

# Trust Me, Principal, or Burn Out! The Relationship Between Principals' Burnout and Trust in Students and Parents

Niyazi Ozer

Inonu University, Malatya-Turkey

*The purpose of this study was to determine the primary school principals' views on trust in students and parents. It was also aimed to explore the relationships between principals' levels of professional burnout and their trust in students and parents. To this end, Principal Trust Survey and Friedman Principal Burnout scales were administered on 119 primary school principals (F=7, M=112) working in Malatya, a city located in the eastern part of Turkey. Results suggested that principals' views on trust in students differed significantly in terms of school size. It was also revealed that principals working in small schools had the lowest scores of burnout, while principals working in big schools had the highest. Contrary to the burnout scores, principals working in small schools had the highest scores of trust in students while principals working in big schools had the lowest. Results also showed that principals' trust in parents and students accounted for approximately 21% of the total variance in exhaustion, 22% of the total variance in depersonalization, and 6% of the total variance in accomplishment.*

*L'objectif de cette étude était de connaître la perception qu'ont les directeurs d'écoles primaires de la confiance en les élèves et les parents. L'étude visait également le rapport entre les niveaux d'épuisement professionnel des directeurs et la confiance de ceux-ci en les élèves et les parents. À 119 directeurs d'écoles primaires (F=7, M=112) travaillant à Malatya, une ville dans l'est de la Turquie, nous avons fait passer un sondage portant sur la confiance chez les directeurs (Principal Trust Survey) et avons administré les échelles d'épuisement professionnel de Friedman. Les résultats suggèrent que les perceptions des directeurs quant à la confiance en les élèves diffèrent de façon significative selon la taille de l'école. Les directeurs des plus petites écoles avaient les taux les plus bas d'épuisement professionnel alors que ceux des plus grandes écoles affichaient les taux les plus élevés. Contrairement aux taux d'épuisement, la confiance des directeurs envers les élèves était la plus élevée chez ceux des petites écoles et la plus basse chez ceux des grandes écoles. Les données ont également démontré que la confiance des directeurs en les parents et les élèves représentait 21% de la variance totale de l'épuisement, 22% de la variance totale de la dépersonnalisation et 6% de la variance totale du rendement.*

There has always been interest in trust, if not in theory, then in practice. The practice of human relations shows us that the making and breaking of trust is a perennial theme (Nooteboom, 2002) in all spheres of life including social, political, and economic issues. Trust, as a social phenomenon affecting individual and organizational behavior (Dietz, Gillespie, & Chao, 2010), has been widely investigated in various disciplines. Organizational theorists, sociologists,

behavioral psychologists, and educators claim that trust is important in social transactions and working relationships (Adams, Forsyth, & Mitchell, 2009). Although the importance of trust is emphasized broadly in terms of organizational and human behavior (e.g. Dietz, Gillespie, & Chao, 2010; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Hosmer, 1995; Kramer & Tyler, 1996), there is still no agreement regarding the definitions, analyses, and dimensions of the trust (Nooteboom, 2002).

Trust is a complex concept with a variety of facets or dimensions, and consequently it is difficult to define (Tschannen-Moran, 2000). Trust varies with the expectations held in different kinds of relationships and changes over the course of a relationship (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). According to Gambetta (1988, as cited in Zayim, 2010), trust is an abstract concept that is highly evocative and as highly elusive as concepts of freedom, justice, knowledge, power, prosperity, solidarity, or truth. Trust is used in reference to the weather, railroad schedules, cars, and animals, as well as in relation to human beings (Deutsch, 1958). More generally, trust can be regarded as a way of reducing uncertainty and having confidence that our expectations of others will be met (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). In this regard, trust is something associated with dependence and risk, or where the trustor depends on the trustee and/or object of trust (Nooteboom & Six, 2003). According to Luhmann (1979), trust represents someone's faith in an opponent's behavior that one will always be fair, ethical, and predictable. In management literature, trust is also defined as "a remarkably efficient lubricant" that reduces the complexities of organizational life and facilitates transactions far more quickly and economically than other means of managing (Powell, 1990, p. 305). Baier (1986, p. 234) uses the metaphor *air* to describe the trust-distrust contradiction, stating that, "most of us notice . . . trust most easily after its sudden demise. . . We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted."

