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AN EVALUATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE BASE ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF TURKISH STUDIES: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

School leadership has attracted the attention of researchers after it was revealed that leadership is an important factor in effective schools, along with school effectiveness studies. Since the mid-twentieth century, the number of studies on school leadership has increased in Western countries, where research has been intensifying every year, as well as in other countries. Türkiye is one of the countries where studies on school leadership have increased. The current study aims to make a systematic review of the research conducted by Turkish researchers on school leadership. Systematic review is an effective method for identifying trends, author collaborations, publication numbers, citation status etc. in a field. The research on school leadership in the web of science database, which were conducted in all times, and whose author or at least one of the authors was Turkish, were compiled and analysed by bibliometric analysis method. The results of the analysis showed that the number of studies increased especially after 2010, the studies were in journals indexed in SSCI and ESCI indexes, the research partnerships were mostly between Turkish academics, and the USA and China came to the fore in partnerships with academics from other countries. It was observed that transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and instructional leadership models were intensively studied. The findings also include the most cited publications and authors with the most co-citations. The research findings are important in terms of revealing the current situation in the field with a country-based analysis on school leadership and making suggestions for the future.

Keywords: School leadership, transformational leadership, instructional leadership, distributed leadership, bibliometric analyse.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership studies have attracted the attention of researchers for many years and this interest has not diminished. Scholars express that the importance of leadership research stems from the difficult-to-define nature of leadership (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Leadership in educational organisations has gained importance since the beginning of the 20th century. The education sector, which received support from the business sector while creating the educational management literature, followed a similar path in the leadership literature. Leadership models developed and applied in different sectors, primarily in business, have been transferred to educational management and applied in educational organisations. A considerable amount of research provides enduring evidence that principal leadership is crucial for improving the quality of teaching (e.g. Goddard et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2008). The accumulation of knowledge over the last two decades provides a better picture of the size and direction of the effects of leadership on teaching. Some researchers argue that effective leadership cannot be reduced to a single type and that principals use multiple leadership approaches to respond to the needs of their schools (e.g. Marks & Printy, 2003). When leadership studies in the field of education are examined, it is seen that some leadership models are more prominent (for example: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership) (Bellibaş et al., 2016; Gümüş et al., 2018).

Türkiye is culturally characterised by hierarchical and high-power distance. In Türkiye, school principals are responsible for implementing the rules of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (Kılınç et al., 2021). As the importance of school leadership in teaching has become more evident, Turkish policy makers have aimed to develop a professional development programme that can also support the formation of principals' leadership behaviours (MoNE, 2018). Although the knowledge base on school leadership is well established in Western countries, empirical studies from Eastern countries are becoming more prominent. Further research in different cultures can provide a better understanding of school leadership. Therefore, researchers have examined Türkiye's cultural and social contexts and their effects on distributed, instructional, transactional, and transformational leadership styles (e.g. Atasoy & Çoban, 2021). The main purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive review of the studies of Turkish researchers on school leadership and to reveal the tendency in this field in Türkiye. This study is important in terms of drawing a country-based picture of the field by revealing to what extent school leadership, which is an important issue in the field of educational administration, has been examined by Turkish researchers, what kind of international collaborations have been established, and how much the studies of the researchers have been cited. The articles analysed in the study were scanned in the WoS database. The main reason for choosing this database is the importance given to the studies in journals indexed in SSCI and SCI indexes in the criteria for associate professorship and appointment in Türkiye. This situation has increased the tendency towards journals indexed in these indexes, especially in the last 5 years. This main reason paved the way for the examination of the WoS database. The questions addressed by this study are as follows:

RQ 1: How is the number and increase of studies?

RQ 2: What are the affiliations of the authors?

RQ 3: How is the citation impact of studies?

RQ 4: Who are the most productive researchers?

RQ 4: What are the most used keywords?

RQ 5: Who are the most cited authors?

Theoretical Framework

School Leadership

The concept of school leadership was characterised by the separation of leadership from management (Murphy, 1995). While discussions about types of management are mostly concerned with what makes an organisation more effective, leadership discussions have focused on understanding or identifying leadership practices that can help an organisation achieve its desired goals (Gümüş et al., 2018). The School Leadership Scale, which has had a significant impact on the conceptualisation of school leadership, was developed by Leithwood (2012) and adapted into Turkish by Yalçın and Atasoy (2021). The dimensions of the scale are: giving direction, developing people, developing the organisation, and developing the curriculum. With the transition from traditional models to modern models in leadership studies, leadership styles were first presented separately from each other and then shifted to combining certain sets of leadership practices (Leithwood et al., 2020). Traditional conceptions of leadership assume that 'leadership is equated with position or role' (Harris 2003, 318). However, from the 1990s onwards, this traditional view has received significant criticism from leading researchers for its inability to respond to the wave of change resulting from financial, social, pedagogical and technological developments that have increased the complexity of school leadership work (Gronn, 2000).

