



The Mediating Role of Leader-Member Exchange in the Relationship between Motivational Language and Loyalty to Supervisor in Schools

Okullarda Motivasyonel Dil ile Yöneticiye Sadakat İlişkisinde Lider-Üye Etkileşiminin Aracılık Rolü

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Received: 02 March 2022

Research Article

Accepted: 30 May 2022

ABSTRACT: The present study aimed to examine the mediating role of leader-member exchange in the relationship between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor. The population of this correlational study consisted of primary, secondary, and high schools in Gaziantep, during the 2020-2021 academic year. The research sample included randomly determined 511 teachers through unequal cluster sampling technique. Data were collected through “Motivational Language Scale”, “Loyalty to Supervisor Scale” and “Leader-Member Exchange Scale”. In data analysis, descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients were estimated. Then, the model, which was based on the theoretical framework, was tested through structural equation modelling. According to research results, teachers’ perceptions of motivational language, loyalty to supervisor, and leader-member exchange were found to be relatively high. There were positive and high-level relationships between motivational language, loyalty to supervisor, and leader-member exchange. The results of structural equation modelling analysis indicated that the leader-member exchange partially mediated the relationship between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor. The research results revealed that the motivational language of school administrators was a significant determinant of teachers’ perception of leader-member exchange and their loyalty to supervisor. Thus, it seemed necessary to establish high-quality communication, appreciate their efforts, and support teachers to increase their loyalty to the administrator.

Keywords: Motivational language, leader-member exchange, loyalty to supervisor, teacher.

ÖZ: Araştırmada, motivasyonel dil ile yöneticiye sadakat ilişkisinde lider-üye etkileşiminin aracılık rolünün incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. İlişkisel modelde yürütülen araştırmanın evrenini, 2020-2021 eğitim-öğretim yılında Gaziantep ilinde bulunan ilkökul, ortaokul ve liseler oluşturmaktadır. Örneklem ise, bu okullarda görev yapan ve oransız küme örnekleme yöntemiyle tesadüfi olarak belirlenen 511 öğretmenden oluşmaktadır. Veriler, “Motivasyonel Dil Ölçeği”, “Yöneticiye Sadakat Ölçeği” ve “Lider-Üye Etkileşimi Ölçeği” aracılığı ile toplanmıştır. Analiz aşamasında betimsel istatistikler ve korelasyon katsayıları hesaplanmıştır. Daha sonra kuramsal çerçeveye dayalı olarak öne sürülen model, yapısal eşitlik modeli ile test edilmiştir. Betimsel analiz sonuçlarına göre, öğretmenlerin motivasyonel dil, yöneticiye sadakat ve lider-üye etkileşimine yönelik algı düzeyleri görece yüksektir. Motivasyonel dil, yöneticiye sadakat ve lider-üye etkileşimi değişkenleri arasında pozitif yönde ve yüksek düzeyde bir ilişki bulunmaktadır. Yapısal eşitlik modeli analizi sonucunda, lider-üye etkileşiminin; motivasyonel dil ile yöneticiye sadakat arasındaki ilişkide kısmi aracılık rolü olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları, okul yöneticilerin kullandıkları motivasyonel dilin, öğretmenlerin lider-üye etkileşimi algı düzeyleri ve yöneticiye sadakatleri üzerinde önemli bir belirleyici olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Buradan hareketle öğretmenlerin yöneticiye sadakatlerini artırmak için, nitelikli iletişim kurulması, yaptıkları çalışmalara değer atfedilmesi ve desteklenmesi önemli görülmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Motivasyonel dil, lider-üye etkileşimi, yöneticiye sadakat, öğretmen.

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Citation Information

Kara, M., & Alev, S. (2022). The mediating role of leader-member exchange in the relationship between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor in schools. *Kuramsal Eğitimbilim Dergisi [Journal of Theoretical Educational Science]*, 15(3), 699-715.

