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# Investigating the Relationship between Social Capital, Employee Performance, and Employee Empowerment in Educational Organizations

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## ABSTRACT

This study, which is aimed at examining the relationship between social capital, employee performance, and employee empowerment in educational organizations, was designed with a correlational survey design from quantitative research methods. A total of 392 teachers working in public schools in Maltepe, Kartal, Pendik, and Tuzla districts of İstanbul province, selected by simple random sampling method, participated in the study. The research data were collected using the "Social Capital Scale", "Employee Performance Scale" and "School Participant Empowerment Scale". Correlation and regression analyses were conducted to reveal the relationship between the concepts using the collected data set. As a result of the analyses, it was revealed that there is a positive relationship between employee performance and employee empowerment, employee performance and social capital, and employee empowerment and social capital. Moreover, it has been observed that social capital and employee performance perception have a positive predictive effect on employee empowerment perception.

Keywords:

Social capital, employee performance, employee empowerment

## 1. Introduction

At the point where many theories on how to increase productivity in organizational functioning have evolved today, we see that the issue of employee qualifications and competencies has come to the fore. At this point, the importance of the concept of social capital increases day by day. Social capital is a new economic concept with social content that aims to reveal the effects of social life on the economic activities of countries. Although it is very difficult to provide a single definition of the concept, it is possible to define social capital in its simplest form as the opportunity for communication between at least two people based on trust and, in a slightly broader definition, the characteristics of trust, norms, and communication networks that increase the productivity of society by facilitating coordination activities between individuals, non-governmental organizations, and public institutions that make up the society (Temple, 2002). Evaluations of social capital are generally centered around the axis of communication networks, social norms, and trust (OECD, 2011). In this framework, studies on social capital analyze the physical, legal, and moral feasibility of all kinds of vertical and horizontal communication between individuals and institutions and the extent to which they are based on trust. The general aim of these studies is to determine the extent to which these relationships between individuals, institutions, and organizations contribute to the achievement of the general economic and social goals of society (Schuller, 2001).

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Social capital is a combination of actual and potential resources linked to the possession/saving of continuous networks of more or less institutionalized relations of mutual recognition; or, to put it differently, it is something related to resources based on belonging to a group (Bourdieu 1983). Every individual in society actually possesses social capital. This ownership is related to the individual's belonging to a certain family, group, party, etc. Through this belonging, the individual guarantees the right to use the networks and resources of the group to which they belong. This belonging is both a recognition and a validation for the individual, and this process develops in a reciprocity relationship.

Although the concept of social capital seems to have gained more importance in recent years, it is a sociological factor whose importance and effectiveness in the development of society have been recognized by social scientists much longer ago. In particular, theorists such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Thorstein Veblen, and Max Weber have emphasized the importance of social capital in economic development and solving social problems (Woodhouse, 2006). However, it is observed that the number of studies that systematically addressed the issue of social capital and emphasized its economic dimension intensified in the 1990s. It is known that theorists such as Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993), Putnam (1995), Labonte (1999), and Bankston and Zhou (2002) pioneered the related studies. Social capital, one of the most important economic and social concepts of recent years, is considered a factor directly related to the economic, political, and social success of countries (Woodhouse, 2006).

While production patterns are changing in countries transitioning from the second wave industrial society to the third wave information society, the factors of production are also changing (Toffler, 2022). In this context, while the accumulation of physical and financial capital, which are the main factors of production in the industrial society, is at the forefront, it is seen that the accumulation of human and social capital comes to the fore in the information society (Baydar, 2021). The similarity between social capital and physical capital is its positive contribution to production in proportion to its existence. This feature is also the reason why social relations based on trust are considered capital.

Social capital is closely linked to success and stability in the economic, social, and political spheres. Therefore, investing in people and the development of social values will facilitate success in global competition. Just as the creation and production of physical capital require considerable cost and effort, the accumulation of social capital requires similar effort and cost. However, accumulating social capital is different from accumulating physical capital. Because what needs to be done for this purpose mainly consists of social activities. The ability of countries to use their material factors of production efficiently is largely directly proportional to their accumulation of social capital. Researchers have shown that organizations that adopt efficiency as a basic principle do not have high productivity despite having strong economic capital based on raw materials and human capital based on human knowledge. Such a situation stems from the weakening of trust-based relationships between people and their low participation in decision-making processes (Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 2005; Nahapiet & Ghosal, 1998; Putnam, 1995). This is due to the fact that the enrichment of social capital facilitates both social and organizational development.

