Unethical Behaviors of School Principals According to Teachers' Views: Causes and Recommendations for Prevention

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal school principals' unethical behaviours based on teachers' perceptions within schools, to reveal the causes for these behaviours and recommendations to prevent them. An interpretive qualitative approach was applied. Data were gathered via face-to-face interviews conducted with 17 public school teachers in Kocaeli Province of Turkey. The data was examined through content analysis technique. The participants listed the unethical behaviours of school principals in seven different themes as discrimination, favouritism, violation of the rules of courtesy, misconduct, mobbing and pressure, neglect of duty, and other behaviours. The causes of unethical behaviours of school principals were stated as the factors related to administrative qualifications, personal factors, institutional factors, the factors related to teachers, and environmental factors. To prevent unethical behaviours of school principals, the participants suggested some training activities as post-graduate education in educational administration and psychological guidance to school principals. They also suggested some activities to increase the professional development levels and human relations competences of school principals. It was also recommended to make some legal regulations regarding the appointment, assignment issues, reward, rotation, and supervision of administrators. In addition to these suggestions, it was recommended to organize social activities for preventing unethical behaviours of school principals.Click or tap here to enter text.

Keywords:
Ethics; unethical behaviour; school principal; administrative ethics

1. Introduction

School principals have great responsibilities in establishing the values of educational organizations. On the one hand, they should guide all students and teachers while achieving the aims of the school. On the other hand, they should be a role model in reflecting the values of the school. Thus, school principals should define a vision together with teachers that is understandable by everyone and prioritizing the aims of education. For this purpose, they should cooperate with teachers, observe them, and give them feedback, and show an encouraging and encompassing approach within the school (Hoy, 1990; Leithwood et al., 2008, 2020; Özdemir & Sezgin, 2002). While performing these duties, school principals must comply with ethical principles in their relations with students and teachers, and in their professional duties. By demonstrating ethical leader behaviours, leaders also increase the managerial effectiveness (Yukl et al., 2013).

Education process without ethical values is insufficient. The ultimate goal to be achieved in education is not only to convey information, but also to establish an awareness of ethical behaviour in students (Karataş et al.,

2019). According to Socrates, education is a learning activity based on ethics (Pieper, 2012). Ethics examines the contents and ground of things related to morality. The ethics is a philosophical discipline that adopts the expressions of "what is good" and "what should we do" as a duty (Akarsu, 1975). This discipline has been an important component of social science studies, since it is interested in the principles of how individuals should and should not behave (Gökçe & Örselli, 2011).

The eligibility of actions to ethical criteria is related with social, cultural, and religious norms. Fairness, pragmatism, human rights, and individuals' own rules are effective in the establishment of ethical actions (Gözütok, 1999). Professional ethics can guide employees about what these principles and rules are (Karataş et al., 2019).

Professional ethics is a sub-discipline of ethics that is related to a specific profession (Vanaki & Memarian, 2009). If a job contains ethical principles and values, then it can be called as a profession. The professions may inherently contain strong ethical components such as ethical rules and understandings, which are sometimes implicitly accepted by professionals, can also be clearly defined as professional skills and knowledge (Koul, 2012). The compilation of these ethical elements in any profession is brought together under the title of "ethical codes". It is expected that everyone who works in that profession will adhere to professional ethical codes. Otherwise, professional union may bring to minds the ethical codes. In addition to this, some ethical codes may be like a guide that consist of professional principles and rules rather than being a sanction tool (Aydın, 2017).

The enactment of professional ethics rules contributes to the functioning of the bureaucracy. Across developed countries, the criteria that public personnel are obliged to comply with in matters such as the use of resources belonging to the state and accepting gifts have been established in detail. In Turkey, there are also some principles such as impartiality, accountability, and honesty that public personnel must abide by (Yüksel, 2006). According to the relevant legislation (Official Gazette, 2005), that are required to comply that the personnel in the public sector are required to comply, ethical behaviour principles can be listed as; "being conscious of serving the public, complying with service standards, being committed to purpose and mission, being honest and impartial, having respect and trust, acting with courtesy and respect, informing the superiors, avoiding a conflict of interest, not to use duties and authorities for profit, complying with the prohibition of receiving gifts and providing benefits, complying with the law in the use of public goods and resources, avoiding extravagance, not making binding and false statements, being transparent and having participatory attitude, accountability of administrators, not favouring former public officials, declaring of wealth".

