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Problems Faced by School Administrators Regarding Different Genders

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Abstract. In this research, it was aimed to determine the problems that school principals and vice-principals experienced in schools they work. The research was carried out with a comparative case study pattern and the study group was determined according to the snowball sampling method. Eight school principals and eight vice-principals during the spring semester of 2019-2020 academic year participated in this research. A semi-structured interview form was used to collect data. The data obtained were analysed by content analysis technique and themed. According to the findings, the problems faced by school administrators with their colleagues, were examined in three categories: administration, human relations, and academic and field proficiency levels. It was found that almost all of the problems experienced were reported by the vice-principals without gender exception. This situation, with a different discourse; indicated that the subordinates had problems with their superiors. The personality traits and individual perceptions of administrators are more effective than gender differences in problems. Another important point to be expressed is; although there are problems in both genders, considering the negative effects of these problems in terms of the depth and functioning of the school, it can be said that the negative relationships of female school administrators with their colleagues and the psychological damage they have caused to the communication channels are more severe than males.

Keywords. Gender-based problems, administrative problems, school administration.

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It is a common belief that problems remain the same; however, the way to the solutions, could change according to perceptions, which has been a recurring phenomenon throughout the ages. The troubles that people face are not only perceived differently between various countries, ethnicities, and cultures; the feelings also differ regarding both sexes: female and male perceptions. The perception that causes people to evaluate the physical and psychological world is a sensory experience which involves not only recognizing the environmental stimuli but also acting in response to these stimuli. Thus, people acquire information about the world and this information lets us decide and act within a scheme.

Today, although women work in many fields, it seems that they are not sufficiently represented in the field of management, which is accepted as a male role by the society (Çelikten, 2004, p. 92). As for the education management, it is seen that the number of male school administrators in education management is more than the female administrators. Although the majority of school employees are women, the number of female managers corresponds to a tiny proportion of the total number of managers (Çelikten, 2004, p. 92; Meriçelli, 2017, p. 55).

Educational researchers constantly embark on a quest to find solutions for the problems faced at schools. Finding solutions for these problems is essential in terms of effective education, and for effective school leadership school administrators must have such qualities as being a successful problem identifier and solver. There might be several leadership qualities that determines, construes, and tackles the issues such as leader's support to enhance the creativity (Chen and Hou, 2016), knowledge sharing (Huang et al., 2008) and work domain goal orientation (Van de Walle, 1997). The studies that examine the administrative problems, human relations issues, academic field problems at schools according to gender-based views are already very scarce. The studies compare female and male perceptions together within the same research in Turkish educational settings with a qualitative design are even scarcer. This research has been conducted to determine, whether having a female or a male school administrator in a school, creates any effect on the functioning of the school, regarding the problems faced at that school.

In different studies, it has been determined that male and female principals have some different characteristics in terms of management. For example, females are more successful in communication (Turan and Ebiçlioğlu, 2002, pp. 454-455; Meriçelli, 2017, p. 155). The female school principals, when they face with and try to solve problems, exhibit instructional leadership in a more developmental, supportive and collaborative way (Hallinger et al., 2016, p. 568; Shaked et

al., 2018, pp. 428-429). Another research reveals that female school principals encourage participation, are willing to share their positional power and knowledge, increase the self-esteem of other employees and are excited about the accomplishments of others (Rosener, 2011, pp. 20-21). Moreover, compared to male principals, female school principals were observed as more loyal, supportive, more revealing in the sense of communication and more human-oriented in the relationships at school (Konrad et al., 1997, p. 90). Bayrak and Yücel (2000, pp. 139-140) in their research define female principals as responsible and passive when they approach to academic and management problems at school. Krüger (2008, pp. 162-164) points out that male administrators spend more time and attention on administrative tasks and external contacts than females.

The leadership characteristics of school administrators have an important effect on the formation of effective schools. Ensuring these effectiveness school administrators have a key role in creating a school climate and a school culture. In addition, school administrators have indirect and direct effects on students' success (Balçı, 2014, p. 119). One of the most important roles of the administrators on the success of the students is the creation of a positive school culture within the school and this role necessitates the administrators work in harmony with each other. In order to achieve success in education, it is necessary to provide a working environment, in which employees within the organization to have positive relationships with each other. Therefore; it is thought that conducting this research on determining the problems experienced by school administrators of different genders with each other and determining whether these problems are gender-related or not will make an important contribution to the literature. The purpose of this comparative case study is to discover what the problems are that school administrators in Eskisehir province experience according to their genders, with each other. The conclusion of this study may serve the teachers, school principals and policy makers. In the light of this study, it can be proven that having female administrators in schools reaps a huge benefit for the schools they work for and the staff they work with and even for the Turkish National Education System. Within the framework of the general-purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the administrative problems that school administrators experience with each other?
2. What are the problems school administrators experience with each other related to human relations?
3. What are the problems school administrators experience with each other regarding academic and field proficiency levels?

Method

Research Design

This research, designed to understand the problems experienced by school administrators of different genders, was structured as qualitative research. Qualitative research is a research model that the data on the environment, process and perceptions are revealed by observation, interview and documents, in order to provide a flexible, holistic and inductive understanding of the complex multidimensional structure of human behaviour (Creswell, 2009, pp. 175-176; Merriam, 2015, pp. 13-17; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, pp. 41-44). The research design has been determined as a multiple case study. A case study is a research method in which a case is analysed and described in order to get answers to questions about how and why (Merriam, 2015, p. 40; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p. 314). Multiple case studies are preferred more because the data obtained are more reliable (Yin, 2003, p. 45). In multiple case studies, data from different case studies with subunits and cases are collected and analysed (Merriam, 2015, p. 49).

