The Effect of Empowering Leadership and Teacher Autonomy on Affective Commitment: The Mediating Role of Teacher Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

Teachers' affective commitment is closely related to their performance. The present study investigated the relationship between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy, teachers' sense of self-efficacy, and affective commitment. A questionnaire was completed by 611 teachers in Ankara. To test the proposed model, we conducted a mediation analysis of structural equation modelling. The results show that empowering leadership and autonomy predict teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Similarly, teachers' sense of self-efficacy is also positively and significantly correlated to affective commitment. The analysis confirms that teachers' sense of self-efficacy is a prominent mediator in the relationship between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy, and affective commitment. This study is expected to contribute to the body of research focusing on the effects of empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and teachers' sense of self-efficacy on teachers' affective commitment. Implications are presented for policymakers and school leaders.

Introduction

The quality of school outcomes depends, to some extent, on the performance of the teachers in the school. Teacher performance, on the other hand, depends on their knowledge, skills and experience (Yusnita et al., 2018) as well as their attitude towards the school. One of the attitudes of teachers towards the school is organizational commitment. With the discovery of its contribution to the achievement of organizational goals, researchers from different disciplines have increasingly focused on the organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Angle & Perry, 1981; Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996; Luthans, Baack, & Taylor, 1987; Mowday, 1998; Swailes, 2002). More recently, educational researchers have focused more specifically on the relationship between affective commitment, a dimension of organizational commitment, and various organizational behaviours of teachers (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Dee, Henkin, & Singleton, 2006; Tsui & Cheng, 1999). However, these studies have not yet reached a satisfactory level that can explain the individual and organizational antecedents of teacher affective commitment in a holistic way. Therefore, there is a need for new studies on the individual and organizational antecedents of teacher affective commitment in different educational contexts.

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In the literature review on affective commitment in educational organizations, it has been observed that researchers have revealed the antecedents and consequences of teacher affective commitment. In previous studies, the effects of various school and teacher-level variables that strengthen teachers' affective commitment have been discovered. In the studies conducted in this context, it has been revealed that school-level variables such as principal leadership (Dou, Devos, & Valcke, 2017), organizational health (Tsui & Cheng, 1999), organizational justice (Tamghe, 2019), organizational trust (Bastug, Pala, Kumartasli, Günel, & Duyan, 2016), organizational culture (Zhu, Devos, & Li, 2011) and organizational climate (Polat & İskender, 2018) are important predictors of teachers' affective commitment. In addition, teacher-level variables such as personality traits (Utami et al., 2021) and various demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, marital status and seniority (Rabindarang, Bing, & Yin, 2014; Yücel & Bektaş, 2012) have been found to be related to teacher affective commitment.

Although several studies have been conducted on the antecedents of teachers' affective commitment, other areas remain to be explored. First of all, there are very few studies that examine the organizational and individual factors that predict teacher affective commitment together (Baksi Maiti, Sanyal, & Mazumder, 2021; Sheikh, 2017). In addition, the holistic effects of empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and self-efficacy on teacher affective commitment have been neglected in previous studies. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature on whether empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and self-efficacy are significant predictors of teachers' affective commitment. Moreover, whether self-efficacy plays a mediating role in the relationship between empowering leadership and teacher autonomy and teacher affective commitment remains to be explored. Based on these gaps in the literature, the following questions are sought to be answered in this study.

1. Are empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and self-efficacy perception significant predictors of teacher affective commitment?

2. Does teacher self-efficacy mediate the relationship between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and affective commitment?

Examining the multifaceted relationships between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy, teacher self-efficacy and affective commitment has the potential to contribute to the related literature, policymakers, and practitioners. First of all, testing the school-level and teacher-level antecedents of teacher affective commitment in a single model is necessary to fill the gap in the related literature. This study aims to explore the effects of empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and teachers' self-efficacy on teachers' affective commitment. Therefore, the findings of this study can provide a scientific basis for the preparation of policies towards teacher empowerment and teacher autonomy. In addition, the findings of this study have the potential to contribute to the development of teacher empowerment and teacher autonomy practices by educational and school leaders.

Study Context

This research has been conducted in Turkish public schools designed according to a centralist management approach. Several studies conducted in the context of Türkiye have revealed that teacher participation in decision-making is low, both within the entire education system and specifically within schools (Şener, 2018; Yılmaz & Altınkurt, 2011). Consequently, it is evident that teacher autonomy is not adequately encouraged due to the general structure and functioning of Turkish schools (Kılınç, Bozkurt, & İlhan, 2018). On the other hand, it has been noted that teachers in Türkiye do not receive sufficient support in their professional processes, leading to feelings of hopelessness and professional burnout (Okumuş, Mete, Bakiyev, & Kaçire, 2013). Similarly, teachers working in the Turkish education system generally perceive that administrators do not act fairly in various systemic and school-based decisions and practices (Demirtaş & Demirbilek, 2019). As a result, Turkish teachers' trust in the education system and their commitment to the schools they work in may decrease (Karadirek, 2021), and some teachers express intentions to leave the profession based on these and similar reasons (Kurtulmuş & Yiğit, 2016). Despite this overall structure and negative climate, some efforts have been made in recent years to

improve the professional status of teachers. Notably, the preparation of the Teacher Strategy Document and the enactment of the Teaching Profession Law are prominent developments. Consequently, it is suggested that these steps taken to protect and develop the social status of the teaching profession have led to some school administrators exhibiting empowering leadership behaviors, albeit in limited measures, and supporting teacher autonomy (Yorulmaz, Çolak, & Çiçek Sağlam, 2018). Several studies conducted in Türkiye have determined that both empowering leadership (Dağlı & Kalkan, 2021) and teacher autonomy (Sökmen & Kılıç, 2019) have positive impacts on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, an increase in teacher self-efficacy perception has been found to positively correlate with teachers' commitment to their schools (Demir, 2020). Given the educational reforms implemented in recent years, there is a need for more research to examine the relationships between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy, self-efficacy belief, and affective commitment in a holistic manner within Turkish schools. This study, conducted in the context of Türkiye, has the potential to contribute to the national and international literature in this area. The research results may enable comparisons between practices in centralized and decentralized countries, thus contributing to the international literature. Additionally, alongside the research findings, this study can foster increased interest among Turkish educational administration researchers in the topics of teacher autonomy and empowering leadership, which have been relatively underexplored. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will contribute to the development and effective implementation of education policies in Türkiye. As such, the results of this study can form a scientific basis for the further democratization of education and school management practices in Turkish conditions.

