

The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and School Happiness: The Mediator Role of School Culture

Tuba Çakır 

Ministry of National Education, Istanbul, Türkiye

Mustafa Özgenel* 

Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Istanbul, Türkiye

Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal the mediating role of school culture in the effect of school principals' transformational leadership style on school happiness. For this purpose, the research was conducted according to the quantitative research method and relational screening model. Transformational leadership style was determined as the independent variable, school culture as the mediating variable, and school happiness as the dependent variable. The study group of the research consists of 403 teachers working in public schools on the European side of Istanbul. Data were analyzed with correlation and mediation tests. The research findings indicate a significant and positive relationship between school principals' transformational leadership style and teachers' perception of school happiness. While the transformational leadership style directly and positively impacts school happiness, this effect continues even when support culture, achievement culture, and task culture are included in this dual relationship. However, support culture and task culture "partially mediate" this relationship, thereby indirectly contributing to the impact of transformational leadership style

Article Info

Article History:

Received:

October 18, 2023

Accepted:

September 1, 2024

Keywords:

Leadership,
Transformational
leadership,
School culture,
School happiness.

*Corresponding author

Email: mustafa.ozgenel@izu.edu.tr

on school happiness. In light of these findings, the transformational leadership style of school principals can be considered as an important strategy to increase the overall happiness of the school community by developing and supporting a culture of support and a culture of task.

Cite as:

Çakır, T. & Özgenel, M. (2024). The relationship between transformational leadership and school happiness: The mediator role of school culture. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership*, 9(3), 253-293. <http://10.30828/real.1377849>

Introduction

The concept of organizational happiness is gaining increasing attention in contemporary research. This trend emerges from the understanding that enhancing the happiness of individuals in the workplace significantly contributes to the development and effectiveness of schools and organizations (Achor, 2018; Gavin & Mason, 2004). Consequently, many recent studies emphasize the necessity and importance of investigating the concept of school happiness and its antecedents. For example, research has shown that happy individuals perform better and achieve more in their professional lives (Achor, 2018; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Mendoza-Ocasal et al., 2022), thereby contributing more to organizational outcomes (Cropanzano & Wright, 1999; Marescaux et al., 2019; Tanwar, 2019; Yusof et al., 2017; Wright et al., 2007). Furthermore, happy employees are reported to have better physical health, job performance, job retention intentions (Wright & Quick, 2009), job satisfaction, job engagement (Aruoren & Oisamoje, 2023), emotional



commitment (Abdullah & Ling, 2016), organizational citizenship behaviors (Al-Abedie & Al-Temimi, 2015), problem-solving skills, and higher productivity (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). The happiness of teachers is as important as fostering positive student experiences in the educational environment. This is because the general happiness of teachers not only affects their personal job satisfaction but also deeply impacts the quality of education delivered and, consequently, student and institutional outcomes. In this light, identifying the antecedent factors affecting school happiness can provide school principals with insights into developing strategies to create a supportive and conducive environment for enhancing school happiness.

School principals are among the key factors influencing teachers' school happiness (Döş, 2013; Kılıç et al., 2023). The primary responsibility of leaders is to develop strategies to achieve organizational goals (McGregor, 1966) and promote the happiness of employees (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004). Specifically, school principals should prioritize enhancing teachers' happiness to increase the effectiveness of educational institutions. However, the school happiness of teachers, who bear multifaceted responsibilities in school environments, has been overlooked (Talebzadeh & Samkan, 2011). Yet, in recent years, interest in research on the school happiness of teachers (Al-Bataineh et al., 2021; Akyürek & Göktaş, 2023; Akyürek & Aypay, 2023; Alkan & Özgenel, 2024; Aunampai et al., 2022; Bahat & Işık, 2023; Sezer & Can, 2020) and students (Akyürek, 2024; López-Pérez & Fernández-Castilla, 2018; Xiang & Choi 2024; Yam, 2022; Yoon & Shin, 2014) has increased. Existing literature examines the bilateral and linear relationships between school administrators' leadership styles and school culture (Özgenel, 2020; Özgenel & Dursun, 2020; Yu et al., 2002), leadership styles and school happiness (Şahin & Özgenel, 2020),



and school culture and teachers' happiness (Raj et al., 2019). However, there is a noticeable lack of evidence regarding the mediating role of school culture, which significantly influences the school community and shapes the identity of educational institutions, in the relationship between principals' transformational leadership approaches and organizational/school happiness. This study proposes transformational leadership and school culture as antecedents of school happiness. Specifically, we tested a mediation model in which transformational leadership enhances school happiness through school culture. The research model of this study is unique in that it is the first (to our knowledge) to test the mediating effect of school culture in the relationship between transformational leadership and school happiness. In this context, the research aims to provide school principals with a conceptual model and empirical evidence for enhancing teacher happiness. The present study will deepen our understanding of the antecedents and possible mechanisms associated with school happiness.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

