

The relationship of high school teachers' political skills to their career satisfaction: The mediating role of personal reputation

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between high school teachers' political skill and career satisfaction, and the mediating role of personal reputation in this relationship. This study used prediction design. The Political Skill Scale, Career Satisfaction Scale and Personal Reputation Scale were administered to the participants. The findings indicated that all dimensions of political skill were significant predictors of personal reputation. Furthermore, social astuteness, interpersonal influence and networking were significant predictors of career satisfaction, whereas apparent sincerity was not. Personal reputation was found to mediate the relationship between social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking and career satisfaction. Based on these findings, providing trainings about the positive and negative effects of political skill to administrators and teachers, especially to novice teachers, is recommended.

Keywords: political skill, personal reputation, career satisfaction, teacher, high school

It is possible to portray schools as organizations where many internal and external stakeholders, with different and contradictory goals, are struggling for dominance. Although they are the subjects of the power struggle, the organizational definitions developed for schools often fail to reflect the complex network of relationships. Research on schools is mostly based on the conceptions of organizations developed for commercial organizations and bureaucracies. This results in our knowledge about schools reflecting the point of view of external stakeholders rather than the internal stakeholders. In reality, schools are more complex, less stable, and more unpredictable than traditional conceptions depict as the formal organization structure (Ball, 2012). Therefore, relying only on traditional power types of organizational science, such as authority, ideology or expertise, may not be enough for teachers to achieve their career goals. With authority, it may be enough to give orders to people for the achievement of a goal. The power of ideology can lead to the execution of organizational activities through generally accepted norms and beliefs without the need for external intervention. The expertise of individuals can ensure that they can dominate over those who do not have the same level of expertise. However, authority is rarely accepted without resistance; ideological integrity is rarely seen in public schools, and expertise often contradicts individual interests. In addition, the power of political relations in schools increases when these other powers weaken. Accordingly, approaching schools from a micropolitics perspective allows us to describe better the organizational structures of schools (Ball, 2012; Mintzberg, 1985).

Micropolitics is a concept developed to describe the political behaviors of employees in an organization. From the point of view of micropolitics, schools are political spaces in which different groups with different agendas and interests compete to achieve their goals. Resources such as success, prestige, promotion to administrative positions and social mobility are often limited in schools. Moreover, teachers usually believe that information about their performance is often distorted by other people in the school environment. Such negative thoughts stem from individual insecurities, hidden agendas, ideological conflicts and conflicts of responsibility. The political behaviors of teachers are mostly in response to these pressures (Blase, 2000). In this respect, politically skilled teachers devote a lot of time to networking, coalition building, being close to strong people, and negotiating, because teachers can meet their needs for respect and success, and can protect their interests through their personal connections as well as traditional formal power types (Durnalı & Ayyıldız, 2019). In other words, according to micropolitics perspective, the development of personal reputation usually requires political skill in addition to formal authority. Personal reputation can, in turn, increase career satisfaction through preventing punishment and facilitating the attainment of personal career goals (Blickle et al., 2011). Career satisfaction mostly comes after personal reputation, as it predominantly

results from subjective evaluations about existing work conditions (Fu, 2010).

However, the relationships between political skill, personal reputation and career satisfaction might also be affected by personal factors, such as gender, educational status, teacher union membership, professional experience, administrative experience and desire to become an administrator. For instance, gaining reputation and career success is particularly challenging for female teachers. The opportunities for career advancement, such as access to important information about the school environment and participation in social networks, are more difficult for them to reach than their male counterparts. Therefore, female teachers should be more politically skilled to attain reputation and career success (Perrewé & Nelson, 2004). Furthermore, teachers usually tend to use diplomas or certificates, such as postgraduate degrees, as a means of interpersonal influence to gain reputation and to preempt their rivals in acquiring career-related rewards (Spence, 2002). Similarly, teachers can use the power of teacher unions, which strengthen the negotiation capabilities of teachers and transform them into a part of a large network, to build up reputations and reach their own career goals (Wasser & Lamare, 2014).

In addition, teachers acquire political skill over time. Teachers often endeavor to develop their skills related to classroom management and teaching methods at the beginning of their careers. Expectations of administrators, colleagues, parents and students, as well as professional values, occupy an important place in teachers' opinions about school life during this period. As they gain experience, they realize that such factors are not sufficient for attaining reputation and career goals, and they need to consider political relations to succeed. This change is mainly due to the fact that they feel vulnerable to destructive criticisms and aggressive behaviors arising from the work environment. Against such difficulties, teachers are developing the political self to protect themselves and take measures against possible future attacks (Blase, 2000). Political skill is also expected to be possessed by all administrators, regardless of their gender, education or experience, and by those who desire to become an administrator. Performance is no longer the only criterion for executive evaluations and appointments. Politically skilled administrators (and administrator candidates), who are successful at personal and organizational reputation management, can easily adapt to fast-changing conditions. This also leads them to be in greater demand and facilitates reaching career goals (Ferris et al., 2007).

