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The relationship between the effectiveness of preschools and leadership styles of school managers

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the relationship between the effectiveness of preschools and their managers' leadership styles, according to the opinions of teachers and managers from the preschool year of elementary schools and from independent kindergartens.

The study had a descriptive nature. The study population included teacher and managers working in Istanbul. The sample consisted of 198 teachers and 67 managers chosen with random sampling from the districts of Kadıköy, Ümraniye, Maltepe, Fatih, and Kartal in Istanbul. The "Effective School Survey" was utilized to measure the effectiveness of schools and the "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire-Evaluation Form" to evaluate the leadership styles of managers. The results indicated a positive meaningful relationship ($p < .01$ and $p < .05$) between the subdimensions of the effective school survey and the multifactor leadership styles questionnaire. This finding is indicative of a parallel relationship between the effectiveness of schools and high leadership skills possessed by managers.

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Keywords: Preschool education; manager; leadership; effective school; management.

1. Introduction

Schools are organizations that offer education and instructional services. They have different characteristics than other social organizations. Likewise, school management is different from the management of other organizations. Since the very reason for the existence of schools is students themselves (Binbaşıoğlu, 1983), every interaction and activity must be considered from the viewpoint of students and instruction.

Being the first level of education, preschools are institutions that are rapidly developing and expanding. In the preschool period, it is crucial to provide children with love and affection, meet their needs and protect their health. At least as important as these is to provide a social and physical environment that will support all aspects of development. As a preschool is the first social environment that children see after the family environment, a new relationship pattern emerges in this institution when compared to others, which needs to be direct, open, and simple while at the same time within certain limits (Zembat, 1994). Therefore, preschools must both create the warmth of

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the home environment and establish a unique school climate. The conditions that will provide a healthy physical and mental development must be created in addition to providing education (Zembat, 1992).

Schools are different from other organizations in many important ways. Administrative difficulties are a characteristic feature of schools. A school is effective as long as it accomplishes its goals (Dağlı, 2000). While it is difficult to conceptualize school effectiveness due to the multifaceted and complex structure of schools, it is believed that their most important function is instruction. A school's level of effectiveness is measured in relation to the success level of its students. The educational achievement of students is usually measured through standard achievement tests at schools. These tests aim to measure basic knowledge, skills and attitude. The most important educational feature of effective schools is to equip students with basic skills (Ostroff and Schmitt, 1993; cited in Baştepe, 2002).

Sergiovanni (1995) defined the main characteristics of an effective school as follows (cited in Pehlivan, 1997): Effective schools are schools that are student-centered and offer learning opportunities to improve student learning in a positive climate.

While listing the five characteristics of effective schools, Edmonds (1982) stated that they know their instructional objectives, make systematic assessments, meet student expectations, have a safe climate and principled educators (Beare, Caldwell, Millikan, 1989; cited in Çubukçu and Girmen, 2006).

Among the most important dimensions of school effectiveness are the curriculum, the instructional process, school manager, teachers, school climate and culture, school health, school surroundings, parental involvement, school environment, developing the teaching staff, job satisfaction, physical conditions of the school, supervision, school safety, student development, in-service training, leadership, teacher-student relationships, teacher conduct, assessment of student performance, concord, productivity, class management, discipline, effective communication and participation of teachers in the decision making process (Şişman, 1996).

The characteristics of a manager, who is vital to the effectiveness of a school, are important. A school manager who aspires to develop the school in accordance with its goals has to be a leader so as to ensure effective management. With the emergence of modern management principles, the leadership aspect of the educational manager has gained importance. If a manager aspires to be effective, s/he needs to take action as the leader of the group and persuade the audience (Kaya, 1991). School effectiveness; that is, the ability of schools to accomplish their goals, is dependent to a large extent on the effectiveness of managers who are responsible for implementing the curriculum. Research on effective schools demonstrates that the school manager is a critical factor in effective schools (Balci, 1993).

Along with the managerial skills of managers, their leadership qualities render schools effective and influence the environment. Leadership is a combination of ability and knowledge in bringing a group of people together for a common purpose and galvanizing them into action with a view to realize these purposes (Eren, 2000). According to Drucker, effective leaders do not just make decisions but look at the organization from a broad perspective and make a great impact on employees. Rather than solving or revealing daily problems, leaders try out strategic thoughts and shape the organizational structure and process so as to reach a desired outcome. Leaders strive to bring the group together around a vision (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 1991; cited in Çelik, 2007).