Although there have been a wide variety of definitions of trust, the five faces of trust model introduced by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) took into account key elements of trust gleaned from the literature on trust, particularly in relation to schools. They defined trust as an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open. Defining trust as the reliance on others' competence and willingness to look after the other, Baier (1986, p. 236) stated that we typically do care about and value things that we cannot singlehandedly either create or sustain. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) asserted that these valued things could be tangible, such as money or children, or intangible, such as ideals of democracy, norms on respect, and tolerance. Considering the fact that schools form our children's attitudes, values, and dispositions and contribute to the kind of society we are and will become (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), trust is a vital issue in the study of schools (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

## **Trust in Schools**

Trust has a vital role in securing sustainable relations among disparate parties, especially in ambiguous situations characterized by uncertainty (Dietz, Gillespie, & Chao, 2010). It allows individuals and collectives to manage interdependence more easily by reducing the need for contracts and formal agreements (Mishra & Mishra, 2013). We live in a complex and fast-changing society (Hargreaves, 2002), where change and transition have become commonplace in all organizations. Therefore, it can be asserted that in an environment like this, collaboration is needed like never before (Reina & Reina, 2006). Fukuyama (1995) points out that people who trust each other can adapt easily to new conditions and create appropriate new organizational

forms. It is also stated that without trust, there cannot be optimal or effective levels of cooperation between people, teams, departments, or divisions (Ceyanes & Slater, 2005). In sum, there appears to be a general consensus among scholars from different disciplines that in ambiguous and changing situations, trust has a number of important benefits for organizations, at both individual and collective levels (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Kramer, 1999). In this respect, trust can be regarded as an essential element for maintaining cohesive relationships and fostering effective cooperation.

Today, more than ever before, if schools are to be responsive, effective, and productive, then (like other organizations) schools must be cooperative, cohesive, and well-managed (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). For schools to be effective in the restructuring process and to sustain new reform initiatives, trust must exist among all stakeholders (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). As Meier (2004) stated, no form of curriculum or teaching method can succeed where trust has never existed. Bryk and Schneider (2002) identified that a high level of trust is an essential predictor of a school's abilities to improve test scores and provide a positive school environment. Trust and collaboration have an important role in school interactions. Administrators, teachers, staff, students, and parents engage more effectively through the virtues of mutual trust. When school professionals trust one another and sense support from parents, they feel safe and facilitate better learning practices. Similarly, relational trust fosters the necessary social exchanges among school professionals as they learn from one another (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Blase and Blase (1997) suggested that effective facilitative school principals promote teachers' work through the use of both tangible strategies such as funds, time, materials and intangible strategies like autonomy, respect, and trust. In this regard, establishing a trusting and collaborative climate can be regarded as a fundamental ingredient and/or necessity for the well-functioning of schools.

School principals have a particular responsibility for developing and sustaining trust among all members of the school community (Day, 2009). Principals establish both respect and personal regard when they acknowledge the vulnerabilities of others, actively listen to their concerns, and avoid arbitrary actions (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Bryk and Schneider (2003) and Lazar (2011) stated that school administrators have to develop a trust relationship with the parents. However, it shouldn't be limited to the parents; it should also include the students. Lack of trust between school professionals and parents makes it difficult for these groups to maintain a genuine dialogue about shared concerns (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Research has shown that establishing an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect among those in the school community was correlated with higher student performance, lower teacher burnout, increased collaboration, open professional relationships, engagement in organizational citizenship behaviors and teachers' employment decisions, and overall school improvement efforts and a healthy school climate (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; 2003; Ceyanes, 2004; Ceyanes & Slater, 2005; Hoy, 1996; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Reeves, Emerick, & Hirsch, 2007; Tarter, Sabo, & Hoy, 1995; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Therefore, building trusting relationships among teachers, school leaders, students, and parents is essential in order to advance the academic mission of a school (Meier, 1995). There are, however, times when it is a difficult job for school principals to promote trusting relationships in schools. As Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000, p. 550) stated, "trust seems ever more difficult to achieve and maintain." When trust is absent from the school setting, principals may experience some level of stress and burnout.

## **Burnout and School Principal**

Burnout is a global phenomenon creeping into every corner of the modern workplace (Leiter & Maslach, 2005) and has the potential to negatively affect the individual's psychological and physical health, as well as an organization's effectiveness (Carod-Artal & Vázquez-Cabrera, 2013). Due to negative effects on health and both personal and professional life, many scholars from different disciplines have tried to explore the concept of burnout. Burnout is a metaphor that is commonly used to describe a state or process of mental exhaustion, similar to that of smothering a fire or extinguishing a candle (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003). Psychiatrist Freudenberger (1975) introduced the term burnout to define the emotional wear out and lack of motivation and commitment that gradually appeared among volunteers who worked together in non-profit health service. According to Leiter and Maslach (2005), burnout is a chronic state of being out of sync and has common symptoms such as losing energy, enthusiasm, and confidence. To Maslach and Jackson (1986, p. 1), "burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment." Directly associated with stress and depression (Friedman, 2002), burnout is defined as a state of disappointment or weariness as a result of a life style or relationship not yielding the expected results (Pierucci, 1985). In sum, burnout can be defined as an extreme form of role-specific alienation, high levels of emotional exhaustion and feelings of depersonalization, low feelings of personal accomplishment, and the presence of strain-making stressors that can overwhelm coping capabilities (as cited in Whitaker, 1996).

