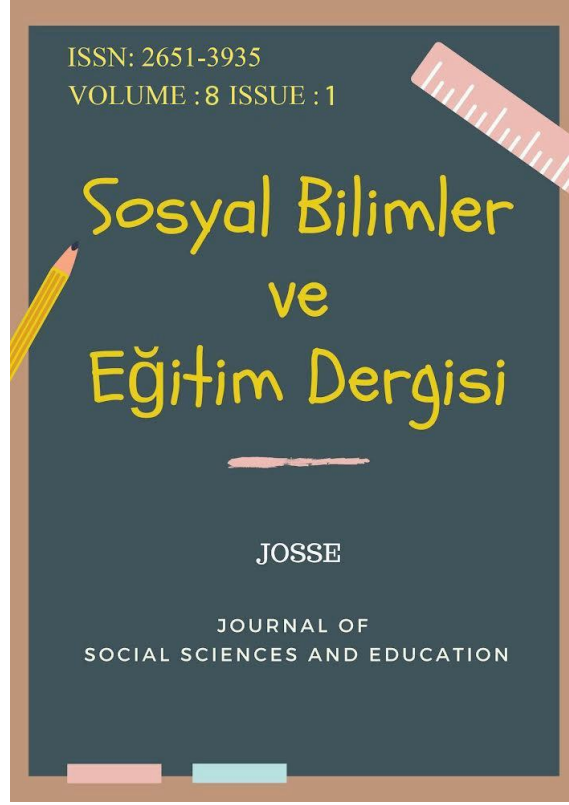# JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION (JOSSE)

Gender in School Administration: Problems of Women Administrators

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Abstract	Research Article

Gender reflects the biological characteristics that people are born with. Society attributes different characteristics and abilities to different genders. This study aims to determine the problems of female school principals who serve as school principals. A qualitative research was conducted in the study using a positive case study design. 12 out of a total of 26 female school principals serving in the 2024-2025 academic year in Tokat province were determined using the purposeful easy-to-access sampling method. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. In the study consisting of gender-based problems of female administrators, difficulties and advantages of being a female administrator and suggestions, it was determined that women mostly experience problems related to communication and long working hours. It was observed that most women are stuck between home and management, have problems due to long working hours and male teachers avoiding communication. The general expectation that the manager or leader will be a man and the traditional perspective on women may prevent women from becoming managers. More encouragement of women to take part in school administration, financial support of administrators, rewarding successful administrators, making arrangements regarding working hours are important suggestions for women to become school administrators.

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Introduction

Historically, when studies in educational administration are examined, the focus is generally on male educational administrators. In recent years, many studies have been conducted on determining female and male leadership styles (Çıkmaz, 2019; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Gunbayani, 2005; Haslett et al., 1992; McCollum, 2005). Clearly, it is seen in the 2022 statistics announced by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) that the number of female teachers working in the Ministry of National Education in Turkey is almost twice as much as male teachers. However, despite this, the rate of female administrators is very low. The rate of women in administrative positions remains at only 1.92% (Birgün, 2019).

There should be no gender in management, even in developed countries, the rate of female educational administrators is much lower than that of men. The fact that there are many female school administrators, at least in noticeable proportions, is important in terms of being a role model for girls in developing countries in particular, and representing gender equality and a fair division of labor. It is known that the first female school administrator in Turkey started with the appointment of Fatma Hanım as the principal of Beşiktaş İnas Rüstiye Mektebi. In 1881, Fatma Zehra Hanım was appointed as the principal of Darülmuallimat School (Aydın, 2009). Although the appointment of female school administrators dates back to 1881, the appointment of women as a district director of national education began for the first time with the appointment of Dane Carıllı to the Adana Kadirli District Directorate of National Education. Even today, in the context of educational administration, we do not see female administrators very often, especially in upper management positions. According to the YÖK (2021) report, the number of female professors in Turkey is above the European average. However, the number of women in upper management is 394. With 17 female rectors, 8.37% of the total rectors in Turkey are women, while this rate is 15% in EU countries. These figures show that the number of female administrators is very low compared to men. While women are generally overrepresented as classroom teachers, the roles in which women are least represented are school principals or vice principals (Kerr et al., 2014). In his study, Yılmaz (2016) determined that the rate of female administrators in the education sector in Turkey is 19%. This rate is an indicator of the problems experienced by female administrators.

Women are the majority in the education sector as teachers, the representation of women in educational leadership positions is strikingly disproportionate. With the increasing activities of feminist movements in the 1960s, there was an increase in the number of female administrators in Turkey and the world. However, this increase has never reached an equal

level. Female administrators are mostly employed in lower-level educational institutions such as kindergartens and primary schools in many countries of the world and in Turkey. Most of the research conducted in the field of education administration is shaped by dominant leadership theories that support the masculine leadership perspective, which is rarely applicable in a workplace where women are the majority (Campbel, 2010). Although both genders have leadership characteristics, it is observed that a male-dominated management style is adopted.

Acuner (2019) conducted a study to determine the problems women encounter in their career processes in the public sector. The study determined that the problems experienced by women are; gender-based judgment, taking on many responsibilities, success, organizational culture, obstacles that women create against themselves and problems created by other women, and problems related to the perception of women administrators.

This study on gender in school administration is considered important because it examines women administrators and their problems in education administration, and tries to determine the obstacles and problems that women face in reaching certain positions in education administration, both from the literature and in line with the views of women school principals. Leadership has a nature that is sensitive to the situation/context. In environments where men are predominantly present, leadership characteristics that are effective for men can be rendered ineffective when women leaders try to use them. For example, when women leaders have to display autocratic leadership characteristics, they may not be liked and this may reduce commitment and compliance to the organization (McCollum, 2005). Clearly seen that there is a gender inequality in the assignment of women to administrative positions.

Problems of Female Education Administrators

Kaplan (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of studies examining the problems of female school administrators and determined that the studies between 2016 and 2022 were grouped under three main themes: "general, obstacles, coping" in terms of purpose, and those three main results emerged in terms of the results of the studies: "views on management, general difficulties in management, gender-related results in management". Since the problems arising from the regulations can be considered as common problems of female and male administrators, it can be said that gender-related problems are problems specific to female administrators.

