A Deeper Insight on School Principals' Emotion Management: Perspectives of Principals, Vice Principals and Teachers[*]

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Due to the multifaceted nature of their responsibilities, school principals constantly engage with various stakeholders within the educational environment, including teachers, students, parents, and administrative staff. This continuous interaction requires them not only to make effective managerial decisions but also to navigate a wide range of emotions. Recognizing and regulating these emotions is crucial for maintaining a productive school climate. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of teachers, vice principals, and school principals regarding principals' emotional experiences and their strategies for managing those emotions. The study employed a basic qualitative research design and included data collected from seven school principals, four vice principals, and twelve teachers across seven schools. Participants' perspectives were analysed under three main themes: (1) the types and sources of emotions experienced by school principals, (2) the techniques used in managing these emotions, and (3) how principals serve as emotional role models or sources of inspiration for others in the school. Findings revealed that school principals often experience a variety of intense emotions due to the pressures of their role. They tended to suppress their emotions and commonly used a "cooling" strategy to manage them. Interestingly, principals were more capable of identifying and articulating their emotional states than other participants. These results were interpreted in light of Social Exchange Theory and the cultural characteristics of Türkiye's centralised and hierarchical education system, which may influence both emotional expression and leadership dynamics.

Introduction

School principals serve many stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, school staff, and provincial and district administrators. Therefore, they may be faced with various complex situations and are expected to be prepared for these situations. It has been stated that complex situations can be emotionally exhausting for principals as well as other administrators

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(Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Park & Datnow, 2022), so it is necessary for school principals to manage their emotions. On the other hand, an analysis of the history of leadership studies shows that the rational aspect of school principals has been emphasised more than the emotional aspect. This rational approach, which dominated the leadership literature for a long time, suggested that emotions negatively affected the ability to manage (Brotheridge & Lee, 2008) and emotions were ignored in leadership studies. The finding of positive and negative relationships between cognitive and emotional processes (Callahan & McCollum, 2002) has led to discussions that focusing only on cognition and excluding emotions is not realistic for the management world. One of the main architects of this intellectual shift is the human relations theory, which looks at individuals in relational and emotional terms, beyond the rational perspective that dominates the management literature. It is now recognised that both emotion and logic are two integral parts of a manager's leadership (Maskin, 2016). Leadership is seen as particularly challenging when considering the emotional effort required for behaviours such as convincing, sympathy, empathy or simply 'role-playing' (Crawford 2009, p.201). Therefore, the emotional experiences of leaders are worth analysing (Ginsberg & Davies 2003).

School principals' complex interactions and relationships with various stakeholders both inside and outside the school often require a high level of emotional labour and can sometimes put school principals in emotionally challenging situations (Wang et al., 2022). This strain can cause emotional imbalance and emotional stress in school principals, which can be felt by students, teachers, staff, and the entire school. Three sources of stress for principals are 'work-related stressors, relationship-related stressors, and time-related stressors' (Dadaczynski et al., 2022, p. 359), and these stress sources may also be a result of the different roles that principals are required to perform. In schools, people communicate with each other in different directions, frequencies and intensities, and emotions play a major role in communication (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011). Studies suggest that school principals may experience positive or negative emotions such as fear, passion, empathy, enthusiasm, joy, satisfaction, anger, loneliness, care, trust and distress while doing their job (Arar, 2017; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015). Therefore, McDowelle and Bell (1997) suggest that those who prepare educational leaders should develop emotional competencies for self-development, such as mindfulness and self-management. According to them, these critical competences influence the leader's ability to build productive teams, manage self and others, improve teaching and empathise with staff. School principals' social and emotional competencies are the foundation of their well-being and leadership, which affect school climate, teacher engagement and well-being, family and community partnerships, and student outcomes (Mahfouz, et al., 2019). The well-being of school principals has been linked to how successful they are at managing their emotions and how well they cope with life and work challenges (Wang, 2025). Well-being is most broadly defined as people's overall assessments of their lives and emotional experiences (Diener et al., 2017, p. 89). Positive well-being is also associated with positive emotions, commitment, relationships, meaning, and success (Seligman, 2018). According to Marks and Shah (2004) well-being is more than happiness; it also means 'growing as a person, being satisfied, and contributing to society' (p. 9).

When it comes to emotional competencies, emotion management comes to the fore, and school principals with emotion management skills can create a more positive atmosphere in the school. In order to manage emotions properly and have a positive effect on the organisational climate, school leaders need to learn to manage themselves before they manage others. According to Cliffe (2011), managers should not show every emotion in every way, on the contrary, they should show it by finding and managing the right way to show it, and they should act by

thinking which emotion it would be right to express. When we focus on the emotional management of leaders, we see that the importance of their emotional awareness is emphasised. The leader's emotion management skills play a crucial role in trying to understand, manage and act to facilitate emotion management. This is because the positive or negative emotional climate created by the manager as a result of emotion management directly affects the emotion management of followers (Lindebaum & Jordan, 2012), and good emotion management increases the productivity of followers (Akın, 2004). Blase and Blase (2004, p. 258) stated that "the ability to identify and understand emotions, manage emotions, and express emotions appropriately is critical for effective school leadership".

