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# Relationships Between Empowering Leadership, Supportive Work Environment and Organizational Commitment: Example of Guidance and Research Centers (GRC) *

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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationship between the empowering leadership styles of the principals of Guidance and Research Centers, the organizational commitment of teachers, and the mediating role of the supportive work environment in this relationship. The sample consisted of 428 teachers working in the Guidance and Research Centers in Türkiye, and was determined according to the cluster sampling method. This study was conducted by using a correlational survey method. The data was collected and maintained using the *School Principal Empowering Leadership Scale, Supportive Work Environment Perception Scale*, and *Organizational Commitment Scale* in the 2021–2022 academic year. Regression analysis and path analysis relied on data to determine the direct predictors of empowering leadership and supportive work environment perception on teachers' organizational commitment, and the indirect predictors of empowering leadership through supportive work environment perception on their organizational commitment. We also calculated the correlation coefficients (r) to determine the relationships between variables. According to the results, empowering leadership is a positive and significant predictor of teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment and organizational commitment. Likewise, teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment significantly predicted their organizational commitment. Simultaneously, while empowering leadership alone explained 27% of the total variance in teachers' organizational commitment, the variance explained by including perceptions of a supportive work environment in the model was 37%. These results show that principals' empowering leadership behaviors that increase teachers' organizational commitment might affect their perceptions of a supportive work environment.

## Keywords

Empowering leadership
Organizational commitment
Teacher leadership
Supportive work environment
Guidance and Research Centers (GRC)
Guidance teacher (Psychological counselor)
Special education teacher

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## Introduction

The role of the teacher is rapidly evolving from a traditional to a modern view, depending on the differentiation of ways to access information with technological developments. Teachers in existing educational systems are followers of new methods, authors and sources of their methods, and observers and researchers in the classroom and school, taking on more responsibility and being willing to participate in decision-making (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Evans, 1996; Frost, 2012; Frost & Roberts, 2013; Mangin, 2005; Page & Czuba, 1999). These expectations make teachers both the subject and object of change, render teacher empowerment an obligatory as a field (Fandiño, 2010; Romanish, 1993). Teacher empowerment aims to increase teachers' decision-making authority and responsibilities in their field of activity (Duhon, 1999). When teachers participate in decision-making and see their decisions coming into play in administrative practices, they focus more on their academic development (Kalkan & Dağlı, 2021), their problem-solving skills improve (Kimwarey, Chirure, & Omondi, 2014), and they exhibit more creative and innovative behaviors (Sağnak, 2012). Empowerment practices, on the other hand, have been found to be negatively related to teacher indifference (cynicism) and professional burnout (Kaya & Altnkurt, 2018; Kıral, 2015). Administrators' ability to lead is the most important factor in creating an environment in which teachers are empowered (Çetin & Kıral, 2018). According to Balyer, Özcan, and Yıldız (2017), school administrators should create conditions that encourage participation in decision-making, autonomy in developing teaching methods, and collaboration in a trustworthy environment. Research indicates that leaders who empower employees can improve their motivation and commitment, resulting in greater organizational effectiveness. This can be achieved in various ways, such as by creating a shared vision, setting common goals, encouraging participation in decision-making, and sharing information (Devos, Tuytens, & Hulpia, 2014; Wall & Rinehart, 1998). In this context, in empowerment practices aimed at making teachers' work more meaningful (Conger & Kanungo, 1988), the critical roles of principals compel them to pay some special attention to the concept of empowering leadership (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Vecchio, Justin, & Pearce, 2010).

### *Conceptual Framework*

#### *Empowering Leadership*

The concept of empowerment, which forms the theoretical groundwork for empowering leadership, "refers to the practices and situations in which individuals feel motivated, their confidence in their knowledge and expertise increases, they can take risks, they are motivated to participate in decisions, and they believe that they can control events" (Koçel, 2014, p. 321). Empowerment entails assisting, sharing, supporting, increasing employees' decision-making authority, and developing employees through teamwork (Vogt & Murel, 1990). According to Foy (1997), behavioral outcomes such as effective communication in a team spirit, problem solving, helping others, appreciation, and encouragement are critical indicators of empowerment. Empowering leadership (Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000), which is the behavioral dimension of empowerment, consists of practices aimed at building trust and loyalty within the organization, reducing alienation, establishing a two-way communication system, and facilitating participation (Honold, 1997). Leaders who empower their employees are essential for fostering effective group awareness, promoting group operability, and influencing employee behavior towards work and the work environment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Studies have shown that empowerment practices in organizations and the interiorization of these practices by employees enhance job performance (Çöl, 2008; Sigler & Pearson, 2000), altruistic and creative behaviors (Çekmecelioğlu & Eren, 2007), job satisfaction (Somuncuoğlu, 2013), and organizational commitment (Balçık & Ordu, 2019; Çekmecelioğlu & Eren, 2007; Çöl, 2004; Joo & Shim, 2010; Odabaş, 2014; Sigler & Pearson, 2000; Yücel & Koçak, 2017).

In the process of empowering teachers in educational organizations, the main actors are empowered *teachers* and *principals*. Empowering leadership is achieved by delegating responsibilities, fostering trust and cooperation, and providing support, as explained by Reitzug (1994) and Sergiovanni (2005). Teacher empowerment encompasses several dimensions (Balyer et al., 2017), and it typically involves behaviors that empower, hold accountable, and support teachers (Konan & Çelik, 2018).

Delegation involves assigning duties and responsibilities to experts and competent employees to increase the quality of leaders' decisions (Yukl, 2018). Empowering teachers enables them to be autonomous in structuring teaching activities and to have a say in decisions that may affect students' success, which in turn brings about many positive organizational results. Studies have shown that when teachers make decisions, their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, academic optimism, and organizational citizenship behaviors improve (Çelik & Konan, 2021; Dağlı & Kalkan, 2021b; Kalkan & Dağlı, 2021; Köse & Gül, 2022). Simultaneously, it is known that when teachers are given autonomy in their teaching activities, they are more willing to ensure the effectiveness of organizations by establishing emotional bonds with their schools (Akan & Kılıç, 2019; Dee, Henkin, & Duemer, 2003). Responsibility is another aspect of empowering leadership; it is an effort to develop teachers' actions in their field of activity and create new actions (Konczak et al., 2000). Teachers' responsibility behaviors may change depending on how administrators encourage and trust them to take initiative (Dağlı & Kalkan, 2021a). Principals who support teachers' efforts to create new actions and give teachers confidence, according to Demirtaş, Özer, Demirbilek, and Balı (2017), increase teachers' sense of commitment. The supporting dimension of empowering leadership includes the behaviors of leaders, such as providing control to employees by sharing information, mentoring, and encouraging professional development (Reitzug, 1994). Existing research indicates that employees are more entrepreneurial and engage in extra-role behaviors because of their leaders' supportive and appreciative behaviors (Günbayı, Dağlı, & Kalkan, 2013; Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). According to Littrell, Billingsley, and Cross (1994), principal support reduces teacher job stress and burnout while increasing teacher engagement and job satisfaction. Şama and Kolamaz (2011) examined the effect of supportive and developmental leadership on organizational commitment and found that the supportive leadership approach is more effective than the developmental leadership approach in increasing teachers' commitment to their organizations and colleagues.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that empowering leadership behaviors of principals can improve teachers' job satisfaction (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Dağlı & Kalkan, 2021b; Rinehart & Short, 1994), professional commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Çelik & Konan, 2021), perceptions of psychological contracts (Koçak & Burgaz, 2017), organizational commitment (Gümüş, 2013; Kıral, 2020; Konczak et al., 2000; Limon, 2022), self-confidence based on expertise (Dee et al., 2003), motivation (İhtiyaroğlu, 2017), and innovative behavior (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), while decreasing teacher burnout (Kaya & Altınkurt, 2018), organizational dissent behaviors (Bayın, 2021), and teacher indifference (Kıral, 2015). In the context of the quantum paradigm, Sert (2021)'s research findings indicate that empowering leaders can have an effect that can change teachers' perspectives on the school. Limon (2022) investigated the indirect effect of organizational commitment on the positive and significant relationship between empowering school leadership and teachers' job performance. Based on the results of the literature, empowering leadership behaviors can create positive organizational behaviors in teachers, and empowering leadership behaviors can explain teachers' organizational commitment in a meaningful and positive way. However, Short and Rinehart (1992) state that empowerment can create dominant coalitions in teacher groups, leading to conflict and stress, whereas Wan (2005) states that empowerment practices only achieve their goals in schools where teachers cooperate and share information.

