



**SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND MICROAGGRESSION:  
WHAT DO THEY THINK? HOW DO THEY DO IT?  
HOW DO THEY REACT TO IT?<sup>i</sup>**

**Elgiz Henden<sup>1iii</sup>,  
Ali İlker Gümüseli<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Postgraduate Student,  
Okan University,  
Institute of Social Science,  
Istanbul, Turkey

<sup>2</sup>Prof. Dr.,  
Okan University,  
Faculty of Educational Sciences,  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The current study focused on the opinions and reactions of school principals regarding microaggression, a new concept for Turkey, as well as the impacts of such behavior. **Research Method:** The research was conducted according to the qualitative research methodology while the interview technique was used as data collection tool. Descriptive analysis of the data acquired from focus group discussions with 12 school principals in two different groups. For data analysis, firstly encoding was carried out, and then, the arrangement of codes, clarification and interpretation of findings were done respectively. **Findings:** It was found out that school principals were not cognizant of microaggression and in need of developing awareness, knowledge, ability, and attitude for perpetrators, targets, and witnesses of microaggressions. **Conclusion:** Upon a holistic assessment of the findings, this study proved that educational directors in Turkey lack of knowledge and awareness, and are in need of education in terms of microaggression. That microaggression has a motivational aspect, and that associations of intervention in microaggressions with age are the unique outcomes of this study. Furthermore, it is concluded that in sub-dimensional derogation of microaggression, “comparison with others” may be included in behavioral definitions and that the concept of “communicational abuse” may be used as a Turkish equivalent.

**Keywords:** microaggression, microassault, microinsult, microinvalidation, prejudice

<sup>i</sup> OKUL MÜDÜRLERİ VE MİKROAGRESYON: NE DÜŞÜNÜYORLAR? NASIL YAPIYORLAR? NASIL TEPKI VERİYORLAR?

<sup>ii</sup> Correspondence: email [elgiz@izkocluk.com](mailto:elgiz@izkocluk.com)

## Özet:

Bu araştırmanın amacı okul müdürlerinin mikroagresyonu nasıl kavramsallaştırdıkları ve mikroagresyona nasıl tepki gösterdiklerini belirlemektir. Araştırma nitel araştırma yöntemine göre yapılmış ve veri toplama aracı olarak görüşme tekniği kullanılmıştır. 12 okul müdürüyle 2 farklı odak grup çalışmasından elde edilen verilerin betimsel analizi yapılmıştır. Veri analizinde önce kodlama yapılmış daha sonra sırasıyla kodların düzenlenmesi, bulguların açıklanması ve yorumlanması yapılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda Okul müdürlerinin mikroagresyondan haberdar olmadıkları, mikroagresyonun faili, hedefi ve şahidi olmak üzere her üç konum için de farkındalık, bilgi, beceri ve tutum geliştirmeye ihtiyaçları oldukları bulunmuştur. Bulgular bütünlük olarak değerlendirildiğinde bu araştırmanın Türkiye'de eğitim yöneticilerinde mikroagresyon konusunda bilgi ve farkındalık eksikliği ve bu bağlamda eğitim ihtiyacı olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Mikroagresyonun motive edici bir yönü olduğu ve mikroagresyona müdahalenin yaş ile ilişkilendirilmesi sonucu ise bu araştırmaya özgü bir sonuçtur. Ayrıca mikroagresyonun mikro değersizleştirme alt boyutu, davranış tanımları arasına "başkalarıyla kıyaslanma" mın eklenebileceği ve Türkçe karşılığı için de "iletişimsel istismar" kavramının kullanılabileceği sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** mikroagresyon, mikrosaldırğanlık, mikroşağılama, mikrodeğersizleştirme, önyargı

## 1. Introduction

Despite centuries-old efforts of mankind as social beings in terms of understanding each other that is one of the crucial codes of coexistence; at the present time, having such notions of discrimination, bias, equality, diversity, and social inclusion among the issues still to be solved may be the indication of that such efforts are not sufficient enough.

In the new world where accessibility is increased and distances between time and space are reduced, people interact more with every race, culture, society, and age in daily life. In such interactions, people bring in their own previous experiences, intentions, and needs. Such lessons, experiences, needs and intentions cause prejudices, and the latter may be manifested explicitly or implicitly (Ünal, 2018, p.3289). Such prejudices manifested by people in their attitudes toward others at macro levels may be defined as racism. In racism, equality ceases to be, and alienation is showed up by entitling rights to a higher race (Kırık, Öztürk, Saltık, and Orujova, 2018, p.16). You are the 'other' if you are different from the majority, and alienation makes it difficult to understand the 'other'. In a world where the sole common ground is to be different, understanding others becomes more important gradually.

## 2. Microaggression

Microaggression as a mode of communication emerging from the concept of macro-level

racism stands out as another form of alienation or discrimination. Microaggression is described as sardonic and derogatory verbal and non-verbal expressions that are professed consciously or unconsciously toward any addressee in relations, and become noxious in the long term (Torino et al., 2019, p.12). It is also possible to mention some concepts similar to, but essentially different than microaggression, such as prejudice, patterned perception, discrimination, and alienation. Prejudice is such an attitude related to expressing hostility and negative feelings toward people belonging to another group (Allport, 1954; Duckitt, 2019). Prejudice as a non-inherited attitude, but learned, is taught by society. Microaggressions are affected by prejudices. Patterned perception used in the same sense as prejudice is physical and social descriptions, such as race, gender, religion, and ethnicity that are usually not based on reality, but assumed to exist depending on any referred group, and used to classify people (Göregenli, 2012). Microaggression may be toward certain marginalized groups due to certain characteristics so that such characteristics are supported by patterned perceptions. As a form of prejudice transformed into an attitude, discrimination is such a conduct aiming to harm members of any group without a justification, but just because of belonging such a group (Aronson, Wilson, and Akert, 2012). As the underlying cause of such conducts, it is thought that uncommon individuals and groups are assumed to be “the lows” in society, and that prevalence of such conducts is due to exclusion and alienation of ‘uncommon’ ones (Göregenli 2012). The “other” and “alienation” as crucial issues of mankind continue to exist as important issues due to the development of class society, the appearance of racism, and exclusionist approaches of belief systems (Akmeşe 2020, p.58). Bandura (1977) points out in his social learning theory that such attitudes emerged with prejudice, formed with patterned perception, existed in thought with discrimination, transformed into attitude with alienation, and become permanent with branding are learned by means of observation and mimic. Another theory founding microaggressions is the social dominance theory studying the causes of prejudices and discrimination that is the behavioral extent of prejudice (Pratto, Sidanius, and Levin, 2006). This theory, essentially, states the intolerant behaviors of those being in a high-level group emerging from inequality and holding the power and authority toward those of a low-level group not having better opportunities. Microaggressions are derogatory, verbal and non-verbal, behavioral and systemic unjust conducts, that are addressed to a group or individual, and usually automatically done intentionally or unwarily (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, and Willis, 1977, p. 65). Having described by the adjective “micro” is not because the notion is trivial or inoffensive, but rather, due to being performed in small scales in interpersonal relations (Sue, 2020, p.7).

Microaggression: The concept of microaggression was used for the first time in an article titled “Reports on Crimes of Aggression” in the periodical *Universitas* in 1970 (Güleç and Özden, 2019, p.125). In 1970, it was also used by Dr. Chester Pierce with respect to racism with a meaning closest to its current meaning in the literature. The “microaggression” notion was perceived by many as a matter of racist discrimination based on Dr. Chester Pierce’s explanation with respect to particularly black race. Sue et

al. studied the concept after Pierce accepted the notion beyond the black race, and used it for such concepts as other ethnic origins, genders, sexual preferences, civil status, aesthetics, and disabilities.

