School Administrators' and Teachers' Perceptions of School Happiness in Türkiye: A Phenomenological Inquiry[*]

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Abstract

This study aimed to understand how the concept of school happiness is perceived as a fundamental purpose of education by examining the views of school administrators and teachers on school happiness in depth. In the study, a phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research methods, and maximum variation sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, were employed. 30 teachers, 19 vice principals and 12 school principals participated voluntarily in the interviews conducted in schools. A semi-structured interview form was used in the study, and the data were analysed by content analysis. The participants conceptualised school happiness as the experience of spending quality time together. Overall, the findings indicated that school happiness was associated with effective communication, shared activities, and a peaceful school climate, while unhappiness was primarily linked to indiscipline and management problems.

Keywords: Happiness, school happiness, school administrator, teacher

Okul Yöneticileri ve Öğretmenlerin Okul Mutluluğuna İlişkin Görüşleri: Nitel Bir Çözümleme

Öz

Bu araştırma, okul yöneticileri ve öğretmenlerin okul mutluluğuna ilişkin görüşlerini derinlemesine inceleyerek, okul mutluluğu kavramının eğitimin temel bir amacı olarak nasıl algılandığını anlamayı amaçlamıştır. Çalışmada, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenoloji deseni, amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden maksimum çeşitlilik yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Okullarda gerçekleştirilen görüşmelere 30 öğretmen 19 müdür yardımcısı ve 12 okul müdürü gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Araştırmada yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmış olup veriler içerik analiziyle çözümlenmiştir. Katılımcılar okul mutluluğunu birlikte kaliteli zaman geçirme

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deneyimi olarak kavramsallaştırdılar. Genel olarak, bulgular okul mutluluğunun etkili iletişim, paylaşılan etkinlikler ve huzurlu bir okul iklimi ile ilişkili olduğunu, mutsuzluğun ise öncelikle disiplinsizlik ve yönetim sorunlarıyla bağlantılı olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Mutluluk, okul mutluluğu, okul yöneticisi, öğretmen*

Introduction

Happiness as a goal in education continues to be an essential topic in academic discussions and school practices over the last decade (Aunampai et al., 2022; Badri et al., 2018; Bin Mahfooz & Norrmén-Smith, 2022; Dantas, 2018; Gómez-Baya et al., 2021; Gramaxo et al., 2023; López-Pérez et al., 2022; Stearns, 2019). This concept is gaining more and more importance in educational policies and programmes with the assumption that happiness can have positive effects on the place of happiness in education (Warr, 2007), student satisfaction (Uusitalo-Malmivaara, 2012), teacher motivation and overall school climate (Supriadi & Mohamad, 2015).

Students who study in a happy environment tend to achieve higher academic results, and their social relationships and emotional interactions are strengthened (Bird & Markle, 2012; Kirkcaldy et al., 2004; Quinn & Duckworth, 2007; Socha et al., 2013). Otherwise, a decrease in school happiness may lead to negative situations, such as organisational loneliness, personal anxieties, or psychological disorders, which can reduce academic success in students (Sezer & Can, 2019). Most of the studies on school happiness have been conducted on school satisfaction (Marescaux et al., 2019; Tanwar, 2019; Yusof et al., 2017), school climate (Asıcı & İkiz, 2019; Bird & Markle, 2012; Bulut, 2018), school commitment (Bilgin, 2018; Field & Buitendach, 2011), organisational happiness and job performance of employees (Düzgün, 2016), happiness and academic achievement (Kirkcaldy et al., 2004; Quinn & Duckworth, 2007; Socha et al., 2013). Although these studies have contributed to the investigation of happiness in the school environment, they primarily focus on identifying possible determinants of happiness through questionnaires and scales, overlooking what school administrators and teachers understand as happiness in the school context. Despite the growing focus on school happiness, limited research has explored how school administrators and teachers conceptualize this notion based on their lived experiences. However, the literature states that surveys and scales may not be able to detect fine details in determining people's perspectives (Joshanloo et al., 2016). For this reason, this study addresses this gap by examining in depth school administrators' and teachers' beliefs about happiness at school through qualitative research. On the other hand, researchers have generally viewed happiness as an outcome; in fact, happiness should be a goal of education. A good education should significantly contribute to both personal and collective happiness (Noddings, 2003). Therefore, the present study aims to examine the views of school administrators and teachers on school happiness, focusing on the perspectives of school principals, vice principals and teachers working

in different types of schools, taking into account the diversity of participants. However, the literature states that surveys and scales may not be able to detect fine details in determining people's perspectives (Joshanloo et al., 2016). For this reason, it is essential to examine school administrators' and teachers' beliefs about happiness at school in depth through qualitative research. On the other hand, researchers have generally viewed happiness as an outcome; in fact, happiness should be a goal of education. A good education should significantly contribute to both personal and collective happiness (Noddings, 2003). Therefore, the present study aims to examine the views of school administrators and teachers on school happiness, focusing on the perspectives of school principals, vice principals and teachers working in different types of schools, taking into account the diversity of participants.

