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# How to Enhance Occupational Health and Safety Practices in Schools: An Analysis Through the Eyes of School Principals

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## ABSTRACT

School principals are responsible for occupational health and safety (OHS) issues that may arise, and they play a critical role in ensuring that the health and safety procedures in schools can be improved with reference to the views of school principals. Twenty-one principals from kindergarten, primary, secondary and high schools participated in this qualitative research. The research data were collected via official documents and semi-structured interviews. Document and content analyses were utilized to examine the data. At the end of the research, the findings show that the OHS activities for school administrations are listed under the following headings: 'Occupational health and safety services', 'training and information', 'emergency drills', 'projects and activities', 'chemical waste and zero waste project', 'audit, guidance and supervision activities', 'health observation', 'precautions, measurements, safety and periodic checks', 'notifications', and 'OHS module'. The expectations of school administrations from senior management for the development of OHS practices address budget/financial support; directing the solutions to the school; the appointment of an OHS specialist; health and security personnel; more training, seminars, audit and technical support; cooperation among institutions. However, school administrators are expected to properly follow work and operations, assess risks and take action, and use school sources or apply for funds. The research results reveal important insights to achieve high standards of school health and safety by concluding with implications for successful school leadership, and recommendations for practice and research.

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Keywords:

Occupational health and safety, practices, school, school principal

## 1. Introduction

Occupational health and safety (OHS) has become more important for governments and organizations as OHS threats, and their negative consequences increase in workplaces. As a matter of fact, more specialists responsible for occupational health and safety have been employed in the OECD, ILO, and other government institutions (Burke, 2019). Occupational health and safety practices have four pillars internationally: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the World Health Organization (WHO), the EU European Commission Agency for Occupational Health and Safety (OSHA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Saygun, 2019). ILO defines occupational health and safety as "the discipline dealing with the prevention of work-related injuries and diseases as well as the protection and promotion of the health of workers," and OHS aims to improve working conditions and the environment through its practices (ILO, 1998, p. 22). Thus, occupational health and safety is linked to all industries, businesses and trade, including traditional manufacturing centres, information technology companies, healthcare, nursing homes, schools, and universities (Hughes & Ferrett, 2016).

Following the initiatives started in 1865 within the scope of OHS in Turkey, the OHS regulatory provisions, which were part of the Labor Law No. 4857 dated 2003, separated as the Occupational Health and Safety Law

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No. 6331 with European Union procedures (Kök Sevdalı, 2019). It has organized duties and responsibilities in this regard with this law issued in 2012. Besides, it is aimed to ensure occupational health and safety by giving specific roles to employers, employees, and governments (Erol, 2015). The projections of these regulations have been reflected in the schools. Besides the responsibilities specified in the law, the health and safety measures detailed by various regulations and circulars (Ministry of National Education-MEB 2014/16 Occupational Health and Safety Circular) must be implemented by all educational administrators according to the type of school (Bülbul, 2016).

The concepts of safety and health are an integral part of the education system, and the fact that most of the population has a direct or indirect relationship with the education sector increases public interest in this field (Kandemir & Argon, 2020). Today, the safety of schools has been questioned by researchers, administrators, teachers, students, and parents because it is impossible to talk about health education in an unsafe environment (Memduhoğlu & Taşdan, 2007). To ensure effective teaching, students and employees need to feel safe in the teaching environment. Effective learning and teaching are challenging to carry out in educational settings, where school stakeholders do not consider themselves safe. Every student needs to feel safe in every part of the school, as they do at home. Schools' administrative practices and established rules must aim to provide a healthy and safe environment (Turhan & Turan, 2012).

