

Why Is There a Disequilibrium Between Power and Trust in Educational Settings?

Faruk Levent
Marmara University, Turkey

Nehir Özdemir
Marmara University, Turkey

Tuba Akpolat
Marmara University, Turkey

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between school administrators' power sources and teachers' organizational trust levels according to the teachers' perceptions. The sample of the study, which employed a survey research method, consisted of 401 school teachers, working in both the private and public sectors in Istanbul, Turkey. One data gathering instrument of the study incorporated the "School Administrators' Organizational Power Sources Scale" developed by Zafer (2008) and the other was the "Organizational Trust Scale" first developed by Daboval, Comish, Swindle and Gaster (1994) and adapted to Turkish by Yılmaz (2005). Descriptive statistics and parametric analysis tests were used to determine the relationship between the power and trust dimensions. According to the research findings a moderately positive relationship was found between power sources except coercive and all organizational trust subscales. There is a positively low level of relationship between coercive power and all organizational trust sub-dimensions. There is a positively moderate relationship between sensitivity to employees and communication environment sub-dimensions of organizational trust and legitimate power, as well as a low positive relationship with openness to innovation and trust to administration subscales. Thus, the results revealed that sub-dimensions of organizational power significantly predicted organizational trust scores.

Keywords: trust, education, power, administration, teacher, leadership

Introduction

Today, increasing technological, economic and political developments make organizational change inevitable, including in educational organizations. During this process of change, the ways in which educational leaders use the power sources they have gain importance.

An education system's ability to fulfil its functions effectively at school level depends on the knowledge and abilities of the school administrator first of all. A head-teacher who can provide this success needs to be well trained in behavioral sciences as well as having knowledge about the concepts and processes related to school management. At this point, educational administration is not only an expertise, but also a combination of personal skills, experiences and knowledge (Nathan, 2013). Within this knowledge and skills, the ability of school administrators to influence the teachers and other staff is very important and illustrates their form of power. Ability to influence with power is one of the basic ways to create behavior change in subordinates and this causes productivity to increase because the essence of the power concept consists of the ability to have control over the behavior of others (Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 2002). According to Raven and Kruglansky, the concept of power is a form of influence that controls over the conflict and chaos (cited in Benzel, 1983). In this way, the use of power sources is regarded as a factor to reduce mistrust in the chaotic environment of organizations. In this context, the problematic question of this study is; Is there any significant relationship between the power sources used by administrators and the organizational trust that teachers feel in educational organizations?

Educational organizations, like other organizations, should be able to adapt to the ever-changing and evolving conditions. It should be taken into consideration that the power shared by the organization during the modernization of schools is the winning power and that the sharing of power by the administration will create an environment based on trust and synergy (Taymaz, 2005). The concept of trust is a significant influence that increases the level of productivity of educational organizations and basically this concept is the product of a relationship based on honesty and integrity. According to contemporary approaches, the concept of trust is the most fundamental resource for the coordination of individuals who have common goals (Shrum, Chompalov & Genuth, 2001). In terms of organizational trust, it is seen that the variables such as a leader's capabilities, prestige and philanthropy are the basic preconditions for creating an environment based on trust in organizations. Therefore, it is seen that this trust environment influences employees' skills such as creativity and organizational commitment (Tan, H. & Tan, C., 2000). According to the literature, Daboval, Comish, Swindle and Gaster's (1994) Organizational Trust Scale consists of four sub-dimensions of trust: sensitivity towards the employees, trusting to the principal, openness to innovation, and communication environment (as cited in Yilmaz, 2005, see p. 84).

Organizational trust provides positive outputs for the organization and employees directly and indirectly. In the determination of the trust level, one of the important variables is the organizational power sources used by the administrations. Even though there are limited studies which examine the organizational trust perception and organizational power sources relationship effect on educational organizations (Karadag & Bektas, 2013; Altinkurt & Yilmaz, 2011), there have been different studies related to this subject for different professional groups in different organizations (Bachman, 2001). The research is important for explicating the relationship between these two variables (power and trust) in terms of educational organizations. In fact, it is believed that the relationship between the trust

atmosphere, which affects the productivity level of teachers, and the power sources used by administration has an important contribution to the related literature.

Literature Review

According to Weber, power is defined as “the ability of an individual to achieve their own goals or aims when others are trying to stop them from realising them and having influence on others” (as cited in Ordonez Asenjo, 2014, p. 7).

