Examining School Administrators' Views on Organizational Culture

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine school administrators' views on organizational culture. The study sample consists of 32 school administrators working at preschool, primary, and secondary levels in public educational institutions in the province of Sakarya. The study employed a holistic multiple-case study design, a qualitative method. Data were collected through a literature review and semi-structured interview form. The collected data were analyzed and tabulated using descriptive analysis. The school administrators interviewed for their opinions expressed moderately positive opinions about traditional organizational culture and highly positive opinions about contemporary organizational culture.

Keywords: Corporate culture, school administrators, contemporary organizational culture, traditional organizational culture.

Introduction

Organizational culture is the totality of beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and material elements present within an organization. These elements influence the organization's purpose, goals, working methods, and employee behavior. Organizational culture defines the organization's identity and loyalty to that identity, and determines how the organization responds to communication with the outside world. (Karaköse & Altınkurt, 2009).

The term corporate culture emerges as an element of this concept. In the literature, corporate culture is also referred to as company culture, organizational culture, or institutional culture. Corporate culture is a value that has gained prominence in recent years. Organizations can adapt to technological and transformative periods, but they cannot meet the core elements of their corporate culture from other sources. All organizations have their own norms, values, and rituals. Organizations that firmly uphold these elements are more likely to adapt to changes in the future compared to others. The core theme of corporate culture is people. Organizations that effectively utilize their human resources and prioritize people experience a beneficial and high-quality period, and are able to project a successful image both internally and externally (Taymaz, 2009).

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Schools are among the leading institutions that guide the future lives of communities, transmit cultural values, and enable socialization. They are educational institutions capable of producing and disseminating knowledge and science, monitoring developments, and applying current practices. An individual's ability to compete and succeed at both national and international levels in various fields depends on effective education. This desired education is provided by educational institutions. The quality of education is greatly influenced by the institutional culture of the schools. For positive outcomes to be achieved, schools need to have an institutional culture that is open to change, prioritizes collective intelligence, and focuses on the individual (Taymaz, 2009).

The formation of organizational culture begins with the establishment of the organization and can change direction over time. Factors influencing the formation of organizational culture include the organization's purpose, goals, working methods, employee behavior, and the organization's communication with the outside world (Bakioğlu & Bahçeci, 2010). Organizational culture is considered an important topic by researchers and practitioners because it affects organizational performance and employee satisfaction. A corporate culture that positively impacts stakeholder's increases employee motivation, leads to higher work productivity, and reduces employee turnover. Furthermore, it promotes a healthy work-life balance and encourages employees to be healthy and happy (Bahçeci, 2009).

Schools are complex systems comprised of many factors designed to support the individual and social development of students. Among these factors, the school's institutional culture holds a significant place. Institutional culture refers to the school's values, principles, norms, and how relationships are conducted between teachers and students (Gülbahar & Koşar, 2020). Student achievement, teacher motivation, and the overall school performance are all influenced by the organizational culture. In other words, a positive organizational culture contributes to higher student motivation and achievement levels (Aydın, 2010).

Many factors play a role in the formation of institutional culture in schools. These include school administration, the behavior of teachers and students, and the physical environment of the school. School administrators define the values and principles of the school and reflect these values and principles to all members of the school community. The behavior of teachers and students demonstrates how the school's institutional culture is applied in real life. The school's physical environment reflects the overall atmosphere and mood of the school (Peçe & Taşdemir, 2021).

Another important factor in the formation of institutional culture is the relationships between teachers and students, both inside and outside the school. These relationships ensure that students feel safe and welcome at school. Similarly, the relationships between teachers and students are also part of the institutional culture. Teachers' attitudes toward students can influence students' attitudes toward school. Positive teacher attitudes can help students develop a more positive attitude towards school. (Aydın Gülbahar, 2019).

The attitudes of school administrators towards teachers and students also play a significant role in the formation of the organizational culture. Educational administrators know that a positive organizational culture helps improve communication, activities, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, a positive organizational climate, and increased motivation levels within the school. In other words, a consciously created, managed, and employee-employed organizational culture provides a competitive advantage

over other similar organizations. Organizational culture is a significant factor in how schools function and how it affects student learning. The organizational culture of schools is a significant factor in how it affects student learning. It is a significant factor in how it affects students' learning. Institutional culture is a significant factor in how schools function and how it affects students' learning (Taymaz, 2009).

