

The Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Teachers' Job Performance: Organizational Commitment as a Mediator*

Güçlendirici Liderlik ile Öğretmen İş Performansı Arasındaki İlişki: Örgütsel Bağlılığın Aracı Rolü

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the mediating role of organizational commitment on the relationship between principals' empowering leadership and teachers' job performance. To this end, it employed a cross-sectional design, one of the quantitative methods. Data were collected through the "Empowering Leadership Behaviors Scale", "Organizational Commitment Scale" and "Job Performance Scale". The sample consisted of 324 teachers working in different cities in Turkey. They were employed through convenience sampling and responded to the scales online. Predictive relationships between variables were revealed using a structural equation model. Before testing the structural model, the validity of the scales and measurement model was investigated. The findings indicated that validity and reliability of scales were ensured. On the other hand, the fit indices regarding the measurement model satisfied the cutoff values in the literature. Since the data did not satisfy the multivariate normal distribution assumption, bootstrapping was used. The findings indicated that empowering leadership is positively associated with teachers' job performance and organizational commitment. On the other hand, organizational commitment boosts job performance. Lastly, empowering school leadership enhances organizational commitment, which in turn teachers' job performance. The findings were discussed based on the literature and some suggestions were made based on the findings.

Keywords: Teacher empowerment, commitment, job performance.

ÖZ: Bu çalışma, okul müdürlerinin güçlendirici liderliği ile öğretmenlerin iş performansı arasındaki ilişkide örgütsel bağlılığın aracı rolünü incelemektedir. Nicel desende kurgulanan mevcut araştırma kesitsel bir çalışmadır. Veriler, "Güçlendirici Liderlik Ölçeği", "Örgütsel Bağlılık Ölçeği" ve "İş Performansı Ölçeği" aracılığı ile toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini Türkiye'nin farklı illerinde görev yapan 324 öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcılara uygun örnekleme yöntemi ile ulaşılmış ve katılımcılar ölçekleri çevrimiçi olarak yanıtlamıştır. Değişkenler arası öngörücü ilişkiler yapısal eşitlik modeli kullanılarak ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Yapısal modelin test edilmesinden önce, ölçüm modelinin ve araştırmada kullanılan ölçeklerin geçerliliği incelenmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular ölçeklerin geçerlik ve güvenilirliğine işaret etmektedir. Ölçüm modeline ilişkin uyum iyiliği değerleri alanyazındaki ölçütleri karşılamıştır. Veri çok değişkenli normal dağılım varsayımını karşılamadığından önyükleme (bootstrapping) yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, güçlendirici okul liderliğinin öğretmenlerin iş performansı ve örgütsel bağlılığı ile pozitif ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir. Öte yandan, örgütsel bağlılık iş performansını artırmaktadır. Son olarak, güçlendirici okul liderliği örgütsel bağlılık aracılığı ile öğretmen iş performansını dolaylı olarak etkilemektedir. Araştırma bulguları alanyazın temelinde tartışılmış ve bulgulara dayalı olarak bazı önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Öğretmen güçlendirme, bağlılık, iş performansı.

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The leadership role of school principals on the effectiveness and development of the school has attracted considerable attention recently in the literature (Abdurrezzak & Uğurlu, 2016; Cerit & Yıldırım, 2017; May & Supovitz, 2011; Setwong & Prasertcharoensuk, 2013; Slater & Teddlie, 1992; Tatlah & Iqbal, 2012). However, as in all other social fields, a transformation and change have become necessary for school leadership. In an increasingly complex environment, it became difficult for school principals to undertake all management and leadership responsibilities of the school alone (Beycioğlu & Aslan, 2010; Carter, 2016; Dilekçi & Sezgin Nartgün, 2020). In this context, autocratic or hierarchical leadership styles in which organizational power is concentrated are out of date, and sharing power has gained great importance (Bastian, 1995; Elmazi, 2018; Moran, 2015; Pan, 2007). This transformation brought the concept of “teacher empowerment” to the agenda (Blase & Blase, 1996, 2001; Short, 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Terry, 1995). As for educational organizations, empowering leadership emerged from teacher empowerment (Çelik & Konan, 2020). In order to achieve the desired outcomes from ongoing reform initiatives in education systems (Lee & Nie, 2016), the effectiveness of school principal as a leader (Maxfield & Flumerfelt, 2009; Muzvidziwa, 2014) and school as an organization and ultimately the creation of a better learning environment are associated with empowered teachers (Aliakbari & Amoli, 2016; Lutsilili et al., 2014). Empowering teachers is regarded as one of the best methods for the school to realize its mission and goals (Blase & Blase, 2001).

