

## PAPER DETAILS

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ON PREFERENCES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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**Research Article**

**SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' VIEWS ON THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI) ON PREFERENCES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

**Gizem GÜNÇAVDI ALABAY\***

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**Abstract**

This study aims to discover the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and conflict management within educational institutions, specifically focusing on school administrators' perspectives. Designed in phenomenology, the study encompassed 14 school principals from Turkish public schools, utilizing semi-structured interviews for data collection. Upon transcription and descriptive analysis, seven salient themes emerged. Findings clearly evinced the integral role of EI in conflict management, resonating with established EI paradigms, emphasizing aspects like empathy, self-awareness, and self-regulation. Moreover, the tangible link between EI and harmonious school cultures, efficient conflict resolution, and the generation of emotionally robust students was evident. In light of these revelations, the study proposes policy recommendations, including mandatory EI training for school personnel and the integration of EI frameworks into student curricula.

**Keywords:** School principals, emotional intelligence, conflicts, conflict management, qualitative research.

**OKUL YÖNETİCİLERİNİN DUYGUSAL ZEKÂNIN ÇATIŞMA YÖNETİMİ STRATEJİLERİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİNE İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİ**

**Öz**

Bu çalışma, özellikle okul yöneticilerinin bakış açılarına odaklanarak, eğitim kurumlarında Duygusal Zekâ (EI) ile çatışma yönetimi arasındaki ilişkiyi keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Okullarda değer çatışmaları ve kaynak tahsisi de dahil olmak üzere çeşitli kaynaklardan kaynaklanan çatışmaların her yerde bulunmasına rağmen, etkili çözüm büyük ölçüde yöneticilerin iletişim becerilerine ve mevcut organizasyonel ortama bağlıdır. Fenomenoloji deseninde tasarlanan çalışma, veri toplamak için yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden yararlanılarak Türkiye'deki devlet okullarında görev yapan 14 okul müdürünü kapsamıştır. Betimsel analiz sonucunda yedi tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Bulgular, duygusal zekânın çatışma yönetimindeki tamamlayıcı rolünü açıkça ortaya koymuştur. Elde edilen bulgular empati, öz farkındalık ve öz düzenleme gibi yönleri vurgulamıştır. Ayrıca, duygusal zekâ ile uyumlu okul kültürleri, etkili çatışma çözümü ve duygusal açıdan güçlü öğrenciler yetiştirmek arasındaki somut bağlantı ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu

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açıklamaların ışığında çalışma, okul personeli için zorunlu duygusal zekâ eğitimi ve duygusal zekâ eğitimi çerçeve programlarının öğrenci müfredatına entegrasyonu dahil olmak üzere politika önerileri önermektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Okul yöneticileri, duygusal zekâ, çatışmalar, çatışma yönetimi, nitel araştırma.

## Introduction

In the late 20th century and early 21st century, the influence of post-modern theories on management science shifted the focus towards the human aspect within organizations, emphasizing the psychological needs of employees. This evolving perspective placed an expectation on managers to recognize and address the individual differences among employees, as well as to develop strategies, skills, and approaches for effectively managing conflicts that might arise from these differences (Hubbard, 2004).

Conflict, defined as a process leading to tension among group members due to actual or perceived differences, can occur for various reasons. Moore (1996) categorized conflict causes into five groups, including conflicts rooted in differences in values (such as ideology or religious beliefs), relationship conflicts stemming from poor communication, conflicts arising from differing interpretations of data, conflicts of interest related to competition for psychological benefits, and disputes over the fair allocation of resources or authority within the organization. Conflicts are a common occurrence in all types of organizations, albeit to varying degrees. Educational organizations, which rely heavily on human resources, are no exception, often experiencing conflicts due to factors related to both organizational structure and individual differences among stakeholders (Nural, Ada & Çolak, 2012). Nikolaou (2018) highlighted that conflicts in educational institutions can involve teachers, students, and parents, underscoring the importance of school administrators possessing the social skills and academic knowledge necessary to resolve conflicts successfully and without the involvement of third parties. Similarly, Nural et al. (2012) found out that the effectiveness of school principals in managing conflicts is in a close relationship with their communication skills and their ability to create a positive school climate. Kapıcı and Radmard (2016) also revealed the significant impact of school administrators' competencies and knowledge on conflicts within educational organizations.

Conflict management is a critical process that can influence the organizational climate and its overall success. Thus, there have been so many studies in the related literature on conflict management strategies. One of those models, proposed by Rahim (1983), distinguishes between integration, compliance, domination, avoidance, and compromising strategies, depending on the individual's level of interest in both themselves and others. Another model by DeDreu et al. (2001) identifies five dimensions of conflict management: Problem solving (cooperation), compromise, avoidance, forcing, and yielding strategies. These strategies offer different approaches for handling conflicts based on the parties' priorities and goals (DeDreu et al., 2001).