Some definitions related to microaggression in relevant literature are as follows: *"a mode of verbal and non-verbal communication that is usually performed automatically in a way that is subtle and shocking"* (Sue et al., 2007, p.273), *"intentional or unintentional attitudes and behaviors displayed toward those non-American individuals living in U.S.A."* (Durmuş, 2019, p.53), and *"subtle, derogatory abusive statements or indifferent glances, gestures, and emphases that are put forward inadvertently, and sometimes deliberately"* (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273).

## 2.2 Microaggression and Sub-dimensions

Sue et al. (2007) mention three types of microaggression. These are Microassault, Microinsult, and Microinvalidation. While Microassault is often an offensive expression, whether verbal or non-verbal, committed consciously; Microinsult is mostly an insensitive expression committed involuntarily and unconsciously toward a group or identity, and Microinvalidation is an expression disregarding thoughts, feelings, and experiences of any individual of different ethnic groups (Sue et al., 2007, p.274).

Whether displayed consciously or involuntarily, micro assaults are rather harming, derogatory, and offending attitudes for the addressee. What is important in this matter is that most of the time, the relevant imposer has no idea about the issue. It is particularly important to study the topic of microaggression which is challenging for parties, nourishing from prejudices, and causing emotional, physical, and cognitive harm to people. It may be said that there are numerous studies on microaggression in countries where people of many cultures, different races and ethnic origins live together, and that it is related rather to races and sexual orientations. Based on the definition of microaggression as an attitude - eliminating the definition of it as a behavior of only one race - that almost every individual might be subjected to, microaggression categories of Sue et al. (2010) have been adapted as below.

In Figure 1, microaggressions are taken into account that are not only displayed toward any race, but anyone might impose on another in regulating the communal life. Distinguishing and discovering any statement, attitude, and circumstances containing microaggression may provide a basis for creating a communication medium that is free of such attitudes as far as possible, socially egalitarian and comprehensive, and respectful to diversity. In the current study, the term microaggression is used for all sub dimensions of microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation, whereas the term microassault is used only for a sub dimension thereof.

The following are some examples of microaggression manifestations encountered in the studies; *"Actually, where are you from?"*, *"You speak English very well? (When said to someone not originally an American)"*, *"How difficult to pronounce your name"*, *"I do not discriminate people; I have friends from every culture"*, *"Women and men have equal opportunities for success"*, *"Actually, I think you are..., (completion of someone else's sentence)"*, *"I believe that only qualified people should be employed"* (Sue et al. 2007), *"You give overreaction,*

*you are a much better driver than I expect (when addressed to a woman)", "Do you write them down correctly?" "When will you have a child?" (Turaga, 2020), "What do you mean that you didn't hear of The Cosby Show?", "Where were you hiding?", "You are all millennium generation and on Facebook; you may find your project homework thereon" (Microaggression in The Classrooms, 2021). Based on the foregoing statements, the following statements may be given examples of microaggressions that might be encountered at work or school; "You don't look like a teacher at all", "You are in the wrong classroom; this is a science class", "Don't you know what 'TikTok' is?", "You don't look like a graduate of Boğaziçi University at all", "You have a very nice nose despite being someone from the Black Sea Region", and "I wasn't expecting such a performance from you".*

**Figure 1: Microaggression and its Sub Dimensions**

<b>Categories of Microaggression/Microassault</b>		
Intentional or unintentional expression, behaviors, and environments containing humiliation, scolding, disrespect, and insult		
Microassault (Usually unconsciously)  Statements containing rudeness and apathy	Microinsult (Usually consciously)  Nicknaming Discrimination Humiliation and Ignorance	Microinvalidation (Usually unconsciously)  Statements and behaviors disregarding thoughts and experiences of others
Reference to intelligence level Second class citizenship Assumption of guilt Invalidation of cultural values and communicational modes	Environmental and institutional microinsults at macro levels	Meritocracy mythos; assertion of that culture and gender have very little effect in success  Statements such as; <i>You are exaggerating</i> <i>Don't be touchy</i> <i>We are all the same, human beings</i> <i>That's life</i>
<b>Source:</b> Sue, D. W. (2010), <i>Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation</i> . Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley * Adapted from Sue D. W. (2010).		

As the concealed aspect of discrimination, microassault draws more attention of researchers in recent years. One of the recent studies on microaggression published by Alexandra M. Simsin in 'Teaching and Learning Moments section of Academic Medicine' in 2020 is "A Case of the Microaggression Mondays", in which he discusses the issue of microaggression with respect to race-based diseases and mentions that any belief based on the chemical differences among people might stir up zealotry. Another study of microaggression conducted in 2020 is "I Know What Happened to Me; The Epistemic Harms of Microaggression" published in the book "Microaggressions in philosophy" edited by Freman and Shorer, emphasizes that studies on microaggression are mostly in physiology. It is stated therein that as people undergo to microaggression and experience

alienation attitudes, they attain a common knowledge and realize what is really happening to them. Said study mentions two types of epistemic harm of microaggression. It points out that while the primary type is direct harm as a result of microaggression, the secondary harm shows up when the people who witnessed to microaggression do not recognize, or fail to consider it as a microaggression (Fatima, 2020). There is also some skepticism on microaggression that Lilienfeld (2019) claims, being a slim chance of microaggression being convenient to a scientific approach. Sue et al. (2007, p. 273) emphasize that microaggression causes inequality among groups and individuals of society, as well as demoralization of exposed people, and decline of productivity in many thereof. Sue (2010) states that in order to avoid micro aggressions, it is important to be aware of personal prejudices and the harm thereof on others, to be interacting with different individuals, to have open communication instead of a defensive attitude, and to act together against prejudices. Haris (2017, p.429) points out that microaggression is normalized and adopted by those inflicted, and therefore, it becomes rather difficult to cope with.

In Turkey, microaggression has become prominent in the last five years. In his 2018 article 'New Invisible Aspect of Racist Discrimination: Cultural Encounters and Microaggressions', Ünal emphasizes that despite diminishing of former racists' attitudes, new type of racist discrimination still continues increasingly in a manner different than before. In his 2018 study 'Micro Aggression in Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language', Er emphasizes that attitudes, behaviors, verbal statements, and mimics of instructors in classrooms may be considered as micro aggressive attitudes and that it might take time to determine such attitudes and behaviors. In the 2019 study 'Inadvertent Defamation (Microaggressions) and Their Commonly Displayed Examples in Turkey' on the subject of microaggression, Güleç and Özden studied on the experiences of foreign nationals in Turkey regarding micro aggressions, and which sub dimensions of micro aggressions and how frequently those individuals, who came to Turkey by running away from wars in their motherlands for a better education and a better living, were subjected to. In the 2019 article 'Micro Aggression as Part of Culture-Sensitive Psychological Consultation: An Implicit Form of Discrimination', Uygur, Sarı, and Baş studied the concept of microaggression in terms of race, gender, sexual preference, weight, and religion. In the master's thesis on microaggression, 'Disability-Based Micro Aggressions Displayed Toward Students Receiving Inclusive Education: A Perspective of a School Psychological Counselor', Yılmaz (2019) described the concept of microaggression as masked, implicit, and discriminative attitudes and behaviors. According to the study, while school psychological counselors display attitudes of mostly superiority and alienation, and obtaining side income, teachers and principals display behaviors implying second-class citizens and environmental discrimination.