On the other hand, teachers’ commitment is another crucial factor which enhances school effectiveness (Bogler & Berkovich, 2020; Özgenel & Koç, 2020). It is a critical antecedent of the success of educational reforms and school effectiveness because higher teacher commitment results in extra effort to achieve school vision and goals; therefore, it is important to identify the factors contributing to teachers’ commitment (Selamat et al., 2013). In the literature, it is stated that teachers’ empowerment is one of the most effective ways to enhance teachers’ commitment (Muhammad & Hussain Ch., 2020). Thus, Bogler and Somech (2004) found that empowered teachers display a higher level of organizational commitment which implies that empowering leadership is promising to have more committed teachers. As well as being an outcome of empowering leadership, organizational commitment is an antecedent of performance (Boz et al., 2021; Mailool et al., 2020) on which schools mainly rely to achieve their goals. Considering the importance of these three variables in terms of school effectiveness, there is a need to further investigate the relationships among them.

Previous literature also suggested that teachers’ being more involved in critical decisions that direct the school, being more autonomous and being exposed to more school-related input, may cause stress by complicating communication processes and harm their motivation (Davis & Wilson, 2000). Based on this, the efforts to empower teachers can have negative outcomes. As a matter of fact, studies conducted in different sectors reveal that there is not always a linear relationship between employee empowerment and performance (Cheong et al., 2016; Hao et al., 2018; Humborstad et al., 2014). Considering the limited empirical evidence on the effects of empowering school leadership (Atik & Celik, 2020; Çelik & Konan, 2020; Lee & Nie, 2013), there is a need to further examine the relationship between teacher empowerment and performance. Based on the aforementioned gap in the literature, the mediating role of

organizational commitment on the relationship between empowering school leadership and teacher job performance is investigated in the present study. Thus, this study aims to provide insight into the relationship between empowering leadership and teacher performance and to reveal the processes through which empowering school leadership affect performance. Additionally, the findings are supposed to have significant implications for school administrators in terms of leadership style that they should adopt. Lastly, the study can extend our existing knowledge on empowering school leadership and guide the theoretical frameworks in further research.

Theoretical Framework

Empowering Leadership

The concept of “empowering leadership” was first proposed by Manz and Sims (1989, 1991). Researchers defined the concept, which they expressed as leaders directing employees to self-management, as “super leadership” (Knezovic & Musrati, 2018; Liu, 2015). Pearce et al. (2003) argued that empowering leadership could be regarded as a distinctive leadership behavior and determined that empowering leadership behaviors are gathered in a separate dimension from transformative, interactional, and directive leadership behaviors. According to the authors, directive leadership embodies organizing, problem solving, clarifying roles, and objectives, informing and monitoring; transactional leadership recognizing, and rewarding; transformational leadership planning, motivating, inspiring, and networking. On the other hand, empowering leadership covers consulting, delegating, supporting, developing, and mentoring, and managing conflict, and team building.

While leadership is defined as the process of influencing others, empowering leadership can be conceptualized as empowering subordinates to influence rather than influencing them (Knezovic & Musrati, 2018). Empowering leadership can be regarded as an approach that offers leaders a prescription for the distribution and use of power (Vecchio et al., 2010). In its broadest term, empowering leadership is the behavior of the leader to share her / his power with subordinates (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). Empowering leaders increase the meaningfulness of the work for the employee by ensuring that employees understand the importance of their contribution to the overall effectiveness of the organization; express confidence in the employee’s competence, and possibility of high performance by encouraging the employee to make decisions about how to do her/his job, and offering autonomy (Audenaert & Decramer, 2018; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Empowering leadership behaviors are listed as delegation of authority, coordination, and information sharing, encouragement of initiative, and being goal-oriented, support of effectiveness, inspiration, modeling, motivational support, participatory decision-making, showing interest, assuming responsibility, providing opportunities for professional development, coaching for innovative performance, guidance, participatory goal setting, and encouraging teamwork (Ahearne et al., 2005; Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Arnold et al., 2000; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Dennerlein, 2017; Konczak et al., 2000; Pearce et al., 2003).

Considering school organizations, empowerment is defined as the processes that offer the school stakeholders the opportunity to take responsibility for their professional

development, and solve their own problems (Short et al., 1994). On the other hand, Short (1994) briefly explains the dimensions of teacher empowerment as follows:

Participation in decision making: It refers to the participation of the teacher in class and school level decisions. Achieving the desired results from participating in decisions depends only on the teachers being sure that her/his involvement in the process will affect the outcomes.

Professional development: It refers to the teacher's perception that the school offers the opportunity to develop professionally, learn continuously, increase professional skills, and work collaboratively (Short & Rinehart, 1992).

Status: It is the perception that teacher is respected and appreciated.

Self-efficacy: It is the perception that the teacher has the abilities and skills that can aid student learning and the competence to develop a curriculum for students.

Autonomy: It refers to the perception of whether the teacher has control over key elements in a professional sense or not.

Impact: It is the perception that the teacher is valuable for the school; s/he affects teaching and learning processes and her/his ideas are put into practice.

Empowering school leadership is to create a sense of trust in teachers, develop shared management structures, ensure teacher participation in problem-solving, and decision-making mechanisms, enable teacher autonomy, encourage innovation, creativity and risk-taking, reward, offer support, the delegation of authority, providing intellectual stimulation, affirming and appreciating, creating a vision, encouraging collaborative relationships, respecting the teacher's ideas, providing the teacher with resources for the benefit of students, being a role model and displaying personality traits such as being interested, enthusiastic, optimistic, honest and approachable (Bastian, 1995; Blase & Blase, 1996; Konan & Çelik, 2018; Lee & Nie, 2013; Reitzug, 1994).