The Relationship between Transformational Leadership, School Culture, and School Happiness

While happiness is generally considered a series of positive emotions or overall well-being (Achor, 2018), school/organizational happiness is defined as the emotional well-being arising from the harmony among individuals and groups that constitute the school/organizational community (Engels et al., 2004). School/organizational happiness is gaining increasing importance in terms of organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Imran et al., 2023). Warr (2011) suggests that individuals can experience various emotional states in their



organizations, and reaching the desired happiness will be effective in realizing their potential. Januvarson (2015) found that happy employees in organizations are more willing to help their colleagues, perform better, handle a significant portion of their work independently, and exhibit high organizational commitment. Additionally, recent studies on the general well-being and happiness of teachers provide compelling evidence that happy teachers perform better and have a higher potential to improve and enhance school and student outcomes (Abdullah & Ling, 2016; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2009; Imran et al., 2023; Özgenel & Canuylası, 2020).

School administrators are prominent among the factors affecting teachers' school happiness and satisfaction levels (Bulut, 2015; Döş, 2013; Ouellette et al., 2018). This is because the leadership practices exhibited by school administrators in the school environment affect the entire school community, especially the teachers. In other words, effective school leadership influences school management processes, operations, and outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2006; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2013). For example, the management of diversity within an organization (Arslan & Polat, 2021) and the organizational justice behaviors of the leader (Çetin & Polat, 2021) are factors that affect teachers' happiness. Furthermore, research has shown that leadership styles are associated with teacher satisfaction, student engagement, and overall school effectiveness (Waters et al., 2003). According to research findings, teachers report being happier when working with transformational leaders rather than laissez-faire or transactional leaders (Kılıç et al., 2023). Transformational leadership is said to impact school happiness because it encourages looking beyond personal interests for the group's welfare, meeting emotional needs (Bass, 1990), and showing great sensitivity and interest in the

happiness of others (Rosenberg, 2010). This claim is supported by research findings. Empirical evidence indicates that school principals' transformational leadership style enhances school happiness (Abdullah et al., 2017; Şahin & Özgenel, 2020). Based on this theoretical foundation and empirical evidence, we hypothesize that transformational leadership is positively related to school happiness (Hypothesis 1).

Transformational leaders, as part of modern leadership approaches, are individuals who can change the goals and values of their followers during the leadership process and activate their potential (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders act in accordance with ethical principles and values, provide vision, pay attention to followers' needs, inspire and motivate them, make their efforts valuable, encourage creativity and innovation, and serve as role models (Bass, 1996; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass et al., 2003). In other words, transformational leaders make their followers inspirational and intellectually stimulating (Bass, 1999), gradually transform followers' attitudes and values into other-oriented values (Starratt, 1995), increase followers' levels of awareness (Antonakis et al., 2003), develop leadership capacities, and promote a shared vision and positive organizational culture (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

A positive culture contributes to the success of the organization/school when aligned with leadership practices (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). The school leader plays a key role in creating a positive school culture. Organizational culture is built (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Daft, 2015), transformed, and managed by leaders (Schein, 2004). The primary duty of the school leader is to manage the culture towards the goals of the school (Schein, 2004). Despite the acknowledged importance of school culture on school effectiveness and efficiency (Cogaltay &



Karadag, 2016; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Schreiber, 2019), there is insufficient research identifying the specific behaviors of school leaders that contribute to a positive school culture (Fullan, 2007; Rutter & Maughan, 2002; Turan & Bektaş, 2013). A study aimed at filling this gap found that school principals contribute to a positive school culture when they are visible and participatory in the daily operation of the school, clearly communicate values, involve all stakeholders in the process, encourage shared decision-making processes, support collaboration opportunities, use recognition and appreciation systems, engage in face-to-face communication, show respect to others, and build trust (Schreiber, 2019). School leaders who can articulate a clear vision, empower and support their staff and students, set high expectations, and create a culture of community are more likely to succeed in creating a positive school culture. A study reported that transformational school leaders are more successful in creating a positive school culture by clearly expressing the school's vision, empowering and supporting their staff and students, setting high expectations, and fostering a sense of community (Sasan, 2023). Research underscores the importance of the connection between school leaders and school culture (Huguet, 2017; McKinney et al., 2015; Özgenel & Dursun, 2020; Özgenel, 2020). In summary, research findings show that transformational leadership influences school culture and contributes to its development (Windasari et al., 2023). Considering the pattern of association and past evidence, we hypothesize that transformational leadership is positively related to school culture (Hypothesis 2).