Occupational health in educational institutions can be defined as ensuring the physical, psychological, and social wellbeing of students, teachers, and other employees in the school by preventing risk factors that may adversely affect their health. On the other hand, occupational safety can be expressed as systematic and scientific studies that try to avoid dangerous situations for students, teachers, and other employees in the school without any accidents (Kök Sevdalı, 2019). Occupational health and safety in schools is an issue that affects all individuals associated with the school, including students, teachers, administrators, personnel, parents, and other visitors (OHS in schools, 2017). According to the Occupational Health and Safety Hazard Classes Communiqué (2012), some levels of education (preschool, primary, general secondary school, and university) are classified as "less hazardous," while technical and vocational secondary school (excluding disability education), technical and vocational secondary school (excluding disability education), and apprenticeship education are classified as "hazardous." Occupational health and safety in schools is a critical area of study, given the events that occur even in schools classified as 'less dangerous', concerning the written and visual media reports (Turhan & Turan, 2012), recent and possible future pandemic conditions.

Recent studies within the scope of OHS in schools can be listed as follows: School safety and violence through research and clinical understandings, trends, and improvement strategies (Cohen, 2021); monitoring and improving the health and wellbeing of school administrators (Riley et al., 2021); the development of disaster preparedness and safety school model (Widowati et al., 2021); the importance of incident reporting systems (Boucaut & Knobben, 2020); school safety in terms of occupational safety practices of human resources management (Kandemir & Argon, 2020); reopening schools in the context of Covid-19 (Melnick & Darling-Hammond, 2020); the work of school leaders during the Covid 19 pandemic (Pollock, 2020); basic occupational health and safety in a provincial directorate of national education (Van & Koç, 2020); safety culture among university students (Gong, 2019; Olcay et al., 2021); occupational health and safety practices of school administrators and the problems that they face (Kök Sevdalı, 2019); consideration of risk factors and warning signs, determination of concerns, follow-up practices and monitoring (Louvar Reeves & Brock, 2018); building schools' readiness to implement a comprehensive approach to school safety (Kingston et al., 2018); role of principals, teachers, and supervisors in OHS training (Andersson, et al., 2015); occupational health and safety education, problems and solution suggestions (Ceylan, 2012); safety in secondary education institutions (Turhan & Turan, 2012); the development of school safety research (Astor et al., 2010); OHS trainings in schools (Stokes & Cuervo, 2009). The literature review shows that there is very limited research examining the views of school principals about improving occupational health and safety practices in schools by uncovering the expectations of school administrations and senior (upper) management. However, school principals are at the center of the responsibilities regarding all kinds of health and safety problems that may occur in schools. Therefore, efforts to realize these expectations can promote occupational health and safety in schools.

This study aims to determine how occupational health and safety practices can be developed effectively in schools based on the views of school principals. To achieve this, the research reveals the OHS practices planned and conducted in schools, as well as school principals' views on expectations of school administrations and

senior management to make schools healthier and safer. The selection of the school principals participating in the study from different kindergarten, primary, secondary, and high school levels is crucial in giving a more comprehensive knowledge of OHS practices in schools. In addition, the researcher's experience as a school administrator responsible for OHS in the school contributes to the study's findings. Thus, this study can contribute to policymakers and practitioners on how to conduct occupational health and safety practices more effectively in schools. The study addresses the following questions:

- What kind of practices regarding occupational health and safety are planned and conducted in schools?
- What are the expectations of school administrations and senior management to improve OHS practices in schools?

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Research Model**

A basic interpretive qualitative research design (Merriam, 2002) was used in this study. This design enables to represent the OHS practices in schools, and to access the thoughts and perspectives of the school principals on how to provide more effective occupational health and safety practices in schools. Therefore, the research focuses on improving these practices in schools by defining the expectations of school administrators and the expectations of senior management from them. The efforts to realize these expectations can significantly contribute to school health and safety.

