



The Mediating Role of Motivation to Lead in the Relationship Between Teachers' Leadership Self-Efficacy and Their Desire to Become a School Principal

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Abstract

It is substantial to reveal how candidates for school leadership emerge and which factors have impacts of direct and indirect sort on the said process. This study investigated the relationship between leadership self-efficacy and desire to become a school principal and the mediating effect of motivation-to-lead in this relationship. Individual and environmental variables were also included in the study as control variables. In the study, the cross-sectional design was utilized. Structural equation modeling was used in the analysis of data collected from 386 high school teachers working in Ankara, Türkiye. The findings exhibited that gender and administrative experience had a significant effect on the desire to become a principal. The restrictive institutional environment had no significant effect on the desire to become a principal; however, role ambiguity had a negative effect, whereas leadership prototypes had a positive effect. According to the main finding of the study, leadership self-efficacy affected the desire to become a principal through motivation-to-lead. Based on the findings of the study, applying positive discrimination to female teachers to encourage them on school principalship, integrating the activities in the job descriptions of school principals in the in-service training programs of teachers, developing mechanisms enabling teachers to participate in administrative tasks, granting school principals a separate legal status independent from those of teachers, making holding a graduate degree in educational sciences among the basic criteria for the selection of school principals, and designing the content of the educational administration certificate programs in a way to cover predominantly leadership issues were recommended.

Keywords

Desire to become a school principal
Leadership self-efficacy
Motivation-to-lead
Institutional environment
Role ambiguity
Leadership prototypes

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Introduction

School principals have a great influence on school success, and it is observed that the idea that “behind every successful school there is a successful principal” has gained a place in the literature (Dolph, 2017; Dutta & Sahney, 2022). As a matter of fact, there is a consensus in the literature that school principals are among the fundamental elements for the development of their schools (Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011; Sun & Leithwood, 2012), since school principals are in an ideal position to initiate, support, and lead school improvement initiatives (Dolph, 2017). For instance, Böse and Brauckmann-Sajkiewicz (2021) remark that school improvement initiatives focus on the needs specific to each school; hence, school principals play an important role in determining the areas where these initiatives will concentrate on and the goals to be achieved. Likewise, Carrington, Spina, Kimber, Spooner-Lane, and Williams (2022) state that there is a relationship between school principals’ leadership skills and school development initiatives. School principals who value differences, can provide teachers with the support they need, attach importance to their professional development, and open up a space for them to develop their leadership capacities can indeed create suitable conditions for school improvement initiatives. In this context, the desire to become a school principal reflects teachers’ motivations to lead school improvement initiatives in the future. As this desire gets stronger, teachers are more likely to see school principalship not only as an administrative position responsible for the daily functioning of the school; but also, as a leadership position that prioritizes the needs of students and teachers and supports school improvement initiatives (Blaum & Tobin, 2019).

That being said, the number of teachers who desire to become a school principal around the world is decreasing every year (Anderson, Brien, McNamara, O’Hara, & McIsaac, 2011). Factors such as ever-increasing responsibilities, limited authority in making important decisions, and low payment make the school principalship a less demanded position for teachers (Heffernan, 2021; Ning, Liu, & Cui, 2022). At a time when schools need qualified leaders more than ever, the tiring nature of the position negatively affects teachers’ desire to become principals (Doyle & Locke, 2014). The difficulties, both at the organizational and individual levels, that the school principalship embodies due to its very nature cause many teachers who are potentially suitable for leadership not to desire to become school principals (Oplatka, 2017). Whilst the need for effective principals is increasing, there is still a lack of information in the relevant line of literature regarding the factors shaping teachers’ desire to become a school principal, and the theory development in this field has not been completed yet (Hancock, Hary, & Müller, 2012; Ning et al., 2022).

Teachers make the decision to become a school principal after a complex process (Hancock et al., 2012). The studies on the desire to be a leader may be used as a starting point to describe the desire/refusal to take on assigned leadership roles, such as school principalship (Ziegert & Dust, 2021). In the accumulated literature, especially gender and administrative experience are individual factors that are often claimed to be effective in the emergence of leaders (eg: Jiang, Snyder, Li, & Manz, 2021; Kalish & Luria, 2021). Besides, there are researchers who argue that the desire to become a leader is shaped by the impact of environmental factors, such as restrictive institutional pressures, role ambiguity, and leadership prototypes (Acton, Foti, Lord, & Gladfelter, 2019; Oc, 2018; Ziegert & Dust, 2021). On the other hand, there are also researchers who argue that the desire to become a leader is predominantly driven by cognitive factors like leadership self-efficacy and motivation-to-lead (eg: Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; Paglis & Green, 2002; Shenhav, Geffon, Salomon, & Glanz, 2021). As can be seen, there is a possibility that individual, environmental, and cognitive factors shape the decision of teachers about school principalship, yet their effects on the desire to become a school principal have not yet been tested in the same conceptual model. In this direction, the individual, environmental, and cognitive factors that affect the desire to become a school principal are the subjects of this study. In this direction, the mediating effect of motivation-to-lead in the relationship between leadership self-efficacy and the desire to become a school principal has been tested. Furthermore, prominent individual and environmental factors were included in the study as control variables.

Based on the findings of this study, recommendations can be developed on how teachers should be prepared for the school principalship position. In addition, these can contribute to the development of school administrator training and appointment policies. The school principal selection policies in Türkiye have changed significantly in recent years. In order to be appointed as a school administrator in Türkiye, working as a teacher is required. Teachers who want to be principals must first own an educational administration certificate and must also be successful in the written and oral administrator selection exams. Teachers who pass these stages are appointed as deputy principals. After one year in the deputy principalship, the right to apply for the vacant principalship positions is obtained. In spite of these prerequisites, Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education (MoNE) does not consider school principalship a field of specialization and sees it as an additional duty to teaching. What is more, those who aspire to the position of school principal are not always the most suitable people for these positions. Thereupon, to enhance the number of teachers who wish to become a school principal and to prepare them in a desired fashion are of great importance for the education system and schools (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005).

Conceptual Framework

The first theoretical basis of the study is the emergence theory. According to this theory, leaders emerge as a consequence of the interaction between leader candidates, followers, and the environment. Emergence is predominantly a cognitive and perceptual process. The decision about which member of the organization is compatible for the leadership role emerges with the opinions formed as a result of the interaction of individual, environmental, and cognitive factors. These opinions are primarily open to the influence of individual factors such as gender and administrative experience, as they provide clues related to the characteristics that organization/group members want to see in leaders (Lord & Dinh, 2012). Additionally, environmental factors, viz. legal and bureaucratic restrictions stemming from the institutional environment, the uncertainties of the leadership role, and the expectations of the members of the organization/group regarding what characteristics leaders should have and how they should behave (in other words, leadership prototypes) are also effective in the emergence of leaders. In conclusion, cognitive factors i.e., self-efficacy beliefs about leadership and motivation-to-lead may guide candidates' decisions to assume the leadership role (Acton et al., 2019; Paglis & Green, 2002).

The second theoretical basis of the research is implicit leadership theory. On the basis of the theory in question, individuals create representations of their environment in their minds and interpret the outside world with the help of these representations. Accordingly, individuals have implicit expectations and assumptions about their work environment, the goals to be accomplished, and the personal characteristics and behaviors of employees who can lead the organization/group. Individuals who have the characteristics expected from a leader and exhibit relevant behaviors are perceived as leader candidates, others are considered followers or failures to become leaders. Put differently, a decision is made for the individual concerned as to whether they can be a leader. Individuals follow the same path when evaluating whether their own characteristics and behaviors are compatible for the leadership role and make self-inferences about if they are suitable for the leadership category (Medvedeff & Lord, 2007).

