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Research Article

How teacher leaders think about parents: A mixed methods approach

Özgür Bolat 

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Abstract

The present study firstly explores teacher mental images and understandings of the concepts of 'parent' through metaphor analysis and secondly examines how teacher leaders differ in terms of perceptions about parents. The primary objective of this study is to uncover teacher leaders' implicit attitudes about 'parents' in order to contribute to parental involvement initiatives undertaken by teacher. The study adopts a mixed-design methodology. Teacher leaders were identified through Teacher Leadership Behavior Scale and the metaphors were evaluated using a content analysis method. The research was conducted with 89 teachers. The study presents several significant findings. Metaphor analysis revealed teachers perceive parents in different seven distinction roles, which imply positive, neutral and negative attitude: partner / nurturer (positive), supporter (positive), observer (neutral), student (neutral), mirror (neutral), inspector (negative), Machiavellist (negative) and antagonist (negative). These roles indicate three types of parental involvement, ranging from 'active participation' (positive) to 'passive participation' (neutral), and to 'adversarial participation' (negative). Statistical analysis revealed that teacher leaders, high scorers as identified by teacher leadership behavior scale, have a more positive attitude towards parents than low scorers. Overall, these findings can be utilized by teacher leaders, educational leaders and researchers working in similar domains, providing valuable insights into teachers' view of parents and contributing to the enhancement of parental involvement practices.

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Author(s)' statements on ethics and conflict of interest

Ethics statement: I hereby declare that research/publication ethics and citing principles have been considered in all the stages of the study. I take full responsibility for the content of the paper in case of dispute.

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Introduction

'Parental involvement' is a multidimensional concept (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2022). Although there are different conceptualizations of parental involvement, the definition proposed by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) is widely accepted. They define parental involvement as "the family's dedication of resources to the child's academic life in terms of time, money, and energy." Similarly, a more recent definition of parental involvement, according to Castro et al. (2015) is "the active participation of parents in all aspects of their children's social, emotional, and academic development". Parents are involved in their children's education in different ways. Barger et al. (2019) distinguish between two broad forms of parental involvement: the school front and the home front. School-based involvement comprises parents' direct contact with the school in the form of participation or governance. Home-based involvement takes place at home and/or outside the school.

Several studies have shown that parental involvement contributes positively to student outcomes, such as cognitive, social and emotional development. For instance, Veas et al. (2019) found a positive relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. Similarly, El Nokali et al. (2010) found a positive relationship between parental involvement and children's engagement, school adjustment, and motivation. In his most recent literature review, Fiskerstrand (2022) found that many of the parent involvement indicators were positively related to the children's mathematical achievement, performance, and skills. In a meta-analysis conducted by Jeynes (2005), a high correlation was also found between parental involvement and academic achievement. In more recent meta-analysis conducted by Castro et al. (2015), a similar result was found: as parental involvement increases, academic achievement increases.

Parental involvement not only affects school achievement, but also emotional and social development of children. For instance, according to a longitudinal study by Hill et al. (2004), as parental involvement increases, behavior problem decreases. The significance of parental involvement has gained even more prominence in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Yu et al. (2022) found that high parental involvement during the Covid-19 pandemic contributed positively to children's learning. The most authoritative work on parental involvement was carried out by Wilder (2014). It was a meta-analysis of six previous meta-analysis studies. The result indicated that the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement was positive. Overall, the evidence suggests that there is strong support for parental involvement in terms of almost all child outcomes. Therefore, 'parental involvement' needs to be supported and enabled by educational leaders and teachers for student improvement.

Parental involvement is a quality of effective schools (Fullan, 1985). School leaders play a pivotal role in involving parents in their children's education (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Giles 2006). Parents feel welcome and feel like a family within the school community when the school leaders create a supportive atmosphere (Heinrichs, 2018). Yulianti et al. (2019) found that there is a strong positive relationship between transformational leadership by principals and parental involvement because the more principals support teachers' effort to promote parental development and the more teachers involved parents (Epstein, 1987). Recent research has demonstrated that teachers involved parents more often when they were supported by a principal who has transformational leadership (Jung & Sheldon, 2020).

School leaders are not the only that promotes parental involvement. Teachers play a significant role in promoting parental involvement as well (Yulianti et al., 2019). Teacher

invitations have been identified as powerful motivators for parents to be involved (Murray et al., 2015). In their second study, Yulianti et al., (2022) compared the impact of transformational leadership and teacher invitation and found that teacher invitation for parental involvement had an effect on parental involvement while transformational leadership did not have an effect. This finding shows that while transformational leadership is important, teacher leadership could be more important in promoting parental involvement.

