

Exploring School Principals' Leadership Strategies to Enhance Teacher Well-Being: A Case Study of a Disadvantaged School in Türkiye*

Ali Çağatay Kılınç*, Gökhan Savaş**, Taner Atmaca***, Erhan Dolapçı****, Salih Çevik*****

To cite this article:

Kılınç, A. Ç., Savaş, G., Atmaca, T., Dolapçı, E., Çevik, S. (2025). Exploring School Principals' Leadership Strategies to Enhance Teacher Well-Being: A Case Study of a Disadvantaged School in Türkiye. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Education*, 44, 128-157. Doi: 10.14689/enad.44.2229

Abstract

This qualitative case study examines the leadership strategies of a primary school principal in promoting teacher well-being within a disadvantaged part of Türkiye. Employing Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework as a theoretical base, our study aims to uncover the leadership strategies employed by a school principal to enhance teacher well-being. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 staff members from the case study school, including the principal, two assistant principals, and eight teachers. Data analysis provided valuable insights into the leadership strategies employed by the principal to influence teacher well-being. Findings suggest that principals play a pivotal role in fostering teacher well-being by providing clear direction, fostering professional development, creating a supportive organizational climate, and enhancing instructional practices. The study adds nuance to the global school leadership literature by underscoring the importance of effective leadership in promoting teacher well-being in disadvantaged school contexts and offers implications for practice and policy.

Keywords: case study, disadvantaged school, school principal, teacher well-being

About the Article

Submitted date:

24.6.2025

Revised Date: 6.7.2025

Accepted Date:

2.9.2025

Article Type:

Research

© 2025 ANI Publishing. All rights reserved.

*This study was presented orally at EDUCongress 2024 held between 18-21 September 2024 in Diyarbakır, Türkiye.

•  Prof. Dr, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Educational Sciences, Karabük University, Türkiye.

*  Assist. Prof. Dr, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Bartın University, Türkiye.

•  Assoc. Prof. Dr, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Düzce University, Türkiye.

•  Dr, Ministry of National Education, Göl Anatolian High School, Kastamonu, Türkiye.

•  Dr, Ministry of National Education, Türkiye.

Introduction

The impact of teacher emotions on educational outcomes has been extensively documented, revealing significant effects on both students and teachers (Frenzel et al., 2021; Keller et al., 2014; Kunter et al., 2013). Among various constructs related to teacher emotions, well-being has recently emerged as a critical area of scholarly focus (Hascher et al., 2021). The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed both policy-driven and academic efforts to explore and enhance teacher well-being (Hargreaves, 2021; OECD, 2021). Existing research on teacher well-being can be broadly divided into two streams: (1) studies examining its impact on educational outcomes and (2) studies investigating the factors that shape it (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Kouhsari et al., 2023; Liang et al., 2022).

Scholarship in the area of educational administration has increasingly acknowledged the importance of teacher well-being, particularly in the context of disadvantaged schools (Chen et al., 2023; Karakus et al., 2024). These schools pose unique challenges, such as limited resources, socio-economic pressures, and heightened teacher stress, which can significantly affect both teacher well-being and student outcomes (Virtanen et al., 2010). While the critical role of principal leadership in supporting teacher well-being is well established (Laine et al., 2017; Liu, Liu et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023), there remains a scarcity of research examining how principals in disadvantaged contexts specifically enact strategies to enhance it. Prior studies highlight that leadership behaviors such as valuing teachers' contributions (Cann et al., 2021) and showing empathy towards teachers' emotional needs (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018) are beneficial, yet a comprehensive understanding of strategic leadership tailored to disadvantaged schools is still lacking. More specifically, although various leadership styles such as transformational, instructional, and distributed have been extensively examined in relation to school improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008), their connection to teacher well-being in disadvantaged settings has received limited attention (Day & Gu, 2014; Hascher & Waber, 2021). Moreover, existing research on the intersection of principal leadership and teacher outcomes is largely concentrated in Western or high-income countries, leaving important gaps in non-Western contexts such as Türkiye, where principals must navigate additional socio-economic and systemic constraints (Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019). Finally, much of the evidence on school leadership effects is drawn from quantitative surveys (Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2019), which capture broad associations but provide limited insight into the day-to-day practices principals employ.

Addressing the gaps in the literature, this qualitative case study explores the strategies the school principal of a socio-economically disadvantaged school employs to promote teacher well-being. It seeks to provide deeper insight into how leadership is enacted in such a context and to offer guidance for policymakers and practitioners in Türkiye and other comparable settings, supporting the development of interventions tailored to the needs of teachers in disadvantaged schools.

Literature Review

Teacher Well-Being

A foundational and frequently referenced definition from the World Health Organization (1946: 2) describes well-being as ‘a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’. Another perspective on the well-being concept is presented by Ryan and Deci (2011: 48), who describe it as ‘open, engaged, and healthy functioning’. In the educational context, well-being is primarily conceptualized within the context of the school environment, emphasizing teachers’ positive evaluations and healthy functioning within their professional setting (Collie et al., 2015). In this study, we operationalize teacher well-being as how teachers perceive and respond to the cognitive, emotional, health-related, and social conditions associated with their professional responsibilities and work environment (Matthew & Adam, 2022; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

Beyond these general definitions, several theoretical frameworks have been widely applied in the literature on teacher well-being. For instance, Seligman’s (2011) PERMA model, originally developed as a general framework for human flourishing, identifies five core dimensions of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. These domains are considered distinct yet interrelated components of well-being, each of which can be examined and enhanced individually while still contributing to an overall state of flourishing. The model has been adapted to the educational context, where it offers a multidimensional perspective for understanding both student and teacher well-being (Dreer, 2024). Ryan and Deci’s (2000) self-determination theory emphasizes the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), which are critical for teachers’ intrinsic motivation and personal well-being. Similarly, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) explains how the balance between job demands, such as workload and emotional pressure, and job resources, such as support, autonomy, and professional development, shapes teacher stress, engagement, and well-being. We partly benefit from these frameworks to enrich our conceptualization of teacher well-being by linking it not only to individual health and functioning but also to workplace conditions and psychological needs.

The importance of supporting and improving the well-being of teachers is evident, as it significantly influences various factors related to both teachers and students within the educational settings (OECD, 2021). Teacher well-being not only contributes to elevated levels of life and work satisfaction but also helps cultivate strong, positive relationships among colleagues (Kern et al., 2014). Furthermore, it influences factors such as stress, burnout, and motivation to exit the profession among educators (Viac & Fraser, 2020), while also impacting teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Matthew & Adam, 2022).

School Leadership

Within the dynamic sphere of educational leadership, theoretical foundations have experienced substantial evolution over the past several decades. Initially, the 1980s spotlighted instructional leadership, emphasizing the crucial role of school leaders in refining teaching and learning processes. A line of scholars has extensively documented the significant impact of principals' instructional leadership practices on enhancing school effectiveness and elevating student academic outcomes (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Robinson et al., 2008). Shifting focus in the 1990s, attention turned to transformational leadership. It gained prominence for emphasizing principals' visionary abilities to transform school cultures, thereby facilitating extensive reform and restructuring efforts. This leadership style distinctly prioritizes inspiring and empowering teachers to advance collaboratively towards a cohesive vision (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Marks & Printy, 2003). Although they exhibit distinct nuances, both leadership models converge in highlighting the critical role of principals in initiating and driving leadership actions and bearing the primary responsibility for spearheading school improvement initiatives and boosting student performance. However, scholars have long criticized both instructional and transformational leadership for their tendency to conceptualize leadership as residing primarily in a single, central authority figure (Hallinger, 2003; Printy et al., 2009).

