2002). Research shows that teacher collaboration affects organizational commitment (Beattie, 2002; Cooper, 2010; Graham, 1996; Ling & Mackenzie, 2001). Therefore, this study hypothesized that teacher collaboration would positively affect organizational commitment (H<sub>1</sub>).

### ***Teacher Collaboration***

The concept of collaboration comes from adult learning theory which emphasizes efficient learning environments where people work together and learn from each other (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). From an educational point of view, teacher collaboration means that teachers share their inner-class and out-of-class experiences (Geijsel et al., 2009). Moreover, teachers create opportunities for each other in terms of their professional development

(Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ling & MacKenzie, 2001) and academic performance (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard et al., 2007). We used the term "teacher collaboration" suggested by Geijsel et al. (2009). This study suggested that teachers working in a collaborative atmosphere exchanged ideas and shared reflective practices about classroom instruction. Research suggests that a collaborative atmosphere should be supportive and friendly and encourage collegial support to overcome the challenges of teaching and learning (Demir & Durnalı, 2022; Ghedin & Aquario, 2020; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Effective teaching and collegial solidarity enhance student learning outcomes and result in low dropout and absenteeism rates (Chen et al., 2020). Moreover, peer mentoring and coaching help teachers develop problem-solving skills (Goddard et al., 2004b). Teacher collaboration encourages teachers to share ideas and materials and discuss problems (Limon & Durnalı 2017). Therefore, they can easily overcome difficult circumstances. In short, collegial support is vital for teacher professional development and teacher collaboration, enabling teachers to have a greater sense of ability to solve problems related to teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Research shows that teachers with high social capital are more likely to cooperate (Antinluoma et al., 2018, Cohen & Prusak, 2001; Conrady, 2013; Parlar et al., 2020; Putnam, 1993). Therefore, we suggested that social capital positively affected teacher collaboration (H<sub>3</sub>).

### **Social Capital**

Human Capital Theory, Social Reciprocity Theory, and Psychological Contracts Theory address the concept of social capital (Shultz, 1968; Watson & Papamarcos, 2002). Fundamental concepts in social capital are associated with establishing networks, setting norms, and building social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation among employees for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1993, 1995). Social capital has three dimensions: cognitive, structural, and relational (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; King, 2004; Smith et al., 1995; World Bank, 1999). School administrators build social capital by creating an environment of mutual trust, establishing social relations among related parties (teachers, students, parents, etc.), and building cooperation and a sense of belonging to schools (Falk, 2005; Gözübüyük Tamer, 2019; Töremen, 2002). Coleman and Hoffer (1987) argue that schools with strong social networks are better at providing high-quality instruction and operating efficiently. Research shows a positive correlation between social capital and academic performance, school attendance, student-teacher, school-parent, and employee cooperation (Coleman, 1988; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Goddard, 2003; Gözübüyük Tamer, 2019; John, 2005; Plagens, 2011; Putnam 1995, 2000; Smith et al., 1995; Steinberg, 1996; Teachman et al., 1997).

Communication networks, information sharing, and trust are sub-dimensions of social capital. They provide a sense of commitment and improve and strengthen the cooperation among organizational members (Cohen & Prusak, 2001; Erbaşı & Sanioğlu, 2016; Fukuyama, 2001; Putnam, 1993). Some researchers detected a positive relationship between social capital and organizational commitment (Alioğullar, 2021; Erbaşı & Sanioğlu, 2016; Kocaoğlu & Ener, 2018; Sadık & Ergüven Akbulut, 2020; Sayadi & Hayati, 2014; Watson & Papamarcos, 2002). This study also hypothesized that teachers at schools with high social capital were more likely to cooperate and had a high organizational commitment. In other words, we argue that social capital affects teachers'

organizational commitment via their cooperation. Therefore, we claimed that social capital has a positive effect on organizational commitment (H<sub>2</sub>) and teacher collaboration has a positive and indirect effect on organizational commitment (H<sub>4</sub>).

## **METHOD**

### **Research Model**

This study adopted a correlational survey design to examine the direct and indirect relationship between social capital, teacher collaboration, and organizational commitment. In correlational survey, researchers examine the relationships between two or more continuous quantitative variables by conducting analysis. In this survey, data is collecting from individuals or objects to investigate the relationships between variables and researchers make predictions for the possibility (Kalaian & Kasim, 2008).