School Happiness

School happiness, as a fundamental goal of education, refers to a welfare environment that results from the harmonious collaboration of administrators, teachers, students, and all stakeholders (Engels et al., 2004; Noddings, 2006). Indeed, according to Boniwell, Osin, and Martinez (2015), one of the goals of education is happiness, as it is believed that all stakeholders should be happy in schools where educational goals are realised. The concept of school happiness refers to the positive feelings that arise from the harmony between the individual needs of all stakeholders, both inside and outside the school (Engels et al., 2004). According to Gramaxo, Seabra, Abelha and Dutschke (2023), being happy means being able to reduce tensions and eliminate pain. Being happy is also a result of genetics and personality that enable the individual to respond positively at both the cognitive and emotional levels. Happiness is the best, noblest, most pleasant thing in the world. According to Huebner and Gilman (2006), student success in school is the harmony between psychological and social experiences and the attitudes and behaviours of stakeholders in the school. In more general terms, schools where administrators, teachers, students, and employees experience positive emotions and are in a state of prosperity are called happy schools (Döş, 2013).

According to Bird and Markle (2012), student achievement, social skills, positive relationships between students and emotional interaction in the school environment are defined as school happiness. Subjective well-being is a combination of both cognitive satisfaction at school and positive/negative emotions experienced in the school environment. However, the concept of school happiness goes beyond these; it offers a more inclusive structure that includes contextual dimensions such as school climate, social relations, physical and emotional safety, and learning processes. Therefore, an in-depth examination of this concept on the basis of school administrators' and teachers' own experiences and perceptions will make a unique contribution to the academic literature (Sezer & Can, 2019). In this regard, especially school administrators should take significant responsibility to increase the school happiness of their teachers through taking responsibility, to establish a democratic

environment within the school and to encourage them, and thus to make the happiness of all stakeholders in the school effective (Danielsen et al., 2009; Eker & Özgenel, 2021). For this reason, it is crucial to understand which variables influence employee happiness to effectively promote happiness at school (Wesarat et al., 2015). Within this scope, unlike quantitative studies, we focused on the views of administrators and teachers to examine the situations that impact school happiness in greater depth.

Within this framework, answers to the following questions were sought.

1- What are the participants' views on school happiness?

2- What are the characteristics that a happy school should have?

3- What are the criteria for a school to be characterised as an unhappy school?

4- What are the contributions of a happy school?

5- What are the suggestions for increasing school happiness?

Method

Research Design

In this study, the phenomenological design, a qualitative research approach, was employed. Phenomenology focuses on exploring how individuals experience a particular phenomenon within its natural context and seeks to understand the essence of these lived experiences from the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). While case study research aims to provide a detailed, holistic description of a bounded system such as an institution, event, or process within a specific context (Creswell & Poth, 2016), phenomenology, in contrast, is concerned with the meaning individuals assign to a shared experience or phenomenon. Therefore, unlike a case study that centers on a specific setting or case, phenomenology seeks to uncover the universal essence of an experience across participants, regardless of context. In this study, a phenomenological design was preferred to deeply explore and interpret the lived experiences of school administrators and teachers regarding school happiness, rather than to describe a particular school or institutional case.

Sample

The participants of this study were 30 teachers, 19 assistant principals and 12 school principals. Participant characteristics are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variables		Principal	Assistant Principal	Teacher
Gender	Female	4	6	13
	Male	8	13	17
School Type	Kindergarten	2	4	7
	Primary School	3	4	7
	Middle School	3	5	8
	High School	4	6	8
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	10	14	22
	Master's Degree	2	5	8
Marital status	Single	2	4	11
	Married	9	14	17
	Widowed	1	1	2
Total		12	19	30

As indicated in Table 1, the sample predominantly consists of male respondents, with teachers representing the largest group. Most participants across all school types are married and hold a bachelor's degree.

Sampling Method

Maximum variation sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used in the study. In maximum variation sampling, it is crucial to identify both similar and different situations related to the problem to be investigated and to conduct the research within this framework (Büyüköztürk et al., 2014). In this study, administrators and teachers from various branches and school levels, currently working in Siirt city centre but originally from different provinces of Türkiye, were selected as they reflect diverse regional experiences and perspectives.

Interview Procedure

During the data collection process, participants were initially contacted via email and telephone by school directorates. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a quiet and suitable room in the participants' schools. Prior to the interviews, informed consent was obtained, and necessary ethical permissions were secured. Pilot interviews were conducted with two school principals, two assistant principals, and three teachers who were not part of the study.

Ethical Considerations

The interviews were scheduled by making appointments with each participant at mutually convenient times. The interviews were conducted in self-determined environments, where participants felt free and more comfortable, allowing them to express themselves more effectively. Creswell and Poth (2016) mention some ethical principles that should be followed in qualitative research. In this context, and within the scope of the present study, the research objective was reiterated to participants prior to the commencement of the interviews. They were informed that participation was entirely voluntary, that they could withdraw from the interview at any point, and that the interview would be audio-recorded only upon their explicit consent. Participants were assured that the recordings would be used exclusively for the purposes of this study and would be used solely by the researcher. Furthermore, it was explicitly stated that participants' identities would remain confidential and would not be disclosed in any part of the research reporting process. Against this background, except for four of the participants, all the remaining participants gave permission to be audio-recorded. The interviews were conducted step by step, starting with school principals, followed by vice principals, and then teachers, in order to ensure a logical flow and to benefit from the information obtained in earlier interviews when conducting later ones. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes.