As evident in the aforementioned studies, the competence of school administrators plays a pivotal role in effectively managing conflicts within educational organizations. The literature also explores the relationship between conflict management strategies and various variables, such as emotional intelligence levels (Özdemir & Özdemir, 2007), social intelligence levels (Şahin, 2016), and leadership behaviors (Uzun, 2014). For instance, Özdemir and Özdemir

(2007) found a correlation between the empathy dimension of emotional intelligence and conflict management strategies like domination and compromise, as well as a significant and moderately positive relationship between cooperation and compromise and the social skills dimension of emotional intelligence among university academic staff.

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has been a subject that has been researched in the literature since the 1990s. Salovey and Mayer are the first researchers to define the concept of emotional intelligence. Salovey and Mayer (1990) stated that EI is one of the sub-dimensions of social intelligence, and they define EI as managing the feelings and emotions of the individual himself and other individuals around him, being aware and distinguishing that each individual's emotions and feelings are different from each other, using this information to guide the individual's thoughts and behaviors. It is possible to say that individuals with high EI are more successful in both their personal and business lives (Wong and Law, 2002). Wong and Law (2002) emphasized that individuals with high EI can understand both their own emotions and the emotions of the people around them, are more successful in managing their emotions thanks to the attitudes and behaviors they develop depending on these emotions, and thus have a high level of job satisfaction and job performance in organizations. The findings of Özdemir and Özdemir's (2007) study on the effect of EI on conflict management processes revealed that EI also affects conflict management processes. Similarly, Güney (2005) in his study found a low and positive significant relationship between school administrators' EI levels and compromise strategy; a low and positive significant relationship between EI levels and integration strategy; a low, negative and significant relationship between EI level and avoidance strategy; a low level, positive and significant relationship between EI and problem solving.

It is known that individuals' high levels of emotional intelligence are effective in reducing communication problems, which are among the causes of conflict (Avcı, 2019). Therefore, considering the effect of EI in managing conflicts, it is possible to say that conflicts will be managed more effectively. Karip (2015) states that a well-managed conflict has positive results, and Karip (2015) emphasized stress, job boredom, decreases and disorders in communication, an unsafe organizational environment, low level of performance, low level of job satisfaction, low level of organizational commitment, and increased resistance of employees in the organization to change among the negative consequences. It is possible to say that in order to prevent the emergence of these negative factors, it is important for conflicts to be managed effectively and for school principals to have some knowledge, skills and competencies in this management process. It is possible to say that having a high level of EI is among the characteristics that school administrators must have in the process of managing conflicts effectively.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are quantitative studies examining the relationships between school administrators' emotional intelligence levels and conflict management strategies (Atay, 2002; Gomez-Leal, Holzer, Bradley, Fernandez-Berrocal, & Patti, 2022; Güney, 2005; Kazak & Aygün, 2022; Karamuk & Dulay, 2023; Şahin & Yüksel-Şahin, 2017). Research shows that there are relationships between these skills. However, it was felt that it was necessary to conduct research designed with a qualitative pattern in order to understand the opinions of school administrators on this issue in depth. In this context, the aim of this study is to examine school administrators' views on the impact of EI on conflict management preferences. Within this aim, the sub-problem questions were formed as follows:

- 1) What are the views of school principals on emotional intelligence?
- 2) What are the views of school principals on conflict management?
- 3) What are the views of school principals on the conflict management process which is driven by emotional intelligence?
- 4) What kind of outcomes do school principals expect from the conflict management process driven by emotional intelligence?

## 1. Methodology

### 1.1. Research Design:

The research is designed in phenomenology, which is one of the qualitative research designs. Phenomenology aims to explore, describe, and interpret the lived experiences of individuals regarding a particular phenomenon in order to understand the essence of the experience in-depth (Moustakas, 1994). This research design tries analyze personal experiences, emotions, and perceptions to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By focusing on the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals, phenomenology provides rich, descriptive insights (Van Manen, 1990).

