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Female School Administrators' Opinions on the Problems They Face¹

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Abstract

The number of female teachers in the Ministry of National Education is higher than the number of male teachers. When looking at the number of men and women in school administration, the situation is exactly the opposite. The aim of this research is to determine the problems faced by female school administrators working in the Ministry of National Education and to determine the views of female school administrators regarding these problems. This research was carried out using the phenomenology research design, one of the qualitative research designs. The participants of this research consist of 10 female school administrators selected according to the criterion sampling technique, one of the purposeful sampling methods. A semi-structured interview form was used to collect data. The researchers interviewed with the participants by phone due to pandemic conditions in 2020-2021 academic year. The obtained data was analyzed with descriptive analysis techniques. When the data obtained was examined, it was found that female school administrators saw school management as a coordinating process and gave importance to cooperation. According to the findings of this research, female school administrators cannot spare enough time for themselves and their families. In addition, it was determined that female school administrators had problems with teachers, parents, and students. Finally, based on the findings obtained, some suggestions were made by the researchers, such as training female school administrators on effective use of time, informing school personnel about gender discrimination, and arranging the working hours of female school administrators.

Keywords: school administration, female school administrator, problem, opinion

Article Type Research article

Recommended Citation: Bayar, A., & Özsalih, O. (2021). Female School Administrators' Opinions on the Problems They Face *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications* (IJONTE), 12 (2).

Introduction

According to the "Working Life of Women Teachers: Findings and Suggestions" report, which was prepared to determine the situation of female teachers at school and to increase their opportunities, 71 percent of female teachers do not want to be administrators. According to the report, female administrators have difficulties in terms of student indiscipline, extracurricular workload, and parental pressure (Gazetevatan, 2021).

The female population constitutes about half of the world's population. Therefore, men and women have equal importance in economic and social life. However, the responsibilities of women and men in economic and social life are not equal. Historically, women's roles in business life have been less than that of men. This situation continues today. This exclusion, which manifests itself in almost every

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented as a paper presentation at the "1st International Congress on Excellence in Education", Turkey, November 20-21, 2021.

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business line in the world, also manifests itself in our country (Çakır, 2008). This distinction between men and women causes problems in some issues such as women's entry into business life and promotion in their work (Çekten, 2004). The traditional, economic, and socio-cultural structure of our country has a great impact on the problems that women experience in business life and their unwillingness to be managers (Besler & Oruç, 2010).

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) announced the number of teachers working in formal education in 2019-2020 as 1,077,307. Female teachers constitute 53 percent of them (MoNE, 2020). When the MoNE 2021 Educational Institutions Administrator Selection Exam guide is examined, it is seen that there is no gender discrimination between the conditions of administration. However, when the data of the school administration has been examined, there is a very different situation in the ratio of women to men. Former Minister of National Education Ziya Selçuk stated that only 5.3 percent of school principals working in the Ministry of National Education are women (Milliyet, 2021).

Although women constitute the majority in the field of education, it is obvious that they are quite behind in the administration stage. This is the case almost everywhere in the world. For example, even though the number of female teachers is higher than the number of male teachers in the United States and European countries, it is seen that the number of female teachers who undertake the task of school administrators is low (Boydak & Akpınar, 2002).

Among the reasons for the low rate of women in school administration in our country are the problems faced by women as well as cultural reasons (Aktaş, 2007). Bakır, Köybaşı, Özyazıcı, and Uğurlu (2017) found the problems faced by female administrators in their research. According to this, they listed the management as being tiring, having many responsibilities, intense administrative work, long working hours, not having enough time for the family, not having enough time to spare for housework, not being able to spare enough time for oneself, decreasing vacation time, and seeing teaching as more suitable for women than administration.

In today's societies, women are expected to fulfill their duties towards their spouses and children. This situation makes the problems faced by women administrators more intractable. According to the research conducted by İnandı, Özkan, Peker, and Atik (2009), female teachers think that they face more family obstacles in terms of making a career than male teachers. In addition, the fact that women cannot fulfill their duties towards their children and home due to the long working hours of the administrators and the high workload makes it difficult for women to perform their duties as administrators (Usluer, 2000).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Under this title, school administration, school administrators and female administrators in education are discussed respectively.

School Administration and Administrator

A school is a private and official institution under the supervision of the state, which develops the individual's abilities in line with the needs and expectations of the society. The school has an important place because of these duties. All private and public educational institutions, from kindergartens to universities, can be included in the concept of school (Urlu, 2002). School administration uses all kinds of resources in educational organizations in the most accurate way by considering the benefit of the society. The application of administration to education is called education administration and its application to school is called school administration (Bursalioğlu, 2010).

