A CRITICAL INCIDENT ANALYSIS OF PARENT-SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' CONFLICTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Examining the disputes that arise between parents, teachers, and students is the goal of this study. The study, which was carried out at the primary school level, where parent-child interaction is high, employed the critical incident analysis method. The typical sampling method was used to select participants for the study, and school principals were required to have at least 5 years of managerial experience. As a part of this research, interviews were conducted with 10 elementary school principals working in the Tuzla district of Istanbul. A semi-structured form, prepared by the researchers in consultation with experts, was used as a data collection tool. As a result of the interviews, themes were identified relating to "reasons of conflict," "conflict resolution methods," "end of conflict," and "impact and change of conflict." Effective communication, active listening, valuing others, seeking support, and displaying a firm stance were identified as conflict resolution methods. The conflicts affected school principals emotionally and influenced them to behave more professionally. The study's conclusions include that school principals should receive training in communication skills, have their legal standing reinforced, and become more professional. Given the critical importance of managing conflicts in educational settings, recommendations for researchers are offered.

Keywords: Critical incident analysis, conflicts, professionalization, effective communication.

INTRODUCTION

"School is our second home." This expression implies that parents can enter the school with wide open arms. The relationship between parents and schools has been a topic that has long attracted the attention of educational researchers (Bilton et al., 2018; Guo & Mohan, 2008; Saltmarsh & McPherson, 2022). Effective school approaches that value parental involvement in school attendance argue that increasing the level of parental involvement has positive effects on students' education (Sanders & Epstein, 1998). Increasing teacher-parent interaction accelerates student adaptation (Kim et al., 2013) and supports academic success (Kainz & Aikens, 2007). Additionally, it is said that parents are expressing a wish to be more active in their kids' education on a regular basis. (Peters et al., 2008).However, the involvement of students' parents in the school ecosystem can generate conflicts in practice (Saltmarsh & McPherson, 2022). Cultural differences, time constraints (Lasky, 2000), and socioeconomic status (Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012) can be cited as some of the reasons for these conflicts. One of the main causes of these disputes is communication issues brought on by differences in parenting viewpoints and educational approaches, which is why it's critical to enhance communication channels (Guo & Mohan, 2008). Furthermore, it's necessary to acknowledge the expectations of the parents of the pupils, ascertain the difficulties they encounter, and devise workable solutions (Rhijn et al., 2018).

Research on conflicts in schools has often been based on teacher-administrator relationships (Aydin et al., 2011; Kimber & Campbell, 2014; Zembat, 2012), teacher-student relationships (Carbonneau, 2020; Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2018; Xie & Jiang, 2021), and teacher-parent relationships (Addi-Raccah &

Grinshtain, 2021; Amado et al., 2012; Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015; Ruiz et al., 2015). However, when conflicts in schools are not resolved, the school principal may become a part of the conflict, directly or indirectly. Nevertheless, there are limited studies about the role of school principals in the conflicts of students' parents (Lareau & Munoz, 2012; Saltmarsh & McPherson, 2022).

This study aims to understand the reasons behind conflicts between parents in primary schools. Primary schools are seen as the level of education where parental involvement is intense and school administrators organize this involvement most effectively (Albez, 2016), and to analyze conflict resolution strategies employed by school principals. The critical incident analysis method was applied in this study to examine previous instances involving the interaction of parents and school principals. The question of what conduct school principals would display in the same situation was then used to analyze the behavioral changes that had happened.

Conflict

Conflict can arise in every situation where people interact.. Conflict is generally perceived as a frightening concept, as human memory associates it with negative experiences such as bitterness, enmity, and wars (Karip, 2013). However, interpersonal conflicts are inherently neither positive nor negative. Conflicts have a neutral value. Whether they acquire a positive or negative quality depends on how they are managed and resolved (Türnüklü et al., 2002). If the management of a conflict is destructive or competitive, the outcomes are negative, whereas if it creates development opportunities, the results can be positive (Crawford & Bodine, 1996).

There are several approaches that can be used to handle conflicts. Five conflict resolution tactics are listed by Rahim (2001): integrating, complying, dominating, avoiding, and compromise. By thoroughly exploring the core causes of the dispute, integrating seeks to eliminate them. It is a strategy that can result in a permanent resolution of the conflict. Obliging refers to one party in the conflict giving up their interests due to the other party's more significant concerns. The dominating strategy generally leads to the imposition of the dominant party's demands. Avoiding is a method that can be temporarily used in cases where the reasons for the conflict are insignificant or when the conflict is escalating. Compromising is a strategy employed to reach an agreement by giving up some of the demands mutually (Rahim, 2001).

