

**OKUL YÖNETİCİLERİNİN POLİTİK BECERİLERİ:
YÖNETİM SÜREÇLERİ BAĞLAMINDA**

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ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, okul yöneticilerinin okuldaki yönetim süreçlerinde sergilemiş oldukları politik becerilerin neler olduğunu belirlemektir. Araştırma nitel bir araştırma olup, olgu bilim deseninde tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu, 14' ü kadın, 14'ü erkek okul yöneticisi olmak üzere toplam 28 okul müdüründen oluşmaktadır. Araştırma verileri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile toplanmıştır. Araştırma verileri içerik analizi yöntemiyle çözümlenmiş ve literatür destekli olacak şekilde temalar oluşturulmuştur. Araştırmada, kadın ve erkek yöneticilerin planlama sürecinde ilişki ağı kurma becerisini ortak beceri olarak sergiledikleri, bunun yanı sıra kadın yöneticilerin samimi görünme becerisini de kullandıkları, örgütlenme sürecinde ise kadın ve erkek yöneticilerin politik becerilerin ilişki ağı kurma ve kişilerarası etki alt boyutlarına yönelik beceriler sergiledikleri sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmanın bir başka bulgusuna göre, yöneltme sürecinde kadın ve erkek yöneticilerin politik becerilerin, kişilerarası etki, samimi görünme ve sosyal zekâ alt boyutlarına yönelik beceriler sergiledikleri görülmektedir. Araştırmanın son bulgusunda ise, erkek ve kadın yöneticilerin denetleme sürecinde kişilerarası etki ve ilişki ağı kurma becerilerini sergiledikleri, kadın yöneticilerin ayrıca samimi görünme becerisini de kullandıkları bulgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Politik beceri, yönetim, yönetim süreçleri, okul yöneticisi

**THE POLITICAL SKILLS OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS:
ADMINISTRATIVE PERSPECTIVE****ABSTRACT**

The present study aimed to determine the political skills exhibited by school administrators during administrative processes. It was a qualitative study based on the phenomenological research design. The study group consisted of 28 school principals, 14 were female and 14 others were male. The research data were gathered through a semi-structured interview form. The data were analysed using the content analysis method and the themes were created based on the relevant literature. It was concluded that networking ability was commonly displayed by female and male administrators during the planning process, apparent sincerity skill was additionally exhibited by female administrators, and both female and male administrators displayed the networking and interpersonal influence sub-dimensions of political skills during the organizing process. The research findings also indicated that female and male administrators exhibited the interpersonal influence, apparent sincerity, and social astuteness sub-dimensions of political skills during the coordination process. Finally, it was uncovered that female and male administrators displayed interpersonal influence and networking abilities during the supervision process while females additionally performed apparent sincerity skills. To sum up, school administrators were found to exhibit diverse political abilities during the administrative processes.

Keywords: Political skill, administration, administrative processes, school administrator

INTRODUCTION

The bureaucratic and hierarchical structure of organizations has gradually been replaced by a teamwork-based working style around the world. The emergent organizing trend points out the differentiation in leadership roles and skills and leads to the understanding that organizational leaders might be regarded as a coach or a facilitator (Cascio, 1995). In parallel, leaders are also supposed to develop newer competencies highlighting different skills, such as persuasion, influence, and control in order to encourage others (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas & Ammeter, 2004; Nyhan, 1999). That's why, leaders are expected to struggle in order to maintain the continuity of their organizations, to reach organizational goals, and to protect organizational interests (Nair, 2018). This often obliges them to act politically. It is emphasized in a majority of published works in the literature that the leaders should be capable of convincing, influencing and controlling the others due to the fact that organizations inherently have political-arena-like structures (Ferris, Treadway, Perrew, Brouer, Douglas & Lux, 2007; Mintzberg, 1985).

