THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN THE EFFECT OF EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP ON QUALITY OF WORK LIFE
GÜÇLENDİRİCİ LİDERLİĞİN İŞ YAŞAM KALİTESİNE ETKİSİNDE ÖRGÜTSEL DESTEĞİN ARACILIK ROLÜ

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Abstract
This study aims to investigate the mediating role of organizational support in the impact of empowering leadership on the quality of work life. The research employs a relational methodology and focuses on 319 teachers working in public schools in Kilis province during the 2024-2025 academic year. Data were collected using scales measuring empowering leadership, organizational support, and quality of work life, as well as a personal information form. Analyses were conducted using SPSS and Hayes' Process Macro Model 4, with a 95% confidence interval calculated based on 5000 bootstrap samples. The findings of the study indicate that teachers perceive high levels of empowering leadership, organizational support, and quality of work life. Moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationships were found between the variables, with the strongest relationship being between organizational support and quality of work life. Empowering leadership has both a direct effect on work life quality and an indirect effect through organizational support. These results suggest that organizational support plays a partial mediating role. The study proposes several recommendations for school administrators, including promoting empowering leadership behaviors by granting teachers authority and responsibility, involving them in decision-making processes, and providing developmental opportunities. Additionally, it is recommended to foster school cultures that enhance perceptions of organizational support and offer in-service training for administrators

Keywords: Empowering Leadership, Quality of Work Life, Organizational Support

Özet
Bu araştırma, güçlendirici liderliğin iş yaşam kalitesine etkisinde örgütsel desteğin aracılık rolünü incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, ilişkisel yöntem kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın örneklemini 2024-2025 eğitim-öğretim yılında Kilis ilindeki kamu okullarında görev yapan 319 öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Veri toplama araçları olarak güçlendirici liderlik, örgütsel destek ve iş yaşam kalitesi ölçekleri ile kişisel bilgi formu kullanılmıştır. Analizler SPSS ve Hayes'ın Process Macrosu Model 4 kullanılarak yapılmış ve 5000 bootstrap örneklemesi ile %95 güven aralığı hesaplanmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, öğretmenlerin güçlendirici liderlik, örgütsel destek ve iş yaşam kalitesi algılarının yüksek olduğunu göstermiştir. Değişkenler arasında pozitif yönde orta düzeyde anlamlı ilişkiler tespit edilmiştir; örgütsel destek ile iş yaşam kalitesi arasındaki

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ilişki en güçlü olanıdır. Güçlendirici liderlik, iş yaşam kalitesi üzerinde hem doğrudan hem de örgütsel destek aracılığıyla dolaylı etkiler göstermiştir. Bu sonuçlar, örgütsel desteğin kısmi aracılık rolüne işaret etmektedir. Araştırmada, okul yöneticilerine öğretmenlere yetki ve sorumluluk verme, karar alma süreçlerine katılma ve gelişim fırsatları sunarak güçlendirici liderlik davranışlarını yaygınlaştırma gibi öneriler sunulmaktadır. Ayrıca, örgütsel destek algısını güçlendirecek duyarlı okul kültürleri geliştirilmesi ve yöneticilere hizmet içi eğitimler sunulması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güçlendirici Liderlik, İş Yasam Kalitesi, Örgütsel Destek

INTRODUCTION

The ability of organizations to achieve their goals and sustain success depends on how effectively they manage their human resources (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 1998). Effective management of human capital, in turn, is possible only when employees' physical, mental, and psychological well-being is maintained at an optimal level (Barnett & Brennan, 1998). Research indicates that employees who are physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy demonstrate higher performance and exhibit lower rates of absenteeism in the workplace (Adams, 2019). The quality of the work environment has a significant impact on employees' overall health. In particular, factors such as workload, autonomy over one's job, compensation, and the support provided by supervisors positively influence employees' overall health status and job satisfaction (Diep & Horváthová, 2025). Consequently, by creating work environments that strengthen employees' overall well-being, organizations can achieve higher levels of performance at both the individual and institutional levels. In this regard, quality of work life emerges as a critical strategy for organizational success (Pandey, Maheshwari, & Malik, 2025).