Theoretical Framework

This study examines the effects of empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and self-efficacy beliefs on teachers' affective commitment. In the related literature, there are various theories that have the potential to explain teachers' affective commitment. Among these, affective events theory (AET) and job demands and resources model (JD-R) have the potential to explain the relationship pattern between the variables of this study. AET was developed to explain how employees' emotional states affect their job performance and job satisfaction (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Similarly, the JD-R model was developed to explain the antecedents of positive or negative emotions experienced by employees (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). In this study, the relationship pattern between the independent, mediator and dependent variables was modelled based on the JD-R model. The main reason for this choice is that the JD-R model evaluates organizational and individual factors that cause positive and negative emotions in employees together (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The JD-R model has two components: job demands and job resources. Job demands consist of the physical and mental effort requirements expected from the employee to accomplish a job (workload, time pressure, etc.). Job resources, on the other hand, consist of the opportunities and benefits that a job offers to the employee (development and advancement opportunities, etc.) (Demerouti et al., 2001). According to the JD-R model, excessive job demands may lead to negative feelings such as burnout. On the other hand, a satisfactory level of job resources helps employees to cope more easily with the negativities caused by job demands and increases their commitment to work (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003). There are personal and organizational types of job resources. Personal job resources include self-efficacy (Huang, Wang, & You, 2016), while organizational job resources include leadership (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009) and autonomy (Collie, Granziera, & Martin, 2018). In addition, leaders empower employees by giving them autonomy and responsibility (Schaufeli, 2017). In summary, the JD-R model assumes that the availability of individual and organizational level job resources increases employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In this context, the JD-R model provides a favorable theoretical framework to explain the relationship pattern between the current research variables. In line with the basic assumptions of the JD-R model, the model presented in Figure 1 was tested in this study based on teacher data. In the following section, the independent, mediating and dependent variables of the study are explained on the basis of the relevant literature and the theoretical and empirical bases of the hypothetical relationships between the variables are presented.
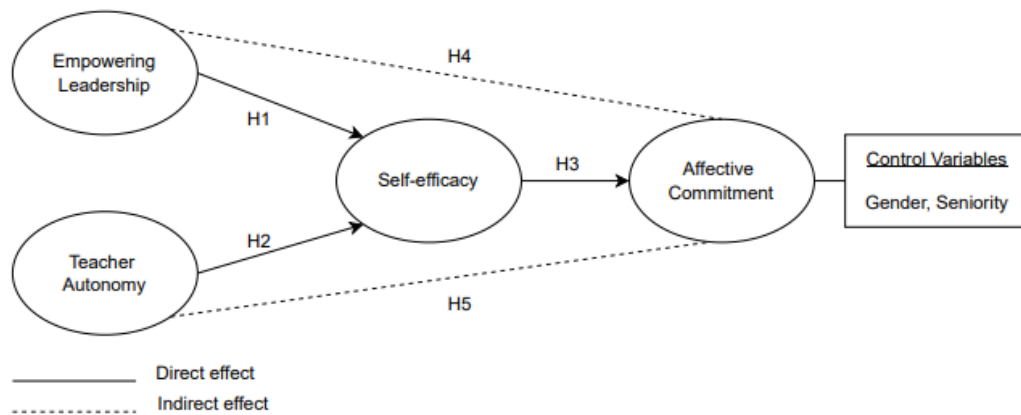
Figure 1. Conceptual model

Empowering Leadership

Empowering leadership is defined as the act of delegating authority and responsibility to groups of people or teams in order to increase internal motivation and produce better results at work (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). The idea of empowering leadership has historically developed in line with streams of supportive leadership (Bowers & Seashore, 1966), coaching, and delegating behaviours covered by situational leadership theory (Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979), participative leadership (Locke & Schweiger, 1979), and individualized leadership specifying the support of followers' self-worth (Dansereau et al., 1995). In the related literature, empowering leadership is analysed from two different perspectives. In the first one, researchers focus on leaders' giving more responsibility to followers, transferring authority and sharing power. In the second one, researchers focus on the effects (trust, motivation, etc.) of leaders exhibiting empowering behaviours on followers (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006).

The number of studies on empowering leadership in the Turkish educational context has been increasing in the last few years. The studies have revealed that empowering leadership has a significant impact on various organizational aspects, such as psychological contract (Koçak & Burgaz, 2017), trust in the leader (Doğru, 2018), perception of competence and job satisfaction (Dağlı & Kalkan, 2021), psychological resilience (Soylu & Okçu, 2022), motivation (Üstel, 2022), organizational commitment (Yılmaz, 2022), and sharing information (Mehtap, 2023). Additionally, Konan and Çelik (2018) conducted a scale adaptation study on empowering leadership. Given the crucial role empowering leadership plays in educational organizations, these research findings collectively indicate that empowering leadership significantly affects the behaviors of teachers and administrators within educational organizations in Türkiye.

In the present study, we used the empowering leadership model (ELM) conceptualized by Konczak, Stelly and Trusty (2000). According to ELM, there are six dimensions of empowering leadership. These dimensions are the delegation of authority, accountability, encouragement of self-directed decisions, information sharing, skill development and coaching for innovative performance. Delegation of authority is closely related to the concept of empowerment conceptualized by Conger and Kanungo (1988). Therefore, the empowerment process is basically related to granting of power or delegation of authority. Ford and Fottler (1995) claim that empowerment not only redistributes authority but also offers a way to hold people and teams accountable for results. Similarly, the leader encourages employees towards independent decision-making behaviour, which is an important part of the empowerment process. Employees' decision-making behaviour is based on goals, plans and rules (Manz & Sims, 1987). In addition, empowering leaders share information and knowledge with employees in order to support them to increase their organisational performance (Ford & Fottler, 1995). On the other hand, empowering leaders endeavour to provide appropriate learning opportunities for employees to develop the professional skills they need. Finally, the coaching for innovative performance dimension of empowerment refers to leader behaviours that support calculated risk-taking and novel ideas, offer performance feedback, and view failures and mistakes as teaching moments (Konczak et al., 2000).