### **2.2. Participants**

The study group of the research consists of 21 school principals working in kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, and high schools in Nilüfer, Osmangazi, and Yıldırım districts of Bursa province in 2021. Maximum variation sampling was used to determine the study group of the research. Thus, it is aimed to reveal comprehensive data about OHS in schools. Research participants were randomly selected, and those who volunteered to participate were included in the study. Information about the participants of the study is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Demographic Information Regarding School Principals*

Code	Gender	School type	The total number of students	Administrative seniority (year)
P1	Male	High school	101-500	6-10
P2	Male	Primary school	101-500	6-10
P3	Female	Secondary school	1001-1500	6-10
P4	Male	Secondary school	101-500	6-10
P5	Male	Primary school	1-50	6-10
P6	Male	Secondary school	101-500	1-5
P7	Male	Primary school	501-1000	11-15
P8	Male	Secondary school	1001-1500	16-20
P9	Male	Secondary school	1501-1700	21 and above
P10	Male	High school	501-1000	6-10
P11	Male	Primary school	1001-1500	6-10
P12	Male	High school	501-1000	1-5
P13	Male	High school	501-1000	11-15
P14	Male	High school	101-500	1-5
P15	Male	Secondary school	101-500	1-5
P16	Female	Secondary school	501-1000	1-5
P17	Female	Kindergarten	51-100	6-10
P18	Female	High school	501-1000	11-15
P19	Male	Secondary school	1501-1700	6-10
P20	Male	High school	501-1000	11-15
P21	Female	Kindergarten	1-50	1-5

When Table 1 is examined, it can be stated that the school principals participating in the study provide sufficient diversity in terms of gender, school type, total number of students and service length as an

administrator. Since the number of female school principals is low in schools, a limited number of female participants participated in this study. However, it can be stated that the school administrators, who have different variables in the number of students and administrative seniority, provide variety to the research regarding their experiences with OHS practices in K-12 schools.

### 2.3. Data Collection Tool and Procedure

In the research, the data obtained from the school principals were collected with a semi-structured interview form, and other data were gathered by examining the relevant official documents. These two data collection methods were chosen to provide more comprehensive information on school OSH practices. The documents include the annual OHS plans and other official letters related to OHS sent to schools for an academic year. The review procedures of these documents cover accessing documents, checking authenticity as official documents, understanding what data are specifically for school administrations, and excluding practices for other institutions, and finally, using data.

The semi-structured interview form consists of two parts, including demographic information of the participants and interview questions. The demographic information section of the form gathers information about the participants. The second part includes interview questions related to what school administrators expect from senior management and senior management administrators about occupational health and safety practices in schools and how these practices can be improved. Interview questions were finalized by taking the opinions of an education administration field expert and a school principal. The same interview form was applied to all participants. Some interview questions are as follows: *“What do you expect from senior management to improve occupational health and safety practices in schools? What does the senior management expect from you in this regard?...”*.

To collect the research data, interviews were conducted with the school principals specified in the study group. Some of these interviews were completed face-to-face ( $n=14$ ) in principals' offices, while others were completed by telephone ( $n=2$ ) and online meetings ( $n=5$ ) with participants' preferences due to the pandemic conditions. The interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. Notes were taken during the interviews and transcribed by computer. Eleven pages of written text were obtained. In the coding of the research data, abbreviations P1, P2 were used to represent school principals. The role of the author in this study is to bring together participants' views and present evidence from official documents and, with direct quotations from different perspectives of the participants. Besides, the author reflected on the experiences and recent practices in the study when he worked as a school administrator in charge of occupational health and safety for two years. The data collection process for documents and interviews took 4 weeks in total.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

OHS practices in schools were gathered by analyzing the relevant official documents. The document analyzes were completed descriptively by adding the recent practices on the categories presented in the plans, and removing the ones that are unrelated to school administrations. Namely, the author adapted these practices through selecting and summarizing. In the conclusion and discussion section, these applications were discussed with more detailed information by presenting the author's experiences. The content analysis technique was used in the analysis of the interview data. In content analysis, researchers reach the concepts and relationships that will explain the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In this study, the data obtained from the school principals were analysed by unifying the concepts and situations related to each other.

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are discussed to ensure the study's credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To increase the credibility of the research, the participants' opinions are given with direct quotations when necessary. Principals, who are school administrators, were selected from different school levels (kindergarten, primary school, secondary school, high school). In addition to differences in the length of service of participants, the number of students at the school where they work also varies. In order to ensure data control before the analysis, data confirmation was conducted by reaching nine participants who agreed to interview again.

