

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND THEIR PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the problems encountered by principals and vice principals working in public middle schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye, along with the strategies they employ to resolve these problems. The research is based on a qualitative phenomenological design. The study group consists of 14 school administrators serving during the 2023–2024 academic year. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using content analysis. Findings revealed that school administrators face problems in four main categories: teacher-related, parent-related, student-related, and system-related. Participants identified a total of 30 distinct issues and proposed 21 solution strategies. System-related issues – such as the lack of support staff, inadequate physical infrastructure, budget shortages, and restricted administrative authority – emerged as particularly critical. The study also found that school administrators tend to see these challenges as personal responsibilities, but experience difficulties in resolving them due to limited authority. The results provide practical insights for improving school leadership and policymaking in educational management. In addressing these problems, they explained that they used methods such as establishing communication, providing training, conducting guidance activities, developing projects, and utilizing local resources.

Keywords: School Administrator, Problem Solving, Management Issues, Schools in Türkiye, Middle School.

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1. Introduction

Organizations are composed of individuals. Individuals are social beings, and their labor, intellectual power, and productive capacity are key factors ensuring the continuity and stability of organizations. The skill of an administrator lies in harnessing and managing individuals' potential in the most active way. The management mechanism serves as the structure to address organizational issues through scientific methods. Within this mechanism, an administrator is someone who finds diverse solutions, considers various perspectives, and can effectively apply the experiences and education related to their profession. Administrators in the field of education are responsible for managing the institutions they oversee in alignment with the general objectives and principles of the Ministry of National Education, with an obligation to administer fairly and equitably (Taymaz 2003: 18). A sense of responsibility and integrity in an educational administrators are crucial factors in problem-solving. An administrator with these qualities will use their self-confidence to facilitate problem-solving. They adopt a sensitive and solution-focused approach when faced with issues in their environment and school (Kadioğlu & Çardak 2016: 106).

In contemporary schools, the responsibilities placed on administrators are significant, which in turn increases the importance of school management. The principal is the key factor in a school achieving the status of an effective school. The success of the school equates to the success of the education system (Aytaç 2000). School administrators, who have limited authority yet must deal with all of a school's issues, face difficult tasks, such as planning, executing, evaluating, supervising educational processes, conducting routine correspondence, and reporting to institution heads. While fulfilling these responsibilities, they encounter numerous problems that they are expected to solve individually (Yazıcı & Sunay 2006).

Problems are a part of life and emerge at every stage of daily life, as they do in professional life. Educational administrators need to both implement preventive measures to avert potential problems and handle emerging issues. The most important task for educational administrators is the ability to solve problems, making it a primary responsibility for all. Managing a school inherently requires a process of problem-solving (Güçlü 2003). Educational administrators are expected to possess characteristics such as effective communication skills, high self-confidence, sound decision-making abilities, knowledge, cultural awareness, and diligence. Additionally, they should be skilled in accurately identifying and resolving problems (Çelikten 2001: 298). According to Küçükahmet (2000), problems are forces that drive development and direction within our education system; thus, it is almost impossible to envision an education system without issues. It is essential to address all types of problems within our education system. If a middle school administrator lacks sufficient competence, problem-solving will be challenging and ineffective.

In general, school administrators are akin to the owners of the school. Each administrator who adopts the school feels obliged to address every issue within it. All

matters are tied to them. In addition to dealing with physical maintenance, repairs, and renovations while facing budget constraints and finding resources, they must manage the entire planning, implementation, and evaluation of education and instruction, all while handling unexpected problems. School administrators are the first individuals responsible for implementing and enhancing educational activities (Ağaoğlu et al. 2002). The problems faced by administrators change over time, with previously benign situations potentially becoming problematic today. The constant changes in curriculum, conflicts among students both inside and outside the school, and interactions with parents, including their involvement in group discussions, are all challenges that school administrators encounter. Each problem must be resolved in a timely manner to prevent the emergence of new issues. To manage such a complex process effectively, a school administrator needs to have advanced problem-solving skills, be self-improving, possess strong communication abilities, and be proactive in anticipating and addressing potential issues. This research aims to identify the problems encountered by middle school administrators and their proposed solutions. Therefore, the research question is: “What kinds of problems do middle school administrators encounter, and what are their methods for solving them?”

2. Literature Review

Most studies on the problems faced by school administrators have utilized qualitative methods (Akçadağ 2013; Aslanargun & Bozkurt 2012; Çetin 2019; Karaköse et al. 2014), whereas studies related to problem-solving strategies have generally used quantitative approaches, often employing the Problem-Solving Inventory (Buluç et al. 2011; Çinkır 2010; Semerci & Çelik 2002). It is also noted that the majority of these studies have focused on school principals (Çetin 2019; Çinkır 2010; Karaköse et al. 2014). This research aims to contribute to the literature by examining the challenges experienced by middle school principals and assistant principals in depth through a qualitative approach. Additionally, it seeks to provide insight into the management process for both current and prospective administrators, aiding them in anticipating issues and facilitating effective and efficient school administration.

