



## Gender Perceptions of The Leadership Styles Of School Principals in Turkey And The Usa

### Türkiye ve Amerika Birleşik Devletlerindeki Kadın ve Erkek Okul Müdürlerinin Liderlik Algısı

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#### Öz

Eğitim sürecini iyileştirme gayretlerine paralel olarak, müdürlerin bu çabalardaki payı bütün dünyada önemli hale gelmiştir. Her geçen gün daha fazla kadının okul müdürü olmasıyla, kadınların ve erkeklerin nasıl liderlik yaptıkları ve onların liderlik stillerinin ve etkililiklerinin hem müdürlerin kendileri hem de müdürlerin okulundaki öğretmenler tarafından nasıl algılandığının araştırılmasına gereksinim duyulmuştur. Bu nitel çalışma, kültürel farklılıklara rağmen eğitime büyük önem veren ve iki ayrı ülke olan Türkiye ve Amerika Birleşik Devletlerindeki kadın ve erkek müdürlerin nasıl liderlik yaptıklarını ve onların liderlik stillerinin ve etkililiklerinin hem müdürlerin kendileri hem de müdürlerin okulundaki öğretmenler tarafından nasıl algılandığını araştırmaktır. Türkiye’de 40 öğretmen ve 20 müdürle görüşme yapılmıştır. Araştırmaya Amerika’da da aynı şekilde, 20 müdür ve 40 öğretmen katılmıştır. Araştırma verileri kodlanarak analiz edilmiştir. Bu araştırma sonucu literatürle tutarlıdır ve araştırmada, kadın ve erkek müdürlerin liderliğinin algılanmasında cinsiyetin belirleyici olduğu; ayrıca, müdürlerin liderliğine ilişkin hem öğretmen hem de müdür algısının cinsiyete göre farklılık gösterdiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Hâlihazırda müdür olarak çalışan ve müdür olmak isteyen kadınları desteklemek, yönlendirmek ve teşvik etmek gerekmektedir. Toplumsal cinsiyet ve liderlik hususu, mesleki gelişim ve lider yetiştirme sürecinin her düzeyinde mevzuatlar çerçevesinde ele alınmalıdır.

#### Anahtar Kelimeler

okul müdürü  
liderlik  
cinsiyet  
kadın müdür  
erkek müdür

#### Keywords

school principal  
leadership  
gender  
female principal  
male principal

#### Abstract

In an effort to improve the education of all students, much attention throughout the world has focused on the impact the principal plays in this effort. With more women taking on the role of principal, research is needed to examine how women and men lead, and how their leadership style and effectiveness is perceived, by both the principals themselves and the teachers they lead. This qualitative study examines how female and male school principals lead in Turkey and the United States (US), and how their leadership style and effectiveness is perceived, by both the principals themselves and the teachers they lead, in two distinct countries that, despite cultural differences, have committed to the strong belief of a public. The data were analyzed by coding the responses into a number of categories related to gender, leadership style, and descriptive phrases. Results from this study found that, consistent with the literature, gender perceptions of school leadership exist, and influence how principals and teachers perceive leadership along gender lines. Support, resources, and encouragement are needed for those who are currently female principals and for those who are aspiring to become principals. The issue of gender and leadership needs to be addressed in a formal manner at all levels of professional development and leadership preparation.

## 1. introduction

During the past several decades, there has been a significant increase of globalization among nations of the world, including trade, cultural exchange, instant communication, and improving the quality of education (Friedman 2005; House & Javidan, 2004). Technological developments bring about many social changes (Çelik, 2015a; Çelik 2015b). As the amount of globalization continues to increase, governments, universities, policy-makers and educational leaders throughout the world are devoting much attention to the critical nature of having high quality educational systems, and continue to look to other parts of the world for research, practices and programs to support this quest.

Although located in different and distinct regions of the world, and having significant cultural differences, both Turkey and the United States (US) share a common belief in the critical importance of educating the young people of their respective countries (Akinoğlu, 2008; Fuhrman & Lazerson, 2005). Both nations have a compulsory educational system, and within the system, have public and private schools for students to attend (Arslan, 2009; Fuhrman & Lazerson, 2005). In addition, both nations have the position of principal to lead schools (Barth, 1990; Karaköse, 2007), and have both females and males in such positions.