Data Collection Tool

In this study, the semi-structured interview technique was used to determine the views of school administrators and teachers on school happiness. The purpose of using the semi-structured interview technique in qualitative research is to understand people's perceptions of events and phenomena, their feelings and thoughts, and to obtain more in-depth information to collect detailed data without limiting the answers to a pre-determined theoretical framework (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Before the semi-structured interview form was prepared, the domestic and international literature was reviewed (Aunampai et al., 2022; Bin Mahfooz & Norrmén-Smith, 2022; Gómez-Baya et al., 2021; Gramaxo et al., 2023; López-Pérez et al., 2022; Stearns, 2019) and a question pool consisting of 8 main questions to fulfil the aims of the research and 16 probe-type questions under the main questions to enable the participants to express their ideas better. Then, these questions were presented to a total of fourteen field experts: three of whom were working in different universities; four of whom were appointed to academic positions at university after teaching in schools for a while; two of whom had publications on qualitative research; three of whom had similar studies with the research topic; and two of whom were language editors. In line with the opinions of field experts, three main questions and four probe questions were removed from the interview form, some changes were made to three probe questions, and the interview form consisting of a total of five main questions and twelve probe questions was finalised.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected by the researcher using the interview method. An interview is a powerful method for qualitative research that people use to reveal their attitudes, thoughts, feelings and perceptions about a subject (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The interviews to collect research data were conducted with 30 teachers, 19 vice principals, and 12 school principals working in various branches of four different school types in the central districts of Siirt Province during the 2023-2024 academic year. Afterwards, the participants were selected using criterion sampling and maximum diversity sampling methods and were informed in detail about the research process.

Analysing the Data

In the analysis of the data in this study, descriptive and content analyses were used as qualitative data analysis methods. Descriptive analysis was employed in the first stage to summarise participants' opinions under pre-determined themes based on the theoretical framework. This helped to present the general tendencies and highlight significant statements. Content analysis was subsequently applied to deepen the analysis, reveal meaning patterns, and extract categories and codes independently of the initial framework. To increase the trustworthiness of the study, participant confirmation was carried out. After transcription, participants were contacted to review their transcripts and to verify the accuracy of their statements. Necessary corrections were made in line with their feedback. Themes, categories, and coding were made in accordance with the conceptual framework, and the expressions were presented in tables. In determining the codes, both inductive and deductive approaches were used. Firstly, a draft code list was created based on the literature and the research questions. Later, new codes that emerged from the data were added during the analysis. The coding process was conducted independently by two researchers. Afterwards, the codings were compared, and any differences were resolved through consensus to ensure inter-coder reliability. In this respect, along with thematic coding, direct quotations of the participants' original opinions or thoughts on the relevant subject were used when necessary. In the analysis of the data and direct quotations, teachers were represented by the abbreviation 'T', assistant principals by the abbreviation 'AP', and school principals by the abbreviation 'P'.

Research Credibility, Transferability, Consistency and Verifiability

There are various strategies to enhance the internal validity, external validity, internal reliability, and external reliability of qualitative research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In order to strengthen the internal validity of this study, long-term interviews with participants were conducted, and member checking was employed to verify the accuracy of the data and interpretations. To ensure internal reliability, a consistency analysis was carried out. For this purpose, Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula, [Reliability = Number of Agreements / (Total Number of Agreements +

Disagreements)] was used. In qualitative research, an agreement level of 90% or above between the researcher and the expert is generally considered acceptable. In this study, the data were coded both by the researcher and by a predetermined expert. As a result, the reliability values were calculated as follows: 92% for "What are the participants' views on school happiness?", 90% for "What are the characteristics that a happy school should have?", 93% for "What are the criteria for a school to be characterised as an unhappy school?", 91% for "What are the contributions of a happy school?", and 90% for "What are the suggestions for increasing school happiness?". These values demonstrate that the reliability level of the study is within the desired range. To enhance external validity, detailed descriptions of the research process, participants, and setting were provided to allow readers to judge the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Furthermore, the research stages were reported in a transparent and systematic manner. To ensure external reliability, a confirmation audit was conducted. For this purpose, an independent academic experienced in qualitative research was asked to review the research process, data collection tools, and findings to assess whether the conclusions were supported by the data. The auditor confirmed that the procedures followed were methodologically sound and that the findings were dependable.

Findings

The findings obtained from the participants regarding the questions determined in this research are given in the tables below.

Opinions on School Happiness

In this sub-heading, school administrators and teachers were asked the following questions: What do you think school happiness is? Can you define it? Accordingly, the frequency distributions of school administrators' and teachers' views on school happiness are demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2.
Participants' Views on School Happiness

Categories	Codes	Participants	n
Environment and relationships	Spending quality time together	T1, T4, T8, AP3, AP7, P1	6
	Free and anti-oppressive environment	T7, T14, T19, T21, T29, AP16	6
	Healthy relationships	T2, T7, T9, T18, AP4, P2	6
	Administrator and teachers cooperation	T11, T13, AP14, AP17, P5, T9	6
	Teamwork	T11, T12, T16, AP14, P9	5

