



The Opinions of Teachers on the Levels of School Principals' Use of Perception Management

Research Article

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research is to determine teacher opinions on the levels of school principals' use of perception management. The research was conducted in a descriptive survey model in which the quantitative method was used. The population of the research comprises 859 teachers working in Kahramanmaraş, Pazarcık, in 2016 - 2017 academic year. The sample of the research consists of 303 teachers (98 primary, 125 secondary, 80 high school teachers) selected by stratified sampling method. Data were collected using the "Perception Management Scale" and analyzed with SPSS 22. In addition to descriptive statistics such as arithmetic mean, frequency and standard deviation, T-test and one-way variance analysis were used in data analysis of independent variables. As for the results, the participants stated that school principals generally use the perception management at a "high" level. It has been determined that the teachers' perceptions about the levels of use of perception management by school principals differed significantly according to gender and graduated faculty variables. According to this, male teachers have a higher perception about "the school administrators' level of using perception management" than the female teachers. Likewise, the perception of teachers graduated from the education faculty is significantly lower than that of teachers graduated from other faculties.

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Keywords:

Perception, perception management, school management, school principal, teacher opinions

Introduction

Human beings are a social entity and must be able to share his ideas and feelings with other people and to solve the problems between them in the frame of qualified communication so that he can maintain his social life in a healthy way. People have a variety of purposes to communicate with people around, and one of these purposes is to influence the people, to make an impact on them and to direct them in the direction they want.

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Sociologists say that there are three different ways in which one person can make another person, people or masses do his desires (İplikçi, 2015: 67):(a) to buy with money, (b) to use force, and (c) to persuade or convince. It can be argued that the most effective and lasting of these three ways is to "persuade". To persuade one is to convince him of something and to manage his "perception".

The term "perception" is derived from the word "grasp/sense" in Turkish, as in many Western languages (Özer, 2012: 148). The origin of the concept is "capare" in Latin. Perception, in the Turkish dictionary, is defined as "to become conscious of a thing through the senses by directing attention to it, comprehension" (TDK, 2011: 92). Perception is to organize and interpret the sensory data carried by our senses. It is the process of making sense of the stimuli in people's surroundings (Uğurlu, 2008: 149). In Stupak's study (as cited in Özer, 2012), perceptions are treated in two forms as mental perception and as the experience based perception. Perceptions based on experience are perceptions developed with our five sensory organs, such as sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. Mental perceptions are things that are expressed as the sixth sense, knowing, understanding and sensing things. There are some concepts associated with perception. Two of these concepts are perception and perception management.

Perception is the state of a person to understand the events, cases and situations that happen around him, to search and to find them when he needs, to arrange the things he acquired in an informational systematic and to understand and perceive the environment (Kınacı, 2011: 39). Due to the continuity of the individuals' perception processes, people's ideas, convictions, assumptions and theories may change over time. Perceptions can be changed through different applications and routed to the desired side. A number of people, groups or institutions who want to take advantage of this feature for their own purposes and interests can influence the patterns of perception which form the value, behavior and ideas of other people, can control them, or can even change and reroute in the direction they want. In doing so, they use a very effective technique: the perception management.

Perception management can be defined as the interpretation of the meanings obtained about individuals with organizational processes and as the use and the orientation of the perception fact in such a way as to contribute to the realization of organizational and individual goals (Uğurlu, 2008: 149). In many research, it is observed that the concept of "perception management" is used in similar meanings with concepts of "perceiving management" and "perceptual management." The first conceptualization of perception management was by the US Army, and the army described this concept as: Perception management is the activities of denying and / or reporting information selected by external audiences. The aim is to influence and change their emotions, motives and objectives" (Saydam, 2005: 89). It can be argued that efforts such as persuasion, having them believe and direct them are the essence of perception management. These activities have been used from past to the present time to influence and direct individuals, societies and masses. While different government bodies use perception management for the military, intelligence and political purposes, civil institutions and organizations use this technique for purposes such as marketing, advertising and communication. The aim of the perception management is to promote positive perceptions, to maximize interests and to develop various tactics and strategies by investigating the ways and methods of persuading the target group.

