



## EXAMINING THE COMMUNICATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS OF THE YOUTH CAMP PROGRAM SUPERVISORS<sup>i</sup>

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### Abstract:

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to examine the communication and problem solving skills of the program supervisors who responsible for youth camps run by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in terms of several variables.

**Material and Method:** The study group consisted of 103 participants 45 of whom were female and 58 of whom were male and who were in charge of the youth camps run by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 2015-2016 period. The "Communication Skills Evaluation Scale (CSES)" was made use of in determining the communication skills of the people who were in charge of youth camps; and the "Problem Solving Inventory (PSI)" was made use of in determining the problem solving skills.

**The Findings:** It was determined upon the analyses that there were no significant differences between the groups in the communication and problem solving skills of the people responsible for running the program in terms of gender, age, marital status, educational status and in-service training variables ( $p>0.05$ ); however, it was also determined that there were significant differences between the groups in the communication skills according to the time at office variable as the responsible person ( $p=0.048$ ), and in problem solving skills according to the occupational status variable. ( $p=0.042$ ). Upon the analyses that were made to determine the origin of these significant differences, it was determined that the communication skills of the people responsible for the programs who worked for 1-2 years and 5 years and over 5 years were higher; and that the problem solving skills of the students were higher than the public employees.

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**Result:** According to the findings obtained in the scope of the study, it was determined that there was a decrease in the communication skills in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years according to the *time at office variable*; and it was also determined that the problem solving skills of the students were higher than the employees who were working in public institutions. As a conclusion, it was determined that the communication skills of the supervisors who were responsible for the program were high, and the problem solving skills were at the medium level.

**Keywords:** communication, problem solving, youth camp, program responsible

## Introduction

The fact that humans are social creatures living in communities has made it essential for individuals to be in constant interaction with one another, and to rely on communication to address and solve any mutual problems they have or might have in the future (1). Mısırlı defined communication as *“the whole range of interactions that has interconnected humans since the dawn of history (and will continue to do so in the future), and which allows humans to reach agreements compromises as a social group, by seeking balance and harmony with one another.”* (2) Communication can also be defined as *“a dynamic process in which news, information, emotions, thoughts and attitudes are exchanged by and between individuals, groups or at social level through a system of symbols”* (3).

As humans are social creatures, they spend their lives in affiliation with more than one social group. Social groups are defined as *“small or large human communities that consist of individuals that interact with each other, that are psychologically aware of one another’s existence, and perceive themselves as a group or organization”* (4). The youth camps organized by the Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sports represent as an example of such social groups. These youth camps, which are managed by the state, provide youth of different age groups and of different cultural and educational backgrounds the opportunity to spend their free time performing various social, cultural and sports activities, and thus allow these youth to socialize. These youth camps are organized at certain times of the year in different regions Turkey in the form of nature or seaside camps, and all transportation, accommodation and food requirements of those taking part in these camps are covered by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, with no fees being requested from the youngsters. The youth camps are organized as *“Seaside Camps”* for the 12 to 15 age groups, and as *“Nature Camps”* or *“Thematic Camps”* for the 16 to 22 age groups. The youngsters participating in these camps are under the responsibility of the camp supervisor, the program supervisor and the camp leader, who all work at the

camp (5). In these youth camps organized in open areas and natural environments, administration can often become complex and problematic due not only to the camps' organizational structure, but also to the different culture, age and educational background of the participants. Moreover, throughout the camp period, participants engage extensively in activities involving intra-group and inter-group communication (6).

The program supervisors who are in charge of managing these youth camps by ensuring that they functions properly and without problems, and by coordinating the leaders assigned at the camps, are all appointed to the task by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. In this respect, to ensure the proper execution of camp activities in line with their intended purpose, program supervisors need to have impeccable communication skills that will allow them to communicate effectively with the participants as well as the camp leaders. Without proper communication, it is highly possible for the camp participants to experience problems as individuals or groups which, collectively, might engender even greater and more difficult-to-solve problems for the camp in general.

The word *problem* can be used to describe either the complex situations or cases that humans frequently encounter in almost every aspect of daily life, or the challenging and undesirable situations they might experience. Problem-solving, on the other hand, refers to the ability of individuals to attain their goals by solving the complex and difficult-to-solve problems they encounter. Problem-solving requires not only knowledge and experience, but also the use of cognitive skills such as creativity, decision-making, etc. (7) Problem-solving skills, which are an important requisite for leaders with managerial tasks, function based on certain cognitive processes, and are vital for ensuring the conduct of the effective and seamless conduct of activities with a common goal, in accordance with the scope and purpose of the relevant activity (8).

