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An Analysis of Instructional Leadership Studies in Türkiye: A Meta-Synthesis Study

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

ABSTRACT

Instructional leadership has a remarkable importance in student learning and school development in the international literature. This situation enables researchers to examine different aspects of instructional leadership. This study aims to synthesize qualitative research findings examining the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals in Türkiye. Meta-synthesis method was employed; thus, 21 studies that met the inclusion criteria were analyzed using this method. The studies constituting the study's data source were accessed by scanning the databases of ERIC, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, YÖKTEZ (Council of Higher Education, National Thesis Center), and ULAKBİM (Turkish Academic Network and Information Center). As a result of the research, three themes were obtained: Instructional leadership behaviors, effects of instructional leadership, and factors hindering instructional leadership. Although the research results indicate positive relationships between instructional leadership and organizational effectiveness and development, the roles of school principals as instructional leaders in the Turkish education system, which has a centralized structure, are reflected in their actual daily practices to a limited extent. To this end, there is a need for more comprehensive empirical studies and evidence-based models of exactly how instructional leadership affects organizational development in the Turkish literature.

Introduction

School leaders are important in terms of their direct or indirect influence on the teaching processes in the school. The main purpose of schools is learning and teaching processes, student learning, and student well-being. Therefore, the concept of instructional leadership is emphasized as a leadership approach that focuses on student learning, student well-being, and professional initiatives for learning. Instructional leadership became popular through the effective school movement that began in the late 1970s and attracted attention as a key feature of effective schools (Edmonds, 1979). In effective school studies, the leadership behaviors of the school principals were regarded as one of the main factors in the effectiveness of the school (Seong, 2019; Şişman, 2016). Therefore, an effective instructional leader was needed to design an effective school. Thus, instructional leadership has become a fundamental research area of educational administration for the last 35 years (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Şişman, 2018). Instructional leadership began to be conceptualized through various initiatives after the 1980s (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) conceptualization was the most notable and widely adopted model. In this model, emphasis was placed on the role of instructional leaders in defining and communicating the school's mission, managing the curriculum, and fostering a positive learning climate in the school. With these initiatives, instructional leadership gained an important place in the educational administration knowledge base and obtained momentum with research in different contexts (Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1990; Nguyen, Ng, & Yap, 2017; Şişman, 2018). Studies have shown that school principals exhibiting instructional leadership behaviors showed a strong influential positive effect on outcomes such as student achievement (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008), teachers' professional development (Blase & Blase, 1999), and organizational learning (Rosmanar & Marzuki, 2016).

Instructional leadership research in Türkiye emerged at the end of the 1990s (Gümüşeli, 1996; Ercan, 1997; Şişman, 1997). Especially in the 2000s, these studies increased and have continued today(Baş & Yıldırım, 2010; Çalık & Kılınç, 2018; Koşar & Buran, 2019). In these studies, subjects such as the instructional leadership roles of school principals, their necessity for school stakeholders, and the effect of instructional leadership on the school and learning processes were examined. Through these studies, the need to synthesize, interpret and evaluate the body of knowledge about instructional leadership emerged. Hence, there have been various compilation attempts to synthesize research findings on instructional leadership in Türkiye (Cansoy & Polatcan, 2018; Gümüş, Hallinger, Cansoy, & Bellibaş, 2021; Özdoğru & Güçlü, 2020). These compilation studies make significant contributions to the instructional leadership knowledge base. Likewise, this study is based on a research synthesis initiative that will shed light on instructional leadership practices in the context of Türkiye. Nevertheless, science is a cumulative process. Through this research, a more comprehensive and holistic conclusion is expected to be reached based on the knowledge of previous review studies. This compilation study was carried out to reveal the process and meaning of instructional leadership research based on different methodologies, approaches, and time. In this study, the findings of qualitative research on instructional leadership conducted in Türkiye were synthesized. Besides, it was aimed to develop suggestions for policymakers and practitioners about the instructional leadership practices of school leaders in the context of Türkiye. Thus, it is envisaged to reach a rich content of information about the behaviors and effects of school leaders regarding instructional leadership in Türkiye and the conditions that prevent these behaviors. Therefore, the following research question was determined in the study: *What are the results of qualitative studies on instructional leadership in Türkiye?*

Instructional leadership concept

Effective school research in the 1980s focused the attention of policymakers and academics on instructional leadership. The most crucial aspect that distinguishes instructional leadership from other leadership types is its focus on the learning processes at school (Şişman, 2018). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) proposed the most extensively tested and widely adopted model in their research on instructional leadership. This model identified three key instructional leadership roles: Defining school mission,

managing curriculum, and promoting a positive learning climate in the school. Accordingly, the two functions of defining the school mission are setting the school's goals and communicating those goals. Second, instructional leaders have three roles in terms of managing curriculum: Supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Finally, to develop and promote a positive learning climate at school, the roles of instructional leaders are referred to as creating an academic learning environment, developing high standards and expectations for students, providing incentive mechanisms for learning, and promoting teachers' professional development.

Similarly, Hallinger (2005) highlighted five characteristics of school principals as effective instructional leaders: (1) being strong and directive, (2) managing the instructional program and curriculum activities, (3) being culture builder, (4) being goal-oriented, and (5) adopting the principles resulting from the combination of expertise and charisma. In addition to these, there are some expectations from school principals as instructional leaders. In this context, it is expected to conduct course supervision and be a guide and model for all stakeholders to develop and improve teaching processes (Koşar & Buran, 2019).

