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## Teachers' Views on the Communication Skills of School Administrators: A Mixed Method Research

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## **Teachers' Views on the Communication Skills of School Administrators: A Mixed Method Research**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of the present study was to determine teachers' views on the communication skills of school administrators through a mixed methods design. Although quantitative or qualitative studies deal with the communication skills of school principals according to teacher perceptions, the number of studies conducted in mixed design is quite low. The study's quantitative data were obtained from 368, and the qualitative data were obtained from 20 teachers working in primary, secondary, and high schools in Acıpayam and Tavas districts of Denizli province in Turkey. The data were collected via the "Interpersonal Communication Skills Scale of Primary School Administrators" developed by Şahin (2007) and through an interview form developed by the researchers. For the quantitative data analysis, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, t-test and one-way analysis of variance were applied as a content analysis were carried out in the qualitative data analysis. When the results were examined, it was observed that the communication skills of the school administrators were at a high level, and it was revealed that their communication skills were at the highest level in the dimension of "giving confidence", while it was at the lowest level in the dimension of "giving feedback". There are significant differences in school administrators' communication skill levels considering the branch's variables, teachers' tenure at school, school type, and the number of teachers. It has been seen that the quantitative and qualitative data of the research support each other.

**Keywords:** Teacher, School administrator, Communication skills, Communication barriers

### **Introduction**

Today, social networking sites such as Facebook, My Space, and LinkedIn; Social media applications such as Instagram and Twitter are used by most people. Many people either have one of these applications on their phones, computers, or tablets or have subscriptions to social networking sites. One of the relationship status options for individuals on Facebook is "complicated". This simple phrase actually defines today's world and our lives. Our beliefs about our relationships, families, work, politics, and ourselves are complicated. In organizations, this complexity is even more pronounced. Beyond any doubt, the organizational world is much more complicated than a hundred years ago (agriculture, increased industrialization, and the birth of the assembly line), fifty years ago (moving to the suburbs, long-term employment, and when fathers thought to know the best), or even twenty years ago (cross-functional work teams, the early years of the internet and glass ceiling break). The complexity of the organizational world has also affected organizational communication, and it has brought along various processes such as socialization, decision making, conflict management, management of emotions, and management of differences to help cope with the complexity that emerged (Miller, 2012). Today, it can be said that these processes undoubtedly affect managers the most in organizations. In addition to these processes, managers are also faced with an environment where communication problems get more complicated each day.

Because they play a key role in ensuring the effective flow of information and the development of harmonious relationships in the organization, managers have an essential communicative role. They spend most of their time interacting with employees. Executive monitoring studies have revealed that more than 60 percent of managers' working time is spent in scheduled and unscheduled meetings, approximately 25 percent is spent on paperwork, 7 percent is on the phone, and 3 percent is on the go (Dickson, Hargie, & Tourish, 2004).

The research suggests that according to the employees, an organization's culture is 70% determined by managers. It is sufficient to look at the manager to see the energy and motivation levels of the people in an organization and

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to find out where the desired or undesired behaviours in that organization originate from. . In educational organizations, how school administrators communicate what has to be done is as important as what they accomplish (Türkmenoğlu, 2019), and it is evident that good communication is the way to do this. It all starts with people's need for communication to ensure the continuity of their lives and to maintain their relationships. It would not be wrong to say that communication is very important in treating people as social rather than biological beings. Since the human being is defined as an entity that carries out social relationships through communication, it can be said that the term communication has also emerged in line with human history. Cave paintings from the first humans or the communication of the Indians with smoke can be given as an example of this. There are numerous definitions of communication. All definitions concur that communication is an information exchange based on psychology. The process of communication's primary goal is to influence and be influenced by others. The concept of "interaction" that these two concepts directly evoke also means mutual action and influencing each other (Güven, 2013). The word "communication" is derived from the Latin word "communis", which means common. In the Turkish Language Association dictionary, communication is defined as conveying feelings, thoughts or information in any way possible (TDK, 2020).

The process of communication involves the exchange of information between the source and the receiver (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). The information between the sender and the recipient, referred to as the message, is another component of communication. A channel facilitates the transfer of the message between the source and the receiver. The message sent from the source to the receiver comes back similarly. This is the feedback process. There are four basic elements of communication: source (transmitter, sender), message, channel and receiver (destination). The complement of these four basic elements is called feedback. (Güven, 2013). In the literature, there are opinions stating that communication elements consist of three, four, or five basic elements. While Can (2005) talked about the three basic elements of communication, Gürel and Gürüz (2008) stated that communication consists of five basic elements. Although it is indicated as basic or complementary in the literature, it is seen that communication elements are named similarly. Therefore, the basic communication elements can be listed as a source, message, channel, and receiver. Apart from these, four communication processes complete the communication process and provide the relationship among these basic elements. These are encoding (encryption), decoding (interpretation), feedback (behaviour), and noise (Kaya, 2019; Tanrıögen, 2018; Yüksel, 2019).

Communication skills are defined as learned behaviours that enable an individual to listen effectively with respect and empathy, to open himself by speaking concretely, to communicate his feelings and thoughts with his language without hiding anything, to protect his rights without humiliating others, to use verbal and nonverbal messages harmoniously, to establish satisfactory relationships with others, to get positive reactions and to help the individual to live in a society. To establish good and effective communication, the individual must sincerely respect himself and others, empathize, ensure active listening, speak concretely, reveal himself, use the "I language," send a complete and one message, act transparently (unmasked), use verbal and non-verbal messages in harmony and display an empathic and trustworthy behaviour (Yüksel-Şahin, 2019).

When people understand all the elements involved in the communication process, they can improve their and others' communication. Therefore, communication skills are, at their core, leadership skills. It directs you to access how you can manage the communication between you and someone else or a group so you can reach your goals and results (McPheat, 2010).