The concept of perception management has a positive meaning for some people but for some others, it has a negative meaning. Those evaluating that it has a positive meaning emphasize that the perception management is the most basic way to use for reaching and introducing any new product or service to individuals and masses, whereas according to the ones who have negative evaluation, perception management is used to deceive and direct the target individual and masses within an interest policy and to ensure them move upon this interest policy. Because of these negative associations, sometimes concepts, which are thought to be more welcoming to the ear, such as soft power, public diplomacy, social engineering (Yıldız

Özşmanlı and Pank, 2013: 52), reputation management, image-impression management (Varoğlu, 2011: 1) are used instead of this concept.

Educational Organizations and Perception Management

When the history of states and societies is examined, it will be seen that a healthy society and a sound state structure and system are based on some institutions. Political institutions, justice, economy, transportation, communication and education are the first to come into mind. All of these are ultimately influenced by educational institutions. Schools are also inevitably directly or indirectly affected by the changes in the environment mentioned, and by any restructuring or change initiatives undertaken in adapting to changing conditions in the whole of the education system or in any of its upper and lower systems (Gizir, 2008: 183). The more educational institutions are healthy and sound, the stronger the state is with all its institutions. In the study of Ensari (as cited in Atalay, 2016), the key features of a good educational organization, the factors that cause social change, the vision for the future and the requirements of educational institutions are comprehensively enumerated. Only with a good educational administration can these features be implemented. In order to achieve this, the principle must direct the teachers towards the goals of the school. The principal can use different strategies in this direction, but it can be argued that the most effective method he can use is an effective perception management, just like it is in business and marketing. In today's intense competitive conditions; executives have been striving to create more efficient working environments. Improved communication methods, administrative attitudes and behaviors such as predicting the wishes and needs of the employees are becoming more and more important as basic approaches that improve the quality of working life (Çelik and Tabanlı, 2012: 32). With this method, the manager will not only take teachers' participation feelings and their need for consideration into account but also ensure their being happy to have a positive perception for their institution, According to Reclies (2015), by managing the perceptions, it is ensured that the employees and other individuals who are somewhat in relation to the organization are satisfied with the organization and that the opinions and attitudes related to the organization are seen positively. The presence of a positive perception for the institution and the continuity and management of this perception depend largely on the school administrator. It is important that teachers, as employees of the organization, also have a positive perception for the institution and the school administrator. By doing so, it can be said that they will try to accomplish the objectives of the organization in a more effective way. This situation is expected to create a favorable organizational climate in the school and contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the school.

In this regard, according to the teachers' opinions, it is hoped that this research will provide insight into the extent to which school administrators use the elements of perceptions management in their institutions and how successful they are. When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that there are a limited number of researches on perception management in the field of educational organizations, while there are many researches on perception management in business, public and advertising and marketing fields in our country. With this research, it is thought that it is important to carry out this research in order to contribute to the literature.

Purpose of the research

The main purpose of this research is to determine the teachers' opinions about the levels of use of perception management by school principals.

In accordance with this aim, the following questions are answered:

1. According to teachers, to what extent do school principals use perception management?

2. Does the teachers' views on the level of use of perception management by school principals differ significantly according to variables such as the gender, subject area, graduate education institution, school type, the total service time in the teaching profession (professional seniority) and the total service time in the present school (time spent in the latest school)?

Method

Research Design

In the study, the descriptive survey model which is one of the quantitative research methods was used to determine the teachers' views on the level of use of perception management by school principals working in schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education.