Various individual and organizational variables affect the performance of employees in organizations. Loyalty, which is accepted to be a vital factor for quality and productivity (Mohsan et al., 2011), indirectly affects organizational performance by increasing the performance of employees (Chen, 2001). Loyal employees show commitment to the organization, identify with the values and goals of the organization, and behave accordingly (Ali et al., 1997). In the schools, it is asserted that the high level of loyalty of teachers to their administrators is one of the factors facilitating the realization of the school goals of (Akman, 2017). Loyalty is associated with teachers' performance and motivation in interpersonal relationships. Interactions with school administrators, colleagues and students play a prominent role in the development of teachers' feelings of loyalty (Akman & Özdemir, 2019). School administrators' fair practices among teachers by considering their differences and providing opportunities for them to improve themselves are examples of practices that will improve teachers' feelings of loyalty (Akman, 2017). Dewhurst et al. (2010) determined that offering praise, courtesy, and leadership roles to employees positively affects loyalty. Therefore, it can be argued that motivational expressions and high-quality interactions of school administrators during interpersonal relations will improve teachers' loyalty. Furthermore, Ülker (2015) noted that the feeling of loyalty would develop, and teachers' commitment to the school and the administrator will boost administrator-teacher relationships with a high level of emotional interaction, which refers to the relationship between loyalty to supervisor and the leader-member exchange.

Studies have concluded that the use of motivational language increases teachers' job satisfaction (Haider et al., 2018) and is an effective factor in establishing relationships based on trust, respect and loyalty (Sivik, 2018). Besides, motivational language positively affects the sense of trust in principals (Holmes & Parker, 2018) and school climate (Alqahtani, 2015; Sabir & Bhutta, 2018). Principals must be aware that their personal behavior has an impact on both teachers and school outcomes (Anderson, 2008). Therefore, it is vital for positive school climate that school principals use their leadership skills in an effective way through motivational language (Alqahtani & Alajmi, 2010).

Consequently, motivational language contributes to establishing relationships based on trust, respect, and loyalty by deepening the quality of communication with teachers (Gemalmaz, 2014). Thus, leader-member exchange may enhance depending on motivational language (Brannon, 2011; Karaaslan, 2010). However, relevant studies have not considered the mediating role of leader-member exchange in the association between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor. Therefore, the role of leader-member exchange in the association between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor needs to be clarified through future studies in light of the results of the previous studies in the literature to focus more on the relationships between the variables in question.

Conceptual Framework

Loyalty to Supervisor

The concept of loyalty to supervisor, which is closely associated with organizational commitment, has been the subject of numerous research in recent years

(Bozkurt & Sincar, 2019; Çelebi & Korumaz, 2016; Wang et al., 2017). Loyalty is the sincere support that an employee shows for his/her supervisor. This support is explained as sacrificing the personal interests of the employees and devoting themselves to the supervisor (Chen et al., 2002). Loyalty to supervisor is the employee's support of his/her manager, dedication to his/her goals, placing his/her interests before one's own (Ceylan & Doğanyılmaz, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2002) and accepting the manager's values as a part of their own (Janssen, 2004). The quality of communication with employees, supporting employees, and solving their problems increase the loyalty of employees to the supervisor (Chang et al., 2010). Similarly, the managers' fair behaviors are suggested to be crucial in heightening the loyalty of the employees to the supervisor (Uğurlu & Üstüner, 2011).

Chen et al. (2002) discussed that loyalty to supervisor is composed of five sub-dimensions. *Dedication to the supervisor* includes behaviors such as supporting the manager, making sacrifices, putting the manager's interests before their own. *Making an extra effort for the supervisor* refers to the employee's complete fulfillment of his/her responsibilities and making an extra effort to do his/her job in the best way even when the manager is not there. *Attachment to the supervisor* is the state of being happy to work in the same institution and willing to continue working with the manager even if better alternatives may emerge. *Identification with the supervisor* is about the employee's feeling attached to the manager, being proud of working together and attributing the triumphs or failures of the manager to oneself. Internalizing the values of the supervisor is perceiving the values of the manager as one's own. In other words, it is the similarity of the value fit between the manager and the employee.

Loyalty to the supervisor is seen as the unconditional commitment of teachers to the wishes of the administrators, working self-sacrificingly to fulfill their duties successfully, and offering sincere support to the administrator (Akman & Özdemir, 2019). Loyalty to the supervisor, which is also considered to be commitment to the administrator in the context of education, has been the subject of numerous research (Arlı, 2011; Bozkurt, 2018; Çelebi & Korumaz, 2016; Duman, 2018). In these studies, it was found that school administrators' creation of a trust-oriented school climate increase teachers' commitment (Bozkurt, 2018; Çelebi & Korumaz, 2016); administrators have to exert effort to improve teachers' confidence, loyalty and commitment to their supervisors (Arlı, 2011), and loyalty is a factor that strengthens teachers' affective and normative commitment to school (Duman, 2018). Therefore, it can be argued that the attitudes and behaviors of school administrators are important in shaping loyalty to the administrator.