The concept of social capital first emerged with studies in schools. According to Hanifan (1916), who first proposed social capital, relationships such as neighborhood, intimacy, and friendship between families or individuals that make up the society have a tangible value. On one hand, schools interact with their environment, and on the other hand, they try to improve the knowledge and skills of the students receiving services. Thus, while the academic achievement of the school represents human capital, the school culture, which is formed due to intensive relations with its environment, corresponds to social capital (Coleman, 1988; Rice & Croninger, 2005).

Research on social capital in schools has generally focused on the effects of social capital on student achievement. As a matter of fact, Coleman (1988) states that children from disadvantaged families in the society reduce educational inequality to some extent through schooling. Plagens (2011) argues that teacher quality, teacher experiences, and the number of students per teacher have an impact on school performance. According to him, social capital elements such as facilitating relationships between individuals and improving social relations also affect school performance. These studies have revealed that social capital is a valuable asset for schools.

Bullen and Onyx (2000) used the dimensions of trust, tolerance for differences, participation in local communities, and neighborhood connections in their study. Meier (1999) categorized social capital as social closeness, family involvement in school, communication between families, and student-teacher interaction. Takakura et al. (2014) tried to measure social capital at school with reciprocity, trust, and neighborhood relations between teachers and students. Putnam (2000) divides social capital into two categories: intra-community and extra-community social capital. Intra-community social capital refers to the relationships between close people, such as family members, close friends, and neighbors. Extracommunity social capital, on the other hand, is a horizontal metaphor, referring to the relationships between people who share many similar demographic characteristics but are not very close to each other. In-community social capital represents relationships between family members and members of the same ethnic group. Extracommunity social capital reflects relationships between distant friends, community members, and colleagues. Extracommunity social capital is often seen as necessary to enhance economic and social performance.

Extracommunity social capital contributes to the formation of trust and facilitates communication between horizontal groups. In empirical studies, these different types of social capital are often compared with each other, and it is argued that dense ties (intra-community social capital) have a negative impact on economic performance, whereas open and weak ties (extracommunity and unifying types of social capital) have a positive impact on economic performance. This is because weak ties build bridges between different communities, foster information sharing, and allow trust to spread quickly among outsiders. In this way, it benefits the economic development process. In short, it is argued that intra-community social capital, which is between family, friends, and acquaintances, negatively affects income and development, while extracommunity capital, which brings together members of voluntary organizations, positively affects it (Beugelsdijk & Smulder, 2003; Sabatini, 2006).

One of the prominent study topics in terms of increasing organizational efficiency is the concept of individual performance. Performance is the level of success achieved by an individual in the face of all the efforts he/she has spent to fulfill his/her job. A person's performance depends on his/her qualifications, abilities, beliefs, and values (Morillo, 1990). In this context, it is obvious that individual performance is open to change and influence. Performance appraisals are also very important for the employee. Especially successful employees want to be rewarded for their work. An individual who puts forth all his/her efforts for the job with all his/her good intentions will be demoralized when he/she sees that he/she is evaluated in the same way as a person with low performance and indifference towards the job, and this situation will gradually cause a decrease in his/her determination to work. Consequently, performance appraisal can also be seen as a tool for directing and encouraging employees to work and increasing their trust in the organization (Cohen et al., 1984).

One classification of performance is Shields and Hanser's (1990) classification of "can do" and "will do" factors. The "can do" factor is related to capacity and ability, while the "will do" factor is related to the candidate's willingness, attitudes, behaviors, and interest in the job. Another performance classification is the "task" and "context" performance made by Borman and Motowidlo (1997). This classification is based on the view that it is not enough to perform only job-related tasks. Situational performance that will contribute to the social structure of the job includes actions such as helping others, guiding, and volunteering. Task performance is mostly associated with ability, while situational performance is associated with personality.