When the above-mentioned principles are embedded in organizational practices and culture, it can be easier to provide an atmosphere of peace in organizational relations. Additionally, organizational members' willingness to cooperation may positively affect ethical climate within organization. Positive perceptions about organization's ethical climate decreases the frequency of members' unethical behaviours (Birtch & Chiang, 2014). Hence, some of the responsibilities of the administration are to regulate the communication between superior and subordinate, to make reminders about social values by meeting ethical requirements and to contribute creating behaviours in this direction (Saylı & Kızıldağ, 2007). Thanks to ethical principles and positive ethical climate; corruption, favouritism, violence, and many other unethical behaviours can be prevented in organizations. The ethical rules and principles aim to motivate the organizational members towards the realization of the desired correct behaviour and contribute both to personal and organizational success (Brooks & Dunn, 2020; Doğan & Karataş, 2012).

There are some acts defined as unethical behaviours within organizations. This type of behaviour violates commonly accepted moral or social norms, and also deviates from these norms (Kilduff et al., 2016; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). These behaviours can be listed as organizational deviant behaviours, exploitation, flattery, mobbing, discrimination, favouritism, violence, insult, sexual harassment, selfishness, gossip, bigotry, corruption, bribery, neglect of duty, violation of the rules of courtesy (Aktan, 2021; Aydın, 2013, 2017; Baykal, 2014; Cingi, 1994; Çelenk, 2009; Çoban, 1999; Fidan & Koç, 2020; Gül, 2006; Okuyucu, 2009; Özerkmen & Gölbaşı, 2010; Sam, 2021). Although there is a legislation that public personnel are obliged to comply with, the above-mentioned unethical behaviours may occur while fulfilling organizational duties. The existence of unethical behaviours is not welcomed by the society and damages the trust in the organization (Yüksel, 2006).

In addition to this, these kinds of behaviours affect the organizational functioning negatively (Önen & Yıldırım, 2014).

By revealing the causes of unethical behaviours, it is possible to prevent unethical behaviours in organizations, to determine the behaviours that will harm the organization and to take the necessary measures. Hence, the study aims to investigate the opinions of public-school teachers with regards to unethical behaviours of school principals.

1.1.Theoretical Framework

In this part, it is aimed to highlight the theoretical foundations of the phenomenon of unethical behaviours by briefly exploring ethical leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Kalshoven et al., 2011; Yukl et al., 2013) and Oplatka's (2016) irresponsible leadership theories. Although ethical and unethical leadership are separate concepts rather than the polar opposite concepts of each other (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Sam, 2021), ethical leadership and irresponsible leadership were briefly identified to reveal what do ethical and unethical leaders do based on the literature. Also, in the further captions what an unethical leader does was presented based on the findings of the current study. Hence, reader(s) may have an opportunity to reconsider about the main components and differences between both of the concepts.

Brown and Treviño (2006) assert that an ethical leader is both a moral person and a moral administrator. A moral person is honest, trustworthy, and fair in the eyes of others, and behaves ethically in both the private and professional life (Kalshoven et al., 2011; Yukl et al., 2013). A moral administrator defines ethical values with the followers and is a visible role model of these values. The ethical leaders show these behaviours by making fair decisions and not exhibiting favouritism behaviour (Brown & Treviño, 2006; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Kalshoven et al. (2011) also highlight that ethical leaders are fair individuals who share their power with the followers and clarify the organizational roles including responsibilities, expectations, and performance goals. In addition to these conceptualizations, Yukl et al. (2013) define the concept more broadly by listing the components of ethical leadership as honesty and integrity, fairness, communication of ethical values, consistency of behaviour with espoused values, ethical guidance, and altruism. To recap, an ethical leader is a moral person and a moral administrator who behaves in a fair manner, has ethical values, and displays these values in both private and organizational life.

There are irresponsible leaders in the other side of the medallion. Irresponsible leadership has five main components. Of those components, first two focus on a person's perspective on education, others focus more on an individual level. Components related to educational perspectives are a narrow view of education and a business-like view of the student. Other components are a narcissist and ego-centrist view, self-centred decision making, and emotional unawareness and poor emotion regulation (Oplatka, 2016).

Irresponsible leaders in schools behave like the boss of a market-oriented organization rather than an educational leader. They approach to teachers as service providers, and to students as clients of those market-oriented organization. Due to their narcissist and ego-centric views, they do not want to hear critics from members of the school community and ignore the needs and interests of the community. They use their position mainly to get more personal power. Irresponsible school leaders also make decisions mainly based on their own preferences without considering the views of students and teachers. Their inabilities for regulating emotions may lead to experience undesirable emotions of teachers, students, or other stakeholders (Oplatka, 2016).