The concept of quality of work life is multidimensional and broad in scope, making it difficult to establish a universally accepted definition (Danna & Griffin, 1999). According to Warr (1987), quality of work life refers to reducing stress within the work environment. Lokanadha and Mohan (2010) define it as the extent to which an organization supports the psychological and physical well-being of its employees. Pfeffer (2004) views it as enhancing employee performance through training and promotion opportunities. Lau, Wong, Chan, and Law (2001) describe it as providing employees with a safe work environment, rewards, and opportunities for career development. Walton (1973) associates the concept with the characteristics and conditions of work. Considine and Callus (2002) conceptualize it as a multidimensional structure encompassing reward systems, promotion opportunities, job security, training, and participation in decision-making. Huzzard (2003) defines quality of work life as democratizing the work environment, improving working conditions, protecting employees, and humanizing work. Studies on quality of work life indicate that it plays a critical role in shaping organizational identity, employee performance, job satisfaction, and turnover decisions (Kheirandish, 2009; Waitayangkook, 2003). Donaldson (2000) reported that quality of work life is associated with organizational commitment, absenteeism, and tardiness. In the study conducted by Abbasi, Samadzadeh, and Shahbazadegan (2011), quality of work life was found to be linked to job performance, job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational commitment. Masoomzadeh, Feizi, and Alipour (2013) emphasized that improving employees' quality of work life reduces counterproductive work behaviors. Akar (2018) noted that quality of work life decreases occupational burnout and school alienation while enhancing emotional commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors. As highlighted in the literature, inadequate levels of quality of work life

may lead to numerous personal and organizational problems that are difficult to remedy. Therefore, identifying variables that positively influence quality of work life is essential. Numerous individual and organizational factors affect quality of work life. In particular, employees' relationships with their managers and their perceived level of support play a significant role in determining quality of work life. This brings to mind the concepts of empowering leadership and organizational support.

Empowering leadership is a leadership style in which leaders grant autonomy to employees, provide continuous support, and help enhance their development and performance (Kim & Beehr, 2022). This style involves delegating authority and responsibility to subordinates, informing them more thoroughly about organizational processes, encouraging their participation in decision-making, and supporting their professional growth (Atik & Çelik, 2020). Research has shown that empowering leadership is associated with numerous variables. Specifically, managers' empowering leadership behaviors have been found to be positively related to psychological resilience (Çevik & Doğan, 2025), job satisfaction (Atik & Çelik, 2020; Dağlı & Kalkan, 2021; Horoub & Zargar, 2022), work engagement (Al Otaibi, Amin, Winterton, Bolt & Cafferkey, 2023; Töre & Uzun, 2024), self-efficacy (Çelik & Konan, 2020; Dağlı & Kalkan, 2021), organizational citizenship behavior (Çelik & Konan, 2020), trust (Atik & Çelik, 2020), creativity (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), innovative work behavior (Erdem, 2021), job performance (Limpo & Junaidi, 2022), organizational support (Imamoğlu & Dönmez Turan, 2019), work-related well-being (Zhang, Ni, Lin, Li & Zhou, 2023), and psychological empowerment (Fong & Snape, 2015). Conversely, empowering leadership has been found to be negatively associated with workplace loneliness (Hou & Cai, 2024) and occupational burnout (Khan, Chughtai & Zhiqiang, 2025).

Another factor that influences teachers' perceptions of work life is organizational support. Organizational support refers to the extent to which an institution recognizes the contributions of its employees and values them (Martin, 1995). In essence, organizational support is grounded in employees' perceptions. When employees believe that their institution values them, their perceived level of organizational support increases (Yoshimura, 2003). Organizational support assures employees that their social and emotional needs will be met when necessary and that their expectations and requests will be addressed (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades, 2001). Research indicates that perceptions of organizational support are influenced by perceptions of organizational justice (Moideenkutty, Blau, Kumar & Nalakath, 2001). Similarly, employees' trust in their supervisors and colleagues, as well as the support they receive from them, has been shown to significantly affect their perception of organizational support (Shore & Shore, 1995). Moreover, factors such as autonomy, job security, working conditions, and reward systems are closely related to organizational support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003; Yoon & Thye, 2000; Stamper & Johlke, 2003). Additionally, organizational support has been found to enhance organizational commitment (Nayir, 2012; Abdollahi, Piri & Azimi, 2013), job satisfaction (Gutierrez, Candela & Carver, 2012), work engagement (O'Driscoll & Randall, 1999), job performance (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), and quality of work life (Akar & Üstüner, 2018), while reducing absenteeism (Yoon & Lim, 1999), turnover intention (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), job alienation (Yılmaz & Görmüş, 2012), and work–family conflict (Foley, Hang-Yue & Lui, 2005).