Methodology

Research Model

This research, which analyzes the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals in terms of form, condition, and process, is a meta-synthesis study, which is an inductive qualitative research method in which qualitative research findings and results are brought together, analyzed in-depth, interpreted, and synthesized with a critical perspective (Au, 2007). Aspfors and Fransson (2015) suggest that meta-synthesis studies are not an ordinary review of qualitative studies but aim to develop new knowledge with an interpretive analysis. Meta-synthesis studies also become a rich source of reference for decision-makers, teachers, and researchers by synthesizing the common aspects of studies that deal with the same subject with different dimensions (Ünal, Çalık, Ayas, & Coll, 2006). In this context, in this study, the findings of qualitative research on the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals, the hindering factors, and their effects were synthesized and interpreted with a critical perspective.

Data Collection and Determination of Studies

To determine the studies to be included in the study, databases of ERIC, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, YÖKTEZ (Council of Higher Education, National Thesis Center), and ULAKBİM (Turkish Academic Network and Information Center) were searched. In addition, the keywords "instructional leader" and "instructional leadership" were used in the literature review. Finally, the studies reached as a result of the review were checked one by one, and a total of 21 studies, 16 of which were master's theses and 5 of which were articles, were included in the study within the framework of inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criteria For Study Inclusion and Exclusion

In this study, the steps of Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) to be followed before determining the studies, including (i) determining the study field, (ii) determining the keywords, (iii) performing the search, (iv) determining the inclusion and exclusion criteria, were considered. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were considered to conduct detailed reviews and set a limit for the studies. The criteria and explanations about them are given below. The criteria such as the following are suggested:
• Conducted by a qualitative research method,
• Inclusion of the concepts of "instructional leader" or "instructional leadership" in the title,
• Supporting the findings with raw data,
• Having full text, and
• Sample with Turkish participants.

Studies Included in the Research

As a result of the evaluation of the reached studies within the framework of the determined criteria, 21 studies were included in accordance with the study's inclusion criteria. The flowchart of the process of incorporating the studies obtained by reviewing the relevant literature into the meta-synthesis is presented in Figure 1.
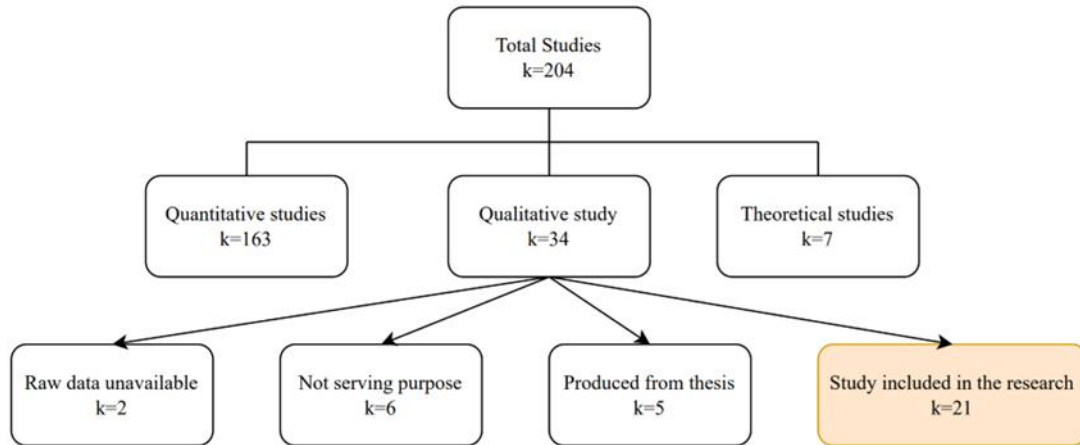

Figure 1. Studies included in the research

The general characteristics of the studies included in the research, such as code, author (s), publication year, type of publication, purpose, and method information, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Information on the studies included in the study

Coding	Author(s) and Publication Year	Type	Purpose	Participants	Data Collection Tool	Data Analysis
S1	Aktepe and Buluç (2014)	Article	Determining the instructional leadership characteristics of school principals	13 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S2	Anıl and Sarpkaya (2014)	Article	Determining how school principals perform instructional leadership behaviors	16 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Descriptive analysis and content analysis
S3	Bağrıyanık (2017)	Thesis	By determining the instructional leadership levels of school principals, collecting their opinions on organizational commitment and behaviors that cause organizational cynicism in line with teachers' perspectives.	30 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S4	Bal (2019)	Thesis	Identifying the opinions of primary and secondary school principals on the display of instructional leadership behaviors	16 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Descriptive analysis
S5	Bayar and Önder (2016)	Article	Determining primary school principals' levels of displaying instructional leadership behaviors	10 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	----
S6	Bozkurt (2013)	Thesis	Determining at what level school principals try to realize their instructional behaviors	16 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S7	Bozkurt (2019)	Thesis	Determination of instructional leadership behaviors of school principals working in primary and secondary schools	14 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Descriptive analysis and content analysis
S8	Çalık and Kılınç (2018)	Article	Determining how school principals make sense of instructional leadership based on their professional experiences and experiences.	6 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Phenomeno logical analysis