Micro aggression and its sub dimensions are new concepts for Turkey and educational leadership. The concept of microaggression is much more important as to be considered a fine-tuned mode of communication particularly for educational institutes the employees and products of which are human beings is important. As a result of the

review of field literature conducted, no study on microaggression and principals conducted directly in Türkiye was found. However, schools are such organizations having critical importance in terms of the formation of society. It is obvious that people working in the field of education need especially more knowledge on this concept and awareness on subjecting and being subjected to microaggression. It is thought that to understand the concept, use it as a manner of communication intentionally or inadvertently, and study the impacts thereof by principals might have a positive impact on work performances of, attachment to school, and devotion to tasks by teachers, as well as successes of students and eventually, resulting in school productivity. Therefore, "Finding out the opinions of principals functioning at state high school in Istanbul regarding to microaggression and the impacts thereof" composes the basic issue and goal of the current study.

### **3. Objective**

This study aims to determine the opinions of the principals of 12 state high schools in Istanbul on microaggression and the impacts thereof.

Answers to the following questions are sought for such purpose:

- 1) How do the principals conceptualize microaggression?
- 2) How do the principals respond to microaggression at their schools?

### **4. Importance**

Microaggression manifestations in schools mostly are displayed automatically or inadvertently among employees and students as well as between teachers and students as verbal or non-verbal statements and mimics. Neither school managers, nor teachers, nor students do still have sufficient knowledge for distinguishing such behaviors and understanding the impacts and consequences thereof when any microaggression manifestation occurs.

The current study tries to draw attention to how to acquire knowledge of microaggression manifestations and the impacts thereof concerning managers and teachers in schools. This study might create an opportunity of awareness in order to create a safe school environment that cares about diversity and differences, and is away from any kind of aggressive behavior with an egalitarian and inclusive approach. Every manager, teacher, and student plays a critical role and has a responsibility for creating an inclusive and safe school environment. It is thought that the results of the current study might be beneficial for schools in order to recognize, distinguish, cope with, and prevent microaggression manifestations.

It is important that microaggression manifestations as a result of implicit prejudices are to be correctly recognized by school managers, teachers, and other employees. Because children copy what they see, and model behaviors are needed for children in school environments. Therefore, the awareness of school principals, who are

constantly in contact with students, on microaggression is crucially important in terms of the creation of an inclusive and democratic school environment free of microaggression. The school environment is important for teachers as well as students. Any teacher ignored and invalidated in schools cannot use their abilities and intellectual capitals for the development of schools. This may lead schools to miss out the support of teachers, who are a critical source for realizing their goals. Microaggression manifestations may affect devotion to the school, trust, and professional satisfaction of teachers as well as their emotional and physical health.

## **5. Methodology**

### **5.1 Research Model**

In the current study, a qualitative research model is utilized for determining how the principals conceptualize microaggression and respond to microaggression at their schools, and for understanding the microaggression concept in depth, a model which ensures the continuation of researches by concentrating on any events, cases, or manifestations occurring in natural environments (Büyüköztürk, 2020: p.253). For this purpose, the data gathered by means of interviews are analyzed descriptively. The study started with principals due to their roles in school culture, and for determining their opinions and experiences. Since microaggression is a new concept, a case study is conducted serving to exhibit the present situation in order to understand it in detail and depth.

### **5.2 Working Group**

The working group of the current study is the principals, assigned to high schools in Istanbul Province in the academic year of 2020-2021. In determining the study group, the method of non-random objective sampling was used. Concordantly, the individuals to be selected for representing the population are determined not randomly but at the discretion of the relevant researcher (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013. p.107). For sampling, a suitable sampling method is used among the non-random purposeful sampling determination methods. The reason for preferring this method is because of the sensitivity of the subject besides accessibility. Principals firstly were reached out and briefed on the study by phone for participation in the online focus group study, and their verbal consent was obtained. By phone, 20 principals were contacted, and 14 volunteered principals were sent later on necessary forms of volunteering participation as well as forms for personal particulars to be filled out by volunteered principals. The research was planned to be conducted with 14 principals in two focus groups comprising of 7 individuals, but while studying with 7 principals of the first focus group, one principal of the second focus group did not participate in the study without notice, whereas another principal notified his renouncement just one hour before the start of the study and referred to another principal as a replacement. Because the referred principal was not a high school principal, his data was not assessed despite his participation in the focus



group study, and as result, the second focus group study was completed with the opinions of 5 principals. Due to the phone disconnection of one principal during the study, only 4 principals were able to participate in the second focus group study. While the first focus group was composed of 4 female and 3 male principals, the second focus group was of 5 male principals. The groups were determined randomly. Each focus group study lasted two hours.

### **5.3 Process of Data Collection and Analysis**

The study data were obtained by means of focus group interviews. During the focus group interviews, firstly, open-end apprehensible and focused questions on the microaggression subject were preferred. The first question forms used in the focus group study, consisting of 14 questions and prepared by the researchers, were sent to two experts for obtaining their opinions, and the final number of the questions was reduced to eleven. In order for testing the questions whether they are apprehensible, a pilot study comprising four individuals was conducted, and in conclusion, those questions thought to be repetitive and not apprehensible were removed for obtaining the final interview form. After completion of the pilot study, two focus group studies of two hours were held with twelve principals online via Zoom.

During the focus group study, inquiring questions, such as "What was it", "How did it happened", "Would you please elaborate it", "What did you do", "How did you feel then", were asked in order to encourage the participants to speak freely in addition to those in the interview form prepared beforehand.

Everything said during the focus group studies was digitalized and analyzed line by line by deciphering the audio records thereof. All participants were sent the digitalized interviews by e-mail and asked to read their own statements and if they want, to correct any part thereof. A principal made corrections to the text sent, and another one completed a sentence that was not completed during the interview due to a bad connection.

In the stage of classification, data was encoded, and during the final data association, any data obtained in accordance with the designated themes was associated and construed.

The data of the study was analyzed, in relation to microaggression and sub dimensions thereof, in line with the main themes of: 1. Microaggression concept; a) Scope, b) Turkish equivalent, 2. Sub dimensions of Microaggression; a) Microassault, b) Micro scorning, c) Micro degrading, d) Its effects, 3. Principals a) Responses thereto, b) Role thereof.

First of all, data was encoded, and then, the arrangement of codes, clarification and interpretation of findings were done respectively. Analyses were conducted for each question, and the codes were created. Participating principals were encoded as M1, M2... and M12. Principals' names, school names, and places mentioned in direct quotations were replaced by other names.

## **5.4 Validity and Reliability of the Study**

The terms generally used in qualitative studies are ‘credibility’ for internal validity, ‘transmissibility’ for external validity, ‘consistency’ for internal reliability, and ‘confirmability’ for external reliability (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p.258).

### **5.4.1 Internal Validity (Credibility)**

The form of questions prepared for the internal validity of the current study was sent to two university researchers in the fields of psychology and communications in order to get their opinions. According to the feedback of the researchers, the questions to be used in the focus group interviews were taken in their final forms. Furthermore, the preliminary forms of questions were sent to two principals to get their evaluations with respect to readability and comprehensibility.

For the sake of the internal validity of the study, direct quotations were referred and mentioned under the section of findings as is. A limiting element for the internal validity of the current study may be the utilization of a single tool (focus group interview) as the data collection tool.

### **5.4.2 External Validity (Transmissibility)**

The external validity of any study is related to whether it is generalizable (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p.258). In order to ensure the external validity of the current study; research model, working group, data collection tool, process of data collection, data analyses, and arrangement of findings were described in detail. A factor of limitation for external validity may be the number of participants being twelve only.

### **5.4.3 Internal Reliability (Consistency)**

The interviews of the study held online were recorded in audio and video format with the consent of participants for avoiding the risk of any data loss. The findings thereof are presented without any comment.