The success and sustainability of organizations in general, and educational institutions in particular, depend not only on material resources but also on the ability to manage human resources effectively. In many institutions that operate

with a human-centered focus, such as educational organizations, employees' quality of work life can directly influence their performance. A stressful, uncontrolled, and unsupportive work environment may lead employees to experience professional burnout, reduced motivation, and ultimately turnover. Therefore, it is of great importance to examine both the direct and indirect effects of employee-centered approaches—such as empowering leadership and organizational support—on the quality of work life. The findings of this study are expected to provide guidance for school administrators, decision-makers, and policymakers. In this way, it will become possible to develop policies and practices that enhance teachers' overall well-being. Furthermore, improving the quality of work life in institutions such as schools, which directly affect a large portion of society, will generate not only individual but also institutional and societal benefits. Accordingly, the results of this research will contribute to the literature as well as offer practical insights for practitioners. In this study, which examines the mediating role of perceived organizational support in the effect of empowering leadership on quality of work life, the hypotheses related to the model developed in line with the literature (Figure 1) were tested. The hypotheses of the study are as follows:

H1: Empowering leadership has a positive effect on teachers' quality of work life.
H2: Empowering leadership has a positive effect on teachers' perceived organizational support.
H3: Perceived organizational support has a positive effect on teachers' quality of work life.
H4: Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and quality of work life.
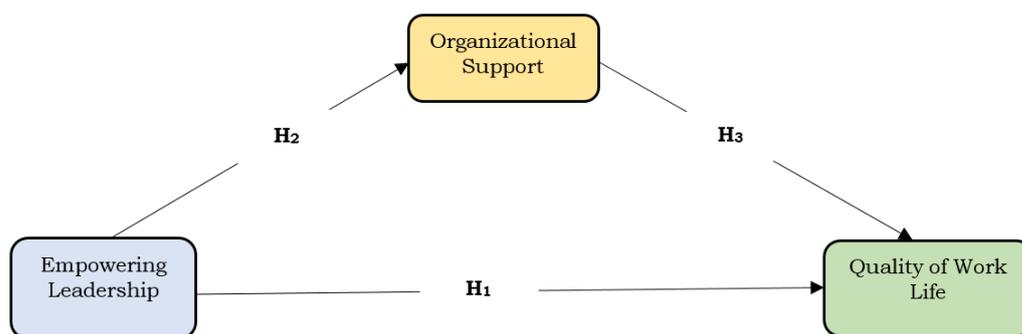

Figure1. *Research Model*

METHOD

Research Model

This study was conducted using a relational (correlational) research design, as it aims to examine the mediating role of organizational support in the effect of empowering leadership on quality of work life. Relational research is typically employed to identify existing connections between two or more variables, as well as the direction and strength of these relationships. This method emphasizes the relationships among variables rather than providing causal evidence (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2018; Karasar, 2020).

Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of teachers working in public schools *(primary, secondary, and high schools)* in Kilis during the 2024–2025 academic

year. Convenience sampling was employed to determine the sample of the study, which helped to accelerate data collection and minimize time loss (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018). The sample consisted of 319 teachers. The demographic information of the participating teachers is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Information of the Participants*

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Female	154	48.3
	Male	165	51.7
Age	21–30	95	29.8
	31–40	91	28.5
	41–50	102	32.0
	51 and above	31	9.7
Seniority	1–5 years	79	24.8
	6–10 years	66	20.7
	11–15 years	74	23.2
	16–20 years	46	14.4
	21–25 years	30	9.4
	26 years and above	24	7.5
School Level	Primary School	134	42.0
	Secondary School	114	35.7
	High School	71	22.3

As shown in Table 1, 51.7% of the participating teachers are male, while 48.3% are female. Regarding age distribution, 29.8% of the teachers are between 21–30 years old, 28.5% are 31–40 years old, 32% are 41–50 years old, and 9.7% are 51 years or older. In terms of teaching experience, 24.8% have 1–5 years, 20.7% have 6–10 years, 23.2% have 11–15 years, 14.4% have 16–20 years, 9.4% have 21–25 years, and 7.5% have 26 years or more of professional experience. Furthermore, 42% of the teachers work at the primary school level, 35.7% at the secondary school level, and 22.3% at the high school level.