The first of the main arguments of our study is the need for school principals to focus on emotion management. Berkovich and Eyal (2015) highlighted the need to define and categorise the relationships between school tasks and emotions, to educate school principals about emotions, and to support institutions in this direction. However, some researchers argue that educators' emotions and how these emotions affect them have been ignored in educational reforms (e.g. Hargreaves, 2001; Schmidt, 2010). Furthermore, while the critical role of educators' emotions has been highlighted, it has also been noted that the emotional aspects of school leaders have been understudied (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015). As this gap has been recognised, the number of studies on school principals' emotional intelligence, emotional expectancy and emotional identity has increased in recent years (e.g. Gomez-Leal et al., 2022; Nordholm, et al., 2020). Second, our study was guided by Social Exchange Theory, which refers to non-material exchanges between people, including interactions and emotions. This theory is both relevant to our conceptual perspective and provides a broad framework for understanding emotion management. Finally, we were guided by Türkiye's vertically hierarchical education system and its collectivist-power balance culture. This study examines the emotions and emotion management of school principals in Türkiye, based on the views of school principals, vice principals, and teachers. In this context, the following three issues were examined.

(1) School principals' emotions and emotions' sources,
(2) School principals' emotional management,
(3) Inspiration of school principals to others to manage their emotions.

Theoretical and contextual framework

Social exchange theory

Social Exchange Theory is based on the use of interaction frequency and emotions to explain the formation and strength of social relationships (Homans, 1950). There are different models that operationalise Social Exchange Theory. This study is based on the conceptualisation of leader-member exchange and perceived organisational support (Eisenberger et al., 2002). This has been conceptualised as the 'quality' of social change that occurs as a whole between the leader and the follower, while leader-member change is seen as the relationship of change that occurs between followers and the leader.

Social exchange is inherently a joint task in which actors have a common focus and engage in a 'shared' activity. Shared activities generate or reinforce emotional responses (e.g. the exhilaration or excitement that comes from doing something with others, affirming a shared identity or commitment, or achieving some success with others). As a result, the emotions that individuals experience as a result of a shared task are likely to be perceived as co-produced.

This makes relational or group membership a possible source or cause of the emotions felt (Lawler, 2002).

Emotion

Emotion is a multifaceted psychological phenomenon defined by the complex interaction of physiological, cognitive and subjective elements; it encompasses a range of emotional states and experiences, including moods, reactions to internal and external stimuli (Lazarus, 1991). Emotion is the individual's response to the relationship between their own needs and objective things. Positive emotions arise when self-needs are met and negative emotions arise when they are not. Emotions are effective in helping people face uncertainty, set goals, make choices, predict the future, and make decisions (Damasio, 1994). Emotions are based on experience, and are immediate responses, including behavioural actions.

According to Barutçugil (2004), since all kinds of emotions cause tension in the body, they cause the body to lose energy and the emotional process consists of five elements: Physical or psychological stimuli; feelings; conscious awareness and appreciation of the experience; emotionally expressive behaviour; and environmental consequences of emotional behaviour. Although emotions are often determinants of behaviour in human life, they are often neglected, misunderstood, denied and suppressed. According to Goleman and Cherniss (2000), the main clusters of emotions are; sadness, anger, happiness and fear.

Emotions act as activators in many parts of the leadership, such as inspiring followers and establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011; Humphrey, 2008). Leadership research has examined how the leader's own positive and negative emotional displays affect followers (Brotheridge & Lee, 2008) and the effects of surface or deep behaviours on follower outcomes (Humphrey et al., 2008). It has also focused on leader support for followers in managing their emotions (Little et al., 2016).

Emotional intelligence emerges as a key factor in studies of emotions and emotional skills. Emotional intelligence, which dates back to the 1920s, can be defined as the ability to understand and successfully manage people in interpersonal relationships that goes beyond cognitive skills.

According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is a life skill that encompasses emotional awareness, including empathy and self-awareness, as well as the ability to understand the feelings of others and control one's own reactions. Goleman (2006, p. 73) linked emotional intelligence skills with factors in work life and came with a four-dimensional emotional intelligence model: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social relationship management. Salovey and Mayer (1990, p. 5) defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thoughts and actions". Brackett (2019) mentioned recognising, understanding, labelling and expressing emotions and supporting emotion management in oneself and others.