### 1.2. Study Group:

The study group included 14 school principals who worked at public schools in one of the districts of Turkey. They were chosen through maximum variation sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods. Within the maximum variation sampling, researchers seek to identify and select participants who represent a broad spectrum of variability in characteristics or experiences related to the research phenomenon (Patton, 2002). By deliberately selecting a diverse set of participants, this approach allows for the identification of common patterns that cut across variations, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within this research, the school principals with different seniorities, education levels, genders, and ages. The demographic information of school principals is presented in Table 1:

Table 1: The Demographic Information of Participants

Code	Gender	Age	Seniority	Education degree
M1	Male	42	15	Bachelor
M2	Male	38	10	Bachelor
M3	Male	48	20	Bachelor
F1	Female	50	25	MA
F2	Female	35	7	Bachelor
M4	Male	46	18	Bachelor
M5	Male	40	12	Bachelor
M6	Male	39	11	MA
M7	Male	43	16	Bachelor
M8	Male	37	9	MA
M9	Male	45	17	MA
M10	Male	41	14	Bachelor
M11	Male	49	21	Bachelor
M12	Male	36	8	Bachelor

As it can be seen from Table 1, 2 of the participated school principals were female and 12 of them were male; the ages of school principals changed between 35 and 49; the seniority of them were between 7 and 25 years; and 9 of the participants got bachelor degree in education while 5 of them got MA. In order to provide anonymity of the participants, the participants were

given codes which is formed related to their gender (e.g.: A male principals was coded as M1= The first, male participant).

### 1.3. Data Collection Process:

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The questions were prepared to understand the views of school principals on emotional intelligence and its effect on conflict management strategies. The questions were used firstly in a pilot study, with three school principals who were not included in the study group of this research. They clearly understood the questions, and the answers gathered from them showed that the questions were understandable and served the purpose of the research. The questions included in the semi-structured interview form are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The Questions Included in the Semi-Structured Interview Form

Questions	Probing questions
How do you define emotional intelligence?	
How do you define the terms “conflict” and “conflict management”?	Could you give me examples about your experiences about conflict management, if any?
What kind of effect does EI have on school environment?	How does it affect school climate, school culture, etc.?
What kind of effect does conflict management process on school environment?	How does it affect school climate, school culture, etc.?
What importance does EI have on conflict management process?	Do you believe that EI effects conflict management process? How?
What kind of outcomes would you expect from a conflict management process on which EI has an effect?	

### 1.4. Data Analysis:

The data gathered from participants were firstly transcribed verbatim. After that, the transcribed data were sent to the participants in order to get their approval. All of the participants approved their transcribed data. As the next step, the data were analyzed by using descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis in qualitative research refers to the process of interpreting and giving meaning to raw data to provide a comprehensive and detailed description of the phenomena under study. Rather than quantifying patterns or making predictions, the focus is on elucidating the richness and depth of experiences, behaviors, and contexts. This form of analysis seeks to depict the "who, what, and where" of events or experiences, providing a narrative account of the data grounded in participants' own terms (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Descriptive analysis serves as a foundational step for subsequent interpretative or thematic analyses in qualitative research, ensuring that findings are deeply rooted in the actual experiences and perspectives of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

At the end of descriptive analysis process, 7 themes were formed, and these themes are discussed in the next section in detail.

## 2. Findings

As a result of descriptive analysis, seven themes are formed in terms of school principals' views on emotional intelligence and its effect on conflict management strategies. The themes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Main Themes and Sub-Themes Related to The School Principals' Views on Emotional Intelligence and Its Effect on Conflict Management Strategies

Main themes	Sub-themes
Interlinked capacities	
Proactive conflict prevention	
Empathy in mediation	
Self-awareness and self-regulation	
Tailored conflict approaches	
Building emotionally intelligent school cultures	
Perceived outcomes of EI-driven conflict management processes	Positive outcomes Neutral outcomes

Before discussing the themes, school principals' definitions of emotional intelligence and conflict management are presented in order to discuss whether school principals had knowledge about EI and conflict management or not.

Firstly, school principals identified emotional intelligence as in the examples below:

*"To me, emotional intelligence means being able to recognize my own emotions and those of others. It's like tuning into an emotional frequency."* (M3)

*"It's not just about knowing how you feel but also understanding why you feel that way and how to handle it."* (M1)

*"It's being aware of your emotions without letting them take control, especially in stressful situations."* (F2)

*"I believe it's deeply connected to resilience. When life throws challenges, emotional intelligence helps you cope, adapt, and move forward."* (M8)

The example utterances of school principals show that they identified EI as being aware of their own emotions, as well as others' emotions; understanding emotions; and being able to handle them. These definitions are similar to the EI's definition in the literature (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Thus, it is possible to say that school principals have basic knowledge about EI.

When it comes to defining the concepts of conflict and conflict management, the school principals made definitions as presented below:

*"Conflict to me is when two or more people or groups have opposing views or interests that clash."* (M12)

*"I've always seen conflict as a difference in opinions or beliefs that can lead to tensions"* (M10)

*"I believe conflict management is a dance. Sometimes you lead, sometimes you follow, and sometimes you find a new rhythm together."* (F1)

*"For me, conflict management means stepping back, assessing the situation, and then approaching it with a calm and open mind."* (M6)

The utterances presented above show that the school principals identify conflicts and conflict management processes by taking human interactions and relationships into

consideration. One of the participants produced a metaphor about conflict management, which is “dance”. All of these example utterances prove that the school principals have basic knowledge and awareness about conflicts and conflict management processes.

