

Roles and responsibilities of PTAs in Türkiye's public schools: Principals' perceptions

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This study employed an explanatory sequential design and mixed methods to investigate school principals' perspectives on parent-teacher associations (PTAs). The research involved a large sample of 3,606 school principals or senior managers who participated in a survey and a smaller subsample of 6 principals who engaged in a focus group interview study. Overall, the findings revealed that principals regarded PTAs as functional entities focused primarily on fundraising activities. However, the study also uncovered power struggles within PTAs at the administrative level. This suggests that PTAs may not always operate smoothly and harmoniously, but rather face challenges related to authority and decision-making. These power dynamics within PTAs could potentially influence their effectiveness and hinder their ability to fulfil their intended roles. By enhancing the school-community relationship, our findings aim to improve the quality of education provided by schools. This research highlights the importance of fostering a collaborative and supportive environment between schools and parents, emphasising the need for effective communication and cooperation to ensure the success of PTAs that ultimately benefits students' educational experiences.

Introduction

Parental involvement in education has gained significant attention from researchers worldwide (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2022; Noy, 2014; Sehitoglu & Kocyigit, 2020; Villegas, 2021). Although the forms and patterns of parental involvement vary across countries, research findings suggest a positive association between parental involvement in school processes and students' academic achievement (Ingram et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2007; Olaifa et al., 2024; Sibanda, 2017). Furthermore, studies on the effective school movement indicate that factors outside the school significantly impact student achievement, highlighting the importance of engaging external stakeholders in educational activities (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). Such collaborations are facilitated through administrative mechanisms, such as *Parent-Teacher Associations* (PTAs), which are formal and voluntary organisations comprising parents, teachers, and administrative staff established to support school participation or raise funds for complementary educational activities (UNESCO, 2009). The concept of parent-teacher collaboration refers to a process of joint efforts between parents and school staff to promote the well-being of children in school (Twum-Antwi et al., 2020), which is integral to education policies aimed at facilitating the establishment and functioning of PTAs (Pang, 2004). In other words, PTAs can be defined as a formal communication channel between teachers and parents concerning school matters (Wolf, 2020). However, PTAs have also been criticised for perpetuating inequality in education by providing discretionary donations to support hardware such as additional materials and equipment (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Posey-Maddox et al., 2014).

PTAs have been recognised as a crucial component in enhancing the education system. They have a positive impact on equal opportunities in education, as they promote parent involvement in schools, which can lead to greater support for underprivileged students (Murray et al., 2019). Parent involvement has been linked to better academic outcomes (Otani, 2020), higher attendance rates (Murray et al., 2019), and increased motivation among students (Froiland, 2021). Through fundraising, PTAs can provide resources such as books, technology, and extracurricular activities, which can benefit students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not have access to such resources at home (Tatlah & Iqbal, 2011). Furthermore, PTAs can promote diversity and inclusivity by ensuring that all families are represented and have a voice in the education system (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009).

In addition to the benefits mentioned above, PTAs can also impact teaching processes (Marschall & Shah, 2020). PTAs can provide professional development opportunities for teachers, which can enhance their skills and improve their teaching practices (Ballang, 2020). Furthermore, PTAs can facilitate communication between parents and teachers, leading to a better understanding of student needs and improving the overall quality of education (González & Jackson, 2013; Izzo et al., 1999). However, some critics argue that PTAs can perpetuate inequalities by favouring the interests of affluent families over those of low-income families where PTAs may create an uneven playing field (González & Jackson, 2013). While PTAs can have positive effects on equal opportunities in education and teaching processes, they are not without their criticisms. It is important for PTAs to actively promote diversity and inclusivity and ensure that all families have a voice in the education system. By doing so, PTAs can continue to play a vital role in enhancing the quality of education for all students.

In Switzerland, even though parent-teacher associations carry out responsibilities such as providing support from professionals in contemporary issues such as bullying and addiction, offering career guidance for students, facilitating the design of school facilities and recreational areas, seeking resolutions to parental concerns, and providing support for the integration of families of foreign origin, they lack the jurisdiction to oversee schools and determine pedagogical strategies, curricula, and course content (Neuenschwander et al., 2008; Sehitoglu & Kocyigit, 2020). In contrast, in Israel, most parent committees possess the authority to intervene in the educational decisions of the school, up to 25% of the curriculum, subject to certain conditions (Fisher, 2010). The United States, on the other hand, has voluntary groups of parents and teachers in all schools, with the largest of these being the "National PTA," which includes students as well. The National PTA aims to enhance the well-being of children, improve home environments, foster parent-school partnerships, promote the enactment of laws that safeguard youth and children, and enhance the quality of education at schools where children are currently enrolled (National PTA, 2022). While increasing parental involvement in schools and fostering parent-teacher partnerships is viewed as an educational and Western policy in Hong Kong (Pang, 2004), in Italy, it has been functionalised from policy to practice as the integration of stakeholders in educational settings at all levels (MIUR, 2018).

