The Impact of High School Teachers' Perceptions of Synergistic Management on Organizational Culture and Organizational Learning Perceptions

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Abstract

The exposure of educational institutions to rapid and profound changes due to globalization and the transition to the knowledge society emphasizes the cultivation of individuals who develop universal and critical thinking skills through educational transformation. Synergistic management is an approach that has gained increasing importance in educational management in recent years, highlighting its predictive capacity by contributing to the quality of educational activities. Synergistic management practices enable different elements within organizations to come together to achieve more effective results and are strongly associated with organizational culture and learning processes. The learning processes of organizations foster the development and continuity of intellectual knowledge accumulation by creating awareness in the organizational culture memory. Secondary education institutions are of critical importance in completing students' personality development and preparing them for higher education, underscoring the significance of examining teachers' perceptions of synergistic management, organizational culture, and organizational learning for the development of management and leadership strategies in educational institutions. At the end of the study, it was found that organizational learning and organizational culture (r=.82, p<.01) had a high level of statistically significant and positively directed relationship with synergistic management (r=.83, p<.01). Additionally, a high level of statistically significant and positively directed relationship was also identified between organizational culture and synergistic management (r=.76, p<.01). The results of Cohen's f² analysis for the structural model indicated that the statistical effect sizes of synergistic management on organizational culture (f²=3.081) and organizational learning (f²=12.513) were substantial, demonstrating the significance of the relationships in the model.

Keywords: Synergistic Management, Organizational Culture, Organizational Learning

Introduction

Educational institutions are subject to rapid and profound changes due to the impact of globalization and the transition to the knowledge society, further emphasizing the importance of these institutions within societal life (Parlar, 2012; North & Kumta, 2014). These changes, in turn, bring about a transformation, highlighting the aims of educational institutions to foster universal and critical thinking skills, continually renewing themselves, assimilating and utilizing current knowledge without compromising their values (Sezgin, 2005). The ability of educational institutions to achieve these aims correlates with their institutional openness to learning and change, their innovation, their embrace of a culture of collaboration, the construction of a values framework, and their focus on development (Beycioğlu & Aslan, 2010).

In educational institutions, the cultivation of individuals who are subjects of society has led to an increasing recognition of the importance of a synergistic management approach that enables participatory, inclusive, collaborative processes within and beyond the institution in the delivery of educational services (Yeşil, 2022). Organizations that embrace a synergistic management approach are able to achieve more effective outcomes, both qualitatively and quantitatively, through the collective efforts of different units, elements, or individuals working together as a team, as opposed to operating individually (Irby et al., 2000; Adler, 1980; Genç, 2016). This approach encompasses distinctive features for organizations, derived from their histories, the leadership styles adopted in organizational management, organizational activity processes, shared values, beliefs, norms established within the organization, and interactions with individuals and other stakeholders (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985). Furthermore, there exists a strong link between organizational culture, comprising characteristics such as those mentioned, and the quality and objectives of the educational environment (Hofstede, 1983; Kıymık, 2015).

The organizational learning processes, which have a significant impact on the future vision of organizations and their contributions to societal life, lead to the formation of a repository of organizational cultural memory, creating a consciousness (Levitt & March, 1988). The development of intellectual knowledge resulting from this consciousness and the preservation of this awareness are crucial in terms of the achievements of organizational learning processes (Garvin, 1993). These achievements result in the discovery of organizational members' strengths and expertise, fostering environments where they can develop innovative, effective communication skills, and utilize creative problem-solving abilities (Zavar & Poorandy, 2024; Cincioğlu, 2011). This dynamic process facilitates both organizations and individuals in understanding their environment, enhancing their abilities in acquiring, sharing, processing, and utilizing knowledge (Senge, 1990; Gavetti et al., 2012), thus contributing to its sustainability (Daft & Weick, 1984). Organizations with qualified human resources naturally assume the role of guiding subsequent generations by exploring their internal dynamics and factors of progress (Armağan, 2004).