S9	Deniz (2015)	Thesis	Identifying the factors limiting the instructional leadership of school principals according to principals and assistant principals working in primary and secondary education institutions.	26 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S10	Gaziler (2017)	Thesis	Determining the opinions of school principals and teachers on instructional leadership	10 school principals and 10 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S11	Göçen (2013)	Thesis	Determining the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals within the scope of the constructivist approach-based program	16 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Descriptive analysis
S12	Güneş (2014)	Thesis	Revealing the effect of the instructional leadership behaviors of the secondary school principals on the academic success of the school by collecting the opinions of the school principals.	12 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S13	Özdoğru (2020)	Thesis	Determining the barriers to school principals' instructional leadership behaviors and the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals who contribute to their corporate reputation.	10 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S14	Sağır (2011)	Thesis	Determining the levels of primary school principals in performing their instructional leadership roles according to the perceptions of principals and teachers and the problems they encounter while performing these roles.	10 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	----
S15	Sezer (2017)	Thesis	Determining the level of realization of instructional leadership by pre-school principals	10 school principals and 20 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S16	Şahin (2011)	Thesis	Determining the opinions of secondary school principals on instructional leadership roles	10 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S17	Taşdelen, Aküzüm, Tan and Uçar (2015)	Article	Determining the instructional leadership roles of school principals in the education process.	52 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S18	Topaloğlu (2020)	Thesis	Determining to what extent private school principals perform their instructional leadership roles and how these roles are perceived by teachers.	10 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis
S19	Tüzün (2019)	Thesis	Determining the impact of school principals as instructional leaders on students' academic achievement	10 school principals	Semi-structured interview form	----
S20	Yağmur (2018)	Thesis	Determining the school principals' performance of instructional leadership behaviors	13 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Descriptive analysis and content analysis
S21	Zorlu (2015)	Thesis	Determining the opinions of teachers working in secondary schools on the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals	15 teachers	Semi-structured interview form	Content analysis

Table 1 indicates that most of the studies are master's theses; semi-structured interview forms are used in all studies; the number of school principals and teachers in the study group is close to each other; and content and descriptive analysis methods are used together or separately.

Data Analysis

In this study, the analysis steps consisting of five stages were followed, considering the qualitative data analysis recommendations in the literature (Creswell, 2013).
1) *Reading and editing qualitative data*. At this stage, the general purpose of the studies included in the research, the statements in the themes and sub-themes, the findings, results, and suggestions were arranged and transferred to a document file.

2) *Coding*. First, a code (such as S1, S2…) was assigned for each study. Then ideas and concepts that were deemed necessary by open coding were marked separately for each study, with codes consisting of one or more words. Next, with axial coding, the studies were read in-depth;new codes were added to the first coding, and similar codes were brought together. To determine the similar aspects of the studies and to obtain common themes, they were grouped by associating with each other.

3) *Creating categories by combining codes*. Codes divided into groups were categorized.

4) *Synthesis (revealing analytical themes)*. At this stage, analytical themes were revealed. According to Merriam (2013), the themes were named at this intuitive stage. Abstract generalizations were reached by examining the codes divided into groups in depth.

5) *Presenting and interpreting analytical themes*. The themes, sub-themes, and codes created at this stage were presented in tables. Additionally, direct quotations from the studies included in the study were included with the study code and the participants in the relevant study and were supported by comments and syntheses.

Validity and Reliability

Different strategies can be used to ensure the validity and reliability of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018) consider detailed reporting of the collected data and how the results are achieved as an essential criterion for validity. In this study, the data source was clearly stated (see Table 1), and analysis methods and the creation of themes were described in detail. These demographic features were coded by creating a Microsoft Office Word document table, and codes (numbers and letters) were assigned to the studies. The two encoders performed the coding separately. To test the internal consistency, the codes produced by the encoders were compared. The agreement between encoders was calculated as 88%. According to Miles and Huberman (2002), this value is at an acceptable level in terms of internal consistency.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics committee was not needed because this study was meta-synthesis and did not require participants.

Findings

In this section, the themes, sub-themes, and codes obtained from data analysis are presented as tables. The themes reached within the scope of the research were determined as (i) instructional leader behaviors (Table 2), (ii) factors hindering instructional leadership (Table 3), and (iii) effects of instructional leadership (Table 4). The main themes and sub-themes shown in the tables were interpreted, supported, and explained by participants' quotations from the relevant research.

Instructional Leader Behaviors

The sub-themes under the theme of "instructional leader behaviors" in the research reflect the general thoughts on the question "What are the behaviors and attitudes that the instructional leader should have at school?" The codes reached regarding the instructional leadership behaviors are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The sub-themes and codes regarding instructional leader behaviors

Sub-Theme	Codes
Developing and implementing school goals	Creating an original vision and mission
	Engaging stakeholders
	Developing a goal by setting goals
	Developing goals according to changing and developing conditions

	Drawing student attention to school goals
	Sharing school goals
Improving the teaching process	Motivating the student to learn
	Maintaining teaching time
	Student monitoring and evaluation
	Rewarding/honoring the student
	Ensuring that teaching time is spent effectively and efficiently
	Coordinating between courses
	Having up-to-date curriculum information
	Carrying and sharing good practices and examples in education to school
	Organizing social, sporting, and cultural activities
Supporting and developing teachers	Allocating time for teachers
	Procurement of tools
	Supporting ideas and projects
	Rewarding/honoring
	Motivating and tolerating the teacher
	Mentoring
	Modeling
	Supporting the professional development of teachers
Developing a positive school climate	Organizing social activities
	Building a collaborative learning culture
	Sharing tasks and giving the job to those who are competent
	Participating in decisions
	Paying attention to teachers' opinions
	Being visible at school
	Gathering around common goals/values
	Building team spirit
	Distribution of tasks according to merit
	Developing cooperation and dialogue among teachers
	Respect for values
	Being solution-oriented, not accusatory
	Being friendly, being kind
	Being equal to everyone
Monitoring, supervising, and evaluating the teaching process	Supervising the courses
	Supervision on a branch basis
	Guiding
	Identifying teachers' strengths and weaknesses

