

## Review of school leadership research in terms of content analysis

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### Abstract

This research aims to conduct content analysis of the published articles on school leadership in the Scopus database and thus ascertain the tendencies of articles that were published in journals. It is a qualitative research with a design involving document analysis. The research has been limited to 88 articles on school leadership within the Scopus database that were subsequently analysed. In the selection process, attention has been paid to select articles published in journals that were indexed in the Scopus database for the period between 2012 and 2017. The articles were analysed through content analysis. Based on the data it was found that school managers are predominantly used as the sample group. It was also indicated that the studies were mostly qualitative and co-authored. As a result of the analysis conducted, it was ascertained that studies on school leadership were generally performed in the United States.

**Keywords:** Education management, leadership, leadership approaches, Scopus, content analysis

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## 1. Introduction

Education is vital in terms of achieving progress, leading to capacity development within a country. Educational management thus holds significance for a country's development and its efforts to keep abreast of global advancement (Ariatana, Sirisookslip and Ngang, 2016).

The human race has always been curious about the concept of leadership. It is a phenomenon that is scientifically studied and constantly discussed. According to Goffe and Jones (2002), leadership, which has been termed a mysterious phenomenon, has not diminished in value over the years. Although it is a common subject in social sciences, social scientists have not reached a consensus over the definition of leadership (Şişman 2002).

During the course of change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the phenomenon of leadership has also been affected. The various definitions of leadership clearly indicate that making a broad and inclusive definition for this term is challenging (Büyükçolak, 1997). This is due to the unique conditions and perspectives of individuals or societies. However, it is widely accepted by academic circles that the traits and qualities that a leader should possess could be ascertained in a broad sense and issues such as the leader's attitude, goals and objectives as well as the strategy he/she will pursue may be identified (Solok, 1997).

People have sought answers to the questions of "Who is a leader" and "How can people become leaders?" from the past to the present. According to the data obtained from the research conducted date, the answer to these questions can be found in trait theory. Trait theory argues that, in order to become a leader, the individual should have certain inherent traits.

A leader, by birth, has intellectual, sensual, and physical traits that are different from other individuals. Since the trait approach fails to provide a satisfactory explanation about the nature of a leader, the behavioural approach was introduced. According to the behavioural approach, factors that determine whether an individual is a leader or not were are not found in the individual's personal traits, but by the ability to behave in a manner that is consistent with the group that they represent. The third approach that introduced, the contingency approach, acknowledges that a leader should have an approach in accordance with his situation and environment. On the other hand, it argues that there is not a single model for the right behaviour and the leader should decide on how to behave based on the prevailing conditions. While in some cases, a leader should behave in an autocratic way, in others, he/she may be driven to behave democratically due to the circumstances. The effectiveness of a leader determines the specific leadership model that will be used in a particular case. Transformative and transactional leadership are also other styles which have been suggested (Sabuncuoğlu & Tüz, 2001)

The development, progress and change of individuals and the society can only be achieved when schools established with the aim of enabling the education system to accomplish its goals actually fulfil the tasks expected from them. For this reason, the realization of educational objectives is generally ensured through proper management, particularly within the schools as well as the education system in general. If the schools are managed properly, the possibility that educational objectives will be realized is increased. In this regard, it is significant that schools are influential in the promotion of human resources. One of the most important tasks of an effective school administrator is to set the objectives of the school by taking the views of his/her subordinates (Pashardis 1993; Barnett and Mc Cormick 2003). It is apparent that school administrators with effective leadership traits play an important role in enhancing the achievements of students, teachers and schools. (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford 2005; Raihanii 2008). According to Karatepe (2005) the traits an effective school administrator should possess are as follows:

- 1) Maintaining effective communication with his/her employees;
- 2) Contributing to the managerial development of his/her employees by delegating responsibility

and power;

- 3) Improving the sensitivity of his/her employees and thus ensuring that they assume responsibility;
- 4) Appreciating employees who show the necessary performance in the attainment of the goals.

According to Gümüşeli (1996), school administrators have responsibilities where an increase in success can be achieved through effective leadership. The tasks of the school administrator include contributing to the occupational development of employees in the school, creating a positive atmosphere for learning, devising and implementing effective reward mechanisms and creating an atmosphere for face-to-face contacts with students, teachers and other employees. Ozmusul (2017) states that principals are a vital element in schools for both effective leadership and management and also the development of the organizations' culture, vision and climate. Thus, it is essential that school principals' have high job satisfaction levels. However, as it is a complex process, it is necessary to obtain a better understanding of job satisfaction before it can be improved.