Conflicts arise for many reasons, such as communication problems, lack of information (Podolchak et al., 2016), workload, high expectations from managers (Yılmaz & Öztürk, 2012), managerial uncertainties, and power struggles (Koçel, 2015), among others. The conflict that emerges may result in negative consequences such as decreased organizational commitment, loss of motivation, weakening of friendships, decreased productivity, and increased stress (Çalık, 2021), as well as positive outcomes such as the acquisition of psychological maturity, increased self-esteem, achieving better solutions, eliminating monotony, and enabling the organization to keep up with the requirements of the era (Karip, 2013).

Not only can conflicts arise between administrators in educational institutions, but they can also arise between teachers and teachers, teachers and staff, staff and staff, students and students, students and parents, parents and parents, teachers and students, and teachers and parents. educational institutions(Köseoğlu & Aydın, 2022; Özge Sağbaş & Özkan, 2022; Sarıpınar, 2014; Türnüklü et al., 2002). Considering that educational institutions are structures that contain the human factor at their core and that conflict is inevitable, knowledge of the concept of conflict and how to manage it by educational administrators will be beneficial for schools, which are educational institutions (Şimşek et al., 2003).

Conflicts in Educational Organizations

Conflicts in schools can arise from a variety of factors, including structural reasons, individual differences (Nikolaou, 2018), unclear job descriptions, perceptual differences (Salleh & Adulpakdee, 2012), material issues (Karip, 2013), personal reasons in relationships, and organizational reasons (Saiti, 2015). Principals of schools are reported to have the biggest disagreements with teachers(Karip, 2013), and teachers have the most conflicts with students (Andreea-Mihaela, 2014). Conflict resolution

strategies that are frequently used by school principals can be listed as integrating (Karip, 2013; Saiti, 2015; Salleh & Adulpakdee, 2012), compromising (Girgin, 2020; Karip, 2013), and conceding (Girgin, 2020). Conversely, other research indicates that when the experience grows or is not regularly employed as a dispute resolution tactic, compromise is not favored. (Şahin, 2016; Vestal, 2011). Only disputes with parents—the largest stakeholders in education—have been the subject of studies.. Educational leaders will benefit from a review of parent-school conflicts, an investigation of the reasons behind them, and a study of the efficacy of conflict resolution techniques.. The successful management of parents' involvement in a school ecosystem will have a positive impact on an educational system.

The purpose of this study is to examine the conflict stories between parents of primary school students and school administrators in Türkiye. For this purpose, first, the school administrator was asked about having a conflicting story. The following questions were asked to school administrators who had a conflicting story:

How did the parents' and the school administrator's disagreement begin, grow, and ultimately be resolved?How would the conflict resolution process differ if a comparable incident occurred today,?

METHOD

Design of the Study
In this study, the critical incident technique from a qualitative research approach has been used. Rich data can be collected using this technique for situations where humans are active agents, especially in the social sciences.. The strength of the critical incident technique is that it allows for the extraction of rich data from real-life events and the revelation of shared realities. It is sufficient that the event analyzed is a specific event experienced by an individual and reveals any aspect of the topic (Butterfield et al., 2005; Hughes et al., 2007; Trepal & Hammer, 2014). The critical incident technique is useful when hypotheses are unclear, and the responses determine the trends. Adequate and systematic responses are sufficient for accuracy and reliability (Butterfield et al., 2005). The critical incident analysis technique involves five stages: determining goals, devising plans, collecting data, analyzing data, and interpreting data (Hughes et al., 2007). The present investigation has undertaken an analysis grounded in the experiences of school administrators employed in primary schools, where parent-teacher interaction is more intense (Albez, 2016). Conflict stories were analyzed using the critical incident analysis method.

Participants
Typical case sampling is a purposive sampling technique that was used to choose study participants. A technique that can represent the universe and has features that don't deviate greatly from the population is typical case sampling. (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Typical cases can be identified using data from surveys and demographic analyses (Bernard, 2011). Tuzla district ranks 12th in terms of socio-economic development among the districts of Istanbul (SEGE, 2022). Considering that it has parent profiles with different statuses, it was evaluated as a typical sample for Istanbul as a whole. There are 23 primary schools in Tuzla district, and 10 school principals who work in these schools were interviewed voluntarily. The participants were asked questions about their professional seniority, managerial experience, and educational background. The data obtained from the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants of the study.

Code	Position	Gender	Professional Experience (Teaching + Management) (Year)	Duration of Manager (Year)	Education Level
Shark	School Manager	Male	22	10	Bachelor's D.
Fox	School Manager	Male	13	10	Master's D.
Turtle	School Manager	Female	27	9	Master's D.
Teddy Bear	School Manager	Male	17	10	Master's D.