Research Group

In this research, the snowball sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used to determine the research group. Snowball sampling is an effective sampling method in determining individuals and situations where more information about the research problem will be obtained (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p. 139). This research was attended by eight school principals and eight vice-principals who were working in Eskişehir city centre during the spring semester of 2019-2020 academic year. Table 1 has the demographic characteristics of the participants. Four of the eight school principals participating in this research are women, and four are men; three out of eight vice-principals are women, the remaining five are men. In order to ensure data diversity, the research group was composed of participants from different school types and different administration roles in both genders.

Table 1.

Demographic Features of the Participants

Participant	Position	Gender	Professional Seniority (Year)	Duration on the Current Duty (Year)	School Type
F1	Principal (P)	Female	23	15	Secondary School
F2	Principal (P)	Female	23	12	Primary School
F3	Principal (P)	Female	28	25	Primary School
F4	Principal (P)	Female	19	5	Primary School
F5	Vice-Principal (VP)	Female	12	4	Primary School
F6	Vice-Principal (VP)	Female	13	3	High School
F7	Vice-Principal (VP)	Female	15	4	High School
M1	Principal (P)	Male	25	20	Primary School
M2	Principal (P)	Male	30	16	Primary School
M3	Principal (P)	Male	10	7	Secondary School
M4	Principal (P)	Male	20	6	Primary School
M5	Vice-Principal (VP)	Male	18	9	High School
M6	Vice-Principal (VP)	Male	24	6	High School
M7	Vice-Principal (VP)	Male	8	2	High School
M8	Vice-Principal (VP)	Male	12	5	Primary School
M9	Vice-Principal (VP)	Male	7	3	High School

Collection of Data

A semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions was used to collect data. Before preparing the questions used in the interview form; draft questions were prepared under the administration, human relations, and academic and field proficiency levels by scanning the literature. The interview form consisting of these draft questions was submitted to the expert opinion to check the content validity and reliability. The pilot study was conducted after the necessary changes were made.

The data collection phase was started after asking for the approval of the interview confirmation form, on the voluntary basis and ethical principles. Face to face interviews were conducted with some of the participants for data collection. In cases where the participants cannot come to the meeting at the specific place, telephone calls can be made since there is no possibility to conduct face-to-face interviews (Creswell, 2012, p. 219). In total, sixteen interviews were conducted. Data collection began in March 2020 and ended at the end of April 2020. All the interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 75 minutes were recorded with a voice recorder, and necessary notes were taken. Each participant checked the records and notes of the detailed transcriptions and the confirmation of the participants was provided via e-mail.

Data Analysis

Content analysis has been conducted to analyse the data. In the content analysis, the collected data are logically arranged according to the concepts that arise after conceptualization, the themes that explain the data are determined and interpreted in a way that the reader can understand (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p. 259). Thus, the content analysis steps were followed as; coding the data, finding themes, arranging the codes and themes, and defining and interpreting the findings. Assistance was received from an expert external auditor during the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from the interviews. Findings obtained by exchanging views with the external auditor and researchers were evaluated gradually together.

Validity and Reliability

“Validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of the inferences a researcher makes. Reliability refers to the consistency of scores or answers from one application of an instrument to another, and from one set of items to another” (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun, 2012, p. 147). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested the term trustworthiness to enhance validity and reliability in qualitative research. Throughout the research process as well as in data collection and data analysis, immense importance was given to trustworthiness and various actions were taken into consideration, such as data triangulation, peer debriefing, inter-rating and inter-coding to ensure the trustworthiness of the research.

Results

Findings obtained in this research were examined under three main themes: The first one is the administration-related problems with their colleagues in the administration team. The second one is the problems with their colleagues in the administration team regarding human relations. The third one is problems with the academic and field proficiency levels of colleagues. Findings about the main themes created are explained in detail.

Administration-Related Problems with Their Colleagues in the Administration Team

When the data obtained are examined, the problems regarding the school administration with their colleagues a school administrator faces, are grouped under three headings; the distribution of tasks, general functioning of the school, school resources and budget management.

Distribution of tasks. Some of the female administrators (F1, F5 and F6) mentioned that they had various problems. Although F1 asks the opinions of her colleagues, makes a fair and equitable distribution, and tries to assign tasks to different people for each academic year; she states that she feels an obligation to give the important tasks only to the colleagues she trusts most. She admits that by assigning easy tasks to administrators who do not work hard, they are rewarded; she also admits that hardworking administrators are given hard tasks; hence they are being treated unfairly by increasing their workload.

“I distribute the tasks equally. I switch the tasks among my colleagues. But since not everyone does their job carefully, I assign the hard tasks to teachers I trust more, the easy tasks to the less responsible ones.” (F1, P)

F6 points out that there is no fair distribution of tasks and there is an ambiguity on job descriptions. She also says that occasionally the principal gives her the tasks that other vice-principals should complete, and perhaps she even does it intentionally.

“I think the principal is not fair in the distribution of tasks. She is trying to give me the tasks that other vice-principals should do, as she is confused about my duties.” (F6, VP)

Some of the male school administrators (M4, M5, M6, M7 and M8) express that they have different problems about the distribution of duties. M5 underlines that, stressful jobs are always given to the same people, and because of the ability to do a task well, the same hard task given to the same person can be perceived even as a punishment.

“Some of the stressful jobs with deadlines are always given to the same people. So, being able to do a job well is like a reason for getting punished for it.” (M5, VP)

M8, on the other hand, uttered that although the principal makes a distribution of duties, he has problems with always assigning the tasks to the same person, because he frequently forgets who does which tasks. He also adds that a vice-principal, who is given a job that he is not responsible for, fails to complete this task and behaves as if he had never attempted doing it. He usually discharges all the responsibility on to the real responsible person.