Research has shown that school leadership is a factor that affects teacher practices both directly and indirectly by encouraging teacher beliefs, attitudes and dispositions (Leithwood et al., 2020). This has led to an increase in the number of studies in the field of school leadership. Over the last two decades, school leadership research has made significant progress in exploring how principals influence learning (Gümüş et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2008). The keystone of the development of school leadership models is the research on effective schools. The results of effective school research say that: School leaders are important for education and they make a difference (Huber, 2004, Yalçın & Çoban, 2023). These studies have been influential in the development of the concept of school leadership and the proposition of new leadership models. Three leadership models are the most widely studied in school leadership research: Transformational leadership, distributed leadership and instructional leadership. The theoretical background of these models is given below.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership attracted increasing attention of educational leadership scholars in the mid-1990s (Gümüş et al., 2018). Transformational leadership, as originally theorised by Burns (1978), House (1977) and Bass (1985), is predicated on the connections between leaders and other employees; an effective transformational leader is able to understand the needs and motivations of others and attempts to assist them in achieving their full potential (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformational leaders motivate and inspire employees by raising their

awareness of the value of their work and the importance of organisational goals, and by tapping into their intrinsic needs (Bass, 1998). In his seminal work, Bass (1985) proposed that transformational leadership can be conceptualised as comprising four distinct components: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised support. Leithwood (1992) posited that transformational leadership in schools serves three primary purposes: firstly, to facilitate staff development and cultivate a professional school culture predicated on cooperation; secondly, to encourage teachers' professional development; and thirdly, to assist teachers in more efficaciously resolving problems. It is evident that principals are capable of exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours. These behaviours include the generation of ideas, the creation of a shared vision, the distribution of power, the cultivation of trust, and the attainment of success (Yang, 2012).

Distributed Leadership

After the turn of the millennium, new conceptualisations of leadership, including distributed leadership, focus on the collective distribution of administrative responsibilities among teachers (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). The concept of distributed leadership, which encompasses the expansion of leadership roles in schools beyond administrative and formal tasks, has been widely accepted and is one of the most discussed topics in the field of educational leadership in recent years (Leithwood et al., 2009; Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership in schools, defined as 'the sharing of leadership within and across schools' (Harris, 2008, p. 16), has attracted considerable attention among researchers, policy makers, practitioners and educational reformers (Leithwood et al., 2009). Two principal approaches to the emergence of distributed leadership have been proposed. The concept of distributed leadership, as posited by Harris (2008) and Heck and Hallinger (2009), is predicated on the notion of collective action on the part of school members, who, in principle, are able to lead both within and beyond the confines of the classroom. This approach is said to engender a high sense of agency and ownership in the execution of leadership functions. In accordance with Spillane's 'practice-centred' theory, 'leadership practice emerges through the interaction of leaders, followers and the situation' (Spillane et al. 2001, 27). Many studies in the educational administration have demonstrated a positive correlation between distributed leadership and a multitude of school outcomes, including organisational commitment (Hulpia et al., 2011), teacher confidence, self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Zheng et al., 2019).

Instructional Leadership

Historically, instructional leadership dominated empirical progress in the field until the 1990s. Studies of effective schools (e.g. Goldman and Heald, 1968) suggest that an effective leader is a type of leader who places great emphasis on the teaching and learning aspects of schools. These early efforts to understand effective leadership laid the foundation for the emergence and development of instructional leadership theory, one of the most widely studied types of leadership in educational administration. The most widely cited model of instructional leadership in the literature is that developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). This model defines instructional leadership in terms of three components: Defining the school's mission requires principals to articulate and communicate the school's goals; managing the instructional program suggests that principals coordinate the curriculum, supervise and evaluate instruction, and monitor student progress; and finally, fostering a positive

school learning climate involves principals' efforts to protect instructional time, provide incentives for teachers and learning, promote professional development, develop and implement academic standards, and maintain high visibility.

METHOD

Research Model

This study used bibliometrics to determine the performance of Turkish researchers' school leadership knowledge base. The bibliometric method is a quantitative approach that helps to identify and analyse published research in the field. This method is valuable for mapping the research field as well as enabling more holistic and clearer analyses by providing clear and systematic review procedures (Zupic & Cater, 2015, p. 429). One of the most important indicators for comparing scientific productivity across countries and cultures is undoubtedly scientific publications. Scientific publication indexes constitute a large and qualified pool for bibliometric analyses.