Individual performance can be defined as the capabilities used by the individual to achieve organizational goals. These competencies include not only job-related tasks but also non-job-related tasks and behaviors. Competence is the degree to which a person can achieve organizational goals (McGrath, MacMillan, & Venkataraman, 1995). The basic condition for realizing high-performance organizations is to work with individuals who have high-performance skills, i.e., competencies. High-performing individuals are those who adopt a positive approach to everything in their world, focus on all the good things in their lives, and try to improve them (Sharma, 2022). To accomplish this, employees need to strike a balance between the goals of the organization and their own goals and adopt the goals of the organization as their own (Amar, 1994).

A high-performing individual is someone who realizes task performance and organizational performance at the same time at the highest level while working in line with the vision and strategies of the organization (Barutçugil, 2002).

There are three factors that constitute individual performance (i) Focus - The employee must know what to do. (ii) Competence - The employee must have the skills to do it. (iii) Dedication - The employee must be willing to contribute.

Managers may not give a lot of money to their employees, but they can do something to improve their employees' performance in terms of managerial skills, working conditions, and career opportunities (Fitz-Enz & Phillips, 2001). One of the most important things that organizations can do to improve the performance of their employees is employee empowerment. It has become more important today to remove limitations that may reduce the ability of employees to accomplish tasks and to enable them to do their own work (Jefkins, 1995).

Hales and Klidas (1998) define empowerment as the sharing of information, knowledge, and power with lower-level employees. Empowerment can be explained as the delegation of authority and responsibility to employees by top management and employees taking ownership and responsibility for their work in order to achieve organizational goals and values (Eade, 1993). Staff empowerment is the strengthening of the belief in one's own effectiveness (Conger, 1989) and the decentralization of the decision-making process in the organization. In this way, managers provide staff with more autonomy and discretion (Brymer, 1991).

Ettorre (1997) listed the elements related to employee empowerment as power sharing, fewer dismissals, orientation according to organizational structure and organizational culture, and being open to innovation at all levels. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) defined psychological empowerment as the employees' perception of whether they feel empowered or not within the framework of the cognitive model they developed and stated that empowerment is related to cognitive change, which has an important place in motivating employees. Spreitzer (1995) states that employee empowerment is a whole consisting of four dimensions: meaning (the intrinsic importance of the task and the evaluation of job goals according to the individual's own ideals and standards), competence (employees' beliefs about whether they have the capacity to perform activities related to their work), autonomy/autonomy (freedom to make decisions about the steps to be taken at work), and influence (the degree to which people can make differences that will create desired effects in the work processes). For employee empowerment to be vital and measurable, the strategic goals of the organization and individual goals must be linked, and when empowerment is in line with strategic goals, the lower levels must implement it (Ettorre, 1997). Empowerment is therefore based on trust in employees' abilities. Moreover, it should be based on trust in one's own ability.

In accordance with all these explanations, it is obvious that the managers of schools, which are social organizations, should develop a management policy that deals with the concepts of social capital, individual performance, and employee empowerment in a holistic manner in order to achieve the goals assigned to them by the top policy makers, provide a peaceful working environment, and increase work efficiency in the institutions they manage. Within this context, this study, which aims to examine the relationship between social capital, employee performance, and employee empowerment in educational organizations, is unique in that there is no other study in the literature that deals with these three concepts in a holistic manner.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research Model**

In this research, relational survey design, one of the quantitative research methods, was used to reveal the relationship between teachers' social capital, employee performance, and employee empowerment variables. In relational survey designs, a situation is tried to be explained as it is by exploring the relationship between variables, and the degree to which variables affect each other is revealed (Kaya et al., 2012). Such designs try to understand how the participants perceive the situation rather than revealing the reasons for their opinions (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2013).

