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## **Professional Burnout: A Comparative Study from Turkey with State and Private School Principals**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine state and private school principals' professional burnout. The study also aims at exploring whether certain variables have an impact on their burnout and investigating their opinions about factors which trigger professional burnout, emotional burnout, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment as well as suggestions on how to prevent professional burnout. The study was carried out with explanatory mixed method design. The quantitative data was collected through Maslach Burnout Inventory, which had 22 items and three sub-categories. The data was collected from 207 school principals. For the qualitative portion of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four private and four state school principals separately. At the end of the study, it was found out that the professional burnout level of private school principals was higher than state school principals' professional burnout level. State school principals were found to have higher levels of emotional burnout, while private school principals showed a higher level of depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Their work experience and the schools they work in were found to have an impact on professional burnout. However, their level of education and the category they worked in did not have any effect on the professional burnout level. Focus group interviews revealed that both groups agreed to place parents as the primary factor that triggered professional burnout. Further, they stated that they did not get depersonalized, except for some of the requests coming from teachers and students.

**Keywords:** Professional Burnout, School Principals, Educational Administration, Private Schools, State Schools

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## **Introduction**

Educational institutions require good human relations and the successful implementation of educational programs due to their specific and unique functions. At this point, it can be argued that school principals are responsible of ensuring the school vision, keeping the parent-student-teacher relations continuing and implementing curriculum successfully. School principals should also actively use their communication skills effectively. In parallel with recent changes, they should reconstruct their institutions based on their students' needs, they should understand these needs thoroughly and they should have full awareness when implementing. It is thought that school principals, who are currently having problems in keeping up with educational changes and implementing them, constitute an indispensable part of the educational systems (Izgar, 2000). In order to achieve all the mentioned goals in educational settings, school principals, who are in charge of the management of schools, are required to be in healthy condition, both physically and mentally. For a person to lead a healthy lifestyle there is a direct relationship with job satisfaction. Research in the field shows that there is a negative relationship between job satisfaction and professional burnout (Koçak, 2009; Saridakis, Lai, Muñoz Torres, & Gourlay, 2020). Therefore, it can be stated that the less school principals are satisfied with the job they are doing, the more the risk of professional burnout. Thus, job satisfaction and professional burnout syndrome are closely related to each other.

The term burnout was first defined by Freudenberger (1974) and there have been many studies conducted in the field in many different professional areas. Maslach and Jackson (1981) argues that professional burnout is a process of becoming indifferent to the environment and it is mostly observed in employees who have to be in contact with people in their jobs. It leads to hopelessness and mental fatigue, as well as physical exhaustion (Enzmann, Schaufeli, Janssen, & Rozeman, 1998; Gedvilienė, & Didžiulienė, 2020). The definition of professional burnout by Maslach (1982) is the most widely accepted definition today. According to this definition, professional burnout has three dimensions. These are (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) reduced personal accomplishment. Depersonalization corresponds to the notion of treating others or co-workers as objects or having a rather uninterested manner towards them (Izgar, 2000). In this dimension, those who suffer from professional burnout, start to have a careless attitude towards their colleagues, costumers or co-workers. Rreduced personal accomplishment refers to not feeling complete and successful at work. It is related with feeling inefficient and dissatisfied at work.

There are a number of physical and mental consequences of professional burnout (Çam, 1992; Kara, 2020). Ilgar (2000) states that people who suffer from professional burnout syndrome have to face many undesired outcomes. Some of the job related consequences might be decreasing job performance, not going to work, having bad relationships with partners or bosses, misbehaving at work and causing trouble or misunderstandings at the workplace. According to Salvagioni and his colleagues (2017), some of the consequences that have personal impacts are exhaustion, fatigue, insomnia and headaches as well as extreme anxiety, sensitivity, reduced personal accomplishment, feeling of uneasiness and feeling helpless.

