



# POSITIVE THINKING PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS

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## Abstract

*This study was conducted within the scope of the Positive Schools Project to shed light on teachers' perspectives on reflecting positive thinking in their own branches and practices in the teaching environment. Twenty-four teachers who received training within the scope of the project and agreed to participate in the study voluntarily were included in the study. Phenomenology was used as the research design. The content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained through interviews during the research process. Based on the results of the analyses performed, tables describing the themes, sub-themes, and codes were created, and explanations representing the views of the teachers were provided. The findings of the study revealed that teachers from all levels of education, from pre-school to upper secondary school, think that there is a need for activities on positive thinking and that they can transfer the understanding of positive thinking to their branches. When the views of teachers on the need for activities to be developed within the scope of positive thinking for their students were examined, the themes of difficulties in adaptation to school, the trauma process, and the need for effective communication-interaction emerged. Teachers suggested activities for self-awareness, unity awareness, and awareness of contribution within the scope of positive thinking in schools. In addition to the views of teachers on positive thinking, the study points to some negative situations that teachers have observed in their students. These negative situations include dysfunctional self-confidence, dissatisfaction with possessions, non-functional goals or goals for saving the day, and difficulties in purposeful planning.*

**Keywords:** *positive thinking, positive schools, school adaptation, problems in education*

## Introduction

Well-being includes the components of having a meaningful social role, feeling happy and hopeful, being in positive social relationships and in a supportive environment, and overcoming difficulties with positive skills (INEE, 2018). This is the point where the concept of positive thinking comes into play. Positive thinking refers to a way of thinking focused on bringing the positive to the forefront (Gür, 2021). A person's thoughts about an event affect their feelings, and their feelings affect their behavior. Therefore, the way a person thinks shapes his/her perception and construction of life and emotions. The way of thinking influences behaviors and reactions. The way of thinking affects emotions, and emotions affect the brain structure (Doidge, 2019). Therefore, it can be stated that how one thinks is a factor that changes an individual's quality of life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2012). The experiences of a person affect their progress as the brain tends to take a shortcut to do what it can most easily do, and the person automatically reacts accordingly. Therefore, what is constantly repeated in life, the examples that students observe, and the training they receive are important. Repeated experiences change the structure of the brain (Doidge, 2019). Within this context, it is very important to be conscious of the experiences and learning experiences to be lived (Siegel & Bryson, 2018).

The main purpose of positive thinking education is to support positive thinking skills and contribute to well-being. Positive thinking is grounded on students' gaining a perspective

that increases their quality of life and perceives and evaluates opportunities and constructive solutions in life (Gür, 2021). Positive thinking should not be confused with ignoring negative situations. Acting with a perspective toward developing constructive solutions by analyzing negative situations is within the scope of positive thinking (Gür & Eser, 2022). What needs to be emphasized here is highlighting the positive aspects of life and determining strategies for a more quality life (Rice, 2015). In other words, although evaluations are made on negative events, analyzing experienced emotions and situations instead of feeling helpless and taking constructive measures for life by making evaluations from different frameworks is also included in the scope of positive thinking (Peterson, 2009; Seligman, 2012).

Positive thinking can be supported in schools through various activities, practices, and projects (Gür et al., 2021a). These include activities with the dimensions of self-awareness (awareness of one's own individual characteristics), recognizing the other (empathy), developing communication-interaction skills with the group, and awareness of the needs of the society/community, as well as self-actualization (contributing) (Dinallo, 2016; Hayes & Lillis, 2021; Gür et al., 2021b). Within this scope, these activities can be designed to be implemented in a single class hour, as multiple activities spread over several days, or even as long-term project studies. In this context, an activity can be designed for a single dimension or for more than one dimension (Gür, 2022).

Many studies in the international literature emphasize the importance of educational studies aimed at supporting the well-being. Studies not only with students but also with teachers to support well-being gain importance. All types of studies to be conducted in the context of contributing to the well-being of generations are considered valuable for the future of societies (Seo&Yuh, 2021; Waters, 2021).

### *The Present Study*

The stress, school closures, and social isolation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic that started in 2019 have negatively affected the well-being of children and youth (Swedo et al., 2020). Isolation and quarantine, which led to social exclusion, also caused anxiety and stress in children (RojeDapic et al., 2020). Researchers state that the well-being of children is negatively affected, and negative emotional states and traumas increase during long-term school recess and natural disasters (disease outbreaks, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.) that result in closure, such as the pandemic period (Caron, 2020; RojeDapic et al., 2020; Swedo et al., 2020). Barboza et al. (2021) pointed out the importance of developing intervention strategies based on the experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic as a precaution against situations that may be encountered in the future. Swedo et al. (2020) emphasized that children can increase their opportunities for development in safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments and state that the well-being of children can be increased through various studies. Caron (2020) pointed out the importance of studies with the purpose of supporting the well-being of children and young people and raising awareness among adults during large-scale adverse conditions.