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between high school teachers' political skill and career satisfaction and the mediating role of personal reputation in this relationship. In this regard, first, direct predictive effects of dimensions of political skill on career satisfaction and, then, their indirect effects through personal reputation were examined. Studies regarding political skill, personal reputation and career satisfaction can introduce a new perspective to analyze the complexity of school life, since there are discrepancies between the school image

presented in organizational theories and what teachers experience in real work life. Micropolitics studies can also enable teachers and researchers to explore new types of leadership, based on realities and decision-making processes experienced in school life. These studies can reveal the degree to which political skill is effective in achieving personal reputation and career success, which are among the main goals of teachers' work lives (Brosky, 2011). In addition, studies of teachers have already examined relationships of political skill to influence tactics (Brosky, 2011), job satisfaction (Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015), psychological capital (Özdemir & Gören, 2015), burnout (Jawahar et al., 2007) and leadership orientation (Özdemir, 2018). Although there are studies on the relationship between political skill, personal reputation and career success in the literature (Blickle et al., 2011), studies on teachers have not been conducted yet. Furthermore, there are studies indicating that the relationship between the dimensions of political skill, personal reputation and career success should be examined (Kimura, 2015).

Theoretical underpinnings

The effects of political skill on career success are explained predominantly based on interpersonal influence theory, since career success can only be partially related to academic skills and hard work (Ferris et al., 2005a, 2007). Therefore, employees must have political skill to achieve their career goals. In other words, employees must have expertise in interpersonal influence strategies such as persuasion, manipulation and negotiation (Mintzberg, 1985). By using these strategies in interpersonal relations, employees can consciously manage the impressions they want to leave on others. In this respect, they can produce new images or make their existing images more attractive to influence other people and gain personal benefit (Higgins et al., 2003).

The second theoretical basis of this study is signal theory of Spence (2002). Signal theory is related to the reduction of information asymmetry between different sides of communication, such as administrator-employee or employer-employee. Individuals send signals to convey information, reduce uncertainty or influence the beliefs of other individuals. For example, highly-qualified candidates use documents, such as diplomas and certificates reflecting the quality of their educational backgrounds, to send signals and thus to stand out from their low-qualification competitors and to eliminate the lack of knowledge of employers (Spence, 2002). Signal theory is used to explain the effects of information asymmetry in management literature. By means of signals, signallers can gain reputation in the eyes of other individuals by highlighting their characteristics, behaviors and actions. Politically skilled individuals can reach their career goals more easily by establishing close

relationships with their superiors and by generating signals shaping the perceptions of other employees (Blickle et al., 2011).

Political skill also makes it easier for employees to develop social exchange relationships with their superiors and colleagues and to strengthen their personal reputation. Social exchange theory (Blau, 2017) is based on the assumption that the resources we need and value, such as goods, money, service, friendship, status and reputation, can be obtained from other social actors. Individuals with resources that may be subject to exchange are involved in the social exchange process and generate benefits for other people or organizations at a specific cost. In this way, benefits are mutually exchanged.

Political skill and career satisfaction

Political skill involves interpersonal influence and networking skills, the use of formal authority by showing sensitivity to the feelings and thoughts of other employees; and the skills of predicting what is possible and establishing the necessary alliances to achieve personal goals. These are usually required to be successful in today's organizations, which have predominantly become a political scene (Mintzberg, 1985). Although Mintzberg (1985) mainly relates the concept of political skill to formal sources of power, recent research tends to re-conceptualize it as an ability to be effective in informal interactions (Kimura, 2015). For example, Ferris et al. (2005a) define political skill as an individual's understanding of the desires of other employees and the reasons behind their actions in the organization, and the use of this information to ensure that others act in accordance with his/her personal and/or organizational goals.

Political skill requires the knowledge of how power flows in the organization from the top to bottom, the channels and sources of formal and informal influences, the kinds of friendship and enmity, the organization's public and secret rules, and which of these can be violated. With the help of this information, it is possible to identify the interpersonal sources of influence required to persuade other employees to act in a desired way (Mintzberg, 1985). In the light of these debates, it can be argued that political skill refers to *a comprehensive pattern of social competencies, with cognitive, emotional and behavioral manifestations* rather than limited behaviours specific to certain situations (Ferris et al., 2007). Thus, political skill consists of four dimensions: *social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking, and apparent sincerity* (Ferris et al., 2005a).

Social astuteness

Social astuteness involves accurately perceiving social situations, and personal interactions taking place within these settings. Politically skilled teachers are extremely successful in observing others' behaviors and can adapt quickly to environmental changes (Brosky, 2011; Perrewé & Nelson, 2004). They have strong intuition and high self-awareness. In other words, they have the ability to identify with others to get something for themselves (Ferris et al., 2007).

Interpersonal influence

Political skill requires individuals to exert a strong influence on people around them. Teachers with a high level of interpersonal influence can adapt their behavior to different environments and situations to get the reactions they desire from their colleagues and other school stakeholders. Their flexibility facilitates the building of alliances they need to achieve their goals. Those people also possess the skill of persuasion (Ferris et al., 2005a; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015).

Networking

Politically skilled individuals tend to see interpersonal interactions as an opportunity, not as a threat. In other words, political skill requires individuals to establish networks proactively and reach the resources they need through this network. Teachers with a high level of networking skills are able to reach resources by positioning themselves at an advantageous point within this network and establish alliances and coalitions to assess the opportunities they encounter. These people are good negotiators and conflict managers (Ferris et al., 2007).