Cultural perspectives play a significant role in the stages of problem-solving. Cultural differences are unique characteristics of individuals, and what may appear as a problem in one culture may not be viewed as such in another (Sonmaz, 2002:28). Administrators in educational institutions continually face problems, and their primary duty is to present an objective perspective and resolve these issues appropriately.

In a qualitative study, Çetin (2019) aimed to identify the problems faced by school principals in administration and examine how they experience these situations in their schools. The study revealed that the most common issue was financial resource management, followed by relationships with parents, relationships with teachers, physical conditions, and administrative problems.

Karaköse et al. (2014) conducted a study aimed at identifying the challenges encountered by newly appointed principals and exploring the solutions they employed. The research utilized a qualitative methodology, and data were analyzed using content analysis. The problems experienced by school principals were categorized into five areas, with the most prominent issues being related to school facilities, followed by problems with school stakeholders, educational policies, administrative matters, and financial difficulties. School principals suggested increasing the school budget, providing training for administrators, expanding school resources, and making improvements within schools as solutions to these issues.

In another study, Akçadağ (2013) examined school administrators' concerns and problems with their superiors, their suggestions for solutions, and the impact on their performance. This qualitative study employed content analysis and collected data through interviews with school principals. The findings indicated that upper management often lacks an understanding of the school's day-to-day realities, and system-level changes made without adequate information can lead to issues. Additionally, it was found that upper management does not always possess the necessary skills for effective leadership.

The study by Aslanargun and Bozkurt (2012) focused on identifying the issues that school administrators face in communication with teachers and the methods they use to resolve these problems. Using a qualitative research approach, the study found that administrators' problems with teachers were often grouped under issues related to teacher interactions, budget allocations, support staff, educational factors, and environmental conditions. The administrators emphasized the importance of adapting behaviors based on the situation and individual characteristics when solving problems. Challenges in communication with teachers were often related to their qualifications and adherence to responsibilities. The main administrative issues included financial constraints, lack of technical infrastructure, conflicts with student parents, and challenges involving the school-parent association.

In the study by Semerci and Çelik (2002), the aim was to determine the problems faced by primary school administrators and the strategies they employ to address these issues. This quantitative study used survey methods to collect data. The findings revealed that administrators identified budget issues, inadequate facilities, and lack of parental involvement as key problems. The solutions involved making suggestions at teachers' council meetings, gathering detailed information on problem situations, and establishing priority tasks, with high participation reported for these approaches.

In a study by Buluç et al. (2011), the researchers examined perceptions of problem-solving skills among principals and assistant principals working in primary education. The study, a quantitative research using the "Problem Solving Inventory," revealed that the participants perceived themselves as having high problem-solving abilities and believed they were competent in this area.

Çinkır (2010) explored the challenges faced by school principals in their managerial roles, the sources of these challenges, and support recommendations for addressing them. This quantitative study employed surveys to collect data. The study found that budget-related issues were a primary challenge, followed by problems originating from external factors, personnel services, and student-related issues, with the least amount of issues reported in educational and instructional areas. Solutions included providing an independent budget based on school size, establishing physical standards for each school, and offering management training and academic support when necessary.

In a recent study conducted by Duygulu, Yenel, and Cemaloğlu (2023) on the issues faced by school administrators in Turkey, it was emphasized that parental attitudes and behaviors are a significant challenge, with the most prominent problem being parents' interference in school administration.

3. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted to examine the issues faced by middle school principals and vice principals working in public primary schools under the Ministry of National Education in a town in Türkiye, and the solutions they propose. A descriptive approach and qualitative research method were employed.

Research Design

This study utilized a phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research models. Phenomenology focuses on exploring participants' perceptions and the meanings they attach to situations based on their personal experiences. Phenomenological research investigates how individuals interpret and understand their experiences from their unique perspectives (Baş & Akturan, 2013). In phenomenological studies, the aim is to reveal situations that are recognized yet lack detailed understanding, which is particularly useful in uncovering middle school administrators' experiences and perceptions of their management abilities (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

Sample

The sample for this study consists of 14 middle school administrators working in public primary schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in a district during the 2023-2024 academic year. This sample represents approximately one-third of the total middle school principals and vice principals working in the district. The demographic characteristics of the participants are outlined below.