Table 1 (Continued). Participants of the study.

Code	Position	Gender	Professional Experience (Teaching + Management) (Year)	Duration of Manager (Year)	Education Level
Owl	School Manager	Female	25	12	Bachelor's D.
Sword	School Manager	Male	22	11	Bachelor's D.
Brain	School Manager	Male	24	18	Master's D.
Shield	School Manager	Female	16	8	Bachelor's D.
Spear	School Manager	Male	27	25	Bachelor's D.
Chess	School Manager	Male	18	6	Master's D.

The research participants, who are school principals, are 7 males and 3 females. It was observed that the participants had professional seniority ranging from 13 to 27 years and managerial experience ranging from 6 to 25 years. Among the participants, five had completed their undergraduate studies, while the rest had completed their graduate studies.

Data Collection

In order to get more information about the initiation, progression, resolution, and effects of conflicts involving researchers, school administrators, and student parents, researchers have created a semi-structured form with two interview questions.. To validate the effectiveness of the developed form, input was sought from two different experts in the field of educational management, who provided feedback indicating that the form could be adequate and suggested conducting a sample application. A pilot study was conducted, and the transcripts of the obtained responses were shared with the same experts. The results demonstrated that the semi-structured form was consistent, comprehensible, and adequate for the research objectives. By providing a specific framework for interviews, semi-structured forms ensured that the researcher remained within the anticipated parameters (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Prior to the interviews, participants were briefed about the research, and they were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Permission was obtained for recording the interviews, and participants were asked to complete informed consent forms. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, with each session lasting approximately 20-25 minutes. The data collection process of the study was carried out with the approval number 2022.12 obtained from the Yıldız Technical University Ethics Committee.

Data Analysis

The data were subjected to content analysis, which involves the systematic disaggregation of details pertaining to participants' opinions (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed into written text using a computer, resulting in a total of 43 pages of content. The researcher carefully examined the raw data twice, and descriptive codes were generated using terms that encapsulated the primary notion, in accordance with Saldana's (2013) recommendations.. As acknowledged in qualitative research methodologies (Creswell, 2013), the researcher is situated at the core of data analysis, employing inquiries, observations, researcher journals, and commentaries as integral tools for data collection. The fact that the researcher was at the focal point of the analysis process and had personal observations ensured that the data analysis was carried out manually in order not to miss the fine details in the interviews. Categories and themes were then derived from the similarities among the assigned codes. An expert in qualitative studies in the field of education was consulted for their opinions, and based on their feedback, the theme of conflict reasons was subdivided into two sub-themes: initiators and maintainers.

RESULTS

The conflicts between parents and school administrators in primary schools were analyzed through the analysis of an event that the participants, who had five or more years of managerial experience and still served as school principals, had experienced in the past and considered important. Based on the narratives of the participating school principals, the themes of "reasons of conflict," "conflict resolution