Researchers stated that teachers also had educational needs to manage the new re-opening process. Bakırcı et al. (2023), pointed out that after the pandemic teachers identified school adaptation and social interaction problems in their students and asked for effective strategies in order to manage the re-opening process. Erdemci and Elçiçek (2022) emphasized that teachers were confused and needed to develop effective strategies to support student adaptation and engagement during this period. Waters (2021) and Hatzichristau et al. (2021) pointed out that school-based studies on positive thinking will support students' school engagement, adaptation and social skills. Gür (2022), García-Álvarez et al. (2022) and Bakırcı et al. (2023) emphasized that such practices can be implemented at different levels of education, but also emphasized the importance of planning based on teachers' opinions.

This study was planned to shed light on teachers' perspectives on reflecting positive thinking in their own branches and practices in the teaching environment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been periods of school closure and re-opening. In the following year, still there were problems related to the COVID-19 situation. Although the schools were re-opened, the students had adaptation problems as they had been at home trying to adapt to the online education process in the previous education year. During the process, teachers made efforts to adapt to the situation while also making efforts for the adaptation of their students.

In this context, as stated above, teachers also had educational needs to manage the new re-opening process in a more qualified way. Within the scope of The Positive Schools Project (Gür, 2022; Positive Schools Workshop Report, 2022) carried out jointly with the North Cyprus Ministry of National Education, Cyprus International University, and the North Cyprus Prime Ministry Anti-Drug Commission. The teachers at the pre-school, primary school, secondary school and upper secondary school levels received an 8-week (one hour per week) training on the scope of positive thinking to support teacher well-being. Prior to the training process, informational announcements were made by the Ministry of National Education about the content of the training; and the teachers who wanted to participate in the training applied to the program. Twenty-four teachers who received training within the scope of the project and agreed to participate in the study voluntarily were included in the study.

Answers to the following questions were sought within the scope of the study:

- What are the teachers' views on the need for activities to be developed within the scope of positive thinking for their students?

-What do the teachers think about transferring the understanding of positive thinking to their own branches?

-What kinds of activities would be beneficial to carry out in schools in the context of positive thinking according to teachers?

## Research Methodology

### *Study Design*

This study was structured as a qualitative study and was conducted with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology allows people to express their understanding, feelings, perspectives, and perceptions about a particular phenomenon or concept. Face-to-face interviews are widely used as a data collection method in the phenomenological approach (Tekindal & Arsu, 2020).

### *Study Process*

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with teachers who volunteered to participate in the study, and a researcher's diary was kept. After seeking expert opinion on the questions, necessary corrections were made to finalize the questions. Within this scope, the participants were asked the following questions: "What are your views on the need for activities to be developed within the scope of positive thinking for your students?", "What do you think about applying the positive thinking approach by transferring it to your branch?", "What kind of activities would be useful to carry out in schools in the context of positive thinking?" Each interview lasted approximately an hour. The semi-structured questions were asked by the first researcher, and the interviews were audio-recorded. The audio records were transcribed by the researchers.

*Study Group*

The study was conducted with 24 voluntary teachers among the teachers who had previously been trained within the scope of the Positive Schools Project. The sample size is recommended as 10-30 in qualitative studies. What is important in qualitative research is to reach a certain saturation. When similar answers begin to come to certain questions in the study and the diversity of answers disappears, this situation is considered as reaching a certain saturation (Tekindal & Arsu, 2020). In this study, the number of teachers who volunteered to take part in the research process was within the specified range. Since similar responses started to be received during the interview process, there was no need to expand the sample further. Information related to the gender, branch, and level of grade at which the participants teach is given below:

**Table 1**  
*Information About the Teachers' Branches, Genders, and Grade Levels*

Teacher No.	Gender	Branch /Field	Grade Level
1	Female	Information and Communication Technologies	6th Grade
2	Male	Information and Communication Technologies	6th-8th Grade
3	Male	Turkish	6th Grade
4	Female	Visual Arts	4th grade
5	Female	Class Teacher	1st grade
6	Female	Class Teacher	2nd Grade
7	Female	Class Teacher	Preschool
8	Male	Mathematics	10-12thGrade
9	Female	Chemistry	12th Grade
10	Female	History	10th Grade
11	Female	Turkish Language and Literature	10th Grade
12	Male	Class Teacher	4th Grade
13	Female	Class Teacher	Preschool
14	Female	Visual Arts	7th- 8th grade
15	Male	Science and Technology	6th- 8th grade
16	Female	Turkish Language and Literature	11th grade
17	Female	Music	1st- 5th grade

18	Male	Science and Technology	8th Grade
19	Female	Class Teacher	1st and 2nd grades
20	Female	English	5th Grade
21	Female	Mathematics	6th Grade
22	Female	Music	5th Grade
23	Female	Turkish Language and Literature	10th-11th Grades
24	Female	Visual Arts	6th Grade

As shown in the table, of the 24 teachers, 18 are female and 6 are male. There are two teachers at the pre-school level, 6 at high school, 8 at grades 6-8, and 8 teachers in 1st-5th grades. Six of the teachers work as class teachers, and 18 of them work as branch teachers. These teachers were the teachers who responded to the announcement made by the Ministry of National Education and registered to the online system and wanted to participate in the study. The interviews with the teachers were recorded on an audio device with their permission and then transcribed by the researchers. For the transcribed responses (in order to prevent misunderstanding), individual responses were obtained from the teachers. For anonymity, instead of using names, descriptions were made with numbers.