Apparent sincerity

Achieving success in political relations requires a sincere and genuine attitude (Mintzberg, 1985). Therefore, politically skilled teachers should have a high level of sincerity, honesty, reliability and openness. Apparent sincerity is especially important for the success of attempts to influence other people. This is because it focuses on how the intentions behind the exhibited behavior are perceived by the target individuals (Brosky, 2011; Munyon et al., 2015). Influence attempts can only be successful if the influencer is perceived as possessing no hidden agenda (Ferris et al., 2005a).

Political skill is expected to have positive relationships with indicators of career success, such as financial income, life and career satisfaction. Career success, in addition to objective criteria, such as financial income and organizational position, can also be investigated by subjective criteria, such as life and career satisfaction (Blickle et al., 2011). Moreover, the term 'career' refers to a dynamic action full of ups and downs, rather than a stable and upward journey, as in the past (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Therefore, subjective criteria, such as career satisfaction, can be used as an indicator of people's welfare or perceived quality of life (Aryee & Luk, 1996).

Career satisfaction

This term refers to the satisfaction that individuals receive from the internal and external aspects of their careers, such as payment, progress and development opportunities. Career satisfaction is related to the extent to which the long-term expectations of one's careers are met (Judge et al., 1995). Similarly, Fu (2010) conceptualizes career satisfaction as a general level of happiness during an individual's chosen career. Conley et al. (2005) describe career satisfaction as the realization level of a teacher's career goals and expectations.

There are empirical studies that link political behavior and political knowledge with career success (e.g., Blickle et al., 2011); since socially astute employees who can accurately grasp the social interactions and the behaviors of their colleagues within the organization are able to know how to present themselves to others in a positive way and how to win their hearts. At the same time, those people can influence others to achieve their career goals (Todd et al., 2009). Such close interactions facilitate the establishment of intra-organizational contacts and relations. Interpersonal interactions lead to the creation of common interests and values on one hand, and the emergence of trust and respect on the other. These factors may facilitate the sharing, exchange and incorporation of resources within a network. They can also enable politically skilled individuals to build stronger coalitions and reach a wide variety of resources (Wei et al., 2012). Finally, if these people seem sincere in their attempts at influencing and building relationships, they can win the sympathy of other people and convince them to act in line with their career goals (Todd et al., 2009). Based on the discussion of political skill and career satisfaction in the literature, it is possible to develop the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: There is a positive relationship between social astuteness and career satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1b: There is a positive relationship between interpersonal influence and career satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1c: There is a positive relationship between networking and career satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1d: There is a positive relationship between apparent sincerity and career satisfaction.

The mediating role of personal reputation

The term reputation is often defined as the opinion people have toward a person or entity, based on his/her/its past behaviors or character (Cambridge, 2008). In other words, reputation is a general belief about the character of a person or entity. Past behavior should be presented to other people in a good way; because reputation is related to trust or distrust towards a person or living being stemming from an action or situation (Bromley, 1993).

However, in the management literature, the concept of reputation is defined in different ways. For example, Bromley (2001) has developed a definition, “disseminating ideas about a person or entity within the stakeholder or interest groups,” because reputation reflects a collective image revealed through communication. In business life, reputation emerges when individuals perform their duties effectively, and act cooperatively and helpfully towards their colleagues (Zinko et al., 2012).

At this point, Ferris et al. (2003) state that personal reputation is a perceptual identity. This identity reflects the complex combination of distinct personal characteristics, achievements, visible behaviors and images that are directly observable and/or transmitted through indirect sources. That is to say, personal reputation is not an instantaneous impression. On the contrary, it emerges when certain behaviors are consistently exhibited over time (Zinko et al., 2012). Similarly, Parsons (2005) states that the personal reputation of a teacher is related to how and to what extent his or her image is shared by the school stakeholders. Teachers' past achievements, classroom management skills and field knowledge are the basis of their personal reputations.

Therefore, we argue that the dimensions of political skill can contribute to the development of personal reputation (Zinko et al., 2012). Personal reputation requires understanding of the differentiated expectations of a variety stakeholders of an organization and knowing what to do to meet these expectations. In other words, a high level of social astuteness makes creating a personal reputation easier. Social astuteness can also give an advantage to individuals in determining which interpersonal sources of influence will be effective in a given circumstance (Blickle et al., 2011). For example, teachers' reputations are closely related to their influences on school administrators and students. The reputation of the teachers who can

control students' behaviors and influence them to exhibit certain behaviors is strengthened, and then they are considered successful teachers by administrators (Parsons, 2005). Similarly, politically skilled individuals can spread their signals in the organization in such a way that they can create a positive image through proactive networking activities, and can build their reputation. When these social skills are combined with individuals' ability to adapt their behaviors to different situations in a sincere way, it is possible to gain the trust and support of other people. In other words, individuals who look sincere in their actions receive more positive reactions than others and create their personal reputation more easily (Ferris et al., 2007). It is possible to reach the following hypotheses in the light of the findings about political skill and personal reputation in the literature.