Institutions operating at the secondary education level play a critical role in shaping societal life, as they encompass processes for students to complete their personality development, make career choices, and prepare for higher education. This educational level stands out for imparting necessary skills and elevating students' motivation for preparation towards higher education (Gündüz et al., 2020). Given their strategic function, secondary education institutions should initiate digital knowledge transformations by enhancing learner organization capacities, developing students' digital skills, and fostering their abilities in knowledge production and management (Zaman et al., 2022). Moreover, it is of critical importance to establish education programs targeting new professional fields and provide students with opportunities to acquire 21st-century vocational skills such as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. The perceptions of teachers working in educational institutions at this level regarding school management, the perceived organizational culture within the educational institution, and the level of learning behaviors within the organization are significant factors for the quality of educational activities (Uçkun et al., 2024). While studies have examined teachers' perceptions and orientations from various organizational perspectives in secondary education institutions, there has been no research on the impact of teachers' perceptions of synergistic management on organizational culture and organizational learning perceptions at the high school level. Understanding how the synergistic management approach affects teachers' levels of collaboration, communication, and interaction, and how this effect reflects on organizational culture and learning processes within the organization, rather than traditional leadership approaches, is critical for enhancing management and leadership strategies in educational institutions (Şahin & Cemaloğlu, 2021).

Aim of the Study

Our research seeks to answer following questions regarding level of prediction of teachers' perceptions of synergistic management on their perceptions of organizational culture and organizational learning:

- What are the levels of high school teachers' perceptions of synergistic management, organizational learning, and organizational culture?
- Do high school teachers' perceptions of synergistic management, organizational culture, and organizational learning vary according to variables such as gender, marital status, school type, professional tenure, and educational status?
- Is there a mediating role of high school teachers' perceptions of synergistic management in predicting perceptions of organizational culture and organizational learning?

Methodology

In this study, a predictive pattern model was employed from quantitative research methods (Wazed, 2012) to reveal the relationships among teachers' perceptions of organizational culture, organizational learning, and synergistic management variables (Fielding & Schreier, 2001). The predictive pattern aims to identify which variable(s) predicts other variable(s) from the analyzed variables (Creswell, 2007). Based on this pattern, the current research was designed as a mediation model.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of 8,155 teachers working in 163 secondary education institutions in the central districts of Gaziantep during the 2021-2022 academic year. Cluster sampling, a non-probabilistic sampling method allowing for adequate representation of the population, was utilized (Balcı, 2016). Based on Cochran's (1977) method, calculations indicated that a sample size of 363 individuals would be sufficient for a population of 8,155 with a 5% acceptable error rate. After obtaining necessary permissions, data collection instruments were distributed through online forms and administered through visits to previously identified schools, resulting in responses from 517 teachers. Upon evaluation, it was found that a considerable number of data forms (35) contained missing values or were incompletely filled out, thus they were excluded from the analysis. As a result, data from 482 participants were included in the analysis.

Evaluation of the participants revealed that 165 (34.2%) were female, while 317 (65.8%) were male; 356 (73.9%) were married, and 126 (26.1%) were single. Among these teachers, it was determined that 159 (33%) worked in Anatolian High Schools, 89 (18.5%) in specialized high schools, 141 (29.3%) in Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools, and 93 (19.3%) in Anatolian Imam Hatip High Schools. Additionally, it was observed that 130 (27%) had 1-5 years of professional tenure, 93 (19.3%) had 6-10 years, 85 (17.6%) had 11-15 years, 54 (11.2%) had 16-20 years, and 120 (24.9%) had 21 years or more of professional tenure. The majority of participants held a licence degree 330,(68.5%), while a relatively smaller portion held a graduate degree (152, 31.5%). Employment status revealed that 381 (79%) were permanent, 92 (19.1%) were contracted, and 9 (1.9%) were employed on a temporary basis.

Data Collection Tools

In this study, the 'Organizational Learning Scale' developed by Silins et al. (1999) and adapted into Turkish by Korkmaz (2006), consisting of 26 items, the 'Organizational Culture Scale' developed by İpek (1999), comprising 36 items, and the 'Synergistic Management Scale' developed by Balay and Müjdeci (2013), consisting of 54 items, were utilized. The data obtained from the research were analyzed using the SPSS 22.0 and MPlus software packages.