### **Sampling**

The study population covered all teachers in Turkey in the 2022-2023 academic year. We determined the sample by using convenient sample. The sample consisted of 422 teachers from 50 provinces. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling. More than half the participants were women (64,2%; n=271). Less than a quarter of the participants had bachelor's degrees (20,6%; n=87). Participants were preschool (19,2%; n=81), primary school (26,1%; n=110), secondary school (21,6%; n=91), or high school teachers (32,7%; n=138), Participants were branch (38,6%; n=163), vocational (13%; n=55), preschool (25,4%; n=107), or classroom (22,5%; n=95) teachers.

### **Data Collection and Instrumentation**

The data were collected online using a sociodemographic characteristics questionnaire, the Social Capital Scale (SCS), the Teacher Cooperation Scale (TCS), and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Authorization was obtained from the developers of the scales. Permission was obtained from the Ministry of National Education.

#### ***Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)***

The OCQ consists of 15 items rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ("1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree"). It was developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) and adapted into Turkish by Özdemir and Turan (2018). Some items are "My school inspires me to do my best," "I am proud to be a part of this school," and "I am really interested in the fate of this school."

#### ***Teacher Collaboration Scale (TCS)***

The TCS was developed by Geijsel et al. (2009) and adapted into Turkish by Çoban and friends (2023). The scale consists of eight items rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ("1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree"). Items 3 and 6 are reverse scored. Some items are "My colleagues give me positive feedback about my coursework" and "My colleagues are only interested in their own lessons."

**The Social Capital Scale (SCS)**

The SCS was designed by Polatcan (2018). The scale consists of five subscales: (1) loyalty, (2) social interaction, (3) trust, (4) participation, and (5) cultural memory. The items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (“1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”). Some items are “Teachers are happy to work in this environment,” “Teachers are encouraged to participate in social and cultural activities,” “Parents show interest in school activities in this school,” and “Stories about the past of the school are told in this school.”

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to test the factor structure of the scales (Table 1). The OCQ had standardized loadings of ,790 to ,902. The SCS had standardized loadings of ,696 to ,883. The TCS had standardized loadings of ,492 to ,865. CFA values are in Table 1 (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** The Validity Results for the Scales

Scales	$\chi^2(df)$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
OCQ	17,679 (6)	,994	,985	,068	,014
TCS	56,510 (19)	,969	,954	,068	,027
SCS	1281,416 (427)	,907	,899	,069	,047

The results showed that the fit indices regarding the structure of the scales were at an acceptable level in terms of the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Inter-item correlations, item-total correlations, and Cronbach's alpha were calculated to determine the reliability of the scales (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The “commitment,” “social interaction,” “trust,” “participation,” and “cultural memory” subscales had a Cronbach's alpha of ,946, ,937, ,941, ,872, and ,896, respectively. The Teacher Collaboration Scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .904. The OCQ had a Cronbach's alpha of ,904 ( $p < .05$ ). The results showed that the scales were reliable.

**Data Analysis**

The data were organized using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, IBM, v. 25) and then transferred to Mplus 8.3 for analysis. Before analysis, frequencies and Mahalanobis distances were used to determine outliers. The verification status of the measurement model regarding the variables was tested in the analyses. Next, the predictions related to the model were analysed using the Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2019).

**FINDINGS**

This section addressed the results. Descriptive statistics and correlation values of the scales are in Table 2 (See Table 2).

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations among Variables

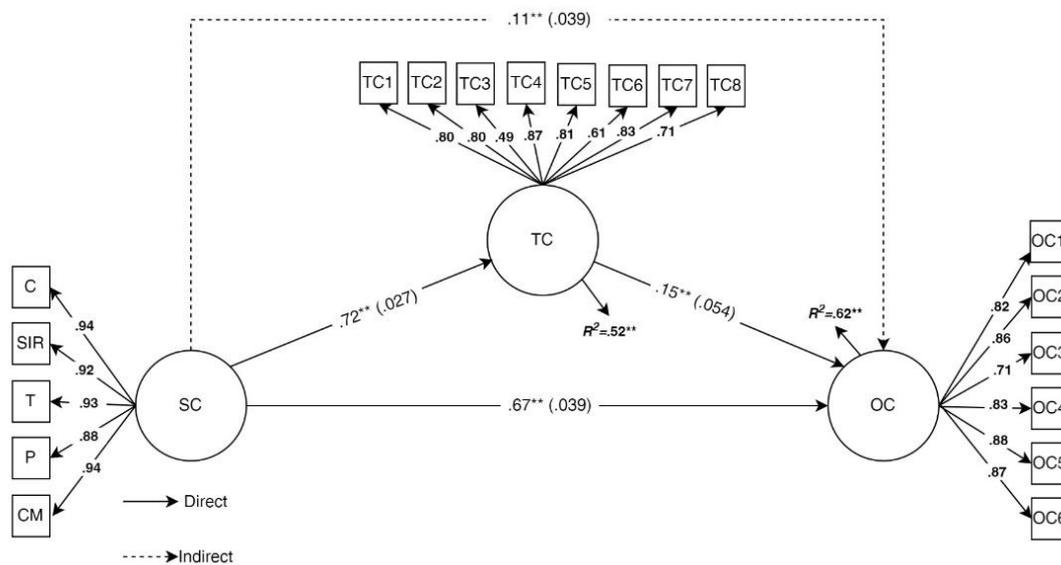
Variable	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	(1)	(2)	(3)
SC	3,41	,80	,98	1	,67**	,72**
TC	3,53	,84	,90		1	,58**
OC	3,60	,95	,93			1