“Our principal distributes duties to three vice-principals. But in practice, he gives every task to only one person. But he usually forgets who does which tasks.” (M8, VP)

General functioning of the school. F5 and F6 state that they have some problems with the general functioning of the school. F5 points out that, the school principal did not hold any meetings

regarding the general functioning of the school together with the administrative staff. In addition, she states that there is not much information given about the works to be done, the details of the desired outcome, and therefore, they constantly must ask questions to the principal for each step or decide themselves how to continue doing the job.

“Our school principal has not even held a meeting once, saying ‘What are our shortcomings?’ or ‘What can be done about them?’ When he gives a task, we don’t understand what he wants. We always have to think about the particulars or ask about the details to him.” (F5, VP)

F6 mentions she has trouble due to insufficient authority and that she has to solve them by acting on her own initiative. She also states that the principal carried out educational activities randomly, because, she was only concerned with disturbing the teachers, instead of school administration. She adds that this creates an atmosphere of chaos in the school.

“Of course, I’m having problems. I am unable to find a solution in some cases because some matters exceed my authority... I act on my own initiative in emergency situations. Because, my principal pokes his nose into nearly everything and eventually a chaos occurs.” (F6, VP)

All male vice-principals (M5, M7, M8) speak of that, they experience various problems related to the general functioning of the school. Expressing the discomfort, he feels by the principal’s interference with the tasks assigned to him, M5; states that the principal does not trust her employees and supervises all of the assigned tasks noticeably in the presence of the students and this behaviour of the principal harms the reputation of the vice-principal in the eyes of the students and teachers.

“Sometimes the school principal can get involved in the process, after she assigns us the task and this can make things complicated... We don’t like it when, she implies that ‘I, myself, do all the jobs around here, what do you exactly do here!’ as if we are not doing our job or do not fulfil it. She creates a situation that undermines our authority in the eyes of the students or the teachers.” (M5, VP)

M7 says that difficulties arise due to the fact that the given task is not explained clearly and the process is not followed well. In addition, he expresses that, he has difficulties in the implementation of the decisions taken because the female principal is mild-mannered and always finds a way to forgive the mistakes, and that teachers and students are aware of this situation and they abuse it.

“My principal cannot put a deadline for any task and assign the person who is responsible for a specific task with clarity. This creates uncertainty ... As for a female vice-principal and the principal, they are always behaving in a mild-mannered way and a forgiving position related to disciplinary issues. Both the teachers and the students abuse it.” (M7, VP)

School resources and budget management. F5, one of the two administrators who have problems (F5 and F6), expresses her discomfort with not being held a standard budget planning.

“We never held a meeting as a whole administration team or made a plan about the future or the needs of our school with the parent-teacher association.” (F5, VP)

Some of the school administrators (M4, M5, M8 and M9) say that they have different problems in this regard. M5 complains that as she sees it as a power, the school principal does not want to share the authority to use the school resources with the administrative team, and does not ask for the opinions of the vice-principals. He also says that he is disturbed by such behaviour of the school principal's transferring resources to the equipment that will facilitate her own job, instead of spending on something that may be beneficial for the students. He also states that, the school principal does not value the use of the school tools most effectively by the students, and the principal often prevents these uses for different reasons.

“Our opinions are not asked much ... School principals see the use of school resources as a power and they definitely do not want to share that power. Something necessary for the benefit of the students, such as preparing a mechanism for students to lock their bicycles, is not fulfilled. But if the principal's printer is broken, the money can be easily transferred to it, which means principals' needs have a higher priority.” (M5, VP)

Problems with Their Colleagues in the Administration Team Regarding Human Relations

As a result of the examination of the data obtained the problems related to the human relations that school administrators had with their colleagues, are divided into four subgroups: effective communication with the administration team, developing a good rapport with staff, developing a good rapport with students and developing a good rapport with parents.

Effective communication with the administration team. Based on the findings obtained from the school administrators regarding effective communication with the administrative team, the dimensions of their relationship with their colleagues are found as positive and negative. When it was examined whether the female school principals had problems regarding the human relations

with their vice-principal colleagues, it was observed that, all of them (F1, F2, F3 and F4) had positive relationships with their colleagues in the administrative team. F1, who works with two male vice-principals, says that they have a positive and constructive relationship based on mutual respect.

“We succeeded in establishing a sincere environment on the basis of mutual respect. We have a positive, constructive environment...” (F1, P)

F5 and F6, who respond negatively to effective communication with the administrative team, keep their relationship with the vice-principals and the school principal apart. While F5 has a sufficient relationship with the both female and male vice-principals, she states that she has a cold and distant relationship with the male principal because it is difficult to communicate with him.

“I have good relationships with all of them as they should be... But me and the principal, we are a bit distant. It is a little difficult to communicate with him...” (F5, VP)

F6, on the other hand, states that she has a positive relationship with his male vice-principal colleagues and a negative relationship with the female principal. F6 states that the principal is in constant conflict with her and this situation affects her negatively. She also describes the female principal as a jealous and confrontational person.

“We usually get along well with my vice-principal colleagues... I have a problem with my principal. I think she has feelings of professional jealousy about me. In other words, trying to prevent my (doctorate) education indirectly, putting me in a conflict with the parents, trying to hurt me psychologically...” (F6, VP)

Similar to the female school principals, all of the male school principals (M1, M2, M3, M4) state that they have good relations with their colleagues in the administrative team. M1, who works with both female and male vice-principals, states that due to the nature of human beings, there may be mistakes, but it is necessary to find solutions together.

