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Primary School Principals' Self-Monitoring Skills

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Abstract: The aim of the present study is to identify primary school principals' self-monitoring skills. The study adopted the general survey model and its population comprised primary school principals serving in the city of Diyarbakir, Turkey, while 292 of these constituted the sample. Self-Monitoring Scale was used as the data collection instrument. In data analysis, descriptive statistics, t-test, homogeneity of variances, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Tukey's test were used. The primary school principals' mean self-monitoring score was found to be 9.72. In addition, primary school principals' self-monitoring skills did not significantly vary in terms of gender and length of service. On the other hand, primary school principals who were class teachers had a higher level of self-monitoring skills than subject teachers; Faculty of Education graduates had a higher level of self-monitoring skills than those of other faculties', teachers serving as principals had a higher level of self-monitoring skills than both principals and assistant principals at a significant level.

Keywords: *primary school, principal, self-monitoring skill*

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Introduction

School principals in Turkey have the responsibility of carrying out the duties given to them through legal regulations. The school principal is authorized by legal regulations, programs and within the limitation of higher authorities' orders to organize, carry out and audit all of the school work and is held responsible for managing, auditing, assessing and developing the school in line with its aims (Sisman & Tasdemir, 2008; Sisman & Turan, 2005). When carrying out this responsibility, the internal and external elements influencing the school management should be taken into consideration.

Principals, teachers, students, non-teaching staff, parents, pressure groups and leaders in the environment, management structure, labor market and central organization are regarded as internal and external elements influencing the school management (Bursalioglu, 1991). It is highly probable that the school principal's management of the school without considering these elements will prove to be an ineffective effort. For these reasons, in schools whose input and main element is basically the human, and which are regarded as social systems in this respect, principals' social interactions are highly important. The web of relationships directing the social interactions at school encompasses various activities and behaviors expected from the principals. There are a lot of expectations with regard to principals' acts and behaviors from both inside and outside the school. Principals may experience high levels of tension in order to meet these expectations. The contexts and people that school principals have to contact and interact with are both numerous and different. Therefore, school principals may have to play various roles in different contexts for various purposes. Lately, some skills and personality traits have gained in importance for performing these roles which center on human relations effectively. One of these is the self-monitoring skill.

Individuals differ in terms of monitoring their expressive behavior and self-presentation. In this sense, monitoring is to observe and control one's expressive behavior and self-presentation. There are two types of monitoring: The first is self-monitoring person, and the second is non-self-monitoring person. The former is particularly sensitive to the expression and self-presentation of others in social situations and uses these cues as guidelines for monitoring and managing his own self-presentation and expressive behavior. The latter has little concern for the appropriateness of his presentation and expression, pays less attention to the expression of others, and monitors and controls his presentation to a lesser

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extent. His presentation and expression appear to be controlled from within by his experience rather than by situational and interpersonal specifications of appropriateness (Snyder, 1974: 536). The goals of self-monitoring may be (a) to communicate one's true emotional state by means of an intensified expressive presentation; (b) to communicate an arbitrary emotional state which need not be congruent with actual emotional experience; (c) to conceal adaptively an inappropriate emotional state and appear unresponsive and unexpressive; (d) to conceal adaptively an inappropriate emotional state and appear to be experiencing an appropriate one; (e) to appear to be experiencing some emotion when one experiences nothing and a non-response is inappropriate (Snyder, 1974: 527).

It is argued that self-monitoring is one of the basic qualities for having better interpersonal relationships (Babaoglan, 2010: 123), creating a positive organizational environment (Kesken & Ayyildiz, 2008: 738) and helping individuals succeed (Dagli, Silman & Caglar, 2008: 42-43). In addition, those who lack self-monitoring skills may experience difficulty in meeting their needs (Kumru Sarica, 2008: 5) and realizing self-expectations (Yildirim & Bozdogan, 2009: 131). In this light, school principals are expected to be equipped with self-monitoring skills in order to be more effective in interpersonal relationships, create a positive environment in their schools, and make their schools successful.

On the basis of this rationale, the aim of the present study is to identify primary school principals' self-monitoring level.

To this end, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Do primary school principals' self-monitoring skills significantly differ in terms of gender?
2. Do primary school principals' self-monitoring skills significantly differ in terms of their branch?
3. Do primary school principals' self-monitoring skills significantly differ in terms of their last completed education institution degree?
4. Do primary school principals' self-monitoring skills significantly differ in terms of title?
5. Do primary school principals' self-monitoring skills significantly differ in terms of length of service?

Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopted the general survey model in order to identify self-monitoring skills. The survey models are research approaches which aim to illustrate a state as it is or as it was in the past. The event, individual or object which forms the basis for the study is defined in its own conditions and as they are (Karasar, 2008).

Population and the Sample

The population of the study comprises primary school principals serving in the city of Diyarbakir, Turkey.

The sample was determined by means of convenience sampling and comprised 292 school principals serving in primary schools. In convenience sampling, the basic aim is to prevent loss of time, money and labor power. Here, the researcher works on the most accessible sample, which will maintain the maximum amount of saving (Buyukozturk, Cakmak, Akgun, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2008).

Data Collection Instruments

As data collection instrument, Self-Monitoring Scale was used. The scale has two components, the first of which is the Personal Information Form to identify principals' demographic features and the second comprises questions related to principals' self-monitoring skills. The scale developed by Synder (1974) comprises 25 items. The scale which was adapted to Turkish by Bacanli (1990) comprises 20 True or False items. If the individual finds an item appropriate for himself/herself, True is selected, if not False is selected. The scale is scored on the basis of an answer key. The key includes 13 true and 7 false statements. In line with the key, each answer is scored as 1 point. The sum of all scores constitutes the individual's self-monitoring score. The minimum score to be obtained is 0 while the maximum score is 20. A high score points to a high level of self-monitoring while a low score points to a low level of self-monitoring.

Analyzing of Data

In the present study, descriptive statistics was used for assessing the independent variables in the first section of the study. In data analysis, t-test was conducted in order to understand whether participants' responses vary in terms of gender, branch and last completed education institution degree. Later, the homogeneity of variances was tested (title Levene=.226, p=.798; length of service Levene=.796, p=.452) and when it was understood that variances were homogeneous, the parametric test One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the post-hoc Tukey's test were used in order to determine differences between the groups. The level of significance was set at .05.

Findings and Interpretation

The findings obtained in the present study, which aims to determine whether primary school principals' self-monitoring skills differ in terms of gender, branch, last completed education institution degree, title, length of service are presented below.

The results of the t-test performed in order to understand whether primary school principals' self-monitoring skills differ in terms of gender are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. T Test Results for Gender Variable of Primary School Principals' Self-Monitoring Skill

	Gender	n	x̄	S	Sd	t	p
SMS	Female	32	9.84	2.86			
	Male	260	9.70	3.27	290	.257	.817

** p <.05*

Table 2. T Test Results for Branch Variable of Primary School Principals' Self-Monitoring Skill

	Branch	n	x̄	S	Sd	t	p
SMS	Class teacher	258	9.96	3.17			
	Subject teachers	34	7.91	3.06	290	3.63	.000 *

** p <.05,*

An analysis of Table 1 reveals that there is no significant difference between primary school principals' self-monitoring skills in terms of the gender variable.

The results of the t-test performed in order to understand whether primary school principals' self-monitoring skills differ in terms of branch are presented in Table 2.

An analysis of Table 2 reveals that there is a significant difference between primary school principals' self-monitoring skills in terms of the branch variable. The group means indicate that primary school teachers have a higher mean (x̄ =9.96) than others.

This difference may have stemmed from the expectation that class teachers' pedagogical competences should be higher than that of subject teachers. Besides, it could be argued that the social behavior course recently incorporated into primary school teaching curricula might have increased class teachers' self-monitoring skills since it aims to help teachers show the appropriate behaviors expected from them in different places and times.

The results of the t-test performed in order to understand whether primary school principals' self-monitoring skills differ in terms of last completed education institution degree are presented in Table 3.

An analysis of Table 3 reveals that there is a significant difference between primary school principals' self-monitoring skills in terms of last completed education institution degree variable. The group means demonstrate that among school principals, faculty of education graduates have a higher level of self-monitoring skills (x̄ = 10.02) than graduates of other faculties (x̄ = 7.98)

The obtained findings are not surprising. Some of the principals have degrees from agricultural engineering, veterinary medicine, business administration science and letters faculties. Graduates of faculty of education are expected to be more successful in terms of understanding and interpreting human relationships than graduates of other faculties. For, such faculties focus on plants, animals, documents, machinery, etc. while preparing the individual for a profession, whereas faculties of education focus on the individual.