Teacher Autonomy

Teacher autonomy is defined as "the capacity to manage daily routines, to instruct as one chooses, to enjoy the freedom to decide what to teach and to develop ideas for curricula" (Husband & Short, 1994). The ability of teachers to select their own teaching strategies is one of the key signs of teacher autonomy (Nguyen, Pietsch, & Gümüş, 2021). As a result, autonomous teachers have the freedom to select the resources they will use in the classroom. In addition, participation in organizational decision-making processes is a component of teacher autonomy (Friedman, 1999). Independent educators are involved in their own professional development (Little, 1995). Therefore, the term "teacher autonomy" refers to a teacher's willingness, capacity, and freedom to manage their instructional strategies and educational procedures (Vangrieken, Grosemans, Dochy, & Kyndt, 2017). According to Parker (2015), granting teachers autonomy is a good place to start when trying to address current issues in schools because it's crucial for the growth of teachers' professionalism.

There has been an increasing trend towards teacher autonomy in Türkiye in recent years, although it remains limited. The studies have shown that teacher autonomy in educational organizations significantly impacts the quality of teaching and teachers. Simultaneously, autonomy is influenced by factors such as organizational support, teacher expertise, colleague cooperation, and school environment (Kılınç et al., 2018). Research conducted on teacher autonomy has indicated its relationship with various educational aspects, including student achievement (Ayral et al., 2014), job satisfaction (Çolak, Altınkurt, & Yılmaz, 2017), school climate (Çolak & Altınkurt, 2017), teacher professionalism (Karatay, Günbey, & Taş, 2020), and managerial style (Akçay & Sevinç, 2021). Additionally, there are theoretical studies exploring teacher autonomy (Ertürk, 2020; Öztürk, 2011). These studies collectively reveal that, despite the centralized structure of the Turkish Education System, the outcomes of teacher autonomy significantly affect educational organizations.

In the present study, we used the teacher autonomy model conceptualized by Ulaş and Aksu (2015). According to this perspective, there are three dimensions of teacher autonomy. The first of these dimensions is autonomy in instructional planning and implementation. In other words, autonomous teachers plan and implement all instructional activities in the classroom based on their own decisions (Friedman, 1999). An important reason for this is that teachers are expected to perform in the following areas in the classroom; (a) addressing the psychological needs of students; (b) addressing their academic needs; (c) inspiring students and reducing disruptive behaviour by fostering positive classroom relationships; (d) collaborating with parents on all matters pertaining to their children; (e) designing effective teaching timetables and ensuring class functioning as a social unit; (f) developing effective teaching methods to enhance learning; and (g) establishing working grounds (Jones & Jones, 1986). The second dimension of teacher autonomy is autonomy in professional development. According to this, autonomous teachers can take decisions on the planning and implementation of professional development processes on their own. And, the third dimension of teacher autonomy is autonomy in organizational decision-making. In this context, autonomous teachers can actively participate in organizational decisions. One reason for this is that in recent years teachers have been expected to contribute to issues related to the school's inadequate resources, budget, and finances (Friedman, 1999).

Teacher Self-efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy can be defined as a teacher's confidence in their capacity to organize, plan, and carry out the necessary actions to achieve educational objectives (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Two conceptual perspectives are used to build teacher efficacy. The first is the locus of control-theoretical perspective put forward by Rotter (1966), wherein teacher efficacy is described as a teacher's confidence in their control of the learning environment. The second conceptual perspective is based on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, and it defines teacher self-efficacy as the confidence a teacher has in their capacity to implement an instructional strategy in an educational setting that produces favorable student outcomes. There is broad consensus that teacher self-efficacy research should be more in line with Bandura's theoretical viewpoint (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

Teacher self-efficacy is a frequently studied subject in the field of education in Türkiye. Particularly, studies have investigated the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and various leadership behaviors exhibited by school administrators, such as instructional leadership (Çalık, Sezgin, Kavgacı, & Kılınç, 2012; Derbedek, 2008; Köstekci, 2023), ethical leadership (Sağır & Tutkun, 2017), and distributed leadership (Yakut Özek & Büyükgöze, 2023). Additionally, there are some studies examining the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and different variables in the educational context, such as academic optimism (Kılınç, Polatcan, Atmaca, & Koşar, 2021), motivation and epistemological belief (Kutluca, 2018), and job satisfaction (Yakut Özek & Büyükgöze, 2023). The increasing number of studies in the field of self-efficacy led to a study conducted to address the studies on teacher self-efficacy (Çaylar, 2023). The developments in this field in Türkiye indicate that teacher self-efficacy will continue to be relevant and can be explored from various dimensions.

In the current study, we used the teacher sense of efficacy framework developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), since it has been widely adopted and has a profound effect on the field (Fackler & Malmberg, 2016). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) defined teachers' self-efficacy as teachers' judgment of his/her ability to produce desired outcomes concerning student engagement and achievement, even when working with students who are particularly challenging or lacking in motivation. According to this framework, teachers' sense of efficacy is made up of three dimensions. The first of them is efficacy for the instructional strategy which refers to teachers' assessment of their ability to implement effective teaching practices. Self-efficacy in student engagement, which relates to how much a teacher believes they can inspire students to participate in class activities, is the second component of a teacher's sense of efficacy. The third dimension is self-efficacy in classroom management, which is how well teachers think they can motivate students to obey rules and set clear expectations for them (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is one of the important dimensions of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is defined as the individual's acceptance of the goals and values of the organization he works for, belief in them, making efforts for the organization and at the same time having a strong desire to continue his membership in the organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974). In other words, it is the degree to which the individual feels himself a part of the organization (Schermerhorn, Hunt, & Osborn, 1994). Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) defined organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification and participation with a particular organization. According to Allen and Meyer (1990), organizational commitment has three dimensions: continuance commitment, normative commitment and affective commitment. Employees with strong normative commitment continue to work in the organization they work in because they think they should stay in the organization. Employees with strong continuance commitment work in organizations because of their needs. On the other hand, employees of the organization with strong affective commitment continue their work in line with their own wishes.