Hypothesis 2a: There is a positive relationship between social astuteness and personal reputation.

Hypothesis 2b: There is a positive relationship between interpersonal influence and personal reputation.

Hypothesis 2c: There is a positive relationship between networking and personal reputation.

Hypothesis 2d: There is a positive relationship between apparent sincerity and personal reputation.

It is possible to see career satisfaction as one of the consequences of personal reputation while political skill is accepted as one of its antecedents, since as personal reputation increases, the existing powers of individuals also increase. This extra power comes with a reputation, alleviates the need for individual accountability and gives them a certain degree of autonomy in the face of the norms to which they must conform (Zinko et al., 2012). Therefore, positive impressions of individuals in the past lead to subsequent gains of support from organizational executives, and thus to gain an advantage in their work life. Their reputation makes them seem more powerful and capable, making it easier for other employees to respond positively when they ask for help. Moreover, administrators often have to settle for limited information resources in performance assessments. This uncertainty forces them to make decisions based on clues that are not relevant to performance. In other words, in uncertain situations, personal reputation can enhance performance evaluations (Blickle et al., 2011). It is therefore possible to reach the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between personal reputation and career satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Personal reputation mediates the relationship between social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking, apparent sincerity and career satisfaction.

The hypotheses of the study led to the emergence of a theoretical model consisting of the dimensions of political skill, personal reputation and career satisfaction. This model is presented in figure 1.

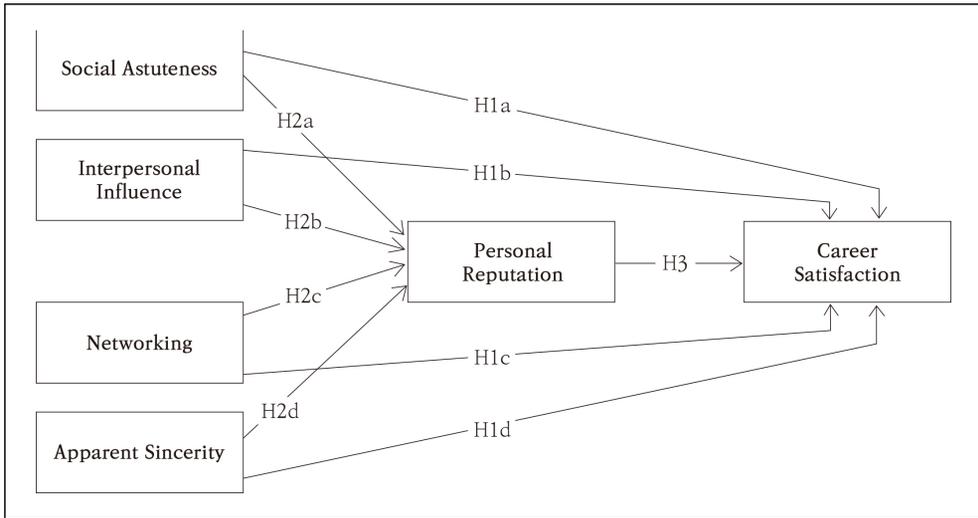


Figure 1. Research model and hypotheses

Method

This study uses a prediction design, a type of a correlational study. The independent and dependent variables do not occur simultaneously in prediction design. Instead, independent variables usually precede a dependent variable, based on a cause-and-effect relationship (Beins, 2017).

Population and sampling

The population of the study consists of 37,100 teachers working in 783 public high schools in Istanbul in the academic year 2018-2019. Correspondingly, the sample size was determined as 381. In the sampling, a stratified sampling method

was used, considering the differentiation of Istanbul districts in terms of quality of life. The strata were determined according to the Quality of Life Index in Istanbul, which was developed by Şeker (2015). According to this index, 39 districts in Istanbul were divided into five socio-economic groups. Kadıköy from the first group; Fatih from the second group; Maltepe, Bahçelievler, and Küçükçekmece from the third group; Kağıthane, Ümraniye, and Avcılar from the fourth group; Sancaktepe and Esenler districts from the fifth group were selected randomly. 11,965 teachers are employed in the 10 selected districts. The number of teachers to be selected in each district was determined by comparing the number of teachers in the districts to the total number. Five hundred surveys, more than required by sample size calculations, were delivered as a measure against potential response errors. Surveys were delivered and collected by the authors through school visits. It took an average of 15 minutes to complete the surveys. Of the 500 surveys distributed, 449 were returned. Thirty-two were not included in the analysis due to erroneous or incomplete data, and 36 due to being clear outliers. 381 scales, which equal the determined sample size, were included in the analysis.

66% of the participants were female and 34% were male. 73% hold a graduate degree and 27% hold a postgraduate degree. While 60% are union members, 40% are not. 44% have 1-15 years of experience and 56% have 16 years and over work experience. 24% of the participants had been in administrative positions in the past. In the future, 25% are planning to pursue a career in school administration or higher positions.

Data collection tools

The Political Skill Scale (PSS; Ferris et al., 2005a), the Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS; Greenhaus et al., 1990) and the Personal Reputation Scale (PRS; Hochwarter et al., 2007) were used to collect data. Adaptation studies were conducted with teachers working in high schools in Ankara. Explanatory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were conducted with different groups of participants.