Organizational culture reflects a school's goals, values, norms, and expectations. These values, norms, and expectations determine how the school operates and how students learn. For example, a focus on student achievement within a school's organizational culture can help students take a greater interest in their academic performance and learn better. Similarly, a school's culture that prioritizes students' social and emotional needs can help them develop positively socially and emotionally, and learn better. (Aydın Gülbahar, 2019).

Corporate culture enables employees to think and act together while performing their tasks. From another perspective, the functions of corporate culture are as follows (Eren, 2010):

- Corporate culture must be something learned or acquired.

- It exists in the mindset, consciousness, and memory of individuals within the organization in the form of values and beliefs.

- Corporate culture is a pattern that can be regularly repeated or established.

- Corporate culture must be shareable among the members of the group.

In other words, an organization's culture is a phenomenon created by multiple individuals working together. It is something that can be learned and passed on to future generations through symbols and symbolic behaviors. Because it is a term that has developed over time, its definition is determined according to the transition period (Gürbüz, Erdem & Yıldırım, 2013).

In today's scientific society, not only the structure of society but also its institutions are undergoing rapid change. One of the most important pillars of a scientific society is the quality and efficiency of educational institutions (Alemdar & Köker, 2013). Schools are institutions that can produce, present, and disseminate science and knowledge. Therefore, the institutional culture of schools will have a strong impact on the development of scientific societies. The institutional culture of schools should be open to scientific progress and innovation, value human resources, and enable individuals to achieve self-realization (Çelik, 2012).

Schools are institutions that reflect the cultural values of society, rather than businesses with specific goals. A cultural analysis of schools is more appropriate than analyzing their functions. Schools are a social reality subsequently constructed through individuals. The essence of school life is determined, to a limited extent, by the level of interaction between the individuals within the school (Şişman, 2011). The strength of this interaction is determined by the formation of an effective school culture. The school's founding philosophy can guide the perspectives of administrators, teachers, and students, and provide a peaceful school environment. The fundamental elements of a school culture can be listed as values, norms, organizations, and goals (Taymaz, 2009).

This research aims to examine school administrators' views on the concept of organizational culture. A review of existing studies in the literature reveals that the importance of organizational culture is emphasized, and the competencies and perspectives of school administrators regarding organizational

culture are considered significant. In this context, it is expected that the research findings will shed light on future research and contribute to the literature.

Method

This research, which aims to examine school administrators' views on organizational culture, is designed using a holistic multiple case study, a qualitative method. Research data were collected through a literature review and semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research methods aim to examine events or situations that occur in real life. Literature review aims to examine the current state of the event or phenomenon under investigation and previous research. A holistic multiple case study design, on the other hand, aims to examine the views or situations of individuals or groups in relation to various variables (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

To collect data for the research, researchers first conducted a literature review. Then, standardized open-ended interviews were conducted with school administrators. A question pool was created based on the relevant literature to standardize the interview form. From this pool of questions, those that could elicit the clearest and most in-depth answers to the problem were selected, and the interview form was finalized after consulting with an academic in the field of measurement (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

The population of this study consists of school administrators working in official preschool, primary, secondary, and high schools in Sakarya province during the 2022-2023 academic year. The sample of the study consists of 32 school administrators selected from this population using a convenience sampling method. Research data were collected from school administrators through a semi-structured interview form. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive analysis techniques and interpreted by tabulating them according to the themes identified in the literature review.