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics*

<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>		Frequency
Gender	Female	6
	Male	8
Age	31-35	2
	36-40	5
	41-45	4
	46-50	2
	50-55	1
	6 -10 years	2
Professional Seniority (Years)	11-15 years	3
	16 years and above	9
Years of management	0 - 5 years	4
	6 -10 years	4
	11-15 years	6

As shown in Table 1, among the school administrators participating in the interviews, 6 are female and 8 are male. The age distribution includes 2 participants aged 31-35, 5 participants aged 36-40, 4 participants aged 41-45, 2 participants aged 46-50, and 1 participant aged 50-55. In terms of professional seniority, 2 participants have 6-10 years of experience, 3 have 11-15 years, and 9 have more than 16 years of experience. Regarding their years in administrative roles, 4 participants have served between 0-5 years, 4 participants between 6-10 years, and 6 participants between 11-15 years.

Data Collection

An interview technique was used for data collection. To enhance validity and reliability, a semi-structured interview form was developed, based on a literature review, and draft questions were prepared. A pilot test was conducted with an experienced school administrator for content validity, after which necessary revisions were made before the main interviews took place.

A personal information form was used to collect demographic information from participants, including gender, professional seniority, and years of service in administration. The introduction of the form provided information about the study's purpose, researcher details, and ethical principles. For content validity, an educational sciences expert reviewed the form, and a Turkish language teacher assessed it for linguistic clarity.

Interviews were conducted in locations and at times deemed suitable by the participants, often in their own offices to create a comfortable, conversational atmosphere. Interview durations varied between 20 and 80 minutes. Some participants preferred to provide written responses to the questions, which were handed to them in an open-ended format for self-completion. To encourage detailed responses, follow-up

questions were asked based on their answers. Interviewers refrained from making comments that might influence participant responses. Notes were taken during interviews, and audio recordings were made with participants' permission to avoid missing any details.

Data Analysis

Participants' identities were anonymized, with code names like A1, A2, A3, etc., assigned for use in the study. The interviews were recorded with an audio device, and notes were taken during the conversations. After the interviews, the data were compiled into documents to create a framework for content analysis. A clear and accessible language was used for describing and presenting the findings, with direct quotes provided where necessary.

4. Results

This section presents the findings regarding the problems faced by middle school administrators and the methods they employ to solve these issues.

The problems encountered by middle school administrators

The problems encountered by middle school administrators were categorized into four main themes: teacher-related issues, parent-related issues, student-related issues, and system-related issues.

4.1. Teacher-Related Problems

One of the themes highlighted by middle school administrators was teacher-related issues. Eight participants emphasized challenges in this area.

Table 2. *Distribution of Teacher-Related Problems by Category*

<i>Teacher-Related Problems</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Lack of a sense of duty	5	A5, A6, A7, A8, A11
Financial dissatisfaction	5	A2, A4, A5, A7, A8
Lack of dedication	4	A1, A6, A8, A11
Professional inadequacy	2	A1, A11
Communication issues	1	A6
Adapting to Generation Z	1	A4
Lack of self-improvement	1	A1
Difficulty adapting to system changes	1	A11

According to Table 2, the most frequently reported teacher-related problems were financial dissatisfaction and lack of a sense of duty (5 participants each). Other issues included lack of dedication (4), professional inadequacy (2), communication issues, adapting to Generation Z, lack of self-improvement, and difficulty adapting to changes in the system.

Lack of Sense of Duty. Some teachers were observed to be inconsistent in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. These teachers reportedly do not adhere to class schedules, fail to enter the classroom on time, and demonstrate an unwillingness to fulfill their responsibilities. Teachers who view administrative paperwork as a burden or avoid taking on responsibilities create communication challenges. Middle school administrators described these issues as follows:

“Teachers do not enter class on time. They seem to avoid their duties, even though they know it’s required. Some teachers are difficult to communicate with.” (A6)

“Teachers don’t adhere to class entry and exit times. Some see paperwork as an extra burden.” (A7)

“They do not fully fulfill their duties and responsibilities.” (A11)

“Some teachers don’t even follow the lesson hours and don’t exhibit the profession's essentials.” (A5)

Financial Dissatisfaction. Some teachers, due to financial concerns, turn to external work such as private tutoring, which consumes much of their energy. Believing their salaries are inadequate, they adopt a "work as much as I’m paid" attitude and reduce the time they spend at school to focus on private lessons. Additionally, the limited availability of additional teaching hours contributes to financial dissatisfaction, prompting many teachers to give private lessons outside of school to supplement their income. Administrators provided the following comments on this issue:

“Teachers have the attitude that they work only as much as they are paid. Instead of spending their time at school, they focus on private tutoring.” (A7)

“Teachers often feel financially dissatisfied, so they engage in other jobs. They can’t give their full energy to the school.” (A2)