Finding suitable solutions to the managerial and educational problems faced in a school will increase its efficiency. In brief, an effective school administrator's ability to find effective and precise solutions to problems is one of his/her essential managerial qualities (Çelik & Semerci, 2002). According to another view, an effective school administrator should have the knowledge to guide his/her employees in the planning of educational/teaching activities (Balci, 2002).

The administrative, pedagogical and scientific staff in universities produce higher quality work when they are highly motivated and convinced that they can make a meaningful contribution to students, science and society. A thorough review of academic motivation by means of analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalization of theoretical knowledge on motivation and leadership shows that various subjective, objective, quantitative and qualitative factors have an influence on motivation. The factors that are most effective on motivation may be a part of the quality of the managers' influence, respectively creative leadership content and overall managerial facilitation used by managers to influence work behavior and employee performance (Blaskova and Trskova, 2017).

According to Güçlü (2000), studies aimed at changing and renewing educational systems have been focused on the improvement of human resources. The school administrator and the teacher have been acknowledged as the two most significant resources of manpower in educational systems. The responsibility of schools regarding quality has experienced considerable change with the acceleration of global competition. The significance and role of the school administrator has been emphasized in the successful management of this process. Effective school administrators are even capable of arranging new building facilities in order to increase the success of teachers and students.

The only factor with efficiency within inputs of production is the human resource. All organizations' efficiency and productivity are directly influenced by the effective utilization of this resource. Hence, it is vital that the staff have the perception of the perfect manager. Undoubtedly, the staff's perception of their own managers as perfect plays an important role in their motivation. Organizational productivity, on the other hand, relies heavily on highly motivated staff. Thus, this study is significant in terms of showing the managers the staff desires to work with under organizational psychology. The perception of the perfect manager is already revealed by the findings. Staff who work harmoniously with their managers are satisfied with their roles and, as they require a lesser degree of control, they deliver time and energy to the managers. (Bektaş, 2017)

As a result of the impact of the industrial revolution in developed countries and with the increasing presence of the private sector in the field of education, investments in this field have started to expand. This development has highlighted factors like leadership, quality, competition and effectiveness in education. Nevertheless, a consensus has not been reached on the qualities that distinguish an effective leader from an ineffective one. The perception that leadership definitions had changing situational characteristics and, instead of defining leadership as a whole,

they included the behaviours and qualities of leaders observed at a given place and time started to be acknowledged (Karip, 1998).

The fact that there is a relationship between leadership behaviours of school administrators and the morale, job satisfaction and motivation of teachers has been revealed by research conducted on educational organizations (Kabadayı 1982). The emotional characteristics possessed by school administrators as a result of their positions within the school have become more important. This is because school administrators have the capability to influence the entire organizational processes because of their status. The perceptions of school administrators towards life satisfaction and isolation have an impact on each and every aspect of life as well as their organizational lives. The reason for this is that the mood of school administrators can influence the interaction of the leader with his/her subordinates (Goleman, 2007). In their capacity as organizational leaders, school administrators should promote the development of teachers by coordinating their work within a new learning organization paradigm through a suitable leadership style. Using such a leadership style motivates teachers and raises awareness for team-building and working cooperatively (Ariratana, Sirisookslip & Ngang, 2016).

The fact that administrators have decisive power in terms of institutional success has also highlighted some of their psychological characteristics. This has been due to the positive contributions of the emotional characteristics of administrators to the organizational environment, revealed by previous studies (Boyatzis, Goleman & Mckee, 2000). According to Schmitter (2003), feeling physically healthy, contentment with daily life, economic security, social relationships, harmony in accomplishing goals, the meaning attributed to life and a positive personal identity are primary factors in that regard.

Traits like justice, patience, pre-emptive thinking, integrity, self-control and courage should form the character of the school administrator (Aronson, 2003). The school administrator, as a leader, should create environments where there is love, unity and integrity and they should demonstrate a benevolent attitude (Bonstingl, 2000).

The time spent by individuals in and out of work is defined as life. Life satisfaction, on the other hand, is defined by the comparison between what an individual desires and what he/she actually experiences in life. This emerges when one has a holistic view of the qualities of a good life in terms of school, friends and family (Christopher, 1999). Life satisfaction is related with subjective well-being, morale and happiness (Karabulut & Özer, 2003). It also has the power to contribute to the positive development of the overall quality of life (Veenhoven, 1996).

Meindl, Ehrlich and Dukerich (1985), indicated in their study titled "The Romance of Leadership" that, as a result of an organizations' presence in mixed environments, the followers who wish to attach meaning to the individuals around them begin to see a leader in a highly heroized way and thus idealize the role of the leader.

