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Investigation of Employees' Sources of Stress According to Demographic Variables by Controlling Type A Personality Scores

Yasemin Yavuzer [1] , Rezzan Gündoğdu [2] , Seçkin Can Koyuncu [3]

Abstract

This study aimed to examine stress sources of officials and supervisors in the Ministry of Education's central administration in terms of gender, age, marital status, job position, length of service by controlling Type A Personality scores. The Stress Source Scale and The Type A Personality Scale tests were administered to 102 employees of the Ministry of Education's central administration. The data was analyzed by covariance analysis. Their scores for stress sources related to social factors, work and self-interpretation indicate they are inclined to develop illness, and their scores for stress sources related to physical environment indicate that the employees are exposed to stress sources to such an extent that they are likely to develop illnesses. It was observed that the employees between the ages of 41-50 tend to have more stress sources related to social factors, work and physical environment than employees between the ages of 20-30. Similarly, men tend to have more stress sources related to work and physical environment than women. Married individuals have more stress sources related to work and physical environment than singles. Supervisors have more stress sources related to work than officials. Employees who have been working for 6-15 years have more stress sources related to physical environment than employees who have been working for 1-5 years.

Keywords

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Introduction

Employees face stress in both their daily and work lives without realizing it. Stress is a natural and inevitable part of life. That is why the stress literature includes a variety of studies from different disciplines (clinical and applied psychology, anthropology, sociology, psychosomatic medicine, industrial relations, etc.) that reflect different perspectives. The main problem in understanding the dynamics of stress is that there is not a consensus on the definition of the phenomenon. What further complicates the problem is the existence of various other terms (such as job stress, burnout, and occupational stress) that can be substituted for one another (Moracco & McFadden, 1982, p. 1). According to Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978, p. 2) stress is, "any event that is considered a threat to an individual's self-esteem and well-being." The comprehensive definition of stress has been put forward

[1] Niğde University, Educational Faculty, Department of Guidance and Counseling, Turkey, yyavuzer@nigde.edu.tr
[2] Aksaray University, Educational Faculty, Department of Guidance and Counseling, Turkey, gundogdurezzan@hotmail.com
[3] Niğde University, Institute of Social Sciences, Turkey, seckincan@gmail.com

by Folkman and Lazarus (1980). They defined stress as "social demands that place an individual's cohesion at risk, put an individual in danger and exceed the individual's current resources in individual-society interaction." Thus, the concept of stress has been defined in different ways. Hansen and Sullivan (2003, p. 4) combine the differences in these definitions in three dimensions. The first is sources of stress. These are the events that occur in the work life. The second dimension is the psychological (fear, anxiety, anger, aggression, etc.) and physiological (increased muscle tension, heartbeat acceleration, etc.) effects of stress sources on the individuals. The third dimension is the evaluation of stress sources as threatening or harmful.

There can be many facts and events in an individual's life that cause stress. Baltaş and Baltaş (1998, p. 173) classified the sources of stress in four groups: (1) social stress that stems from human relationships, (2) work-related stress, (3) stress related to physical environment, (4) stress related to self-interpretation (self-talk). People are exposed to stress sources everyday both in daily and in work life. Some individuals become more productive and energetic when working under stress. There are indeed good stress sources that encourage healthy life and creativity (Griffin, 1990, p. 585). Gökgöz and Altuğ (2014, p. 529) state that scholars have medium levels of organizational stress, and this has a positive impact on their performance.

However, being exposed to long-term and intense sources of stress has a negative impact both on the individual and the organization. Recent studies of job stress highlight the relations between job stress and physical and mental health (DeVries & Wilkerson 2003), job satisfaction (Erşan, Yıldırım, Doğan & Doğan, 2013), burnout (Rogers, Creed & Searle, 2014) and inefficiency (Hargreaves, 1999).