Teacher leadership has recently started to attract increasing attention in the academic world (Martínez & Tadeu, 2018). However, there is no complete consensus regarding the definition of teacher leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). In a review study on teacher leadership conducted by Nguyen et al. (2020), seventeen different definitions of teacher leadership were found. York-Barr and Duke (2004) define teacher leadership as “the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence stakeholders of the school to improve the educational process with the aim of increasing student success”. Wenner and Campbell (2017), who conducted influential research on teacher leadership in recent years, define teacher leadership as “teachers taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom while fulfilling their classroom responsibilities”.

Teacher leadership has different dimensions. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) measure teacher leadership in seven dimensions: "self-awareness," "leading change," "communication," "diversity," "instructional competency and leadership," "continuous development," and "self-regulation." Wang and Xia (2020) measure teacher leadership in their scale in four dimensions: (a) leading instruction and professional development; (b) characteristics of teacher leadership; (c) participating in decisions concerning the school; and (d) diversity and continuous development. The Teacher Leadership Culture Scale developed by Demir (2014) has three sub-dimensions: "professional collaboration," "administrator support," and "supportive work environment". The scales developed by Beycioğlu and Aslan (2010) have three dimensions: "institutional development", "professional development," and "collaboration with colleagues". As observed, various studies reflect an array of dimensions for teacher leadership. Although there are common themes, unfortunately parental involvement is not explored as part of teacher leadership. Parental involvement needs to be examined within the context of teacher leadership.

In his research, Bolat (2013) discovered that teachers lead at three different levels and labelled these three dimensions as (i) self-leadership, (ii) micro-level leadership, and (iii) macro-level leadership. Teachers with a self-leadership approach feel responsible for their professional development, the development of their students and parents. Leadership starts when the teacher starts believing in himself/herself, having self-confidence and learning from others (Can, 2009). Teachers with a micro-level leadership approach have tried to lead their colleagues they are close with. Teachers with a macro-level leadership approach have tried to lead the entire school. Drawing from this early research, Bolat (2023) developed a teacher leadership behavior scale and four factors emerged. Self-leadership was divided into ‘classroom leadership’ and ‘parental leadership.’ This research indicates some teachers see parental involvement as part of their professional identity and are involved in parental involvement practices as part of their leadership practice. He turned three-factor teacher leadership model into a four-factor model, making a ‘parental leadership’ as a distinct teacher leadership category.

Teacher leadership is one of the important drivers for parental involvement. However, two perspectives affect teachers’ decision to exercise leadership for parental improvement.

Epstein and Becker (1982) have found that some teachers have negative attitudes towards parental involvement and some teachers have positive attitudes. In other words, some teachers see a lot of advantages and some see potential problems in parental involvement (Becker & Epstein, 1982). Bryan and Henry (2012) underlined the importance of exploring school members' beliefs regarding the parents. Henderson et al. (2007) further suggested that holding positive beliefs about family engagement is a starting place to working effectively with parents. Assumptions about parents build the foundation of what will destroy or create an essential parent/teacher relationship (Basarabai, 2013). Therefore, it is important to identify if teachers' beliefs are helpful or harmful in developing relationships with parents and families (Pushor & Amendt, 2018)

The present research explores in detail how these two perspectives affect teachers in general and teacher leadership behavior in particular since teachers who have a negative attitude towards parents are less likely to communicate with parents and encourage parental involvement. Therefore, it is important to explore teachers' attitudes about parental development. One way to measure attitudes is through direct measurement methods, but people do not often have direct access to their attitudes (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Therefore, metaphor analysis is a valid method to explore the implicit attitudes of teachers towards parents.

The word metaphor means "employing a word or a concept in a novel way that differs from its conventional meaning" (TDK, 2015). The word 'metaphor' derives from the Greek word "Metapherein". Meta means 'change' and pherein means 'bearing' (Levine, 2005). Therefore, metaphors alter mental patterns by converting established ideas into fresh perceptions. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) emphasize in their book "Metaphors We Live By" that the process of human thought and conceptual systems are structured by metaphors. In other words, metaphors are not just tools, but mechanisms that shape thought structures and attitudes (Landau et al., 2018). In other words, they are thoughts itself. Metaphors are often used to convey subtext (Thibodeau et al., 2019). For instance, when we ask, "where is the relationship going?", we convey our assumption that we are in a relationship that we expect to go forward. Metaphors are also used to express difficult-to-define feelings powerfully (Ortony & Fainsilber, 1987). For example, instead of saying "I'm tired," we might say, "I feel like I've been run over by a truck," or for a motionless person, we might say, "he/she is like the dead." There are even some metaphors without which it would be difficult to convey an idea because these metaphors have captured the essence of certain concepts (Cornelissen, 2005). For example, by naming the factors hindering women's career development as the "glass ceiling," researchers have emphasized that these factors are unseen and hidden (Cotter et al., 2001). Moreover, metaphors are effective tools both in the production of new knowledge and in the transmission of information in different fields (Schoemaker, 2020). Thanks to metaphors, researchers can look at familiar concepts with completely new eyes (Huebner, 1984). Metaphors are also effective in creating new theoretical frameworks by establishing relationships between two concepts (Tsoukas, 1991). Through metaphors, researchers make concepts more understandable (Ritchey, 2018). Because of its ability to uncover implicit association between concepts (Tsoukas, 1991) as well as describe people's perceptions of a certain phenomenon, metaphor analysis has been increasingly employed as an analytical tool in educational science research (Hacifazlıoğlu et al., 2011).