Moving away from traditional models, recent decades have witnessed the rise of distributed or shared leadership models (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2005). These models advocate a pluralistic leadership approach, distributing responsibilities across various stakeholders within educational settings. Recent discourses in educational leadership are increasingly advocating for integrated frameworks that transcend the constraints of traditional, singular leadership models. This advanced discourse underscores the integration of diverse leadership practices, aiming to provide a holistic view and potentially enhance educational outcomes (Day et al., 2016; Printy et al., 2009). This more recent perspective suggests that the continual improvement and efficacy of schools depend not merely on principals' leadership styles but on their ability to tailor leadership practices to the specific contexts of their schools. Nevertheless, the literature has largely overlooked how principals influence the psychological dimensions of teachers' work, particularly their well-being and motivation. This gap has only recently begun to receive scholarly attention in educational research (Cann et al., 2021; Karakus et al., 2024).

In alignment with this evolved viewpoint, our study adopts Leithwood's (2012) framework, which categorizes school leadership into four fundamental dimensions: (1) setting directions, (2) building relationships and developing people, (3) developing the organization to support desired practices, and (4) enhancing the instructional program. 'Setting directions' focuses on aligning organizational members and stakeholders around shared goals and objectives. 'Building relationships and developing people' stresses the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and fostering a trust-based culture within the school community. 'Developing the organization to support desired practices' involves creating collaborative work environments and optimizing

organizational practices and structures to achieve desired outcomes. Finally, 'Enhancing the instructional program' concentrates on improving instructional quality through strategic staffing and comprehensive instructional support.

We acknowledge that in the past decade, important theoretical perspectives have emerged, such as positive psychology-based school leadership (Cann et al., 2021), well-being leadership approaches (Acton & Glasgow, 2015), and research on teacher burnout and stress (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). These perspectives offer valuable insights into how leadership can influence teacher well-being. However, given our study's aim to capture the broad set of leadership strategies a principal employs in a disadvantaged school to improve teacher well-being, we selected Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework because it provides one of the most comprehensive and widely applied models of school leadership. Its four dimensions extend beyond instructional improvement to encompass relational, organizational, and motivational domains, all of which are fundamentally interwoven with the promotion of teacher well-being. For instance, setting directions could reduce uncertainty and enhance teachers' sense of purpose; building relationships and developing people could foster belonging and emotional support; developing the organization to support desired practices could promote collaboration and reduce stress; and enhancing the instructional program could provide professional resources that strengthen teachers' confidence and efficacy. In addition, because this framework is flexible and integrative, it allows us to situate our findings within a well-established structure while also drawing conceptual connections to newer perspectives. Thus, Leithwood's model offers both the breadth and adaptability necessary to guide our analysis in a disadvantaged school context, while also providing a theoretically grounded lens for understanding how principal leadership influences teacher well-being.

The Role of Principals in Promoting Teacher Well-Being

The literature suggests that school principals play a crucial role in shaping and enhancing teachers' emotions, including well-being and job satisfaction, as well as their emotional health (Hetland et al., 2007; Karakus et al., 2024). Different leadership styles, such as distributed leadership (Bellibaş et al., 2024; Liu, Liu et al., 2024) and transformational leadership (Matthew & Adam, 2022; Thoonen et al., 2011), have been shown to influence teacher well-being significantly. Existing research also indicates that school principals employ a diverse array of strategies to promote teacher well-being, ranging from providing individual support (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018; Langford & Crawford, 2022), fostering trust among teachers (Liu, Liu et al., 2024), cultivating a culture of collaborative decision-making (Bellibaş et al., 2024), building strong relationships (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015), to facilitating continuous professional learning opportunities (Cann et al., 2021).

Yet, despite this growing body of evidence, the literature has paid limited attention to exploring the leadership strategies principals working in socio-economically disadvantaged contexts enact. Research has largely generalized findings from better-

resourced settings, which risks overlooking the unique constraints and demands faced by principals in disadvantaged schools. This neglect has left a critical gap in understanding whether and how leadership practices can be adapted to support teacher well-being under conditions of limited resources, heightened student needs, and stronger community pressures (Preston & Barnes, 2017; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The concept of teacher well-being is also context-specific, influenced by various factors that shape how well-being is perceived and addressed in different educational settings (Viac & Fraser, 2020). In economically disadvantaged areas, limited resources, inadequate physical facilities, and challenges students and their families face can significantly impact teachers' health and well-being (Virtanen et al., 2010).

Method

Research Model

This study was designed as a holistic single-case study to uncover the leadership strategies of a primary school principal in promoting teacher well-being within a disadvantaged part of Türkiye. The single-case study design allows for a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon, process, or individual being studied, thereby revealing the contextual richness and complexity of the research (Yin, 2018). Several reasons guided our choice of research design, each closely aligned with the specific purposes of our study. First, this design allows for a deep, contextual exploration of the complex dynamics at play in such unique environments. This is crucial for our purpose of delving into the specific leadership strategies adapted to the challenges of a disadvantaged setting, which would be difficult to capture through a broader, multi-case approach. Second, the intricate and potentially subtle nature of leadership strategies that effectively address the socio-economic challenges in these schools demands detailed, rich data that a single case study can provide. This aligns with our goal to document and understand the comprehensive impact of leadership strategies on teacher well-being. Third, focusing on one school allows for an intensive examination of the principal's role within the specific socio-economic and cultural context of that school, providing insights that are both profound and directly relevant to similar contexts. This focus supports our aim to contribute targeted, actionable recommendations for policy and practice.

In accordance with Yin's (2018) guidelines, therefore, our goal was to understand the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics of a disadvantaged school and identify the effectiveness of leadership strategies in promoting teachers' well-being in these specific conditions. Furthermore, the comprehensive and intensive data collection techniques we employed, including interviews and observations, allowed us to gather in-depth information. Consistent with Yin (2018), this study was designed as a single, holistic case. The bounded case and unit of analysis was School A as an organisation operating in a disadvantaged rural context. Interviews with the principal, assistant principals, and teachers, as well as on-site observations, served as units of data collection rather than separate units of analysis.

The Study School

This study was conducted at School A (founded in 1994), a primary school located in a rural area of the West Black Sea region in Türkiye. The school is managed by a principal, assisted by two deputy principals, and employs twenty-one teachers serving 180 students. Notably, 60% of these students participate in a transported education program, commuting from surrounding villages.

Under the principal's leadership, who has been in his role at School A since 2016, the school has adeptly navigated a complex array of challenges inherent to its disadvantaged setting, significantly impacting its operational and educational capabilities. These challenges include limited resources, which often restrict the availability of essential teaching materials and hinder the school's ability to invest in advanced technological tools for learning. The low socio-economic status of the student body poses additional difficulties, as many students require additional academic support and resources that their families cannot provide. In addition, the school has no funding sources other than official and limited government funding, offers limited social and cultural events, and serves a community with low parental cultural capital. These constraints significantly impact the school environment, affecting both the teaching and learning experience.

The low socio-economic status of the student body poses additional difficulties, as many students require extra academic support and resources that their families or surrounding communities are unable to provide. This economic disadvantage also affects students' engagement and attendance, making educational consistency a challenge. Additionally, the school's geographical isolation limits access to broader educational collaborations and professional learning opportunities for staff, which are more readily available in urban settings.

Despite these challenges, School A has demonstrated remarkable resilience and success. Academically, it ranks among the top five in city-wide exam scores and consistently excels in sports, securing first place in regional volleyball competitions. The principal's strategies for enhancing teaching and learning are likely pivotal to these achievements. For instance, he initiated the Erasmus mobility program in 2020, which has allowed teachers to engage in professional learning initiatives across Europe. Upon returning, these teachers have shared new instructional methods with their colleagues, potentially boosting teacher well-being through enhanced engagement and improved attitudes. Additionally, the principal has emphasized integrating technological education within the school's curriculum, providing teachers with the tools and training needed to enhance their instructional practices. Efforts to preserve cultural heritage have further enriched the teaching environment, fostering greater engagement among teachers and students alike. These strategic initiatives by the principal have played a crucial role in navigating the complexities of a disadvantaged setting and promoting a supportive and enriching school environment.