In Türkiye, the initial collaborative practice between schools and families was established in 1931 to provide continuous support to underprivileged students in primary schools. The legal foundations of school and family cooperation, however, were formalised during the III. National Education Council in 1946 (Akbasli & Tura, 2019). Subsequently, the Ministry of National Education Regulation on Parent-Teacher Associations was issued in accordance with the Basic Law on National Education No. 1739, and its latest iteration was published in the Official Gazette No. 28199 on 09.02.2012 (MoNE, 2012).

According to this regulation, unions without legal personality can be established within schools to facilitate communication and cooperation between parents and schools, support activities aimed at enhancing education and training, and provide for the compulsory needs of schools and students who lack financial resources for education and training. These unions, referred to by the name of the respective school, comprise school principals, teachers, and parents of students in formal education institutions, as well as school principals, teachers, master instructors, parents, trainees, apprentices, journeymen, masters, members of educational clubs, and volunteers in non-formal education institutions. The regulation outlines the duties and authorities of PTAs (MoNE, 2012). While the Regulation outlines the responsibilities and duties of PTAs to improve the quality and success of schools in education and training, as well as to facilitate communication and collaboration with families and the community, scholars have argued that in Türkiye, PTAs' role is primarily limited to providing financial resources to schools (Akbasli & Tura, 2019; Nural, Kaya & Kaya, 2013). As a result, PTAs face challenges in recruiting parents who are willing and able to dedicate their time to the school, and in ensuring attendance at PTA meetings, leading to issues of trust and inadequate skills or knowledge among PTA members (Nural, Kaya & Kaya, 2013). However, in developed countries today, parents are increasingly involved in their children's education, working closely with school administrations and teachers to contribute to the growth and transformation of educational institutions in their communities. This is achieved through the delegation of authority and responsibility from central administration to local schools, empowering families to participate in decision-making processes (Aslanargun, 2007).

Our research investigates the extent to which PTAs in public schools in Türkiye fulfil their duties and functions, as established by regulation. The following research questions were addressed:

1. How do school principals perceive the function and responsibility of PTAs?
2. How do school principals' perceptions on PTAs change with respect to certain variables?

Methods

Design

A mixed-methods research study was conducted to gain insight into the functioning of PTAs in Türkiye. The mixed-methods approach utilises both qualitative and quantitative research methods in one research process to explain a phenomenon or situation (Johnson

& Christensen, 2019). An explanatory sequential design was used to explain the quantitative data with the qualitative data (Creswell, 2021). A survey was used to collect data in the first stage of the study, while a phenomenological research design was employed in the second stage, to better understand the survey findings.

Data collection and analysis

Sampling for the quantitative stage

The pilot study was conducted with 501 school principals from three provinces selected from the west, middle, and east of Türkiye namely; Ankara, Bursa, and Mardin. For the main study, 3,606 school principals participated in a survey. The sample was selected by using a stratified cluster sampling approach. The statistical regions of Türkiye are classified into three levels of NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units of Statistics). The lowest level, NUTS 3, comprises the 81 provinces of Türkiye, while the NUTS 2 level includes 26 regions formed by aggregating the provinces. These NUTS 2 regions are then combined to form twelve NUTS 1 regions. This spatial breakdown is a significant determinant in comprehending demographic, social, cultural, and economic differences across different parts of the country, as each region exhibits distinctive geographical, climatic, cultural, social, and economic characteristics.

The most industrialised and socioeconomically advanced regions of Türkiye are located in the western part of the country, including Istanbul, West Marmara, Aegean, and East Marmara, followed by the South (Mediterranean), North (West Black Sea and North Black Sea), and Central (West Anatolia and Central Anatolia) regions. Regions in the eastern part of Türkiye, including North-east Anatolia, Central East Anatolia, and Southeast Anatolia, are considered to be the least developed areas of the country. The largest provinces of each category under the NUTS 1 level were selected as the sample for the study, namely Ankara ($n=135$), Antalya ($n=724$), Bursa ($n=91$), Erzurum ($n=303$), İstanbul ($n=417$), İzmir ($n=253$), Kayseri ($n=452$), Mardin ($n=167$), Samsun ($n=681$), Tekirdağ ($n=97$), Trabzon ($n=207$), and Van ($n=79$). An online survey (*Google Forms*) was administered to school principals via the research and development department of each provincial directorate of national education. The demographic characteristics of the volunteers who participated are presented in Table 1.