## 2.5. Ethical

This study was evaluated by the Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research Ethics Committee of the İnönü University and found ethically appropriate with its decision numbered 2021/7-1 and dated 25.03.2021. Participants were asked for their consent before participating in the study, and interviews were conducted only with those who gave consent to participate. Moreover, the participants were coded and personal information was not included in the study.

## 3. Findings

The first research question is as follows: "What kind of practices regarding occupational health and safety are planned and conducted in schools?". In this context, documents were analyzed to present the plans of occupational health and safety practices sent to the school administrations by the senior management as official letters, and recent practices were also considered. Tablo 2 includes up-to-date practices that are not yet reflected in the plans. In addition, the table below presents practices excluding those for which school administrators are not responsible.

**Table 2.** Annual OHS Practices for School Administrations\*

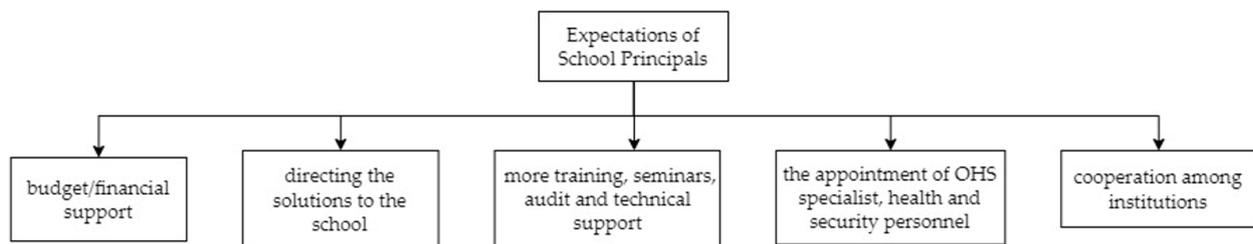
Scope	Practices
Occupational health and safety services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ Creation of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Board and carrying out the necessary transactions (institutions with more than 50 employees)</li> <li>⊗ Determination of risk assessment teams</li> <li>⊗ Creation of Emergency Teams, planning and implementation</li> <li>⊗ Creation of Search, Rescue, First Aid, Communication, Evacuation and Protection Team members</li> </ul>
Training and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ Training of OHS board members</li> <li>⊗ Completion of Basic Occupational Health and Safety Training of Employees</li> <li>⊗ Completion of training in risk assessment, first aid, fire, search, rescue, first aid, communication, evacuation and protection team members</li> <li>⊗ Follow-up of OHS training of vocational and technical Anatolian high school students and trainees and apprentices</li> <li>⊗ Providing special training to personnel affiliated with special training and guidance services</li> <li>⊗ Informing employees to evaluate occupational health and safety risk</li> <li>⊗ Providing training on the use and maintenance of personal protective equipment</li> </ul>
Emergency drills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ Conducting personnel evacuation drills</li> <li>⊗ Carrying out warning/alarm (such as fire, or earthquake) drills</li> </ul>
Chemical waste and zero waste applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ Collection of chemical waste and retention of quantity data</li> <li>⊗ Implementation of the zero waste project</li> <li>⊗ Registration and data entry into e-CBS system</li> </ul>
Audit, guidance and supervision activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ Monitoring audits, guidance and periodic controls</li> <li>⊗ Detection of nonconformity and carrying out preventive activities</li> </ul>
Health observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ Monitoring of student vaccination activities</li> <li>⊗ Analysis of drinking water</li> <li>⊗ Inspection of school canteens, kitchens and food-related places</li> </ul>
Precautions, measurements, safety and periodic checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ Carrying out periodic inspections of work equipment</li> <li>⊗ Bringing schools into compliance with health and safety signs regulations</li> <li>⊗ Review of risk assessment reports and follow-up of necessary works</li> </ul>
Projects and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ Follow-up of work and procedures related to school projects such as nutrition-friendly school; 'My school is clean' (Improving Hygiene Conditions in Educational Institutions and Preventing Infection); a white flag</li> </ul>
Notifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ Keeping and reporting occupational accident and occupational diseases records</li> <li>⊗ Keeping and reporting event records in the near-miss</li> </ul>
OHS MODULE (MEBBİS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ Modulating / updating school information</li> <li>⊗ Modulating information about risk assessment teams, emergency teams</li> <li>⊗ Risk-based allowance entry</li> <li>⊗ Modulating drill reports and emergency evacuation plans</li> </ul>