Participants

The selection of the case school for this study was based on its distinctive characteristic of being a relatively high-achieving institution compared to its socio-economically disadvantaged counterparts. We used the national high school entrance test scores to identify high-achieving schools and a national socio-economic development index (SEGE) to categorise the socio-economic disadvantage status of the areas where the schools are located (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Industry & Technology, 2022). In addition to these indicators, we considered publicly available information on project participation (for example, Erasmus mobility) and achievements in sports and cultural activities as complementary criteria reflecting the school's capacity to succeed despite structural disadvantages. Initially, we identified three schools that demonstrated strong academic performance, engagement in projects, and success in sports and cultural activities within a disadvantaged context in the given region of Türkiye. Also, the proximity of this region to the researchers facilitated the possibility of in-person data collection.

We contacted the principals of the three eligible schools that met these criteria, which included SEGE rankings, high school entrance test results, project participation, and achievements in sports and cultural activities. Only the principal of School A returned written consent, while the other two principals did not respond to our invitations despite follow-ups, and therefore, no data were collected from those schools. Since we did not collect any data from the non-responding schools, we cannot report internal characteristics beyond publicly available indicators. However, these indicators (last year's enrollment count, number of teachers, and exam performance) suggest that the non-responding schools were broadly comparable to School A. Given the potential selection bias due to proceeding only with the consenting site, we adopt a purposeful, information-rich case rationale (Patton, 2002), offer thick contextual description to support transferability, and triangulate interviews with on-site observations consistent with case study best practice (Yin, 2018).

For this study, participants were selected from School A using a purposive sampling strategy. The school principal played a key role in this process by recommending individuals who met a set of predefined criteria aimed at ensuring participant diversity. These criteria were carefully formulated to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences (Patton, 2002), focusing on variations in gender, age, and professional tenure. To minimise potential gatekeeper effects and power asymmetries, the principal's suggestions served only as an initial contact frame. The research team independently vetted candidates against a list of predefined diversity criteria (based on role, tenure, gender, and age), obtained individual informed consent directly from participants, and scheduled interviews privately. The principal neither attended interviews nor was informed about who agreed or declined. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was emphasized during recruitment. To further enhance the representativeness of the data, the sampling frame was broadened to include staff members with diverse roles and backgrounds. A summary of participant demographics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Name	Position	Gender	Age	Experience
SP	School principal	M	39	17 years of experience, 8 years as principal, 2 years as assistant principal 8 years at School A
AP1	Assistant principal	M	40	14 years of experience and 8 years as assistant principal 3 years at School A
AP2	Assistant principal	M	45	23 years of experience and 17 years as principal and as assistant principal 2 years at School A
T1	Primary Education Teacher	M	54	30 years of experience and 6 years as head of subject department at School A
T2	Information Technologies Teacher	M	41	19 years of experience 9 years as head of subject department at School A
T3	Primary Education Teacher	F	50	27 years of experience and 5 years as head of subject department at School A
T4	Education of Religion Teacher	M	30	8 years of experience, 2 years as head of subject department at School A
T5	Science Teacher	F	41	18 years of experience, 6 years as head of subject department at School A
T6	Pre-School Teacher	F	43	16 years of experience
T7	Physical Education Teacher	M	46	18 years of experience, 11 years as head of subject department at School A
T8	Maths Teacher	F	35	10 years of experience

The demographic variation in Table 1 demonstrates that the participant group included staff with different roles, genders, ages, and levels of professional experience. This diversity contributed to the analysis by ensuring that the themes reflected perspectives shared across different teacher profiles rather than being limited to a single subgroup. In this way, demographic variation strengthened the credibility of the findings and supported their potential transferability to similar disadvantaged school contexts.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study were collected using a combination of face-to-face semi-structured interviews and observations. After obtaining ethical approval, interviews were scheduled with the principal and teachers of School A during the spring term of the 2023-2024 academic year. The primary method of data collection involved in-depth interviews with the principal and the teachers of School A. The interviews were conducted in a designated private meeting room within the school premises, ensuring a conducive and confidential environment for the participants. Each interview lasted about 60 minutes and was transcribed verbatim. Transcript length varied with speaking rate and formatting. The semi-structured interview guidelines were based on Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework, which encompasses four core components: setting directions, building relationships and developing people, developing the organization to support desired practices, and enhancing the instructional program.

A total of 15 questions were posed to the participants. Additionally, multiple school visits were conducted to ensure that the observations accurately reflected the school's daily realities. By employing multiple data collection methods that include interviews and observations, we aimed to gather comprehensive data that detailed the school's unique context, the principal's leadership strategies, and their impact on teachers' well-being. This methodology grounded the findings in the actual experiences and practices observed within the school, providing a robust basis for analysis. However, we noted that we did not conduct a systematic analysis of internal strategy documents (e.g., school development plans or performance reports). This was a deliberate methodological choice, as the study prioritized capturing teachers' lived experiences and perspectives on well-being through interviews and on-site observations. While publicly available indicators (such as SEGE scores, exam performance, and evidence of project participation) were considered for case selection and contextualization, they were not included as analytic data sources.

After the interviews and observations were completed, all recorded data were transcribed to convert the spoken words and noted observations into written text. This transcription provided a detailed, accessible format for subsequent analysis. We employed a hybrid coding strategy that combined a deductive codebook, informed by Leithwood's four dimensions, with inductive subcodes for emergent codes not captured by the framework (Miles et al., 2019). To ensure the rigour of this approach, two researchers independently coded an initial subset of transcripts, reconciled discrepancies through discussion, and iteratively refined the codebook before applying it to the full dataset. During this process, specific codes were developed concerning the principal's leadership strategies to promote teachers well-being. These codes were systematically applied to text sections within each transcript and observation note, ensuring precise correspondence with the identified thematic concerns.

The transcribed data then underwent content analysis guided by the codebook derived from Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework and inductive codes that emerged from the data. The analysis was executed in two distinct phases: initially, a vertical analysis was conducted to examine each participant's responses independently, aiming to capture their unique perspectives and insights. This was followed by a horizontal comparative analysis performed to identify and synthesize common themes and patterns across all interviews (Cohen et al., 2011). We incorporated illustrative quotations from staff in different roles to represent the range of perspectives captured in the case, ensuring that both shared and distinct viewpoints were reflected in the analysis.

The final step involved organizing the extracted data around a central theme: the leadership strategies employed to promote teacher well-being. This structure allowed us to clearly identify and report the specific leadership strategies executed by the principal of School A to enhance the well-being of teachers at School A.

Trustworthiness

To ensure validity and reliability, we adhered to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through member checks, sharing interview transcripts with participants for verification, and extended engagement with multiple visits to School A over three weeks. In this study, member checking extended beyond transcript verification; participants also reviewed our preliminary interpretations of interview and observation data. This iterative process confirmed the accuracy of their accounts and allowed participants to challenge and refine our analyses, thereby reducing the risk of researcher-driven bias. Triangulation was employed using interviews and observations to provide a comprehensive understanding of the principal's leadership strategies.

Transferability was addressed by providing rich, detailed contextual descriptions of School A, examining its socio-economic and cultural dynamics, achievements, and challenges. This allows our findings to be assessed for applicability to similar educational settings. Dependability was ensured through a detailed audit trail documenting the research process. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and systematically coded by two independent researchers. Observation records were meticulously kept, and member checking was carried out to verify the accuracy of interpretations.

Confirmability was supported through detailed documentation of data collection, analysis, and decision-making processes. To encourage candid conversations, interviews and observations were conducted by two researchers with prior experience as school administrators. While this professional background enabled rapport and credibility with participants, it could also increase the risk of interpretive bias and influence participant responses. To address this, we systematically documented such risks in reflexive memos, openly discussed them in team meetings, and incorporated counter-interpretations into the coding framework. In this way, the memos became not only records of potential bias but also active tools for shaping more balanced and critical analysis. By rigorously applying these strategies, we ensured that the findings were not only credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable but also reflexively grounded and methodologically transparent.

Findings

Our analysis revealed a series of strategies employed by the Principal of School A to promote teacher well-being, categorised under the four dimensions of Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework: setting directions, building relationships and developing people, developing the organization to support desired practices, and enhancing the instructional program.