As mentioned above, organizational members may exhibit unethical behaviours due to several factors such as their characters, moral philosophies and idealisms, organizational environment (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), and lack of organizational trust (Colquitt et al., 2007). In other words, personal and organizational factors play a role in the occurrence of unethical behaviours. Ethical problems arising from individuals can also be the cause of ethical problems at the organizational level. Since, although ethical rules are the rules created within the organization, these rules gain form in line with the ethical values and attitudes of individuals when they are put into practice (Okuyucu, 2009). Individuals' own ethical values influence their way of understanding, and this is determinant in decisions and practices within the organization they are in. When the ethical understandings of the organization and its members are compatible with each other, the organization becomes a more harmonious place (Saylı & Kızıldağ, 2007).

The increase in unethical behaviours within organizations lead to serious consequences for any type of organizations (Wang & Yang, 2016). For instance, one of the reasons for the unfavourableness in schools, which is one of the important institutions of social systems, is the increase in unethical behaviours along with the continuous loss of ethical values. The increase in unethical behaviours disrupts the functioning of the school, causes organizational unhappiness, and most importantly brings degeneracy (Recepoğlu, 2020). Thus, it can be asserted that while professional ethics has a positive effect on the school climate, the prevalence of unethical behaviours also negatively affects the school climate. Degeneracy caused by unethical behaviours may cause teachers, other school personnel, students, and parents, especially school principals, to encounter various problems, and these problems may cause the lack of successfulness and effectiveness of educational organizations.

It has been observed that there are many studies on ethics in the field of educational administration. It is understood that most of these studies are about ethical behaviours, while there are very few studies about unethical behaviours. Notably, the limited research on unethical behaviours primarily focuses on the perspectives of teachers, pre-service teachers, and students (e.g., Yılmaz & Altınkurt, 2009). However, a noteworthy gap exists concerning investigations into the unethical behaviours exhibited by school principals (Can & Can, 2019; Çetin & Demirkasımoğlu, 2015; Yalçın, 2017). Consequently, this study assumes paramount significance in several dimensions. It is a pivotal endeavor as it delves into the realm of school principals' unethical behaviours, and the reasons of these behaviours based on teachers' opinions by using an interpretive qualitative approach. Hence, the current study aims to examine school principals' unethical behaviours, the causes for these behaviours and recommendations to prevent them, and three research questions were formed:

- Which unethical behaviours do school principals exhibit?
- Why do school principals act with unethical behaviours?
- How can unethical behaviours of school principals be prevented?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The present research employs an interpretive qualitative approach. The current study aims to examine the types and causes of school principals' unethical behaviours, and to reveal recommendations to prevent them within an interpretive qualitative approach. One of the most dominant characteristics of qualitative research lies in its emphasis on exploring events from the viewpoints, values, and perceptions of the participants involved. During the data analysis, it is important to focus on the participants' own expressions and the concepts they use, to reveal what they mean and what they mean to the participants (Ekiz, 2020). The selection of the qualitative methodology was deemed most fitting for this research, as it aligns with the interpretive paradigm. Within this paradigm, the fundamental objective of the study was to cultivate profound understanding and nuanced insights derived from the participants' lived experiences.

2.2. Participants

The participants were selected by using maximum variation sampling method. Thus, it was aimed to reveal whether there are similar and different aspects in diverse situations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). While selecting the participants, schools from different educational levels and school districts from different socio-economic status were chosen. Also, teachers from different branches, gender, age, and teaching experience were selected to ensure maximum diversity. Profile of participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Profile of Participants*

Teacher (T)	Gender	Age	Teaching branch	Teaching experience (years)	School level	SES of school district
T1	Female	30	Religious culture and moral knowledge	9	High school	High
T2	Male	38	Computer science	15	High school	High
T3	Female	46	Music	23	High school	High
T4	Female	43	Turkish	23	High school	High
T5	Male	60	Mathematics	38	High school	High
T6	Female	41	History	13	Vocational high school	Low
T7	Female	33	German	7	High school	High
T8	Male	38	Mathematics	13	Middle school	Low
T9	Male	31	Science	6	Middle school	High
T10	Female	39	Physics	17	High school	High
T11	Male	42	Classroom teacher	21	Primary school	High
T12	Female	30	Psychological counsellor	7	Primary school	High
T13	Male	41	English	18	Primary school	High
T14	Male	44	Visual arts	21	High school	High
T15	Female	30	Turkish	8	Middle school	High
T16	Female	37	English	15	Primary school	Low
T17	Male	30	Turkish	8	Middle school	High

Of the participants from 13 different teaching branches, nine were female and eight were male. The youngest participant was 30 years old and the oldest was 60, whilst the lowest amount of teaching experience was 6 years and the highest was 38 years.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Teachers' views about unethical behaviours of school principals were gathered via a semi-structured interview form. First, a draft form was composed based on the related literature. Then, a pilot interview was conducted with a teacher, the interview lasted 20 minutes. Based on the pilot interview, researchers decided that there is no need to make any changes to the form.