The third theoretical basis of the research is motivation-to-lead theory. Based on this theory, taking on the leadership role is a choice. Individuals' self-efficacy beliefs about leadership strengthen their probability of choosing leadership roles. The ones who feel emotionally ready for the leadership role, are willing to face the challenges of the role without hesitation and are motivated to fulfill the societal and moral obligations of leadership tend to take charge in the position of school principal. To wit, as individuals' motivation levels increase, their desire to become a leader also increases (Chan & Drasgow, 2001).

In light of these theories, it would be fair to put forward a conceptual model consisting of individual, environmental, and cognitive factors that can shape teachers' desire to become a school principal. According to this model, the desire to become a school principal is guided by cognitive factors emerges within trajectories consisting of individual and environmental factors (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; Pounder & Merrill, 2001). The conceptual model and research hypotheses regarding the factors that shape the desire to become a school principal are presented in Figure 1.

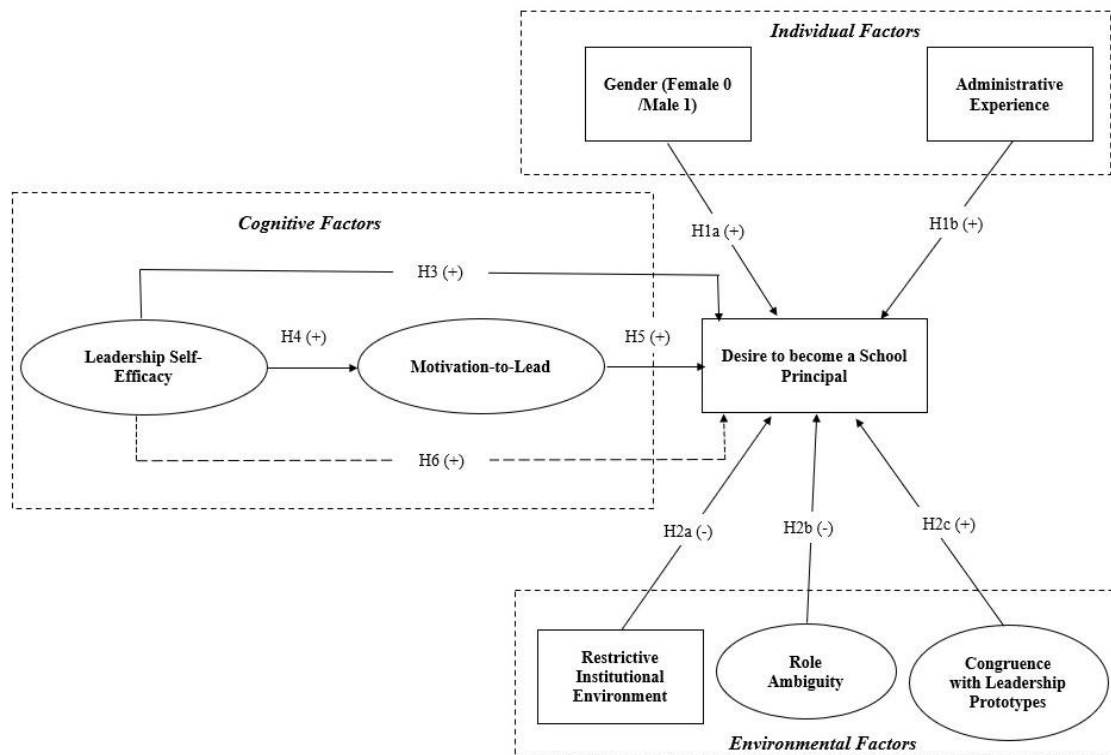


Figure 1. Conceptual model and research hypotheses regarding the factors shaping the desire to become a school principal (dashed arrow indicates an indirect effect)

Desire to become a School Principal

The desire to become a school principal makes teachers add the goal of being a school principal in their career plans and striving towards this goal (Elton-Chalcraft, Kendrick, & Chapman, 2018). School principals are the administrators responsible for the execution of the administrative processes related to the daily functioning of the school, namely, paperwork, meetings, parent-teacher associations, school security, data entry to IT systems, purchasing, salary and additional course payments (Spillane & Hunt, 2010). They also take on the role of instructional leaders of their schools. As the leaders of schools, principals also bear the responsibility of ensuring that all stakeholders are cared, taken into account and given the opportunity to succeed (Sergiovanni, 2005). Thus, the actions of principals directly and indirectly affect both the administrative and instructional processes of schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Wide areas of responsibility, covering administrative and instructional activities, cause the job descriptions of school principals to encompass dissimilar processes and become more complex (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Low wages, a heavy workload, and intense accountability pressures from families and bureaucratic upper levels aggravated the situation of school principals (Beach, 2010; Pounder & Merrill, 2001). School principalship has turned into a challenging task that requires more and more energy, time, flexibility, and resilience for individuals (Oplatka, 2017).

The challenging qualities of the school principal's job may be perceived differently by teachers due to individual factors, such as gender and past administrative experiences. School principalship is seen as a male-dominated position, in particular by the administrators at the upper bureaucratic levels (Brooking, Collins, Court, & O'Neill, 2003). Due to the prejudice that female teachers cannot cope with the difficulties of the position, male candidates are more preferred for the school principalship. This results in female teachers to receive less support from their peers and lower their self-confidence compared to their male colleagues, even in cases where male and female teachers equally aspire to the school principalship position (Martínez, Molina-López, & de Cabo, 2021). In addition to these, reasons such as the apprehension of having to choose between home and work and the possibility of neglecting

family members may also cause women to be reluctant to become school principals (Çelikten, 2004). The representation rate of women in leadership positions is on the increase, nevertheless, unfortunately, the gap has not closed yet, and male employees are still more preferred for such positions (Badura, Grijalva, Newman, Yan, & Jeon, 2018). Based on these inferences, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1a: Male teachers' desire to become a school principal is higher than that of female teachers.

In a similar vein, teachers with previous administrative experience are aware of the difficulties that being a school principal brings and what needs to be done to overcome these difficulties (Jiang et al., 2021; Kalish & Luria, 2021). As an example, Shore and Walshaw (2018) revealed that an administrative experience like deputy principalship provides teachers with knowledge and skills on how the daily functioning of schools is, what obstacles may hinder this process, and how these obstacles can be overcome. Moreover, it provides the opportunity to experience challenging problems related to student achievement without taking school principals' responsibility for accountability. Thanks to this experience, teachers can learn how an administrator should behave to become a leader (Shore & Walshaw, 2018). It is possible to express that this situation may increase the desire of teachers with administrative experience to become a school principal compared to their other colleagues. In conformity with these implications, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1b: Teachers with previous administrative experience desire to become a school principal more than teachers without such experience.

