Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research 14 (8): 1114-1123, 2013

ISSN 1990-9233

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DOI: 10.5829/idosi.mejsr.2013.14.8.2194

# An Analysis of Empathetic Tendencies and Communication Skills of School Directors in Terms of Some Variables

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Abstract: Communication is a process to associate and make sense of meanings, to generate information. Empathy is to understand one's emotions and thoughts truly by placing self in one's position. The reason why a relationship between communication and empathy exists is that empathy is affected by the nature of communication. In this study, levels of the empathetic tendency and communication skills of school directors are tried to be determined, the relation between empathetic tendencies and communication skills is described. The samples of this research are school directors working central district of Sivas. Statistical processes are realized with 153 school directors in these schools. In the analysis of research data, among descriptive statistics methods, Mann Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis and Spearman's Correlational Test and Regression analysis are performed. According to the findings of research, considering the relationship between communication skills and empathetic tendencies of school directors, [r=.551 p>0.01] a medium level positive relation is seen. Director's communication skills are precursors of empathetic tendency (R=0.551, R²=0.304, p<.00). Director's communication skills describe nearly %30 of empathetic tendency. Between school directors' communication skills and empathetic tendencies, a medium level and positive relation is seen. Communication skill is a variable predicting empathetic tendency. According to this, communication skills explain % 30 of empathetic tendencies.

**Key words:** Communication • Communication skills • Empathy • Empathetic tendency • School directors

### INTRODUCTION

A human continues his life as a social and cultural creature. Sociality of a human is a result of his necessity of communication and interactivity. In the history, life adventure of human caused different cultural contents about communication or cultural contents brought about new communication methods and styles. Day by day, human - being has found himself in a more complex relation environment. Culture is a whole reality which a human presents and lives in. With culture, everything in human world can be understood. How and what the existence of human means is culture. It is also every kind of interactivity, every habit of creating, work of material and spiritual [1]. The events happening in school is related to the existence of human. As a creature generating value, human has to communicate interact. That the school directors are at the center of spotlight is a known truth. That's why school directors and communication skills shape the cultural structure of school. Quality of communication affects the empathetic

behaviors. Theoretic and functional knowledge behaviors about the nature of communication will be able to change the quality of empathetic tendencies. communication skills and empathetic Directors' tendencies are important concepts for school management structure. The nature of school directors' communication and empathetic perceptions about themselves guides to understand the insights of school managements and school management process. As open systems socially, at schools, the human factor may be accepted as basic input. As the nature of human communication, communication and empathy are the concepts that are at the forefront and examined.

Human is a social creature. Sociality is the case of not being able to live alone. The more a human realizes his shortcomings, the more help of others he needs. Sociality is the situation of completing mutually. As human realizes his shortcomings, that is, he knows himself, he starts to appreciate his relations with others. This appreciation occurs as having relations friendlier and closer. Another way of this is empathy.

Empathy is the effort to understand a human as a whole and by taking his conditions into consideration. If empathy accompanies communication, it provides better communication, the quality increases and points of agreement mounts. As people know more about themselves, they gather under common aims and they improve easier cooperation. By this means, attendance and activity are secured [2]. Management attitudes change according to the quality of communication skills and empathetic tendencies. The right way for directors to communicate more reliable among pursuers and to strengthen the culture and climate at their schools is the right communication, empathetic attitude and behaviors. Communication skills of directors and their views about the empathetic tendencies are important for identifying the need in this field.

Communication: Communication is a process to associate and make sense of meanings, to generate information [3, 4]. According to Zıllıoğlu [5], communication is to speak with others. It is television, newspaper, a literary critic, painting. It is sometimes to hear, to see and to touch. According to Aydın [6], communication is the process of expressing and communicating commands, information, thoughts and explanations. Mark and Wulf [7] regard communication as interactive relation among individuals and as a critical role in business life. Regarding the communication as a bilateral process, Usluata [8] defines communication: the activity to communicate news, thoughts and emotions, to share or exchange thoughts and the expression of information, news, thought and view [9].