After analyzing the understandings of the school principals about EI and conflict management processes, the themes are going to be discussed in detail.

### 2.1. Interlink Capacities:

Principals often view EI and conflict management not as separate skill sets, but as interlinked capacities. They believe that EI and conflict management are mutually connected. Some of the example utterances are presented below:

*“For me, emotional intelligence is the foundation of conflict management. You can't separate the two.” (M4)*

*“After talking to you, in my role as a principal, I've realized that my ability to manage conflicts effectively comes directly from my emotional intelligence.” (M9)*

*“There's a direct correlation, I feel. The more tuned in I am to the emotions of others, the better I am at managing disagreements.” (M7)*

*“There's a synergy between EI and conflict management. You can't excel in one without the other. Being in a leadership role, I've noticed that when I tap into my emotional intelligence, conflicts tend to resolve more organically.” (M2)*

The utterances presented above show that the school principals perceive the relationship between EI and conflict management as having the interconnected nature. They emphasized that these two concepts are not just complementary but are deeply connected in practice.

### 2.2. Proactive Conflict Prevention:

The second theme of the research is “proactive conflict prevention”. According to the school principals, EI helps them see possible conflicts before they occur. The data showed that principals with higher EI are perceived to be more able to prevent conflicts before they occur. Some example utterances from school principals are given below:

*“There's something about high EI individuals. They can read the room and prevent disagreements from becoming major issues. I've worked under several principals, and the ones with strong emotional intelligence always had a knack for diffusing situations before they got out of hand.” (M11)*

*“It's like they have a sixth sense. They can anticipate where conflicts might arise and navigate the situation in advance. Emotionally intelligent principals don't just manage conflicts, they prevent them. It's a proactive approach that makes all the difference, and I'm trying to do in my school.” (M5)*

*“I think high EI gives principals a sort of 'emotional foresight.' They can predict and preempt conflicts with remarkable accuracy.” (M1)*

The example utterances put forward that school principals believed that with higher emotional intelligence, they can proactively prevent conflicts from occurring within a school setting. They underscore the value of emotional foresight in ensuring a harmonious school environment.



### 2.3. Empathy in Mediation:

The third theme of the research is about empathy in mediation process. Emphasizing the role of empathy, many principals believe that truly understanding the emotional perspectives of all parties involved is crucial for successful conflict management. Some of the utterances of school principals are as follows:

*“To mediate effectively, I've always believed it's paramount to step into the shoes of everyone involved. Without understanding their emotions, resolutions can be superficial.” (M6)*

*“I've been in situations where, as a principal, the facts were on one side but the emotions on another. Navigating such scenarios without deep empathy would be impossible.” (F2)*

*“When teachers or students come to me with conflicts, my first step isn't to find a solution but to genuinely understand their feelings. That's where true mediation starts. I've seen many conflicts escalate simply because parties felt they weren't understood. Emphasizing empathy has made my mediation efforts far more successful.” (M9)*

The utterances given as examples above emphasized the central role of empathy in the mediation efforts of school principals. They underscore the belief that understanding and validating the emotions of all parties involved is fundamental for effective conflict resolution.

### 2.4. Self-awareness and Self-regulation:

The next theme is about “self-awareness and self-regulation” of school principals. School principals emphasized that being self-aware of their own emotions during conflicts allows them to respond rather than react. Some example utterances are given below:

*“There have been instances where I felt the anger rising, but recognizing that emotion allowed me to take a step back and address the situation calmly.” (M2)*

*“I often find myself in the middle of staff disagreements. But being aware of my feelings and biases helps me mediate more effectively” (M7)*

*“I remind myself that it's okay to take a moment, excuse myself, and return when I feel more centered. That's not a sign of weakness but one of self-awareness. Because if I don't do this, every time I've reacted without thinking, I've regretted it. Over time, I've trained myself to recognize those moments and pause.” (M10)*

The utterances from the school principals emphasized the significance of self-awareness and self-regulation in their leadership roles. They highlight the journey of growth from reactive responses to reflective actions, emphasizing the benefits of recognizing and understanding one's own emotions during conflicts. The principals value the ability to differentiate between personal feelings and the overarching goal of student welfare, suggesting that self-awareness is a compass guiding them towards rational and compassionate decisions. The utilization of strategies such as deep breathing, journaling, and seeking peer advice further exemplify proactive measures taken to maintain emotional equilibrium. Through these narratives, it's evident that self-awareness isn't merely about acknowledging emotions but harnessing them as tools for effective conflict resolution and setting a positive example for the school community.

