

Examining teachers' organizational power distance in terms of demographic variables

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Abstract

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This research determined teachers' organizational power distance according to demographic factors. The relational screening method, one of the quantitative research designs, was used in the research. The research study group consists of 465 teachers working in Izmir Bornova in the 2023-2024 academic year. This study used the "Organizational Power Distance" scale as a data collection tool. Two questionnaires were delivered to the participants. The demographic characteristics of the teachers were determined with the individual questionnaire, and the form containing the scale expressions was analyzed. The data collected

within the scope of the research were analyzed through the SPSS 22.0 program. According to the research findings, it was understood that organizational power distance differs according to teachers' gender, age and professional seniority. According to the results of the post hoc analysis, it was determined which independent group averages caused this difference and the analysis was interpreted. For teachers to have high job performance in the schools they work for, it is essential how the entire school administration determines the leadership and management approach. This research is essential as it is a resource that will help administrators adopt correct approaches differentiated according to teachers' gender, age and professional seniority.

Key Words: Organization, organizational power distance, teacher.

Introduction

Organizations need to use authority and power to achieve their goals. Lack of authority can lead to failure in achieving the organization's goals. Depending on their organisational roles, individuals interact and communicate using organizational authority. Power is the capacity to influence others and mobilize them. As a person's authority and power increases, his ability to direct and influence others increases (Kızanlıklı et al., 2016). Influenced individuals align with the influencer's wishes (Eren, 2010). When evaluating the power of influence of managers on their employees and other stakeholders, the importance of power should not be ignored (Zaleznik, 1998).

In traditional understanding, the primary power source is position or authority, which generally operates in a hierarchical structure. In an organization, the power and sanction gained by the person in office means they must implement the manager's decisions (Bursalıoğlu, 2005). The effectiveness of official power is built on the validity of certain assumptions. Each individual within the group is expected to adopt and abide by formal rules, regardless of the form in which

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they are adopted. Rules are created consciously and have internal consistency. The group must approve or at least not criticize these rules. The official authority has a bureau or office, and its orders are not taken personally. Group members obey orders simply because they are group members and accept these orders as law. It is the law, not the manager; group members obey that (Weber, 2012). According to Weber (2012), the individual's ability to direct all kinds of opposition in the direction he wishes in a social environment is defined as power. The existence of power may result from the manager's position or personal qualities. One of the standard classifications of power supplies is the five categories created by French and Raven. This study examined power sources under five categories: legal authority, charisma, expertise, coercion and reward power (Koçel, 2015).

Charismatic Power

Charismatic power is based on communication skills and personality traits. This power is especially seen in state administrators, religious community leaders and people in the art world. Charismatic power can also be found in informal groups within the social structure (Karaman, 2008). People who are loved and respected can influence the actions of others. The attractive and admirable characteristics of the manager are internalized or imitated by other organizational members. This is a result of the charismatic power of the manager (Özkalp & Kirel, 2004). If the group likes the manager and tries to please him, the manager's management job is more straightforward (Koçel, 2015).

Expertise Power

Expert power relates to the perception of one person within a group as more knowledgeable or experienced than others. The lower-level employee who sees this kind of expert power in a leader thinks that the leader is competent in management matters. This perception gives power to the person thought to know (Mullins, 1996). When an organizational member is considered an expert on an important topic, it makes that person powerful. The required expertise, especially in technical matters, increases the influence of organizational members on leaders (Karaman, 2008). Group members may have power based on their specialized knowledge and domain competencies. In knowledge-based organizations, it is seen that some members reach a level of power that exceeds the hierarchical structure due to their expertise (Bayrak, 2001). People are more willing to receive advice from people with high knowledge and experience in technical matters and to implement these recommendations (Dyer, 1979).

Coercive Power

Coercive power occurs when a person in an organization influences others with threats (Meydan & Polat, 2010). This type of power manifests as a person using physical or psychological pressure on others to force certain behaviours. Coercive power can be used in various ways (Şimşek, 1998). According to Kirel (1998), excessive use of coercive power will disturb the organisation's members, negatively affecting the management. Coercive power can be used by superiors against lower-level employees and lower-level employees against superiors. Actions such as hiding information, slowing down work, or quitting work are examples of this type of use of power (Karaman, 2008).

