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# The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment in the Effect of School Administrators' Servant Leadership Behavior on Teacher Motivation

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## Abstract

This research aims to examine the mediating role of organizational commitment in the effect of school administrators' servant leadership behavior on teacher motivation. For this purpose, the relational survey model was used in the research. 304 teachers from different regions of Turkey participated in the research. 166 of the participants were female and 138 were male. In the research, Organizational Commitment Scale, Servant Leadership Scale and Intrinsic Motivation Scale were used. The data were collected online. Data showed normal distribution. Cronbach's alpha coefficients of this study were found to be sufficient. It was found that school administrators' servant leadership behavior had a significant effect on organizational commitment. Similarly, organizational commitment had a positive effect on teacher motivation. Additionally, school administrators' servant leadership had an indirect effect on teacher motivation. In the study, the mediating effect of organizational commitment on the effect of school administrators' servant leadership behavior on teacher motivation was significant.

## Key Words

Motivation • Organizational commitment • Servant leadership

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Educational institutions are people-centered organizations with people as their input and output. As the principal staff of these institutions, teachers have a direct impact on the quality of the institutions and, consequently, the training of the students. One of the factors that will increase the quality of teachers and enable them to perform better is their motivation for their work. (Coşgun, 2019). The most crucial part of the learning-teaching process, teachers have important responsibilities including giving students the greatest education possible, guiding them toward the right goals, and assisting them in becoming contributing members of society. However, order to accomplish these goals, teachers must be motivated and feel prepared to offer services in education and training (Dviren & Okçu, 2020). Since instructors' willingness and motivation have a big influence on students, educational leaders and administrators are very concerned with teacher motivation. While it's a common complaint of teachers to have trouble getting students interested in learning, if the teachers themselves lack enthusiasm for teaching, it will be considerably harder to get students interested in learning (Neves de Jesus & Lens, 2005).

According to Örücü and Kanbur (2008), motivation is "a varied range of internal or environmental factors that stimulate the action of individuals." Another definition of motivation states that it involves "filling individual expectations and wants and directing them in line with corporate goals" (Karaköse & Kocabaş, 2006). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are two general categories of motivation. External motivational components connect to the organization, whereas intrinsic motivational elements link to the teachers themselves (Köse et al., 2018). For the teaching profession, it's necessary to have both internal and external motivation sources (Yazıcı, 2009). The benefits of motivated teachers include improving communication with the school administration, successfully conducting their duties, fostering cooperation among workers, and boosting student achievement (Atkinson, 2000).

School administrators have the greatest responsibility for increasing teacher motivation in educational organizations (Polat, 2010). Studies show that there is a significant relationship between the leadership behavior of school administrators and teachers' job satisfaction, motivation and morale levels (Aksel & Cevat, 2016; Çoban, 2019; Yıldırım, 2011). Many leadership theories and styles have been put forward based on the idea that leaders will maximize efficiency and effectiveness by motivating individuals (Özgan et al., 2013). Servant leadership, which is assumed to have a positive impact on organizational outcomes and is expected to enable educational institutions to achieve the goals they set, is thought to be a approach that should be adopted by school principals (Beştaş-Marakçı & Boz, 2022; Black, 2010; Güçlü & İhtiyaroğlu, 2012).

Greenleaf (1970) defined the servant leader as "a leader who serves with a natural feeling." In other words, what is important in servant leadership is not pretend leadership aimed at influencing the environment; it is leadership that is done sincerely and sincerely (Ekinci, 2015). Leaders with servant leaders gain leadership characteristics by serving the people around them and focus on cooperation by giving importance to the development of the individuals under their command (Türkmen, 2016). Additionally, servant leaders allow the holistic development of people, strive to ensure the peace and happiness of the people around them and serve by centered on ethical values (İş & Balcı, 2017). The goal of these leaders, who have adopted the principle of serving without considering their own interests and expecting nothing in return from their employees, is to increase their employees' commitment to the organization and to make them ultimately a servant leaders (Günaydın, 2016).