Although many leadership styles exist, this study focuses on transformational leadership and transactional leadership styles. The transformational leader, beyond carrying out daily transactions, has inspirational motivation skills, provides individual support, and is an energetic visionary. This type of leader has the ability to see opportunities in a dynamic society and in rapid change, and is able to start new initiatives in an institution by encouraging his/her subordinates in solving problems (Açıkalın, 2000).

Transformational leadership is currently the most popular style of leadership in administrative sciences, especially in the area of educational management. Particularly in the USA, Canada and the UK, long-term experimental studies in this area are being carried out and their results evaluated (Bottery, 2001). Leithwood (1992) has found out in a study that transformational leadership helps school staff contribute to the school culture, improves teacher development and helps solve problems efficiently in collaboration.

Transformational leadership has four subdimensions. These are idealized effect, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Transactional leadership has three subdimensions. These are respectively contingent reward, management by exception and laissez-faire. Transformational leadership has been found to cause three main effects: "extra effort", "effectiveness", and "satisfaction", according to subordinates' evaluation. These are treated as the outcomes of transformational leadership (Cemaloğlu, 2007).

In a study entitled "Effective School Management" conducted by Şişman (1996), the elementary schools in central Eskişehir were investigated in terms of whether they were effective schools or not and whether they differed

in terms of effectiveness. The results indicated that the most effective dimension in terms of effectiveness of elementary schools is the manager. Similarly, Stolp (1994) referred to school culture and the manager's effect on school culture in his study entitled "Leadership for School Culture". He claimed that all the behaviors of the school manager are modeled by others and they create a new organizational culture. While studies cited in the literature mostly center on elementary education, there are fewer studies conducted in preschool settings. Therefore, the present study aims to analyze the relationships between the effectiveness of schools and the leadership styles of managers, according to the opinions of teachers and managers from independent kindergartens for 0-6 year-old children and the preschool year of elementary schools. With this goal in mind, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Is there a relationship between the dimensions of the effective school survey according to the opinions of teachers and managers?
2. Is there a relationship between the subdimensions of the effective school survey when the opinions of teachers and managers are considered separately?
3. Is there a relationship between the subdimensions of multifactor leadership questionnaire according to the opinions of teachers?
4. Is there a relationship between the multifactor leadership questionnaire and the effective school survey?
5. Is there a difference between the subdimensions of the effective school survey in terms of gender, the school being public or a private, and the school being an independent kindergarten or the preschool year of elementary schools, according to the opinions of teachers and managers?

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

In this study, the descriptive method and the scanning model were used.

2.2. Population-sample

The population of the study was selected from the city of Istanbul. The study sample consisted of 198 teachers and 67 school managers who were chosen with random sampling from the Kadıköy, Ümraniye, Maltepe, Fatih and Kartal districts of Istanbul.

2.3. Implementation process

Data were collected during the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years with the permission of Istanbul Provincial Directorate for National Education. During the implementation process of the study, researchers collected data from the teachers and school managers at times convenient for them by visiting their schools.

2.4. Data collection tools

In this study, the "Effective School Survey" developed by Ayık (2007) was used to measure the effectiveness of schools. The survey includes statements concerning the school manager, teacher, school environment and instructional process, and students and parents. In order to evaluate the leadership styles of school managers, the "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire-Evaluation Form (5x Short)" was used. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Cemaloğlu (2007). In addition, a "Personal Information Form" intended for teachers and managers was developed by the researchers.

2.6. Analysis of Data

The data obtained was computed by SPSS 15.00 for Windows. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moments Correlation and Independent Groups t test were used.

3. Results (Findings)

A total of 198 teachers and 67 managers were included in the study. 187 of the teachers (94.4 %) were female, 11 (5.6 %) were male; 25 of the managers (37.3 %) were female, 42 (62.7 %) were male. Of those who participated in the study, 33 (12.5 %) were school principals, 34 (12.8 %) were assistant principals and 198 (74.7 %) were teachers. Of the schools in the study, 146 (55.1 %) were elementary schools and 119 were (44.9 %) kindergartens.

