

The relationships among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency among teachers of Syrian refugee children in Turkey

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Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Abstract

Within the provision of education, teachers typically have the closest contact and play a key role in meeting the needs of refugee children through effective communication to achieve culturally qualified education and the provision of more humanistic approach. This descriptive cross-sectional design study is aimed to explore the relationships among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency in teachers of Syrian refugee children in Turkey. Data were collected from 367 teachers of Syrian refugee children. Teachers of Syrian refugee children who participated in the study had a high level of psychological resilience, moderate level of empathic tendencies and a high level of intercultural sensitivity. Statistically significant relationships were found among study variables. The data reveal that there is a relationship among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency among teachers of Syrian refugee children in Turkey. Furthermore, regression analysis revealed that psychological resilience significantly supports intercultural sensitivity and empathic tendencies.

KEYWORDS

culture, education, empathy, refugee, resilience, teacher

1 | INTRODUCTION

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports more than 6.7 million Syrian refugees internationally, especially in neighbouring countries. Of those, Turkey alone accommodates more than 3.6 million (UNHCR, 2016). Nearly half of Syrian refugees are aged under 18 and two thirds of them are at school age (UNHCR Turkey, 2015). This forces Turkey to develop new plans and strategies to make regulations and reforms more acute particularly in the field of education (Dallal, 2016). Education is the most important instrument for refugee children to remove the traces of trauma, provide significant aims for social mobility and enhance their social and structural integration to society (Çelik & Erdoğan, 2017). However, refugee children experience several disadvantages in adopting to

new educational system and language, suffering from cultural challenges and not easily accepted by their peers and teachers (Fazel et al., 2012; Hart, 2009). These disadvantages might decline the school success, and also it can lead to isolation, discrimination and psychological problems (i.e. anxiety disorder, depression, phobias; Ahmadi Forooshani et al., 2019; Al-Krenawi, 2019; Seker & Sirkeci, 2015). Additionally, Turkish families do not want their children to study with refugee children at the same school, and even some teachers accept refugee children as traits for social order and try hard to exclude refugee children in school settings (Soylu et al., 2020). Such negative perceptions make those students vulnerable to psychosocial problems and force them not to mitigate Turkish culture.

In Turkey, Syrian refugee children entered the Turkish education system so quickly, however, Turkish Education System was not

ready to cope with the issues arisen from cross-cultural differences. Cross-cultural education requires that education environments should be organised in accordance with the cultural differences of the students (Türkan et al., 2016). Within the provision of education, teachers typically have the closest contact and play a key role in meeting the needs of refugee children through effective communication to achieve culturally sensitive education and the provision of more humanistic approach (Seker & Sirkeci, 2015). By this way, refugee children can be able to mitigate Turkish system and do not suffer from psychosocial problems (Aydın & Kaya, 2019). With this regard, teachers' cultural sensitivity is very valuable element to provide equal education without discrimination. Cultural sensitivity is a dynamic, lifelong learning process, requiring the combining of specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that enhance the humanistic effects throughout the education (Biasutti et al., 2020; Levi, 2019). It also contributes to the reduction in disparities through assessment of cultural needs using the complex combination of cultural knowledge, awareness, attitudes and skills (Douglas et al., 2014). Moreover, culturally sensitive educational perspective can help overcome the risks of cultural humiliation, racism, classism, sexism, ageism and stereotyping in school environment by providing empathetic, respectful and effective education (Walter, 2018). It is also important for teachers to examine cultural expressions of diverse populations while providing culturally sensitive education that will optimise educational outcomes (Culbertson & Constant, 2015; Wellman & Bey, 2015). Attending cultural sensitivity helps develop professionally appropriate attitudes, values and beliefs and enhances the active participation of refugee children in their education (Biasutti et al., 2020; Strekalova-Hughes & Wang, 2017).