Emotion management

Although it is not possible for people to control every emotion, it is possible for them to understand, recognise, interpret and manage their emotions correctly (Barutçugil, 2004, p. 82). Emotions are inevitable human elements in every aspect of our lives. Emotions and behaviours resulting from emotions can be managed if they can be regulated in accordance with

predetermined goals. The first requirement for emotion management is to learn to recognise emotions in detail and to develop the ability to deal with them effectively. In fact, this can be described as increasing emotional awareness. Emotion management includes self-control, regulating emotions, adjusting reactions to contradictory events and situations, and relieving tense moods with an optimistic temperament. The positive outcomes of emotion management include developing the ability to cope better with feelings of frustration and helplessness, less verbal humiliation in the organisation, developing the ability to express anger and stress in more appropriate ways, reducing aggressive and self-destructive behaviours, having more positive feelings about oneself and the environment, and feeling less loneliness and social anxiety (Goleman & Cherniss, 2000).

Contrary to popular belief, school principals' emotions are influenced by social and organisational as well as psychological factors (Cemaloğlu & Çoban, 2019; Zorn & Boler, 2007). If we examine the context that shapes the emotions of school principals, the environment comes to the fore: Teachers, students and parents, other factors include policies, practices and norms (Park & Datnow, 2022), in a broader context, it is culture and climate (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015). These conditions, in which school principals are interdependent, affect their emotions both positively and negatively.

School principals' awareness of their emotions, their knowledge of emotion management, and their ability to identify emotions, support emotions, and share emotions to inspire employees increase their emotion management skills (Kaplan, et al. 2014). It has been found that principals' emotion management behaviours positively affect teachers' motivation (Güngör, 2019). According to the findings of Örücü (2019), emotion management of school principals in Türkiye provides professionalism and ease in managing unexpected situations.

Different strategies are proposed in emotion management. Hochschild (2003) categorises emotion management strategies as superficial and deep role-playing. Superficial role-playing is a reaction-oriented strategy, such as putting on a fake smile or pretending to have different emotions. Deep role-playing is a presumptive strategy. It is an example of using personal experiences or memories to evoke the emotions required by a professional role in the face of an event.

Türkiye Context

The background of this study is based on a collectivist culture with a high power distance and a centralised education system with a vertical hierarchical structure. In contrast to Western cultures, this study was conducted in Türkiye, where the collectivist culture is dominant and the power distance is high. It can be seen that studies on emotion management of educational leaders are mostly of western origin (Arar & Oplatka, 2018; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Harris, 2007; Oplatka, 2017). In western societies, which are more individualistic, leaders may often need to use emotion management strategies, as leaders are concerned about their own desires when making decisions and prefer to act more autonomously. In Turkish culture, which has feminine characteristics, emotions are defined as an important key force in interpersonal relationships (Beycioğlu & Sincar, 2019). A recent study from Türkiye examining school principals' anger management in relation to emotion management can be given as an example (Özaslan et al., 2024). However, as a result of the collectivist culture, respect for elders and obedience to authority are also important (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Therefore, the leader is expected to use the power of the position (Arar et al., 2018) and it is considered normal to suppress emotions and even be political in order to appear more professional. Study conducted

in collectivist Arab and Israeli schools revealed that school principals demonstrated a high level of emotional involvement in their relationships with students but tended to suppress their emotions when discussing teachers and professional decisions (Sheety, 2019). Due to the high power distance, the education system in Türkiye is vertically hierarchical and decisions are centralised. The education system is managed by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the main responsibility of school principals within this system is to implement decisions (Kılınç, et al., 2021), in other words, to obey. Türkiye's collectivist, feminine and vertical hierarchy structure may contain factors that may complicate school principals' emotion management processes.

This study can fill an important gap by examining school principals' emotion management as leader-member interaction in the context of Social Exchange Theory and providing insight from a non-Western culture into emotion management studies based on Western research. Although in-service training attempts to support the development of emotion management strategies among school principals, it is difficult to regulate these strategies through strategic policies outside the individual initiatives of school principals. The current study may inspire decision-makers to view emotion management among school principals as an organizational goal beyond individual efforts. In light of the studies mentioned above and the existing gaps in the literature, we aimed to investigate the emotion management skills of school principals.

Methodology

Research design

The research design used in this study is the basic qualitative approach, also referred to as general or interpretive qualitative research. This design was selected with the objective of gaining insight into how individuals make sense of their lives and the aim of this design is to reveal and interpret how participants perceive and make sense of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

Participants

In the study, the maximum variation sampling method was used to capture the common dimensions and underlying experiences of the phenomenon (Patton, 2014, pp. 235-243). The objective of maximum diversity sampling is to select information-rich situations for in-depth study. The schools were selected from the central districts of Ankara. Accessibility was the determining factor in the selection of schools. The study area was expanded to include schools further away from those that were easily accessible to researchers. Initial contact was made with the schools identified on the map via telephone, information about the study was provided, and participants were asked if they were willing to participate. If they agreed, some demographic data was collected to ensure diversity. If the school met the conditions, an appointment was scheduled for an interview. The data was collected from principals, vice principals and teachers in the selected schools. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, the data source was triangulated, and participants were grouped according to a series of basic variables such as age, years of service, gender, and whether they had received emotion management training. Additionally, the socio-economic environment of the school and the type of school were taken into account. Seven school principals, four vice principals and 12 teachers from seven schools were interviewed. The information pertaining to the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Participants' information