Organizational communication is a social process that runs the organization, is the continuous expression of information and thoughts between the organization and the others forming the organization. Organizational communication ties the staff so they can work in accordance with each other. It enables problem solving and creative power to form and provides orientation to new conditions by flow of information [10]. The quality of communication among individuals contributes to power of organization to reach aims.

In an efficient and productive organization, the expression of idea, information and thoughts bilaterally is an important necessity. The failure of information flow means the failure of coordination. Organizational communication ties staff so they can work in coherence and in coordination. The reason why organizations exist is to realize the aims as a group. With efforts, management is the process to reach the aims formerly determined.

A good director must have a lot of methods and humane skills. A director, who has the ability of solving problems, making decisions, giving orders, feedback, collecting and spreading information, will undertake the role of leadership in the organization he works [10].

A leader's empathetic tendencies may affect the quality of relationship between leader and pursuer. Leadership uses communication as a language. Communication skills, key to organizational management, can be thought to affect empathetic tendencies.

In different researches, the level of communication skills, training of communication skills are examined [11-15]. Views about the level of communication skills or communication process seem high when looked at the research results.

Empathy: Empathy is to correctly understand one's thoughts and emotions by putting himself in one's position. Rogers (1970 and 1983) defines empathy in general terms: it is the process to view actions by one's point of view by putting himself in position, to correctly understand his thoughts and emotions, to feel and to express it. In the empathy process, to put himself in one's position, to correctly understand his thoughts and emotions and to express the empathetic comprehension across [16-19]. Communication and empathy requires a bilateral relation by their nature. Empathy is a concept that should be thought together with communication and interactivity. When we don't express our empathetic attitude and behaviors across, we don't complete the empathy process. According to Cooper (2002), teachers who don't feel empathy with his students slights them and this causes a loss of motivation among students. According to Wilson and Kneisl (1988), empathetic comprehension is the way to enter individual's emotional world [20]. In different studies, variables about the empathy are seen to be examined. In many situations, that the empathetic tendencies are affected or affect is presented in research results. [20-30].

Relation Between Empathy and Communication: Some research findings about the relation between empathy and different variables have been found. For example; Bell and Hall (1954) determined that people who have the feature to be a leader have better skills to feel empathy. According to Marcus, Telleen and Roke (1979) there is a relation between empathy and cooperation. According to Chlopan vd (1985), Berms (1988) there is a relationship between socialization, social sensibility and empathy [31].

The relation between empathy, socialization and social sensibility reveals the relation between empathetic tendencies and communication skills of the sides. Communication, as a general cultural element, also an element of school culture in private determines empathetic tendencies. The reason why there is a relation between empathy and communication is that empathy is affected by the nature of communication.

There are some relations detected between communication and different concepts. In the researches; emotional communication and fatigue [32] communication and pleasure [33, 34] relation between pleasure and formal and informal communication out of class [35], quality of communication ways among individuals and their effects on directors' empathetic sensibility [36], empathy and communication levels relation [37], relation between empathy and communication is researched.

In this research, it is aimed to determine the empathetic tendencies and communication skills of school directors and the relation between empathetic tendencies and communication skills are described. For that purpose, views of school directors are consulted with the communication skills scale and empathetic tendency scale.

#### Method

**Research Design:** Model of research is a descriptive study based on relational screening model. In this research, it is aimed to determine the directors' relation between communication skills and empathetic tendencies, for both variables; to determine whether it is different in gender, branch, marital status, seniority.

Working Group: School directors of 72 primary schools in 81 villages and towns in Sivas comprise the samples of the research. 153 school directors and 38 assistant managers of these primary schools, 191 in total, are delivered the scales and statistical operations are carried out on 153 of them who turned back and are available to treat.