School principals are supposed to manage their system in accordance with the educational needs and objectives, similar to other managers and directors. Some of the main responsibilities and duties that school principals need to have can be listed as identifying educational needs, setting institutional goals, creating a suitable environment for curriculum planning to take place, creating a peaceful workplace atmosphere, making efficient decisions and providing cooperation within and among other institutions. On the other hand, a successful school principal should not be prejudiced, timid, inconsiderate, bad at making decisions and easy to be affected by external factors (Izgar, 2000). Taking into consideration school principals' responsibilities and duties, it can be argued that school principals are likely to experience professional burnout. Research about how to manage it or underlying factors that lead to professional burnout can help educators in preventing possible threads. Moreover, there is a need to identify the differences in school principals' professional burnout with respect to the school type so that the sources of the construct and the strategies to overcome it can be understood better. Although there

are some studies (Özyolcu, 2015; Baş & Yıldırım, 2012; Koçak, 2009; Başol &, Altay 2009, Babaoğlu, 2008; Dağlı, 2006; Aksu & Baysal, 2005) that examined professional burnout in the literature, there is a scarcity of studies that focused on the possible differences in both professional burnout levels of school principals who work in private schools and state schools and the factors that trigger professional burnout. Therefore, the present study is considered to be significant in the sense that it provides a comparison of professional burnout levels and perceived beliefs of possible reasons of professional burnout considering school principals working in state and private schools. In the light of the arguments above, the purpose of this study is to identify state school and private school principals' professional burnout levels and provide a comparison of their ideas in terms of professional burnout. Research questions formulated for this study are as follows:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between state school and private school principals' professional burnout levels of according to;
  - a. their total professional burnout scores,
  - b. emotional exhaustion levels,
  - c. depersonalization levels,
  - d. personal accomplishment levels?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference between state school and private school principals' professional burnout levels in terms of their professional experience?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between state school and private school principals' professional burnout levels in terms of their educational background?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between state school and private school principals' professional burnout levels in terms of the grade they work in?
5. What are state school and private school principals' opinions on professional burnout?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The current study was conducted with explanatory mixed method research design. This method is defined as uniting qualitative and quantitative research designs and it implies collecting and analyzing quantitative and then qualitative data in two consecutive phases within one study (Creswell, 2003; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006; Tashakkori ve Teddlie, 1998). In mixed method research design, different strategies are implemented and a variety of data collection tools can be utilized. Opinions are supported both with quantitative and qualitative data sources; therefore, the validity of the results increases (Johnson and Turner, 2003). Since the data analysis has two steps, results are validated for a second time. At the end, strong interpretations can be made (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Within the framework of explanatory mixed method design, quantitative portion of the study was completed first and this portion of the study was supported by the qualitative portion in the current study. With the help of interviews, the researchers aimed to get insights into school principals' opinions on professional burnout.

### **Participants**

For the quantitative portion of the study, participants of this study were 207 school principals working in various private and state schools in three different districts in the city of Istanbul, Turkey. Convenience sampling technique was chosen as a sampling technique. In this technique, participants can easily be accessed, it is economic, practical and fast (Baltacı, 2018). In this framework, the researchers reached the school principals that were easy to contact and asked to fill the survey form. The distribution of school principals based on the districts they worked in is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Distribution of school principals based on the districts they worked in*

District	Title	Number of data collection	Number of data collection
		tools that returned	tools that were delivered
District 1	School Principal	38	50
	Assistant Principal	36	40
District 2	School Principal	27	30
	Assistant Principal	37	50
District 3	School Principal	20	50
	Assistant Principal	49	50
Total		207	270

School principals, who volunteered to participate in the semi-structured interviews, were from three different districts that were identified in Table 1. Interviews were conducted with principals working in different grades and different educational backgrounds. School principals who worked in state schools were coded as S-P and those worked in private schools were coded as P-P. For the selection of interview participants, maximum likelihood method (Creswell, 2012) was applied and participants from different school types, genders, experiences, grades, and districts were included in the interview. Information regarding semi-constructed interview participants is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Description of participants for semi-structured interviews*

Principal code	School type	Gender	Experience	Grade	District
P-P,1	Private	Female	6 years	Kindergarten	District 1
P-P, 2	Private	Male	16 years	High school	District 1
P-P, 3	Private	Male	5 years	Middle school	District 3
P-P, 4	Private	Female	10 years	Campus	District 3
S-P, 1	State	Male	15 years	High school	District 2
S-P, 2	State	Female	12 years	Primary school	District 1
S-P, 3	State	Female	4 years	Kindergarten	District 3
S-P, 4	State	Male	11 years	Middle school	District 2