In addition, schools in Türkiye are parts of a centralized education system with the Ministry of National Education at its center. MoNE regulates the functioning of schools through its central and provincial organizational units. What is more, actors such as political parties, teacher unions, universities, and educational non-governmental organizations can have an impact on the functioning of schools. That is to say, schools are parts of an institutional environment consisting also of MoNE and of the aforementioned actors. This institutional environment has a determining impact on the student admission and graduation conditions, the appointment and working conditions of administrators and teachers, and the relations between school stakeholders through regulations like laws, regulations, directives, circulars, and curricula (Fidan & Balcı, 2018). School principals have to consider the restrictive effects of the institutional environment, while performing their duties. Even school principals do not always voluntarily implement the policies dictated to them by this environment. It is common for school principals to encounter situations where they have to follow orders that they do not even adopt (Mizrahi-Shtelman, 2021). In this respect, the way teachers perceive the institutional environment can shape their desire to become a school principal. The more restrictive this environment is perceived, the less the teachers desire to become school principals (Fidan & Kurt, 2022). On the testimony of these inferences, the following hypothesis was developed.

H2a: The restrictiveness of the institutional environment negatively predicts the desire to be a school principal.

Institutional actors enable schools to operate in a predictable environment. For this reason, there are arguments that school principals face less uncertainty than administrators working in other non-educational sectors. That said, frequent legal and curricular changes indicate that the institutional environment of schools may not be as predictable as it is thought. The fact that institutional actors, such as the Ministry, universities, teacher unions, and non-governmental organizations in the field of education, have different expectations, particularly about teachers' personal rights and curricula, creates a complicated and political institutional environment for school principals (Fidan & Kurt, 2022). Addedly, the factors related to the immediate environment of schools, such as student backgrounds and needs, socioeconomic status and culture of families, and organizational history and culture, might constitute a source of uncertainty for school principals. In other respects, school principals are responsible for serving an audience with diverse needs and conflicting expectations in an ever-changing and complex institutional environment. This issue removes the school principalship from being a static

position and transforms it into a dynamic one where it is usual to encounter uncertainties (Wang, Pollock, & Hauseman, 2023). Such uncertainties that school principals encounter when performing their duties may negatively affect teachers' desire to become a school principal. The more the school principalship is perceived as a role loaded with uncertainties by the teachers, the less they desire to be a school principal (Hameiri, Nir, & Inbar, 2014; Oc, 2018). On the report of these inferences, the following hypothesis was developed:

H2b: Role ambiguity negatively predicts teachers' desire to become a school principal.

Another environmental factor affecting the desire to become a school principal is leadership prototypes. Leader prototypes are implicit expectations and assumptions that followers have regarding the traits and behaviors they want to see in their leaders. These expectations and assumptions enable followers to create leader and non-leader categories in their schemata. In accordance with that, the more a person exhibits the traits and behaviors in the leader category, the more likely they are to be accepted as a leader (Fidan & Ayyıldız, 2022). The mistakes of the school principals who are congruent with the leader category of the teachers are less noticed, and these people are seen as more effective leaders than the those who are not congruent with the relevant schemes. Followers' evaluations consistent with leadership prototypes are mostly graded rather than "all or nothing". As the level of overlap between the personal traits and behaviors of incumbent school principals and the school leader traits and behaviors in the minds of teachers boosts, the probability of seeing principals as leaders gets elevated (Acton et al., 2019).

This issue also shapes the attitudes of teachers towards the school principalship position. At this point, Daniëls, Hondeghem, and Heystek (2020) pinpointed that there are generally differences in perception between teachers and school principals regarding the traits and behaviors of an ideal school leader. Teachers are of the opinion that school principals display less supportive and encouraging attitudes than they claim, and they attach more importance to administrative routines than they claim (Daniëls et al., 2020). Simply put, teachers tend to describe the leadership of incumbent school principals at a level below the ideal (Fidan & Balcı, 2018). Such an assessment of the traits and behaviors of school principals leads teachers to perceive school principalship as an achievable task (Rechsteiner et al., 2022). As a result of these evaluations, the desire of teachers to become a school principal may escalate, as they conclude that their personal traits and behaviors are suitable for school leadership prototypes (Fidan & Ayyıldız, 2022). In keeping with these arguments, the following hypothesis was developed:

H2c: Teachers' school leadership prototypes of incumbent school principals positively predict their desire to become a school principal.

With that being said, it is probable to come across teachers who would like to take on the role of leadership even in situations where the negative effects of individual and environmental factors are felt the most. Cognitive factors, to illustrate high self-efficacy and motivation levels, may lead teachers to aspire to the school principalship position despite individual and environmental obstacles (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012).

The Relationship Between Leadership Self-Efficacy and the Desire to become a School Principal

Self-efficacy refers to the belief that an individual can successfully exhibit the set of behaviors necessary to achieve desired results in a particular job (Paglis & Green, 2002). The concept of self-efficacy plays a kernel role in the initiation, frequency, and persistence of the desired behavior. It is possible to say that individuals with high self-efficacy are more persistent in undertaking challenging tasks, making the necessary effort to complete these tasks, and overcoming the difficulties they encounter (Bandura, 2002). In this regard, leadership self-efficacy can be defined as the self-confidence of the individual in exhibiting the behaviors that are part of the leadership role. Leadership necessitates the determination of situations in which social groups should take place in the future and the support of group members for this change. Thusly, leadership self-efficacy entails the individual's competencies in direction setting for other people, establishing quality relationships with them to gain their commitment to change goals, and working with them to overcome obstacles to change (Paglis & Green, 2002).

Leadership self-efficacy has been defined as the premise of the desire to take action in theoretical discussions in the literature (eg: Bandura, 2002; Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Empirical studies in the literature also confirm that leadership self-efficacy strengthens the desire to take action. To cite an example, Chan and Drasgow (2001) unearthed that leadership self-efficacy strengthens the possibility of taking on leadership roles by enabling individuals to see leadership as a part of their identity. Along similar lines, Justus, Arghode, and Barker (2022) underpin that there is a significant relationship between leadership self-efficacy and leadership performance. The willingness of administrators and teachers with high leadership self-efficacy to intervene in instructional problems also increases (Justus et al., 2022).

It is possible to argue the effect of leadership self-efficacy in this direction in terms of its dimensions. As an illustration, the act of direction setting involves conveying the school's goals to school stakeholders. School principals have to use their direction setting ability in the process of determining the mission of the school and ensuring that teachers focus on the academic progress of students. This effort also requires school principals to establish high-quality relationships with teachers and other school stakeholders and persuade them to be dedicated to the goals of the school (Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Nonetheless, neither the schools nor the masses they serve are homogeneous. The socioeconomic, cultural, and cognitive differences between students within and between schools make it common for different types of obstacles to arise in the educational process for learners and other stakeholders. Having the necessary skills to overcome such obstacles and working in collaboration in different environments in this regard are among the basic components of the job descriptions of both school principals and teachers (Hallinger & Bridges, 2017). Hence, it is possible to put forth that teachers with skills of direction setting, gaining others' commitment to change, and overcoming obstacles feel more prepared for the school principalship position (Li, Hallinger, & Ko, 2016). In congruence with these implications, the following hypothesis was developed:

H3: Leadership self-efficacy positively predicts teachers' desire to become a school principal.