Motivational Language

Motivation is the power that moves an individual to achieve a specific goal (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Leaders must exhibit attitudes and behaviors that will improve the motivation of employees for the realization of organizational goals (Hoy & Miskel, 2010). Most of the leadership studies conducted recently have emphasized the influence of communication. The use of motivational language by the managers is shown to be effective in positive organizational outcomes (Brown et al., 2018; Karaaslan, 2010; Özen, 2013). Motivational language is defined as a verbal communication strategy used by leaders that produce positive outcomes such as higher job performance, increased job

satisfaction, and lesser absenteeism of employees (Mayfield et al., 1995). Sullivan (1988) developed the Motivational Language Theory based on the assumption that leaders' communication skills are influential in increasing employee performance. Accordingly, the leader-subordinate relationship is based on three basic speech acts. *Direction-giving language* means explaining and guiding the employees about their duties (Madlock & Sexton, 2015), *empathetic language* is reinforcing the positive behaviors of the employees and encouraging them to express their thoughts comfortably (Brannon, 2011), and *meaning-creating language* refers to conveying the structure, values, and norms of organizational culture to employees by making use of literary arts, metaphors, and stories (Özen, 2013).

The motivational language studies conducted suggested that the use of motivational language by school administrators increases the job satisfaction of teachers (Haider et al., 2018), positively affects the sense of trust for the administrators (Holmes & Parker, 2018), improves organizational citizenship behaviors as a result of extra-role efforts for the development of the school (Özen, 2014). Additionally, it was yielded that motivational language contributes to establishing relationships based on trust, respect, and loyalty by deepening the quality of communication with teachers (Gemalmaz, 2014) and to the professional dedication of teachers (Sivik, 2018). Based on this information, it is possible to allege that motivational language will have positive reflections on teachers' behaviors.

Leader-Member Exchange

The Leader-Member Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), which is used to explain the manager-employee relationship and developed based on Blau's (1964) Social Exchange Theory, suggested that the leader does not interact with all the members in the organization in a similar way, but develops personal relations each of them with different qualities contrarily (Northouse, 2013). Leader-member exchange is explained as a relation based on trust, respect, and loyalty (Yu & Liang, 2004). Employees have to interact with the leader constantly to receive the necessary support during the process of realizing individual and organizational goals. The approach and behaviors of the leaders may direct the attitudes and behaviors of the members. Therefore, the leader's manner of approaching is regarded as an influential factor in the performance of the employees (Agarwal et al., 2012).

The present study was based on the classification of Liden and Maslyn (1998), examining leader-member exchange under four sub-dimensions. While *affect* includes the perceptions of the leader and the member's sympathy for each other, their exhibiting sincere behaviors and mutual interactions; *contribution* includes perceptions about the amount, quality, and direction of direct or indirect actions for the common purpose during the leader-member exchange process (Lee, 2005). *Loyalty* plays a vital role in developing and continuing the leader-member exchange and includes the approval, respect, support, and advocating of the decision taken either by the leader or the member (Göksel & Aydınhan, 2012). *Professional respect* relates to perceptions of the mutual competence of the leader and member in work-related matters. These perceptions are based on past experiences, impressions of other individuals, and rewards received (Baş et al., 2010).

The studies on leader-member exchange in educational settings concluded that it reduces the bad effects of organizational cynicism (Alev, 2020) and burnout (Alev & Taş, 2020), positively affects teachers' performance (Cerit, 2012), and school climate (Alqahtani, 2015; Alqahtani & Alajmi, 2010; Sabir & Bhutta, 2018), positively affects the sense of trust for the principals (Holmes & Parker, 2018) and improves organizational citizenship behaviors (Runhaar et al., 2013). In addition, they offered suggestions on how to build a high-quality relationship between school administrators and teachers (Power, 2013) by emphasizing that the quality of administrator-teacher interaction is vital in terms of teachers' adapting to the school, their devoted work, and feeling like a part of the school (Gül, 2019).