## **Data Collection Tools**

Both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were utilized in this study. For the quantitative portion of the study, a demographic information form was used to collect data to identify participants' socio-demographic identities. The information collected via this form included age, gender, education level and the year of experience. The second quantitative data collection tool was Maslach Burnout Inventory, which was used to identify participants' professional burnout levels. This inventory was developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) and its validity and reliability was proved in many studies. The original inventory is in English; therefore, in this study the Turkish adaptation, the necessary validity and reliability studies of which was completed by Ergin (1992) was used. After completing the quantitative data analysis, a semi-structured interview was conducted for the qualitative portion of the study. The semi-structured interview questions prepared by the researchers. During the interviews, participants were asked six questions in total in order to obtain their opinions about professional burnout, their workplace, their attitude towards their profession, what they knew about school principals' professional burnout and their suggestions for improvement. The questions were prepared within the framework of the existing literature and the opinions of three field experts were asked for the final version of interview questions. Before conducting the data collection period, all the official permissions were taken from the related institutions.

## **Data Analysis**

During the quantitative analysis, SPSS 23.0 statistical analysis program was utilized. In order to get answers for the four research questions, independent groups t-test and ANOVA test was applied. To analyze the qualitative data, content analysis was chosen as a method to categorize and code the collected data. Following the face-to-face interviews with the school principals, firstly, the voice recordings were transcribed. Afterwards, the transcription was read carefully to define repeated terms and words and codes were formed based on those. Codes were later categorized into larger groups. After categorizing, themes were found and school principals' opinions were presented based on these themes. (Büyükoztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2008; Creswell, 2003).

## **Findings**

### **State and Private School Principals' Professional Burnout Levels**

To find answer to the first research question, state and private school principals' professional burnout levels were examined under different dimensions comparatively.

#### **Total professional burnout**

In order to answer to the first sub-question, independent groups t-test was applied to data collected from Maslach Burnout Inventory. Findings indicated that private school principals' professional burnout levels are ( $M=61.26$ ) higher than state school principals' professional burnout level ( $M=47.74$ ). In order to understand whether this difference is statistically significant, independent groups t-test was applied. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Private and state school principals' total professional burnout*

School type	$\bar{X}$	SS	N	<i>p</i>	SHF
State	47.74	9.24	106	.00	.89
Private	61.26	13.65	107	.00	1.32

Based on the t-test results, private school principals' experience showed higher levels of professional burnout when compared to state school principals, and the difference is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

#### Emotional exhaustion

To answer the second sub-question, independent groups t-test was applied and the results of the analysis are presented in Table 4:

Table 4  
*Private and state school principals' professional burnout in terms of emotional exhaustion levels*

School type	$\bar{X}$	SS	N	<i>p</i>	SHF
State	2.52	.55	106	.00	.09
Private	3.28	.82	107	.00	.09

When the t-test results are examined in Table 4, it can be seen that there is a statistically significant difference in state and private school principals' emotional exhaustion levels ( $p < .05$ ). Private school principals experienced statistically higher levels of emotional exhaustion than state school principals.

#### Depersonalization

As part of the third sub-question, independent groups t-test was applied to figure out whether the difference in state and private school principals' depersonalization levels were statistically significant. The results are presented in Table 5:

Table 5  
*Private and state school principals' professional burnout in terms of depersonalization levels*

School type	$\bar{X}$	SS	N	<i>p</i>	SHF
State	.47	.04	106	.00	.07
Private	.57	.05	107	.00	.07

When t-test results are examined, it can be seen that there is a statistically significant difference in state school and private school principals' depersonalization levels ( $p < .05$ ). Private school principals experienced higher levels of depersonalization when compared to state school principals.

### Personal accomplishment

In order to figure out whether the difference in state school and private school principals' personal accomplishment levels is statistically significant, independent groups t-test was applied. The results are presented in Table 6:

Table 6

*Private and state school principals' professional burnout in terms of personal accomplishment levels*

School type	$\bar{X}$	SS	N	<i>p</i>	SHF
State	2.21	.42	106	.00	.07
Private	2.67	.64	107	.00	.07

When t-test results are examined, it can be seen that there is a statistically significant difference in private school and state school principals' personal accomplishment levels ( $p < .05$ ). Private school principals were found to have higher personal accomplishment when compared to state school principals.