Reward Power

In organizations, the leader's capacity to influence the behaviour of employees through rewards is called reward power. Managers can use this power by giving or not giving rewards. The size of

the reward and the belief that the reward will be given play an essential role in the effectiveness of the power (Berberoğlu, 2004). When reward power is used, employees avoid undesirable behaviours while their likelihood of exhibiting desired behaviours increases (Kirel, 1998). The impact of reward power can be more effective than formal power, but it is used less (Genç, 2010). Cultural differences that vary from society to society also cause the perception of power distance to change. While power distance is high in some societies, it is seen at lower levels in others. This is associated with the extent to which people accept this unequal distribution rather than the unequal distribution of power itself (Kemikkiran, 2015). While seeing inequality in power distribution as average indicates high power distance, individuals' demand for an equal distribution of power means low power distance (Çağlar, 2001). Individuals with high power distance follow their managers' orders without question. Subordinates see themselves as inferior and less potent than their superiors. Supervisors consulting their subordinates on any issue may be perceived as a sign of weakness by subordinates with this perception. Supervisors often make decisions alone (Rhee et al., 2014).

A rigid hierarchical structure and inequality are common in high power distance societies. While those who hold power are seen as privileged and superior by society, those who are powerless are often criticized (Doğan, 2012). Hierarchical structures in low power distance organizations are characterized by subordinates and superiors viewing each other as equals. Employees are aware that superior-subordinate roles are variable. In this case, senior managers are not perceived as unapproachable or privileged, and subordinates are not perceived as unworthy or disrespected. Salary differences between subordinates and superiors are relatively low, and no separate social spheres or different needs are defined for subordinates and superiors (Hofstede et al., 2010).

If an organisation has a low power distance, employees can easily and comfortably communicate with everyone, including top managers. In decision-making processes, the opinions of even the lowest-level employees are considered. Managers prefer to be guides rather than controllers (Deniz, 2013).

Method

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

Research Design

The study used the relational screening method within the quantitative research design to evaluate teachers' organizational power distance according to demographic factors. The relational screening method is defined as the model used to determine the relationship between two or more variables (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). The responses of the teachers participating in the research to the organizational power distance statements 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 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 465 teachers who answered the questionnaires.

Data Collection Tools

Yorulmaz et al. The Organizational Power Distance Scale developed by (2018) is a five-point Likert-type scale. 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 Organizational Power Distance Scale consists of the sub-dimensions of Acceptance of Power, Instrumental Use of Power, Legitimization of Power and Consent to Power and 20 items. Three of the scale items are reverse-scored. When the factors' Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficients were examined, it was decided that the scale was reliable ($\alpha=.80$).

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. Additionally, the K-S value ($\alpha=.000$) was calculated for the scale, and it was determined that the data set was normally distributed. ANOVA, T-Test and post-hoc analyses were conducted to calculate the relationship variance between demographic factors (independent variables) and statements regarding organizational power distance (dependent variables).

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	254	54,6
	Male	211	45,4
Age	24 years and under	139	29,9
	25-44 years old	211	45,4
	45-64 years old	115	24,7
Profession Seniority	0-5 years	120	25,8
	6-20 years	225	48,4
	21 years and over	120	25,8

According to Table 1, 54.6% of the participants are female teachers and 45.4% are male teachers. According to the percentage distribution in terms of the age of the participants, 29.9% of the teachers are 24 years old and under, 45.4% are between the ages of 25-44, and 24.7% are between the ages of 45-64. According to teachers' professional seniority, 25.8% have been working for 0-5 years, 48.4% have been working for 6-20 years, and 25.8% have been working for 21 years or more. To ensure easy expression in the table section of the research, the scale expressions are coded as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Organizational power distance scale items

Subdimensions

Accepting power

1. I show more respect to people in managerial positions.
 2. I question the decisions made by managers.
 3. I care about what managers think about me.
 4. I oppose the decisions taken by managers when necessary.
 5. I find it normal that managers have some privileges.
 6. If a person becomes a manager, my respect for that person increases.
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Using power as a tool

7. I try to be close to managers to make my job easier.
 8. The status of the other person affects my behaviour towards him.
 9. To avoid conflict, I try to exhibit the behaviours managers expect.
 10. My business will not work if I disagree with management.
 11. I try not to conflict with managers to avoid problems in my career.
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Legitimizing power

12. I find it normal that managers grant specific privileges to employees with the same worldview.
 13. I react against the manager's harsh (imperious, authoritarian) behaviour.
 14. I find it normal that people close to managers have some privileges.
-

Consent to power

15. If I do not influence the management's decision, I will agree to the decisions made.
 16. If the managers do not consider my opinions, I will not object further.
 17. My basic idea about work is "everything will work out".
 18. There is no point in appealing to managers if the outcome is inevitable.
 19. I generally do not criticize management practices I disapprove of.
 20. I avoid taking legal action regarding managers' decisions that I do not find correct.
-

In Table 2, the expressions of the Organizational Power Distance Scale are numbered and included in the table created for descriptive statistics.