Organizational commitment is a significant field of scientific research in Türkiye. Most of the studies focus on organizational commitment holistically. Notably, different leadership styles have been found to affect organizational commitment (Bektaş, Çoğaltay, & Sökmen, 2014; Buluç, 2009). For instance, it is noteworthy that teachers display a positive commitment towards schools where ethical leadership behavior is observed (Uğurlu & Üstüner, 2011). On the other hand, affective commitment, which is a sub-dimension of organizational commitment, has emerged as an independent area of study in Türkiye. Karaca and Şenel (2022) revealed that teachers with high affective commitment have a lower intention to leave their jobs. Additionally, in a study exploring the relationship between affective commitment, paternalistic leadership behavior, and organizational citizenship, it was found that the amount of time spent working at school influences teachers' affective commitment (Ertürk, 2018). These independent studies on affective commitment indicate that it holds the potential to become a subject of further research as a new field of study in Türkiye.

In this study, we specifically studied the affective commitment dimension of organizational commitment. Because teachers with high affective commitment adopt the goals and values of the school more, make more efforts to ensure the success of the school, and continue to stay at school voluntarily (Starnes & Truhon, 2006). In addition, affective commitment is associated with different behavioral variables such as helping others, working extra, and sharing information (Solinger, van Olffen, & Roe, 2008). Previous studies have shown that affective commitment is negatively correlated to job turnover and positively correlated to organizational citizenship behavior (Mercurio, 2015).

The Relationship of Empowering Leadership with Teachers' Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura (1997), workplace settings and social influence can be sources of one's self-efficacy, and followers are encouraged to build self-efficacy by their leaders' verbal persuasion and support. In this respect, empowering leadership behaviors such as coaching and modelling in schools can contribute to teachers' self-confidence. Teachers have opportunities to advance their knowledge and learn from one another by exchanging information when empowered leaders enable them to participate in their work-related decision-making and boost their involvement (Latham, Winters, & Locke, 1994). Each of these processes helps to promote teachers' self-efficacy. Therefore, empowering leaders should be aware of teachers' capacities and support the use of their skills, which helps them develop self-efficacy beliefs (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). Previous empirical studies have shown that empowering school leadership has an effect on teacher self-efficacy (Hao, He, & Long, 2018; Kim & Beehr, 2017).

Thus, we hypothesized that empowering leadership is positively related to teachers' self-efficacy (H1)

The Relationship of Teacher Autonomy with Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Conger and Kanungo (1988) claimed that autonomy is an important determinant of self-efficacy. By having autonomy, a teacher is given the freedom to respond to circumstances and issues at school. Therefore, autonomy encourages and empowers teachers to try new things and learn from the results. This allows them to expand their knowledge of their jobs and, more broadly, their skill sets, which in turn strengthens their confidence in their own capacity to do a good job. Based on this argument, James and McCormick (2009) mentioned that teachers should be given enough classroom autonomy to be empowered. Previous studies have indicated that when having sufficient autonomy, teachers are likely to develop self-efficacy (Collie et al., 2018). In addition, it was explored that teachers who have more autonomy are more likely to improve their teaching practices (Wermke, Olason Rick, & Salokangas, 2019). Similarly, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) found that teachers' autonomy is positively correlated with teachers' self-efficacy.

Thus, we hypothesized that teacher autonomy is positively related to teachers' self-efficacy (H2)

The Relationship of Teachers' Self-Efficacy with Teachers' Affective Commitment

Bandura (1997) mentions that self-efficacy has two dimensions. One of them is 'outcome expectancy', and the other one is 'efficacy expectations'. A person's expectation about the outcomes of a certain activity is implied by the term 'outcome expectancy'. On the other hand, 'efficacy expectation' refers to actions taken to achieve the anticipated results. It is not unexpected that teachers display greater organized behaviors in the areas where they report having higher levels of self-efficacy. Teachers with high expectations of themselves to perform well and successfully in the classroom will participate in extracurricular activities and feel more devoted to their school and the teaching profession (Bogler & Somech, 2004). Consistent with this assumption, it has been explored that when teachers feel they can have an impact on their students, they do better (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Similarly, according to several studies (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, & Hofman, 2012; Chesnut & Burley, 2015), teacher self-efficacy (TSE) has a significant impact on teachers' work satisfaction and occupational commitment (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016). In addition, researchers have shown that teachers' opinions about their own efficacy affect their commitment to their profession (Rots, Aelterman, Vlerick, & Vermeulen, 2007).

Thus, we hypothesized that teachers' self-efficacy is positively related to teachers' affective commitment (H3)

Self-efficacy as Mediator

Several recent studies have examined the mediation effects of some general work attitudes on the relationship among empowering leadership, autonomy and affective commitment, such as engagement (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011) and perceived organizational support (Ambreen, Naz, Bhatti, & Khan, 2014). In the current study, we propose teacher self-efficacy may mediate the above relationship. A body of studies has indicated that teacher self-efficacy is correlated with a range of positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction (Klassen & Chiu, 2010), work engagement (Cai, Wang, Bi, & Tang, 2022), perceived collective teacher efficacy (Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018), motivation and job involvement (Demir, 2020). Considering the importance of teacher self-efficacy, scholars have explored the school-level mechanism promoting teacher self-efficacy. Previous studies explored that a number of school contextual factors (e.g. instructional leadership, school leadership, school culture) were correlated with teachers' self-efficacy (Damanik & Aldridge, 2017; Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Schipper, de Vries, Goei, & van Veen, 2020). As one of the most effective theoretical perspectives for understanding employee behaviors, JD-R Model assumes that a satisfactory level of job resources increases employees' commitment to work (Bakker et al., 2003). Based on the basic assumptions of the JD-R model, we argue that JD-R Model can help to explain the effects of empowering leadership and teacher autonomy on affective commitment mediated by teacher self-efficacy in the present study.

Thus, we hypothesized that teachers' self-efficacy mediates the relationship between empowering leadership (H4) and teacher autonomy (H5) with teachers' affective commitment.

Method

This study, which examines the relationships between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy, affective commitment and teacher self-efficacy in schools, was conducted based on the quantitative research method. For this purpose, correlational survey design was used in the research. In this context, the conceptual model developed based on the relevant theory and previous research has been tested by structural equation modelling (SEM) and interpreted (See Figure 1).