### **2.2. Research Group**

This study was conducted with the participation of 392 teachers working in public schools in Maltepe, Kartal, Pendik, and Tuzla districts of Istanbul Province, selected by simple random sampling method. In this type of sampling, each of the individuals in the selected region is given an equal chance of being selected. In correlational studies, 350 individuals are considered sufficient for parametric tests (Creswell, 2017). The 392

participants in this study can be considered sufficient for further statistical processing. Care was taken to ensure that the teachers selected for the implementation of the scale volunteered to answer the questions sincerely. Regarding the distribution of the participants according to their demographic characteristics, 231 (58.9%) of the 392 participants were female and 161 (41.1%) were male. According to the age characteristics of the participants, 106 (27%) were 30 years old and younger, 163 (41.6%) were 36-35 years old, and 123 (31.4%) were 46 years old and older. In terms of education level, 310 (79.1%) of the participants were undergraduates, and 82 (20%) were postgraduate graduates.

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools

Social Capital Scale, Employee Performance Scale, and School Participant Empowerment Scale were used to collect research data. Furthermore, a Personal Information Form was used to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants. *Personal information form*: In this form, questions regarding the gender, age, and graduation status of the participants were included.

*Social Capital Scale*: The scale, which was developed by Kouvonon et al. (2006) and adapted into Turkish by Akyürek (2021) to measure the social capital levels of employees, consists of 8 items and one dimension. A high score on the scale indicates that employees have high social capital. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .94 in the adaptation study and .90 in this study. These results indicate that the scale is suitable for use.

*Employee Performance Scale*: It is a four-item unidimensional scale adapted into Turkish by Çöl (2008) to measure the individual performance of employees. The high score given by the participants indicates that the employees perceive their performance as high, while the low score indicates that they perceive their performance as low. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .82 in Çöl's (2008) study and .76 in this study. These results indicate that the scale is suitable for use.

*School Participants Empowerment Scale*: It was developed by Short and Rinehart (1992) and adapted into Turkish by Polat (2022) to determine the level of empowerment of organizational employees. The scale is applied to teachers, and the scores to be obtained from the scale vary between 5 and 145. There is no reverse item. A high score on the scale indicates that teachers' empowerment levels are high. The final adapted version of the scale consists of six sub-dimensions and 29 items in total. Polat (2022) calculated the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the sub-dimensions between .83 and .90 in the adaptation process. In this study, the reliability coefficient was calculated as .93. These results show that the scale is suitable for use.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Correlation and regression analyses were conducted in this study to determine the relationship between social capital, employee performance, and employee empowerment. Before proceeding to further analyses, it was determined whether the data conformed to the normal distribution. Data on the normality of the distribution are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Normality Values for Social Capital, Employee Performance, and Employee Empowerment

		Statistic	Std. Error
Social capital	Mean	4,22	.023
	Std. Deviation	.451	
	Skewness	-.061	.123
	Kurtosis	.167	.246
Employee performance	Mean	4.02	.023
	Std. Deviation	.446	
	Skewness	.114	.123
	Kurtosis	-.204	.246
Employee empowerment	Mean	4.13	.028
	Std. Deviation	.546	
	Skewness	-.440	.123
	Kurtosis	.833	.246

Table 1 shows that the kurtosis and skewness values of the three variables are between -1.5 and +1.5. According to Tabachnick and Fidel's (2007) reference values, it can be said that the data are normally distributed. Once

the conformity of the data to the normal distribution was verified, the perception levels of teachers regarding the variables of social capital, employee performance, and employee empowerment were determined, and analyses were conducted to reveal the relationship between the variables.

## 2.5. Ethics

In this study, all rules were complied with within the scope of the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive". In this study, all rules were complied with within the scope of the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive".

## 3. Findings

The levels of social capital, employee performance, and employee empowerment according to teachers' perceptions are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Social Capital, Employee Performance, and Employee Empowerment Variables

Variables	N	M	SD	Assessment
Social capital	392	4.13	.546	High
Employee performance	392	4.22	.451	High
Employee empowerment	392	4.03	.446	High

As Table 2 shows, teachers' perception levels of social capital (M=4.13; SD=.546), employee performance (M=4.22; SD=.451) and participant empowerment (M=4.03; SD=.446) were calculated at high levels. In other words, teachers think that they have high levels of performance and social capital. On the other hand, teachers state that they are highly empowered by their managers. Correlation analyses showing the relationship between the variables are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Correlation Values of Employee Performance, Social Capital, and Employee Empowerment Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Employee performance	4.22	.451	1		
Social capital	4.13	.546	.276**	1	
Employee empowerment	4.03	.446	.511**	.560**	1