### 2.5. Tailored Conflict Approaches:

The fifth theme is “tailored conflict approaches”. Recognizing the unique emotional dynamics of each conflict situation, principals with strong EI skills often adjust their conflict management strategies accordingly in a flexible way. Some of the example utterances are as follows:

*“It's like being a conductor of an orchestra. Each conflict has its own rhythm, and with strong EI, I can ensure we reach a harmonious resolution. When emotions run high, it's crucial to be adaptable. I've learned that sometimes the best approach is to give individuals space and time before addressing the core issue”* (M8)

*“Some conflicts are more emotionally charged than others. By gauging that intensity, I can decide whether to address it head-on or give it some time to calm down”* (M1)

*“Emotional intelligence isn't just about understanding my own feelings but also about tuning into the emotional frequencies of others. This guides my conflict management techniques”* (M11)

From these examples presented above, it's evident that (EI) plays an important role in shaping conflict management strategies. The principals emphasize the non-uniform nature of conflicts, pointing to the necessity of a tailored and adaptable approach. Their narratives underscore the importance of not just understanding one's own emotions but also tuning into the emotional nuances of others involved. The capacity to read and respond to these emotional cues, whether by active listening, validation, or strategic patience, is highlighted as a hallmark of effective leadership. These utterances reinforce the belief that strong EI skills equip school principals with the flexibility and discernment required to navigate the diverse and dynamic emotional landscapes of their school communities.

### 2.6. Building Emotionally Intelligent School Cultures:

The next theme is about building an emotionally intelligent school culture. Some school principals believe that creating a school culture where EI is valued and developed can lead to an environment with fewer conflicts and better strategies to address them when they arise. Some of the examples from school principals are given below:

*“Cultivating a culture that prioritizes emotional intelligence has been transformative. It's not just about fewer conflicts; it's about creating a space where everyone feels understood. By valuing emotional intelligence, we're telling our students that their feelings matter. This acknowledgement alone can deter many potential conflicts.”* (M5)

*“When we value and develop EI, we're not just creating a school; we're fostering a community. This community then has the tools to address conflicts in a more productive manner.”* (F1)

*“It's not just about reducing conflicts; it's about teaching our school community the value of emotional connection, understanding, and growth.”* (M3)

The utterances showed that school principals emphasized that integrating emotional intelligence into the fabric of school culture not only minimizes conflicts but fosters a holistic environment of mutual understanding, empathy, and proactive resolution, preparing students and staff alike for the intricate emotional landscapes of the world beyond the classroom.

### 2.7. Perceived Outcomes of EI-driven Conflict Management Processes:

The seventh and the last theme is about the outcomes of conflict management process on which EI has an impact. There are two different outcomes according to school principals' views. These outcomes are positive and neutral outcomes. Some views of the school principals on positive outcomes are presented below:

*"Since emphasizing EI in our conflict management strategies, there's been a palpable shift in school culture. Disagreements now often lead to constructive dialogues rather than escalating tensions"* (F2)

*"There's been an unexpected yet welcome outcome from our emphasis on emotional intelligence: enhanced collaboration among faculty. Teachers are now more open to feedback, and discussions are more fruitful and less defensive"* (M4)

*"Parent-teacher conferences have become more solution-oriented and less confrontational. By applying emotionally intelligent techniques, we're able to address concerns in a more collaborative and understanding manner."* (M12)

Emphasizing emotional intelligence in conflict management has not only cultivated a more harmonious school culture, but it has also fostered constructive dialogues, long-lasting solutions, increased collaboration, and a strengthened sense of community among students, staff, and parents alike.

When it comes to neutral outcomes of EI-driven conflict management process, some example utterances of school principals are as follows:

*"While we've implemented EI-driven conflict management techniques, it seems that some conflicts simply take their natural course regardless. It doesn't necessarily create resolution, but it does bring an understanding."* (F1)

*"Emotionally intelligent practices have been integrated into our conflict management, but it's worth noting that some traditional strategies are just as effective in certain scenarios. EI adds depth, but doesn't always replace what has worked in the past."* (M1)

*"While students are being exposed to emotionally intelligent conflict resolution strategies, it's evident that their home environment and external influences play a significant role in their reactions. EI provides a framework, but real-world application varies."* (M7)

The school principals who believed the outcomes were neutral emphasized that while emotional intelligence-driven conflict management introduces a nuanced dimension of understanding and clarity to school dynamics, its impact varies across individuals and situations, suggesting that it complements, rather than replaces, traditional conflict resolution methods, and its full integration and acceptance is an evolving process.