There are several studies that used a metaphor analysis approach in educational science. The concepts of 'technology leadership' (Karadeniz et al., 2011), 'teacher' (Aslan, 2013; Pektas &

Kıldan, 2009), 'student' (Saban, 2009), 'school' (Saban, 2008a), 'school manager' (Zembat et al., 2015), 'knowledge' (Saban, 2008b), 'internet' (Saban, 2010), and 'education' (Altun & Apaydin, 2013) have been analyzed using a metaphor analysis approach. There is one study that explores teachers' perception about 'parent' (Çakmak et al., 2014). However, there is no study that explores teacher leaders' perception of 'parents' through metaphors. Discovering the thoughts of teacher leaders regarding the concepts of 'parent' through a metaphor analysis method can give important insights about the attitudes teachers have towards parents. In the present research, teachers' metaphors in general and teacher leaders' metaphors in particular in relation to the concept of 'parent' is explored. The findings can be utilized by educational leaders, teachers and researchers providing valuable insights into teacher leaders' perspectives and contributing to the enhancement of parental involvement practices.

Research questions

The present study aims firstly (i) to explore teachers' attitudes toward parents in general and teacher leaders' attitudes toward parents in particular through metaphor analysis and secondly (ii) to examine how teacher leaders differ in terms of perceptions about 'parents' than other teachers. Our research questions are as follows:

1. What are the metaphors that teachers have regarding the concept of "parent" in general?
2. Under which conceptual categories can the identified metaphors be grouped in terms of common characteristics?
3. How do teacher leaders think differently about parents than teachers who do not exercise leadership?

Methodology

In line with the purpose of the study, a mixed methods approach has been adopted for the study. A phenomenology methodology has been adopted for the first qualitative part. Phenomenology focuses on exploring the depth of human experiences as perceived by the individuals themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Although teachers generally have knowledge about the concepts of "parents," this approach was chosen because it enables the exploration of teachers' unconscious and implicit understanding about parents. For the analysis of qualitative data, a metaphor analysis approach was used. The metaphors are often reflective of individuals' implicit beliefs and attitudes which may not easily captured by more traditional research methods (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Therefore, in educational research, metaphors are frequently used to describe people's perceptions (Hacıfazlıoğlu et al., 2011). For the quantitative part of the study, a survey methodology was adopted. Teacher leadership behavior scale (Bolat, 2023) was used to collect quantitative data. The use of scale offers a systematic and standardized approach to data collection (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). This approach provided a quantitative measure to what extent teachers exercise leadership in their schools and thus allowed for transforming the phenomena of leadership into a standardized format that is understandable and analyzable (Streiner et al., 2015). Participants filled out the scale and received a leadership score based on the scale. An Anova test was applied to compare three groups of teachers who have different perceptions about 'parents'. Such a quantitative approach was necessary since it would not be

possible to determine whether the difference of perceptions among groups were statistically significant without such a statistical analysis.

Study group

Data were collected from 112 teachers who work as teachers at public schools in the city of Bartın, Turkey during the 2022-2023 academic year. A convenience sampling method has been chosen. This sampling method brings speed and practicality to the research (Etikan et al., 2016) and provides easy access to the population (Fraenkel et al., 2011). Data were collected from participants in Bartın because of easy and convenient access. 23 participants were excluded from data analysis since their forms were incomplete, or contained meaningless sentences. Data analysis was performed on 89 participants. Participants were from diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, teaching experience and age. The number and percentage distributions of the demographic characteristics of the participants are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Number and percentage distributions of the demographics of the participants

Category		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	71	83,5
	Male	14	16,5
	Total	85	100
Age	25-34	29	34,1
	35-44	37	43,5
	45-65	19	22,4
	Total	85	100
Experience	1-10 years	29	34,9
	11 – 20 years	27	32,5
	21+ years	27	32,5
	Total	83	100