The Relationship between School Culture and School Happiness

Culture is a fundamental factor that strongly predicts happiness (Mathews, 2012; Oishi & Gilbert, 2016; Ye et al., 2015). Organizational



culture is a pattern of assumptions developed by an organization to solve its internal and external adaptation problems, and it is adopted by group members as valid when similar situations arise (Schein, 1990). Positive cultural elements within a school, such as values, heroes, rituals, ceremonies, and stories, help unite the school community around a common mission or purpose (Deal & Peterson, 1998). Schwartz and Davis (1981) noted that the most important factor underlying the success of the world's most effective organizations is a distinct culture that sets them apart from others. Organizations with strong cultures are more cohesive, have higher member motivation and commitment, are more collaborative, better at resolving conflicts, have greater innovation capacity, and are more effective in achieving their goals (Peterson & Deal, 1998). School culture reflects the positive relationships within the school environment and the shared experiences of key stakeholders, such as administrators and teachers. The more accepted this sharing is, the happier the school community becomes. A strong and established school culture framed by a set of shared values, attitudes, beliefs, and norms supports school happiness. In other words, high school happiness requires a positive school culture that supports it. Stoia (2016) concluded in his study that an organization must have a culture based on development and progress for organizational happiness. Based on this theoretical foundation and empirical evidence, we hypothesize a positive relationship between school culture and school happiness (Hypothesis 3).

The Mediating Role of School Culture

The school principal is the person who best understands the strength and importance of school culture in management. This is because the behaviors and practices of leaders become symbols of organizational culture (Bass, 1999). The primary duty of school leaders is to create a



positive school culture (Schein, 2004) and shape the school culture to focus on student learning (Peterson & Deal, 1998). In this sense, transformational school leaders build school culture by involving teachers in decision-making processes, serving as role models, keeping their motivation high, establishing self-regulation, and communicating effectively in their daily work (Arifin et al., 2022). They convey core values through their actions and words, which teachers reinforce (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Principals shape culture positively when they share leadership and assume responsibility for shaping classroom improvements (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

When considering organizational culture in schools, it encompasses the unwritten norms, traditions, rituals, rules, values, and beliefs created by school members (Kaplan & Owins, 2013; Peterson & Deal, 1998). Therefore, school culture is seen as an invisible force that is not immediately noticeable in the school. Although invisible, a meta-analysis study reported that a positive school culture positively contributes to teacher productivity, job satisfaction, and student success (Cogaltay & Karadag, 2016). Additionally, it has been determined that school culture needs to reflect a supportive learning environment for teachers to perform at their best (Schreiber, 2019).

Culture is a dynamic phenomenon continuously created through our interactions and shaped by leadership behavior. It also represents a set of structures, values, rules, and norms that guide and constrain the behavior of individuals in the organization (Schein, 2004), shaping how people think, feel, and act in schools (Peterson & Deal, 1998). School culture mediates transformational leaders' organizational change efforts. In other words, transformational leadership indirectly affects organizational change through school culture (Atasoy, 2020; Windasari et al., 2023). Transformational leaders establish the

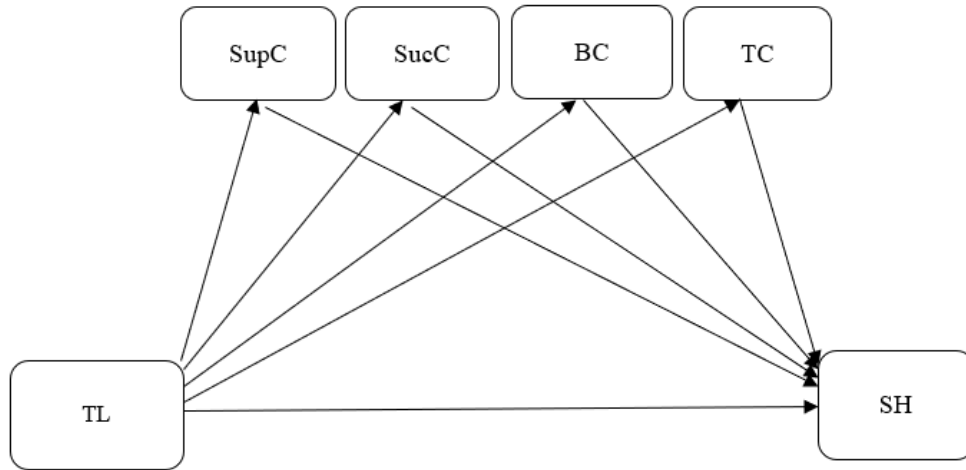


fundamental values and norms of school culture, ensuring these values are embedded in daily practices. By shaping school culture positively, transformational leaders strengthen relationships within the school community, increase motivation, create a supportive environment, and enhance school happiness. Empirical studies consistently suggest that transformational school leadership behavior promotes school happiness (Hypothesis 1) and positive school culture (Hypothesis 2). Based on this knowledge, we predict a positive relationship between school culture and school happiness (Hypothesis 3). Additionally, considering Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, we hypothesize that transformational leadership indirectly influences school happiness through school culture (Hypothesis 4).