According to the French and Raven, social power in some systems is defined as the maximum potential ability of social agent to influence others and they classified the power in five different categories as legitimate, reward, coercive, expert and referent power sources (1959, p. 261). Even though information power is added as a sixth power source to this classification later on, in some sources it has still been included in the field of expert power (as cited in Goethals, Sorenso & Burns, 2004, p. 210). ‘Expert’ and “Referent” power sources are related to personal properties of the administrators and expert is based on a person's high levels of skill and knowledge whereas referent is based on a person's perceived attractiveness, worthiness and right to others' respect. The “Legitimate”, “Reward” and “Coercive” dimensions are positional power sources and they are defined as: legitimate power source is based on the formal right to make demands, and to expect others to be compliant and obedient, reward power source results from one person's ability to compensate another for compliance, and coercive power source comes from the belief that a person can punish others for noncompliance (Daft & Marcic, 2014, pp. 489–490).

On the other hand, the concept of trust, that is considered to be influenced by power sources, is defined as an attention to the sensitivities of the other side. According to Zucker, it is viewed as a confidence that cannot be harmed or put at risk by the actions of the other party (as cited in Jones & George, 1998, p. 531). In addition, the feeling of trust, which is seen as the most important social capital of school organizations, will lead to a culture shared through the suitable power used by school administrators and this shared culture will contribute to the creation of trust in the staff (Zalabak, Morreale & Hackman, 2010).

There are sub-dimensions of trust defined in the literature. The most common sub-dimensions of trust are defined by Daboval, Comish, Swindle and Gaster (1994). They have come to the conclusion that there are four different sub-dimensions of trust. These sub-dimensions are (as cited in Yılmaz, 2005, p. 54):

- Sensitivity towards the employees: It refers to administrator’s understanding and respect of staff. For this sub-dimension, the support of the managers raises staff in terms of productivity and feeling trust.
- Trusting to the principal: It refers to staff’s trust of the administrators’ fairness and expertness. The emphasis of the administrator is to be generous in sharing information and to develop a sincere and honest relationship with his staff.
- Openness to innovation: It refers to administrator’s eagerness and effort in creating effective and positive organizational change and development, thus the environment of trust can easily be created.
- Communication environment: It refers to staff’s right to share ideas and feelings for the organization without hesitation and the importance of conveying the information to the employees in a correct and timely manner.

Method

The target population of this study were 4877 primary, middle and high school teachers, working in private and public schools in Eyup/Istanbul and Tuzla/Istanbul during the 2016–2017 academic year. The research sample size can be assessed in an approximate 95 per cent confidence interval for different size of populations and the participant number was determined in accordance with the relating sampling table (Anderson & Olkin, 1994). A total of 4877 teachers should be represented by a sample of 356 participants according to the 95% certainty level. Considering the problems that may be encountered during the completion of questionnaires, 450 questionnaires were distributed of which 401 were returned. The total number of participants according to demographic values is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: The Number of the Questionnaire Respondents

Gender		N	%
	Female	258	54
	Male	183	46
Branch			
	Class	59	15
	Branch	342	85
Seniority			
	0-5 years	170	42
	6-10 years	108	27
	11-15 years	77	19
	16 years and over	46	12
Degree			
	Undergraduate	298	74
	Graduate	103	26
School Type			
	Public	253	63
	Private	143	37
Union Membership			
	Member	167	42
	Non-member	234	58

Of the subjects, 54% of them were female (258 participants) and 46% were Male (183 participants), 15% participant teachers (59) worked in primary schools and 85% participant teachers (342) worked in middle and high schools. As a seniority variable, 42% of them had 0-5 years of experience (108), 27% of them had 6-10 years of experience (108), 19% of them had 11-15 years of experience (77), 12% of them had experience over 16 years (46). Of the subjects, 74% of them had a bachelor degree (298) and 26% of them had a master or PhD degree (103), 63% of them worked in public schools (253) and 37% of them worked in private schools (143), 42% of them had membership in teacher unions (167) and 58% of them did not have membership in teacher unions (234).

One of the data collection instruments used in the research is the “Organizational Power Sources Scale” developed by Zafer (2008) and this scale has five different power sources: expert, referent, reward, legitimate, coercive power. This scale performed well in validity and reliability analysis and as a result of the exploratory factor analysis of the scale, it has been

found that explanation variances of each dimension varied between 53% and 62% whereas Cronbach Alpha coefficients, which were the indicators of reliability, were between .82 and .94.

The other data collection instrument is the Organizational Trust Scale developed by Daboval, Comish, Swindle and Gaster (1994) and adapted to Turkish by Yılmaz (2005) after displaying good validity and reliability and it has four subdimensions: sensitivity towards the employees, trusting to the principal, openness to innovation, communication environment. Total variance explained by the scale is found to be 52%, whereas Cronbach Alpha coefficient is .97.

For this study, data was analyzed by SPSS (23.0 version). In order to determine which statistical techniques should be used to analyze quantitative data, the Shapiro-Wilk H Test was first conducted. As a result of the test, parametric techniques such as Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis were applied during the analysis of data on the normality of research data.