Data Collection

In this text mining application, the WoS database, which is recognised as one of the most important international indexes for high-impact journals, was used. The WoS database was searched for articles in the field of education (Education & Educational Research). While selecting the country name, 'Turkey' and 'Türkiye' were chosen. The subject of 'school leadership' in the "Citation topic micro" field was chosen. A total of 669 articles were found in the first search. After screening 550 articles were selected by the researcher. Figure 1 summarises the articles selected from the WoS database.

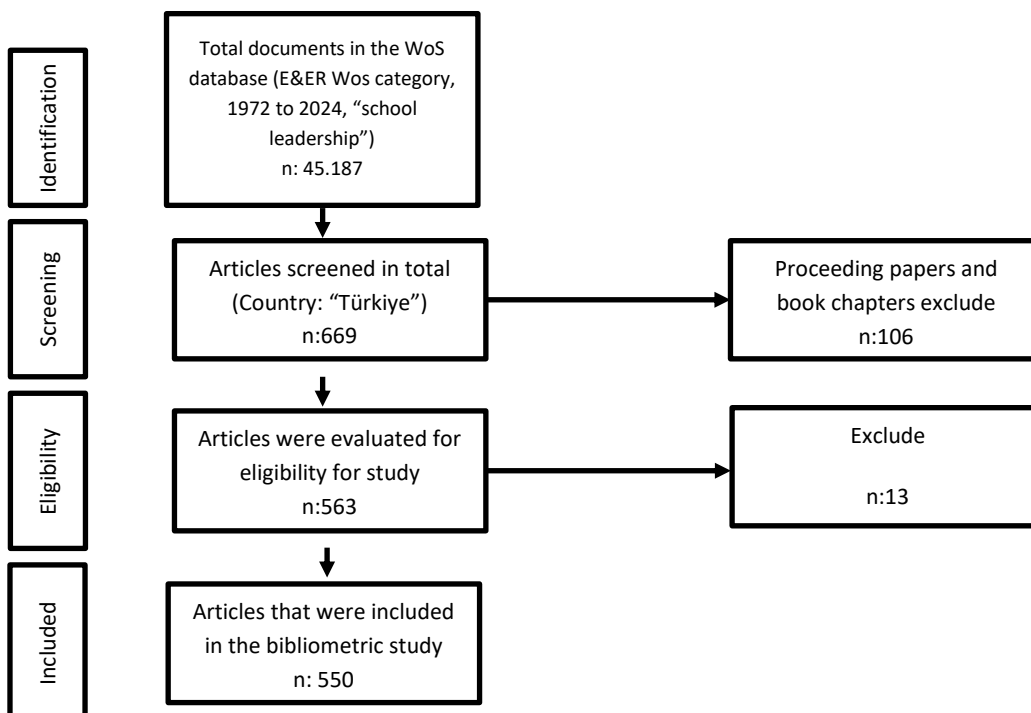


Figure 1. Article Selection Progress with PRISMA Flow Diagram (Moher et al., 2009).

Data Analysis

The articles retrieved from the Web of Science (WoS) database were saved in plain text format, including information such as the publication year and authors' name, affiliations etc. Additionally, the most frequently cited articles were identified through WoS analysis. To explore co-authorship networks and the co-occurrence of author keywords, the software VOSviewer was utilized. The application of mapping techniques in bibliometric studies is widely accepted (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014). Van Eck et al. (2008) have highlighted that the VOS method performs most effectively for distance-based visualizations. This bibliometric study provides insights into the annual publication trends, commonly used keywords, leading authors in terms of productivity, prominent journals and publishers, as well as the most cited researchers. An overview of the bibliometric analysis process is presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Bibliometric Analysis Process of The Study

The analysis of the number of articles (year, journals, publishers, indexes), author affiliations and article citations were conducted using Excel. In contrast, the analysis of country co-authorship, author keywords and co-citation was performed using VOSviewer.

FINDINGS

In order to answer the research questions, the findings are presented below under the headings of number of articles, affiliations of authors, citation, most productive authors, most used keywords and co-citation.

Number of Articles

Results on the number of articles are given below under the titles of distribution of studies by year, main journals main publishers and Wos indexes.

Distribution of Studies by Year

As illustrated in Figure 3, which presents the frequency of articles by year, there has been an increase in the number of articles since 2010.