Methodology

Research Model

Since this study aimed to test the mediating role of school culture in the effect of school principals' transformational leadership style on school happiness, it was conducted according to the relational survey model. The relational survey model is a study in which the relationships between two or more variables are examined (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The relationships between the independent variable (transformational leadership style), mediator variable (school culture) and dependent variable (school happiness) in the research are shown in Figure 1.



Note: TL= Transformational Leadership; SupC= Support Culture; SucC= Success Culture; BC= Bureaucratic Culture; TC= Task Culture; SH= School Happiness; SC= School Culture

Figure 1. Theoretical model

H₁: Transformational leadership (TL) directly affects school happiness.

H₂: Transformational leadership (TL) directly affects school culture (SC) (support culture; success culture; bureaucratic culture; task culture).

H₃: School culture (support culture [SupC]; success culture [SucC]; bureaucratic culture [BC]; task culture [TC]) directly affects school happiness.

H₄: SC (SupC, SucC, BC, TK), mediates the relationship between TL and SH. In other words, TL indirectly affects SH through SC.



Participants

403 teachers working in public schools in Istanbul participated in the research voluntarily in the 2021-2022 academic year. Participants were identified using non-probability convenience sampling, which involves collecting data from participants who were “convenienced” for the study (Edgar & Manz, 2017; Galloway, 2005). Data were collected face to face by the researchers by visiting schools over a period of approximately two months. Participants were informed about the purpose and scope of the research. 4.9% (302) of the teachers were female, 91.6% (369) had a bachelor's degree, 32.3% (130) had a seniority of 11-15 years, 40.2% (162) are in the age range of 31-40, 60.5% (244) work in primary schools, 71.5% (288) work at their current school for 4 years or less, and 78.9% (318) are working with the same principal since maximum 4 years.

Data Collection Tools

In the research, Personal Information Form, Transformational Leadership Scale (TLS), School Culture Scale (SCS) and School Happiness Scale (SHS) were used.

Transformational Leadership Scale (TLS). In the research, the 8-item and one-dimensional TLS established by Berger et al. (2012) and adapted to Turkish by Okan and Okan (2021) was used (*Example item= He/she develops ways of motivating us*). There are no reverse items in the scale. It is a 5-point Likert type. The total score is assessed by summing the scores from all items. TLS: It is coded as “Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Undecided (3), Agree (4), Totally agree (5) points”. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the test reliability for the TLS was found to be .960.

School Culture Scale (SCS). Scale established by Terzi (2005) was used to determine the current cultural structure in schools. SCS contains 29 items and 4 sub dimensions. SCS was coded with an increasing point system in the form of 1- 2- 3- 4- 5 and was graded as "Never", "Rarely", "Occasionally", "Usually", "Always" as a 5-point Likert Scale (*Example item= In this school, sufficient effort is made to achieve the school's goals*). Subdimensions in the SCS; It represents Support culture, Bureaucratic culture, Success culture, and Task culture.

School Happiness Scale (SHS). SHS developed by Sezer and Can (2019) was used to determine the perceptions of teachers' school happiness. SHS consists of 5 subdimensions and 26 items (*Example item= Teachers at school love their profession*). These are determined as: "Physical Equipment (1.- 2.- 3.- 4. Items)", "Learning Environment (5.-6. -7.-8.- 9.- 10.-11. Items)", "Cooperation (12.-13.-14.-15.-16.- 17.-18.-19. Items)", "Activities (20.- 21.- 22. Items)", "School Administration (23.- 24-25-26. Items)". The scale is a 5-point Likert type. Scale items are coded as "Never (1), Rarely (2), Occasionally (3), Usually (4), Always (5)". The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the SHS was calculated as .872.

The necessary legal and ethical permissions for the research process and the data collection tools used in the research were obtained from the developers (Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education dated 28.03.2022 and numbered E-59090411-20-46622054 and Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University Ethics Committee dated 24.02.2022 and numbered 2022/02).

Analysis of the Data

Before testing the mediation model proposed in the study, the reliability values (Cronbach Alpha [*a*]) of the scales, normality (kurtosis and skewness), multicollinearity (Tolerance Value [TV] and

Variance Inflation Factor [VIF]) and autocorrelation assumptions (Durbin-Watson [DW]), and outliers (Mahalanobis and Cook's distance) values were examined.