Data collection tool and analysis for the quantitative stage

To gain insight into how school principals perceive PTA, the researchers chose to develop and validate a scale that could be used to measure PTA functionality in various settings and conditions. The scale was designed to be well-structured, valid, reliable, and unbiased, with accurate and practical reporting options. To develop the scale, the researchers followed Hinkin's (1995) methodology, which involved addressing issues related to item generation, validity, and reliability assessment. For the item generation, 14 items of the Ministry of National Education Regulation on Parent-Teacher Associations were transformed into 28 scale items. Items containing more than one judgment were formulated as two or three-scale items. The scale was conducted in Turkish language and

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants (N=3,606)

Variables	Levels	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Female	705	19.6
	Male	2,901	80.4
Administration position in the school	Principal	2,617	72.6
	Vice Principal	783	21.7
	Principal-authorized teacher	206	5.7
Teaching seniority	1-5 years	277	7.7
	6-10 years	500	13.9
	11-15 years	554	15.4
	16-20 years	564	15.6
	21-25 years	677	18.8
	26 and more	1,034	28.7
School administration seniority	0 (not completed one year)	202	5.6
	1-5 years	699	19.4
	6-10 years	986	27.3
	11-15 years	731	20.3
	16-20 years	467	13
	21-25 years	311	8.6
	26 and more	210	5.8

was translated into English to make sense for international readers. The researchers evaluated the scale's characteristics through empirical analysis and expert review. Overall, the study focused on the development and validation of a measurement tool for assessing PTA functioning, with attention to ensuring its accuracy, practicality, and validity.

To validate the data of the pilot and main studies, factor analyses were performed. In the main study, the data were randomly divided into two subsamples by using the split sampling method, which is a way to ensure the data's validity by analysing it in two independent subsamples, and factor analysis was performed separately on each subsample (Brown, 2006, p. 301). To achieve cross-validation, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on subsample n_1 , while confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed on subsample n_2 . Descriptive statistics, EFA, and reliability analysis were performed using *SPSS 18*, while *LISREL 8.80* for Windows was used for CFA.

According to Hair et al. (2019), factor loading estimates should be higher than .50. The criteria for assessing the conformity of the scale, the X^2 value is calculated (Finney & DiStefano, 2013). The other goodness of fit indices are used by considering the following criteria; RMSEA is less than or equal to .06, SRMR is less than or equal to .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), GFI is greater than .90 (Marsh & Hau, 1996), CFI is greater than .95 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993), and IFI is greater than .90 (Byrne, 1998). Cronbach's alpha internal reliability coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the scale. A reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is sufficient for the reliability of a psychological instrument (Kline, 1993).

To examine whether there was a significant difference in school principals' perceptions about PTAs concerning their gender, their residential area, administration position in school, teaching seniority, school administration seniority, and education level, an independent-samples t-test and a one-way ANOVA test were employed, after conducting tests for normality of data distribution, and homogeneity of variance. The normality of the data was checked by skewness and kurtosis values (<3 and <10 , respectively), and the Q-Q plots. Levene's test of homogeneity results ($p>.05$) verified that variances were equal across groups. As none of the assumptions were violated, we continued with the t-test and ANOVA procedures.

Sample, data collection and analysis for the qualitative stage

By conducting interviews with a group of participants simultaneously, a conducive environment is created for the participants to express their opinions freely, and the group dynamics facilitate a deeper exploration of the participants' perspectives and views (Merriam, 2013; Yildirim & Simsek, 2021). In this study, focus group interviews were utilised to investigate the current functioning of PTAs, specifically to determine the opinions of school principals on this matter. The maximum variation sampling method was adopted to form a small group of participants with similar characteristics and obtain a holistic understanding by gathering diverse perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Suri, 2011). Focus group interviews typically comprise 4 to 12 participants, according to varying opinions in the literature (Edmunds, 1999; Gibbs, 1997; Kitzinger, 1995; MacIntosh, 1993). This study also considered the number of participants and invited eight school principals working in Ankara which is the capital and second-largest province of Türkiye. However, six of the school principals were able to participate in the focus group discussion. As a result, a voluntary focus group interview was conducted with a total of six school principals from different education levels. The characteristics of focus group participants are presented in Table 2. The participants were seated in a U-shaped arrangement, and each of them was provided with a pen and paper. The research's purpose was explained in the introduction, and the interview began with participants briefly introducing themselves. The participants' viewpoints were recorded as well as documented in writing by four interviewers during the two-and-a-half-hour interview. The interview was structured with general-to-specific questioning in a question-and-answer format. During the focus group interview, conversational-style open-ended questions (Bas et al., 2008) were used (Appendix 1), employing everyday language and avoiding technical terms (Krueger, 2014) in Turkish.