Academic and Social Activities	Productive and good lessons	T4, T9, T16, T20, T22, T26	6
	Self-development of the teacher	T5, T6, T17, T21, T22, T27	6
	Extracurricular activities	T2, T6, T15, AP11, P10	5
School Climate	Peaceful working environment	T2, T3, T14, T17, T21, T22, T26, AP7, AP-12, P4, P6	11
	Equitable and transparent practices	T1, T5, T9, T11, T16, T22, T30, AP16, AP17	9

When Table 2 is analysed, the participants evaluated school happiness in the categories of environment and relationships, academic and social activities and school climate. In the category of environment and relationships, spending quality time together (n=6), Free and anti-oppressive environment (n=6), healthy relationships (n=6), Administrator and teachers cooperation (n=6) and teamwork (n=5); in the category of academic and social activities, productive and good lessons (n=6), self-development of the teacher (n=6) and extracurricular activities (n=5); In the category of school climate, a peaceful working environment (n=11) and equitable and transparent practices (n=9) were predominantly highlighted by participants. The views of some participants on this issue are as follows.

"I think school happiness is the school staff spending quality time together and being in harmony from the administration to the teachers, from the students to all employees and staff (T1)".

"School happiness means a free environment. It is the absence of pressure and restriction (T21)".

"In my opinion, school happiness is the ability to carry out all relationships in the school in a healthy way. These relationships include all interactions, such as administration-teacher, student-administration, staff-teacher, and student-staff. (T9)"

"School happiness is spending quality time with harmonious teammates. Happiness is being able to demonstrate teamwork both among teachers themselves and among administrators as cohesive groups (P9)."

"It is the environment where the teacher thinks about how to work most efficiently and what he/she can teach without experiencing anxiety (T20)".

"School happiness is the environment where students feel happy and peaceful, and teachers feel at home. It is the presentation of an environment where students can express themselves comfortably and realise themselves (AP16)".

"We are in constant communication with our principal at school. We exchange ideas on every matter and make joint decisions. (AP17)".

Opinions on the Characteristics That a Happy School Should Have

In this sub-heading, school administrators and teachers were asked what are the characteristics that a happy school should have. Can you explain them together with their justifications? Accordingly, the frequency distributions of school administrators' and teachers' views on the characteristics that a happy school should have are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

Participants' Views on the Characteristics That a Happy School Should Have

Categories	Codes	Participants	n
Communication and Cooperation	Strong communication	T6, T9, T14, AP2, AP6, P5	6
	Parent-teacher cooperation	T13, T14, T23, T26, T30	5
	Stakeholder solidarity	T4, T9, T19, AP6	4
Physical and Social Environment	social activities	T6, T9, T17, T23, T25, AP4	6
	Adequate infrastructural conditions	T1, T9, T11, T21, AP7	5
	Cleanliness and order	T8, T13, T14, AP11, P4	5
Education Environment	Confidence and peace of mind	T2, T6, T17, T21, AP3, P1	6
	Justice and tolerance	T7, T8, T19, T20, AP9	5

When Table 3 is analysed, the participants evaluated the characteristics that a happy school should have in the categories of communication and cooperation, physical and social environment and educational environment. In the communication and cooperation category, strong communication (n=6), parent-teacher cooperation (n=5), and stakeholder solidarity (n=4); in the physical and social environment category, social activities (n=6), adequate infrastructural conditions (n=5), and cleanliness and order (n=5); and in the education environment category, confidence and peace of mind (n=6) and justice and tolerance (n=5) were identified as the most salient codes. The views of some participants on this issue are given below.

"In my opinion, one of the features that a happy school should have is the strong communication between the school principal, vice principal, teachers, parents and students (T14)".

"One of the features that happy schools should have is that the physical characteristics of the school are suitable for education and training. (T9)"

"One of the characteristics of happy schools is the cleanliness and order that should exist in the school environment. (P4)"

"Managers who behave justly and tolerantly towards their employees provide a happy school environment. (T20)"

Criteria for a School to Be Characterised as an Unhappy School

In this sub-heading, school administrators and teachers were asked the question: What are the criteria for a school to be characterised as an unhappy school? The question was asked. Accordingly, the frequency distributions of the opinions of school administrators and teachers regarding the criteria for a school to be characterised as an unhappy school are shown in Table 4.

Table 4.

Participants' Views on the Criteria for Characterising a School as an Unhappy School

Categories	Codes	Participants	n
School Environment and Working Conditions	Low cooperation	T3, T14, T15, AP12, P4, P9	6
	Unwillingness to come to school	T7, T11, T17, T20, T21, P3	6
	Poor physical conditions	T6, T8, T11, T17, T21, AP1	6
	Miscommunication between stakeholders	T9, T10, T14, AP3, AP7	5
	Mobbing	T11, T13, T21, T24, T25	5
Discipline and Management Problems	In-school indiscipline	T4, T8, T11, T19, T22, P7	6
	Unqualified administrators	T2, T8, T15, T19, T20, T29	6
	Injustice	T5, T7, T17, T21, T23, T27	6

When Table 4 is analysed, the participants evaluated the criteria for a school to be considered an unhappy school in the categories of school environment and working conditions, and discipline and management problems. In the category of school

environment and working conditions, low cooperation (n=4), unwillingness to come to school (n=6), poor physical conditions (n=6), miscommunication between stakeholders (n=5), and mobbing (n=5), and in the category of discipline and management problems, in-school indiscipline (n=6), unqualified administrators (n=6), and injustice (n=6) were predominantly highlighted by participants. The views of some participants on this issue are given below.