### 3. Discussion

The research's findings showed that there is a nuanced relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and conflict management within the educational domain, particularly through the view of school principals. This study's findings align with established literature on emotional intelligence and conflict management. Salovey and Mayer's (1990) foundational definition of EI, which emphasizes the ability to perceive, evaluate, and manage one's own and

others' emotions, resonates with the principals' understanding of emotional intelligence. As per their definitions, the principals showcased an awareness of emotional subtleties, signifying its practical relevance in the educational environment (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

The perception of emotional intelligence and conflict management as interlinked capacities, as evidenced in this study, parallels Goleman's (1995) claims in his landmark work. Goleman (1995) proposed that emotional intelligence is integral to competencies like conflict management, which requires an understanding of the emotions of oneself and others to navigate disputes effectively. The principals' responses align with this perspective, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between EI and conflict resolution (Goleman, 1995). Research consistently shows the synergy between emotional intelligence (EI) and effective conflict management (Goleman, 1995). Principals who view EI and conflict management as deeply connected reflect a growing consensus in the literature, with studies indicating that individuals with higher EI tend to be more adept at handling conflicts (Brackett et al., 2011).

Proactive conflict prevention, as highlighted by our participants, is consistent with Brackett and Mayer's (2003) work. They discussed that individuals with higher emotional intelligence could anticipate emotional shifts in interpersonal dynamics, thereby preempting potential conflicts (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Bar-On (2000) posited that individuals with higher EI levels are more adept at interpersonal relationships, which might explain why such principals can preemptively address potential conflicts. Their ability to anticipate conflicts aligns with the findings that emotionally intelligent individuals have a propensity for heightened social awareness (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).

Empathy's role in mediation, as underscored by the principals, finds support in the works of scholars such as Bar-On (2002). Bar-On argued that empathy is a critical component of EI, enabling individuals to understand and respond to the emotions of others, ultimately facilitating effective conflict mediation (Bar-On, 2002). The emphasis on empathy aligns with Mayer et al.'s (2008) model of EI, which highlights the significance of empathetic concern in interpersonal interactions, as well. Recognizing the emotions of others and understanding their perspectives is fundamental for effective mediation, as empathy is shown to foster trust and open communication (Batson, 2009).

The importance given to self-awareness and self-regulation by the school principals mirrors the model of emotional intelligence proposed by Petrides and Furnham (2000). They identified self-awareness and regulation as central traits in their trait EI theory, suggesting their importance in emotional processing, especially in challenging situations like conflicts (Petrides & Furnham, 2000). The ability to differentiate between personal feelings and the overarching goal underscores the significance of two core components of EI: self-awareness and self-regulation (Salovey & Grewal, 2005). Studies suggest that these skills play a crucial role in leadership, enabling leaders to respond constructively to challenges (Caruso & Salovey, 2004).

Another finding of this research, the emphasis on tailored conflict approaches, compiles with Jordan and Troth's (2004) research. They contended that emotionally intelligent individuals possess a versatile range of strategies, allowing them to adapt and approach conflicts differently based on the unique emotional dynamics of each situation (Jordan & Troth, 2004). In addition, the notion that conflicts possess distinct emotional dynamics resonates with the findings of Cherniss (2010), who proposed that emotionally intelligent individuals exhibit flexibility in

their approach to challenges, adapting their strategies to the unique requirements of each situation.

School principals participated in this study emphasized the importance of the focus on building emotionally intelligent school cultures, and this draws parallels with Goleman's (1998) idea of the "emotionally intelligent organization". Goleman posited that institutions with a strong culture of EI are better equipped to manage internal dynamics, leading to more harmonious and productive environments (Goleman, 1998). his perspective echoes the research of Elias et al. (1997), who found that schools with a strong focus on emotional learning tend to experience fewer conflicts and foster more harmonious learning environments. Such environments not only minimize conflicts but also cultivate emotionally resilient students ready for real-world challenges.

Lastly, the perceived outcomes, both positive and neutral, of implementing EI-driven conflict management techniques align with Caruso and Salovey's (2004) findings. They asserted that while emotional intelligence provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing emotions, its effectiveness is contingent on various external factors and individual variations (Caruso & Salovey, 2004). The positive impact of EI on school culture and collaboration echoes the findings of Druskat & Wolff (2001), who found that teams with higher collective EI tend to have more effective interpersonal interactions and collaborative efforts. However, the neutral outcomes highlight the importance of understanding EI as a tool within a broader conflict management toolkit, a sentiment which has been echoed by scholars noting the multi-faceted nature of conflict management (Jordan & Troth, 2004).