The Mediation Effect of Motivation-to-Lead

It is possible to put forward that taking on a leadership role is primarily related to individual choices. The strongest factor behind choosing (or not choosing) to become a leader is the individual's motivation level (Öztürk, 2021). When individuals' social skills are combined with general cognitive competencies, such as the knowledge and intelligence capacity needed for leadership, they are more likely to choose the leadership role on their own. To this end, motivation-to-lead can be described as the individual characteristics that affect the leaders' or candidates' plans for attending training programs on leadership, their decision to take on leadership roles and responsibilities, and the whole effort they have made to maintain their leadership (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Chan and Drasgow (2001) highlight that these individual characteristics consist of three basic dimensions as "affective-identity", "social-normative" and "noncalculative". The affective-identity dimension consists of the motives that lead individuals to come forward simply as they like to lead. The social-normative dimension points to individuals' aspiration to leadership roles due to the motives, such as a sense of duty or responsibility. The noncalculative dimension is related to the cost of leadership. It embodies individuals' coming forward to assume leadership roles without considering the cost or benefit leadership will impose on them (Guillén, Mayo, & Korotov, 2015).

It is propounded that leadership self-efficacy is the antecedent of motivation-to-lead (Paglis & Green, 2002). This point is also supported by several empirical studies. To give an example, Chan and Drasgow (2001) found that leadership self-efficacy positively predicted the affective-identity and social-normative dimensions of motivation-to-lead. Likewise, Polatcan (2023) discovered that leadership self-efficacy positively predicted motivation-to-lead. When the sub-dimensions of motivation-to-lead are scrutinized, it is witnessed that they are closely related to the competencies and experiences required by leadership. Teachers who believe that they are competent in setting directions for other people, gaining their commitment to change, and working together to overcome obstacles to change are of the opinion that they are relatively more suitable for leadership roles (Hallinger, Hosseingholizadeh,

Hashemi, & Kouhsari, 2018). These persons tend to italicize the positive and enjoyable aspects of leadership while putting the negative aspects in the background. Moreover, their self-efficacy beliefs back up these teachers' self-confidence that they can fulfill the duties and responsibilities required by the leadership role (Li et al., 2016). This also makes it easier for individuals to engage in community-oriented, socially responsible actions. Thanks to their sense of competence, these individuals are able to predict how they can balance the costs that may be incurred by leadership. Despite the fact that they do not provide any additional benefit, it is sufficient for them to adopt the leadership role and satisfy their sense of duty and responsibility thanks to this role (Brandmo, Tiplic, & Elstad, 2021). Bearing in mind these arguments, the following hypothesis was developed:

H4: Leadership self-efficacy positively predicts motivation-to-lead.

Similar to leadership self-efficacy, motivation-to-lead encourages teachers to take on leadership roles, such as school principalship. There exist empirical studies pointing out that teachers with high motivation-to-lead are more likely to include school principalship position in their future career plans. As an example, Fisher (2017) found out that teachers with high motivation-to-lead are more sensitive to instructional problems and more willing to undertake positions, such as principalship. Tian and Virtanen (2021) concluded that even the potential increase in workload does not weaken this effect of motivation-to-lead. The reason behind this is that the school principalship is in a hierarchical position above the school stakeholders and requires the use of authority associated with the general functioning of the school. The school principalship position offers opportunities to teachers aspiring to lead to satisfy their desires. The fact that teachers with a high sense of duty do not avoid taking responsibility makes them stronger candidates for the school principalship position too (Weiner & Holder, 2019). School principalship may bring administrative and financial risks and individual costs like neglecting the family. This may strengthen the desire of teachers, who do not care about these risks and costs or believe they can easily cope with them thanks to their competencies, to undertake such positions (Guillén et al., 2015; Margolis & Deuel, 2009). Taking into account these arguments, the following hypotheses were developed:

H5: Motivation-to-lead positively predicts teachers' desire to become a school principal.

H6: Motivation-to-lead has a mediating effect on the prediction of the desire to become a school principal by leadership self-efficacy.

Method

A cross-sectional design was employed in this study which aims to investigate the factors shaping teachers' desire to become a school principal in a specific place and time. Cross-sectional studies are non-longitudinal studies involving data collection at a specific place and time. Cross-sectional prediction designs refer to studies in which there is a cause-effect relationship between independent and dependent variables (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, and Liao, 2003). The principal factor in deciding this design is that the theories that can be used to describe teachers' desire to become a school principal have already been developed in the leadership literature. Alongside this, the relatively stable nature of the environmental factors that shape the desire to become a school principal, since the procedures for selecting and assigning school principals are regulated by the legislation, facilitates the use of this design.

Sampling and Data Collection Process

The population of the study consists of 20.739 teachers working in 485 public high schools operating in Ankara, Türkiye in 2020-2021 Academic Year (MoNE, 2021). Since the socioeconomic development level of the districts in Ankara is close to the Türkiye's average, the study was conducted in this province (Acar et al., 2022). Due to the social distancing measures required by the global pandemic, a random sampling strategy was resorted to. In the first stage, the administrators of randomly selected schools in each district were contacted. It was communicated to the administrators that teachers could participate in the study by filling out either printed or online scale forms. Owing to

the global pandemic, the option of using an online scale was generally preferred. The online scales were first sent to the school administrators via different online instant messaging applications or e-mail, and they were shared with the teachers. Along with the scales, assurance statements were sent to the teachers regarding the fact that participation in the study was completely voluntary, they could leave the study whenever they wanted without stating a reason, and their personal information would never be shared with third parties. Aside from these, informed consent forms were sent to the teachers and collected in the same way as the scales.

In order to reduce the risk of common method bias, precautions were taken by considering the sources of risk identified by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003). Thereby, strategies like not writing the scale items mixed, measuring the variables using both two-category and Likert type scales, placing questions about demographic characteristics of participants between the scales, presenting each scale to the participants on separate pages and creating a gap between the response times of the scales were all referred to (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

A total of 386 teachers participated in the research. Regarding the limit values adopted for the goodness-of-fit tests utilized in this study and the number of predictor variables, it was seen that this sample size was sufficient to generate statistical power at the level of .99. To put it in other words, it is possible to argue that the sample size attained was sufficient to use the structural equation model (Kim, 2005). The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variable	Subgroups	n	%
Gender	Female	252	65.3
	Male	134	34.7
	Total	386	100
Education Status	Undergraduate	266	68.9
	Post-graduate	120	31.1
	Total	386	100
Professional Experience	0-5 years	95	24.6
	6-10 years	74	19.2
	11-15 years	67	17.4
	16-20 years	50	13
	21-25 years	60	15.5
	26 years and above	40	10.4
	Total	386	100
Administrative Experience	Yes	126	32.6
	No	260	67.4
	Total	386	100
Desire to become a School Principal	Yes	167	43.3
	No	219	56.7
	Total	386	100

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of the participants are female teachers. Further, undergraduates are in the majority. The majority of the participants are teachers with less than 20 years of professional experience. The vast majority of them have not had administrative experience in the past then, and the number of those who desire to become a school principal in the future is less than those who do not. Considering the 64% representation of female teachers in the population, it is possible to say that the demographic characteristics of the participants are close to the population (MEB, 2021).

Measurement Tools

The measurement tools used to collect the data for the study were explained separately for each variable. A two-category nominal measurement method was exploited for the desire to become a school principal, gender, and past administrative experience. Likert type scales were recruited for other variables.

Desire to be a School Principal (Dependent Variable). The question of “Do you desire to be a school principal?” was asked. No answers were coded as (0) and yes answers as (1).

Gender and Administrative Experience (Control Variables). Gender and administrative experience are individual factors included in the study. They are dummy coded as female (0) and male (1), no administrative experience (0), and administrative experience (1).