During the interviews, follow up questions were also asked. Face-to-face interviews lasted an average of 25 minutes and were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants to prevent potential data loss.

The data were first subjected to content analysis. Then, thematic analysis was conducted. The purpose of content analysis is to explain how a group or event is represented through text (Bell, 2001). Thematic analysis was utilized to simplify the extensive amount of transcribed data. While presenting the data, the views of the participants, which were similar to each other, were categorized under the relevant codes and sub-themes, and direct quotations were given in order to aid interpretation of findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). While presenting the quotations, a label was assigned to each participant (e.g., T1).

In order to provide the reliability of the data, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, then the data were subjected to content analysis by two researchers for gaining researcher triangulation. Furthermore, the findings were discussed in line with the results of similar research to reveal dependability. The profile of participants was also given in detail for increasing transferability of findings to other contexts and circumstances. In addition to these, the methodological phases of the research were defined clearly and in detail, and what was done at different phases of the study was explained in detail for gaining confirmability (Klenke, 2016; Merriam, 2013; Sim et al., 2018).

2.4. Ethical

In this study, all rules were complied with within the scope of the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive". In addition, for this study, Kocaeli University Social Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee committee approval was obtained (Document Number: 2021/04).

3. Findings

In this section, it is aimed to present and interpret the findings based on the research questions formed. In other words, unethical behaviours of school principals, the causes of these behaviours, and recommendations to prevent these were listed based on the views of the participants.

3.1. Unethical Behaviours of School Principals

The participants' views regarding the unethical behaviours of school principals were listed in seven sub-themes: "discrimination", "favouritism", "violation of the rules of courtesy", "misconduct", "mobbing and pressure", "neglect of duty", and "other behaviours" (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Unethical Behaviours of School Principals*

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes
Unethical Behaviours	Discrimination	Distribution of duties
		Professional union affiliation
		Gender discrimination
		Based on religious belief
		Based on teaching branch
	Favouritism	Nepotism
		Cronyism
	Violation of the rules of courtesy	Offending the teacher
		Entering the teacher's class without notice
		Using vulgar language
		Ignoring teachers' ideas
		Not respecting the legal rights
	Misconduct	Using authority for punishment
		Pretending to attend the class formally, even though the principal is not conducting a class in practice
		Using the school's income for personal gain
	Mobbing and pressure (through)	Weekly course schedules and duties
		Appearance
		Teaching seniority
		Political views and professional union affinity
		Measurement and evaluation
	Neglect of duty	Dealing with personal affairs during working hours
		Transferring professional responsibility to others
	Other behaviours	Inconsistent, contradictory words and behaviours of the principal
		Getting information about the teacher from others, gossiping

Participants stated that school principals discriminate teachers based on distribution of duties, professional union affiliation, gender, religious belief, and teaching branch. Some of the participants' views which underline discrimination of school principals included:

> *Duties that seem important are given to particular teachers. For example, some teachers seem worthy of 8th graders. Another teacher is assigned to the 5th grades. A teacher who is deemed worthy of the 8th grade becomes a good teacher in the eyes of the principal2. (T8)*

> *Tasks are always given to those who do well, those who do not do the tasks assigned to them well are rewarded. When I say "I am already in charge of many other things", the principal says "Okay, this the last task, they can not do, they are not able to do this". … We hear that the principals give more privilege to their own professional union members in some schools. (T15)*

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2 Authors' note: In Turkey, 5th grade is the first year of middle school, whilst 8th grade is the last year. A centralised national exam is applied throughout Turkey for the transition from middle school to high school, and this exam is of significant importance for both the society, parents and school members.