Table 2: Demographics of focus group interview participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Teaching experience	Administrative experience
P1	Female	52	3	23
P2	Male	46	8	13
P3	Male	55	24	8
P4	Male	50	26	12
P5	Female	46	12	11
P6	Male	50	3	23

The collected data were analysed word by word, and redundant interviews were removed. The content analysis method was used to categorise the data into themes and codes. While presenting the data, quotes from participants were coded with P and their number. Demographic characteristics are presented in Table 2.

Results

Validity and reliability findings for the scale

Pilot study for the scale

Before conducting the exploratory factor analysis, the researchers checked the assumptions of the EFA. The Bartlett test was found significant ($p < .05$) and the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) value (.98) surpassed the threshold value of .60. For the normality, the skewness and kurtosis values were tested and found between -3 and +3. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was significant ($p < .05$), but the histogram of the univariate normality showed no violation of normality. Cases with Mahalanobis Distance values above the critical value were examined to identify multivariate outliers. Based on these results, the researchers decided to continue with EFA. Factor analysis indicated that the scale was a single-factor structure with 28 items which explained 70.0% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha value was .98 for the scale.

Main study of the scale

Before the analysis, EFA assumptions were once more tested in the first split of data ($n_1=1,803$) in the main study and similar results (KMO=.98 $>$.60, Bartlett test's $p < .05$) with the pilot study were obtained. The single-factor structure with 28 items explained 64.4% of the variance. The mean, standard deviation, and factor loadings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean, standard deviation, and factor loadings values for the scale

PTA ...	Mean	SD	Factor loading
6. Collaborates with parents in order to raise students in alignment with national and moral values.	3.95	1.05	.83
14. Collaborates with school administration in organising musical, theatrical, athletic, artistic, excursion-related, fair-related, and analogous educational events.	3.90	1.03	.83
15. Collaborates with institutions involved in education and training and non-governmental organisations.	3.85	1.06	.81
21. Ensures that social security contributions, taxes, and similar payments are made regarding the services provided to the school.	3.84	1.04	.85
16. Contributes to working commissions established to improve education and training.	3.84	1,01	.81
5. Cooperates with teachers to raise students in line with national and moral values.	3.84	1.04	.81

PTA ...	Mean	SD	Factor loading
13. Collaborates with the school administration to organise activities held outside of class time in the school's educational environments such as classrooms, gymnasiums, libraries, laboratories, workshops.	3.80	1.03	.81
11. Cooperates with parents in matters related to education and training activities.	3.78	1.07	.86
12. Cooperates with the school administration in organising educational activities such as courses, exams, seminars, etc. in order to increase the educational attainments of students.	3.77	1.13	.83
26. Uses conditional donations in accordance with their purpose.	3.76	1.04	.76
10. Cooperates with the school administration in matters related to education and training activities.	3.75	1.12	.85
22. Cooperates with the school administration in the organisation of educational environments such as classrooms, gymnasiums, libraries, laboratories, workshops, etc.	3.74	1.02	.88
7. Collaborates with the school management in order to further the attainment of the school's goals and objectives.	3.74	1.14	.78
25. Accepts and keeps records of in-kind and in-cash donations made to the school.	3.71	1.06	.77
23. Cooperates with parents to improve the physical facilities of the school.	3.69	1.03	.88
1. Cooperates with the school administration in order to raise students in line with the aims of national education.	3.69	1.15	.75
28. Fulfils the obligations indicated in the Regulation on School Bus Service Vehicles.	3.69	1.10	.57
24. Contributes to the expenses of organising national holidays, special days and weeks, and cultural competitions.	3.67	1.04	.83
19. Determines the school's needs for services and/or supplies.	3.66	1.11	.85
27. Operates or has run canteens and other similar places.	3.66	1.12	.79
2. Collaborates with teachers in order to raise students in line with the aims of national education.	3.66	1.12	.78
20. Purchases services and/or supplies to meet the needs of the school.	3.64	1.06	.84
3. Cooperates with parents in order to raise students in line with the aims of national education.	3.63	1.09	.70
17. Collaborates with parents to enable equal opportunities in education.	3.57	1.09	.80
9. Cooperates with parents for the realisation of the school's goals and objectives.	3.47	1.16	.83
18. Participates in national and international projects and contributes towards the realisation of project objectives.	3.33	1.20	.78
4. Collaborates with school administration in order to raise students in alignment with national and moral values.	3.31	1.12	.72
8. Collaborates with teachers to the attainment of the school's objectives and goals.	3.26	1.17	.82
<i>Overall</i>	3.69	1.03	