The Present Study

The motivational language used by the leader has an important place in yielding positive attitudes and behaviors, such as employee commitment in the organizational milieu (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Murray, 2016; Sabir & Bhutta, 2018). The sincere and motivational language use among individuals in educational organizations contributes to the strengthening the bond between the administrators, teachers, and students (Sivik, 2018). Moreover, administrator-teacher relationships with a high level of emotional interaction enable the enhancement of a sense of loyalty, and thus teachers' commitment to both the school and the administrator boosts (Ülker, 2015). In a similar vein, Duman (2018) concluded that administrators who want to receive the support of teachers, strengthen their relations with them, and encourage teachers to strive beyond their job requirements should attempt to win teachers' loyalty. Furthermore, it is specified that motivational language is an essential communicating power for administrators, and thus the quality of communication with teachers will increase and it will have positive reflections on the school climate (Gemalmaz, 2014). In light of these, the following hypotheses have been developed:

Hypothesis 1. There is a significant and positive relationship between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor.

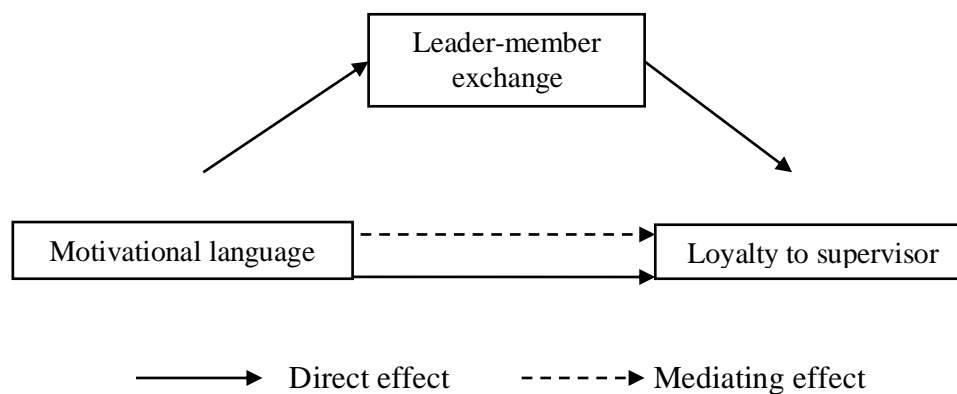
Hypothesis 2. There is a significant and positive relationship between motivational language and leader-member exchange.

Hypothesis 3. There is a significant and positive relationship between leader-member exchange and loyalty to supervisor.

Hypothesis 4. Leader-member exchange has a mediating role in the relationship between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor.

The conceptual model of the present study was created based on the above hypotheses and was presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The Conceptual Model**Method****Research Design**

The correlational survey design, one of the quantitative research methodologies, was employed to examine the relationship between motivational language, loyalty to supervisor, and leader-member exchange.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of primary, secondary, and high schools in Gaziantep in the 2020-2021 academic year. The research sample consists of randomly determined teachers through the unequal cluster sampling technique. The scales were delivered to approximately 650 teachers, and 36 surveys were excluded due to being filled in incorrectly or incompletely among the total of 547 files. Data analyses were conducted on 511 scales. Of the participating teachers, 276 (54.0%) were female, and 235 (46.0%) were male. While 270 teachers (52.8%) were between 21-30 years old, 185 of them (36.2%) were between 31-40, and 56 of them (11.0%) were 41 and over. In terms of professional seniority, 255 (49.9%) had been working between 1-5 years, 127 (24.9%) had between 6-10 years, 68 (13.3%) had between 11-15 years, 61 (11.9%) had 16 years and over. Based on the types of schools, 210 (41.1%) of the participating teachers worked at primary school, 220 (43.1%) of them were in secondary school, and 81 (15.9%) of them were high school teachers.

Instruments***Motivational Language Scale***

This scale was developed by Mayfield et al. (1995) and adapted into Turkish by Özen (2013). The scale consisted of 24 items and three sub-dimensions. It has a 5-point Likert type grading by I completely agree (5) ... I do not agree at all (1). In the CFA, which was conducted to test the construct validity of the scale, theoretically supported modifications were made to improve the model fit by adding covariance between the error terms of the items ML1 and ML2, ML7, and ML8, ML14 and ML15, and ML21 and ML22. The items ML9, ML18, and ML19 that caused the increase in the chi-square values were deleted, respectively. As a result of the analysis, goodness of fit indices were estimated as; $\chi^2=720.49$, $df=182$, $\chi^2/df=2.95$, $RMSEA=.07$, $RMR=.05$, $NFI=.91$,

IFI=.93, TLI=.92 and CFI=.93. It was determined that χ^2/df and RMSEA had an acceptable fit while the others had the perfect fit. (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011). For the original scale, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was estimated as .94 for *direction-giving language*, .93 for *empathic language*, .88 for *meaning-making language*, while the present study's Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was computed as .93 for *direction-giving language*, .88 for *empathic language*, .86 for *meaning-making language*, and .95 for the overall scale.