Although it has been stated that some situations can cause stress, it has been claimed that the effect of these situations on individuals is a function of the Type A personality and behavior (Aktaş, 2001; Aydın, 2008; Batıgün & Şahin, 2006; Bruck & Allen, 2003; Durna, 2004; Jamal, 2005; Spector & O'Connell, 1994; Şahin, Güler & Basım, 2009; Şahin, Basım & Akkoyun, 2011). Individuals with Type A behavior patterns have been characterized as impatient, ambitious, competitive, constantly racing against time, success-oriented, and they are more likely to be exposed to stress (Aydın, 2008, p. 32; Batıgün & Şahin, 2006, p. 33; Bruck & Allen, 2003, p. 459; Deniz-Yöndem, 2011, p. 81). Lelord and Andre (1996) points out that due to their competitive, aggressive and hurried attitudes, Type A individuals can even perceive ordinary events as stressful and are more likely to be exposed to stress. Jones and Bright (2001) mentions that Type A individuals tend to show more reaction to stress sources that exist in their social environment. Moreover, employees can be more sensitive to stress due to certain demographic characteristics. There are many studies of the relation between the demographic characteristics of the employees and stress sources, and they have reached differing conclusions. Some studies have found that the stress sources do not vary by gender (Argon & Ateş, 2007; Erdoğan, Ünsar & Süt, 2009; Martocchio & O'Leary 1989), age (Argon & Ateş, 2007) and marital status (Barhem et al., 2004). Martocchio and O'Leary (1989, p. 498) did a meta-analysis of 15 studies based on gender differences and occupational stress. It found that there is no gender difference in lived and perceived job stress. Other research has determined that stress sources vary by marital status (Erdoğan et al., 2009; Decker & Borgen, 1993; Zukri & Noor, 2010), age (Erdoğan et al., 2009; Decker & Borgen, 1993; Zukri & Noor, 2010), length of service (Argon & Ateş, 2007; Barhem et al., 2004) and gender (Decker & Borgen, 1993; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005). Since personality characteristics can have an impact on stress perception and Type A individuals perceive even ordinary situations as stressful, it will be beneficial to analyze the relation between stress sources and demographic variables along with type A personality scores.

The Ministry of Education (MEB) is charged with strategic and vital tasks such as raising the nations's workforce, educating people and ensuring that the nation andsociety are well prepared for the future (Mahmutoğlu, 2007, p. 21). Thus it is inevitable that the Ministry of Education central administration is one of the most stressful environments due to intense human relations and work load. Accordingly, This study aimed to examine stress sources of officials and supervisors in the Ministry of Education's central administration in terms of gender, age, marital status, job position, length of service by controlling Type A Personality scores.

Method

Study Group

The study aims to analyze stress sources in terms of gender, age, marital status, job position, length of service by controlling Type A Personality scores. It was conducted with a sample of 112 employees who work for the MEB central administration and participated in an on-the-job training. Easily accessible case sampling, a purposive sampling method, was used to select the sample. The sample group is composed of 46 females (45.1%) and 56 males (54.9%). Of them, 38 were aged 20-30 (37.3%), 41 were aged 31-40 (40.2%) and 23 were aged 41-50 (22.5%). The sample included 85 officials (83.3%) and 17 supervisors (16.7%). Finally, 49 employees (48.0%) had been working for 1-5 years, 32 employees (31.4%) had been working for 6-15 years, and 21 employees (20.6%) had been working for 16-25 years.

Data Collection Tool

Stress Source Scale: This scale is a five option rating scale composed of 43 questions. It provides information on the sources of overwhelming and health-threatening stress. Each item on the scale is a statement about stress. These statements can be defined as sources of stress in daily life. The scale is composed of 4 sub-scales. These are social stress that stems from human relationships, work-related stress, stress related to physical environment and stress related to self-interpretation (self-talk). The responses are: never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4) and always (5). The maximum score on the sub-scales is 85 for social stress sources, 80 for work-related stress sources, 50 for self-interpretation, and 25 for physical environment. The scale classifies the scores on each sub-scale in four groups: no health risk, possible health risk, likely health risk and highly likely health risk (Baltaş & Baltaş, 1998, p. 175).

- Social stress sources: Individuals who score 85-60 points have a highly likely health risk; 59-40 points, likely health risk; 39-25 points, possible health risk, and 24-17 points, no health risk.
- Work-related stress sources: Individuals who score 85-60 points have a highly likely health risk; 59-40 points likely health risk; 39-25 points, possible health risk, and 24-15 points, no health risk.
- Self-interpretation related stress sources: Individuals who score 50-35 points have a highly likely health risk; 34-25 points, likely health risk; 24-15 possible health risk, and 14-10 points, no health risk.
- Physical environment related stress sources: Individuals who score 25-18 points have a highly likely health risk; 17-13 points, likely health risk; 12-7 points, possible health risk, and 7-5 points, no health risk.