Organizational Commitment

Employee commitment is very important for organizations to achieve their goals by performing at a high level (Princy & Rebeka, 2019; Visanh & Xu, 2018), develop and maintain sustainability (Batugal & Tindowen, 2019). Because of its importance for organizations, organizational commitment is one of the mostly discussed issues in literature (Al Jabri & Ghazzawi, 2019; Bogler & Berkovich, 2020). Interest in organizational commitment increased especially in the 1980s, and commitment became a rival to the concept of job satisfaction as an organizational research topic (Meyer et al., 1993). In general terms, organizational commitment is the internalization of organizational goals and values and a feeling of loyalty towards the organization (Kushman, 1992). Meyer and Allen (1991) described the concept, which was previously considered as attitudinal and behavioral commitment, as a psychological condition, and discussed it in three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Accordingly, organizational commitment characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization and includes implications of whether s/he wants to continue organizational membership. These three dimensions of organizational commitment can be briefly explained as follows (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997; Meyer et al., 1993). Affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment of the employee towards, the level of identification with and involvement in the organization. Employees with high affective commitment stay because they want to stay in the organization. On the other hand, continuance commitment refers to the cost that employee associates with leaving the organization. Employees who have continuance commitment remain in the organization because they must remain. Finally, normative commitment refers to the

employee's feeling of obligation to work and the employee feels a moral obligation to stay in the organization. Meyer and Allen (1991) stated that any employee can experience organizational commitment dimensions at different levels. While an employee feels a strong desire or necessity to stay in the organization, s/he may feel a low-level obligation. Another employee may have a low level of desire, a medium level of necessity, and a high level of obligation. Therefore, it can be said that three dimensions of organizational commitment affect behavior interactively and a researcher who wants to better understand the employee's relationship with the organization should consider these three dimensions together (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Considering educational organizations, we can state that teachers' commitment is important for the success of educational reforms and the effectiveness of the school and teaching (Adeyemo, 2007; Celep, 2000; Devos et al., 2014; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Hamid et al., 2013; Kushman, 1992). Educational organizations need teachers with high organizational commitment to create/maintain a competitive edge and perform at a higher level (Bashir & Gani, 2020). Crosswell (2006) stated that teaching is not limited to activities carried out in the classroom; therefore, teacher commitment should be considered from a broader perspective.

As a matter of fact, three types of commitment are mentioned in terms of the teaching profession in the literature (Celep, 2000; Crosswell, 2006; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Fresko et al., 1997; Kushman, 1992) which are commitment to the students, teaching (profession) and school. According to Firestone and Pennell (1993), teachers need to feel all these commitment types to professionalize and respond to the complex demands brought about by the changes in teaching practices while following them simultaneously. This study handles organizational commitment in terms of affective, continuance and normative dimensions (Meyer et al., 1993).

Teachers' organizational commitment can be defined as a considerable level of loyalty towards a particular school (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Park, 2005). According to Park (2005), a consensus about the mission of the school, working conditions and social relations between teachers can contribute to the development of this loyalty. Tsui and Cheng (1999) described teachers' organizational commitment as the level of identification and involvement with the school. Teachers' organizational commitment can be characterized by a strong belief and acceptance of the school's goals, mission, and values; a willingness to make a considerable effort for the school; a strong desire to pursue a career in the current school; and a tendency to take on different roles on behalf of the school (Celep, 2000; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Park, 2005; Sheikh, 2017; Tsui & Cheng, 1999). According to Kushman (1992) commitment in educational organizations can yield the effort required for the better learning of students who learn relatively difficult, the necessary loyalty to create a culture of continuous academic excellence and teacher professionalism, and a consensus among teachers towards the basic educational goals and values of the school. Additionally, Kushman stated that organizational commitment in schools can function as a powerful motivational tool when bureaucratic rules and external rewards are not appropriate. Sheikh (2017) indicated that teachers with high organizational commitment will have a low rate of absenteeism, a strong enthusiasm to come to school, and tend to display organizational citizenship behavior. In this sense, when schools create an environment to increase teachers' organizational commitment, they can have a more dedicated,

enthusiastic, and responsible teaching staff which in turn can contribute to better student learning.

Job Performance

As the realization of organizational goals depends largely on employee performance, the performance level of employees is of great importance for organizations (Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019). Job performance can be defined as employee actions and behaviors that contribute to or facilitate the achievement of organizational goals (Fogaça et al., 2018; Sackett & DeVore, 2005); the total value expected to provide the organization by different behavioral patterns the employee exhibits in a standard time period (Motowidlo & Kell, 2013). The most commonly referred dimensions of job performance in literature are task, contextual, and adaptive performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Griffin et al., 2000; Sonnentag et al., 2008). Task performance refers to the behaviors that directly include the production of products or services, or activities that indirectly support the core technical processes of the organization; contextual performance to behavioral patterns that support the psychological or social context in which task activities are carried out (Van Scotter et al., 2000); and adaptive performance to the ability to meet the demands of a dynamic environment (Charbonnier-Voirin & Roussel, 2012).

