**The Reasons of Negative Emotions that School Administrators Feel and How They Manage Them**

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| **Abstract**  Within the neoclassical theories of management, the human factor gained importance in organizations as one of the factors that affect productivity, fertility of human factor. Emotions are known to affect commitment of employees, their intention to leave the job and, shape organizational climate. Thus, it is important to take emotions into consideration in every type of organization, and educational organizations are one of them. Each stakeholders’ emotions are important for the organizations, and so are school administrators. Thus, the aim of this study was to define the reasons of negative emotions that school administrators feel and how they manage them. Descriptive phenomenological design was used, and 13 school administrators participated in this study. The results showed that school administrators define negative emotions as the emotions that cause them to lose their motivation and make them feel bad. Also, they felt negative emotions which were fear, anger, stress, anxiety, and regret. In addition to these, the school administrators defined the reasons that make them feel negative emotions as work-related reasons and stakeholders related issues. Lastly, they explained that they showed introverted behaviours or outward behaviours when they dealing with negative emotions.  **Key words:** Negative emotions, emotional management, school administrators, emotions at work. |

**Introduction**

The human factor, which has gained importance with neoclassical management theories, has become an important factor that cannot be overlooked in the management process of today's organizations. One of the dimensions that affect the fertility, productivity, organizational commitment and many other variables of the human factor is emotions. Emotion is defined as “the impression that a particular object, event or individual awakens in the inner world of man” (TDK, 2018). When its influence on people's existence is taken into consideration, the importance of managing emotions arises. Individuals feel positive and negative emotions in the face of events they experience throughout their lives.

Among the positive feelings, there are feelings like excitement, cheerfulness, happiness, satisfaction, being calm, relaxed and love while the negative feelings are nervousness, tense, stressed, sadness, worry, depression and impatience (Bozkurt, 2014). It has been dealt with in studies that it is important that these feelings should be balanced in terms of the effect on the human being (Andries, 2011; Çeçen, 2002; Rowe & Fitness, 2018; Sorensen, 2010). An individual who only focuses on positive emotions and ignores negative emotions experiences a mechanical, superficial, and non-natural life. Likewise, an individual who only focuses on negative emotions and ignores positive emotions ignores the energies carried by the emotions and be trapped in their negative emotions. Thus, it is possible to say that the spiritual health of the individual will deteriorate as a result of both situations (Çeçen, 2002; Rowe & Fitness, 2018).

The above-mentioned situations emphasize the importance of managing an individual's emotions in order to be healthy and productive for the organization. Emotion management is a concept that includes controlling and organizing the emotions, coping with the negative emotions felt, expressing the individual's emotions as well as anger control (Güney, Taşkıran & Özkul, 2015). Also, emotion management includes self-control, self-awareness, communication, social skills and empathy (Yaylacı, 2006).

The great impact of emotions on the individual's life and success is also crucial for the productivity of organizations. Emotion managements’ impact on organizational commitment and organizational citizenship has also been made visible throughout the studies (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000). Also, Langelier (1996) put forward that organizational climate is affected by emotions. If feeling sad, anger, hatred and discouraged in an organization are dominant in an organization, it is highly possible that employees run away from work, have low motivation, do not care about their duties, and behave in abandonment. On the contrary, if positive emotions such as hope, optimism, love, self-confidence and happiness are suppressed in an organization, it is seen that the employees in the organization are working more efficiently, high performance, feeling responsibility towards work, prudent to work and prone to innovation. This situation shows how important the feelings of members of an organization are for the success and productivity of that organization.

It is possible to say that besides the above-mentioned factors, another factor affecting the organizational climate is the administrator of the organization. Administrators may experience positive or negative emotions at schools, and they are increasingly experiencing negative emotions as the leaders in other types of organizations. Thus, school principals and vice principals may sometimes feel frustrated based on many factors (Schmidt, 2010). It is possible to state that these negative emotions may affect all administration processes. To minimize the effect of these emotions on school administration processes, principals and vice principals may use different emotional strategies as other professionals (Arizmendi Tejeda et al., 2016). This is why it is important to understand in detail the influence of the administrator's emotions and ways of managing their emotions on the organization and employees. Understanding the school administrators’ emotions and the way they manage them is important, since educational organizations deals with human and its capital is human. Within the light of this information, the aim of this study is to understand the reasons of negative emotions school administrators feel and how they manage those emotions, and the research questions are as follows: “How do school administrators define negative emotions?”, “Which negative emotions are felt by school administrators in schools?”, “What are the reasons of negative emotions?”, “How school administrators manage negative emotions?”.