Testing the Construct Validity of the Scales

Initially, a single-level 13-factor model (M1) was examined, considering all dimensions of organizational learning, organizational culture, and synergistic management scales as latent variables. The fit indices for the M1 model were estimated as follows: $\chi^2/df=2.08$; RMSEA=.053; CFI=0.865; TLI=.855; and SRMR=.057. However, since the CFI and TLI values were estimated below the designated cutoff point (.90), it was observed that the M1 model did not adequately fit the data. Subsequently, a second-level 10-factor model (M2) linking the dimensions of trust and collaborative climate, shared and observed vision, initiative and risk-taking, and professional development to the latent variable of organizational learning was tested. The fit indices for the M2 model were estimated as follows: $\chi^2/df=2.06$;

RMSEA=.050; CFI=0.865; TLI=.856; SRMR=.057. Despite a decrease in AIC and BIC values compared to the M1 model, the CFI and TLI values were still estimated below the cutoff point (.90), indicating that the M2 model did not meet acceptable fit criteria.

Subsequently, a second-level seven-factor model (M3) linking power culture, role culture, achievement culture, and support culture to the latent variable of organizational culture was examined. The fit indices for the M3 model were estimated as follows: χ^2/df=2.05; RMSEA=.048; CFI=0.867; TLI=.861; SRMR=.050. Similar to the M2 model, although there was a decrease in AIC and BIC values, the CFI and TLI values were estimated below the cutoff point (.90), indicating that the M3 model did not meet acceptable fit criteria. In the final stage, a second-level three-factor model (M4=proposed model) linking leadership, employees, legislation, institutional culture, and communication dimensions to the latent variable of synergistic management was tested. The fit indices for the M4 model were estimated as follows: χ^2/df=2.03; RMSEA=.047; CFI=0.877; TLI=.872; SRMR=.048. Although there was a relative improvement in all fit indices compared to previous models, and a significant chi-square difference test ($\Delta\chi^2$=24.05, Δsd=20, p<.001) was observed, the CFI and TLI values did not exceed the .90 cutoff point as in previous models.

Due to the inadequacy of all fit indices within acceptable limits, modification interventions determined by DFA were conducted. Subsequently, a second-level three-factor model (M5) was tested after correcting errors between items 4 and 5 in professional development (latent variable in organizational learning) and items 5 and 6 in leadership (latent variable in synergistic management), and it was observed that all fit indices of this model were above acceptable values (χ^2/df=1.80; RMSEA=.041; CFI=0.909; TLI=.901; SRMR=.048). Additionally, the chi-square difference test showed a significant improvement in the fit of the M5 model compared to the M4 model ($\Delta\chi^2$=1509.12, Δsd=3, p<.001), and a decrease in AIC (119035.16) and BIC (160263.13) values was also observed. Consequently, it was concluded that the construct validity of the M5 model was established. In the final stage, the M5 model with established construct validity was tested by adding paths between variables within the scope of the research questions to form a structural model (M6). The results indicated that the M6 model had acceptable fit indices (χ^2/df=1.81; RMSEA=.041; CFI=0.908; TLI=.900; SRMR=.050).

Analysis of Data

Analyses aimed to determine whether there were differences in teachers' perceptions of organizational learning, organizational culture, and synergistic management across various categorical variables. The dataset met the assumption of normality, with all kurtosis and skewness values observed within the ± 1 range (Çokluk et al., 2010). Two-group categorical variables were analyzed using Independent Samples t-Test, while one-way ANOVA tests were employed for categorical variables with more than two groups (Baştürk, 2010). In attempting to access one-way ANOVA statistics, Tukey's test was utilized when variances were equal and group sizes were relatively equal, Scheffe's test when they were not equal, and Dunnett's T3 test when variances were unequal. To determine relationships between variables, the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimator, applicable to both continuous and ordinal/categorical variable analyses within the framework of frequency theory, was employed using the Mplus 8.3 software package.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Variables

In terms of descriptive statistics, teachers' perceptions of organizational learning ($\bar{x}$=3.56, SD=.83), organizational culture ($\bar{x}$=3.69, SD=.63), and synergistic management ($\bar{x}$=3.65, SD=.72) indicate an average falling within the 'Agree' range, with consistent affirmative responses across all measures. The Cronbach's Alpha values analyzed within the scope of the study yielded .95 for organizational culture, .97 for organizational learning, and .96 for synergistic management perception, indicating high internal consistency. Furthermore, the subscales of the variables showed Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from .87 to .97.