Popper and Zakkai (1994), proposed in their study titled "Transactional, Charismatic and Transformational Leadership: Conditions Conducive to Their Predominance", that the typical leadership theories are limited and studied the psychological basis upon which the emotional link between the leader and follower is based

In their study titled "Transformational Leadership and Emotional Intelligence: An Exploratory Study", Barling, Slatter and Kelloway (2000) analysed the relationship between transformational leadership behaviours and emotional intelligence. As a result of the research, it was determined that the transformational leadership behaviours of contingent reward, being inspirational, charisma and individualized interest were related with emotional intelligence. However, no relationship was found between intellectual stimulation, which is one of the transformational leadership behaviours, and emotional intelligence.

Jennifer George (2000), studied the effectiveness of emotions during the leadership process in her article titled "Emotions and Leadership: The Role of Emotional Intelligence". In other words, she

defined emotional intelligence as the individual's ability to comprehend his/her own emotions as well as those of others and to be able to control and manage those emotions. She also added that it has a contribution to the effective leadership process in organizations. George, with her study, concluded that emotional intelligence is influential in leadership and confirmed that leadership is a network of relationships.

Palmer, Walls, Burgess and Stough (2001) in their article titled "Emotional Intelligence and Effective Leadership" highlighted the significance of emotional intelligence and indicated that transformational leadership was a more effective type of behaviour in comparison to interactive leadership. They also studied how transformational leadership behaviour was influenced by emotional intelligence. As a result of the study, it was determined that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence. The researchers revealed a positive correlation between the transformational leadership traits of individualized interest and being inspirational and the dimensions of emotional intelligence, such as the perception of an individual's own emotions, management of their own emotions as well as those of other and the development of empathy. Nonetheless, no correlation was found between emotional intelligence and intellectual stimulation.

In their article titled "Examining the Relationship Between Leadership and Emotional Intelligence in Senior Level Managers", Gardner and Stough (2002) studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership through an emotional intelligence scale, which they designed. As a consequence of the research, it was found that emotional intelligence traits like understanding and expressing one's own emotions, understanding the emotions of others and emotional management can lead to a positive change in leadership behaviours.

Sivanathan and Fekken (2002) studied the contribution of emotional intelligence to leadership styles and effectiveness in their article titled "Emotional Intelligence, Moral Reasoning and Transformational Leadership". Resultantly, it was ascertained that leaders with a high level of emotional intelligence exhibited more transformational leadership behaviours.

Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005), in their study titled "Emotional Intelligence and Its Relationship to Workplace Performance Outcomes of Leadership Effectiveness" studied the relationships between emotional intelligence, personality, cognitive intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Consequently, several relationships were found to exist between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. It was also discovered that the effectiveness a leader demonstrates in accomplishing organizational objectives is linked with emotional intelligence.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the scientific studies conducted in the area of leadership by taking school leadership as the basis. In order to meet the objectives of the research, answers were sought to the following questions:

- What is the distribution of studies on school leadership accessed from the Scopus database in terms of the year of publication?
- What is the number of authors of the studies on school leadership that were included in the research?
- In which countries were the studies on school leadership included in the research conducted?
- What is the number of keywords used in the studies on school leadership that were included in the research?
- What is the methodology of the studies on school leadership that were included in the research?
- What is the sample group of the studies on school leadership that were included in the research?
- What is the distribution of the references used in the bibliographies of the studies on school

leadership that were included in the research?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Research Model*

This is a descriptive research. Descriptive research involves generalizations on scientific principles like recording, observation, ascertaining relationships between phenomena as well as on unchangeable and controlled principles of science. In short, the descriptive aspect of science assumes prominence (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). According to Kaptan (1998), descriptive research seeks to explain objects, phenomena, individuals, groups, fields and institutions. Thus, the opportunity to group and comprehend these more effectively emerges and the relationships between them are subsequently identified.

### *2.2. Data Collection*

In the present study, articles published between 2012 and 2017, which were made available in the Scopus database, were sought to be explained through analysis based on of different variables. The articles analysed were limited to those with the terms "Leadership", "School Leadership" and "Leadership in school management" and those indexed by Scopus database between 2012 and 2017, which constitutes a limitation of the research. Also, expert views were obtained to ensure that the study is fit for the intended purpose.