Köse and Uzun (2017) investigated the problems of female administrators in preschool education institutions with a qualitative research design. In the study examining the

importance of gender in school administration, the strengths of women as administrators were determined as physical order and communication power, while their weaknesses were determined as professional inadequacy, weaknesses in personal and social areas.

There are many problems that female administrators face in the public sphere. Çıkmaz (2019), who conducted a study on these problems, stated that the problems are grouped under three headings: socio-cultural, psychological and environmental. The psychological pressure that women administrators face in business life can be expressed as social and cultural factors and environmental reasons (Tınaz, 2006). The traditional concept of leadership is seen as masculine. For this reason, women generally have difficulty in establishing a balance between the masculine expectations of the role and the expectations traditionally associated with being a woman. This situation can create psychological pressure on women.

Topçu (2021) stated the main problems preventing women from taking part in business life as administrators under four headings: cultural, religious, social and political. Women, who gained many legal rights with the establishment of the Republic, have been exposed to various obstacles in business life due to prejudices supported by cultural and religious ways of thinking.

In the literature, women's adaptation problems are generally defined with the concept of "role conflict" (Chin, 2011). Eagly and Carli (2003) stated that gender affects both the way women administrators lead and the way women administrators are perceived. It can be said that the way women administrators are perceived by the environment is problematic. Despite occupying a role such as an inspector or school administrator, male and female administrators may differ in their leadership behaviors or styles depending on their gender. Accordingly, their leadership styles may also change. As Hallinger (2011) stated, leadership is managed by the personal characteristics of the leaders and the source of diversity in leadership is the personal characteristics, values, beliefs, knowledge and experiences of the leaders. Kanter (1977), who stated that women who reached administrative positions in education administration were restricted from presenting alternative methods in management, stated that the male-dominated structure of the 20th century caused a male-dominated perspective to be established in the field of management. This perspective can prevent women from daring to use alternative methods and implementing new practices. However, leadership should be freed from stereotypical limitations and alternative perspectives should be valued. One of the biggest problems women face is seen as the glass ceiling syndrome. In fact, such an obstacle does not exist for anyone. However, there is such a problem for a significant portion of society that is subject to discrimination, such as women. Kanter (1977) states that the concept of glass

ceiling is a term that emerged in relation to career ladders in the business world. With this concept, it is stated that there are invisible obstacles to women's career ladder advancement. It is stated that although more opportunities are offered to women, there is more male dominance in administrative decisions. The characteristics and principles related to leadership are mostly expressed as specific to men (Blackmore, 1989).

Kirişci and Can (2020) examined the views of female administrators on the glass ceiling syndrome and determined that female administrators mostly face the glass ceiling syndrome. It was also determined that women create obstacles for themselves due to the fear of disrupting traditional roles and the deterrent nature of working hours.

Even if women have traditionally held leadership positions in their homes or in society, they prefer not to be seen as leaders. Laboratory studies have found that understanding and using power within the traditional leadership understanding is critical to women's leadership success. The underlying reason for this is the dominance of traditional values and characteristics in organizations.

Yoder (2001) determined that power is needed for leaders to be effective in environments where men are the majority. Since power is identified with men, women's leadership and management adventures are difficult. The gender perceptions of employees have positive and negative effects on leadership approaches and the way leaders themselves are evaluated. Therefore, it is useful to understand how socio-political elements related to leadership philosophy and behavior interact. Kezar (2002) suggested in his study with 36 female and male faculty members that in order to understand the perspectives of individuals, depending on the fact that power and position are located in similar social contexts, the environment in which they work and live should be examined.

Women who achieve leadership positions and advance to a certain level are more likely to remain childless than men. Burton (1993) states that this is because women tend to take on most of the childcare and household responsibilities, which is an additional disadvantage. Therefore, most women are forced to choose between having a family and being an administrator or in a certain position. For this reason, there are very few female leaders who can be role models in the field of educational leadership (Grogan, 2005). When examining studies on educational administrators, it is seen that there is a large numerical gap in terms of gender, especially in studies conducted with school principals. While the number of female teachers is almost twice that of male teachers, it is seen that the number of women in school administrator positions is much lower in favor of men (Birgün, 2019).

Feminists claim that there are some important differences between female and male administrators, and that women are more suitable for educational leadership than men because they are more collaborative and caring. However, they cannot explain the fact that female and male educational leaders use similar adjectives when describing their own leadership styles. Although female leaders are less likely to describe styles with traditionally masculine adjectives such as "formal, competitive, objective," there is no evidence that women are soft or indecisive. Although it is widely believed that leadership is a role that requires masculine qualities such as decisiveness, assertiveness, and dominance, there is almost no evidence to support this (Campbel, 2010; Coleman, 2005). However, despite the lack of supporting evidence, this belief makes it difficult for women to advance to administrative positions and take part in certain roles.

It is seen that men tend to gain more power in education administration. This situation is seen to be against women. Women have much less support from their own gender, which can cause employees to be less compliant and to exhibit a hostile and complacent attitude towards the administrator. The decisions of women who lack power are also less credible. For this reason, women leaders have to spend much more time and effort than men to implement the decisions they make (Campbel, 2010). According to the gender model proposed by historian John Scott, gender is the primary area where power is expressed (Ecomoto, 2000). Ecomoto divided power into four dimensions to examine its positive and negative meanings: The first dimension of power is the contested or contradictory power a person has over others. The second dimension is the undisputed power that stems from a person's hierarchical position within a company, the organization or system as a whole. The third dimension is the power, cooperation or support obtained from the individual's connections with others such as mentoring, networks of relations. Finally, the fourth dimension is the power derived from personal power, expertise and endurance, which includes self-respect, autonomy and self-expression (Ecomoto, 2000).