It is thought that the servant leadership approach, in which organizational needs are prioritized rather than individual interests, will also impact the development of schools, which are an organization (Akyüz & Eren, 2013). As a matter of fact, it is seen that the job description of the person who manages the school and functioning of the school administration is based on the idea of serving employees, students and parents of students (Taylor, 2008). In schools where servant leadership is dominant, the concepts of cooperation, respect and cooperation come to the fore (Türkmen, 2016). However, organizations should have leaders who are compassionate, patient, honest, visionary, and center on people and knowledge to be successful and for the progress of humanity. These characteristics emerge as the characteristics of leaders who adopt servant leadership (Bakan & Doğan, 2012)

When studies on the subject are examined, it is revealed a significant relationship between school principals' servant behavior and positive teacher behavior and positive school outcomes (Beştaş-Marakçı & Boz, 2022). Servant leadership increases the motivation of employees and contributes to the formation of a quality learning climate by adopting a strong school culture (Polatcan, 2020; Spears, 2010).

Considering that the commitment of the employees to the institution provides the desire and effort required for the institution to achieve its goals, another concept that is thought to impact the motivation of the teachers appears as "organizational commitment" (Ertan, 2008). Employees with organizational commitment are more satisfied with their jobs and performance increases in this way that they enjoy their job (Shore & Martin, 1989). Employees with high organizational commitment are expected to show higher performance (Steyrer et al., 2008).

Motivation and organizational commitment have a significant impact on the quality and efficiency of teachers, who are the most effective and dynamic elements of educational institutions, and therefore on the quality of institutions and students. The most important task falls to school principals to increase the motivation of teachers and increase their commitment to the institutions they work for. It is predicted that school principals' adopting the servant leadership approach will both directly motivate them and indirectly motivate them because it increases their organizational commitment. Considering the studies conducted in this context in the literature, there are studies in which teacher motivation is investigated with the servant leader behavior and organizational commitment levels of school principals (Ateş & Buluç, 2018; Beştaş-Marakçı & Boz, 2022; Ertürk & Aydın, 2016; Memişoğlu & Kalay, 2017). Likewise, the relationship between school principals' servant leadership behavior and teachers' organizational commitment levels is also been investigated in the literature (Özkan, 2021; Türkmen, 2016). However, no study was found in the literature in which these three variables were studied together. In this sense, it is thought that the study will contribute to the literature. The ability of teachers, who are at the center of both public authorities and parents' expectations, to conduct the education process brings with it the need for a high level of motivation (Köse et al., 2018). From this perspective, it is thought that the studies to be conducted on this subject can guide policy makers and practitioners. In this context, the mediating effect of organizational dependence on the effect of servant leadership on organizational commitment was investigated within the scope of the research. In particular, this study established a mediation model to test the following hypotheses:

H1. School administrators' servant leadership positively predicts organizational commitment.

H2. Organizational commitment positively predicts teacher motivation.

H3. Organizational commitment plays mediating role between school administrators' servant leadership and teacher motivation.

## Method

### Research Model

In this study, we examined the mediator role of organizational commitment in the effect of school administrators' servant leadership behavior on teacher motivation. For this purpose, the relational survey model was used in the research (Karasar, 2009).

### Study Group

The study included 304 teachers from various regions of Turkey. There were 166 female participants (54.6%) and 138 male participants (45.4%). The participants ranged in age from 24 to 58, with an average age of 36.94.

### Data Collection Instruments

Personal Information Form: The researchers prepared this form to determine the characteristics of the participants (gender, age).

Servant Leadership Scale: Kılıç and Aydın (2016) translated and adapted the scale to the Turkish language. The scale consists of seven items, such as “I would seek help from my manager if I had a personal problem.” The scale is one factor and his factor could explain 66.61% of the total variance item factor loads of the scale varied between .65 and .83. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Turkish form was .87. The fit indicates was obtained  $X^2/df=2.65$ ; GFI=.97; CFI=.97; TLI=.96; IFII=.97; RMSEA=.06.

Organizational Commitment Scale: Dağlı et al., (2018) translated and adapted the scale to the Turkish language. The scale consists of 18 items, such as “This school has a special place for me.” The scale is there a factor and his factor could explain 52.71% of the total variance. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Turkish form was .88. Item factor loads of the scale vary between .33 and .80. The fit indicates was obtained  $X^2/df=2.10$ ; GFI=.88; CFI=.90; AGFI=.84; RMSEA=.07.