Upon examining correlation coefficients, it is evident that organizational learning exhibits a high, statistically significant, and positive relationship with both organizational culture (r=.82, p<.01) and synergistic management (r=.83, p<.01). Additionally,

a strong, statistically significant, and positive correlation is observed between organizational culture and synergistic management (r=.76, p<.01). These findings highlight robust relationships among the variables utilized in the research.

Findings

According to the descriptive statistics, teachers' perceptions of organizational learning (x̄=3.56, SD=.83), organizational culture (x̄=3.69, SD=.63), and synergistic management (x̄=3.65, SD=.72) fall within the 'Agree' range, with consistent affirmative responses observed across all dimensions.

The research findings indicate no significant difference in perceptions of organizational learning between male and female teachers (t=1.495, p=.129). However, significant differences are observed in perceptions of organizational culture (t=2.188, p=.029) and synergistic management (t=.624, p=.041) between genders, with females exhibiting higher perceptions of organizational culture and synergistic management compared to males.

Regarding marital status, the results reveal no significant differences in perceptions of organizational culture (t=.034, p=.973), synergistic management (t=1.301, p=.194), and organizational learning (t=-0.334, p=.738).

Similarly, perceptions of organizational culture (t=.612, p=.541), synergistic management (t=.763, p=.446), and organizational learning (t=1.633, p=.103) do not significantly differ based on educational status (licence vs. postgraduate degree).

Concerning employment status, while no significant difference is found in perceptions of synergistic management (t=-1.898, p=.059), significant differences are observed in perceptions of organizational culture (t=2.188, p=.029) and synergistic management (t=.624, p=.041) between those employed on permanent and contract basis, with contract-based employees exhibiting higher mean values compared to permanent employees.

Furthermore, participants' perceptions of organizational culture (F_{482}=1.310, p=.270), synergistic management (F_{482}=1.239, p=.295), and organizational learning (F_{482}=.364, p=.779) do not significantly vary based on the type of high school where they work.

Lastly, the research findings indicate significant differences in perceptions of organizational culture (F_{482}=4.840, p=.001), synergistic management (F_{482}=3.298, p=.011), and organizational learning (F_{482}=4.678, p=.001) based on professional tenure. Specifically, participants with 1-5 years of professional tenure have higher mean values compared to those with 11-15 and 16-20 years of tenure for organizational culture. Similarly, participants with 6-10 years of tenure have higher mean values compared to those with 11-15 years of tenure. For synergistic management and organizational learning, participants with 1-5 years of tenure have higher mean values compared to those with 11-15 years of tenure. The direct, indirect, and total effect coefficients between Synergistic Management (SM), Organizational Culture (OC), and Organizational Learning (OL) are in Table 1.

Table 1 Direct, Indirect, and Total Effect Coefficients between Variables

Direct Effects	β	S.E	z	% 95 BCI		p	R²
				Lowest	Highest		
OC → OL	.646	.079	8.186	.516	.776	.000	
SM → OC	.869	.022	39.714	.833	.905	.000	.755
SM → OL	.346	.081	4.267	.213	.480	.000	
Indirect Effects							
SM → OC → OL	.561	.069	8.147	.182	.420	.000	
Total Effects							
SM → OL	.908	.021	43.802	.927	.967	.000	.926

The findings in Table 1 indicate that standardized path coefficients, estimated with 2000 Bootstrap Confidence Interval (BCI), statistically significantly and positively predict organizational culture (β=.869, 95% CI [.833, .905]) and organizational learning (β=.908, 95% CI [.927, .967]) by synergistic