In today's educational system, teachers should develop orientations towards instruction, and interpersonal interactions with children, that produce evidence of culturally responsive pedagogy (Warren, 2018). Thus, teachers should take responsibility to actualise culturally sensitive education (Dolby, 2012; Warren, 2018). However, teachers should also cope with the challenges that cross-cultural education brings such as; completing the curriculum in time, balancing the academic growth of Syrian refugee children with their Turkish peers and overcoming language barriers (Akman, 2020; Cırıt-Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Sartaş et al., 2016). In the long run, such a high level of effort to provide culturally sensitive education can deplete the emotional and psychological resources of teachers and, consequently, render them more vulnerable to highly distressing experiences with regard to cultural issues (Gutentag et al., 2018; Sharifian, 2017). The aforementioned teaching processes causes distress among some teachers' life (Greaves et al., 2020; Richardson, 2018; Sharifian, 2017), whereas other teachers show resilience and seem them to thrive (Bowles & Arnup, 2016; Damico, 2020). Past studies showed that psychological distress negatively influence teaching environment and often results in cultural insensitivity (Arar et al., 2018; Aydın & Kaya, 2019; Greaves et al., 2020; Richardson, 2018). Literature has also demonstrated that teachers' cultural insensitivity effect students negatively (i.e. missing learning opportunities, negative learning environment without

What is known about this topic?

- Syrian refugee children have adaptation problems in Turkish Educational system.
- Teachers are struggling to communicate with Syrian refugee children.
- Cultural differences are often the main cause of educational discrimination.

What this paper adds?

- It is evident that delivering culturally sensitive education by teachers is essential to refugee children in today's educational system.
- The findings showed that the psychological resilience of teachers positively affected their empathetic tendencies and increases intercultural sensitivity.
- The findings underline the strong relationship among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency in teachers of Syrian refugee children.

empathetic tendency, anxiety, humiliation, psychological distress; Maharaj-Landaeta, 2019; Richardson, 2018; Soylu et al., 2020; Taskin & Erdemli, 2018). On the other hand, there are evidences about the positive impacts of teachers' psychological resilience on better equipped refugee education (Cachón Zagalaz et al., 2020; Ee & Chang, 2010; Güner & Levent, 2018; Jennings 2019). Psychological resilience is defined as psychological skills and abilities to benefit from social and external sources effectively (Deshields et al., 2016). In other words, it allows individuals to cope with stressful events through the effective utilisation of internal and external resources (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Teachers who develop and nurture their own psychological resilience derive a sense of empathetic tendency which allows to maintain positive relationships, solve problems skillfully, stay motivated and better equipping to foster psychological resilience in children (Bowles & Arnup, 2016; Damico, 2020; Ee & Chang, 2010). Empathy is the ability to read other people's cues to their psychological and emotional states, and empathetic tendency is the motivation that improves teachers' flexibly to respond and communicate with children whatever their racial and cultural background is (Dolby, 2012; Warren, 2018). Hence, it is evident that psychological resilience offers teachers to insight into the process of developing empathetic awareness towards different cultures (Broome, 1991; Warren, 2018; Zhu, 2011). Regarding refugee education, highly resilient teachers can promote not only culturally sensitive learning environment (Bottrell, 2009; Cachón Zagalaz et al., 2020; Jennings, 2019) but also empathetic tendency (Ee & Chang, 2010; Güner & Levent, 2018).

Given that psychological resilience and empathetic tendency might help teachers understand the refugee students and provide culturally responsive education (Dolby, 2012; Warren, 2018). To be

able to develop effective and appropriate education for Syrian refugee children, it is crucial to understand the psychological resilience, empathetic tendency and cultural sensitivity of teachers and the association between these concepts. However, little attention is paid to this issue and to our knowledge, to our knowledge, no published studies have explained the relationships among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency in teachers of Syrian refugee children in Turkey. Resulting from the gaps in knowledge described above, the aim of the current study is as follows: to investigate the relationships among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency in teachers of Syrian refugee children in Turkey.

2 | AIM

This study is aimed to explore the relationships among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency in teachers of Syrian refugee children in Turkey.

The study tried to find answers to the following questions;

- Is there a relation among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency among teachers of Syrian refugee children?
- Are there any mediator effects of psychological resilience on intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency among teachers of Syrian refugee children?