Communication is also at the center of educational organizations. Administrators communicate with teachers, teachers with students, and students with each other. There are many varied ways of communication. But it is also the source of many problems that arise in schools. A critical area of interest is the communication between administrators and their teachers. Their ability to communicate effectively cannot be ignored as they are key players involved in the normal day-to-day operations of a school (Rowicki, 1999). What principals and teachers talk about and how they communicate reflect and structure what is considered important in different processes and activities. Therefore, communication also reveals what is focused on in the organization's day-to-day work (Ärlestig, 2008).

Communication skill in educational organizations is one of the most important elements in developing the teaching profession. Managers with high communication skills can help organizations improve their existing human resources, effectively cope with environmental forces, and increase employees' job satisfaction (Hamidi, & Barati, 2011). When the literature is examined; communication skills and performance (Kambeya, 2008; Ndidi, & Alike, 2018), teachers' positive emotional change (Berkovich, & Eyal, 2018), school culture (Mohamed, & Abidin, 2021; Şimşek, 2003), job satisfaction (Supriadi, & Mutrophin, 2017), teachers' organizational

socialization (Saylık, & Hazar, 2021), teacher motivation (Doğan, & Koçak, 2014), conflict management (Nural, Ada, & Çolak, 2012; Şahin, 2007) were found to be positively correlated.

As can be seen, effective communication plays a vital role in achieving the goals of schools. However, some factors prevent the realization of communication in the effectiveness of a communication process (Lunenburg, & Ornstein, 2012). These factors, which are called communication barriers, can be listed as psychological barriers, cultural barriers, semantic barriers, environmental barriers, mechanical barriers, stylistic barriers, didactic-methodical barriers, structure, and quality of the message, status and roles, protection area, hierarchy, sleep, limitation and lack of feedback (Geçikli, 2010). Kaya (2019) stated that there are many barriers to communication and classified these into two; constructive and disruptive. Moreover; he also stated that people might encounter obstacles due to their unawareness of their communication needs, inability to adequately grasp the importance of communication, and ignorance of effective communication methods.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

Kambeya (2008) stated in her study that when principals demonstrate good interpersonal communication skills, teachers are motivated to put forth more than 100% effort. Teachers' perceptions of their principals showed themselves in their efforts to do their jobs. Recognizing school administrators' communication skills is hugely important in improving these skills. The present study aims to contribute to the development of the communication skills of school administrators and to help prevent communication barriers between school administrators and other stakeholders in the school. If administrators recognize how teachers perceive their communication skills, they can improve their skills and work better with staff. Results from this study may help administrators who can focus on improving their communication skills. When the relevant literature is examined, many studies deal with the communication skills of school administrators according to their teacher perceptions (Ada, Çelik, Küçükali, & Manafzadehtabriz, 2015; Akan & Azimi, 2019; Çınar, 2010; Kambeya, 2008; Özan, 2006; Sezgin, & Er, 2016; Sueltenfuss, 2001; Şanlı, Altun, & Karaca, 2014). However, examination of these research reveals that the majority are quantitative and few are qualitative. In his review study on the studies on the communication skills of school administrators, Gomez (2022) noted that there are few studies on this topic. He found that most of the studies were done with descriptive survey methods and using a questionnaire. The number of studies on this subject in mixed design is very few. Küçük Güngörmez and Polatcan (2020) discussed the communication competencies of school principals according to the opinions of teachers working in secondary schools. The difference in our study was the consideration of communication skills and the inclusion of teachers at all school levels. Therefore, the main purpose of this research is to reveal how school administrators' communication skills concerning the teachers' views. For this purpose, the following questions were tried to be answered.

1. How do teachers feel about the communication skills of school administrators?
2. Do school administrators' communication skills differ significantly, according to teachers, depending on the industry in which they work, their length of service at the school, the type of school, the number of teachers at the school, and the number of students?
3. How do teachers rate the communication skills of their school administrators?
4. What are teachers' views on the communication barriers they experience with their school administrators?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

A mixed method design, which aims to determine teachers' views on the communication skills of school administrators, was carried out in the present study. The mixed method design is a design in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected and used together (Airasian, Gay, & Mills, 2012; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). This study used a convergent parallel approach from mixed method designs. The convergent-parallel approach is a concurrent approach and involves the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data, followed by the combination and comparisons of these multiple data sources. This approach involves collecting different but complementary data on the same phenomena. Thus, it is used for converging and for the subsequent interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data. This approach is often referred to as the concurrent triangulation design (single-phase) because the data is collected and analysed individually but at the same time. (Creswell, 2009). The most important reason for choosing the convergent parallel design in the research is to reveal the general views of teachers on the communication skills of their administrators with the collected quantitative data; at the same time, to be able to make an in-depth analysis of their managers' views on their communication skills and the communication barriers they experience with their managers, and to explain the current situation better. In

addition, it was tried to determine to what extent the answers the teachers gave in the interviews, and the general opinions they gave to the scale were consistent. This rationale can be related to Bryman's (2006) reason for "triangulation or greater validity". Triangulation or greater validity refers to the traditional view that findings can be diversified and quantitative and qualitative research can be combined for mutual validation.

In the quantitative data analysis, the survey model, one of the quantitative research designs, was used. The survey model is defined as a research approach that aims to describe past and ongoing situations, events, individuals, and objects in their terms (Karasar, 2003). In qualitative data, the basic qualitative research design was used. Basic qualitative research aims to explain how individuals build reality on their interactions in the social world. It deals with how individuals interpret their lives and the meanings they add to their experiences (Merriam, 2009).