### ***School Principals' Professional Burnout in terms of Professional Experience***

To answer the second research question, two-way ANOVA was applied to the data and results are shown in Table 7:

Table 7

*Private and state school principals' professional burnout in terms of professional experience*

Total	KT	sd	KO	F	<i>p</i>
School type	3709.30	1	370.30	31.43	.00
Experience	3885.99	5	777.19	6.58	.00
School type*Experience	545.65	4	136.41	1.15	.33

The results of two-way ANOVA shows that professional experience and school type had no statistically significant impact on school principals' professional burnout levels ( $F=1.15$ ;  $p=.33$ ). However, school type and experience each had an impact on professional burnout. The professional burnout level of school principals who had 0-2 years of experience ( $M=60.86$ ) was higher than the professional burnout level of school principals who had 2-5 years of experience ( $M=60.32$ ). School principals who had less professional experience had statistically more professional burnout.

Table 8

*Findings of Scheffe post-hoc test*

(I) Experience	(J) Experience	Average difference (I-J)	SH	p
0-2 years	2-5 years	.53	5.31	1.00
	5-10 years	6.8	5.11	.87
	10-15 years	8.48	5.37	.77
	15-20 years	12.48	5.77	.46
	20 and more	15.02	7.27	.51
2-5 years	0-2 years	-.53	5.31	1.00
	5-10 years	6.26	2.36	.22
	10-15 years	7.95	2.89	.18
	15-20 years	11.95	3.58	.05
	20 and more	14.48	5.68	.26
5-10 years	0-2 years	-6.80	5.11	.87
	2-5 years	-6.26	2.36	.22
	10-15 years	1.68	2.49	.99
	15-20 years	5.68	3.27	.69
	20 and more	8.21	5.49	.81
10-15 years	0-2 years	-8.48	5.37	.77
	2-5 years	-7.93	2.89	.18
	10-15 years	-1.68	2.49	.99
	15-20 years	4.00	3.67	.94
	20 and more	6.53	5.74	.93
15-20 years	0-2 years	-12.48	5.77	.46
	2-5 years	-11.95	3.58	.054
	10-15 years	-5.68	3.27	.69
	15-20 years	-4.00	3.67	.94
	20 and more	2.53	6.12	.99
20 and more	0-2 years	-15.02	7.27	.51
	2-5 years	-14.48	5.68	.26
	10-15 years	-8.21	5.49	.81
	15-20 years	-6.53	5.74	.93
	20 and more	-2.53	6.12	.99

When the Scheffe post-hoc test results are examined, there is not a statistically significant difference among the experience variable itself. However, professional burnout level in 0-2 and 2-5 years of experience was higher when compared to others.

***School Principals' Professional Burnout in Terms of Educational Background***

In order to find out whether school principals' professional burnout levels differ in terms of their educational background, two-way ANOVA test was applied. Educational background is divided into four categories (Group 1: Associate's degree, Group 2: Bachelor's degree, Group 3: Master's degree, Group 4: PhD Degree). The results are presented in Table 9.



Table 9

*Private and state school principals' professional burnout in terms of educational background*

Total	KT	sd	KO	F	p
School type	1075.32	1	1075.32	7.95	.00
Educational background	791.71	3	263.90	1.95	.12
School type*Educational background	93.22	2	46.61	.34	.70

As can be seen in Table 9, findings of two-way ANOVA test reveal that there is no statistically significant impact of school type and educational background on school principals' professional burnout levels ( $F=.34$ ;  $p=.70$ ). When educational background is examined separately, there is still no statistically significant impact on professional burnout levels ( $F=1.95$ ;  $p=.12$ ).