Note: Four participants did not provide demographics data

Out of the 89 participants, 71 (83.5%) are female, and 14 (16.5%) are male. 29 (34.1%) individuals are in the ‘25-34’ age range, 37 (43.5%) individuals are in the ‘34-44’ age range, and 19 (22.4%) individuals are in the ‘45-65’ age range. Finally, upon examining the experience of the participants, it is seen that the number of those with ‘1-10 years’ of experience is 29 (34.9%), the number of those with ‘11-20 years’ of experience is 27 (32.5%), and the number of those with ‘21 years and above’ of experience is 27 (32.5%).

Data collection instruments

Two data collection instruments were used for the purpose of the study. Firstly, for the quantitative data, participants filled out Teacher Leadership Behavior Scale developed by Bolat (2023). The scale has been shown to have high validity and reliability (Bolat, 2023). The purpose of the scale was to identify teacher leaders. The scale is a five-point Likert type scale, ranging from ‘(1) never’ to ‘(5) ‘always’. The scale consists of 17 items that measure teacher leadership behavior in four dimensions. These dimensions are classroom leadership (4 items), parental leadership (3 items), micro-level leadership (5 items) and macro-level leadership (5 items). The

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the scale are 0.77 for the classroom leadership dimension, 0.87 for the parental leadership dimension, 0.87 for the micro-level leadership dimension, and 0.88 for the macro-level leadership dimension. The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale is 0.89.

Secondly, for the qualitative data a single-item question form was prepared, which included the sentence: "A parent.....is like, because.....". All participants were asked (i) to generate a metaphor that best describes 'parents' and (ii) to explain their metaphor in order to provide deeper context and understanding, by filling out the blanks. Before the application of the question form, a pilot study was carried out with two teachers. The purpose of the metaphor was to explore parents' implicit thought patterns about 'parents'.

Data collection and analysis

Data for the study were collected through an online platform (SurveyMonkey) for the purpose of the study. A link was created and sent to the educational authorities in the city of Bartın and the link was forwarded to teachers. Metaphors generated by teachers were coded by two researchers independently in order to ensure the reliability of the findings, drawing from the principles of grounded theory, where patterns, themes, and categories emerge from the data itself rather than pre-conceived hypotheses (Charmaz, 2014). A content analysis technique was employed to analyze the data (Schreier, 2012), using open coding strategy (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Each participant was given a code name such as P1 and P15 and metaphor was given a category label. Subsequently, the metaphors were grouped based on similarities in their thematic content (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Through a process of constant comparison, themes were identified and refined. Discrepancies between the two researchers in the coding process were resolved through discussion until a consensus was reached. After the first coding, seven general categories emerged from the data. These seven categories were further coded in terms of their similarity. Three overarching categories emerged from the second round of coding process. The validity and reliability were established by providing a comprehensive description of the data collection and analysis processes as well as direct quotes from the qualitative data (Merriam, 2009) through what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call 'member checking'. The metaphors were presented to two participants, and the interpretation of the researcher was confirmed (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics 26. The first step involved conducting a frequency analysis to determine the number and percentage distribution of participants' personal information. Subsequently, normality tests and reliability analyses were applied to ascertain the suitability of the data for parametric tests. The analysis yielded Skewness and Kurtosis values of -0.441 and -0.632, respectively. Furthermore, the scale's Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.89. Based on these results, it was concluded that the data adhere to a normal distribution and that the measurement tool is highly reliable. Having met the precondition, the Anova test was applied to test the research hypotheses, and the findings of this study have been reported in the findings section.

Findings

This section firstly presents the findings and detailed analysis of the metaphors generated by teachers to characterize their conceptualization of 'parents'. Secondly, it presents the results

derived from statistical analysis. The interpretation of these findings is interpreted in the context of the research questions that guided this study. Teachers generated a total of 89 metaphors in relation to the concept of ‘parent’. Metaphors generated by teachers are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Metaphors generated by teachers in relation to the concept of ‘parent’