#### *Ethical Procedures*

Clarifying consent forms were distributed to the participant teachers before the training and the research processes. Necessary permissions were obtained from the North Cyprus Ministry of National Education for the study. Additionally, ethical approval was obtained from the university (19.04.2021/100-3378). The names of the participating teachers were not disclosed in accordance with the ethical procedures and were expressed with numbers instead. Participants in the study were voluntary.

#### *Data Analysis*

The data obtained from the interviews and researcher journals were subjected to content analysis. Relational analysis that explores the relationships between concepts was involved. In this context, themes, sub-themes, and codes were developed, and representative example opinions were indicated. The codes were evaluated and compared independently by the researchers and found to be consistent. The answers provided by the teachers and the categories into which these answers fell were communicated to the teachers in writing, and their approval was obtained. Open coding and axial coding were applied here. Open coding creates categories of information by dividing the information. It reveals sub-categories within each category. Axial coding refers to the combination of data. Here, logic is established, causal conditions are taken into consideration, and actions and interactions arising from the situation are revealed (Bal, 2016). After the researchers created categories, they brought together the data obtained as a result of the teacher interviews and combined them with the notes in the researcher's diary kept for each interview. Within the scope of the analysis, open code categories were determined, the data within the themes and codes were classified, the categories were associated and visualized and expressed in tables. Examples of teachers' opinions regarding the sub-themes and codes obtained were described by expressing them in quotation marks.

## Research Results

### *Opinions of the Teachers on the Need for Activities to be developed within the Scope of Positive Thinking*

Table 2 shows the opinions of the teachers who participated in the study on the need for activities to be developed within the scope of positive thinking.

**Table 2**

*Teachers' Views on the Need for Activities to be developed within the Scope of Positive Thinking*

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
State of Need	Difficulties of Adaptation to School	Unwillingness to attend classes
		Lack of motivation
		Decline in social skills
	Trauma Process	Pessimism
		Introversion
		The need to feel valued
	The Need for Effective Communication and Interaction	Teacher - Student
		Student - Student

When teachers' views on the need for activities to be developed within the scope of positive thinking for their students were examined, it was found that all teachers considered this as a need. As shown in the table, in this context, the sub-themes of difficulties in adapting to school, the trauma process, and the need for effective communication-interaction emerged under the theme of the state of need.

#### *Difficulties in Adapting to the School*

Under the sub-theme of difficulties in adapting to the school are the codes of unwillingness to attend classes, lack of motivation, and decline in social skills. Regarding the difficulties in adapting to school, there were opinions about the inability of students to adapt to online education during the school closures and the inability to adapt to school with the opening of schools. However, it was stated that the expectation levels, particularly, of high school students had decreased and that they could not be motivated to study for the university exam. Academically, lack of motivation, difficulty in paying attention to the lessons, academic reluctance, and a decline in social skills were observed by teachers from all grade levels. Especially the preschool and first grade teachers stated that the children had difficulties in group games, sharing game tools, and acting in line with a purpose in the game and that they showed a tendency towards more individual games. For all these reasons, they commented that positive thinking content was a necessity for students. However, the decline in social skills code was observed at all levels of education. Some teachers' views on the sub-theme of difficulty adapting to school are as follows:

*"Students could not adapt to the online education process after the school closures. They could not focus on the lessons; even if they seemed to be attending the lesson, they turned off their cameras and engaged in other things. This negatively impacted academic participation and motivation towards the course. Now that the schools are open, we expect children to continue as before. Honestly, they can't adapt. They're not interested in the course, they can't make plans for the future, and they cannot identify a goal which causes a lack of motivation. I believe that the integration of positive thinking activities into courses would impact student motivation and participation positively."*

*"Currently, I observe that my students are reluctant to do group work or play games together compared to before. I observed a decline in social skills with the closure process. With the opening of schools, they seem to be together but alone. They need activities that will keep them together, increase their empathy skills, and help them work together towards a goal."*

*"....I think this should be included in the curriculum. These trainings should be provided continuously, and more teachers should be reached. What is important here is not that students advance to the next grade by simply receiving academic information. School is more than that. These children have experienced the COVID process right now; maybe they will have different negative experiences in their lives. The important thing is to be strong and to acquire the skills to cope with problems. To plan what they want and what they can do for it, and try to do it step by step. To be able to motivate themselves for a particular purpose, to focus on what they can do.... Right now, they are not motivated, and they don't know what they want; they only come and go to school. We need to overcome this."*

### *Trauma Process*

The codes of pessimism, introversion, and feeling valued were identified for the sub-theme of the trauma process. Opinions within the scope of pessimism and feeling valued were the views expressed by all teachers. In terms of pessimism, either constantly or frequently repeated negative thoughts and feelings and negative expectations/predictions that were observed by the teachers were shared. The introversion code included observations such as being distant from others, not taking the initiative to be with others, and staying away from others. This situation was observed mostly in students who experienced sad events. Statements regarding the desire of students to express themselves in a way, to be noticed, and to receive positive feedback on what they do constituted the feeling valued code. In terms of the trauma process sub-theme, it was stated that activities were needed within the scope of positive thinking to be able to cope with repeated negative thoughts stemming from losses experienced in the family/illness-trauma process - coping with the loss of a parent, the illness process of self/a relative, or being influenced by the media. Some of the views shared regarding the trauma process sub-theme are as follows:

*"Our students experienced the COVID-19 process, and families have also been negatively affected. Many children may have experienced domestic violence or felt emotionally isolated. We cannot know who experienced what. However, what I see is that children are generally pessimistic. I would like to give you a concrete example: Before the schools were closed, when I started to tell a story to my children, which started with "birds were flying together. Then the baby bird landed on the tree and waited there for a while..." and asked them to finish it, the children would continue the story with sentences such as, "Then her parents came to her... Her friends came and they played together..." And that's what's normal. But now, the end of the story is pessimistic. The bird falls, gets injured, dies, etc.; negative things happen to the bird. In summary, I can say that children focus on the negative. That's why I consider positive thinking training a necessity."*

*"Children are more introverted. Many of them had either deaths or serious illnesses in their families or close circles. There are parents who lost their jobs, which is reflected on the family. Children are aware of everything. Even if they do not experience the trauma themselves, they are around those who are affected, and thus they are affected. Based on the positive thinking training I received, I performed some activities with my children at school, and I observed that they liked such activities and became more participatory in the process. I believe that such activities can support children in being more resilient."*

*"Students want to feel valued in the environments they are in. I think that efforts to contribute toward a goal will provide significant support in this regard. First of all, of course, it is important for each student to know himself/herself well and to be able to express himself/herself through what he/she can do. In this context, I think it would be supportive to provide activities for self-awareness, empathy, group work, awareness of the needs of society, and self-actualization within the scope of the course or as separate extracurricular activities."*

### *The Need for Effective Communication and Interaction*

Teacher-student communication/interaction and student-student communication/interaction codes have emerged for the sub-theme of the need for effective communication and interaction. Teachers shared their views that both the interaction and communication between teacher and student and the communication and interaction among students need to be supported in this process. They stated that positive thinking activities would positively impact both the interaction and communication between the teacher and the student, and among the students themselves. Here, the importance of activities that strengthen effective communication and activities to overcome the difficulties encountered in getting to know each other closely between teachers and students, as well as between students, and participation in academic activities. Some statements regarding the need for the effective communication and interaction sub-theme are as follows:

*"Everyone was separated from each other due to the process. First of all, communication and interaction need to be supported in a positive way. Stronger relationships between students and increasing the quality of communication between teachers and students. These are important. The student's commitment to the school, participation in classes, feeling safe... All these are things that can happen with effective communication and interaction; it doesn't make much sense to just enter the classroom and provide academic education at the moment..."*

### *Opinions of the Teachers on Transferring Positive Thinking to Their Own Branches*

Table 3 shows the views of teachers on transferring positive thinking to their own branches.

**Table 3**

*Views of Teachers on Transferring Positive Thinking to Their Own Branches*

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
Ability to Transfer to Branch	Adaptability	In-Class Processes Extracurricular Activities
	Needs	Guidance Exchange of the Opinions Reference source Planning

The views of teachers on transferring positive thinking to their own branches were examined in Table 3. Teachers stated that they could implement it and added their views on the need for guidance and planning. In this context, the sub-themes of adaptability and needs emerged under the theme of transferability to the branch.



### *Adaptability*

The adaptability sub-theme includes the codes of applicability to in-class processes and applicability to extracurricular activities. Within the scope of in-class activities, teachers described using positive thinking as a means of enriching the course and increasing student participation. It was stated that it can be used in activities such as project studies and trip-observation activities that can be carried out at school within the scope of extracurricular activities. Some of the statements regarding the adaptability sub-theme are as follows:

*"It would be nice for students to be able to participate in activities that can be done both individually and in groups, based on what they have, evaluating what the need is, and considering what they can do on their own. Dedicating time to such activities instead of traditional lectures to enrich the subject matter would make the lesson more understandable and help students retain the information better. It would impact student interest and participation positively."*

*"A positive thinking approach can be used within the scope of extracurricular activities planned by the school, a certain group, or the class teacher. Students can develop unique and creative works under the guidance of the teacher. With a positive thinking approach, exhibits, group presentations, experiments, tool/device designs, demonstrations, and activities in various categories may contribute positively to students."*

### *Needs*

The codes of guidance need, opinion exchange need, reference resource need, and planning need have emerged under the sub-theme of needs. Regarding the guidance need code, the needs for counseling and guidance during the process were expressed. In this context, although the teachers find the subject of positive thinking useful, they stated that they could apply what they learned more effectively as they gained experience. They stated that conducting interviews with educators from time to time and being able to ask questions in the process for more qualified practices were important. The thoughts shared within the scope of the opinion exchange code were about teachers who conduct such practices coming together and sharing with each other from time to time. Teachers stated that they could gain meaningful insights from each other's experiences. They stated that such meetings could be held with educators in the form of both educational counseling and an exchange of opinions by sharing examples of teachers' practices. In terms of the need for reference resources, the importance of accessing examples of activities was mentioned. Especially the teachers in the fields of pre-school and classroom teaching placed particular importance on this issue and stated that they could contribute to the preparation of such a resource if necessary. Regarding the planning code, opinions were shared regarding the planning that can be done at the beginning of the semester and the technical needs that may arise if education continues online again. It was expressed that with planning at the beginning of the semester, more efficient results can be obtained for both in-class and extracurricular activities and practices, and that time and resources may need to be arranged, particularly in extracurricular practices. In the event of a new epidemic, the importance of issues such as equipment support, infrastructure support, the provision of computer programs that can be used in lessons and make the process effective, and teacher training for new technological applications for a more quality online education process was emphasized. Some of the expressions under the sub-theme of needs are as follows:

*"Positive thinking training has been very interesting and useful for me. I can say that I benefited in terms of personal and professional development and that it contributed in terms of self-evaluation, relationships with my family, and relationships with my friends. I am of the opinion that it will be more effective to act in a planned manner in terms of applying the concept of positive thinking with students in*

*schools and integrating it into the lessons, and to practice after receiving educational support about the practices in schools.”*

*“...It would be great to get together with our friends, who receive positive thinking training from time to time, and talk about our experiences and give each other advice. In fact, we can meet with our educators and friends from time to time. Online meetings can also be held to facilitate the process... ”*

*Opinions of the Teachers on Activities that will be Beneficial to Develop in Schools in the Context of Positive Thinking*

Table 4 shows the views of the teachers on activities that will be beneficial to develop in schools in the context of positive thinking.

**Table 4**  
*Teachers' Views on Activities that Will Be Beneficial to Develop in Schools in the Context of Positive Thinking*

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
Scope of activity	Self-awareness	Self-Esteem Self-compassion Functional confidence Emotional Awareness Goal Setting and Self-Regulation
	Unity Consciousness	Empathy Group work
	Contribution Awareness	Awareness of the needs of the society/community Purposeful Actions

When the teachers' views on activities to develop in schools within the context of positive thinking were examined, the sub-themes of self-awareness, unity consciousness, and contribution awareness emerged under the theme of the scope of activity. Teachers evaluated the activities for self-awareness, unity consciousness, and contribution awareness as activities that would be beneficial to develop in schools in the context of positive thinking.

*Self-Awareness*

The self-awareness theme included the codes of self-esteem, self-compassion, functional confidence, emotional awareness, goal setting, and self-regulation. Within the scope of self-esteem, opinions were shared on becoming aware of one's own characteristics and taking responsibilities accordingly, being process-oriented rather than result-oriented, developing awareness of one's own characteristics and taking responsibilities accordingly, or improving oneself rather than comparing oneself to others, and evaluating oneself through positive characteristics, contributions made, and the efforts made rather than evaluating oneself with the possession of objects/products. It was stated that bragging about what they have, dissatisfaction and evaluation of their own value and dignity through what they own were encountered very frequently in students in every age group and that this was a factor damaging self-esteem. Accordingly, it was emphasized that practices to support self-esteem are needed. Self-compassion was another code under the sub-theme of self-awareness. It is stated that students can be judgmental towards themselves at times, and they can punish themselves cruelly by magnifying a small mistake or something they do not have. It was shared that those who are

not compassionate towards themselves can also be cruel and judgmental towards their friends and that activities for self-compassion should also be given importance. The functional self-confidence code was noteworthy. Teachers stated that there is confusion in society about what self-confidence is. It was shared that situations such as owning something, getting what they want, and bullying others can be perceived as displaying self-confidence. Another factor that emerged regarding self-confidence was the observations made about the students who think they can do everything, who volunteer for many tasks but do not fulfil any responsibility and wait for someone else to pick up the slack. These indicate a non-functional sense of self-confidence. Teachers stated that functional self-confidence should be supported within the scope of supporting self-confidence, and others cannot be considered as beneficial self-confidence to the person and society. Another code under self-awareness is emotional awareness. Regarding this code, teachers mentioned the importance of recognizing and expressing emotions and developing awareness about what emotions they feel, what can cause them, and how they manifest. Teachers also stated that sometimes even parents cannot express the emotions they feel and the reason behind these emotions, and pointed out that activities for expressing emotions should be included according to age, starting at a young age. Recommendations for the code of goal setting and self-regulation were shared mostly by middle school and high school teachers. Accordingly, planning skills, determining one's own goals, progressing in this direction, and the importance of making efforts were discussed. Teachers stated that they encountered problems related to not only not being able to determine a goal but also not knowing what they wanted and setting false goals. Dysfunctional goals for saving the day were described as goals that the student uses to deceive themselves or persuade their family/surroundings, that seem beautiful and meaningful, but that the student does not make any effort for, or goals that are not suitable for the student's skills and will not be appreciated by others. It has been stated that with such goals, students can develop avoidance behaviors by distracting themselves or those around them. In this context, the importance of activities for students to know themselves well across all age groups and education levels rises to prominence. Some of the views shared regarding self-awareness are as follows:

*"...It is important for students to recognize and make sense of emotions. What are they angry about, what are they happy about, and how do they react? How do they comfort themselves when angry? When do they feel unwillingness and withdraw? How can they encourage themselves? It is important to raise awareness about these. How will they communicate effectively with others who don't know them? How will they choose the right profession? How will they be raised to contribute as individuals to society?..."*

*"Planning, self-compassion, self-confidence... I think these are not just limited to courses, such as psychology or counseling. In high school, the math teacher, the chemistry teacher, the elementary school teacher, the music teacher, the arts teacher, all branches... all of them... can implement practices according to the content of their branches. "Even when teaching math, a teacher who wants to provide these can teach these."*