\*adapted from OHS plans of Educational institutions in Bursa Province

In line with the observations made regarding the practices shared in Table 2, it can be commented that OHS practices with comprehensive work and transactions are seen as a priority and are becoming more detailed. To briefly mention, OHS practices in schools start with forming the boards and teams in line with the plan sent by the senior management and continue with training and informative procedures. In addition, emergency drills and periodic checks are carried out and the relevant data are entered into the modules. Also

in these module sections there are lines where information about the school, the risks and the planned measures are entered and grants are applied for. On the other hand, audit and guidance activities and projects such as 'our school is clean', nutrition-friendly school, and zero waste are carried out and checked time to time in a year. However, schools may have informational deficiencies about the records of drinking water analyses, occupational accidents, occupational diseases and near-miss occurring in schools at a national level.

The second research question is as follows: "What are the expectations of school administrations and senior managements to improve OHS practices in schools?". School principals' views about school administrators' expectations from senior managements (Figure 1) and expectations of senior managements from school administrators (Figure 2) were revealed to improve occupational health and safety practices in schools.



**Figure 1.** Themes for Expectations of the School Principals

Within the scope of the expectations of the school principals regarding OHS, many of the participants highlighted the necessity of financial support. Accordingly, the participants stated:

- "I expect financial assistance from senior management to complete the shortcomings" (P3, secondary school),*
- "Financial support is required to carry out all occupational health and safety-related procedures in my school" (P14, high school),*
- "The expectations of senior management and the economic power of the school are contradictory, not enough" (P11, primary school),*
- "Kindergartens try to solve them with dues with the school budget, and they fall short" (P17, kindergarten),*
- "Funding for OHS and budget required for some equipment" (P6, secondary school),*
- "We expect to meet the financial burden of measures" (P2, primary school),*
- "We expect support for the solution, elevator fares are very expensive to repair and are left to us, schools can need repair even after the first 3 or 4 years of building... also strict control is required" (P18, high school),*
- "What we expect from the upper management is a special budget on this issue" (P13, high school).*

The participant as mentioned above, opinions show that school administrators need financial support for OHS practices. Furthermore, one said delivery of necessary materials to schools to take necessary measures instead of financial support and stated that "...as school administrators, we demand that all the measures expected by the OHS regulation in both newly built schools and existing schools are provided by the governorships during the summer holidays when the schools are closed..." (P2, primary school). A participant who shared a similar opinion said, "When the age range of the student group we work with is taken into account, accidents occur frequently. However, in some cost-intensive measures, the school administration is faced with a budget problem. Senior management should support providing the material for safety measures" (P16, secondary school).

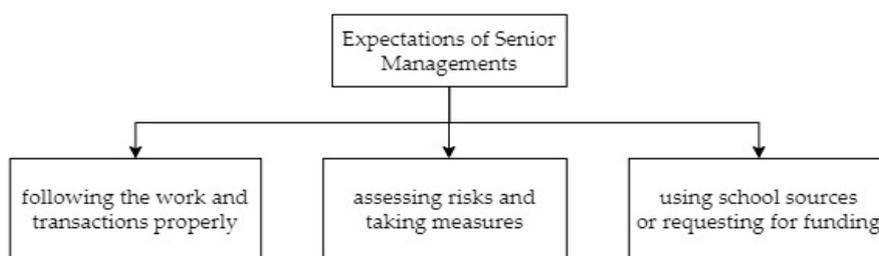
One participant (P8, secondary school) shared: "In the summer, they come to assess the OHS, and we are reported, told to sort it out somehow. Don't ask for money; convince the parent. Instead, it would be more appropriate to direct the solution of the problem to us". Similarly, P10 (high school) demands that "more visits and controls are required, as well as the solution, the specialist, the authorized companies to the school".