**Method**

**The research design**

The research design of this study is descriptive phenomenological design which is one of the qualitative inquiries. Descriptive phenomenological studies aim to describe individuals’ experiences and perceptions about a phenomenon (Ersoy, 2016). In this study, it was aimed to examine the experiences and perceptions of negative emotions experienced by school administrators and the methods they use to deal with these emotions.

**Pilot study**

Before conducting the main study, the researchers implemented a pilot study. In the pilot study, one school administrator was interviewed with the questions included in the data collection tool. The school administrator was a MA student in the department of Educational Administration. The reason why he was chosen was that having a background knowledge related to the subject being studied would be helpful for participant to mention his idea about what should be included and what should not be. In the pilot study, the semi-structured interview form included seven questions. During the pilot study, the two of the questions were seen to gather similar answers. Thus, one of those questions were deleted. Also, the other questions were reviewed depending on the feedback from the participant and the last version of the semi-structured interview form was reached.

**The study group**

The study group includes 13 school administrators. Participants who experience negative emotions in their schools are reached via snowball sampling method. This sampling method enables to reach other information-rich cases based on former participant’s guidance (Creswell, 2007). These administrators include principals and vice principals of kindergarten, primary schools, elementary schools and high schools. The age range of administrators change between 35 and 53. Their tenure is between 11 and 28. The demographic information of principals are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic information about participants

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Gender** | **Age** | **Tenure** | **The school level** | **The administrative level** |
| Hakan | Male | 38 | 17 | Primary school | Principal |
| Ahmet | Male | 45 | 23 | Kindergarten | Principal |
| Ümit | Male | 35 | 11 | Primary school | Vice principal |
| Ekrem | Male | 52 | 16 | High School | Principal |
| Seda | Female | 37 | 13 | Primary school | Vice principal |
| Aylin | Female | 36 | 20 | Elementary school | Principal |
| Beren | Female | 39 | 23 | High school | Vice principal |
| Onur | Male | 41 | 19 | Elementary school | Principal |
| Tuba | Female | 48 | 22 | High school | Vice principal |
| Akif | Male | 39 | 15 | High school | Vice principal |
| Sedat | Male | 46 | 22 | High school | Principal |
| Ceyda | Female | 42 | 21 | Kindergarten | Principal |
| Mustafa | Male | 53 | 28 | Primary school | Vice principal |

**Data collection tool**

The data were gathered through semi-structured interview form. The questions in the semi-structured interview form are questions such as "What are the negative feelings you are experiencing?", "What are the situations that make these feelings alive?", “What are the reasons that make you feel negative emotions?, “How do negative emotions affect you?” "What are you doing to overcome this feeling?”.

The interviews with the administrators were conducted face to face, interview(s) for each participant lasting between 30 and 45 minutes on total average. After the collection of the data, the researchers transcribed data, and then started the content analysis.

**Data analysis**

Descriptive analysis method was used to analyze the data in the study. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the researchers used the credibility, transferability, consistency and confirmability criteria determined by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016). In order to ensure the credibility of the research, all the data was first recorded with a voice recorder, and then it was transmitted and sent to the participants for confirmation. After removing the parts that the participants did not want to include in the study, the analysis was carried out. In order to ensure its transferability, the researchers provided the readers with detailed information about the environment in which the study was conducted, how the participants in the study were selected and the demographic characteristics of the participants who participated in the study. The researchers received the opinions of an external expert during the analysis and coding process for consistency. In addition, the researchers carried out the analysis independently of each other, then came together and reached a consensus on the themes and their contents that emerged by comparing their individual analysis. In this process, the percent of agreement for coding between the researchers was calculated. As a result of the calculation, the coding reliability was found to be 0.89. The percent of agreement used to determine reliability between coders is more than 0.70 is considered as good fit (Tavsancil & Aslan, 2001). In order to ensure the confirmability of the research, the analysis process has been explained in detail and the findings have been discussed by supporting them with different opinions.

**Findings**

**The definitions of negative emotion**

First research question of the study was “how do school administrators define negative emotions?”. The administrators defined the negative emotions as feeling the emotions which make them uncomfortable, worried, and demotivated. Some of the definitions are presented below:

“All emotions that make me feel uncomfortable, worry and demotivate me. Sadness, fear, anxiety, etc. All of them.” (Hakan)

“The moment or conflict that destroys my motivation and energy. As a result, I do not want to do anything.” (Ahmet)

“The emotion that makes everybody and the individual unhappy, restless.” (Ümit)

“Being unhappy in workplace, loss of motivation to work.” (Seda)

“Emotions that make me feel nervous, anxious and even sick.” (Ceyda)

**The negative emotions felt by school administrators**

Second research question of the study was “which negative emotions are felt by school administrators in schools?”. The administrators listed the negative emotions they feel as anger, restlessness, tension, nervousness, impatience, annoyance, wasted effort, anxiety, stress, jealousy, mistrust, depression and sadness. Some of the direct quotations about the research question are as follows:

“I feel fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, jealousy and rage (...). When students or teachers have some health issues at school, I feel fearful. I feel anxious about making mistakes or students’ failure. When students have conflict or when I have conflict with teachers, I feel sad. If my students cannot win competitions, I become jealous. And lastly, if a staff member or a parent disturbs my motivation, this makes me feel angry.” (Akif)

“What directly comes to my mind about this question is being regretful. I try my best to help my teachers, but they forget them and behave as if we were enemies when we encounter a minimum problem.” (Beren)

“I sometimes feel disappointed. Because it is sad to see that everybody has higher level of ego day by day. In congruent with this, I feel mistrust towards teachers since they never accept their mistakes always blame other teachers.” (Ekrem)

“(…) Our students’ parents sometimes make me feel I waste my effort in vain. We really work hard as school stakeholders. However, parents aren’t happy and they frequently complain.” (Tuba)

It is seen that definitions and examples of the school administrators about negative emotions are consistent with literature (Bozkurt, 2014). For one’s managing her/his emotions, being aware of these emotions is a prerequisite. Thus, this can be seen as a clue that participants of the study have the ability to deal with negative emotions.

When the data about the research questions of “what are the reasons of negative emotions?” and “how school administrators manage negative emotions?” were analyzed, two main themes have been reached, which are the reasons of negative emotions and the ways of dealing with negative emotions (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Main themes and sub-themes

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| --- | --- |
| **Main themes** | **Sub-themes** |
| The reasons of negative emotions | * Work related reasons * Stakeholders related issues |
| The ways of dealing with negative emotions | * Introverted behaviours * Outward behaviours |

**The reasons of negative emotions**

The reasons for school administrators’ feeling negative emotions were related to work and the reasons stemming from the individual characteristics of school stakeholders.

*Work-related reasons*

School administrators listed work-related reasons that made them feel negative emotions as paperwork and heavy workload. Some of their views can be seen below:

“Since I am the only vice principal of our school, it is sometimes very hard to deal with problems. We have to keep our teaching-learning continuing, and also we have to deal with bureaucratic issues. There are lots of paperwork (…) Asking from teachers to deal with the ones they are responsible for, and getting them together can sometimes be too demanding. All of these facts make me feel stressful.” (Mustafa)

“People sometimes think that being a principal means doing nothing at school. It is not the situation. You are the one and only authority to explain and convince the top managers when something bad happens. You should keep an eye on students. You should listen to teachers’ problems and try to solve them. Besides, you should deal with financial issues of a school, and that includes wide range of things from painting the walls to buying toilet papers.” (Sedat)

“I am the vice principal at our school who are responsible for students’ issues. We have approximately 370 students, which means 370 student files in terms of paperwork, and 370 souls that we are responsible for educating. It is a huge responsibility, believe me (...) The bureaucratic issues are a problem, and students’ personal problems such as health issues and problems in their family are another issue which depresses me.” (Akif)

*Stakeholders related issues*

Participants listed the reasons stemming from the individual characteristics of school stakeholders as different working styles of teachers and janitors. Some of the views of school administrators are presented below:

“We are not a big school, but we have some problems as any other school has. Our main problem is making staff do their job. I have been working for long years here, however I couldn’t find a standard way to distribute works to our teachers and their assistants in classrooms. For example, one of my teachers always knows what to do and how to do, so I don’t have to warn her about anything. On the other hand, another teacher is a bit reckless, which makes me tell her what to do more than one time. It can be tiring sometimes.” (Ceyda)

“What is difficult about being a principal at a crowded high school is sharing the school with so many staff who have different characteristics. Teachers are different from each other, janitors are different from each other and securities are different from each other. It is the nature of social sciences, I guess.” (Sedat)

“Managing so many different characters at school can sometimes be demanding. I remember an example which can be emphasized this fact. A few years ago, one of our janitors was a bit sincerer with our students. Some of the parents complain about this. Thus, I warned him. However, he didn’t accept the accusations. I told him that I trusted him, and asked him to be more careful. But this event changed his attitudes towards his job, his duties. After a while, he left without letting us know, and we had difficulty until new personnel came.” (Mustafa)

It is understood that the nature of work in schools can make the principals and vice principals feel negative emotions. In addition to this, other stakeholders of school community as teachers and janitors can make them feel negative emotions. The last research question of this study was about how school administrators manage these negative emotions; the findings are presented below.

**The ways of dealing with negative emotions**

When the ways in which school administrators deal with negative emotions are analyzed, it has been found that there are two themes: introverted behaviors and outward behaviors.