Setting Directions

Our findings identified three strategies used by the Principal of School A to set directions for the school to foster teacher well-being.

Strategy 1: Communicating the vision and goals

The principal regularly communicated a vision emphasizing overcoming challenges and achieving success despite socio-economic barriers, focusing on student success. This vision was shared through regular staff meetings and individual conversations, highlighting success stories of teachers and students who overcame significant challenges. This approach maintained motivation and resilience among teachers, which is crucial in disadvantaged contexts. T1 stated her opinions as follows:

"Our principal keeps us updated on the school's goals and celebrates our successes, which really keeps us going. For instance, during staff meetings, he often highlights how teachers have managed to help students improve despite limited resources. This kind of recognition boosts our morale and reminds us why our work is important."

The recognition of teachers' efforts, particularly in a disadvantaged context where resources are scarce, reduces feelings of burnout and frustration. This sense of appreciation contributes directly to their well-being. Supporting this, the school principal (SP) explained:

"We communicate our vision and mission regularly through various channels to ensure everyone stays motivated and aligned with our goals. One of our vision statements is 'happy school community.'"

The principal's focus on creating a 'happy school community' emerges as essential in promoting teacher well-being. In a disadvantaged school setting, where external pressures such as poverty and limited resources add stress, this emphasis on building a positive, emotionally supportive environment plays a crucial role in reducing teacher stress and enhancing well-being.

Strategy 2: Setting specific and measurable goals

The principal set clear and achievable goals, such as reducing student absenteeism to zero and increasing the percentage of students entering high schools through central exams to 30%. The participant teachers emphasised that these measurable goals provided them with a structured plan, helping to reduce uncertainty and stress. In disadvantaged schools, where challenges can feel overwhelming, having clear targets helps to focus efforts and maintain motivation. T6 highlighted:

"Our principal sets clear and straightforward goals for the school, which really energises us as teachers. It is like having a roadmap that inspires us and makes our jobs feel more meaningful and rewarding."

By setting such goals, the principal provided clarity and direction, which helped teachers manage their workload more effectively. This sense of direction is critical for reducing stress in environments where resource limitations can create additional challenges. The achievement of these goals, such as reducing absenteeism, also contributes to improved teacher well-being by fostering a sense of accomplishment and progress.

Strategy 3: Encouraging teacher participation in goal setting

The principal actively involved teachers in setting school goals, considering their insights on handling resource limitations and socio-economic challenges. Teachers stated that such a participatory approach fostered their sense of ownership and empowerment, which is particularly important in disadvantaged contexts where external challenges often make teachers feel powerless. By involving them in decision-making, the principal increased their commitment to school initiatives, which enhanced their sense of well-being. T7 emphasised:

"Our principal really involves us in setting the school's goals and vision. He often asks for our input, saying things like, 'Your perspectives are important as we figure out our school's direction. What do you think about this plan?' This way, we feel like we are an essential part of the school."

In disadvantaged schools, where teachers often face significant external stressors, being involved in decision-making processes helps reduce feelings of helplessness and increases engagement. This involvement supports their well-being by giving them a sense of control and agency. Similarly, the assistant principal (AP2) noted that although teachers were actively consulted in setting educational goals, decisions on administrative matters were still finalized by the principal:

"Ultimately, the final word always comes from the principal."

Building Relationships and Developing People

Our research identified three strategies employed by the Principal of School A to promote teacher well-being through building relationships and developing people.

Strategy 1: Creating a family-like organizational climate

The principal cultivated a family-like atmosphere in the school, emphasizing mutual support and personal connections among staff members. In disadvantaged settings, where external professional support may be limited, building a strong internal support system is crucial. Accordingly, most of the participant teachers supported the idea that the sense of solidarity creates a more cohesive and supportive work environment. T2 shared:

"Our principal creates a family-like atmosphere in our school, which makes us feel like a community. The principal's approachability and willingness to listen contribute significantly to this climate."

In a similar manner, SP stated that:

"The strongest aspect of our school is its family-like atmosphere. This unity helps us tackle challenges together."

In contexts where teachers face significant stress from external pressures, having a strong support system within the school is vital. By creating a family-like atmosphere, our finding suggests that the principal reduced feelings of isolation and stress, contributing directly to teacher well-being.

Strategy 2: Using positive communication and empathy

The principal maintained open communication and regularly checked in with teachers, responding empathetically to their concerns. In disadvantaged schools, where emotional strain can be particularly high due to resource limitations and socio-economic challenges, positive communication is essential for reducing stress. T5 highlighted:

"Our principal's open-door policy makes us feel heard and supported. Whenever we have issues, whether personal or professional, we can talk to him, and he always responds with understanding and kindness. This support is invaluable."

The SP also noted:

"By showing that we genuinely care about their problems, we foster a happier staff."

Our finding suggests that the principal's approach of listening and providing empathy is crucial for reducing emotional stress and fostering a positive work environment. This empathetic leadership enhances teacher well-being.

Strategy 3: Encouraging and supporting teachers' professional development

In the disadvantaged school setting of the present study, the principal actively promoted professional development opportunities, including further education, certifications, and specialized training, despite the challenges posed by limited resources. Our analysis revealed that this focus on professional development not only enhanced teachers' skills but also positively impacted their long-term well-being. This is particularly important in disadvantaged contexts where teachers face unique challenges requiring additional support and training. T6 shared:

"The professional development opportunities provided by our school are invaluable for our growth. Recently, during an Erasmus+ mobility, I attended a workshop in Spain, which significantly improved my teaching practices."

The SP reinforced this by stating:

"I have organized training courses on the use of technology in education, and I encourage teachers to participate in Erasmus+ and other national and local projects."

The principal's commitment to professional development helps build teachers' confidence and competence, which in turn contributes to their well-being. By providing these opportunities, the principal addresses the specific challenges teachers face in a disadvantaged setting, helping them feel more supported and capable.

Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices

We identified three leadership strategies employed by the Principal to promote teacher well-being by developing the organization to support desired practices.

Strategy 1: Fostering collaboration among teachers

The principal actively encouraged collaboration, creating opportunities for teachers to share best practices and support one another. Participant teachers noted that, given the scarcity of resources, such collaboration allows them to pool their knowledge and strategies, which not only reduces individual stress but also enhances overall teaching effectiveness. T8 shared:

"The principal really knows how to bring us together as a team. He creates a relaxed atmosphere where teachers can freely collaborate, share ideas, and work together to support one another."

Supporting this argument, the assistant principal (AP1) highlighted:

"The principal develops school culture through shared activities and events, which supports collaboration among teachers."

In a challenging environment, collaboration becomes a critical tool for overcoming adversity. By fostering this culture, the principal not only enhanced teaching effectiveness but also contributed significantly to teacher well-being. The principal's approach helped mitigate the stress and isolation often accompanying working in disadvantaged contexts, thereby improving overall teacher well-being.

Strategy 2: Promoting a peaceful and supportive work environment

The principal implemented policies that promoted work-life balance, accommodating teachers' personal needs when scheduling lessons. In disadvantaged schools, where teachers often face overwhelming demands, our analysis indicates that promoting work-life balance is essential for supporting teacher well-being. T3 shared:

"Our principal really helps us balance work and personal life. For instance, if we need to make some adjustments to our schedule for personal reasons, he tries to accommodate us, which really helps us manage our workload and personal life better."

Enhancing the Instructional Program

Our analysis identified two leadership strategies utilized by the Principal to support teacher well-being through the improvement of the instructional program.

Strategy 1: Providing resources and support for instructional improvement

The principal ensured teachers had access to necessary instructional materials by leveraging creative solutions, such as partnerships with local businesses and organizations. In a school where the budget is constrained due to the socio-economic status of parents and their expectations in the disadvantaged community it serves, obtaining even basic instructional materials can be challenging. The participant teachers stated that they are often left to manage their classrooms with inadequate resources, which increases their stress and limits their ability to deliver lessons effectively. Recognizing this challenge, the principal sought external funding and donations to provide these much-needed materials. T5 highlighted how this impacted her classroom:

"Our principal is always finding ways to get us the materials we need. For instance, we recently received a donation of books from a local business, which has made a huge difference in our classrooms."