Participants	Age	Gender	Working Year	Emotion management training	School Type
T1	25	Male	5	-	Private Secondary School
T2	57	Female	33	-	Special Education School
T3	28	Female	8	-	Private Secondary School
T4	33	Female	12	-	Public Primary School
T5	29	Female	7	-	Public Secondary School
T6	38	Male	17	-	Special Education School
T7	29	Male	4	-	Private Primary School
T8	35	Female	14		Public Kindergarten
T9	31	Female	6	-	Public Kindergarten
T10	32	Female	10	-	Special Education School
T11	34	Female	10	-	Private Primary School
T12	37	Female	11	Participated	Public High School
VP1	37	Female	11	Participated	Public High School
VP2	38	Female	14	-	Public Primary School
VP3	54	Male	30	-	Private Primary School
VP4	45	Female	23	Participated	Private Secondary School
P1	51	Male	30	-	Private Primary School
P2	56	Male	36	-	Public Kindergarten
P3	47	Female	17	Participated	Public High School
P4	45	Female	26	-	Public Primary School
P5	54	Female	20	-	Private Secondary School
P6	55	Female	30	Participated	Private Secondary School
P7	54	Male	30	Participated	Special Education School

T: Teacher, VP: Vice Principal, P: Principal

The study group comprised seven male and 16 female participants. The participants' ages ranged from 25 to 56 years and working years ranged from 5 to 36. Three of the schools are

private schools, three are public schools and one is a special education school. In the context of emotion management training, the MoNE conducts in-service training for school principals, vice principals, and teachers during periods. A total of six participants were included in the study group who had received the training.

Data collection and analysis

The participants were invited to respond to ten open-ended questions, which had been developed by the researchers. In formulating the questions, the extant literature was subjected to exhaustive analysis in three distinct domains. The study also sought to gain insight into the difficulties and workload experienced by school principals on a daily basis, as well as the emotional management techniques and strategies employed by these individuals in their professional roles. Accordingly, the researchers sought to address the study topic from a comprehensive standpoint, encompassing all pertinent aspects related to the study. Once the interview questions had been drafted, the opinions of two experts were sought and any ambiguous questions were revised accordingly. Following the editing process, a pilot interview was conducted with three participants, and any necessary updates were made to the questions.

Prior to the commencement of the interview, the researchers scheduled an appointment with each participant, allotting an average of three hours for the interview. The interviews commenced with the verbal consent of the participants, who confirmed their voluntary participation in the study. The interviews were conducted in person and audio recorded. In order to conduct the interviews in an environment conducive to concentration and confidentiality, the times when the participants were available were selected. Once the data collection process was complete, the researchers transcribed the recordings of the participants and selected quotations.

In qualitative analysis, the researcher endeavours to gain a more profound understanding of the data. The objective is to respond to queries such as 'What is occurring here?' and 'How can we interpret these responses? In order to analyse the data pertinent to this research, the content analysis method was employed. Content analysis is a widely employed method in qualitative social science research. The objective of this analysis is to identify themes and codes within the databases pertinent to the research question, with a detailed description of the data provided (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Patton (2014) defines content analysis as an effort to reduce and interpret qualitative data by taking qualitative material and identifying underlying consistencies and meanings. The analytical process comprises the following stages:

(1) The responses of participants were subjected to independent analysis by the authors. One researcher employed the MAXQDA 2022 software, while the other conducted the analysis manually.
(2) The analysis focused on common codes in the school principal, vice principal, and teachers' evaluations of the school principal's emotion management. The analysis provided insights into similarities in the participants' views.
(3) The emotional expressions of the participants were subjected to analysis.
(4) Codes in the responses were identified on more than one occasion.
(5) The categories were identified by the authors in a manner that was independent of one another.
(6) The authors conducted a joint examination of the codes and categories to ascertain the relationships and links between them.
(7) The authors proceeded to verify the prevalence and suitability of the identified themes.
(8) Subsequently, a table of themes, categories and codes was constructed.

Credibility and transferability

The following steps were taken in order to enhance the credibility and transferability of the study:

- Presenting the data collection and analysis stages of the study in detail, tracking the time from data collection to transformation and storing the study data,
- Ensuring the compatibility between the research questions and the research design, making coding checks by the researchers and explaining the roles of the researchers in the research process,
- Paying attention to the voluntary nature of the participants, clearly expressing the findings and results, and quoting the participants' views on the categories.