Depending on the findings of this research, it is possible to make some suggestions for policy makers. Given the strong link between emotional intelligence (EI) and effective conflict management, it might be prudent for policymakers to mandate regular EI training not just for school principals, but potentially for the broader school staff as well. Such initiatives could greatly benefit personal development and enhance school environments (Goleman, 1998). Rather than attempting to merge EI principles into pre-existing policies, a more strategic approach might involve the creation of new policy frameworks that use EI as a foundational cornerstone. This approach could potentially mitigate the challenges observed when trying to integrate EI with established protocols, ensuring that the overarching policy direction is in sync with emotionally intelligent paradigms. In addition, the introduction of feedback mechanisms within the school system could allow principals and other staff members to share their experiences and insights regarding the impact of EI-centric policies, offering a dynamic tool for policy refinement. Furthermore, considering the evident advantages of EI in conflict management among the educational staff, there's a compelling argument to be made for the integration of EI concepts into student curricula. Such an integration could equip students with essential skills, preparing them to handle future conflicts more adeptly.

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### Geniş Özet

Söz konusu çalışma, 20. yüzyılın sonları ve 21. yüzyılın başlarında, yönetim bilimlerindeki post-modern teorilerin etkisiyle, organizasyonlardaki insan unsuruna odaklanmayı artırdığını ve çalışanların psikolojik ihtiyaçlarının önemini vurguladığını belirtmektedir. Yöneticilerden, çalışanlar arasındaki bireysel farklılıkları tanıyıp bu farklılıklardan kaynaklanabilecek çatışmaları etkili bir şekilde yönetmek için stratejiler, beceriler ve yaklaşımlar geliştirmeleri beklenmektedir.

Çatışma, gerçek veya algılanan farklılıklar nedeniyle grup üyeleri arasında gerilime yol açan bir süreç olarak tanımlanır ve çeşitli nedenlerle meydana gelebilir. Eğitim kurumlarında çatışmalar, yapısal ve bireysel farklılıklarla ilişkili faktörler nedeniyle sıkça yaşanır. Okul yöneticilerinin çatışma yönetimindeki etkinliği, iletişim becerileri ve olumlu bir okul iklimi yaratma yetenekleriyle yakından ilişkilidir.

Çatışma yönetimi, kurumsal iklimi ve genel başarıyı etkileyebilen kritik bir süreçtir. Bu nedenle, çatışma yönetimi stratejileri üzerine çok sayıda çalışma yapılmıştır. Rahim'in (1983) modeli, bireyin kendine ve diğerlerine olan ilgisine bağlı olarak entegrasyon, uyum, hakimiyet, kaçınma ve uzlaşma stratejilerini ayırt eder. DeDreu ve diğerlerinin (2001) modeli ise çatışma yönetiminde beş boyut belirler: Problem çözme (iş birliği), uzlaşma, kaçınma, zorlama ve boyun eğme stratejileri.

Okul yöneticilerinin yetkinliği, eğitim kurumlarındaki çatışmaları etkili bir şekilde yönetmede önemli bir rol oynar. Duygusal zekâ (EQ) seviyeleri, sosyal zekâ seviyeleri ve liderlik davranışları gibi değişkenlerle çatışma yönetimi stratejileri arasındaki ilişki literatürde incelenmiştir. Duygusal zekâ, bireyin kendi ve diğer bireylerin duygularını yönetme, farklılık gösteren duyguları fark etme ve bu bilgileri bireyin düşüncelerini ve davranışlarını yönlendirmek için kullanma yeteneği olarak tanımlanır. Duygusal zekânın yüksek olması, kişisel ve iş hayatında daha başarılı olmaya yardımcı olur.

Duygusal zekânın çatışma yönetim süreçlerine olan etkisi, çatışma nedenlerinin azaltılmasında etkili olduğu ve iyi yönetilen bir çatışmanın olumlu sonuçlar doğurduğu belirtilmiştir. Okul yöneticilerinin çatışmaları etkili bir şekilde yönetebilmeleri için belirli bilgi, beceri ve yetkinliklere sahip olmaları önemlidir. Duygusal zekânın yüksek olması, çatışmaların etkili yönetiminde okul yöneticilerinin sahip olması gereken özellikler arasında yer alır.

Araştırma, nitel bir araştırma yöntemi olan fenomenoloji kullanılarak tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmanın katılımcıları, Türkiye'deki bir ilçede kamu okullarında çalışan 14 okul müdürüdür. Katılımcılar, farklı kıdem, eğitim seviyesi, cinsiyet ve yaş özelliklerine sahip olmaları nedeniyle maksimum çeşitlilik örneklemesi kullanılarak seçilmiştir. Veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılarak toplanmış ve betimsel analiz yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir.