Findings

As a result of the analysis of the data, basic findings were obtained for the problematic situation to be answered. In this context, the mean scores and the standard deviation scores of the teachers' perceptions of sub-dimensions of Trust Scale scores are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Values for Organizational Trust Sub-dimensions

Sub-dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication environment	3.53	1.36
Sensitivity towards the employees	3.29	1.25
Trusting to the principal	3.52	1.47
Openness to innovation	3.38	1.02
Total Trust Score	3.42	1.20

As shown in the Table 2, it is seen that the organizational trust levels were perceived in the form of communication environment ($X = 3.53$), sensitivity towards the employees ($X = 3.29$), trusting to the principal ($X = 3.52$), openness to innovation ($X = 3.38$) and the total trust score ($X=3.42$). Accordingly, teachers perceive the communication environment sub-dimension as the highest of all.

For this study, according to the participant teachers, the mean and the standard deviation values of the power sources used by the administrators are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Power Resources Used by Administrators

Sub-dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Expert Power	3.55	.84
Referent Power	3.43	.94
Reward Power	3.41	.95
Legitimate Power	3.83	.71
Coercive Power	3.53	1.36

According to the perceptions of the teachers, it is seen that the power source used at the highest level is the legitimate power ($X = 3.83$), then expert power ($X = 3.55$), coercive force ($X = 3.53$), referent power (3.43) and the last one is reward power ($X = 3.41$).

According to the teachers' perceptions; the results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis, conducted to determine the direction and dimension of the relationship between the organizational trust attitude's subdimensions and the power sources used by the administrators are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of Correlation between Organizational Power and Organizational Trust

		Sensitivity towards employees	Trust to principal	Openness to innovation	Communication environment	Total Score of trust	Expert power	Referent power	Reward power	Legitimate power	Coercive power
Sensitivity towards employees	r p	1 .000	.838** .000	.399** .000	.870** .000	.952** .000	.390** .000	.389** .000	.388** .000	.321** .000	.254** .000
Trust to principal	r p		1 .000	.306** .000	.924** .000	.954** .000	.315** .000	.287** .000	.289** .000	.217** .000	.086 .087
Openness to innovation	r p			1 .000	.304** .000	.430** .000	.839** .000	.914** .000	.898** .000	.743** .00	.538** .000
Communication environment	r p				1 .000	.957** .000	.341** .000	.307** .000	.307** .000	.285** .000	.157** .002
Total score of trust	r p					1 .000	.425** .000	.412** .000	.411** .000	.340** .000	.216** .00
Expert Power	r p						1 .000	.906** .000	.784** .00	.783** .000	.526** .000
Referent power	r p							1 .000	.804** .000	.763** .000	.495** .000
Reward power	r p								1 .000	.754** .000	.495** .000
Legitimate power	r p									1 .000	.665** .000
Coercive power	r p										1

As shown in Table 4, it is seen that there is a positively moderate relationship between the sensitivity towards employee sub-dimension and the power of expert, referent, reward and legitimate power, while there is a positively low relationship between sensitivity towards the employee's sub-dimension and coercive power. There is a positively moderate relationship

between organizational trust's sub-dimension, trust to principal and expert power and positively low relationship with referent power, reward power, and legitimate power, but no significant relationship with coercive power. Organizational trust's openness to innovation sub-dimension has a positively high level of relationship with expert power, referent power, reward power, legitimate power and coercive power. Organizational trust's communication environment sub-dimension has positively moderate relationship with the expert, referent and reward power sources while it has positively low relationship with legitimate power and coercive power.

When the relationship between organizational trust and power source types is examined separately, it can be said that there is a positively moderate and significant relationship between expert, referent power, reward power and organizational trust total score from the findings; expert power ($r = 0.425$), referent power ($r = 0.412$), reward power ($r = 0.411$), legitimate power ($r = 0.340$) and coercive power ($r = 0.216$). Accordingly, it can be said that the effective use of expert, referent and reward power sources increases the level of trust environment in educational organizations. There is a much lower relationship between legitimate power, coercive power and organizational trust in comparison with the other power sources.

Discussion and Conclusion

Today, organizations that are under the influence of globalization need to envisage organizational change and innovation in order to meet growing expectations and make a difference from their competitors in increasingly competitive environments. For organizations that want to keep up with the 21st century conditions, change can sometimes create pressure and stress due to employees' self-renewal and development efforts. This situation which is inevitable for almost all organizations is also valid for educational organizations. Organizations' and schools' complex structures, the problems created by the inability to share corporate resources, differences in worldviews and judgments of values, sense of self or power battles originating from work position, communication problems between employees and their goal differences can create a chaotic and insecure atmosphere in organizations. It is important to work in a peaceful and safe environment between the teachers and the administrators at the point where educational organizations fulfill their goals. Creating this environment of trust is one of the main tasks of the administrators and this is possible with the correct and effective use of the power sources of the ones at the management level of schools.