Cooperating with the EFA results, the single-factor structure was tested on the second sample ($n_2=1,803$) by CFA, and the fit indices were as follows: ($n=1,803$); $\chi^2=1779.97$, ($df=350$, $p<.001$), $\chi^2/df=5.09$, RMSEA=.04, SRMR=.04, GFI=.91, CFI=.98, and IFI=.98. The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was .98 (Figure 1).

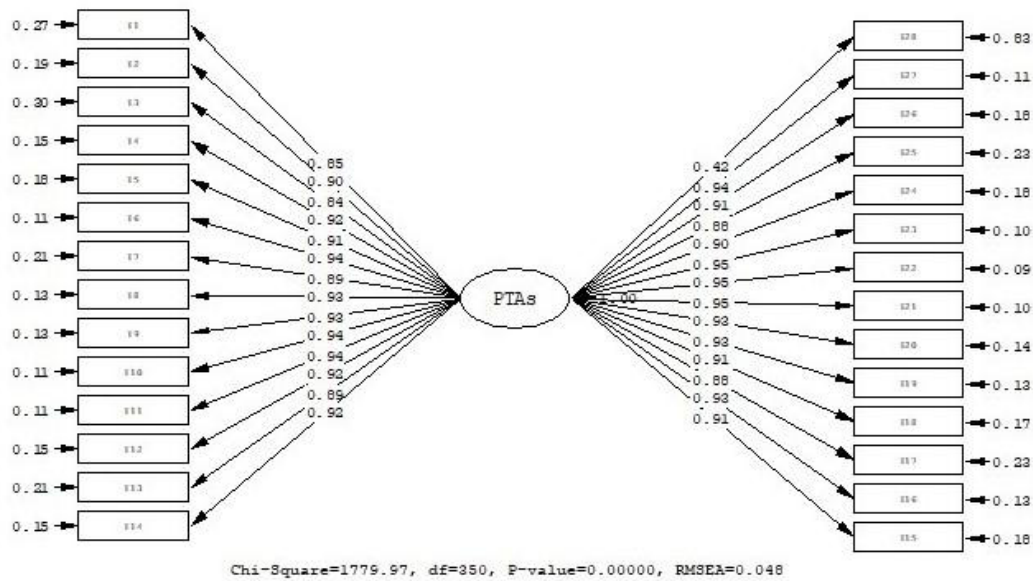


Figure 1: The standardised loadings of the scale
(use 'zoom in' function in web or PDF viewer to read)

Perceptions of school principals on the function and responsibilities of PTAs

PTAs were evaluated based on school principals' perceptions using a five-point scale. The scale was interpreted as follows: a score of 5.00-4.21 was considered 'always', 4.20-3.41 was 'usually', 3.40-2.61 was 'occasionally', 2.60-1.81 was 'rarely', and 1.80-1.00 was 'never'. It was found that school principals' perceptions of PTAs were "usually" ($M=3.69$, $SD=1.03$) (Table 1). The item with the highest score on the scale was "PTA collaborates with parents in order to raise students in alignment with national and moral values" ($M=3.95$, $SD=1.05$). This was followed by "PTA collaborates with school administration in organising musical, theatrical, athletic, artistic, excursion-related, fair-related, and analogous educational events" ($M=3.90$, $SD=1.03$) and "PTA collaborates with institutions involved in education and training and non-governmental organisations" ($M=3.85$, $SD=1.06$), respectively.

Different from what we obtained with the survey data, the findings of the focus group interviews revealed that all school principals shared a common view that PTAs served as a "financial resource". The first research question was addressed by only one category, which is how school principals perceive the responsibilities and functions of PTAs. The following excerpts illustrate the responses obtained:

When it comes to PTA, money comes directly to mind. In other words, PTA equals money (P1).

Let's put it like this: When there is no money in the PTA, there are no cleaning staff (P4).