Educational organizations that train human capital, the most important asset of society, need teachers with high performance to achieve their goals. Since job performance is defined as fulfilling the requirements of a specific job successfully (Chaithra & Hiremath, 2018), there may be job-specific performance definitions (Koopmans et al., 2011). Thus, teacher job performance is related to how effectively a teacher performs his job (Polat & Abaslı, 2019) and the level of contribution s/he offers to school's goals (Duze, 2012; Özdemir & Gören, 2017; Özdemir & Yirmibeş, 2016). The success and quality of the educational service offered by the school is closely associated with the quality and performance levels of its teachers (Mgbere & Andrew, 2019). Therefore, it can be stated that teacher performance is among the main factors that contribute to the academic success of students, the ultimate goal of the school (Cerit, 2012; Osagie & Akinlosotu, 2017; Polat, 2019). For this reason, revealing the factors affecting teacher performance is important in terms of improving student learning, which is the purpose of the school's existence.

Conceptual Framework

Relationships between Empowering Leadership, Organizational Commitment, and Job Performance

There is a growing body of literature examining school principals' empowering leadership behaviors and teacher empowerment. These studies associate empowering leadership behaviors with some favorable outcomes at both organizational and individual levels. Among these are job satisfaction (Amoli & Youran, 2014; Atik & Celik, 2020; Bogler & Nir, 2012; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Vecchio et al., 2010); organizational citizenship behaviors (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Somech, 2005); perceived organizational support (Bogler & Nir, 2012); compliance with psychological contract (Koçak & Burgaz, 2017); innovative behavior (Gkorezis, 2016; Zhu et al., 2019); intention to stay at school (Ndoye et al., 2010); trust in school principal (Atik &

Celik, 2020) and the organization (Uygur & Arabacı, 2019). Empowering leadership creates an environment facilitating teachers' development and autonomy, contributing to the development of teachers' potential (Lee & Nie, 2013) and increasing teacher motivation (Davis & Wilson, 2000). These are all factors that can indirectly contribute to the commitment and performance of teachers. On the other hand, there are also studies that directly associate teacher performance (Özdemir & Gören, 2017; Somech, 2005; Vecchio et al., 2010) and commitment (Aliakbari & Amoli, 2016; Batugal & Tindowen, 2019; Bogler, 2005; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Boonyarit et al., 2010; Gordon, 2018; Gretkierewicz, 2020; Gümüş, 2013; Hamid et al., 2013; Holliman, 2012; Özdemir & Gören, 2017; Somech, 2005; Wu & Short, 1996) with empowerment. Based on the previous literature, the following hypotheses are suggested.

H₁: School principals' empowering leadership behaviors significantly predict teachers' organizational commitment.

H₂: School principals' empowering leadership behaviors significantly predict teachers' job performance.

Teachers' organizational commitment has significant implications for schools (Sheikh, 2017). For example, efficacy (Adeyemo, 2007), organizational citizenship behaviors (Çelik & Üstüner, 2020; Sheikh, 2017) and job satisfaction (Demirtaş, 2014; Önder et al., 2019) are associated with commitment. Teachers with a higher level of commitment will carry out their jobs more willingly, show extra effort on behalf of school, and have a lower level of absenteeism (Gordon, 2018; Sheikh, 2017; Singh & Billingsley, 1998). On the other hand, commitment is negatively associated with intention to leave school (Demir, 2019; Flynn, 2000; Sheikh, 2017). Similarly, the findings in literature indicate that organizational commitment increases teacher performance (Doğan & Çelik, 2019; Flynn, 2000; Laily & Wahyuni, 2017; Sheikh, 2017). These findings imply that when teachers are more committed to the school, they will exhibit a higher level of performance. Teachers may tend to devote to and stay in the school to accomplish the objectives of the school because they personally have same goals and values with it (Az, 2017). Drawing on these, the following hypothesis is suggested.

H₃: Teachers' organizational commitment significantly predicts their job performance.

As mentioned above, principals' empowering leadership behaviors affect both teachers' organizational commitment (Aliakbari & Amoli, 2016; Bogler, 2005; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Boonyarit et al., 2010; Gretkierewicz, 2020; Gümüş, 2013; Hamid et al., 2013; Holliman, 2012; Özdemir & Gören, 2017; Somech, 2005) and job performance (Özdemir & Gören, 2017; Somech, 2005; Vecchio et al., 2010). On the other hand, organizational commitment is a significant predictor of teacher job performance (Doğan & Çelik, 2019; Flynn, 2000; Sheikh, 2017). Thus, based on the previous literature it can be anticipated that empowering leadership may increase teachers' organizational commitment which in turn positively contribute to performance. This implies that organizational commitment could play a mediating role on the relationship between empowering leadership and job performance. Based on this, the fourth hypothesis of this study is as follows.