The political skill scale

The original PSS (Ferris et al., 2005a), consists of 18 items. The four-factor scale, obtained as a result of the adaptation studies, consists of 15 items and is a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*.” The total variance explained by the PSS was 67.65%. The PSS consists of four dimensions: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking, and apparent sincerity. There

are four items in the social astuteness dimension. The Cronbach's alpha of this dimension was .80. The sample item for this dimension was, "I have good intuition or savvy about how to present myself to others." There are four items in the interpersonal influence dimension. The Cronbach's alpha of this dimension was .80. The sample item for this dimension was, "I am able to communicate easily and effectively with others." There are four items in the networking dimension. The Cronbach's alpha of this dimension was .72. The sample item for this dimension was, "I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others." There are three items in the apparent sincerity dimension. The Cronbach's alpha of this dimension was .83. The sample item for this dimension was, "When communicating with others, I try to be genuine in what I say and do." The four-factor structure of the scale was tested with a confirmatory factor analysis. The result of the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that a four-factor model captured distinct constructs and provided an acceptable (Hu & Bentler, 1999) fit to the data, with $[\chi^2 [83] = 242,602, p < 0.01]$, $\chi^2 /sd = 2.92$, RMSEA = .07, GFI = .91, IFI = .92 and CFI = .92.

The career satisfaction scale

The original scale consists of five items. The single factor scale obtained as a result of the adaptation studies consists of five items and is a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The total variance explained by the CSS is 65.33%. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .84. The sample item for the scale was, "I am satisfied with my progress in achieving my career goals." The single factor structure of the scale was tested with confirmatory factor analysis. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis yielded the following fit indexes: $[\chi^2 [5] = 13,520, p < 0.01]$, $\chi^2 /sd = 2.70$, RMSEA = .07, GFI = .99, IFI = .99 and CFI = .99. As a result, the analysis indicated that the single factor model is confirmed, in other words, provided an acceptable fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The personal reputation scale

The scale, developed by Hochwarter et al. (2007), consists of 12 items. The single factor scale, obtained as a result of the adaptation studies, consists of eight items and is a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The total variance explained by the PRS was 58.40%. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .80. The sample item for scale was, "I am highly respected by others." The single factor structure of the scale was tested with confirmatory

factor analysis. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis yielded the following fit indexes: [$\chi^2(17) = 42,440, p < .01$], $\chi^2/sd = 2.50$, RMSEA = .07, GFI = .97, IFI = .98 and CFI = .97. As a result, the analysis indicated that the single factor model is confirmed, in other words, provided an acceptable fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Control variables

Gender, educational status, teacher union membership, professional experience, administrative experience and desire to become an administrator were included as control variables. These variables were dummy coded as female = 0, male = 1; graduate degree = 0, postgraduate degree = 1; union member = 0, non-member = 1; 1-15 years of experience = 0, 16 years and above experience = 1; administrative experience = 0, no administrative experience = 1; desire to become an administrator = 0, no desire to become an administrator = 1.

Data analysis

To determine the appropriateness of the data for multivariate analysis, the assumption of normality was examined. In order to examine multivariate normality, skewness and kurtosis coefficients were examined as a descriptive method. The skewness and kurtosis coefficients were found to be within the range of -1 to +1. In addition, graphical methods, such as box-plot graphs, multiple scatter plots and Q-Q graphs, were used. Box-plot graphs indicated that the data was spread symmetrically around the medians. When multiple scatter graphs were analyzed, it was seen that the data were distributed elliptically. Q-Q graphs demonstrated that the overlap between the actual values and the expected values revealed a straight line with an angle of 45 degrees (Garson, 2012).

The data were first analyzed with descriptive statistics such as arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The level, direction, and significance of the relationship between the variables were calculated with the Pearson correlation coefficient. The multicollinearity problem was tested using correlation coefficients and variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Then, hierarchical regression analysis and mediation tests were conducted. In the first stage, the relationship between the independent variables and the mediator variable was tested. In the second stage, the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable was tested, and finally, the change in relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was examined when the mediator variable was included in the analysis.

PROCESS macro, which consists of bootstrapping procedures, was used to test the significance of indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In addition, the Durbin-Watson test was used to detect the existence of autocorrelation among the residuals.

Findings

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients of variables were presented before conducting hierarchical regression analysis. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations

| Variables | Mean | sd | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. Social Astuteness | 4.09 | 0.55 | | | | | |
| 2. Interpersonal Influence | 4.18 | 0.56 | .72* | | | | |
| 3. Networking | 3.67 | 0.68 | .61* | .64* | | | |
| 4. Apparent Sincerity | 4.64 | 0.43 | .44* | .50* | .40* | | |
| 5. Career Satisfaction | 3.74 | 0.71 | .48* | .50* | .45* | .31* | |
| 6. Personal Reputation | 4.23 | 0.49 | .66* | .65* | .60* | .51* | .54* |

Note. $n = 381$; * $p < .01$

As seen in Table 1, apparent sincerity is the most frequently used political skill dimension, while networking is the least used. There is a moderate and high correlation between all variables. The highest relationship level between the variables is .72, which implies that there is no multicollinearity problem (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Table 2 presents hierarchical regression analysis results.