Researchers from different disciplines have studied some organizational, professional (job- or role-related), and personal factors such as workload, role conflict, role ambiguity, job expectations, relations with co-workers/supervisors, gender, age, professional seniority, and marital status in order to trace the antecedents of burnout (see reviews by Friedman, 2002; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Nuallaong, 2013; Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003; Schaufeli & Enzman, 1998). Although there is no consensus between research results, it can be asserted that anxiety, neuroticism, and lack of hardiness are the most prominent personality characteristics correlated with burnout, while workload, time pressure, and role conflict seem to be the most important possible causes for burnout (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003). There are a number of symptoms of burnout mentioned in the literature and, in a broader sense, symptoms of burnout can be grouped into five major categories (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Kahill, 1988):

- physical (fatigue, exhaustion, sleep difficulties);
- emotional (emotional depletion, anxiety, depression);
- behavioral (absenteeism, alcohol and drug use);
- interpersonal (communicates with clients in impersonal, stereotyped ways); and
- attitudinal (demonstrates cynicism, callousness, pessimism, defensiveness, intolerance of clients).

Although researchers differ on the definition, causes, and symptoms of burnout, there is a consensus that burnout is experienced more among individuals who do *people-work* of some kind (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993). It was reported that professionals, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, and managers, who experience a good deal of interpersonal relationships, suffer from burnout (Friedman, 1995a; 1995b; 2002; Maslach &

Jackson, 1981; 1986). What is special about their work is that in addition to their professional technical abilities, they also have to use their own social skills, attitudes, and personality characteristics (Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993). Therefore, in addition to personal or organizational sources of stress, professionals may suffer from burnout induced by problems related to interpersonal interactions. School principals are likely to suffer from burnout because of the complex nature of the profession, which demands both technical and social skills while managing the school, staff, parents, and instruction.

Due to its nature, the educational system is dynamic and principals need to cope with complex tasks and relations that are often subject to change (as cited in Federici & Skaalvik, 2012) and socio-economic, political, and technological transformations. Today, the roles of the principals have become fairly complex and it is inevitable that principals will struggle more compared to the past and, therefore, will need to acquire leadership competencies (Gümüşeli, 2001). Principals also face increasing demands and pressures from a variety of sources while trying to meet the sometimes conflicting expectations of different stakeholders (Pierucci, 1985). Principals not only deal with school staff, students, and parents during a school day (Friedman, 1995b), but they also have to meet the expectations of politicians, media press, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), et cetera (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012).

Previous research (e.g., Friedman, 2002; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Koch, Tung, Gmelch, & Swent, 1982; Whitaker, 1996) suggests that principals experience problems in their interaction and communication with teachers, students, parents, central and regional executives, supervisors, and representatives of both state and private sectors. It is a challenging job for principals to meet these varied and often conflicting demands (Friedman, 2002). In most cases, aspiring and practicing principals are frequently ill-prepared and inadequately supported to take on the challenging work of instructional leadership (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). Findings confirm that principals experience some difficulties and stress in response to these challenging issues, which, in turn, lead them to suffer from burnout. For instance, Borg and Riding (1993), conducted a study of primary and secondary school administrators in Malta, and identified four major stress factors for school administrators: lack of support and resolving conflicts; inadequate resources; workload; and work conditions and responsibilities. Likewise, Friedman (2002), found that stressors stemming from parents, teachers, overload, and school support staff were the four main dominant sources for principal burnout.

### **School Size as a Factor Affecting Principals' Trust and Burnout**

Relevant studies that aimed to explore school-related variables affecting principals' trust and burnout emphasized the importance of factors such as socio-economic status (SES), race, and school size (Goddard, Salloum, & Berebitsky, 2009). The issue of school size has received much attention in theoretical and popular papers about education, as well as in reports (Lee & Smith, 1997). Although empirical research findings lack consensus, many findings show positive outcomes of small school size which include positive teacher attitudes towards instruction, positive student behaviors, higher rates of student and teacher attendance, parental involvement, and participation in extracurricular activities, and higher student achievement (i.e., Cotton, 1996; 2001; Lee & Loeb, 2000; Pittman & Haughwout, 1987; Raywid, 1999; Wasley & Lear, 2001). Small school size provides the opportunities for autonomy, collaboration, and relationships that are necessary to create new ways of designing and restructuring both the

learning process and the organizational practices and policies (Benitez, Davidson, Flaxman, & Sizer, 2009). Thus, small schools may be friendlier institutions, capable of involving staff and students psychologically in their educational purposes (Fowler & Walberg, 1991). On the other hand, larger schools tend to have fewer interactions between staff and students and more bureaucratic relations across the organization, which leads to poor student academic performance, high drop-out rates, weak student and staff engagement, and high levels of staff burnout (Bryk & Schenieder, 2003). As schools grow larger, the professional and personal interactions among school staff tend to weaken; the relationships between teachers and students become more difficult as well (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2009).