H₄: Teachers' organizational commitment mediates the relationship between principals' empowering leadership behaviors and teachers' job performance.

Method

This is a cross-sectional study (Cohen et al., 2005) following quantitative design to reveal the relationships between principals' empowering leadership behavior, teachers' organizational commitment and job performance. Cross-sectional studies explore the instantaneous situation of the sample at a certain time.

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 324 teachers employed through convenience sampling method (Mertens, 2010) and the sample size can be considered satisfactory for a study in which structural equation modelling is used (Kline, 2011). This sampling method was chosen because it offers some advantages in terms of cost of locating participants, the geographic distribution of the sample and obtaining data from the selected elements. On the other hand, in this sampling method the researchers do not put as much focus on the representativeness of the sample as in purposive sampling (Lavrakas, 2008). This is also an internal validity study which aims to validate a model including predictive relationships between variables, so it was not carried out on a sample. Internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data while external validity refers to the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population, cases, or situations (Cohen et al., 2005). So, teachers from different cities were included in the study. Of the participants, 187 were women (57.7%) and 137 men (42.3%). Of the participants 312 were working in public (96.3%) and 12 in private schools (3.7%). 11 participants were working in pre-schools (3.4%), 60 in primary schools (28.5%), 81 in secondary schools (25%), 160 in high schools (49.4%) and 12 in other educational institutions (3.7%). The average age of teachers participating in the study is 39.27 ($SD=7.62$); of teaching experience is 15.31 years ($SD=7.77$), duration of working with current school principals is 2.51 years ($SD=2.53$) and duration of working at current schools is 5.42 years ($SD=4.43$).

Data Collection

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Batman University Ethics Committee dated 20th November 2020 and numbered 2020/5-14. The study employed an online data collection procedure. First of all, an online form including scales was created via Google Forms. The researcher copied and sent the link to the school administrators and teachers with whom he is acquainted with in different cities. They shared the link on their schools' Whatsapp groups. The teachers could have access to the form by clicking this link and responded the scales online. Their personal information was kept confidential.

Data Analysis

SPSS 25 and AMOS 23 package programs were used in data analysis (Arbuckle, 2019). First of all, the data set was scanned for missing values and there were none of them since data were collected online. In the second step, the univariate distribution of data set was checked through skewness and kurtosis values. The skewness values were

(-.627; -.293; -.544) and kurtosis (.321; -.034; .484) for empowering leadership, organizational commitment, and job performance, respectively which indicate univariate normal distribution of the data (Field, 2009). Within the scope of descriptive statistics, minimum, maximum values, arithmetic means, and standard deviation values were calculated and the correlations among variables were calculated through Pearson correlation coefficient.

The predictive relationships among the variables were investigated through a structural equation model including all observed variables. Structural equation models allow researchers to test the relationships between variables simultaneously (Collier, 2020). In the present study, empowering leadership of principals was the independent variable, organizational commitment was the mediator and teacher job performance was the dependent variable. Firstly, it was examined whether there was a multicollinearity problem between empowering leadership and organizational commitment as variables that predict teacher job performance. The findings (Tolerance=.661; $VIF=1.513$; $r=.586$) showed that there was no multicollinearity between predictor variables (Field, 2009). Multivariate normality assumption was checked through “*multivariate kurtosis and its critical ratio*”. The findings indicated that the data did not satisfy multivariate normality assumption (Multivariate Kurtosis=219.629; $CR=36.795$). Thus, non-parametric “*bootstrapping*” method (Byrne, 2016), which does not require the normal distribution of data, was employed to reveal direct and indirect relationships. The steps suggested by Hair et al. (2014) were followed during the structural model analysis procedure which can be summarized as follows: (1) *Identification of measurement tools*, (2) *Development of measurement model*, (3) *Testing the measurement model*, (4) *Evaluation of the findings regarding the measurement model*, (5) *Development of the structural model*, (6) *Evaluation of the findings regarding the structural model*.

Data Collection Tools

Empowering Leadership Scale

This scale was developed by Konczak et al. (2000) and adapted into Turkish by Aras (2013). It was used by Koçak and Burgaz (2017) to measure the empowering leadership behaviors of school principals based on teachers’ perceptions. The scale consists of 18 items and its dimensions are “delegation of authority and responsibility (4 items)”, “decision making (3 items)”, “knowledge sharing (3 items)”, “skill development (3 items)” and “coaching for innovative performance (5 items)”. A sample item is as follows “My principal contributes to my ability to identify and solve problems at school.” It is a five-point Likert type scale and item responses range from “(1) Strongly disagree” to “(5) Strongly agree”. Koçak and Burgaz (2017) reported the Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale and its dimensions between .86-.92.