Participant

This study was conducted in Ankara. The population of the study consists of 16061 teachers working in public middle schools in nine metropolitan districts in Ankara in the 2022-2023 academic year (Altındağ, Yenimahalle, Çankaya, Mamak, Keçiören, Etimesgut, Sincan, Pursaklar and Gölbaşı). A total of 611 teachers selected by stratified sampling method voluntarily participated in the study. The demographic data of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants information (N= 611)

Teacher gender	M(SD)	n	%
Female		427	69.9
Male		184	30.1
Age	43.96 (8.134)	611	100
Seniority			
<=5		35	5.7
6-10		54	8.8
11-15		105	17.2
16-20		99	16.2
>=21		318	52.0
Education background			
Bachelor's degree		492	80.5
Graduate degree		119	19.5

As seen in Table 1, among the respondents, 427 (69.9%) were females, and the mean age was 43.96 years (standard deviation (SD) = 8.134). Most of the the respondents' seniority was 21 years (*n*= 318) and above (52%). In addition, 492 of the respondents (80.5%) held a bachelor's degree.

Measures

Parallel with our theoretical model, all variables in the current research were conceptualized as individual-level constructs. Five-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) were used to measure empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and affective commitment, whereas teacher sense of self-efficacy was measured on a 9-point scale between 1 (strongly disagree) and 9 (strongly agree).

Empowering leadership. To determine the teachers' perspectives with regard to empowering leadership, we used Leader Empowering Behavior Questionnaire (LEBQ). LEBQ was developed by Konczak et al. (2000) and adapted to Turkish culture by Konan and Çelik (2018). An important reason for choosing the LEBQ in this study is that this scale is accepted internationally and is widely used among researchers. LEBQ consists of 17 items with six factors. To test the construct validity of the six-factor empowering leadership model, we conducted a second-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The CFA results indicated a good fit of the six-factor structure; $\chi2=416.058$, RMSEA = 0.06, CFI = 0. 97, TLI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.05. The Cronbach's alpha of the overall LEBQ was 0.95.

Teacher Autonomy. To determine the teachers' perspectives with regard to teacher autonomy, we used Teacher Autonomy Scale-Turkish (TAST). The most important reason for using TAST in this study is that this scale was prepared by considering the characteristics of the Turkish national education system. Teacher autonomy scales developed in other countries were not preferred because they were not suitable for the general characteristics of the Turkish education system. TAST was developed by Ulaş and Aksu (2015) for the Turkish culture and education system. TAST consist of 18 items with three factors. To test the construct validity of the three-factor teacher autonomy model, we conducted a second-order CFA. The CFA results indicated a good fit of the three-factor structure; $\chi2=688.654$, RMSEA =0.08, CFI =0. 94 TLI = 0.92, SRMR = 0.04. The Cronbach's alpha of the overall TAST was 0.95.

Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy. To determine the teachers' perspectives with regard to self-efficacy, we used the *Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES).* TSES was developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) and the short form of the TSES-SF was adapted to Turkish culture by Karaoğlu (2019). TSES is widely accepted around the world and in terms of its dimensions, it is compatible with the objectives of our research. Therefore, we preferred to use TSES in this study. TSES-SF consists of 12 items with three factors. To test the construct validity of the three-factor teacher self-efficacy model, we conducted a second-order CFA. The CFA results indicated a good fit of the three-factor structure; $\chi2=245.455$, RMSEA =0.08, CFI =0. 96, TLI = 0.94, SRMR = 0.04. The Cronbach's alpha of the overall TSES-SF was 0.92.

Affective Commitment. To determine the teachers' perspectives with regard to affective commitment, we used *Affective Commitment Scale (ACS).* ACS is the sub-dimension of the Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS) which was developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). OCS was adapted to Turkish culture by Dağlı, Elçicek and Han (2018). OCS and its dimension, ACS, have been used in many studies all over the world and in our country, and it has a high level of validity and reliability. Therefore, in the present study, it was decided to collect data with ACS. ACS consist of 6 items. To test the construct validity of the ACS, we conducted a CFA. The CFA results indicated a good fit of the one-factor structure; $\chi2=26.572$, RMSEA =0.06, CFI =0.99, TLI = 0.99, SRMR = 0.01. The Cronbach's alpha of the overall ACS was 0.91.

Control Variables. Considering the possible influence of teachers' demographic variables on the relationship between variables of interest, we included teacher gender (1 = Female, 2= Male) and seniority (1 = <=5; 2 = 5-10; 3= 11-15; 4 = 16-20; 5 = >=21) as the control variables in the current study.

Data Analysis

All analyses were executed by using *Mplus* 7.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) with maximum likelihood estimations (ML). At first, descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations between the independent, mediating and dependent variables were calculated. Before testing the hypothesized relationships between variables, we conducted CFA for the proposed model to ensure construct distinctiveness among variables. And then, we tested the mediated effects of a teacher's sense of self-efficacy on the relationship between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and affective commitment. We used the bootstrapping method, suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008), to obtain confidence intervals and significance levels for paths. We examined model fit with comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). CFI and TLI values of .90 or greater and .95 or greater indicate adequate and good fit respectively. RMSEA values of .08 or less and .05 or less indicate adequate and good fit respectively (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The data for the study came from a single source (i.e., teachers). Therefore, we took some steps to decrease common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). In this case, we used the single-factor test suggested by Harman (1967). The analysis revealed that the items were not grouped by a single factor. The first factor accounted for 39% of the total variance (less than 50%). In addition, the correlation matrix procedure was also examined, and it was seen that the bivariate correlation coefficient values between all variables of the research were below .90 (see Table 2) (Pavlou, Liang, & Xue, 2007). We also employed the common latent factors method, as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2012). The findings indicated that there was no variance similarity between any two study variables. As a result, this study does not have a problem with common method bias. Ethics Committee approval was obtained in order for the study to comply with scientific ethical principles. Because the research data was collected from adults, they participated in the research voluntarily. In addition, all principles related to scientific ethics were complied with in data collection, data analysis and reporting processes.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents means, standard deviations and Pearson correlations for the study variables.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and correlations (n = 611)

Variable	M	SD	EL	TA	SE	AC
EL	4.03	0.80	-			
TA	3.97	0.81	0.56*	-		
SE	4.40	0.60	0.43*	0.48*	-	
AC	3.99	0.81	0.69*	0.52*	0.45*	-

Abbreviations: M, mean; SD, standard deviation; EL, empowering leadership; TA, teacher autonomy; SE, self-efficacy; AC, affective commitment