Restrictive Institutional Environment (Control Variable). It was measured with a single item. The participants were asked, “Schools operate in an environment that is composed of political parties, the central organization of the Ministry, provincial-district national education directorates, teacher unions, and non-governmental organizations related to education (associations, foundations, etc.) that direct the work of administrators and teachers through legislation and bureaucratic processes. To what extent do you think this environment limits the work of school principals?” Response options ranged from fully facilitating (1) to fully restrictive (7).

Role Ambiguity (Control Variable). It was measured with a seven-item role ambiguity scale adapted from Hameiri et al. (2014). Participants were asked “If you were a school principal, how much uncertainty would the following topics be for you?”. This is a five-point Likert scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). The total variance explained is 70.15%. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the scale is .93. The sample item for the scale is “Making the right decisions when sufficient information cannot be reached on time”. Confirmatory factor analysis results demonstrated that the single-factor scale provided a good fit to the data ($X^2=40.438$; $sd=13$; $X^2/sd=3.11$; $p>.05$; $RMSEA=.07$; $SRMR=.02$; $TLI=.98$; $CFI=.99$).

Leadership Prototypes (Control Variable). It was measured with five items adapted from Aycan, Schyns, Sun, Felfe, and Saher (2013). Aycan et al. (2013) articulate that leadership prototypes can be examined with the help of paternalistic, authoritarian, transformational, supportive, and participatory leadership styles. Hence, the participants were asked questions about these leadership styles. The question, “To what extent does your school principal exhibit the following leadership styles?” was asked to the teachers. This is a five-point Likert scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). The total variance explained by the scale is 69.44%. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the scale is .70. The sample item for the scale is “Transformational leadership: Having an impact on employees and a strong persuasion ability”. Confirmatory factor analysis results showed that the single-factor scale provided a good fit to the data ($X^2=12.758$; $sd=5$; $X^2/sd=2.55$; $p<.05$; $RMSEA=.06$; $SRMR=.02$; $TLI=.99$; $CFI=.99$).

Leadership Self-Efficacy (Independent Variable). The 12-item Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Paglis and Green (2002) was utilized. The number of items on the scale decreased to 11 as a result of the adaptation studies. The teachers were asked how much confidence they had in the subjects mentioned about leadership. The scale is a five-point Likert type, ranging from I do not trust at all (1) to I completely trust (5). The total variance explained by the scale is 73.65%. The scale consists of the subscales of direction setting, gaining commitment, and overcoming obstacles. There are four items in the direction setting subscale. The sample item for this dimension is “Planning the changes that will move your school to a better place”. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of this subscale is .89. There are four items in the gaining commitment subscale. The sample item for this dimension is “Getting the full support of other teachers to initiate change in our school”. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of this subscale is .88. There are three items in the overcoming obstacles subscale. The sample item for this subscale is “Finding ways to solve the problems stemming from legislation that hinders change”. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of this subscale is .75. Confirmatory factor analysis results revealed that the three-factor scale provided an excellent fit to the data ($X^2=53.639$; $sd=39$; $X^2/sd=1.38$; $p>.05$; $RMSEA=.03$; $SRMR=.03$; $TLI=.99$; $CFI=.99$).

Motivation-to-Lead (Mediator Variable). The 27-item Motivation-to-Lead Scale developed by Chan and Drasgow (2001) was used. The number of items on the scale decreased to 18 as a result of the adaptation studies. The teachers were asked to what extent they agreed with the statements about themselves. The scale is a five-point Likert type, ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5). The total variance explained by the scale is 61.31%. The scale consists of subscales of affective-identity, social-normative, and noncalculative. There are six items in the affective-identity subscale. The sample item for this subscale is "I usually want to be a leader in the groups I work with". The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this subscale is .84. There are six items on the social-normative subscale. The sample item for this subscale is "It is appropriate to accept leadership roles or positions when people request it". The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this subscale is .82. There are six items in the noncalculative subscale. The sample item for this subscale is "I agree to lead others even if it does not provide a special reward or benefit". The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this subscale is .73. Confirmatory factor analysis results showed that the three-factor scale provided a good fit to the data. ($X^2=277.405$; $sd=130$; $X^2/sd=2.13$; $p<.05$; $RMSEA=.05$; $SRMR=.06$; $TLI=.94$; $CFI=.95$).

Adaptation studies of the role ambiguity scale, leadership prototypes scale, leadership self-efficacy scale, and motivation-to-lead scale were conducted within the scope of this study. In the first stage, the items of scales were translated into Turkish by the language experts. The resulting scales were evaluated by the field experts and the items were revised in line with the suggestions. Following this stage, the scales were translated back into English and presented to the expert opinion again to compare it with their original forms. After the translation phase, validity and reliability studies were carried out. Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were performed using two separate samples collected from two provinces outside the population of this study.

Data Analysis

In the first stage, it was tested to determine whether the normality assumption was met to confirm the suitability of the data for multivariate statistical analysis. For this purpose, graphical and descriptive methods were made use of. Q-Q plots, box plots, and scatterplots are amongst the graphical methods used. The Q-Q graphs showed that as a result of the overlap between the expected values and the actual values, a line making an angle of 45 degrees emerged. Box plots demonstrated that the data were distributed symmetrically around the median. The scatterplots presented that the data were distributed in an elliptical form. The skewness and kurtosis coefficients were analyzed as a descriptive method. The skewness and kurtosis coefficients range from -0.61 to +0.25. With respect to these results, it was possible to suggest that the data met the normality assumption (Garson, 2012). As a result of the normality tests, it was monitored that there was no scale form that had to be removed due to outliers. Apart from these, since the data were collected using online tools, there is no incompletely filled-out scale form.

In the second stage, tests regarding the multicollinearity problem were run. With a view to doing so, correlation coefficient values and variance inflation factor (VIF) values were used. The highest correlation coefficient between dependent, control, independent, and mediator variables of .33 indicates that there was no multicollinearity problem (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Moreover, the variance inflation factor values ranging from 1.036 to 1.182 supported this situation.

In the third stage, the marker variable technique was performed to determine whether the common method bias could affect the results of the study. This technique involves using a variable that is theoretically unrelated to the variables in the measurement model. The level of correlation between this variable and others indicates the level of common method bias (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). In this study, the statement "I am worried about not being able to spare adequate time for my family due to my job" regarding teachers' work-life balance was used as a marker variable. There are non-significant correlations between this variable and others ranging from -.002 to -.08. This was evaluated as the risk of common method bias was not at a level that would affect the results of the study.

In the fourth stage, the data were analyzed. The collected data were first analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as the arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The level, direction, and significance of the relationships between the variables were calculated with the Pearson correlation coefficient. The hypotheses of the research were tested with the structural equation model (SEM) using the AMOS 25 program. In SEM analysis chi-square model fit criterion (X^2/df), Tucker Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and root means square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used as goodness of fit indices. On account of the number of the observed variables ($v=45$) and the number of observations ($n=386$), the X^2/df ratio less than 3.0, RMSEA less than or equal to .07, SRMR less than or equal to .08, and TLI and CFI greater than or equal to .92 indicate that the model is acceptable (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014, p. 584; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The SEM model was tested using scale items. Each item was examined as an observed variable, subscales, and main variables as latent variables. Lastly, bootstrapping analysis was exercised to test the total, direct and indirect effects between the variables in the model. The bootstrapping analysis was executed with 5,000 resamples as suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008).