“We can communicate effectively; as we need to... The solution and the problem go hand in hand where the human exists; the main point is to be able to focus the staff to the solution in that process... In this respect, it is necessary to think professionally.” (M1, P)

M3, who works with a male and a female vice-principal, states that, as an administrator, he has a conciliator role in the solution of communication problems. He thinks that human relations will be healthier in a team with mutual respect, trust and sincerity.

“The most important feature is communication skills ... Trust and sincerity ... I strive to act in accordance with these virtues ... As a manager, I assume I have a mediator role.” (M3, P)

M6, M7 and M9, the male vice-principals, state that they did not have any problems in terms of communication with their colleagues. M6 states that if careful attention is paid to healthy human affairs, there will be no problems.

“If you care about healthy human affairs, there is no reason for you to have problems.” (M6, VP)

M5 and M8 state that, they have some problems in communicating effectively with their colleagues in the administrative team. M5 states that excessive friendliness among the administrative team caused some problems about adequately perform their duties; therefore, he believes that professionalism and a formal relationship should be emphasized during school hours.

“Over-friendliness can go to a point where tasks are ignored... So, everything must be written. Should be formalized...” (M5, VP)

Continuing his words about the troubles he has experienced, M5 says that he had several problems in communicating with the female school principal and the school principal has problems in human affairs and communication. He says that he could not take a leave of absence for an emergency, emphasizing that this attitude even reduces the number of personal sacrifices for work, M5 also states that especially the female principals who are unmarried and have no children are insensitive.

“You can easily say that your child is sick at the first time. But over time, when it is the second, the third... the school principal deliberately makes you feel that this situation is abused by you... After a while, this eliminates healthy communication... This situation leads to a decrease in self-sacrifice for work. School principals need to deal with the events a bit more humanely.” (M5, VP)

M8 added that he had been experiencing ego wars with a female vice-principal, and said that she does unacceptable things behind his back, since she envies that he is a successful administrator and develops good relations with students, parents and teachers. For this reason, the male vice-principal qualifies his relations with his female colleague as negative.

“There are ego wars between me and a female vice-principal. Because she is an inexperienced manager and her human relations skills are weak. As I have a good rapport

with students, teachers and parents, she thinks that she is left in my shadow and does all kinds of things to hurt my reputation.” (M8, VP)

Developing good rapport with staff. Female school principals (F1, F2, F3 and F4); stated that they did not have any problems in developing good relations with the staff together with their administrative team, and their vice-principals provide the necessary support for them.

“We have created a positive school culture in our school ... Everyone cares about each other and the school as necessary.” (F1, P)

“This situation is also related to the personality of the manager, being solution-oriented and having practical intelligence ... I do not have much trouble in this sense.” (F2, P)

Unlike the female school principals, the female vice-principals (F5, F6 and F7) stated that they had some problems with their colleagues in developing good relations with the staff. F5 states that, she experienced difficulties with the guidance counsellor in the guidance service which is in her field of responsibility and that she could not get enough support from the school principal in this regard.

“I ask our school principal to control our guidance teachers’ work more often. Our manager drops the subject by saying, ‘Guidance service does what is necessary, and I believe they will do better’...” (F5, VP)

F6 states that some teachers generally share their problems with her, in order to avoid seeing the principal, she adds that, she tries to help them by using initiative on some issues. She also states that the female principal makes gender discrimination, practices mobbing on the teachers she dislikes and verbally harassed them.

“The teachers often come to me in order to avoid dealing with the principal, they share their problems with me... I help them by using initiative... There is gender discrimination in punishments and rewards. Our teachers want to leave from our school. When asked for the reason, they always say that the principal practices mobbing. Many of my fellow teachers left our school (by asking for to be appointed to another school) saying the same.” (F6, VP)

Similar to the female school principals, the male school principals (M1, M2, M3 and M4) state that they do not have any problems in developing good relations with their colleagues and staff. M1 states that the reason for the school's success is that all staff work together and work in an organized manner.

“We can do many things that we cannot do alone by organizing and getting together... There is always the possibility of negative examples, if you are an administrator, you have to foresee them, and they can be overcome with a positive approach, in a proper language.” (M1, P)

M7 and M9, male vice-principals, say that they do not have any problems in developing good relations with their colleagues.

“There was no problem thanks to my principal's human relations skills and positive attitude.” (M7, VP)

The male vice-principals M5, M6 and M8; express that they have problems. M5 states that the school principal easily grants the wishes of the teachers who are close to him. He feels discomfort about the fact that there are some victimized teachers exist in their school, because they did not participate in informal out-of-school events with the principal.

“School administrators sometimes interfere with our practices, because of the complaints of teachers whom we think are closer to the principal...The teachers who attend the out-of-school events have some kind of close friendship with the principal, so they can express their wishes easily ... But teachers who do not join to those events and who disapprove this type of informal relationships are victimized.” (M5, VP)

Continuing his words, M5 states that the school principal has intervened in the decisions made by the vice-principals, according to requests and complaints from other staff or teachers. He says that while listening to the requests of the staff, she makes some decisions without consulting the vice-principals, she discredits them in front of the staff as she did not give the vice-principals enough freedom in such matters.

“After the complaints of the teachers, school principals can interfere with our practices... Then (a teacher) says ‘I go and solve all my problems with the principal, she does whatever I want’...” (M5, VP)

M5, who also ties the tendency of the supporting staff to shirk their duties, to the practices of the school principal, stated that the supporting staff do not fulfil the orders of the vice-principals, because the principal makes support personnel do her own personal work and uses them as intelligence sources.