Regarding the cleanliness of schools and improvement of physical conditions by emphasizing cooperation among institutions (P9, secondary school), a statement is that "Municipalities should take over and cooperate. Parents and schools should not talk about money". On the other hand, P11 (primary school) emphasized that expectations are high as in the following statement: "We are asked to take all measures like CEO, our expectation is financial support and a salary like CEO".

A participant (P9, secondary school) who stated that schools should have permanent OHS specialists, and medical and security personnel shared the opinion: "We have the execution of school work, but it is expected to

strictly comply with the OHS, but this is a specialty, there must be a course or training about OHS in schools, every school needs OHS specialists, health care and security personnel." Similarly, one participant (P21, kindergarten) said, "Health care personnel are required in schools; schools need technicians, nurses. It is necessary to appoint these staff to 3-4 schools..." and he suggested that these staff should be provided to 3-4 schools in the immediate vicinity if it is not possible for every school.

Participants discussing topics such as training, seminars, audits, and technical support related to OHS formulated the following demands: "We demand more training at OHS" (P5, elementary school), "Continuous monitoring and technical support are needed" (P7, elementary school), "Seminars and courses for OHS can be offered as part of in-service training" (P6, secondary school), "Relevant training and audits should be conducted with health and safety experts" (P14, high school). Noting a similar situation, one participant (P16, secondary school) stated: "... at the same time, the number of occupational safety specialists should be increased and expert visits to schools should be more. OHS experts should raise the awareness of our staff by giving frequent seminars."



**Figure 2.** Themes for Expectations of Senior Managements

The following are some of the ideas about OHS that have been articulated as part of senior management's expectations of school administrators:

*"Senior management expects risk assessment, measures to be taken in risky areas, compliance with the regulations" (P2, primary school),*

*"It is expected that all possible measures should be taken in the school and that the staff follow the rules" (P4, secondary school),*

*"Let the schools do it on their own or ask for funding" (P19, secondary school),*

*"Somehow complete OHS-related transactions" (P13, high school),*

*"It is said to ask for funds from the OHS module. Besides everything is expected of us according to the OHS regulation, but it is more difficult to implement this in public institutions such as schools, whose most important stakeholders are students with child status" (P1, high school).*

When the participant opinions above are examined, it is seen that the senior management expects that school administrations must bring the schools into compliance with the rules and make risk assessments; take precautions to prevent risks, and request funds if there is no sources of school.

Other school administrators, who have expressed their shortcomings and difficulties in this regard, said, "Senior managers constantly write with regulations and circulars regarding OHS, but there is no continuity in showing the necessary sensitivity in practice (P6, secondary school). Another one said, "Senior managements expect a lot, and this exhausts us..." (P15, secondary school). P20 stated that OHS is a specialty and emphasized: "Regulation is issued, but this job requires expertise, this work needs to be done by experts in person. The ministry of education is required to make audits of equipment, natural gas etc. in schools, and the school administration carries out administrative work.". On the other hand, P12 (high school) from the participants who mentioned the official letters that were sent to the schools within the scope of OHS said "Official letters are coming from the senior administrations through the document management system. In contrast, in the past years, about 100 official letters came in one year within the scope of OHS. So far this year, approximately 250 official letters have arrived; these are announcements, the work, and procedures to be done for OHS practices, provincial health protection decisions, etc." and emphasized that procedures, transactions, and workload related to OHS have been increasing in schools.

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

This research reveals the OHS practices planned for schools and the expectations of school administrators and senior management to develop these practices in schools. Documents show that OHS practices in schools are

planned and conducted with the activities under the headings of 'occupational health and safety services', 'training and information', 'emergency drills', 'projects and activities', 'chemical waste and zero waste project', 'audit, guidance and supervision activities', 'health observation', 'precautions, measurements, safety and periodic checks', 'notifications', and 'OHS module'. Moreover, research results represent the expectations of school administrators (budget/financial support; directing the solutions to the school; the appointment of an OHS specialist, health and security personnel; more training, seminars, audit and technical support; cooperation among institutions), and expectations of senior management (following the work and transactions properly; assessing risks and taking measures; using of school sources or requesting for funding).

