



TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to determine conflict management styles of school administrators with regards to teacher perceptions. With this respect, 300 high school teachers working in Bartın constituted the study sample. The scale consisting of five dimensions and adapted into Turkish by Gumuseli (1994) was used as the data collection instrument. The dimensions of the scale are Integrating Style, Compromising Style, Accommodating Style, Dominating Style and Avoiding Style. The scale consists of a total of 28 items. According to the data of the study, teacher opinions about school administrators' conflict resolution styles are at Sometimes level. Whether or not there are differences between the genders, educational status, year of service and professional duration in the school variables was examined. While there were no significant differences between groups concerning the gender and professional duration variables, there were significant differences for the educational status and years of service variables.

Keywords: conflict management, school principal, teacher

1. Introduction

Workers enter in mutual interactions in educational organizations which are among social organizations. It is crucial to manage the communication and interaction between the workers according to organizational goals so as to achieve administrative

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effectiveness. Conflicts can arise due to the differences in the educational status or mental-social structures of the workers. Administrators have a key responsibility in resolving these probable conflicts and they are obliged to be able to manage these problems that occur within their organizations. This is inevitable for administrative effectiveness.

It is difficult to define the term conflict with only one sentence (Rahim, Magner & Shapiro, 2000). Conflict can be defined as an outcome of the disagreement that takes place between the goals, behaviours and values of an individual and other individuals. Through abstract terms, conflict can be defined as power struggle (Rahim, Magner & Shapiro, 2000), opposition, incompatibility and the cross-purposes among individuals (Dokur & Profeta, 2006). No matter how conflict is defined, there is disagreement, opposition, incompatibility and cross-purposes among individuals in conflicting cases (Rowden, 2000).

The term conflict, which has no direct equivalent in Turkish, is referred to as contradiction, disagreement, incompatibility, dispute and debate (Gumuseli, 1994). Like force and obstruction, conflict is a negative term which destabilizes the order workers create with the organization and forces them to stabilize again (Basaran, 1982). Conflict is; the disagreement between two or more people or groups that occurs due to various reasons. No matter how conflict is defined, disagreement, incompatibility and cross-purposes among individuals is the main components of conflicts (Steyn, & Van Niekerk, 2007; Folger, Pool & Stutman, 2005; Koçel, 2005).

Conflicts are probable experiences that humans, who are social beings, can encounter (Uline, Tschannen-Moran and Perez; 2003: 783; Slabbert, 2004; Daft, 2010). Schools, which are sub-systems of the educational system, are social systems whose inputs and outputs are humans. Conflicts among workers are inevitable in educational organizations whose input and outputs are humans (Durukan, 2004). Collaborative efforts in resolving conflicts within organizations will be effective in attaining organizational goals (Goh, 2002). Conflicts don't only have negative outcomes for organizations. When the literature is considered various researchers have underlines that conflicts have negative outcomes for organizations as well positive outcomes (Genc, 2005; Bayar, 2015). A good administrator will not only resolve conflicts but also take lessons from these conflict experiences to better manage the organization.

Educational institutions are among the organizations in which conflicts occur frequently. Thus, it is crucial for school administrators to accurately analyse conflicts, to successfully manage them and to be aware of the personal characteristics that shape humans and their behaviours. In cases of conflicts, the conflict management style preferences of administrators can differ among administrators and among the conditions (Yildizoglu & Burgaz, 2014). Studies have emphasized that the amount of

time administrators spend in resolving conflicts has doubled since the mid 1970's. It is evident that this issue is becoming more significant. Thus, in order to manage conflicts in accordance with organizational goals, administrators should have necessary knowledge and experience (Kocel, 2005).

Conflict management consists of acquiring necessary skills related to conflict resolution, the self-awareness related to conflict models, effective communication skills and creating a structure for conflict resolutions. Conflict resolution is crucial for a better working environment and healthier workers (Rahim, 1992). In school settings, principals are expected to undertake the key role in resolving conflicts. According to Steyn and Van Niekerk (2007:76), school administrators need to struggle with the following four types of conflicts. These are:

1. Intrapersonal conflict (within an individual)
2. Interpersonal conflict (between individuals)
3. Intergroup conflict (between groups)
4. School-community conflicts (within the community)

Various styles have been suggested for resolving conflicts in studies about conflict management. The most prominent example is the classification of five styles made by Rahim et al. (2002). The five styles of conflict management are:

1. **Integration:** In this style, the individual has high level of concern for both himself and others. This is a win-win style which requires collaboration, openness, knowledge sharing among parties and examining differences together so as to reach a solution that both parties will accept. The integration approach requires active collaboration such as openness and knowledge transfer among the parties (Rahim, Magner & Shapiro, 2000).
2. **Compromising:** It refers to the low concern for the self but the high concern for others. This style, which emphasizes common features so as to downplay differences and to satisfy the interests of the other party, is defined as the compatibility, lack of confrontation, compliance or lose-win style (Rahim, 1992).
3. **Dominating:** It refers to the individual having high concern for the self and low concern for others. In the Dominating approach administrators or individuals avoid other people's desires, expectations and needs so as to protect their own interests and attain their own goals. While administrators or individuals have high concerns for themselves, they have low concerns others. Administrators or individuals use their own power and authorities to solve conflicts and dominate against conflicts (Kocel, 2005).
4. **Avoiding:** It refers to the low concern towards the self and others. This style is related to regression, avoiding responsibility, sidestepping or "no see, hear and talking" the problem (Ozkalp & Kirel, 2005).

5. Accommodating: It refers to the intermediate concern for the self and for others. This style involves common sharing among parties as both parties give up on certain things to come to an acceptable decision and it refers to seeking a middle point. Differences among parties are a subsidiarity issue (Kocel, 2005; Rahim, 1992).

2. Method

This study was design according to the quantitative research method and conducted through the screening model. Screening models are research approaches that aim at describing past or present events as they are and also revealing what the truth is (Karasar, 2012:77). By conducting analyses on the sample selected from the population, screening models help numerically describing the attitudes, tendencies or opinions within the population (Creswell, 2013). Studies conducted through the screening model facilitate collecting information and examining the relationships with the variables (Kaptan, 1998: 62).

Population Sample

High school teachers working in the center of Bartın constituted the study population. The study sample consisted of a total of 300 teachers selected through the simple random sampling method. According to Buyukozturk (2010: 84), simple random sampling is the method in which each unit has the equal chance of being selected in the sample during the sampling process.

Data Collection Instrument

The “*Determining Teacher Perceptions Related to Conflict Management Styles of School Principals Scale*” was used in the study so as to determine participant opinions on conflict management styles. This scale was developed by Rahim (1983) and adapted into Turkish by (Gumuseli, 1994). The scale has the feature to measure five different conflict management styles. In the scale consisting of 28 items, there are 6 items on the Integrating Style, 5 items on the Compromising Style, 5 items on the Dominating Style, 6 items on the Avoiding Style and 6 items on the Accommodating Style. The highest score that can be obtained from the scale is 140 and the lowest is 28. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the overall scale is .90; and the reliability coefficients for each sub-dimension are .90, .87, .89, .91 and .90 respectively. Because the Cronbach Alpha value is >0.70 (Buyukozturk, 2010), the scale was considered reliable.

Data Analysis

In the 5 point Likert type scale, participant opinions were transformed into quantitative data as "Lather less; 1", "Less; 2", "Sometimes; 3", "Mostly; 4" and "Always; 5". The score intervals of participant agreement on the items of the scale are given on the Table 1.

Table 1: Score Intervals of the Level of Agreements

Score Interval	Level of Participation
1.00-1.79	Lather less
1.80-2.59	Less
2.60-3.39	Sometimes
3.40-4.19	Mostly
4.20-5.00	Always

The data were transcribed to the computer and analysed through statistical processes. Once the data collection instruments were collected the data were transcribed to the computer and analysed with statistical software. Descriptive statistics were carried out initially based on the aims of the study. Frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean values were calculated during the analysis process. An Independent Samples T-Test was conducted to determine whether or not there is a significant difference between the gender, duty and educational status variables; a one way variance analysis (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether or not there is a significant difference between the year of service and professional duration.

3. Findings

The demographic features of the participants are given on Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic Features of the Participants

Değişkenler	f	%
Gender	Female	126 42,0
	Male	174 58,0
Year of Service	1-5 Years	61 20,3
	6-10 Years	52 17,3
	11-15 Years	51 17,0
	16-20 Years	45 15,0
	21 Years +	91 30,3
Professional Duration Variable	1-5 Years	149 49,7
	6-10 Years	91 30,3
	11-15 Years	21 7,0
	16-20 Years	16 5,3
Educational Status	21 Years +	23 7,7
	Postgraduate degrees	252 84,0
	Graduate degrees	48 16,0
Total	300	100

It is evident on Table 2 that 42.0% of the participants are female and 58.0% are male; with regards to the year of service variable 20.3% have 1-5 years, 17.3% have 6-10 years, 17.0% have 11-15 years, 15.0% have 16-20 years and 30.3% have 21 years and above seniority. When the professional duration of teachers in the schools they currently work in is considered, it is evident that 49.7% have spent 1-5 years, 30.3% have spent 6-10 years, 7.0% have spent 11-15 years, 5.3% have spent 16-20 years and 7.7% have spent 21 years and more. When the educational statuses of the participants are considered, it is evident that 84.0% of the teachers have a graduate and 16 % have a postgraduate degree.