Population and the Sample

The population of the research comprises 859 teachers (of public elementary schools, secondary schools and high schools) working in Kahramanmaraş province, Pazarcık District, in 2016 - 2017 academic year. As a sample, a large sample that can represent the population with at least 5% tolerable error margin is taken. Therefore, it is calculated that at least 278 people can consist the sample (Çingir, 1994: 25). The stratified sampling method was used in determining the sample group. In this context, each school level was considered as a separate layer and the layers were proportionately sampled according to the size of each layer. As a result, the sample of the study consists of 98 primary school, 125 secondary school and 80 high school (overall total, 303) teachers.

Data Collection Instruments

In the research, in order to determine the teachers' opinions about the level of the school principals' use of perception management, 'Perception Management Scale' which was developed by Atalay (2016) was used. The scale, a 5 Likert type, consists of two sub dimensions: (a) "Perceptual Action and Applications" and (b) "Organizational Strategy and Tactics." While there are 38 items in the perceptual action and applications sub-dimension, there are 5 items in the strategy and tactics dimension of the scale. The validity and reliability analyses of the scale were made by Atalay and the reliability coefficient was found 0.90. In this study, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) normality test and Cronbach Alpha reliability test were re-conducted for the scale. As a result of the analysis, it was found that the scale had a normal distribution. For reliability test, Büyüköztürk (2014) states that the reliability coefficient value should be 0.70 or higher. As a result of the analysis, the reliability value of the scale was 0.95. Therefore, it can be said that the scale is normally distributed and reliable.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process was started after the necessary permissions were obtained. For this purpose, the schools in the sample of the study were visited one by one and after the necessary explanations about the scale in the breaks were made, the teachers were requested to respond to the items in the scale if they were voluntary. A total of 336 primary, secondary and high school teachers agreed to respond to the scale. Of the scales that were answered, 303 (81.9%) were valued by subtracting 33 scales that were found or thought to be inadequate, incomplete or biased. Of accepted as valuable scales, 98 belong to primary school teachers, 125 belong to secondary school teachers and 80 belong to teachers working in high school.

Data Analysis

In the scope of the study, significance values were based on 0.05 significance level. A 5-point Likert scale was used in the study. The scores of the teachers' responses were rated as 'Never (1)', 'Rarely (2)', 'Sometimes (3)', 'Mostly (4)' and 'Always (5)'. The statistical analyses of the data obtained in the study were conducted

with the SPSS 22 package program. In the study, percentage and frequency values were used in the description of the personal information (gender, subject area, professional seniority, time spent in the latest school, faculty of graduation and the school type); arithmetic mean and standard deviation values were used in determining the levels of school principals' use of perception management according to the teachers' opinions.

A t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the opinions of the teachers about the school principal's use of perception management in relation to the gender, subject area, and the faculty of graduation variables. Finally, a one-way variance analysis was used to test the difference in professional seniority, time spent in the latest school and school types variables.

Findings

The findings revealed with the analysis of the data gathered in accordance with the research purpose are presented below in order.

Results on the levels of use of perception management by school Principals according to the teachers' opinions

In order to find out the answer to the question "to what extend do the school principals show perception management according to the teachers' opinions concerning the school principals' use of "perceptual actions and practices" and "organizational strategy and tactics", which are the sub-scales of the perception management scale, the arithmetic mean and the standard deviation values were computed. In these two dimensions, there is a set of 43 items (first dimension consists of 38 items, and the second dimension consists of 5 items). However, instead of giving all the items under each dimension one by one, the followings steps were preferred: (a) the overall arithmetic mean and the standard deviation values of the "perceptual actions and practices" dimension, (b) the highest first three and the lowest items of the dimension were given. For the second dimension (organizational strategy and tactics), again, (c) the overall arithmetic mean and the standard deviation values of the "organizational strategy and tactics" dimension and (d) the highest and the lowest items of the dimension were given. Information about dimensions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results on the levels of school principals' use of perception management