Results of the One-Way ANOVA and Tukey's test performed in order to understand whether primary school principals' self-monitoring skills significantly differ in terms of title are presented in Table 4.

An analysis of Table 4 reveals that there is a significant difference between primary school principals in terms of the title variable In order to understand the direction of this difference, Tukey's test was performed and inter-group differences were analyzed. Accordingly, teacher principals have a higher level of self-monitoring skills (x̄ = 10.62) than both principals (x̄ =9.36) and assistant principals (x̄ =8.43).

Table 3. T Test Results for Last Completed Education Institution Variable of Primary School Principals' Self-Monitoring Skill

	Education Institution	n	x̄	S	Sd	t	p
SMS	Faculty of Education	249	10.02	3.14			
	Other Faculties	43	7.98	3.17	290	3.90	.00 *

** p <.05,*

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA and Tukey Test Results for Title Variable of Primary School Principals' Self-Monitoring Skill

	Title	n	x̄	S	F	p	Significance (Tukey)
SMS	(A) Principal	89	9.36	3.02			A-C
	(B) Assistant-Principal	69	8.43	3.18			B-C
	(C) Teacher Principal	134	10.62	3.12			
	Total	292	9.72	3.22	12.11	.000 *	

** p <.05,*

Table 5. One-Way ANOVA and Tukey Test Results for Length of Service Variable of Primary School Principals' Self-Monitoring Skill

	Length of Service	n	$\bar{x}$	S	F	p	Significance (Tukey)
SMS	(A) 1 year	103	9.97	3.00			
	(B) 2-4 years	110	10.03	3.26			
	(C) 5 years and over	79	8.96	3.36			
	Total	292	9.72	3.22	3.036	0.50	

** p <.05*

Teacher principals are defined in Ministry of Education, Education Institution Principals Regulation as school principals serving in primary schools which do not have a principal in the norm positions. These are generally village primary schools which generally have only one teacher. It could be argued that these teachers are young teachers who have just started the profession and therefore pay more attention to self-monitoring.

The results of the One-Way ANOVA and Tukey's test carried out in order to understand whether there is a significant difference between primary school principals in terms of length of service are presented in Table 5.

A glance at Table 5 reveals that there is no significant difference between primary school principals' self-monitoring skills in terms of length of service.

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The present study aimed to determine primary school principals' self-monitoring skills. The maximum score to be taken from the questionnaire ranges between 0 and 20. Primary school principals' mean score was found to be 9.72. This rate indicates that the school principals have an intermediate level of self-monitoring skills.

Primary school principals' self-monitoring skills do not significantly differ in terms of gender. In research studies conducted with different age and profession groups (Bacanli 1990; Bacanli, 1997; Ellis, Adamson, Deszca & Cawsey, 1988; Lafci, 1999; Ozalp Turetgen, 2006; Undal,1996; Yildirim & Bozdogan, 2009), no differences were found between the participants' self-monitoring skills in terms of gender. As can be seen, the findings obtained in the present study are in line with previous findings.

In terms of branch, primary school principals who are class teachers have a significantly higher level of self-monitoring skills ($\bar{x}$ =9.96) than primary school principals ($\bar{x}$ =7.91). Similarly, a difference was observed in terms of last completed education institution degree. As regards this variable, principals who graduated from the faculty of education had a significantly higher level of self-monitoring skills ($\bar{x}$ = 10.02) than graduates of other faculties ($\bar{x}$ = 7.98). However, a study by Yildirim and Bozdogan (2009) failed to find a significant difference between Faculty of Education students' self-monitoring skills and their branches. In another study which aimed to determine the self-monitoring skills of students from different faculties (Bacanli, 1990), no significant difference was found between the self-monitoring skills of students from different faculties. The reason for this difference may stem from the fact that students may not have internalized the roles assumed by their future profession.

In terms of the title variable, teacher principals' self-monitoring skills were found to be at a significantly higher level than that of both principals ($\bar{x}$ =9.36) and assistant principals ($\bar{x}$ =8.43). The fact that teacher principals have a higher level of self-monitoring skills may stem from the fact that they are younger than those who have other titles. The teacher principals serving mostly in villages are younger since they have started the profession very recently. The finding that self-monitoring decreases in accordance with age (Bacanli, 1990; Reifman, Klein & Murphy, 1989; Undal, 1996) is an expected result.

