

Review

A review on the effect of school principals' perceptions of professional loneliness on their performance

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In this research, it is aimed to make a compilation based on studies in the literature on the reflection of professional loneliness levels of Educational Managers, especially school principals, on their individual and organizational performances, and to raise awareness by drawing attention to the problems experienced. Based on the literature, the variables affecting the professional loneliness levels of school principals are exemplified in the light of studies. Then, the factors affecting the performance of school principals were explained in two dimensions, especially individual and organizational, and attention was drawn to the relationship between professional loneliness levels and these factors. As a result, some suggestions have been made for researchers and practitioners based on these factors.

Key words: Occupational loneliness, school principals, performance.

INTRODUCTION

The most critical place in educational environments is undoubtedly schools, and therefore, principals may encounter extreme stress factors. However, despite numerous studies on assistants and resources supporting the health and well-being of principals, there are still insufficient results. This is primarily because this situation is mostly resolved by the technical, social, and cognitive skills of managers. For example, a study conducted on Australian school principals examined the mutual effects on job goals, job resources (endurance), job-related outcomes (burnout and job satisfaction), and individual effects (job satisfaction and physical effects) over a 3-year period, taking into account job requirements and opportunities. Some results indicated that work goals and resources undergo small changes in subsequent outcomes, with beneficial effects of resources, while

demands for work-related outcomes, in particular, are subject to negative effects. Attempts were made to determine the adverse reciprocal effects of initial outcomes (burnout and job satisfaction) affecting subsequent job characteristics. However, no support was found for the Yerkes-Dodson Law (non-linear effects of demands) or Nietzsche effects and infusion effects (creation) in answering fundamental and theoretically important research questions. On the other hand, some suggestions are presented for further research by considering the individual coping skills (such as, cognitive skills) of school principals, associating the study with the current literature, making use of the research limits, and drawing connections with other theories (Marsh et al., 2023).

According to a study investigating the relationships

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between school principals' job performance and well-being, utilizing the job demands-resources approach of the job performance model and self-determination theory, it was found that need satisfaction and need frustration, job crafting behaviors, and job-related well-being (work-related well-being) have positive and negative effects. It is assumed that they act as possible mechanisms among the effects. The use of cross-sectional data collected from a sample of Finnish school principals revealed that the processing of structural job resources was positively related to need satisfaction and negatively related to need frustration. Increased challenging job demands were positively associated with need satisfaction, which, in turn, was

associated with higher work-related well-being. Additionally, the processing of structural job resources has been found to be directly positively linked to burnout and work engagement. Reduced job demands were also found to be positively related to burnout and negatively related to work engagement through the postponement of needs. No relationships were found between the deployment of social resources, indicators of basic psychological needs, or quality of work life. These results provide insight into how managers determine their basic psychological needs through job performance and how this is reflected in their quality of work life. The study supports the theory of job mastery and self-direction theory with important implications and recommendations for practice and future research (Toyama et al., 2022).

In a recent major project aimed at developing a new job performance feedback system, a study was conducted focusing on primary school administrators' perceptions of school performance feedback and their use of this feedback. The study aimed to determine the effects of the use of school feedback through in-depth interviews with 16 school principals, building on an eclectic framework of the literature. This study aims to develop the definition of feedback, its stages, types of use, and effects on school development. In this way, the effects of school principals' performances are evaluated. However, unfortunately, although school performance feedback is seen as an important tool for school development, it has been observed that school principals do not use feedback systematically. This situation was partially explained by the principals' individual performance, lack of time and support, and the professional loneliness levels of school administrators were emphasized (Verhaeghe et al., 2010).

A sample of primary school and high school samples was used in a replication of a study conducted on companies to determine the impact that school principals exert on the instructional performance of schools. An analysis of the components of change was conducted to estimate the effects of principals while controlling for environmental and organizational factors and found that principals had a small but significant impact on school performance as measured by standardized achievement

tests (Ogawa and Weaver Hart, 1985).

A study conducted in New York City to determine how principals' individual characteristics relate to school performance based on results obtained through students' academic achievement and other measurement tools found little evidence of any relationship between organizational performance and management education and pre-managerial experience. However, there is some evidence that a principal's experience as an assistant principal at his or her current school is associated with higher performance among inexperienced principals, highlighting the importance of experience. However, a positive relationship was found between the principal's experience and school performance, especially in terms of academic achievement scores and student absenteeism. Pre-managerial experience is very important, especially in the first few years of management. Finally, some findings were identified regarding the relationship between management training and professional development programs and school performance, and some suggestions were offered regarding their effects on the current managerial role and principals' perceptions of professional support. There are also some warnings that the effects of selecting and appointing New York City executives who participate in these programs make professional isolation more difficult. The positive returns to principal experience suggest that policies that cause principals to leave their positions early (for example, early retirement or termination) will be costly and mean that less advantaged schools tend to be led by less experienced principals (Clark et al., 2009).

PROFESSIONAL LONELINESS IN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

In a study investigating the relationship between school principals' occupational isolation and their performance at work, principals in a suburban district of Quebec were administered French versions of the UCLA Loneliness Scale and the Performance Assessment Instrument for Community College Administrators. The results show, as expected, that there is a negative and significant relationship between school principals' isolation and their self-reported workplace performance, emphasizing the importance of searching for ways to reduce principals' professional isolation and conducting research on this issue (Dussault and Thibodeau, 1997).