Empowering leadership has become essential in contemporary-oriented schools. Educational institutions face increasing societal expectations for student achievement and the quality of learning (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Accordingly, educational organizations should be more collaborative, participatory, and sharing in order to respond to students' multifaceted needs (Beachum & Dentith, 2004). In this direction, it is crucial to spread and share power among teachers regardless of hierarchy and authority (Baloğlu, 2011). Today, when principals no longer take the lead alone (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2013), a successful school is not a one-person kingdom based on the leader-follower duality (Özdemir & Gören, 2017; Spillane, 2006). Fullan (2002) emphasized the significance of management in teaching activities. Leadership should manifest in behaviors that allow teachers to develop self-leadership abilities, increase competence, and promote autonomy. At this point,

empowering leadership is not a variation of the traditional leadership approach or so-called innovation, but rather a leadership approach required for the effectiveness of schools due to educational reforms (Storey, 2006). In traditional leadership approaches, leadership is the process of influencing others through power, which is the idea of leaders empowering their followers to influence them.

In schools, principals are organizational architects (Louis & Miles, 1990). Empowering leaders as organizational architects fosters an influential school culture marked by open communication among colleagues and teamwork, allowing all teachers to participate in decision making (Melenyzer, 1990). They must create democratic educational environments in which teachers feel confident in their interactions with one another and administrators, where they can freely express themselves, harmony among teachers is prioritized, and everyone has the right to speak (Beycioğlu, 2009; Melenyzer, 1990). In this respect, administrators' leadership styles can be a determinant of supportive relationships among teachers. Leaders form teams by considering individuals' knowledge and experiences, and adopting a participatory management approach with task distribution increases teacher interaction and sharing (Korkmaz, 2008). According to Mok and Au-Yeung (2002), trust-based relationships between open-minded, motivating, and shared leaders and employees ensure the effectiveness of strengthening applications. As a result, empowering leaders who create a communication structure based on knowledge sharing, provide opportunities for skill development and innovative behaviors, and encourage and appreciate others can help teachers to form supportive relationships.

*Supportive Work Environment*

More than just empowering the principal's leadership behaviors may be required to ensure teacher commitment in educational institutions. Colleague support can also help teachers develop a sense of commitment to their schools (Öztürk & Şahin, 2017). A supportive work environment that includes colleague relations refers to the school culture in which teachers work as a team in the sense of trust, appreciation, and encouragement, are active in problem-solving, and develop leadership skills (Demir, 2014; Short, 1994). Short and Rinehart (1992) proposed that teachers feel empowered when they perceive that they receive professional respect and appreciation from colleagues in the work environment. When teachers work in supportive environments in which they appreciate success, respect their knowledge and expertise, cooperate (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Duhon, 1999), and share values (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021), they tend to act more professionally. According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018), the harmony of shared values among teachers increases job satisfaction and commitment, while decreasing burnout and perceptions of leaving the profession. Similarly, Geisler, Berthelsen, and Muhonen (2019) found that a supportive work environment is a crucial factor in determining employee engagement and job satisfaction. Atik and Üstüner (2014) noted that supporting organizations significantly influence teachers' organizational commitments. In work environments where quality social relations exist between teachers, administrators support their teachers, encourage development, and support each other; teachers not only increase their self-efficacy but also encourage cooperation among colleagues (Harris, 2005; Hobson & Moss, 2010; Morrison, 2007) and develop a sense of collective efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2019). The perception of collective teacher efficacy (Bandura, 2000), which indicates a higher level of commitment (Cansoy, Parlar, & Polatcan, 2020), extends beyond the sum of teachers' competencies. Teachers who aim to increase each other's competencies with a high level of commitment may find it challenging to leave a supportive and reassuring environment they have created. Demir (2019)'s study showed that teachers' belief in their collective efficacy decreases their intention to move from their current school to another school. Based on previous studies, supportive work relationships increase organizational commitment and a supportive work environment is a positive and significant determinant of teachers' organizational commitment.

*Organizational Commitment*

Although many factors influence the success of educational activities, an essential factor is the high sense of commitment that teachers display towards their schools (Balay, 2000). While some studies on teacher commitment find teachers' commitment to be at a high level (Buluç, 2009; Korkmaz, 2011; Nartgün & Menep, 2010), some research results show that teachers' organizational commitment is not at the desired level (Balay & İpek, 2010; Balyer, 2015; Celep, 2000). Balyer (2015) explained the reasons for low teacher engagement, adverse working conditions and organizational climate, dissatisfaction with administrative practices, and administration not allowing teachers to participate in decisions. In addition, in the same research, it was suggested that school administrators should create a healthy school climate and ensure teacher participation in the decisions taken to feel valued and reach the desired level of commitment.

Employees' interiorization of organizational goals and values and their willingness to stay with the organization are called organizational commitment (Cushman, 1992). This willingness is a strong tendency to be loyal to, identify with, and permanent in the organization (Robbins & Coulter, 2003). There are three types of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), it is a psychological process connected to employees' sense of belonging to their organizations, which deals with organizational commitment more comprehensively. Emotional commitment can be demonstrated by aligning with organizational goals, exerting efforts to achieve these goals, and desiring to remain employed by the organization for an extended period. Conversely, the desire to remain in the organization solely because of perceived obligations or external pressures is referred to as continuance or compulsory commitment (Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012). Allen and Meyer (1990) state that Becker (1960)'s Side Bet Theory explains how individuals develop continuance commitment to the organizations they work for through investments such as effort and rewards. In continuance commitment, the person is aware of the responsibility and cost of leaving the organization; therefore, continuance commitment is the perceived cost (Chen & Francesco, 2003). Another dimension of organizational commitment is normative commitment. This dimension expresses a moral commitment. Employees who show normative commitment to their organizations have a greater sense of duty and are more committed to organizational values and goals; therefore, they consider staying in the organization as a correct and moral behavior (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, 2019; Wasti, 1999). All three types of commitment connect the individual to the organization. However, each type of commitment has different effects on directing an individual's behavior in the work environment (Coladarci, 1992).