As for the length of service in a certain position, there is no significant difference between primary school principals' self-monitoring skills. In a study by Lafci (1999), a significant difference was not found between length of service and self-monitoring.

In order for school principals to carry out the expectations effectively, they should be leaders at the same time. The criteria for the selection, training and promotion of school principals who are expected to be leaders is topic of intense debate. Here, results of studies on leadership could be taken as reference. A significant portion of these studies are directed towards the determination of the characteristics which make one a good leader.

Recently, there is a revived interest in investigation of leaders' personality traits as elements determining the perception of leadership (Bass, & Bass, 1990; Hogan, Curphy & Hogan, 1994; Hynes, Richardson & Asher, 1979; Judge, Bono, Ilies & Gerhardt, 2002; Judge, Piccolo & Kosalka, 2009; Kickul & Neuman, 2000; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Lewis, 2010; Lord, De Vader, & Alliger, 1986; Lord, Foti & De Vader, 1984; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982; Nahrgang, Morgeson & Ilies, 2009; Nyquist & Spence, 1986; Peterson, Smith, Martorana & Owens, 2003; Silverthorne, 2001; Smith & Foti, 1998; Sorrentino & Field, 1986; Stewart, 2001; Taggar, Hackett & Saha, 1999; Tait, 1996; Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004).

Especially, studies in the field of psychology present new opportunities in terms of determining and explaining different aspects of personality. These studies have presented new data concerning the predictors of personality. These data have paved the way for determining new characteristics that makes one a leader. One of these is self-monitoring, which is also accepted as a personality trait (Bacanli, 1997). Many studies have been conducted in order to determine the relationship between self-monitoring and leadership (Cronshaw & Ellis, 1991; Day, Schleicher, Unckless & Hiller, 2002; Dobbins, Long, Dedbrick & Clemons, 1990; Ellis, 1988; Ellis, Adamson, Deszca & Cawsey, 1988; Ellis & Cronshaw, 1992; Groves, 2002; Kent & Moss, 1990; Kesken & Ayyildiz, 2008; Lord, Brown, Harvey & Hall, 2001; Norris & Zwgingeinhaft, 1999; Ozalp Turetgen, 2006; Zaccaro, Foti & Kenny, 1991; Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor & Mumford, 1991). These studies have shown that self-monitoring is one of the elements which determine the leadership perception. Considering the fact that those who have high levels of self-monitoring skills are perceived to be leaders, it is clear that this may present an advantage in terms of becoming a leader. In this case, the fact that school principals have high levels of self-monitoring skills may facilitate the perception and recognition of these principals as leaders.

On the other hand, a high level of self-monitoring skills which presents an advantage in recognition as a leader may not give a similar result in terms of staying as a leader. For, those with higher levels of self-monitoring skills organize their behaviors on the basis of environmental and situational factors rather than internal emotions, attitudes and beliefs (Ajzen, Timko & White, 1982; Bacanli, 1990; Bacanli, 1997; Dabbs, Evans, Hopper, & Purvis, 1980; McCann & Hancock, l983; Norris & Zwgingeinhaft, 1999; Oztemel, 2000; Snyder ve Kendzierski, 1982; Snyder & Monson, 1975; Snyder & Swann, 1976; Zanna, Olson & Fazio, 1980). This might lead to being questioned in terms of congruence, genuineness and honesty. As a result, high levels of self-monitoring skills may become a risk source in terms of staying as a leader. In this respect, school principals who want to be leaders may demonstrate balanced attitudes and behaviors with regard to their self-monitoring skills.

Considering the positive effects of perception of primary school principals as leaders on realizing the school aims, the findings of the present study may contribute to both the selection and career planning of principals.

Considering the finding that self-monitoring skills can be improved through training (Bacanli, 1990; Koc Telli, 2010; Kutlu, Balci ve Yilmaz, 2004), primary school principals might be encouraged to receive training in order to improve their related skills.

Another suggestion might be that primary school principals may analyze their own characteristics and learn about their strong and weak sides. This result can also improve personal awareness and development.

Self-monitoring skills of principals from different educational institutions can be compared.

Another issue of investigation might be to compare and contrast school principals' rates of realizing the expectations from them on the basis of inspectors', teachers' and students' opinions.

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