3 | METHOD

3.1 | Design

This descriptive cross-sectional design study was carried out from June to October 2019 in the 44 elementary, mainly serving to Syrian refugee children (Syrian refugee children take classes with their Turkish peers). The article has been written in accordance with the STROBE Checklist.

3.2 | Participants

To calculate the sample size, G*power, version 3.1.7, was used. Since there was no similar study, the calculation was based on pilot data collected from 50 teachers of Syrian refugee children. This pilot collection was not included in the study population. The power was set at 0.99 and at an α value of 0.05. The required sample size was calculated to be 367. The participants of this study were selected through convenience sampling.

All teachers who met the inclusion criteria were invited to participate in the study. Those who were interested in the study were informed about the aims and methods of the study. The researcher asked their willingness about participations to get informed consent,

after consent was obtained, tools and a pen were given to the participants. While the participant filled the tools, the researcher was ready for any questions of the participants.

The researchers contacted 550 eligible participants. A total of 183 of them declined the invitation to participate in the study. The most commonly provided reasons were as follows: feeling "uncomfortable", a lack of interest and/or time. In total, data were collected from 367 teachers.

Study inclusion criteria were (a) being teacher for Syrian refugee children at least 1 year and (b) voluntary participation. Purposively, only teachers of Syrian refugee children were included to this study for some reasons. First, although Turkey host refugees from many different regions, majority of these refugees are Syrian and most of the them are school aged. Second, teachers perceptions can change according to nationality of refugee children (i.e. majority of the school aged children are Syrian and their educational background is too poor when compared with other refugee children from other nationalities). Third, most of the Syrian children cannot attend a school before, thus, they were very uninformed about any education and they entered to Turkish educational system so quickly. Fourth, Syrian refugee children are admitted to specific formal classes taught in Turkish as soon as they enrol. These classes called '*combining classes*' which serve only Turkish and Syrian children to be able to create a multicultural environment and help Syrian refugee children adopt better to Turkish system. Hence, we could include only teachers of Syrian refugee children. Lastly, providing appropriate education to Syrian refugee children is still the main issue in Turkish education system.

3.3 | Data collection

The participants were recruited from the elementary schools, which offer education for Syrian and Turkish students. Once potential participants were identified and deemed eligible, researcher explained all study procedures and provided a copy of the written consent form. The researcher approached the teachers, enquired about their willingness to participate in the study and requested their consent. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Ministry of National Education in Turkey and with the Helsinki declaration. Eligible teachers received a printed letter, which informed them about the study. After obtaining their consent, researcher showed a venue (a suitable meeting room within the school) where they could complete the assessments. Then, data were collected using Data Sheet, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CDRS), The intercultural sensitivity scale and Empathetic Tendency Scale. Data collection took approximately 30 min for each participant.

Information about data collection tools was as follows:

Data Sheet is developed to determine the socio-demographic characteristics and perspectives of teachers related to cultural

sensitivity based on previous literature (Bonanno et al., 2011, 2012; Connor & Davidson, 2003; Goroshit & Hen, 2016).

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CDRS) is the measurement of the resilience, developed by Connor and Davidson (2003). CDRS is commonly used scale for determining resilience in teachers. Turkish version of the scale has been validated and assessed for reliability by Kararmak (2010). It is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, comprised of 25 items. The score is ranging from 0 to 100. Higher scores reflect greater resilience. The scale includes three sub-dimensions titled "tenacity and personal competence", "tolerance of negative affect" and "tendency toward spirituality." The Cronbach's α value was 0.89 in the Turkish validity-reliability study of scale (Kararmak, 2010), and the Cronbach alpha in this study was 0.92.

The intercultural sensitivity scale is developed by Chen and Starosta (2000). The Turkish validity and reliability was made by Üstün (2011). The scale is a commonly used tool to assess intercultural sensitivity in teachers and it appears to have utility in determining the intercultural sensitivity levels. The scale consists of 24 items with 5-point Likert type. The scale involves five subscales titled *interaction engagement*, *respect for cultural differences*, *interaction confidence*, *interaction enjoyment* and *interaction attentiveness*. Nine items of the scale are reversed coded. The Cronbach's α value was 0.88 in the Turkish validity-reliability study of scale (Üstün, 2011), and the Cronbach alpha in this study was 0.80.