In light of all this information, the aim of this study was to investigate certain variables pertaining to the communication and problem-solving skills of program supervisors assigned in youth camps.

## **Methods**

The study was conducted based on a qualitative study method. In this context, a reliable and valid scale was used for determining the communication and problem-solving skills of the study participants, and the obtained data were analyzed and interpreted using the SPSS package software. The study group consisted of 103 program supervisor, including 45 females and 58 males, who were assigned at the youth camps of the Ministry of Youth and Sports during the 2015-2016 season. The

study data were obtained from supervisors who took part in the Youth Camp Program Supervisors Orientation Meeting organized on March 12-15, 2016, by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The data in question were collected by the researcher, and the study participants were informed about the scales before they were administered and completed.

To determine the communication skills of the youth camp program supervisors, “*The Communication Skills Assessment Scale*” (CSAS) developed by Korkut F. (1966) was used (9; 10; 11), while the program supervisors’ problem-solving skills were determined using the “*The Problem-Solving Inventory*” (12) developed by Heppner and C. H. Petersen (1982), and adapted to Turkish by Şahin N., Şahin N. and Heppner (1993). In addition, the “*Personal Information Form*” developed by the researcher was used to determine the socio-demographical characteristics of the individuals taking part in the study.

To determine whether there was any significant differences in the communication and problem-solving skills of the program supervisors according to their age, gender, profession and the time/duration at office, the t test (the independent groups t test) was used to analyze the independent samples of the CSAS data exhibiting normal distribution, while the PSI data, which did not exhibit normal distribution was analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test. The variation in CSAS data according to the variables of age, occupational status, and duration of assignment as program supervisor was analyzed using the One Way Analysis of Variance (Anova) for independent samples, while the PSI data were analyzed by means of the Kruskal-Wallis H test.

## Results

In this section, the data analyzed within the scope of this study are shown in tables and interpreted accordingly.

**Table 1:** Comparison of the Communication Skills of Program Supervisor according to their Gender

Variable	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	T	P
Gender	Female	45	107.13	7.70	1.23	.219
	Male	58	109.10	8.25		

Results in Table 1 indicate that the communication skills of the program supervisors did not vary significantly according to gender [ $t(103) = 1.23, p > 0.05$ ]. In the other words,

the communication skills of the program supervisors were similar between two genders.

**Table 2:** Comparison of the Problem-Solving Skills of Program Supervisors according to their Gender

Variable	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	U	P
Gender	Female	45	100.18	1.88	1220.500	.574
	Male	58	101.78	2.65		

Results in Table 2 indicate that the problem-solving skills of the program supervisors did not vary significantly according to gender [ $p = 0.574$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ].

**Table 3:** Results of the One Way Analysis of Variance on the Communication Skills of the Program Supervisors according to the Age Groups

Variable	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean of Squares	F	P
Age	21-25	31	108.74	7.95	Inter-Group	11.804	2	5.902	.090	.914
	26-30	50	107.96	8.37	Intra-Groups	6581.128	100	65.811		
	31 and above	22	108.18	7.70	Total	6592.932	102			

There were no significant inter-group differences in the communication skills of the program supervisors with respect to the age variable [ $F(2-100) = 0.090$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ]. In the other words, for the program supervisors, different age groups were not associated with a change in communication skills.

**Table 4:** Results of Kruskal-Wallis H Test concerning the Problem-Solving Skills

Variable	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	Sequence Average	Sd	$\chi^2$	P
Age	21-25	31	97.74	1.31	46.16	2	1.696	.428
	26-30	50	103.02	2.64	54.51			
	31 and above	22	101.36	4.90	54.52			

There were no significant inter-group differences in the problem-solving skills of the program supervisors with respect to the age variable [ $\chi^2(1.696) = 0.428$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ].

**Table 5.** Kruskal-Wallis H Test Results regarding the Problem-Solving Skills of the Program Supervisors with respect to the Occupational Status Variable

Variable	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	Sequence Average	Sd	$\chi^2$	P	Significant Difference
Occupational Status	Student	28	94.25	2.12	40.14				
	Public	63	104.49	2.41	57.24	2	6.355	.042*	Student<Public
	Private	12	99.08	4.05	52.17				

(\*; p<0.05)

Table 5 indicates seen that there was no significant differences between the problem-solving skills of the program supervisors according with respect to the occupational status variables [ $\chi^2$  (6.355) =0.042, p>0.05]. According to Mann-Whitney U test performed to determine the inter-group difference, the difference of 5.24 points between the mean PSI scores of program supervisors who work in public institutions and those who are students (with the mean score of program supervisors from public institutions being the lower mean value) was statistically significant. According to this result, the problem-solving skills of program supervisors who are the students was higher than those of program supervisors from a public institution background.