OHS practices in schools begin with the creation of the boards and teams for occupational health and safety services at the beginning of the academic year. This establishment of a health and safety committee in a workplace can encourage the employee to take part in an action to prevent possible risks (Milgate et al., 2002). On the other hand, training and informative studies are done in school and via courses organized by senior management. Emergency drills are carried out and recorded in schools. These school drills are held annually, educating students on safety precautions, self-defense, and evacuation, increases student readiness (Hosseini & Izadkhah, 2020). Zero waste project is implemented and recycling materials are collected separately in schools. In this regard, efforts are needed to help students acquire the habit of throwing garbage into appropriate bins to make their lives more environmentally friendly.

The senior management guide the audit within the scope of OHS. Periodic operations such as heating boiler and elevator maintenance should be recorded and entered into the relevant module. Health institutions monitor vaccination activities. Municipalities and health institutions should follow up drinking water analyses. It is possible to mention that the school administrations do not have much information about these topics. Besides the lack of knowledge, not paying enough attention to occupational health and safety practices can lead to many problems such as occupational risks, hazards and diseases (Puplampu & Quartey, 2012). School canteen inspections are carried out by two groups, the team formed within the school and a team from the senior managements. It is important to place the necessary health and safety signs in relation to the measures and assess the possible risks. Furthermore, recording and reporting incidents in schools (Boucaut & Knobben, 2020) can inform other schools before incidents may occur.

The "my school is clean" project, which emerged with the Covid 19 pandemic, is being followed by all school administrations and controlled periodically by the officials appointed by the senior managements. It has been seen that there are similar approaches such as social distance methods, extra attention to hygiene and cleanliness, and the use of quarantine to prevent Covid 19 in many countries (Melnick & Darling-Hammond, 2020). In addition, the "White Flag" project aims to make the school hygienic, and the "Food Friendly School" project aims to help children develop healthy eating habits through information posters, blackboards, etc. However, it can be said that it is necessary to report occupational accidents, occupational diseases and near misses, and provide information to other schools at the national level. In the OHS module, it is necessary to update the information about the school, enter the risks, and request allowances for certain levels of risks. It is of great importance that the incoming allowances are used to eliminate risks without delay. Hence, educational institutions must protect children from various risks, including disasters (Widowati et al., 2021). On the other hand, school administrators are expected to find funds and make provisions for risks that cannot be adequately funded.

According to the information obtained from the participants' opinions about the expectations of the school administrators from the upper managements, it is understood that the school administrators primarily need financial support. It is also emphasized that the necessary materials can be provided instead of financial support to eliminate the risks associated with OHS, or the solution can be directed to schools. Indeed, some school administrators do not want to confront parents about funding. Several studies (DeVos et al., 2018; Hamlin & Li, 2019; Timm, 2015; Xaba, 2006) highlight the importance of funds or financial resources to school safety and health. Yet, schools must be the safest places for children ensuring them feel safe (Cohen, 2021). A research (Van & Koç, 2020) shows that 98% of the school administrators, teachers and other employees who participated in the survey did not have any work accident. The participants had an accident generally due to falling. 58% of the participants received basic OHS training, and they stated that the 12-hour training was sufficient. Nevertheless, employees may also need to know that administrators take care of their health and safety concerns; their efforts towards improving health and safety practices are supported; information about

problems will be used to improve these practices (Lundstrom et al., 2002). Hence, informative initiatives at regular intervals by school administrations can be effective in helping employees feel safe and secure.