### ***School Principals' Professional Burnout in Terms of the Grade They Work at***

To examine whether the degree in which school principals work had an impact on professional burnout levels, two-way ANOVA analysis was conducted. School type is divided into two, as private schools and state schools. Grades in which school principals worked were divided into four groups. (Group 1: Kindergarten, Group 2: Primary school, Group 3: Middle School, Group 4: High school). Results are shown in Table 10:

Table 10

*Private and state school principals' professional burnout in terms of the grade they work at*

Total	KT	sd	KO	F	p
School type	7795.24	1	7795.24	57.99	.00
Degree	488.65	3	162.88	1.21	.30
School type*Degree	703.77	3	234.59	1.74	.15

Findings of two-way ANOVA test reveal that there is no statistically significant difference in school principals' professional burnout levels with respect to the school type and degree ( $F=1.21$ ;  $p=.30$ ). When the degree variable is examined separately, there is no statistically significant impact on professional burnout levels ( $F=1.21$ ;  $p=.30$ ).

### ***School Principals' Opinions on Professional Burnout***

With regard to the school principals' opinions on professional burnout, five basic themes were identified as a result of the content analysis. The themes can be summarized as (1) factors that trigger professional burnout, (2) factors that trigger emotional exhaustion, (3) factors that trigger depersonalization, (4) factors that trigger personal accomplishment, and (5) ways to cope with professional burnout.

#### ***Theme 1: Factors that trigger professional burnout***

When explaining professional burnout, school principals from state schools and private schools mentioned two major factors. These factors are (a) institutional factors and (b) personal factors. Four out of four school principals working in two types of schools mentioned personal factors when explaining professional burnout. Codes, categories and themes obtained from the content analysis are presented in Table 11:

Table 11

*Factors that trigger professional burnout*

School Type	Category	Code	Sample data
State	Institutional factors	Work hours	“Professional burnout, to me, is related to exhaustion. Both physically and mentally. Not getting used to the job, may be not feeling competent in the job and realizing them too late.” (P-S, 2)
		Co-workers	
Student profiles			
Parents			
School resources			
Private	Personal factors	Feeling of despair	“Usually, in our schools, we have to deal with parents and some of their weird demands and expectations rather than students. Principals who are unprepared for such problems may experience problems in their first professional experience”. (P-S-, 3)
		Lack of experience	
Private	Institutional factors	Parents	“The lack of support from the system. People may feel loneliness when there is no support. Feeling under pressure because there are lots of to do and being the only one responsible of them.. That might later on cause fatigue. In my perspective, this is professional burnout.” (P-P, 4)
		Work load	
Private	Personal factors	Limited support	I see professional burnout as not being able to feed professionally, not seeing the beauties brought by the profession, not being aware of innovations and failure to convert negative situations to positive (P-P, 3)
		Emotional characteristics	
Private	Personal factors	Not following innovations	I see professional burnout as not being able to feed professionally, not seeing the beauties brought by the profession, not being aware of innovations and failure to convert negative situations to positive (P-P, 3)
		Personal development	

When Table 11 is examined, it can be seen that school principals of both types emphasized institutional factors as a contributor to professional burnout. They also referred to the parents issue and their expectations. It was mentioned that parents’ expectations from schools were far beyond reality and that might be related to professional burnout. The majority of the school principals mentioned institutional factors when talking about reasons of professional burnout. When defining professional burnout, possible impacts of work hours and negative behaviors of co-workers were also referred to. Student profiles, students’ age groups and parents’ demands were found to be related to professional burnout, limited support, and work load.

*Theme 2: Factors that trigger emotional exhaustion*

State school principals’ opinions regarding emotional exhaustion were grouped into three categories; namely, institutional factors, partners and personal factors. On the other hand, two categories emerged under private school principals’ heading; partners and institutional factors. Findings can be examined in Table 12:

Table 12

*Factors that trigger emotional exhaustion*

School Type	Category	Code	Sample data
State	Partners	Parents	“We sometimes get tired of handling our parents' concerns, curiosity and questions, as our students are too young. When I last saw myself in a burnout position, I think I was thinking about a parent-related issue.”
		Students	
	Institutional factors	Work load Management	“We have a lot of responsibilities. When you talk about managing a school, it sounds like one thing only. However, we deal with everything from a fault in water pipes, to paper stocks and students' problems.” (P-S, 4)
Private	Partners	Sensitivity	“Of course, there are times when I run out emotionally. I am not a machine! I have feelings and weaknesses.” (P-S, 2)
		Weaknesses	
	Institutional factors	Work load	“It is our duty to lead the students. But we feel bad when we encounter meaningless expectations of parents or teachers, and their selfish attitude towards us.” (P-P,4) “While trying to bring students to the society and give them an academic life, the effort to carry out all the action plans, school cooperation and guidance in our school at the same time can be tiring. When we try to determine our priorities that we need to focus on, we can get tired of providing adequate support to students.” (P-P, 3)