Empathetic Tendency Scale is developed by Dökmen (1988), was a 5-pointed Likert type scale and was composed of 20 items. It is a commonly used tool to assess empathetic tendency in teachers. It mainly evaluates an individual's potential ability to empathise with others. The score is ranging from 0 to 100. The Cronbach's α value of the scale was 0.82, and the Cronbach alpha in this study was 0.76.

3.4 | Analyses

The SPSS 23 statistical software was used for data analysis. The socio-demographic data were summarised as count, per cent and mean \pm standard deviation. Normality test with Shapiro-Wilks approach was adopted to explore the use of tests. As the variables in the sample were normally distributed, parametric tests were used for analysis. The associations and the interrelationships among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency were assessed using Pearson's correlations. Linear regression analysis was used to evaluate moderating effects. Unstandardised indirect effects were computed for each of the variables, and the 95% confidence interval (CI) was computed. For all analyses, $p < 0.05$ was accepted for statistical significance.

3.5 | Ethical considerations

The ethical approval was given by the Hacettepe University's Research Ethics Board before it was initiated and the necessary

permission from the schools was approved. We obtained verbal as well as written informed consent from each prior to their inclusion in the study, and their anonymity was preserved. All the written materials that were created during the study were stored in a locked safe.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Characteristics

Of the teachers 51.5% ($n = 189$) were aged over 40 years; 83.4% ($n = 306$) were female; 83.9% ($n = 308$) were married; 89.1% ($n = 327$) were graduated to BSc level; 54.0% ($n = 198$) were working as a teacher for 16–30 years and 52.6% ($n = 193$) have experience in refugee children education for 3–5 years. Many of them (82.3%; $n = 302$) reported that they do not have willingness to educate refugee children, 70.8% ($n = 260$) found it difficult to educate refugee children, 76.0% ($n = 279$) find it easier to educate children from the same culture, more than half (56.1%, $n = 206$) have not heard about culturally sensitive education and one third (36.8%, $n = 135$) felt competent to educate refugee children (Table 1).

4.2 | Participants' psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency ($n = 367$)

The findings showed that teachers' psychological resilience severe high (95.87 ± 13.97 , range; 60.00), while empathetic tendency levels were medium (59.19 ± 5.05 , range; 40.00). Intercultural sensitivity of teachers was also high (80.25 ± 6.45 , range; 37.00) (Table 2).

4.3 | Interrelationships among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency

Positive associations were reported between the CDRS and empathetic tendency scores, with the Pearson's correlation coefficients (r_s) ranging from 0.035 to 0.193 (all at $p < 0.05$). Additionally, many CDRS scores were significantly correlated with the *intercultural sensitivity* total and domain scores for "interaction engagement", "respect for cultural differences", "interaction confidence", "interaction enjoyment" and "interaction attentiveness" (all at $p < 0.05$). The CDRS scores were significantly and positively associated with the *intercultural sensitivity* total and all domains with the r_s ranging from 0.81 to 0.512 (all at $p < 0.05$). The CDRS scores were positively correlated with *empathetic tendency* total (r_s ranged from -0.193 to 0.035 , all at $p < 0.05$). The empathetic tendency score was low and insignificant with the domain for "tendency toward spirituality" (Table 3).

TABLE 1 Characteristics of teachers

Characteristics	n	%
Age		
20–30	67	18.3
31–40	111	30.2
>40	189	51.5
Gender		
F	306	83.4
M	61	16.6
Marital status		
Married	308	83.9
Single	59	16.1
Educational level		
BSc	327	89.1
MSc	40	10.9
Professional experience duration as a teacher		
0–5 years	59	16.1
6–15 years	98	26.7
16–30 years	198	54.0
≥31 years	12	3.3
Experience duration as a teacher in refugee children education		
1–2 years	174	47.4
3–5 years	193	52.6
Willingness to educate refugee children		
Yes	65	17.7
No	302	82.3
Find it difficult to educate refugee children		
Yes	260	70.8
No	73	19.9
Not sure	34	9.3
Find it easier to educate children from the same culture		
Yes	279	76.0
No	43	11.7
Not sure	45	12.3
Heard about culturally sensitive education		
Yes	124	33.8
No	206	56.1
Not sure	37	10.1
Feel competent to educate refugee children		
Yes	124	33.8
No	108	29.4
Not sure	135	36.8