“When we warn the staff if cleaning needed during the day, they can often find a way to shirk this job by serving tea to the principal... She (school principal) uses them as intelligence sources to spy on the vice-principals and teachers.” (M5, VP)

In addition, M8 states that favouritism is vital in the principal's relations with the staff. He emphasizes that while all the problems of those who have good relations with the principal are solved, there is uncertainty in solving the problems of others. He states that a teacher who did not do his job well was protected because the principal used this teacher as an intelligence source and because of his obsequious manners.

“In general, favouritism is at the forefront of the problems of the staff. If you are the man of the principal, any problems will be resolved, if you are not, it is uncertain... I have received complaints from all the teachers that the guidance and counselling service are not sufficiently working with students and parents. But when we report that to the principal, I was told that I was wrong in the end, because the responsible person was the rumourmonger of the principal and because of his servile attitude.” (M8, VP)

Developing good rapport with students. It is observed that school administrators do not have any problems with their colleagues in developing good relations with students, except for F6, from the female administrators, M5 and M8 from the male administrators.

F4 states that they have a friendly and close relationship with the students as a team, without losing control.

“At the basic education level, we do not have problems, as we maintain our control and behave sincerely and closely in our relations with students.” (F4, P)

Talking about the problems she had in developing good relations with students, F6 states that the principal of the school discriminates the students and her treatment of them varies according to the social status of the parents.

“My principal swept the petition I filed about the discipline committee under the rug several times. And then we had a problem with these students... Since one of our students is the son of the local police chief, this kid has been never invited for a hearing by the disciplinary committee, for the offence he repeated several times...” (F6, VP)

Similarly, M5; stated that the principal practised discrimination when evaluating the disciplinary crimes committed by the students, he even classifies these offences differently

depending on whether they were directed towards teachers or towards himself or towards a student, and encouraged the student award and discipline committee to follow his own decision.

“Disciplinary Committee members are impacted by the school principal as ‘Definitely you must give this or that punishment!’ ... When this (an offence) is against to a teacher, no punishment is imposed, and when it is done against the school principal it is demanded to be imposed a harsh punishment.” (M5, VP)

Continuing his words, M5 states that the principal advocates that keeping the students at a distance, as a whole administration team, and that he has a despotic administration approach that tends to dominate and control everything.

“...Our manager, who thinks that there should be no close relationship with the students, says, ‘Students shouldn’t ask you for anything so easily!’ I think they should be able to ask. Because we do not accept every request here, we filter it... Such a despotic manager approach...” (M5, VP)

In this regard, the vice-principal M8 states that he is constantly involved in social, artistic or sportive events with the students. He expresses that his other friends in the administrative team, especially the school principal, try to evade those events by stating that they do not understand any of such events. He also thinks that therefore their relations with the students remain poor.

“A gymnastics competition, a folk-dance event or swimming I attend all these events with my students, but there is no support from other administrators, unfortunately. In particular, the principal says, ‘I don’t understand much’ for any kind of event. I remember that he didn’t even come to the award ceremony.” (M8, VP)

Developing good rapport with parents. All of the female school principals (F1, F3 and F4) except F2 stated that they did not have any problems with their colleagues regarding developing good relations with parents.

However, F2 mentions that when the vice-principal does not have full knowledge of the subject matter, he often has a communication problem with the parents. She also claims that these communication problems may create further problems for her.

“The communication of the vice-principal who does not have control over an issue, with the parents can sometimes create a new problem for me.” (F2, P)

All of the female vice-principals (F5, F6, F7) state that they have problems with their colleagues regarding developing good relations and parents. F5 says that the principal does not usually communicate with the parents, and that she directs the parents to the vice-principals, even in matters concerning the principal.

“(When a parent visits him to discuss about an issue) Our school principal immediately calls the vice-principal and directs them to a vice-principal, if the parent came directly to him.”
(F5, VP)

F6 states that the principal misinformed the parents and students about herself, provoking them against her and causing conflicts between her and the parents. She says that the parents who visit the school while she is on leave, are deliberately not given the sufficient information and that the parents are manipulated against her.

“When I leave the school (for doctorate level courses), (the principal) starts to call me right away, or manipulates the parents who come to visit me (by not providing necessary information) ... Instead of trying to resolve an issue, he creates even more conflict for both sides....” (F6, VP)

All male school principals (M1, M2, M3 and M4) state that they do not have any problems with their colleagues, regarding developing good relations with the parents. M2 says that since he acts professionally in this regard, he does not have any problems.

“We have good relations with all parents, there might be those who do not like me, there are also parents I do not like, but I approach the matter from a professional perspective...” (M2, P)

Except for the male vice-principals M5 and M8, (M6, M7 and M9) states that they do not have any problems with their colleagues, in developing good relations with parents.

However, having problems in developing and maintaining positive relations with parents, M5, criticizes the principal for behaving differently according to the appearance and social status of the parents and favouring the parents who contribute the school with donations.

“Our school principal is warmer towards neatly dressed, properly speaking (without local accents) parents ... My approach to parents is definitely not so. Every parent is absolutely equal for me ... If a parent has already contributed to the school or he is a parent who can

really help the school in the future; the principal opens his door wide open for such a parent, but in other cases, only says "Go to responsible vice-principal." (M5, VP)

Problems with Academic and Field Proficiency Levels of Colleagues

Within the framework of the findings obtained, the problems expressed by the school administrators regarding the academic and field proficiency levels were examined separately for female and male administrators and the findings obtained are presented below.

Most of the female school administrators (F2, F3, F4, F5 and F7) state that they are academically satisfied with their colleagues and have no problems.