It is thought that loneliness increased as a result of the deepening social, cultural, and economic crisis in industrial societies after the 18th century. Although it is a concept within the field of expertise of psychologists, studies on loneliness generally started after the 1950s. It appears that no significant research was conducted on this subject until the 1970s. In his work on emotional and social isolation published in 1973, R. Weiss contributed to the development of psychometric scales used to measure

individual differences in loneliness (Wright, 2005). When we look at the literature, it can be seen that many studies have been conducted on loneliness to date. However, studies on loneliness in the workplace are very few and recent. Wright et al. (2006) define workplace loneliness as sadness resulting from the perception that relationships between colleagues are not of high quality. In this sense, the level of difference and contradiction between desired and realized relationships reveals the level of professional loneliness. Wright states that although loneliness in general has been widely researched, workplace loneliness has not been analyzed much. In this context, a multifactor scale was developed to measure loneliness, and this scale generally showed low correlations with other loneliness scales. In this regard, it is extremely important to understand the effects of professional loneliness for various reasons.

First of all, when social relations are not sufficient, employees are more likely to perceive lower social support in the organization. On the other hand, weak social relations between organizational employees may cause them to feel less belonging and to be less well-known. It is also expected that there will be a decrease in organizational commitment and an increase in intention to leave. As a result, it seems that it is not possible to observe a lone individual performing his duties effectively when there is not sufficient resource exchange between colleagues (Lam and Lau, 2012).

According to Krause-Parello (2008), since loneliness is a painful, unpleasant, and stressful experience, it can hinder social development and negatively affect physical and emotional health. On the other hand, Lam and Lau (2012) state that loneliness at work is negatively related to organizational citizenship behavior and individual performance. In other words, as loneliness increases, organizational citizenship behavior, and performance decrease. Additionally, lonely individuals experience various emotional difficulties resulting from unsatisfactory social relationships. In a study conducted by Campbell et al. (2006), they stated that 9 out of 12 principals sometimes felt loneliness in their jobs, especially in the first years, but this feeling disappeared over time. Based on all these findings, it can be said that the lack of support from colleagues and making all decisions alone isolates the manager. The findings that high school principals experience less loneliness than primary school principals due to their higher administrative levels are quite significant. Accordingly, Wright (2012) states that loneliness experienced in institutions may be related to the individual's isolation in responsibility and especially in making decisions about others.

Iecovich (2013) states in his study that the loneliness levels of the participants were at a moderate level. It can be said that individuals with poor social skills and communication may experience loneliness problems. Yılmaz (2008) found a positive relationship between the loneliness level of school principals and their level of

compliance with organizational commitment; They found a negative relationship between life satisfaction and organizational commitment compliance levels.

EFFECT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Low levels of loneliness at work can make a significant contribution to increasing individual performance. In this context, performance refers to the amount produced and the cost spent in return for effort. Generally, performance denotes the amount achieved as a result of an intended and planned activity, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Organizational performance serves as an indicator showing the extent to which an organization is approaching its goals, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization in achieving its goals can be evaluated (Özutku, 2010). In this sense, performance is highly dependent on the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of working individually or as a group. The majority of studies examine performance solely in terms of the level of individual performance at work.

Individual performance, in this sense, can be defined as the effectiveness of personnel in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. The evaluation of individual performance can be used as a criterion to determine which employees are more successful and which employees need support, promotions, wages, layoffs, rewards, workplace changes, and motivation based on recruitment techniques. Additionally, clearly determining individual performance in advance can play a helpful role in determining personnel policy. In this regard, there are many factors that affect individual performance. For example, it is stated that there is a significant negative relationship between stress and performance. On the other hand, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) claim that perceived organizational support increases performance. Motivation is thought to be an important predictor of individual and team performance. Kirkman and Rosen (1999) determined that there is a partial relationship between employee empowerment and leadership and team performance; they found a positive relationship between job satisfaction and individual performance. Koopmans et al. (2011) identify four dimensions of individual job performance as task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and counterproductive job performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Principal leadership is encouraged as a means of improving school performance. Despite the growing literature on the effects of leadership in education, most early studies were cross-sectional in nature, providing only a snapshot of the relationship between principal

leadership and school performance at a specific point in time (Hallinger and Heck, 2011; Heck and Hallinger, 2009). As suggested by researchers, there is a need to use longitudinal data sets when examining the effects of principal leadership because (a) executive leadership takes time to make an impact, and school improvements develop over time, and (b) longitudinal studies are superior to cross-sectional studies (Hallinger and Heck, 2011; Heck and Hallinger, 2014).

The aim of many studies on this subject in the literature is to examine the relationship between changes in principal leadership in general and various leadership practices, in particular, on the basis of performance. Many studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement based on quantitative data. However, very little space is given here to the variables that affect the performance of principals individually or organizationally. However, previous studies have either combined quantitative data on organizational performance and cross-sectional data on principal leadership, or the performance levels of school administrators have been among the topics that have received the most attention, whether at a school level or a district level, even though principals have changed over the years (Heck and Hallinger, 2010).

Investigating principals' organizational performance and the correlation between growth in their leadership and growth in school performance may be considered to have the potential to provide more actionable guidance for leadership preparation, policy, and practice. Based on all this, there are many factors that affect the performance of school principals. The most important of these are the impact of physical and mental health conditions and feeling lonely on their individual and organizational performance.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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