When the power relationship in the context of women's positions in educational organizations in Turkey is considered, it is not yet a common structure to have women in senior management positions due to the traditional female figure, including the positioning of the socio-political system. Both the YÖK (2021) and the MEB (2021) data show that women administrators do not yet have a balanced hierarchy in power relations. Some adjectives used for women can create different perceptions when used for men. The definition of "leader like a mother" is a restrictive and trap expression for women. A mother is gentle and compassionate, and these adjectives for leadership can express weakness. While an aggressive

woman is considered oppressive, harsh, evil, disgusting and uncaring, aggressive men can be considered dominating, successful, talented, strong, heroic, powerful and masculine (Enomonto, 2000). The basis of this perspective is the society's gender.

As long as some characteristics are seen as more feminine and some characteristics are seen as more masculine, it is not possible to achieve balance. There has been much debate about the existence and extent of gender differences, and if there really is a difference, theories have been discussed and are still being discussed on the reasons for this. Models that attribute differences to hormonal, genetic, and physical characteristics are rejected as determinants of leadership style.

The theory of social role incongruity has been proposed to explain the interaction between gender stereotypes and social role requirements and the prejudice that emerges for women leaders. It has been attempted to show that the prejudice against women leaders is based on what characteristics women have and what characteristics leaders should have. It is argued that the attitude towards women leaders is less positive than men, and that it is more difficult for women leaders to successfully fulfill their leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, this situation can be evaluated as an indicator of gender inequality and a reflection of the perspective on gender.

Gender Differences in Management

Gender expectations or gender-consistent expectations affect self-perception as well as the perceptions of others regarding management and success. The general expectation that the administrator or leader will be male means that women's experiences as administrators tend to be very different from men's experiences as administrators. The extent to which female educational administrators adhere to gender norms or adopt more masculine characteristics is not reported in the literature. Christman and McClellan (2008) found in their study of female administrators that participants described leadership that defied gender classification. Gender expectations also vary by leadership level. While it is possible to see more school administrators at the elementary school level, this situation seems to change to the detriment of women when it comes to upper management (Mokaba-Bernardo, 2016).

Masculine values, language, definitions of knowledge, interaction patterns, and standards of behavior dominate school culture. Women may question these standards or prefer to work in accordance with them (Smulyan, 2000). In education administration, women and men administrators can describe their administrative styles as collaborative or people-centered (Coleman, 2003). Studies show that there are very few differences between men and women

in leadership approaches (Lewis, 1998). However, Smulyan (2000) revealed in his qualitative study that women education administrators have to make a lot of effort to prove their leadership style and competence. For example, women education administrators stated that they had to wear suits all the time in order not to highlight their feminine characteristics. Women education administrators are more likely to experience burnout syndrome. Women generally have less control over their work environments and tend to deny their own feelings and needs while satisfying the wishes of others, and women tend to undertake most of the household tasks, which is an important gender difference that increases the possibility of conflict between work and family (Oplatka, 2002).

Some studies (Bass, 1985; Gunbayani, 2005) have shown that female administrators encourage participation more, share power, and make an effort to increase the self-esteem of others. It has been observed that employees define female administrators as more charismatic and that female leaders are more inclined to soften criticisms with positive feedback. Coleman (2005) stated in his study that both female and male school principals tend to define their leadership styles with feminine adjectives such as collaborative and people-centered, and do not use masculine adjectives. It has been observed that women tend to exhibit female or male leadership characteristics depending on the situation. Coleman (2005) has shown the extent to which school principals exhibit feminine and masculine adjectives in the tables below.

Table 1

Feminine adjectives chosen by school principals to describe their leadership styles (Coleman, 2005)

Femine Descriptors	%Female Administrators	%Male Administrators
Caring	85	91
Intuitive	86	72
Tolerant	74	78
Creative	68	60
Informal	57	62
Non-competitive	13	19
Subjective	17	14
Aware of individual differences	90	88

As seen in Table 1, the most frequently chosen feminine adjective by school principals is "awareness of individual differences" and the least frequently chosen is subjective, that is, "acting individually". Among the feminine adjectives chosen by male school principals, the most frequently chosen is "caring" and the least frequently chosen is "subjectivity".

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Table 2

Masculine adjectives chosen by school principals to describe their leadership styles (Coleman, 2005).

Femine Descriptors	% Female Administrators	%Male Administrators
Evaluative	74	75
Disciplined	61	60
Competitive	50	62
Objective	50	64
Formal	13	19
Highly Regulated	13	10
Compliant	7	10
Prescriptive	3	6

When Table 2, which includes the masculine adjectives chosen by school principals, is examined, it is seen that the masculine adjectives chosen by female and male principals are similar, and in both groups, the adjective "evaluative" is the most frequently chosen and the adjective "prescriptive" is the least frequently chosen. When the percentages in both tables are examined, the adjectives chosen by female and male principals regarding their leadership styles have similar rates.

Table 3

Typical Leadership Characteristics of Women and Men (Adapted from Mokaba-Bernardo, 2016: 44)

Leadership characteristics specific to men	Leadership characteristics specific to women
Aggressive, competitive, controlling,	Collaborative, cooperative, caring, emotional, empathic, tactful, compromising and submissive
Intermediary, assertive, directive	Mother
Disciplinarian	Shared decision making, collaborative decision making
Power, individualism, hierarchy (top-down)	Spiritual leadership for social justice, relational leadership for learning, balanced leadership
Task-oriented, autocratic	Social, sensitive, Interpersonally focused and democratic

Table 3 includes a summary of women in educational leadership as well as their leadership styles and characteristics. This table also shows how women leaders are perceived.

Mokaba-Bernardo (2016) found in her study that all women leaders exhibit a transformational style. It was observed that women acted with their beliefs and used their leadership skills, understanding, empathy and awareness of people to shape their management style. Women educational leaders acted in accordance with both stereotypical feminine characteristics and sometimes masculine leadership concepts. It was stated that women's leadership styles were dynamic, and they alternated between leadership styles considered feminine and masculine depending on the situation.