	Objective performance evaluation
	Providing feedback to teachers
	Analyzing written/practice exams
Family and environmental cooperation	Parent visits
	Providing financial support from parents and the environment
	Giving guidance by attending parent meetings

Table 2 shows that school principals should have instructional leadership behaviors for school development, student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and environmental cooperation. Furthermore, under the theme of "developing and implementing school goals" , it was emphasized that besides the vision, mission and purpose patterns determined by the Ministry, the school's own situational, changing, and developing conditions should be considered, and stakeholder participation should be ensured. One of the direct quotations from the related studies referenced in the creation of sub-themes and codes are as follows:

> "… while achieving our goals, we act together by taking into account the opinions of all our teachers and staff, that is, we have an understanding of education that is not selfish, but cooperation … we take these decisions together at the meetings at the beginning of the year…" (S6-P14).

The opinions under the theme of "improving the teaching process" are that the principal should feel responsible for each student. It is thought that the school principal's primary function of motivating the student with reinforcements, such as rewarding to increase student success and striving to increase student knowledge, skills, and equipment, improves the teaching process. The statement of a principal on this subject S6-P11, "*…We try to motivate our students by holding frequent meetings with my teachers, especially to increase student achievement…*" explains that the main purpose is to increase the quality of the student teaching process.

Under the theme of "supporting and developing teachers", managerial behaviors that motivate teachers, show sensitivity to the problems experienced by teachers, direct them to in-service training organized by central and local institutions, and support teaching processes are included. The following are the opinions of the principals stating that they provide material support to teachers and set an example as a model:

> "I try to support teachers in every way. In particular, I try to provide tools and materials related to the course. For example, the photocopy machine is one of the most used and most important tools for my teachers in our school. I regularly service the copier. Besides, A4 paper is another tool that we need the most. Therefore, I provide teachers with A4 paper" (S10-AP5).

> "When the school principal or administration leaves their job unfinished, the teacher will also leave it unfinished. So this is a ripple effect. In other words, "A fish rots from the head down." First of all, the school administration should give all its time and energy to its institution before anyone else" (S12-P5).

Under the theme of "developing a positive school climate," teachers emphasized the positive personality traits of their principals, which are considered important in human relations and managerial processes. Some of the participants' opinions in related studies on positive climate creation practices are summarized below:

> "I work with a principal who contributes to the achievement of the school's goals, shows an understanding, affectionate, fatherly attitude towards the teacher, is smiling, does not judge the teacher, and does not offend. Our principal, who has a democratic attitude, stands at an equal distance from all teachers. As this is the case, school work runs smoothly, and school goals are met quickly and smoothly. Thanks to our principal, who has a democratic attitude, teachers feel comfortable. We work efficiently because we are not under pressure" (S1-T8).

"…I take care not to use 'you' language and not to be judgmental or accusatory when addressing my students, teachers, and parents. In general, I try to take the events with examples from myself and convey what I feel to them by using the 'I' language, so I try to establish empathetic communication and arouse a sense of trust in them. I do this to ensure that they come to me willingly and know that I will listen to them, try to understand them and approach them in a solution-oriented manner, not fearfully or timidly…" (Ç19-Duru).

The sub-theme of "monitoring, supervising, and evaluating the teaching process" addressed the behaviors towards the responsibility of supervising and evaluating their colleagues, with the control given to the principals from the education inspectors. Principals' objectivity in supervising teachers and guiding them with feedback was emphasized.On this subject, the principal with the code S12-P3 said, "*I supervise the teachers' lessons at least once every semester. After the inspection, I evaluate the process with the teachers. I indicate their strengths and tell them what to do about their weaknesses. In this way, I supervise and evaluate the teaching process*", and I added that he meticulously carried out the inspection process.

Under the sub-theme of "family and environmental cooperation", there are opinions that communication with parents contributes to school and student achievement. One principal said, "*As the school, we are in cooperation with the parents. When a parent has a problem with the school, we always meet and provide a solution. As a school, we visit the parents in case of a parent's illness, having a child, or death of a family member... Thus, school-environment cooperation develops* (S10-AP2)." and expresses the necessity of communication.

Effects of Instructional Leadership

To this end, three sub-themes were identified regarding the impact of instructional leadership behaviors and processes. These are individual, organizational, and social and environmental effects.

Table 3. Sub-themes and codes regarding the effects of instructional leadership

Sub-Theme	Codes
Individual	Increasing student achievement
	Revealing the individual awareness of each student
	Being motivated
	Internalizing goals
Organizational	Providing a positive climate
	Ensuring organizational commitment
	Building organizational trust
	Avoiding organizational cynicism
	Creating a sense of collective responsibility
	Providing job satisfaction
	Creating a democratic environment
	Organizational identification

	Creating a learning organization
	Supporting organizational happiness
Social and environmental	Enabling social change
	Developing environmental and family relationships

Table 3 shows the opinions on the increase of students and revealing the individual differences of each student are presented from the direct quotation in the related studies expressing the "individual" contributions of instructional leadership to teachers and students.