### **Purpose of the Research**

When principals, teachers, students, and parents trust each other and work together cooperatively, a warm and positive school climate is likely to occur (Tschannen-Moran, 2004), which may prevent principals from experiencing burnout. In this regard, it was assumed that principals' sense of burnout may be associated with their trust in parents and students. In this context, the primary purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the primary school principals' views on trust in students and parents and principals' level of professional burnout. This study also aimed to explore the relationships between principals' burnout and their trust in students and parents. This study intentionally aimed to explore principals' burnout and trust in terms of school size, which was a distinctive variable affecting the relationships in a school as well as the climate and culture of a school.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

The participants of the study comprised a total of 119 (F = 7, M = 112) primary school principals who attended an in-service training program arranged jointly by Inonu University Faculty of Education and TED Malatya College from 3-5 May, 2009. Although sampling seems convenient in nature, the main purpose was to have access to all of the local principals. As the attendance to the in-service training program was high (130 principals from 148 local schools), the sample (N = 119) can be considered representative of the general demographic of local principals in Turkey. In terms of professional seniority, 37.8% of participating principals reported working as a principal for less than 10 years, 33.6% reported 11-20 years of experience and the remaining 28.6% reported working more than 21 years. Approximately three fourths of participating principals (76.5%) reported having a graduate degree and one quarter (23.5%) reported having an associate degree. The female principals were underrepresented in the study. In Turkey, the number of female school principals is extremely low; about 9% of all school principals and 11% of the vice-principals are female (as cited in Babaoglan & Litchka, 2010). Generally, Turkish women do not desire administrative positions with long work hours or difficult working conditions (Celikten, 2005).

### **Principal Trust Scale**

Principals' views on trust in students and trust in parents were measured by an adapted version

of the Principal Trust Scale (PTS) originally developed by Gareis and Tschannen-Moran (2004). The original PTS included 20 items in three subscales that measured principals' trust in teachers as well as trust in students and trust in parents. Nine of the items assessed principals' trust in teachers, six assessed principals' trust in students, and five assessed principals' trust in parents. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was done by the researcher. When adapting the original scale, the 20 items were translated into Turkish using a two-way translation method, first English to Turkish, then Turkish to English. Next, the adapted PTS was forwarded to two experts of English and two experts of Turkish languages working at İnönü University, Faculty of Education for evaluation. Following the modifications in line with the experts' reviews, the adapted PTS was given to three principals working in Malatya to test the clarity of the items.

As a result, the final form of the scale was ready for the construct validity and reliability studies. In order to determine the factor structure of the scale, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the data gathered. Prior to performing EFA, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett tests were performed to test the sampling adequacy of the data for factor analysis. KMO's measure of sampling adequacy was .88, which exceeded the recommended value of .60, and Bartlett's test of sphericity (1784.949,  $p = .000$ ) fulfilled the statistical significance, indicating the factorability of the correlation matrix (Pallant, 2011).

All 20 items in the scale were subjected to a principal components analysis (PCA). After the first factor analysis, three salient factors were obtained (consistent with the original PTS). Five items (8, 9, 10, 13, and 17) were discarded from the scale due to inconsistent or low factor loadings. After these items were discarded, the analysis was repeated, which yielded a three-factor structure with 15 items, each factor containing five items. This three-factor solution accounted for 70.28% of the total variance, with trust in teachers 24.07%, trust in students 24.63%, and trust in parents 21.58% respectively. The factor loadings ranged between .584 and .881 for *trust in parents*; .644 and .809 for *trust in teachers*; and .612 and .867 for *trust in students*.

In sum, EFA analysis results revealed that all items loaded convincingly on the intended factors. Internal consistency coefficients were .87 for *trust in parents* and *trust in teachers*; .89 for *trust in students*; and .93 for *total*. In Gareis and Tschannen-Moran's (2004) study estimated reliability coefficients were .87 for *principals' trust in teachers*; .87 for *principals' trust in students*; and .86 for *principals' trust in parents*. There seemed to be a remarkable similarity between reliability values of the adapted scale and those of the original scale. The Turkish version of the instrument (PTS-T) consisted of 15 items, arranged on a five-point Likert scale with the indices ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Sample items included: *Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments; I believe in my teachers; and Most students in this school are honest*. See the Appendix for the factor loadings, item-total correlations, and mean values of the items. For research purposes, only principals' trust in student and trust in parents subscales of the PTS-T were used in this study.