Table 3. Distribution of scale expressions

Expression	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Mostly		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1			139	29,9			163	35,1	163	35,1
2			163	35,1			163	35,1	139	29,9
3			48	10,3			259	55,7	158	34,0
4					168	36,1	230	49,5	67	14,4
5			72	15,5	187	40,2	206	44,3		
6			48	10,3	163	35,1	187	40,2	67	14,4
7			158	34,0	163	35,1	144	31,0		
8			48	10,3	139	29,9	206	44,3	72	15,5
9			24	5,2	158	34,0	168	36,1	115	24,7
10			24	5,2	163	35,1	211	45,4	67	14,4
11			43	9,2	163	35,1	187	40,2	72	15,5
12	67	14,4	96	20,6	206	44,3	96	20,6		
13	86	18,5	235	50,5	144	31,0				
14	67	14,4	96	20,6	206	44,3	96	20,6		
15			139	29,9	163	35,1	163	35,1		
16			43	9,2	163	35,1	187	40,2	72	15,5
17					144	31,0	235	50,5	86	18,5
18			139	29,9	163	35,1	163	35,1		
19			139	29,9	163	35,1	163	35,1		
20			139	29,9	163	35,1	163	35,1		

When the percentage distribution of teachers' responses to organizational power distance scale expressions is explicitly examined in terms of sub-dimensions, in the acceptance of power sub-dimension, 70.2% of teachers show more respect to administrators due to their position, 65% question the administrator's decisions, and 89.7% believe that the administrator himself/herself 63.9% of them object to the manager's decisions when necessary, and 54.6% state that they will respect someone who rises to a managerial position more than before. Accordingly, the majority of teachers accept power. According to the instrumental use of the power dimension, only 31% of the teachers said they tried to be close to the administrators to make their jobs easier. In comparison, the remaining 69.1% said they sometimes and rarely did this. 59.8% of teachers behave according to the status of the other person. 60.8% of the participants behaved as the managers wanted, 59.8% thought that their business would only work if they conflicted with the management, and 55.7% tried to avoid conflicts with the managers to avoid problems in their careers. The distribution of responses revealed that more than half of the participants used power instrumentally. According to the power legitimization sub-dimension, participants are equally distributed regarding managers granting privileges to employees with the same worldview. All participants stated that they could never, rarely or sometimes react to the harsh attitudes of their managers. The participants generally legitimized the power. According to the sub-dimension of consenting to power, 70.2% of the teachers stated that they sometimes and often consent to the decisions taken

by the management, 55.7% stated that they would not object further if their opinions were not taken into account by the administrators, and 69% stated that their main opinion about work was "everything". They stated that "things will happen". Accordingly, most teachers are satisfied with power.

Table 4. T-Test results of organizational power distance according to teachers' gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	p
Acceptance of power	Female	254	3,2795	,26081	,01636	2,563	,000
	Male	211	3,3594	,40595	,02795		
Instrumental use of power	Female	254	3,4835	,51534	,03234	3,607	,000
	Male	211	3,6227	,24271	,01671		
Legitimizing power	Female	254	2,6115	,65973	,04140	3,441	,728
	Male	211	2,4013	,65151	,04485		
Consent to power	Female	254	3,2421	,66062	,04145	1,663	,000
	Male	211	3,3333	,51640	,03555		

It has been determined that there is a significant difference between teachers' views on using power instrumentally and accepting power, which are sub-dimensions of organizational power distance and gender. In the sub-dimension of legitimizing power, no significant difference was found between gender.

Table 5. ANOVA test results of organizational power distance according to teachers' age

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Acceptance of power	Between Groups	9,972	2	4,986	54,102	,000
	Within Groups	42,579	462	,092		
	Total	52,551	464			
Instrumental use of power	Between Groups	2,826	2	1,413	8,267	,000
	Within Groups	78,971	462	,171		
	Total	81,797	464			
Legitimizing power	Between Groups	17,429	2	8,714	21,539	,000
	Within Groups	186,922	462	,405		
	Total	204,351	464			
Consent to power	Between Groups	8,627	2	4,313	12,553	,000
	Within Groups	158,747	462	,344		
	Total	167,374	464			

As seen in Table 5, it was determined that there was a significant difference between teachers' views on organizational power distance sub-dimensions and their ages. Accordingly, teachers' evaluation of organizational power distance varies depending on their age.