As seen in Table 1, 8(%5.2) of school directors are females and 145 (%94.8) are males. In terms of branch variable, 98 (%64.1) are class teachers, 18 (%11.8) are numeric field teachers, 37 (24.2) are social, sports and art teachers. In terms of seniority, 46 (%30.1) are 8 years and below, 61 (%39.9) are numeric field teachers, 46 (30.1) are social, art and sports teachers. In terms of marital status, 148 (% 96.7) are married and 5 (% 3.3) are single.

Table 1: Numeric Data about the Samples

Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	8	5.2
	Male	145	94.8
Branch	Class Teacher Numer	98	64.1

**Data Collection Tools:** Data of the research is collected with "Personal Information Form", "Evaluation Scale of Communication Skills", "Empathetic Tendency Scale".

**Personal Information Form:** Information about gender, branch, seniority and marital status of school directors is collected. However, statistical operations are carried out taking data about branch and seniority variables into consideration.

**Evaluation Scale of Communication Skills:** (ESCS) Evaluation Scale of communication skills is realized by Korkut [38]. It is 5 point likert scale. 25 items exist in scale in total. The highest point to be taken from the scale is 125 and the lowest is 25. The higher point it is, the better school directors communicate. Internal consistency parameter (Cronbach alfa) of evaluation scale of communication skills is. 89.

Scale of Empathetic Tendency: (SET) Scale of empathetic tendency, which is directed to people to assess their emotional sensibility, is developed by Dökmen [18]. 20 items about empathetic tendency scale is graded with 5 point likert scale. In the scale; "Totally inappropriate for me", "Not appropriate for me", "Indecisive" "Totally appropriate for me" are the options. While positive empathy sentences are graded 1-5, negative ones are coded reversely. In the reliability and validity study carried out by Dökmen [18], reliability parameter is accounted. 91. In this study, internal consistency parameter (Cronbach alfa) of empathetic tendency scale is. 76. The highest point to be taken from the scale is 100 and the lowest is 20. The higher point it is, the better school directors communicate.

Looking at the data in Table 2, in "Evaluation Scale of Communication Skills", it seems that there are 25 items, the highest point is 125 and the lowest point is 82. Arithmetic average is 111.18 and standard deviation is 9.18. In "Empathetic Tendency Scale", there are 20 items, the highest point is 98 and the lowest is 54. Arithmetic average is 76.48 and Standard devation is 8.93.

Table 2: Statistics about Scales

Scales	n	K	Lowest Point	Highest Point	×	Sd
ESCS	153	25	82	125	111.18	9.18
SET	153	20	54	98	76.48	8.93

Table 3: School directors' Points from "Evaluation Scale of Communication Skills" and "Scale of Empathetic Tendency"

		Evaluation of Communication Skills				Empathetic Tendency				
Branch	n	Highest Point	Lowest Point	×	SD	Highest Point	Lowest Point	×	SD	
Class Teacher	98	125	98	111.44	8.96	91	54	76.51	8.96	
Numeric Field	18	123	93	109.72	10.89	82	58	77.61	8.81	
Social Field	37	125	98	111.21	9.07	82	54	75.86	9.11	
Total	153	125	82	111.18	9.18	98	54	76.48	8.93	
Seniority	n	Highest Point	Lowest Point	≅	SD	Highest Point	Lowest Point	≅	SD	
Below 8 Years	46	125	82	111.43	9.87	98	56	77.21	8.17	
9-13 years	61	125	87	111.60	8.47	95	54	74.86	8.88	
Above 14 years	46	125	91	110.39	9.52	98	61	77.89	9.57	
Total	153	125	82	111.18	9.18	98	54	76.48	8.93	
Human Relations	n	Highest Point	Lowest Point	×	SD	Highest Point	Lowest Point	×	SD	
Yes	41	125	87	110.80	8.88	95	54	74.26	8.16	
No	112	125	82	111.33	9.32	98	54	77.29	9.10	
Total	153	125	82	111.18	9.18	98	54	76.48	8.93	