### **5.4.4 External Reliability (Confirmability)**

This is related to whether study results can be obtained likewise under similar conditions. In order to increase the external reliability, a method of taking dated notes was used when collecting data, encoding, and drawing the report. All the data is being preserved. The codes created were sent to an expert researcher in the field of management and organization for evaluation. After two separate studies conducted by the expert, the codes were reduced in number in their final forms.

## **6. Findings and Interpretation**

In the scope of the current study aiming to determine how the principals of twelve high schools in Istanbul conceptualized and responded to microaggression at their schools, the principals were asked eleven questions in total. The questions were classified under

three headings; definition, sub dimensions, and principals. Under the first heading which is about the definition of microaggression, five questions were asked to the participants regarding the concept, getting informed of, and the Turkish equivalents thereof. The second heading is about the sub dimensions of microaggression, which are microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation, and five questions were asked about the same and the impacts of microaggression. Under the last heading, two questions were asked as behaviors and roles of principals. The codes created are presented in the table below.

**Table 1: Themes and Codes about Microaggression**

<b>A. Definition</b>		
<b>a. Findings Related to Concept</b>		
Concept	Scorning	8
	Doing inadvertently	5
	Telling insufficiencies	4
	Using barbed tongue	4
	Displaying sexist approach	4
	Misunderstanding	3
	Exclusion of differences	1
	Nicknaming	1
<b>b. Meaning of Microaggression Concept in Turkish</b>		
Turkish Equivalent	Approach	1
	Implicit coercion	1
	Ignorance	4
	Insinuation	2
	Assault	2
	Petty mobbing	3
	Communicative abuse	2
<b>B. Sub Dimensions</b>		
<b>a. Findings Related to Microassault</b>		
Microaggression manifestation (exposure)	Using jokes	4
	Making use of position	9
Microassault sub-dimension	By ignoring	3
	By controlling	1
	Insinuation	2
	Using as a tool of motivation	1
	Scorning by including himself/herself	1
	By warning concerning about appearance	1
<b>b. Being Exposed to Microassault</b>		
Face to microaggression (Exposed to)	Being ignored	5
	Marginalization	1
	Compared to others	1
	Being unappreciated	4
Microassault sub dimensions		
<b>c. Findings Related to Humiliation</b>		
Microaggression Sub dimension Micro humiliation	Giving advices	1
	Displaying sexist approach	2
	Being ignored	6

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	Comparison	3
	Not getting in direct contact	3
<b>d. Findings Related to Microinvalidation</b>		
Microaggression	Scorning	3
Sub dimension	Encumbering	1
Micro invalidation	Criticism	1
	Carping	1
	Lack of empathy	3
<b>e. Findings Related to Impacts of Microaggression</b>		
Impacts	Making to feel being trivial	2
	Reducing involvement	1
	Causing depression	2
	Making to be weary of life	1
	Causing stings	1
	Causing anger	1
	Making to feel incompetent	1
	Lowering productivity	1
	Diminishing motivation	2
	Hindering synergy	1
	Hindering collaboration	1
	Promoting polarization	1
	Causing psychological harms	1
	Giving motivation	5
<b>f. Principal Reactions</b>		
Reactions	Interference	3
	- Guidance	1
	- Reconciliation	1
	- Interference depending on circumstances	3
	- Creating awareness	
	Not interfering	2
<b>g. Role of Principals</b>		
Role of Principals	Being an arbitrator	1
	Being a peacemaker	3
	Knowing himself/herself	1
	Not acting according to his/her emotions	3
	Being a good communicator	7
	Acting as a leader	2

At the onset of the focus group interviews, principals were given the following definition of microaggression.

*“The concept of microaggression has emerged from racism in macro scale, which may be defined as manifestations that contain verbal and non-verbal statements of insult, derogation, implicit humiliation, barbed words, indifferent glances, mimics, etc., intentionally or inadvertently displayed toward any addressee in interpersonal relations on the basis of the concepts of alienation and discrimination.*

*For instance; “I wasn’t expecting such a performance from you”, “You don’t speak any foreign language!”*

The principal M1, who remarked hearing the concept and definition of microaggression for the first time, stated that

*“Oh my! I didn’t know we had been displaying microaggression all day long.”*

### **6.1 How do the Principals Conceptualize Microaggression?**

Under this section, principals were asked questions in relation to the scope, required information, and Turkish equivalent of microaggressions. In the scope of the main concept of microaggression, the participants were asked what they think of the concept. It is noted that the participants mostly used such negative connotations regarding the concept as scorning, nicknaming, speaking of insufficiencies, and using barbed tongue.

#### **6.1.1 Scorning**

Scorning is among the manifestations displayed consciously under the assault sub division of microaggression. The statements of the principals regarding to ‘scorning’ are as follows:

*“If someone has a better car or a better life despite having the same salary, while someone else hardly makes the ends, may this be considered in the same concept? May having observed that be considered in the same concept? Or let’s say, could a competition among young girls for being more beautiful be? I just wonder, from the perspectives of our students. Particularly for those days they don’t wear school uniforms, I just wonder whether such behavior of “one of them is more stylish while another is less in comparison” could be a problem. In addition to manifesting such behaviors, using mimics and gestures makes them dominant, in my opinion.” (M7)*

#### **6.1.2 Committing Inadvertently**

‘Committing inadvertently’ is very important for the participants because of microaggression here as well as it was in the association section. The statements of the principals regarding to ‘unawareness’ are as follows:

*“I think, it is presumably a mobbing with our expressions or attitudes regardless of deliberate or unintentional, or unconsciously!; With or without intention.” (M4)*

*“Something you do something for good intentions sometimes may lead to adverse outcomes; because not everyone may be aware of what they do; on the contrary, you may become the faulty part in the end.” (M10)*

#### **6.1.3 Sexist Approach**

It may be said that ‘sexist approach’ is the most frequently manifested form of microassault. Particularly in schools, the example of a sexist approach commonly used

among managers is 'female principal'. The statements of the principals regarding to 'sexist approach' are as follows:

*"Look, who is that beautiful woman sitting next to our principal?" (M1)*

*"For instance, racism; 'Where are you from', or any question put to women, 'How old are you, are you married, or single?' ... I mean, it comes out more as you think about it, but for the sake of seeing an area that we know nothing of! Maybe, there are different areas that we don't know". (M4)*

#### **6.1.4 Exclusion of Differences**

The most typical aspect of the prejudice, discrimination, and alienation among microaggression manifestations is 'exclusion of differences. Exclusion and alienation of that not like oneself is a crucial micro-aggressive manifestation. The statements of the principals regarding to 'exclusion of differences' are as follows:

*"We may consider it as standardization of different ones. We may also take it as a notion of making who is different like ourselves, in other words, we may take this concept as an effort of finding someone different, or revealing his/her difference, and making him/her like ourselves! Therefore, in some high schools, particularly due to their skin color, or due to their accent, we alienate people, or easily nickname them; "You are from there, you are Laz, Kurdish, Turk, or Circassian"; actually, by doing so, we try to categorize everyone in the dominant group". (M12)*

#### **6.1.5 Nicknaming**

Another manifestation of microaggression that is displayed intentionally is 'nicknaming'. The principal M11 expresses his opinion regarding nicknaming as

*"I always give this example; in our villages, everyone has a nickname; Mehmet the blind, Ahmet the lame, Hüseyin the deaf."*

Although the principals used the notion of nicknaming in the subject of microaggression only once, nicknaming is specifically mentioned in intentional assault manifestations in Sue's microaggression taxonomy (2010). In this section, the participants were furthermore asked to give their opinions on what microaggression is in a sentence.