We experience gender discrimination, sometimes. Let me give an example as a male: In our school, female teachers are more than male teachers. We, male teachers, can communicate with our principals. However, female teachers can not communicate like us. (T11)

In my opinion, the most important unethical behaviour is discrimination among people. These behaviours may be based on gender, age, appearance, ideology, and religious belief. (T12)

A teacher does not do his duty well. You see this. No warning is given by the principal. However, when you do the same behaviour, the attitude of the administration becomes very different. (T9)

Another sub-theme of unethical behaviours is favouritism. Participants stated that principals favour their fellow countrymen and some teachers. Their views about nepotism and cronyism are as follows:

Favouritism may become due to hometown. (T9)

Principals inevitably have a closer relationship with certain people. The principal may favour some people. For example, it is okay when those people say they can not come to school, but you have to prove your excuse. (T6)

For instance, the principal does not give permission to person A and give it to person B because of the social relationship between them. (T10)

Offending the teacher, entering the teacher's class without notice, using vulgar language, ignoring teachers' ideas, and not respecting the legal rights were listed in the violation of the rules of courtesy sub-theme. Some of the participants expressed their opinions on this sub-theme as follows:

Reprimanding a teacher! Entering the classroom without knocking! This is very disrespectful to me. Not using expression like "I am sorry, I am disturbing you, I interrupted your lesson" after entering the classroom. These are both unethical and rude behaviours. (T4)

There are problems in the wording used against the teacher. The principal sometimes has inappropriate and excessive jokes and insulting speeches. (T6)

Although we informed the principal that we did not want to be on duty on the upper floors as pregnant teachers, we were on duty on the top floors for the last two and three months of the pregnancy. … The principal is shouting at the teachers in public. Sometimes near students. Shouting at teachers at meetings for no apparent reason. (T16)

Another sub-theme is misconduct. Teachers stated that the school principals are using authority for punishment and using the school's income for personal gain. They are also pretending to attend the class formally, even though the principal is not conducting a class in practice. Some direct quotations about this sub-theme are as follows:

I heard that another school principal has pocketed the parent-teacher association's money and made all expenses with personal credit card. (T12)

The school's fire extinguishers are renewed every year. When the attendant came to change the fire extinguishers, the school principal said, "Leave a small fire extinguisher for my car.". … For example, the principal formally divided the classroom into two groups. But in practice, there was only one classroom and one teacher. The principal took 6 hours of extra class without taking any classes... (T17)

Another sub-theme of unethical behaviours is mobbing and pressure. Participants' views about mobbing and pressure through weekly course schedules and duties, appearance, teaching seniority, political views and professional union affinity, and measurement and evaluation are as follows:

I know that the principals put pressure on the teacher because of their professional union activities. I also know that the principals put classes at very different hours. I have had friends I know who commissioned them at all the ceremonies and were constantly warned about the clothes they were wearing. (T3)

… I have seen all kinds of pressure from not wearing a tie to my hair and beard style. (T9)

The principals have made promises to some parents that your child will pass his class. Then, they have put pressure on the teachers who attend that student's class (T15).

Weekly course schedules! I was coming to school for only one lesson for two days. I think this is pressure. This is not fair. … I was pressured because of my professional union membership. The principal said that if I became a member of his/her professional union, he/she would treat me differently (in a positive way). (T7)

Dealing with personal affairs during working hours and transferring professional responsibility to others were listed in the neglect of duty sub-theme. Participants also highlighted that some principals start work late. Some of the teachers stated their views on this sub-theme as follows:

The principal may deal with personal affairs during working hours. Also, if the principal leaves his main duty to you and is chatting with someone at that moment, this is not ethical. We experienced this a lot. (T2)

The principal does not come to school before 12 p.m. When he/she comes at 12 p.m., he/she leaves from the school at 1 p.m. (T9)

Participants stated that other unethical behaviours of school principals are exhibiting inconsistent, contradictory behaviours and getting information about the teachers from others, and gossiping. Teachers declared that there are some inconsistencies between what principals say and what they do, some principals talk behind of the teachers, and the principals use other school members as spies. Their opinions about this sub-theme are as follows:

There may be some inconsistencies in what they say. They promise for something. Then, they say: "I did not say this, you misunderstood.". (T11)

It is unethical to say negative things to the individuals in the new school where the teacher will work before the teacher starts working. (T1)

I also heard that the principal receives information from the students about the teachers. They use students as spies. I also know that they received information from teachers about other teachers, even using assisted services staff. (T7)

According to the views of the teachers, it is seen that school principals exhibit discrimination behaviour due to the distribution of duties, and verbal lesson teachers are discriminated against more than numerical lesson teachers. Similarly, Doğan and Uğurlu (2015) state that the ethical leadership behaviours of school principals show a significant difference according to the branch variable. In addition, according to participant teachers' views, it can be said that the teachers who have less professional seniority and the teachers who are nearing the end of their professional life are exposed to more unethical behaviour than other teachers.

3.2. The Causes of School Principals' Unethical Behaviours

The teachers' views were listed in five sub-themes: "the factors related to administrative qualifications", "personal factors", "institutional factors", "the factors related to teachers", and "environmental factors" (see Table 3).