*Introverted behaviours*

Among school administrators’ introverted behaviors, there are being silent, ignoring, taking care of something else, and inspiring oneself.

“I see management as a profession. I inspire myself about that the negative event I face is not permanent, it is a part of my job. I ignore it in a way.” (Onur)

“I walk away from the school to calm down myself. Sometimes I try to occupy my mind by dealing with works not related to the school.” (Hakan)

As the administrator Ekrem and Beren mentioned, school administrators can choose to isolate themselves by going to their room, or by listening to music.

“I shut myself down for a while. I go to my room, lock the door and not let anyone in until I feel myself better.” (Ekrem)

“I turn on a song, a classical music piece, and try to calm down. If it doesn’t help, I go out and get some fresh air.” (Beren)

“I don’t talk to anyone. I go to my room, close the door, sit my chair, and close my eyes. By doing this, I try to isolate myself. But sometimes it doesn’t help, thus I go out and smoke.” (Mustafa)

As it can be seen from the quotations above, school administrators sometimes try to cope with negative emotions by isolating themselves, and deal with those emotions. However, sometimes they can show outward behaviours, as well.

*Outward behaviours*

Among the outward behaviors of school administrators there are shouting, leaving the room by hitting the door, going to another person and pouring out, consulting others.

“When I experience something negative, I prefer explaining myself and negotiating on failures by communicating.” (Aylin)

“I can’t hold myself sometimes, and shout. After a while, I regret shouting. However, at that moment I can’t help myself shouting.” (Akif)

“I try to spend time with a friend of mine, which makes me feel better.” (Tuba)

“I consult my husband, or my friend and try to get his or her ideas. This makes me feel calm.” (Seda)

“I remember hitting the door and leave the class when I get angry with students. Also, I shout at them, because they don’t listen to me and agree on solutions for problems. This makes me really angry, and I shout at them as a result.” (Sedat)

It can be understood that school administrators show introverted or outward behaviours when they face with negative emotions. In other words, they use different emotional strategies to manage their negative emotions.

**Results, Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study aiming to define the negative emotions school administrators experience and what they do to overcome these emotions resulted in two main themes. These themes are the reasons of negative emotions and the ways of dealing with negative emotions. Before these themes are detailly examined, the researchers tried to understand whether school administrators know what negative emotions mean and what kind of emotions are defined as negative by school administrators. The results showed that school administrators define negative emotions as the emotions that cause them to lose their motivation and make them feel bad. These definitions are in line with literature (Diener & Lucas, 2000). Diener and Lucas (2000) defined negative emotions as the ones that make individuals feel demotivated, distracted and cause them to lose their desire to work, which is a similar definition to the one made by administrators. The school administrators feel negative emotions which are sadness, fear, anger, stress, anxiety, and regret. Frey and Stutzer (2001) also listed negative emotions as sadness, stress, anxious, anger and hopelessness. Thus, it can be inferred that school administrators know what negative emotions mean.

Another and important finding of this study is that school administrators defined the reasons that make them feel negative emotions as work-related reasons and stakeholders related issues. Among the work-related reasons, administrators talked about heavy workload related to paperwork and some bureaucratic issues. This finding correlates with Kiefer’s (2005) findings about reasons of negative emotions. Kiefer (2005) mentioned that working conditions, such as unreasonable workload or task problems, cause negative emotions. On the other hand, they mentioned different characteristics and different working styles of teachers and janitors as reasons stemming from the individual characteristics of school stakeholders.

When it comes to the ways in which school administrators deal with negative emotions, they explained that they showed introverted behaviours or outward behaviours when they faced negative emotions. Among their introverted behaviours, there are being silent, ignoring, taking care of something else, and inspiring oneself. Among the outward behaviours of school principals, there are shouting, hitting, leaving the room by hitting the door, going to another person and pouring out, consulting others. Yi and Baumgartner (2004) similarly expressed that individuals deal with negative emotions by showing anger and feeling disappointment and regret. Arizmendi Tejeda et al. (2016) also stated that individuals used different emotional strategies to manage their negative emotions. Thus, it is possible to say that this finding of the study correlates with literature.

Within the light of the findings of this study, it can be suggested to conduct a further research to teachers as well, since all stakeholders at school are equally important. Also, a quantitative research can be conducted to see a big picture at schools, since this study is a qualitative study and it is limited to the views of these 13 school administrators.

For the practitioners, it can be suggested that in-service training be conducted to school administrators to improve their emotion management skills. In addition to this, a break room can be placed in each school to make both administrators and teachers have a rest. There can be music player, cosy sofas, etc that will make them feel comfortable. When they face something that make them feel negative emotions, they can go into that room and calm down. Most of all, a counselling service can be provided by specialists in each school.

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