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Research on the political skills of leaders started to be carried out in the early 1900s. However, it can be alleged that the accumulation of studies and the prominence of concept for organizational leaders coincided with the early 1980s. Mintzberg brought the concept of political skill to the agenda at the beginning of 1983, by emphasizing the need to have political skills in order to achieve political goals and to have the necessary energy to maintain the continuity of the organization. It was followed by Ammeter, Douglas, Gardner, Hochwarter and Ferris (2002) who proposed the political leadership theory composed of contextual factors for the areas of leadership together with the characteristics, behaviours, and activities of leaders. Later, Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman and Humphrey (2011) introduced “An Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviours and Effectiveness” which was believed to influence leadership effectiveness as a set of leadership attributes through displaying political skills and leadership behaviours. In this regard, understanding the concept of political behaviour gains importance as a primary concern. In the literature, political behaviour, as a type of organizational behaviours, has been defined as a process covering the activities that the individual is not formally liable for, but that affect or attempt to affect the distribution of the advantages and disadvantages within the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Mayes and Allen (1977), on the other hand, defined political behaviour as an individual’s attempt to use his/her influencing capabilities to achieve the outcomes approved or disapproved by the organization. The main motivation underlying an individual’s predisposition to display political behaviour can be ascribed to his/her overriding desire for preserving the existing situation and feeling more powerful. As also stated by Mintzberg (1983), beyond the eagerness to display political behaviours, the individuals should also be capable of displaying these behaviours intelligently and effectively. Based on Mintzberg’s political behaviour hypothesis (1983), political skill has a mediating role for the evolution of will into behaviour though political behaviour is a precursor to political will. Therefore, political skills can be defined as the capability to effectively understand others and use the available information so as to improve the personal and/or organizational goals of others (Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Kacmar and Douglas, 2005). Regarding the concept of political skill, Pfeffer (1981) and Mintzberg (1983) suggested that social skills are of vital importance for organizations to achieve their objectives as a consequence of their political nature. That’s why, the individuals with political skills may display different behaviours when it comes to communicating with others, understand them, adopt the changes within the organization, and earn trust and support of other teammates. At first glance, political skills can be attributed with a negative connotation; however, it is regarded to be a prerequisite for success and it is also noted that people with political skills are more likely to exhibit the behaviours required to understand others and achieve favourable outcomes (Pfeffer, 1981). Thus, political skill is defined as a personality type that synthesizes social astuteness and networking skills with particular emphasis on trust, sincerity, and reality (Ferris, Perrewé, Anthony & Gilmore, 2000). Consequently, political skills can also be regarded to be a multi-dimensional structure with an apparent embodiment of an acute mind, persuasive ability, networking capabilities, and authenticity. Besides, individuals with political skills are generally perceived to have calm and confident personalities by others, thus attracting them with a sense of relief. Despite their self-confident appearance, those with political skills are not self-centred individuals as they are extroverts rather than being introverts. In this way, they maintain the balance between internal and external accountability (Ferris, Davidson & Perrewé, 2005). Although political skill is considered to be somewhat innate ability and somewhat a behaviour depending on environmental factors, there is a common belief that it can be developed and shaped (Perrewé & Nelson, 2004).

Based on the relevant literature, individuals with political skills exhibit not only the ability to make an accurate interpretation of social situations but also the ability to behave accordingly in a sincere manner. That’s why the achievement of the desired goals and being effective require political skills. As also suggested by Perrewé and Nelson (2004), a person may in time learn the tactics and strategies to influence others, but these attempts are likely to fail in the end if they are not accompanied by political skills.

It is suggested by several researchers and supported by numerous research findings that political skill is closely associated with organizational success, stress factors, employee reactions, employee performance, leadership effectiveness, organizational communication, decision-making processes and business outcomes (Yıldıztaş, 2017; Özdemir & Gören, 2016; Cingöz, 2013). It can be deduced that

the administrators displayed divergent political skills without even realizing during administrative processes. Administrators may sometimes deliberately or unconsciously use power, authority, or influence others in order to direct the individuals or groups towards organizational goals (Mangaltepe, 2012; Aslan, Çalık & Er, 2019). Accordingly, it can be stated that political skills hold importance for the planning, organizing, coordinating, and supervising processes of schools. That's why, administrators are able to direct their employees towards behaving in favour of organizational goals by means of political skills (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas & Ammeter, 2004). Therefore, school administrators are generally expected to exhibit political skills during administrative processes when it comes to defining the goals and philosophy of the school, determine the school policy, enhance school effectiveness, establish the relationship between individuals and groups, develop a democratic and participatory administrative style, plan educational activities, resort to external support in times of need, facilitate coordination with in-school and out-of-school partners, and monitor and evaluate teachers (Taymaz, 2003). The attitudes and behaviours of administrators hold particular importance in creating effective plans, managing conflicts, establishing healthy communication with the emergent coalition groups, improving organizational effectiveness, showing their persuasive skills in achieving common goals, and reducing the influence of interest and pressure groups. It can accordingly be inferred that school administrators have to display diverse political skills throughout the administrative processes. This can be ascribed to the fact that administrators with positive influence through the use of political skills on the people they work with are taken as role models by their subordinates in their career development. It is also voiced that political skills represent a series of critical social competence that may have a significant contribution to team performance (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas & Ammeter, 2004), and political skill is considered to be an indicator of the social capabilities of leaders. Ferris, et al. (2005) also embraced the concept of "political skill" in the context of "social skill" and placed emphasis on its cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects which have significant effects on the interpersonal communication of individuals and organizational performance. Political skill comprises four critical dimensions, namely social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking, and apparent sincerity skills.

The Dimensions of Political Skill

Political skill comprises four critical dimensions, namely social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking, and apparent sincerity skills.

Social Astuteness

For leaders, it involves the requirement for having a higher level of awareness about their social environment. Such kind of a social awareness level enables individuals to interpret and identify others' behaviours more accurately (Ferris, Treadway & Perrewé, 2012). People with a higher level of political skills tend to adopt diverse social environments more readily and observe the people around them more clearly. Silvera et al. (2001) proposed that social astuteness comprises three sub-dimensions, namely information processing, social awareness, and social skill. However, Goleman (2007) suggested that social astuteness is fundamentally based on two sub-dimensions, social awareness, and social skills. He defines social awareness as the ability to sense others' inner situations, understand their emotions and ideas, and empathize with complex social situations, and he portrays social skills as the ability to establish effective communication.