Researches have clearly revealed the critical role that the school principal plays in improving schools and the achievement of students (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Lashway, 2003; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Önder & Güçlü, 2014). Additionally, schools' success is possible with educational leaders who overcame the obstacles that are evolving in the process of change (Korkmaz, Çelebi, Yücel, Şahbudak, at all, 2015). Subsequently, the primary role of the school principal has shifted over time from being a manager to an instructional leader (Lashway, 2003; Lucas & Valentine, 2002). Thus, research has strongly suggested that a principal's leadership be directed at improving student learning, with particular emphasis on teacher instructional skills. In the researches of Çelebi and Bayhan (2008), teachers have emphasized that school principals can not be leaders adequately in becoming a role model, free and innovate.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the gender perceptions of the leadership styles of school principals in Turkey and the US. The following research questions were addressed in this study: 1. Do principals perceive the effectiveness of their leadership style being impacted by gender-both of the principal themselves and teachers? 2. Do teachers perceive the effectiveness of the leadership style of their principal being impacted by gender-both the gender of the teacher and the gender of their principal? 3. How do the perceptions of the effectiveness of the leadership styles of principals, based upon gender, in Turkey compare to those in the US?

### Context

While there are no legal barriers for a woman to become a principal in Turkey, only about 9% of all school principals are female (Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü, 2009), yet more than half of all elementary teachers and more than 40 percent of secondary teachers in Turkey are female (Turkey Statistical Yearbook, 2008). Research has shown a number of reasons for this disparity, including social and cultural norms that discriminate against women (Altınışık, 1995; Anafarta, Sarvan & Yapıcı, 2008; Çelikten, 2004; Ekren, 2014; Titrek, Bayrakci and Güneş, 2014).

Women educators in the United States face similar circumstances, where women have made up a significant majority of the number of teachers, yet have been significantly underrepresented as school principals. According to the National Center of Educational Statistics (2010), 75% of all teachers are female, while 51% of all principals are female, including 59% of all elementary principals and 29% of secondary principals (NCES, 2010). As in Turkey, researchers in the United States have found female principals faced with role conflict in which the female school leader is challenged with trying to balance their professional roles and responsibilities with personal lives and obligations as wife, parent, and mother (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Hochschild, 1989; Kochan, Spencer & Mathews, 2000).

### Leadership Style

According to Northouse (2009), "leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). During the past century, a number of leadership theories have evolved in attempting to determine what makes a leader effective, including the "great man" theories (Bass, 1990; Jago, 1982). According to this theory, leaders were believed to possess traits such as self-confidence, intelligence, dependability, fairness, extroversion, enthusiasm, and good appearance.

Leadership style is defined as how a leader behaves when providing an organization with leadership, including what the leader does, and how they act (Bass, 1990, 1998). According to Northouse (2009), the style approach is formed

through a range of two leadership behaviors: task behavior, which relates to the emphasis placed by the leader on the attainment of organizational goals, and relationship behavior, which emphasizes the interpersonal relationships between the leader and the subordinates within the organization. Included within the style theory is the extent to which the leader allows the subordinates to participate in organizational decision-making. Researchers such as Vroom and Yetton (1973) and Blake and Mouton (1964, 1978, 1985) have identified a range of behaviors of a leader, from democratic, which encourages subordinates to participate in decision-making, to autocratic, which discourages subordinates from participating in organizational decision-making. However, researches study redefined those characteristics within the framework of characteristics of narcissistic, charismatic and authoritarian leaderships; that is, it is considered that it has a multi-dimensional structure (Çelebi, Güner, Yıldız, 2015).

### Gender and Leadership

Women can often be trapped between what may be a true leadership style and leading according to what others think or want in a female leader. If the female leader remains true to her gender, she may be perceived as too gentle, nurturing and emotional. Conversely, if the female leader tries to become more “male-like” in her leadership, she may be perceived as too assertive, domineering and aloof (Adler, Laney & Parker, 1993; Lugg, 2003). Shakeshaft (1987) suggested that women have excellent leadership skills, but often face obstacles that men may not face, including traditional family demands, lack of support from colleagues and not having the strength to lead an organization.