Data Collection Instruments

The data for this study were collected using the Empowering Leadership Scale, Organizational Support Scale, Quality of Work Life Scale, and a Personal Information Form.

Empowering Leadership Scale: Developed by Konczak, Stelly, and Trusty (2000), the scale was adapted into Turkish by Konan and Çelik (2018). It consists of 17 items and 3 sub-dimensions and employs a 5-point Likert-type response format. Within the scope of this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.85.

Organizational Support Scale: Originally developed by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986), the scale was adapted into Turkish by Özdemir (2010). It comprises 15 items in a single dimension and uses a 5-point Likert-type response format. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale has been reported as 0.89. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha was calculated as 0.88.

Quality of Work Life Scale: Developed by Van Laar, Edwards, and Easton (2007), the Turkish adaptation was carried out by Akar and Üstüner (2017). The scale consists of 23 items and 6 dimensions, with a 5-point Likert-type response format.

The original Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.93, while it was calculated as 0.90 in the current study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected through in-person visits to the schools by the researcher. Initially, participating teachers were provided with a brief explanation of the study's purpose and assured that their responses would remain confidential and would not be shared with anyone. Subsequently, the participants were asked to complete the data collection instruments. The time required to complete the instruments ranged from 5 to 10 minutes. After the data collection process was completed, the data were entered into SPSS 25, and analyses were conducted using this software. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentage, and frequency) were first calculated to summarize the research variables. Correlation analyses were then performed to examine the relationships among the variables. To test the mediating role of organizational support in the effect of empowering leadership on quality of work life, the Process Macro, developed by Hayes (2013) and integrated into SPSS, was employed. Hayes' (2013) Process Macro allows analyses with different structural models depending on the research objective. In this study, Model 4, which is suitable for testing the specified relational structure, was used. Additionally, 5,000 bootstrap samples were applied to determine the significance of the indirect effect, and a 95% confidence interval was considered.

FINDINGS

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for teachers' perceptions of empowering leadership, organizational support, and quality of work life, as well as the correlation coefficients indicating the direction and strength of the relationships among these variables.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients for Empowering Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support, and Quality of Work Life*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Empowering Leadership	3.58	0.45	—		
2. Perceived Organizational Support	4.05	0.78	0.502**	—	
3. Quality of Work Life	4.22	0.64	0.481**	0.568**	—

p < 0,01

As shown in Table 2, teachers' perceptions of quality of work life (M = 4.22), organizational support (M = 4.05), and empowering leadership (M = 3.58) are at a high level when considering the 5-point Likert scale. Based on this finding, it can be inferred that school administrators generally exhibit empowering leadership behaviors, teachers feel adequately supported by their institutions, and their perceptions of quality of work life are positive. Moreover, significant moderate positive correlations were observed among all variables in the study (p < .01). The highest correlation was found between organizational support and quality of work life (r = 0.568; p < .01), followed by the relationship between empowering leadership and organizational support (r = 0.502; p < .01), and between empowering leadership and quality of work life (r = 0.481; p < .01). These findings indicate that meaningful connections exist among the variables. In particular, it can be stated that teachers' perceived organizational support plays a significant role in their quality of work life. Furthermore, considering the positive relationships among empowering leadership, organizational support, and quality of work life, it can be suggested that school administrators' empowering leadership behaviors may shape teachers' quality of work life both directly and indirectly through organizational support.