Dimensions	Items	N	\bar{X}	Ss
Perceptual actions and practices	Considers the physical appearance.	303	4.44	0.83
	Highest			
	Makes sure that the activities carried out and to be carried out are suitable for social norms and values.	303	4.43	0.72
	Efforts to improve the image of the school in society.	303	4.42	0.77
	Lowest			
	Rewards teachers' effective performances and behaviors.	303	3.36	1.19
Organizational strategy and tactics	Tries to increase organizational commitment by coming together with the teachers outside the school.	303	3.01	1.32
	Calls teachers on important dates (such as birthdays, holidays) by e-mail, phone, etc.).	303	3.00	1.45
	Mean of the dimension	303	4.01	0.66
	Highest			
Sometimes, spreads rumors at school to make teachers accept something	303	1.81	1.22	
Lowest				
Gives teachers lack or wrong information and messages on purpose.	303	1.37	0.90	
Mean of the dimension		303	4.01	0.66
Overall means of the perception management scale (both dimensions)		303	3.72	0.76

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that according to teachers participating in the research, school principals generally use perception management at a high level ($\bar{x} = 3.72$). When Table 1 is examined in terms of the sub-dimensions of the perception management scale, school principals use the first dimension (perceptual actions and practices) at a high level ($\bar{x} = 4.01$), whereas they use the second dimension (organizational strategies and tactics) at a low level ($\bar{x} = 1.53$).

When Table 1 is examined within the context of the first sub-dimension, the teachers stated the item "considers the physical appearance" ($\bar{x} = 4.44$) as the most frequently used one by school principals. This item is followed respectively by those "Makes sure that the activities carried out and to be carried out are suitable for social norms and values" ($\bar{x} = 4.43$) and "Efforts to improve the image of the school in society" ($\bar{x} = 4.42$). In this dimension again, the least used actions and practices that the school principals use for perception management, are the items "Calls teachers on important dates (such as birthdays, holidays) by e-mail, phone, etc." ($\bar{x} = 3.00$), "Tries to increase organizational commitment by coming together with the teachers outside the school" ($\bar{x} = 3.01$) and "Rewards teachers' effective performances and behaviors" ($\bar{x} = 3.36$) respectively.

When the second sub-dimension of Table 1 is examined, teachers reported that the most and the least used strategies and tactics that school principals use for perception management are "sometimes, spreads rumors at school to make teachers accept something" ($\bar{x} = 1.81$) and "Gives teachers lack or wrong information and messages on purpose" ($\bar{x} = 1.37$) respectively.

The Results of teachers' opinions on the level of the school Principals' use of perception management in terms of the demographic variables

The levels of school principals' using perception management differ significantly prior to variables such as the gender, subject area, the graduation institution, the school type they teach, the professional seniority and total time spent in latest school" were analyzed through independent samples t-test and one way variance (ANOVA) analysis. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the opinions of the teachers about the school principals' use of perception management by means of the gender, subject area, and the faculty of graduation variables. The results are given in Table 2. Variables such as professional seniority, time spent in latest school and the school types were subjected to one way variance analysis (ANOVA). The results are given in Table 3. To interpret the effect sizes of the analysis Cohen d was used.

Table 2 shows the results of the t-Test on the levels of use of perception management by school principals prior to gender, subject area and the faculty of graduation variables.

Table 2. The results of t- Test analysis

Variables	Groups	N	\bar{X}	Ss	sd	t	p
Gender	Female	143	2.70	0.49	301	-2.364	0.019*
	Male	160	2.83	0.48			
Subject area	Literacy-Numeracy	87	2.71	0.42	301	-1.284	0.200
	Other Subjects	216	2.79	0.51			
Faculty of Graduation	Faculty of Education	237	2.74	0.47	301	-2.269	0.024*
	Other Faculties	66	2.89	0.54			

*p<.05

According to Table 2, teachers' opinions on the levels of school principals' using the perception management differ significantly prior to the gender variable [t (301) = - 2.364, p < 0.05]. Accordingly, the perception of male teachers ($\bar{x} = 2.83$) for the "levels of school principals ' use of perception management" is

significantly higher than that of the female teachers' ($\bar{X} = 2.70$). In order to see the effect size of the difference, Cohen d was calculated. The Cohen d was calculated as 0.27, which means that there was a trivial effect.