“Most teachers work only for their base salary and do not receive extra pay, leading them to take on private tutoring outside of school.” (A8)

Lack of Dedication. Some middle school administrators noted that teachers lacked dedication. Participants commented as follows:

“Teachers come to school reluctantly, feeling undervalued. A teacher who is not enthusiastic can’t be effective.” (A6)

“I believe teachers’ lack of willingness to take responsibility is a critical issue.” (A5)

“Teachers aren’t showing enough dedication.” (A1)

“They accept students’ lack of interest or desire to succeed and adapt to it.” (A)

Other Teacher-Related Problems. Additional issues raised by middle school administrators included communication issues, professional inadequacy, adapting to

Generation Z, unwillingness to improve, and struggling to adapt to the changing system. Comments included:

“Some teachers’ inadequacies affect the entire school structure.” (A1)

“Teachers aren’t interested in self-improvement.” (A1)

“They don’t follow new developments in their field or adapt to system changes.” (A11)

“It’s hard to communicate with certain teachers.” (A6)

“Some teachers continue working due to financial concerns but can’t engage with students or broaden their horizons.” (A4)

4.2. Parent-Related Problems

Parent-related issues were also a major theme, with all participants discussing challenges within this area.

Table 3. *Distribution of Parent-Related Problems by Category*

<i>Parent-Related Problems</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Excessive use of complaint systems	5	A5, A6, A7, A10, A12
Negative attitudes and indifference	4	A1, A7, A9, A12
Interference in school matters (cultural gap)	4	A1, A5, A6, A13
Low level of education among parents	4	A1, A2, A13, A14
Lack of importance placed on education	3	A1, A3
High expectations	2	A6, A7
Insufficient communication	2	A1, A12

According to Table 3, the most frequently mentioned parent-related issue was the excessive use of complaint systems (5 participants). Other concerns included negative attitudes toward school, interference in school affairs, and low levels of education (4 participants each), lack of importance placed on education (3), high expectations (2), and insufficient communication (2).

Excessive Use of Complaint Systems. Some administrators expressed frustration with parents using official complaint systems excessively and often without valid reasons. Comments included:

“Parents view teachers as inadequate and constantly submit complaints to higher authorities. Responding to each complaint creates extra work for us.” (A7)

“With complaint systems like CİMER and BİMER, parents feel like they hold a power over the school. They complain about everything, causing us to waste time and manage unnecessary tasks.” (A10)

Negative Attitudes Toward School and Teachers. Another issue involved parents holding negative and biased views toward the school and teachers. Administrators provided the following comments:

“Parents do not trust teachers or administration, have preconceptions about the school, and believe that student achievement is lacking.” (A1)

“Parents have no respect for teachers and do not trust them.” (A9)

“There is a lack of respect for the teaching profession.” (A12)

Interference by Parents (Cultural Gap). Some parents tend to interfere in school operations, feeling entitled to dictate how things should be done. This was attributed to a lack of education and awareness. Comments included:

“They act as if they know everything, even telling us how to manage the school. Their confidence often stems from a lack of education.” (A1)

“They believe they know how everything should be done and interfere in teachers’ work.” (A6)

Other Parent-Related Problems. Additional issues with parents included low education levels, a lack of value placed on education, high expectations, and insufficient communication. Administrators remarked:

“Our parents’ low educational levels contribute to problems in engaging them with the school.” (A2)

“Despite invitations, we struggle to reach parents and bring them into school activities.” (A12)

“Parents have high expectations, often overwhelming teachers and school staff with demands.” (A6)

4.3. Student-Related Problems

Student-related issues were another theme that emerged, with five participants reporting challenges in this area.

Table 4. *Distribution of Student-Related Problems by Category*

<i>Student-Related Problems</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Lack of preparedness for the next grade	5	A1, A5, A7, A11, A14
Lack of importance placed on education	4	A1, A2, A6, A8
Disciplinary problems	4	A1, A2, A6, A8
Foreign students	3	A1, A4, A9
Difficulty expressing themselves	1	A11

According to Table 4, the most frequently mentioned student-related issue was students’ lack of preparedness for the next grade (5 participants). Other challenges included students’ lack of interest in education and disciplinary problems (4 participants each), issues related to foreign students (3), and difficulties in self-expression (1).