Loyalty to Supervisor Scale

This scale was developed by Chen et al. (2002) and adapted into Turkish by Ceylan and Doğanyılmaz (2007). It consisted of 17 items and five sub-dimensions. It has a 5-point Likert type grading by I completely agree (5) ... I do not agree at all (1). In the CFA, the LS4 item with a low factor load was excluded from the data set. As a result of the analysis, goodness of fit indices were estimated as; $\chi^2=322.89$, $df=94$, $\chi^2/df=3.44$, RMSEA=.07, RMR=.05, NFI=.93, IFI=.95, TLI=.94 and CFI=.95. It was determined that χ^2/df and RMSEA had an acceptable fit while the others had the perfect fit. (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011). For the original scale, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was estimated as .67 for *dedication to the manager*, .81 for *making an extra effort for the manager*, .82 for *being attached to the manager*, .81 for *identification with the manager*, .73 for *internalizing the manager's values* while the present study's Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was computed as .78 for *dedication to the manager*, .80 for *making an extra effort for the manager*, .85 for *being attached to the manager*, .87 for *identification with the manager*, .85 for *internalizing the manager's values*, and .91 for the overall scale.

Leader-Member Exchange Scale

This scale was developed by Liden and Maslyn (1998) and adapted into Turkish by Öztürk (2015), thanks to the validity and reliability studies. It consisted of a total of 12 items and four sub-dimensions. It has a 5-point Likert type grading by I completely agree (5) ... I do not agree at all (1). As a result of the CFA, goodness of fit indices were estimated as; $\chi^2=128.07$, $df=48$, $\chi^2/df=2.67$, RMSEA=.05, RMR=.03, NFI=.97, IFI=.98, TLI=.97 and CFI=.98. For the original scale, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was estimated as .89 for the sub-dimension of *affect*, .89 for the sub-dimension of *loyalty*, .84 for the sub-dimension of *contribution*, .94 for the sub-dimension of *professional respect*, and .96 for the overall scale while the present study's Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was computed as .87 for the sub-dimension of *affect*, .86 for the sub-dimension of *loyalty*, .80 for the sub-dimension of *contribution*, .86 for the sub-dimension of *professional respect*, and .92 for the overall scale.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed with SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 23.0 software. Skewness and kurtosis were estimated following the removal of the outliers, and it was determined that they ranged between -1.5 to +1.5. It indicated that the research data was normally distributed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). For the model fit, certain indices were reported in the CFA. Studies mainly were found to report χ^2 , χ^2/df , RMSEA, RMR, NFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI indices (Meydan & Şeşen, 2015). Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to report these values in the present study. A χ^2/df ratio less than or equal to 5 means an

acceptable fit. RMSEA and RMR less than or equal to .08 (Kline, 2011), and NFI, IFI, TLI and CFI indices .90 and over (Hu & Bentler, 1999) indicate that the model has the perfect fit. The reliability coefficients of the scales were computed using Cronbach's Alpha (α). Path analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling (SEM) to determine the role of leader-member exchange in the relationship between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor. The level of significance for the mediation effect was tested using the Bootstrap method. The bootstrap method makes it possible to resample by producing very large data sets from the existing data set (Sacchi, 1998). Thus, more accurate results can be obtained with analyses conducted on larger data sets obtained by resampling.

Ethical Procedures

Necessary permissions were obtained from the institutions where the research was conducted before the research. Participants whose opinions were sought in the study were selected on a voluntary basis. The identity information of the participants was not included anywhere in the study. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Gaziantep University Ethics Committee dated 1st June 2021 and numbered 49278. The research scales included the Motivational Language Scale, the Loyalty to Supervisor Scale, and the Leader-Member Exchange Scale, as well as the personal information of the participants.