management. Additionally, it is another finding that organizational culture also statistically significantly and positively predicts organizational learning (β=.646, 95% CI [.516, .776]). When examining the path coefficients of the indirect relationship, which is evidence of the mediating role (β=.561, 95% CI [.182, .420]), it suggests the presence of a mediating role of organizational culture between synergistic management and organizational learning. However, while examining the mediating role of organizational culture, it indicates a partial mediating role in this relationship, as synergistic management statistically significantly and positively predicts organizational learning, and the path coefficient is (β=.346, 95% CI [.213, .480]). When examining the R2 coefficients, synergistic management explains 76% of the variance in organizational culture; and 93% of the variance in organizational learning. Cohen's f² analysis results indicate that the effect sizes of synergistic management on organizational culture (f²=3.081) and organizational learning (f²=12.513) are large, and the two relationships in the model are significant. The standardized path coefficients of our structural model are shown in Figure 1.
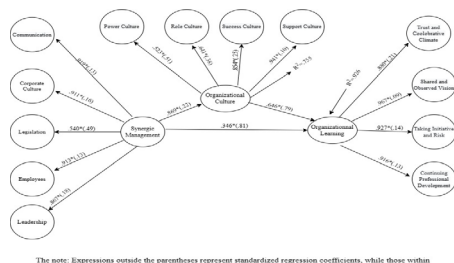

The note: Expressions outside the parentheses represent standardized regression coefficients, while those within parentheses represent standard errors.

Figure 1 Standardized Path Coefficients of the Structural Equation Model

Discussion and Conclusion

The perceptions of teachers participating in the research regarding the 'synergistic management' scale were observed at the level of 'Agree' both overall and in its sub-dimensions. This indicates that there is a certain level of ability to act collectively within the organization, considering the approaches of educational managers. This result could be considered evidence that educational managers take into account modern leadership approaches in intra-organizational management processes. Aksoy (2022) has found high organizational synergy in educational organizations. Similarly, Duman (2021) and Yeşil (2022) have obtained results parallel to our research, indicating the level of organizational synergy as 'often.'

The perceptions of teachers participating in the research regarding the 'organizational culture' scale were observed at the level of 'Agree' throughout the scale. This situation indicates the presence of a value chain that is felt in educational institutions, leading to a positive perception by teachers, enabling individuals to develop a sense of belonging. It is observed that in all dimensions of the Organizational Culture Scale, including Power culture, Role culture, Achievement culture, and Support culture, the level is 'Agree.' İpek (2012) and Balay et al. (2013) found a 'medium' level of organizational culture perception in their studies. Yücekeya and Polat (2020) and Gürbüz (2020) have found a high perception of organizational culture. İpek (1999) stated that the highest cultural dimension is the 'Power factor', and the lowest dimension is the 'Support Factor', while Altınışık and Sarpkaya (2020) stated that the highest dimension is the 'Support Factor', and the lowest dimension is the 'Achievement factor'.

The levels of 'organizational learning' among teachers participating in the research were measured at the 'Agree' level. Çandır (2010) and Güngör and Celep (2016) have found organizational learning levels at levels parallel to those obtained in secondary education institutions. The perception of organizational learning in this way indicates that educational institutions are in a serious position to create a learning school culture. This theme, which appears at the 'Agree' level in all sub-dimensions of the Organizational Learning Scale, may indicate the presence of a strong culture of professional collaboration, open communication, and a strong commitment to continuous professional development among teachers in school environments, where honest and sincere discussions among teachers, mutual support culture, effective professional dialogue, relative openness of school managers to change, and trust and belief in teachers' participation in decision-making processes are maintained (Seashore and Lee, 2016).

When the comparative statistical results of our research are examined, it is observed

that the perceptions of participants regarding synergistic management, organizational culture, and organizational learning are higher in females in terms of the 'gender' variable. Our research has not found a differentiation in terms of the gender variable, similar to the findings of Yanık and Açar (2020), who generally determined the level of synergistic climate in educational institutions as 'high.' The emergence of this result in our study may be due to the fact that societal gender roles and expectations tend to make female employees more inclined to cooperation, communication, and empathy. The emphasis on teamwork and interaction in synergistic management may be compatible with the natural inclinations of women. Similarly, the high perception of organizational culture can indicate that women may be more effective in a collaborative environment. Furthermore, the higher perception of organizational learning among female employees can be attributed to their positive attitudes towards continuous learning and change. Female employees may generally attach more importance to learning and knowledge sharing, which is thought to contribute to the formation of a more dynamic and learning-oriented culture within the organization.