3.1. Findings about the first research question

Table 1. Results of the Pearson Correlation Analysis conducted to determine the relationships between the scores obtained from the subdimensions of effective school survey

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. School manager	-	.472**	.721**	.567**	.310**
2. Teachers		-	.489**	.334**	.294**
3. School environment			-	.597**	.386**
4. Students				-	.478**
5. Parents					-

N: 265 p<.01**

As can be seen in Table 1, as a result of the Pearson Correlation Analysis conducted to determine the relationships between the scores of the sub dimensions of effective school survey, a statistically positive meaningful relationship was found between the variables ($p<0.01$). In other words, the managers and teachers that participated in the study expressed similar opinions to the subdimensions of Effective School Survey.

3.2. Findings about the second research question

Table 2. Results of the Pearson Correlation Analysis conducted to determine the relationships between the scores obtained from the subdimensions of the Effective School Survey according to the opinions of teachers and managers

Teacher/Manager	1	2	3	4	5
1. School manager (teacher)	-.101	-.202	.006	-.004	-.106
2. Teachers (teacher)	-.227	-.147	.027	-.112	-.175
3. School environment (teacher)	-.185	-.127	.26	-.119	-.159
4. Students (teacher)	-.136	-.212	.005	-.156	-.176
5. Parents (teacher)	-.333**	-.298*	-.198	-.249*	-.174

(Teacher) N: 198

(Manager) N: 67

p<.01**

p<.05*

According to Table 2, as a result of the Pearson Correlation Analysis conducted to determine the relationships between the scores of the sub dimensions of effective school survey, a negative and statistically meaningful relationship was found between the teacher responses to the parents dimension of the survey ($r=-.333$; $p<0.01$) and the manager responses to the teachers dimension ($r=-.298$; $p<0.05$) and students dimension ($r=-.249$; $p<0.05$). In other words, as the scores of teacher opinions about parents increased, the scores of manager opinions about teachers and students decreased. No statistically meaningful relationship was found between the teachers' and managers' responses on other dimensions of the effective school survey.

3.3 Findings about the third research question

Table 3. Results of the Pearson Correlation Analysis conducted to determine the relationships between the scores obtained from the subdimensions of the Multifactor Leadership Styles Questionnaire

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Idealized effect (attributed)	.343**	.413**	.496**	.598**	.655**	.581**	.576**	.193**	.442**	.359**	.300**
2. Idealized effect (behavior)	-	.137	.016	.018	-.002	.266**	.175*	.042	.016	-.097	-.072
3. Inspirational motivation		-	.517**	.505**	.371**	.513**	.536**	.365**	.418**	.448**	.376**
4. Intellectual stimulation			-	.581**	.519**	.505**	.570**	.397**	.517**	.868**	.844**
5. Individualized consideration				-	.605**	.570**	.592**	.348**	.549**	.564**	.455**
6. Contingent					-	.635**	.494**	.298**	.485**	.482**	.441**

acceptance												
7.Management by exception (Active)	-	.540**	.260**	.455**	.420**	.401**						
8.Management by exception (Passive)		-	.395**	.508**	.563**	.456**						
9.Laissez-faire			-	.342**	.389**	.320**						
10.Extra effort				-	.500**	.404**						
11.Effectiveness					-	.892**						
12.Satisfaction						-						

N: 198 p<.01** p<.05*

When the distribution of the relationships between the subdimensions of leadership styles given in Table 3 are analyzed, it can be seen that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between the idealized effect (behavior) dimension and the idealized effect (attributed) ($r=.343$; $p<0.01$) and between the management by exception (active) ($r=.266$; $p<0.01$) and management by exception (passive) ($r=.175$; $p<0.05$) dimensions, but no statistically meaningful relationship between the idealized effect (behavior) and other dimensions. Between other dimensions, statistically meaningful relationships ($p<0.01$) were found. Therefore, according to teacher opinions, managers' effective leadership behaviors increased or decreased parallel to each other in dimensions other than idealized effect (behavior).

3.4. Findings about the fourth research problem

Table 4. Results of the Pearson Correlation Analysis conducted to determine the relationships between the dimensions of the Multifactor Leadership Styles Questionnaire and the total scores of the Effective School Survey