Findings

The findings are showed under the main themes and codes of 'School principals' emotions and sources of emotions', 'School principals' emotion management' and 'School principals' inspiring others to manage their emotions'. Themes, categories, and codes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Themes, categories and codes

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories	Codes		
			Principals	Vice principals	Teachers
School principals' emotions and emotions' sources	Positive emotions		- Happiness* - Patience* - Love - Enthusiasm - Trust - Peace	- Happiness - Patience	- Happiness - Patience
	Negative emotions		- Anxiety * - Sadness* - Frustration*	- Anger - Sadness - Anxiety - Frustration	- Anger - Impatience - Anxiety - Sadness - Frustration
	Sources of positive emotions		- Communication* - Success* - Responsible behaviour* - Tolerance - Working with people of merit	- Communication - Success - Responsible behaviour	- Communication - Success - Sincerity - Goodwill - Smiling face
	Sources of negative emotions		- Frustration* - Stress* - Relationship* - Workload* - Irresponsibility* - Unfair criticism*	- Frustration - Stress - Relationship - Workload - İrresponsibility - Unfair criticism	- Relationships - Workload - Stress - Frustration - İrresponsibility - Gossip
School principals' emotional management	Ways of dealing with emotions	Taking action	- Being solution-oriented* - One-to-one contact* - Giving advice* - Empathising*	- One-to-one contact - Giving advice - Being solution-oriented	- One-to-one contact - Giving advice - Empathising
		Postponing	- Cooling down* - Being patient* - Meditation	- Cooling down - Being patient	- Cooling down - Being patient
		Active	- Being perfectionist*	- Being perfectionist	- Being perfectionist

		- Perceiving events without personalising them*	- Perceiving events without personalising them	- Perceiving events without personalising them
School principals' openness to improvement in dealing with emotions	Passive	- Being impartial* - Suppressing emotions*	- Being impartial - Suppressing emotions	- Being impartial - Suppressing emotions
Strategies used in emotion management	Supportive	- Being fair* - Democratic behaviour - Participation in decision making*	- Being fair - Participation in decisions making	- Being fair - Participation in decisions making
	Motivative	- Empathy* - Rewarding* - Organising activities * - Clearly defined tasks*	- Empathy - Rewarding - Organising activities - Clearly defined tasks	- Empathy - Rewarding - Organising activities - Clearly defined tasks
Inspiration of school principals to others to manage their emotions		- Sharing experience* - Being patient* - Being respectful * - Cooling*	- Sharing experience - Being patient - Being respectful - Cooling	- Sharing experience - Being patient - Being respectful - Cooling

* Common codes of participants

School principals' emotions and emotions' sources

The initial findings of the study seek to elucidate the participants' awareness. Accordingly, this section is dedicated to the examination of the positive and negative emotions experienced by the school principals, along with an investigation into the underlying sources of these emotional states.

Positive emotions

When the views of the participants were examined, positive emotions such as happiness, patience, love, enthusiasm, trust and peace were defined by school principals. Teachers and vice principals were reported happiness and patience as positive emotions associated with school principals.

> "I think love and happiness are more because we are together with the child, so everything does not have to be dependent on an event... even a situation you see while leaving the meal can create love and happiness."(P5)
> "He is very happy when I go with good news." (VP3)
> "We do not experience incredible emotional interactions in my interviews with him, but he shares his tiredness. He shares their happy moments, if any, or if he has any concerns, he shares them." (T1)

All participants commonly expressed happiness and patience as positive emotions. It was observed that principals mentioned a wider range of emotions when describing their own feelings.

Negative emotions

Anger, sadness, impatience, anxiety and frustration were found as negative emotions experienced by school principals. Anger is expressed by teachers and assistant principals as negative emotions of principals, while school principals' failure to associate themselves with anger may stem from their perception that this negative emotion is not appropriate for them.

"He wants his expectations to be fulfilled immediately, and when they are not, he gets very impatient." (T4)

"Problems that are not intervened in time grow, and my principal is sadness about this situation. He is anxious because he foresees difficulties in communicating with parents." (VP2)

"When a parent criticises us very unfairly and criticises the whole school system together with the teachers, we first feel frustration and then anger." (P6)

Anxiety, sadness, and frustration are common negative emotions expressed by all participants.

Sources of positive emotions

When the situations that cause the school principal to feel positive emotions, school principals stated that communication, success, responsible behaviour, tolerance and working with people with merit caused positive feelings in them. Teachers mentioned communication, success, sincerity, goodwill and smiling face. While vice principals mentioned success and responsible behaviour.

"It is actually good for all of us that the environment is sincere and warm, and as our principal, he is also pleased that it is like this." (T11)

"If there is a problem, he prefers to see responsible behaviour such as 'what happened, how should we do it?' rather than talking feverishly." (VP4)

"Being responsible and keeping the conversation within a certain respectful framework makes things easier." (P5)

Communication, success, and responsibility are common themes among all participants.