## Participants

The research population consists of 1322 teachers working in primary, secondary and high schools of the Ministry of National Education in Acipayam and Tavas districts of Denizli province in the 2020-2021 academic year. The sample for the study's quantitative data consists of 368 teachers selected by simple random sampling. According to the formula of Cochran (1962), widely used in calculating the sample size, the required sample size for the research population was 298 (cited in Balci, 2001). The answers of 368 participants were considered after eliminating the incorrect or incompletely filled 372 scales collected electronically. It was observed that there were participants who did not answer the questions asked to determine demographic characteristics, and these areas were considered as missing data. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the teachers who participated in the quantitative part of the study.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of the demographic characteristics of the teachers from whom the quantitative data of the study were collected

Variable	Group	Number	Percentage
Tenure of Teachers at School	0-2 years	98	26,63
	between 3-6 years	129	35,05
	7 years and above	136	36,95
	Missing data	5	1,37
Branch	Primary School teacher	110	29,89
	Subject teachers	253	68,74
	Missing data	5	1,37
Type of School	Primary	146	39,67
	Secondary	128	34,78
	High Schools	87	23,64
	Missing data	7	1,91
Number of Teachers	between 0-12	125	33,96
	between 13-26	112	30,43
	27 and above	121	32,88
	Missing data	10	2,73
Number of Students	between 0-100	94	25,54
	between 101-190	84	22,82
	between 191-450	88	23,91
	between 451	88	23,91
	Missing data	14	3,82
Total		368	100

To obtain the qualitative data for the research, the study group consisting of 20 teachers was formed by using the criterion sampling method, which is one of the types of the purposeful sampling method. The criterion was based on the fact that the teachers had worked with their school administrators for at least two years.

The demographic information of the study group is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the teachers who participated in the interview

Variable	Group	Number
Age	20-30 years	5
	31-40 years	11
	41 years and older	4
Years of Experience	1-8 years	4
	9-16 years	12
	17 years and above	4
Tenure of Teachers at School	2-4 years	5
	5-7 years	13
	8 years and above	2
Working Time with Administrators	2 years	6
	3 years	7
	4 years and above	7
Type of School the Teachers Work	Primary	7
	Secondary	7
	High School	6
Branch	Primary School Teacher	7
	Subject Teacher	13
Total		20

### Data Collection Tools

For the quantitative part of the research, the scale titled "Interpersonal Communication Skills of Primary School Administrators" developed by Şahin (2007) was used as a data collection tool. The scale included items in determining the interpersonal communication skills of school principals. Şahin (2007) formed a measurement tool consisting of 4 dimensions (empathetic listening, effectiveness, giving feedback, and inspiring confidence) and 33 items resulting from exploratory factor analysis. The total variance explanation rate of the 4 factors obtained was 68.37%. The first dimension of the interpersonal communication skills scale consists of 11 items, the second dimension consists of 9 items, the third dimension consists of 9 items, and the fourth dimension consists of 4 items. It was determined that the load values of the items' factors in the first factor were between 0.594 and 0.843, the load values of the items' factors in the second factor were between 0.660 and 0.784, the load values of the items' factors in the third factor were between 0.571 and 0.789, and the load values of the items' factors in the fourth factor were between 0.564 and 0.818. In the reliability studies conducted by Şahin, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be  $r=.96$ . The scale was developed for primary school principals. However, studies used at all school levels (Nural, Ada, & Çolak, 2012; Saylık & Hazar, 2021; Sabancı, Şahin, Sönmez, & Yılmaz, 2016) were also found in the literature. The results obtained in the reliability studies conducted in this study were found to be .967 for the empathic listening and effectiveness dimensions, .974 for the feedback dimension, .924 for the inspiring confidence dimension, and .99 for the overall scale. The measurement tool is a five-point Likert-type scale. Teachers were asked to mark one of the items among "always (5)", "often (4)", "sometimes (3)", "rarely (2)", and "never (1)" for each item. There is no reverse-scored item in the scale.

In the qualitative part of the present study, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers was applied. In the interview form, there are questions to determine the communication skills of school administrators and the communication barriers that may be experienced between teachers and administrators in schools. In the preparation of the interview form, the literature was reviewed, and a question pool was created by examining the previously developed scales. After consulting an expert, a pilot research with three teachers who are professionals in educational administration was done. The readability of the questions was evaluated, and the interview form was finalized by making the required modifications. Listed below are some of the interview questions:

- What do you think about your school administrator's communication skills?
- Can you communicate comfortably with your school administrator?
- What are your views on the body language used by your school administrator?

## Data Analysis

For the normality test of the study, skewness and kurtosis tests were applied to the data. It is seen that the skewness and kurtosis values were between -.994 and .494 for the general data; -.991 to .487 for the empathetic listening dimension; -.952 to .350 for the effectiveness dimension; -.923 to .330 for the dimension of giving feedback and -1.102 to .887 for the dimension of giving confidence. Since the values for skewness and kurtosis are within the range of  $\pm 2.0$  (George & Mallery, 2010), the data set can be said to have a normal distribution. After determining that the data were in the normal distribution range, analyses were carried out through parametric tests.

In quantitative data analysis, tables containing personal information were created by calculating frequency and percentage. The arithmetic means and standard deviation values were used to determine the level of communication skills of school administrators. According to the views of the teachers, whether the communication skills of the school administrators differ in the 'branch' variable was examined via the Independent Samples T-test, and One-way analysis of variance was carried out to determine whether there was a difference in the variables' teachers' tenure at their schools', 'the type of school they worked in', 'the number of teachers in their schools' and 'the number of students in their schools'.

Content analysis, one of the qualitative data analysis techniques, was used in the analysis of the qualitative data. Content analysis aims to reach concepts that will help explain the data gathered. The obtained data are analysed in depth, and new codes and concepts are created. During qualitative data analysis, coding is carried out by naming the meaningful parts in the data. The data obtained during the coding process is divided into sections, analysed, compared, and correlated (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2008).