Dana and Bourisaw (2006) tried to characterize women's leadership characteristics with a leadership style that focused on teaching, preferred a collaborative, transformational approach. According to the study, the leadership style that women superintendents generally preferred was not compatible with the culture of the school district. This situation caused women superintendents to have shorter terms of office. In such cases, women were inadequate in supporting their own gender. Unlike female educational administrators, male administrators are more supported by their colleagues and prefer to negotiate for their own interests and salaries. Female administrators generally prefer to accept the situation in such cases.

In other studies (Eagly et al., 1992; Taylor, 1994), it was revealed that female school administrators tend to adopt less autocratic and more democratic leadership styles than their male counterparts and are involved in more participatory decision-making processes. Researchers could not find a difference between task orientation and interpersonal orientation. Helgesen's (1990, cited in Taylor, 1994) research revealed that women prefer to strengthen relationships and seek ways to strengthen the bond between people, and that they give equal value to ends and means. Shakeshaft (1989, cited in Campbel, 2010) found that female inspectors spend more time in the classroom than male inspectors during classroom visits and spend more time helping teachers who have just started their education life with their problems.

Varying from transformational to laissez-faire depending on the situation, it is observed that women educational leaders exhibit a transformational leadership style. Women exhibit leadership approaches ranging from the compassionate, collaborative style defined as feminine to the directive, controlling, and autocratic leadership defined as masculine. Findings from studies show that women act dynamically and fluidly (Mokaba-Bernardo, 2016; Northouse, 2010). According to some studies (Barsh and Cranston, 2011; Duncan, 2007), although the leadership styles used by women educational leaders differ from men, these differences are not seen as an obstacle to women's advancement in educational administrative positions (Brundge, 2016).

Gender Inequalities in Leadership Roles

Glass ceilings, glass cliffs, glass escalators, mazes, zigzags, ivory basements, leaky pipelines and velvet ghettos are all concepts that have been used in the literature to point out gender inequality. Leadership studies that attempt to explain gender inequality have focused on determining the most effective roles of women in leadership. Understanding which characteristics are important for success could create a role map for taking action for professional advancement and promotion in educational leadership roles. The ivory basement phenomenon, proposed by Eveline (2004), was put forward to understand how the bias of the social role incongruity theory is reflected in the gender inequality in women's subordinate roles in the education system (Brundage, 2016).

Bagihole (2012) likens the inequalities in educational leadership roles to trends in local government institutions and states that this can be explained by the glass ceiling phenomenon. According to the glass ceiling model, Cotter et al. (2021) women have difficulty reaching leadership roles because they are women and because of their gender. The glass ceiling is defined as gender-related differences that cannot be explained by other work-related characteristics of employees. In other words, the concept of the glass ceiling refers to gender inequality in leadership roles. Weyer (2007) states that although 20 years have passed since the glass ceiling phenomenon was introduced, gender differences continue to create prejudices in the evaluation of women. The glass ceiling has been perceived by women as partially threatening, and women have attributed the existence of such a phenomenon to their family life choices, personal characteristics, and perceptions of obstacles to advancement in their positions (Ezzedeen et al., 2015).

Women's belief in the existence of the glass ceiling is observed to significantly affect their career satisfaction, emotional and physical health, and commitment to work (Smith et al., 2012). Until recently, concepts such as glass ceiling, labyrinth, and zigzag have been used to conceptualize the difficulties women leaders face on their path to leadership. In the research literature, these concepts largely cover the difficulties women face on the path to leadership, describing the difficulties on the path to women's leadership roles. The labyrinth framework provides explanations and suggestions for understanding gender inequality in leadership roles (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Olid (2013) defined the processes on the path to women's leadership as a zigzag.

The glass ceiling phenomenon has also been associated with the concept of the glass cliff over time. A study on the possibility of women being promoted to leadership positions revealed that women leaders face obstacles that prevent them from failing from the moment

they are appointed to leadership roles. This situation is also evaluated as a relationship with the assignment of women leaders during periods when organizations experience a decline in performance. The glass cliff effect may have been created by providing an environment with less freedom to pull an organization out of a crisis. The glass cliff is completed by saying that the pine cliff effect occurs as a result of women being promoted to leadership roles when the organization is experiencing a decline in performance. Women take on leadership roles in achieving strategic goals in risky situations and environments where support is low, and their leadership roles are generally shorter-term than men (Cook & Glass, 2013).

In a similar study, Malcahy and Lineham (2014) concluded that women are more likely to attain board positions during periods of dangerous organizational decline. However, when these same women leaders provide input into the decision-making process, feel empowered, and perceive organizational justice, the glass cliff is reduced (Sabharwal, 2015). The concept of the velvet ghetto, introduced by Guillaume and Pochic in 2009, reflects the idea that women have high visibility but low power, that is, are placed in lower-level positions. This situation can create an illusion in women about diversity, intention, equality, and inclusion in the organization (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

There are six barriers in the literature that create the glass ceiling in women's leadership roles. Three of these barriers are valuing masculine characteristics more than feminine characteristics, women's success being less likely to be associated with talent than men, and women having the same agency as men but being described as less likable and more hostile than men. The other three barriers are choosing to pursue parenting and leadership roles, prejudices and threats to identity, and women constantly evaluating themselves as less talented than men (Isaac et al., 2012).

Another study supporting the concept of the glass ceiling was conducted by Maume (1999). The study found that in professions with a high proportion of women, men were able to reach supervisory roles more easily than women. The high proportion of female employees in the profession reduces the likelihood of women coming to administrative roles such as supervisory. In addition, Maume determined in her study that women waited longer than men to reach supervisory roles. She defined this situation as the glass staircase for men and the glass ceiling for women.

Nguyen (2013) found that family responsibilities are an obstacle for women to reach leadership roles. However, there are studies that show the opposite. Nguyen (2013) states that strong family support for women leaders is critical for success in leadership roles. The long period women spend out of the public sphere due to having children and the fact that they

prefer to have children early or later in their working lives have a significant effect on reaching leadership roles. In most cases, women reject leadership roles in favor of family responsibilities. In addition to discrimination, there are also obstacles such as lack of self-confidence, learned sexist roles and self-sexism in women leaders. According to the study by Fitzsimmons et al. (2014), women set limits for themselves in reaching leadership roles based on gender from birth.