> "Because every student has different characteristics and different abilities. We had a very problematic student. She was a girl who cut and scratched herself. She was the child of a broken family. We sent her to fine arts high school. She was very talented in painting. It is not a very realistic goal to aim to send this child to science high school now. Then a deaf girl became a national player in badminton, and maybe her life was saved" (S7-P6).

Regarding the sub-theme of "organizational" effects of instructional leadership, instructional leadership enables teachers and students to come to school with pleasure, helps to create a caring and willing profile, and allows them to enjoy their studies. On this subject, in the related study with the code of S3-P29, the participant teacher expressed the sense of commitment he felt with the opinion that "*I would never think of leaving my school because the principal provides cooperation among teachers instead of competition.*"

Finally, the sub-theme of "social and environmental" refers to the fact that instructional leadership contributes to the school's functioning and changes in the social structure in the initiatives based on integration and cooperation with the environment and family. On this subject, the participant's opinion coded S7-P9 explains the situation saying, "*I think that being in cooperation with parents contributes positively to the school. They both help us in the process of improving the physical environment, and when we consider their ideas and include them in work to be done at school, they feel valued and contribute with their ideas.*"

Factors Hindering Instructional Leadership

In the research, sub-themes of managerial competencies, physical conditions of the school, curriculum, teacher qualifications, administrative affairs, bureaucratic and legal procedures, structural and political elements, and the social-cultural environment of the school were formed under the theme of factors hindering instructional leadership. In Table 4, sub-themes and codes related to the factors affecting the instructional leadership reached as a result of the meta-thematic analysis of the studies included in this study are given.

Table 4. Sub-themes and codes regarding the factors hindering instructional leadership

Sub-Themes	Codes
Administrative incompetencies	Technology use
	Conflict management
	Diversity management
	Problem-solving
	Time management
	Communication
Physical conditions of the school	Number of classrooms

	School and class size
	Suitability of common areas
	Safe, healthy, and clean environment
Curriculum	Frequent changes of the curriculum
	Intensive curriculum
Teacher qualifications	Teacher's interest/attitude
	Teacher's professional knowledge
Administrative affairs	Managerial workload
	Resource allocation
	Management of the guidance service
Bureaucratic and legal procedures	Legislation
	Circulation
	Mid-year appointments
	Frequent changes in curriculum
	Teaching time adequacy
Structural and political elements	Centralized structure
	Incentive for instructional leadership
	Assignment status
	Political concerns and expectations
Social-cultural environment of the school	Parent attitude
	Parent profile
	Social structure

Table 4 shows the difficulties faced by principals in displaying instructional leadership behaviors and some limitations, most of which are not due to principals. Under the theme of "administrative incompetencies", the managers' lack of expertise, subject matter knowledge, and management skills were expressed. Direct quotations from studies in which teachers critically evaluate their administrators are as follows:

> "Our principal is not very enthusiastic and encouraging about researching and informing new methods. On the contrary, he prefers traditional methods that will not cause problems and noise in the classroom and therefore judges teachers according to their dominance in the classroom and the level of students' fear of the teacher" (S11-T4).

> "Our principal only communicates with us when there is paperwork; I think that is not enough. He does not meet with the parents too much; he only communicates when necessary" (S15-P11).

It was stated that the "physical conditions of the school" sub-theme, the size of the school and classroom size, security, and cleaning problems negatively affect the teaching activities. In this context, some opinions are given below:

> "… the number of classrooms is too small for the implementation of new curricula. Because the new curriculum requires switching to the classroom system, in other words, the classrooms of each course should be different. However, unfortunately, this is not possible … Or when we say infrastructure, the educational material deficiencies of schools should have been completely eliminated. However, this did not happen; we still do not have many materials. This is also a problem for curricula" (S14-YI).

> "That is one of the things that prevent us from being crowded. In other words, the average classroom sizes are currently around 40-45. So, the biggest reason for this development is the crowd" (S4-P15).

In the sub-theme of "teacher qualifications", the negative effects of teachers' lack of knowledge and indifferent attitudes toward the teaching process were emphasized. The opinions of the principals in the related studies, which stated that the teachers did not go out of certain patterns, are given below:

Senior teachers, that is, ex-teachers do not want to change their old habits. They do not follow innovations. They do not want to participate in activities outside of working hours. The understanding of "this is not my duty" prevails" (S9-P5).

> "…They are far from technology, they are not enough about motivating the student. Most of our teachers do not do research and have a disinterested attitude. They react to the new applications…" (S6-P7).

In the sub-theme of "administrative workload," it can be said that principals and teachers complain that the intensity of administrative work, such as bureaucratic correspondence and resource problems, precedes educational activities, according to the opinions of the participants in the related studies:

> "School principals do not have time to lead the way because of bureaucratic correspondence, business follow-ups, welcoming and sending off those who come to the school, dealing with problems related to teachers, students, and parents, and their willingness and enthusiasm to respond to the needs and expectations of the school" (S1-P2).

> "All of our problems are of monetary origin. We pay for the working cleaning staff; the state pays for only one of them. Since we could not pay the others, we wanted to open a kindergarten this year, and we wanted to pay the employees from the income of the kindergarten. However, it did not turn out the way we thought it would because kindergarten's expenses were already high enough. Therefore, we could not make our payments…" (S9-P7).