4.4 | Mediator effects of psychological resilience on intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency

The psychological resilience increased the intercultural sensitivity ($b = 0.482$, $p < 0.001$) and positively affected empathetic tendency ($b = 0.161$, $p < 0.001$). The overall results explained 23.2% of the

TABLE 2 Participants' psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency ($n = 367$)

	M	SD	Range
CDRS domain and total score			
Tenacity and personal competence	59.44	8.93	60.00
Tolerance of negative affect	21.36	4.28	24.00
Tendency towards spirituality	14.96	2.78	16.00
CDRS total	95.87	13.97	100.00
Intercultural sensitivity domain and total score			
Interaction engagement	19.97	2.29	15.00
Respect for cultural differences	22.28	3.04	16.00
Interaction confidence	15.96	1.74	13.00
Interaction enjoyment	11.16	2.55	12.00
Interaction attentiveness	10.86	1.82	11.00
Intercultural sensitivity total	80.25	6.45	37.00
Empathetic tendency total score	59.19	5.05	40.00

Abbreviation: CDRS, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale.

variation in intercultural sensitivity and 2.6% of the empathetic tendency (Table 4).

5 | DISCUSSION

Refugee education commonly perceived as a crisis among teachers (Arar et al., 2018; Sağlam & İlksen-Kanbur, 2017), however, teachers also had the ability to tackle challenges stemming from cultural differences (Bowles & Arnup, 2016; Damico, 2020; Greaves et al., 2020). In this regard, psychological resilience which is defined as the ability to bounce back from adverse experiences (Connor & Davidson, 2003) and has crucial importance in education processes to overcome challenges related to cultural differences (Greaves et al., 2020). Past studies showed that teachers' psychological resilience was positively related to psychologically positive outcomes (Gu, 2014; Gunnestad, 2003; Jennings 2019). The study conducted by Güner and Levent (2018) reported that there is a relation between intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency of teachers. Gunnestad's study (2003) also showed the close association of resilience and intercultural sensitivity. Similar to past findings, the present findings clearly emphasised to the positive associations of the psychological resilience of teachers of Syrian refugee children with empathetic tendency and multicultural sensitivity. These associations may be attributed to the fact that resilience enables individuals to cope with distressful new experiences and adapt better. By this way, it not only helps teachers provide culturally sensitive education with an empathetic tendency but also enhances the

TABLE 3 Associations of psychological resilience, empathetic tendency and intercultural sensitivity ($n = 367$)

CDRS	Empathetic tendency	Intercultural sensitivity					
	Total	Total	Interaction engagement	Respect for cultural differences	Interaction confidence	Interaction enjoyment	Interaction attentiveness
Total	0.161**	0.482**	0.351**	0.185**	0.311**	0.201**	0.378**
Tenacity and personal competence	0.179**	0.512**	0.333*	0.221**	0.300**	0.252**	0.388**
Tolerance of negative affect	0.193**	0.338**	0.320**	0.087	0.270**	0.104*	0.244**
Tendency towards spirituality	0.035	0.252**	0.217**	0.081	0.180**	0.031	0.269**

Note: Bold fonts are used for highlighting correlation coefficients with statistical significance.

Abbreviation: CDRS, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale.

*Significant at 0.05.