Some studies have revealed that women and men employees mostly prefer male leaders (Vuksanovic, 2012). Although leaders have equal abilities, it was determined that 53% of the participants in the study preferred male leaders. Similarly, women leaders have more difficulty in gaining legitimacy in terms of power balance. In a study conducted with 26 women who reached senior management roles at the university level, it was observed that personal negativities such as conflict with family and health problems constituted obstacles to reaching leadership roles (Diehl, 2014). Koening et al., (2011) surprisingly concluded as a result of a meta-analysis of 70 studies that leadership is equal to masculinity, but this situation is less valid for educational institutions. In addition, traditional career processes do not support gender-based female leadership.

Kaplan (2022) stated that three of the studies conducted on female school administrators were based on views about the problems of female school administrators. Therefore, it can be said that studies on the gender-based problems of female school administrators are few in the literature. The aim of this study is to determine the problems that female education administrators face in business life. In order to achieve this aim, the following questions were answered;

1. What are the gender-based problems of female administrators?

2. What are the difficulties of being a female administrator?

3. What are the advantages of being a female administrator?

4. What suggestions can be developed for female administrators and those women who want to become administrators?

Medhod

This part of the research includes the research model, study group, data collection tool, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability studies.

Research Design

This study aims to determine the problems of female educational administrators in line with the views of female school administrators and is a descriptive study designed in accordance with the case study, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Kaptan (1998) states that descriptive studies aim to explain the "what" of an event, object, institution, group, entity or various areas. The case study design is used to express different things in different disciplines and is related to the intensive study of an event. It includes the in-depth and longitudinal examination of the data obtained through interviews (Glesne, 2013). In the case study design, the factors related to a situation are investigated with a holistic approach and the focus is on how they affect the relevant situation and how they are affected by the relevant situation (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). In this study, it was aimed to describe the views of female school administrators regarding the problems they face based on gender with a holistic approach and in accordance with the case study design.

Working Group

In the formation of the working group of the research, the easily accessible criterion sampling method was used. According to Baltacı (2018), the reason for using maximum diversity in qualitative research is to investigate differences and diversities and to deepen the basic analysis. There are 26 female school principals working in public formal education institutions within the borders of Tokat province. Data was collected from 12 easily accessible school principals who have at least 2 years of management experience and work at different school levels. Participants were coded as A1, A2… (Administrator 1, Administrator 2…). The table containing demographic information about the participants is given below.

Table 4

Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Age	Education Level*	School Type**	Professional Seniority	Seniority in Management	Branch
A1	37	2	3	10	3	Chemistry
A2	45	1	3	15	12	English
A3	32	2	3	15	9	Mathmatics
A4	39	1	2	14	8	Phys. Educ.
A5	46	2	2	16	9	Turkish Lang.And Lit
A6	40	2	2	20	9	Math
A7	39	1	1	19	8	Class
A8	34	3	1	13	5	Class

A9	33	1	1	8	5	Class
A10	38	2	1	11	3	Class
A11	38	1	0	16	7	Kindergarten
A12	41	1	0	18	6	Kindergarten

*Education level, 1 Bachelor's, 2 Master's, 3 Doctorate,

**School type is coded as preschool education 0, primary school 1, middle school 2, high school 3.

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that 12 school administrators participated in the study, 3 high schools, 3 middle schools, 4 primary schools and 2 kindergartens. The average service years of the participants as administrators are 7 years. It is seen that the minimum service years of the administrators are 3 and the maximum is 12. The professional seniority of the participants varies between 8-20 years. It is also observed that the branches of the participants are diverse.

Data Collection Tool

In this study, data was collected through interviews. A semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used in the interviews. Considering the suitability of the questions for the purpose of the study, a literature review was conducted, the raw questions were developed in line with the expert opinions by receiving opinions from 2 different experts with doctoral education, and a pilot application was conducted to evaluate whether the questions were suitable for the purpose of the study, understandable and properly sequenced. As a result of the evaluation, it was concluded that no problems were observed in terms of form, purpose and scope, and that the interview form could be used in the actual application in its current form.

Interviews are conducted with pre-prepared questions in order to focus the participants on similar topics and to elicit the same type of information (Patton, 2014). The interviewer has the opportunity to ask the questions he/she has prepared based on the topics and areas he/she has determined in advance and to ask additional questions depending on the flow of the interview (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011: 122). Semi-structured interviews have some benefits. Open-ended semi-structured questions provide the opportunity to obtain in-depth information from the participants. It helps to obtain in-depth information about the phenomenon by ensuring that the participants provide detailed information directly, and helps the researcher to ask more detailed questions (Creswell, 2012: 218). In semi-structured interviews, the researcher is free to ask additional questions by remaining loyal to the questions (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). The first part of the two-part form includes questions about the demographic information of the participants. The second part includes 4 open-ended

questions aimed at determining the problems faced by female educational administrators. The female administrators participating in the research were given codes starting from A1 (Administrator 1) to A12.

Data Collection

Before the interviews, ethics committee permission was obtained and a preliminary interview was held with the participants, and they were informed about the nature, purpose, data collection method, data analysis and where the study would be used. They were informed that no personal information about the participants would be shared, if they gave permission, audio recording would be used, if they did not give permission, the interview would be conducted by the researcher taking notes. It was stated that appropriate interview conditions were needed and they were asked whether they would volunteer to participate in the study. The study was conducted in the schools where the school administrators and participants who accepted to volunteer to participate study, in the school principal's offices. The interview questions were asked by the researcher, and it was decided that it would be appropriate to write down the answers and note them. Since the participants did not want audio recordings, no audio recordings or images were taken. The interviews lasted an average of 20 minutes. The interviews lasted approximately 240 minutes/4 hours. The collected data was converted into an MS Word document on a computer.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the participants were converted into a Word file, first conceptualized, and then content analysis was used to determine the themes explaining the concepts that emerged (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). In the coding of the data, a faculty member who is experienced in qualitative research, has a doctorate level education and works as an associate professor in the Department of Educational Administration at a public university, performed the coding as the second coder. The researcher compared the coding he made with the coding from the other coder, and as a result of this comparison, it was decided what the codes and themes would be. The codes and themes obtained with the content analysis method were converted into tables. The codings in the tables were supported by direct quotes from the participants.