*"What we call self-confidence is an eviscerated concept. When we want to raise self-confident children, irresponsible children who do not know what they want are raised. First, a definition of self-confidence should be made. The important thing is to raise generations with a sense of responsibility, who are aware of what they can do and what they need to improve, and who can act accordingly. Such activities can be integrated into courses or extracurricular projects within the scope of positive thinking."*

### *Unity consciousness*

Teachers shared that practices toward unity consciousness can be implemented within the scope of positive thinking. It was stated that activities for unity consciousness connect people and strengthen psychological resilience, particularly in cases such as epidemics and

disasters. The codes of empathy and group work emerged under the unity consciousness sub-theme. While teachers pointed out the importance of activities for developing empathy, they also emphasized the issues of being aware of the characteristics and possibilities of the other and sensitivity in their friendship relations. Additionally, they pointed out that negative situations, such as trying to express themselves to attract attention through monologue-like interactions and material demands and belittling those who do not behave in this way, can be encountered. Communication in the form of monologues was described as everyone talking about what is important to them and not paying too much attention to what others are talking about. Being proud of possessions and belittling those who don't have them was also mentioned as a problem related to empathy. It was emphasized that it is important for students to show empathy and respect for each other to create something together.

Group work was highlighted as crucial for individuals to feel empowered, and it was shared that students can feel better with such activities and that the sense of being part of a group can help overcome the sense of isolation and loneliness. Regarding the group work code, in addition to the necessity of such activities, the challenges experienced were also discussed. Inability to work with others, avoiding responsibilities, not being able to distribute tasks within the group, the same expectations of everyone by the group members, and a lack of distribution of tasks according to performance and individual characteristics (which points to the importance of self-awareness and empathy dimensions) were described as behaviors exhibited by students. In this context, the importance of guiding students well and helping them gain experience in group work was pointed out. Another recommendation shared regarding the code of group work involved activities to overcome isolation during the isolation process. Accordingly, remote computer-assisted communication was emphasized. It was pointed out that even if friends or group members cannot be together in person, practices that allow them to work together are still important. It was shared that such practices can be beneficial in cases where education may be interrupted or people cannot be together, such as during epidemics or other chaotic special processes. Some of the views shared regarding the unity consciousness sub-theme are as follows:

*“...Children are so insatiable. On the one hand, the individualization resulting from the isolation process, on the other hand, the exclusion of those who cannot have what they have. At this point, it is necessary to instill in students what value is... Creating something with a unity consciousness, presenting that as a group, everyone taking responsibility based on their knowledge and competencies. Equal responsibility rather than equality of all things, that is, equal task sharing according to interests and competencies... Of course, in-group communication skills, empathic approach to each other ..all come into play. Pretending to do something is different from planning by placing importance to the process in terms of really raising students...”*

*“...Sometimes humanity goes through difficult processes. These children also have encountered such a process. Difficult processes are overcome best with a consciousness of unity and togetherness, and this is possible with group work. If group work is carried out effectively, students will gain very important skills. Particularly, sensitivity towards others, which started to be lost and degenerated, active listening skills, effective communication-interaction, strong friendships, being able to make sacrifices for each other... Otherwise, isolation will bring psychological fragility.”*

### *Awareness of Contribution*

Under the sub-theme of awareness of contribution, the codes of awareness and purposeful actions for the needs of society /community have emerged. Regarding the awareness code for the needs of society/community, while pointing out the importance of contributing to issues such as animals, others at school, and awareness of a clean environment, teachers pointed out the importance of raising awareness about what the needs or requirements are. As for the code

of purposeful actions, actions aimed at contributing to others by persevering in line with a certain purpose were shared. Some of the views shared regarding the sub-theme of awareness of contribution are as follows:

*"I'm a preschool teacher. Many people think that these children are small and cannot take part in social activities that contribute to society. For their age, these children are also sensitive, and there is a lot they can do, too. For example, a student of mine asked me how birds live in the cold. We discussed it together. They commented on what they could do for the birds and what they needed. We built birdhouses together. They observed birds. They drew pictures to raise awareness about the needs of birds. They gifted those pictures to people in their circles. Their efforts and happiness as they made efforts for birds are worth telling..."*

*"We can observe that sensitivity awareness develops, especially in adolescence." If students are supported in the subjects they are interested in, they can participate in activities that they will contribute to society with great enthusiasm. This can be realized in many different subjects and in many different branches, from the protection of these endemic plants to animal rights to explaining mathematics to friends who have difficulties in mathematics to realizing and putting into practice the measures that can facilitate the lives of friends with disabilities. What is important here is to support this awareness of sensitivity and to contribute to others. And to enable them to experience that they feel happy while doing these. In this way, our students learn to move away from self-centeredness and become individuals who strive towards the goal..."*