"He said, "If there are disagreements among all stakeholders, the main reason for this is miscommunication. In such a case, the school becomes an unhappy school (T14)."

"The most prominent feature of an unhappy school is teachers who come to school reluctantly (P3)".

"Unhappy schools are those where there is no co-operation and constant mobbing (T13)".

"The fact that incompetent and unqualified people are made administrators, administrators who cannot respond to the needs of teachers, start to intimidate teachers after a while and do not produce solutions (T19)".

"An unhappy school is a school managed by unjust, oppressive, unsympathetic and stylistically individual administrators (T5)".

Contributions of a Happy School

In this sub-heading, school administrators and teachers were asked what the contributions of a happy school are. Accordingly, the frequency distributions of school administrators' and teachers' views on the contributions of a happy school are shown in Table 5.

Table 5.
Participants' Views on the Contributions of a Happy School

Categories	Codes	Participants	n
Personal and Professional Development	Personal development	T4, T11, T9, T14, T18, AP7	6
	Academic success	T1, T7, T11, T21, AP9, P1	6
	Occupational satisfaction	T3, T4, T12, AP1, AP3, P5	6
	Quality of education	T8, T13, T23, T24, T28, T30	6
Happiness and Social Relations	Happiness at school and in private life	T2, T7, T13, T16, AP4, P1	6

	Sociability	T7, T12, T14, AP11, P4	5
	Positive relationships	T6, T7, T15, T22, AP4	5
Motivation and Innovation	Willingness	T1, T5, T6, T14 AP3, P1	6
	Innovation	T3, T14, T20, T26, AP9	5
	Belonging	T9, T12, AP4, AP9, P4	5

When Table 5 is analysed, the participants evaluated the contributions of a happy school in the categories of personal and professional development, happiness and social relations, motivation and innovation. In the personal and professional development category, personal development (n=6), academic success (n=6), occupational satisfaction (n=6), and quality of education (n=6); in the happiness and social relations category, happiness at school and in private life (n=6), sociability (n=5), and positive relationships (n=5); and in the motivation and innovation category, willingness (n=6), innovation (n=5), and belonging (n=5) were frequently highlighted by participants. The views of some participants on this issue are given below.

"Happy schools encourage teachers in creativity, assertiveness, self-confidence and entrepreneurship by increasing their personal development (T11)".

"In happy schools, teachers reach professional satisfaction (AP1)".

"Happiness at school causes everyone to be happy in their private lives. Because the administrator, teacher and student who are happy at school are also happy at home (T7)".

"Happy schools provide positive social effects (P4)".

"In a happy school, everyone will come to school willingly (T1)".

"Happy schools raise individuals with a sense of identity and belonging (AP4)".

Suggestions for İncreasing School Happiness

In this sub-heading, school administrators and teachers were asked what their suggestions are for increasing (ensuring) school happiness. The question was asked. Accordingly, the frequency distributions of school administrators' and teachers' suggestions for increasing school happiness are shown in Table 6.

Table 6.
Participants' Suggestions for İncreasing School Happiness

Categories	Codes	Participants	n
Management and Leadership	Meritorious and just managers	T1, T6, T11, T12, T19, T24	6
	Transparency	T4, T7, T9, T14, AP6, AP9	6
	Participation in decisions	T2, T4, T14, T15, AP3	5
	Rewarding	T8, T12, T13, T20, T21	5
Teacher Support and Development	Professional competence	T7, T2, AP9, AP11, P4, P7	6
	Guiding the teacher	T3, T7, T8, T16, T22	5
	Support for the teacher	T5, T8, T17, T21, T24	5
Corporate Culture and Communication	Open and collaborative communication	T2, T15, T26, T27, AP9, P1	6
	Tolerance and friendliness	T1, T7, T8, T14, T17, T26	6
	Removing mandates	T8, T14, T22, T28	4
Working Conditions and Financial Support	Increasing teacher salaries	T5, T7, T8, T14, T15, T16	6
	Adequate infrastructural conditions	T1, T8, T13, T19, AP3, P9	6
	Improving teacher reputation	T11, T17, T21, T26	4

When Table 6 is analysed, it is seen that the participants evaluated their suggestions for increasing school happiness in the categories of management and leadership, teacher support and development, institutional culture and communication, working conditions and financial support. In the category of management and leadership, Meritorious and just managers (n=6), transparency (n=6), participation in decisions (n=5) and rewarding (n=6); in the category of teacher support and development, professional competence (n=6), guiding the teacher (n=5) and support for teachers (n=5); in the category of corporate culture and communication, open and collaborative communication (n=6), tolerance and friendliness (n=6) and removing mandates (n=4); in the category of working conditions and material support, Increasing teacher salaries (n=6), adequate infrastructural conditions (n=6), and improving teacher reputation (n=4) are among the codes. The views of some participants on this issue are given below.

"In my opinion, increasing the number of meritorious and fair administrators who do their job with love is the most important factor to increase happiness in schools (T11)".

"Having my opinion in the decisions to be taken at school, being actively involved in the decision-making process, and being informed of the decisions taken transparently with justifications increases school happiness (T14)".

"School administrators should guide teachers and encourage them to take the school to a higher level (T8)".