Validity and Reliability

In the study, expressing the information regarding the method and analysis of the research in a clear and understandable language and storing the collected raw data in a way that can be examined by others are considered as important issues that ensure the external reliability of the research. The path followed in developing the research questions, conducting a pilot application, paying attention to collecting data appropriate to the questions and purpose in data collection, and using a second competent coder in the field other than the researcher in coding the data should be considered as contributions to the internal reliability of the research (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). Since the consensus between the coders will contribute to the reliability of the study, the consensus between both coders was calculated with the formula used by Miles and Huberman (1994: 64) and determined as 82%. According to Miles and Huberban (1994: 64), a consensus of 70% and above between the coders indicates that the study is reliable.

In case studies, validity is expressed that knowledge does not exist on its own, but is found together, and that it exists with those who experience it. Valid knowledge is clear. (Langdridge, 2007: 155). Yardley (2007: 220) states that the data obtained from the study should be sensitive to the context, should be evaluated in terms of dedication and meticulousness, transparency and logical conformity, impact and importance. It is emphasized that the findings in the current study should be sensitive to the context and the findings of previous qualitative research. The current study shows sensitivity to the context in terms of revealing similarities and differences with the studies in the literature. Transparency, meticulousness and logical conformity were tried to be provided by expressing the data collection and analysis in detail. The study was carried out in a long period of time such as 6 months. This time allocated shows dedication.

Expert evaluation was also used in order to increase the validity of the study. Different expert opinions were received both in the development of the research questions and in the analysis stage, and the study was evaluated from different perspectives. According to Shenton (2004), different expert opinions will change the researcher's perspective on events and will contribute to the validity of the study as they will provide the opportunity to evaluate the study from different perspectives.

Ethics Committee Permission

It was conducted with the approval decision taken in the 21st session of Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, dated 24.12.2024, number 01-51, ethical ssessment certificate number: 504270

Findings and Comments

The questions in the semi-structured interview form developed to collect data for the study were asked to 12 participants consisting of female school principals in order and their answers were obtained. The answers converted to written Word format were content analyzed and given in this section.

Gender-Based Problems of Female Administrators

The question "What are the difficulties you face regarding your gender?" was asked to the female administrators, and the content analysis of the answers obtained from the participants was given in Table 5.

Table 5

Gender-Based Problems of Female Administrators

Participant Problems	*Participant Codes (A=Administrator)*	*f*
Communication problems,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, A10, A11, A12	12
Gossiping,	A1, A2, A4, A5, A6, A8, A9, A10, A11	9
Fear of being misunderstood,	A1, A2,A3, A4, A6, A8, A9, A11,	8
Not eager to enter administrator room,	A1, A2, A8, A9, A11, A10, A12	7
Getting permission from the assistant administrator,	A1, A,2, A3, A5, A6, A8	6
Not accepting female administrator as an administrator,	A1, A2, A4, A5, A9, A12	6
Provocative behaviors,	A1,A7, A8, A9	4
Looks like saying who are you,	A1, A12	2
Attitudes as if I took their rights.	A8	1
Ignorance.	A8	1

When Table 5 is examined, the main problem experienced by female administrators based on gender is "communication problems". The second important problem is "gossiping"

caused by the presence of a female administrator in the school. The third problem is "fear of being misunderstood" while communicating with administrators. Therefore, they prefer to do their jobs with male vice principals, teachers and other employees rather than the school administrator. The underlying factor of all these problems is observed to be communication problem between women and men. Below are excerpts from the views of some participants supporting the Table 5;

> *I had problems with teachers at first. They did not want to enter my room. They got their permission from the vice principal, I later learned about it, they were more afraid of being misunderstood, I think we had a bit of a communication problem, but we broke it over time. Some teachers, especially in the first days, displayed provocative attitudes such as asking who are you. They also gossiped about me a lot, but I continued without paying attention, and I can say that they got used to it after a while (A1).*
> *We had communication problems, they didn't want to talk to me, they went to the assistant administrators. What upset me the most was the unfounded gossip? Like I was someone's nephew and that's why I was appointed. However, my efforts, the criteria for appointment, the awards I received are obvious. Nobody sees what I do. When they talked, they always started a sentence saying "Don't misunderstand me" (A6).*
> *Interestingly, they couldn't accept me. They acted as if it was their right and I had taken it. Gossip, loud conversations in front of the door. They ignored me for a while and tried to handle their work with the assistant administrator (A8).*

Difficulties of Being a Female Administrator

In order to obtain the opinions of school principals regarding the difficulties of being a female administrator, the question "What are the difficulties of being a female administrator?" was asked to the participant administrators. The participants' responses were recorded by the researcher and analyzed using the content analysis method. The subthemes regarding the difficulties of being a floor administrator are given in Table 6.

Table 6

Difficulties of being a female administrator

Difficulties	Participant Codes(A=Administrator)	f
Long working hours,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A8, A9, A11, A12	10
No time for housework,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A9, A11,	9
Exposure to slang expressions,	A1, A7, A8, A9, A10, A11,	6
Bad dialogues with parents,	A1, A2, A4, A10, A12	5
Technical issues,	A1, A4, A6, A11, A12	5
Employee discipline issues,	A1, A3, A5, A6, A11,	5
Communication with external masters,	A4, A6, A8, A9, A11	5
Learning regulations,	A1, A4, A8,	3
Difficulty in motherhood.	A12,	1

When Table 6 is examined, it is seen that the majority of the participants (f=10) stated that working hours are long as the most important difficulty. The participants stated that they have no time for housework (f=9) as the second most important problem. Some other

important problems expressed are being exposed to slang expressions, problems in meetings with parents, technical issues, and disciplinary problems of employees, respectively, as a female school principal. The following direct quotes from the participants support the table;

First of all, at first, technical issues, regulations, legislation, how to handle the school's fractures and dislocations, and communication with the masters who come were really difficult. I had to do the work at school that I had my wife do at home or that my wife did. So sometimes it was useful for me to have men assistant principals. When the masters and some technical issues were done by them, I could relax (A4).