Intrinsic Motivation Scale: Aydemir Dev et al. (2022) translated and adapted the scale to the Turkish language. The scale consists of four items, such as “My job is meaningful.” The scale is one factor and his factor could explain 68.71% of the total variance. The factor loads of items varied from .72 to .90. The internal validity reliability coefficient of inventory item was .85. Also fit indicates was obtained  $X^2/df=3.07$ ; GFI=.99; CFI=.99; RMSEA=.10; SRMR=.02.

### Period

Ethical standards were compliance in the collection, analysis and reporting of research data. The data were collected online. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Demographic information forms and scales were applied electronically. We shared the study link on social media accounts (e.g.,

WhatsApp) which enabled us to reach out to a diverse population. We have also kindly asked potential participants to share our study link with others. This research was carried out with volunteer participants.

### Analysis of Data

In that study, firstly, missing data analysis was performed. The SPSS package program was used to calculate the normality test and Cronbach alpha values of the data. Direct and indirect impact analyzes between variables were calculated using SPSS PROCESS (Hayes, 2018). Bootstrapping was performed with 5000 samples and a 95% confidence interval.

### Findings

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis values, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The skewness and kurtosis values were found to be in the 1.96 range, indicating a normal distribution (Karagöz, 2016). All Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to be adequate because they were 0.70 or greater (Pallant, 2016).

Table 1

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

	$\alpha$	M	SS	Skew.	Kurt.
Servant Leadership	0.66	22.82	5.47	0.52	-0.56
Organizational Commitment	0.86	75.65	7.61	-0.66	1.28
Teacher Motivation	0.65	16.65	1.94	-0.11	-0.11

\*\* $p < .01$

Figure 1 shows the mediating role of organizational commitment in the effect of school administrators' servant leadership behavior on teacher motivation. According to the bootstrapping result, school administrators' servant leadership behavior have a significant effect on organizational commitment ( $\beta = 0.73$ , CI = [0.61, 0.87]). Similarly, organizational commitment had a positive effect on teacher motivation ( $\beta = 0.12$ , CI = [0.09, 0.14]). Additionally, school administrators' servant leadership has an indirect effect on teacher motivation ( $\beta = 0.09$ , CI = 0.07, 0.11). In the study, the mediating effect of organizational commitment on the effect of school administrators' servant leadership behavior on teacher motivation is significant. Additionally, servant leadership and organizational commitment explain 41% of the variance ( $R^2$ ) of motivation (Figure 1).