methods," "ending of conflict," and "impact and change of conflict" were formed. The findings, along with sub-themes and categories, are presented in Figure 1.
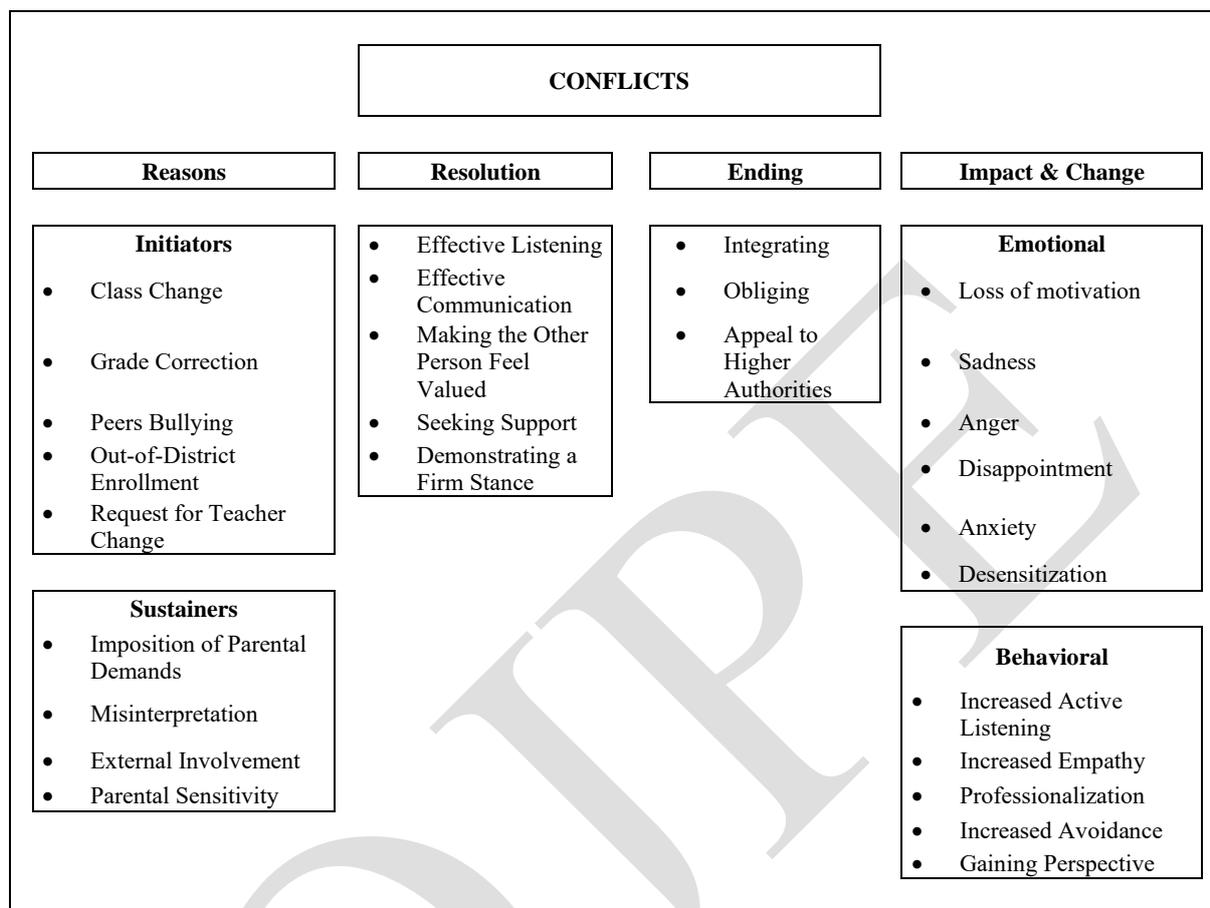

Figure 1. Conflicts between parents and school administrators.

Theme 1: Reasons of Conflict

Based on the narratives of school principals, two sub-themes and a total of eight categories were identified regarding the initiating and sustaining factors of conflicts between parents and school administrators in primary schools. Initiating factors were identified as class change, requests for grade correction, peer bullying, out-of-district enrollment, and requests for teacher selection. Sustaining factors were identified as the imposition of parents' demands, misinterpretation, external involvement in the matter, and parental sensitivity. Among the initiating factors, class change was the most frequently mentioned by the participants. Regarding their experience, the participant, known as Shark, stated the following:

> "The issue is about a classroom change, which is actually a simple matter. The student was still in the 1st grade. The parent requested a classroom change for the student. It was an early period, maybe only 1 or 2 weeks since school had started. The parent was complaining about the teacher. The teacher in question, in our opinion, is a successful and good teacher. The child was a little younger than his or her peers. When the teacher talked to the parent about this issue, the parent thought that the teacher did not want the student."

Fox is a different school principal who has voiced disagreements over class changes. Here, the parent's request is really motivated by their desire to transfer their student to a different teacher..

> "I will tell you about a conflict I experienced about a class change. When the student started school, the parent saw that the teacher did not fit the profile they had in mind for their child. So, they came to me with a request. We told them that we could not fulfill that request. Then they made a complaint

against us. Parents hear things about teachers from others and think it would be better for their child to have a specific teacher. But this particular parent realized that their child was doing very well with the current teacher, and even if we suggested a change, they wouldn't want it."

Turtle, sharing an experience where peer bullying was the initiating factor for a classroom change;

"I often receive requests for class changes. They are not happy with the teacher, and they are not happy with their classmates. I will tell you about one of these cases. The parent wanted their child to change classes. I said I would look into it in detail. We talked to the class teacher and the guidance counselor. The student was bullying their classmates in the class, so they were having problems. After discussions with our guidance counselor, we determined that the student had entered early adolescence and was showing behavioral problems as a result. Then we made referrals to psychiatry, etc."

Bullying among peers can cause problems for students in school and can lead to conflicts that affect parents as well. Misunderstandings and parental sensitivities can complicate solutions. As Teddy Bear reported;

"During lunch break, my student got a rope tangled around his neck while playing. More precisely, the rope left a mark after hitting him. Later, when the teacher handed over the student at the end of the school day, the mother noticed the mark on the child's neck and asked what happened. The teacher replied that the student did not mention anything important to her. When they got home, the parents learned the truth from what the student told them and immediately came to the school. They were angry and asked questions such as, 'Why didn't anyone care? Isn't there any security here? How did you not notice?' They thought their child was choked with a rope by his friends. When I reviewed the videos, I saw that while playing jump rope in the yard, the rope hit his neck and left a mark. I showed it to the parents."