Table 1.

Kurtosis and Skewness Values of Scales and their Reliability Coefficients

Variable	Skewnes	Kurtosis	<i>a</i>	TV	VIF
1-Transformational Leadership (TL)	-0.626	-0.449	0.961	0,496	2,015
2-Support Culture (SupC)	-0.514	-0.224	0.878	0,236	4,240
3-Success Culture (SucC)	-0.589	-0.039	0.832	0,211	4,737
4-Bureucratic Culture (BC)	-0.001	0.067	0.788	0,897	1,115
5-Task Culture (TC)	-0.580	0.431	0.808	0,436	2,291
6-School Happiness (SH)	-0.358	0.089	0.948		

When the scale's kurtosis and skewness values are examined, it can be understood that they are in the range of ± 1 . According to George and Mallery (2019), when the kurtosis and skewness values of the data are in the range of ± 1 , they show a perfect distribution. When the reliability values of the scales are examined, it is understood that the reliability values of the transformational leadership, support culture, task culture, success culture and bureaucratic culture and school happiness scales are high (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance Value (TV) are often recommended to detect multicollinearity. According to Table 1, TV values vary between 0.211-0.897; VIF values vary between 1.115-4.737. There is no multicollinearity problem when $VIF \leq 10$ and $TV > 0.10$



(Bruin, 2006; Gunst & Webster, 1975). The Durbin-Watson (DW) test was examined to determine whether there was an autocorrelation problem between the error terms in the data of the scales. In DW statistics, it takes values between $0 < d < 4$. If the DW value is less than 1 and greater than 3, it indicates that there is an autocorrelation problem. Since the DW value in the study 1.882, it is understood that there is no autocorrelation (Yavuz, 2009).

Multiple regression analysis was performed to examine multicollinearity, autocorrelation and outliers of the scales. Transformational leadership, support culture, success culture, bureaucratic culture and task culture were determined as independent variables, and school happiness was determined as the dependent variable and analysis was carried out. Relevant findings are given in Table 2.

Table 2.
Residual Statistics for Variables

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	DW
Mahal. Distance	,122	20.431	4.988	3,793	401	1.882
Cook's Distance	,000	,055	,003	,007	401	

In structural equation modeling analysis, outliers need to be detected because multivariate outliers have an impact on fit indices (Kline, 2019; Simmons et al., 2011). Outliers can completely change the model because they are usually caused by an error in measurement and have the potential to skew the data (Leys, Klein, Dominicy, & Ley, 2018). In this respect, Cook's distances and Mahalanobis distances are the most effective techniques for outlier detection (Olive, 2008). The Mahalanobis distance critical value can be calculated with a chi-square

(χ^2) distribution table (Rousseuw & Van Zomeren, 1990). Since there were 5 independent variables in the study (transformational leadership, success culture, support culture, bureaucratic culture, task culture) and one dependent variable (school satisfaction), the critical value of Mahalanobis distance was determined as $\chi^2 < 20.52$ according to the chi-square table (Fisher & Yates, 1953). Cook's distances value must be less than 1.00 (Cook, 1977). In the multiple regression analysis, 2 outliers were identified, these values were removed from the data set and the analysis was re-done. When Table 2 is examined, it is understood that there is no outlier since the Mahalanobis distance value ($\chi^2 = 20.431$) is less than $\chi^2 > 20.515$ and the Cook's distances value is less than 1.00 (Max. = .055).

In the study, after it was determined that the data showed normal distribution, was reliable, and did not have multicollinearity, autocorrelation and outlier problems, the model was tested according to the multiple mediation analysis suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986): (i) There must be a significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent and mediating variables; (ii) there must be a relationship between the mediating variable and the dependent variable. (iii) When a mediating variable is added to the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable should either disappear or be noticeably reduced. In addition, the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation method was used to test the predictive power of the theoretical model. Indirect effect values were calculated to test the mediating role and effects of school culture on the relationship between transformational leadership and school happiness. The bootstrap technique was used to determine the effect size and statistical confidence level, and 95% confidence



intervals (CI) with 5000 iterations were used as the basic reference (Hayes, 2022; Hayes & Scharkow, 2013).

Findings

To test the theoretical model of the research, first the relationships between TL, SC and SH variables were examined.

Table 3.