A number of studies imply that women in leadership are often faced with the dilemma of balancing the societal expectations of women regarding their family responsibilities with that of the leadership at the workplace, and to alienation, isolation and exclusion for women educational leaders (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). McGee-Banks (2007) suggests that role theory, which is how individuals in certain positions within a culture are expected to behave, perceive what they are supposed to do and then act accordingly, can affect the behaviors of a leader. Thus, if the expectations are that strong, decisive principal requires a masculine leadership style, such expectations could not only discourage women in education from becoming a school leader, but also could lead women to struggle with their own gender identity and leadership abilities. As Shakeshaft, Nowell and Perry stated (1991), “We believe that gender affects both supervisory style and outcome” (p. 339).

## 2. Method

The current study uses a qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009) to examine the leadership styles of principals working in Turkey and in the US. Convenience sampling (Merriam, 2009) was used to identify principals and teachers for the interviews. A total of 20 principals and 40 teachers were interviewed in both Turkey and the US during July-December, 2009.

The questions selected were prepared by the researchers in alignment with the research questions and the literature regarding leadership style (Blake & McCanse, 1991; Northouse, 2009). Accordingly, the following questions were asked of principals: 1. How would you best describe your leadership style? Why did you select this style and can you provide insight into this particular style? 2. Explain how effective you think this style is when dealing with teachers. Can you please provide examples? 3. Does your gender and/or the gender of your teachers influence the leadership style you use as principal? If so, please provide examples.

The following questions were asked of the teachers: 1. How would you best describe the leadership style of your principal? Why do you think your principal selected this style? Can you provide examples of the principal using this style? 2. Explain how effective you think this style is when dealing with teachers. Can you provide examples? 3. Does your gender and/or the gender of your principal influence how you perceive the effectiveness of the principal's leadership style? Can you provide examples of this?

Once the interviews were completed, the researchers analyzed the data by coding the responses into a number of categories related to gender, leadership style, and descriptive phrases. Once the responses were categorized, the researchers used peer debriefing (Marshall & Rossman, 2010) in which knowledgeable and available colleagues familiar with the topic provided reactions, insights and interpretations.

### Participant Demographics

*Turkey:* In Turkey, principals and teachers were selected for interviews from the cities of Ankara, Antalya, Burdur, Isparta and Konya. Forty (40) teachers were interviewed by the researchers. Twenty female and twenty male teachers were interviewed in Turkey. As displayed in Table 1, participants were grouped according to gender, role and experience.

**Table 1. Participant demographics-Turkey**

Gender/Role (n) Principals	Experience	Gender/Role (n) Teachers	Experience
Female Elementary Principal (n=5)	2-13 years	Female Teacher w/Fem Principal(n=10)	3-20 years
Male Elementary Principal (n=5)	6-24 years	Female Teacher w/ Male Principal(n=10)	7-21 years
Female Secondary Principal (n=5)	7-14 years	Male Teacher w/ Female Principal (n=10)	5-21 years
Male Secondary Principal (n=5)	4-22 years	Male Teacher w/ Male Principal (n=10)	15-33 years
Total Principals (n=20)	2-24 years	Total Teachers (n=40)	1-34 years

US: Similarly, twenty principals and forty teachers participated in the study the US. And shown in Table 2, were grouped according to gender, role and experience.

**Table 2. Participant demographics-United States (US)**

Gender/Role (n) Principals	Experience	Gender/Role (n) Teachers	Experience
Female Elementary Principal (n=6)	1-32 years	Female Teacher w/ Female Princ. (n=13)	2-34 years
Male Elementary Principal (n=3)	6-25 years	Female Teacher w/ Male Principal (n=9)	5-9 years
Female Secondary Principal (n=4)	4-16 years	Male Teacher w/ Female Principal (n=8)	3-22 years
Male Secondary Principal (n=7)	2-18 years	Male Teacher w/ Male Principal (n=10)	1-14 years
Total Principals (n=20)	1-32 years	Total Teachers (n=40)	1-34 years

### 3. Findings

*Principal Perceptions-Turkey:* Principals were asked first to identify and describe their style of leadership, and then explain why they chose this particular style. All of the principals from Turkey-both male and female- identified and described their style as collaborative, and has similar responses as to why this style was selected. Principals, regardless of their gender, felt strongly that teachers are more effective when involved in the instructional decision-making. As one female principal stated: Since I believe in a democratic school and participation, I behave and lead collaboratively. It is important for me to satisfy the needs and wants of our teachers.