Organizational Commitment Scale

The scale developed by Meyer et al. (1993) and adapted into Turkish by Dağlı et al. (2018) was employed to measure teachers’ commitment level. The scale consists of 18 items loading on three dimensions: “affective commitment (6 items)”, “continuance commitment (6 items)” and “normative commitment (6 items)”. It measures teachers’

organizational commitment based on self-report. A sample item is as follows “It would make me very happy to spend the rest of my professional career in this school.”. It is a five-point Likert type scale and item responses range from “(1) Strongly disagree” to “(5) Totally agree”. Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale and its dimensions were reported between .73 and .88 (Dağlı et al., 2018).

Job Performance

The “Employee Performance Scale” (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Sigler & Pearson, 2000) was used to measure teachers’ self-reported job performance level. The adaptation study of the scale into Turkish was conducted by Çöl (2008). This is a uni-dimensional scale consisting of four items. A sample item is as follows “I complete my tasks just on time.”. It is a five-point Likert type scale and item responses range from “(1) Strongly disagree” and “(5) Strongly agree”. Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was reported as .82 (Çöl, 2008).

The validity and reliability of data collection tools were also evaluated within the scope of the present study. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the validity and Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficients were calculated. The findings of the first confirmatory factor analysis showed that an item on the empowering leadership scale ($EL4=.319$) and two items on organizational commitment scale ($OC3=.398$; $OC5=.483$) had low factor loadings. Thus, they were discarded (Hair et al., 2014) from data analysis. Consequently, 17 items remained on the empowering leadership scale, and the factor loadings ranged from .708 to .914. As for organizational commitment scale, the remaining 16 items had factor loadings ranging from .493 to .855. On the other hand, the factor loadings for items on job performance scale ranged from .535 to .735. Table 1 below presents Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficients and the fit indices of scales and measurement model.

Table 1

Fit Indices and Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficients of Scales

Scale	χ^2/df	p	RMSEA	NFI	NNFI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	SRMR	Alpha
EL	2.551	.000	.069	.948	.959	.967	.911	.875	.027	.968
OC	3.781	.000	.093	.854	.866	.887	.886	.812	.064	.912
JP	1.729	.189	.048	.996	.991	.998	.997	.973	.010	.820
MM	2.218	.000	.061	.851	.905	.912	.807	.780	.067	-

Note: EL: Empowering leadership; OC: Organizational commitment; JP: Job performance; MM: Measurement model

As shown in Table 1, the fit indices of the scales and measurement model in which all the observed variables are included satisfied the cut off values in literature (Hair et al., 2014; Sharma et al., 2005). On the other hand, Cronbach’s Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scales, which are $>.75$, indicate reliability (Singh, 2007). Based on these findings, it can be said that the validity and reliability were ensured.

Findings

Descriptive Findings and Correlations among Variables

In this section, descriptive findings and correlations among variables are presented.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Variables

Scale	Descriptives				Correlations		
	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
(1) EL	1.06	5.00	3.62	.80	1.00		
(2) OC	1.00	5.00	3.22	.73	.586**	1.00	
(3) JP	2.00	5.00	4.15	.59	.135*	.184**	1.00

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

As shown in Table 2, based on teachers' perceptions empowering leadership behaviors of school principals is relatively high $M=3.62$ ($SD=.80$). Self-reported organizational commitment is $M=3.22$ ($SD=.73$) and job performance is $M=4.15$ ($SD=.59$). On the other hand, there were statistically significant positive correlations among variables. Accordingly, the correlation between empowering leadership and organizational commitment was ($r=.586$; $p < .01$); empowering leadership and job performance ($r=.135$; $p < .05$) and organizational commitment and job performance ($r=.184$; $p < .01$).

Findings on Structural Model

The structural equation model investigated the mediating role of organizational commitment on the relationship between empowering leadership and job performance. Fit indices regarding the structural equation model were as follows ($\chi^2/df = 2.218$, $p = .000$; $CFI = .912$; $RMSEA = .061$; $NFI = .851$; $NNFI = .905$; $GFI = .807$; $AGFI = .780$; $RMR = .075$; $SRMR = .067$) indicating good fit. The model can be seen in Figure 1 below.