By securing these resources, the principal alleviated a significant source of stress for teachers, allowing them to focus more on teaching and less on compensating for the lack of supplies. The SP further elaborated:

"Given the school's limited budget and the economic challenges faced by our families, securing partnerships and grants is crucial for providing the necessary resources to our teachers. Without these external supports, the pressure on our staff would have been considerably higher."

Strategy 2: Monitoring students' academic progress and providing feedback

The principal regularly assessed students' progress and provided constructive feedback to teachers, focusing on strategies that work in resource-limited settings. Regular assessments were conducted, and results were discussed in meetings with teachers to provide feedback and discuss strategies for improvement. T8 expressed:

"Our principal keeps a close eye on students' academic performance. Because he has good relationships with the students, he meets with them regularly and motivates them. He often meets with us to discuss the results of practice exams. The guidance he provides helps reduce our stress."

SP also stressed the importance of monitoring students and providing feedback for teachers' well-being. SP noted that:

"Every month, we conduct practice exams, and I closely monitor the results. I also review the students' exam scores and provide feedback to the teachers based on my assessments. Keeping a close watch on the teaching process helps keep the teachers motivated."

In addition to these positive experiences, some teachers also mentioned that high expectations could at times create stress. T5 reflected:

“When the practice exam results were low, my principal called me... I got very anxious, wondering if he would criticize me.”

This finding suggests that while close monitoring and feedback were generally valued and reduced uncertainty, they could also generate pressure when student performance did not meet expectations.

Discussion

First, under the ‘setting directions’ dimension of school leadership, we found that establishing a clear vision, setting specific and measurable goals, and encouraging teacher participation in goal setting are important leadership strategies that contribute to teacher well-being. In disadvantaged schools where socio-economic challenges are pervasive, the principal’s proactive communication and goal-setting appear not only strategic but also inspirational. Such leadership strategies help align the school community toward overcoming barriers and strengthening teacher morale and resilience, which are essential for sustaining well-being. Our findings deepen the understanding of contextual factors that shape leadership effectiveness in under-resourced environments and are consistent with previous studies showing that clear and shared goals can enhance both teacher morale and effectiveness, thereby positively influencing their well-being (e.g., Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Robinson et al., 2008). However, in contrast to Western contexts where goal setting is frequently linked to accountability and performance monitoring (e.g., Dotson, 2016), our findings indicate that in disadvantaged Turkish schools, it primarily serves as a source of motivation and resilience against systemic constraints. Other research also offers a different perspective. For instance, in the Flemish context, Hulpia et al. (2009) found that participative decision-making was not significantly related to teacher job satisfaction. This inconsistency across findings from various contexts indicates that while participation in goal setting can foster a sense of ownership, its influence on well-being is not always straightforward. Ultimately, the principal retains final responsibility for management-related decisions, which is a dynamic that may also reflect the centralized structure of the Turkish education system.

Second, under the school leadership dimension of ‘building relationships and developing people’, we identified a family-like organizational climate, the use of positive communication and empathy, and the encouragement of professional development as key strategies for fostering teacher well-being. In disadvantaged settings where external social and professional networks are often less accessible, these practices take on heightened importance. The principal’s initiatives to create a familial atmosphere and organise social events become particularly significant, as they provide teachers with alternative sources of social connection and support (Harrison et al., 2025). Such practices enhance teachers’ sense of belonging and emotional support, both of which are crucial for sustaining well-being in challenging contexts (Kern et al., 2014).

Alongside this, providing professional development opportunities, even in resource-limited environments, not only strengthens teachers' teaching and learning capacity but also contributes to their sense of professional fulfilment (Fernandes et al., 2019). Our findings also resonate with Cann et al. (2021), who highlight that leadership actions such as relationship building, meaningful professional development, and fostering a sense of being valued are central to teacher well-being. Yet, international evidence suggests an important contextual distinction. In Western contexts, teachers often draw on external support systems such as professional associations and unions to maintain their well-being and mitigate work-related stress (Coppe, 2024; Han, 2019). In contrast, our findings indicate that such institutionalized supports are largely absent in disadvantaged Turkish schools. Instead, principals' efforts to cultivate collegial trust, empathy, and a family-like climate constitute the main source of social and emotional support for teachers. This distinction underscores that while teachers in Western contexts can rely on both external networks and school-based relationships, in Türkiye they primarily depend on the school itself for sustaining their well-being. In this sense, the emphasis on a family-like climate and positive communication illustrates the importance of principals demonstrating social and emotional competence alongside contextual awareness, which are especially critical in disadvantaged schools. The interviews further revealed that participants most strongly emphasised the strategies within this dimension, reinforcing their central role in contexts where collegial bonds and principal support compensate for systemic shortcomings.

Third, under the 'developing the organization to support desired practices' dimension, we identified fostering collaboration among teachers and promoting a peaceful and supportive work environment as impactful strategies for supporting teacher well-being. These strategies might create a supportive and collegial atmosphere that not only reduces stress but also builds a strong community ethos (Newmann et al., 1989; Rae et al., 2017). Furthermore, by considering teachers' out-of-school lives when scheduling, the school supports a better work-life balance, which is essential for reducing stress and enhancing overall well-being (Yin et al., 2016). This finding may be derived from the inherent necessity for mutual support and collaboration in contexts lacking external resources and support systems. In schools facing challenges and limited resources, the need for teacher collaboration becomes critically important. Collaboration among teachers in these settings can thus provide essential support, enabling them to share resources, strategies, and emotional encouragement and persevere through challenges (Tannehill & MacPhail, 2017). While international research frequently highlights collaboration as a means of professional development and instructional improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Goddard et al., 2007), our findings suggest that in disadvantaged Turkish schools, it also takes on a more pragmatic role. It becomes a necessary strategy for coping with resource shortages and emotional strain, revealing a context-specific dimension of collaboration that has not been sufficiently emphasized in the broader literature.

Finally, under the 'enhancing the instructional program' dimension, we found that providing resources and support for instructional improvement together with monitoring

student academic progress are crucial practices for principals to bolster teacher well-being. Prior research suggests that these practices can reduce the stress associated with resource limitations (Liu, Thien et al., 2024; Robinson et al., 2008). This is particularly important in disadvantaged schools, where limited resources pose significant challenges for teachers. In such contexts, principals' efforts to seek and allocate resources become critical, as teachers strive to keep pace with their counterparts in socio-economically advantaged schools. Ensuring equitable access to resources may therefore help level the playing field, enabling teachers in disadvantaged settings to improve their instructional practices and support student achievement effectively. Regular assessment and constructive feedback, as observed in School A, also allow teachers to make informed adjustments to their teaching practices. By reducing uncertainty, such practices can alleviate stress and strengthen teacher well-being in disadvantaged contexts (Matthew & Adam, 2022). This finding aligns with previous literature emphasizing the vital role of continuous assessment and feedback for both instructional improvement and teacher well-being (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Nevertheless, frequent monitoring and assessment, while generally valued, were also reported as potential sources of stress when outcomes fell short of expectations. Importantly, this tension is not unique to the Turkish context. International evidence demonstrates that accountability systems and achievement pressures are strongly associated with teacher stress and diminished well-being (Jerrim & Sims, 2022). Overall, these findings suggest that although the sources of teacher stress may differ across educational systems, the dual nature of feedback and monitoring as both supportive and pressuring represents a common challenge in international as well as disadvantaged Turkish settings.

It is also worth noting that not all participant accounts are mapped neatly to Leithwood's dimensions. For instance, some teachers placed stronger emphasis on challenges beyond the model's categories, such as dealing with parental expectations in disadvantaged communities or coping with the emotional strain of insufficient systemic support. These aspects suggest that while Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework provides a valuable analytical lens, it may not fully capture the socio-emotional and contextual complexities experienced by teachers in under-resourced schools. Recognising these nuances highlights the importance of adapting existing models to better reflect the lived realities of disadvantaged educational settings.