The VIF values in Table 2 range between 1.07 and 2.67, which supports the assumption that there is no multicollinearity problem. In a similar vein, the variation of Durbin-Watson values between 1.76 and 1.90 indicates that there is no positive or negative autocorrelation between the error terms in the regression models.

Table 2. Results of hierarchical regression analysis

| Predictor Variables | Personal Reputation | | | | Career Satisfaction | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|------|---------|------|---------------------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | |
| | β | VIF | β | VIF | β | VIF | β | VIF | β | VIF |
| Control Variables | | | | | | | | | | |
| F(0) vs M(1) | -.01 | 1.29 | -.05 | 1.33 | -.04 | 1.29 | -.08 | 1.33 | -.06 | 1.33 |
| G(0) vs PG(1) | .02 | 1.07 | -.02 | 1.07 | .02 | 1.07 | -.01 | 1.07 | .01 | 1.07 |
| UM: Yes(0) vs No(1) | .10* | 1.09 | .02 | 1.13 | .08 | 1.09 | .01 | 1.13 | .01 | 1.13 |
| Prof. Exp.:1-15(0) vs 16+(1) | .21** | 1.09 | .10** | 1.13 | .20** | 1.09 | .12** | 1.13 | .09* | 1.15 |
| Adm. Exp.: Yes(0) vs No(1) | -.04 | 1.27 | -.05 | 1.28 | .01 | 1.27 | .01 | 1.28 | .02 | 1.29 |
| DTBAA: Yes(0) vs No(1) | -.08 | 1.27 | .01 | 1.31 | -.01 | 1.27 | -.07 | 1.31 | .07 | 1.31 |
| Main Effects | | | | | | | | | | |
| SA | | | .30** | 2.31 | | | .21** | 2.31 | .12 | 2.51 |
| Int. Inf. | | | .20** | 2.57 | | | .22** | 2.57 | .16* | 2.67 |
| NW | | | .21** | 1.93 | | | .19** | 1.93 | .13* | 2.03 |
| AS | | | .18** | 1.44 | | | .01 | 1.44 | -.05 | 1.51 |
| PR | | | | | | | | | .30** | 2.29 |
| <i>F</i> | 3.94 | | 47.74 | | 2.96 | | 17.79 | | 19.25 | |
| <i>R</i> ² | .06 | | .56 | | .05 | | .33 | | .37 | |
| Adj. <i>R</i> ² | .04 | | .55 | | .03 | | .31 | | .35 | |
| ΔR^2 | | | .50 | | | | .28 | | .04 | |
| DW | | | 1.76 | | | | | | 1.90 | |

Note. $n = 381$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; F = Female; M = Male; G = Graduate; PG = Postgraduate; UM = Union Membership; Prof. Exp. = Professional Experience; Adm. Exp. = Administrative Experience; DTBAA = Desire to Become an Administrator; SA = Social Astuteness; Int. Inf. = Interpersonal Influence; NW = Networking; AS = Apparent Sincerity; PR = Personal Reputation; DW = Durbin-Watson

As shown in Table 2, the effects of control variables on personal reputation were analyzed in model 1. Gender and educational status were found to have no significant effect on personal reputation, whereas union membership and professional experience variables were significant predictors of personal reputation. Control variables accounted for 4% of the variance in the dependent variable. The direction of the relationship between these variables and personal reputation suggested that the personal reputation scores of teachers with 16 years or more experience and that of non-union members were relatively higher.

In the second model, when the main variables were included in the analysis, union membership was no longer a significant predictor of personal reputation; but professional experience retained its significant effect. In other words, the effect of these variables might be absorbed by some dimensions of political skill, which

implies that teachers' use of political skill is varied by their union membership or professional experience. In support of the hypotheses 2a-b-c-d, significant and positive relationships were found between social astuteness ($\beta = .30, p < .01$), interpersonal influence ($\beta = .20, p < .01$), networking ($\beta = .21, p < .01$), apparent sincerity ($\beta = .18, p < .01$) and personal reputation. Control variables and independent variables accounted for 55% of the variance in the dependent variable. Accordingly, we argue that the effect of control variables on personal reputation is limited ($F = 3.94, p < .01, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .04$) while independent variables account for a greater portion of the variance ($F = 47.74, p < .01, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .55$).

When the results of the prediction of career satisfaction were examined, professional experience was the only significant predictor among control variables in the first model. Control variables accounted for 3% of the variance in the dependent variable. The direction of the relationship between professional experience and career satisfaction indicated that teachers with professional experience of 16 years or more had higher career satisfaction than those with less experience. This finding supports Blase (2000), who states that teachers realize the necessity of political skill for career success as their professional experience increases.