The principals' microaggression expressions were;

*"You are not working for nothing." (M3)*

*"Principal the lady." (M4)*

*"You are not a mother, have no children, so you wouldn't understand it." (M6)*

*"If you don't study harder, and don't become an esteemed professional, then you may end up working for a minimum wage."* (M12)

*"Be a decent person; otherwise, you may end up living a dog's life."* (M10)

*"-to a student-, "I wouldn't expect you do that.""* (M8)

In consideration of the principals' opinions, it seems that they have chosen statements that are non-empathic, derogatory, critical, sexist, threatening, and alienating. They were also asked which aspects of such statements caused microaggression manifestation, but the participants did not give answers to this question. The reason for failing to answer that question may be because they skipped the question since it was the second of two consecutive questions in the questionnaire prepared by the researcher.

When the participants were asked "What could be used as the Turkish equivalent of the concept?", seven codes were created from the participants' responses as cognizance, implicit mobbing, using barbed tongue, assault, petty mobbing, ignorance, and communicational abuse. It is observed that the concepts taken as Turkish equivalents are mostly microaggression manifestations. While the concept 'cognizance' used by the principals as Turkish equivalent stands out as a constructive notion, the other concepts used bear negative meanings. It may be said that the most inclusive concept of principals was 'communicative abuse'.

## **6.2 How do the Principals Respond to Microaggression at Their Schools?**

The principals were asked two questions regarding microassault and one question each regarding microinsult and microinvalidation. The most important difference of microassault from microinsult is that it is mostly manifested consciously. The principals were asked whether they had displayed any microassault manifestations in the past, and eight codes were created therefor as, particularly, use of jokes, use of status, neglecting, checking up, as using barbed tongue. It was observed that the principals frequently made use of status when displaying micro aggressive attitudes.

### **6.2.1 Using Jokes**

Microaggression manifestations are mostly hidden in jokes. It may be said that jokes are another method of normalization of microaggression. The statement of the principal M3 regarding displaying microaggression manifestations by means of jokes is as follows.

*"I sometimes, slightly humorously, in a gathering; well, how should I put it; I have very dear friends of vice principals. For instance, when I introduce them to someone, I would say, "Well, I have surplus vice principals; if there is any vice principal to be replaced, you could use them, and furthermore, I could give you a sheep at side" in such a friendly gathering. Well, as I think of it now, we had hit the deep bottom of microaggression".* (M3)

### 6.2.2 By Making Use of Status

According to the theory of social dominance, making use of status is the intolerant behaviors of those holding the power of authority in a higher rank, which is essentially due to inequality, toward those in any lower rank, and principals display micro aggressive behaviors using the power of their status. The principals' statements regarding to making use of status are as follows.

*"When I was a vice principal, I used to chair the disciplinary board for students' misbehaviors. The incident occurred in Esen'ler at that time; we addressed to the son of an imam saying, "You are son of an imam, how could you do that", or to someone else saying "You are son of this or that", now, I think such statements are manifestations of microaggression. So, we had done it in the past!" (M12)*

### 6.2.3 By Ignoring

Neglecting or ignoring is specifically described in the microassault sub dimension of microaggression. Ignoring is often used in all three types of microaggression; being exposed, expose to, and witnessing. The principal M10 expresses that when displaying microaggression, he used ignorance as follows.

*"Sometimes we think as 'Who could do that', or 'Don't let him/her do it, can't accomplish it'. When we commission a task, we feel uneasy; 'He/she can't do it, can't overcome, let us give this task to this or that teacher so that it can be completed and well performed'. But then, what do we do? Actually, when applying reverse or positive discrimination, we put burdens on certain people. Well, in fact, involuntarily, we manifest discrimination, by ignoring others, not involving them in the performance". (M10)*

### 6.2.4 Using as a Tool of Motivation

Use of microaggression as a motivational tool is a unique finding of the current study. No finding was encountered in earlier studies that microaggression was manifested or used for motivation. For the motivational usage, the principal M10 remarked as below.

*"Well, when I used to teach, I used such statements as 'I was expecting a better performance from you, etc.' I used it time to time, but never with bad intentions; not as scorning, but on the contrary, as I said it earlier, let me put it this way; slightly motivational, or enthusing purposes, regardless of how unfortunate." (M10)*

### 6.2.5 Scorning by Including Himself/Herself

The principals indicated that when manifesting microaggression they displayed it much easier by including themselves in such statements to normalize such manifestations. The statement of the principal M9 regarding to scorning by including himself.

*"We utter what we cannot directly say to a teacher by including ourselves in the first place. In other words, teaching profession is surely the utmost invaluable profession; it does not*



*accept any black holes, but time to time, when you get angry, or irritated, we just speak aside saying 'We are a teacher, are we not?', and so, we display microaggression toward ourselves as well. (M9)*

From the perspectives of perpetrators, it is important to know what personal awareness, core values, and prejudices are in relation to the concept of microaggression. Knowing that any manifestation displayed is microaggression and what impact it has on the relevant addressee might cause a diminishing of such attitudes. The principals try to normalize microaggression by means of humor and inclusion of themselves into it. It is possible to say that normalization of microaggression may cause much severe damage in the long run.

The microassault has two aspects as besides being an exposor, it is possible to be exposed; accordingly, four codes are defined from the statements of the principals regarding to being exposed to microassault, as being ignored, marginalization, being compared to others, and not being appreciated. The statements of the principals regarding to 'microassault' are as follows:

#### **6.2.6 Being Ignored**

Principals pointed out that they were exposed by ignoring their interlocutors, and and were exposed by being ignored. Those principals, who were the target of exposure to microaggression, stated their opinions as follows.

*"Because our instructors are right behind one another; as other principals uttered in the beginning, speaking of management (Turkish word; 'idare'), excuse me but I just think of a 'lampion', as all you know there is a Turkish word 'İdare lambası' ('lampion)?" (M7)*

#### **6.2.7 Compared to Others**

Another way that principals are exposed to microaggression is by comparison to others. The opinions of the principals regarding to being compared to others are as follows:

*"The most common case in which principals as exposed to is to be compared with other principals. In other words, each school may be managed according to its own culture, environment, and requirements; but our esteemed instructors make comparisons much more without knowing the context, because of any work they hear about implicitly, tacitly." (M7)*

#### **6.2.8 Being Unappreciated**

Principals stated that they were exposed to microaggression by not being appreciated. The statements of the principals regarding to being unappreciated, which is to show appreciation for or trivialization of any work accomplished, are as follows.

*“Well, when the program started, naturally this particular teacher got very excited, her voice got sharpened, had difficulty in presentation, just because there was a complete official protocol including district mayors, department heads, directors of agencies, etc.! After the ceremony, District Director of Education reproached us slightly, ‘Have you not foreseen this, how come you included him in the program’. Whereas there was no problem during rehearsals; it was all because of some momentary excitement. Well, regardless of all nice performance or all the efforts, we had been in the line of criticism fire, as if a planned incidence, ‘How come you do such a thing’.” (M3)*

The principals indicated that when being exposed to microaggression manifestations, they were being ignored, compared to others, not appreciated, and marginalized. Recognition and distinguishing microaggression from the perspective of those exposed are important for responding and prevention.