Overall, our findings add nuance to the global literature on school leadership by demonstrating how context-specific challenges and resources shape the strategies school leaders must employ to enhance teacher well-being, they also broaden our understanding of leadership dynamics in under-resourced schools and thus provide a valuable framework for similar contexts globally. In addition, by applying Leithwood's (2012) school leadership model to a specific context of disadvantaged schools, our study illustrates how principals can operationalize it to promote teacher well-being as well as how the model can be expanded to incorporate contextual and socio-emotional dimensions.

Conclusion and Implications

This study demonstrates the critical role of school leadership in enhancing teacher well-being in socio-economically disadvantaged settings. By effectively employing strategies aligned with Leithwood's (2012) school leadership framework, the principal of School A has successfully navigated the myriad challenges inherent to a resource-limited environment. The principal's leadership strategies, ranging from communicating a clear vision and mission, fostering collaboration among teachers, creating a family-like organizational climate, and providing resources and support for instructional improvement, have not only bolstered teacher morale and resilience but also cultivated a robust, community-centered school culture, ultimately leading to increased teacher well-being.

Our study has important implications for policymakers and educational practitioners. First, policymakers should develop and fund specialised leadership training programs for principals that emphasise building supportive and resilient school cultures. These programs could include modules on strategic communication, conflict resolution, and team building, aligning with the need to foster collaboration and professional development. Second, sustained investment is needed in the continuous professional development of teachers in disadvantaged schools, through workshops, online courses, and collaborative learning opportunities. Beyond training and funding, more concrete measures are necessary. For instance, establishing systematic mechanisms to regularly monitor teacher well-being at the school level would enable the early identification of stress, burnout, and disengagement, allowing for timely and tailored interventions. In addition, school-based support structures, such as peer-support groups, mentoring schemes, and access to psychological counseling, should be institutionalized to address the socio-emotional challenges teachers face in disadvantaged contexts. Aligning these initiatives with the MoNE's existing teacher development and support strategies would help ensure that well-being is embedded as a long-term policy priority rather than treated as a short-term project. Finally, broader policy frameworks should be created to mandate regular professional development and well-being programs for both principals and teachers in disadvantaged schools, incorporating clear guidelines, measurable outcomes, and accountability mechanisms to ensure effective and sustainable implementation.

While the leadership strategies identified in this study for promoting teacher well-being have naturally been context-specific, they hold potential for adaptation by principals in similar disadvantaged settings. Therefore, we suggest that principals in such environments could benefit from prioritizing the establishment and effective communication of clear, actionable goals. Additionally, fostering a collaborative atmosphere that encourages continuous professional development and actively cultivating a supportive, community-focused school culture are recommended. Furthermore, by leveraging available resources through strategic partnerships and implementing rigorous monitoring and feedback mechanisms, such principals could

strengthen the foundational elements of strategic communication, collaboration, resource optimization, and continuous assessment.

Limitations and Further Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged, each of which also points to avenues for future research. First, this study focuses on a single primary school in a disadvantaged area, which constrains the transferability of the findings to other settings with different socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, the selected school is somewhat atypical, as it has achieved relatively high academic success despite operating in a disadvantaged context. While this makes the case valuable for understanding effective leadership under challenging conditions, it may not fully capture the realities of more typical disadvantaged schools. Future research could address this limitation by adopting a comparative design that includes schools from diverse socio-economic contexts and varying levels of academic achievement. Such an approach would help determine whether the leadership strategies identified here are effective across different environments, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the results.

Second, we did not conduct a systematic analysis of internal school documents, as our methodological design prioritized teachers' lived experiences and perspectives captured through interviews and observations. While this choice aligns with the study's focus, it limits triangulation. Future studies could integrate document analysis (e.g., school improvement plans, project files) alongside interviews and observations, and broaden the design to include multiple stakeholder perspectives such as parents, students, and community members. This would provide a richer and more comprehensive account of how leadership strategies shape teacher well-being.

Third, the reliance on qualitative data, though rich and in-depth, means that the conclusions drawn are inherently subjective and influenced by the participants' personal experiences and perspectives. This subjectivity could affect the replicability of the findings. Future research could therefore combine qualitative approaches with quantitative methods to improve the robustness of the findings, allowing for a more comprehensive evaluation of leadership strategies' effectiveness and reducing the risk of subjective bias.

Fourth, the researchers' professional backgrounds as former school administrators, while providing valuable insider understanding and facilitating rapport with participants, may also have shaped data collection and interpretation. Despite the use of reflexive memos and team discussions to mitigate potential bias, it is possible that the researchers' positionality influenced participants' responses and the analytic lens applied. Therefore, future studies should continue to emphasize reflexivity and consider involving research teams with diverse professional backgrounds to balance insider and outsider perspectives.

Finally, our methodology does not allow for examination of how leadership strategies influence teacher well-being over time. Leadership practices often exert their strongest effects in cumulative or delayed ways, and the absence of longitudinal data limits our ability to assess sustainability and long-term impact (e.g., Thoonen et al., 2011). Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to capture the evolving effects of leadership, offering insights into how principals' efforts accumulate, adapt, or diminish over time in shaping teacher well-being and student outcomes.

References

- Acton, K. S., & Glasgow, P. (2015). Teacher wellbeing in neoliberal contexts: A review of the literature. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(8), 99–114. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n8.6>
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309–328. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115>
- Bellibaş, M. Ş., & Gümüş, S. (2019). A systematic review of educational leadership and management research in Turkey: Content analysis of topics, conceptual models, and methods. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 57(6), 731–747. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-01-2019-0004>
- Bellibaş, M. Ş., Gümüş, S., & Chen, J. (2024). The impact of distributed leadership on teacher commitment: The mediation role of teacher workload stress and teacher well-being. *British Educational Research Journal*, 50(2), 814–836. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3944>
- Berkovich, I., & Eyal, O. (2015). Educational leaders and emotions: An international review of empirical evidence 1992–2012. *Review of Educational Research*, 85(1), 129–167. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654314550046>
- Berkovich, I., & Eyal, O. (2018). Principals' emotional support and teachers' emotional reframing: The mediating role of principals' supportive communication strategies. *Psychology in the Schools*, 55(7), 867–879. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22130>
- Blasé, J., & Blasé, J. (2001). *Empowering teachers: What successful principals do*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Cann, R. F., Riedel-Prabhakar, R., & Powell, D. (2021). A model of positive school leadership to improve teacher wellbeing. *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology*, 6(2), 195–218. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41042-020-00045-5>
- Chen, J., Li, X., Hallinger, P., & Lee, J. C.-K. (2023). Looking back and ahead: A bibliometric review of research on principal well-being 1962–2022. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 53(4), 730–750. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432231190217>
- Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., Perry, N. E., & Martin, A. (2015). Teacher well-being: Exploring its components and a practice-oriented scale. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 33(8), 744–756. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734282915587990>
- Cohen, L. Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education (7th ed)*. London: Routledge.