Employee commitment is affected by many organizational factors (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Organizational factors affect commitment, such as organizational structure, organizational culture, management style, participation in decisions, nature and meaningfulness of work, and interaction between work groups (Özdevecioğlu, 2003). Healthy school environments (Hoy & Miskel, 2018; Korkmaz, 2006, 2011) that make being in the organization one's own choice are the prerequisites for providing solid supportive relationships between teachers and organizational commitment at school. Steers (1977) suggested that relationships within the work environment are more closely linked to organizational commitment than other factors. When employees perceive a sense of trust, importance, and necessity in their work environment, their commitment to the organization is significantly enhanced. Rosenholtz (1989) argues that spiritual rewards increase organizational commitment as external validations that teachers receive from their colleagues; according to McCroskey (2007), the improvement of social relations within the organization and the support of the work environment increase the emotional commitment of employees to the organization. A meta-analysis conducted by Ng and Sorenson (2008) revealed that co-worker support is related to work and organizational variables, such as employees' job satisfaction, emotional commitment, and intention to leave.

Another notable organizational variable that affects organizational commitment is managers' leadership style (Özdevecioğlu, 2003). Many researchers have found that principals' leadership styles can increase or decrease teacher commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Bektaş, Çoğaltay, & Sökmen, 2014; Korkmaz, 2011; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Şama & Kolamaz, 2011; Uslu & Beycioğlu, 2013). Polatcan and Cansoy (2019) conducted a systematic analysis of studies that examined the relationships between school principals' leadership styles and teacher commitment. They found that school principals have prominent features, such as sharing responsibility, supporting and developing employees, creating a culture of cooperation, caring for and valuing individuals, and creating a trust-based work culture. They concluded that leadership behaviors increased teachers' commitment to their schools. Çoğaltay (2014) found that transformational leadership styles exhibited in a meta-analysis study investigating the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment had a significant positive effect on organizational commitment. In this context, empowering leadership can effectively increase teachers' organizational commitment. Teachers' high level of organizational commitment is also a desired situation for administrators, as it positively affects the quality of education offered in educational institutions. Teachers' autonomy in their teaching practices, sharing their experiences with colleagues and administrators, and healthy school environments that are open to interaction and their participation in decisions in their activities affect teachers' attitudes towards their work and organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2018; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991). Given these findings, a leader with an empowering leadership style contributes to teachers' organizational commitment.

Few studies have demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between empowering leadership behaviors and organizational commitment (Bixby, 2016; Cevahir, 2004; Gümüş, 2013; Konczak et al., 2000; Limon, 2022). However, there is a need to examine the relationship between empowering leadership and organizational commitment in the context of a supportive work environment. For this reason, this study examines teachers' organizational commitment, principals' empowering leadership behaviors, and teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment, which will fill this gap in the literature. It also includes views of teachers working at school levels, focusing on students' academic knowledge and skills in studies conducted with empowering leadership (Bayın, 2021; Çelik & Konan, 2021; Dağlı & Kalkan, 2021b; Gümüş, 2013; Koçak & Burgaz, 2017; Konan & Çelik, 2017; Limon, 2022; Sert, 2021). This research included teachers' opinions in Guidance and Research Centers, which made the research unique. Like all educational institutions, Guidance and Research Centers aim to ensure the versatile development of students. These centers structure the learning process according to individual differences in the context of the general development of students and equal opportunities, coordinated guidance, and special education services. In addition, institutions offer educational evaluation, diagnosis, monitoring, and guidance services for individuals in need of special education as well as the least limited educational environment for the individual, and provide support education, guidance, and psychological counseling services to the individual and his/her family (Ministry of National Education, 2020). The center method's practical efforts and teachers' cooperation provided these services. The commitment of teachers, who play critical roles in guiding students and parents in the centers, is deemed necessary for the continuity and efficiency of the institution's activities. When the studies on the centers were examined, they mainly focused on the functioning of the centers, their aims and activities, the lack of personnel, and their structural features, such as their physical condition (Aslan & Bal, 2014; Nazlı et al., 2021; Tiryakioğlu, 2009; Yılmaz & Uçar, 2021). On the other hand, studies show that job stress and burnout increase, and job satisfaction decreases because of the professional problems experienced by teachers working in the center (Acar & Karaaslan, 2022; Alver, Dursun, Zengin, & Aydınlı, 2018; Koç, 1998; Yıldız, 2021). Akkuş (2010)'s findings show that teachers' job satisfaction in centers may differ according to the quality of the relations between management and teachers. Özgözgü (2011) examined the organizational culture of the centers and found that senior teachers' views on democratic and participatory culture were lower than those of teachers who had just started their professions. The fact that teachers do not find the management processes of the institutions they work in democratic and participatory may decrease their commitment and cause them to leave and move to different institutions. Data from the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) show that

working rates at other institutions are more common among experienced teachers (MoNE, 2021). At this point, the sharing of authority by the principals with the teachers in the center, encouraging and supporting the teachers to take responsibility, can contribute to the commitment of the teachers. If the center's principal prioritizes the hierarchical and bureaucratic framework, it disregards the teachers' valuable perspectives and concepts, and makes unilateral decisions that could significantly impede guidance activities, as Yeşilyaprak (2000) noted. Özdemir and Atik (2021) discovered that principals aged fifty and above with undergraduate-level education generally use legal and coercive power to study the power sources used by directors of guidance and research centers. Managers' power styles are significant predictors of organizational commitment and job performance (Doğan & Çelik, 2019). With empowering leadership practices in the centers, teachers transition from working in isolation to more participatory work, taking on equal roles in the central administration, which can make teachers part of the power structure and enable them to adopt attitudes and behaviors that will contribute to organizational effectiveness. In this context, center administrators' awareness of empowering leadership practices positively affects teachers' commitment and can define empowering leadership behaviors in a broader context. On the other hand, determining the level of the role of empowering leadership on organizational commitment and whether a supportive work environment influences the relationship between empowering leadership and organizational commitment can be said to contribute to the literature by presenting data to center principals, teachers, field experts, and other stakeholders related to the subject.

***Research Hypotheses***

This study aims to examine the relationship between the empowering leadership behaviors of the Guidance and Research Center principals, the organizational commitment of teachers, and the mediating role of teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment in this relationship. Based on the results of the studies in the literature and the theoretical foundations of the variables, the following hypotheses were developed based on the model (see Figure 1). This study tested the following hypotheses:

H1. The empowering leader behaviors of the directors of Guidance and Research Centers positively and significantly predict teachers' organizational commitment behaviors.

H2. The empowering leader behaviors of the directors of the Guidance and Research Centers positively and significantly predicted teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment.

H3. Teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment significantly and positively predicted their organizational commitment behaviors.

H4. Teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment mediate the relationship between the empowering leader behaviors of Guidance and Research Center principals, and their organizational commitment.

## Method

***Model of the Research***

In response to the purpose of the research, we used relational and predictive design research methods and a quantitative research model. In the survey model, correlational and predictive methods were used. Relational design research determines whether the variables change together; if there is a change, its direction and degree are determined. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), "in predictive design studies, beyond the relationship, which of the variables is the cause of the other is investigated, and in this research design, there should be at least two variables dependent (endogenous/intrinsic) and independent (exogenous/external)"(p. 435). Accordingly, this study examined the relationships between dependent, organizational commitment, and independent empowering leadership and a supportive work environment (mediator) using the relational design research model.