Comparisons based on subject area variables revealed no statistically significant differences [$t(301) = -1.284, p > 0.05$]. This suggests that both groups of teachers do not contradict to each other and have similarities in their opinions about the levels of school principals' using the perception management.

According to Table 2, teachers' opinions on the levels of school principals' using the perception management differ significantly in terms of the graduation of faculty variable [$t(301) = -2.269, p < 0.05$]. Accordingly, the perception of the teachers graduated from faculty of education ($\bar{X} = 2.74$) is significantly lower than that of the teachers graduated from other faculties ($\bar{X} = 2.89$). In order to see the effect size of the difference, Cohen d was calculated. Like in the gender variable, the Cohen d was calculated as 0.32, which means that there was a trivial effect.

Table 3 shows the results of the One Way ANOVA analysis on the levels of school principals' use of perception management in terms of professional seniority, time spent in latest school and the school type variables.

Table 3. The results of the One Way ANOVA analysis

Variables	Groups	N	\bar{X}	Ss	Source of variance	Sum of squares	sd	F	p	Source of difference
Professional Seniority	1-4 years	92	2.80	0.52	Between Groups	0.129	2	0.265	0.768	-
	5-10 years	110	2.75	0.51	Within Groups	73.083	300			
	11- 11+ years	101	2.77	0.43	Total	73.212	302			
Time Spent in Latest School	Less than 1 year	100	2.80	0.43	Between Groups	0.135	2	0.277	0.759	-
	2-4 years	121	2.75	0.53	Within Groups	73.077	300			
	5- 5+ years	82	2.75	0.49	Total	73.212	302			
School Types	Primary School	98	2.71	0.42	Between Groups	0.910	2	1.887	0.153	-
	Secondary School	125	2.76	0.56	Within Groups	72.302	300			
	High School	80	2.85	0.42	Total	73.212	302			

According to Table 3, one way ANOVA analysis was conducted to compare the teachers' opinions on the levels of school principals' use of perception management in such variables as professional seniority, time spent in latest school and the school types. The analysis revealed that teachers' opinions do not show any statistically significant differences in terms of professional seniority, [$F(2;300) = 0.265, p > 0.05$], time spent in latest school [$F(2;300) = 0.277, p > 0.05$], and the school types [$F(2;300) = 1.887, p > 0.05$].

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the levels of school principals' use of perception management were analyzed based on the teachers' opinions prior to the data gathered via "perception management scale" of which subscales are "perceptual actions and practices" and "Organizational Strategy and Tactics". Variables such as gender, subject

area, graduation faculty, school types, professional seniority, and time spent in latest school were respectively taken into consideration during analysis.

As a result, the teachers are in the opinion that the school principals generally use the perception management at the "mostly" (high) level. But for the sub-dimensions of the perception management scale, school principals use the "perceptual actions and practices" dimension still at the "mostly" (high) level whereas using the "organizational strategy and tactics" dimension at the "never" (low) level. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the levels of school principals' use of perception management are not at the desired level (the higher the average, the better it is). This can be inferred with the average score of the both dimensions ($\bar{x} = 3.72$), which is at the "mostly" level.

Atalay (2016) used the same scale in her study, carried out in public primary schools in Ankara. She stated that school principals used both dimensions ("perceptual actions and practices" and "organizational strategy and tactics") of perception management at the "mostly" level. This research overlaps with the first dimension of Atalay's research, while it differs in the second dimension. As a matter of fact, when the results of these two studies are taken into consideration, it is observed that the items like "the school principals' giving incomplete or fake information to teachers", "principals' taking side with some teachers when using their power and authority" and "principals' giving the teachers, thought to be close to them, more equipped classrooms" were at a high score. Whereas the same items were at a low score in this study, this may be due to the principal delegation regulations of Ministry of National Education [MEB]. Because the school principal might have the idea that "as a school principal, my delegation will last for 4 years in any case, and I will teach again. So, there is no point in giving a teacher a promise that won't come true by developing different strategies and tactics."