## Discussion

### *Teachers' Needs for Activities to be Developed in the Scope of Positive Thinking*

Regarding teachers' needs for activities to be developed within the scope of positive thinking, the importance of activities to be developed within the scope of positive thinking was emphasized through addressing the difficulties of adaptation to school, the trauma process, and the need for effective communication and interaction that resulted from the re-opening of schools after the closure of schools during the COVID-19 process. Under the sub-theme of difficulties in adapting to school are the codes of unwillingness to attend classes, lack of motivation, and decline in social skills. The codes of pessimism, introversion, and feeling valued were identified for the sub-theme of the trauma process. Under the sub-theme of the need for effective communication and interaction, teacher-student communication/interaction and student-student communication/interaction codes were included. For this code, the importance of activities that strengthen effective communication and participation is emphasized to overcome the difficulties experienced in getting to know each other closely and participating in academic activities. Teachers stated that they think that positive thinking activities will positively affect both the interaction and communication between teachers and students and the communication and interaction among students. Moreover, they stated that they thought that positive communication and interaction would play a positive role both in overcoming the traumatic process and in improving the students' adaptation to school. The isolation and quarantine process, which led to social exclusion, brought about social-emotional and psychological needs for children and youth (RojeDapic et al., 2020; Swedo et al., 2020). Barboza et al. (2021) pointed out the importance of developing response strategies for current circumstances based on previous experiences in the COVID-19 process. Studies on positive thinking can lead to effective results within this scope. Noble&McCraith (2011) and Zeng et al. (2016) pointed out that the practices carried out in schools within the scope of positive thinking contribute significantly to the social, emotional, and psychological well-being of the students. Supportive education processes in the context of teacher education and positive thinking under the guidance of teachers in schools support student well-being (Gür & Koçak, 2018; Young et al.,

2019; Gür, 2021; Gür & Eser, 2022). However, it is important to seek individual psychological support in cases of severe trauma (Oehlman et al., 2021). It can be stated that supporting student well-being through activities at school will not replace professional treatment support to be received individually if needed.

### *Views of Teachers on Transferring Positive Thinking to Their Own Branches*

Based on the teachers' views on transferring positive thinking to their own branches, it can be said that positive opinions were expressed. Teachers expressed their opinions on needs (guidance, exchange of views, planning, and reference resource needs) in addition to adaptability. Regarding the adaptability sub-theme, teachers described using positive thinking as a means of enriching the lessons and increasing student participation within the scope of in-class activities. In their study analyzing 17 different positive thinking projects implemented in schools, Gur et al. (2021a) found that positive thinking activities could be implemented within the framework of different branches such as mathematics, art, music, and literature. Research findings confirm the needs expressed by teachers in the context of practices in schools (Hazel, 2018; Seo & Yuh, 2021). It can be stated that the views expressed by the teachers about the needs are shared by many educators who want to apply a new understanding. Kamışlı (2022) and Gur and Eser (2023) emphasized the importance of guidance, planning, and evaluation aligned with the needs within the scope of educational practices. Hatzichristou et al. (2021) first conducted teacher training within the scope of the program they developed to support the needs felt during the Covid-19 process, and then the teachers implemented practices in their classrooms. They found that the program contributes significantly to the social, emotional, and psychological well-being of the students. In line with the needs expressed by the teachers involved in this study, guidance studies were conducted during the project process, and group meetings were held every two weeks (five meetings were held in three months). Teachers carried out in-class practices or projects at school (literary studies, music album studies, competition projects, awareness projects supporting animal love, exhibitions, etc.) during this process. In line with the teachers' suggestions for resource needs, activities for creating books were held, and it was observed that the teachers worked devotedly to contribute. As seen in students, these activities with teachers were efficient in terms of setting goals and working towards them on a subject that they are interested in. Teachers designed their events to make their work sustainable and contribute to society; they made corrections based on the feedback they received from the field experts; they implemented practices by obtaining the necessary permissions; and they wrote about their practices in a format to be published in the book (Gür et al., 2021b; Gür, 2022). Accordingly, it can be said that teachers were involved in the stages of self-awareness making plans about what they could do, getting to know their students closely and making arrangements according to their needs (empathy), communication-interaction with the group, awareness and planning for the needs of students and fellow teachers at school, and self-realization in line with a purpose, which are among the positive thinking stages. While the teachers applied the understanding of positive thinking to their students, they also experienced it practically. Experiencing the process through practice is an important tool to be able to teach it to others (Gur & Eser, 2022). Teachers took ownership of the subject as they actively participated in the process and observed that it had a positive impact on both their own and their students' lives. They recommended discussing the subject in a wider platform to make the subject common. Accordingly, a workshop was held. Teachers participated voluntarily and actively in the workshop and shared the recommendation of disseminating positive thinking education more widely and discussed that this education is a necessity for every education level from preschool to adolescence and that positive feedback was obtained for student well-being (Positive Schools Workshop Report, 2022). Effective strategies are needed for a quality future,

and people who think positively are needed for effective strategies. The brain seeks answers to the questions we ask, and in this context, it perceives and evaluates the clues in the environment (Harris,2020; Burns,2021). Therefore, it is of great importance from the point of view of how events are approached.

*Teachers' Views on Activities That Will Be Beneficial to Develop in Schools  
in the Context of Positive Thinking*

When the teachers' views on activities to plan at schools within the understanding of positive thinking were examined, it was found that teachers considered activities towards developing self-awareness, unity consciousness, and awareness of contribution as beneficial activities to be implemented at schools. The codes regarding self-awareness included self-esteem, self-compassion, functional confidence, emotional awareness, goal setting, and self-regulation. Frankl (2005) pointed to the importance of finding meaning in life. It is important for a person to know themselves and to develop self-compassion, self-confidence, and emotional awareness to shape their life in a positive way (Frankl, 2005; Goleman, 2022).