Findings

In this section, in the first stage, descriptive statistics of the variables in the model and the correlation coefficients between the variables were calculated. This information is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients between variables

Variables	Mean	SD	DBSP	GEN	AE	RIE	RA	LP	LSE	DS	GC	OO	MTL	AI	SN
DBSP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GEN	-	-	.19**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AE	-	-	.28**	.33**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RIE	4.65	1.09	-.08	-.01	.02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RA	3.16	.83	-.04	-.03	.06	.04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LP	3.23	.85	.10*	-.01	.08	-.26**	.15*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LSE	3.67	.53	.18**	.02	.09	.15**	.07	.18**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DS	3.92	.58	.17**	.01	.11*	.02	.04	.10*	.79**	-	-	-	-	-	-
GC	3.73	.64	.16**	.05	.09	-.10*	.08	.12*	.88**	.55**	-	-	-	-	-
OO	3.25	.76	.12*	-.01	.01	-.24**	.05	.22**	.76**	.41**	.49**	-	-	-	-
MTL	3.38	.53	.29**	.16**	.24**	.02	.04	.05	.30**	.34**	.23**	.18*	-	-	-
AI	3.38	.75	.37**	.11*	.26**	.01	.04	-.02	.31**	.37**	.23**	.17*	.77**	-	-
SN	3.00	.79	.24**	.18**	.20**	-.08	.09	.16**	.15**	.12*	.12*	.11*	.71**	.37**	-
NC	3.83	.83	-.07	.03	.02	.04	-.07	-.04	.14**	.17**	.11*	.08	.53**	.11*	.04

Note: $n=386$; ** $p>.01$; * $p>.05$; Mean=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation; DBSP=Desire to become a School Principal; GEN=Gender; AE=Administrative Experience; RIE= Restrictive Institutional Environment; RA=Role Ambiguity; LP=Leadership Prototypes; LSE=Leadership Self-Efficacy; DS=Direction Setting; GC=Gaining Commitment; OO=Overcoming Obstacles; MTL=Motivation-to-Lead; AI=Affective- Identity; SN=Social-Normative; NC=Noncalculative

Examining Table 2, it appears that the means of the variables are at a relatively moderate level. There is mostly a high level of correlation between the main variables and their sub-dimensions. There is mostly a low or moderate correlation among other variables. The highest level of correlation between the main variables was between gender and administrative experience. It is followed by the correlation between leadership self-efficacy and motivation-to-lead.

In the second stage, SEM analysis was operated to test the research hypotheses and the theoretical model. SEM results demonstrated that hypothesized measurement model provided an acceptable fit to the data ($X^2=1485.981$, $df=928$, $X^2/df=1.60$, $p=.00$; $RMSEA=.04$; $SRMR=.07$; $TLI=.93$; $CFI=.94$). The SEM results indicated that the measurement model was validated. SEM analysis results are presented in Figure 2.

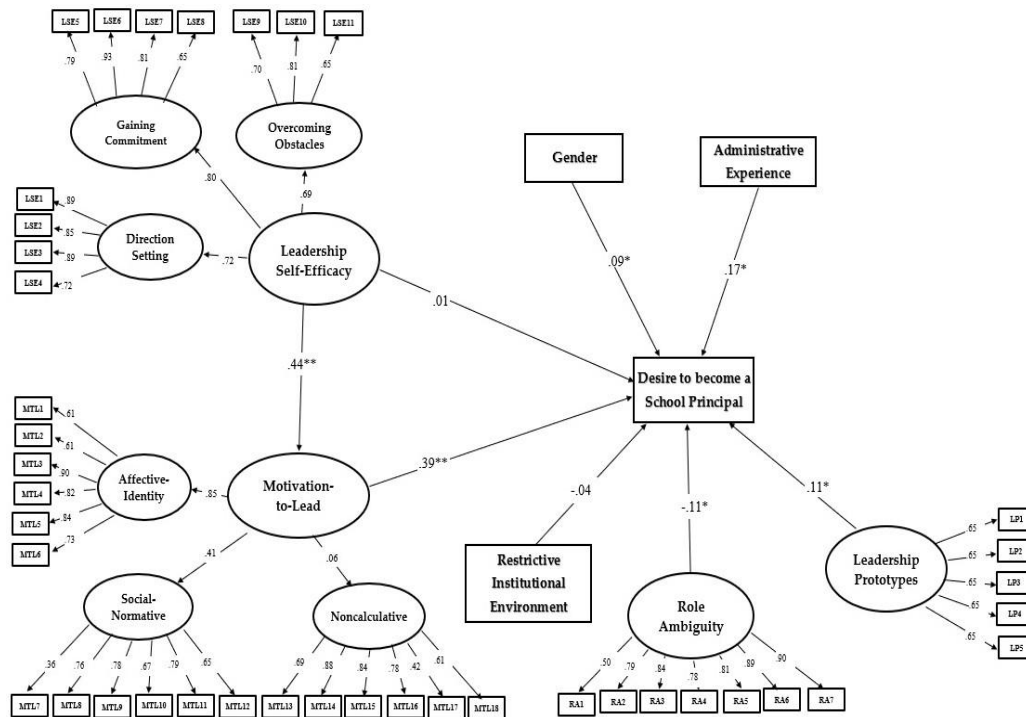


Figure 2. SEM analysis results (** $p<.01$; * $p<.05$)

As seen in Figure 2, gender was found to have a low level of positive and significant effect on the desire to become a school principal ($\beta=.09$, $p<.05$). The direction of the relationship expounded that male teachers desired to become a school principal more than female teachers did. In accordance with this result, Hypothesis 1a was supported. In a similar way, administrative experience was found to have a low-level positive and significant effect on the desire to become a school principal ($\beta=.17$, $p<.01$). The direction of the relationship revealed that teachers with administrative experience desired to become a school principal more than those without such experience. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1b was supported.

Examining the environmental variables in Figure 2, it was figured out that the restrictive institutional environment did not have a significant effect on the desire to become a school principal ($\beta=-.04$, $p>.05$). This denoted that Hypothesis 2a was not supported. On the contrary, role ambiguity was found to have a low significant negative effect on the desire to become a school principal ($\beta=-.11$, $p<.05$). Leadership prototypes, on the other hand, had a low significant positive effect ($\beta=.11$, $p<.05$). Accordingly, Hypotheses 2b and 2c were supported.

In Figure 2, it is clear that leadership self-efficacy did not have a significant effect on the desire to become a school principal ($\beta=.01$, $p>.05$). This finding signalled that Hypothesis 3 was not supported. On the other hand, the results evidenced that leadership self-efficacy had a moderately positive significant effect on motivation-to-lead ($\beta=.44$, $p<.01$) and motivation-to-lead on the desire to become a school principal ($\beta=.39$, $p<.01$), supporting Hypotheses 4 and 5. At this juncture, it is worthwhile to note that the noncalculative subscale of the motivation-to-lead did not have a significant contribution to the covariance ($\beta=.06$, $p>.05$). This attested that the decisions regarding assigned leadership tasks, such as school principalship, were different from the decisions that are pertinent to classical leadership roles. When SEM results were evaluated in general, it was understood that cognitive factors had greater effects on the desire to become a school principal than individual and environmental factors.

The correlation coefficients in Table 2 showed that there was a positive significant correlation ($r=.18$, $p<.01$) between leadership self-efficacy and the desire to become a school principal. This hinted at that motivation-to-lead might have a mediating effect on the relationship between leadership self-efficacy and the desire to become a school principal. The total, direct, and indirect effects between independent, dependent, and mediator variables in the model were retested by bootstrapping analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The results of the bootstrapping analysis are available in Table 3.