The study conducted by Gümüşeli (2001) found the scale's internal consistency coefficient to be .88. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient was .82 for the entire scale, .64 for the social stress sources sub-scale, .74 for the work-related stress sources sub-scale, .59 for the physical environment stress sources sub-scale, and .59 for self-interpretation stress sources sub-scale.

The Type A Personality Scale: The scale was developed by Batıgun and Şahin (2006) who were inspired by Rathus and Nevid's (1989) questionnaire for determining if individuals demonstrate Type-A or Type-B personality characteristics. It is a Likert type scale composed of 25 items scored between 1-5. The minimum score on the scale is 25, and the maximum is 125. High scores indicate the intensity of Type A personality characteristics of individuals. The entire scale's internal consistency coefficient was found to be .86 and .90 in two different studies. The correlation coefficients between the total score of Type A Personality Scale and the scales of Stress Symptoms, Tendency to Stress and Coping with Stress varies between r = .44 (p <.01) and r =-.07 (p >.05). The scale has sub-scales including the importance given to work, divergence from social activities, importance given to speed, importance given to timing (Batıgün & Şahin, 2006). This study used no sub-scale scores, but total scale score was evaluated in line with the goal of the study. This research's reliability study indicates that the internal consistency coefficient is .74 for the entire scale.

Analysis of Data

This study used Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). This analysis aims to statistically control variable/s that have a relation with a dependent variable apart from factor/s whose effectiveness are tested (Büyüköztürk, 2003, p. 105). The study controls Type A personality scores that many studies demonstrated its relationship with stress (Aktaş, 2001; Aydın, 2008; Batıgün & Şahin, 2006; Bruck & Allen, 2003; Durna, 2004; Jamal, 2005; Spector & O'Connell, 1994; Şahin et al., 2009; Şahin et al., 2011). The analysis of covariance also reduces the error variance, synchronizes regressions between different groups and can be more beneficial when the sample size is small (Keskin, 2006, p. 185). Before the analysis, the data was tested to see if it meets the basic assumptions of parametric tests. The study determined that the data has a normal distribution using the Kolmogorov Smirnov Test. It examined the homogeneity of the variance using Leven's Test of Equality, and analyzed the equality of the slope of regression lines using the Tests of Between-Subjects Effects. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Results of Kolmogorov Smirnov, Leven's Test of Equality and Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Variables		**Leven's Test of Equality**		**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**		**Kolmogorov Smirnov**	
		F	*p*	*F*	*p*	*K-S*	*p*
Social stress sources	Gender	3.91	.05	2.63	.10	.07	.20
	Age	1.37	.25	.18	.83		
	Marital status	.86	.35	.46	.49		
	Job position	.01	.93	.35	.55		
	Length of service	1.63	.20	1.41	.24		
Work related stress sources	Gender	.39	.53	3.17	.08	.05	.20
	Age	.30	.73	.16	.84		
	Marital status	.01	.90	3.60	.06		
	Job position	.06	.79	2.38	.12		
	Length of service	.49	.61	2.04	.13		
Physical environment related stress sources	Gender	.03	.85	.46	.49	.06	.20
	Age	.95	.39	.26	.77		
	Marital status	.48	.49	.86	.35		
	Job position	2.33	.13	1.18	.27		
	Length of service	.44	.64	.12	.88		
Self-interpretation	Gender	1.91	.16	2.19	.14	.07	.12
	Age	.01	.99	.37	.68		
	Marital status	.14	.70	.02	.88		
	Job position	.06	.80	.40	.52		
	Length of service	.73	.48	.30	.73		

As Table 1 shows, for each group the variances of dependent variable's scores are equal ($p > .05$) and the slope of regression lines are equal ($p > .05$). Each group displays normal distribution ($p > .05$). After it was determined that the necessary assumptions were met, ANCOVA was used for data analysis. The Bonferroni Test was used to test the source of the difference. The data was analyzed using the SPSS-WINDOWS 18.0 program.