Opinions under the sub-theme of "bureaucratic and legal procedures" express that strict legislative understanding, managerial appointments, and instability in curricula create obstacles to being an instructional leader. The opinions of teachers and administrators on this subject are given below:

> "The Law No. 657 on civil servants gave the teacher the right to receive a medical report for 40 days for 1 year, and the right to excused leave for up to 10 days…I cannot prevent it. As I said, the class is empty, but I quit my administrative work and attend the class myself, and my assistant principal also attends" (S4-P7).

> "At the beginning of the year, detailed orders by our Ministry on how we should do teaching activities, including the training programs we implement in our courses, are communicated to both us teachers and principals. In other words, school principals and we are obliged to carry out the tasks determined by the center and do not have much flexibility. I can say that because the system is like this, school principals cannot contribute much in teaching activities" (S13-Teacher 5).

On the other hand, regarding the sub-theme of "structural and political elements," it was stated that the centralized structure of the Turkish education system, the problems related to the merits of the appointment of principals, and the lack of encouragement of instructional leadership constitute an obstacle for instructional leadership. Therefore, the opinions of the managers on this subject are as follows:

> "After a certain period, we move away from the classroom, the student, and the teaching profession after we switch from the teaching profession to school principals. Administrative work related to the functioning of the school constantly distracts us from teaching and causes us to stay out of the teaching process" (S13-P9).

> "We were appointed as a result of the oral exam. The criteria are clear. I can't go to school proudly. It is not possible to become an instructional leader by appointment" (S8-P4).

In a relevant study, as underlined in the statement of participant coded as S14-YJ regarding the theme of the "socio-cultural environment of the school", the participant said, "*The parents are told about the school's aims, but they do not show much interest. Because they are not aware of the importance of school goals on student achievement. Since the environment does not interfere with the school anyway, it does not interfere with the purposes*" and revealed that the demographic and cultural status of the

parents affect the principal's display of instructional leadership behaviors. Participants also think that the social structure in general also affects the principal.

Discussion

This study examined qualitative studies on instructional leadership in Türkiye, and the findings were reinterpreted with the meta-synthesis method. Thus, it was aimed to reveal the basic perceptions and current situation regarding the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals. It is thought that reinterpreting the studies on instructional leadership holistically guides the models and practitioners to be developed. As a result of data analysis in the research, three themes and sub-themes and codes of these themes emerged.

First, when the studies included in the meta-synthesis were examined in terms of defining *instructional leader behaviors, it* is indicated that there are six sub-themes, including developing and implementing school goals, improving the teaching process, supporting and developing teachers, developing a positive school climate, monitoring, supervising, and evaluating the teaching process, and family and environmental cooperation. Hallinger and Murphy (1985), who first conceptualized instructional leadership through their empirical studies in North America, the most widely used and accepted instructional leadership framework in the literature is defining the school's mission, managing the curriculum, and promoting a positive school learning environment (Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale - PIMRS). In the following years, in the context of Türkiye, Şişman (2018) was influenced by international studies and included instructional leader behaviors, involving defining and sharing the goals of the school, the management of the curriculum and teaching process, the evaluation of the teaching process and students, the support and development of teachers, and the creation of a stable learning-teaching environment and climate. Although the studies conducted in Türkiye mainly depended on Şişman's framework, the similarities and overlapping aspects with PIRMS support this study.

Research findings emphasize that while determining the objectives, the objectives would be internalized by ensuring stakeholder participation, considering the characteristics of the school and the region, and updating them according to changes and developments. Instructional leadership literature emphasizes that the principal should set a vision for the school, establish a vision-based mission, goals, and objectives, and demonstrate a solid and guiding leadership that can align the strategy and activities with the academic mission of the school (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). In the Turkish Education System, which has a centralized structure, the schools' aims are predetermined in the relevant legislation. However, according to Şişman (2018), these are general abstract expressions and are open to interpretation and development. In Türkiye, in accordance with Law No. 5018, it is necessary to define the vision and mission-specific to schools and determine the goals and objectives within the strategic plan. Developing the vision, mission, and objectives of the principals due to legal obligations may cause the situational conditions to be ignored and the determined objectives to remain on paper. In Singapore, which has a centralized system similar to Türkiye, the relevant Ministry determines the vision. Schools in Singapore, which perform well in exams such as PISA and TIMMS, consistently implement their visions in cooperation. Although they do not seem to have the freedom to create their vision, they can improve and change the goals in the process (Nguyen, Ng, & Yap, 2017). Nguyen et al. (2017) suggest that school principals in Singapore constantly create their school vision and reflect it in their strategies to align education with desired outcomes, even when constrained by the narrow framework imposed by the Ministry. The most crucial difference between school administrators in Singapore and those in Türkiye is the initiative they take in determining the school-specific vision. .

The research concludes that the teaching process is improved when principals motivate students and teachers by rewarding them, taking time to follow up on lessons to ensure they are practical and efficient, and coordinating between lessons. The research results also coincide with the research results of Gümüş et al. (2021), who synthesized the instructional leadership studies carried out in Türkiye. In this context, Gümüş et al. (2021) underlined the roles of school principals as instructional leaders in Türkiye, such as maintaining the learning environment and motivating and activating teachers.