Another sub dimension of microaggression is microinsult. The principals were asked “From which attitudes of your colleagues do you understand that they do not respect you?” regarding to microinsult. Five codes were created regarding to microinsult as; giving advices, sexist approach, ignorance, comparison, and not getting in direct contact. The purpose of insensible microinsult with bitter scorns is to humiliate interlocutors between lines. The principals’ opinions on the issue are as follows:

While the principal M6 expressed his opinion regarding to advising as a microinsult manifestation as

*“Since I was recently started at this school, I encountered such advices; for instance, two male vice principals couldn’t accept me”,*

the principal M4 stated his opinion regarding to sexist approach as

*“...- Actually, ‘Female principal’, how could I say, even the expression of ‘We are working with a female principal’ is ...”,*

whereas the principal M6 saying

*“- Yes, something has happened to our male colleagues this time, has it not? We as females hear such sentences more than you do, such as a female principal is not thinkable. Funny, but when someone comes to school looking for “Where is Mr. Principal?” As if a male has to be in that building; we encounter such circumstances much more.”*

Another case the principals encounter in relation to microinsult is to be ignored and compared with other principals; while principal M5 expressed her opinion regarding ignorance as:

*“Well, there you are the final decision-maker, you have the command, but you are trying to bypass you somehow; you sense it with their lack of respect toward you.”*

while the principal M3 stated her opinion regarding to comparison with other principals as:

*“I think they cannot directly express their lack of respect because of the hierarchy; you are their superior, but in my opinion, any sentence starting with ‘Our previous principal’ makes it obvious.”*

Regarding to microinvalidation which is insensibly ignoring thoughts, feelings, and experiences; principals were asked “Have you ever observed your colleagues reacting outrageously to something trivial?”, and five codes were created from the principals’ responses to this question, which are scorning, overburdening, criticizing behaviors, looking for mistakes, and failing to feel empathy.

### **6.2.9 Scorning**

The statements of the principals regarding to ‘scorning’ as a microinvalidation manifestation are as follows:

*“Fortunately, as people get promoted - surely, for the majority - they become more tolerant, more experienced, and I think, a little more informed, leading to easily taking such circumstances and tackle the problems for preventing risks getting out of hand; so, the provincial coordinator ended the communication in a friendly way. Afterwards, the teacher complained to me saying “I did not enter the classroom for lecturing; the provincial coordinator called me, asking why I did not lecture. I asked him ‘Are you my wife, why do you call me?’ Well, that’s unacceptable!” (M2)*

### **6.2.10 Lack of Empathy**

The principals indicated that they invalidated the feelings and experiences of other people by means of a lack of empathy. The principal M10 expressed his opinions regarding this sub division as follows:

*“Any instructor with a child expects privileges, and when you don’t grant it she reacts; “I, with my child...”, while another teacher says “Am I guilty because I have no child, and why don’t I get some privilege just because I don’t have children so that I get the worse course schedule, in other words, just because she has children, I have to take it all burden...”; we encounter such circumstances.” (M10)*

The principals expressed that they may invalidate the feelings and experiences of others due to a lack of empathy and by criticizing their behaviors and belittling them.

Two questions were put forward regarding the impact of the third theme of microaggression and the roles of principals. While 13 out of 14 codes created in relation to the impacts of microaggression indicated that it might have adverse impacts, only one code indicated its favorable impacts.

The statements of principals M5 and M1, regarding to making someone feel pitiable as one of the effects of microaggression,

*"You could feel yourself insignificant",*

and

*"I think that excessive and overdosed microaggression may become loss of trust, unhappiness, and derogation",* respectively.

Another result of being exposed to microaggression is the impairment of sense of belonging to the institution. The principal M5 expressed his opinion regarding to impairment of sense of belonging as:

*"If you want to send someone from somewhere, or don't want to have somewhere, you break the sense of belonging of and invalidate that person if you manifest such behaviors, and eventually, he/she would have to leave the institution."*

Microaggression causes adverse biological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral impacts on people. One such impact is depression. The statements of the principals regarding to 'depression' are as follows:

*"Nevertheless, person may feel depressed, or display depressive behaviors."* (M5)

Among the adverse impacts of microaggression is stated the loss of motivation and performance. The opinions of the principals regarding to loss of motivation are as follows:

*"It causes loss of motivation; that's what its impact is; in other words, you lose your ambition to work".* (M8)

*"In my opinion, it causes jealousy, loss of motivation, and at the end of day, it wouldn't be possible to reach any common goal."* (M10)

### **6.2.11 Giving Motivation**

Another important finding on microaggression unique to the current study is the use of microaggression by the principals for motivation. The principals' statements regarding to 'giving motivation' among the impacts of microaggression are as follows:

*“Despite we say it may cause motivation loss, sometimes teachers or managers use it to increase motivation as a mean of provocation, as if it is a positive word! As if saying ‘You can do it’, or ‘I wouldn’t expect it from you, how come you don’t that’; actually, how to put it in words, as a mean of motivation, as it is called in our society... we use it as an reverse motivation.” (M10)*

Microaggression essentially containing adverse meanings is not known by the principals at all. In order for proper comprehension of the concept, it is important that every individual, whether perpetrator, target, or witness, must be knowledgeable on microaggression. It is rather important to create awareness of microaggression, the impacts of which may create risks to mental health in the long run.

Whether unaware or aware, any manifestation of microaggression displayed may be in any environment of people as well as among individuals. The principals were asked “How would you react if you witness a microaggression manifestation in the environment you are in?”, and two categories were defined ‘I would interfere’ and ‘I would not interfere’ in relation to that question. Under the category of ‘I would interfere’, four codes are created as guidance, reconciliation, interfering according to the case, and creating awareness.

The opinions of principals M4 and M10 regarding to ‘guidance’ under the category ‘I would interfere’ are, respectively, as;

*“As the principal, I duly issue a letter of warning to both parties, and try to avoid the divide and rule attitude”,*

and

*“Well, I think I would warn, not as a motivational tool, but just for alienating and neglecting.”*

The principal M7 indicated that he would choose to interfere depending on the case when witnessed a microaggression manifestation around him, by saying

*“I think to tackle such a problem at that instant or later on, or if failed, respective instructor files a petition to relevant form teacher to be referred to the counseling service, and then, to the management and the disciplinary board..., the procedure has to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, when I witness such behaviors among teachers, I am a little ashamed to interfere; because, we are colleagues, and I think that a professional adult needs to act responsibly, that’s why I don’t want to interfere.”*

Those principals considering no harm in interference when witnessed to microaggression indicated that they are able to create awareness, and expressed their opinions in this respect as follows.

*"Up until now, we were not aware of this concept, but from now on, we would create awareness in everyone by saying: "Hey friends, you are displaying microaggression manifestation, exactly like mobbing." (M12)*

### **6.2.12 Category of 'I Do Not Interfere'**

There are two different aspects in recognition of any microassault. One is being the target or the perpetrator of a microassault, while the other one is witnessing someone exposed to a microassault. Someone witnessing a microassault manifestation around may be indecisive about whether to be personal or professional about interfering or not (Sue, 2020, p.56). The principals expressed their both personal and professional dilemmas as follows:

*"Sometimes, I let it be, freely, -though I know it is a microaggression-, so that it could be an example for others, and sometimes, I interfere as soon as I gather that the stress will peak to the extreme." (M3)*

*"I do if it is proper to interfere. Most of the time, I just cannot do! You would just walk away, thinking that ... 'Never mind, both parties are already in stress'." (M9)*

It is important that principals must be knowledgeable on how to react to microaggression, and react accordingly. It is necessary to be aware of personal values and prejudices and know oneself in order to overcome personal dilemmas, and as for professional dilemmas, awareness of one's function and role. It is important that regarding any microaggression manifestation any principal witnesses, they must be knowledgeable on micro interferences such as making unseen visible, mitigating its impact, educating the perpetrator, and seeking support, as proposed by Sue at all (2020, p.258).

The role of a principal in a school environment cannot be denied. Based on the responses of the principals to the question "What should your role be in relation to microaggression?", six codes are created as arbitrating, reconciling, knowing oneself, not acting emotionally, being a good communicator, and act as a leader.