In our school, which operates under disadvantaged conditions, unexpected financial needs may arise, such as a burst pipe, and there may not be enough funds readily available to cover the costs. To address this, the PTA organises fundraising activities, such as selling bagels at school, to ensure that there is always a budget available for such emergencies. This is crucial for us to be prepared and able to respond promptly to unexpected financial needs (P5).

Nearly all items in the scale were scored moderately by principals. The principals in the focus group reported that:

We asked them to buy a screen to show the in-class activities of the children to the parents or to present various content to the children during breaks. They said "No" without giving any reason (P2).

For example, even if the school needs a pen, they may say "I don't think it is necessary." The PTA says "I pay your salary" and "What I say will be done" to the school staff (P3).

The items that were rated the lowest on the scale were "PTA collaborates with teachers to the attainment of the school's objectives and goals" ($M=3.26$, $SD=1.17$), "PTA collaborates with school administration in order to raise students in alignment with national and moral values" ($M=3.31$, $SD=1.12$), and "PTA participates in national and international projects and contributes towards the realisation of project objectives" ($M=3.33$, $SD=1.20$), respectively.

The reason why no item was scored as "always" may be due to communication problems between PTAs and school administrations. The focus group study participants mentioned the communication problems with the PTAs.

Our school is located in a disadvantaged area where we often face financial challenges. Unfortunately, when I explain these issues to the PTA, they tend to criticise our management skills instead of offering support (P2).

As a school principal, it is crucial to maintain a compulsory positive relationship with PTAs because they provide essential financial assistance. However, building and maintaining this relationship can be challenging (P4).

In terms of communication, PTAs do not engage extensively with teachers and parents, except during social events. They usually communicate through class mothers, who act as intermediaries between the PTA and parents (P5).

According to school principals, this kind of problem may arise from the selection method for PTA members. Members can be selected from any volunteer parent without any criteria. P1 stated that although announcements were made before the elections, sufficient participation was not ensured. All the participants mentioned the effect of parents' socio-

cultural profiles on their decisions and visions while working with school administration, teachers, and other parents. According to one participant (P5), PTAs tend to perceive themselves as being one level higher in the school's hierarchical system and communicate differently with other parents. Another participant, P3, emphasised the importance of careful selection when choosing a PTA, stating that "the PTA can sometimes be disinterested or unqualified to fulfil their duties effectively".

Perceptions of school principals by demographic characteristics

To examine whether there was a significant difference in school principals' perceptions of PTAs concerning their gender, an independent-sample t-test was conducted. There was no significant difference in school principals' perceptions about PTAs by gender [$t_{(3,604)}=1.47, p=.14$]. The results are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: t-test results by gender

Gender	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Female	705	3.77	.88	3604	1.47	.14
Male	2901	3.72	.87			

* $p < .05$

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to investigate whether there were any significant differences in participants' perceptions about PTAs based on their residential area, administration position in school, teaching seniority, school administration seniority, and education level.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA test results

		Sum of squares	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Residential area	Between groups	17.21	11	1.564	2.063	.019*
	Within groups	2725.43	3594	.758		
	Total	2742.64	3605			
Administration position in the school	Between groups	.42	2	.210	.276	.759
	Within groups	2742.22	3603	.761		
	Total	2742.64	3605			
Teaching seniority	Between groups	2.66	5	.532	.699	.624
	Within groups	2739.98	3600	.761		
	Total	2742.64	3605			
School administration seniority	Between groups	1.75	6	.291	.382	.891
	Within groups	2740.89	3599	.762		
	Total	2742.64	3605			
Education level participants work	Between groups	4.24	4	1.060	1.393	.234
	Within groups	2738.40	3601	.760		
	Total	2742.64	3605			

* $p < .05$

The results showed that only one variable, residential area, had a significant difference on school principals' perceptions [$F_{(11,3,594)}=2.06, p<.05$]. The scores did not differ by administration position in school [$F_{(2,3,603)}=.28, p=.76$], teaching seniority [$F_{(5,3,600)}=.70, p=.62$], school administration seniority [$F_{(6,3,599)}=.38, p=.89$], and education level [$F_{(4,3,601)}=1.39, p=.23$]. Results are presented in Table 5.

Participants were divided into twelve groups to reveal differences in school principals' perceptions of PTAs by their residential area. According to the Scheffe post-hoc test results, significant differences were found between the groups of İstanbul-Kayseri and İstanbul-Antalya. The scores of the school principals in İstanbul ($M=3.89; SD=.98$) and Antalya ($M=3.68; SD=.88$) were higher than the principals in Kayseri ($M=3.67; SD=.88$). However, there were no significant differences among other provinces.