Interpersonal Influence

People with political capabilities are the masters of impressing people in their immediate surroundings through a comforting communication and interaction style (Ferris et al., 2012). They make a great impression on others. As a consequence of their capability to get on with everyone, they can also be considered to be capable of establishing strong social networks. Thanks to this characteristic feature, also referred to be "flexibility" by Pfeffer (1992), the individuals adapt to environmental needs so as to fulfill the requirements of others. They are thus commonly perceived to be highly productive and sympathetic personalities as they can easily grasp the others' reactions and behave accordingly (Yıldıztaşı, 2017).

Networking Skill

The individuals with political skills are highly capable of establishing and maintaining multiple social networks and they can use them for individual and organizational success. They are also expertized in strengthening their relationship with others, settling conflicts, and negotiating (Ferris et al., 2012). Networking skill is also considered to provide individuals with the advantage of being in the right place at the right time.

Apparent Sincerity

The people with political skills are commonly perceived to be highly righteous and transparent individuals (Ferris et al., 2005). That's why they make an impression of "credible person" on others due to their realistic and trustworthy deeds. Therefore, politically capable people achieve a higher potential for success in their influencing attempts as they do not resort to manipulative or coercive means (Jones, 1990). Even though they sometimes perform stealthy actions for their interest, those actions are likely to be overlooked due to their preconceived impression of "credible" or "frank" appearance.

Ferris, Davidson and Perrewé (2005) define political skills as a prerequisite for leadership effectiveness and further proposed that the social astuteness, networking, interpersonal influence, and apparent sincerity skills also provide leaders with the abilities such as interpreting individuals and situations accurately, establishing effective relationships, deciding on suitable actions and being sincere and realistic. For individuals to gain ground and to be successful in their organizations, political skills can thus be considered to have particular importance.

School administrators in educational institutions are also supposed to possess new leadership skills to fulfill ever-changing expectations as in the case of all organizational managers. In this regard, undertaking the task of administration at schools becomes more challenging than many other institutions due to the intense human interactions. Moreover, the requirement for school administrators to adopt a participative and team-work-oriented organizational structure rather than an individualist and autocratic one necessitates acquiring new leadership skills. In the particular case of school administrators, who take on the responsibility in such an ecosystem-like environment, they are expected to display constructive behaviours against the problems they encounter and towards their subordinates, use divergent strategies during the administrative process and exhibit their skills. As also reported in the relevant studies (Chen, Beck & Amos, 2005; Evans, 1998, 1999; Riaz & Haider, 2010), school administrators' capability to display behaviours such as visibility, sincerity, establishing healthy communications, having a high level of social awareness and their ability to empathize also help others in displaying positive social behaviours apart from the established definition of their roles. The majority of the relevant studies in the literature have focused on leadership behaviour. However, the process of leadership is another aspect that is as equally important as behaviour. The leadership process involves the relationships between the individuals taking part in the process. Özdemir (2017) characterized the aforementioned process with the power and authority relationships of the participating actors and referred to school environments in a social context to be a micro-political arena in which power struggles take place. In this context, employees, parents, and other stakeholders can be considered to be the political actors of schools. The political skills of all these political actors are regarded to be an important facilitator in achieving individual and organizational goals (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas & Ammeter, 2004; Cingöz, 2013; Douglas & Ammeter, 2004). Accordingly, the administrators at schools, which consisted of social environments on the basis of human relationships, should be equipped with political skills for both the effective administration of schools and organizational success. Besides, the present study is hoped to contribute to the relevant literature as it aims to determine school administrators' political skill, an important dimension of organizational behaviour, whose importance is increasing day by day due to its effect on school climate, improved organizational outcomes and decision-making process while fulfilling the administrative function of school administrators. In this regard, this study aimed to determine the political skills exhibited by school administrators during the administrative processes of schools. The following sub-problems were developed to seek answers for the main problem:

- Which political skills do school administrators exhibit during the planning process?
- Which political skills do school administrators exhibit during the organizing process?
- Which political skills do school administrators exhibit during the coordinating process?
- Which political skills do school administrators exhibit during the supervising process?

METHOD

It was a qualitative study aiming to determine the political skills of school administrators. A phenomenological research design was used in the study. Phenomenology focuses on the social activities of individuals which are the conscious experiences during their daily lives (Schram, 2003:73). In this regard, the political skills used by school administrators during the administrative processes were attempted to be revealed by adopting an individual or situation-based approach. Throughout the study, the spelling rules, publication principles, and ethical rules of the journal were followed and permission was granted from the ethics committee for the study.

Study Group

The study group composed of 28 school administrators (14 females and 14 males) to reveal the common and distinguished aspects of the two genders. The participants in the study group were determined using maximum variation sampling and criterion sampling techniques. The main purpose is to reveal the common or divergent aspects of the opinions on the subject matter under investigation to enrich the outputs of the study (Özkan, 2019). For this purpose, the participants (two females and two males per province) were determined on a voluntary basis among the individuals meeting the criterion of having an administrative experience for at least 5 years from the seven geographical regions of Turkey namely the provinces of Sakarya, İzmir, Sivas, Gaziantep, Adana, Zonguldak and Diyarbakır.

Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection instrument of the study. The “Political Skill Inventory” developed by Ferris et al. (2005) and adopted into Turkish by Özdemir and Gören (2015) for educational institutions, the book of “Fundamentals of Management: Essential Concepts and Applications” by Robbins, Decenzo & Coulter (2016) and other relevant works in the field were exploited while designing the questions in the interview protocol. Underlining the importance of decision-making for administrators, Decenzo and Coulter (2016), emphasized that decision-making is placed in the planning and evaluation processes and that communication is involved in the function of coordinating. Based on this discourse, the administrative functions have been discussed under four headings while preparing the interview questions. Before the development of the interview form, the researcher first created a question pool based on the relevant literature. The question pool was then submitted to two field experts in educational administration to receive their opinions regarding the suitability and understandability of the questions. On the basis of their recommendations, the interview form was developed so as to involve three main questions and a probing question under each main question. Preliminary interviews were conducted with five individuals to test the understandability of the interview form. The interview form was finalized after the preliminary interviews.

Data Analysis

The content analysis method was used to analyse the obtained data using the interview form. First, the audio recordings of the interviews were documented through digitizing via the use of computer software. These documents were then independently filed and coded using ATLAS.ti 8 qualitative data analysis software. Afterward, proper themes were created for the obtained codes. The political skill dimensions in the relevant literature were taken as a basis for the creation of themes. Research data were then interpreted through the depiction of themes. Direct quotations from interviews were included in data analysis to support the participants’ opinions and to reveal cause-effect relationships (F1, F2, M1, M2...). The main purpose of content analysis is to acquire information about the concepts that can explain the obtained data as well as the relationships between them. In this regard, the obtained data should first be conceptualized and then be organized accordingly in a sensible manner in line with the emerging concepts as a means for the determination of themes clarifying the

data. This is mainly due to the fact that the concepts are good indicators of themes which further enable us to more easily organize the phenomena and make them more comprehensible (Yıldırım & Şimşek 2011: 227).

The participants were selected among volunteers who are more likely to direct the researcher towards accurate findings to enhance the validity of the study. Before the interviews, the researcher held a ten-minute long preliminary interview regarding the purpose of the study. During pre-interviews, the researcher informed the participants that the confidentiality of research data would be ensured to make them conduct a more comfortable interview. The research data were coded by a field expert apart from the researcher and the coefficient of the agreement was estimated accordingly in data analysis. Also, the transcriptions of the interviews were submitted to participants for their confirmation. The researcher attempted to behave objectively during both the interviews and the data analysis procedure to enhance the reliability of the study by avoiding to reflect her ideas.

FINDINGS

In line with the purpose of the study, the political skills of school administrators while fulfilling their administrative tasks were determined under four headings of administrative processes. The findings related to the sub-problem of “which political skills do school administrators exhibit during the planning process?” were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants’ opinions related to the political skills exhibited during the planning process

Theme	Code (female)	f	Code (Male)	f
Networking	Group study	14	Participating in decisions	14
	Information sharing	14	Job follow-up	11
	Receiving support	10	Establishing good relationships	9
	Time management	9	Time management	7
Social Astuteness	Recognizing co-workers	14		

As shown in Table 1, female and male administrators used networking skills during the planning process. As part of networking skill, female administrators articulated that they resorted to teamwork, shared information, sought intra or extra organizational support to achieve the desired goals and benefited from time management strategies to facilitate the achievement of plans with the following statements:

“In my opinion, the works and tasks to be fulfilled should be initially mapped. This way, I can get insight into the abilities and motivational situations of my co-workers and establish my working plan on the basis of group work...” (F2)

“To ensure the fulfilment of organizational tasks, I establish good relationships both with my colleagues and with those from outside the organization to receive assistance...” (F6)

Male administrators, on the other hand, made the following statements to emphasize that they ensured the participation of their colleagues in the decision-making process, monitored the tasks and jobs after the division of labour till the achievement of desired results and performed time management planning:

“I attach much importance to human relations. That’s why the fulfilled tasks in an organization can be deemed successful to the extent that they involve good human relationships and participatory decision-making ...” (M3)

“I think, time management holds particular importance during the planning stage of job processes. This becomes even more important in the case of our administrative system where administrators undertake excessive workloads. Therefore, I attach particular importance to work sharing, shared decision-making, following-up the performed tasks, putting the tasks in order, and developing good relationships...” (M9)

Differently from male administrators, female administrators stated that they primarily got to know their subordinates to avoid random planning, which enabled them to decide on what and to what extent their co-workers could do. In this regard, the participants made the following statements:

“Having insight into the characteristics and abilities of each colleague provides great convenience for administrators. I also decide on whether I include my colleagues into in-school plans considering their skills and their sense of responsibility...” (F10)

“When I make planning, I stick to the notion that I must adopt individual-oriented thinking which initially requires recognizing someone’s co-workers ...” (F14)

The organizing process which represents the designs of administrators during the development stage of the organizational structure involves a series of works related to how the jobs will be performed and on what grounds will the attitudes of subordinates be shaped. In this sub-problem of the study, the answers were sought to the question of “which political skills do school administrators display during the organizing process?” The findings related to this sub-problem were submitted in Table 2.