According to the Post-Hoc test results, the difference in question is between the ages of under 24 and 45-64 for the acceptance of the power sub-dimension; the 25-44 age range and the 45-64 age range; For the instrumental use of power dimension, the age range is under 24, 25-44 years old and 45-64 years old; For the power legitimization sub-dimension, under 24 years of age, 25-44 age range and 45-64 age range; For the sub-dimension of consenting to power, it was determined that the difference was caused by the difference between the age range of under 24 and the 45-64 age range, and between the age range of 25-44 and the age range of 45-64.

Table 6. ANOVA test results of organizational power distance according to teachers' professional seniority

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Acceptance of power	Between Groups	3,848	2	1,924	18,250	,000
	Within Groups	48,703	462	,105		
	Total	52,551	464			
Instrumental use of power	Between Groups	16,028	2	8,014	56,297	,000
	Within Groups	65,769	462	,142		
	Total	81,797	464			
Legitimizing power	Between Groups	38,369	2	19,185	53,399	,000
	Within Groups	165,982	462	,359		
	Total	204,351	464			
Consent to power	Between Groups	13,201	2	6,601	19,780	,000
	Within Groups	154,172	462	,334		
	Total	167,374	464			

As seen in Table 6, it was determined that there was a significant difference between teachers' approaches to organizational power distance and their professional seniority. Accordingly, teachers' evaluation of organizational power distance varies depending on their professional seniority.

According to the post hoc test results, it was determined that the difference in question was between 0-5 years, 6-20 years and over 21 years for the acceptance of power sub-dimension. On the other hand, no relationship could be detected between 6-20 years and 21 years and above. For the instrumental use of power dimension, a relationship was found between 0-5 years, 6-20 years and over 21 years. In the case of instrumental use of power, a significant difference was found between all seniority ranges. The power legitimization sub-dimension was determined to range from 0-5 years to 6-20 years and over 21 years. On the other hand, no relationship could be detected between 6-20 years and 21 years and above. Finally, for the sub-dimension of consent to power, a significant relationship will lead to differences among all seniority ranges.

Results

This research examined in-depth teachers' perspectives on organizational power distance and the relationship of this perception with demographic factors such as gender, age, and professional seniority. The findings show that teachers' perceptions of power distance vary significantly with

these factors. These results are critical for a better understanding organizational structures and power dynamics in education.

This research was conducted to examine teachers' perspectives on organizational power distance and to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between organizational power distance and teachers' demographic factors such as gender, age and professional seniority. According to this,

1. It has been determined that there is a significant difference between teachers' views on accepting power, using power instrumentally and accepting power, which are sub-dimensions of organizational power distance and gender. In the sub-dimension of legitimizing power, no significant difference was found between gender.
2. It was determined that there was a significant difference between teachers' views on organizational power distance sub-dimensions and their ages. Accordingly, teachers' evaluation of organizational power distance varies depending on their age.
3. It has been determined that there is a significant difference between teachers' approaches to organizational power distance and their professional seniority. Accordingly, teachers' evaluation of organizational power distance varies depending on their professional seniority.

Based on the research results, some suggestions can be made for administrators and teachers. First, in-service training can be provided on the power resources that administrators use while maintaining order in schools. Awareness can be raised about using power resources in effective and efficient areas. In addition, teachers can be given organizational democracy training, which is lacking according to the research results, and school administrators can organize various social activities to make the school climate positive.

The key findings from the research provide important practical implications for school administrators and education policymakers. Administrators' understanding of teachers' power distance perceptions, which vary according to their demographic characteristics, can ensure that in-school communication and decision-making processes are more effective and inclusive. This may positively affect teachers' professional satisfaction and student achievement. Considering teachers' perceptions of power distance may allow for more equitable and ethical use of power resources within the school.

In addition, this study can also play an essential role in the design of teacher education programs and professional development activities. Teachers' understanding of organizational power dynamics and their ability to deal with them effectively can significantly contribute to their professional development. Such training can help teachers transform their perceptions of power distance and build stronger, democratic, collaborative relationships in the school environment.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide excellent knowledge and understanding of organizational power distance in the field of education. This information can help education leaders and teachers develop the strategies necessary to create a more effective, equitable, collaborative work environment in schools. Understanding teachers' perceptions of power distance and developing strategies compatible with these perceptions will play a critical role in shaping the future of education.

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