"School administrators should endeavour to create a democratic, tolerant and friendly working environment (T17)".

"School administrators should not forget that they are also teachers and should guide the teachers with a good style without giving orders and by acting within the framework of respect for a happy school environment (T22)".

"If teachers are paid so little that they think about how to make a living, this situation will negatively affect school happiness. (T16)".

"As a school administrator, I want to spend my power and effort on education and training services instead of dealing with the deficiencies of the physical environment.. (P9)"

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to understand how the concept of school happiness can be perceived and implemented as a fundamental goal of education by analysing school administrators' and teachers' views on school happiness in depth. The findings of the study reflect that school happiness is strongly linked to both relationships within the school and academic and social activities.

In the first problem of the research, the views of school administrators and teachers on school happiness were analysed. According to the results of the research, it was concluded that school administrators and teachers should cooperate, a free and pressure-free environment should be created, and the school climate should be based on peace and justice. Similar findings have been reported by previous studies (Argon, 2015; Döş, 2013; Januwarsono, 2015; Warr, 2007). In general, the most important characteristics of a happy school are based on cooperation among stakeholders, a peaceful and fair environment without pressure (López-Pérez et al., 2022; Sezer & Can, 2019). Recent research also highlights that supportive and fair management is the strongest predictor of teacher happiness and that fair management practices directly contribute to increased happiness (Sebilla & Cemaloğlu, 2025; Vale, Ribeiro & Alves, 2025; Çakır & Özgenel, 2024). Therefore, it comes to the fore that school

administrators and teachers generally see happiness as a co-operation between administrators and teachers, that free and pressure-free environments will be expressed by happiness, and that a fair environment will create a good school climate.

In the second problem of the research, the views of administrators and teachers on the characteristics that a happy school should have were analysed. According to the results of the research, happy schools should have strong communication and co-operation as well as a physically clean and organised school environment. In addition, administrators and teachers think that schools with justice, tolerance and trust will be happy schools. This is in line with the findings of Goodman-Deane et al. (2016), Park and Oh (2017), Ravina-Ripoll et al. (2022), and Subathradevi et al. (2020), who emphasised that strong communication within the organisation enhances happiness. Similarly, a study conducted in Portugal (Gramaxo et al., 2023) and more recent research (Permana & Yuslimah, 2025) confirm that strong communication among school stakeholders has a direct positive effect on school happiness. Thus, the expectations of administrators and teachers from a happy school are the existence of a strong communication network within the school, the school being physically clean and organised, and the establishment of justice, tolerance and trust in the school.

In the third problem of the research, the views of administrators and teachers on the criteria for a school to be characterised as an unhappy school were examined. According to the results of the research, the criteria for being characterised as an unhappy school are miscommunication and low cooperation between school stakeholders, reluctance of administrators, teachers and students to come to school, poor physical conditions in the school, mobbing, indiscipline within the school, meritless administrators and injustices experienced in the school. Previous studies underline similar factors. For instance, lack of communication and cooperation has been suggested to harm school success and climate, thereby increasing unhappiness (Barutçu & Akın, 2025; García-Martínez et al., 2021; Petro, 2023; Setiabudi, 2021). According to Mendell and Heath (2005), poor physical conditions in the school, in other words, the poor quality of the internal environment of the school building, cause unhappiness and negatively impact student attendance. Furthermore, mobbing (Gülcan, 2015), student indiscipline and unjust practices (Chanda et al., 2023), and weak administrator–teacher relations (Kılıç et al., 2023) have all been associated with a restless school climate. These results align with the findings of the research. Therefore, the participants view unhappy schools as places where administrators, teachers, and students do not want to be, characterised by pressure and mobbing, where miscommunication between stakeholders has reached its highest levels, physically unpleasant, managed by unqualified administrators, and where injustices prevail accordingly. This separation was intended to provide conceptual clarity and to clearly demonstrate the distinction between the two opposing school climates and to emphasise how the presence or absence of similar factors leads to either a happy or an unhappy school environment.

In the fourth problem of the research, the views of administrators and teachers on the contributions of a happy school were analysed. According to the research results, it was concluded that the contributions of a happy school include personal and professional development, happiness and social relations, motivation, and innovation. This is consistent with previous findings demonstrating that a happy school supports teachers' and administrators' personal and professional development (Postholm, 2012) and fosters innovative practices (Caena & Vuorikari, 2021). Similarly, research has revealed that social relations (Kim & Kim, 2013; Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014) and innovative environments (Giản et al., 2021) contribute to school happiness. Abdullah and Ling (2016) concluded in their research in Malaysia that school happiness affects personal and professional development, social relations and innovation. These results support the results of the research. Accordingly, administrators and teachers in happy schools are open to continuous development, attach importance to personal and professional growth, and are highly motivated individuals who are committed to self-improvement.