Category	Sub-Categories	Metaphors
Active Participants	Parent as Partner / Nurturer	A Business Partner (2), Companions (1), A Travel Companion (2), A Safe Haven (1), Salt (1), Soil (1), A Flower Pot (1), A Pot (1), A Collaborator (2), A Mother (1), The Four Legs of the Table (1), A Root (1), Your Teammate at Home (1), A Communication Tool (1), The Third Leg of a Three-Legged Table (1), A Puzzle (1), A Sculptor (1)
	Parent as Supporter	A Substitute Player (1), Supporter (2), A Support Stick (1), A Window (1), Sunlight (1), A Vehicle (1), A Staple (1), An Assistant (1), Our Professional Reflection (1), The Wire of a Kite (1), A Helper (1), A Coach (1)
	Parent as Observer	A Rooted Tree (1), An Audience (1), A Spectator (1), An Observer (1), A Listener (1)
Passive Participants	Parent as Student	The Seeker in a Game of Hot and Cold (1), Boomerang (1), A Follower (1), A Balance Scale (1), Clay (1), Passenger (1), A Home (1), A Student (1), A Car (1), A Flexible Rubber (1), Wind (1), Train Carriage (1)
	Parent as Mirror	A Mirror (8), A Home (1), A Book (1), A Foundation (1)
Adversarial Participants	Parent as Inspector	A Lion (1), A Journalist (1), The Hidden Hand (1), An Inspector (1), The Mother-in-law (1),
	Parent as Machiavellist	Wind (1), Rain (1), A Huge Variety (1), A Blessing (1), A Mushroom (1), A Cave (1), A Dark Well (1),
	Parent as Antagonist	A Piranha (1), An Ostrich (1), A Garbage Disposal (1), Trouble (2), A Balloon (1), Compliant (1), A Child (1), Salt (1), Ignorant (1), A Stop (1), A Blind (1),

Following a comprehensive first analysis in relation to teachers’ perception of parents, seven distinct parental perceptions/roles were identified: (i) parent as partner / nurturer, (ii) parent as supporter, (iii) parent as observer, (iv) parent as student, (v) parent as mirror, (vi) parent as inspector, (vii) parent as (viii) machiavellist and (ix) parent as antagonist. In the second comprehensive analysis, these categories were further grouped into three overarching parental roles and were expressed on a continuum ranging from ‘active participation’ to ‘passive participation’, and to ‘adversarial participation’ (see Table 3).

Table 3. Grouping of metaphor categories into three overarching parental roles

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Sub-Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Active Participants	33	37,08	Parent as Partner / Nurturer	20	23,60
			Parent as Supporter	12	13,48

Passive Participants	29	32,58	Parent as Observer	5	5,62
			Parent as Student	13	14,61
			Parent as Mirror	12	12,36
Adversarial Participants	27	30,34	Parent as Inspector	5	5,62
			Parent as Machiavellist	10	11,24
			Parent as Antagonist	12	13,48
Total	89	100		89	100

Active participation

This category includes the roles of 'Parent as Partner/Nurturer' and 'Parent as Supporter'. Teachers in these two groups (f33, %37,08) have a very positive view towards parents and they work with parents collaboratively for effective student outcomes.

Parents as partner / nurturer

Teachers who have a conception of parents as partner/nurturer (f20, %23,60) perceive parents as their team members. They see them as actively participating in their children's education. They contribute to the educational process, by working in collaboration with teachers. Teachers and these parents share a common vision for children. Furthermore, parents in this group are seen as nurturing the child like nurturing a plant. They create a supportive environment and offer assistance to promote their child's development. They also provide support in terms of extending learning beyond school. Here are some direct quotations from parents in this category: "A parent is like salt, because salt is an indispensable ingredient." (P49), "A parent is like the third leg of a three-legged table, because education is only achieved when the legs stand together." (P62), "A parent is like your teammate at home, because they support education at home." (P58), "A parent is like a puzzle, because you cannot have a whole without the missing piece." (P63) and "A parent is like a flower pot, because the soil has a significant role in the growth of a flower." (P53).

Parent as supporter

This role (f12, %13,48) represents parents who, while allowing teachers to lead the educational process, provide essential support and encouragement to teachers in times of need. While they grant teachers to lead the educational process, they back teachers' efforts. They are perceived as allies in the educational journey of their child. These parents stand behind teachers' endeavors and are viewed as dependable and reliable sources of support. More importantly this support is not just limited to their child but also extends to the teacher. Here are some direct quotations from parents in this category: "A parent is like a substitute player, because they should be involved in the educational process only when necessary." (P78), "A parent is like a support stick, because even when there is a plant in good soil, the plant will not stand upright without support." (P80), "A parent is like an assistant, because they're your supporter." (P86) and "A parent is like the wire of your kite, because they're your biggest supporter." (P88).

Overall, this 'active participation' category reflects the positive impacts of parents who provide support, motivation and encouragement to teachers. They view parents as active contributors to children's education and they appreciate their collaboration and support.

Passive participation

This group consists of the roles of 'Parent as Observer', 'Parent as Student', and 'Parent as Mirror'. Teachers perceive the parents in this broad category playing a less active, neutral role but still engaged in the educational process. Their participation involves observation and reflection, which leads to the development of their children indirectly. Teachers, who are aware of this dynamic, try to engage parents in the learning process.