- Coppe, T. (2024). Teacher networks: From a catalyst for enactment of professional development to a source of professional development. *Teachers and Teaching*, 30(3), 380–393. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2023.2263734>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Day, C., & Gu, Q. (2014). *Resilient teachers, resilient schools: Building and sustaining quality in testing times*. London: Routledge.
- Day, C., Gu, Q., & Sammons, P. (2016). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(2), 221–258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X15616863>
- Dotson, R. (2016). Goal setting to increase student academic performance. *Journal of School Administration Research and Development*, 1(1), 45–46. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jsard.v1i1.1908>
- Dreer, B. (2024). Teachers' well-being and job satisfaction: The important role of positive emotions in the workplace. *Educational Studies*, 50(1), 61–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2021.1940872>
- Fernandes, L., Peixoto, F., Gouveia, M.J., Silva, J.C., & Wosnitza, M. (2019). Fostering teachers' resilience and well-being through professional learning: Effects from a training programme. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 46(4), 681–698. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00344-0>
- Frenzel, A. C., Daniels, L., & Burić, I. (2021). Teacher emotions in the classroom and their implications for students. *Educational Psychologist*, 56(4), 250–264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2021.1985501>
- Goddard, Y. L., Goddard, R. D., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2007). A theoretical and empirical investigation of teacher collaboration for school improvement and student achievement in public elementary schools. *Teachers College Record*, 109(4), 877–896. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810710900401>
- Gronn, P. (2002). Distributed leadership as a unit of analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(4), 423–451. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(02\)00120-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(02)00120-0)
- Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(3), 329–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764032000122005>
- Hallinger, P., & Kovačević, J. (2019). A bibliometric review of research on educational administration: Science mapping the literature, 1960 to 2018. *Review of Educational Research*, 89(3), 335–369. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319830380>
- Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. F. (1985). Assessing the instructional management behavior of principals. *The Elementary School Journal*, 86(2), 217–247. <https://doi.org/10.1086/461445>
- Han, E. S. (2019). The impact of teachers unions on teachers' well-being under various legal institutions: Evidence from district-teacher matched data. *AERA Open*, 5(3), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858419867291>
- Hargreaves, A. (2021). What the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us about teachers and teaching. *Facets*, 6(1), 1835–1863. <https://doi.org/10.1139/facets-2021-0084>

- Harrison, M. G., Wang, Y., Cheng, A. S., Tam, C. K. Y., Pan, Y.-L., & King, R. B. (2025). School climate and teacher wellbeing: The role of basic psychological need satisfaction in student- and school-related domains. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 153, Article 104819. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2024.104819>
- Hascher, T., & Waber, J. (2021). Teacher well-being: A systematic review of the research literature from the year 2000–2019. *Educational Research Review*, 34, 100411. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2021.100411>
- Hascher, T., Beltman, S., & Mansfield, C. (2021). Swiss primary teachers' professional well-being during school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 687512. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.687512>
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112. <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>
- Hetland, H., Sandal, G. M., & Johnsen, T. B. (2007). Burnout in the information technology sector: Does leadership matter? *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 16(1), 58–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320601084558>
- Hulpia, H., Devos, G., & Rosseel, Y. (2009). The relationship between the perception of distributed leadership in secondary schools and teachers' and teacher leaders' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 20(3), 291–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243450902909840>
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491–525. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>
- Jerrim, J., & Sims, S. (2022). School accountability and teacher stress: international evidence from the OECD TALIS study. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 34(1), 5–32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-021-09360-0>
- Karakus, M., Toprak, M., & Chen, J. (2024). Demystifying the impact of educational leadership on teachers' subjective well-being: A bibliometric analysis and literature review. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432241242629>
- Keller, M. M., Frenzel, A. C., Goetz, T., Pekrun, R., & Hensley, L. (2014). Exploring teacher emotions: A literature review and an experience sampling study. In Richardson P. W., Karabenick, S. A. & Watt, H. M. G. (Eds.), *Teacher motivation: Theory and practice* (pp. 69–82). New York: Routledge.
- Kern, M. L., Waters, L., Adler, A., & White, M. (2014). Assessing employee well-being in schools using a multifaceted approach: Associations with physical health, life satisfaction, and professional thriving. *Psychology*, 5(6), 500–513. doi: 10.4236/psych.2014.56060
- Kouhsari, M., Chen, J., & Baniasad, S. (2023). Multilevel analysis of teacher professional well-being and its influential factors based on TALIS data. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 18(3), 395–418. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17454999221143847>
- Kunter, M., Klusmann, U., Baumert, J., Richter, D., Voss, T., & Hachfeld, A. (2013). Professional competence of teachers: Effects on instructional quality and student development. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 805–820. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032583>

- Laine, S., Saaranen, T., Ryhänen, E., & Tossavainen, K. (2017). Occupational well-being and leadership in a school community. *Health Education*, 117(1), 24–38. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HE-02-2014-0021>
- Langford, S., & Crawford, M. (2022). Walking with teachers: A study to explore the importance of teacher wellbeing and their careers. *Management in Education*, 39(2), 89–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08920206221075750>
- Leithwood, K. (2012). *The Ontario Leadership Framework 2012 with a discussion of the research foundations*. 1, Research Report. Institute for Educational Leadership and the Ontario Ministry of Education. Available at: <http://www.yrdsb.com/Careers/Documents/Ontario%20Leadership%20Framework.pdf>
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1990). Transformational leadership: How principals can help reform school cultures. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 1(4), 249–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0924345900010402>
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2006). Transformational school leadership for large-scale reform: Effects on students, teachers, and their classroom practices. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17(2), 201–227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243450600565829>
- Liang, W., Song, H., & Sun, R. (2022). Can a professional learning community facilitate teacher well-being in China? The mediating role of teaching self-efficacy. *Educational Studies*, 48(3), 358–377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2020.1755953>
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Liu, L., Liu, P., Yang, H., Yao, H., & Thien, L. M. (2024). The relationship between distributed leadership and teacher well-being: The mediating roles of organisational trust. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 52(4), 837–853 <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432221113683>
- Liu, P., Thien, L. M., Song, H., & Wang, X. (2024). The effects of instructional leadership on teacher well-being: the mediating roles of professional learning community and teacher self-efficacy. *Educational Studies*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2024.2322947>
- Marks, H. M., & Printy, S. M. (2003). Principal leadership and school performance: An integration of transformational and instructional leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 370–397. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X03253412>
- Matthew, M. R., & Adam, N. M. P. (2022). Transformational leadership's influence on teacher well-being in international schools. *Philosophy International Journal*, 5(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.23880/phij-16000235>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). London: Sage.
- Newmann, F. M., Rutter, R. A., & Smith, M. S. (1989). Organizational factors that affect school sense of efficacy, community, and expectations. *Sociology of Education*, 62(4), 221–238. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2112828>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]. (2021). *Building teachers' well-being from primary to upper secondary education*. Teaching in Focus No. 42, Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/722fe5cb-en>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Preston, J., & Barnes, K. E. (2017). Successful leadership in rural schools: Cultivating collaboration. *The Rural Educator*, 38(1), 6–15. <https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v38i1.231>
- Printy, S. M., Marks, H. M., & Bowers, A. J. (2009). Integrated leadership: How principals and teachers share transformational and instructional influence. *Journal of School Leadership*, 19(5), 504–532. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105268460901900501>
- Rae, T., Cowell, N., & Field, L. (2017). Supporting teachers' well-being in the context of schools for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 22(3), 200–218. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2017.1331969>
- Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Industry and Technology. (2022). *Socio-economic development ranking report (SEGE)*. <https://www.sanayi.gov.tr/assets/pdf/birimler/2022-ilce-sege.pdf>
- Robinson, V. M., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: an analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635–674. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321509>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2011). A self-determination theory perspective on social, institutional, cultural, and economic supports for autonomy and their importance for well-being. In Chirkov V. I, Ryan, R. M. & Sheldon, K. M. (Eds.), *Human autonomy in cross-cultural context: Perspectives on the psychology of agency, freedom, and well-being* (pp. 45–64). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-90-481-9667-8_3
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2020). Teacher burnout: relations between dimensions of burnout, perceived school context, job satisfaction and motivation for teaching. A longitudinal study. *Teachers and Teaching*, 26(7-8), 602–616. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2021.1913404>
- Spillane, J. P. (2005). Distributed leadership. *The Educational Forum*, 69(2), 143–150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720508984678>
- Tannehill, D., & MacPhail, A. (2017). Teacher empowerment through engagement in a learning community in Ireland: Working across disadvantaged schools. *Professional Development in Education*, 43(3), 334–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2016.1183508>
- Thoonen, E. E. J., Slegers, P. J. C., Oort, F. J., Peetsma, T. T. D., & Geijsel, F. P. (2011). How to improve teaching practices: The role of teacher motivation, organizational factors, and leadership practices. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 47(3), 496–536. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X11400185>
- Viac, C., & Fraser, P. (2020). *Teachers' well-being: A framework for data collection and analysis*. In OECD Education Working Papers, No. 213, Paris: OECD Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c36fc9d3-en>.
- Virtanen, M., Kivimäki, M., Pentti, J., Oksanen, T., Ahola, K., Linna, A., Kouvonen, A., Salo, P., & Vahtera, J. (2010). School neighborhood disadvantage as a predictor of long-term sick leave among teachers: Prospective cohort study. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 171(7), 785–792. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwp459>