It is the duty of the school administrator to plan the educational activities in line with the aims of the school, to provide meaningful feedback to the teachers in the school with their observations during the teaching process, and to manage the educational activities they have planned (Özdemir and Sezgin 2002). The school administrator is the person responsible for providing the necessary human

and material resources for the school to achieve its goals, using them effectively, and implementing the determined policies and decisions (Aydın, 2010; cited in Dağ, 2020).

The responsibilities of school administrators have increased with the changing conditions of the day; it continues to increase day by day (Bozanoğlu, Çetin, and Konan, 2017). Therefore, in every possible condition, the school administrator should be able to respond to the needs of the school and use his/her administrative skills. At this point, the school administrator is very important for the school to reach its mission.

Female Administrators in Education

In the teaching profession, women are more common than men. Based on this majority, it is expected that women will be outnumbered among school administrators. However, male teachers take more roles in school administration than female teachers (Tan, 1996). In fact, the time when women start working as teachers in the Turkish education system and when they start working as administrators in education is equivalent to each other. Firstly, Fatimatüzzehra Hanım was appointed as the administrator of Darülmuallemat in 1881. However, since 1895, it has been determined that there will also be a male principal at the school and a female principal will take charge under him (Akyüz, 2000). This practice continued from the proclamation of the Republic until the 1932-1933 academic year. Later, in the 1932-1933 academic year, Teze Taşkıran started to work as a female principal in the Girls Teacher's School (Bakioğlu, Hacifazlıoğlu, & Özcan, 2002). For the first time in the Turkish education system, a woman took charge as the District Director of National Education in 1968. For the first time, a woman took charge as the Provincial Director of National Education in 1990. In 2009, a woman was appointed as the Minister of National Education for the first time (Aksu, 2019).

According to the statistics for the year 2019-2020, the Ministry of National Education announced the number of teachers working as 1077307. Accordingly, 53 percent of them and approximately 5 percent of school administrators are women (MoNE, 2020). There is no advantage or disadvantage between men and women in the conditions of being appointed as school administrators. Female and male teachers have the right to participate equally in the school administration. Despite this, the fact that the number of female administrators in the education system is so low. It can be accepted as an indication that women have some problems in the administration processes. The relevant study is important in terms of drawing attention to this situation.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

In this study, it is aimed to determine the problems faced by female school administrators working in the Ministry of National Education. Within the scope of this aim, the researchers addressed the following research questions:

1. What does school administration mean for female school administrators?
2. What are the problems faced by female school administrators in family life?
3. What are the problems faced by female school administrators at school?

METHOD

Under this heading, research method, research design, study group, researchers' roles, and data collection and analysis were mentioned.

Research Method

This research was carried out within the framework of qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is the process of expressing social life and human problems by examining it with its own methods (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research is an approach that prioritizes researching and making sense of social phenomena in the environment they belong to, by aiming to build theory (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018).

Research Design

This research was carried out using the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research designs. The phenomenological design focuses on phenomena that are known to exist but for which sufficient information is not available (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2018). With the phenomenological design, it is possible to make an analysis that reveals the subjective views of the people about the phenomena (Özdemir, 2010).

Participants

The study group of this research was determined according to the criterion sampling technique. The critical point in the criterion sample is that the sample with the specified criterion can provide a rich source of information to the researcher about the phenomenon under investigation (Marshall, 1996; cited in Baltacı, 2018). Persons meeting the criteria determined in the criterion sampling technique are included in the sample (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, cited in Kök, Yıldırım & Sökmen, 2019). In this study, it was determined that the school administrators who would form the study group were female. In this research, the study group consists of 10 female school administrators working in the Ministry of National Education. Participants have been coded as Y1, Y2, Y3, ..., and Y 10. Demographic information of the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

Code	Gender	Age	Professional Seniority	Administration Period	Marital Status
Y1	Female	41-50	16-20 year	6-10 year	Married
Y2	Female	31-40	6-10 year	0-5 year	Single
Y3	Female	31-40	6-10 year	0-5 year	Single
Y4	Female	41-50	6-10 year	0-5 year	Married
Y5	Female	31-40	6-10 year	0-5 year	Married
Y6	Female	31-40	6-10 year	0-5 year	Single
Y7	Female	41-50	11-15 year	6-10 year	Married
Y8	Female	31-40	11-15 year	0-5 year	Married
Y9	Female	31-40	6-10 year	0-5 year	Married
Y10	Female	41-50	16-20 year	6-10 year	Married

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the female administrators participating in the research. When the table is examined, it is seen that four of the participants are between the ages of 41-50 and six of them are between the ages of 31-40. When the time spent in the profession is examined, it is seen that two of them have been in the profession for 16-20 years, two of them 11-15 years and six of them 6-10 years. In addition, three of the participants are single and seven of them are married, and the time spent in administration varies between 0-10 years.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers used semi-structured interview technique to collect data. Thanks to the semi-structured interview technique, the researcher can get detailed information about the case he/she has studied from the individual he/she is interviewing. If the researcher detects different topics during the interview, they can ask their questions in a way that they can get more information (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2018).