Lack of Preparedness for the Next Grade. Some students were seen as unprepared for the transition to the next grade, particularly when moving from elementary to middle school. Administrators noted:

“Students are coming from elementary school without sufficient readiness. We face challenges in helping them adapt to school culture and rules.” (A1)

“We have adaptation problems with students advancing to the fifth grade.” (A5)

Lack of Interest in Education. Administrators observed that some students were indifferent to their education, which often contributed to other disciplinary issues. Comments included:

“Students don’t value education; they see school as a waste of time.” (A6)

“Lack of interest in lessons and indifference to school rules is common.” (A8)

Disciplinary Problems. Disciplinary issues were attributed to various factors, such as family background and lack of social opportunities. Administrators expressed:

“Some students face difficult family situations, affecting their behavior in school. We see a lot of disciplinary issues due to these backgrounds.” (A1)

“Students display uncontrolled behaviors because they feel detached from school.” (A12)

Other Student-Related Problems. Middle school administrators also noted issues related to foreign students and difficulties in self-expression among students. Comments included:

“It’s challenging for foreign students to adapt to the Turkish education system, especially if they don’t speak the language.” (A1)

“We have students who cannot express themselves adequately, which leads to further communication problems.” (A11)

4.4. System-Related Problems

System-related issues were also frequently mentioned, with all participants expressing challenges stemming from the educational system.

Table 5. *Distribution of System-Related Problems by Category*

System-Related Problems	Frequency	Participants
Lack of support staff	9	A1, A3, A4, A5, A7, A8, A10, A11, A12
Inadequate physical conditions	8	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A8, A14
Lack of budget and funding	7	A3, A4, A5, A7, A9, A10
Frequent changes in the education system	3	A3, A5, A7

Lack of authority	3	A1, A2, A10
Effects of complaint systems	2	A10, A12
Limited authority or teachers	2	A2, A6
Teacher rotation issues	1	A4
Presence of foreign students	1	A1
The current educational system	1	A1, A14

According to Table 5, the most frequently reported system-related issue was the lack of support staff (9 participants). Other major issues included inadequate physical conditions of schools (8) and lack of budget or funding (7). Additional issues included frequent changes in the educational system and lack of authority for administrators (3 participants each), as well as the impact of complaint systems, limited authority for teachers, teacher rotation, and challenges related to foreign students.

Lack of Support Staff. Administrators noted that the lack of support staff, including cleaning and security personnel, affected the school environment. Comments included:

“Our school has limited funds and lacks sufficient support staff. We request assistance from higher authorities, but are told to handle it independently.” (A7)

“We have only three support staff members, which isn’t enough for the school’s needs, especially when it comes to cleaning and security.” (A5)

Inadequate Physical Conditions. Administrators highlighted issues with the physical conditions of schools, noting that facilities often do not align with modern educational needs. Comments included:

“Classrooms are not designed for new educational methods; they follow an outdated model.” (A3)

“The number of students per class exceeds the capacity, creating cramped and inadequate learning spaces.” (A10)

Budget and Funding Issues. Funding limitations were frequently mentioned as a significant barrier to resolving school issues, affecting everything from maintenance to program expansion. Comments included:

“Our school faces budget constraints that make it difficult to improve facilities or provide additional resources.” (A5)

“We rely on community donations and external support to cover essential needs.” (A7)

Other System-Related Problems. Other system-related issues mentioned by middle school administrators included frequent changes in educational policies, lack of

authority, the effects of complaint systems, and inadequate enforcement power for teachers. Comments included:

“There are frequent policy changes, creating uncertainty for teachers and students alike.” (A3)

“Our authority is limited, which restricts our ability to effectively manage school affairs.” (A10)

“Teachers lack authority to enforce discipline, which affects classroom management.” (A2)

4.5. Problem-Solving Methods for Teacher, Parent, Student, and System Related Problems.

Problem-Solving Methods for Teacher-Related Problems

The middle school administrators reported various strategies for addressing teacher-related problems, which were categorized into seven themes.

Table 6. *Distribution of Problem-Solving Methods for Teacher-Related Problems by Category*

<i>Problem-Solving Method</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Providing additional lessons	4	A2, A5, A6, A7
Offering in-service training	4	A1, A3, A7, A11
Conducting counseling sessions	2	A5, A7
Offering support and building trust	2	A6, A8
Effective communication	2	A6, A11
Implementing oversight	1	A5
Addressing issues through formal channels	1	A11

According to Table 6, the most common methods for addressing teacher-related issues included providing additional teaching opportunities to alleviate financial dissatisfaction (4), organizing or requesting in-service training (4), offering counseling sessions (2), building trust and support (2), fostering effective communication (2), and using formal channels or oversight (1).