"I am very pleased with my colleagues. They are open to academic development, they are open to development and progression in education ..." (F3, P)

F1, one of the female school principals, complains that her own proficiency level is behind the age as time passes, and most of all, she has difficulty in adapting to technology.

"Our level of competence lags behind the age, as time goes on. Problems with adapting to the new technology are the most challenging" (F1, P)

However, despite the fact that his principal was academically trained, F6 thinks he still has shortcomings in this area. She adds that rather than dealing with the success level of the school and guiding the teachers, he even creates difficulties for them.

"Academically, my principal has a master's degree and studied sociology. I doubt if he has learned anything academically, I do not think he is proficient. He is not concerned about the issues such as success of the students and the teachers. Rather than trying to help he is even trying to disturb the teachers who are really concerned about these matters ..." (F6, VP)

Many of the male school administrators (M2, M3, M4, M7 and M9) state that they think the academic level of their colleagues is high. However, M1, mentioning that administrative staff is a part of the society, he says that he works with highly skilled and qualified people who love their jobs; he also works with lazy people who do not have problem-solving skills. In addition, he complains that competencies such as experience, vision or problem-solving skills are not considered in the selection of administrators.

“There is an exam to become a manager at schools. However, in the current vice-principal selection system; experiences, general knowledge, vision, problem solving skills are not very measurable... like any randomly selected part of the society.” (M1, P)

M5 states that although his colleagues do not have any shortcomings in academic and field proficiency levels, many of them are reluctant and behave as if they are inadequate, due to the problems they have with the principal.

“I don't think a staff member has any shortcoming here. But we can say that there is reluctance. In other words, he does not do what he can do as a negative reaction against the school administration or the principal because of some negative events, and acts as if he is inadequate.” (M5, VP)

M8 states that, although he thinks his vice-principals academically proficient, the principal is incapable and not qualified. He also says that some people should not be appointed as administrators without considering their qualification, because of their servile attitude.

“I do not think that they are academically insufficient regarding vice-principals. But managers must be selected on merit. And this should start from the principal. Management positions should not be given to people who do not know the job, just because they are submissive. Let's say I can just ignore their obsequiousness, but if only they had really known how to do their jobs, that would be enough.” (M8, VP).

Discussion and Conclusion

It has been determined that the problems experienced by school administrators with each other are grouped under three titles: administration, human relations, and academic and field proficiency levels. Problems faced by school administrators with their colleagues about administration are grouped under three sub-titles: The distribution of tasks, general functioning of the school, school resources and budget management. Problems related to task distribution are the most common problems experienced by the participants. The most common problems are; the unfair task distribution, not complying with the division of work, the assigned tasks remaining only on paper, assignment of inexperienced administrators for a task that requires experience; assignment of risky and highly difficult tasks to the same staff repeatedly.

Hence, here we can reach that both female and male principals and vice-principals strongly agree that hard tasks are given to hard-working and eligible staff at school. This also creates a big

suspicion that maybe some staff at school, pretend that they are not eligible for some tasks. Moreover, they even act the fool to shun the workload. Besides, some school principals are so indifferent that they usually forget who they assigned some tasks. For this reason, these careless principals tend to distribute the highly essential works to same vice-principals frequently, not to miss his obligations.

Problems such as the fact that the given tasks are not clear and understandable and excessive intervention in these tasks, are among the problems encountered. In parallel with the problems related to the distribution of duties, the problems encountered in the general functioning of the school are among the most frequently expressed problems. Two of the biggest problems in this regard are; the lack of a clear job description and effective organizational management, and the difficulties in the management of instant situation and crises that arise as a result of wrong or careless practices. In the management of school resources and budget, personal practices of administrators are expressed as the most disturbing factor. It is believed that personal opinions and judgments of the administrators and instant, short-term decisions prevent long-term budget planning.

It is a striking point that almost all of the school administrators who reported the problems about their colleagues are mostly vice-principal participants without gender exception. Other studies also show that vice-principals have troubles in similar problems such as excessive administrative documents, the intensity of off-duty jobs, inequality in the distribution of duties, unclear job description and excessive workload (Deniz, 2019, p.153; Bakioğlu and Demirbilek, 2019, p.754; Lim and Pollock, 2019, p.90; Ho et al., 2021, p.10). Vice-principals may resign from their vice-principal positions due to these reasons (Bakioğlu and Demirbilek, 2019, p.754).

Unlike vice-principals, it is seen that school principals in both genders draw a more positive picture in terms of explaining the problems experienced. It is thought that school principals may try to protect an organizational image and reputation alongside their personal preferences. It is seen those in-house cases, can be presented to school parties differently, and school principals may make efforts to create a more positive perception. Most of the school principals involved in the research; stated that they do not experience any problems regarding administrative processes that everything is under their control, that they do not have problems with their vice-principals, and that they continue their duties in good communication and harmony.

However, it has been observed that the current situation can be expressed differently among the administrators interviewed at the same school. Unlike her school principal, a female vice-principal mentioned many problems, especially regarding the distribution of duties, and stated that they never met as an administration team. She stated that the principal manages the school without leaving his room, leaving all responsibility to his vice-principals, intervening only in critical situations and making matters more complicated rather than leading them to a solution. This school principal, which we can refer to as the “Seat Administrator”, is thought to have an interactive leadership style in terms of the characteristics it shows. As Korkmaz (2006, p. 216) states, administrators have different expectations according to their personality traits, and according to expectations, the leader in management intervenes only when errors and problems arise. The first purpose of the leader is to identify and correct the mistake. Lim and Pollock (2019, p.95) find in their study that school principals expect vice-principals to carry out both instructional and operational tasks in a balanced way. However, it is stated that vice-principals have to spend most of their time at school with operational duties such as supporting students and employees. It is seen that the school administration team determines the duties of the vice-principals according to their interests, strengths and areas of development. The high expectations of principals from vice-principals cause vice-principals to experience role conflict and role ambiguity. In addition, it is seen that these high expectations result in difficulties in prioritizing their operational and instructional tasks and cause them to think that it is very difficult to balance their professional and personal lives.