When Table 12 is examined, it is seen that state school principals addressed partners as a contributor to emotional background. In this category, they mentioned student related problems, teacher related problems and parents' expectations while private school principals referred to student related problems, teacher related problems and parents' expectations. In addition, they mentioned problems related to work load and management took place under institutional factors category. Problems related to personal factors were named as sensitivity and weaknesses such as feeling tired, fatigue, despair and hopelessness. Private and state school principals both stated that they sometimes experience emotional exhaustion. All of the school principals pointed out the institutional factors as reasons. Private school principals did not mention personal factors as a source of emotional exhaustion. It can be said that institutional factors triggering emotional exhaustion are similar in both state schools and private schools. Unlike private school principals, principals in state schools did not point out teacher related problems as factors of emotional exhaustion.

*Theme 3: Factors that trigger depersonalization*

School principals were asked whether they had been through depersonalization in any matter since they started their career. When the data was content analyzed, factors triggering depersonalization were found to be student and teacher related problems.

Table 13

*Factors that trigger depersonalization*

School Type	Category	Code	Sample data
State	Institutional factors	Students' expectations Teachers' expectations	"Our door is always open to our teachers and students. We should listen to their expectations. Let alone being depersonalized, I am more careful to what happens around me, to what my students are doing thanks to my concerns as a school principal." (P-S, 4)
Private	Institutional factors	Students' expectations Teachers' expectations	"At first I was considering every demand. Now I realize that I need to put some of them in secondary importance. I can say I started to be depersonalized to them." (P-P, 4)

School principals working in state schools stated that they did not experience depersonalization. On the contrary, they said their attention to their environment, students' needs and innovations in the field increased. They also claimed that they were not depersonalized neither to the teachers' expectations nor to the students' due to the responsibilities as principals they have. However, they regarded depersonalization as an issue that was related to institutional factors such as students' and teachers' expectations. Similarly, school principals that worked in private schools stated that they did not experience depersonalization. They stated they had been more sensitive and careful about what was going on in the school. They explained this fact by referring to their empathy skills. For example, school principals stated that having kids was one of the reasons why they were not depersonalized because of some emotional factors. They said they were more careful than ever before.

*Theme 4: Factors that trigger personal accomplishment*

School principals were also asked about personal accomplishment during the interview and content analysis indicated that they grouped factors that triggered personal accomplishment under different categories. Findings can be found in Table 14:

Table 14

*Factors that trigger personal accomplishment*

School Type	Category	Code	Sample data
State	Communication skills	Parents Teachers Students	"My relation with the teacher has always been good. Our communication is very strong. The feedback has always been positive. As a school principal, it is important for me to have these traits." (P-S,1)
	Following trends	Improvements in the field Changes in the field	"I follow the innovations and make the necessary changes in the program according to the developments I see if it fits the

	Management skills	Appropriateness to the profession Sense of responsibility High energy	mission and vision of the school. I trust myself on this topic. I like reading, researching and finding something new and I like applying what I find in my school.” (P-S, 4) “I think my strength is that I can enjoy this great responsibility rather than making it a problem. Because I love my job and I feel I belong here. This sense of belonging keeps me motivated.” (P-S, 2)
Private	Communication skills	Communication with students	“I strongly believe that I am competent in communication with students, as being fair to all of them.” (P-P, 2).
	Academic success	Field readings	“I find myself more successful in academic sense. I attach importance to improving myself. I feel strong enough to continue education in my field and I trust myself in this regard.” (P-P, 3)
	Instructional leadership	Planning Material development	“Education, materials, and planning the program. Following the updates, being aware of them. And if possible, applying them in my school. We are working very hard in these areas. This is one of the things that make our school strong.” (P-P, 1)