Table 3. Bootstrapping results

Yollar	Coefficients		95% Bootstrapping Confidence Interval		P
	β	SE	Lower	Upper	
Standardized Total Effects					
LSE→DBSP	.19	.05	.08	.30	.00
Standardized Direct Effects					
LSE→DBSP	.02	.09	-.22	.16	.89
Standardized Indirect Effects					
LSE→MTL→DBSP	.17	.08	.07	.40	.00

Note: Bootstrapping was conducted with 5000 resamples. LSE=Leadership Self-Efficacy, DBSP=Desire to become a School Principal; MTL=Motivation-to-Lead

Bootstrapping results in Table 3 indicated that Hypothesis 3 was supported, unlike the SEM analysis. According to the total effects, leadership self-efficacy had a positive significant effect on the desire to become a school principal ($\beta=.19$, $p<.01$). When motivation-to-lead was added to the model, the significant effect of leadership self-efficacy disappeared. Leadership self-efficacy was found to largely influence the desire to become a school principal indirectly through motivation-to-lead ($\beta=.17$, $p<.01$). Accordingly, motivation-to-lead was found to be a full mediator, which implied that Hypothesis 6 was supported.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the mediating effect of motivation-to-lead on the relationship between teachers' leadership self-efficacy and their desire to become a school principal was tested. Furthermore, individual and environmental factors were included in the study as control variables. Thence, this study contributed to the formation of a conceptual framework for determining the factors shaping teachers' desire to become a school principal and the antecedents of school principal selection.

Hypothesis 1a was that male teachers' desire to become a school principal was higher than that of female teachers. The findings supported this hypothesis. In this manner, it was concluded that male teachers desired to be a school principal more than their female colleagues did. This finding is largely consistent with the past research findings. Although evidence regarding no difference in effectiveness between male and female leaders were frequently provided (eg: Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015; Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014), there are studies in the literature purporting that men aspire leadership roles more than women do. (Badura et al., 2018; Erbek & Coğaltay, 2022; Hu, Jiang, Huang, & Liu, 2022). At this point, Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt (2002) suggest that this issue is related to what extent individuals are accepted as leaders by others. Because of social gender stereotypes, there is prejudice against women in leadership issues all over the world. This prejudice stems from the meanings and expectations that society attributes on being a woman or a man, rather than biological differences. When these meanings and expectations are internalized by individuals, they may lead to negative self-evaluations about whether they are suitable for certain roles (Kray, Howland, Russell, & Jackman, 2017).

Hypothesis 1b was that teachers with previous administrative experience desired to become a school principal more than those without such experience. The findings supported this hypothesis. This finding is consistent with the previous research results. There are studies in the literature having found that employees with administrative experience are relatively more willing to assume leadership roles (eg: Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Shaked & Schechter, 2016). In a similar manner, Gezer (2021) concluded that school principals deemed previous administrative experience as a prerequisite for the principalship position by. Administrative experience facilitates the training of school principals who are fair, able to lead, and have strong communication skills (Gezer, 2021). Within this frame of reference, Cebrián, Moraleda, Galán-Casado, and Andújar-Molina (2022) arrive at that as they gained experience in school administration, teachers could form realistic opinions about the scope and content of the school principalship position. Thanks to administrative experience, it is probable for teachers to join a new social network consisting of school principals. This network provides them with role models and resources that they can take as an example in overcoming the obstacles they may encounter and makes them more aspiring for school principalship (Cebrián et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 2a was that the restrictive institutional environment negatively predicted the desire to become a school principal. This hypothesis was not supported though. Despite the restrictive effects of the institutional environment, teachers desire to become a school principal in the context of Türkiye. In the literature, there are studies having found out that restrictive institutional environment elements, such as legal regulations, rules, and procedures, could shape teachers' attitudes, behaviors, future plans, and desires (Armstrong, Ko, & Bryant, 2018; Mizrahi-Shtelman, 2021). Notwithstanding, the findings of this study disclosed a unique situation. Steele (2021) attributes this situation to the fact that institutional environment elements are seen by people as unchangeable and inevitable entities. Even if people are aware of the existence of these elements, they no longer interrogate them and use them as a frame of reference. These enable people to create environmental awareness, internalize, distinguish, predict, and take action. This means, such institutional elements are seen as taken-for-granted and internalized features that define the school principalship position, organize its content, and make it predictable (Steele, 2021). At this point, Konan, Bozanoğlu, and Çetin (2017) announced that the high level of environmental interventions and the obligation to fulfill the tasks within the intense legal restrictions are among the qualities that define the school principalship. Provided teachers would like to add the school principalship to their future career plans, they have to make a decision considering these qualities. The lack of a significant contribution of noncalculative subscale to the covariance of motivation-to-lead also supports this point.

Hypothesis 2b was that role ambiguity negatively predicted teachers' desire to become a school principal. The findings supported this hypothesis. In this framework, it was concluded that role ambiguity negatively affected the desire to become a school principal. There are studies in the literature that reach similar results. To illustrate, Can (2022) ascertained that school principalship is a position loaded with uncertainties. The fact that they have to respond to expectations of a wide variety of internal and external stakeholder expectations in spite of their insufficient authority limits their influence on school functioning. This issue poses the threat of reducing the attractiveness of the school principalship position (Can, 2022). Consonantly, Gilboa, Shirom, Fried, and Cooper's (2008) meta-analysis detected that role ambiguity negatively affects employees' self-evaluations of their performance. Consequently, role ambiguity strengthens the tendency of employees to give up on their career goals (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017). On this occasion, it can be asserted that questions, such as "What is expected from school principals?", "What activities are school principals responsible for?" and "What consequences do school principals have for themselves, for others, and for schools?" have a decisive effect on teachers' attitudes towards the school principalship position. To the extent that these questions remain unanswered, teachers' desire to become a school principal weakens (Lim & Pollock, 2019).

Hypothesis 2c was that teachers' school leadership prototypes of incumbent principals positively predicted their desire to become a school principal. This hypothesis was confirmed. Viewed in this way, it was deduced that teachers thought they could fulfill the requirements of the principalship position by observing the leadership styles and levels of school principals. This finding is consistent with the results of the previous research in the literature. To give an example, Giessner, Van Knippenberg, Van Ginkel, and Sleebos (2013) and Monzani, Knoll, Giessner, van Dick, and Peiró (2019) determined that individuals were more likely to aspire leadership roles when they believed they had traits and behaviors unique to leaders. Correspondingly, Lin and Sun (2018) extrapolated that employees with high self-esteem, strong self-efficacy beliefs, an internal locus of control, and a belief that they have high emotional intelligence would like to see these traits in their leaders. Expressly, these people see themselves as ideal leader candidates. It can be proclaimed that with the help of the leadership prototypes of incumbent school principals, teachers predict both principals' potential to effectively fulfill their duties and their own potential to become a school principal (Jacquart & Antonakis, 2015).