- Wieczorek, D., & Manard, C. (2018). Instructional leadership challenges and practices of novice principals in rural schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 34(2), 1–21.
- World Health Organization. (1946). *Preamble, Constitution of the World Health Organization* (as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 states).
- Yin, H., Huang, S., & Wang, W. (2016). Work environment characteristics and teacher well-being: The mediation of emotion regulation strategies. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 13(9), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph13090907>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zhang, Y., Liu, S., Aramburo, C. A., & Jiang, J. (2023). Leading by serving: How can servant leadership influence teacher emotional well-being? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 53(3), 602–624. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143223118225>

Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin sosyoekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı bir bölgesinde bulunan bir ilkokulda okul müdürünün öğretmenlerin iyi oluşunu artırmak amacıyla geliştirdiği liderlik stratejilerini incelemektedir. Nitel araştırma yöntemine sahip bu tekil durum çalışması, öğretmenlerin iş ortamında yaşadığı bilişsel, duygusal ve sosyal zorlukları aşmalarına destek olan liderlik pratiklerini ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Araştırma, Leithwood'un (2012) okul liderliği çerçevesi temelinde kurgulanmış ve veriler dört temel liderlik boyutu olan yön belirleme, ilişkileri geliştirme ve insanları destekleme, örgütsel yapıyı güçlendirme ve öğretim programını destekleme temelinde analiz edilmiştir.

Araştırmanın yürütüldüğü "Okul A", Batı Karadeniz bölgesinde kırsal bir alanda yer almakta olup sınırlı kaynaklara, düşük sosyoekonomik düzeye sahip öğrenci profiline ve ulaşım sorunlarına rağmen akademik ve sportif başarılar elde etmiştir. Okul müdürü 2016 yılından bu yana görevde olup, Erasmus+ gibi projelerle öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimini desteklemiş, teknolojik altyapının güçlendirilmesini sağlamış ve okul kültürünü geliştirmeye yönelik çalışmalar başlatmıştır. Çalışmada 11 katılımcı (müdür, 2 müdür yardımcısı, 8 öğretmen) ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmış ve okul gözlemleri gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler tematik analiz ile çözümlenmiştir.

Elde edilen bulgular, müdürün öğretmenlerin iyi oluşunu desteklemek üzere geliştirdiği liderlik stratejilerinin Leithwood'un modeline uygun biçimde yapılandığını ortaya koymaktadır. Yön belirleme kapsamında müdürün, okulun vizyon ve hedeflerini açıkça ifade etmesi, bu hedefleri öğretmenlerle birlikte belirlemesi ve bu hedefleri ulaşılabilir ve somut kılması, öğretmenlerde amaç duygusunu güçlendirmekte ve belirsizlikten kaynaklanan stresleri azaltmaktadır. Müdürün sık sık başarı hikâyeleri paylaşması, "mutlu okul toplumu" gibi pozitif kavramlarla ortak değerler etrafında öğretmenleri birleştirmesi, dezavantajlı koşullarda çalışan öğretmenlerin motivasyonunu artırmakta ve mesleki bağlılıklarını güçlendirmektedir.

İlişkileri geliştirme ve insanları destekleme boyutunda müdür, okulda aile atmosferi oluşturarak karşılıklı destek ve güven ortamı sağlamıştır. Müdürün, empatik bir iletişim tarzı benimsemesi öğretmenlerin yalnızlık ve tükenmişlik duygularıyla baş etmelerinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin bireysel ve mesleki gelişimlerine yönelik fırsatlar sunması (örneğin Erasmus+ hareketlilikleri, teknoloji eğitimleri) öğretmenlerin kendilerini değerli ve yeterli hissetmelerini sağlamış, bu da iyi oluşlarını desteklemiştir.

Örgütsel yapıyı destekleme stratejileri arasında öğretmenler arası iş birliğini teşvik etmek, okul içinde sosyal etkileşimi artıran ortamlar yaratmak ve öğretmenlerin kişisel yaşamlarına uygun program düzenlemeleri yapmak yer almaktadır. Özellikle dezavantajlı bölgelerdeki öğretmenlerin karşı karşıya kaldığı kaynak eksikliği ve sosyal yalıtılmışlık gibi sorunlar göz önüne alındığında, müdürün işbirliğine dayalı, esnek ve destekleyici bir örgüt yapısı inşa etmesi öğretmenlerin psikolojik dayanıklılığını artırmış ve kuruma aidiyetlerini pekiştirmiştir.

Öğretim programının güçlendirilmesi açısından müdür, öğretim materyallerinin temini için yerel paydaşlarla iş birliği yapmış, öğretmenlere gerekli ders materyallerini sağlayarak öğretimin niteliğini geliştirmiştir. Bunun yanında, öğrenci başarısını düzenli olarak izleyerek öğretmenlere geri bildirimde bulunması, öğretim süreçlerinde iyileşmeye katkı sağlamış ve öğretmenlerin çabalarının görünür olmasına olanak tanımıştır. Bu sayede öğretmenler, hem başarıyı daha net gözlemlemiş hem de desteklenmiş hissetmiştir; bu durum da iyi oluşlarını olumlu yönde etkilemiştir.

Araştırma, okul müdürünün uyguladığı stratejilerin öğretmenlerin yalnızca akademik performansını değil, mesleki doyumlarını ve psikolojik sağlamlıklarını da etkilediğini göstermektedir. Özellikle dezavantajlı okullarda çalışan öğretmenlerin içinde bulunduğu stresli ve belirsiz ortamlarda, liderlik yaklaşımının empati, katılım, destek ve gelişim odaklı olması öğretmenlerin iyi oluşunu artırmada kritik bir faktör olarak ortaya çıkmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın politika yapıcılar ve uygulayıcılar açısından önemli çıktıları bulunmaktadır. Öğretmenlerin iyi oluşunu artırmak amacıyla okul yöneticilerinin liderlik becerilerinin geliştirilmesi, destekleyici okul ikliminin oluşturulması ve sürekli mesleki gelişim fırsatlarının sunulması gerektiği anlaşılmaktadır. Özellikle dezavantajlı bölgelerde görev yapan okul müdürlerinin kaynak yaratma, iş birliğini teşvik etme ve empati temelli iletişim kurma gibi becerilerle sahip olmaları öğretmenlerin iyi oluşunu artırmak açısından önemlidir. Ayrıca bu çalışma, Leithwood'un liderlik modelini dezavantajlı okul bağlamında uygulamalı biçimde analiz ederek modele katkı sunmakta ve iyi oluşun liderlik stratejileriyle nasıl bütüncül biçimde desteklenebileceğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Ethics Committee Approval: The ethics committee approval for this study/research was obtained from Düzce University. (2024-232).

Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from the participants.

Peer Review: This study was peer-reviewed.

Authors' Contribution: Ali Çağatay Kılınç: Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing - Original Draft, Gökhan Savaş: Investigation, Interpretation of the data, Writing - Original Draft Taner Atmaca: Data Curation, Analysis, Erhan Dolapcı: Resources, Writing - Review & Editing, Salih Çevik: Methodology, Writing - Review & Editing

Conflict of Interests: The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose.

Financial Disclosure: There was no funding to report for this article.

Acknowledgement: We extend our sincere appreciation to all participants for their voluntary contribution to the data collection process.

Authors	Contact
Ali Çağatay Kılıç	Karabük University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Educational Sciences, Türkiye
Gökhan Savaş	Bartın University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Türkiye, E-mail: gokhansavas@bartin.edu.tr
Taner Atmaca	Düzce University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Türkiye
Erhan Dolapcı	Ministry of National Education, Göl Anatolian High School, Kastamonu, Türkiye
Salih Çevik	Ministry of National Education, Türkiye