Araştırmanın bulguları, okul müdürlerinin duygusal zekâ (EI) ve çatışma yönetimi stratejileri üzerine görüşlerini yedi tema altında toplamıştır. Bu temalar, duygusal zekânın eğitim alanındaki çatışma yönetimi üzerindeki etkisini ve önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bulgular, duygusal zekâ ve çatışma yönetimi üzerine yapılan önceki çalışmalarla uyum içindedir.

Çalışma kapsamında elde edilen ilk tema “İç İçe Geçmiş Kapasiteler” temasıdır. Okul müdürleri, duygusal zekâ ve çatışma yönetimi becerilerini ayrı yetenekler olarak değil, iç içe geçmiş kapasiteler olarak görmektedir. Bu görüş, duygusal zekânın, çatışmaların yönetiminde temel bir rol oynadığını ve bu iki alanın birbirini tamamladığını ve pratikte derinden bağlantılı olduğunu ifade etmektedir. Çalışmanın ikinci teması “Proaktif Çatışma Önleme”dir. Okul müdürleri, yüksek duygusal zekâyâ sahibi bireylerin, çatışmaların ortaya çıkmasını önceden görebileceklerini ve bunları engelleyebileceklerini belirtmiştir. Bu yaklaşım, çatışmaların daha büyük sorunlara dönüşmeden önce etkili bir şekilde ele alınmasını sağlamaktadır. Yüksek duygusal zekâ seviyeleri olan okul müdürleri, çatışmaları öngörme ve önleme konusunda daha başarılı olmaktadır.

Araştırmanın üçüncü teması “Arabuluculukta Empati”dir. Empati, çatışma çözüm sürecinde merkezi bir rol oynamaktadır. Okul müdürleri, çatışmaları etkili bir şekilde çözmek için tarafların duygusal perspektiflerini anlamının ve bunları dikkate almanın önemini vurgulamaktadır. Katılımcılar, tarafların duygularını anlamak ve onaylamak için empati kullanmanın çatışma çözümünde temel olduğuna inanmaktadır. Araştırmanın dördüncü teması ise “Öz Farkındalık ve Öz Düzenleme” temasıdır. Okul müdürleri, kendi duygularının farkında olmanın ve bu duyguları yönetmenin, çatışmalar sırasında daha etkili tepkiler verilmesini sağladığını ifade etmiştir. Araştırmanın diğer teması “Özelleştirilmiş Çatışma Yaklaşımları”dır. Araştırma, duygusal zekânın, çatışma durumlarına özgü stratejiler geliştirme



yeteneğine katkıda bulunduğunu göstermektedir. Okul müdürleri, çatışmaların benzersiz duygusal dinamiklerini anlayarak, bu durumlara uygun stratejiler geliştirilmesi gerektiğini ifade etmişlerdir.

Araştırmanın altıncı teması “Duygusal Zekâ Odaklı Okul Kültürleri Oluşturma” olarak bulunmuştur. Okul müdürleri, duygusal zekâyı okul kültürünün bir parçası olarak benimsemenin, daha az çatışma yaşanan ve mevcut çatışmaların daha etkili bir şekilde ele alındığı bir ortam yarattığını belirtmiştir. Bu yaklaşım hem öğrencilere hem de öğretmenlere duygusal zekânın değerini öğretmekte, bu sayede daha uyumlu bir öğrenme ortamı oluşturulmasını sağlamaktadır. Araştırmanın yedinci ve son teması “Duygusal Zekâ Odaklı Çatışma Yönetimi Süreçlerinin Algılanan Sonuçları”dır. Okul müdürlerinin görüşlerine göre, duygusal zekâ odaklı çatışma yönetimi süreçlerinin hem olumlu hem de nötr sonuçları bulunmaktadır. Olumlu sonuçlar arasında, okul kültüründe olumlu değişimler, iş birliğinde artış ve daha az çatışma sayılırken nötr sonuçlar ise, bazı geleneksel stratejilerin hala etkili olabileceğini ve duygusal zekânın her durumda çatışmaları çözme yöntemi olarak tek başına yeterli olmayabileceğini göstermektedir.

Bu bulgular, okul müdürlerinin, duygusal zekâ ve çatışma yönetimi arasındaki ilişkiyi nasıl algıladıklarını ve bu becerileri nasıl uyguladıklarının anlaşılmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Duygusal zekâ, okul yöneticilerinin çatışmaları etkili bir şekilde yönetmeleri için sahip olunan önemli bir beceridir. Bu becerilerin geliştirilmesi, eğitim ortamlarının daha uyumlu ve verimli olmasına katkıda bulunabilecektir.