Before preparing the interview form as a data collection tool, first of all, a literature review was conducted on the subject. Then, experienced people were interviewed. Afterwards, a semi-structured interview form with eight questions was prepared. As a preliminary application, two people who were similar to the study group were interviewed, and the intelligibility of the questions was tested, and necessary changes were made. The interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis by the participants. The place and time of the interview is planned in line with the wishes of the participant. Interviews were recorded with a voice recorder after asking permission from the participants.

In the analysis of the data, the descriptive analysis technique was used. The data obtained with the semi-structured interview form with the descriptive analysis technique gives the opportunity to present to the reader regularly according to the predetermined codes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Descriptive analysis consists of 4 steps. The stages of data analysis are:

1. Based on the research questions, a conceptual framework was created for the analysis of the data. Afterwards, it was determined under which themes the data would be presented to the reader according to the determined framework.
2. The data obtained according to the determined conceptual framework was arranged. Data outside the determined themes was excluded from the study.
3. Data was defined, and direct quotations were used where necessary.
4. Findings were interpreted and made sense by the cause-and-effect relationship (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2018).

Researchers' Roles

Before becoming an academician, the 1st researcher worked as a school administrator and teacher in schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. During this period, the researcher, who was surrounded by very few female school administrators, decided to conduct this research to draw attention to the difficulty of female school administrators.

The second researcher has been working as a Psychological Counselor/Guidance Teacher at the Ministry of National Education for seven years. During his time at the Ministry of National Education, he worked with different school administrators at different levels. He has noticed that women are very few among school administrators. That is why, he decided to do this study.

FINDINGS

The findings were respectively analyzed within the scope of research questions. The first research question is "What does school management mean for female school administrators?". When the data obtained was analyzed, it was seen that female school administrators participating in the research expressed school management as 1. Coordinating, 2. Managing, 3. Leadership, 4. Collaboration, 5. Mediator, and 6. Supervision. The statements of female school administrators about school administration are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Statements of Female School Administrators about School Administration

	Code	f	%	Sample Sentence
1	Coordinating	5	27	"It is necessary to communicate and coordinate with the interlocutors both inside and outside the school. It is to work in a joint plan with other institutions and organizations and to fulfill the wishes of the teachers." (P2)
2	Managing	4	22	"I think school administration is managing teachers. Not even their teachers. At the same time, school administration is to manage both parents and superiors. It is seeing the possible part of every job and acting accordingly." (P5)
3	Leadership	3	17	School management for me means leading every person in the school. In this context, school administration is to have the necessary equipment to produce solutions to problems, to provide team spirit, to raise moral and successful individuals, and to make the school more qualified" (P4).
4	Collaboration	3	17	"It is to maintain order in the functioning of the school. Clearly, school administration is to activate the system for the benefit of the students with a team spirit by providing cooperation in the fulfillment of more work in less time." (P10)
5	Mediator	2	11	"We become a bridge between teachers. This is also true for parents and students. There may be problems from time to time. In this case, the school administrator is to find the middle ground and to compromise between the two parties." (P1)
6	Supervision	1	6	"It is our responsibility to control the functioning of the school, to share

		the work, to make the final checks of the work done. I can describe the school administration as supervising the works." (P3)
Total	18	100

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the participants' perceptions of school management are 27% coordinating, 22% managing, 17% leadership, 17% cooperation, 11% mediator, and 6% supervision.

The second research question is "What are the problems that female school administrators face in family life?". When the data obtained was analyzed, the problems faced by female school administrators in family life were determined as 1. Not being able to spare time for the family, 2. Irregularity, and 3. Not having enough time for oneself. The problems faced by female school administrators in family life are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Problems faced by Female School Administrators in Family Life

Code	f	%	Sample Sentence
Not being able to spare time for the family	5	56	"School responsibilities are in our lives 24/7. Our phones and message groups work no matter what time it is at night. This is stealing the time we will give to the family." (P10)
Irregularity	2	22	"We women in society play many roles. Even the change of time to go home forces many plans to change. The prolongation of work may require changing daily routines and rescheduling many things, especially if you are both a mother and a administrator." (P5)
Not having enough time for oneself	2	22	"The effort to spare time for the family in the rest of the work and meetings wears people out. The day is ending, and you see that there is nothing you have done for yourself." (P1)
Total	9	100	

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that 41% of the participants face the problems of not being able to spare time for their family, 17% of irregularity and 17% of not being able to spare time for themselves.