Relationships Between Variables

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1-Transformational Leadership (TL)	4.089 (0.807)	-	,680**	,653**	,083	,570**	,648**
2-Support Culture (SupC)	3.954 (0.717)		-	,860**	,173**	,637**	,710**
3-Success Culture (SucC)	3.874 (0.755)			-	,179**	,716**	,682**
4-Bureaucratic Culture (BC)	3.246 (0.697)				-	,298**	,135**
5-Task Culture (TC)	4.038 (0.626)					-	,576**
6-School Happiness (SH)	4.040 (0.593)						-

Note(s)=403; *p<.05 level; **p<.01 level

According to Table 3, the mean values of all scales and subscales in five-point Likert-type scales are relatively high, ranging from 3.246 to 4.089 (0.807); standard deviation values vary between 0.593 and 0.807. When Table 3 is examined, school principals' TL and SupC, there is a moderately significant relationship between (r=.680; p<.01), culture of SucC (r=.653; p<.01), TC (r=.648; p<.01) and SH (r=.648; p<.01). Nevertheless, it has been determined that there is no significant relationship between the TL and the BC. (r=.083; p>.05).

While it is detected a moderately significant and positive relationship between SH and SupC (r=.710; p<.01), SucC (r=.682; p<.01), and TC (r=.576; p<.01); It was determined that there is a positive but low-level

significant relationship between SH and BC ($r=.135$; $p<.01$). After determining the relationships between TL and SH and SC, mediating analysis was performed.

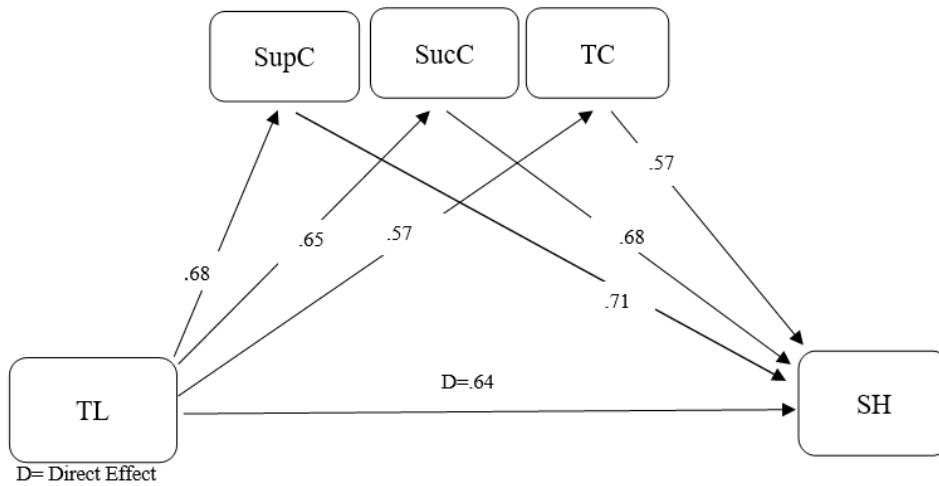


Figure 2. Research Model

SupC, TC and SucC were included and analyzed in the relationship between TL and SH. Transformational leadership was explained 41% of the total variance in school happiness. After the analysis, it was checked again whether the regression path coefficients between the variables were significant (Table 4).

Table 4.

Regression Coefficients Between the Variables

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
Support Culture	<---	Transformational Leadership	,604	,033	18,525	***

Task culture	<---	Transformational Leadership	,443	,032	13,888	***
Success Culture	<---	Transformational Leadership	,610	,035	17,225	***
School Happiness	<---	Transformational Leadership	,193	,034	5,693	***
School Happiness	<---	Support Culture	,287	,056	5,163	***
School Happiness	<---	Task culture	,104	,045	2,286	,022
School Happiness	<---	Success Culture	,104	,056	1,864	,062

According to Table 4, it was seen that the regression path coefficient between school happiness and success culture was not significant ($p > .05$), this path between school happiness and success culture was deleted and the analysis was performed again.