The statements of the principals regarding "being a peacemaker" are as follows:

*"Therefore, we have to be a peacemaker." (M5)*

*"Surely, principals have a role; what I mean is that they should be reconciling, open to communication, not compulsive, not acting emotionally, but again, I think it is up to individuals." (M8)*

One of the most important factors leading to microaggression is to know oneself and be aware of personal and cultural prejudices. The principals expressed the importance of knowing oneself when manifesting microaggression as follows:

*"In my opinion, every individual, rather than just principals, must know of themselves in the first place. What I mean is that at the end of the day, these people have bachelor degrees, and each one of them is at least 40 years old or older; in my opinion, people need to know of themselves. This is what I believe, and yet, I have to interfere, we all do. I do my best for mediation among all parties without hurting their dignity." (M2)*

Microaggression, containing both verbal and nonverbal manifestations, starts with the tongue in the first place. It requires being a very good communicator for comprehending the manifestations of microaggression, which is a mode of communication aiming to aggrieve other people. The opinions of principals regarding to being a good communicator with respect to microaggression are as follows:

*"We need to spend more time for communication. In any case, first of all, we need to spare greater time on communication rather than red tapes." (M4)*

Principals have responsibilities in three aspects in terms of being a perpetrator, target, and witness of microaggression manifestation. They need to be informed on the subject and aware of personal and collective prejudices for the part of the subject related to them for comprehending microaggression. As to being a target to microaggression manifestations, it is important that they need to be a good communicator, and able to respond to potential assaults, insults, or invalidations. The most important role and mission of principals regarding to microaggression manifestations are how they react or interfere in case of witnessing such a manifestation. During both implicit and obvious training programs at schools, principals have a role and responsibility for manifestations of microaggression comprehended by both teachers and students.

## **7. Discussions, Conclusions, and Suggestions**

Principals, who aim to recognize, comprehend, and prevent manifestations of microaggression, need to exert efforts for comprehending their own prejudices in the first place. Having principals only be aware of their own prejudices is not sufficient for a communication medium free of microaggression. Besides principals acquiring knowledge and competence, everyone, from teachers to students, to all the support personnel at schools needs to be informed, and put such information into actions, and environmental conditions of schools need to be free of microaggression. In search of the literature on microaggression at educational institutes, it is observed that particularly in The United States of America, the studies on microaggression based on mostly racism, sexual orientation, and ethnic origin are prominent. Aside from speaking of any studies on microaggression in Türkiye, it is obvious that the principals are not even aware of the existence of such a concept.

At the times when the concepts of diversity, equality, and comprehensiveness are raised all around the world and social justice for everyone is discussed; it is much more

important for Türkiye desiring among developed countries of the world, having a communicational and educational media, particularly at schools, free of microaggression. It is inevitable to place emphasize on the subject of microaggression, create awareness in general public, and carry out scientific researches in order for the prevention of microaggression that inflicts people and is harmful in the long run. Therefore, in the scope of the current study, the opinions of twelve high principals functioning in Istanbul on microaggression and the impacts thereof are taken.

The current study reached the following conclusions:

Since what the principals said of microaggression were rather the methods of microaggression utilized, it is concluded that they had not heard of this concept before. Their particular emphasis on 'jokes' proves that up until the present, the principals never distinguished manifestations of microaggression embedded in jokes. Another concept associated with microaggression is motivation; it is concluded that the principals utilized microaggression in forms of expressions for motivating students, particularly during their teaching periods as a 'reverse psychology'. Since this was not encountered in any other study, it is possible to say that this is unique to the current study. In a review of theories of motivation, no conclusion is found to prove that putting employees or students into adverse conditions ensures better performance or success. Reverse psychology, also known as strategic self-anticonformity (<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-reverse-psychology-5115635>), is a tactic that involves advocating for a behavior that is different from the desired outcome. It is based on the assumption that by compelling just the opposite of what is really desired any addressee would choose the actually desired behavior. The current study, as per its aim and scope, is not sufficient to determine the motivational impact of microaggression on employees. Therefore, it is thought that investigation of reverse psychology definition and the impact of said approach particularly on microaggression is important in terms of bringing a different perspective to the subject.

Microassault emerging from tacit prejudices of people makes its existence primarily in daily speeches. Knowing that the expression 'Female Principal', which is a sexist approach and frequently comes across particularly in the educational field, is a manifestation of microaggression may prevent abuse of it, and cause a change similar to switching from 'man of science' to 'people of science' (both terms being the Turkish equivalent of 'scientist'). It is also understood from the principals' statements that the judgmental expression '*How good to be working under females*' is also a manifestation of microaggression. The findings related to micro aggressive manifestations toward women are in accordance with those of previous studies. Moss-Racusin (2012) and Gruspan et al. (2016) indicated that male instructors and students constantly despise the performance of women in classrooms. The study 'Women in the Workplace' of LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Co (2018) also emphasizes that 64% of women are exposed to microassaults. The principals were asked to make a statement regarding to the usage of the microaggression concept, and it is concluded that they have chosen such statements that not empathetic, but scolding, judgmental, sexist, alienating, and menacing. It is possible



to conclude that such statements indicate the principals being prejudiced toward other people, not accepting them as is and who they are. The participants were also asked which aspect of their sentences caused them to be a manifestation of microaggression. Nevertheless, due to two consecutive questions put by the researcher during the focus group study, the participants missed to answer this question. This indicates that the researcher also has an assumption regarding to the participants that they would answer this question. This may conclude that personal assumptions and prejudices hinder communication and reaching to correct results.

As to the Turkish equivalent of the foreign term of 'microaggression', there is no common term yet. When asked what the Turkish meaning of the concept would be, the principals expressed the aspects of any statement or attitude of microaggression, proving that the concept must be learned and comprehended. Güleç and Özden (2019) suggest the concept of 'inadvertent insult' in Turkish equivalent of this concept based on the description of Pierce 'vague, tacit offensive statement'. Besides the 'inadvertent insult' concept according to the statements of the principals, the notion of 'communicational abuse' may also be recommended as a Turkish equivalent based on the results of the current study.

It is obvious that the principals commonly utilized the power of their status, jokes, and ignorance when they were committing microaggression. The finding regarding to use of official power is consistent with the findings of Hofstede in the study on power distance conducted in Türkiye. The effect of power distance on the attitudes and behaviors of employees were indicated in many scientific studies (Brockner et al., 2001; Farh, Hacket, and Liand 2007, Vidyarthi et al., 2013; Lam, Schaubroeck, and Aryee, 2002; Yang et al., 2007). Manifestations of microassault by principals due to their institutional role show similarities with the findings of Young and Anderson (2015). It may also be possible to say that learning and implementation of new approaches is difficult in any culture and concordantly in any organizations where power distance is great.

The principals used jokes as a microaggression perpetrator, leading to a conclusion that it is the indication of rebuttal and normalization of what they did. This finding is similar to the findings of Eschmann et al. (2020) as to the efforts of rebuttal and normalization of microaggression statements in social media. Microaggression manifestations are not normalized only by perpetrators, but also by those exposed as remarked by Haris (2017, p.429).