In responding to how they perceived their effectiveness, all but one principal (female) in Turkey described it as effective.

Principals were then asked if their gender or the gender of a teacher influences how they lead the school. Each principal, as shown in Table 3, said that gender, in fact, did influence their leadership, with only one principal indicating that this degree of influence was only “a little”, while the remaining principals stated this degree of influence was either “a lot” or “some”. In discussing how gender has an impact on school leadership, a female principal said: I think all teachers are glad to work with me, but when a problem occurs, female teachers are much more supportive than male teachers. I think female teachers want me to succeed, but not all male teachers.

A male principal suggested that gender of both the principal and teacher often influence how he leads, especially when the gender of the principal and teacher are the same: I believe male teachers are more sincere and willing to communicate to me as the male principal. Female teacher feel more confident and trusting of female principals.

**Table 3. Gender influence on leadership style-principals' self-perception in Turkey**

Role (n)	Yes/No (n)	If Yes, To What Degree		
Female Collaborative Principal (10)	Yes (7) No (3)	A Lot (1)	Some (5)	Little (1)
Authoritative Female Principal (0)	---			
Collaborative Male Principal (10)	Yes (5) No (5)	A Lot (1)	Some (4)	
Authoritative Male Principal (0)	---			
Total Principals (20)	Yes (12) No (8)	A Lot (2)	Some (9)	Little (1)

*Teacher Perceptions-Turkey:* In response to the first question, How would you best describe the leadership style of your principal?, about two-thirds of the teachers in Turkey indicated their principal's style as collaborative, another twenty percent indicating an authoritative style, while the remaining teachers indicated a combination of styles. Responses from female teachers and male teachers were similar, regardless of whether these teachers worked for a female or male principal, and why they felt principals selected a particular style. As shown in Table 4, Turkish teachers had varied opinions regarding the leadership style of their principal, which is different than the principals' perceptions, with more than one-third of the teachers indicating leadership styles other than collaborative. However, responses were similar

regarding the gender of the teacher.

Regarding the second part of the first question, Why did you think the principal selected this leadership style?, there were very similar responses between female teachers and male teachers. Each of the groups suggested that principals selected this style because the principal was comfortable with this style, it reflected the beliefs and values of the principal, it will lead to success throughout the school, and that teachers are motivated by the selected style of the principal, particularly if the style was collaborative.

A female teacher stated: I believe our principal [female] selected a democratic style because it creates a good working environment in which the teachers feel much more productive.

Teachers were also asked, How effective do you think this style is?, and Can you provide examples?. Most of the teachers indicated that their principals were either very effective or effective, while twenty percent indicated the principal was ineffective. In terms of responses according to gender, however six of the female teachers indicated the leadership style of their principal as being effective, while only half as many male teachers indicated such.

A female teacher, with a female principal described the effectiveness of her principal by stating: We discuss, talk and we making the best decision together, and we try to make the decision successfully. We are working in a comfortable school.

At the same school, a male teacher suggested that: Since our principal is open to teachers' suggestions, the principal then uses the information from the suggestions to make better decisions.

Teachers who had authoritative principal felt that this style was, for the most part ineffective and not good for the school, and once again, gender did not play a significant role in such perceptions.

The final interview question for the teachers in Turkey was, Does your gender and/or the gender of your principal impact how you perceive the effectiveness of your principal's leadership style? Results, as shown in Table 4, indicate difference in perceptions according to the gender of the teacher, with male teachers having a higher level of perceived influence of leadership according to gender.

A female teacher who works with a female principal said: Our principal is collaborative and manages (administers) both female and male teachers the same. Both female and male teachers are good friends with our principal and we work hard to keep a good working relationship with our principal.

However, several teachers described principals who, in fact were influenced by gender as they led the school. A female teacher who worked with male principal stated: Male teachers want the principal to behave more autocratically when things do not work well. Our principal is considerate to both female and male teachers every time. But since females have more responsibilities at home, our principal is more considerate to female teachers.