*p<.01

As can be seen in Table 2, the arithmetic mean values of empowering leadership, teacher autonomy, self-efficacy and affective commitment variables were calculated at medium and high levels. According to these results, it is understood that empowering leadership behaviours are exhibited and teachers feel relatively autonomous in the schools where the research is conducted. In addition, the Pearson correlation coefficient values between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy, self-efficacy and affective commitment variables are below .85. According to this result, it was concluded that there was no multicollinearity problem in the study. As seen in Table 2, empowering leadership is significantly and positively correlated with teacher autonomy (*r*=0.56, *p*<.01), self-efficacy (*r*=0.43, *p*<.01) and affective commitment *(r*=0.69, *p*<.01). In addition, teacher autonomy is significantly and positively correlated with self-efficacy (*r*=0.48, *p*<.01) and affective commitment (*r*=0.52, *p*<.01). There is a significant and positive correlation between teacher self-efficacy and affective commitment (*r*=.45,

p<.01). All these results provide preliminary support for the research hypotheses. In other words, these relationships observed among the research variables provide clues to support the conceptual model that empowering leadership and teacher autonomy affect teacher self-efficacy, while teacher self-efficacy affects teacher affective commitment.

Results of Structural Equation Model

The SEM results of the theoretical model for the relationships between the independent (empowering leadership and teacher autonomy), mediating (self-efficacy) and dependent (affective commitment) variables of the study are presented in Figure 2.
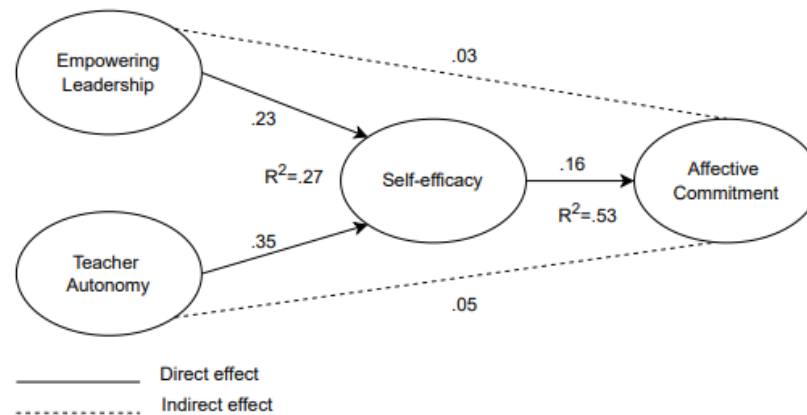
Figure 2. Results of SEM

As can be seen in Figure 2, empowering leadership has a direct effect on teacher self-efficacy (β=.23, *p*<.01). Based on result, H1 was supported, suggesting that empowering leadership was positively related to self-efficacy. Similarly, teacher autonomy has a direct effect on teacher self-efficacy (β=.35, *p*<.01). Therefore, H2 was supported, indicating that teacher autonomy was positively related to self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy also has a direct effect on affective commitment (β=.16, *p*<.01). According to this result, H3 was supported, suggesting that self-efficacy was positively related to affective commitment. Empowering leadership and teacher autonomy explain 27% of the variance in teacher self-efficacy perception. Teacher self-efficacy perception explains 53% of the variability in affective commitment. The goodness of fit values of SEM has confirmed the theoretical model [χ^2=7.13, df=2, χ^2/df= 3.56 CFI=0.99, TLI=0.96, RMSEA=0.07, SRMR=0.02]. Structural equation modelling (SEM) results show that the conceptual model of the research was confirmed. In other words, empowering leadership and teacher autonomy together predict teacher self-efficacy, and then teacher self-efficacy affects affective commitment.

Indirect and Total Effects

The indirect and total effect results regarding the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between empowering leadership and teacher autonomy and affective commitment are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The indirect and total effects

Indirect effects	β	SE	CI(Lower)	CI(Upper)	p
EL -- SE-- AC	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.05	0.00*
TA -- SE-- AC	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.08	0.00*
Total effects					
EL -- AC	0.57	0.04	0.50	0.63	0.00*
TA -- AC	0.21	0.04	0.14	0.28	0.00*

Abbreviations: SE, standard error; CI, confidence interval; EL, empowering leadership; TA, teacher autonomy; SE, self-efficacy; AC, affective commitment

*p<.01

As can be seen in Table 3, teacher self-efficacy plays a mediating role in the relationship between empowering leadership and affective commitment (β=0.03, p<001, CI=0.01-0.05). According to this result, H4 was supported, suggesting that teacher self-efficacy mediated the relationship between empowering leadership and affective commitment. Similarly, teacher self-efficacy mediates the relationship between teacher autonomy and affective commitment (β=0.05, p<.001, CI=0.02-0.08). Based on this result, H5 was supported, indicating that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between teacher autonomy and affective commitment. In addition, the total effect value of the mediating effect of self-efficacy in the relationship between empowering leadership and affective commitment was calculated as 0.57, which is statistically significant (p<.001, CI=0.50-0.63). Similarly, the total effect value of the mediating effect of self-efficacy in the relationship between teacher autonomy and affective commitment was calculated as 0.21, which is statistically significant (p<.001, CI=0.14-0.28). When these values are evaluated as a whole, it is possible to reach the general conclusion that the conceptual model of the research is supported by the data. In other words, self-efficacy plays a mediating role in the relationship between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and affective commitment in the schools where the research was conducted.

Discussion

The results indicate that empowering leadership and teacher autonomy are related to teachers' sense of efficacy. And also, it is understood that self-efficacy is related to teachers' affective commitment. In addition, teachers' sense of efficacy moderates the relationship between independent variables (empowering leadership and teacher autonomy) and affective commitment. In this section, we will discuss our main findings.