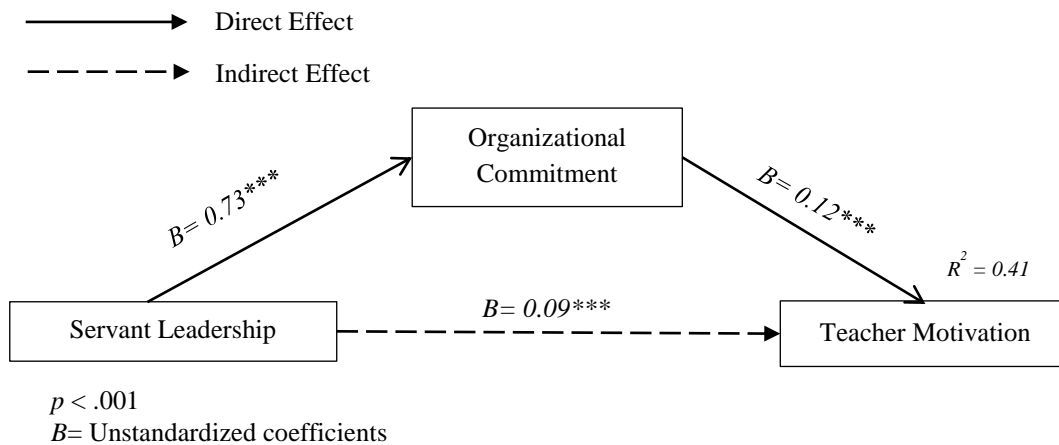


Figure 1. Mediation Effect Model

## Discussion

According to the study's findings, school administrators' servant leadership actions had a strong and significant impact on teachers' motivation. The study of [Beştaş-Marakçı and Boz \(2022\)](#) supports this finding. According to the study, teacher motivation was meaningfully explained by the school administrators' adoption of the servant leadership style in administrative practices. Additionally, it was noted in the study that improved teacher motivation would have a good impact on instructional strategies. Similar to this, [Sulistyorini \(2009\)](#) claimed (as reported in [Wahyuni et al., 2014](#)) that the servant leadership responsibilities of the school principle have a substantial impact on the motivation of teachers in their instructional activities. According to [Polatcan \(2020\)](#), school principals that exhibit servant leadership traits inspire teachers to make their best efforts, which increases the likelihood that the school will succeed in achieving the shared objectives it has set. The servant leadership approach behavior of school administrators and teachers' work motivations was shown to have a positive and important relationship in [Kuanprasert and Phetsombat's \(2019\)](#) study, which studied the relationship between servant leadership and teachers' work motivations. The servant leadership model has a favorable impact on all of the aforementioned factors as well as teachers' job performance, job happiness, and overall well-being ([Çoban, 2019](#); [Öter, 2021](#); [Liana & Hidayat, 2021](#)). In addition to these, research findings have shown that additional leadership behavior and teacher motivation have beneficial associations ([Aydınoğlu, 2020](#); [Okçu et al., 2020](#); [Özgan et al., 2013](#); [Üstel, 2022](#)).

The research's conclusions indicate that school administrators' servant leadership practices have a favorable and significant impact on teachers' organizational commitment. [Barbuto and Wheeler \(2006\)](#) stated that thanks to servant leaders, teachers will perform better, and this will increase teachers belonging to the school and their organizational commitment. [Cerit \(2010\)](#), in his study with primary school teachers, found a positive relationship between servant leadership and organizational dependence. In addition to these, there are studies in the literature showing that the organizational dependencies of individuals working in different institutions are affected by the servant leadership

behavior of leaders (Harwiki, 2016; Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Ramli & Desa, 2014). Servant leadership also has a positive effect on organizational trust and health (Del & Akbarpour, 2011; Öter, 2021).

The study finds that teachers' organizational commitment positively impacts their levels of motivation. According to Ertürk and Aydın (2016), instructors with a high organizational commitment will benefit their schools, and if they are useful, their internal motivation will increase. According to Steyrer et al. (2008), personnel with strong organizational commitment participate heavily in both production and the organization, work to advance the interests of the latter and exhibit more original and creative thinking. Another study found that educators with high levels of emotional commitment may be driven by both internal and external factors (Oran al., 2016).

In this study, it was found that organizational commitment had a mediating effect on the effect of servant leadership on teacher motivation. Servant leaders support employees' ability to express their own ideas by including employees in decision-making processes and strive to increase employees' commitment to the organization. In this manner, servant leaders contribute to the self-development of employees, which increases their commitment to the leader. Since the leader also represents the organization, this commitment spreads throughout the organization, and individuals continue to work in the organization they work for because of the kindness done to them, and they do not want to go to another organization (Koç & Özyılmaz, 2020). As organizational commitment increases, turnover decreases, stability increases, morale and motivation increases (İbicioğlu, 2000). Individuals spend more effort to do the task assigned to them. In contrast, individuals with low organizational commitment cannot devote themselves to their work and cannot show sufficient success (Gül, 2002).

As explained in the literature, increasing the motivation level of teachers and their commitment to the organization increases their performance and job satisfaction. Increasing efficiency and effectiveness of teachers positively affects the success and performance of both the student and institution. Since servant leadership behavior contributes to both teacher motivation and organizational dependency, school administrators can be given in-service training on this subject to increase their awareness of servant leadership and its benefits. Simultaneously, it can be aimed to increase the motivation of teachers and their commitment to the organization by determining the servant-leader characteristics of school principals. However, the present study has several limitations. First, a sample of teachers was used, so the results may not be generalizable to other groups. The study is a cross-sectional study and is far from examining the course of teacher motivation.

### **Ethic**

I declare that the research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

### **Author Contributions**

All authors contributed equally.

### **Conflict of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest in this research.

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