When the findings are examined, it is seen that state school principals referred to communication skills, following the trends and management skills as factors that trigger personal accomplishment. All state school principals stated that they had high personal accomplishment. Both state and private school principals said there were three sources for high personal accomplishment. However, these sources differed in terms of frequency and type. The most frequent factor mentioned was having good management skills. Having strong communication skills and following trends followed the first one. Unlike private school principals, school principals working in state schools stated they had high levels of management skills and therefore they felt successful at work. School principals differed from each other in that sense. When the findings are examined, it is also seen that private school principals considered their communication skills, reading activities related to the field and following the innovations as causes of personal accomplishment. Besides, having successful communication skills was found to be effective in having high personal accomplishment. When the results are summarized, according to private school principals, it is seen that having high personal accomplishment is related to feeling successful in their profession, having good communication skills with students, being academically successful and following trends and innovations in the field.

*Theme 5: Ways to cope with professional burnout*

In order to deal with professional burnout, school principals referred to the importance of communication, work hours, in-service training programs, and experience as a teacher, performance evaluations and personal development. School principals’ answers in terms of the question as how to deal with professional burnout are presented in Table 15:

Table 15

*Ways to cope with professional burnout*

School Type	Category	Code	Sample data
State	Institutional improvements	Performance evaluation	“Feedback taken from teachers and other collaborators will help. Like everyone, school principals also need appreciation, they want to be seen, and to see that they do their job well. When people realize their effort and appreciate it, I’m sure they will be more dedicated.” (P-S, 4)
		In-service training Work hours Work distribution	
Private	Personal development	Strong communication skills	“One solution that comes to my mind is of course having experience as a teacher. You simply cannot start being a school principal out of nowhere. I believe that it would be more effective to become a school principal after some years of actively teaching.” (P-S, 3)
		Experience as a teacher	
	Institutional improvements	Performance evaluation	“In-service training is very important. Taking out of school courses is also important. There is a variety of options out there; conferences, seminars... We should follow both local ones and international ones.” (P-P, 1)
In-service training programs Work hours			
	Personal development	Strong communication skills Personal growth	“The communication skill of a school principal must be very strong. The principal's room, the office is not her/his room; it must be the students’ room. It should be transparent. The student should be able to enter. They should be able to communicate.” (P-P, 2)

When Table 15 is examined, it can be seen that data is divided into two major groups as institutional improvements and personal improvements in both groups. Performance evaluation, in-service training and changes in work hours are considered as solutions under institutional improvements category. Having strong communication skills and valuing personal growth were given as examples under personal development category. With respect to personal development, state school principals pointed out the importance of strong communication and added that having these skills could prevent professional burnout. It was argued that better relations with co-workers could also be effective in dealing with professional burnout. Activities and meetings out of school were also believed to be important in reducing the feeling of burnout. Data collected from interviews with private school principals revealed that they also recommended both institutional improvement and personal development in dealing with professional burnout. They stated that effective performance evaluation,



arranging activities with staff and students to have stronger communication, organizing in-service training programs and regulations in work hours were important in tackling professional burnout.

To sum up, while state school and private school principals stated similar ideas for some themes, they also differed in some others. School principals working in both types of schools stated that they sometimes felt professional burnout. Parents were seen as the major cause of professional burnout in each group of school principals. While private school principals mentioned work load and limited professional support, state school principals mentioned student profiles, co-workers and work hours. Regarding emotional exhaustion, private school principals pointed out only personal factors. On the other hand, state school principals mentioned both environmental factors and personal factors. Both groups of school principals stated that they did not feel depersonalized. On the contrary, they believed that they more actively participated to what went on in their environment. In terms of personal accomplishment, neither of the groups stated they felt it. Both groups were found to be having high levels of personal accomplishment. All of the school principals stated that the major reason for this was having good communication skills. While state school principals mentioned the importance of having strong management skills, private school principals did not mention anything related to management skills. Lastly, regarding ways to deal with professional burnout, both groups mentioned some institutional and personal improvements which would help. Performance evaluation, regulations in work hours and having access to in-service training programs were seen as solutions to professional burnout. While state school principals pointed out the importance of having experience as a teacher, private school principals did not mention anything related to this issue.