### **Friedman School Principal Burnout Scale**

Principals' sense of burnout was measured by the Friedman School Principal Burnout Scale originally developed by Friedman (1995a) and adapted in Turkish by Donmez and Guven (2001). The Turkish adaptation of the burnout scale consisted of 22 items in three different subscales: *exhaustion*, *depersonalization*, and *personal accomplishment*. The *exhaustion* subscale contained nine items measuring mental, cognitive, and physical fatigue experienced by

school principals. Sample items in this scale included: *I feel tired of running the school to the extent that I wish to quit*; and *I feel emotionally worn out by running the school*. The items in the *depersonalization* subscale indicated any shifts in the principal's previous levels of enthusiasm/involvement as a leader and distinct withdrawals or aloofness. Friedman (1995b) had originally labeled this scale as *Aloofness*. However, in the light of other research regarding the definition of burnout as aloofness, Friedman changed the name of this scale to *depersonalization* but kept the items within this scale unchanged (Friedman, 1997). Sample items in this scale included: *I feel that my relations with teachers and students are more impersonal than they used to be*; and *I am less supportive and appreciative of teachers at my school*. Seven items in the *personal accomplishment* scale measured the principal's sense of professional accomplishment and proper functioning as the school leader. Sample items in this scale included: *I find time to encourage teachers having difficulties and to assist them in solving problems*; and *During a day's work I find the peace and quiet to think and plan future activities*. High mean scores on the *exhaustion* and *depersonalization* subscales and low mean scores on the *personal accomplishment* subscale indicated a high degree of principal burnout. In order to obtain total scores, as well as compare scores from the burnout subscales, items in the *personal accomplishment* subscale were reverse coded.

### **Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data obtained from participating principals, the descriptive statistics of the mean scores from principals' trust in parents and trust in students and dimensions of principal burnout scale were calculated. Zero-Order correlation coefficients between dimensions of principal burnout and principals' trust in students and trust in parents were estimated. In order to find out whether the participating principals' trust in students and trust in parents differed significantly in terms of school size, ANOVA was administered. When significant differences were observed between groups, the difference was also tested for effect size using omega squared coefficient. Although a number of different estimates of effect sizes were available when using ANOVA (e.g. omega squared, epsilon squared, eta squared), eta squared seemed to be most frequently reported (Levine & Hullet, 2002), especially by researchers in education and psychology (Pierce, Block, & Auginis, 2004). Some researchers (i.e. Field, 2009; Pierce, Block, & Auginis, 2004; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), however, stated that this measure of effect size was slightly biased particularly when total sample size was small, since it was based purely on sums of squares from the sample and with no attempt to estimate proportion of systematic variance in the population. On average, eta square overestimated the variance in the population. Omega-squared and epsilon-squared, on the other hand, were unbiased estimates and thus reported when estimating the population strength of association. Therefore, omega square was used in this study to determine the association between school size and dependent variables. Also multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine whether the trust in students and trust in parents variables significantly predicted dimensions of principal burnout. The predictions of burnout dimensions by principals' trust in parents and trust in students variables were estimated using three separate multiple regression analyses. Exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment served as dependent variables and principals' trust in parents and trust in students served as the independent (predictor) variables.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Research Variables (N=119)*

Scales	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4
1. Exhaustion	25.27	4.79	.79				
2. Depersonalization	15.05	4.77	.83	.611**			
3. Personal Accomplishment	12.73	3.69	.68	.155	.373**		
4. Trust in Parents	16.51	4.53	.89	-.373**	-.333**	-.073	
5. Trust in Students	19.39	3.97	.87	-.463*	-.485**	-.240**	.686**

\*\*p &lt; .01, \*p &lt; .05

### Findings and Results

Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed for each of the burnout and trust scales, and a correlation matrix was calculated. Table 1 presents the estimated mean scores, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients among research variables.

Table 1 shows that participating principals had a mean score of 25.27 (SD = 4.79) in exhaustion, 15.05 (SD = 4.77) in depersonalization, and 12.73 (SD = 3.69) in personal accomplishment. Given the mean scores, the dimensions of principal burnout showed that when compared to other subscales, principals had higher scores in exhaustion, indicating that principals experienced mental, cognitive, and physical fatigue. Considering the trust dimensions, results revealed that while principals had a mean score of 16.51 (SD = 4.53) in trust in parents and 19.39 (SD = 3.97) in trust in students. These results implied that compared to the parents, participating principals trusted their students more than they trusted their parents. The correlation matrix revealed a complex pattern of positive and negative relationships between the research variables. While the correlation between burnout dimensions ranged between .373 and .611, a positive and medium correlation ( $r = .686$ ,  $p = .000$ ) was found between trust in students and trust in parents. The zero-order correlations between principals' trust and burnout dimensions showed that three burnout dimensions were significantly correlated with principals' trust but there was no correlation between personal accomplishment and trust in parents. Exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were negatively correlated with trust in parents and trust in students (correlations ranged from  $r = .240$  to  $r = .485$ ).