**Significant at 0.01.

TABLE 4 Psychological resilience as a mediator of intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency among teachers of Syrian refugee children ($n = 367$)

	Intercultural sensitivity				Empathetic tendency			
	Coeff.	SE	p	95% CI	Coeff.	SE	p	95% CI
CDRS	0.482	8.04	<0.001	-3.68 to 27.96	0.161	8.59	<0.001	105-434 to 139.221
	$R^2 = 0.232$			$F = 108.99$	$R^2 = 0.026$			$F = 9.50$

professional learning environment for refugee children. Moreover, the study's findings have shown the significant contribution of resilience to the empathetic tendency and intercultural sensitivity of teachers. Considering the present results, it is evident that high psychological resilience in teachers might contribute to the promotion of intercultural sensitivity and facilitating better empathetic tendency level. In other words, teachers with high resilience are more likely to be open and interested in students' cultural needs in the learning environment. As stated by Nieto (2003, p. 125), all teachers "*need to know more about the students they teach*" for effective teaching. Additionally, previous studies showed that teachers who have a high level of intercultural sensitivity are mindful of intercultural interaction, respect for differences, show confidence in interacting with culturally diverse student population and enjoy this interaction (Güner & Levent, 2018; Sağlam & İlksen-Kanbur, 2017). Since empathy is the ability to express emotions experienced by others based on similar or shared experiences (Liu & Dong, 2019), teachers with empathetic tendency may contribute to students' learning by providing strong teacher-student communication (Meyers et al., 2019). Thereby, teachers' understanding of the experiences of refugee students in the context of the learning environment and their sensitivity to what they feel can help them gain insight into their students' needs. In this way, they can offer better solutions to their students with challenges related to adaptation and learning.

As the main sources of refugee education, teachers' resilience is important to obtain better psychological outcomes among refugee children (Damico, 2020). An important finding of this study pertains to the high level of resilience of teachers. However, teachers were still struggling to activate their resources to bounce back from adversity. This was a very surprising finding which may stem from the teachers negative prejudices about Syrian refugee children. In Soylu et al.'s study (2020), it is reported that Turkish teachers accept refugee children as traits for social order. Another possible explanation of this result can be arisen from compelling and destabilising factors (i.e. completing the curriculum in time, balancing the academic growth of Syrian refugee children with their Turkish peers and overcoming language barriers) that are found in previous studies (Akman, 2020; Cirit-Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Sarıtaş et al., 2016). Moreover, this result can be caused by the unwillingness of teachers to educate Syrian refugee children. Majority of the participating teachers emphasised that they were not willing to educate Syrian refugee children. This unwillingness of teachers was also a very surprising finding, whereas participating teachers' intercultural sensitivity levels were high in the present study. The unpreparedness of teachers for refugee education can be the main reason of these unwillingness of teachers who also found it difficult to educate Syrian refugee children. In Er and Bayındır' study (2015), it is found that a large majority of teachers did not have any training on refugee children's education and that a large majority of teachers believed

that they would not be able to perform the education of refugee children without problems. Similarly, Mercan Uzun and Bütün (2016) reported that some teachers of refugee students felt inadequate to solve problems. These in turn can lead to poor relationship between teachers and refugee children and hinder the positive educational processes.

Another valuable factor to provide proper educational environment for refugee children is intercultural sensitivity. In the present study, unlike the current literature in Turkey (Kardeş & Akman, 2018; Rengi & Polat, 2014; Sağlam & İlksen-Kanbur, 2017; Sakız, 2016), intercultural sensitivity levels of teachers were high, nevertheless majority of the teachers reported unwillingness to educate Syrian refugee children which in turn may hinder the intercultural sensitivity. This result made us think that teachers were not aware of the real mean of intercultural sensitivity. The finding posed above can be attributed to several reasons. First, teachers can be inadequate in a spectrum of knowledge and skills regarding approaches and strategies used in the education of diverse student populations within disadvantaged environments. Even if the intercultural sensitivity of teachers is high, they may not have sufficient knowledge and skills about how to carry out culturally sensitive education. Second, intercultural competencies draw a broader framework covering intercultural sensitivity and awareness using different teaching styles and various classroom management strategies, adapting the content of the curriculum to reflect the cultural diversity of students and applying various pedagogies such as discourse, participation and evaluation (Gay, 2018). In other words, intercultural sensitivity may not always lead to intercultural competence, whereas intercultural competency involves sensitivity towards cultural differences. Consistent with this knowledge, in the present study only one third of the teachers indicated themselves competent enough to educate refugee children. Similarly, Sağlam and İlksen-Kanbur's study (2017) reported that teachers of Syrian refugee students in Turkey were positive in "*communication*" and "*adaptation*" in teaching these children but felt inadequate in the "*competence*". Third, Syrian students continue their education in combining classes with their Turkish peers. This is why the teacher of these classes have a great level of distress about completing the current curriculum, efforts to balance the academic growth of Turkish students with that of Syrian refugee students, crowded classrooms and overcome language barriers (Akman, 2020; Cirit-Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Sarıtaş et al., 2016), in turn, these factors can impact on negative perceptions of teachers towards the education Syrian refugee children. Taken together, it is obvious that there is a need for an enhanced education to increase teachers' cultural sensitivity and further studies to investigate the deeper insights of teachers about intercultural sensitivity and related factors that have possible effects on cultural sensitivity. In other words, if teachers had a higher level of cultural competency and properly prepared for refugee education, they would have less difficulties, as well as increased adaptation to refugee education. In this study, interestingly findings also indicated that more than half of the