In the second model, when the main variables were included in the analysis, the professional experience remained as a significant predictor of career satisfaction. In support of the hypotheses 1a-b-c, social astuteness ($\beta = .21, p < .01$), interpersonal influence ($\beta = .22, p < .01$) and networking ($\beta = .19, p < .01$) were found to be significantly and positively related to career satisfaction. On the other hand, hypothesis 1d was not supported because apparent sincerity ($\beta = .01, p > .05$) was not a significant predictor of career satisfaction. Although apparent sincerity ($\beta = .01, p > .05$) was not found as a significant predictor in this model, it might have an indirect effect on career satisfaction due to its significant relationship with personal reputation. Control variables and dimensions of political skill together accounted for 31% of the variance in the dependent variable. Accordingly, control variables had a limited effect on career satisfaction ($F = 2.96, p < .01, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .03$). On the other hand, when the independent variables were included in the model, there was a large increase in the amount of variance explained ($F = 17.79, p < .01, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .31$).

In the third model, when personal reputation was included in the analysis, social astuteness ($\beta = .12, p > .05$) was no longer significant predictor of career satisfaction, whereas the effects of professional experience ($\beta = .09, p < .05$), interpersonal influence ($\beta = .16, p < .05$) and networking ($\beta = .13, p < .05$) weakened. As mentioned in hypothesis 3, a significant and positive relationship was found between personal reputation and career satisfaction ($\beta = .30, p < .01$). The independent variables together accounted for 35% of the variability of career satisfaction. As seen in Table 2, the variability of career satisfaction was largely caused by social astuteness, interpersonal influence and networking; but the effects

of control variables and personal reputation were limited. We argue that the variance caused by personal reputation was largely due to its mediating role in the relationship between these three independent variables and career satisfaction. A bootstrap analysis was conducted to determine the significance of indirect effects by using 5000 replicates with 95% confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Results excluded zero and confirmed that professional experience ($B = 0.15$, $SE = 0.4$, $CI [0.0754, 0.2283]$), social astuteness ($B = 0.34$, $SE = 0.5$, $CI [0.2408, 0.4417]$), interpersonal influence ($B = 0.31$, $SE=0.5$, $CI [0.2209, 0.4190]$) and networking ($B = 0.27$, $SE = 0.4$, $CI [0.1971, 0.3362]$) have an indirect effect on career satisfaction through personal reputation. The disappearance of the significant effects of social astuteness when personal reputation was included in the model indicates a full mediation effect, while the weakening of the effects of interpersonal influence, networking and the professional experience is a sign of partial mediation. As a result, it is possible to state that hypothesis 4 is partially supported because apparent sincerity was not found to be a significant predictor of career satisfaction.

Discussion and conclusion

In this study, we examined the relationships between the dimensions of political skill, personal reputation and career satisfaction. We found that the most common political skill used by teachers was apparent sincerity, while the least used skill was networking. It can be argued that this finding is consistent with similar studies (e.g., Brosky, 2011); because teachers usually deem sincerity as an integral part of their professional values (Close, 2013) while networking is frequently regarded as a skill to be used when necessary to use opportunities (Ferris et al., 2007).

Moreover, the finding that social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking and apparent sincerity positively influenced personal reputation was generally consistent with previous studies, even though they were largely conducted in non-educational organizations. For example, Close (2013), in his conceptual paper, argues that social astuteness can enable teachers and administrators to accurately read the dynamics of complex situations, which also helps them to determine appropriate influence strategies to build reputation. In this regard, qualitative studies with managers of private sector firms confirmed that interpersonal influence actions aiming to create accountability and develop a trust culture were among the characteristics of highly reputable managers (Smith et al., 2009). At this point, Kim (2013), in her qualitative study with private sector managers, found that managers could enhance personal reputation through networking with potential career sponsors and key members of an organization. Finally, apparent sincerity was

usually found to be among key factors increasing the personal reputation of managers, as employees expected them to be sincere and certain in their interpersonal relationships and influence strategies (Trevino et al., 2000). The consistency across educational and non-educational organizations might stem from the relatively objective nature of building a personal reputation. In other words, it arises when employees—and also teachers—meet role expectations regarding their profession, and have a positive image among stakeholders (Parsons, 2005; Zinko et al., 2012). Therefore, we argue that the four dimensions of political skill have an important role in increasing or protecting teachers' personal reputations.

The findings also demonstrated that social astuteness, interpersonal influence and networking had a positive effect on career satisfaction, whereas apparent sincerity did not. Our findings on the relationship between political skill and career satisfaction are partially consistent with those of previous studies, since there are conflicting findings on the relationship between political skill and career satisfaction in the literature. For example, Lu and Guy (2018), in their quantitative study with public sector employees, found that interpersonal influence and apparent sincerity had positive effects on career satisfaction. Maroulis (2015), who reached a different finding in her quantitative study with public and private sector managers, suggests that interpersonal influence and networking could be associated with the perception of career success. On the other hand, Shakti and Srivastava (2004), in their quantitative study with private sector mid-level managers, found that interpersonal influence, networking and apparent sincerity had positive effects on career satisfaction. At this point, there are researchers claiming that political skill can cause different effects depending on cultural values (Özdemir & Gören, 2015), sectors (Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, 2005) and position in the workplace (Judge et al., 1995). Furthermore, career satisfaction usually relies on subjective criteria, such as happiness and personal expectations, which might potentially lead to results varying due to contextual and personal differences (Fu, 2010; Conley et al., 2005). Thus, it is possible to conclude that the relationship between political skill and career satisfaction can differ according to contextual and personal factors, and theoretical discussions on this topic have only been partially supported (Blickle et al., 2011; Kimura, 2015; Todd et al., 2009).