### Principals' Trust in Parents and Trust in Students by School Size

One purpose of this study was to investigate whether there would be a significant difference between principals' trust in parents and trust in students and the principal's sense of professional burnout by school size. To this end schools were grouped under three categories: schools with an enrollment rate less than 500, between 500-1,000, and above 1,000. The one-way ANOVA test was used to compare the difference between these groups. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Analysis of Principals' Trust in Parents and Trust in Students by Student Population*

Scale	School Size	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	F	Post-hoc (Scheffe)	$\omega^2$
Burnout	1) Below 500	54	49.40	9.72	2	11.891**	1-3	0.15
	2) 500-1,000	32	52.53	9.84	116		2-3	
	3) Above 1,000	33	59.57	8.60	118			
	Total	119	53.06	10.30				
Trust in Parents	1) Below 500	54	16.59	5.26	2	.536		
	2) 500-1,000	32	17.03	4.31	116			
	3) Above 1,000	33	15.87	3.35	118			
	Total	119	16.51	4.53				
Trust in Students	1) Below 500	54	20.57	3.55	2	10.690**	1-3	0.14
	2) 500-1,000	32	19.96	3.24	116		2-3	
	3) Above 1,000	33	16.90	4.23	118			
	Total	119	19.39	3.97				

\*p < .01

Given the school size, results showed that participating principals' mean scores on burnout differed significantly ( $F_{2-118} = 11.891$ ,  $p = .00$ ). Considering the mean scores, findings revealed that principals working in small schools (below 500 students) had the lowest levels of burnout, while principals working in big schools (above 1,000 students) had the highest levels of burnout. In addition, an estimate of effect size was obtained by computing omega squared. The computed value of omega squared ( $\omega^2 = .15$ ) showed that school size accounted for 15% of the variance in principal burnout. Considering the trust scales, it was revealed that while principals' mean scores of trust in students differed significantly ( $F_{2-118} = 10.690$ ,  $p = .00$ ), trust in parents did not differ ( $F_{2-118} = .537$ ,  $p = .58$ ). It was revealed that, contrary to the burnout, principals working in small schools (below 500 students) had the highest scores from the trust in students subscale, while principals working in big schools (above 1,000 students) had the lowest scores. The computed value of omega squared ( $\omega^2 = .14$ ) showed that school size accounted for 14% of the variance in principals' trust in students.

**Prediction of Principal Burnout by Principals' Trust in Parents and Trust in Students**

The predictions of school principals' burnout by principals' trust in parents and trust in students' variables were estimated using three separate multiple regression analyses. Results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 shows the unstandardized ( $B$ ) and standardized ( $\beta$ ) regression coefficients, the standard error for  $B$  and  $\beta$ ,  $t$  and the semi-partial correlations ( $sr^2$ ), and  $R$  and adjusted  $R^2$ . Semi-partial correlation ( $sr^2$ ) for a variable serves as an indication of the variable's importance in predicting the dependent variable (Allen & Bennett, 2008). The independent variables in the regression equations significantly predicted the principal burnout,  $F_{2-118} = 16.356$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $F_{2-118}$

Table 3

*Results of Multiple Regression Analyses on Prediction of Principal Burnout*

Variable	R	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	sr <sup>2</sup>
Dependent Variable							
Exhaustion	.469	.207					
Predictor Variables							
Trust in parents			.112	.119	.106	.936	.08
Trust in students			-.471	.136	-.390	-3.460**	.28
Dependent Variable							
Depersonalization	.485	.222					
Predictor Variables							
Trust in parents			-.001	.117	.001	.010	.00
Trust in students			-.581	.134	.484	-4.333**	.35
Dependent Variable							
Personal Accomplishment	.271	.057					
Predictor Variables							
Trust in parents			.141	.100	.173	1.406	.13
Trust in students			.334	.115	.358	2.916**	.26

= 17.807,  $p < .01$ ; and  $F_{2-118} = 4.589$ ,  $p < .01$ , for exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment respectively. Results showed that among the predictor variables, principals' trust in students was most salient in predicting burnout dimensions, and its greatest contribution was in predicting depersonalization ( $\beta = .48$ ;  $sr^2 = .35$ ). The predictive variables altogether accounted for approximately 21% of the total variance in exhaustion, 22% of the total variance in depersonalization, and 6% of the total variance in personal accomplishment.