Sources of negative emotions

All participants see disappointment, stress, relationships, workload, irresponsibility, and unfair criticism as sources of negative emotions. Teachers also mentioned gossip. The vice principal's statement, "I can see that the principal gets angry when he thinks that people don't understand how much work they have to do (VP3)," can be given as an example of an emotional state arising from a lack of awareness of the principal's difficult role.

"Unfortunately, there is also gossip. That, of course, makes it difficult."(T4)

The situations cited by the principals, unlike the ones mentioned by the teachers and vice principals, included fights and disagreements, but did not mention gossip. Principals generally stated that stress, relationships, workload, irresponsibility and not understanding the importance and difficulty of their work caused negative feelings in them.

"I lose my patience if there is no change despite my warnings and explanations about how to appreciate the other person, whether it is the teacher, parent or whoever, and how to fulfil their duties and responsibilities." (P2)

It is noteworthy that participants agree on the sources of negative emotions. This can be interpreted as teachers and vice principals being able to empathise with school principals.

School principals' emotional management

The findings on school principals' ways of coping with emotions, their aspects open to development for coping with emotions, and their emotion management strategies were gathered under the heading of emotion management and the findings are shown below.

Ways of dealing with emotions

School principals' ways of coping with emotions were categorised under the sub-categories of "taking action" and "postponing". In taking action, teachers mentioned one-to-one contact and giving advice intensively, while vice principals mentioned one-to-one contact, giving advice and being solution-oriented. School principals stated that being solution-oriented, being one-to-one, giving advice and empathising were important in coping with their emotions. Under the sub-category of postponing, all participants stated that principals used cooling down and being patient in coping with emotions.

> "Since we work with children, principal tries not to reflect their negative emotions in negative situations as much as possible." (T5)
> "We never lose our patience under all circumstances, even in the face of the troubles and negativities we encounter. Because our job is a profession of patience, a profession of love, we overcome the problems with the power of patience by integrating the students with each other, by establishing very close communication, by expressing to the parents the naturalness of this job, the negativities that children will experience in childhood until they grow up." (P5)
> "Volcanoes are erupting inside him (principal), something is happening. We definitely feel it, but he always remembers that he has to be professional. There are certain limits that their profession brings to them. Within these limits, I think they somehow restrain them under the concept of professionalism." (T1)

School principals' openness to improvement in dealing with emotions

The principals stated that they suppressed their emotions in order to manage them and as a result of this situation, they had to cope with more intense emotions. Therefore, they stated that they need to improve themselves in expressing their emotions in the passive dimension without suppressing them but at the same time without being hurtful. They also stated that they usually behave perfectionist and this increases their workload and stress. Some of the principals think that they are open to improvement in terms of being objective, impartial and perceiving events without personalising them.

From the vice principals' point of view, school principals are open to improvement in terms of showing flexibility in expectations according to the situation (being perfectionist) and expressing their feelings correctly. Most of the teachers mentioned that the perfectionist attitudes of the principals created difficulties in the working environment and underlined that most of the principals should improve themselves in being impartial and solving problems without personalising them.

> "In terms of communication, she has to hide her feelings somehow. Because in the end, it may be right for her to tell us everything that happened between her and the student or everything she talked to the parent. I think a little bit of professionalism comes into play there. I think she tries to suppress her own emotions a little bit, trying to control herself,

trying to manage her emotions, trying to suppress the excessive expression of these emotions. But since I don't have much contact with these people outside the school, I don't know how they actually reflect their real emotions in their real lives." (T1)

"People's work colleagues can also be their friends in their normal lives. But I think this should not be reflected too much in the work environment. If a principal treats me very coldly, if he draws a completely different profile next to another teacher, this disturbs me. I want a little bit of standardisation here." (T4)

"While there is more expectation from teacher A, there should not be more expectation from teacher B. To me, this seems like injustice." (T3)

"The expectation that it should be immediate and super is tiring." (VP1)

"After all, it is a stressful job, we have good days and bad days. Keep it in, keep it in for a while. Then the explosion is worse." (P3)

All participants agreed on perfectionism, personalisation, impartiality, and suppressing emotions.

Strategies used in emotion management

Unlike ways of coping with school principals' emotions, examining emotion management strategies is important in terms of evaluating the awareness in emotion management among all participants. Emotion management strategies of school principals were categorised under supportive and motivational sub-categories. The strategies that all participants agreed on were fair approach, participation in decisions, empathy, rewarding, organising activities and clear tasks. Under the supportive sub-category, school principals mentioned fair approach, democratic behaviour and participation in decisions. Vice principals and teachers stated that principals used fair approach and participation in decisions as supportive emotion management strategies. Under the sub-category of motivating, school principals, vice principals and teacher stated that principals used empathy, rewarding, organising activities and clear tasks as emotion management strategies.