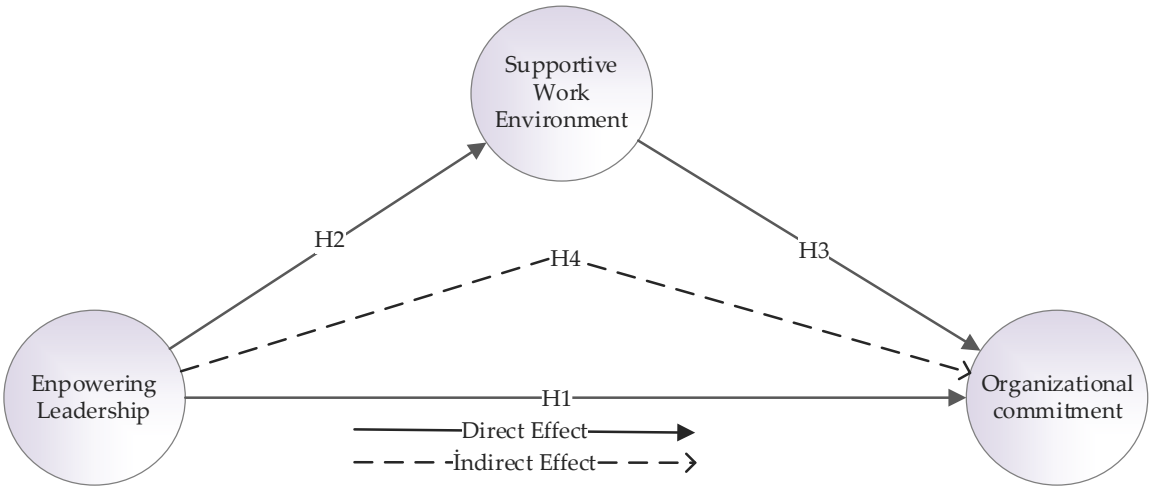


**Figure 1.** Model for the Relationship of Empowering Leadership, Supportive Work Environment and Organizational Commitment.

In the conceptual model created within the scope of this research, empowering leadership and supportive work environment perceptions were determined as variables explaining organizational commitment. The model was created based on the assumption that individual, managerial, and organizational factors can have reciprocal determinism in ensuring teacher commitment. According to the principle of reciprocal determinism asserted in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura,1986), personal and organizational factors affect each other in an organizational environment (Wood & Bandura, 1989). However, the level and duration of these mutual interactions may differ. In other words, while the environment influences the individual, the person can affect the environment, albeit to a lesser extent (Bandura, 1995). Suppose we explain the organizational commitment model analyzed in this research by associating it with the concepts of social cognitive theory. In this case, we can state that *the environment* is empowering leadership practices and supportive work environment *behavior* is organizational commitment. In addition, Social Cognitive Theory assumes that indirect learning, observing learning, and learning from a model influence an individual's learning (Bandura, 1986). When evaluated within the scope of this research, in educational institutions with a supportive work environment and leadership empowerment has become a phenomenon, teachers may encounter many direct/indirect observations and models that will enable them to show commitment. In other words, empowering leadership practices and supportive work culture may explain teachers' organizational commitment behavior.

***Population and Sample***

The study population consisted of teachers working in Guidance and Research Centers affiliated with the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services across Türkiye. According to the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services data, as of February 2022, 263 Guidance and Research Centers across Türkiye and 3,864 teachers work in these centers. The sample used in this research was the cluster sampling method. According to Özen and Gül (2007), "cluster sampling is conducted with randomly selected groups, not individual individuals and all unit of selected groups have similar characteristics" (p. 406-407). The sample size was in the 95% confidence interval, with a sampling error of d=0.05, and the theoretical t value corresponds to 1.96 (Büyüköztürk, 2016). To determine the sample size in the study, we decided that the number of participants should be at least 381 using formula calculations. We defined each of the universe's 263 Guidance and Research Centers as a cluster, and calculated that there were approximately 15 teachers (3864/263≅15) in each cluster. In line with this finding, to reach the required number of teachers in the sample, we found it appropriate to include at least 32 Guidance and Research Centers and approximately 480 (32 × 15=480) teachers. The centers included in the study were determined using the random selection method. We applied the tools online to the teachers with permission from the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services. The demographic information of the 428 teachers participating in the study is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Demographic Information of Teachers(n=428)

| **Gender** | **Frequency (f)** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 264 | 61.7 |
| Male | 164 | 38.3 |
| **Branch** | **Frequency (f)** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Psychological Counselor (Guidance Teacher) | 108 | 25.2 |
| Special Education Teacher | 320 | 74.8 |
| **Education Status** | **Frequency (f)** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Undergraduate | 348 | 81.3 |
| Master | 68 | 15.9 |
| Ph.D. | 12 | 2.8 |
| **Experience** | **Frequency (f)** | **Percentage (%)** |
| 0-5 years | 36 | 8.4 |
| 6-10 years | 104 | 24.3 |
| 11-15 years | 110 | 25.7 |
| 16-20 years | 76 | 17.8 |
| 21 years and above | 102 | 23.8 |
| **Working Time with Current Principals'** | **Frequency (f)** | **Percentage (%)** |
| 1-4 years | 274 | 64.1 |
| 5-8 years | 138 | 32.2 |
| 9 years and above | 16 | 3.7 |

Table 1 shows that 61.7% of the 428 teachers were female and 38.3% were male. 27.7% of the teachers are psychological counselors (guidance teachers), 72.3% are special education teachers, 81.3% are undergraduates, 15.9% are master's degrees, and 2.7% are doctorate degrees. Additionally, 8.4% of the teachers have "0-5 years" seniority, 24.3% "6-10 years" seniority, 25.7% "11-15 years" seniority, 17.8% "16-20 years" seniority, and 23.8% "21 years" or more seniority. Teachers' work time with their current principal is as follows: 64.1% of the teachers for 1-4 years, 32.2% for 5-8 years, and 3.7% for 9 years or more.

***Data Collection Tools***

We collected data using the School Principal Empowering Leadership Scale (Konczak et al., 2000), Teacher Leadership Culture Scale's Supportive Work Environment sub-dimension (Demir, 2014), and Organizational Commitment Scale (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). We have provided details on the scales below:

School Principal Empowering Leadership Scale: To determine teachers' perceptions of empowering leadership behaviors, Konczak et al. (2000), and adapted to Turkish by Konan and Çelik (2018) for educational organizations, we used the School Principal Empowering Leadership Scale. The scale consists of 17 items and three sub-dimensions: three items in the delegation dimension, three items in the responsibility dimension, and 11 items in the support dimension. Konan and Çelik (2018) calculated the Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha$) values as .76 for the delegation dimension of the scale, .82 for the responsibility sub-dimension, .80 for the support sub-dimension, and .79 for the overall scale. In addition, as a result of the CFA performed to test the scale's construct validity, the goodness of fit values were $\chi^2$/df = 2.54, NNFI= .98, CFI= .95, GFI= .92, RMSEA = .054, and SRMR = .032. Based on the t-test of the lower and upper 27% groups, they concluded that the validity of the items was high and distinctive. According to Büyüköztürk (2016),"the significant difference between the average item scores of the lower and upper 27% groups also indicates the extent to which the items distinguish individuals in terms of measured behavior"(p. 171). The t-test for the upper and lower 27% of the items was between 5.32 and 10.52 (n = 172, p.001). Sample items from the Likert-type scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always) are as follows: In the delegation dimension, "My school principal delegated equal authority to me in the subjects he or she assigned". In the dimension of responsibility, "My school principal holds me responsible for what I do and the consequences". In the dimension of support, "My principal ensured that continuous learning and skill development are prioritized in our school".