In the light of these thoughts, the aim of this study was to clarify if there is any significant relationship between the power sources used by administrators and the organizational trust that teachers feel in educational organizations. At this point, it will be a contribution to the related literature area whether the power sources used by school administrators in educational organizations affect the atmosphere of trust affecting teachers and if so, it is also necessary to know the level of this effect. It is also useful to see which power sources influence the trust environment in educational organizations.

According to Kratzer's (1997) research there is a positive relationship between open communication and organizational trust in educational organizations. Also, it has been found that creating a trust environment in schools depends on the teachers' ability to establish clear relationships with each other. As a result of this trust environment, it has been observed that teachers can share their professional secrets with each other, establish their strategies and

fulfill their tasks successfully and can share materials and plans with each other (Kratzer, 1997, p. 26). In a study they conducted together, Jones and George aimed to identify factors that contributed to organizational trust in educational organizations and found that these were the factors of employee qualifications, environment, organizational structure, organizational climate and interpersonal relationships (Jones & George, 1998, pp. 542–543). When the level of organizational trust is examined in this study, it is seen that the average scores of the communication environment are the highest among organizational trusts sub-dimensions score. As a result of this research and on the basis of the study of the literature, it is seen that inter-teacher communication is an important element in providing an environment of trust at schools.

In a study conducted by Sheehan, teachers' feelings of trust toward the school administrator contribute their improving positive attitudes toward the school and their involvement in school management. Also, as a result of the high organizational trust in educational organizations, the teachers' level of risk and initiative taking increases (Sheehan, 1995, pp. 136–137). In this study, feeling trust towards the principal was encountered as an element that increases organizational trust level and it is seen that trust to principal sub-dimension is the most perceived one after the communication environment sub-dimension.

This study, which was conducted in order to determine the relationship between school administrators' power sources and organizational trust according to teacher perceptions in educational organizations, shows that the bureaucratic, decentralized and vertical hierarchical structure of the National Ministry of Education in Turkey has the legitimate power source as the most used by school administrators. School administrators who are responsible for implementing the laws and regulations coming from the Ministry have to develop a law-based management approach to ensure the general operation of schools. Since political interventions are frequently carried out in Turkey through legislation and regulations, it is possible for law enforcement officials to use legitimate power as a way of ensuring that employees adapt to these frequently changing educational policies. Other power sources used by school administrators in this study are respectively expertise, coercive power, referent power and the lowest one is reward power. When the related literature is examined, Altinkurt and his colleagues (2014) conducted empirical studies on power sources used by school administrators in relation to power preferences of school administrators show that according to the teachers' perceptions, school administrators used the legitimate power most of all (Altinkurt, Yılmaz, Erol & Salah, 2014, p. 51). Similarly, Kocabaş (2016), in his master's thesis study, examined the views of teachers about the power sources used by the school administrators. Participant teachers stated that school administrators first received their power source from laws and regulations (Kocabaş, 2016, p. 121). In a study of school administrators' power sources, conducted in Washington State, it has been determined that the most used power sources are referent power and expert power (Benzel, 1983, p. 101).

In another research study, according to Lyons and Murph, when school administrators' experience in the same institution increases, it has become clear that the school administrators use the authority powers (especially the legitimate power), which are more organizationally sourced ones. It has been argued by the researcher that administrators have lost their teaching and learning activity skills as they gain managerial experience and thus have lost the ability to use the expert and referent power sources, which are the ideal power sources for their organizations to achieve their goals (as cited in Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, pp. 574–575). However, the use of personality powers such as expert and referent plays a more effective role for successful management of schools in the related literature (Benzel,

1983, pp. 7–8). Moreover, as mentioned before, legal regulations in Turkey cause school administrators to use legitimate power more effectively than the usage of referent and expert power.

Based on the results of this study, there is a moderate and positive relationship between organizational trust and expertise, referent, rewarding and legitimate power; there is a low positive relationship between organizational trust and coercive force. Also, a moderate positive relationship between school administrators' power sources and organizational trust, causes the concepts of power and trust to be considered as concepts has similar effects on educational organizations. Similarly, other investigations have shown that organizational power is a concept that greatly affects organizational trust (Bachman, 2001; Altinkurt & Yilmaz, 2011; Karadag & Bektas, 2013).

Considering the effects of organizational trust on the organizational outcomes, the explanatory effect of power sources used by the school administrators should be taken into consideration in a broad sense, that's why it may be useful to carry out more studies in this area in educational organizations.

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Corresponding author: Nehir Özdemir
Contact email: nehirozdemir@marun.edu.tr