Table 3: Results of the Descriptive Analysis Regarding Teacher Perceptions on Conflict Management Styles of School Administrators

Scale and Sub-Factors	N	Min	Max	\bar{X}	SS
Integrating Style	300	1,00	5,00	3,21	1,147
Compromising Style	300	1,00	5,00	2,88	1,046
Dominating Style	300	1,00	5,00	2,94	,946
Avoiding Style	300	1,00	5,00	3,03	,867
Accommodating Style	300	1,00	5,00	3,09	,991
Total	300	1,00	5,00	3,04	,757

Table 3 displays the arithmetic means and standard deviation values of school administrators' conflict management styles and the sub-dimensions with regards to teacher opinions. When the arithmetic means are considered, opinions are observed to be at "Sometimes" level. The Integrating Style has the highest average while the Compromising Style has the lowest average with \bar{X} = 2.88 value.

Table 4: Conflict Management Styles According to the Gender Variable - Results of the Independent Samples T-Test

	Gender	n	\bar{X}	SS	sd	t	p
Integrating Style	Female	126	3,25	1,07	298	,46	,65
	Male	174	3,19	1,20			
Compromising Style	Female	126	2,88	,99	298	,02	,98
	Male	174	2,88	1,09			
Dominating Style	Female	126	2,87	,99	298	-1,05	,30
	Male	174	2,99	,92			
Avoiding Style	Female	126	3,01	,80	298	-,47	,64
	Male	174	3,05	,91			
Accommodating Style	Female	126	3,09	,95	298	,07	,94
	Male	174	3,08	1,03			
Total	Female	126	3,03	,72	298	-,17	,86
	Male	174	3,05	,79			

*p < .05

Table 4 displays the t-test which indicates whether or not there is a significant difference between female and male teachers' opinions. According to the table, female teachers have higher averages than male teachers concerning the Integrating Style and the Accommodating Style; and male teachers have higher averages than female teachers considering the Dominating Style, Avoiding Style and the overall scale. For the Compromising Style, female and male teachers obtained the same average with $\bar{M} = 2.88$. When teacher opinions are considered, it is evident that there are no significant differences ($p > .05$).

Table 5: Conflict Management Styles According to the Educational Status Variable -
Results of the Independent Samples T-Test

	Educational Status	n	\bar{X}	SS	sd	t	p
Integrating Style	Postgraduate degrees	252	3,21	1,16	298	-,016	,99
	Graduate degrees	48	3,22	1,09			
Compromising Style	Postgraduate degrees	252	2,92	1,08	298	1,63	,10
	Graduate degrees	48	2,65	,85			
Dominating Style	Postgraduate degrees	252	2,96	,98	298	,73	,46
	Graduate degrees	48	2,85	,76			
Avoiding Style	Postgraduate degrees	252	3,09	,88	298	2,67	,01*
	Graduate degrees	48	2,73	,72			
Accommodating Style	Postgraduate degrees	252	3,09	,99	298	,33	,74
	Graduate degrees	48	3,04	,97			
Total	Postgraduate degrees	252	3,06	,78	298	1,31	,19
	Graduate degrees	48	2,91	,63			

* $p < .05$

The table displays the data indicating whether or not there is a significant difference between the opinions concerning the educational status of teachers. In general, teachers with graduate degrees have more positive opinions than teachers with postgraduate degrees. Teachers receiving post graduate education were observed to have higher averages ($\bar{M}=3.22$) than teachers receiving under-graduate education ($\bar{M}=3.21$) only for the Integrating style. According to the table, there is a significant difference in favour of the participants receiving undergraduate education at the Avoiding Style ($p < .05$).