**Table 4. Influence of gender on perceived leadership styles of principals by teachers in Turkey**

Teacher (n)	Yes/No (n)	If Yes, To What Degree (n)
Female Teacher w/Collaborative Female Principal(8)	Yes(0) No(8)	---
Female Teacher w/ Authoritative Female Principal(2)	Yes(0) No(2)	---
Female teacher w/ Collaborative Male Principal (6)	Yes(2) No(4)	Some(1) A little (1)
Female Teacher w/ Authoritative Male Principal (2)	Yes(0) No(2)	
Total Female Teachers (20)	Yes(2) No (6)	
Male Teacher w/Collaborative Female Principal (6)	Yes(2) No(4)	Some(1) A little (1)
Male Teacher w/ Authoritative Female Principal (2)	Yes(1) No(1)	Some(1)
Male Teacher w/ Collaborative Male Principal (2)	Yes(1) No(1)	Some(1)
Male Teacher w/ Authoritative Male Principal (7)	Yes(2) No(5)	A Lot(1) Some (1)
Total Male Teachers (20)	Yes(6) No(11)	A Lot(1) Some(3) A Little (1)

*Principal Perceptions-US:* Principals were asked to identify and describe their leadership styles. Of the twenty principals who were interviewed, almost all used the word collaborative to describe their leadership style, while only three used the word authoritative to describe their principal's style. Two of the principals who described their style as authoritative were male principals, while one was a female principal.

As a follow-up question, principals were asked why they chose this particular style. Female principals placed a priority on building relationships, teamwork, modeling, and gaining input before making decisions. One female principal

stated, “I believe, first and foremost, that teachers are leaders, and I need to include them in our school improvement efforts as partners, not subordinates”.

Male principals, while discussing the importance of being collaborative, were more likely to adopt this style in order to reach goals and perform tasks. A male principal suggested: Collaborative leadership is critical to making good decisions...I seek input and ask lots of questions but ultimately I have to make the decision and I am held accountable to make good decisions.

Principals were then asked to discuss their perceptions of how effective they were in using a particular leadership style. Collaborative principals generally described their style as either highly effective or effective, with no significant differences between genders. However, one male principal stated: I supposed some would expect a male principal to be more autocratic, but that’s the old way of doing things. Nothing will get done around here if I am a dictator. I feel very strongly that we continue to get better because of this collaborative style.

Finally, the three principals who selected authoritative as their leadership style spoke of the tradition of success over a long period of time at their school and that they were not willing to change to a different style. The female principal who selected the authoritative style stated: It’s the way I do things...people have a right to their opinion, but I am not changing...I’ve been here for thirty years and I will retire first before changing. The two male authoritative principals had similar thoughts regarding the tradition of having this particular style.

The final set of questions for the principals related to whether they felt that gender-either their gender or the gender of teachers-influenced their leadership style. More than half of the principals twelve indicated that gender did influence how they led. As shown in Table 5, of these principals, six were females who described themselves as collaborative, five were male principals who described themselves as collaborative, and one male principal who described himself as authoritative.

**Table 5. Gender effect on leadership style-principals’ self-perception in the US**

Role	N	Yes/No (N)	If so, To What Degree? (n)
Female Collaborative Principal	9	Yes (6) No (3)	A lot (3) Some (2) A Little (1)
Authoritative Female Principal	1	Yes (0) No (1)	- -
Collaborative Male Principal	8	Yes (5) No (3)	A Lot (1) A Little (4)
Authoritative Male Principal	2	Yes (1) No (1)	Some (1)
Total Female and Male Principals		Yes (12) No (8)	A Lot (4) Some (3) A Little (5)

Female principals discussed gender in terms of how they would be perceived-as a good principal or a good *female* principal, and the likelihood of being tested in the beginning of the principalship by those who were more used to having a male principal. One female principal stated: Being a female principal of a high school was not what people were used to, and I had to watch what I said and did...and there was always the “good old boys” who were coaches and department chairs. They certainly did not go out of their way to welcome me and help me during the first few years. And even some of the women teachers were very distant to me. I don’t know if it was because I was an outsider or there was jealousy, but it was there. But then, it may have been different if I had not been the first female principal at this school.