The codes of empathy and group work emerged under the unity consciousness sub-theme. While teachers pointed out the importance of activities for developing empathy, they also emphasized the issues of being aware of the characteristics and possibilities of the other and sensitivity in their friendship relations. Group work was emphasized as an indispensable activity for individuals to feel empowered, and opinions were shared that students would feel better with such activities and that the feeling of being a part of the group would help overcome the feelings of isolation and loneliness. Furthermore, the importance of utilizing technology for such activities in difficult times was highlighted. Technology can be an important element in situations such as education processes and group activities in times when isolation and coming together are difficult (Gür et al., 2021a). The way the events are viewed, and the expressions used by the individual both for themselves and for others affect their communication, which in turn affects the flow of events and the ability of the person to cope. Within this context, empathy is an important factor (Chapman, 2012). Emotions shape behaviors and cognitive development increases with emotional skills (Goleman, 2016). When individuals bond with others, they not only feel good but also feel safe. When individuals are alone, our mind-body system, programmed over thousands of years of evolution, begins to give warning signals. Thousands of years ago being alone meant death. That's why loneliness is related to high stress hormone levels. The chronic feeling of loneliness increases the perception of threat. The brain constantly looks for clues about threats and evaluates them, which causes uneasiness in the individual. Activities aimed at being together help individuals feel safe (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018). The unity consciousness becomes even more important to cope with particularly challenging events.

Under the sub-theme of awareness of contribution, the codes of awareness and purposeful actions for the needs of society/community emerged. Regarding the awareness code for the needs of society/community, teachers pointed out the importance of contributing to issues such as animals, others at school, and awareness of a clean environment, while also pointing out the importance of raising awareness about what the needs or requirements are. In relation to the code of purposeful actions, actions with the purpose of contributing to others by persevering towards a certain purpose were mentioned. Awareness of the needs of society is important in terms of meaningful activities in life. According to Frankl (2005), not finding meaning in life leads to violence, addiction, and depression. Frankl (2005) emphasized the importance of purposeful actions. Meaningful activities in life give the individual the joy of life, which makes positive contributions to social communication and productivity (Goleman, 2022).

In addition to identifying the views of teachers on positive thinking, this study also revealed certain negative situations observed by teachers. These include dysfunctional self-confidence, dissatisfaction with possession, non-functional goals for saving the day, and difficulties in purposeful planning. Moreover, the difficulties in adapting to school, the difficulties in acting together with the group, and the more pessimistic interpretations of events experienced during the isolation period were the negative aspects, especially regarding the COVID-19 process. Achterberg et al. (2021) stated that students were in a negative mood and couldn't develop positive coping strategies with the closure process experienced due to the pandemic. At this point, the responsibility of educators is to develop strategies for positive gains and to plan educational situations based on these negativities. Robbins (2018) described three decisions that shape human life as deciding what to focus on, deciding what something means to the individual, and deciding what to do to achieve the desired results. Our brain is structured as an internal system that enables us to make decisions. This system acts as an invisible force. It shapes all our thoughts, actions, and feelings, good or bad, in every moment of life. It controls how one evaluates everything in every moment of life. It is the subconscious that mainly controls this system. The majority of people have not developed this system consciously. The system evolves over time as a result of various interacting sources. These resources include almost all kinds of experiences learned from the environment (Robbins, 2018). Lived experiences, education status, and practices at schools are very important. As the number of experiences increases in a given situation, behaviors become automatic (Elibol, 2021). Based on all these, it can be stated that how education is structured has an important role in the life of the person.

## Conclusions and Implications

Within the framework of the study, meaningful feedback was obtained in the context of teachers' views on positive thinking, however, the study findings were limited to 24 teachers. A qualitative research method was used, and the data were obtained from the interviews in which the teachers shared their opinions and observations. The generalizability of qualitative methods is lower compared to quantitative methods. The data were obtained in North Cyprus. It may be recommended that the study should be conducted in different countries, as well as supported by quantitative studies with larger sample groups. Based on the data obtained from this study, ideas can be obtained for studies that can be carried out in schools. However, it should be taken into consideration that different situations or results may occur in different countries.

Based on the findings of the study, teachers shared their opinions on the need for activities related to positive thinking and that they could transfer the understanding of positive thinking to their branches. Teachers recommended activities for self-awareness, unity consciousness, and contribution awareness within the scope of positive thinking in schools. Based on the statements shared above, developing programs to implement within the scope of positive thinking at different age and grade levels and examining positive thinking education with different variables using pre- and post-test control group experimental designs can be recommended. Creating activity pools in the field of positive thinking and making these activities available to teachers online free of charge can also be recommended. Within the scope of the projects for teachers to participate in, developing activities together with teachers, determining the needs that arise in the field, receiving recommendations from those who will implement them as they have experienced them, and making adjustments aligned with those recommendations will make the process more efficient. Another recommendation by the researchers is that teachers who want to practice the understanding of positive thinking at schools should receive training on the subject as personal development, practice it in their own lives, and then move forward with implementing those activities at school.



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**Declaration of Interest**

The authors declare no competing interest.

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