Analysis of Data: In the analysis of research data, descriptive statistics methods are used. In the analysis, SPSS (Statistical Packet for Social Studies) 17 is used. Arithmetic average, standard deviation, the highest and the lowest points are calculated. Before the analysis of data, for homogeneity of data, Homogeneity of Variance and Sample K – S tests are made. When the variances are not homogenous and the dispersion is not normal, Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests are applied. When the variances are homogenous, t test and single direction variance analysis (Anova) are applied. To determine the relation between Evaluation Levels of Communication Skills and Empathetic Tendencies, Spearman's Correlational Test is applied. Whether correlational parameters are + or - determines the direction of relation. In order to determine how much variances in research model describe each other, regression analysis is applied. Target of regression analysis can be defined like that [39].

To explain dependent variable and independent variable or relation among variances with regression equality.

To specify how much dependent variable or variables explain the observed changes in variable with determination parameter.

To find out whether independent variable or variables predict dependent variable meaningfully.

**Findings:** In this chapter, quantitative findings are given and interpreted in tables according to independent variables. Communication skills and empathetic tendencies of school directors are handled according to such variables as; do you have difficulty in relations with seniority, branch and with people? And resulting findings and interpretations are included.

School directors' Average Points and Standard Deviation Values from "Evaluation Scale of Communication Skills" and "Scale of Empathetic Tendency"

According to the findings in Table 3, that the average results of communication skills of school directors according to branches, class teachers ( $_{\rm x}$ =111.44), social field teachers ( $_{\rm x}$ =111.21), numeric field teachers ( $_{\rm x}$ =109.72) are similar and it seems that they have given results nearly to the highest point in all branches (between 25 and 125). According to the empathetic tendency scale of school directors, class teachers ( $_{\rm x}$ =76.51), social field teachers ( $_{\rm x}$ =75.86), numeric field teachers ( $_{\rm x}$ =75.86) are similar and it seems that they have given results nearly to the highest point in all branches (between 20 and 100).

According to seniority variable, looking at the communication skills of school directors, the averages of school directors, who are 8 years or below, are ( $\approx$ =111.43), 9-13 years, ( $\approx$ =111.60) and 14 or more years ( $\approx$ =110.39)

and they seem to have given results nearly to the highest point from the scale (between 20 and 125). According to empathetic tendency scale points of school directors, the averages of school directors, who are 8 years or below, are ( $\bar{x}$ =77.21), 9-13 years, ( $\bar{x}$ =74.86) and 14 or more years ( $\bar{x}$ =77.88) seem to be similar and they seem to have given results nearly to the highest point from the scale (between 20 and 120).

According to the views of school directors about whether they have problems in human relations, looking at the results of communication skills of school directors, the average of directors saying they have problems is ( $\bar{x}$ =110.80), the average of others saying they don't have problems is ( $\bar{x}$ =111.33). They seem to have similar averages and to give results nearly to the highest point from the scale (between 20 and 125). According to the empathetic tendency scale of school directors, the average of the directors saying they have problems is ( $\bar{x}$ =74.26), the average of others saying they don't have problems is ( $\bar{x}$ =77.29). They seem to have similar averages and to give results nearly to the highest point from the scale (between 20 and 100).

Communication skills and Empathetic Tendency Level of School Directors according to Branch.

Kruskal Wallis test is carried out in order to determine whether communication levels and empathetic tendencies of school directors may differ according to branch. According to the variable, branch, as a result of Kruskal Wallis test for the evaluation of any possible difference between communication skills and empathetic tendencies of school directors, the average for the communication skills is  $[x^2 \ (2)=.408 \ p>.05]$  and for empathetic tendency  $[x^2 \ (2)=.658 \ p>.05]$ . There are no meaningful differences according to the branches of school directors.

Communications Skills and Empathetic Tendency Levels of School Directors according to Seniority.

Kruskal Wallis test is carried out in order to determine whether communication levels and empathetic tendencies of school directors may differ according to seniority.