We also repeated the validity and reliability studies in this study. We calculated the scale's Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha$) values as .84 for the delegation dimension, .86 for the responsibility dimension, .89 for the support dimension, and .96 for the circular. The goodness-of-fit values of the CFA results $\chi^2$= 855.95, df = 265, $\chi^2$/df= 3.23, AGFI = .90, GFI = .88, NFI = .95, CFI = .97, IFI = .98, RMR = .032, RMSEA = .041 provided valid evidence for the School Principal Empowering Leadership Scale, with three factors for the Guidance and Research Center sample (Kline, 2013). We used this variable because the measurement in question was valid and reliable according to variable perceptions/beliefs (Konan & Çelik, 2018), and because it describes structural empowerment through the behaviors of principals.

*Support Work Environment Scale:* We used the 9-item Supportive Work Environment sub-dimension of the three-dimensional Teacher Leadership Culture Scale developed by Demir (2014) for teachers' views on the supportive work environment. The composite reliability coefficient was.93, while the alpha reliability coefficient calculated for a supportive working environment on the scale was.88. The reliability coefficients calculated for the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale's three sub-dimensions were all greater than the recommended lower limit .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). At the same time, for the factor analysis of the first-level three-dimensional measurement model of the scale ($\chi^2$/df=2.01, p=.00; CFA=.95; NFI=.90; SRMR=.06; RMSEA=.05; GFI=.85; AGFI=.86), the data were quite similar to the model. According to the results of the second-level confirmatory factor analysis, the structural model's compatibility with the data was quite good ($\chi^2$ (327) = 574.16, p > 0.01). An example item from the Likert scale (1 = I totally disagree, 5 = I totally agree) is as follows: "In this school, teachers work as a team".

In this study, we repeated the validity and reliability tests of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha$) value of the scale was .97. Goodness-of-fit values in the CFA tested the construct validity of the scale $\chi^2$=802.87, df= 216, $\chi^2$/df = 3.72, AGFI =.94, GFI=.91, NFI=.97, CFI=.97, IFI=.97, RMR = .042, RMSEA= .034 The calculated CFA values show that the 9-item form of the supportive work environment scale validates the current study (Kline, 2013). In this study, we preferred this tool because it provides validity

and reliability based on teachers' perceptions/beliefs (Demir, 2014) and describes supportive relationships between teachers in a cultural context.

*Organizational Commitment Scale:* We used the Organizational Commitment Scale developed by Meyer et al. (1993) and adapted to Turkish by Wasti (2003) to determine teachers' organizational commitment. The organizational commitment scale consists of three commitment dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative. There were 18 items, six for each dimension, and three were reverse items. Wasti (2003) calculated the Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha$) values for affective commitment as .82, for continuance commitment as .74, for normative commitment as .83, and for the overall scale as .80, and found that the data for the three-dimensional factor analysis $\chi^2$/df= 3.16, p=.00, GFI=.91, AGFI=.88, NNFI=.94, CFI=.95, and RMSEA=.063 had a perfect fit with the model. Sample items from the Likert scale (1 = I totally disagree, 5 = I totally agree) are as follows. In the affective commitment dimension, "This institution has a special meaning". In normative commitment, "I would feel guilty if I leave the organization". In the dimension of continuance commitment, "one of the reasons I stayed in this institution was that I had few alternatives".

In this study, we repeated the validity and reliability tests of the scale. We calculated the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha$) values of the scale as .85 in the dimensions of affective commitment, .87 in the dimension of normative commitment, .84 in the dimension of continuance commitment and .89 for the overall scale. The construct validity of the scale was tested using goodness-of-fit values in the CFA result [$\chi^2$= 1065.35, df = 232; $\chi^2$/ df = 4.59, AGFI = 0.92, GFI = 0.93, NFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.92, IFI = 0.92, RMR = 0.034, RMSEA=0.054]. The related goodness-of-fit values show that the three-factor structure of the organizational commitment scale is also valid in this study (Kline, 2013). In this study, we preferred it because construct validity and reliability were ensured (Wasti, 2003) and because the scale items included understandable and inclusive expressions in the dimensions of affective, normative, and continuance commitment in the cultural context.

***Analysis of Data***

In this study, we used a structural equation model to explain the effect of empowering leadership on teachers' organizational commitment in a supportive work environment. We analyzed the data using the SPSS 25 and JASP 0.16.1 package programs. Before data analysis, we examined the data for missing and incorrect values. We calculated the z-score for the outlier data. Data with z values greater than +3 or less than -3 were outliers. However, according to Çokluk, Şekercioğlu and Büyüköztürk (2018), "in large samples (n>100), the range of z scores can be between -4 and +4" (p. 14). Since we found no values below -4 and above +4 in the dataset, we concluded that there was no one-way outlier. We corrected the adverse items in the organizational commitment scale before the analysis and calculated the total scores for each dimension of the variables after the confirmatory factor analysis. We then checked the suitability of the dataset for multivariate analysis. We calculated skewness and kurtosis coefficients to determine the suitability of the dataset for a univariate normal distribution. We determined that the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the data were within the ranges determined for empowering leadership (-.57;-.31), supportive work environment (-.52;-.51), and organizational commitment (-.24; -.62). A skewness value between -1 and +1 indicates that the univariate normality assumption is met (George & Mallery, 2001). Within the scope of this research, we evaluated the covariance between each independent variable according to the scatter plot and found no pattern in the graph. To determine how the bilateral relationships between the variables were distributed, we performed a multivariate normality analysis according to the multivariate scatter diagram matrix containing the research variables (Çokluk et al., 2018). We conclude that the research dataset met the multivariate normality assumption. We calculated the correlation coefficients, variance increase factors (VIF), tolerance values (TV), and condition indices (CI) to determine whether there was a problem of multicollinearity among the independent variables. We found that the correlation coefficients of the independent variables were less than .90 (see Table 2), and the VIF values were less than 10. In contrast, the tolerance value (TV) was greater than .10, and the condition index (CI) was less than 30. we detected. We calculated TV, VIF, and CI values for the supportive work environment independent variable (.63,

1.58, and 12.14) for the empowering leadership independent variable (.54, 1.42, and 8.14), respectively. However, we applied the Durbin-Watson test to determine the correlation status of the independent variables' residual terms. The test result shows associated errors with Durbin-Watson numbers less than 1.0 and more significant than 4.0 (Durbin & Watson, 1951). In the current study, we calculated the Durbin-Watson number to be d= 1.301. Accordingly, we determined that the residual terms did not exhibit a problematic correlation. The results of the tolerance value (TV), condition index (CI), variance increase factor (VIF), and Durbin-Watson test obtained with the analyzes performed showed that there was no problem of multicollinearity between the independent variables in the data set. We used Pearson correlation coefficients (r) to examine the relationships between variables and path analysis (Rosseel, 2012) within the structural equation modeling framework to determine the direct and indirect predictive power of the independent variables on the dependent variable. We used $\chi^2$/df, SRMR, RMSEA, CFI, IFI, NFI, GFI, and AGFI to evaluate the path analysis model fit. Finally, we performed bootstrapping analysis with a process macro to determine the mediation effect. The fact that the lower and upper confidence interval limits do not contain zero values from the bootstrapping analysis result indicates the significance of the mediation effect (Hayes, 2009). For Bootstrap analysis, we used a sample size of 5000 and 95% confidence interval in SPSS. In addition, we examined the VAF (Variance Accounted For) value to decide whether the supportive work environment is a partial or complete mediator between empowering leadership and organizational commitment (Hadi, Abdullah, & Sentosa, 2016).