As for the initiating reasons, the request for grade correction, and the sustaining reasons, the involvement from outside the issue, Owl has this to say:

"The teacher gave the student a low grade. The parent came to me with anger towards the teacher. Then, I talked to the teacher. The teacher was concerned about the issue, but the conflict did not end. Later, when the incident continued, the teacher took a cool attitude, said that she would not do anything, and withdrew. The parent turned completely towards me because she was obliged to maintain a relationship with the teacher. She started complaining to me about unrelated issues in different departments."

Sword presented another example of external involvement in the matter. The category of sustaining reasons, where the parent imposes their demands, is again prominent here.

"The issue started with the teacher and eventually came to me. The teacher was not responding to the parents' text messages. The parent was asking about assignments and important topics for their child. Then, I wanted to understand the situation by talking to the teacher. However, the teacher stated that they were not obligated to do so and that they had received constant messages. As a result, we also had a problem with our teacher. The parents tried to justify themselves by telling us about how other schools and teachers maintain excellent communication. In short, they said that we, as administrators, could not manage this situation."

Based on the narratives, it can be observed that conflicts between parents and school administrators generally start with a request from the parents, such as a request for a class change, a specific teacher, out-of-district enrollment, a low grade, or peer bullying experienced by the student. As reasons for sustaining the conflict, misunderstandings, a dominant attitude in parents' demands, the sensitivity created by being a parent, and the sudden involvement of the school administrator in the matter have been identified. The beginning of the incidents and the following process can directly affect the behavior adopted by the school administrator.

Theme 2: Conflict Resolution Methods of the School Principal
Based on the narratives, five categories of conflict resolution methods used by the school principal in parent-school conflicts in primary schools were identified as active listening, effective communication,

making parents feel valued, seeking support, and demonstrating a firm stance. Regarding the incident that Brain experienced, the following has been presented;

> *"A parent came to me claiming that their child had been harassed. The uncle of the child also came with a gun in his hand. As you know, these are critical situations. I immediately called my guidance counselors. I asked them to have discussions about the matter and provide information. It turned out that one child reached into another child's pocket to take some money, which caused this misinterpretation."*

Here, it can be observed that the relevant school principal requested support from the guidance counselor, who is an expert on the subject. After the counselor's consultation, it was determined that the incident was more accurately described as peer bullying among 1st grade students. Similarly, in the case of Fox and Tortoise, they expressed their intention to act in accordance with the guidance of the counselor regarding their class change problems and received expert support as a conflict resolution method. In order to make parents feel valued, Teddy Bear and Spear shared a common expression unique to Turkish culture. Spear indicated;

> *"We usually focus on the solution; try to understand while doing it over a cup of tea."*

Bear is similarly said;

> *"I made him/her understand that I sensed his/her anger. Then I offered a cup of tea before our conversation."*

During the conflicts that arose, school principals were observed to exhibit a resolute stance and act towards the implementation of their own ideas. Despite the crisis growing in intensity, Shark refrained from implementing an alternative solution as he was certain of the correctness of the teacher selection.

> *"We are confident in the competence of our teacher. I explained to the parent that their request would have negative consequences and that we have the best interests of our student in mind. The parent even threatened to harm me physically if I did not make the change. However, I persisted in explaining and did not make the alteration. In the end, the student successfully graduated from the class."*

In a conflict that arose due to out-of-district enrollment, the school principal, Shield, demonstrated a determined stance and attempted to manage the conflict in accordance with the required regulations.

> *"The parent came to the school to register their child, who was going to start first grade in August, when this incident occurred. When I checked the system through identity verification, I realized that the student was not on our list. When I explained the situation, the parent expressed that everyone was making non-residential registrations, discrimination was taking place, and that I had to register their child. I explained the regulations again and told them that they had to go to the school close to their home. I also informed them about exceptional circumstances. As a result, the parent made a complaint against me to CIMER (Presidential Communication Center)."*

Effective communication frequently appears among the statements. Chess;

> *"In first grade, we determine our students' classes by drawing lots. However, every year, some parents come to our office to discuss their preferences for teacher selection. First, we listen to their reasons and explanations. Then, we explain our procedures, the reasons behind them, and the criteria we consider preventing certain situations. Through mutual communication, we usually resolve the issue. "*

The strategy followed by school principals to resolve conflicts involves primarily effective listening to the opposing party, maintaining effective communication by presenting their explanations, seeking expert support from guidance counselors and class teachers, ensuring that the parent feels understood, reducing emotional intensity, and exhibiting a determined stance to make correct decisions that serve the best interests of the student.