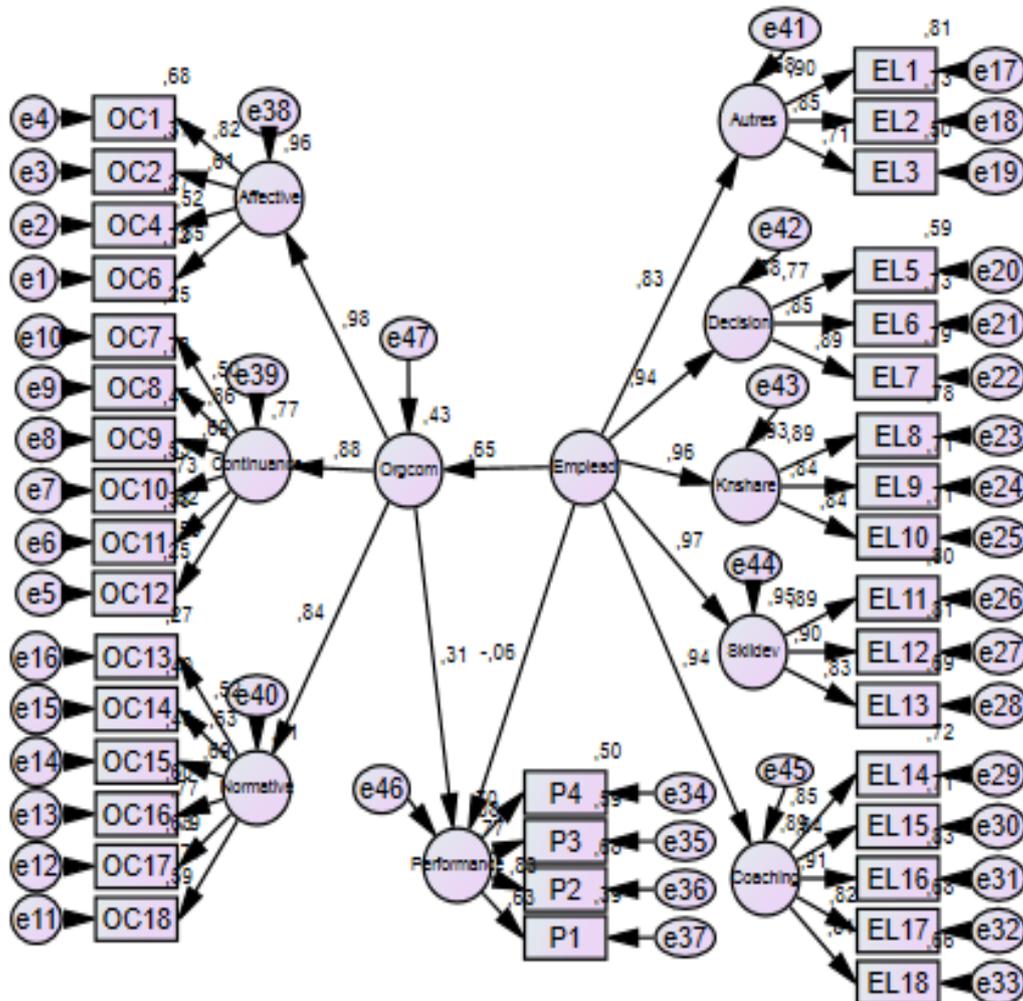
As shown in Table 3 below, empowering leadership significantly predicted organizational commitment ($\beta = .654$; $p = .000$) and organizational commitment predicted job performance ($\beta = .312$; $p = .000$). The direct effect of empowering leadership on job performance was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.057$; $p = .511$). However, total indirect effect of empowering leadership on job performance ($\beta = .148$; $p = .024$) was statistically significant. Lastly, the findings indicated organizational commitment mediated the relationship between empowering leadership and job performance ($\beta = .204$; $p = .000$; 95% CI, $LB = .090$, $UB = .333$). The indirect effect of empowering leadership on organizational commitment was statistically significant at $p < .01$ level, and the upper and lower bounds did not include "0" within 95% confidence interval. When the direct and indirect effects are evaluated together, the findings indicated "indirect only mediation" (Zhao et al., 2010).

Table 3
Standardized Direct and Indirect Effects

Paths	Coefficient		Bootstrap 5000 (95% CI)		
	Estimate	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	p
Direct effects					
EL→OC (H1)	.654	.044	.562	.736	.000
EL→JP (H2)	-.057	.083	-.220	.105	.511
OC→JP (H3)	.312	.090	.139	.492	.000
Indirect effect					
EL→OC→JP (H4)	.204	.062	.090	.333	.000
Total indirect effect					
EL → JP	.148	.066	.025	.285	.024

Note: EL: Empowering leadership; OC: Organizational commitment; JP: Job performance

Figure 1
Structural Model



Discussion

This study focused on the relationships between principals' empowering leadership behaviors, teachers' organizational commitment, and job performance. The literature indicates statistically significant relationships between variables. Based on the existing literature, the main suggestion of the current study was that principals' empowering leadership behaviors increase teachers' job performance through organizational commitment. The hypotheses were investigated through structural equation model.

The first hypothesis of the study was that school principals' empowering leadership behaviors predicted teachers' organizational commitment. Previous research showed that empowering leadership positively contributed to organizational commitment by providing employees with autonomy and development opportunities (Kim & Beehr, 2020). The findings confirmed the first hypothesis, which was consistent with previous literature. Accordingly, principals' empowering leadership behaviors increase teachers' organizational commitment (Aliakbari & Amoli, 2016; Batugal & Tindowen, 2019; Bogler, 2005; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Boonyarit et al., 2010; Gordon, 2018; Gretkierewicz, 2020; Gümüş, 2013; Hamid et al., 2013; Holliman, 2012; Özdemir & Gören, 2017; Somech, 2005; Wu & Short, 1996). A school environment in which the principal delegates authority and responsibility, enables teachers to participate in decisions, effectively shares information with the teacher, enables them to develop their professional skills, and coaches for innovative performance, can contribute to the teachers' adoption of the values and goals of the school and continue her/his career in school. Teacher empowerment will increase the school's effectiveness and the attractiveness of the school as an organization to work for (Köiv et al., 2019). Additionally, it is stated that teachers who are empowered to take the initiative and responsibility related to their duties by school principals will have higher professional satisfaction through self-realization (Boonyarit et al., 2010), which can contribute to the commitment to the school as an organization.