## Results

***Descriptive Statistics***

As part of the study, arithmetic mean values, standard deviations, and correlation coefficient values were first calculated from descriptive statistics, and the results are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Pearson Correlation Coefficients, Mean and Standard Deviation Values of the Variables in the conceptual Model of Organizational Commitment(n=428)

| Variables | $\bar{X}$ | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Delegation | 4.14 | .87 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Responsibility | 3.97 | .73 | .54** | - | | | | | | | |
| 3. Supporting | 3.64 | 1.00 | .79** | .50** | - | | | | | | |
| 4.Continuance com. | 2.41 | 1.16 | -.30** | -.18** | -.34** | - | | | | | |
| 5. Normative com. | 2.83 | .94 | .26** | .16** | .35** | -.40** | - | | | | |
| 6. Affective com. | 3.45 | .77 | .49** | .35** | .52** | -.47** | .69** | - | | | |
| 7. EL | 3.79 | .85 | .87** | .73** | .88** | -.34** | .34** | .54** | - | | |
| 8. OC | 3.24 | .74 | .46** | .28** | .51** | -.68** | .83** | .85** | .52** | - | |
| 9. SWE | 3.39 | 1.04 | .53** | .32** | .61** | -.42** | .39** | .57** | .61** | .58** | - |

**p < .01; EL: Empowering Leadership, SWE: Support Work Enviroment, OC: Organizational Commitment

Table 2 summarizes that the opinions of the Guidance and Research Center teachers about the empowering leadership behaviors of the center principals were *usually* at the level of ($\bar{X}$= 3.79; SD = .85). ($\bar{X}$= = 3.79; *SD* = .85). On the other hand, teachers were at the level of *sometimes* ($\bar{X}$= 3.39; *SD* = 1.04) for the items on supportive work environment and at the level of *undecided* ($\bar{X}$= 3.24; *SD* = .74) for the items related to organizational commitment. In line with these findings, the teachers found that the center principals' empowering leadership behaviors were high, and their perceptions of a supportive work environment and organizational commitment were moderate. According to the teachers' opinions, the central principals exhibited empowering leadership behaviors with the most empowerment ($\bar{X}$= 4.14) and the least support ($\bar{X}$= 3.64); teachers' affective commitment ($\bar{X}$= 3.45) was higher than their normative commitment ($\bar{X}$= 2.83) and continuance commitment ($\bar{X}$= 2.41). When the relationships between the variables were examined, it was found that between empowering leadership behaviors and a supportive work environment (r= .61; p < .01); There are moderate, positive, and significant relationships between a supportive work environment and organizational commitment (r= .58; p < .01).

Similarly, there was a moderate, positive, and significant relationship between organizational commitment and empowering leadership (r= .52, p < .01).These results confirm the positive and significant relationships expressed in Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3.

***Testing Hypotheses***

Structural equation modeling was used to test the hypotheses created to determine the predictive power of empowering leadership and a supportive work environment on teachers' organizational commitment. The tested structural model is illustrated in Figure 2.

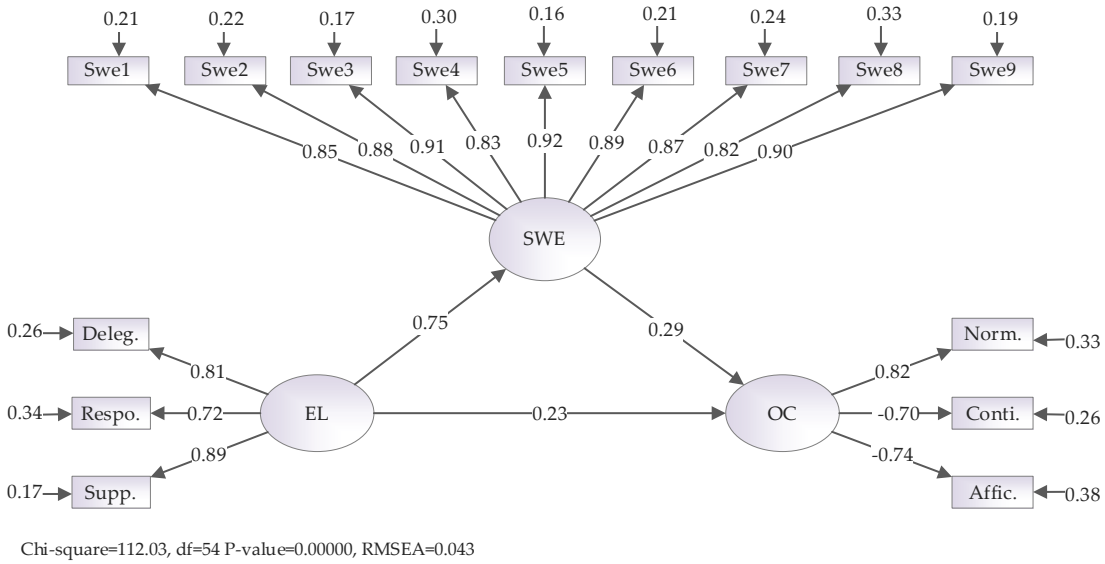


**Figure 2.** The result of path analysis for predicting teachers' organizational commitment

As shown in Figure 2, we examined the model's path coefficients (*P*) and t values and did not encounter any inconsistencies in the paths in the model. According to the path coefficients calculated in the measurement model, empowering leadership behaviors and a supportive work environment (*P* =.75; t = 15.78; p <.05) and teachers' organizational commitment (*P* =.23; t = 5.44; p <.05) were positively and significantly affected. We conclude that this is the case. Research findings show that empowering leadership predicts a supportive work environment more than organizational commitment. The supportive work environment, which is both an independent and mediating variable in the model, is a stronger predictor of teachers' organizational commitment than empowering leadership (*P*=.29; t = 8.60; p < .05). Additionally, while empowering leadership alone explained 27% of the total variance in teachers' organizational commitment, the variance explained by the inclusion of supportive work environment perception in the model was 37%. These findings confirmed hypotheses H1, H2, and H3. We also examined the fit indices for the model's goodness-of-fit. The fit indices of the models are listed in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Fit Indices Concerning the Model

| Good Fit | Acceptable Fit | Fit Values | Fit |
|---|---|---|---|
| $0 \leq \chi^2/df \leq 2$ | $2 < \chi^2/df \leq 3$ | 2.07 | Acceptable |
| 0≤ RMSEA≤ .05 | .05 < RMSEA ≤ .08 | 0.043 | Good |
| 0≤ SRMR≤ .05 | .05 < SRMR ≤ .10 | 0.032 | Good |
| .95≤ NFI≤ 1.00 | .90 ≤ NFI < .95 | 0.97 | Good |
| .97≤CFI≤ 1.00 | .95 ≤ CFI < .97 | 0.97 | Good |
| .95≤ IFI≤ 1.00 | .90 ≤ IFI < .95 | 0.96 | Good |
| .95≤ GFI ≤1.00 | .90 ≤ GFI < .95 | 0.92 | Acceptable |
| .90≤AGFI ≤1.00 | .85 ≤ AGFI <.90 | 0.91 | Good |

Source: Çokluk vd., 2018; Kline, 2013; Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007.