Results

The stress sources sub-scales score mean of the MEB employees are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Stress Sources Sub-Scales Score Mean of The MEB Employees

Stress source subscales scores							
Social		**Work related**		**Physical environment related**		**Self-interpretation**	
M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
44.75	8.44	39.89	8.17	11.97	3.88	25.66	5.10

When the stress sources sub-scales score mean of the MEB employees are analyzed, it can be observed that they are likely to develop illnesses (3rd group) from social, work-related and self-interpretation stress sources, and it is possible that they will develop illnesses (2nd group) due to physical environment stress sources. The employees' stress sources sub-scales score mean adjusted with their Type A Personality scale scores are shown in Table 3 by gender, age, marital status, job position and length of service.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of The Stress Sources Sub-Scales Scores in terms of Gender, Age, Marital Status, Job Position and Length of service

Variables		**Social**			**Work related**		**Physical environment related**		**Self-interpretation**	
		n	***M***	***Adjusted M.***	***M***	***Adjusted M.***	***M***	***Adjusted M.***	***M***	***Adjusted M.***
Gender	Females	46	44.17	43.88	36.69	36.49	11.08	11.02	25.06	25.03
	Males	56	45.23	45.46	42.51	42.68	12.69	12.75	25.16	26.18
Age	20-30	38	43.52	43.57	37.02	37.04	9.94	9.95	25.00	25.00
	31-40	41	43.80	43.62	40.41	40.35	13.31	13.30	25.87	25.87
	41-50	23	48.47	48.71	43.69	43.78	12.91	12.93	26.39	26.40
Job Position	Official	85	43.95	44.04	39.08	39.08	11.68	11.68	25.38	25.38
	Supervisor	17	48.76	48.30	43.94	43.91	13.41	13.99	27.05	27.09
Marital Status	Married	57	46.03	46.03	41.71	41.72	12.96	12.96	26.33	26.33
	Single	45	43.12	43.13	37.57	37.58	10.71	10.71	24.80	24.82
Length of service	1-5 years	49	44.93	44.81	39.08	39.03	11.00	10.97	26.04	26.04
	6-15 years	32	44.12	44.15	41.43	41.44	13.41	13.39	25.96	25.96
	16-25 years	21	45.28	45.54	39.42	39.52	12.14	12.18	24.33	24.33

Table 3 shows that the employees' stress sources sub-scales score mean adjusted with the Type A Personality scale vary by demographic characteristics (gender, age, job position, marital status, length of service). The ANCOVA test was used to determine whether this difference is statistically significant. The analysis results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The Results of ANCOVA test

		Sum of Square	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*p*
Social stress sources	Gender	60.75	1/99	60.75	.86	.35
	Age	463.07	2/98	231.53	3.45*	.03
	Marital status	212.536	1/99	212.53	3.08	.08
	Job position	243.91	1/99	243.91	3.55	.06
	Length of service	24.89	2/98	12.44	.174	.84
Work related stress sources	Gender	935.02	1/99	314.23	4.84*	.03
	Age	664.47	2/98	332.23	5.36**	.00
	Marital status	431.72	1/99	431.72	6.78*	.01
	Job position	314.23	1/99	314.23	4.84*	.03
	Length of service	116.06	2/98	58.34	.86	.42
Physical environment related stress sources	Gender	72.91	1/99	72.91	4.98*	.02
	Age	248.75	2/98	124.37	9.57**	.00
	Marital status	127.81	1/99	127.81	9.07**	.00
	Job position	39.49	1/99	39.49	2.63	.10
	Length of service	109.65	2/98	54.82	3.80*	.02
Self-interpretation	Gender	32.60	1/99	32.60	1.24	.26
	Age	30.92	2/98	15.46	.58	.56
	Marital status	57.44	1/99	57.44	2.21	.14
	Job position	39.79	1/99	39.79	1.51	.22
	Length of service	46.74	2/98	23.37	.88	.41

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

The ANCOVA results show that in the employees' social stress sources sub-scales score mean adjusted with the Type A Personality scale, there is no significant difference in terms of gender, marital status, , job position, length of service. However, there is a significant difference between the employees' social stress sources sub-scale scores adjusted with the Type A personality scale in terms of different age ranges ($F_{(2\text{-}98)} = 3.45$, $p < .05$). The source of this difference was analyzed with the Bonferroni test, and it was found that social stress sources are much greater for employees in the age group 41-50 ($M = 48.71$) than employees in the age group 20-30 ($M = 43.57$).