Due to the region where our school is located, our parent profile is a bit advanced socio-culturally, and sometimes it is not nice for the parents to talk to us in a high tone. I had to argue with a few parents because of this. There are those who talk in a very high tone. For example, the administrator of a place said, "What can we do? You are our guardian here; you have to follow the rules like everyone else. The guy at the security told the gentleman that there are no meetings with teachers without an appointment. I have often encountered situations like, 'Sir, I can meet with whomever I want whenever I want, who are you?' But being a woman sometimes allows these people to restrain themselves. I think I would have more problems if I were a man. Apart from that, there is not much to be difficult about. First, I was both a teacher and an administrator in a village school. I was familiar with some problems (A10).

There is not much to be difficult about actually. We had some problems with discipline. As a woman, there were some slack behaviors and people coming to work late. We overcame these in time. But the most difficult thing for me is the working hours. You have to be at school from morning to evening. When the teacher doesn't have a lesson, they may not come or they may leave when their lesson is over, they do other things, but when you are an administrator, you have to wait here. Especially when you are a woman administrator, you don't have time for housework (Y11).

Advantages of Being a Female Administrator

Participants were asked "What are the advantages of being a female administrator?" Participants' statements regarding the advantages of working as a female school administrator in an educational institution are analyzed and content analysis of the data given in the table below.

Table 7

Advantages of being a female administrator

Advantages	Participant Codes (A=Administrator)	f
Having the opportunity to express ourselves better,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A8, A9, A11, A12	10
More support by upper administrators,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A9, A11,	9
More polite (respectful) conversations,	Y1, Y7, Y8, Y9, Y10, Y11,	6
Checking their behavior when they see us,	A1, A2, A4, A10, A12	5
Parents love women administrators,	A1, A4, A6, A11, A12	5
Understanding girls more,	A1, A3, A5, A6, A11,	5
Parents' views on school have changed positively,	A4, A6, A8, A9, A11	5
People trust women more,	A1, A4, A8, A12,	4
As if they entrust their children to their mothers,	A1, A4, A8,	3

When Table 6 is examined, the most important advantage is that the participants stated that they "have the opportunity to express themselves better" (f=10). Secondly, the participants stated that they are supported by the "upper administrators more" than men because they are female administrators (f=9). It is seen that advantages such as being respected more, especially having more polite conversations and other teachers' checking their behaviors when female administrators are there like changing their sitting positions, being able to understand girls better, being more trustful and changing the views of families to school positively are stated. The statements of some participants are supporting the table given below;

I am one of those who experience many advantages. Especially parents trust us and leave their children to school as if they are entrusting them to a mother. In addition, since we are a model for girls, we understand them better (A2).

In other words, there is a satisfaction that can be seen on the faces of the parents because I am a female administrator. They see us as mothers. When we go to meetings at school or other meetings, when there is a woman, people pull themselves together, whether they want to or not, that is how I see it. We express ourselves better to both parents and other stakeholders, I think the parents' perspective on the school has changed (A3).

First of all, we have become like a family, parents find us more cheerful. They are comfortable with their children, we are accountable to both parents and upper management, and I think I can express myself correctly in this sense. I think the environments we are in are more civilized, people are starting to speak more politely, perhaps the best advantage is that we beautify our environment in this way (A11).

The above quotes from the participants support Table 7. As stated in the participant statements, since women are culturally identified with mothers and family in our society, it is

understood that parents are happy to have a female administrator in the school and consider the school as a continuation of the family.

Suggestions for Female Administrators

Having experience in school administration is considered important to overcome problems. For this reason, the question "What do you recommend to female administrators and those who want to become administrators?" was asked to school administrators to find out what suggestions they have for women who are or are thinking of becoming school administrators like themselves. Participants' answers were analyzed in content and are given in the table below.

Table 8

Recommendations for women administrators

Recommendations	*Participant Codes (A=Administrator)*	f
Working hours should be reduced,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A8, A9, A10, A11, A12	11
Successful administrators should be rewarded,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A8, A9, A11, A12	10
Administration positions should be encouraged,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A8, A9, A11, A12	9
They should be supported financially,	A1, A2, A4, A5, A6, A8, A9, A11, A12	9
They should be confident,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A6, A8, A9, A11, A12	9
They should know their legal rights,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A9, A12	8
They should be good communicators,	A1, A2, A4, A5, A6, A7, A9, A11,	8
They should be brave,	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A8, A9,	7
They should create their own style,	A1, A7, A8, A9, A10, A11,	6
They should support each other,	A1, A4, A6, A9, A11, A12	6
Priority in nursery and care services,	A1, A2, A4, A10, A12	5
They should create new opportunities for themselves,	A1, A2, A4, A10, A12	5
They should cooperate with stake holders.	A1, A3, A5, A6, A11,	5

When Table 9 is examined, it is seen that the majority of the participants (f=11) made suggestions that "arrangements regarding working hours" should be made. The second important suggestion to encourage women to become administrators is "rewarding successful administrators" (f=10), "administration positions should be encouraged" (f=9). It is also seen that the participants made suggestions such as " giving financial support, having confidence, knowing legal rights, being a good communicator, being brave, creating their own administration style, supporting each other, psychological support, priority in nursery and care services, extension of maternity leave". It is seen that the following quotes from the statements of some participants support Table 9.