According to the teachers, first sub-theme about the causes of unethical behaviours is the factors related to administrative qualifications. Participants stated that principals exhibit unethical behaviours due to their less managerial experience, incompetence, desire to protect their own position and authority, and to compete with other principals. Some quotations about this sub-theme are as follows:

It could be inexperience. They may not know how to act professionally. (T1)

I can say that the more the principals try to secure themselves, the worse they get in my eyes. (T8)

Injustice, inequality and mobbing are all due to the incompetence of principals. (T11)

Maybe jealousy is the biggest factor. Let me tell you what I witnessed. … A principal is starting to do the job more properly because he/she is new at his/her job. He/she acts more in line with the rules. But for behaving like this, he/she is constantly verbally attacked by the senior principal. (T10)

Table 3. *The Causes of School Principals' Unethical Behaviours*

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes
The Causes of Unethical Behaviours	The factors related to administrative qualifications	Inexperience
		Incompetence
		Desire to protect own position
		Desire to establish authority
		Competition with other school principals
	Personal factors	Reflecting the private life problems to the work environment
		Type of personality
	Institutional factors	Intensity of bureaucratic work
		Insufficient control mechanism within the institution
		Not getting enough appreciation from superiors
		Lack of clear rules and criteria for school work and functioning
		Pressure from superiors
		Having impact of differences on relationships at work
		Insufficient financial capacity of the school
	The factors related to teachers	Teachers' negative behaviours
		Organizational silence to unethical behaviours
		Teachers' guiding to the principal
	Environmental factors	Bureaucratic power of the principal
		Relations of the school principal with the school environment
		The influence of parents on the school principal

Another sub-theme about the causes of unethical behaviours is personal factors. Teachers stated that school principals exhibit unethical behaviours due to reflecting their private life problems to the school environment and their type of personality. Participant teachers' views about this sub-theme are as follows:

> *Personal factors are influential, one's own experiences are influential. What are these? Financial situation, family relationships. ... You know, we are all affected by them. In other words, when people have no peace, this is reflected in their behaviours. (T2)*

> *… It was due to that person's own character. The principal was definitely impetuous although had managerial qualities. (T7)*

> *If the individuals are not fully mature as a character, they can take every word said to their personally and then take revenge for it. (T8)*

Teachers declared that principals exhibit unethical behaviors due to many factors that were listed below. Some of these factors are intensity of bureaucratic work, insufficient control mechanism within the institution, not getting enough appreciation from superiors, lack of clear rules and criteria for school work and functioning, pressure from superiors, having impact of differences on relationships at work, insufficient financial capacity of the school that were listed in the institutional factors sub-theme. Some of the teachers expressed their views as follows:

> *They treat teachers differently in a negative way if their political or religious views do not align with their views. (T1)*

> *Insufficient control mechanism can sometimes push principals into slack. … Insufficient motivation, lack of reward. (T2)*

> *Who is a teacher? Who is a principal? If job descriptions and roles of all school member be clear, then the school environment may get better. (T13)*

Another sub-theme for the causes of unethical behaviours is the factors related to teachers. They stated that teachers' negative behaviours, organizational silence, and their guiding to the principal are amongst the causes of unethical behaviours of school principals. Some direct quotations about this sub-theme are as follows:

> *Teachers themselves can be problematic. (T8)*

> *Younger colleagues (teachers) prefer to remain silent towards the principals. (T13)*

> *… Unfortunately, the principal is under the influence of some teachers. Therefore, we see that there is not a fair distribution of classes. (T5)*

The sub-theme of environmental factors is the last sub-theme among the causes of school principals' unethical behaviours. Bureaucratic power of the principal, relations of the school principal with the school environment, and the influence of parents on the school principal were stated by the participant teachers in this sub-theme. Some of the participants expressed their opinions as follows:

> *When a parent complains about a teacher, the principal hurts the teacher in order not to hurt the parent. This is a huge problem. (T9)*

> *If there is someone influential behind them, the principals are comfortable. (T12)*

> *… sometimes principals inevitably enter into close relationships with certain teachers. They sometimes favour that teachers. (T6)*

> *… The principals can give privileges to certain teachers by using their own social relationships, but they do not do the same to other teachers. (T10)*

According to the findings, it can be said that while competition with other school principals is not among the reasons for unethical behaviours seen in primary schools, unethical behaviours arising from competition with other school principals are seen in middle and high schools. Unethical behaviours due to environmental reasons such as the influence of parents on the school principal and the relationship of the school principal with the social environment are observed in schools located in districts with high socio-economic level. It has been observed that unethical behaviours occur in schools in districts with low socio-economic level due to the insufficient financial capacity of the school. Similarly, Karayaman (2021) stated that demands of professional unions, local administrative officials and politicians, populist practices of superiors, and in-school power dynamics are the main pressure elements that force school principals to make unethical decisions.