Discussion

Our study offers significant insights into the functions and responsibilities of the PTAs in Türkiye. To achieve this objective, the regulation-ensured responsibilities of the PTAs were analysed by school principals' perceptions. The importance of parents' involvement and parent-teacher associations has been highlighted by Hong (2020), who emphasised fostering collaboration between parents and teachers for the child's benefit through a democratic approach. Our research focusing on evaluations of the function and responsibilities of PTAs by school principals' perceptions indicates that the school principals perceive that PTAs "usually functioned".

Although quantitative data analysis reveals that school principals highly perceive PTAs collaborating with parents to raise students in alignment with national and moral values, organising various educational events, and partnering with educational institutions and non-governmental organisations, the qualitative data unveiled that the common school perception is PTAs playing a sole and vital role as "financial resource" to schools. In line with our study, similar research conducted in Türkiye has examined school principals' perspectives on PTA activities, revealing a predominant focus on the school budget (Ozer et al., 2015) with findings that school principals reported expenses higher than income. As per the regulations (MoNE, 2012), schools are expected to generate their own revenue, wherein donations and aid received by PTAs emerge as a significant income source for schools (Aydoğan, 2023; Toker-Gokce & Uslu, 2018). However, school principals expressed concerns that although these donations contribute to the school's financial resources, they also pose challenges. When the Ministry of National Education transferred expenditure authority to PTAs to distribute administrative tasks and encourage collaboration, the resulting power imbalance, where school principals were left with a solely supervisory authority, was perceived as a concern by principals themselves. Instead of a one-way mechanism such as providing PTA support to the school administration for financial resources only, as Ekundayo and Alonge (2012) advocated, the way is open for PTA members to be more involved in school administration, taking part in decisions regarding educational programs, such as goal setting, the creation and implementation of planned activities, and the allocation of funds.

Although this study was not designed to specifically explore the discourses of PTA activities, it could be said that statements by school principals raised some questions about the competences of PTA members. This suggests a potential need for further research or discussions regarding the roles and effectiveness of PTAs in light of concerns raised by school principals. However, Tatlah and Iqbal (2011) elucidated the perceived distinctions between school principals and PTAs, attributing them to divergent factors driving their respective roles. While school administrators' responsibilities are shaped by legislative reforms, PTAs, being entirely voluntary, face questions regarding their commitment, skills, and capacity to fulfil specific roles. This stems from their perception as non-professionals and laypersons operating in a realm predominantly occupied by professionals.

The perceived distinctions between school principals and PTAs may contribute to potential conflicts or tensions between the two groups (Heystek, 2006; Opoku-Asare et al., 2015; Ozbal et al., 2022). The differing factors driving their roles, such as legislative reforms for school administrations and voluntary engagement for PTAs, can create a divide in perspectives and expectations. The concerns raised by school principals may prompt a re-evaluation of the involvement and contributions of PTAs to the school system. This might include assessing their impact on decision-making processes, their ability to represent the diverse interests of parents and students, and their overall influence on educational policies and practices. We recommend further research into the extent to which PTA members are competent to exercise their responsibility for educational decision-making and, if they are to continue to have this responsibility, how this responsibility can be separated from the involvement of school administrators and teachers, and where the limits of their authority in these matters should lie.

Our study encountered certain constraints that should be taken into consideration. One limitation pertains to the difficulty of examining issues within the capillaries, as the respondents who were approached through the questionnaire displayed a propensity for providing affirmative responses to the questionnaire items. Additionally, although the school principals who participated in the focus group interview had the ability to express criticisms more readily, caution should be exercised in generalising their opinions. The data from both datasets were analysed impartially and given equal significance.

The centrality of communication in educational institutions as social organisations has been highlighted in the literature (Jones & Jones, 2020). Akbasli and Kavak (2008) have emphasised the importance of assertive communication among the three main components of the education system, namely the school, the family, and the student, for achieving the objectives of the education system. The absence of "always" items on the questionnaire in this study may be attributed to potential communication challenges between PTAs and school administrations, as indicated by participants in the focus group study.

Our study contributes to the literature by focusing on PTAs' major role in supporting school development through financial contributions, from the perspectives of Turkish school principals. The research method outlined above also adds to the literature by addressing content and ensuring the validity, reliability and generalisability of the findings,

and highlighting the steps taken to ensure the sample's representativeness according to NUTS for Türkiye. Although conducted by the provincial directorate of national education, our research maintained the reliability of responses by not accessing identity information and by using *Google Forms* for data collection. Quantitative findings were supplemented by qualitative research outcomes, and data triangulation was achieved. Therefore, this study, designed with a careful research methodology, is anticipated to make a useful conceptual contribution to the existing literature.