Another vice-principal who shared the problems he experienced stated that the female school principal showed an administration approach according to the person, that she could react differently in similar situations, and some cases even patronize the school staff with scolding. Another executive feature that can be counted among the types of interactive leadership expressed in Korkmaz's (2006, p. 216) work is defined as Laissez-Faire Leadership and these administrators exhibit classical administrator behaviour rather than leadership feature. The leader postpones decisions, does not use awards to motivate subordinates or does not attempt anything new. The results obtained from the interviews confirm that some school principals both male and female portray this administrator type.

It is thought that the personality traits and individual perceptions of administrators are more effective than gender differences in problems related to administration. Some principals want academic success to be at the forefront and the school to be remembered with educational activities, while others prefer to come to the fore in sports and artistic activities. According to Korkmaz (2006,

p. 217), who investigates the relationship between school administrators' personality traits and leadership styles, administrator's personality traits and problem-solving skills in organizational settings will help the organization's top administration team. For example, individuals who are in the motivating group and thus possess the characteristics of this group may be suitable for administration positions such as high profile and highly social hospital and school administration.

When evaluated in general, it is understood that almost all of the problems regarding administration are conveyed by the vice-principals and although there are problems in both genders, mostly male administrators suffer from the distribution of tasks and excessive workload. When the results of the research conducted by Cömert and Dönmez (2018, pp. 5-9) on their perceptions about postponing behaviours, workloads and personality traits are examined, similarities and differences are encountered. When the perceptions of the administrators are evaluated according to the task type; it has been determined that vice-principals are more deferring than principals, principals have more responsible personality characteristics and perceive their own workloads more than vice-principals. As a result of these findings, it is thought that the principals do not allow delays while doing their work and pay more attention to time administration because they are the primarily responsible manager of the school (Cömert and Dönmez, 2018, p. 8). The point to be distinguished here is how effective are perceptions on behaviours and whether their colleagues also have the same perceptions about school principals. When perceptions of administrators are evaluated according to gender in the same research; male administrators were found to procrastinate their duties more than female administrators and perceived their workload more (Cömert and Dönmez, 2018, p. 5).

As a result of the examination of the data obtained, problems related to the human relations that school administrators had with their colleagues; it is divided into four subgroups: effective communication with the administrative team, developing good rapport with staff, developing good rapport with students and developing good rapport with parents.

Generally, although the problems experienced in establishing positive and effective communication with the administration team do not differ significantly according to gender, it is striking that all of these problems were expressed by the vice-principals, in other words, the subordinates have problems with the superiors. In both genders, school principals stated that they did not have any problems with the administration team in terms of human relations and communication and that they develop positive relations with humane approaches and solution-oriented perspectives. An administrator should have features such as having good human relations

with those under his command, motivating his employees and supporting them to increase their qualifications (Uğurlu, 2017, p. 170). This may be the reason why school principals who do not want their inadequacy to be seen, paint a positive picture on human relations. Similarly, Çelikten (2004, p. 106) observed that in the qualitative research conducted with female school principals, the participants gave vague answers to questions regarding sexist attitudes and behaviours. Participants highlighted the concepts of “communication” and “human relations” as the most important personality traits in being an administrator. When asked about their weaknesses, they emphasized that they did not have many weaknesses (Çelikten, 2004, p. 105).

In general, the following are depicted as the sources of problems; the lack of the communication skills of the principals, their prejudices about their colleagues, the ego wars they experience with each other, and professional jealousy. Individuals’ gender, social status, psychology, and emotional state can prevent effective communication. While goals, emotions, habits and value judgments may affect the formulation of the messages sent, they can cause the recipients to display a negative and indifferent attitude (Aytekin, 2019, pp. 30-33). In his research, Özdemir (2014, p. 73) states that the vice-principals had difficulties in human relations and communication issues after they took office. Communication, which enables people to interact and connect with each other, has an important place to develop healthy human relationships. In organizations where healthy communication cannot be achieved, this can cause a decrease in efficiency, undermine the morale level of employees and even they quit the job (Tanrıöğen, 2018, pp. 13-16). It is observed that conflicts occur more frequently in organizations where a good communication process cannot be provided and office gossip spreads within the organization (Yılmaz, 2016, p. 148).

Another important point to be expressed is; although there are problems in both genders, considering the negative effects of these problems in terms of the depth and the effects on the functioning of the school, it can be argued that the negative relationships of female school administrators with their colleagues, cause more severe damage on the healthy communication channels. The negative relationships exist between the two vice-principals and their female principals, prove this situation. One female vice-principal claims that her female principal treats her and other female colleagues differently with gender discrimination. In addition, she states that her principal was trying to indirectly hinder her doctorate education, putting her in conflict with the school parents and trying to hurt her psychologically. This situation gives the impression that she is faced with queen bee syndrome. Engaging in ego wars with colleagues by obsessing their personal

feelings and thoughts negatively affects the formation of the expected school climate and creates significant obstacles in the functioning of organizational mechanisms. This situation is clearly reflected to all the staff, students and parents of the school; it is an issue that should be concerned socially and psychologically. Staines et al. (1974) define queen bee syndrome as the negative attitudes of individually successful women towards their fellows in a workplace dominated by men (cited in Ellemers et al., 2004, p. 325). Karakuş (2014, pp. 352-353) conceptualizes the harassment behaviours of female employees or administrators to other women employees as “pink harassment” and states that women who carry out this harassment have queen bee syndrome. This harassment by the administrators, can be practiced through mobbing, gossip and personal attacks.