The analysis of the qualitative data of the research started by creating the data set of the data obtained from the participants. The data sets were read several times and the concepts that might be related to the research topic were noted. The data sets were then examined in detail and coded by the researcher using the previously noted concepts. The codes were combined under the themes derived from the literature review and the interview questions prepared by the researcher. Frequency values showing themes, codes and repetition frequencies were tabulated and interpreted in detail.

For the reliability of the qualitative data, the teachers' views, which are considered important, are directly included in the interpretation of the findings. To ensure the credibility (internal validity) of the research, the notes taken at the end of each interview were summarized by the researcher and confirmed by the participants. For external validity, the data were presented in tables; themes and codes were determined and evaluated. While analysing the data, attention was paid not to reveal the identity of the participants and the school they work in. Participants in the data tables are abbreviated as T1-T20 (Teacher1-Teacher20).

## Findings

### Findings on Quantitative Data

Firstly, teachers' views about the communication skills of school administrators are included. The arithmetic means and standard deviation values of school administrators' communication skills are given in Table 3. According to the findings in Table 3, teachers expressed their opinions as "often" for the dimensions of empathetic listening ( $\bar{X}=3.80$ ), effectiveness ( $\bar{X}=3.79$ ), giving feedback ( $\bar{X}=3.76$ ) and inspiring confidence ( $\bar{X}=3.89$ ). This ratio was also found in the overall average ( $\bar{X}=3.80$ ). Teachers expressed their opinions on the interpersonal communication skills of school administrators at the level of "often".

**Table 3.** Arithmetic mean and standard deviation values for school administrators' communication skills

Dimensions	N	Mean	Sd	Frequency
Empathetic listening	368	3,80	,99	Often
Effectiveness	368	3,79	1,00	Often
Giving feedback	368	3,76	1,02	Often
Inspiring Confidence	368	3,89	,97	Often
Overall average	368	3,80	,98	Often

To determine whether there is a significant difference concerning the communication skill levels of school administrators according to the branch variable, independent groups t-test was performed, and the test results are

given in Table 4. As is seen in the table, the communication skill levels of school administrators show a significant difference regarding the branch variable. There is a significant difference between class teachers and subject teachers in the general average and in all sub-dimensions in favour of class teachers ( $p < .05$ ).

Table 4. T-test results showing the distribution of teachers' views on the communication skills of school administrators regarding the branch variable

Dimensions	Branch	N	Mean	t	df.	Sig.
Empathic listening	Class	110	4,14	4,716	257,15	,000
	Subject	253	3,67			
Effectiveness	Class	110	4,13	4,551	248,14	,000
	Subject	253	3,67			
Giving feedback	Class	110	4,13	5,116	257,12	,000
	Subject	253	3,61			
Inspiring Confidence	Class	110	4,24	5,053	273,60	,000
	Subject	253	3,76			
Overall average	Class	110	4,14	4,932	257,83	,000
	Subject	253	3,66			

One-way analysis of variance was performed to determine whether the communication skills levels of school administrators differ according to the teachers' tenure at the school, and the analysis results are given in Table 5. As a result of the analysis of variance, a statistically significant difference was calculated on the overall mean and in all sub-dimensions. According to the Scheffe test, which was used to test the source of the differences, the difference was found to be between the teachers who worked at their school for 7 years or more and the teachers who worked between 3-6. The results show that teachers who have worked at the school they lead for 7 years or more are more positive about their administrators' communication skills than teachers who have worked at the school for 3 to 6 years.

Table 5. One-way analysis of variance results showing the distribution of teachers' views on school administrators' communication skills according to the variable of tenure of the teachers at the school

Dimensions	Tenure of the Teachers	N	Mean	Sd	F	Sig.	Significant difference
Empathic listening	0-2 years (1)	98	3,84	0,94	6,126	,002	(3)-(2)
	3-6 years (2)	129	3,59	1,06			
	7 years and above (3)	136	4,00	0,88			
Effectiveness	0-2 years (1)	98	3,78	0,93	7,284	,001	(3)-(2)
	3-6 years (2)	129	3,58	1,07			
	7 years and above (3)	136	4,04	0,92			
Giving feedback	0-2 years (1)	98	3,74	0,91	5,705	,004	(3)-(2)
	3-6 years (2)	129	3,57	1,10			
	7 years and above (3)	136	3,98	0,95			
Inspiring Confidence	0-2 years (1)	98	3,92	0,94	6,307	,002	(3)-(2)
	3-6 years (2)	129	3,68	1,06			
	7 years and above (3)	136	4,10	0,84			
Overall average	0-2 years (1)	98	3,81	0,91	6,550	,002	(3)-(2)
	3-6 years (2)	129	3,59	1,05			
	7 years and above (3)	136	4,02	0,88			

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to determine whether the communication skills levels of school administrators differed according to the type of school where teachers worked, and the results of the analysis are shown in Table 6. As can be seen, statistically significant differences were found in terms of the overall average and the type of school in all dimensions. To test the source of the differences, the Scheffe test, one of the Post Hoc tests, was used. Among the teachers working in primary and secondary schools and teachers working in primary and high schools, significant differences were found in favour of teachers working in primary schools on the overall mean and in all dimensions.