The third hypothesis of the study was that leadership self-efficacy positively predicted the desire to become a school principal. The findings did not support this hypothesis. Nonetheless, the fourth hypothesis of the study "leadership self-efficacy positively predicts motivation-to-lead", and the fifth hypothesis "motivation-to-lead positively predicts the desire to become a school principal" were supported. There are studies in the literature that have declared similar results. The fact that leadership self-efficacy is one of the antecedents of motivation-to-lead has been a frequently repeated finding in empirical studies (eg: Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Hoyland et al., 2021; Polatcan, 2023; Schyns, Kiefer, & Foti, 2020). As their leadership self-efficacy, that is, teachers' belief that they can handle leadership roles, such as school principalship, becomes stronger, they become more motivated to fulfill such roles (Schyns et al., 2020). Consistently, in parallel with the findings of this study, it has been divulged by several empirical studies that the increase in the desire to assume leadership roles is one of the most prominent results of the motivation-to-lead (eg: Brandmo et al., 2021; Hoyland et al., 2021; Polatcan, 2023). The sixth hypothesis of this research was that leadership self-efficacy affected the desire to become a school principal through motivation-to-lead. The findings confirmed this hypothesis. That being the case, it was reckoned that leadership self-efficacy strengthened the desire to become a school principal, yet it did so indirectly through motivation-to-lead. The finding that motivation-to-lead had a mediating role in the relationship between leadership self-efficacy and the desire to become a school principal supports the findings of empirical studies in the literature (eg: Badura, Grijalva, Galvin, Owens, & Joseph, 2020; Maurer, Hartnell, & Lippstreu, 2017).

In this instance, Weiner and Holder (2019) presumed that teachers who believe they can lead have a strong motivation to deal with students' problems, engage in school improvement projects, and improve educational activities. Equivalently, Hancock et al. (2012), and Hancock, Müller, Wang, and Hachen (2019) punctuated that as teachers believe they can lead, their motivation to leave positive effects on students and other teachers, improve learning environments, and lead school improvement initiatives also increases. These people are also evaluated as effective school leader candidates by their social environment, and their desire to become a school principal is high (Blaum & Tobin, 2019; Hallinger et al., 2018; Hancock et al., 2019; Weiner & Holder, 2019). Bandura (1997) clarifies this situation with the effect of self-efficacy in the process of designing the future. Teachers, who believe they have direction setting, gaining commitment, and overcoming obstacles skills required by leadership, rely on these skills when designing their future situation. Projections for the future act as motives that direct today's behavior. To rephrase it, teachers with high leadership self-efficacy express their thoughts of becoming a school principal in the future through their motivation-to-lead (Ali, Schalk, Van Engen, & Van Assen, 2018).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study calls attention to that individual, environmental, and cognitive factors could shape the desire to become a school principal. In other respects, we identified that the basic assumptions of leader emergence theory, implicit leadership theory, and motivation-to-lead theory can also be used to describe the process of making a choice about assigned leadership roles, such as school principalship. Besides, it was decreed that the effect of cognitive factors is stronger than those of individual and environmental factors. This supports the qualitative research findings (eg: Barnett & McCormick, 2003; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012) that teachers with high self-efficacy and motivation aspire to assume leadership roles even when individual and environmental factors are not appropriate.

At the same time, the fact that the noncalculative subscale of motivation-to-lead did not contribute significantly to the covariance implies that the choices for the school principalship position are different from those for the classical leadership roles based on group dynamics. In the classical sense, leadership is a status achieved when highly motivated candidates interact with group members and gain their approval. This requires them to exhibit group-oriented behaviors without assessing the benefits and harms of leadership (Giessner et al., 2013; Medvedeff & Lord, 2007; Monzani et al., 2019). Conversely, school principalship is an appointed leadership position. Those who aspire to school principalship usually make a choice by considering the pros and cons of the position. School principals begin their duties as partial leaders. So as to become a complete leader, they need to gain the support of teachers and other school stakeholders by establishing high-quality relationships (Barnett & McCormick, 2003; English, 2007). This limits the use of leadership theories developed for non-educational fields in the school environment.

Given what has been revealed in this study, it can be recommended to create suitable conditions to render school principalship more attractive for female teachers. It can be suggested that the Ministry develop policies regarding personal rights, such as positive discrimination for women and arranging flexible working hours. Even so, it can be alleged that these measures will be effective only if they are supported by practices highlighting employee value and support employee commitment. From this perspective, it is essential to encourage successful teachers to become school principals. Teachers who participate in administrative tasks and contribute to school improvement projects should be rewarded by the Ministry, and these achievements should be taken into consideration in the selection and appointment of administrators. On top of that, the inclusion of leadership competencies and activities in the job descriptions of school principals in in-service training programs and the establishment of legal mechanisms enabling teachers to participate in administrative tasks by the Ministry can be recommended. On that account, teachers' gaining experience in school administration can be ensured, uncertainties germane to the school principalship position can be reduced, and teachers' self-efficacy levels can be increased.

Anent the findings of this study, it is possible to offer recommendations concerning the selection and training policies of school principals. First off, teachers often aspire to the school principalship by evaluating the pros and cons of the position. School principalship was legally defined by the Ministry as an additional duty to teaching and not as a separate field of specialization. For this reason, even though the school principals have the primary responsibility for the functioning of schools, they have similar rights to teachers. In that vein, the Ministry should deem the school principalship as a separate field of specialization rather than an additional duty to teaching and legally define it as a separate duty with relatively higher personal rights. In this way, it may be possible to elevate the status of school principalship and turn it into a more attractive career path for teachers. Secondly, as can be understood from the findings, the desire of teachers to become a school principal is mainly driven by cognitive factors like leadership self-efficacy and motivation-to-lead. Even though school principalship is depicted mainly as an administrative task in the relevant legislation, teachers who aspire for school principalship want this position since they want to be leaders. This unfolds the weight of postgraduate education programs in the process of raising school principals. It can be recommended that the Ministry elevate the status of the participation in these programs from being a qualification evaluated in case of

equality to one of the main selection criteria. Together with these, it can be suggested that the Ministry and higher education institutions design the content of education management certificate programs, which are among the conditions for the appointment of school principals, in a way to predominantly cover issues, such as the construction, implementation, and sharing of leadership in schools.

Limitations and Further Research Implications

This study has some limitations that should be addressed by future research. Firstly, this is a cross-sectional study. It was designated in a way that the data collected at a certain time from a sample of official high school teachers working in a particular place. On the grounds of this, the findings may not be generalizable to teachers working in public and private schools at different educational levels. For this reason, it can be recommended to conduct studies with samples selected from teachers working in public and private schools at different education levels and to retest the results obtained. Over and above that, the use of quasi-experimental and experimental designs that include manipulation of independent variables and experimental and control groups may diminish the number of alternative hypotheses and provide a clearer picture of cause-and-effect relationships (Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2019).

The second limitation of the study is that the data were collected with self-report scales, and the participants were informed about the content of the study before the implementation. In the future, it may be recommended to collect data from third parties in addition to self-report scales and to use variables that are not based on participant opinions. In this way, additional measures can be taken against common method bias (Jacquart, Cole, Gabriel Koopman, & Rosen, 2017).

The third limitation of the study is about the variables whose effects were tested in this study. Failure to include all the variables that may have an effect on the dependent variable in the model may lead to the problem of omitted variable bias. Omitted variable bias is the attribution of effects originating from variables not included in the model – although they should have been included in the model – to existing variables in the model (Jacquart et al., 2017). In future studies, according to the literature on leadership (Acton et al., 2019; Lord & Dinh, 2012), the effects of variables, such as professional experience, educational status, school type and level, social capital, personality, and emotional intelligence, which may affect teachers' desire to become a school principal, can also be tested. In such wise, additional measures might be taken against omitted variable bias (Jacquart et al., 2017).

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