Relationships between Empowering Leadership, Teacher Autonomy, Self-Efficacy and Affective Commitment

Firstly, empowering leadership appeared to be related to teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Previous research has shown that empowering leaders support teachers, which in turn increases their self-confidence (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). In parallel to this, some studies have also discovered that empowering leadership behaviours of school principals strengthen teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Kim & Beehr, 2017). Our finding extends this finding, by showing that in Türkiye, which has a centralized education system, empowering leadership behaviours positively affects teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Overall, our findings are consistent with Bandura's (1997) view that self-efficacy is related to workplace settings and social influences. In this context, Bandura states that the leader's verbal persuasion and supportive behaviours strengthen employees' self-efficacy. This result of the present research has also supported previous studies that drew attention to the importance of empowering teachers (Seaton, 2018). As a matter of fact, previous studies reveal that the empowering leadership in general increases not only self-efficacy, but also organizational citizenship behaviours (Shahab, Sobari, & Udin, 2018), performance (Limon, 2022) and innovative behaviours (Sağnak, 2012). In addition to this, steps are being taken to empower teachers in many developed and developing countries (Yulia, 2017). In this context, educational reforms for the empowerment of teachers are also carried out in various countries (Lefstein & Perath, 2014). Therefore, the finding of our study is also compatible with the general orientation of current education policies and practices all around the world. Overall, our research reveals that empowering leadership is an important factor in the development of teachers' self-efficacy in the Turkish context. Similar to the research results, there are also different studies revealing the effect of empowering leadership on teacher self-efficacy in the Turkish context (Çelik & Konan, 2020; Dağlı & Kalkan, 2021). For many years, the traditional roles of school principals in Türkiye have been considered as keeping the school alive according to its purpose. However, changing conditions prompt school principals to support teachers, especially their professional development. In other words, if school principals want to achieve success in their schools, they must exhibit empowering leadership behaviours. School principals' empowering leadership behaviours will make a significant contribution

to the development of a more positive school climate and supportive school culture. In this context, principals who exhibit empowering leadership behaviours contribute greatly to the school's effectiveness by increasing the professional competencies of teachers in their schools.

Moreover, teacher autonomy is also related to teachers' self-efficacy. This finding is consistent with previous research. For example, Wermke et al. (2019) showed that teachers with high perceptions of autonomy were more effective in their teaching practices. Similarly, several studies have found that teacher autonomy is related to teacher self-efficacy (Collie et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Unlike these studies, our study revealed the relationship between teacher autonomy and self-efficacy in a centralized education system. Our findings also supported Conger and Kanungo's (1988) theoretical perspective that autonomy strengthens self-efficacy. Teacher autonomy has received increasing support in recent years, particularly in certain countries (Lundström, 2015). Within this framework, TALIS (OECD, 2016) defines teacher autonomy as a sub-dimension of teacher professionalization. As our study suggests, teacher autonomy plays a crucial role in teacher professionalization, as it enhances teachers' perception of self-efficacy. Our findings demonstrate that teacher autonomy significantly contributes to teachers' feelings of competence and ultimately has the potential to enhance student outcomes. This conclusion is supported by existing research, which has established a strong link between self-efficacy perception and student outcomes (Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012). Thus, we can argue that teacher autonomy is an important factor that impacts student outcomes, albeit indirectly through self-efficacy. When evaluated in general, teacher autonomy has the potential to lead to multifaceted positive results in schools, especially by contributing to teachers' self-efficacy. Although teacher autonomy has been discussed in terms of various variables in the Turkish context (Akçay & Sevinç, 2021; Ayral et al., 2014; Çolak et al., 2017; Karatay et al., 2020), there is a gap in the literature between the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and autonomy. On the other hand, teacher autonomy is limited by law in the Turkish context. This can be interpreted as a distrust of the education system towards teachers. However, supporting teachers' autonomy will not only contribute to the professionalization of teaching but will also increase the social reputation of teachers. Teachers who have a say in administrative and instructional processes will feel more autonomous and powerful, as their increased participation in decision-making processes will contribute to positive results in their self-efficacy perception. Our research findings also emphasize the significance of taking steps to ensure full teacher autonomy.

Our study also discovered that teacher self-efficacy determines teachers' affective commitment. Our finding is consistent with previous studies in the literature (Canrinus et al., 2012; Chesnut & Burley, 2015; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Rots et al., 2007). Bandura (1997) provides a theoretical explanation for this finding. Accordingly, teachers who have high expectations about their performance should be expected to devote themselves to school and their profession. Teachers who have high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to experience job satisfaction (Klassen & Chiu, 2010), a sense of control over their teaching practices, and persistence in achieving their goals. On the other hand, teachers with low levels of self-efficacy may be more susceptible to burnout (Kim & Burić, 2020), which can lead to reduced affective commitment. Overall, teacher self-efficacy plays a critical role in shaping a teacher's emotional attachment and commitment to their profession, which can have significant implications for their overall job performance and well-being. In the Turkish context, although there are studies on self-efficacy and organizational commitment, there are no studies directly addressing self-efficacy and affective commitment. Contrary to the current research results, Gül (2018) stated in her study of primary school teachers that there was a low level of relationship between self-efficacy belief and organizational commitment. It is believed that this distinction arises from the fact that organizational commitment comprises various dimensions, and the current study solely considers affective commitment. In this respect, our research implies that high teacher self-efficacy beliefs within the context of Türkiye lead to an increased affective commitment among teachers towards their schools. Various reasons contribute to this finding. Firstly, a teacher who has confidence in their professional abilities tends to exhibit

effective performance, subsequently enhancing their sense of professional purpose. When teachers perceive themselves as proficient in their roles, they are more likely to feel a sense of value, as they recognize their contribution to the school's success. Positive feedback from administrators, colleagues, parents, and students, stemming from their effective performance, further bolsters their emotional connection to the school. This, in turn, nurtures their attachment to the institution.

The Mediating Role of Teacher Self-Efficacy in The Relationship between Empowering Leadership, Autonomy and Affective Commitment

In our study, teacher self-efficacy beliefs were found to be a mediating variable in the relationship between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy and affective commitment. These results can be explained by the basic assumptions of the JD-R model. According to the JD-R model, while self-efficacy is among personal job resources, leadership and autonomy are among organizational job resources (Collie et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2016; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Besides, the JD-R model put forwards that the coexistence of personal and organizational job resources in a workplace contributes to the integration of employees with their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Therefore, the finding of our study can be explained by the arguments of the JD-R model. Our contribution to the JD-R model is that we discovered that the effect of leadership and autonomy on affective commitment is mediated by individual variables such as self-efficacy. As a summary we can say that when teachers perceive their leaders as empowering and experience high levels of autonomy, they are more likely to develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy. This increased sense of self-efficacy, in turn, enhances their affective commitment to the teaching profession. Thus, teacher self-efficacy acts as a mediator between empowering leadership, teacher autonomy, and affective commitment. By understanding the critical role of teacher self-efficacy in this relationship, educational leaders can develop strategies to enhance teacher self-efficacy, leading to a more committed and satisfied teaching workforce. This result showed that school-related factors such as empowering leadership and teacher autonomy play an extremely critical role in increasing teacher emotional commitment in the Turkish context. Self-efficacy has a critical importance in the effect of empowering leadership and teacher autonomy on affective commitment. This result points to the importance of school-based factors in shaping teachers' attitudes towards school. If school principals expect teachers to develop positive attitudes towards school, they should first involve teachers in decision processes, support their development, give them autonomy and empower them. This finding once again reveals the importance of the leadership of school principals.