Table 2. *Participants’ opinions related to the political skills exhibited during the organizing process*

Theme	Code (female)	f	Code (male)	f
Networking	Establishing good relationships	9	Job sharing	14
	Exploiting pressure groups	7	Offering alternatives	8
	Establishing coordination	6	Getting the assistance of stakeholders	6
Interpersonal Influence	Shared decision-making	10	Effective speech	8
	Convincing	7	Encouraging	4
Apparent Sincerity	Being objective	7		
	Providing trust	7		
	Respecting others	4		

It is shown in Table 2 that female and male administrators displayed skills covered by the networking and interpersonal influence sub-dimension of political skills. Female administrators made the following statements to emphasize that they established good relationships with their colleagues, benefited from effective group works and attempted to collaborate with individuals having good impressions on their co-workers, and paid attention to shared decision-making thanks to the distribution of authority to appropriately organize the available sources:

“My priority is to establish a dynamic structure within the school. For this purpose, I attach particular importance to establishing good relationships and working in coordination with teachers ...” (F4)

“In my opinion, making people feel that the decisions are their own opinions helps in convincing them to fulfill the target task, and I behave accordingly. In brief, I generally use shared decision-making to organize things to do...” (F7)

Male administrators emphasized that they resorted to job sharing, designed alternative processes to fulfill the tasks, attempted to encourage others through making effective speeches in determining the appropriate methods for achieving the goals, and sought the support of stakeholders intending to establish a good working environment and improve organizational effectiveness.

“In an organization, it is a quite challenging task to bring the people, sources, working environment, etc. into conformity with each other. When designing the stages of a task, I generally exploit job sharing and making a motivational speech to help them feel like they can handle any task ...” (M1)

“Not everything ends up with what is your design and expectation at the very beginning. I, therefore, take into account the alternative ways of fulfilling a job and make adjustments in which I can get the assistance of people other than my colleagues such as parents, senior managers, and even non-governmental organizations...” (M13)

Female administrators were additionally found to exhibit the apparent sincerity sub-dimension of political skills. They expressed that they paid close attention to their colleagues, attempted to make the impression of being neutral, respected all the opinions, and thus they established an environment of trust at school. Some of the participants stated their opinions as follows:

“I believe that if we want to succeed anything, we first have to respect each other and pay attention to each other’s opinions. When my colleagues appreciate my sincerity and enjoy that I empathize with them, they voluntarily fulfill the tasks that I have assigned...” (F2)

“It is highly important to establish good relationships and an environment of trust if you want to make the right decision, make a good plan, and get to know your colleagues...” (F7)

In the coordination process, which is regarded to be the realization of planning and organizing processes, organizational sources are managed to achieve the organizational goals. The findings for the sub-problem of “which political skills do school administrators exhibit in the coordination process?” were presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Participants’ opinions related to the political skills exhibited in the coordination process*

Theme	Code (female)	f	Code (male)	f
Interpersonal Influence	Impressive communication	12	Leading	14
	Taking initiative	4	Being agreeable	12
Apparent Sincerity	Befriending	14	Awarding	8
Social Astuteness	Motivating	14	Motivating	7
			Empathizing	7

As shown in Table 3, female administrators used the interpersonal influence, apparent sincerity, and social astuteness skills during the coordination process. Female administrators implied that they established good communication, took initiative, befriended, and motivated others to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the performed tasks with the following statements:

“I try to establish an effective communication to build consensus and knowledge sharing among the teachers...” (F1)

“From time to time, I take initiative to ensure that the job is done as I expect. To avoid objections, which happen every time, I prefer to impose my directives...” (F5)

“I make them feel my support every moment to motivate them and to get them into action...” (F8)

Male administrators made the following statements to point out that they displayed political skills related to the sub-dimensions of interpersonal influence, apparent sincerity and social astuteness, such as leading their co-workers, assuming an agreeable attitude, motivating, empathizing and awarding the properly fulfilled tasks:

“I place emphasis on the necessity to be agreeable and focusing on the job particularly in the event of conflict about the job. In other words, I try to calm everyone down and show them how to achieve good results...” (M4)

“I try to ensure the working and learning environment essential for effective training. I attempt to be a pioneer with my behaviours...” (M11)

“I award properly fulfilled tasks as an incentive for good works...” (M12)

The skills of administrators are particularly significant during the supervision process, which is a corrective and constructive administrative function. The findings for the sub-problem of “which

political skills do school administrators exhibit during the supervision process?” were given in Table 4.

Table 4. *Participants’ opinions related to the political skills exhibited during the supervision process*

Theme	Code (female)	f	Code (male)	f
Interpersonal	Being a role model	13	Communicating	14
Influence	Awarding	12	Guiding	14
Networking	Collaboration	14	Providing external support	9
Apparent Sincerity	Establishing trust	11		

As shown in Table 4, female administrators emphasized that they displayed the interpersonal influence, networking and apparent sincerity sub-dimensions of political skills through being a role model, awarding, collaborating and establishing trust with the following statements:

“I work in cooperation with my colleagues regarding lecturing, methods and techniques should the need arise ...” (F4)

“I try to build a mutual environment of trust by informing that the process has been designed to yield the best outcomes” ...” (F10)

“I try to become a role model with my behaviours to increase the anticipated level of efficiency particularly in ongoing processes to improve their efforts and endeavours...” (F14)

During the supervision process, male administrators placed emphasis on the importance of counselling, the key function of supervision, as well as their behaviours to seek external support. They expressed their opinions as follows:

“I place particular importance on making personal development plans for teachers. This way, I can determine the aspects they need to improve and help them to receive vocational development support when I deem necessary...” (M3)

“I provide counselling through giving feedback as regards the conclusion of the supervision process...” (M9)

“As I think that healthy communication is the key for everything to be OK, I often exchange ideas as to the process...” (M12)

DISCUSSION CONCLUSION and SUGGESTIONS

Political skill, which has become one of the recent areas of interest for researchers, is ascribed particular importance by administrators as it addresses “the process of putting authority into action which has the potential to influence others successfully” (Atay, 2010). Accordingly, this study aimed to reveal the political skills displayed by school administrators when fulfilling their administrative functions. As a consequence of this phenomenological study, the participants were found to utilize four political skills namely networking, social astuteness, apparent sincerity, and interpersonal influence during their administrative tasks.

The findings revealed that while female and male participants commonly used networking skills, female participants, unlike males, additionally preferred social astuteness during the planning process. The findings indicated that both participating groups pay regard to networking, information sharing, and establishing good relationships for the success of the process, do not tend to use a self-centred behavioural pattern, act with a sense of responsibility, and adopt an extroversive administration style. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) uttered that cultural, technological, economic, and political powers should be considered to have a direct effect on administration, leadership perception, and the adopted administrative skills at schools in an era where those powers impose fundamental changes on the concept of administration and leadership. Administrators with networking skills are capable of building a wide network of facilitators through establishing good relationships with others to ensure that everything goes well (Even, Wihler, Blickle, Oerder, Ellen III, Douglas & Ferris, 2013). We can infer that the participants did not attach enough importance to teamwork, and instead they utilized

administrative time strategies for the achievement of plans in administrative processes. Blickle, Kane-Frieder, Oerder, Wihler, VonBelow, Schutte and Ferris (2013) concluded in their study that administrators with official authority and political skills were perceived to have a higher motivation to initiate what to be done through being more attentive to others, thus gaining their appreciation. That's why, their attentive attitudes provide the leaders with the capability to develop an environment of mutual trust and understanding which is regarded to be an interpersonal relationship skill (Judge, Picollo & Illies, 2004). As a result of the study, female administrators, apart from males, were found to integrate their colleagues into their planning process through attempting to recognize them on the basis of their characters and their relationship. Depending on this, it can be claimed that female administrators perform work-sharing in accordance with the qualities and skills of their co-workers and care about not only the formal but also the informal relationships, and it enables them to know how they should behave. Isler, Bir and Koç (2018) also emphasized that senior female administrators with 6-15 years of working experience displayed higher networking skills.

During the organizing process among administrative functions, female and male administrators were found to display common skills related to the networking and interpersonal influence sub-dimensions of political skill whereas female administrators additionally exhibited apparent sincerity apart from male administrators. Robbins, Decenzo and Coulter (2016) declared in their study that administrators should provide counselling to their co-workers during the organizing process as it is a crucial stage to determine how organizational decisions should be taken and on what grounds job sharing should be designed. It can be inferred from the obtained findings that both female and male administrators placed particular importance on receiving the support of all stakeholders, try to maintain the balance between the workload of co-workers, and act tactfully when it comes to providing alternatives for possible conflicts. That's why, all the organizations aiming to achieve the predetermined goals need well-established coordination (Memiş, 2006). In the study, female administrators were also found to display the apparent sincerity sub-dimension of political skills such as being attentive to all their colleagues, thus making a neutral impression, and building an environment of trust through respecting the opinions of others while designing the organizational structure. Some of the researchers defined leadership as a social means of influence and further emphasized that administrators are supposed to influence their followers to meet the standards of predetermined goals (Douglas & Ammeter, 2004) and that administrators with political skills have been characterized with the ability of reassurance in their working environment with empathy, self-confidence and relaxing others (Treadway, Brelan, Williams, Cho, Yang & Ferris, 2013). It can accordingly be inferred that female administrators endeavour to be a role model for their co-workers with their honesty and sincerity in their working environments. Similarly, Karaca (2008) voiced that the democratic attitudes of administrators result in an improved sense of commitment, confidence, and respect among others which is likely to yield a positive ambiance in the organization.

During the coordination process, female and male administrators were found to display skills related to the interpersonal influence, apparent sincerity, and social astuteness sub-dimensions of political skills. Female administrators were distinguished with regard to political skills such as building impressive communications, taking initiative, displaying sincere attitudes, and motivating their co-workers in achieving the predetermined organizational goals. Balyer (2019) also placed emphasis on the necessity for administrators to display behaviours such as taking initiative, motivating subordinates by asking for their opinions, and getting to know them during the coordination process. Male administrators, on the other hand, were found to exhibit interpersonal influence, apparent sincerity, and social astuteness behaviours such as leading others, being agreeable, motivating and empathizing with their co-workers, and exploiting the power of awarding. Erdoğan (2000) proposed that "a leading school administrator is the one who feels confident, observes events and individuals with an objective point of view, proposes practical ideas, highlights practice and feels sensitive towards his/her environment." It can be accordingly concluded that male administrators consider themselves as instructive individuals with the capability to manage emotions and solve problems with a sense of justice. This kind of discourse is supported by Sertoğlu (2010) who suggested that a leader should be equipped with personal characteristics such as being a problem-solver, having a high sense of responsibility, determination, and justice, and having good communication skills. Günaydın (2017)

pointed out that leaders with social skills are perceived as mediating individuals in conflicting environments owing to their ability to build healthy communication.