According to the variable, branch, as a result of Kruskal Wallis test for the evaluation of any possible difference between communication skills and empathetic tendencies of school directors, the average for the communication skills is  $[x^2 \ (2)=.672 \ p>.05]$  and for empathetic tendency  $[x^2 \ (2)=.316 \ p>.05]$ . There are no meaningful differences according to the branches of school directors.

Communications Skills and Empathetic Tendency Levels of School Directors according to having any problems in Human Relations.

Mann Whitney U test is carried out in order to determine whether communication levels and empathetic tendencies of school directors may differ according to having any problems in human relations.

Table 4: Kruskal Wallis Test Results of Communication skills and En	inathetic Tendency Level of School Directors According to Branch
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							Meaningful
	Branch	n	Row Ave.	sd	$X^2$	p	Difference
Communication skills	Class Teacher	98	78.29	2	.408	.816	
Empathetic Tendency	Numeric	18	71.11	2			
	Social	37	76.46				
	Total	153					
Communication skills	Class Teachers	98	75.77	2	.658	.720	
	Numeric	18	84.92	2			
	Social	37	76.41				
	Total	153					

Table 5: Kruskal Wallis Test Results of Communication skills and Empathetic Tendency Level of School Directors According to Seniority

							Meaningful
	Seniority	n	Row Ave.	sd	$X^2$	p	Difference
Communication skills	8 years or below	46	80.04	2	.672	.715	
Empathetic Tendency	9-13 years	61	77.92	2			
	Above 14 years	46	72.74				
	Total	153					
Communication skills	8 years or below	46	80.52	2	2.307	.316	
	9-13 years	61	70,38	2			
	Above 14 years	46	82,26				
	Total	153					

Tablo 6: Mann Whitney U Test Results of Communications Skills and Empathetic Tendency Levels of School Directors according to having any problems in Human Relations

Communication Skills	Human Relations	n	Row Averages	Row Total	U	p
Communication						
Skills	Yes	41	75.05	3077.00		
p>0.05	No	112	77.71	8704.00	2216.00	.741
Empathetic	Yes	41	66.21	2714.00		
Tendency	No	112	80.95	9066.00	3077.00	.068
p>0.05						

Table 7: Spearman's Correlational Values of Communication Skills and Empathetic Tendencies of School Directors

Variables	Empathetic Tendency	
Communication		
Skills	.551	

P < 0.01

Table 8: Regression Analysis Results about Directors' Communications Skills' Prediction of Empathetic Tendencies

Predicting Variable	Predicted Variable; Empathetic Tendency							
	В	ShB	β	T	P	r		
Stable	16.862	7.373		2.287	.024			
Directors' Communication Skills	.536	.066	.551	8.114	.000	.551		
R = 0.551	$R^2=0.304$							
F=65.833	P=.000							

According to the variable, having problems in human relations, as a result of Mann Whitney test for the evaluation of any possible difference between communication skills and empathetic tendencies of school directors, the average for the communication skills is (U=7130.00, p>0.05) and for empathetic tendency (U=7130.00, p>0.05). There are no meaningful differences according to the branches of school directors. Row averages of empathetic tendencies and communication skills is (SO=75.05) for the ones having problems in human relations and (SO=66.21) for the ones having problems in empathetic tendencies and there are no meaningful differences.

The Relation Between Communication Skills and Empthetic Tendency.

Spearman's Correlational Analysis is carried out in order to determine the relation between communication levels and empathetic tendencies of school directors.

Looking at the communication skills and empathetic tendencies of school directors, a middle positive relation [r=.551 p>0.01] is seen. As a result, as communication skills of school directors increase, so do empathetic tendencies.

According to the data in Table 8, directors' communication skills are predictive of empathetic

tendencies (R=0.551, R<sup>2</sup>=0.304, p<.00). Directors' communication skills explain 30 percent of empathetic tendencies.

# DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Results of the study reveal that school directors' empathetic tendencies and communication skills are high. School directors especially express themselves better in communication skills than in empathetic tendencies. Evaluating the communication skills of school directors, there are not many differences in points in terms of branch and class teachers (x=111.44) have better points than social field teachers ( $\bar{x}=111.44$ ), numeric fields ( $\bar{x}=109.72$ ). For the seniority, 9-13 years school directors have higher points in communication skills. For the question "Do you have difficulty in human relations?", school directors, saying "No" have higher points in communication skills. McAllister and Irvine [40] define empathetic people as the ones who can look through other cultures and people with others' perspectives. In this sense, that the school directors' empathetic tendency average is high can be accepted as a positive value for management of schools meaningfully. However, while the school directors are evaluating themselves about communication skills, they put their points higher than empathetic tendencies. This shows that level of school directors' communication skills is high but they don't regard themselves enough for empathetic behaviors. This result shows that showing empathetic behaviors require a special effort and proficiency. Empathetic behaviors require explicitness. Explicitness affects the quality communication and human relations positively. School directors' explicitness affects the communication of other teachers. McAllister and Irvine [40] regard empathetic behaviors as a tool affecting the success of teachers and students. School directors' empathetic behaviors and communication skills may increase the coordinative study of teachers. It is seen that school directors' communication skills have high and similar averages in terms of branch, seniority and the question "Do you have difficulty in human relations?". In a research carried out by Özerbeş, Bulut and Usta [41], there is not a meaningful difference among the students in different departments.

Also as a result of this study, that school directors are from different branches doesn't reveal a meaningful difference in their views. Generally, a high level of communication skills is seen in all branches. In a research by Baykara Pehlivan [28], communication skills perception of teacher candidates is high. In a research by Keçeci and Taşocak [42], lecturers define themselves in a high level in proficiency. In another research by Özan Boydak [43], in the views of school directors, they grade themselves higher than teachers. Between directors' self – evaluation of communication skills perception and teachers evaluation of school directors, there is a meaningful different view. In Çınar's research [44], according to teachers' views, the efficacy of school directors' in communication process is positive. There is not a meaningful difference in empathetic tendencies of school directors in terms of branch, seniority and the question "Do you have any difficulty in human relations?". In a research by Keçeci and Taşocak [42] for lecturers' communication skills, the empathy, the sub – dimension, gets the lowest point. That communication proficiency is high while empathy is low shows similarity with the results of this study. Like lecturers, school directors grade themselves higher in communication skills than empathetic tendencies. In the research by Pala [20], empathy grades of teacher candidates are above average (3,5 out of 5). It is seen that grades of empathetic tendency is on and above average and the grades are fall behind grades of communication skills. In a research by McAllister and Irvine [40] about cultural diversity and

empathy, they found out that empathetic teachers have a positive effect on students' academic achievement. In the relation between school directors and teachers, similar inferences may be done.

A positive and medium relation is seen in school communication skills and empathetic tendencies. Communication skill is a variable predicting empathetic tendencies. In these regards, communication skills explain 30 percent of empathetic tendencies. Bozkurt Bulut [45] found a parallel relation between teachers' professional skills and their communication skills. Sahin [46] found that communication skills of school directors and their management skills have a positive relation. According to Taşçı and Eroğlu [47], the relation of communication skill and feedback quality of directors may be realized only if director has a healthy and effective communication skill. Communication skills may be accepted as an important factor in managing their organizations in accordance with their aims. That there is a relation between empathetic tendencies and sufficient communication skill and as communication increases, so do empathetic tendencies, may be accepted as an important finding for this study. According to Miller and Vallis [32], communication skills among individuals can be accepted as an important factor in increasing empathy. In the research by Doğuş [48], it is understood that school directors misunderstood empathy and they didn't have any conceptual knowledge about empathy.

According to the results of this study, the highness of communication skills of school directors, the relation between communication skills and empathetic tendencies may reveal that school directors should apply communication training to all staff in their school. For this reason, school managements can apply the training of communication skills and empathetic tendency to their schools.

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