3.3. Recommendations to Prevent School Principals' Unethical Behaviours

They were listed their views in three sub-themes: "training activities", "legal regulations", and "social activities" (see Table 4).

Table 4. *Solutions for Avoiding Unethical Behaviours of School Principals*

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes
Recommendations for Avoiding Unethical Behaviours	Training activities	Post-graduate education in the field of educational administration
		Psychological guidance to school principals and training on psychology for school principals
		Training on professional development
		Training on human relations
	Legal regulations	Appointment of competent individuals to principal position
		Reward system that increases the motivation level
		Job rotation
		Development of controlling process
		Sanctions for unethical behaviours
		Establishment of a principal monitoring commission, including teachers
		Administration experience requirement for assignments
	Social activities	Establishing respect and understanding in relations between teachers and principals
		Organizing social activities

First solution to avoid unethical behaviours of school principals is related to training activities. In this sub-theme, participant teachers recommended psychological guidance to school principals, and post-graduate education in the field of educational administration for principals, and training on psychology, professional development and human relations. Participant teachers' opinions about this sub-theme are as follows:

It is necessary to train principals to provide their professional development. Training should be given for developing their effective communication skills. As I said, trainings should be given to develop principals in terms of social relations (T2).

… so, a master's degree in the field of administration must be a requirement to become a principal (T3).

People with professional qualifications, such as those with a master's degree, who are at least aware of them, should be principals. … Teachers have to pass psychological endurance test, principals have to, too. Because sometimes you need nerves of steel. Just as we receive first aid training, there is also psychological first aid training. The staff should participate to this type of training. (T12)

Second solution to avoid unethical behaviours of school principals is related to legal regulations. Appointment of competent individuals to principal positions, reward system that increases the motivation level, job rotation [Authors' note: In Turkish national educational system, school principals are appointed for a period of four years. Sometimes, they are appointed an additional period of four years to some school, otherwise to another school. When they complete their eight-years administration experience at a school, they are appointed to another school.], development of controlling process, sanctions for unethical behaviours, establishment of a principal monitoring commission -including teachers-, and administration experience requirement for assignments were recommend by teachers for this sub-theme. Some quotations about this sub-theme are as follows:

Human relations, merit, management science. These are all very important. … School principals should be supervised. Supervisors must examine their performance. Are the principals enough successful or not? If they are not qualified enough to work at that school for 4 years, you can dismiss them without waiting for the 4 years to expire. Or if the principal is very successful, you can get the principal to work in a school he/she wants. There will be promotions, there will be other incentives. Successful people should be rewarded. Punishment should be given if necessary. (T11)

Surveys can be conducted within the institution. An objective commission may be established. It can also be a teacher's board, such as a student disciplinary board. … As I said before, in my opinion, job rotation is very important. Principals should experience every school district and working with teachers in those districts. Working in a school that is complete in all aspects and working in a school that is intertwined with problems gives different experiences. … I want the school principals to be selected according to their merits from among the qualified candidates. (T3)

For example, the principal is in close relationships with the people of school district that when a parent complains about a teacher, the principal hurts the teacher in order not to hurt the parent. This is a huge problem. So, one of the most important solutions may be job rotation. … It could be a sanction, a suspension from office, or a punishment within the law. A solution can be found without breaking the law. (T9)

I think it is necessary to be merit, that is, before the principals become a principal, they must pass through certain phases. (T1)

The last solution to avoid unethical behaviours of school principals provided by participant teachers is related to social activities. They recommended to establish respect and understanding in relations between teachers and principal and to organize social activities. Some of the teachers expressed their views about this sub-theme as follows:

In my opinion, when a school's principal is good enough, the teachers in that school become happy, and the school climate become positive. … School principals should support the social activities throughout the school. (T1)

School principals should not stay in their room along the day. They have to walk around the school and observe everything all the day. They should not isolate themselves, they should come to the teachers' room frequently. The principals should have a tea with us, ask us how we are doing, say how is it going. There are principals who never enter the teachers' room, and whom teachers hardly ever see. It shouldn't be like this. The principal should be active. (T15)