Theme 3: Ending of Conflict

Based on the narratives of participating school principals, three categories have been identified regarding how conflicts between parents and school administrators in primary schools are resolved: integrating, obliging, and appealing to higher authorities. Although the integrating approach has been attempted by most participating school principals, the success rate has remained low and often resulted in appeals to higher authorities. For example, as expressed by the school principal, Shark,

> *"A parent requested a classroom change for their student. It was still early in the school year, perhaps only 1 or 2 weeks since the start. They were unhappy with the teacher. I listened to them in detail and told them that we had the best interest of the student in mind. They even threatened me with physical violence. But I kept explaining, and explaining... Eventually, we ended up in court."*

As for the outcome of the incident, school principal Owl stated that:

> *"The incident started with the teacher and then turned to me. They started complaining about me to CIMER every week, saying that I was causing discrimination in many areas."*

Fox, a different school principal, also received complaints regarding his inability to exert authority and dominance..

> *"A parent requested a classroom change, but we did not accept it. Later, we received several complaints from CIMER. Many different things were written, and the request for classroom change was squeezed in between them."*

If we look at situations where conflicts were completely resolved, the account of school principal Turtle can serve as a suitable example for integrating.

> *"I expressed that I would examine the request for a class change for the student. We had meetings with the class teacher and guidance counselors. After the guidance counselor's discussions, we determined that the student entered early adolescence and showed behavioral problems as a result. Then a psychiatric referral was made. The class was changed. The student started medication, and the problem was completely resolved."*

A similar example can be given from the account of the school principal, Chess.

> *"The parent of a student expressed a desire to choose a specific teacher during the registration period for the first grade. They had learned the name of a teacher and wanted their child to be assigned to them. I explained to them about our policy of using a lottery system for teacher assignments and emphasized the importance of fairness and treating everyone equally. However, the parent became angry and threatened to file a complaint if we did not comply with their request. After an investigation and assuring them of our commitment to fairness, they expressed their concerns to us, and we were able to resolve the issue."*

There are narratives that describe the obliging behaviors of student parents. In the experience of school principal Spear, a parent showed obliging behavior and acted according to the guidance provided.

> *"We had a successful student at the time when I worked at a school located in a disadvantaged area. A scholarship opportunity came up, and we wanted this student to benefit from it. The father was working for the minimum wage. When we called him, he did not accept it and responded with anger. We tried to persuade him and asked him to spend the money on his child's education. The student benefited from the scholarship and became the first in Türkiye in the exam he took later in life."*

Another experience involving integrating and ending with obliging behavior from a parent was experienced by the school principal, Sword.

> *"The teacher did not respond to the parents' phone messages. The parent wanted to ask about homework, and there were important topics for their child... Trying to justify themselves, the parent mentioned that teachers at other schools maintain very good communication. I explained that we cannot communicate with teachers outside of school hours without the teacher present, and if there is something very important, we should request a meeting and act according to the teacher's availability. I also said that parents can communicate with each other regarding issues like*

homework. They were not pleased, but I didn't hear anything further from the teacher or parent regarding this issue."

The overall finding is that parents expect their demands to be resolved as they wish. School principals also anticipate that by establishing lines of communication, parents will embrace the practices that they view as appropriate.In this direction, six of the ten distinct tales that were evaluated resulted in a complaint being filed with higher authorities. In the other stories, it was found that the parent behaved obligingly even though they did not quite embrace it or that the issue was cooperatively settled.

Theme 4: Impact and Change

The conflicts between parents and school administrators in primary schools have been divided into two sub-themes in terms of emotional and behavioral effects and changes. Loss of motivation, sadness, anger, disappointment, anxiety, and insensitivity were among the categories identified in the emotional impact and change sub-theme. Similarly, the behavioral impact and change sub-theme included categories like professionalization, enhanced empathy, increased effective listening, preference for avoidance behavior, and gaining new perspectives. Some school administrators stated that they would approach the same situation in the same way and did not experience any effect or change.

The conflicts that arise in primary schools can evoke a multitude of emotions. In the case of school principal Teddy Bear, who experienced parent conflict after his student developed rope marks on his neck, he reported feeling sad for the student, anger towards the parent's behavior, and a loss of motivation as a result of the incident. In terms of behavioral impact and change, he recognized the need to behave more professionally.