When the comparative statistical results of our research are examined, it is observed that the perceptions of participants regarding synergistic management, organizational culture, and organizational learning are higher in teachers serving on a 'contractual' basis compared to those employed as 'permanent' in terms of the 'employment type' variable. The higher levels of contractual teachers may be due to their generally starting their duties through initial appointment, coming from a young and dynamic working environment, and the excitement of being newly connected to the profession, and their desire to take on project-based tasks. On the other hand, the generally more stationary and long-term tasks of permanent teachers and their having more professional seniority may lead to a tendency to resist change or become accustomed to a series of routines, which may indicate that permanent teachers are more conservative in terms of perceptions of synergistic management, organizational culture, and learning. Another factor influencing this difference in employment type may be that contractual teachers frequently use practices that support collaboration,

interaction, and openness to learning, as they generally have less experience in official work and procedures.

When the comparative statistical results of our research are examined, it is observed that there is a significant differentiation in terms of the 'years of professional seniority' variable in terms of organizational culture and synergistic management perceptions. The reason for the higher perception of organizational culture among participants with 1-5 and 6-11 years of service may be that participants with shorter service durations can perceive organizational culture more positively due to generally being new to the job, being in the process of learning institutional values and norms, and this can result in a positive perception of organizational culture. The higher perceptions of synergistic management among participants with 1-5 years of service compared to those with 11-16 years of service may indicate that this group consists mostly of contractual teachers who are young, dynamic, and adaptable to a flexible working environment. It can be argued that this is due to their skills to adapt to a young, dynamic, and flexible working environment. Our research parallels perceptions based on employment type in terms of this variable. The low averages in organizational culture and synergistic management perceptions among participants with longer service durations may be due to tendencies such as maintaining comfort zones, reluctance to change, or becoming accustomed to traditions over time, similar to perceptions based on employment type.

Our research has identified a statistically significant positive relationship between the concepts of synergistic management, organizational culture, and organizational learning. Our research results demonstrate that teachers' perceptions of synergistic management play a predictive mediating role in organizational learning and organizational culture perceptions, and organizational learning behavior is significantly influenced by perceptions of organizational culture and synergistic management. Considering that the synergistic management approach consists of different management approaches coming together (Abd Aziz & Ahmad, 2020) and given the changes and transformations undergone by today's management paradigms, it can be stated that educational managers need to make

more efforts in areas such as individual support in organizations, proactive group management (Aksakal & Doğan, 2022), raising motivation (Gürler, 2020), creating joint synergy (Černe et al., 2017; Sierens et al., 2009), creating innovative opportunities (Tu & Wu, 2021), and ensuring a safe and collaborative environment (Weiner et al., 2021).

Our research results show that the perceptions of teachers' Synergistic management can encourage perceptions of organizational learning and organizational culture. Additionally, the presence of another result obtained in the current study is that organizational culture can enhance organizational learning. Furthermore, the finding that there is an indirect relationship between organizational culture through synergistic management and organizational learning indicates the presence of a connecting mechanism of organizational culture between synergistic management and organizational learning. In other words, it implies that organizational culture could serve as a linkage mechanism between synergistic management and organizational learning. Therefore, it is possible to say that besides the function of synergistic management alone, this relationship is stronger with organizational culture in order to enhance organizational learning. It is thought that the perceived synergistic management, organizational culture, and organizational learning of high school teachers largely depend on the leadership styles and behaviors of school administrators. According to these results, it is possible to express that managers adopt a leadership understanding that encourages collaboration and interaction and can create positive perceptions among teachers (Akbaşlı & Diş, 2019).

Moreover, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between these three variables. This result can be interpreted as an indication that a culture based on collective action towards common goals, where individuals can combine their power, talent, and resources, exists in the organizations where teachers work, and they can increase their learning and experiences with internal and other stakeholders based on this. The increasing number of managers who have completed postgraduate education in the field of educational management and inspection in recent years may be considered a factor in the teachers' perceptions. Socialization practices in educational institutions, teacher-parent cooperation, the importance attached to education in society, the increasing rate of enrollment in schools, and the social awareness about education reveal the importance of the mission assigned to educational institutions.

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