Table 6. One-way analysis of variance results showing the distribution of teachers' views on the communication skills of school administrators according to the type of school the teachers work in

Dimensions	School Type	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>Sd</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	Significant difference
Empathic listening	Primary (1)	146	4,06	0,85	9,520	,000	(1)-(2), (1)-(3)
	Secondary (2)	128	3,69	0,98			
	High Schools (3)	87	3,53	1,07			
Effectiveness	Primary (1)	146	4,04	0,90	8,038	,000	(1)-(2), (1)-(3)
	Secondary (2)	128	3,69	1,03			
	High Schools (3)	87	3,54	1,07			
Giving feedback	Primary (1)	146	4,05	0,88	11,067	,000	(1)-(2), (1)-(3)
	Secondary (2)	128	3,62	1,02			
	High Schools (3)	87	3,47	1,10			
Inspiring Confidence	Primary (1)	146	4,15	0,83	10,302	,000	(1)-(2), (1)-(3)
	Secondary (2)	128	3,80	1,00			
	High Schools (3)	87	3,59	1,03			
Overall average	Primary (1)	146	4,06	0,86	9,982	,000	(1)-(2), (1)-(3)
	High Schools (3)	87	3,53	1,06			

According to the teachers' views, one-way analysis of variance was used to determine whether the communication skills levels of school administrators differ according to the number of teachers in their schools, and the results are given in Table 7. As a result of the Scheffe test, a statistically significant difference was reached in the overall mean and in all sub-dimensions. The differences were on the overall average and in all dimensions, and a significant difference was calculated between the teachers that work with 0-12 teachers in their schools and those that work with 27 or more teachers. The differences are in favour of teachers who work with between 0-12 teachers in their schools.

Table 7. One-way analysis of variance results showing the distribution of teachers' views on the communication skills of school administrators according to the variable of the number of teachers in the school they work

Dimensions	The number of teachers	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>Sd</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	Significant difference
Empathic listening	between 0-12 (1)	125	3,97	1,08	3,397	,035	(1)-(3)
	between 13-26 (2)	112	3,76	0,91			
	27 and above (3)	121	3,65	0,94			
Effectiveness	between 0-12 (1)	125	4,00	1,10	4,176	,016	(1)-(3)
	between 13-26 (2)	112	3,71	0,93			
	27 and above (3)	121	3,65	0,94			
Giving feedback	between 0-12 (1)	125	3,96	1,07	4,169	,016	(1)-(3)
	between 13-26 (2)	112	3,68	0,97			
	27 and above (3)	121	3,61	0,97			
Inspiring Confidence	between 0-12 (1)	125	4,04	1,06	3,285	,039	(1)-(3)
	between 13-26 (2)	112	3,88	0,92			
	27 and above (3)	121	3,73	0,88			
Overall average	between 0-12 (1)	125	3,98	1,07	3,897	,021	(1)-(3)
	between 13-26 (2)	112	3,74	0,91			
	27 and above (3)	121	3,65	0,92			

One-way analysis of variance was performed to determine whether the communication skills of school administrators differ according to the number of students in their schools concerning the teachers' views, and the analysis results are shown in Table 8. Accordingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the overall mean and all sub-dimensions.

Table 8. One-way analysis of variance results showing the distribution of teachers' views on the communication skills of school administrators according to the variable of the number of students in the school they work

Dimensions	The number of students	N	Mean	Sd	F	Sig.	Significant difference
Empathic listening	between 0-100 (1)	94	3,88	1,06	1,051	,37 0	-
	between 101-190(2)	84	3,91	1,03			
	between 191-450(3)	88	3,67	0,91			
	450 and above (4)	88	3,78	0,90			
Effectiveness	between 0-100 (1)	94	3,92	1,08	1,018	,38 5	-
	between 101-190(2)	84	3,83	1,08			
	between 191-450(3)	88	3,67	0,91			
	450 and above (4)	88	3,77	0,92			
Giving feedback	between 0-100 (1)	94	3,86	1,08	0,872	,45 6	-
	between 101-190(2)	84	3,83	1,08			
	between 191-450(3)	88	3,63	0,94			
	450 and above (4)	88	3,74	0,93			
Inspiring Confidence	between 0-100 (1)	94	3,97	1,07	1,188	,31 4	-
	between 101-190(2)	84	3,99	0,99			
	between 191-450(3)	88	3,74	0,85			
	450 and above (4)	88	3,90	0,89			
Overall average	between 0-100 (1)	94	3,90	1,06	1,003	,39 2	-
	between 101-190(2)	84	3,87	1,04			
	between 191-450(3)	88	3,67	0,89			
	450 and above (4)	88	3,78	0,89			

### Findings Related to Qualitative Data

To answer the research question, "What are the positive perceptions of the teachers regarding the communication abilities of the administrators?", semi-structured interview questions were posed to the teachers, and a content analysis was performed on the collected data to generate themes and codes. The outcomes are presented in table 9.

Table 9. Theme and code list obtained from teachers' positive views on communication skills of school administrators

Themes	Codes	Frequency of Code Repetition
Effective Communication Skills	Empathy	6
	Respect	3
	Confidence	4
	Sincerity	6
	Honesty	3
	Consistency	4
Feedback	Relevant	8
	Explanatory	3
	Timely	5
Getting to Know the Staff	Solidarity	12
	Caring	6
Listening Skill	Value	10
	Participation in Decisions	7

When Table 9 is examined, considering the teachers' views on the communication skills of their administrators, the theme "effective communication skills of administrators" consisted of the codes "empathy, respect, sincerity, honesty, consistency and confidence"; the theme "school administrator's feedback" consisted of "relevant, explanatory and timely" codes; the theme "the school administrator's getting to know her staff" consisted of "solidarity and caring" codes; and the theme "the school administrator's listening skill" consisted of "valuing and participation in decisions" codes.

In the "empathy" code, T2 includes statements such as "*I think my school administrator has effective communication skills...he tries to understand me and my other friends...*", T4 includes statements such as "*...I work with a school administrator with developed empathy...*" and T10 includes statements such as "*...for example,*

*our children are very close in age. If my child is sick or there is a situation related to him, he immediately acts with understanding, which I think is empathetic. This makes me happy too. We have good relationships because my school administrator has good communication skills...".*

Teachers who think that their administrators are "sincere" state that they have good relations with their administrators. Expressing opinions in the code of "sincerity", T20's "... says "good morning" sincerely to everyone he meets every morning, asks how they are, and has a stance that shows that it asks them really sincerely, not as a duty." This statement confirms the situation.