In the last problem of the research, the suggestions of school administrators and teachers for increasing school happiness were analysed. According to the research results, it was concluded that management and leadership, teacher support and development, organisational culture and communication, working conditions, and financial support are important factors in increasing school happiness. Consistent with this, previous studies have revealed that management and leadership styles play a critical role in organisational happiness (Delioğlan & Titrek, 2022; Algan & Ummanel, 2019). Additionally, teacher support and development (Guess & McCane-Bowling, 2016; Lei et al., 2018; Stercke et al., 2015), positive organisational culture (Klyueva & Ulanova, 2023), and improved working conditions with financial support (Battaglia, 2009; Burkhauser, 2017; Doğan & Aslan, 2022; King et al., 2016) have all been found to enhance school happiness. Recent evidence also reinforces that supportive management and improved working conditions significantly strengthen school happiness (Çakır & Özgenel, 2024; Sebilla & Cemaloğlu, 2025; Kılıç et al., 2023). These results align with the research findings. Therefore, it comes to the forefront that management style and leadership characteristics are important in increasing school happiness, teachers should always be supported by administrators, an institutional culture should be created in the school, a good communication network should exist, working conditions of administrators and teachers should be improved, and financial support should be increased.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are presented to enhance school happiness. These suggestions are organised under three main categories:

Policy Level Recommendations

It is recommended to embed school happiness as a strategic priority within national education policies and school development plans. This should be supported by the allocation of adequate financial resources to improve school facilities and by establishing systematic mechanisms for monitoring the well-being of teachers and administrators. Such mechanisms, for example, could include the formation of school or district-level units dedicated to identifying and addressing factors that negatively impact school happiness.

School Level Practices

Schools should be encouraged to strengthen collaboration among stakeholders, foster open and pressure-free communication environments, and ensure that merit-based practices are prioritised in administrative appointments. In addition, creating safe, fair, and inclusive school climates can help reduce mobbing and eliminate unfair practices.

Leadership and Teacher Support Strategies

It is important to provide leadership training for school administrators to cultivate happiness-centred management practices. Furthermore, teachers should be supported through regular in-service training and professional development programs, along with targeted initiatives aimed at improving their working conditions and financial well-being.

Ethical and Legal Aspects of the Research

Ethics committee approval of the study was obtained with the approval dated 08/11/2024 and numbered 7898. The teachers participating in the study were informed about the study in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and their consent was obtained for the Informed Consent Form.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Bu çalışma, okul yöneticilerinin ve öğretmenlerin okul mutluluğuna ilişkin algılarını ve deneyimlerini derinlemesine incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Eğitimde giderek daha fazla önem kazanan bir kavram olarak okul mutluluğu, öğrenci başarısından öğretmenlerin mesleki tatminine kadar geniş bir yelpazede önemli etkiler yaratmaktadır. Ancak, mevcut literatürde okul yöneticilerinin ve öğretmenlerin bu kavramı nasıl algıladığına dair nitel araştırmalar sınırlı kalmıştır. Bu çalışma, şu soruları yanıtlamayı hedeflemektedir: Katılımcılar okul mutluluğunu nasıl tanımlamaktadır? Mutlu bir okulun temel özellikleri nelerdir? Bir okulun mutsuz olarak algılanmasına neden olan faktörler nelerdir? Mutlu bir okulun katkıları nelerdir? Okul mutluluğunu artırmak için ne gibi öneriler sunulabilir? Bu sorulara yanıt vererek, çalışma, eğitimin temel hedeflerinden biri olan mutluluğun bireysel gelişime ve kurumsal başarıya nasıl katkıda bulunduğuna dair içgörüler sunmayı ve bunun uygulamadaki yansımalarına dair pratik öneriler geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Okul mutluluğu kavramı, öğrenci başarısını artırması, öğretmenlerin iş tatminini iyileştirmesi ve destekleyici bir okul iklimi oluşturması gibi olumlu etkileri nedeniyle son yıllarda önemli bir ilgi görmektedir (Bird & Markle, 2012, s. 63; Sezer & Can, 2019, s. 169). Mevcut araştırmalar ağırlıklı olarak nicel yöntemler kullanarak okul mutluluğunun belirleyicilerini ve sonuçlarını incelemektedir (Asıcı & İkiz, 2019, s. 624; Talebzadeh & Samkan, 2011, s. 1466). Okul mutluluğu üzerine gerçekleştirilen araştırmalar büyük ölçüde okul memnuniyeti, okul iklimi, okula bağlılık, çalışanların örgütsel mutluluğu ve iş performansları ile mutluluk ve akademik başarı gibi konulara odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışmalar, okul ortamındaki mutluluğun araştırılmasına önemli katkılar sunmakla birlikte, genellikle anket ve ölçekler aracılığıyla mutluluğun olası belirleyicilerini incelemekte ve okul yöneticileri ile öğretmenlerin mutluluk algılarını derinlemesine ele almamaktadır. Ancak, eğitim ortamlarında okul yöneticileri ve öğretmenlerin mutluluğa ilişkin algılarının ve bu algıların eğitim süreçlerine etkisinin nitel yöntemlerle incelendiği çalışmalar sınırlıdır. Bu araştırma, okul yöneticileri ve öğretmenlerin yaşanmış deneyimlerine odaklanarak okul mutluluğu kavramına ilişkin kapsamlı bir bakış açısı sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, farklı okul türlerindeki bu algıları inceleyerek, kavramın çeşitli eğitim bağlamlarında nasıl şekillendiğine dair özgün içgörüler sağlamayı ve literatüre anlamlı katkılar sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