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference between work-related stress sources sub-scale scores in terms of gender ($F_{(1\text{-}99)} = 4.84$, $p < .05$), age ($F_{(2\text{-}98)} = 5.36$, $p < .01$), marital status ($F_{(1\text{-}99)} = 6.78$, $p < .05$) and job position ($F_{(1\text{-}99)} = 4.84$, $p < .05$). Thus, it can be argued that work-related stress sources are much greater for males ($M = 42.68$) than females ($M = 36.49$). They are also greater for people in the age range of 41-50 ($M = 43.78$) than for people in the age range of 20-30 ($M = 37.04$), and for supervisors ($M = 43.91$) than for officials ($M = 39.08$). Married individuals ($M = 41.72$) also experience greater work-related stress sources than singles ($M = 37.58$). It has been argued that there is no significant difference in employees' work-related stress sources sub-scale scores adjusted with the Type A personality scale in terms of different length of service. In other words, the employees' work-related stress sources are not related to their length of service.

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference between physical environment related stress sources sub-scale scores in terms of gender ($F_{(1\text{-}99)} = 4.98$, $p < 05$), age ($F_{(2\text{-}98)} = 9.57$, $p < .01$), marital status ($F_{(1\text{-}99)} = 9.07$, $p < .01$) and length of service ($F_{(2\text{-}98)} = 3.80$, $p < .05$). The source of this difference was analyzed with the Bonferroni test and it has been observed that physical environment stress sources are much greater for males ($M = 12.75$) than for females ($M = 11.02$), and greater for employees in the age groups 31-40 ($M = 13.30$) and 41-50 ($M = 12.93$) than for employees in the age group 20-30 ($M = 9.95$). Married individuals ($M = 12.96$) experienced more physical environment stress sources than singles ($M = 10.71$), and employees who had been working for 6-15 years ($M = 13.39$) experienced more that than employees who had been working for 1-5 years ($M = 10.97$). No significant difference in the employees' physical environment stress sources sub-scale scores adjusted with the Type A personality scale was found for supervisors versus officials. In addition, no significant difference in employees' self-interpretation stress sources sub-scale scores adjusted with the Type A personality scale was found for gender, age, marital status, job position and length of service.

Discussion

In this study, the stress sources of employees at MEB central administration are analyzed in terms of gender, age, marital status, job position and length of service. Type A personality scores which are determined to have a relation with stress sources by a variety of studies was controlled (Aktaş, 2001; Aydın, 2008; Batıgun & Sahin, 2006; Bruck & Allen, 2003; Durna, 2004; Jamal, 2005; Spector & O'Connell, 1994; Şahin et al., 2009; Şahin et al., 2011). The results of this study show that MEB central administration employees experience stress to the extent that they are inclined to develop illnesses from social, work-related and self-interpretation stress sources, and may possibly develop illnesses from physical environment related stress sources.