When the 'administrator's 'feedback' theme was examined, the teachers stated that their administrators gave relevant, explanatory, and timely feedback while expressing their opinions. T14, who expressed his opinion in the "relevant" code, explained his view on this code as *"does not remain indifferent when I want to get information or something about an event at school or outside of school, he is interested. If he does not have an urgent job, he gives information immediately, or if there is something he does not know about the legislation, he investigates and returns..."*.

Teachers who expressed their opinions on the theme 'of the school administrators 'getting to know his staff' stated that their school administrators wanted to work together and cared about their teachers. In this regard, T2 said "... states that we are a family by emphasizing in every meeting and that there will be strength in unity...", T10 explained the opinion as "... every birthday that has recorded the birthdays of teachers gives us gifts, albeit small ones...", T12 said "...we can make this project successful together..." and T18 stated their views as "... they remember when there is an important day for us, they take care to attend places such as weddings and engagements that we invite, and they go and buy their presents for teachers who have children..."

The codes of "valuing" and "participating in decisions" emerged under the school administrator's 'listening skill' theme. T4 expressed his opinion on this issue as follows;

*When there is an activity to be held at the school, my school principal gathers the teachers who will participate in that activity in his room. Gets feedback on the event. He explains the plan in his head. A common ground is found, and an activity plan is created... of course, he values opinions... (Interview Record: Teacher 4).*

In addition, T20 stated the following;

*... I have worked with many principals. Let me tell you about an application I encountered for the first time and was surprised. The course plan was to be made at school last week. In general, the school administration makes the planning and communicates it. But our school principal gathered the teachers who will attend the course and offered to do the planning together... (Interview Record: Teacher 20).*

Finally, the question "What are teachers' views about the communication barriers they experience with their administrators" was answered in the present study. The themes and codes created by content analysis of the data obtained from the views of the teachers are given in Table 10. When Table 10 is examined, it is seen that the teachers who think the effective communication skills of the administrators are inadequate believe that the administrators have a careless attitude while listening to them and do not take them into account by using their position.

Table 10. Theme and code list obtained from teachers' opinions on communication barriers between teachers and school administrators

Themes	Codes	Frequency of Code Repetition
Effective Communication Skills	Passive Listening	5
	Differences in Status	2
Types of communication	Indifference	5
	Rude Behaviour	2
Body Language	Cold	1
	Inconsistent	2
Feedback	Careless	1
	Late	3
Getting to Know the Staff	Reckless	2
Listening Skill	Disregard	3

Commenting on the 'Passive Listening' code, T5 said;

*I don't think my school administrator has effective communication skills. Because when I go to his room, he greets me with an indifferent attitude at first. I can immediately understand this. Most of the time he's looking at his computer or phone while I'm talking. There are times when I have to repeat what I have said. This behaviour of my school administrator shows that he lacks communication skills. In my opinion, a school administrator should first show that he/she takes they take into account and listen to whoever the other person is (Interview Record: Teacher 5).*

T13, who expressed his opinion on the 'Status Difference' code, used the following expressions in the meeting;

*... In my opinion, school administrators should not look down on people by using the power of their office, I think that he is also a teacher and should be aware of this situation when communicating with other teachers. In the end, we all do the same job, but the fact that our school administrator thinks he is different and acts as if he is an unreachable person makes all our bilateral relations and communication difficult (Interview Record: Teacher 13).*

As it is seen in Table 10, the codes of "indifference" and "rude behavior" emerged under the theme "Types of communication with administrators" from the teachers' views regarding the communication barriers they experience with their administrators. According to this information, it is understood that there are some negativities in the communication behaviors of the school administrators, and this negative situation occurs in the form of indifference and rude behavior of the school administrators. Among the participants who expressed an opinion in the code of "indifference", T1 said, "...very indifferent to me when communicating with my school administrator...", T8 said, "...I am tired of encountering the indifferent attitude of my school administrator...", T13 said, "...I know that all the teachers in my school complain about the careless attitude of our school administrator.", T17 said, "...I think that one of the conditions for being elected as a school administrator is that people should be valued in bilateral relations and their opinions should be given importance". These statements clearly indicate the situation mentioned.

It was observed that the codes of "cold" and "inconsistent with his words" are included in the "Manager's Body Language" and emerged from the theme concerning the teachers' views on the communication barriers they experienced with their administrators. Teachers, who see the body language of their administrators as inconsistent with their behaviors, describe their administrators as being cold. Commenting on this issue, T13 said, "Neither our school administrator's body language and behaviors nor what he says are consistent. You can easily tell from his demeanor that he doesn't even believe what he's telling you." T5, who expressed his opinion on the same issue, said, "There is definitely an inconsistency between my school administrator's body language and his behavior. For some reason, when I was listening to him, what he said to me does not reassure me." T17, who expressed his opinion about his school administrator's body language under the code "cold", said, "I cannot predict whether there is an inconsistency between my school administrator's body language and his behavior, because he always tells what he wants to say with a dull expression. For example, when there is a program that teachers need to prepare on a subject, instead of motivating and guiding them, he coldly asks for it to be done."