The model examining the mediating role of organizational support in the effect of empowering leadership on quality of work life, along with the analysis results, is presented in Figure 2.
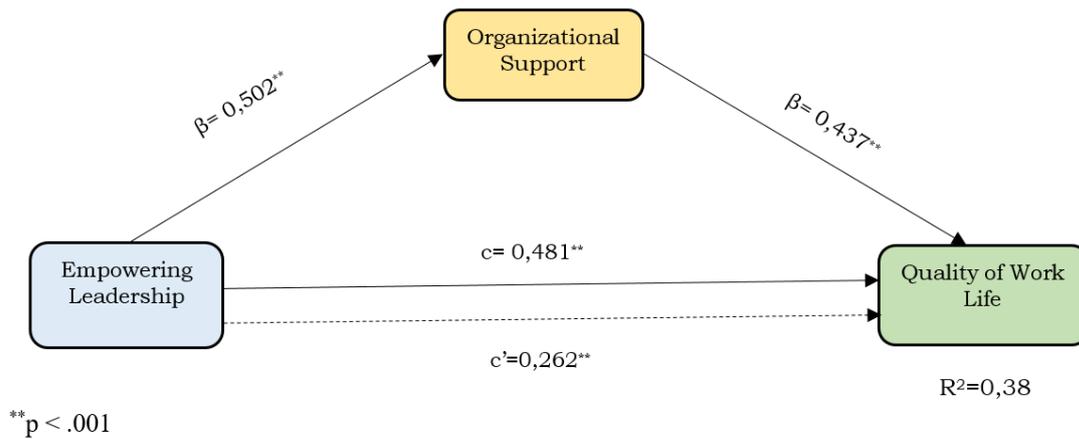

$**p < .001$

Figure 2. *The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support in the Effect of Empowering Leadership on Quality of Work Life and Standardized β Values*

As shown in Figure 2, the total effect of empowering leadership on quality of work life is significant (β_c = 0.481; p < .001). Similarly, the effect of empowering leadership on the mediator variable, organizational support, is also significant (β = 0.502; p < .001). Furthermore, the effect of the mediator, organizational support, on quality of work life is significant (β = 0.437; p < .001).When organizational support is included in the model as a mediator, the direct effect of empowering leadership on quality of work life decreases. However, despite this reduction in effect size, it remains significant ($\beta_{c'}$ = 0.262; p < .001). Based on this finding, it can be concluded that organizational support plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between empowering leadership and quality of work life. In other words, empowering leadership affects quality of work life both directly and indirectly through perceived organizational support. Additionally, empowering leadership and organizational support together explain 38% of the variance in quality of work life.

The total, direct, and indirect effects of empowering leadership on quality of work life are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of Empowering Leadership on Quality of Work Life*

Effects / Paths	β (Standardized)	t	p	95% CI
Total Effect				
EL → QWL	.481	9.78	< .001	[.376, .566]
Direct Effects				
EL → QWL	.262	5.10	< .001	[.158, .356]
EL → OS	.502	10.33	< .001	[.424, .623]
OS → QWL	.437	8.50	< .001	[.315, .505]
Indirect Effect				
EL → OS → QWL	.219	—	—	[.152, .292]

Note: EL = Empowering Leadership, OS = Organizational Support, QWL = Quality of Work Life, CI = Confidence Interval (LLCI = Lower Level Confidence Interval, ULCI = Upper Level Confidence Interval)

Table 3 summarizes the total, direct, and indirect effects of empowering leadership on quality of work life. The findings indicate that both the direct and indirect effects through organizational support are significant. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that all the hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, and H4) are supported.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined teachers' perceptions of empowering leadership, organizational support, and quality of work life, as well as the bivariate relationships among these variables. Additionally, the mediating role of organizational support in the effect of empowering leadership on quality of work life was tested.

The findings indicate that teachers' perceptions of empowering leadership, quality of work life, and organizational support are high. Based on this result, it can be inferred that school administrators in the participating schools generally exhibit empowering leadership behaviors, provide adequate support to teachers, and that teachers hold positive views regarding their quality of work life. These results are consistent with prior research in the literature. For instance, studies by Akar (2018) and Akar and Üstüner (2019) found that teachers' perceptions of quality of work life were high. Similarly, Cihan, Cihan, Bayezit, and Sabancıoğlu (2024) reported high perceptions of quality of work life among school principals and teachers. Kurt and Duyar (2023) found that teachers' perceptions of organizational support were high, and comparable results were reported by Blanco and Tingzon (2023) in studies on perceived organizational support. Regarding empowering leadership, studies by Atik and Çelik (2020) and Çelik and Konan (2021) also demonstrated that teachers' perceptions of empowering leadership were high. Together, the current study and previous research suggest that educational institutions provide a positive working environment.