Parents as observer

Parents in the “Parents as observer” category (f5, %5,62) are depicted as passive spectators in their child's education. They observe children's development from a distance. They entrust the education of their children with the teacher and involve in the educational process when needed. These parents, while maintaining an interest in their child's schooling, often entrust the educational process mainly to the teachers. They assume a more secondary role, offering support when necessary or when explicitly invited by the teachers. Here are some direct quotations from parents in this category: “A parent is like an audience member, because they are curious about the qualities and personality of the hero who will be in their child's life.” (P41), “A parent is like a spectator, because most of the time they observe.” (P42), and “A parent is like an observer, because they observe their child grow” (P43).

Parent as student

Parents in this category (f13, %14,61) are often seen as learners themselves in the educational process. Teachers believe that these parents need guidance and education as much as their children. Teachers believe that these parents are open to suggestions and feedback from teachers. These parents are believed to follow the lead of the teachers and rely on them for guidance. Teachers feel the responsibility to educate parents as well for effective student outcome. Teachers believe they can maintain a learning-oriented relationship with these parents. Here are some direct quotations from parents in this category: “A parent is like clay, because they also need to be molded alongside their child.” (P70), “A parent is like a passenger, because they need to be shown the right way.” (P71), and “A parent is like a car, because they start moving when you press on the gas pedal.” (P74).

Parent as mirror

Teachers in this category (f12, %12,36) perceive parents as reflecting their attitudes and behaviors onto their children. Similarly, they are often seen as reflections of their children. Parents serve as mirrors that shape their children's attitudes towards education, and similarly children's behaviors and attitudes can also be reflections of their parents' attitudes. Teachers are aware of this interaction, that is, parental modeling in learning processes, and often work with both groups. Teachers are aware that parental development reflects positively on their children and parents are strong models for their children. Here are some direct quotations from parents in this category: “A parent is like a mirror, because any child is a reflection of their parents.” (P32), “A parent is like a mirror, because we can see all of their reflections on their children.” (P33), and “A parent is like a book, because it is where the first behaviors and information are read correctly or incorrectly.” (P37).

This category, consisting of the roles of 'Parent as Observer', 'Parent as Student', and 'Parent as Mirror', refers to parents who take a less active but engaged role in children's education. Despite seeming passive or neutral, this style of involvement can lead to positive educational outcomes if it is managed and led effectively by teachers.

Adversarial participation

The roles of 'Parents as Inspector', 'Parent as Machiavellist' and 'Parent as Antagonist' fall under this category. They present serious challenges to teachers. Let alone helping teachers, parents in these group are sometimes believed to hinder teachers' effort to make a difference. These parents are perceived as potential obstacles to teachers' effort to improve educational progress. The 'Antagonist' parents not only lack support for teachers but actively or passively hinder their efforts. They exhibit a lack of trust in teachers' abilities to make a change and are seen as adversarial forces in the educational context. In some cases, teachers view them even as enemies.

Parents as Machiavellist

The 'Machiavellist' parents as perceived by teachers are unpredictable and often prioritize their own interests or their own children's interest over the collective goals of the teacher. Teachers believe that these parents support them when their needs are met and undermines their efforts when their needs are not met. In other words, they can be an effective support or an obstacle depending on whether their interests are served. Some teachers believe that most parents in this category think their child is only child in the universe, which often creates resentment in teachers. That is why these parents were labeled as Machiavellist after the Italian diplomat, author and philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli, who is known for his self-interest. Here are some direct quotations from parents in this category: "A parent is like the wind, because it is unpredictable and you cannot tell where the wind will blow from." (P20), "A parent is like rain, because while it's nice to watch from a distance, you will get wet as you get closer." (P21), "A parent is like a mushroom, because sometimes they're healthy, and sometimes they're poisonous." (P24), and "A parent is like a cat, because cats can scratch you, but they also let you love them." (P27).

Parents as inspector

This category (f5, %5,62) reflects teachers' perception of parents as critical overseers of their behavior. Parents in this 'the inspector role' take on an active, inquisitive stance. Teachers perceive these parents as vigilant monitors of their actions. Teachers feel under scrutiny and the pressure to perform their roles effectively. Most teachers in this group think parents are ready to criticize them when they make a mistake. They do not feel safe in the present of these parents. This attitude of judgment and criticism leads to an adversarial relationship between the teacher and parent. Here are some direct quotations from parents in this category: "A parent is like a journalist, because they question every detail." (P16), "A parent is like the hidden hand, because they observe everyone from afar and up close." (P17), and "A parent is like an inspector, because they inspect everything" (P18).