Working as a woman is very difficult. Even when I was a regular teacher, there was very little time left for housework. After becoming a administrator, you have to spend more time at school, so I suggest that something be done about working hours. When I came, we had a revolving fund that declared a loss every year, and this year we made a profit with me. However, there is no reward for our success. I think successful administrators should be rewarded and encouraged. Maybe management can be encouraged so that there are more women administrators. There should be a nursery opportunity for children. Especially experienced administrators can be provided to support those who are appointed for the first time (A4).

I think working hours are the most important problem. You spend the whole day at school, there is no time left for the children at home. Nursery or childcare support can be provided, working hours can be flexible. In addition, school principalship should be made attractive, management should be encouraged, but the number of female administrators can increase accordingly. Most friends experience the difficulty of juggling home and work, and when management is involved, I think it depends on the person (A6).

First of all, I would suggest that management should be encouraged. This can be done with a reward system, at least by rewarding successful administrators, or administrators can be supported financially. You have to be at school early in the morning. It is necessary to check whether the school is ready for education, whether there are any problems, and the classrooms are cleaned or not. Working hours can really create problems in the family, I can say that we open the school in the morning and close it in the evening. Our spouses and children do not have much time. Maternity leave can be extended, psychological support can be provided (A10).

When the above quotations from the participants are examined, it is understood that female school administrators have time problems due to the heavy burden of motherhood, housewifery, and wife roles outside of their work lives, and have problems in fulfilling other roles outside of school because they have to work overtime like a regular civil servant. Some positive arrangements can be made for female administrators by taking into account the suggestions of the school principal participants. It is recommended that arrangements be made on issues such as providing childcare and care services for children and financial support so that more female administrators can work in educational institutions and women can be more comfortably to fulfill their roles outside of work.

Results and Discussion

Eeffective leadership is contingent to the context, and historically thought that men can do better leadership. Job title, context of the workplace and demands of the work with its roles should be considered when successful leadership is evaluated (Eagly, 2003). However, as Balyer (2017) emphasized, we need to go beyond the traditional leadership qualities before deciding the school administrators. In a male dominated culture, demands from women administrators are incompatible. To open the doors of a modern world why should not we give the opportunity to manage schools to women as they do in most of men's homes.

The leadership roles that women have undertaken in different sectors globally show that they can take more place in educational institutions as school leaders and in other managerial positions. Obviously, there is no significant obstacle to women taking part in educational leadership positions, other than psychological reasons, with the changing conditions.

At a time when it is not possible to manage the world from a patriarchal perspective, the fact that women administrators take more place in educational management positions can further develop them and therefore society. Women stand out with their more transformational and collaborative characteristics. These characteristics of theirs, which emphasize change and acting together, can be used for the development, change and transformation of society.

In this study, which aims to determine the opinions of female school principals regarding their problems, the case study, which is one of the qualitative research designs, was carried out using a semi-structured interview form. The data obtained from the interviews conducted with 12 out of a total of 26 school principals working within the borders of Tokat province were content analyzed and some findings were reached in the study. The most important of the findings obtained was that the participants expressed the difficulties they experienced in communication based on gender. Gender-based problems were experienced due to reasons such as male teachers not wanting to accept female principals, having problems in communication, and fear of gossip or misunderstanding. The second important finding expressed as the most important difficulty of female principals is long working hours and not having enough time for housework. In a culture that defines housework as women's work as a result of a patriarchal social structure, this difficulty should be evaluated as an expression of women both working in a job and doing house and family chores.

According to the findings obtained from the study, the most important advantage of being a female administrator is that women have the opportunity to express themselves more

comfortably, upper management tends to be more helpful to female administrators, and the greater respect that comes with being a woman and being in an administrative position due to the position they are in is stated as important advantages. It was determined that the most important suggestions of the participants for women who are or are considering becoming school administrators like themselves are reducing working hours and rewarding successful administrators. According to the participants, arrangements can be made regarding working hours to increase women's interest in management. Working hours are stated to be very long for women who have to cope with both housework and school work.

Studies show that female education administrators are defined as collaborative, team-oriented, sharing, empathic, caring, motivating and supportive. In addition, female leaders are defined with characteristics such as protector, mother, mentor and teacher. Female administrators can be task-oriented, disciplined and directive when necessary (Chirstman and McClellan, 2008; Mokaba-Bernardo, 2016). When evaluated in terms of these characteristics, female school administrators should be at least as high up in education administration as male administrators. In light of the findings obtained from the study, arrangements such as prioritizing female school administrators in appointments to administration positions, reducing working hours, giving financial support, prioritizing in nursery and care services can be made to ensure that more women take part in education administration.

Recommendations

The results of the study reflects that gender as a criteria for administrative positions is not supportable by itself. Women deserve more to be in administrative positions as men do especially in education. From this point of view apparently there are some recommendations for the policy maker and researchers.

1. The presence of women in school administrator positions at the secondary school level and above can increase sensitivity in schools for the welfare of adolescent girls and girls can positively influence their career choices by having female administrators as role models. Considering the vital role that a country's education system plays in both national development and the development of a gender-equal society, women also need to be actively involved in leading educational change.

2. Women have the necessary skills and understanding to effectively participate in educational management and policy-making processes at both school and national levels in order to be active participants in the process of change and development.

However, it is seen that they are not sufficiently represented in education management in many developed and developing countries such as Turkey. By examining the characteristics of female educational administrators and the way they are perceived in educational institutions and the way female leaders perceive themselves, more women can be encouraged to become educational administrators.

3. Female educational leaders can be role models and guide the new generations in gaining the self-confidence they may need. The fact that women take on fewer roles in senior management positions can negatively affect their work motivation. Therefore, women should be adequately represented in senior management roles.

4. Examining the relationship between the problems women face in reaching administrative positions and the motivation of female employees can help develop new propositions regarding job satisfaction and the adequate representation of women in business life.

5. In terms of education management, action plans should be developed for the gender-based problems experienced by women administrators, and arrangements should be made to help women administrators advance in managerial positions in order to develop a more egalitarian society in the field of education management, as in every area of society.

Ethical Committee Approval

It was conducted with the approval decision taken in the 21st session of Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, dated 24.12.2024, number 01-51, ethical ssessment certificate number: 504270

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