Table 3 shows that the model created according to the fit indices met the necessary fit criteria. When the goodness-of-fit indices of the model were examined, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .03, NFI=. 97, IFI = .96, AGFI=.91 values were in perfect agreement (Çokluk et al., 2018; Kline, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), $\chi 2/df$ = 2.07, CFI .97, AGFI .91, and GFI .92 values were found to be in good agreement (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). In other words, the data obtained from the indirect effects model were compatible.

***Examination of the Mediating Effect***

We used the Bootstrap approach proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) to statistically test the significance of the mediating effect of a supportive work environment. According to this approach, the following conditions must be met for the mediation effect (Hadi et al., 2016; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014): 1. The direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable should be statistically significant, 2. The indirect effect in the mediation model should be statistically significant, 3. Suppose the VAF (Variance Accounted For= indirect effect/total effect) value is more significant than .80, with a full mediation status between .20 and .80; in that case, there is partial intermediation. If it is less than .20, then there is no intermediary situation. In this context, we made a mediation decision based on the VAF value. The results of the bootstrapping analysis for a sample size of 5000 with a 95% confidence interval are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Findings Related to the Mediating Effect of Supportive Work Environment in the Model

| Product of Coefficients | | | | Bootstrapping %95 Confidence interval | | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Effect | Estimated | SE | p | Alt (LLCI) | Üst (ULCI) | Partial Mediator |
| İndirect | .22 | .030 | .000 | .161 | .282 | |
| Direct | .23 | .042 | .000 | .146 | .312 | |
| Total | .45 | .036 | .000 | .377 | .520 | |

VAF=.49(İndirect Effect/Total Effect)

According to Table 4, the mediating role in the relationship between a supportive work environment, empowering leadership, and organizational commitment was statistically significant. In other words, we found a statistically significant difference between the total and direct predictors of empowering leadership on teachers' organizational commitment statistically significant [(Indirect Effect = .22; p = .00) and 95% Confidence Interval (.161, .282)]. The VAF value between .20 and .80 indicates that the mediation effect is partial (Hadi et al., 2016); in other words, the relationship between a supportive work environment, empowering leadership, and organizational commitment is a partial variable. These findings confirm H4 based on the theoretical model of the research.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Teachers' organizational commitment affects their colleagues' and administrators' attitudes and behaviors. The role of principals, who are sensitive to the expectations of teachers, include them in the decisions taken, creating and protecting a democratic culture and open communication climate in the organization, providing an environment of trust, and being aware of their responsibilities in ensuring the organizational commitment of teachers is indisputable. In addition, the educational environments in which teachers work in professional solidarity in peace and appreciate and encourage each other also contribute to their commitment. The increase in teachers' commitment contributes to the expenditure of more time and energy for the organization's goals, the increase in the institution's success, and its effectiveness on students, parents, and society. (Hoy et al., 1991).This scope maintains the importance of investigating the variables that explain organizational commitment. In this direction, we examined teachers' empowering leadership behaviors and supportive work environment perceptions, which is a new leadership approach that can explain the organizational commitment of Guidance and Research Centers teachers. In this research, we developed hypotheses based on the assumptions of social cognitive theory and the results of studies in the literature, and we examined the accuracy of the hypotheses we tested.

The study's first hypothesis is "The empowering leadership behaviors of the directors of Guidance and Research Centers positively and significantly predict the organizational commitment behaviors of the teachers." form we created. From the analysis results, we concluded that the empowering leadership behaviors of center principals positively and significantly affect the teachers' organizational commitment. Therefore, we confirmed the first hypothesis of this study. This result of the research has been reported by Bixby (2016), Bogler and Somech (2004), Cevahir (2004), Gümüş (2013), Joo and Shim (2010), Konczak et al. (2000), Limon (2022), and Özdemir and Gören (2017) study results. These results were consistent with those of the present study. Cevahir (2004) found that empowering leadership, responsibility, self-decision-making skills, and coaching components of innovative performance increase emotional commitment. Joo and Shim (2010) showed that psychological empowerment, the theoretical basis of empowering leadership, is associated with affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Limon (2022) concludes that empowering school leadership increases teachers' organizational commitment.

According to Bogler and Somech (2004), teachers' perceptions of empowerment levels are significantly related to their organizational and professional commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors. Organizational commitment is known to be a determinant of matters such as employees' job success, job continuity, and leaving the job (Baysal & Paksoy, 1999). Simultaneously, employees with high organizational commitment are more likely to participate in realizing the organization's goals. These individuals are more willing to produce creative and innovative ideas for the organization. However, the success of empowerment practices largely depends on employees' high organizational commitment (Cevahir, 2004). According to King and Ehrhard (1997), The success of empowerment practices that will enable managers to create an accepted and shared vision, increase the skills and knowledge of employees, develop their competencies and realize their priorities brings increased loyalty to the employees. The results of the present study also showed that the emotional and normative commitments of teachers working in the centers were higher than their continuance commitments. Employees with high emotional commitment exhibit innovative behaviors for the institution's development, have a sense of belonging to the institution, see the institution's problems as their own, and are willing to solve problems. According to Korkmaz (2011), teachers have a compulsory commitment to negative school environments where their behaviors are hindered, freedom is restricted, or dysfunctional principal behaviors are present. They are reluctant to work in such an environment. At this point, as empowering leaders, the behaviors of principals encourage them to take responsibility and empower them in their decisions, making teachers more owners of their jobs and increasing their emotional and normative commitment. The results of the study show us the trust that the Guidance and Research Center principals will create, adopting open communication, being in cooperation, turning the

failures into learning opportunities, eliminating the fear of making mistakes, providing clear, useful, timely, and effective feedback on the success of teachers, and empowering leadership that increases teachers' commitment demonstrated by their behavior.

The study's second hypothesis is that " the empowering leadership behaviors of the directors of Guidance and Research Centers positively and significantly predict teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment." form we created. The study's findings showed that the empowering leadership behaviors of the center principals positively explained the teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment and confirmed the study's second hypothesis. We could not compare the research results, as no study in the literature has revealed the relationship between empowering leadership behaviors and teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment. When leaders share the necessary information and ideas with their employees, they are committed to broad participation and strive to participate; the process results in sound decisions. Employees are more willing to cooperate to find solutions (Yukl, 2018). According to Schlechty (1990), principals as educational leaders are the creators of supportive working conditions, in which teachers work as a team, act professionally, and facilitate the spread of leadership. Teachers become more creative, proactive, and collaborative when empowering leaders to provide supportive educational environments where they are autonomous and implementers of their own decisions (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015). Leaders' empowerment behaviors encourage self-leadership; they create a positive organizational climate based on solidarity and professionalism, and increase the quality of employee relations. Empowering leaders also help establish effective interpersonal relationships with supportive behaviors (Yukl, 2018). From the research, Guidance and Research Center principals become role models for teachers with empowering leadership behaviors, such as giving importance to teachers' ideas, creating effective information-sharing networks, providing opportunities for them to learn from their mistakes, and then spreading these behavior patterns among teachers. This study supports leadership behavior among teachers' colleagues. We conclude that this has contributed to the development of the environment.