"There are really supportive celebrations in our school. For example, let's say a teacher friend of ours is transferred somewhere during the semester, we have a farewell party for him/her, we cut a cake." (T6)

"We hold meetings every week. The opinions of the whole class are taken before making decisions. Since we contribute to decision making, I think we take more ownership in practice." (T1)

"Taking action without listening to both sides are harmful. Therefore, I usually listen to one side, ask permission and listen to the other side. Then, when necessary, I bring the two sides together and try to make them understand each other." (P7)

"Sharing outside school is good for all of us. We discover each other's differences. Of course, it increases tolerance." (P6)

"If everyone knows clearly what to do, there will be no problems." (VP2)

Inspiration of school principals to others to manage their emotions

How school principals inspire others in the school for emotion management was examined in this section. Teachers stated that they were inspired by school principals especially in terms of sharing experience and being patient.

"If there is a tense and stressful environment, he definitely tries to stay calm and I think this is partly due to his age and life experience. I take this as an example the most because if there is a very angry parent profile and we are in a crowded environment, if very wrong

issues are opened with very wrong language, he can stay calm very well and calm the other person." (T5)

"When the atmosphere becomes tense, he says, 'Let's talk about this later, at a wider time,' and makes an appointment for the next day or another time. Then he always orders coffee or tea and discusses the issue. Generally, after that conversation, he solves the problem somehow." (VP3)

"I mean this issue should actually be asked to the teachers. I usually listen patiently. I say let's think about how we can solve it. Then I exchange ideas. We find a common point." (P7)

All participants agreed that school principals inspire others in emotion management through sharing experience, being patient, being respectful and cooling.

Discussion

The present study shows that school principals, vice principals and teachers are generally aware of the positive and negative emotions that school principals experience during the day and the situations that cause these emotions. Such awareness and good recognition of emotions allow the emotional fluctuations occurring in the inner world to be recognised in time and necessary measures to be taken (Goleman & Cherniss, 2000). According to Goleman (2006, p. 73), self-awareness is one of the important indicators of emotional intelligence skills. The school principals' positive and negative emotions were expressed by participants using common concepts. Happiness and patience were common positive emotions, while anxiety, sadness and frustration were common negative emotions. These findings are partially compatible with the studies on the positive or negative emotions experienced by school principals. According to Goleman and Cherniss (2000), the main clusters of emotions are; sadness, anger, happiness and fear. Unlike previous studies in the literature, this study focuses on emotions such as fear, passion, empathy, and loneliness (Arar, 2017; Berkovich and Eyal, 2015; Goleman and Cherniss, 2000). The fact that school principals define their emotions in more diverse ways compared to other participants may be an indicator of their self-awareness. School principals' awareness of their emotions, knowledge of emotion management, and ability to identify emotions and inspire employees increase emotion management skills (Kaplan et al., 2014). It has been stated in similar studies that school principals' being aware of their emotions and identifying them are critical for them to be able to express their emotions and manage their emotions (Balse & Balse; 2004; Barutçugil, 2004, p. 82).

When the situations that cause the school principal to feel positive emotions were analysed, it was seen that all participants mentioned communication, success and tolerance. Unlike the other participants, teachers stated that sincerity and smiling face supported the positive emotions of school principals, while school principals stated that working with competent people revealed their positive emotions. This finding can be interpreted as teachers' views being relationship-oriented, while school principals' views are task-oriented. According to Zorn and Boler (2007), school principals' emotions are influenced by social and organisational factors as well as psychological factors. Proper communication, which is one of the organisational factors, is consistent with Ashkanasy and Humphrey's (2011) study on the relationship between interpersonal communication and emotions in educational organisations. Again, our findings of fair distribution of tasks and competencies are consistent with Park and Datnow's (2022) norms and practices, which are among the factors shaping the emotions of school principals.

The participants were almost unanimous about the situations that cause the school principal to feel negative emotions. All participants emphasised stress, relationships, workload and

irresponsibility. It is believed that emotional stress experienced by school principals can be felt by students, teachers, staff, and the entire school and relationship is one of the sources of stress (Dadaczynski et al., 2022, p. 359) and that these sources of stress may also be a result of the different roles that principals are required to fulfil. Differently, while the school principal emphasised that not understanding the importance and difficulty of work, teachers emphasised gossip. This finding can be interpreted as teachers' views being relationship-oriented, while school principals' views are task-oriented. The factors that cause the negative feelings of school principals in the current study are related to school climate and culture. Berkovich and Eyal (2015) stated that conditions such as school climate and culture, in which school principals are interdependent, can affect their emotions both positively and negatively.

School principal's ways of coping with emotions were categorised under the sub-categories of 'taking action' and 'postponing'. While teachers mentioned one-to-one talk and giving advice intensively in taking action, vice principals mentioned one-to-one talk, giving advice and being solution-oriented. School principals stated that being solution-oriented, talking one-to-one, giving advice and empathising were important in coping with their emotions. Under the sub-category of postponing, all participants stated that principals used cooling and patience in dealing with emotions. Although cooling down and being patient seem to be passive and ineffective compared to taking action, as Cliffe (2011) emphasised, managers should not express every emotion in any way, on the contrary, they should act by managing them and finding the right way of expressing and expressing them, and they should act by thinking which emotion is the right one to express.