\*\* $p < .01$ ; N=392

When Table 3 is analyzed, it is seen that there are significant and positive relationships between the three variables. There is a positive relationship between employee performance and employee empowerment ( $r = .511$ ,  $p < .01$ ), between employee performance and social capital ( $r = .276$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and between employee empowerment and social capital ( $r = .560$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The results of the regression analysis to determine whether teachers' perceptions of social capital predict employee empowerment are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Level of Prediction of Social Capital for Employee Empowerment

Model		Non-standard coefficient		Standard coefficient	t	p
		B	Standard Error	$\beta$		
1	Constant	2,137	,143		14,967	,000
	Social capital	,457	,034	,560	13,349	,000

N = 392, R = 0,560, R<sup>2</sup> = ,314, Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = ,312

When Table 4 is analyzed, it is seen that the perception of social capital has a positive prediction feature for employee empowerment. Social capital perception explains 31% of the total variance of employee empowerment perception. The results of the regression analysis to determine whether teachers' perceptions of employee performance predict employee empowerment are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Level of Prediction of Employee Performance on Employee Empowerment

Model		Non-standard coefficient		Standard coefficient	t	p
		B	Standard Error	$\beta$		
1	Constant	1.895	.183		10,366	.000
	Employee performance	.505	.043	.511	11,727	.000

N = 392, R = .511, R<sup>2</sup> = .261, Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .259

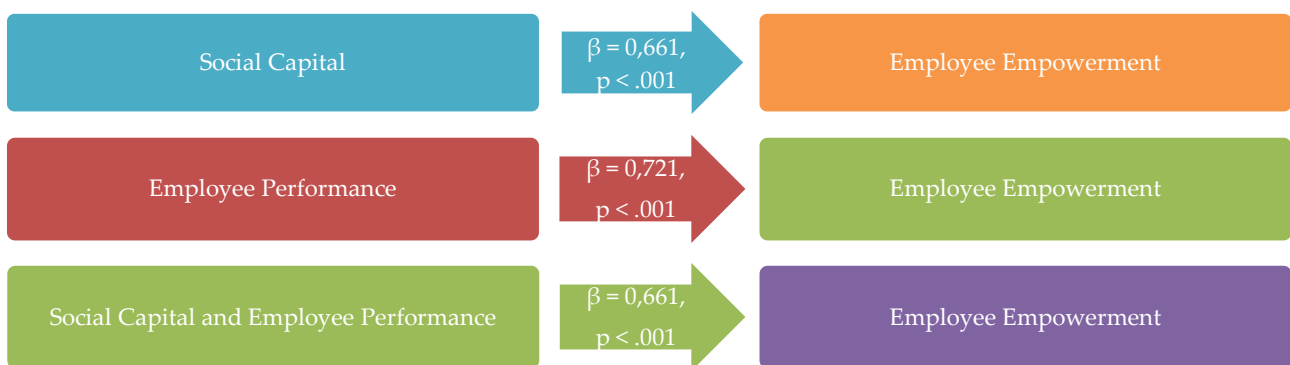
Table 5 shows that employee performance has a positive prediction feature for employee empowerment. Employee performance perception explains 26% of the total variance of employee empowerment perception. The results of the regression analysis to determine whether teachers' perceptions of social capital and employee performance together predict employee empowerment are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.** The Level of Prediction of Social Capital and Employee Performance Together for Employee Empowerment

Model	Non-standard coefficient		Standard coefficient	t	p	
	B	Standard Error	$\beta$			
1	Constant	,887	,180		4,925	,000
	Social capital	,371	,032	,454	11,605	,000
	Employee performance	,381	,039	,385	9,859	,000

N = 392, R = 0,671, R<sup>2</sup> = ,451, Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = ,448

According to Table 6, it is seen that social capital ( $\beta = 0.454$ ) and employee performance ( $\beta = 0.385$ ) have a positive predictive feature on the perception of employee empowerment. The prediction level of social capital is higher than employee performance. The two predictor variables together explain 45.1% of the total variance of employee empowerment perception. The adjusted variance value was found to be 44.8%. In other words, an increase in perceptions of social capital and employee performance positively affects the perception of employee empowerment. The direct effect of employee performance and social capital together on employee empowerment is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Effect Level Values between Variables