During the supervision process among the administrative functions, female administrators were found to exhibit skills related to the behaviours such as acting as a role model, awarding, collaborating with others and building an environment of trust and confidence which are closely related to the interpersonal influence, networking and apparent sincerity sub-dimensions of leadership skills. On the other hand, male administrators were found to display interpersonal influence and networking behaviours such as communication, counselling, and providing external support. It is pointed out that the achievement of objectives and the direction of workforce potential at school to act accordingly require school administrators to display political skills (Özdemir & Gören, 2015: 522). Thus, it can be argued that both female and male administrators place emphasis on establishing relationships and collaborating with others during the supervision process. Zepeda (2003) suggested that the positive attitudes of school administrators are very likely to strengthen their relationship with teachers during the supervision process resulting in an improved cooperation level for instruction. We can accordingly postulate that school administrators should display skills to improve teachers' vocational development, overcome their shortcomings, and provide assistance for effective supervision. Dönmez and Demirtaş (2018) also reported that lesson supervision provides a good opportunity for school administrators to get to know teachers and strengthen their communication.

To conclude, school administrators were found to display diverse political skills while fulfilling their administrative functions. Females were distinguished from male administrators with their inclination to use apparent sincerity skills to a greater extent. This kind of difference can be ascribed to females' higher tendency to be social and sincere based on a gender-based evaluation. The prevailing concepts of authority and politics in the field of administration as well as the requirement for administrators to display proper behaviours to achieve individual and organization goals render political skills a highly important subject in educational organizations as well as in all the other organizations. As also stated by Cemaloğlu (2005), the fulfilment of administrative actions requires school administrators to have in-depth administrative knowledge in addition to diverse roles involving political skills such as leadership and communication skills. The present study may provide a deeper insight into the concept of political skills on which limited research has been conducted in the relevant literature. The enriched studies involving both teachers and administrators from different levels of education can be conducted in further research. Also, in-service training activities can be organized to raise awareness and improve the political skills of school administrators.

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UZUN ÖZ

Örgütlerin, bürokratik ve hiyerarşik şekilde yapılanma biçimleri yerini gittikçe takım çalışması temelli çalışmaya bırakma eğilimindedir. Örgütsel yapılardaki bu yeni yapılanma örgüt liderlerinin bir koç ya da kolaylaştırıcı kişi olarak görülmesi gerektiği anlayışını da beraberinde getirerek, değişen liderlik rolü ve becerileri üzerine dikkatleri çekmektedir (Cascio, 1995). Buna paralel olarak liderlerin, başkalarını teşvik etmek için ikna etme, etkileme ve kontrol etmede etkili olma gibi farklı becerileri vurgulayan yeni yeterlilikler geliştirmeleri de beklenmektedir (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas ve Ammeter, 2004; Nyhan, 1999). Çünkü liderlerin, örgütlerinin devamlılığını sağlayabilme, örgütsel amaçlara ulaşabilme ve örgüt çıkarlarını koruyabilme adına mücadele vermeleri beklenmektedir (Nair, 2018). Bu mücadele de onları çoğu zaman politik davranmak zorunda bırakmaktadır. Mevcut araştırmaların çoğu da göstermektedir ki, örgütler doğaları gereği siyasi arenalar görünüşünde oldukları için liderlerin, politik beceri gerektiren; diğer insanları ikna etme, etkileme ve kontrol etme becerisine sahip olmaları önemlidir (Ferris, Treadway, Perrewe, Brouer, Douglas ve Lux, 2007; Mintzberg) 1983, 1985). Politik becerinin örgüt başarısı, stres faktörleri, çalışan reaksiyonları, çalışan performansı, liderin etkililiği, örgütsel iletişim, karar alma süreçleri ve iş sonuçlarıyla ilişkili olduğu birçok araştırmacı tarafından ileri sürülmüş, araştırmalardan elde edilen sonuçlarla bu görüş desteklenmiştir (Yıldıztaş, 2017; Özdemir ve Gören, 2016; Cingöz, 2013). Bu sonuçlara bağlı olarak yöneticilerin yönetim süreçlerinde farkına varmadan birçok farklı politik liderlik becerileri sergilediklerini söylemek mümkündür. Yöneticiler, birey ve grupları eyleme geçirip, önceden saptanmış hedeflere yöneltebilmek için örgüt içerisinde bilinçli ya da bilinçsiz olarak güç, yetki ve etkileme eylemlerinde bulunmaktadır (Mangaltepe, 2012; Aslan, Çalık ve Er, 2019). Bu bağlamda okullarda; planlama, örgütlenme, yöneltme ve denetleme süreçlerinde politik becerilerin önemli bir yeri olduğundan bahsedilebilir. Çünkü politik beceri ile yöneticiler çalışanlar hakkındaki bilgilerini