Findings

The descriptive statistics are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Variables and Correlation Coefficients

Variables	Mean	SD	SE	1	2	3
1. Motivational Language	4.01	.62	.03	1		
2. Loyalty to Supervisor	3.85	.61	.03	.72**	1	
3. Leader-Member Exchange	3.96	.64	.03	.64**	.70**	1

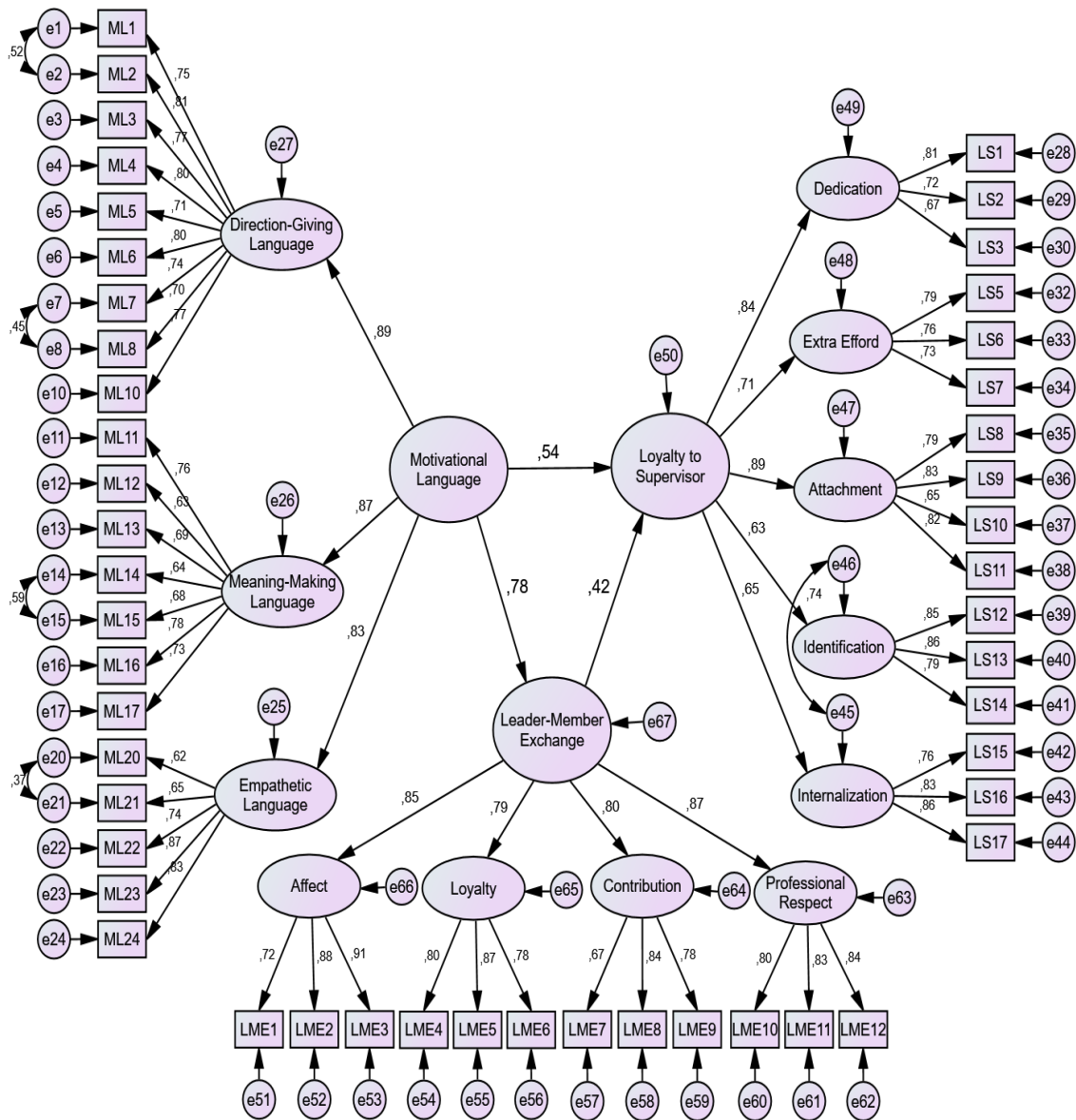
According to Table 1, teachers' perceptions of motivational language ($M=4.01$, $SD=.62$), loyalty to supervisor ($M=3.85$, $SD=.61$), and leader-member exchange ($M=3.96$, $SD=.64$) were partially high. The examination of correlation coefficients yielded that the three variables were related. Both motivational language ($r=.72$, $p<.01$) and leader-member exchange ($r=.70$, $p<.01$) were positively and highly correlated with loyalty to supervisor. In addition, there was a positive and a high level of relationship between motivational language and leader-member exchange ($r=.64$, $p<.01$).

