

Teachers' views on open school climate

Yılmaz Dedeoluk¹, İrem Kaya Öğreten², Nermin Yılmaz Toplu³, Mahir Dursun⁴

Abstract

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This research aimed to determine teachers' thoughts about the open school climate in the schools where they work. The relational screening method, which is within the quantitative research design, was used in the research. The research sample consists of 517 teachers working in schools in Turkey in the 2023-2024 academic year. The "School Climate Scale" was used to determine participants' opinions. Within the scope of the research, distributions of teachers' demographic factors and their participation in scale expressions were determined. Statistical differences were analyzed between the participants' gender,

school type, length of time working with the current principal, and statements. Since the research data were not normally distributed, non-parametric tests were used. Mann-Whitney U Test was used for the averages of two independent groups. Kruskal Wallis H Test was used for the averages of more than two independent groups, and the results were interpreted. According to the research findings, teachers' positive open climate views do not change according to gender and the duration of their employment with the principal, and the relevant hypotheses were rejected. A statistically significant difference was detected between the participants' views on school type and open climate. Accordingly, teachers working in primary schools have more favourable opinions about their schools' open school climate than other types of schools.

Keywords: Open climate, teacher, demographic factor.

Introduction

Education is considered a critical infrastructure for the development of individuals and societies. In this context, the quality of educational environments is an essential factor that directly affects learning processes and results. School climate, in particular, is widely studied by educators and researchers because it has a significant impact on academic achievement and student and teacher well-being. This study deals with "Open School Climate", one of the school climate types.

Education is one of the cornerstones of social development, and school climate is critical in this area. "Open School Climate" stands out as a critical concept that has gained importance in modern education systems. This term includes the school's physical, social, and academic environment, as well as the interactions of teachers, students, and other stakeholders. An open school climate refers to a participatory, transparent and collaborative educational environment, which is known to produce positive results for all stakeholders (Spicer, 2016).

¹ Teacher, Ministry of National Education, dedeoluk74@hotmail.com

² Teacher, Ministry of National Education, iremkaogreten@hotmail.com

³ Teacher, Ministry of National Education, nerminyilmaz12@gmail.com

⁴ Teacher, Ministry of National Education, mahirdursun@gmail.com

The Importance of Open School Climate

Student Achievement and Well-being: Research shows that an open school climate positively affects students' academic success and well-being. Students learn better and socially develop in a supportive and encouraging school environment.

Teacher Motivation and Professional Development: An open school climate increases professional satisfaction and motivation for teachers. Collaboration and professional development opportunities help teachers improve their professional skills and teaching quality.

School Culture and Management: An open school climate makes school management more collaborative and effective. This encourages strong communication and shared decision-making between management and teachers (Karadağ et al., 2016).

Components of Open School Climate

Physical Environment: The physical structure and facilities of the school directly affect the learning and teaching processes. A safe, clean and well-equipped school environment creates a favourable climate for students and teachers.

Social and Psychological Environment: The social and psychological environment of the school includes the relationships of students and teachers with each other and the school administration. Respect, trust and cooperation are the cornerstones of an open school climate.

Academic Environment: Educational content, teaching methods, and assessment practices constitute the school's academic environment. Academic excellence and innovation are essential aspects of an open school climate (Özdemir et al., 2010).

Open school climate can be defined as the way the school provides a physical, psychological and social environment for students, teachers and other stakeholders. This climate is reflected in various dimensions of the school, such as student participation, teacher collaboration, management practices, and the school's general culture. An open school climate contributes to creating a more participatory, collaborative and supportive educational environment that enriches the school experiences of teachers and students (Allen, Grigsby ve Peters, 2015).

Research shows that an open school climate positively affects students' academic motivation, learning attitude and overall school satisfaction. From the perspective of teachers, it has been determined that an open climate has similar effects on teacher motivation, professional satisfaction and job performance (Hoy ve Hannum, 1997; Chen ve Weikart, 2008; Brennan, 2015; Goddard, Goddard ve Kim, 2015). Therefore, understanding and improving school climate is central to efforts to improve the quality of education.