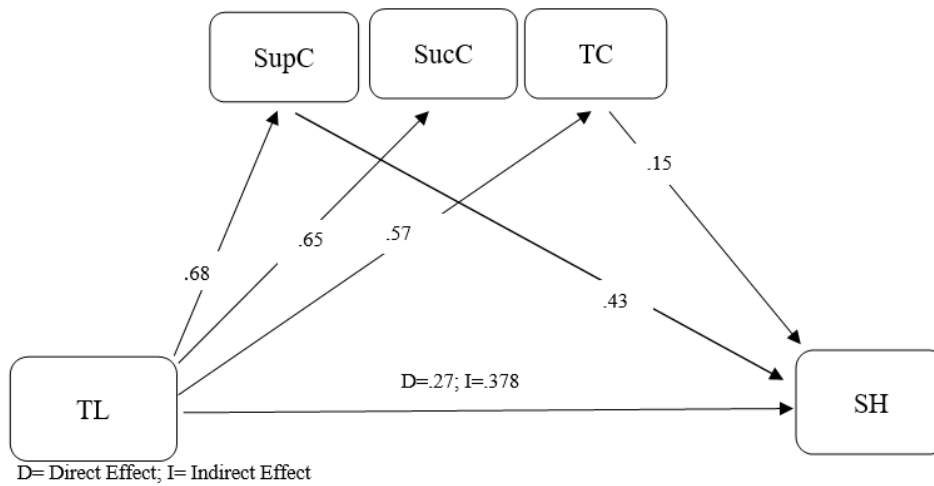


Figure 3. Model with School Culture as Mediator Variable

For the validity of the model, the regression coefficients given in Table 5 were reexamined.

Table 5.
Regression Coefficients Between Variables

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
Support Culture	<---	Transformational Leadership	,604	,033	18,525	***
Task Culture	<---	Transformational Leadership	,443	,032	13,888	***
School Happiness	<---	Transformational Leadership	,199	,034	5,858	***
School Happiness	<---	Support Culture	,359	,041	8,807	***
School Happiness	<---	Task Culture	,138	,042	3,303	***
Success Culture	<---	Transformational Leadership	,610	,035	17,225	***

When Table 5 was examined, all regression path coefficients between the variables were found to be significant ($p < .01$) and it was understood that the fit indices showed perfect fit [$\chi^2=3.461$, $df=1$; $p=.063$], [RMR=.003; SRMR=.007; NFI=.998; CFI=.998; TLI=.983; GFI=.996; AGFI=.997] and acceptable fit [AGFI=.948; RMSEA=.078] (Kline, 2019; Ullman, 2006). In addition, the standardized direct and indirect effect values of the model were examined (Table 6).

Table 6.
Standardized Direct and Indirect Effect Values



	Direct Effect			Indirect Effect		
	TL	TC	SupC	TL	TC	SupC
TC	,570	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
SupC	,680	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
SucC	,653	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
SH	,271	,145	,434	,378	,000	,000

According to Table 6, TL affects the TC ($\beta=.570$; $p<.01$); SupC ($\beta=.680$; $p<.01$), SucC ($\beta=.653$; $p<.01$) and SH ($\beta=.271$; $p<.01$) directly. Furthermore, TC ($\beta=.145$; $p<.01$) and SupC directly affect SH ($\beta=.434$; $p<.01$).

When the indirect effect value in Table 5 is examined, the TL indirectly affects SH through the TC and SupC ($\beta=.378$; $p<.01$). TL affects school happiness directly and indirectly through TC and SupC. Namely, TL directly influences SH in a positive way. Moreover, when SC is added to this dual relationship, the effect of the TL on SH continues, but the SupC and TC indirectly contributes to the effect of the TL on SH by "partially mediating" this bilateral relationship. While the TL explains about 46% of the total diversity in SH ($\sigma^2=.46$); TLS, SupC and TC together explain 57% of the total variance in SH ($\sigma^2=.57$). This finding provides evidence both for the strong effect of TL on SH and for the school culture variable's "partial mediating" role in this relationship. The final step of the mediation analyses involved analyzing the mediating role of school culture in the relationship between transformational leadership and school happiness using bootstrap analysis with 95% confidence interval (CI) and 5000 resamples (Table 7).

Table 7.

Confidence Interval Values

Parameter			CI	Lower	Upper	p
Support Culture	<---	Transformational Leadership	,604	,537	,667	,000
Task Culture	<---	Transformational Leadership	,443	,372	,516	,000
School Happiness	<---	Transformational Leadership	,199	,130	,266	,000
School Happiness	<---	Support Culture	,359	,273	,440	,001
School Happiness	<---	Task Culture	,138	,049	,232	,002
Success Culture	<---	Transformational Leadership	,610	,535	,684	,000

The analysis revealed that school culture mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and school happiness, with a standardized indirect effect coefficient of .378. Bootstrapping indicated that the confidence intervals for the indirect effect ranged from .049 to .537 for the lower limit and from .232 to .684 for the upper limit. Since the confidence intervals do not include zero (0), the indirect effect is considered significant (Hayes, 2022). These results indicate that school culture partially mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and school happiness.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study contributes to the knowledge base of educational leadership by focusing on the complex dynamics between school principals' transformational leadership style, school culture, and school happiness. By showing that school principals' transformational leadership style directly affects task culture, support culture,



achievement culture, and school happiness, and that task and support cultures partially mediate this relationship, the study highlights the multifaceted impact of transformational leadership in educational settings. It also advances our understanding of the antecedent factors of school happiness by drawing attention to the mediating role of support and task culture.