Providing Additional Teaching Opportunities. Some administrators provided additional teaching assignments to help reduce teachers’ need to seek external income. Comments included:

“We try to meet teachers’ needs by assigning extra teaching hours and courses where possible.” (A6)

“We provide as many additional courses as possible to avoid teachers seeking private lessons outside school.” (A5)

In-Service Training. Administrators noted that offering professional development training helped teachers adapt to new systems and teaching methods. Comments included:

“We arrange in-service training and communicate teachers' training needs to the relevant authorities.” (A11)

“Providing teachers with training opportunities helps them keep up with system changes.” (A7)

Counseling Sessions. Administrators conducted counseling sessions to support teachers experiencing burnout or personal challenges. Comments included:

“We offer counseling sessions for teachers who feel overburdened.” (A5)

“Regular counseling sessions are organized to support teachers.” (A7)

Other Problem-Solving Methods for Teacher-Related Issues. Administrators also emphasized the importance of effective communication, offering support, formal channels for addressing issues, and maintaining oversight. Comments included:

“I strive to be supportive and accessible for teachers, providing a sense of security that helps them work more efficiently.” (A6)

“Establishing effective communication is the key to addressing many issues.” (A8)

“For unresolved issues, I use formal channels to ensure accountability.” (A11)

4.6. Problem-Solving Methods for Parent-Related Problems

Middle school administrators employed six primary strategies to address parent-related issues.

Table 7. *Distribution of Problem-Solving Methods for Parent-Related Problems by Category*

<i>Problem-Solving Method</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Organizing parental education programs	4	A1, A2, A7, A12
Providing counseling for parents	3	A1, A2, A9
Maintaining open communication	3	A8, A10, A12
Involving parents in the process	2	A5, A7
Holding individual meetings	1	A1
Using academic language in communication	1	A8

According to Table 7, the most common solutions included parental education programs (4), parental counseling (3), open communication (3), involving parents in the process (2), individual meetings (1), and using academic language to clarify issues (1).

Organizing Parental Education Programs. Some administrators organized education programs to inform parents about school expectations and responsibilities. Comments included:

“We regularly organize parental education sessions to help address common concerns and misconceptions.” (A1)

“We offer workshops and other educational activities for parents.” (A12)

Providing Counseling for Parents. Administrators used counseling sessions to address parent-related issues and help parents better understand their role in supporting students. Comments included:

“We organize counseling sessions specifically for parents to guide them on how they can contribute to their child’s success.” (A1)

Involving Parents in the Process. To strengthen the relationship between parents and the school, some administrators involved parents in school processes. Comments included:

“We involve parents in the process and give them responsibilities to make them feel valued and part of the school community.” (A5)

“Encouraging parent involvement helps prevent many issues from escalating.” (A7)

4.7. Problem-Solving Methods for Student-Related Problems

Administrators reported four main strategies for addressing student-related problems.

Table 8. *Distribution of Problem-Solving Methods for Student-Related Problems by Category*

<i>Problem-Solving Method</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Providing counseling for foreign students	3	A1, A4, A11
Offering social and cultural activities	3	A3, A6, A12
Ensuring equal educational opportunities	1	A3
Organizing projects	1	A11

According to Table 8, common solutions for student-related problems included counseling for foreign students (3), organizing social and cultural activities (3), ensuring equal educational opportunities (1), and running school projects (1).

Guidance and Adaptation Programs for Foreign Students. This category covers guidance efforts aimed at helping foreign students adapt to their educational life. Although a school administrator provides guidance programs for these students based on their needs, there are concerns about whether these efforts are sufficient.

“We have conducted guidance programs for foreign students, but I do not believe they are enough.” (A1)

Support through Social and Cultural Activities. Various sports and cultural activities are organized to enable students to spend more time at school and to prepare them for social life. These activities are arranged to help reduce disciplinary issues, increase students' attachment to the school, and positively channel their energy. It is noted that such activities contribute positively to the students' adaptation process.

“To reduce disciplinary issues, it's essential to make students enjoy school and channel their energy elsewhere. We organize extracurricular activities. We have courses like volleyball, folk dancing, handball, strategy games, and Delbek. We try to keep the numbers high and encourage as much participation as possible.” (A6)

“To help engage students, we open courses to allow them to spend more time at school. Folk dancing, strategy games, and courses for exam preparation are available. We also have many sports activities, including handball, basketball, volleyball, and football teams. We make these courses accessible to all students and do our best to support them.” (A12)

Efforts to Provide Equal Educational Opportunities. Some students lack access to educational and support resources outside of school, leading to disparities in educational opportunities. To balance this, the school administration organizes after-school activities for students with limited means, enabling them to spend more time at school. These efforts aim to contribute to the development of every student.

“If they can't carry aspects of life outside of school into their school experience, we can keep them here. If the family doesn't offer support, the school should ensure they can stay involved through various activities after school. This way, we create equal opportunities.” (A3)

Reading and Social Support Projects. Reading projects and various social support initiatives are organized to develop students' language, communication, and social skills. These projects, especially aimed at helping foreign students socialize and improve their language skills, are conducted under the leadership of guidance counselors.