This study aims to examine the school climate perceptions of teachers working in different types of schools in Turkey and to evaluate the relationship of these perceptions with demographic factors. The research collects teachers' views on open school climate through the "School Climate Scale" and analyzes these data with quantitative research methods. The findings can be significant in shaping education policies and determining strategies to improve the school climate.

For this purpose, do teachers' perspectives on open school climate vary according to demographic factors? The answer to the question was sought, and hypotheses were developed. Below are the hypotheses.

1. Do teachers' perspectives on open school climate differ by gender?

H₀: Teachers' explicit climate views do not vary by gender.

H₁: Teachers' explicit climate views vary by gender.

2. Do teachers' perspectives on open school climate vary depending on school type?

H₀: Teachers' explicit climate views do not vary by school type.

H₁: Teachers' explicit climate views vary by school type.

3. Do teachers' perspectives on open school climate change depend on the length of time they work with the current principal?

H₀: Teachers' open climate views do not change according to the time they work with the current principal.

H₁: Teachers' open climate views vary depending on the time they work with the current principal.

Based on the findings obtained from the research, the results regarding the hypotheses are included in the conclusion section of the study.

Method

Information about the research design, study group, data collection, data collection tools and data analysis are presented.

Research Design

In the research, the relational screening method, included in the quantitative research design, was used to evaluate the teachers' perspectives on the school climate in the schools where they work, according to their gender, school type and working hours with their principals. The relational screening method is defined as the model used to determine the relationship between two or more variables (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018). The responses of the teachers participating in the research to the climate statements regarding the schools they worked in were determined as the dependent variable, and the demographic characteristics of the teachers were determined as the independent variable.

Participants

The research population comprises all teachers working in the 2023-2024 academic year. In selecting the sample, an attempt was made to reach all teachers, and no restrictive discrimination was made. The research sample consists of 517 teachers who answered the questionnaires.

Data Collection Tools

Two questionnaires were used to collect data regarding the sample. The first is the Personal Information Form developed by Özdemir (2023), which includes the participants' demographic characteristics such as gender, school type and working time with the current principal. The other is the School Climate Scale developed by Canli, Demirtaş and Özer (2018) to measure teachers' school climate perceptions. Questionnaires were sent to teachers via Google Forms, and the answered forms were included in the research.

School Climate Scale

There are 23 items in the School Climate Scale developed by Nakit, Demirtaş and Özer (2018)—the response options of the scale range from (5) Always to (1) Never. Participants were asked to choose one of the following statements: "Never, rarely, sometimes, mostly and always," their answers were evaluated at 1-5 points, respectively. The total score range that can be obtained from the scale is 20 to 100 points. The increase in the score range calculated for the statements indicates that an open school climate is valid in the teachers' schools. As a result of the reliability analysis of the scale, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients were calculated, and it was decided that the scale was reliable ($\alpha=.73$).

Data Analysis

The data obtained in the research were analyzed via the SPSS 22.0 program. In this context, descriptive statistics were used for the demographic characteristics and expressions of the participants. Scale expressions are coded to facilitate the tables. Average values calculated with the Compute Variable in the SPSS 22.0 program were used for scale expressions. In addition, the K-S value ($\alpha = .412$) was calculated for the scale, and it was determined that the data set was not normally distributed. Variance analyses were performed to calculate the variance of the relationship between demographic factors (independent variables) and expressions regarding school climate perceptions (dependent variables). For the variance calculations of the gender variable and scale expressions, the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric method used to compare the means of two independent groups in a distribution that does not exhibit typical distribution characteristics, was used. The Kruskal-Wallis H Test was also conducted for the averages of more than two independent groups (type of school and duration of working with the principal), and the results are reported in the tables.

Findings

The tables and their comments prepared for the findings obtained from the research will be examined under this heading.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Characteristic		N	%
Gender	Female	311	60,2
	Male	206	39,8
School Type	Primary school	155	30,0
	Secondary School	206	39,8
	High school	156	30,2
Working Time with Current Principal	0-5 years	103	19,9
	6-10 years	414	80,1
	Ten and over	-	-

According to Table 1, 60.2% of the participants are female teachers and 39.8% are male teachers. According to the percentage distribution regarding the type of school where the participants work, 30% of the teachers work in primary schools, 39.8% work in secondary schools, and 30.2% work in high schools. In addition, according to the length of time teachers have been working with their current principals at the schools where they work, 19.9% of the participants have been working with them for 0-5 years, and 80.1% have been working with them for 6-10 years. No teachers who participated in the research have worked with the same principal for ten years or more.