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Today, when liberal thought dominates every institution of society, educational institutions have also taken their share from this trend of thought. It is seen that the functioning built on the phenomenon of competition in businesses makes its effect felt in educational institutions day by day. The managers of educational institutions are constantly in search of new ways to help their organizations achieve the desired goals in the developing competitive environment. At this point, just like in other organizations, increasing staff competencies has become an important topic in order to achieve the goals in educational institutions. In this context, this study aims to examine the relationship between social capital, employee performance, and employee empowerment in educational organizations.

The findings of the study revealed that teachers think that they have a high level of performance and social capital. There are many important studies (Coleman, 1988; Doolan, 2009; Eng, 2009; Sullivan, 2001) showing that educational achievement is related to the forms of economic, cultural, and social capital that an individual has or does not have. In these areas, it is as important for teachers to have sufficient capital accumulation as it is for students to have sufficient capital accumulation. Therefore, it is positively striking that teachers see themselves as strong in terms of social capital. On the other hand, teachers state that they are highly empowered by their administrators. The importance of school administrators in the development of social capital in schools is undeniable. School administrators play a critical role in the formation of school culture, especially by ensuring the development of effective and positive norms and values (Lim & Cromartie, 2001). In this context, it is important for educational leaders to perform as a flexible situational factor or contextual moderator that can enable and encourage the empowerment of employees in taking responsibility behaviors (Kumar, Liu, & Jin, 2022; López-Cabarcos, Vázquez-Rodríguez, & QuinoA-Pineiro, 2022). The more

successfully school administrators can maintain these roles, the higher the performance and efficiency of school employees will be.

Another important finding of the study is that the perception of social capital has a positive effect on employee empowerment. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are many studies (Erdem Kandemir & İhtiyaroglu, 2023; Erten & Türkmen, 2022; Kakakhel & Khalil, 2022; Zhang, Sun, & Zhang, 2022) that support this finding. Based on the findings, if it is desired to obtain maximum efficiency from the work of all personnel operating in the school, studies should be developed to increase the perception of social capital in the school. It can be evaluated that, in parallel with the development of teachers' social capital, their self-confidence will increase, and they will aspire to assume more responsibility in the institutions where they work.

When similar studies (Alghnimi, Habeeb, & Kadhim, 2020; Baird, Tung, & Su, 2020; Tampi, Nabella, & Sari, 2022) that address the positive relationship between employee performance and employee empowerment are examined, it is seen that these issues should be made an indispensable part of the school culture in order to ensure the most effective use of human resources within an organization and to ensure sustainability.

Within the scope of the research, it is seen that the perception of social capital ( $\beta = 0.454$ ) and employee performance ( $\beta = 0.385$ ) are positive, and together they have a predictive feature on the perception of employee empowerment. With the increasing pace of change, the effect of competition has moved to global dimensions, which reduces the effect of centralized decision-making in organizations and increases the need for employees who can take initiative to produce solutions to problems, participate in decisions, even make decisions on their own, and bear responsibility for the results (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1997; Moorhead & Griffin, 2001). Therefore, when all the findings obtained in this study are considered in a holistic perspective, it is obvious that educational institutions, which have the mission of raising individuals who will keep up with the ever-changing and developing age, should continuously support their employees in order to achieve their goals. At this point, the most important task, besides policymakers, falls to school administrators. Considering the negativities, administrators should take into account the fact that centralized management has been replaced by decentralized management today and the need to empower their employees in order to manage schools with this understanding. At this point, increasing school social capital and employee performance should be handled from a holistic perspective with employee empowerment, and this should be made a part of the school culture.

## 5. Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

This study has certain limitations that need to be addressed. The data obtained in this study is based on teachers' views. For a deeper understanding of the topic, future studies should collect data from different sources, including parents and other school staff, in addition to teachers. The data for this study were collected in the largest city in Turkey. Findings may be different in rural cities. For this reason, future research should collect data from different parts of Turkey, including rural areas.

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