A unit in the provincial/district directorates of national education guides and provides trainings to schools for OHS practices. Due to the idea that this unit will not have sufficient access to all schools and the issue of OHS as a specialty, school administrators ask to have permanent OHS specialists, security, and health care staff (e.g., school nurse) in the schools. The appointment of a health and safety representative may also inspire employee consultation (Milgate et al., 2002). So, if it is impossible to reach all schools, one occupational health and safety specialist and school nurse can be assigned to schools close to each other or in designated areas. As a similar practice, it is ensured that school police is assigned to schools close to each other where it is needed today and that incidents can be intervened in a short time. It can be stated that such practices will significantly contribute to preventing possible risks in schools. Other expectations of school administrators from senior management were in the context of education and seminars. Occupational accidents are a multi-factor problem and largely human-caused, and point to the education at the focus of occupational health and safety (Ceylan, 2012). In addition to the training to be given in this context, public spotlight advertisements can be used to ensure a sufficient understanding of the importance of occupational health and safety (Arpa & Çakı, 2018).

Moreover, mandatory and selective courses can be integrated into educational curriculums to possess a health and safety culture (Gong, 2019; Olcay et al, 2021). Occupational health and safety training for administrators, teachers, students, staff and parents should be increased in schools, and activities should be organized to create OHS culture in schools. In this context, the school's student clubs and social activity contents can be helpful for the formation of OHS culture.

Occupational health and safety, which has become a very important issue for society, should be fulfilled according to the principles of continuous training and development, open communication, cooperation, transparency, audit, planning, motivation, trust, responsibility, etc., and with the understanding of putting human life and health above all. While these studies are conducted, it is necessary to create an occupational safety culture by exchanging views with every employee (Karacan & Erdogan, 2011). The organizational culture should include and reflect the formation of a safety culture in the policies and practices of the OHS (Hasanhanoglu, 2020). From this perspective, the culture of occupational safety and health in schools demonstrates that school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders work together, communicate openly, share ideas, and take on the necessary training and responsibilities to ensure school safety and health.

The opinions of the school principals about the expectations of the senior management regarding OHS in schools have been in the frame of conducting risk assessments, taking the necessary measures to prevent risks, complying with the rules, and requesting funding if necessary. Occupational health and safety in schools includes food safety, disaster and crisis preparedness, proper regulation of traffic issues around the school, and other health and safety issues. Thus, school administrators, teachers, non-educational staff, and stakeholders should work together on these issues (Turhan & Turan, 2012). In Australian schools, as in Turkey, the responsibility to coordinate and monitor OHS within the framework of the established rules is usually given to the school principals. They can share these responsibilities with assistant principals and other unit managers. The basic leadership responsibilities required for OHS include (OHS in schools, 2017): Making decisions on OHS in consultation with occupational health and safety representatives/experts and staff, ensuring that risks are controlled at school, purchasing safe tools that do not pose a danger and risk, keeping school buildings and gardens safe, making sure that new buildings and renovations to existing buildings are designed to provide a safe and secure environment (through good design), address issues raised by occupational safety and health representatives/experts, ensure the health and safety of staff and students, and contact the appropriate management level outside the school to resolve any issues that cannot be addressed at the school level. School administrators who can fulfill this responsibility for a healthy and safe school environment (Leithwood et al., 2020) can be considered successful school leaders in this regard. It is valuable to meet the expectations and needs of school administrators for their schools to facilitate this leadership.

## **5. Recommendations**

OHS research results improve the safety, health, and well-being of stakeholders of an organization (Cunningham et al., 2020). Hence, it is critical to continuously work on school health and safety improvements

and encourage stakeholders to contribute to those endeavours (Andersson et al., 2015). This research revealed how to improve occupational health and safety practices in schools through the views of school principals, and showed the practices in schools, then the expectations of the school administrators and the senior management. Principals are most likely aware of almost everything that is happening in and around their school. Thus, data on OHS can be collected regularly from school administrators and reported to senior management and policymakers. Municipalities and other authorized institutions can help solve health and safety problems in schools. OHS units at senior management can be structured to provide more support in practice, and these units can be brought to the capacity to take effective preventive interventions in schools. Therefore, the research results reveal important insights into ensuring school health and safety. Nevertheless, the research is limited to the school principals as participants. The views of senior management, assistant principals, teachers, students, and parents can also be analyzed in future studies to discuss how to make schools healthier and safer.

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