Table 6: Conflict Management Styles according to the Year of Service Variable -
Results ANOVA Test

	Year of Service	n	\bar{X}	ss	Variance Source	Sum of Squares	sd	Squares Average	F	p	Significant Difference
Integrating Style	1-5 Years	61	3,15	,98	Intergroup Groups within Total	10,607 383,061 393,668	4 295 299	2,652 1,299	2,042	,09	
	6-10 Years	52	3,61	,97							
	11-15 Years	51	3,04	1,28							
	16-20 Years	45	3,18	1,13							
	21 Years and Above	91	3,14	1,25							
Compromising Style	1-5 Years	61	2,87	,93	Intergroup Groups within Total	16,319 310,793 327,112	4 295 299	4,080 1,054	3,872	,00*	
	6-10 Years	52	3,34	,95							
	11-15 Years	51	2,88	1,20							
	16-20 Years	45	2,57	,83							
	21 Years and Above	91	2,77	1,11							
Dominating Style	1-5 Years	61	3,20	,84	Intergroup Groups within Total	42,713 224,958 267,671	4 295 299	10,678 ,763	14,003	,00*	
	6-10 Years	52	3,37	,88							
	11-15 Years	51	2,55	,73							
	16-20 Years	45	2,28	,82							
	21 Years and Above	91	3,07	,99							
Avoiding Style	1-5 Years	61	2,95	,72	Intergroup Groups within Total	20,572 204,355 224,928	4 295 299	5,143 ,693	7,424	,00*	
	6-10 Years	52	3,26	,88							
	11-15 Years	51	2,80	1,22							
	16-20 Years	45	2,60	,61							
	21 Years and Above	91	3,30	,69							
Accommodating Style	1-5 Years	61	3,05	,83	Intergroup Groups within Total	7,755 286,049 293,805	4 295 299	1,939 ,970	2,000	,10	
	6-10 Years	52	3,43	,81							
	11-15 Years	51	3,01	1,21							
	16-20 Years	45	3,02	,92							
	21 Years and Above	91	2,99	1,06							
TOTAL	1-5 Years	61	3,04	,60	Intergroup Groups within Total	12,304 158,880 171,184	4 295 299	3,076 ,539	5,712	,00*	
	6-10 Years	52	3,41	,68							
	11-15 Years	51	2,87	1,01							
	16-20 Years	45	2,75	,63							
	21 Years and Above	91	3,06	,71							

Table 6 displays the ANOVA test result which was conducted to determine whether or not there is a difference between conflict management styles of school administrators based on the year of service variable. The data indicate that there are significant differences for all the dimensions and the scale except the Integrating and Accommodating Styles. Results of the analyses conducted to determine between which groups the difference occurred indicate that teachers with 6-10 years of service have the highest average for the Compromising Style and Avoiding Style; however, the difference at the Dominating Style occurred for teachers with 11-15 years and 21 years and over of service. For the Accommodating Style, teachers with 1-5 years, 6-10 years and 21 years and over service have significant differences from teachers with 11-15 years of service; in addition, there is a significant difference between teachers 11-15 years and teachers with 16-20 years of service.

**Table 7: Conflict Management Styles according to the Professional Duration Variable -
Results ANOVA Test**

	Professional Duration	n	\bar{X}	ss	Variance Source	Sum of Squares	sd	Squares average	F	p
Integrating Style	1-5 Years	149	3,38	1,05						
	6-10 Years	91	3,10	1,14	Intergroup	9,406	4	2,351	1,805	,128
	11-15 Years	21	3,11	1,33	Groups within	384,262	295	1,303		
	16-20 Years	16	2,89	1,59	Total	393,668	299			
	21 Years and Above	23	2,91	1,17						
Compromising Style	1-5 Years	149	2,95	,96						
	6-10 Years	91	2,78	1,11	Intergroup	3,800	4	,950	,867	,484
	11-15 Years	21	3,10	1,15	Groups within	323,311	295	1,096		
	16-20 Years	16	2,60	1,30	Total	327,112	299			
	21 Years and Above	23	2,82	1,09						
Dominating Style	1-5 Years	149	2,97	1,04						
	6-10 Years	91	2,82	,89	Intergroup	4,517	4	1,129	1,266	,283
	11-15 Years	21	2,81	,68	Groups within	263,154	295	,892		
	16-20 Years	16	3,01	,85	Total	267,671	299			
	21 Years and Above	23	3,28	,79						
Avoiding Style	1-5 Years	149	3,09	,74						
	6-10 Years	91	2,87	1,02	Intergroup	5,507	4	1,377	1,851	,119
	11-15 Years	21	3,12	1,06	Groups within	219,421	295	,744		
	16-20 Years	16	3,42	,53	Total	224,928	299			
	21 Years and Above	23	2,94	,91						
Accommodating Style	1-5 Years	149	3,22	,90						
	6-10 Years	91	2,95	1,02	Intergroup	5,986	4	1,497	1,534	,192
	11-15 Years	21	2,90	1,29	Groups within	287,818	295	,976		
	16-20 Years	16	3,07	1,03	Total	293,805	299			
	21 Years and Above	23	2,89	1,06						
TOTAL	1-5 Years	149	3,13	,61						
	6-10 Years	91	2,91	,88	Intergroup	2,941	4	,735	1,289	,274
	11-15 Years	21	3,01	,99	Groups within	168,243	295	,570		
	16-20 Years	16	3,01	,75	Total	171,184	299			
	21 Years and Above	23	2,96	,81						