This study demonstrates that males are much more sensitive to work-related and physical environment related stress sources than females. The literature on the relationship between gender and stress sources has come up with differing results. Some studies indicated that there was no gender difference in work-related stress. For example, the meta-analysis of 15 studies done by Martocchio and O'Leary (1989) argues that there is no gender difference in lived and perceived job stress. Some research conducted in Turkey found no significant difference between stress sources and employees' gender, and that stress sources have the same effect on both genders (Argon & Ateş, 2007; Erdoğan et al., 2009). On the other hand, the studies that have found gender difference (e.g., Barhem et al., 2004; Decker & Borgen, 1993; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005) claim that women are exposed to more stress than men in the workplace. This is due to the fact that women and men face common stress sources, but women face additional stress sources such as barriers to career development, gender stereotypes, multiple roles and discrimination (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005, p. 272). While there have been major changes in family structure and female labor force participation, only minor changes in responsibility for housework have occurred. Women continue to be responsible for housework. Additionally, women have a tendency to undertake other family related roles such as caring for elderly parents. Multiple roles (work and family) can be a stress source for working women (Jacobs & Schain, 2009, p. 99). Yet it has been argued that this can be a good thing since it expands social support networks (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005, p. 279). Besides, cultural characteristics of a society affect differences in gender roles and relatedly social role expectations. Therefore, there also arises differences in individuals' emotional skills and attitudes. In Turkey, men are placed in a more prominent position than women, can be more active and have more advantages in various areas, but they have heavier responsibilities. Moreover, women who work and make an effort to attain the same status as men, may believe that they have succeeded in doing so. Therefore, the fact that especially work-related stress sources are much greater for men than women can be explained by the latter's social support and being good. It is not possible to reach a definite conclusion as the studies in the literature on workplace stress and gender role are insufficient and current studies cover only men (Decker & Borgen, 1993; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005) or only women (Cam, 2004; Rodham & Bell, 2002) and do not sufficiently take into account cultural factors.

Another finding suggests that social stress sources differ in terms of age. Work-related stress sources differ in terms of marital status and job position. Physical environment related stress sources differ in terms of age, marital status and length of service. These results indicate that employees in the age range of 41-50 are more likely to be affected by social stress sources derived from human relations, physical environment and work-related stress sources than employees in the age range of 20-30. It was also found that married individuals are more sensitive to physical environment and work-related stress sources than singles. Supervisors are more likely to be affected by work related stress sources than officials, and employees working for 6-15 years are more likely to be affected from physical related stress sources than employees working for 1-5 years. The literature on the relationship between stress sources and demographic variables such as age, marital status, job position, length of service have come to differing conclusions. The research that supports this study point out that work related stress sources scores increase as the length of service of the individuals increase (İlgar, 2001; Turunç, 2009). Erdoğan et al. (2009) found that married individuals are exposed to more social stress

sources than singles. However, Turunç (2009) states that single employees are more likely to be affected by physical environment stress sources than married individuals, and Erdoğan et al. (2009) mention that the effect of stress sources derived from the job's structure decrease as employees age. Some studies have found that stress sources do not vary by age (Argon & Ateş, 2007) or by marital status (Barhem et al., 2004). For employees, many factors can be a source of stress such as the quality of the job, workload, wages, promotion opportunities, working hours, working conditions, participation in decision making, responsibilities, and relationships in the work environment. Therefore, work-related stress sources differ in different sectors. It is known that personality characteristics can affect stress perception and experience. The relevant literature do not consider this fact, and this may be the cause of their conflicting results.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The study analyzed the stress sources of Ministry of Educationcentral administration employees and their type A personality scores and found that the employees are likely to develop illnesses (3rd group) in terms of social, work-related and self-interpretation stress sources. It that it is possible that they will develop illnesses due to physical environment stress sources. Taking into account all these factors, it can be argued that Ministry of Educationcentral administration employees are exposed to stress while performing their duties. Therefore, it is important to reorganize the employees' work environment in a way to decrease their stress levels and inform the employees about ways to cope with stress. Additionally, preventive mental health services should be provided in these institutions.

This research found that employees between the ages of 41-50 tend to have more stress sources related to social, work and physical environment than employees between the ages of 20-30. Similarly, men tend to have more stress sources related to work and physical environment than women, while married individuals have more stress sources related to work and physical environment than singles. Supervisors have more stress sources related to work than officials, and employees who have been working for 6-15 years have more physical environment stress sources than employees who have been working for 1-5 years. In the literature, studies of the relationship between demographic characteristics and stress sources have had conflicting results. Therefore, it will be beneficial for future studies to continue analyzing the relationship between demographic characteristics and stress sources for employees working in different areas. At the same time, future studies need to consider that personal characteristics can affect stress perception and experience.

The study has some limitations that should be taken into account while interpreting the results. First, the sample group of the study is composed of Ministry of Education central administration employees, so the results can be generalized only to similar groups. Second, the data was gathered from the employees' statements. The individuals' responses may not correspond to their real life behavior. Future studies need to consider these limitations.

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