Conclusion

Our study calls for future research to examine the wider context of school-community relationships. Türkiye is currently facing significant socio-political challenges, including a severe economic crisis, the refugee issue, cybercrime, and political polarization. These issues directly affect the implications of school administrations, particularly due to the growing number of immigrant students with limited proficiency in the local language and the reduction in budgetary allocations from the ministry. The educational involvement of the school community plays a vital role in addressing the impact of these societal problems within educational institutions.

To effectively tackle issues like increasing peer bullying, cybercrime prevention, and the smooth integration of newcomers, it is imperative to provide both financial and social support to school administrations. Moreover, updating regulations through extensive research and re-evaluating the roles and responsibilities in workshops involving school administrations and PTAs are essential steps toward establishing a harmonious working relationship. These endeavours will contribute significantly to enhancing the overall quality of education in schools.

Declaration of interest statement

The authors did not receive support from any organisation for the submitted work. The authors have no financial or proprietary interests in any material discussed in this article.

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Appendix 1: Focus group interview questions

1. Okulunuzdaki okul-aile birliği faaliyetleri hakkında neler söyleyebilirsiniz? <i>Translation: What can you say about the activities of the school-parent association at your school?</i>
1.1. Genel anlamda okul-aile birliği ile ilişkileriniz nasıldır? <i>Translation: How is your overall relationship with the school-parent association?</i>
1.1.1. Okul müdürü olarak beklentileriniz neler? Okul-aile birliğiniz bunları ne kadar karşılayabiliyor? <i>Translation: As a principal, what are your expectations? How well does your school-parent association meet these expectations?</i>
1.1.2. Okul-aile birliğinizin öğretmenleriniz ve velileriniz ile nasıl bir iletişimi var? Hangi konularda birlikte çalışmalar yaparlar? <i>Translation: How does your school-parent association communicate with your teachers and parents? In what areas do they collaborate?</i>
1.1.3. Okul-aile birliğinizin okul yönetimi olarak sizlerden beklentileri neler? Bu beklentiler sizce ne kadar anlamlı? Ne kadarını karşılayabiliyorsunuz? <i>Translation: What expectations does your school-parent association have from the school administration? How meaningful do you find these expectations? To what extent are you able to meet them?</i>
1.2. Okulunuzdaki idari faaliyetleriniz çerçevesinde okul-aile birliğinizin görev ve işlevlerini nasıl tanımlarsınız? <i>Translation: How do you define the roles and functions of the PTA within the scope of your administrative activities in your school?</i>
1.3. Okulunuzdaki eğitim-öğretim faaliyetleriniz çerçevesinde okul-aile birliğinizin görev ve işlevlerini nasıl tanımlarsınız? (Okul-aile birliğinizin eğitim/öğretim programlarının uygulanmasındaki konumu ve etkisi nedir?) <i>Translation: How do you define the roles and functions of the PTA within the context of your educational and teaching activities? (What is the position and influence of the PTA in the implementation of educational/teaching programs?)</i>
2. Okul yöneticisi olarak okul-aile birliği kuruluş/oluşum yapısını nasıl değerlendirirsiniz? <i>Translation: As a school principal, how do you evaluate the structure of the PTA?</i>

2.1. Sizce başkan ve üyeler nasıl seçilmeli? Kriterler neler olmalı? Mevcut durumdaki işleyiş ile karşılaştırarak açıklar mısınız? <i>Translation:</i> How do you think the president and members should be elected? What criteria should be considered? Can you explain by comparing them with the current system?
3. Okul yöneticisi olarak okul-aile birliği işlevinin kapsamını nasıl değerlendirirsiniz? (Yönetmelik) <i>Translation:</i> How do you evaluate the scope of the PTA's function explained in the regulation as a school administrator?
3.1. Sizce ne olmalıydı? Mevcut durumdaki işleyiş ile karşılaştırarak açıklar mısınız? <i>Translation:</i> What do you think should be the case? Could you describe any shortcomings or differences compared to the current functioning?
3.2. Sizce okul-aile birliği yönetmeliğinde eksiklikler veya işlemeyen noktalar var mıdır? <i>Translation:</i> Do you think there are any shortcomings or ineffective aspects in the PTA regulation?
3.2.1. (Varsa) Bu tespitlerinizle ilgili önerileriniz nelerdir? <i>Translation:</i> If so, what are your recommendations regarding these findings?

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