Parent as antagonist

This category, "Parents as Antagonists," (f12, %13,48) represents the most challenging group from the perspective of teachers. Parents into this category are perceived as overtly antagonistic, being as obstacles to teachers' efforts towards achieving effective educational outcomes. In most cases, they are seen as enemies, who try to seriously undermine teachers or 'enemies' who actively work against teachers' achievement. They are often perceived as distrustful of teachers, questioning their competencies. This leads to rivalry, tension and conflict. Here are some direct quotations from parents in this category: "A parent is like a piranha, because they are predatory." (P2), "A parent is like a garbage disposal unit, because they grind everything that they are given and throw away the pieces." (P4), and "A parent is often trouble, because they expect everything from the teacher and they act like the teacher has a magic wand that can fix anything." (P5).

Parents in this category, consisting the roles of 'Parents as Inspector', 'Parent as Machiavellist', and 'Parent as Antagonist', is perceived as the most challenging group by the teacher since they act as obstacles to teachers' efforts. They may act in a self-serving manner, critically scrutinize teacher actions and act as enemies in some cases.

In sum, teachers have three different views about 'parents' ranging from positive (active participation), to negative (adversarial participation), and to neutral (passive participation).

The second purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of teachers' leadership behaviors on their attitudes towards their students' parents. To serve this purpose, a hypothesis for the study has been formulated:

H1: Teachers who have positive attitudes towards students' parents have higher levels of leadership behavior, as measured by Teacher Leadership Behaviour Scale (Bolat, 2023) than teachers who have negative attitudes.

In the study, the difference in viewpoints towards parents between teachers who exercise leadership to a great extent (high scorers on the teacher leadership behavior scale) and teachers who exercise leadership to a less extent (low scorers on the teacher leadership behavior scale) was tested. Accordingly, the levels of leadership behavior among parents with positive (active participation), negative (adversarial participation), and neutral (passive participation) attitudes towards their students were compared. The results of the analysis are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Analysis results regarding the relationship between teachers' levels of leadership behavior and their attitudes towards parents

Dimension	Attitude	F	Mean	Std.S	F	P	Anova
Teacher Leadership Behavior	(1) Negative	27	3.76	0.55	3.440	0.03	2 > 1
	(2) Positive	34	4.13	0.51			
	(3) Neutral	28	3.91	0.61			

Upon examining the analysis results presented in Table 4, it was found that teachers who have a positive view of parents exhibit higher levels of leadership behavior than teachers who have a negative view ($p < 0.05$). Accordingly, the research hypothesis H1: "Teachers who have positive attitudes towards students' parents have higher levels of leadership behavior than

teachers who have negative attitudes" has been accepted. However, no statistically significant findings were detected between other groups.

Discussion and Conclusion

These categories of parental involvement exhibit the complexity and diversity of the parent-teacher relationship. It shows that parents can take on many roles, from active supporters and nurturing partners to passive observers and antagonists. An understanding of these perceptions of teachers offers an important insight into how to design effective parental engagement and teacher-partner collaboration. This categorization provides an insightful framework for making sense of teachers' perceptions of parental roles in education. Important lessons can be learnt about how to promote effective parental involvement and strengthen teacher-parent collaboration by investigating the opportunities and obstacles present in each category.

The present study achieved two things. Firstly, it explored teachers' perception of 'parents' through a metaphor analysis approach and secondly compared whether teacher leaders differ from other teachers in terms of their perception of 'parents.' The main aim of the research was to contribute to parent involvement activities that teachers and teacher leaders could implement by (i) discovering their implicit attitudes and (ii) demonstrating that there is a strong link between teacher leadership and parental involvement. The findings from the current study provide important insights into teachers' perception of parents and the connection between teacher leadership behavior and their attitudes towards parents.

The study identifies seven distinct teacher perceptions regarding the roles of parents. These perceptions of roles were labelled as 'Parent as Partner/Nurturers', 'Parent as Supporters', 'Parent as Observers', 'Parent as Students', 'Parent as Mirrors', 'Parent as Inspectors', 'Parent as Machiavellists', and 'Parent as Antagonists'. These seven roles imply a continuum from 'active participation' to 'passive participation', and to 'adversarial participation' in terms of parental involvement.

'Active participation' category includes the roles of 'Parent as Partner/Nurturer' and 'Parent as Supporter'. These parents are perceived as collaborators, providing motivation and encouragement, and contribute actively to their children's learning (Epstein, 2001). This is consistent with the idea of parental involvement as a joint effort between teachers and parents aimed at improving student outcomes (Jeynes, 2011).