The results of the study revealed moderate positive significant relationships among empowering leadership, organizational support, and quality of work life. When the relative importance of these relationships is considered, the highest correlation was observed between organizational support and quality of work life, followed by the relationships between empowering leadership and organizational support, and between empowering leadership and quality of work life. These findings indicate that school administrators' empowering leadership behaviors may positively influence teachers' perceptions of organizational support and quality of work life. Similar findings are reported in the literature; for example, Akar and Üstüner (2019) found significant relationships between teachers' perceived organizational support and quality of work life, and Zeng, Swatdikun, Aujirapongpan, and Huang (2024) reported similar results. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that when teachers feel valued, supported, and have their needs met within their institutions, their quality of work life is positively affected. Although no prior studies directly examined the relationship between empowering leadership and quality of work life, research on transformational leadership—the most similar leadership style—provides relevant insights. For example, Akar and Üstüner (2019) reported that transformational leadership is a significant predictor of quality of work life among teachers. Similar findings were observed in a study conducted with hotel employees by Doğan, Bayır, and Cinnioğlu (2022). Considering that both transformational and empowering leadership styles support employee development and enhance intrinsic motivation by involving employees in

decision-making, findings from transformational leadership studies provide valuable insight into the potential effects of empowering leadership on quality of work life. Accordingly, in working environments where teachers are supported by school administrators, involved in decision-making, and encouraged in their professional development, perceptions of quality of work life are likely to increase. Several studies also highlight the relationship between empowering leadership and organizational support, supporting the current findings. For instance, İmamoğlu and Dönmez Turan (2019) found a significant relationship between empowering leadership and organizational support among employees in the IT sector, and similar results were reported in a study with healthcare professionals by Amjad, Rehman, and Hashmi (2024). Additionally, findings from a study with administrative staff at a state university by Naktiyok (2019) are consistent with the current study. Despite being conducted across different sectors, these studies suggest that the effect of empowering leadership on organizational support may be universal and sector-independent.

The testing of the research model yielded important findings. The total effect of empowering leadership on quality of work life was significant, indicating that school administrators' empowering leadership behaviors influence teachers' quality of work life. Furthermore, empowering leadership significantly affected organizational support, and organizational support significantly affected quality of work life. Including organizational support in the model reduced the direct effect of empowering leadership on quality of work life, but the effect remained significant, indicating a partial mediating role. In other words, school administrators' empowering leadership behaviors influence teachers' quality of work life both directly and indirectly through organizational support. Thus, all research hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, and H4) were supported. These findings are consistent with previous research; for example, Kim, Moon, and Shin (2018) reported the mediating effect of perceived organizational support in the relationship between empowering leadership and employees' subjective well-being. Similarly, Naktiyok (2019) found that psychological empowerment mediated the effect of organizational support on quality of work life, and Akar and Üstüner (2019) reported that perceived organizational support mediated the effect of transformational leadership on quality of work life. Moreover, Kuang, Anggraini, Derliwanti, and Rohman (2023) found significant effects of both empowering leadership and perceived support on employees' well-being. These findings align with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that employees reciprocate positive behaviors and support from their leaders with increased performance, organizational commitment, and quality of work life. Accordingly, empowering leadership behaviors enhance teachers' perceptions of organizational support, thereby activating a social exchange process that improves quality of work life both directly and indirectly (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Based on the findings, the following recommendations can be made:

- ✓ The results indicate that empowering leadership affects teachers' quality of work life both directly and indirectly through organizational support. Therefore, school administrators are encouraged to frequently apply empowering leadership behaviors, such as granting authority and responsibility to teachers, involving them in decision-making processes, and providing opportunities for professional development.

- ✓ In-service training programs can be organized to increase school administrators' awareness of empowering leadership.

✓ Schools can cultivate a culture that is sensitive to teachers' needs and expectations.

✓ Future research can examine the mediating effects of variables such as burnout, motivation, organizational commitment, and organizational justice in the relationship between empowering leadership and quality of work life.

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