Mevcut araştırma, okul yöneticilerinin ve öğretmenlerin okul mutluluğuna ilişkin algılarını ve deneyimlerini keşfetmek amacıyla fenomenolojik yaklaşımı temel alan nitel bir araştırma deseni kullanmıştır. Fenomenoloji, katılımcıların yaşanmış deneyimlerini ve belirli bir olguya dair anlayışlarını derinlemesine incelemeye olanak tanıdığı için tercih edilmiştir. Araştırmada, farklı okul türleri, eğitim seviyeleri ve

mesleki rolleri kapsayacak şekilde çeşitliliği sağlamak amacıyla maksimum çeşitlilik örneklemesi yöntemi kullanılarak amaçlı örnekleme yapılmıştır. Katılımcılar, Siirt'te görev yapan 30 öğretmen, 19 müdür yardımcısı ve 12 okul müdüründen oluşmaktadır. Veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Görüşme soruları, kapsamlı bir literatür taraması temelinde hazırlanmış ve uzman görüşleri doğrultusunda geliştirilmiştir. Görüşmeler, katılımcıların rahat ve otantik bir ortamda bulunmalarını sağlamak için onların tercih ettiği mekânlarda gerçekleştirilmiş ve her bir oturum yaklaşık 45–60 dakika sürmüştür. Veriler, içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edilmiş ve katılımcıların bakış açılarını detaylı bir şekilde anlamak için ortaya çıkan temalar ve kodlar sistematik bir şekilde belirlenmiştir. Araştırma sürecinde, bilgilendirilmiş onam, araştırmacı tarafından tüm katılımcılara araştırmanın amacı, süreci ve gönüllülük esasları açıklandıktan sonra alınmıştır. Katılımcılardan yazılı onam formu imzalatılmış ve gizlilik ilkelerine titizlikle uyulmuştur.

Araştırma, okul mutluluğunun olumlu ilişkiler, iş birliğine dayalı bir ortam ve etkili iletişim gibi faktörlerle yakından ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Katılımcılar, mutlu bir okulun güven, adalet ve destekleyici liderlik ile karakterize edildiğini; bunların tüm paydaşlar arasında motivasyon ve memnuniyeti artırdığını vurgulamıştır. Buna karşın, yetersiz iletişim, fiziksel koşulların eksikliği ve idari yeterliliklerin yetersizliği gibi faktörlerin okullarda mutsuzluğa neden olduğu belirtilmiştir. Tartışma bölümünde, bu bulgular mevcut literatürle ilişkilendirilmiş ve okul mutluluğunun yalnızca bireysel iyi oluşu artırmakla kalmayıp, öğrenci başarısı ve öğretmen performansı gibi kurumsal sonuçları da iyileştirdiği vurgulanmıştır. Sonuçlar, olumlu bir okul iklimi oluşturmadaki liderliğin kritik rolünü ve adil olmayan uygulamalar ile yetersiz kaynaklar gibi sistemik sorunların ele alınmasının gerekliliğini öne çıkarmıştır. Çalışma, okul mutluluğunu artırmaya yönelik stratejiler önererek sonuçlanmıştır. Bu stratejiler arasında, kapsayıcı ve şeffaf bir yönetimin teşvik edilmesi, fiziksel koşulların iyileştirilmesi ve öğretmenler için mesleki gelişim fırsatlarının sağlanması yer almaktadır. Bu bulgular, okul mutluluğunun dinamiklerini daha derinlemesine anlamaya katkıda bulunurken, eğitim politikaları ve uygulamaları için pratik öneriler sunmaktadır.

Bu bulgulara dayanarak, okul mutluluğunu teşvik etmek için çeşitli öneriler sunulabilir. Bu öneriler şunlardır: iş birliğini teşvik eden uygulamaların hayata geçirilmesi, öğretmenlerin ve yöneticilerin kendilerini baskı hissetmeden özgürce ifade edebilecekleri ortamların yaratılması, eğitim için fiziksel koşulların iyileştirilmesi amacıyla okul bütçelerinin artırılması, idari atamalarda liyakatin önceliklendirilmesi, adaletsiz uygulamaların düzenlemelerle önüne geçilmesi, mobbingin önlenmesi, hizmet içi eğitimlerle öğretmenlerin kişisel gelişimlerinin desteklenmesi ve yöneticilerin ve öğretmenlerin yaşam standartlarının iyileştirilmesi için mali durumlarının güçlendirilmesi önerilmektedir. Ayrıca kapsayıcı ve katılımcı bir liderlik anlayışının teşvik edilmesi önemlidir. Bu kapsamda, iş birliğini ve şeffaflığı karar alma süreçlerinde önceliklendiren, yetkin ve adil yöneticilerin atanmasına vurgu yapılmaktadır. Etkili iletişim, karşılıklı saygı ve empati ile

karakterize edilen destekleyici ve demokratik bir okul kültürü oluşturulması, tüm paydaşlar arasındaki ilişkileri güçlendirebilir. Son olarak, iş yükü dengesi, adil politikalar ve öğretmenlere yönelik mali destek gibi sistemik sorunların ele alınması, öğretmenlerin iyi oluşuna ve dolayısıyla genel okul iklimine önemli katkılar sağlayabilir. Bu öneriler, eğitim liderleri ve politika yapıcılar için daha mutlu ve üretken okul ortamları oluşturmayı hedefleyen uygulanabilir içgörüler sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.