The third research question is "What are the problems that female school administrators face at school?". When the data obtained is examined, the researchers found that they face the problems because of some reasons. These are 1. Teacher-related problems, 2. Officer, servant-related problems, 3. Female supervisor not wanted, 4. Student-related problems, 5. Heavy workload, and 6. Parent-related problems. The problems faced by female school administrators at school are given in Table 4.

Table 4

Problems Faced by Female School Administrators at School

Code	f	%	Sample Sentence
1 Teacher-related problems	5	33	"They perceive the things that are communicated to be done as if they are being done for me. Sometimes they make me think that the status difference is not maintained because I approach it more moderately." (P8)
2 Officer, servant-	3	20	"I think, as a woman, I have problems with the maids due to being more meticulous about cleaning. The search for more organization

	related problems			and order makes them tired. As such, they do not carry out or delay orders." (P9)
3	Female supervisor not wanted	3	20	"When I just started my job, I encountered a sexist attitude. It may be necessary to struggle with the perception that administration is a man's job. I can see the perception that a man is always wanted to be the addressee in official affairs, whether a woman becomes a administrator." (P1)
4	Student-related problems	2	13	"I think that I am more ineffective as a female administrator on students who have disciplinary problems. Especially adolescent students sometimes ignore the warning because I am a female administrator." (P2)
5	Heavy workload	1	7	"The workload at school combined with other responsibilities becomes too much. Paperwork, meetings, message groups are exhausting." (P10)
6	Parent-related problems	1	7	"Obviously, the parents are mostly women. That's why it's good. Both for them and for us. Female parents are more demanding towards female administrators. But sometimes the male parents come to ask if a woman can be a principal." (P6)
	Total	15	100	

When Table 4 is examined, the problems experienced by female school administrators at school; 33% are teachers-related, 20% are officer, servants- related, 20% are not wanting a female supervisor, 13% are students- related, 7% are heavy workload, and 7% are parents- related.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers have found that female school administrators express school administration as coordinating, managing, leadership, collaboration, mediator, and supervision. When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that school management is expressed in similar ways. For example, Erdoğan (2004) defines an administrator as a person who can effectively manage people who come together to achieve a certain goal in cooperation. Özdemir and Sezgin (2002) stated that it is among the duties of the school administrator to plan and coordinate educational activities.

The researchers have also determined that the problems faced by female school administrators in family life are not being able to spare time for the family, irregularity, and not being able to spare enough time for oneself. When the relevant literature is examined, there are some similar results in different studies. For example, Özel (2019) found that female administrators could not spare enough time for their families due to their long working hours. Aktaş (2007) found that female school administrators could not spare time for themselves and their families, and at the same time neglected their social life. Therefore, female teachers do not want to be administrators because they think that when they become administrators, they will devote less time to themselves and their families (Ayan, 2000).

The researchers found that female administrators face some problems at schools. The reasons of these problems are teacher-related, officer, servant-related, female supervisor not wanted, student-related, heavy workload, and parent-related. When the relevant literature is searched, studies that reach similar results are encountered. For example, Aktaş (2007) determined that female administrators experience problems due to the workload at school. In the same study, it was determined that female administrators also had problems with teachers, parents, and students. According to Özel's (2019) research, female administrators are uncomfortable with parent-student attitudes, and they think that this situation increases their workload. According to the results of Usluer's (2000) research, it was revealed that male teachers and administrators think that women are not suitable for administration. Aksu (2019) found that female school administrators have some problems because of the heavy workload, the male teachers' reluctance to take orders from the female school administrator, and the fact that administration was seen as a job that men could do.

In the context of the discussion above, the researchers came to the conclusion that female school administrators care about working in a coordinated way at school and they aim to lead the staff in the school. The researchers also concluded that for female school administrators, the "controlling" side of management remains in the background. They cannot spare enough time for themselves and their families due to their responsibilities at school. Therefore, the researchers determined that due to the heavy workload at school, female administrators have time problems. In addition to the above, the researchers understood that female school administrators have problems in school administration due to the patriarchal characteristics of our society. Hence, male teachers do not want to take orders from the female administrator.

Based on the findings, the researchers offered that training on effective use of time can be given to female school administrators who think that they cannot spare enough time for themselves and their families. Also, the number of administrators can be increased to reduce the workload in schools. The researchers additionally suggested that additional fees may be paid for out-of-hours work. Furthermore, seminars can be organized, and informative activities can be carried out on the falsehood of gender discrimination. As a final suggestion, flexibility in working hours can be provided to women with children within the framework of positive discrimination.

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