The positive relationship between transformational leadership and school happiness (Abdullah et al., 2017; Kılınc, 2023; Şahin & Özgenel, 2020) and school culture (Sasan, 2023; Schreiber, 2019; Yu et al., 2002; Windasari et al., 2023) and between school culture and school happiness (Raj et al., 2019) seems to be consistent with previous research findings. The partial mediating role of support culture and task culture between transformational leadership and school happiness is a critical finding. School principals directly affect school happiness by embodying transformational leadership qualities and indirectly by developing supportive and task-oriented cultures. This mediation emphasizes the fundamental function of school culture as a channel through which transformational leadership practices translate into overall school happiness. The concepts of justice, freedom, and equality form the basis of transformational leadership (Bass, 1999). School transformational leadership fair and egalitarian behaviors positively and strongly affect school happiness and school culture (Aytaç, 2021; Şahin & Özgenel, 2020; Dursun & Bilgivar, 2022). There is considerable empirical evidence supporting the mediating role of school culture. Mert and Özgenel (2020) provide supporting evidence that school culture mediates the relationship between leadership resources, psychological climate, and empowerment, reinforcing the idea that a strong school culture is vital for effective leadership outcomes. Furthermore, transformational leaders indirectly contribute

to organizational change by mediating school culture in their desire to make changes in the organization (Atasoy, 2020; Windasari et al., 2023). In this respect, transformational leadership, which is consistent with a school's culture that encompasses shared values, beliefs, and behaviors, plays a crucial role in shaping school happiness. In other words, transformational leadership can increase school happiness through a culture of mission and support. A task culture mediates this relationship through goal-setting and results-oriented behavior, while a culture of support mediates this relationship through collaboration and emotional commitment.

In conclusion, this research reaffirms the critical role of transformational leadership in creating a positive and strong school culture and increasing school happiness. Transformational leadership, together with a supportive culture and a task culture, contributes to teachers' sense of school happiness and supports school development and effectiveness. The partial mediation of school culture highlights the need for principals to develop supportive and task-oriented environments. These findings provide a solid foundation for both practical applications and future research aimed at optimizing educational leadership and school effectiveness.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study emphasize the pivotal role of transformational leadership in enhancing school happiness through both direct influence and the mediation of supportive and task-oriented school cultures. Principals who embody transformational leadership qualities—such as fairness, egalitarianism, and inspirational motivation—can significantly boost the overall well-being of the school community. Therefore, it is essential for school



leaders to focus on developing a positive school culture that supports and engages teachers, thereby indirectly improving school happiness.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The research is limited to the perceptions of teachers working in Istanbul during the 2022-2023 academic years. This geographical and temporal limitation restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions or time periods. The data collected is based on self-reported measures, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability or respondent's mood at the time of completing the survey. The study used data from teachers. Including a more diverse set of participants, such as administrators, parents, and students, can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. The study employs a correlational survey design, which captures a single point in time. This design limits the ability to make causal inferences or to observe changes and developments over time. The study does not account for various contextual factors that might influence the relationships among transformational leadership, school culture, and school happiness. Factors such as the environment where the school is located, school and class size, and the number of teachers in the school may play important roles in the relationship between variables, but they were not examined in this study. The findings from this study are specific to the educational context and may not be applicable to other organizational settings. Caution should be exercised when generalizing the results beyond the studied context.

Future research should involve diverse sample groups beyond teachers working in Istanbul to enhance the generalizability of the

findings. Including students, parents, and administrators from various regions and school types can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between leadership, culture, and school happiness. Further studies could investigate other organizational concepts that may mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and school happiness, such as emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, and teacher autonomy. Examining the impact of different leadership styles (e.g., transactional, servant, or ethical leadership) on school happiness and culture can provide comparative insights and broaden the scope of educational leadership research. Conducting longitudinal studies to track changes over time in leadership practices, school culture, and happiness can offer deeper insights into causal relationships and long-term effects.

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About the authors:

Tuba Çakır is a graduate of Classroom Teaching. She completed her master's degree in educational administration at Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University. She continues to work as an deputy principal in a public primary school affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in Istanbul.

E-mail: egitim_tuba@hotmail.com



Authorship credit details: Conceptualization, methodology, software, investigation, resources, data curation, formal analysis, writing-original draft, visualization.

Mustafa Özgenel is an associate professor at Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, specializing in professional development, performance, organizational and professional commitment, organizational agility, and agile leadership. He has authored numerous studies on these topics, with a particular focus on educational management, teacher development, and research methodologies. Özgenel is actively involved in international projects aimed at advancing teachers' professional growth.

E-mail: mustafa.ozgenel@izu.edu.tr

Authorship credit details: Methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, writing - review and editing, visualization, supervision.