**Table 6:** Results of the One Way Analysis of Variance on the Communication Skills of the Program Supervisors according to the Time at Office Variable

Variable Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean of Squares	F	P	LSD
Time at Office	1-2 years (A)	30	109.66	8.23	Inter-Group	388.092	2	194.046		
	3-4 years (B)	24	104.75	7.54	Intra-Groups	6204.840	100	62.048	3.127	.048
	5 and above (C)	49	109.08	7.81	Total	6592.932	102			A>B C>B

(\*; p<0.05)

Table 6 shows that there was no significant difference between the communication skills of the program supervisors with respect to the time at office variable [F (2-100) = 3.127, p>0.05]. It was determined that program supervisors who have worked for 1-2 years and for 5 or more years had mean communication skill scores of 4.91 and 4.33, respectively. These average scores were significantly higher than the mean communication skill score for program supervisors who had worked for 3-4 years.

## Discussion and Conclusion

According to the study results, there was no significant difference between the communication and problem-solving skills of the program supervisors with respect to

the gender variable. This result is in agreement with the finding of Dilekmen et al. (2014), Baykara-Pehlivan (2005), and Çiftçi and Taşkaya (2010), who also reported in their studies that communication skills do not vary significantly according to the gender variable. On the other hand, Koç et al. (2015), Gaskar and Özyazıcıoğlu (2014), Aşçı et al. (2015) have obtained results suggesting that women have higher communication skill scores than men. In addition to these studies, Karabacak et al. (2015), Karaca et al. (2013), and Temel and Ayan (2015) have obtained data indicating that the gender variable does not affect problem-solving skills.

Based on the results of the statistical analysis for the age variable, it was determined that there was no significant difference between the communication and problem-solving skills of the program supervisors with respect to this variable. In their studies, Örucü and Kıvrak (2013), Tepeköylü et al. (2009) and Köroğlu (2006) also obtained data suggesting that the age variable has no effect on communication skills. On the other hand, Ulukan and Dalkiliç (2012) obtained data indicating that the age variable has an effect on communication skills, and that a change in the age factor is accompanied by a change in the mean communication skills score. Data from the studies of Güçlü (2003), Karaca et al. (2013) and Berkant and Eren (2013) suggests that the age variable does not affect problem-solving skills. However, Genç and Kalafat (2010) and Alver (2005) have obtained findings indicating that the age variables have an effect on problem-solving skills.

The results of the statistical analysis on the occupational status variable showed that program supervisors who are students had higher problem-solving skills than program supervisors who work at public institutions. In their study, Temel and Ayan (2015) described that the participants had a mean PSI score of  $101.70 \pm 14.89$ , which corresponds to a medium-level problem solving skills. Findings from the studies of Soyer and Bilging (2015) and Yılmaz et al. (2009) were similar to the mean PSI score we determined for program supervisors who are students ( $94.25 \pm 2.12$ ).

An analysis performed with respect to the program supervisors' time at office showed a significant difference between the communication skill levels of the program supervisors. In the other hand, the problem-solving skill of the program supervisors did not vary significantly according to the time at office. In their studies, Kumcağız et al. (2011), Köroğlu (2006) and Şara and Güney, (2015) obtained results indicating an increase in communication skills in parallel to the increase in the time at office (or in the profession). Although the communication skills of the program supervisors in our study were highest at 1-2 years and 5 years or more at office, a decrease was observed at 3-4 years at office. This is possibly due to the initial enthusiasm exhibited by the program supervisors in their first years, and the growing experience they have by the

time they have been at office for 5 or more years, which results in higher communication scores during these periods. In addition, in their study evaluating the views of program supervisors about these youth camps, Temel et al. (2015) notes that the majority of the study participants described these camps as a “*place for gaining experience.*” As these camp environments contribute to the personal skills of the program supervisors, the number of years spent in these camps (i.e. at office) can be considered as a reflection of the experience and knowledge gained by the program supervisors over the years.

In conclusion, the study results demonstrated a decrease in the communication skills of program supervisors working at the Ministry of Youth and Sports during their 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years at office. In addition, it was also determined that program supervisors who are students exhibited higher problem solving skills than program supervisors working at public institutions. In addition, the study results revealed that the program supervisors generally had high level communication skills and moderate level problem-solving skills.

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