The Mediation Test

The mediation test included the results for the mediating role of leader-member exchange on the motivational language's predicting loyalty to supervisor. It was determined that motivational language predicted leader-member exchange ($\beta=.78$, $p<.001$) and loyalty to supervisor ($\beta=.54$, $p<.001$) positively and statistically significant.

Then, it was concluded that the direct effect of leader-member exchange on loyalty to supervisor was positive and statistically significant ($\beta=.42, p<.001$), and the leader-member exchange (mediator variable) was also found to predict loyalty to supervisor (dependent variable) without motivational language (independent variable). The obtained results implied that the mediation test would be appropriate for the model. Therefore, the mediating role of leader-member exchange in the relationship between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor was finally tested, and the findings were submitted in Figure 2.

Figure 2
The Mediating Role of Leader-Member Exchange



As seen in Figure 2, the paths added to the model in the mediation analysis contributed significantly to the model's goodness of fit. The goodness of fit indices were respectively estimated as; $\chi^2/df_{(2687/1107)} = 2.43$; RMSEA=.05, RMR=.05, NFI=.85, IFI=0.91, TLI=.90 and CFI=.91. The obtained scores as a result of the path analysis are given in Table 2.

Table 2
Path Analysis Results

Hypothesis	Paths	<i>B</i>	β	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Result
H1	ML ---> LS	.48	.54	.08	13.100	***	Accept
H2	ML ---> LMX	.83	.78	.07	13.474	***	Accept
H3	LMX ---> LS	.36	.42	.08	6.280	***	Accept
H4	ML ---> LMX ---> LS	.30	.33	.06	7.521	***	Accept

*** $p < .001$, (Note: ML: Motivational language, LS: Loyalty to supervisor, LMX: Leader-member exchange)

The examination of Table 2 indicated that the H1 hypothesis was accepted as motivational language positively predicted loyalty to supervisor ($\beta = .54$, $p < .001$), the H2 hypothesis was confirmed that motivational language positively predicted leader-member exchange ($\beta = .78$, $p < .001$), and the H3 hypothesis was approved as the leader-member exchange positively predicted loyalty to supervisor ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$). Though it was still statistically significant, the β coefficient between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor decreased with the addition of leader-member exchange to the model ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$). In other words, the motivational language's predicting loyalty to supervisor both directly and indirectly through leader-member exchange suggested that leader-member exchange had a partial mediating role. Therefore, the H4 hypothesis was also confirmed and accepted.

After determining the partial mediating role of the leader-member exchange, the significance of the mediating effect was tested through the bootstrap method. The coefficients and confidence intervals of the direct and indirect effects are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Direct and Indirect Effects on the Mediating Role of Leader-Member Interaction

Paths	Bootstrap coefficients		95 % Bootstrap CI		<i>p</i>
	β	SE	Lower	Upper	
<i>Direct effect</i>					
ML \longrightarrow LMX	.78***	.03	.74	.83	***
LMX \longrightarrow LS	.42***	.09	.28	.56	***
<i>Indirect effect</i>					
ML \longrightarrow LMX \longrightarrow LS	.33***	.07	.22	.45	***

Notes. 2,000 bootstrap samples. CI = confidence interval. ML: Motivational language, LS: Loyalty to supervisor, LMX: Leader-member exchange. *** $p < .001$

The examination of the bootstrap coefficients and confidence intervals in Table 3 yielded that the direct paths between motivational language and leader-member exchange ($\beta = .78$; SE = .03; 95% Bootstrap CI = [.74, .83]; $p < .001$), and leader-member exchange and loyalty to supervisor ($\beta = .42$; SE = .09; 95% Bootstrap CI = [.28, .56] were

significant. Moreover, motivational language significantly affected loyalty to supervisor ($\beta=.33$; $SE=.07$; 95% Bootstrap $CI=[.22, .45]$; $p<.001$).