The second hypothesis of the study suggested that principals' empowering leadership behaviors could be associated with job performance positively. The previous literature suggested that empowered employees would develop a sense of belonging to their jobs, which would reflect positively on their performance (Kundu et al., 2019). The findings showed that the direct effect of empowering leadership on job performance was not significant; however, the total indirect effect was significant supporting the second hypothesis. Based on this, we can say that empowering leadership predicted teachers' job performance. This finding is consistent with previous literature (Özdemir & Gören, 2017; Somech, 2005; Vecchio et al., 2010; Yao et al., 2020). These studies revealed that teacher empowerment increased performance. Empowerment enables teachers to realize their own potential and limitations and they gain competence in terms of professional development (Balyer et al., 2017), which can be regarded as a factor enhancing their performance. Balkar (2015) stated that schools with empowering cultures had an environment convenient for increasing the professional performance of teachers. When empowered, teachers feel a higher level of responsibility (Kim & Beehr, 2020) and motivation (Boonyarit et al., 2010). Shortly, we can argue that teachers who are empowered exert greater effort to show a higher level of performance as suggested by findings.

The third hypothesis of the study suggested that there was a significant association between teachers' organizational commitment and their performance. Committed and dedicated teachers are the most important assets of schools, and both quality and quantity of performance are closely related to commitment and dedication (Absar & Das Swain, 2009). The findings in this study indicated that organizational commitment significantly predicted teachers' job performance. In other words, as organizational commitment increases, teacher job performance will also increase. This is consistent with previous literature (Doğan & Çelik, 2019; Flynn, 2000; Laily & Wahyuni, 2017; Sheikh, 2017). Teachers who adopt the values, goals and objectives of the school and regard themselves as a part of the organization tend to exhibit both in-role and extra-role behaviors more (Töre, 2019). Committed teachers will feel considerable loyalty to the school and will be willing to fulfill the organizational tasks assigned to them (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988) and spend effort on behalf of the school (Park, 2005; Sheikh, 2017).

The last hypothesis of the study was that principals' empowering leadership behaviors had an indirect effect on job performance through organizational commitment. The findings confirmed the hypothesis, which means that empowering leadership increases teachers' organizational commitment, enhancing performance. The finding is consistent with the previous research suggesting indirect relationship between empowerment and performance (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Kariuki & Kiambati, 2017; Lestari & Yuniato, 2015; Muhammad & Abdullah, 2016). Additionally, studies conducted in other sectors provide empirical evidence that empowering leadership has an indirect effect on job performance through such variables as self-efficacy (Ahearne et al., 2005); harmonious passion for work (Hao et al., 2018); team cohesion and knowledge sharing (Tung & Chang, 2011).

Conclusion

This study concluded that principals empowering leadership behaviors enhance teachers' organizational commitment and job performance. On the other hand, a higher organizational commitment means a higher level of job performance. Additionally, empowering leadership has an indirect effect on teacher job performance through organizational commitment. In other words, the commitment of the teachers who are empowered increases, which has a positive effect on their performance. If principals desire to increase teachers' commitment and performance, they should empower them by delegating authority and responsibility, sharing knowledge, facilitating professional development, involving teachers in decision making processes and providing them with guidance for innovative performance.

The current study also extended our existing knowledge regarding the effects of teacher empowerment on organizational outcomes. A thorough literature review did not yield a study examining the relationships among these variables, which means that this study has contributed considerably to educational leadership literature.

Implications

The findings revealed that there are statistically significant associations among empowering leadership, teacher commitment, and job performance. Based on the findings, the current study implies the following:

- Principals should be provided with training on how to empower teachers.
- Particularly for countries with highly centralized educational systems, such as Turkey, where this study was carried out, principals should be legally supported to empower teachers.
- Principals, on the other hand, should strive to create an empowering school culture.
- They should act as a facilitator for teachers and help teachers' professional development.
- They should also create a school environment in which teachers feel valuable and realize their personal goals and organizational ones to enhance organizational commitment.
- Schools should find incentives to retain committed teachers.

Limitations

Although it has considerable implications, the current study was conducted within some limitations. Firstly, teachers' organizational commitment and job performance levels were measured using self-reported scales, which may bring social desirability into question. However, while social desirability may cause mean scores to increase, it does not pose a significant problem in terms of the relationships between variables (Luyten & Bazo, 2019). Secondly, since this was a cross-sectional study, it does not provide evidence for causal relationships between variables. Further research may overcome this limitation by conducting studies in experimental and longitudinal design. Finally, the model tested in the study is limited to Turkish cultural context. Cross-cultural validation of the model may provide information regarding the cultural sensitivity of proposed model.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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