It has been observed that the codes of "careless" and "late" appeared under the theme "Manager's Feedback". According to this information, it is understood that the administrators either take a careless attitude during the evaluation of the requests and complaints stated by the teachers, or they do this late even if they give feedback. Commenting on the code "Careless", T9 makes this clear as;

*When we have a request from our school administrator, he always has to make an excuse, whether it is about the school or about our class. Usually, this excuse is related to the lack of funding from the school and financial difficulties. Although our school administrator's communication skills are good, he tries to delay or make us forget instead of finding a solution when we have requests or complaints. We now know that our requests will not be fulfilled and that our school administrator will not care about them (Interview Record: Teacher 9).*

T11, who expressed her opinion of the "delayed" code, used the following expressions during the interview;

*It may take some time for our school administrator to deal with requests and comments made by us. I guess this situation is a consultation to a senior management. Since he is reluctant to make decisions on his own, he gives us feedback after receiving the opinion of his senior management about requests or complaints (Interview Record: Teacher 11).*

It has been observed that the "reckless" code emerged under the theme "Getting to Know the staff". T6 and T8, who commented on the "Reckless" code, commented as follows;

*... I think he only knows what I do in my lessons, my attitude towards the student, how I communicate with the parents... I don't think he cares much about my lifestyle or something like that... (Interview Record: Teacher 6).*

*I think school administrators should be good communication experts and get to know their staff closely. But I can say that my school principal is not very willing to get to know us better. The better a school principal who does not know his staff and does not share the sadness and joy of his staff can be, the better our school principal can be in this regard... (Interview Record: Teacher 8)*

Finally, it was observed that the code "Disregard" appeared under the theme "Listening Skill of the Manager". The problem is that administrators do not care about their opinions when they listen to teachers. T9, who has expressed an opinion on this issue said that "...I don't think my school administrator is listening to me. If I make a request, it doesn't mean much to him. She was doing something on her computer recently when I went to her room to talk to her about the suspension of my class. In any case, nothing has been done about my request so far...".

## Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

According to the findings from the quantitative data of the present study, the communication skills of school administrators were perceived as sufficient according to teachers. The communication skills of school administrators are perceived at the highest level in the "confidence" dimension, followed by "empathetic listening" and "effectiveness" dimensions, respectively. Confidence in the individual, and his goals, knowledge, and capacity affect communication (Ärlestig, 2008). In the results obtained from the qualitative data of the research, it is seen that the teachers think that their administrators have sufficient, positive, and good communication skills. According to these results, it can be said that school administrators have effective communication skills, and the communication process between administrators and teachers in schools is effective. This shows that teachers and school administrators can work in harmony. Pauley (2010) states that school administrators have multi-faceted tasks such as setting goals, organizing tasks, motivating employees, reviewing results, making decisions, planning, organizing, division of labor, directing, coordinating and evaluation tasks. It is stated that there should be communication, otherwise, the tasks cannot be accomplished successfully, the objectives cannot be achieved, and the decisions cannot be implemented (cited from Pauley, Başaran & Çinkır, 2013). According to Kambeya's (2008) research, principals who successfully demonstrate their interpersonal communication skills have experienced a school where teachers work in a climate conducive to teaching and learning. Principals who do not demonstrate good interpersonal communication skills work with teachers who choose not to push themselves beyond expectations. In parallel with the results of our research, Açık (2010), Akan and Azimi (2019), Asar (2014), Ayık and Uzun (2016), Çınar (2010), Çiftli (2013), Değer (1998), Ekici (2020), Kurt (2015), Küçük Güngörmez (2020), Öner (2019), Özkadam (2018) and Yılmaz (2015) concluded that the communication skills of school principals are sufficient and at a positive level. The results of Sueltenfuss's (2001) findings showed that the majority of teachers perceived their principals to use listening communication skills "often", and self-presentation and clarifying skills "very often". As a result of the data analysis on the communication styles adopted by secondary school principals, Samuel and Okotoni (2018) revealed that most of the principals adopted inclusive, open, and assertive communication styles. It has been observed that school principals who adopt inclusive, open and assertive communication styles respect teachers' opinions. Principals allowed teachers to take an active role in decision-making processes in schools. However, in his study, Uyğur (2014) concluded in the opposite direction to this result of research, and in his research, he found out that the communication skills of administrators are at low level according to the views of teachers. Memduhoğlu (2015) also found that the interpersonal communication skills of primary school administrators were at a moderate level, according to the opinions of administrators and teachers.

The teachers' views' being at the adequate level on the communication skills of administrators may be proof of the positive and sincere teacher-administrative relations in schools. This shows that there is a healthy communication environment at schools. Decision-making, cooperation, motivation and job satisfaction will likely be higher in schools where a positive communication environment is provided. As a result, effectiveness and productivity will increase (Tutar, 2009). The increase in cooperation and motivation at schools will also reflect

on the schools' stakeholders, such as family and students, which will lead students to be more successful in every field (Şahin, 2007).

According to another result of the research, the class teachers' views on the administrators' communication skills were higher than the subject teachers. Primary school teachers spend more time in schools than subject teachers. During this time, they are in school, they spend most of their time in their classrooms with their students, and they only deal with the students' problems in their classes for a year. For this reason, class teachers often communicate with the parents of the students when they decide on their class or the students in the class. They are relatively free in their decisions regarding their classes. Since class teachers have only one class for which they are responsible, they do most of the things that need to be done about their classes themselves, without leaving it to the school administrator. This way of working of class teachers also facilitates the work of school administrators and gives them time to meet the demands and requests of school administrators mostly from the top management. Bursalıoğlu (2015) states that the division of labor and cooperation without a written rule affects communication positively at schools, and that school administrators who cooperate with employees, help solve their problems, and are tolerant and motivating can establish healthier communication with the employees. A similar result to the result of this study was not found in the literature review. The research of Çınar (2010), in which subject teachers found the communication skills of school administrators more positive than class teachers, and Açıkel (2010), in which science and mathematics subject teachers found the communication skills of school administrators more positive than other subject teachers, differ with the result of the present study. Coşkuner (2008), Çiftli (2013), Uyğur (2014), and Küçük Güngörmez (2020), on the other hand, concluded that there is no difference in the views of the teachers of different branches about communication skills of school administrators.