Implications for Policymakers and School Leaders

Our findings can have implications for policymakers and school leaders to implement strategies that foster teacher affective commitment. First, we have discovered that empowering leadership and self-efficacy has an effect on teacher affective commitment. Given this, school leaders could empower teachers by delegating authority and responsibility. Thus, teachers will perceive themselves as more competent and as a result, their affective commitment to the school will increase. Secondly, we have showed that teacher autonomy also contributes to the perception of teacher self-efficacy, which in turn increases teacher affective commitment. In this context, there is a need for policies that will implement teacher autonomy, especially in centralized education systems like Türkiye. Apart from these general suggestions, the following suggestions can be made more specifically;

- The practice of training and appointing school principals in Türkiye has been criticized by education stakeholders, especially educational scientists, for a long time. An important reason for these criticisms is that school principals in Türkiye are brought to the management task without being trained before serving and without reaching managerial competencies. In Türkiye, school principals are assigned to schools through central appointment, which limits their decisions and actions. Hence, it becomes challenging to ascertain the roles of entrepreneurship, leadership, resource allocation, and liaison, which are among Mintzberg's managerial roles (Mintzberg, 1971). In this regard, Çevik and Demirtaş (2021) contend that school principals exhibit management characteristics rather than leadership qualities and

emphasize outcomes over processes. Within this general structure, school principals are busy with the function of keeping the school alive in the general framework determined by the legislation and in line with the directives given to them by the senior management. However, contemporary developments and trends in the field of educational administration question and redefine the traditional roles of school principals. One of the managerial roles expected from school principals in the new process is staff development. One purpose of staff development is to develop teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. This is the foundation of empowering leadership behavior. In this general framework, our research has revealed that if school administrators exhibit empowering leadership behaviors in Türkiye, teacher self-efficacy is also reinforced, and as a result, teachers' affective commitment increases. In the light of this general evaluation, we recommend that school principals be trained before service on the basis of competence, selected according to objective criteria, and ensure their continuous professional development.

- In Türkiye, education has historically been extensively planned and managed in a highly centralized manner. Despite the development of recommendations to regulate the distribution of authority between central and provincial organizations and to delegate authority to the provinces on certain matters, these suggestions have not been implemented (Şişman & Turan, 2003). As a result of the central planning of education and the execution of educational activities based on the principles and rules determined by the center, it limits the autonomy of teachers, especially in teaching processes. This undermines the perception of teaching as a socially respected profession. As a matter of fact, Özdemir (2008) reveals that the centralist management approach has difficulty adapting to political, economic, and social developments in the educational context in Türkiye. Contrary to centralized approach, supporting professional autonomy in Türkiye, as in developed education systems, can also contribute to the professionalization of the teachers and its greater prestige in society. As a matter of fact, our research findings have shown that teacher autonomy strengthens teachers' self-efficacy and in turn increases their affective commitment to school. Based on this general framework, we suggest that teacher autonomy in Türkiye should be discussed in the education community and policy makers should develop policies in this context.

- The structuring of Türkiye's education system according to bureaucratic principles fosters the predominance of a traditional management approach across the entire system. This overarching characteristic extends its influence into schools as well. In essence, the undemocratic administrative structure and practices evident at the systemic level also enshroud the school organizations. Accordingly, the cooperative, authoritarian, indifferent, and resistant managerial styles of school principals are identified as significant predictors of teachers' organizational commitment (Abdurrezzak & Üstüner, 2020). For example, Gül and Saraç (2018) emphasize that if the school principal lacks a democratic attitude, it may have a detrimental impact on education, leading to a decrease in teachers' trust, commitment, and motivation. Consequently, a prevailing anti-democratic approach governs the management of Turkish schools. A key signal of this anti-democratic atmosphere lies in the limited involvement of teachers, parents, and students in matters pertaining to school management processes. This situation can detrimentally impact teachers' professional self-efficacy. The cultivation of teachers' belief in their own efficacy can largely occur within a democratic school environment. Educators operating within democratic settings are inclined to invest greater effort and enthusiasm in fulfilling the demanding roles and obligations inherent to the profession. Ultimately, this endeavor can nourish a heightened sense of affective commitment to the school in Türkiye. Within this overarching framework, the introduction of democratized organizational design and administrative practices at the school level stands to enhance the quality of educational outcomes.

- The findings of this study revealed that teacher self-efficacy contributes significantly to teachers' affective commitment. Based on this general result, we suggest taking additional measures to increase teachers' self-efficacy. The first of these measures is the training of teachers in accordance with the qualifications required by the profession before the service, in other words, during the training processes at universities. Türkiye has a strong tradition of teacher training that started with the Tanzimat and accelerated with the transition to the Republic. In other words, Türkiye has a historical basis in teacher training. Therefore, there are institutions experienced in the process of preparing teacher candidates for the profession in Türkiye. In this context, we suggest that the teacher training system should be strengthened by preserving its historical depth and by providing the transformation required by the age in order to increase teacher self-efficacy.

Limitations and Further Research

There are certain limitations to the current study. First, our study features a cross-sectional design. As a result, the study data were obtained from the teachers all at once. However, data can be collected at the beginning and end of the educational year separately with a perspective of longitudinal research design. Second, the study data were analysed by utilising one-level analysis techniques, which is an important limitation of our study. Therefore, researchers can conduct future research using multi-level analysis techniques (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). Third, our study is based on the data collected from Turkish schools where teacher autonomy is relatively low. For this reason, it is difficult to generalize our findings in western countries. Therefore, a similar study can be conducted in western countries where teacher autonomy is relatively high.

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