In order to ensure easy expression in the table section of the research, the scale expressions are coded as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Open school climate scale items**Expressions**

1. Teacher-student relations are good in our school.
2. In our school, teachers' differences are respected.
3. Staff at our school treat each other with understanding.
4. Individual differences of students are respected in our school.
5. The teachers in our school embrace the school.
6. Teachers at our school like to take responsibility for school-related matters.
7. Teachers in our school can easily convey their requests to the principal.
8. Our school principal considers teachers' opinions before making school-related decisions.
9. Our school principal treats teachers fairly regarding administrative practices (disciplinary practices, lesson distribution, task distribution, etc.).
10. Problems in our school are discussed openly.
11. Our school principal clearly states what he expects from teachers.
12. Our school principal provides teachers with the necessary resources.
13. Students in our school strive to increase their success.
14. The performance of the teachers in our school is high.
15. Employees at our school fulfil their responsibilities.
16. Teachers at our school support their students.
17. Employees at our school continue to meet outside of school.
18. Employees at our school enjoy spending time together.
19. The employees at our school are compatible with each other.
20. There is a tense atmosphere in our school.
21. Disciplinary problems are common in our school.
22. There are social groupings among the employees at our school.
23. There are communication problems among the employees at our school.

In Table 2, School Climate Scale statements are numbered and included in the table below for descriptive statistics.

Table 3. Distribution of scale expressions

Expression	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Mostly		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	258	49,9	259	50,1
2	-	-	-	-	50	9,7	208	40,2	259	50,1
3	-	-	-	-	258	49,9	259	50,1	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	259	50,1	258	49,9
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	325	62,9	192	37,1
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	309	59,8	208	40,2
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	286	55,3	231	44,7
8	-	-	-	-	26	5,0	286	50,3	231	44,7
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	260	50,3	231	49,7
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	234	45,3	283	54,7
11	-	-	-	-	-	-	207	40,0	310	60,0
12	-	-	-	-	180	34,8	337	65,2	-	-
13	-	-	-	-	155	30,0	336	65,0	26	5,0
14	-	-	-	-	26	5,0	439	84,9	52	10,1
15	-	-	-	-	26	5,0	311	60,2	180	34,8
16	-	-	-	-	50	9,7	311	60,2	156	30,2
17	-	-	-	-	50	9,7	311	60,2	156	30,2
18	-	-	-	-	-	-	335	64,8	182	35,2
19	-	-	-	-	-	-	365	64,9	152	35,1
20	129	25,0	258	49,9	130	25,1	-	-	-	-
21	101	19,5	286	55,3	130	25,1	-	-	-	-
22	-	-	259	50,1	258	49,9	-	-	-	-
23	-	-	259	50,1	258	49,9	-	-	-	-

When the distribution of teachers' open school climate statements in schools is examined on the scale, it is seen that teachers generally mostly and always agree with the statements. It is seen that teachers sometimes disagree with the statements numbered 2-3-8-12-13-14-15-16-17-20-21-22-23. Accordingly, understanding between employees, respect for individual differences, principals acting reasonably in practices and providing the necessary resources to teachers, students striving for success, employees meeting outside of school and enjoying spending time together, occasional tensions that cause in-school discipline problems, and tensions between employees. Some teachers expressed negative opinions on issues such as social grouping and communication problems.

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U test results of open school climate according to teachers' gender

Gender	N	Sd	SO	U	Z	p
Female	311	78039,00	250,93	29523,000	1,527	,127
Male	206	55864,00	271,18			
Ho: Teachers' explicit climate views do not vary by gender.						Acceptance
H1: Teachers' explicit climate views vary by gender.						Rejection

It is seen that teachers' open climate views do not differ statistically significantly according to the gender variable. According to the analysis results, although the difference was not significant, it was determined that female teachers found the school climate in the schools they worked in closer to the open school climate than male teachers.

Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis H Test results of school climate perception according to school type

	School Type	Sample population.	Rank Average
Open School Climate	Primary School	155	326,53
	Secondary School	206	258,78
	High School	156	192,20
	Total	517	
Kruskal-Wallis H Significance Level: .000			
Ho: Teachers' explicit climate views do not vary by school type.			Acceptance
Hi: Teachers' explicit climate views vary by school type.			Rejection

As seen in Table 5, it was determined that there was a significant difference between teachers' views on the open climate in their schools and the type of school they work in. Accordingly, teachers' opinions vary according to school type and the H₁ hypothesis is "accepted". Looking at the ranking values for school types, it can be seen that participants working in primary schools think more positively about the open climate prevailing in their schools than participants in other school types.

Table 6. Kruskal-Wallis H Test results of school climate perception according to the duration of working with the principal

	Working time with the principal	Sample population.	Rank Average
Open School Climate	0-5 years	103	250,18
	6-10 years	414	261,19
	Ten and over	-	-
	Total	517	
Kruskal-Wallis H Significance Level: .498			
Ho: Teachers' explicit climate views do not vary by school type.			Acceptance
Hi: Teachers' explicit climate views vary by school type.			Rejection

As seen in Table 6, it was determined that there was no significant difference between teachers' opinions about the open climate in their schools and the length of time they worked with the current principal. Accordingly, teachers' opinions do not change according to the length of time they work with the principal and the H_0 hypothesis is "accepted". Looking at the ranking values for working hours, teachers who have been working with the current principal for 6-10 years are more likely to agree that an open climate prevails in their schools than teachers who have worked for 0-5 years.

Results

Some conclusions were reached regarding the data obtained in the research and are listed below.

1. When the distribution of teachers' open climate statements is examined, it is seen that teachers generally mostly and always agree with the statements. On the other hand, understanding between employees, respect for individual differences, principals acting reasonably in practices and providing the necessary resources to teachers, students striving for success, employees meeting outside of school and enjoying spending time together, occasional tensions that cause in-school discipline problems, social interaction among employees, Some of the teachers expressed negative opinions about the existence of an open climate in their schools on issues such as grouping and communication problems.

2. It is seen that teachers' open climate views do not differ statistically significantly according to the gender variable. According to the analysis results, although the difference was not significant, it was determined that female teachers found the school climate in the schools they worked in closer to the open school climate than male teachers. As a result, the H_0 hypothesis was accepted.

3. Teachers' opinions vary according to school type, and the hypothesis is accepted. Looking at the ranking values for school types, it can be seen that participants working in primary schools think more positively about the open climate prevailing in their schools than participants in other school types.

4. It was determined that teachers' views on the open climate in their schools and the length of time they worked with the current principal were similar. Accordingly, teachers' opinions do not change according to the length of time they work with the principal and the H_0 hypothesis is accepted. Looking at the ranking values for working hours, teachers who have been working with the current principal for 6-10 years are more likely to agree that an open climate prevails in their schools than teachers who have worked for 0-5 years.

According to the research results, the positive development of an open school climate will positively affect teachers and students in schools. Therefore, school principals and administrators can implement the following strategies to develop an open school climate:

1. Communication and Participation: Effective communication channels can be established, and the participation of all stakeholders in decision-making processes can be ensured.

2. Cooperation and Teamwork: Cooperation between teachers and the school administration can be encouraged.

3. Continuing Professional Development: Teachers and administrators can be encouraged to pursue continuous learning and development.

4. Student-Centered Approaches: Educational approaches that focus on the needs and well-being of students can be adopted.

Open school climate is one of the keys to educational development, success and performance. Developing this climate is possible with the cooperation and mutual understanding of students, teachers and school leaders. This study aims to make a significant contribution to the field of education by evaluating the current status of the open school climate in schools in Turkey and the

factors affecting it. This study provides valuable information to academics, policymakers and practitioners, especially those working in educational management, teacher education and school development. It will also be an essential resource for educational researchers who want to understand better the effects of school climate on student achievement and well-being.

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