Microaggression in the form of microassault sub dimension is manifested deliberately; the principals stated manifesting deliberate microassaults, but it is understood that when they were the target of microaggression, they were not aware that it was being done deliberately. It is necessary to be aware of personal prejudices for both sides of microaggression, as exposer and exposed. Microinsult, the second sub dimension of microaggression, contains mostly rude and insensitive behaviors and words. In cases of microinsult manifestations displayed toward the principals, mostly giving advice, comparison, sexist approach, and ignorance are used. Giving advice may be associated with reference to intelligence level in the taxonomy of Sue (2010). These conclusions are

in compliance with the findings in Sue taxonomy (2010). Having disassociated microaggression from race and ethnic roots, Sue (2010) contributed the taxonomy by adding the microinsult sub dimension of 'comparison to others', which is also found out in the current study. The participating principals use mostly scorning and lack of empathy as a microinvalidation manifested inadvertently as the third sub dimension of microaggression. It may be said that the principals need to develop empathy, being an important communicational ability for understanding others, which is consistent with the findings of Doğuş (2020) that principals describe empathy just in contrast to circumstances and that empathy is an ability open to improving. The behavior of scorning as another result found out in microaggression may be said to cause confusion commonly with psychological intimidation or mobbing. It is obvious that understanding microaggression, a rather new concept, but the behaviors of psychological intimidation, long known and proven scientifically, is not fully understood yet, and there is a need of developing knowledge and skill therefore, particularly in the educational sector.

The principals used mostly negative statements in regard to the impacts of microaggression. They expressed that those exposed to microaggression may fall into depression, feel inadequate, and lose work their performance. These results are consistent with the conclusions of Nadal et al. (2014, p.92) in their study on microaggression and the mental health relation thereof. Nadal (2014) indicated that those individuals exposed to microaggression in the last six months showed depression symptoms and a diminishing of positive feelings. Sue et al. (2007, p.273) remark that microaggression causes inequality as well as demoralization of exposed people, and declines in productivity in many aspects. It is found out that microaggression has adverse impacts on individuals, work environment, and all organizations. It particularly has adverse biological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral impacts on people. Sue (2020, p.210) emphasizes the necessity of acquiring knowledge by academicians before manifestations of microaggression, whether verbal or nonverbal, in order for recognition thereof. It is indicated that both academic knowledge and popular general information in the learning of microaggression in academia and sharing of videos and personal experiences may be guidance for conducting challenging dialogs (Spanierman and Clark 2019; Sue, 2020, p.213).

Witnessing to microaggression is as important as being a perpetrator or target thereof. The principals answered the question of how would react when witnessing a microaggression manifestation in two different ways; interference and noninterference. They associated this difference, particularly to the age of the individuals they witnessed. They expressed that they might be ashamed of interfering with a microaggression manifestation occurring among colleagues while not refraining to interfere with any among students. This conclusion was not seen in previous researches. The underlying cause of this may be that the principals assume their colleagues should have a complete grasp of such circumstances. It may be said that such an assumption would be very constraining for the prevention of microaggression among adults. Whether among

students or adults, non-involvement to manifestations of microaggression is such an attitude that may cause implicit learning in school environments.

When asked the question “What would be the role of principals?” in case of micro aggressive manifestations at schools, the principals frequently emphasized that they need to be a good communicator, not acting emotionally, displaying attitudes being aware of self and his/her prejudices, and a peacemaker and arbitrator. Such findings are consistent with the findings of Lynn R. Offermann, Tessa E. Basford, Raluca Graebner, Sumona Basu De Graaf, and Salman Jaffer (2013). Principals have responsibilities in three aspects in terms of being a perpetrator, target, and witness of microaggression manifestation. They need to be aware of personal and collective prejudices for the part of the subject related to themselves as well as being informed of the subject for comprehending microaggression. As to being a target to microaggression manifestations, it is important that they need to be a good communicator, and able to respond to potential assaults, insults, or invalidations. The most important role and mission of principals regarding to microaggression manifestations are how they react or interfere in case of witnessing such a manifestation. It is rather important that principals need to develop and improve awareness, knowledge, ability, and attitudes. The studies indicate that manifestations of microaggression may diminish when leaders are to have an egalitarian and just perspective at every level by recognizing discrimination.

Whether consciously and intentionally an assault, or unconsciously or unintentionally a scolding or invalidation, nurture the idea of inequality of people. The prefix ‘micro’ of the concept is not because itself or the impact thereof is minor, but as emphasized by Fatima (2020), exposer, exposed, and witness of the incidence are not aware of the manifestation occurred since they are not cognizant of the concept. Whether occurred consciously or unconsciously, or is hidden under politeness, implicit or openly, discriminative actions estrange people from each other, eliminate equality, marginalize, and make learning, working, and living together difficult.

Although the current study contributes new findings to microaggression studies, it has limited aspects. Having the research completed with only twelve people, and using only an interview questionnaire as the data collection tool is among the limitations of the study. Another limitation was that the definition of microaggression is provided at the onset of the interview, but not displayed constantly during the interview. Only once, the definition was repeated upon a request from participants. This may have caused the participants to forget the definition, or remembering incorrectly. For future researches, such limitations may be prevented by displaying the definition of the concept constantly during the data collection period as well as by sending it to participants beforehand. Another limitation of the research was the provision of example statements. During the pilot study of the research, the participants were not given example statements, but the researchers considered it beneficial to provide example statements in addition to the data collection in order to facilitate correct comprehension of the concept. This approach may be considered as another limitation of the study since it may cause directing/orienting participants.

Having taken note of the findings of the research, it is considered that the following recommendations to practitioners and researchers might be beneficial for the prevention or reduction of microaggression manifested by principals at schools.

Accordingly, communicational and environmental regulations free of microassault must be enforced in order to increase the efficiency of schools and support the solution of communicational problems at schools. It must be paid special attention to that principals in Turkey must have full knowledge of communicational information and skills as much as they do with respect to the legislations. In the short- and long-term communicational plans, special attention must be paid to the expressions of alienation, discrimination, aggression, humiliation, or invalidation. Ensuring the development of school managers in communication skills is needed for the prevention of microaggression in Türkiye, which has a multi-cultural communal structure. Training needs of principals on microaggression should be determined for fulfillment thereof. In Türkiye, there is no legal or organizational regulation on microaggression yet. Legal and organizational regulations must be enforced on the subject. In order to prevention of manifestations of microaggression in classrooms, certain projects should be developed for informing teachers in addition to principals of micro aggressive manifestations.

The current study was conducted with principals functioning at high schools in Istanbul. In order to determine the micro aggressive behaviors of principals in Türkiye, take necessary measures, or draw up preventive and awareness projects, the research scope on microaggression in the education sector needs to be expanded to include principals, teachers, and students at every school level. The current study is accomplished with the principals regardless of high school type. Depending on differences of school types; it is necessary to study whether or not microaggressions vary, increase, or the effects of explicit and implicit microaggressions at schools on schools, teachers' efficiencies, or students' successes, the effect of principals' behaviors and attitudes when witnessing microaggressions on the continuance of microaggressions, and the dimensions of microaggressions particularly among teachers and students in classrooms. A scale-developing study must be conducted in relation to comprehension of manifestations of microaggression that might occur in communication independently of racism and ethnic roots used in lay terminology. What implicit environmental regulations are to be enforced in relation to microaggression and the measures therefore must be studied. Based on the result of the current study, the perception of using microaggression for motivational purposes must be studied.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

### **About the Authors**

**Elgiz Henden** is a PhD student in Educational Administration and Supervision at the Faculty of Education at Okan University. Henden is particularly interested in communication in schools, micro-aggression and coaching in educational leadership.

**Prof. Dr. Ali İlker Gümüşeli** works Istanbul Okan University Faculty of Education as the academic faculty member and as an Advisor to the Rector. Prof. Dr. Gümüşeli did the first applied research in Turkey on the conflict management at schools and educational leadership. He has a book, titled Educational and Instructional Management, and supervised a number of post-graduate dissertations and theses in school administration, leadership, and conflict management, as well as several articles published in national and international journal.

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