### *2.3. Data Analysis*

In the present study, content analysis was made for the purposes of evaluating the data. The data obtained as a result of the examination of the documents were recorded for each article and then converted into reports after being grouped according to the designated criteria. In this vein, the articles made available in the Scopus database between the years of 2012-2017 were classified and analysed under seven basic categories. The primary objective of content analysis is to determine expressions and relationships that can explain the collected data. The data interpreted and summarized in descriptive analysis is analysed in more detail and themes and concepts that are not easily distinguishable through a descriptive approach may emerge through this analysis. The procedure followed in content analysis is to compile similar data under certain themes and concepts and to arrange and interpret these data in a manner that is understandable for the readers (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006) In accordance with another view, content analysis is a new method used for the analysis of a number of publications (Reeves, 1998). In the process of analysing and interpreting the classified articles in the Scopus database, care has been taken during the stages of naming, category development and the calculation and interpretation of frequencies. In the naming and category development stage of the content analysis, each of the articles was carefully examined and categorized under categories including the year of publication, number of authors, the country in which the research was conducted, the number of keywords used in the research, the research methodology, the sample group of the researches and the number of references used. Finally, the prevalence and percentages of the articles analysed were calculated based on the determined categories and interpretation was made in line with these data. However, in a number of articles, the country in which the research was conducted as well as the number of keywords used have not been indicated.

## **3. Findings**

The findings section of the research contains the analyses of 88 Scopus database articles published between the years of 2001-2017, which were made on the basis of different variables as well as the findings obtained. In that connection, research findings are presented in terms of the year of publication, number of authors, the country in which the research was conducted, the number of keywords used in the research, the research methodology, the sample group of the researches and the number of references used, respectively. Research findings, frequencies and percentage results have been tabulated and interpreted accordingly.

Table 1. Distribution by year

Year of Publication	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
2012	22	25
2013	10	11.36
2014	9	10.22
2015	7	7.95
2016	21	23.86
2017	19	21.59
Total	88	100

The distribution of articles within the scope of the research by years is given in Table 1. The year in which the majority of articles were written was 2012 with 22 articles. It is followed by 2016, 2017, 2013, 2014 and 2015 with 21, 19, 10, 9 and 7 articles, respectively. The year with the lowest number of articles was therefore 2015.

Table 2. Distribution by the number of authors

Number of Authors	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
One	21	23.86
Two	34	38.63
Three	21	23.86
Four	7	7.95
Five and more	5	5.68
Total	88	100

When the table above is examined, in terms of the number of researchers making the research, articles with two authors take the lead with a percentage of 38.63%. They are followed by articles with one and three authors, four authors and five and more authors with percentages of 23.86%, 7.95 % and 5.68% respectively. As seen in Table 2, articles written by five or more researchers were found to be the group with the lowest percentage.

Table 3. Distribution by the number of keywords

Number of Keywords	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Three	9	10.22
Four	12	13.63
Five	29	32.95
Six and more	14	15.90
Total	64	~72.7

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that studies with five keywords are the majority. In all of the 88 articles included in the research, the terms “leadership”, “school leadership” and “leadership in education management” are contained in the keywords section. Other keywords have generally

been used to define forms of leadership, leader behaviours and management styles. In the present study, it was seen that the total number was less than 88 since the number of keywords have not been indicated in certain articles.

Table 4. Distribution by country where the research was conducted

Country Where the Research Was Conducted	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
USA	19	21.59
Australia	10	11.36
England	7	7.95
Singapore	5	5.68
Hong Kong	4	4.54
Israel	3	3.40
Chile	3	3.40
Turkey	2	2.27
South Africa	2	2.27
Japan	2	2.27
Finland	2	2.27
Italy	2	2.27
India	2	2.27
Pakistan	2	2.27
Indonesia	2	2.27
China	2	2.27
Others (Asia-Pacific region, Vietnam, Kuwait, Cyprus, Kazakhstan, Germany, Nepal, Oman, West Africa, Canada, Mauritius, Iran, Sweden, Ghana, Costa Rica, Mexico, Spain, Malaysia, Norway)	19	21.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>~96.54</b>

When the articles included within the scope of the research are examined, it is seen that school leadership was frequently used in studies made in the USA, as provided by Table 4. The other countries in which the studies were conducted were Australia (10), England (7), Singapore (5), Hong Kong (4), Israel (3), Chile (3), Turkey (2), South Africa (2), Japan (2), Finland (2), Italy (2), India (2), Pakistan (2), Indonesia (2), China (2) and other countries (19), respectively.