However, a male vice-principal characterizes his female principal as insensitive and overly authoritarian. Due to the pressure of high-power distance in a patriarchal society, women in administrative positions can become more rigid and authoritative than men to gain respect in such societies. In Massry-Herzallah and Arar's (2019, p. 1406) research, when female and male principals were compared, they found that women were more restrictive and did not support the participation of others in decision-making processes much. It is stated that the reason for this is that in the patriarchal Arab society with a high-power distance, women are forced to display a rigid and inflexible character in order to gain trust and acceptance in such society. In addition, women need to adopt a challenging and aggressive personality rather than maintaining their feminine qualities to have them accepted and be successful in the male dominant work environment. This situation causes them to be disliked and belittled by their colleagues (Akkaş, 2001). However, in Turkish society, women are considered to be lower status than men, because they are emotional by nature and are not considered suitable for leadership positions (Celikten, 2005, p. 212). As a finding supporting this situation, in this research, a male vice-principal claims that his female principal treating the school staff and students in an overly maternal manner can create a weak authority image.

The most frequently complained issue about developing good relations with the staff is that school principals, regardless of men or women, have better relations with the people they find close to them and they use their initiatives to solve issues requested by them. Beyond that; friendships between colleagues outside of school are also thought to affect professional relationships within the school. Mostly the vice-principals complain about this situation. It is stated that although vice-principals want to have a fair attitude and approach towards all staff, school principals establish good relationships with people they feel close to, make their work easier, and put some decisions

made according to these individual's wishes into practice. Interactional justice, which is a dimension of organizational justice, is about perceived justice in the communication between employees and administrators. In an institution, the administrator has good relations with some of the employees, and treats them with respect and does not treat others in the same way, and this is an indicative of organizational justice (Özdevecioğlu, 2003, p. 79).

In general, it is observed that there is a difference between school principals and vice-principals rather than a gender difference in terms of problems in developing good relations with the students and parents. It can be said that there is always a distance between the principals and the students and parents, with some exceptions. It is observed that school principals did not communicate with the students and parents frequently, in line with their personal preferences and left the necessary interactions to the vice-principals they work. Here, we can say that the burden of developing the human relations with the different parties and using effective communication ways between these parties and finding solutions to the problems arising, is mostly on the shoulders of the principals. In the research they carried out with school administrators, Cömert and Dönmez (2018, pp. 9-10) reached the conclusion that vice-principals have a perception that they are more moderate than principals. Although it is thought that the principals who have authority and power, prefer more reserved relations due to their position, the fact that the first person consulted by the parents, teachers and students are the vice-principals, shows that their communication skills can be considered better.

In general, both male and female school administrators find the academic and field proficiency levels of their colleagues in the administration team sufficient. However, given the negative practices of some administrators in their duties and the insufficiency of their managerial competencies, it is emphasized that some reforms should be made in the nomination and appointment process for the school administrators. It is believed that after the appointment of administrators if the managerial duties cannot be fulfilled or significant mistakes are detected, these administrators should not be kept insistently at their current positions.

A school principal must have three different competencies, technical competencies, human relations competencies and conceptual competences. Technical competence includes the knowledge and skills related to the teaching methods and techniques, processes and procedures that the manager should have. Human relations competencies are the competencies of an administrator for human relations such as understanding and motivating their employees. On the other hand,

conceptual competencies are the ability of a school administrator to follow the theoretical developments in the field of education and see the school they serve, as a whole (Töremen and Kolay, 2003, p. 1-2). The qualifications required for the effective and efficient management of schools are taken into account in the appointment of administrators in countries where school administration is seen as a speciality. Qualification criterion is not required in the appointment of school principals in Turkey (Ağaoğlu, Altınkurt, Yılmaz and Karaöse, 2012, p. 162). However, Uslu (2013, p. 172), in his research reached a knowledge regarding that the academicians working in the field of educational administration think that school administrators should have technical, humane and conceptual competencies.

Recommendations

Considering administrative implications, the results of the research indicate that gender is not so important for evaluating the problems in school. However, gender is significant for the establishment of positive relations between the administration team and the other school members to reach the same goal. Based on the interpretations, school principals should be aware of that apart from gender-based management type, personal choices, interests and other managerial competencies are important factors for effective school administration and culture. Therefore, effective pre-service and in-service training must be planned in order to improve the managerial competencies of school principals and vice-principals. Due to the multiple roles expected from women, domestic responsibilities that they have to do can restrict the jobs they consider to apply in school. Many women reject the administrative positions they may excel. It is a fact that, because of family responsibilities, they may need more flexible working conditions than men. Today, many organizations create special work environments for women and recognize the importance of realizing female employee's full potential by removing obstacles, in order to benefit more from trained human potential. It can be said that a systemic transformation and sufficient legal regulations are needed in order to help them overcome the glass ceiling perception of female principals, express themselves better and to reach high-level positions. This research has some limitations as participants who are school principals and vice-principals, having a small sample size, having no quantitative data, using only the interview method, and other limitations of qualitative research. Therefore, the results of this research can be compared with the findings of quantitative research involving more and diverse participants and having different variables in order to obtain more detailed information about the similar and different leadership characteristics of female and male school administrators.

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