Although the awarding authority of school principals in Türkiye has been restricted due to the legislative amendment made in 2013 (Ministry of National Education [MoNE]), the instructional leadership studies in the national literature give importance to written and verbal appreciation behaviors. Furthermore, it can be said that rewarding behavior, which is not prominent in the international literature, describes the cultural context based on gift-giving, which is seen as a way to keep traditional/social ties strong in Türkiye.

In the studies included in the scope of the research, the participating teachers sought support from school principals by demanding that both material supply and their ideas be valued. In this study, Andrews and Smith (1989), who defined the support behaviors of the instructional leader desired by the teachers as being a resource provider and an instructional resource, emphasized the necessity of this support for teacher performance and an effective educational process. Pan and Chen (2014), synthesizing the qualitative research findings on instructional leadership behaviors in Taiwan, found that administrators attach importance to teachers' physical and emotional well-being and support teaching materials by providing a safe and orderly environment. Additionally, the findings show that principals' behaviors of directing professional development, mentoring, and being a model are also effective in their development. On the other hand, the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (2018) report indicates that the professional development needs of teachers for Türkiye cannot be fully determined, and professional development activities are not effective (Ceylan, Özdoğan Özbal, Sever, & Boyacı, 2020). From this point of view, the expectation that the principals' knowledge and competence are at a level to be a mentor and model for the teacher brings a paradox for Türkiye. School principals appointed to the management after teaching for a certain period and are not seen as a profession, who have not received postgraduate education or do not participate in training, may not want to be a manager for staff with more training than themselves. In this regard, it is promising that the 2023 Vision Document of the Ministry of National Education aims to improve the expertise of teachers by supporting them with postgraduate education (MoNE, 2018).

The findings of the studies included in this meta-synthesis united in the opinion that sharing culture, cooperation, team spirit, gathering around common goals, respecting values, friendly treatment, and visibility are needed to create a positive school culture. The favourable climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), considered one of the essential dimensions of instructional leadership, is essential for administrators, teachers, and students in schools where social communication is effective in all educational processes. Murphy (1990) considers a positive climate at school as the academic goal of the school and a supportive learning environment. Examining instructional leadership behaviors in the Singapore context, Ng et al. (2015) reported that principals primarily support a collaborative environment, organize activities that ensure staff integration, implement an open-door policy for teachers and students, and attach importance to visibility by going to classes to motivate students. Similarly, studies conducted in the context of Malaysia revealed that administrators achieve their effects on learning and teaching quality not by having deep and detailed interactions with teachers and students but by developing a favourable climate, and they place the positive climate at the center of instructional leadership (Harris, 2002; Harris, Jones, Adams, & Cheah, 2019).

In this study, under the theme of supervision and evaluation, the opinions of school principals to guide teachers in the issues they have difficulty in teaching, make objective evaluations, share the results of these evaluations with teachers, and give feedback were included. While the literature on instructional leadership demonstrates the importance of teachers' professional development in Western countries such as the United States, where the principal provides feedback to teachers through regular classroom visits (Blase & Blase, 1999; Ovando, 2005), on the other hand, in Asian countries such as Taiwan and Singapore, it is not the primary responsibility of the instructional leader, but instead, principals should improve education by increasing teacher capacity and creating a supportive learning environment (Horng & Loeb, 2010; Ng, Nguyen, Wong, & Choy, 2015; Pan & Chen, 2014). Dimmock and Walker (2000) attribute this difference to the view that teachers in Asian countries have a high social reputation and that any intervention in their field will be met with tension by teachers. In Türkiye, the task of supervision was left to school principals in recent years. However, the studies show that the principals are not sufficient in guiding them educationally, instructionally, and professionally, and the reason for

this is that the principal who supervises and the supervised teacher received the same undergraduate education (Aktepe & Buluç, 2014; Bozkurt, 2019). This situation necessitates the questioning and evaluation of managerial competencies in Türkiye.

Finally, the importance of keeping active relations with parents and the environment was mentioned in the theme of instructional leadership behaviors. While the international literature emphasizes more cooperation for the academic development of students in instructional leadership behaviors, it is seen that cooperation in Türkiye, where more budget aid is emphasized, is mentioned. This is because a significant part of the schools' budgets in Türkiye is provided by the external environment and the school-parent union. Çalık's (2007) opinion on this subject that "the main point of school-family cooperation should not be donations, but should be accepted as a requirement of being a democratic society" is noteworthy. In this respect, as an instructional leader, the school principal makes a significant contribution to the achievement of the school's goals if he carries out positive and supportive relations between the parents and the community.

An important theme that emerged as a result of the research is *the effects of instructional leadership*. The studies included in the meta-synthesis show individual, organizational, and social and environmental effects of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership significantly affects the feelings of teachers and students, such as achievement, motivation, trust, and commitment. It also creates a democratic environment where diversity is valued, and equality and justice are experienced. The compilation and meta-analysis studies in the international literature on instructional leadership and the results of instructional leadership showing positive effects on teacher attitudes, practices, and student outcomes are in line with the findings of this study (Blase & Blase, 1999; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger, et al., 2020; Harris et al., 2019; Louis et al., 2010; O'Donnell & White, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008). These results led to the idea of instructional leadership as a powerful tool for Lieberman and Pointer-Mace (2006), who argue that teacher learning is the key to sustainable education reform. Besides, a meta-analysis study conducted in Türkiye also revealed the positive relationships of instructional leadership with organizational outcomes such as commitment, motivation, self-efficacy, citizenship, and job satisfaction (Özdogru & Güçlü, 2020). In this respect, the synthesis of quantitative research results parallels this study, which is the synthesis of qualitative research. It is valuable to provide empirical evidence that instructional leadership increases student achievement in Türkiye, which has a centralized education system.