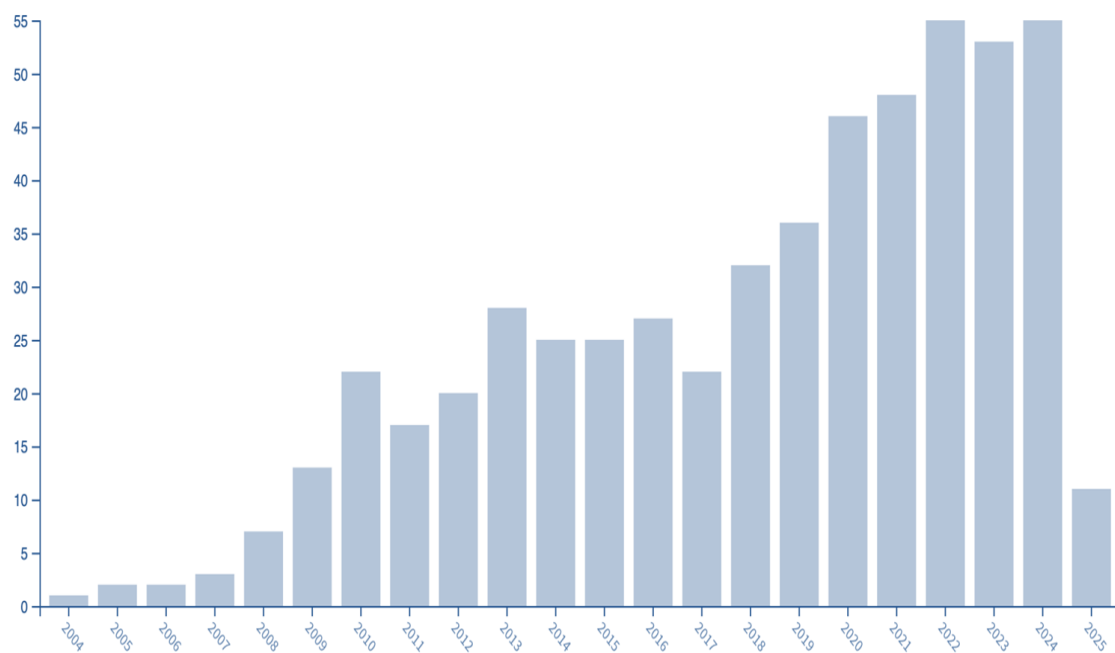


Figure 3. Distribution of Studies by Year

Main Journals

Figure 4 presents the journals in which the articles were published. The figure illustrates the journals with the highest number of publications. The three journals with the highest number of publications are Education and Science (n=51), Educational Management Administration Leadership (n=40), Educational Sciences: Theory and

Practice (n=40). Second and eighth place journals: Educational Management Administration Leadership and Journal of Education Administration are the most important journals in the field of educational administration and both are SSCI, Q1 ranked.