### **Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions**

The purpose of this study was to examine state and private school principals' professional burnout. When the findings are examined, school principals working in both state and private schools were found to experience professional burnout to some extent. School principals who worked in private school were found to experience statistically higher levels of professional burnout when compared to state school principals. State school principals experienced lower levels of professional burnout. Stressful and busy lifestyle in the city where the research was conducted could be one reason of experiencing high levels of professional burnout for each groups of school principals. In fact, Tuna (2018) stated that living in populous and poorly planned cities might affect the residents' lives negatively. Moreover, based on the data, unrealistic expectations of parents, students' and teachers' profiles were seen as factors triggering professional burnout. The fact that private schools charge large amounts of money for education may lead the parents to expect more from private schools. As a result, school principals work overtime and put more effort to meet parents' expectations. These can be seen among the reasons as to why private school principals experienced higher levels of professional burnout when compared to state school principals. It can also be said that the pressure from society to teachers and school principals working in private schools might be effective in causing the difference besides the competitive nature of the private schools and parents' expectations (Ensari, 2002).

Findings gathered from the research also revealed that state school principals experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion when compared to private school principals. The fact that state school principals were not totally independent in making institutional decisions might cause them to feel tired and emotionally exhausted after a while (Eyüboğlu, 2002). Private school principals, on the other hand, are more independent in the process of making decisions (İlgar, 2014).

The effect of professional experience and the school type on professional burnout was explored in this study, as well. When the effect of professional experience on professional burnout was examined, it was found that school principals who had 0-2 and 2-5 years of experience as school principals experience higher levels of professional burnout when compared to more experienced school principals and the difference was statistically significant. Inefficiency in dealing with problems because of lack of experience, being unable to find solutions and feeling of panic might be some of the reasons as why these school principals feel higher levels of professional burnout. On the other

hand, reasons as to why experienced school principals experience high levels of professional burnout could be years of exhaustion and fatigue. When the related literature is examined, it is seen that similar results were obtained in some studies in the field, showing that young teachers and school principals were highly stressful in their early years of profession (Forlin, 2001). These stress related problems might hinder school principals in having hesitations when making decisions and trigger professional burnout since Yeğin (2015) stated that stress was an important factor in causing professional burnout.

Data collected from focus group interviews showed that factors triggering professional burnout were divided into two major categories. These were environmental factors and personal factors. School principals working in both institutions mentioned these two categories. All of the school principals pointed out parents in environmental factors as the reasons of professional burnout. In a similar study conducted by Combs, Edmonson and Jackson (2009), school principals stated that they had difficulties in communicating with parents. In another study by Friedman (2002), parents were seen as causes of stress and professional burnout. Unlike state school principals, private school principals mentioned heavy work load and limited institutional support. The possible reason why work load is one of the causes of professional burnout in private school might be related to the fact that in private schools, besides guidance and counseling services and student club activities, school principals and teachers are also highly involved in sports activities. When these two types of schools are compared, it can easily be argued that there is not that much interest in these types of activities in state schools (Eyüboğlu, 2002).

When school principals' opinions about ways to deal with professional burnout were examined, it is seen that all of the school principals mentioned some solutions related to institutional and personal improvements. Common solutions mentioned in institutional improvements are performance evaluations, having access to in-service training programs and regulations in work hours. In the related literature, it was found that there is a lack of in-service training programs in schools. Even when there are in-service programs, they were found to be ineffective in terms of frequency and content (Demirkol, 2006). Therefore, school principals working in state schools and in private schools consider lack of in-service trainings as a cause of professional burnout and they stated on condition that there are enough opportunities to access in-service training programs, they will be highly beneficial. School principals stated that having access to in-service training programs is one way of handling professional burnout. Lack of in-service training services is seen as a cause of professional burnout. Therefore, in order to deal with professional burnout, school principals could be encouraged to attend seminars and conferences as well as in-service training programs. School principals frequently mentioned problems related to parents. As a solution to professional burnout, school principals might be led to discuss these issues with parents in school gatherings to raise awareness. In this way, school principals might have a chance to talk about their problems and share them with parents. It might also help if school principals have an institution or people in charge to talk about problems they go through in work place. More research can be done in the field related to the relationship between parents and school principals, and parents might be given a chance to discuss the issue from their point of view. Studies as such might be effective in providing various aspects to an issue.



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