> *"When I first heard about the incident, I expressed my sympathy by stating that I was also a parent and could understand their situation. However, the parent called me back that evening, threatening to sue me. The next morning, they came back, and when I showed them the video footage, they calmed down. Despite this, they continued to make other accusations, and I became very angry. This incident had a significant impact on my mood, and if it were to happen again, I would not spend so many hours dealing with it. I could have reached similar results in a shorter amount of time."*

The experience of being threatened with a weapon by parents in two of the incidents described was considered quite normal, causing a sense of anxiety for the school principal. It takes significant experience to be able to handle and manage such a crucial occurrence. The school principal, Brain, expressed the emotional impact of the experience as follows:

> *"The mother came to my room, saying that her child was sexually assaulted. The father and uncle came in while I was talking to the child, and the uncle put his gun on the table... When the assault was first mentioned, I became very anxious. It is already sad and concerning that one of our students could experience such a thing. And when people come to you with information that they heard from others, they can come to harm you, physically or otherwise, directly."*

These experiences can lower the motivation and enthusiasm of school administrators and have a negative impact on their work. They might thus grow more callous and engage in avoidance behaviors more regularly. The school principal, Owl, stated:

> *"Can you imagine that in this situation I got involved because of my teacher, but my teacher left me alone? Relationships of interest are important. The parent approached me because they had expectations from the teacher... Now, I do not show my side openly. I approach more cautiously without revealing my emotions. If incidents are told to me, I prefer to remain in the listening dimension."*

Avoidance behavior that has been developed as a result of encountering such circumstances can also be demonstrated by referring to formal protocols or by addressing the matter with other educators within the organization. School principal Fox explains this situation with the following statement:

> *"When they inquire about a class change, I direct them by stating that the guidance counselor needs to provide their opinion."*

Similarly, Shield stated:

> *"I explain the official procedure and exceptional cases in detail without adding any interpretation. If someone makes a complaint, my response will also adhere to the official procedure. This way, I am preventing any different effects that such problems may have on me."*

The accuracy of the reaction to be delivered depends on one's understanding of the emotional intensity of the new parents. Spear stated that he learned to behave more professionally, improve his active listening skills, and establish better empathy through his experience.

> *"I experienced this incident in 2002, and I still remember it. Back then, the guidance service was not as effective as it is now. We were trying to deal with it. If it had happened now, we would have taken a more conscious approach with the guidance counselor towards the parent. I would have listened better to why the parent was angry. It was an experience that made me realize the importance of empathy."*

The school principal, Turtle, after experiencing an incident that resulted in an unexpected outcome, stated that he gained an understanding of the importance of approaching situations from a different perspective.

> *"After our guidance counselor's meetings, we determined that the student entered early puberty and showed behavioral problems as a result. Then, a referral was made to psychiatry. What we thought was a normal request for a class change led to a very different outcome. The child is bullying peers, but why? What are they experiencing? Look at it from another dimension! That is what I gained from it."*

The conflicts with parents that school principals encounter will have an impact on their management styles in the future. This impact can lead to various outcomes, ranging from personal development to undesirable consequences such as loss of motivation and insensitivity for educators.

When the research's findings were generally evaluated, it became clear that while certain factors contributed to the conflict's beginning, others had long-lasting consequences.. The methods employed by school principals to resolve the conflicts were decided to be active listening, effective communication, making the parent feel valued, seeking support from other professionals, and displaying a resolute stance regarding the methods deemed correct. The conflicts ended in three ways: integration, the parent's obligingness to the decision of the school principal, or the transmission of appeals to higher authorities. Conflicts have an impact on a person's emotions and conduct, changing school principals.. These effects and changes can be either positive or negative.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

The aim of this study was to analyze conflicts between school administrators and parents through critical incidents. The study was conducted at the primary school level, where interactions between parents and school administrators are more frequent. The focus on the primary school level yielded specific results regarding the causes of conflicts. The initiators of conflicts were identified as changes in class placement, requests for grade adjustments, peer bullying, enrollment outside of the school district, and requests for specific teachers. The causes of conflicts related to enrollment outside of the school district, requests for grade adjustments, and requests for specific teachers can be viewed as corresponding to class conflicts within society. Marx and Engels, in their publication of The Communist Manifesto, connected the main reasons for conflicts in society to this class conflict (Freyer, 2012). Individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds attempt to enroll their children in schools located in more affluent areas by enrolling them outside of the school district. Students need to achieve excellent scores because of Türkiye's exam-based educational system.. Students with lower grades are more likely to remain in the lower class of society in the future. This is why there is pressure to achieve high grades in schools, starting at the primary school level. In a similar vein, teacher selection can also be explained. Parents want to enroll their children in the classrooms of well-regarded teachers since they are well-known in the community. Thus, Marx's concept of class is indirectly reflected within schools. This situation also

overlaps with Weber's understanding of interest groups in his three-dimensional stratification model (Collins, 2015).