Male principals who indicated that gender influenced their leadership style described how they would alter the degree of collaborative style when interacting with female staff members.

One male principal suggested: The issue of gender is always there. I tended to be “kinder and gentler” with women, and more “up front” with men. I don’t know if this was good or bad, but that’s the way it was. Personally, the tears from women who were upset influenced me a lot more than “cussing” by men who were angry.

None of the three principals who self-described as having authoritarian leadership style suggested that gender played any role in their leadership. As one principal (male) said, “I do everything by the book-my book-and if you do your job here, it doesn’t matter what gender a person is...do your job, do what is expected and I’ll support you the whole way”.

*Teacher Perceptions-US:* In identifying the type of leadership style used by their principal, a majority of the teachers indicated that the style was collaborative, and a little less than half described the style as authoritative. There were only a few differences regarding teacher gender and their perception of the principal leadership style.

In discussing why they felt their principals selected a particular style, there were differences among the teachers according to gender. Elementary female teachers were more likely to discuss that their principals selected the collaborative

style due to the principal's experience as an elementary teacher, or as one female teacher stated, "I really think women are much more nurturing and willing to listen than men are". However, a male secondary principal suggested that his female principal used the collaborative style because "it offered less resistance, especially among the most vocal and negative teachers".

The teachers who had authoritative principals offered several perceptions as to why their principal had selected this style. A female teacher who had an authoritative male principal suggested: My principal is so typical of a male leader who has power. When you think of it, though, who have been his role models? Who trained him? Most likely males with egos and power! So why would he do it differently? !

A male teacher who worked for an authoritative female principal suggested: I think she is just trying to compete with the other principals in the district, who are mostly male. This is too bad, because I don't think she is being herself.

Teachers were then asked to comment on the effectiveness of their principal's style. Most felt that their principals were either very effective or effective. Authoritative principals, regardless of their gender or the gender of the teachers, were perceived as the least effective. A female teacher suggested the following: She just doesn't get it. She wants to run everything. Know everything. She doesn't trust us at all...it's all about her and her power.

**Table 6. Influence of gender on perceived leadership styles of principals by teachers in the US**

Teacher (n)	Yes/No(n)	If Yes, To What Degree(n)
Female Teacher w/Collaborative Female Principal(7)	Yes(5) No(2)	A Lot(2) Some(2) A Little(1)
Female Teacher w/Authoritative Female Principal(4)	Yes(3) No(1)	A Lot (2) Some (1)
Female teacher w/Collaborative Male Principal(4)	Yes (1) No(3)	A Little (1)
Female Teacher w/Authoritative Male Principal(6)	Yes(4) No(2)	A Lot (3) A Little (1)
Total Female Teachers (21)	Yes(13) No(8)	A Lot (7) Some(3) A Little(3)
Male Teacher w/Collaborative Female Principal (8)	Yes(5) No(3)	A Lot (1) Some (2) A little (2)
Male Teacher w/Authoritative Female Principal (2)	Yes(2)No(0)	A Lot (1) Some (1)
Male Teacher w/Collaborative Male Principal (4)	Yes(1) No(3)	Little (1)
Male Teacher w/Authoritative Male Principal (5)	Yes(4) No(1)	A Lot (2) Some (1) Little (1)
Total Male Teachers (19)	Yes(12) No(7)	A Lot (4) Some (4) A Little (4)

Teachers were then asked to discuss whether or not gender played a role in how their principal led the school, including the gender of the teacher and/or the gender of the principal. Most of the teachers indicated that they perceived gender does play a role in the leadership style of the principal, and as shown in Table 6, that gender influenced these perceptions.

A number of female teachers discussed that they perceived gender as playing a role in the leadership style of the principal, including more than half of these who described the degree of impact as being either *A Lot* or *Some*. Female teachers with authoritative principals-either female or male principal-had the highest ratio of those indicating that there was a gender impact on leadership style. A female teacher who had a *Collaborative Female Principal* stated:

My principal is very collaborative, which we all appreciate. But, I do feel that male teachers on our staff who are more assertive or aggressive get their way a lot easier than we as females do, even if you are assertive! I think there is a degree of her being intimidated by the men, but not by the women.