Binbaşıoğlu (as cited in Töremen and Kolay, 2003) states that school managers are expected to have qualifications such as being more energetic and enthusiastic about the school, having good communication with the environment, embracing democracy, and having sincere behaviors.

Akbaba (2011) found in his study that the inspectors' perception had averages over the specified thresholds values both in the subscale scores and also in the context of the total score. Moreover, when evaluated on the basis of the items on the scale, the study was found to be in common with the studies carried out earlier. For example, in the study of Ambrose and Harland (as cited in Atalay, 2016), there are notes that rewarding effective performance and behaviors increases the support of employees' emotional support and ensure emotional devotion to them, and that directors' calling employees through various means of communication greatly influence them. Apart from this, in terms of perception management, managers are expected to have qualifications such as simple and understandable language (Saydam, 2005), feedbacks for performances, approval and appreciation of such behaviors (Kantos, 2013) and basing what is said and done on realities (Morris and Upchurch, 2012). Such findings in the aforementioned studies also overlap with the results of the present study.

The level of school principals' use of perception management showed a significant difference in terms of gender and faculty of graduation variables, but did not show any significant difference in terms of other variables. According to this, male teachers' perception of "school principals' use of perception management" is statistically significantly higher than female teachers' perception. The fact that all of the current administrators in the population, where the study was realized, were male can be the possible cause of this significant difference. This is because, while male teachers are more comfortable in communicating with school principals who are their fellow men, the situation may not be the same for female teachers, and vice versa, and therefore the perception of women is lower.

As in this study, a significant difference was found in terms of the gender variable in the study carried out by Atalay (2016). However, in contrast to this study, it was determined that female teachers had a higher score for the perception management of school principals than that of the male teachers in Atalay's study. Again, in the study conducted by Uğurlu (2012), female teachers stated that school administrators behave in an unethical manner while exhibiting behaviors such as communication and decision-making.

The second variable, in which there is significant difference, is the faculty of graduation variable. Accordingly, the perception of teachers graduated from the faculty of education for the level of use of perception management by school principals is significantly lower than the perception of teachers graduated from other faculties. It can be stated that the possible reason of this difference is that teachers graduating from the Faculty of Education had management and psychology based courses throughout their undergraduate studies. As an outcome of such courses, the education faculty graduate teachers can easily understand the possible intention of an action or a statement of the school principal either in the context of management or in the context of other social relations. They can understand whether the action or word is unethical, perceptive or distorted, and therefore evaluate accordingly.

In his study, Uygun (2006) found that there was no significant difference in the level of school principals' influence on teachers according to graduation variable. In this respect, it differs from this study.

As a sum up, the conclusions based on the research findings can be presented in four items:

1. According to teachers, school principals use "perceptual actions and practices", which is the first dimension (with positive expressions) of the perception management scale at the "mostly" (high) level.
2. According to teachers, school principals use "organizational strategies and tactics", which is the second dimension (with negative and unethical expressions) of perception management scale at the "never" (low) level.
3. Teacher opinions on the level of school principals' use of perception management differ significantly by gender and graduated faculty variables.
4. Teacher opinions on the level of school principals' use of perception management do not differ significantly by such variables as occupational seniority, branch, present school seniority, and school levels they serve.

Recommendations

The recommendations based on the research results are as follows:

1. It can be studied by means of qualitative and quantitative research techniques to what extent perception management practices of the school principals are perceived by students, parents, other school personnel and stakeholders, as well as teachers.
2. Studies may be conducted to reveal the possible relationship between school principals' perception management practices and school effectiveness.
3. In-service trainings can be held to school principals in order to bring out perceptive management practices that create positive results for school principals more effective.

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