participating teachers have not heard about the concept of '*culturally sensitive education*' before. This finding also made us think that participating teachers do not have insight and awareness towards cultural differences, whereas their scale scores were high (intercultural sensitivity scores). On this point, pre-service courses should be offered about culturally sensitive education throughout the undergraduate period of teachers. Previous studies pointed out that lacking professional development opportunities that address the context of working with refugee students can also affect teachers negatively in culturally sensitive education (Çelik & Özenç-Ira, 2019; Moneymaker-Lamson, 2013). Additionally, Cin (2018) observed that teachers who participated in in-service education about culturally responsive pedagogy were shown to have an increased level of resilience. This finding is noteworthy because it suggests that professional development opportunities offered about culturally sensitive education can increase teachers' resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathic tendencies.

Overall, the present findings underscore the relationships among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency of teachers of Syrian refugee children. Additionally, the findings highlighted that resilience predicts the empathetic tendency and intercultural sensitivity levels of teachers. Although, teachers have an unwillingness towards educating Syrian refugee children, the results suggest that enhancing proper educations to develop a deeper insight towards cultural differences could alleviate more positive learning environment for Syrian refugee children.

5.1 | Limitations

The current study has some limitations. The first is that this research is cross-sectional. Various dimensions of teacher psychological resilience and its relationships with relevant concepts would be more investigated with a longitudinal design. Besides, personal and professional protective factors associated with the psychological resilience of teachers of refugee students should be further explored. Second, the relevant variables in the study were measured by scales. Participants may have answered the items incorrectly due to misunderstanding, fatigue or inattention. Third, interpretation of the results should be made cautiously, as causality between variables cannot be achieved. The relationships among study variables can be reciprocal. Finally, resilience levels of participating teachers can depend on age, experience, gender, etc.

6 | CONCLUSION

This study sought to explore to the relationships among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency in teachers of Syrian refugee children in Turkey. It is evident that delivering culturally sensitive education is essential to refugee children in today's educational system, requiring teachers to appreciate and

adapt their perspectives to the cultural needs of refugees with the help of psychological resilience and empathy.

The findings reveal that there is a relationship among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency in teachers of Syrian refugee children in Turkey. In addition, the findings showed that the psychological resilience of teachers positively affected their empathic tendencies but that teachers need help in raising their own empathic tendencies. This includes developing the positive approaches to explore differences through appropriate communication and overcoming barriers arising from cultural differences. It is also evident that resilience is a predictor of intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency of teachers. In this regard, it can be said that there is a need for further studies to examine teachers' deeper perceptions towards educating Syrian refugee children with qualitative designs. Research on this topic can also contribute to the development of more effective programs for teachers' professional development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are grateful to all participants who agreed to participate voluntarily in this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.


AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

YSÜÖ and SÇ: study design. YSÜÖ, SÇ, GÖİ: data collection and analysis. YSÜÖ, SÇ, GÖİ, manuscript writing.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

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How to cite this article: Üzar-Özçetin YS, Çelik S, Özenç-Ira G. The relationships among psychological resilience, intercultural sensitivity and empathetic tendency among teachers of Syrian refugee children in Turkey. *Health Soc Care Community*. 2020;00:1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.13215>