kullanarak onları, örgütün amaçları doğrultusunda davranmaları yönünde etkileyebilmektedirler (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas ve Ammeter, 2004). Dolayısıyla okul yöneticileri yönetim süreçlerinde; okulun amaçlarını ve felsefesini açıklama, okulun politikasını saptama, okul etkililiğini arttırma, kişiler ve gruplar arasında ilişkiler kurma, demokratik ve katılımcı yönetimi geliştirme, öğretim ve eğitim etkinliklerini planlama, gerektiğinde dış destek alma, okul içi ve dışı öğelerle eş güdüm sağlama, öğretmenleri izleme ve değerlendirme (Taymaz, 2003) konularında politik becerilere sahip olmalıdırlar. Özellikle yöneticilerinin etkili planlar oluşturabilmeleri, çatışmaları yönetebilmeleri, oluşan koalisyon grupları ile sağlıklı iletişim kurabilmeleri, örgütsel etkililiği arttırabilmeleri, ortak hedefleri gerçekleştirmede ikna kabiliyetine sahip olmaları ve baskı gruplarının etkilerini azaltabilmeleri için sergiledikleri tutum ve davranışlar oldukça önemlidir. Sonuç olarak, okul yöneticilerinin yönetim süreçlerinde farklı politik beceriler sergilemeleri gerektiği söylenebilir. Çünkü politik beceri noktasında birlikte çalıştığı kişiler üzerinde olumlu etkileri olan yöneticileri, astları kariyer geliştirme süreçlerinde kendilerine model almaktadırlar. Ayrıca yöneticilikteki politik becerinin, ekiplerin performansına ve etkinliğine anlamlı katkıda bulunabilecek bir dizi kritik sosyal yetkinliği temsil ettiği de ifade edilmekte (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas ve Ammeter, 2004) ve politik becerinin liderlerin sosyal beceri yeterliklerinin de bir göstergesi olduğu söylenmektedir. Araştırma, okul yöneticilerinin politik becerilerini belirlemeye yönelik nitel bir çalışmadır. Çalışmada olgu bilim deseni kullanılmıştır. Çalışma grubu, cinsiyetler arası ortak ve ayrılan yönlerin ortaya çıkarılmasına yönelik 14' ü kadın, 14' ü erkek okul yöneticisi olmak üzere toplam 28 okul müdüründen oluşmaktadır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak, yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Görüşme formunda yer alan sorular belirlenirken, Ferris ve diğerleri (2005) tarafından geliştirilmiş, Türkçe uyarlaması eğitim kurumları üzerine Özdemir ve Gören (2015), tarafından yapılmış politik beceri envanterinden, Robbins, Decenzo ve Coulter'ın (2016), Fundamentals Of Management: Essential Concepts and Applications kitabından ve alanda yapılan diğer araştırmadan yararlanılmıştır. Görüşme yöntemi ile elde edilen verilerin çözümlenmesinde içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Öncelikle elde edilen ses kayıtları, bilgisayar programı yardımıyla çözümlenerek görüşme dökümleri haline getirilmiştir. Yazıya geçirilen bu dökümler her soru için ayrı ayrı dosyalar olarak ATLAS. ti 8 Software nitel veri analiz programı kullanılarak kodlanmıştır. Belirlenen amaç doğrultusunda yapılan bu fenomenolojik araştırma ile katılımcıların, ilişki ağı kurma, sosyal zeka, samimi görünme ve kişilerarası etki olarak dört politik beceriyi yönetim süreçlerinde kullandıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Özetle, okul müdürleri ile yapılan görüşmeler neticesinde okul müdürlerinin yönetsel süreçlerde farklı politik beceriler kullandıkları ön plana çıkmaktadır. Özellikle kadın okul yöneticilerinin, erkek okul yöneticilerine nazaran yönetsel süreçlerde samimi görünme becerisini daha çok kullandıkları görülmektedir. Bu farklılığın cinsiyet temelli olarak, kadınların erkeklere nazaran, daha kolay samimiyet kurabilme ve daha sosyal olma eğilimlerinin yüksek olmasından kaynaklandığı söylenebilir. Ayrıca, yönetim alanında güç ve politika kavramlarının ön plana çıkması ve yöneticilerin kişisel ve örgütsel hedefleri gerçekleştirmek için uygun davranışlar gösterme gereklilikleri tüm örgütlerde olduğu gibi eğitim örgütlerinde de politik becerileri önemli hale getirdiğini ifade edebiliriz. Cemaloğlu'nun (2005) da belirttiği gibi okul müdürlerinin yönetsel eylemlerde başarılı olmaları için güçlü yönetim bilgisine, liderliğe ve iletişim becerisi gibi içerisine politik becerileri alan çeşitli rollere ihtiyaçları vardır. Alan yazında politik beceriler üzerine yapılan çalışmaların kısıtlılığı nedeniyle yapılan bu çalışma kavramın anlaşılabilmesine katkı sağlayabilir. Araştırmacılar farklı eğitim kademelerini, öğretmen ve yöneticileri içerecek şekilde, mix çalışmalar yapabilirler. Ayrıca okul yöneticilerinin politik beceri kavramı ile ilgili farkındalıklarının ve becerilerinin arttırılabilmesi için hizmet-içi eğitim faaliyetleri düzenlenebilir.