Table 7 displays the ANOVA test results, which was conducted to determine whether or not there is a difference between conflict management styles of school administrators based on the professional duration variable. According to the analysis results, teacher opinions are at “Sometimes” level for all dimensions and intervals except the Avoiding Style and 16-20 years of service. It is remarkable that the majority of the opinions from the Avoidant Style 16-20 years of service at “Mostly” level ($\alpha=3.42$). Results of the ANOVA test, which was indicated to determine whether or not there are significant differences between groups, indicated that there are no differences.

4. Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

The purpose of this study was to determine conflict management styles of school administrators based on the perceptions of teachers. With this respect, the scale consisting of five dimensions was used as the data collection instrument. 300 high school teachers working in the center of Bartın participated in the study. Participant

opinions were compared according to the gender, educational status, year of service and professional duration in the school variables.

According to teacher opinions, teachers stated that they agreed with the items concerning conflict management styles at sometimes level. When the arithmetic means of the opinions are considered, the Integrating Style obtained the highest average and the Accommodating Style, Avoiding Style, Dominating Style and Compromising Style followed it respectively. Studies conducted by Toytok and Acikgoz (2013), Sendur (2006) and Sahan (2006) suggest that school administrators resort to the Integrating Style the most. This finding is in line with this study. The main logic in the Integrating Style is that both parties meet at a common point without compromising on their interests and needs. With this respect, it is expected to have the highest average.

According to the t-test results conducted based on the gender variable, there are no significant differences among groups. The result of the study conducted by Otrar and Ovun (2007) stating that there are no significant differences for any of the styles concerning the gender variable is similar with the results of this study. When the arithmetic mean values are considered, it is evident that female participants expressed positive opinions more than the male participants for the Integrating and Accommodating Style dimensions. In addition, male participants were observed to express positive opinions more than female participants for the Dominating Style, Avoiding Style and the overall scale. The reason for this is thought to be because females have more tendencies to accommodation and that male's priorities issue on dominating.

When teacher opinions are considered according to the educational degree, there was only a significant difference at the Avoiding Style dimension. This difference is in favor of the teachers receiving undergraduate education. The study conducted by Tunc and Kutanis (2013) indicates that there is a significant difference between teacher perceptions on school principals' conflict management styles concerning the educational status variable for the "compromising" and "accommodating" styles. This result is not similar with the results of the study. However, when the group related to the difference is considered, it is evident in both studies that participants receiving under-graduate education are more positive than the participants receiving post-graduate education. Similarly, although there are no significant differences, when the arithmetic means are considered, participants receiving under-graduate education are observed to have higher averages for all the dimensions and the overall scale except for the Integrating dimension.

Results of the ANOVA tests, which were conducted according to the year of service and professional duration in schools, indicate that there are significant differences in years of service but there are no significant differences for the

professional duration variable. A significant difference can be observed between Integrating Style, Accommodating Style and the Compromising Style in the study conducted by Acikgoz (2009). When the year of service variable is considered, there are significant differences for all the dimensions and the overall scale except for the Integrating Style and Accommodating style. Although there are no significant differences between the dimensions for the professional duration variable, teachers with 1-5 years duration in their schools have the highest averages for the Integrating Style, the Accommodating Style and the overall scale. The reason for this can be because teachers who are new with system consider the events and people with a more positive perspective. This interval is at 11-15 years for the Compromising Style. The highest average for the Dominating Style was observed to be for teachers with 21 years and above professional duration. The reason for this is thought to be because experienced teachers can observe and learn how to dominate even more. The highest average for the Avoiding Style dimension was obtained by teachers who have 16-20 years of seniority. Findings of this study suggest that school administrators of teachers who participated in the study are not at a desired levels concerning conflict resolution. This indicates that school administrators fail to follow specific principles, goals and strategies while resolving conflicts.

Thus, steps should be taken in Turkey to enable school administrators to become more effective in conflict resolution. The primary step can be implementing skills and competency oriented criteria in selecting and appointing school administrators more strictly. Effective principals in conflict resolution and management will have crucial roles in creating effective schools. It is accepted that effective management of conflicts will help resolving problems and decrease the tension between the teacher and students an eventually improve interpersonal relationships.

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