Findings

Findings Regarding School Administrators' Views on Traditional Organizational Culture

The results of the descriptive analysis of school administrators' statements regarding traditional organizational culture are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

School Administrators' Views on Traditional Organizational Culture

Opinions	%
Nobody wants to fall out with the government.	%20
Strict controls are in place to prevent irregularities.	%35
Hierarchical structures are the basis of relationships.	%45
Managers frequently remind people to follow the rules.	%50
Disputes are resolved at the discretion of the management.	%25
Formal relations take precedence.	%40
The relationships between superiors and subordinates are very formal.	%60
Management tends to focus more on details than on the actual tasks.	%30

An examination of the findings in Table 1 reveals that school administrators possess a traditional organizational culture. It is understood that administrators apply strict controls to ensure compliance with rules and place importance on a hierarchical structure. Furthermore, the frequent reminders about rule-following and the resolution of disputes according to the administration's wishes indicate a controlling approach. The distant relationships between superiors and subordinates can also be interpreted as an indication that school administrators tend to control relationships among teachers. The fact that administration focuses more on details than on core tasks suggests that administration exercises control at a very micro level.

Findings Regarding School Administrators' Views on Contemporary Organizational Culture

Table 2 presents the results of the descriptive analysis of school administrators' statements regarding contemporary organizational culture.

Table 2

School Administrators' Views on Contemporary Organizational Culture

Opinions	%
Success is supported and encouraged by everyone at the school.	%50
Educational activities are planned collaboratively by all school staff.	%40
The high success of the school is important for all staff.	%40
The administration is open to the ideas and suggestions of staff at all levels.	%80
The school's image in the outside world is protected and defended by all staff.	%70
Everyone sees themselves as part of the school.	%50
Achievements are the basis for rewards.	%70

All staff feel responsible for the success of the school.	%90
All staff are proud of the school's success.	%90
Decisions are based on accurate and sufficient information.	%80
Work is results-oriented rather than formalities.	%60
Cooperation is prioritized over competition.	%80
Successes and failures are shared by all staff.	%40
Everyone receives the reward for doing their job well.	%40
Personal knowledge and skills are an important criterion.	%50
The school's level of success is also monitored by parents.	%30
Everyone is ready to take risks to be successful.	%70

Table 2, when examining the item analyses, reveals the school administrators' views on the importance of everyone contributing to success and this success being supported by all personnel, the importance of collaboration and results-oriented work, the school administration's openness to staff ideas and suggestions, the recognition of personal knowledge and skills as a valuable asset, and the shared successes and failures among all personnel. The data obtained show that participation rates are generally high. This indicates that school administrators are acting in accordance with their views on contemporary organizational culture within the organization.

Discussion

According to the statements of school administrators, this research revealed that a contemporary organizational culture is prevalent in schools. Based on this situation, it can be said that positive thoughts and feelings such as cooperation, support, success, and ownership prevail among the staff in the functioning of the schools. Furthermore, it appears that teachers try to avoid conflict with school administration, school administrators frequently conduct inspections to prevent irregularities, and administrators do not attach importance to unnecessary formalities and details in their work.

School administrators are observed to monitor the work of employees within their institutions and support them in their achievements. Furthermore, it has been determined that they plan educational and training activities collaboratively, are open to suggestions and ideas from all levels, and consider achievement as the criterion for rewarding employees.

The research revealed that collaboration, support, ownership, and positive emotions prevailed in the functioning of the schools. Furthermore, it was found that teachers avoided conflict with school administration, and school administrators frequently conducted inspections to prevent irregularities. It appears that school staff see themselves as part of the institution and that everyone takes on the necessary responsibility to achieve the success the school aims for. Furthermore, it has been observed that school administrators are not afraid to take risks in order to achieve institutional goals.

In conclusion, it was determined that a contemporary organizational culture predominates in the functioning of schools, and that school administrators monitor the work of employees, support their achievements, plan educational activities collaboratively, are open to suggestions and ideas from all levels, and base their decisions on sufficient information. In this context, it was observed that school administrators generally do not fear taking risks and work towards achieving success.

To help school administrators create a positive institutional culture, the following suggestions can be made:

- To engage in two-way communication with teachers instead of one-way communication.

- To collaborate with teachers in the decision-making process by adopting a transparent management approach.

- To foster camaraderie among school staff by organizing various activities both inside and outside the school. - To explain the institution's history, values, and achievements to newly appointed teachers.

- To anticipate and prevent potential conflicts among teachers.

- To treat all teachers equally and to adopt a team-oriented management style instead of a self-centered one.

- To create an environment that fosters the development and advancement of teachers at the school.

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