The initiating factors of class changes and peer bullying, along with sustaining reasons such as parental insistence, misperception, involvement of outsiders, and parental sensitivity, can be listed as reasons related to social interaction, where emotions are at the center. Peer bullying is a common and serious problem in Turkish schools (Karaman Kepenekçi, & Çınkır, 2006). Experiencing peer bullying and students' problems with their friends brings about requests for class changes and causes parents to adopt an assertive attitude in this regard. Parental internalization of their children's experiences combined with oversensitivity might result in misconceptions..

School administrators employ different methods to solve conflict situations they face, either directly or indirectly. Active listening, effective communication, showing appreciation, seeking support from colleagues, and demonstrating a resolute stance are prominent conflict resolution methods. Regarding communication, the competence of school administrators and meeting parents' communication expectations are crucial for conflict resolution (Saltmarsh & McPherson, 2022). School principals often emphasize the importance of proper communication in meetings. Some conflicts, however, fall within the expertise of teachers and school counselors, so their support is necessary. Aljhani et al. (2011) found that school principals consult with teachers on topics in which they lack experience. In cases where legal regulations support them and the decision is in the student's best interest, school principals try to resolve conflicts by demonstrating a resolute stance. According to the study by Çakmak (2013), school principals persist in their decisions after providing detailed explanations to parents, and they use this as a conflict resolution method.

According to research findings, conflicts are resolved either by solving the problem or by the parent obliging with the school principal's decision. When expectations are not fulfilled, complaints are made to higher authorities. Studies have shown that school principals frequently use integrating (Saiti, 2015; Salleh & Adulpakdee, 2012), one of the conflict resolution strategies described by Rahim (2001). It has been stated that understanding individuals' problems and presenting detailed solutions through effective communication during interviews eliminate conflicts. It has been observed that some conflicts are resolved by the parent complying with the decision made by school principal's firm stance. It might be argued that in these situations, accurate knowledge and effective communication are equally crucial.. Conflicts that cannot be resolved in a school environment are continued through complaints by parents to higher authorities. School principals state that they receive complaints from higher authorities and communicate the same information they explained to the parent, and conflicts are thus resolved in this manner. This result shows that school principals make decisions in accordance with legal regulations in the incidents recounted.

Conflicts have emotional and behavioral effects on school principals. The study's key participants believe that their work in education is vital, but they also feel demotivated, unhappy, angry, disappointed, and anxious when they hear unfavorable feedback and complaints from parents. This situation can create a negative judgment about the professionalism of the principals. The behavioral impact and change dimensions of the study also support this statement. Professionalization and gaining different perspectives are judgments that school principals have accepted emotionally. Increasing effective listening and empathy skills also indicates professionalization. It is also observed that conflicts particularly result in disappointment, insensitivity, and avoidance behaviors.

The motivations, strategies, and outcomes of disputes between parents and school administrators are all covered in detail in this study. Effective conflict management will have a positive impact on school administrators' ability to carry out their duties, and the success of management activities will also bring educational gains.

Limitations of the research

The fact that this study only included ten school principals in its sample size is a notable limitation.. In addition, the exclusivity of participation for principals operating in a single residential area is another

limitation. The generalizability of the findings of the study is limited, primarily because they reflect cultural nuances specific to the Tuzla district of Istanbul.

Suggestions

Some recommendations can be made based on the research results. Firstly, by empowering school administrators and addressing legislative gaps, many of the initiating causes of conflict can be prevented. Providing effective communication training to school principals can help reduce communication problems. The professionalization of school administration can also reduce emotional reactions. The research was conducted with primary school administrators, and a similar study can be conducted at different levels. Moreover, conducting studies with the participation of student parents and focusing on teacher-parent conflicts could offer valuable perspectives."

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

This study was presented as an oral presentation at the Xth International Eurasian Educational Research Congress. Permission number 2022.12 (December 28, 2022) was obtained from the Yıldız Technical University Ethics Committee for the study. The researchers followed the research ethics guidelines. There is no potential conflict of interest between the authors.

Author Contributions

Metin Özsoy: Conceptualization, methodology, conducting the interviews, data curation, preparing the original draft. Erkan Tabancalı: Conceptualization, methodology, analysis, data curation, review and editing, preparing the original draft.

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