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The current study was conducted in order to reveal unethical behaviours of school principals, the reasons for these behaviours and recommendations to prevent them based on teachers' perceptions. The results show that school principals exhibit discrimination behaviour which is one of the unethical behaviours. The findings revealed that principals exhibit discrimination due to distribution of duties, professional union affiliation, gender, religious belief, and teaching branch. Similarly, it is stated that school principals exhibit religious, political, professional union, and race-based discrimination (Arar, 2016; Can & Işık-Can, 2019). Additionally, Polat and Hiçyılmaz (2017) revealed that teachers were discriminated due to distribution of work, duties, classes, weekly course schedules, ceremony related tasks, and their appearance. In addition to discrimination behaviour, school principals also exhibit favouritism behaviour (Blase & Blase, 2004; Sakçak, Arslan & Polat, 2021; Sam, 2021) that is one of the unethical behaviours and teachers are not treated equally and fairly within schools (Fidan & Koç, 2020; Katip, 2019).

The findings also show that school principals violate the rules of courtesy and respect. The principals offend the teachers, enter their class without notice, use vulgar language to them, and ignore their ideas. They also do not respect teachers' legal rights. In some studies, it was similarly stated that principals exhibited shouting and scolding to teachers, hindering legal rights, and insulting behaviours (Can & Işık-Can, 2019).

The results reveal that school principals misconduct their authorities. Using authority for punishment, pretending to attend the class formally even though the principal is not conducting a class in practice, and using the school's income for personal gain are the unethical behaviours of school principals related to misconducting. Research revealing that school principals misconduct their authorities (Sam, 2021) and derive improper income are in line with this result (Katip, 2019). Sabancı and Şekerci (2014) also stated that teachers were bullied by regulations.

The findings show that school principals act unethically by mobbing and pressure within schools. Teachers are subjected to mobbing and pressure through distribution of weekly course schedules and duties, their appearance, teaching seniority, political views and professional union affinity, style of measurement and evaluation. Similarly, Fidan and Koç (2020) and Katip (2019) revealed that teachers are subjected to mobbing and pressure. It is also stated that school principals pressurize to teachers by demanding changes in student grades (Barrett et al., 2012; Can & Işık-Can, 2019).

Additionally, it was revealed that school principals neglect their duties by dealing with personal affairs during working hours and transferring professional responsibility to others. The findings show that the principals are also inconsistent and gossiping. Similarly, it is stated that school principals exhibit inconsistent behaviour (Bora, 2017) and gossip about teachers (Sabancı & Şekerci, 2014).

The findings show that school principals' lack of administrative qualifications, factors related to teachers, and personal, institutional, and environmental factors are the reasons of their unethical behaviours. It is seen that school principals exhibit unethical behaviours due to political, religious, and professional union differences, as well as close social relations and ethnicity (Polat & Hiçyılmaz, 2017). In addition to these, school principals' type of personality, personal problems, anxiety about losing their power, teachers' type of personality, environmental pressure and expectations are other reasons of principals' unethical behaviours (Arar, 2016; Bora, 2017). Moreover, unethical behaviours are exhibited by school principals due to teachers' behaviours to leave administration in a difficult situation, teachers' lack of knowledge about legislation, principals' reflecting the private life problems to the work environment, using their authority to gain superiority over the teachers, lack of knowledge and qualifications related to management science (Sabancı & Şekerci, 2014).

Training activities, legal regulations, and social activities were suggested to prevent unethical behaviours of school principals. It is seen that these recommendations are in line with the literature. Sabancı and Şekerci (2014) assert that seminars, workshops, and conferences for school principals can be organized to prevent unethical behaviours. These types of activities that focuses on motivation, communication skills, human relations, and conflict management can be also held for school principals. School principals may be assigned based on objective criteria. Institutions and organizations may be established where teachers report unethical behaviours. On the one hand, sanctions can be applied against the unethical behaviour of the school principal. On the other hand, principals who display ethical leadership may be rewarded (Bora, 2017). The principals

can be rotated within the educational system (Katip, 2019). Moreover, the pressure of superiors on school principals can be reduced. Social events can be organized where the teachers and school principals participate together to discuss ethical principles of school. Instead of the hierarchical and vertical atmosphere in schools, a horizontal climate in which respect, empathy and understanding prevails in human relations can be created.

In the current study, the unethical behaviours of school principals were examined via a qualitative research method in accordance with the views of a certain group of public-school teachers in the Kocaeli Province of Turkey. Hence, this limitation should be considered when interpreting the results. It may be suggested that a form of quantitative research could also be conducted which examines unethical behaviours in broader contexts including private-school teachers. Thus, more comprehensive information can be obtained about the unethical behaviours of school principals, their causes, and solutions for the prevention of unethical behaviours. Additionally, since ethical codes differ by culture, comparative studies covering different countries can be conducted.

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