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.Effective school	.288**	-.172*	.343**	.553**	.449**	.388**	.256**	.438**	.325**	.384**	.508**	.429**
2.Idealized effect (attributed)	-	.343**	.413**	.496**	.598**	.655**	.581**	.576**	.193**	.442**	.359**	.300
3.Idealized effect (behavior)		-	.137	.016	.018	-.002	.266**	.175**	.042	.016	-.097	-.072
4.Inspirational motivation			-	.517**	.505**	.371**	.513**	.536**	.365**	.418**	.448**	.376**
5.Intellectual stimulation				-	.581**	.519**	.505**	.570**	.397**	.517**	.868**	.844**
6.Individualized consideration					-	.605**	.570**	.592**	.348**	.549**	.564**	.455**
7.Contingent acceptance						-	.635**	.494**	.298**	.485**	.482**	.441**
8.Management by exception (Active)							-	.540**	.260**	.455**	.420**	.401**
9.Management by exception (Passive)								-	.395**	.508**	.563**	.456**
10.Laissez-faire									-	.342**	.389**	.320**
11.Extra effort										-	.500**	.404**
12.Effectiveness											-	.892**
13.Satisfaction												-

N: 198 p<.01** p<.05*

As can be seen from Table 4, which shows the results of the Pearson Correlation Analysis conducted to determine the relationships between the dimensions of the Multifactor Leadership Styles Questionnaire and the total scores of the Effective School Survey, there is a negative and meaningful relationship ($r=-.172$; $p<0.05$) between the effective school survey total scores and the idealized effect (behavior) dimension of the Multifactor Leadership Styles questionnaire. In other words, according to teacher opinions, as the effective school survey score increases, managers' idealized effect (behavior) score decreases, and vice versa. Statistically meaningful positive relationships among the other dimensions of the effective school survey were found ($p<0.01$).

3.5. Findings about the fifth research question

Table 5. Results of the independent group t test conducted to determine whether the scores obtained from the sub dimensions of the effective school survey differ with respect to gender

	Gender	Descriptive Values				t Test		
		N	x	ss	sh	t	sd	p
School manager	Female	212	7.77	2.04	.14	-2.541	263	.012*
	Male	53	8.33	1.27	.17			
Teacher	Female	212	2.87	5.06	.34	1.879	263	.061
	Male	53	7.56	1.15	.15			
School environment	Female	212	8.25	1.61	.11	1.428	263	.157
	Male	53	7.94	1.34	.18			
Student	Female	212	7.83	1.59	.10	2.192	263	.029*
	Male	53	7.31	1.37	.18			
Parent	Female	212	7.15	1.94	.13	1.716	263	.087
	Male	53	6.64	1.78	.24			

As shown in Table 5, the Independent Groups t Test showed that the difference between the mean scores of school manager ($t=-2.541$; $p<0.05$) and student subdimensions ($t=2.192$; $p<0.05$) was found to be statistically meaningful. The difference was in favor of males in the school manager dimension and in favor of females in the student dimension. Differences in other dimensions in terms of gender were statistically not meaningful.

Table 6. Results of the independent group t test conducted to determine whether the scores obtained from the subdimensions of the Effective School Survey differ with respect to institution

	Institution	Descriptive Values				t Test		
		N	x	ss	sh	t	sd	p
School manager	Elementary	146	7.50	1.94	.16	-3.613	263	.000**
	Kindergarten	119	8.34	1.79	.16			
Teacher	Elementary	146	7.92	1.28	.10	-2.752	263	.006*
	Kindergarten	119	9.46	6.61	.60			
School environment	Elementary	146	7.70	1.58	.13	-5.889	263	.000**
	Kindergarten	119	8.78	1.34	.12			
Student	Elementary	146	7.12	1.47	.12	-7.727	263	.000**
	Kindergarten	119	8.47	1.33	.12			
Parent	Elementary	146	6.89	1.84	.15	-1.482	263	.139
	Kindergarten	119	7.24	2.00	.18			

As seen in Table 6, as a result of the independent group t test conducted to determine whether the scores obtained from the subdimensions of the Effective School Survey differed with respect to the institution, statistically meaningful differences in favor of the kindergartens were found in the school manager ($t=-3.613$; $p<0.01$), teacher ($t=-2.752$; $p<0.05$), school ($t=-5.889$; $p<0.01$), and student ($t=-7.727$; $p<0.01$) subdimensions. The difference in the parent subdimension was statistically not meaningful ($t=-1.482$; $p>0.139$).