The third hypothesis of the study is that "Teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment positively and significantly predict their organizational commitment." The results showed that teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment positively predicted their organizational commitment and confirmed the third hypothesis of the study. In the literature, no study has investigated the relationship between a directly supportive work environment and organizational commitment in educational institutions. However, the results of studies conducted in different sectors show that employees are at the same level in the hierarchy, and perceived support from people doing similar or the same jobs (Giray, 2013; Giray & Şahin, 2012) increases organizational commitment (Hanaysha, 2016; Kundu & Lata, 2017; McCroskey, 2007; Silverthorne, 2004). These results were consistent with those of the present study. McCroskey (2007) investigated the relationship between colleagues'support in the work environment and job satisfaction, motivation to work, commitment to the organization, and intention to stay in the organization. They found that colleague support was positively and significantly related to all the variables. According to Kundu and Lata (2017), in a supportive work environment where professionalism and development are typical, employees' organizational commitment increases and their intention to leave decreases. Silverthorne (2004) showed that employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment are high in organizations with supportive work cultures. A supportive work environment provides individuals with a good working environment in which they can quickly put forward new thoughts and ideas and reinforce employees' positive organizational behaviors. In this context, when teachers collaborate with their colleagues, they develop a sense of collective competence and increase their commitment to their work environment. From a different perspective, in a supportive work environment, which is a component of teacher leadership culture (Demir, 2014), teachers' leadership behaviors and commitment increase as they have opportunities for self-realization.

The fourth hypothesis of the study is "There is a mediating effect of teachers' supportive work environment perceptions on the relationship between the empowering leadership behaviors of the directors of Guidance and Research Centers and their organizational commitment." is in the form. The results showed that a supportive work environment partially mediates the relationship between empowering leadership behaviors and organizational commitment. As a result, the empowering leadership styles of principals in Guidance and Research Centers directly and indirectly affect teachers' organizational commitment. The indirect impact is through a supportive work environment. No study has been found in the literature showing that the perception of a supportive work environment mediates the relationship between empowering leadership behaviors and organizational commitment. However, studies reveal the direct and indirect effects of empowering leadership behavior on organizational commitment through different variables (Konczak et al., 2000; Limon, 2022; Özdemir & Gören, 2017). Konczak et al. (2000) found that psychological empowerment was a mediating variable in the relationship between empowering leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. According to Özdemir and Gören (2017), organizational commitment mediates the relationship between leaders' empowerment behaviors and teachers' performance. Limon (2022)'s results showed that empowering leadership behaviors affect teachers' job performance through organizational commitment. Bixby (2016) tested the mediation of empowering leadership between psychological empowerment, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. Research results show that psychological empowerment increases organizational commitment through empowering leadership mediation. According to the results of studies in the literature, the empowering leadership behaviors of principals can affect teachers' organizational commitment directly and through different variables. In addition, the moderating effect of empowering leadership increases organizational commitment.

## Suggestions

Leaders' attitudes and behaviors are essential for the spread and sustainability of empowerment practices in organizations (Yukl, 2018). The research results show that principals' empowering leadership behaviors and teachers' organizational commitment are significantly related and that the supportive working environment variable has a mediating effect. Owing to the importance of empowering leadership in educational organizations, being willing to spread leadership and being inclined to share power can be a criterion in the category of individual characteristics in determining the principals of educational institutions. On the other hand, educational policymakers have duties in the transformation process regarding understanding leadership. Considering that the adoption of empowering leadership is not only possible with the efforts of principals and teachers, it may be necessary for senior management to make the bureaucracy more flexible in line with the needs of educational institutions and to support the concept of emphasizing empowering leadership. In this direction, we propose making legal arrangements regarding the execution of empowerment and responsibility components of empowering leadership in institutions affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The leadership practices that teachers use can be formalized.

Based on the premises predicted to explain organizational commitment, we hypothesized that a work environment that supports teacher leadership among colleagues might mediate between empowering leadership and organizational commitment. The mediation test results showed that principals provide an educational environment in which to disseminate leadership through empowering leadership practices. Thus, it may be easier to increase teachers' commitment to their organizations. The mediation test results show that principals can create a necessary educational environment that facilitates the spread of leadership with empowering leadership practices so that it may be easier to increase teachers' commitment to their organizations. In other words, the creation of a positive culture that encourages teachers to participate in leadership in educational organizations prepares the ground for empowering leadership practices. In this respect, principals create an institutional culture based on professional cooperation in line with common goals for the types of emotional and normative commitment that teachers want to have in terms of effectiveness in educational institutions, and to offer autonomous educational environments in their fields of activity

for teachers to develop self-leadership skills. To prevent colleague isolation among teachers, teamwork or group activity opportunities can be created to support professional solidarity, cooperation, and cooperation.

The descriptive results of the study showed that teachers' perceptions of a supportive work environment were *moderate.* In addition, the study's findings show that center principals exhibit empowering leadership behaviors, at least in the dimension of *support.* Moderate support behaviors, such as mentoring, improving skills, and sharing information, may also affect teachers' perceptions of the supportive working environment. At this point, the center's principals should be more supportive of teachers in line with their needs. In addition, we found that teachers' organizational commitment was moderate. This finding shows that there is a need for studies that determine the factors that reduce the organizational commitment of teachers working in the centers and that aim to eliminate them. More in-depth studies are needed to investigate organizational commitment in relevant centers. Based on this situation, we suggest that researchers conduct more comprehensive studies of organizational commitment through qualitative and mixed studies in the same sample. We suggest that new researchers develop alternative structural models for this research. The relationship between empowering leadership and organizational commitment should also be explained using different variables (e.g., self-efficacy perception, academic optimism, subjective well-being, and organizational support).

This research reveals that empowering leadership and a supportive work environment are predictive variables of teachers' organizational commitment and has some limitations. In the context of the limitations of the research, the first element is that the measurement tools used in the current study (Organizational Commitment Scale, School Principal Empowering Leadership Scale, Supportive Work Environment Scale) included teachers' self-reports within the framework of behaviors and beliefs in a particular area. However, teachers' views on empowering leadership behaviors are limited to *their principals* and their views on supportive work environments are limited to *their colleagues.* Second, this study includes answers from teachers working in only 32 Guidance and Research Centers across Türkiye in the 2021-2022 academic year. The fact that the participant group of the research does not consist of teachers working at different education levels and institutions (e.g., primary, secondary, high, science and art centers, and private schools) can make it difficult to generalize the research results. In this respect, repeating a similar study in different sample groups would be appropriate for making healthier inferences about the factors affecting teachers' organizational commitment. Third, the study was cross-sectional. Another limitation is that cross-sectional studies do not allow causal inferences. Finally, the assumption that the Guidance and Research Center directors explain empowering leadership behaviors and a supportive work environment according to teachers' perceptions also limits our generalization of the research results.

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