The well-being of school principals has been linked to how successful they are at managing their emotions and how well they cope with life and work challenges (Wang, 2025). All participants stated that principals suppress their emotions in order to manage them and as a result of this situation, they have to deal with more intense emotions. Therefore, they stated that they should improve themselves in expressing their emotions correctly without suppressing them but at the same time without being hurtful. This finding is consistent with studies showing that school principals tend to suppress their emotions when discussing teachers and professional decisions (Sheety, 2019). Since managers in Türkiye are expected to use the power of position due to power distance (Arar & Örücü, 2018), it is considered normal for them to suppress their emotions and even be political in order to appear more professional. This situation may make suppression of emotions a habit. They also think that principals are generally perfectionists and this increases their workload and stress, and that they are open to improvement in being objective and perceiving events without personalising them.

Emotional intelligence skills with factors in work life and came with a four-dimensional emotional intelligence model: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social relationship management (Goleman, 2006). Emotion management includes self-control, regulating emotions, adjusting reactions to contradictory events and situations, and relieving tense moods with an optimistic temperament (Liu, 2013). The strategies that almost all participants agreed on were under the supportive: fair approach, participation in decisions, and under the motivational: empathy, rewarding, organising activities and clear tasks. According to the Social Exchange Theory; joint activities create or strengthen emotional reactions. As a result, the emotions that individuals experience as a result of a common task are likely to be perceived as jointly produced. This makes relational or group belonging a possible source or cause of the emotions felt (Lawler, 2002). Organising school-wide events can support school principals to inspire others to manage emotions through shared emotions.

Emotions act as activators in many parts of the leadership such as inspiring followers, establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011; Humphrey, 2008). In leader research, it has been investigated how the leader's own positive and negative emotional displays affect followers (Brotheridge & Lee, 2008) and the effects of surface or deep behaviours on follower outcomes (Humphrey, 2008). Almost all participants agreed that school principals inspire others to manage emotions by sharing experiences, being patient and cooling. This is because the positive or negative emotional climate created by the school principal directly affects the emotion management of the followers (Lindebaum & Jordan, 2012). Considering the importance of leaders supporting their followers to manage their emotions (Little et al., 2016), it is seen that teachers and vice principals are aware of the emotion management techniques that principals find correct.

Conclusion

In this study, the emotion management skills of school principals were analysed. In general, it is observed that there are similarities between the way principals perceive themselves about emotion management and the way the people they work with perceive the principals. In school principals' awareness of emotion management, happiness and patience in positive emotions; anger, impatience and sadness in negative emotions; and anger, prejudice and tension in emotion evaluations related to professional experience stand out as emotions that need to be managed. It was seen that coping with emotions can be easier in school with correct communication, tolerance and motivating elements; empathic and justice-based approach and social activities at school are the prominent elements in emotion management. The most common methods used by school principals in coping with emotions were sharing experience, being patient and cooling methods; one-to-one interviews, being solution-oriented and suggestion methods were predominantly used in the dimension of inspiring others about emotion management by school principals. It can be concluded that school principals, assistant principals, and teachers generally share common views on principals' emotions and emotion management, and that relationship-oriented and task-oriented perspectives play a role in differences of opinion.

Recommendations and limitations

Some recommendations can be given based on the findings of this paper. Firstly, MoNE can add modules on emotional intelligence and emotion management skills to school leadership programmes. These training courses are important not only for crisis management but also for maintaining a healthy daily school climate. In addition, supervision and support mechanisms can be established to increase the psychological resilience of school principals who work under intense emotional pressure. Within Türkiye's hierarchical and centralised structure, principals may have limited freedom to make decisions. Policymakers can give school principals more freedom by expanding areas where they can demonstrate emotional leadership. The study found that principals were successful in identifying their emotions. Building on this awareness, principals can be encouraged to express their emotions in appropriate ways rather than suppressing them. School principals can also find opportunities to guide those around them while managing their emotions. School-wide workshops can be organised.

This study also provides implications for future studies. Our study encourages further study of school principals' emotional management in different contexts, and in doing so, it may be useful to modify the instrument of analysis. Despite the growing interest in the emotional abilities of principals, schools are still largely rational organisations. With this reality, there is still a need to focus more on the emotional side of principals, teachers, students and parents. Therefore, the

emotion management strategies of employees in educational organisations seem to be worth investigating. Despite the basic theoretical and practical contributions of our study, it also reveals the lack of wider and even longitudinal studies. In addition, possible conditions that affect principals' emotions (e.g., job demands and peer support) can be addressed in the future. This study focused on the commonalities among participants' responses, which may be considered a limitation. In other studies, the views of teachers, school principals, and vice principals could be analysed separately and differences could be highlighted.

Declarations

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