Another female teacher who had a *Authoritarian Male Principal* asserted that the gender issue was always "right below the surface" and that female teachers, in spite of working in a very successful school, often felt that he (the principal) was not approachable nor was he interested in them as anything but teachers.

Twelve of the eighteen male teachers suggested that gender did impact the leadership style of their principal, including eleven of the male teachers who indicated that the impact of gender was at a level of *A Lot* or *Some*. Three of the four subgroups of the male teachers had a majority or better suggesting that gender played a role in leadership style. One male teacher, who worked for a *Collaborative Male Principal*, said that his principal ensures that everything is "gender equitable, making sure that there are equal females and males in all department leadership regardless of the gender make-up of such departments". Another male teacher suggested that his *Authoritarian Female Principal* does not let gender influence her leadership, although the teacher did indicate that he felt she did lead in this way in order "to be a role model for female teachers...so that they would know how to be better prepared for possible leadership roles".

#### 4. Discussion

This international study examined the impact gender plays in how the leadership style of school principals is perceived by both school principals themselves as well as the teachers for whom they lead. The results of this study lend support to previous research which suggested gender plays a significant role in the perceptions of how a principal leads and that, in fact, many of the same biases that have been examined in the past still remain in terms of gender. In addition, this study compares such perceptions of both principals and teachers in terms of the country in which they live and work: Turkey and the United States.

That gender continues to play a role in such perceptions confirms the findings of more than 30 years of research in educational leadership (Coleman, 2005; Loder, 2005; Sali, 2014; Shakeshaft et al, 2007; Young, 2005). Confirming what these researchers have suggested, we found that the following exist, both in Turkey and the United States: male domination, stereotypes, role conflict and family obligations.

Barriers that females may face, as found in our study, is that women in both countries faced challenges that were more intense than what males had to face in terms of male dominance in the hiring and supervision of female principals, which often led to a more “masculine” form of leadership, which then leads to the frequent paradox that female principals face: being too assertive (male stereotype) can lead to backlash from followers who may believe that this is not the way a female should lead; or being too collaborative (female stereotype) can lead to followers thinking that the female leader cannot be “strong and decisive.” This paradox can often result in having the female principal to have a lack of confidence in providing the appropriate and needed leadership for her school. As one American principal commented:

I struggled for a number of years trying to figure out how to lead. I did not have any role models or mentors since I was the only female high school principal in the district. So it was trial and error for me, which ended up being more errors than not, for I was not being myself. It was only when I decided to be myself and not try to please everyone that my leadership began to change for the better. But it still upsets me that I do not believe that male principals, for the most part, go through this to the same extent. They are either perceived as autocratic or collaborative, and that is it. Females, on the other hand, are criticized and perceived as weak regardless of their style. It takes much longer for us to be accepted than males!

In addition, in both countries, female principals perceived themselves as having to be the school leader during the workday, and then take care of the family after work, including but not limited to taking care of children and domestic chores (cooking, cleaning, etc ), with little help or support from their spouse, and with little opportunity for individual time for social activities, self-improvement or reflection. This was previously confirmed by Sali (2014).

Since the school principal, after teachers, has the most influence in student achievement within a school setting (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Stein & Spillane, 2003), schools need and deserve principals who are able to lead with a style that is in the best interest of the context in which they presently operate. While some gender gaps have been changing overtime (e.g; more female principals as percentage of all principals), a number still exist in both Turkey and the United States, and we offer the following recommendations in terms of practice and preparation:

1. Emphasis on social justice and equity.
2. Communication and mentoring among female school leaders.
3. Emphasis on gender and equity research.
4. Continuous professional development on gender, equity, and social justice for all members of a school organization.
5. Assessment of school leadership curricula, theory and practice in terms of gender, equity, and social justice.
6. Synthesis and analysis of trends in school leadership according to gender, ethnicity, and race.

As Loder suggested back in 2005,

It makes very little sense to continue drawing conclusions about women’s progress in achieving gender equity in educational administration based on comparisons between ‘today’s’ women administrators and ‘yesterday’s’ men administrators, which may be invalid or erroneous comparisons (p. 770). Thus, it is not only prudent to have a system that is gender-neutral in the hiring of school principals, but also gender-neutral once the principal has been hired.



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