The findings of this study regarding the relationship between personal reputation and career satisfaction largely overlap with the results of previous studies (Blickle et al., 2011; Ng & Feldman, 2014), since managing the perceptions of school stakeholders to build a positive image, including expertise and performance, is regarded among prerequisites for being a successful teacher (Blase, 2000). Yet, one of the dimensions of political skill, apparent sincerity, was not a significant predictor of career satisfaction. Therefore, we argue that findings of this study partially supported the theoretical arguments in the related literature (Kimura, 2015; Blickle

et al., 2011). In addition, personal reputation had a full mediating role in the relationship between social astuteness and career satisfaction. This may be due to the fact that social astuteness is largely dependent upon an individual's managing his/her impression to correspond to others' expectations and organizational roles (Ferris et al., 2003). In other words, socially astute teachers can observe the behaviors of other colleagues accurately and respond to environmental demands quickly. They thus can increase their personal reputation, which, in turn, enhances their career satisfaction. Furthermore, we argue that professional experience, interpersonal influence and networking, whose effects on career satisfaction were partially mediated by personal reputation, can influence career satisfaction directly or through alternative channels than personal reputation. On this point, Baron and Markman (2000) note that reputation alone is not sufficient for success; past experience, personal interaction and networking skills can also directly affect the success of individuals.

Theoretical and practical implications

This study contributes to the educational administration literature in many respects. First, this study is the first empirical study to examine the relationships of social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking and apparent sincerity to personal reputation and career satisfaction. In addition, the effects of variables such as gender, educational status, teacher union membership, professional experience, administrative experience and the desire to become an administrator were also investigated. In this way, the theoretical models put forward in the literature (Blickle et al., 2011; Kimura, 2015), were tested, and the theoretical propositions regarding apparent sincerity were refuted. The results indicate that political skill can be affected by cultural values and sectoral differences. We suggest that the theory development studies regarding political skill should take into consideration the meaning and importance that employees attributed to the political skill in different cultural environments and sectors.

Besides testing the theoretical models in the relevant literature, these findings revealed that there may be other factors, such as political skill, that could build the personal reputation and career satisfaction of teachers, other than professional knowledge and performance. At this point, Ferris et al.(2005b) suggest that employees could gain skills that enhance their careers through political skill training, such as the ability to express their thoughts more effectively, access important information, and work more closely with colleagues and build relationships based on trust. For this reason, providing political skill training to teachers, especially those early in their careers, may yield positive results for teachers and schools (Balci et al.,

2016). On the other hand, there may be teachers who have high professional competence and effort but low political skill. They may have difficulty in expressing themselves to administrators, their colleagues and other stakeholders and may be adversely affected by this situation. School administrators should be aware of the potential negative impacts of political skill and avoid making unfair evaluations due to the influence of politically skilled teachers during performance appraisals. Therefore, it is suggested to organize training programs for school administrators and teachers about the positive and negative effects of political skill.

Limitations and implications for further research

This study was conducted with a sample of teachers working in public high schools in Istanbul. For this reason, the results may not be generalized to teachers working at the other school levels or in private schools. Different results may also occur in studies conducted with teachers residing in smaller settlements. Furthermore, the fact that the study was carried out using self-reported scales may cause doubts about the accuracy of the participants' responses. In addition to these limitations, variables that may be effective in acquiring and using political skill, such as age, work experience before starting the teaching profession and school size (an indicator of the bureaucratic distance between the administrator and the teacher) were not included in this study. Nevertheless, the number and nature of the control variables included in the study and the consistency of the results with those from the past studies on teachers (Brosky, 2011) can be deemed as factors increasing the reliability of the study.

We can test the validity of the results of this study by using samples selected from cities of different sizes in future studies. The use of samples selected from private schools as well as public schools may enable the generalization of results to different school environments. In these studies, the use of data collected from third-party observers as well as self-report scales can give researchers different perspectives. The inclusion of different control variables in future studies, which may be effective in the acquisition and use of political skill, may alleviate possible doubts about endogeneity bias.

Further studies should also focus on exploring how political skill affects career satisfaction through channels other than personal reputation. A study including factors such as expertise, knowledge, job skills and performance, as well as political skill, can further elucidate in detail the impact of political skill on career satisfaction. Moreover, we suggest conducting studies on how school principals evaluate highly qualified teachers, in terms of expertise, professional experience and performance, who have poor political skill, as well as politically skilled teachers with poor

qualifications in the school context. Finally, the effects of union membership and professional experience could be analyzed within a structural equation model to better portray the relationship of these variables to political skill, reputation and career satisfaction.

In conclusion, this study aimed to examine the influence of teachers' use of political skill dimensions, such as social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking and apparent sincerity, on their personal reputation and career satisfaction. The four dimensions of political skill were found to affect positively the personal reputation of teachers, while only apparent sincerity was not a significant predictor of career satisfaction. Based on the findings of the study, various suggestions are made to both scholars in this field and practitioners.

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