Notes. SD: standard deviation,  $\alpha$ : Cronbach alpha; SC: social capital; TC: teacher collaboration, OC: organizational commitment. \* $p < 0,05$ ; \*\* $p < 0,01$

The scales had a reliability of greater than .70 (Nunnery & Bernstein, 1994). There was a positive correlation

between social capital and teacher collaboration ( $r = .67, p < .01$ ), suggesting that social capital leads to collaboration. There was a positive correlation between social capital and organizational commitment ( $r = .72, p < .01$ ). Moreover, there was a positive correlation between teacher collaboration and organizational commitment ( $r = .58, p < .01$ ).

The results show that teachers who cooperate more are likely to exhibit more professional behaviors. A single-level structural equation model was conducted to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Figure 2 shows the parameter estimates for the model (See Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Standardized Model Results

The fit indices for the structural equation model in Figure 2 are as follows:  $\chi^2 (df= 933) = 2660,383$ , RMSEA = ,066, SRMR = ,046, CFI = ,90, TLI = ,90. The chi-square/degree of freedom ratio, root mean square error (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square error (SRMR) values were below ,05. The comparative fit index (CFI) was greater than ,90. The TuckerLewis index was greater than ,90. These results indicated that the model agreed well with the data. Social capital had a moderately positive and direct effect on organizational commitment (Figure 2). A one-unit increase in social capital led to a ,67 unit increase in organizational commitment. This result indicates that teachers with higher social capital tend to have higher levels of organizational commitment. Teacher collaboration had a positive and low-level significant direct effect on organizational commitment. A one-unit increase in teacher collaboration led to a ,15 unit increase in organizational commitment ( $se = ,05; p < .01$ ). Social capital had a positive and highly significant effect on teacher collaboration ( $\beta = ,72; se = ,03; p < .01$ ). Teacher collaboration played a mediating role between social capital and organizational commitment ( $\beta = ,11; se = ,04; p < .01$ ). Direct and indirect effects among SC, TC and OC were given in Table 3 (See Table 3).

**Table 3.** SEM Estimates, Standard Errors and Confidence Intervals for the Model

Construct	Coefficient		95% Confidence Interval		p
	Estimate	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Direct effects					
TC → OC	,152	,054	,064	,240	,005**
SC → OC	,673	,048	,594	,752	,000**
SC → TC	,720	,027	,676	,764	,000**
Indirect effects					
SC → TC → OC	,109	,039	,046	,173	,005**

Notes. SE: standard error; SC: social capital; TC: teacher collaboration, OC: organizational commitment.

Organizational commitment was directly associated with teacher collaboration and social capital. The significant direct effect of teacher collaboration demonstrated that a one-unit increase in organizational commitment led to a ,15 ( $p < .01$ , 95% CI [.06, .24]) unit increase in organizational commitment, confirming Hypothesis 1. Moreover, the significant direct effect of social capital demonstrated that schools with more social capital had higher organizational commitment ( $\beta = .67$ ,  $p < .01$ , 95% CI [.59, .75]), confirming Hypothesis 2. Social capital moderately and directly affected teacher collaboration ( $\beta = .72$ ,  $p < .01$ , 95% CI [.68, .76]), confirming Hypotheses 3. This result shows that teachers with high social capital are more likely to collaborate to share their teaching practices and commitment. Social capital was significantly associated with organizational commitment through teacher collaboration, confirming Hypothesis 4. The total indirect effect was ,11 ( $p < .01$ , 95% CI [.05, .17]). This result indicates that teacher collaboration plays a mediating role between schools' social capital and teachers' commitment (Table 3).

### CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

Organizational outcomes are critical for determining schools' efficiency and effectiveness. Teacher attributes play a crucial role in this phenomenon (Hallinger, 2005; Mattar, 2012). We tested teachers' organizational commitment with some socio-affective mediators, such as teacher collaboration and teacher social capital (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021). Our first result showed that teacher collaboration directly impacted organizational commitment. We developed a structural equation model (SEM) to test this hypothesis. The results showed a significant relationship between teacher collaboration and organizational commitment, suggesting that if teachers work together to achieve learning outcomes, they become proud of their schools, think of them as the best schools, and focus on their success. The hypothesis concerning the relationship between teacher collaboration and organizational commitment was supported by earlier research, indicating that teacher collaboration had a significant effect on organizational commitment (e.g., Celep, 2000; McInerney et al., 2015). One limitation of the present study was that we did not look into the effect of school leadership factors on organizational commitment. Therefore, researchers should design complex models to investigate the effect of school leadership on organizational commitment.

Our second result showed a positive relationship between social capital and organizational commitment, suggesting that teachers with higher social capital had a higher commitment to their schools. This result is

consistent with the literature (Alioğullar, 2021; Erbaşı & Sanioğlu, 2016; Kocaoğlu & Ener, 2018; Sadık & Ergüven Akbulut, 2020; Sayadi & Hayati, 2014; Watson & Papamarcos, 2002). Teachers with strong relationships and a high sense of trust are more likely to have high organizational commitment, resulting in less absenteeism, turnover, and lateness. If schools focus on the sub-dimensions of social capital -communication networks, information sharing, and trust, teachers can develop a sense of commitment.

Our third result showed a positive relationship between social capital and teacher collaboration, indicating that teachers work together for their professional development when they accumulate social capital. In this way, they develop relationships based on sincerity, trust, and friendship. This result is consistent with the literature (Goddard, 2003; Gözübüyük Tamer, 2019; John, 2005; Plagens, 2011; Putnam, 1995, 2000; Smith et al., 1995; Steinberg, 1996; Teachman et al., 1997). Schools with teachers with high social capital are more likely to have a climate of mutual trust and a strong community. Moreover, teachers with high social capital can provide high-quality instruction.

Our last hypothesis proposed that social capital would be positively related to organizational commitment mediated by teacher collaboration. In other words, we suggested that social capital had a small effect on organizational commitment through teacher collaboration. This result is consistent with the literature. For example, Ting (2011) examined the mediating role of socio-affective factors (e.g., teacher collaboration) and found that school climate and social networks based on teachers' needs had a positive impact on organizational commitment (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021).

Our results indicate an indirect relationship between social capital and organizational commitment through teacher collaboration. This result is consistent with earlier research, which suggests that school principals' facilitator role in teaching and supportive role in teachers' needs would create a collaborative atmosphere and ensure teacher collaboration and organizational commitment (Çoban et al., 2020; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Creating greater emotional commitment would reduce the execution gap and improve well-built social networks among teachers. Therefore, teacher-level variables make schools more effective. A collective school environment and teachers' social capital promote a collaborative school culture where teachers can develop the skills that help them tackle educational issues and advance student outcomes.

#### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Therefore, the results do not indicate a cause-and-effect relationship. We recommend that future studies collect longitudinal data. We found that social capital and teacher collaboration were associated with organizational commitment. We also recommend that researchers examine school principals' leadership styles on those variables.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Our results suggest that schools encourage teachers to accumulate social capital and build a mutual atmosphere to improve their effectiveness. Policymakers should focus on improving teachers' social capital in order to transform pre-service and in-service training. Additionally, school principals create a collaborative and supportive climate to accrue social capital, teacher collaboration. Hence, they make sure their teachers commit to their schools strongly.

## Acknowledgements or Notes

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## ETHICAL TEXT

"In current study; journal writing rules, publishing principles, research and publishing ethics rules and journal ethics rules are followed. The authors are responsible for all kinds of violations related to the study. The data of the study were collected in the 2022-2023 academic year. The ethical permission is taken from Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University Publication Ethics Committee with 102485 numbered official letter."

**Author(s) Contribution Rate:** In this study, the contribution rate of first author is 50%, the second author's contribution rate is 30%, and the last author's is 20%.

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