“We have reading projects, and I believe they are effective. We support areas where students are lacking, whether through seminars or projects. Our guidance counselor leads numerous activities aimed at improving communication and socialization. We provide all kinds of material and emotional support.” (A11)

4.8. Problem-Solving Methods for System-Related Problems

Finally, middle school administrators shared methods for addressing system-related problems, categorized into five strategies.

Table 9. *Distribution of Problem-Solving Methods for System-Related Problems by Category*

<i>Problem-Solving Method</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Seeking solutions through formal channels	5	A5, A7, A10, A11, A12
Utilizing local resources	4	A2, A5, A7, A8
Securing stakeholder support	1	A1
Implementing cost-saving measures	1	A9
Collaborating with school-parent associations	1	A10

According to Table 9, the most frequently used methods included seeking solutions through formal channels (5), utilizing local resources (4), gaining stakeholder support (1), implementing cost-saving measures (1), and collaborating with school-parent associations (1).

Seeking Solutions Through Formal Channels. Administrators often sought solutions through formal requests for resources and budget increases. Comments included:

“We make formal requests for support, although it’s often challenging to obtain it.” (A7)

Utilizing Local Resources. Some administrators relied on support from local businesses and the community to address resource shortages. Comments included:

“We depend on support from local businesses to obtain necessary supplies and resources.” (A5)

Securing Stakeholder Support and Cost-Saving Measures. Other strategies included seeking external stakeholder support and implementing cost-saving measures where possible. Comments included:

“We collaborate with school-parent associations to ensure sufficient resources for the school.” (A10)

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on middle school administrators' views, this study explored the types of issues encountered in schools and the solutions proposed to address these challenges. The findings indicate that educational administrators tend to see these problems as personal responsibilities, and the types of challenges they encounter are similar across different cases. According to the principals and vice-principals, the issues they face fall

into four main categories: teacher-related, parent-related, student-related, and system-related problems. In total, 30 specific issues were identified across these categories, with administrators proposing 21 different solution strategies.

When comparing these results with other studies, some overlapping findings are evident. Demirtaş et al. (2007), for example, found that key problems included teachers' lack of motivation, negative student behaviors, lack of parental support, insufficient educational resources, unnecessary administrative workload, and lack of communication, as well as budgetary limitations.

Middle school administrators identified teacher-related issues such as financial dissatisfaction, distractions from outside jobs, lack of responsibility, inadequate dedication, professional inadequacies, unwillingness to pursue further development, communication gaps, struggles to adapt to the changing system, and reluctance to take on responsibilities. Kazak and Evirgen (2024) also found similar issues, including teachers being late to classes, challenges with teacher duties, and resistance to professional development.

Regarding parent-related issues, administrators reported that excessive use of complaint systems, negative perceptions of the school, lack of understanding of boundaries, low education levels, lack of emphasis on education, poor communication, and high demands posed significant challenges. Tagay and Çakar (2017) similarly noted problems with parents' lack of involvement, unrealistic expectations, and limited participation in school meetings.

Student-related issues included lack of preparedness for the next grade level, low emphasis on education, disciplinary issues, challenges associated with foreign students, and difficulties with self-expression. Aydemir and Çetin (2023) also noted that students progressing to higher grades without mastering the required competencies contributed to similar problems.

The most frequently reported issue among system-related problems was the shortage of support staff, especially security and cleaning personnel, which administrators saw as critical to maintaining a safe and clean school environment. Administrators also reported issues such as inadequate physical infrastructure, insufficient budgets, frequent changes in the education system, limited authority, and the negative impact of complaint systems. Findings from other studies (e.g., Şanlıdağ, 2024; Çinkır, 2010) echo these challenges, highlighting insufficient budgets, lack of infrastructure, and high workload as significant obstacles in school administration.

Administrators adopted various solutions, such as providing extra assignments to teachers to increase income, offering counseling and support for teachers, arranging professional development programs, engaging in effective communication, organizing parental education sessions, including parents in the school process, offering additional activities for students, and creating equal opportunities within the school. Administrators also sought formal support from the Ministry of National Education and local resources to address resource gaps. These findings are consistent with those of

Yıldırım (2011), who found that school administrators face numerous issues in their roles, with interconnected problems that are challenging to resolve due to limited authority. Similarly, Dülger and Dülger (2022) suggested solutions such as organizing in-service training programs, involving external partners, and hosting seminars to support conflict resolution in schools.

Overall, administrators noted that system-related issues, in particular, left them feeling responsible yet without adequate authority. Kazak and Evirgen (2024) highlighted the need for school administrators to be granted greater authority, particularly given the high level of responsibility associated with school management.