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study aimed to examine the mediating role of leader-member exchange in the relationship between motivational language and loyalty to supervisor. According to the descriptive research results, teachers' perceptions of motivational language, loyalty to supervisor, and leader-member exchange were relatively high. This can be regarded as an indication that school administrators use a motivating language for the staff, teachers were loyal to school administrators, and there was a high level of communication between them. As a result of the correlation analysis to determine the direction and level of the relationship between the variables, it was found that the variables had a positive and high level of relationship with each other. In other words, while teachers' high levels of perception of the motivational language used by school administrators affect their levels of loyalty to the administrator and leader-member exchange perceptions positively, their perception levels of loyalty to the administrator and leader-member exchange decrease in cases where motivational language perception levels were low. This was an anticipated finding as the results of the previous studies demonstrated that the motivational language used by school administrators positively affected teachers' commitment to the administrator (Çelebi & Korumaz, 2016; Sabir & Bhutta, 2018; Sivik, 2018) and that the school administrator's explaining and guiding teachers about their duties within the scope of motivational language, reinforcing their exhibiting positive behaviors and meeting their expectations were necessary for increasing loyalty depending on the trust placed in the administrator (Holmes & Parker, 2018). Moreover, the leader-member exchange had a positive effect on teachers' loyalty to the administrator. High-quality teacher-administrator interaction was an essential factor for teachers to adopt the school, work devotedly, and see themselves as a part of the school (Gül, 2019).

As a result of the study, it was determined that motivational language affected loyalty to the administrator both directly and indirectly through leader-member exchange. This is in line with the results of previous research (Akman & Özdemir, 2019; Holmes & Parker, 2018; Murray, 2016; Ülker, 2015). Motivational language (Chen et al., 2002; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002) and the quality of the interaction with the leader (Brown et al., 2018) affect employees' feelings of loyalty and commitment to the manager. Moreover, Bejer (2019) concluded that the use of motivational language in the working environment contributes to the interactions of administrators. Motivational language has various positive outcomes for educational settings. While motivational language enables teachers to develop positive feelings towards their profession (Haider et al., 2018), it provides them with confidence in their administrators (Holmes & Parker, 2018) and makes them exert extra efforts for the school development beyond their role behaviors (Özen, 2014). Therefore, the use of motivational language by school administrators not only increases the loyalty of teachers, which includes working selflessly to successfully fulfill their duties and providing sincere support to their administrator (Akman & Özdemir, 2019) but also has positive reflections on the school climate by increasing the quality of communication between the administrator and the teacher (Gemalmaz, 2014).

Although this study provides a deeper understanding of the relationships among motivational language, loyalty to supervisor, and leader-member exchange, several limitations should be noted. The findings of the study have some limitations regarding the research design and the method used. First of all, the findings are not representative of all schools in Turkey, as the data were not collected from a sample that would represent the whole country. Future researchers can compare the findings of this study with those they will conduct in different settlements as private schools. Various factors can play a role in motivational language, loyalty to the principal, and leader-member exchange, both at the school level and at the individual level. Thus, it should be determined which variables are influential at the school or teacher level by performing multi-level analyses. However, we could not perform these as the collected data were not suitable for multi-level analyses.

The evaluation of the overall results implied that the motivational language used by the school administrators was an important determinant in establishing a high-quality communication between the administrators and teachers and, accordingly, in the formation of the teachers' perception of loyalty to the administrator. If teachers are required to work selflessly and support their administrators sincerely to fulfill their duties successfully, it is necessary to create a school climate based on love and respect, allowing them to enjoy their work, and appreciate and support their work. School principals' using motivational language, guiding them in their work, encouraging them, and creating a sense of belonging and commitment to the school will positively affect the loyalty to the administrator. Moreover, the increase in teachers' loyalty to the administrator will contribute to the effective realization of educational goals by enabling them to be productive and deliver higher performance. Future research can be designed with variables such as trust in the administrator, perceived organizational support, organizational justice, school culture, etc., which are believed to be the antecedents of loyalty to the administrator.

Statement of Responsibility

Mevlüt Kara; determination of problem situation, determination of sample group, selection and application of data collection tools, planning and implementation of activities, literature review, methodology, reviewing and inspection, writing-original draft and resources, editing. Sedat Alev; literature review, methodology, validation, writing-original draft, arrangement, writing review, analysis, visualization and supervision.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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