### Discussion

There is much evidence supporting the notion that an open and healthy school climate based on trusting relationships among all stakeholders shapes much of a school's day to day functioning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Trust, an essential element for organizational health, may function as a lubricant and/or a glue to facilitate or strengthen the relationships within organizations (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Trusting relationships within a school setting have been linked to increased readiness and collaboration among the faculty regarding reform efforts, greater openness to implementation of new instructional methods among teachers, increased parental involvement and support, and increased academic productivity in a school (e.g., Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Kochanek, 2005; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012). In general, it can be stated that trust supports the work of educators and their efforts regarding school effectiveness and improvement (Van Maele, Van Houtte, & Forsyth, 2014). School effectiveness is closely tied with cooperation, collaboration, and positive social relationships (Mitchell & Forsyth, 2004). Trust, on the other hand, seems to provide a foundation for this cooperation and collaboration. Thus,

without trusting relationships, the organization's effectiveness and efficiency is severely hampered (Smith, Hoy, & Sweetland, 2001). A high level of trust improves effectiveness, has consequences for academic outcomes, and significantly effects collaboration among all the parties within schools.

In this regard, it may be concluded that trust is an essential element and a vital resource for sustaining and enhancing school effectiveness. Trust-building is essential for the success of schools and students, and, in a sense, it is a *bridge* between the school and its members, and it has interactions with other organizational aspects such as school culture, school climate, staff's burnout, and commitment. That is why this study aimed to determine the primary school principals' views on trust in students and parents and their level of burnout to draw attention to two important concepts in schools: *principals' burnout* and *trust*. This study also aimed to determine the relationships between principals' levels of professional burnout and their trust in students and parents. Results from the descriptive analyses showed that, compared with the other subscales of burnout, principals' scores were higher in the exhaustion subscale, showing mental, cognitive, and physical fatigue experienced by school principals. These results suggest that depersonalization and decreased personal accomplishment were not significant problems as reported by the majority of school principals in the sample. This is consistent with the findings of Whitaker (1996) who found that most of the participating principals were satisfied with their interpersonal relationships with students, teachers, and parents, and suggested that depersonalization within the work environment was not a major concern. Also, Flynn (2000) and Gramling-Vasquez (2009) investigated South Carolina's school principals' burnout, and found that principals experienced low levels of burnout in the personal accomplishment subscale, even though participating principals had moderate levels of burnout in the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales.

Results of the study reported here also suggest that participating principals trust in students more than they trust in parents. Apparently, participating principals differentiate their trust between parents and students. Principals do not have the same relationships with parents as teachers do. To promote students success, parents and teachers, as equal partners, share joint responsibilities and rights and jointly contribute to the improvement of the child's education (Vosler-Hunter, 1989, p. 15). On the contrary, principals do not have much direct contact with parents. So the relationships they form with parents may not be as closely connected as the relationships with students. To sum up, principals may find it hard to develop and sustain a direct positive engagement with all parents (Bryk & Schneider, 2003) as principals spend more time interacting with students throughout any given school day.

Considering the school size, study results revealed that participating principals working in small schools trust in students more than the principals working in big schools. Interestingly, principals' trust in parents did not differ in terms of school size. It was also found that principals' who worked in big schools experienced higher levels of burnout. These findings highlight the importance of school size in terms of professional burnout and principals' trust in students. The issue of school size has received much attention in theoretical and popular writings about education, as well as in reports (Lee & Smith, 1997).

Although previous empirical research findings were not consistent, some research results (i.e., Cotton, 1996; 2001; Lee & Loeb, 2000; Pittman & Haughwout, 1987; Raywid, 1999; Wasley & Lear, 2001) revealed that small school size provided the opportunities for autonomy, collaboration, and relationships that were necessary to create new ways of designing and restructuring both the learning process and the school's organizational practices and policies

(Benitez, Davidson, & Flaxman, 2009). Thus, small schools might be friendlier institutions, capable of involving staff and students psychologically in their educational purposes (Fowler & Walberg, 1991). On the other hand, larger schools tended to have fewer interactions between staff and students and more bureaucratic relationships across the organization that lead to poor student academic performance, high dropout rates, weak student and staff engagement, and high workload leading to high staff burnout (Bryk & Schenieder, 2003). In this regard, large school size may correlate to higher workload levels for the principals, as well as weaken interpersonal communication with all school stakeholders including parents and students. Workload and time pressure are strongly and consistently related to burnout, particularly regarding exhaustion (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Lieter, 2001).