Under the theme of *factors hindering instructional leadership* obtained in the research, sub-themes of administrative incompetencies, physical conditions of the school, curriculum, teacher qualifications, administrative affairs, bureaucratic and legal procedures, structural and political elements, and the socio-cultural environment of the school were included. Opinions on this theme point to the lack of knowledge and skills stemming from the principals and the limitations related to senior management. Instructional leadership theory was also criticized in the literature for reasons like the findings of this study. For the same reasons, Horng and Loeb (2010) evaluated the theory of instructional leadership as far from the reality of schools and as traditional. Hallinger (2005) described the instructional leader as "a combination of expertise and charisma" but added that this expertise contradicted expectations. It is stated that the principal's focus on both administrative and educational tasks may lead to dysfunction and that educational leadership cannot be defined with a "one-size-fits-all model," as schools differ in terms of resources, size, staff, and student needs (Barth, 1986; Cuban, 1988; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; March, 1978). School principals in Türkiye are trained in an inadequate training program in terms of teaching management skills, and there is no obligation to receive in-service training after becoming a school principal. For this reason, school principals are not effective in producing solutions to crises/problems, and being appointed as a school principal by taking specific exams after teaching is not sufficient for instructional leadership.

Other factors hindering instructional leadership include the physical conditions of the school, curricula, and teacher qualifications. However, the intensity of the frequently-changing curriculum becomes completely difficult for the principals who are already alienated from the teaching process. Although principals and teachers are subjected to in-service courses for the curricula that have started to change gradually since 2004, the relevant literature in Türkiye shows that the principals do not transfer the

curricula to the teachers, but the teachers research and learn with their means. Within the theme of teacher quality, the opinions are that qualified teachers will lead to qualified learning.

The excessive workload of the principals and the lack of resources are considered among the factors hindering instructional leadership. Resources are needed for many works and studies to be done at school. As of 2016, the schools' water, electricity, and natural gas bills are paid by the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye; however, resources are sought for the maintenance, repair, equipment, and cleaning of the buildings and facilities. The fact that school principals must deal with technical work and administrative tasks such as budget preparation and personnel services turns into an administrative workload and keeps them from being visible at school. At the turn of the century, there was a shift towards the phenomenon of "shared or distributed instructional leadership" in instructional leadership studies (Harris, 2003). Since schools require multiple interactions and mutual relationships among stakeholders in terms of implementation processes, Printy (2010) considers this shift to provide the instructional leader with the necessary conditions to support teachers in leadership and take individual and collective responsibility for teaching. Therefore, by focusing on distributing knowledge and skills, the principals increase synergy by creating an active collaborative culture and learning organization rather than a leader-teacher relationship (Gronn, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003).

When the centralized structure of the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye and political elements are added to the administrative workload of school principals, we can say that their bureaucratic leadership roles based on only applying the instructions from the upper management dominate the work. In a dynamic environment that grows and becomes more complex day by day, the limitations of the strict regulatory understanding restrict the authorities of the principals and prevent them from acting freely. Kesen, Sundaram, and Abaslı (2019) assert that the centralized structure of the Turkish Education System creates an imbalance between the authorities and responsibilities of school principals; thus, various problems arise. The authority areas of school principals should be expanded in parallel with their responsibilities. Additionally, the way school administrators are appointed and problems related to merit also affect instructional leadership. Although the expectations from the instructional leadership are explained theoretically, the fact that the policy of selecting, training, and employing educational administrators based on a scientific basis with the knowledge and skills to fulfill these roles and responsibilities has not been developed in Türkiye describes the political context of Türkiye.

The last factor hindering instructional leadership is the socio-cultural environment of the school. Under this theme, the attitude of the parents, the socio-economic profile of the parents, and the social structure are mentioned. Schools in Türkiye are generally not able to select their students, and student registration is made through the e-school system in the surrounding area based on the address information in the Central Population Management System (MERNIS) (MoNE, 2014). Coleman et al. (1966) reported the importance of family income and education level in student achievement and laid the groundwork for effective school research. The foundations of instructional leadership, which emerged with the search for effective schools, are based on the idea of "instructional effective schools" (Hallinger, 2005). In this respect, the instructional leader is expected to minimize the negativities arising from family and environment by creating high expectations for all students and preparing an environment conducive to teaching and learning. Therefore, the behaviors expected from the instructional leader form the basis of effective schools.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In conclusion, based on the synthesis of research findings examining instructional leadership with qualitative research methods in Türkiye, it can be argued that instructional leadership is an approach that centers the educational process, strengthens and improves the academic performance of schools. It is precious that it provides empirical evidence that it increases student achievement. Although the studies show positive effects between instructional leadership and organizational effectiveness and development, there are problems in daily practice due to the structure of the education system and the policies it follows. In other words, ideally, the school principal should be an instructional leader, but there is a difference between the ideal and reality in Türkiye. There is a need for more robust, evidence-

based models that provide richer empirical explanations of exactly how instructional leadership affects organizational development in the Turkish context, which will illuminate how instructional leadership can be fully implemented in practice. Such studies will significantly strengthen the existing knowledge base and contribute to the international knowledge base.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception, design and writing. All authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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