Table 7. Results of the independent group t test conducted to determine whether the scores obtained from the subdimensions of the Effective School Survey differ with respect to type of school

		Descriptive Values				t Test		
		N	x	ss	Sh	t	sd	p
School manager	Public	159	7.51	1.91	.15	-3.950	263	.000**
	Private	106	8.44	1.79	.17			
Teacher	Public	159	7.92	1.26	.10	-3.024	263	.003*
	Private	106	9.64	6.98	.67			
School environment	Public	159	7.75	1.53	.12	-5.843	263	.000**
	Private	106	8.83	1.40	.13			
Student	Public	159	7.15	1.48	.11	-8.267	263	.000**
	Private	106	8.60	1.26	.12			
Parent	Public	159	6.88	1.86	.14	-1.746	263	.082
	Private	106	7.30	1.99	.19			

As shown in Table 7, the independent group t test revealed statistically meaningful differences in favor of private schools in the school manager ($t=-3.950$; $p<0.01$), teacher ($t=-3.024$; $p<0.05$), school environment ($t=-5.843$; $p<0.01$), and student ($t=-8.267$; $p<0.01$) subdimensions. The difference in the parent dimension was statistically not meaningful ($t=-1.746$; $p>0.082$).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

As a result of the correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between the dimensions of the Effective School Survey according to teacher and manager opinions, statistically meaningful relationships at the level $p < .01$ were found. The teacher and manager responses to the statements about managers, teachers, school environment, students and parents were seen to be parallel. When the findings about the second research question and the relationship between teacher and manager opinions about the Effective School Survey were analysed, negative relationships were observed between teacher opinions about the parent subdimension and manager opinions about the school manager at $p < .01$, manager opinions about teachers at $p < .05$ and about students at $p < .05$. Thus, it can be concluded that teacher and manager opinions differed on the parent dimension of the Effective School Survey.

When the findings of the third research question were analysed, it was seen that meaningful relationships existed between the subdimensions of the Multifactor Leadership Styles Questionnaire ($p < .01$ and $p < .05$). A positive meaningful relationship was found between the idealized effect (behavior) and the idealized effect (attributed) ($r = .343$; $p < .01$), and between management by exception (active) ($r = .266$; $p < .01$) and management by exception (passive) ($r = .175$; $p < .05$); however, no statistically meaningful relationship was observed between the idealized effect (behavior) and other dimensions.

When the findings about the fourth research question were analysed, a negative relationship was seen at the level $p < .05$ between the idealized effect (behavior) dimension and the total scores of the Effective School Survey and the subdimensions of the Multifactor Leadership Styles Questionnaire. This shows that as the idealized effect (behavior) leadership styles of managers increased, the effectiveness of the school decreased; or as idealized effect (behavior) leadership styles increased, the effectiveness of the school increased. Positive meaningful relationships between the dimensions of the Effective School Survey and the Multifactor Leadership Styles were observed. Similar results were obtained in the study conducted by Cemaloğlu (2007). The study which analysed “The Effect of Leadership Styles of Managers on Organizational Health” showed that school managers’ leadership qualities were important to organizational health, and that schools where managers displayed transformational leadership qualities had better organizational health, more positive rapport between teachers, more efforts of professional development among teachers, more features of a learning organization in the school, more efficient and productive use of resources, fewer external pressures on teachers, and an elevated sense of belonging and morale among them.

As a result of the t test findings with respect to gender, meaningful differences at $p < .05$ were found in favor of males in the student dimension and in favor of females in the school manager dimension. Findings that support this finding in the student dimension were also reached by Ayık (2007). Ayık’s study entitled “The Relationship Between School Culture and Effectiveness in Elementary Schools” found a difference with respect to gender in favor of females in the school manager dimension. This finding does not support our findings in the present study. Differences of $p < .01$ in favor of kindergartens in the school manager, school environment and student dimensions and of $p < .05$ in the teacher dimension were found with respect to the institution. No differences were found in the parent dimension. As a result of the t test conducted on the basis of teachers and managers working for public or private institutions, meaningful differences of $p < .01$ were found in favor of private schools in the school manager, school environment and student dimensions and a difference of $p < .05$ in the teacher dimension. This finding points to the fact that private schools display more of the features of effective schools.

Following from these conclusions, the following recommendations can be made:

- * As there is a parallelism between the effectiveness of school managers and their leadership skills, managers’ leadership qualities should be taken into consideration.
- * Training may be offered for managers to be able to put their leadership skills to more efficient use.
- * All stakeholders (manager, teacher, parent, student etc.) need to be informed about effective schools.
- * The effectiveness of independent kindergartens fared higher than that of the preschool year within elementary schools. The reasons for this difference need to be analysed.

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