One of the purposes of this research was to determine the relationships between principals' trust in parents and trust in students and professional burnout. To this end, three separate multiple regression analyses were carried out. Results showed that trust in students and trust in parents variables in the regression equations significantly predicted the principals' exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Results also showed that among the predictor variables, principals' trust in students was the most salient in predicting burnout dimensions, and its greatest contribution was in predicting depersonalization ( $\beta = .48$ ;  $sr^2 = .35$ ). Trust in students and trust in parents altogether account for approximately 21% of the total variance in exhaustion, 22% of the total variance in depersonalization, and 6% of the total variance in personal accomplishment. In this regard, it can be asserted that trust in students was an important issue that may prevent principal burnout. Considering the negative effects of principal burnout on the principals' efforts to promote and sustain school effectiveness, it should be stated that warm and close relationships between students and principals should be established.

Trusting relationships are critical ingredients of all human learning and especially important in schools where learning is the primary mission or central focus (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). Educators and researchers need to understand more about the mechanisms that link trust and achievement in the context of principals who play a decisive and critical role in shaping school culture. If schools are to garner benefits of trusting relationships, then a good starting point would be to foster a trust-building environment through principals' leadership and relationships (Tschannen-Moran, 2011). Building and maintaining trusting relationships within a school setting play an important role in promoting school effectiveness and improvement. This study offers new insights into the importance of principals' trust in students and parents and its effect on principal burnout.

### **Limitations and Future Studies**

The current study does not necessarily demonstrate that a low degree of trust in students and parents leads to high burnout. It is possible that high levels of principal burnout may lead to, cause, or diminish the principal's trust in students and parents. This requires further investigation using qualitative or mixed method research designs. In this regard, future studies are needed to explore the possibility of causal relationships between principals' trust in students and parents and principals' burnout. Finally, in terms of the gender variable, female principals were underrepresented in the sample of the present study, even though this was representative of the current school principal demographic in Turkey. As Shakeshaft (1995) stated, even when women leaders were the research objects, their experiences were interpreted according to men's.

However, the distinct world of women brings about a diverse reality, and stands as an independent and equal one (Oplatka, 2002). Therefore, future studies may investigate the burnout and trust issue in terms of the views of female principals.

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Niyazi Ozer is working as an Assistant. Professor Doctor in the college of Education at Inonu University, Malatya-Turkey. His research interests are school leadership, organizational behavior in education (particularly organizational justice and trust) school improvement and technology in education. He is also interested in school safety and security.

### Appendix: Turkish Version of the Principal Trust Survey (PTS-T)

Items	Principal Trust in Parents	Principal Trust in Teachers	Principal Trust in Students	Item-Total Correlation
15. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments. [Velilerimiz üzerlerine düşen sorumlulukları yerine getirirler]	<b>.881</b>			
16. Most parents openly share information with the school. [Velilerimiz bildiklerini açıkça okulla paylaşırlar]	<b>.843</b>			
20. Most parents here have good parenting skills. [Velilerimizin çoğu çocuk yetiştirme konusunda başarılıdır]	<b>.713</b>			
14. Parents in this school have integrity. [Velilerimiz dürüştür]	<b>.662</b>	.362		
2. I can count on parents to support the school. [Velilerimizin okula her zaman destek olacaklarını bilirim]	<b>.584</b>	.333		
6. I believe in my teachers. [Öğretmenlerime inanırım]		<b>.809</b>		
4. I have faith in the integrity of my teachers. [Öğretmenlerimin dürüst olduğuna inanırım]	.305	<b>.806</b>		
18. I trust the teachers in this school. [Okulumuzdaki öğretmenlere güvenirim]	.341	<b>.726</b>		
1. Teachers in this school are candid with me. [Bu okuldaki öğretmenler bana karşı açık sözlüdür]		<b>.724</b>	.308	
12. When teachers in this school tell you something, you can believe it. [Bu okuldaki öğretmenlerin söylediklerine inanabilirsiniz]		<b>.644</b>		
7. Most students in this school are honest. [Bu okuldaki öğrencilerin çoğu dürüştür]			<b>.867</b>	
11. I trust the students in this school. [Bu okuldaki öğrencilere güven duyarım]			<b>.719</b>	
3. Students here really care about the school. [Bu okuldaki öğrenciler gerçekten okulu önemserler]			<b>.710</b>	
19. Students in this school are reliable. [Bu okuldaki öğrencilere güvenebilirsiniz]		.390	<b>.687</b>	
5. Students in this school can be counted on to do their work. [Bu okuldaki öğrencilere sorumluluklarını yerine getirme konusunda güvenilebilir]		.379	<b>.612</b>	
Eigen Values	3.695	3.610	3.237	<b>Total</b>
(%) Variance Explained	21.58	24.07	24.63	70.28
Cronbach Alpha Coefficients	.873	.871	.894	.934

Note. Factor loadings below .30 are not displayed in the table.