When the tenure of the teachers at schools is considered, the views of the teachers who work longer in their schools regarding the communication skills of their administrators are more positive than the teachers who work less. However, on the contrary, in the study, it was seen that there was no significant difference between the views of teachers who started working at school in 1 or 2 years and those of teachers who worked longer in their schools. It is believed that the positive views of teachers who have recently started working in their schools regarding their communication with their administrators are due to the fact that they do not know the school and its administrators well, and even if they do, they have not yet formed a negative opinion. After a while, it is assumed that as they get to know their school and their principal, they realize their lack of communication and develop an attitude towards it. Still, their disregarding attitudes are thought to come to the fore as they work for many years, and these differences are seen. No research results were found to support this study conclusion or express a contrary view. Regarding the tenure of teachers at schools, Asar (2014), Özpolat (2019), and Yılmaz (2015) concluded that the tenure of teachers at schools does not make a significant difference in their views on the communication skills of their administrators.

According to another result obtained from the present research, teachers' views on the communication skills of school administrators differ according to the type of school they work in. As seen in the branch variable, primary school teachers' views on the communication skills of school administrators are more positive than the views of teachers working in both secondary and high schools. Yılmaz (2015), in his research, concluded that the teachers working in kindergartens had more positive views on the communication skills of their administrators regarding the branch variable. Contrary to the present study, Asar (2014) concluded that teachers work in different types of schools does not make a significant difference in teachers' views on school administrators' communication skills.

The communication skills of the administrators who have more teachers in their schools are perceived more negatively by the teachers. This result is not surprising, given that communicating in crowded environments is more complex and difficult. Akcan (2014) stated in his research on the conflict that the size of the organization can be measured with data such as economic capacity and the number of personnel and that the size of the organization is directly related to the complexity to be experienced in the organization. He also gave an example as the difficulties in managing an institution with five personnel and an institution with fifty personnel are not the same; the problems in an organization with fifty personnel will be more than an organization with five personnel, and it will be easier to deal with problems in a small organization. Başaran (2004) also stated that the growth of organizations increases the communication environment and causes communication to be experienced in a complicated way.

According to the findings of the study, the increased number of students in the schools did not influence the instructors' opinions regarding the communication skills of school administrators. This study suggests that the role or impact of student population on the communication between school officials and instructors is minimal. Therefore, whether there are few or many students in their schools does not change the communication

skills of school administrators with their teachers. A relevant research result shows that the number of students in schools affects the communication skills of school administrators could not be reached.

From the qualitative data of the research, it was tried to reach the teachers' views about the administrators' communication skills and the communication barriers that the teachers experienced with their administrators. According to teachers' views, the communication skills of school administrators were generally found to be positive. Teachers emphasized empathy and sincerity regarding the effective communication skills of their administrators. Regarding the feedback of their administrators, the teachers stated that while expressing the opinions of their administrators, they gave explanatory and timely feedback on the subject. The teachers who expressed their opinions about the school administrators "knowing their staff" stated that the school administrators want to work with them and that they care about their teachers. Regarding the "listening skill" of the school administrator, teachers emphasized that their administrators value them and include them in decisions. These findings are consistent with the quantitative data of the study. In the quantitative data, teachers stated that school administrators showed high levels of empathic listening, effectiveness, feedback, and confidence-building skills. Unlike these results, Sezgin and Er (2016), in their qualitative study with teachers revealed that the school principal does not use the communication process sufficiently to improve teacher cooperation and school activities. Teachers tend to have a negative attitude toward school principals' communication styles. Most of the teachers interviewed described the communication style of the school principal as offensive and offensive.

It is seen that there are no communication barriers between teachers and administrators to a great extent. In addition, communication barriers occur when administrators actively listen to teachers, when administrators act indifferent, cold, and rude towards teachers, when the words of the administrators do not match with their body language, and when the administrators act in haste while giving feedback. The fact that these barriers, which are stated to exist, are not experienced by the majority of the teachers but only by a few of them shows that there are no major communication barrier problems in schools. This result shows that the communication environments in schools are mostly healthy. The results of Årlestig's (2007) interviews with teachers and principals showed that communication is mainly about daily activities, knowledge, and productivity. Teachers felt they were well-informed and satisfied with their daily communication with their principals. However, they stated that they lacked conversations about their work in the classroom and in-depth conversations about student results and school improvement.

According to the results of the qualitative and quantitative data of the study, it can be said that, in general, schools have a healthy school climate, the relations between teachers and administrators are sincere, trusting and supportive, and teachers are also included in the decision-making process at schools. It has been determined that the communication abilities of school administrators are adequate, and it is believed that communication obstacles created by administrators are not insurmountable problems for teachers and administrators. This research has some limitations. First, the communication skills of school administrators were evaluated based only on the opinions of teachers. Other school stakeholders (other staff, students, parents, etc.) can be included in the research study group. Another limitation is that data were collected during the pandemic period. Changes in communication tools and types during the pandemic may have affected the answers given by teachers. Since the results of the research revealed that the positive communication skills between the administrators and teachers working in primary schools are higher, it can be suggested that necessary studies should be carried out to ensure that this situation occurs in secondary and high schools. Senior management can conduct the necessary procedures to identify communication hurdles between school administrators and teachers, and research can be conducted to find solutions. School administrators, for instance, can receive training on active listening abilities. Expanding the population and study group of the current study allows for additional research to be conducted. The relationships between teachers' perceptions of administrators' communication abilities and characteristics such as performance, satisfaction, school environment, and school culture can be examined.

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### **Author (s) Contribution Rate**

The thesis which this article was produced from was written by the first author under the supervision of the second author. In the article preparation process, the whole manuscript was reviewed by the second author, made additions and corrections where necessary and ready to submission.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

## Ethical Approval

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