In general, the study's findings indicate that many issues are interconnected, and administrators face considerable challenges in resolving them due to limited control over systemic factors. The perspectives shared by middle school administrators underscore the complexity of addressing these issues effectively.

6. Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made for the Ministry of National Education, practitioners, and researchers.

For Practitioners and Researchers.

- a) Administrators' problem-solving methods could be expanded to cover a broader range of issues.
- b) Further research could explore the underlying causes of the issues administrators face and why these situations become problematic.
- c) Collaborative studies with middle school administrators and teachers could provide insights into shared problem areas.
- d) The challenges posed by foreign students in culturally diverse areas could be examined further.

For the Ministry of National Education

- a) Training for newly appointed administrators in management skills could be expanded, as those who receive such training tend to be more competent in problem-solving.
- b) Administrators should be granted greater authority within their responsibilities to effectively address school-related challenges.
- c) As budget limitations appear to hinder solutions to various problems, schools should be provided with dedicated budgets.
- d) Teachers could be subject to regular rotation to prevent stagnation and promote continuous development.
- e) Programs to enhance teachers' sense of duty and motivation should be organized, helping them maintain a proactive approach to their responsibilities.

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Орта мектеп директорларының қиындықтары мен олардың мәселелерді шешу стратегиясын сапалық зерттеу

Андатпа. Бұл зерттеу Түркия Республикасындағы Ұлттық білім министрлігіне қарасты мемлекеттік орта мектептерде жұмыс істейтін директорлар мен директор орынбасарларының кездескен мәселелері мен олардың осы мәселелер бойынша әзірлеген шешімдерін зерттеуге бағытталған. Зерттеу жұмыс феноменологиялық теория негізінде сапалық дизайн бойынша жүргізілді. Зерттеу тобына 2023-2024 оқу жылында қызмет еткен 14 мектептің әкімшілігі қатысты. Деректер жартылай құрылымдық сұхбат арқылы жиналды және контент-талдау арқылы талданды. Зерттеу нәтижесінде мектеп директорлары кездесетін мәселелер негізгі төрт категория бойынша топтастырылды: мұғалімге қатысты, ата-анаға қатысты, оқушыға байланысты және жүйеге қатысты. Қатысушылар барлығы 30 нақты мәселені баяндап, оған қатысты 21 шешу жолын ұсынды. Әсіресе, көмекші қызметкерлердің жоқтығы, физикалық мүмкіндіктердің жеткіліксіздігі, бюджет тапшылығы және әкімшілік құзғіреттің шектеулі болуы сынды жүйеге қатысты жағдаяттар ең басты мәселе болып отыр. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу мектеп директорлары көп қиындықты жеке басына қатысты жауапкершілік ретінде қарастырып, бірақ құзғіретінің шектеулі болуына байланысты оларды шешуде қиындықтарға тап болғаны көрсетеді. Мектеп директорлары мәселелерді шешуде қарым-қатынас орнату, білім беру, бағыт-бағдар беру, жобаларды әзірлеу және жергілікті ресурстарды пайдалану сынды әдістерді қолданғанын түсіндірді.

Кілт сөздер: Мектеп директор, мәселелерді шешу, басқару мәселелері, Түркиядағы мектептер, орта мектеп.

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Качественное исследование проблем, с которыми сталкиваются администраторы средних школ, и их стратегий решения проблем

Аннотация. Целью данного исследования является изучение проблем в официальных средних Целью данного исследования является изучение проблем, с которыми сталкиваются директора школ и заместители директоров, работающих в государственных средних школах, связанных с Министерством национального образования Турции, и решений, которые они разработали для этих проблем. Исследование проводилось в качественном дизайне на основе феноменологического подхода. Исследовательская группа состоит из 14 директоров средних школ, работающих

в 2023-2024 учебном году. Данные собирались с помощью полуструктурированной формы интервью и анализировались с использованием метода контент-анализа. Результаты исследования показали, что проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются директора школ, были сгруппированы по четырем основным темам: связанные с учителями, связанные с родителями, связанные с учениками и связанные с системой. Участники сообщили в общей сложности о 30 различных проблемах и предложили 21 стратегию их решения. На первый план вышли системные проблемы, такие как нехватка вспомогательного персонала, неадекватные физические условия, бюджетные проблемы и ограниченные полномочия. Исследование также показывает, что директора школ рассматривают многие проблемы как личную ответственность, но они также испытывают различные трудности из-за отсутствия полномочий в процессе принятия решений. Методы, используемые директорами для решения проблем, были описаны как общение, проведение обучения, проведение инструктажа, реализация проектов и использование экологических возможностей.

Ключевые слова: администратор школы, решение проблем, вопросы управления, Школы в Турции, Средняя школа.