Passive Participants, including 'Parent as Observer', 'Parent as Student', and 'Parent as Mirror', are less active but still are engaged in the educational process. This neutral parental involvement, although seeming disengaged or indifferent, has been argued in prior studies as potentially beneficial when properly managed by teachers (Pushor, 2017). This passive involvement is in fact a form of engagement and can be positively leveraged (Cairney & Munsie, 1995). Teachers could devise strategies to engage parents who are less active but still interested in their children's education (Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012).

The third category, Adversarial Participants, including 'Parents as Inspector', 'Parent as Machiavellist', and 'Parent as Antagonist', are perceived as challenges to teachers. These teachers had a negative attitude towards these roles. Having a negative belief about parental involvement could be harmful in developing relationships with parents and families (Pushor & Amendt, 2018). Teachers with this view needs to examine their beliefs. Research has found that when

teachers look inward to examine their dispositions towards parents, there was a significant shift in their disposition (Pushor, 2011). When teachers have a negative attitude towards parents, parents will also have a negative attitude. This adversarial parental belief will in turn impact teacher morale, efficacy, and school environment. Understanding these adversarial roles and finding ways to address them is essential to foster a better educational environment (Pushor, 2013). In sum, teachers perceive parents in different roles and these roles reflect their attitudes towards them. These attitudes influence how they approach parents and how they involve them in educational processes.

The study also explored the interaction between teacher leadership behavior and teachers' perception of parents. The findings support the hypothesis of the study, showing that teachers with higher degrees of leadership behavior have more positive attitudes toward parents than those with neutral or negative attitudes. Teachers who see parents as 'partners/nurturers' or 'supporters' frequently exhibit high levels of leadership behavior, which has a favorable effect on their interactions with parents. On the other hand, there was no statistically significant relationship between teacher leadership behavior levels and the category of 'passive participation.' Although teachers could see these parents as disinterested or indifferent, this neutral parental participation could be turned into an active participation model if they are well managed. For instance, one way to do is through teacher invitations to parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). There was no statistically significant relationship between teacher leadership behavior levels and the category of 'adversarial participation'. Teachers need to look inward to change their perceptions of parents for effective parental involvement.

This study has some limitations. Firstly, it focused on teachers from the city of Bartın. It is necessary to do additional research including parents from various types of school. Secondly, the sample exhibited an inequitable distribution of gender. Females were oversampled while males were undersampled. This convenience sampling strategy offers potential limitations since it is very likely to negatively impact the generalizability and validity of the results. Future studies need to include more males in their research. Future research also needs to explore the strategies teachers use to manage different forms of parental involvement and how these strategies are related to teachers' leadership behaviors.

Suggestions

Recommendations for future studies can be made. Teacher leaders as opposed to teachers who have low leadership scores have a more positive attitude towards parents. Further research should delve deeper into the factors influencing these interactions, especially which one is the cause and which one is the effect. Parental involvement may be significantly influenced by cultural norms and values, socioeconomic level, and community norms (Flowers, 2015). Therefore, future studies should try to include these various situations and investigate how they affect teacher leadership behavior. Further research is needed to understand why some teachers see parents as adversarial.

In light of these findings, several informed recommendations can be put forth to enhance the involvement of parents in the educational process. It is crucial for school leaders to actively facilitate and support teachers in engaging with parents. The study highlights the significance of teachers' attitudes towards parents, as negative attitudes can hinder their ability to effectively exercise leadership in involving parents. Therefore, it is imperative for school leaders to

proactively investigate and address teachers' perceptions, aiming to transform any negative attitudes into positive ones. This initial step is vital in developing and implementing effective strategies for parental involvement, ultimately fostering a collaborative and supportive educational environment.

Secondly, universally, there is a lack of professional preparation for teachers to involve parents in education (Morton, 2017; Saltmarsh et al., 2015) teachers need to be trained in terms of how to involve parents. Early research has shown that that teachers change could change their mindset thorough different interventions (Pushor, 2015). Professional development can play an important role in preparing teachers to effectively engage with parents (Warren et al., 2016). Therefore, school leaders need to design effective professional development programme that empower teachers with the tools so that they can involve more parents and encourage meaningful partnerships with parents.

Thirdly, teachers cannot exercise leadership for parental involvement when they have negative attitudes towards parents. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers engage in self-reflection and self-analysis in order to understand the origins of their mindset. They need to critically evaluate their own approaches towards parents and identify and address any biases that may affect their relationship with parents negatively. This reflective process enables teachers to develop a more positive and strong partnerships with parents in the educational journey of their children.

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