Table 5. Distribution by sample group

Sample Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
School principals	38	43.18
Teachers	19	21.59
School principals-teachers	9	10.22
Teachers-students	3	3.40

Staff	3	3.40
School management teams	2	2.72
Students	2	2.72
Others (School principals-dep.school principals, 10 School principals-chairmen, Inspectors, inspectors-school principals, Administrative interns, school management teams-teachers, Students-staff, school principals-teachers-families, School principals-teachers-staff-students-families, documents (UNESCO)	10	13.6
Total	86	100

Findings on the sample group distribution of articles in Scopus database are given in the table above. The analysis of the findings reveals that studies where the school principals were taken as the sample (38) form the majority. Consequent to the research made, it was determined that studies where teachers were the sample group (19) were second. One of the significant findings is that studies where the school principals and teachers (9), teachers and students (3), staff (3), school management teams (2), students (2), school principals and their deputies (1), school principals and the chairmen (1), inspectors (1), inspectors and school principals (1), administrative interns (1), school management teams and teachers (1), students and staff (1), school principals, teachers and families (1), school principals, teachers, staff, students and families (1) and documents (UNESCO) (1) were used as the sample group are minimal. Within the present study, two of the articles lacked a sample group as their research did not involve compilation methodology. Therefore, it can be seen that the number of sample groups is less than 88.

Table 6. Distribution by research methodology

Research Methodology	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Qualitative	48	54.5
Quantitative	28	31.8
Mixed	10	11.36
No compilation methodology	2	2.27
Total	88	~100

As a result of the findings obtained through Table 6, it is seen that the most widely used research methodology in articles is the qualitative method with a percentage of 54,5%. It is followed by the quantitative and mixed method with percentages of 31.8% and 11.35%, respectively. Methodology that did not involve compilation, on the other hand, was the least preferred.

Table 7. Distribution by the number of references

Number of References	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
5-14	1	1.36
15-24	6	6.81

25-34	9	10.22
35-44	13	14.77
45-54	11	12.5
55-63	12	13.63
64-72	10	11.36
73-82	8	9.09
83 and more	18	20.45
Total	88	100

Table 7 presents the distribution of articles included within the scope of the research by the number of references. Articles which used 83 or more references were the most frequent, with a total of 20.45%.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The 88 articles made available in the Scopus database covered the period between 2012 and 2017. It is observed that the majority of the articles (25%) sent for inclusion in the Scopus database pertain to the year of 2012. The reason that the articles covered the period between 2012 and 2017 is that they are up-to-date and that the scientific data is limited to 5 years.

In the content analysis, when the number of authors of the articles made available on the database was examined, it was found that studies with two authors may be more effective when conducting a qualitative study on school leadership. Since experimental studies cover a longer period and entail initial and final tests, it would be more qualitative to work with multiple authors.

According to the obtained research results, "school leadership" was included in the keywords of all 88 articles which were in the scope of the study and it was also seen that the studies largely contained five keywords. In scientific studies, the number of keywords should vary between three and five and they should be short, clear and understandable.

As per the research results obtained, it was revealed that school leadership was predominantly studied in the USA in the form of descriptive studies, when the distribution of the Scopus studies was analysed in terms of countries. In that connection, it can be stated that the USA is the global leader in this field as many studies have been conducted in that country.

When the sample groups of the analysed articles were examined, it was found that school principals formed the sample group in the majority of the studies. It was also observed that 19 out of 88 studies had a sample group that involved teachers. Studies made in relation to students and staff were minimal. An explanation for this may be that studies conducted with school principals and teachers progress more comfortably and easily in terms of the size of the group and access to data. According to Acar (2002), individuals are not born into this world with the ability to be competent managers. The art of management can only be acquired through learning. In accordance with another view, for the development of schools, school administrators should undergo training for administering the operation of the school and to learn educational leadership. The school system can be designed to accelerate social change only by powerful school administrators, which can govern development and change (Arslan, 2002)

In the content analysis conducted, the data analysis methods used in the published studies have also been evaluated. It was found that qualitative data analysis was the most widely used (48%) method of data analysis. The quantitative data analyses, on the other hand, accounted for only 28%. It was observed that descriptive analysis was the most widely used quantitative data

analysis method. The most frequently used quantitative analysis methods, however, were frequency, presentation through tables and diagrams, Anova and t-test. Furthermore, it was observed that the 88 articles also involved studies conducted using mixed methods or studies with no compilation methods. Balmores (1988) stated that the articles published in educational research journals had an inclination towards quantitative research methods. Similarly, Hsu (2005) concluded that there was an increase in the number of quantitative research studies (cited by Balcı and Apaydın 2007).

This research reveals that 83 or more references were used in the published articles. Many articles emphasize that a detailed literature review should be conducted in order for the descriptive realization of the studies on school leadership to become effective. Therefore, it can be said that a thorough literature review is critical for descriptive school leadership studies.

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