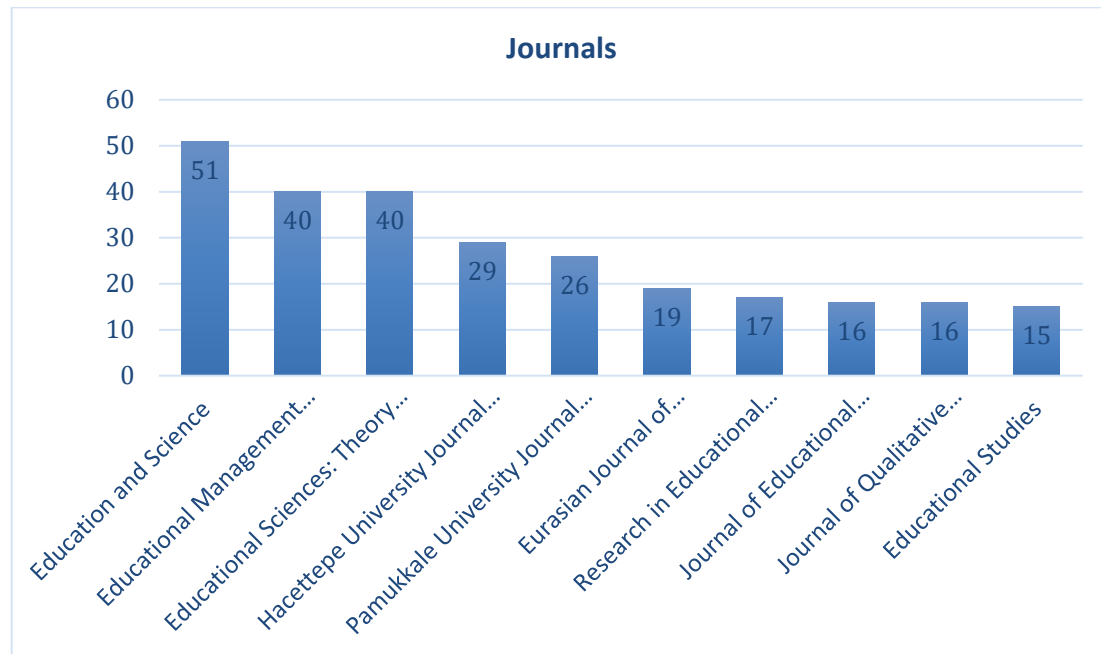


Figure 4. Top 10 Journals by Total Number of Publications

Main Publishers

Figure 5 shows the publisher distribution of the journals in which the articles were published. Overall, Taylor & Francis (n=96), Sage (n=59), Turkish Education Assoc. (n=51), Edam (n=40), Hacettepe University (n=29), Springer Nature (n=26), Ani (n=25) are the publishers of the journals with the most publications.

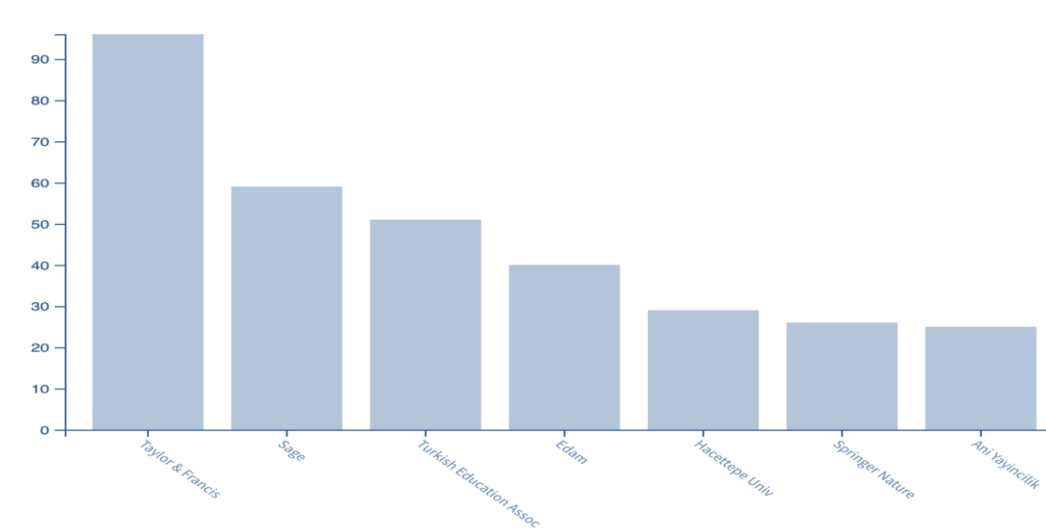


Figure 5. Publishers of Journals

WoS Indexes

Figure 6 shows the distribution of journals based on WoS indexes. The majority of journals were indexed in Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) (n=298) and Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) (n=252).

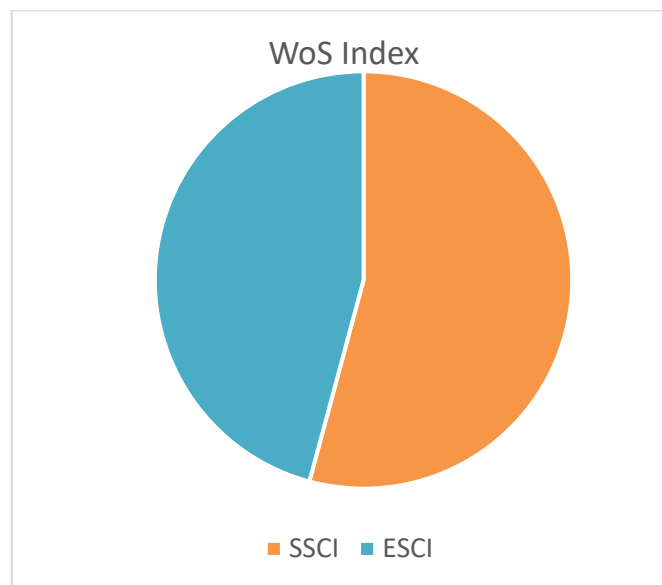


Figure 6. WoS Indexes of Journals

Affiliations of Authors

Figure 7 depicts the distribution of author affiliations. Ministry of National Education (n=56), Hacettepe University (n=51), Karabük University (n=44), Adıyaman University (n=40) and Gazi University (n=40) are the institutions to which most of the authors are affiliated.

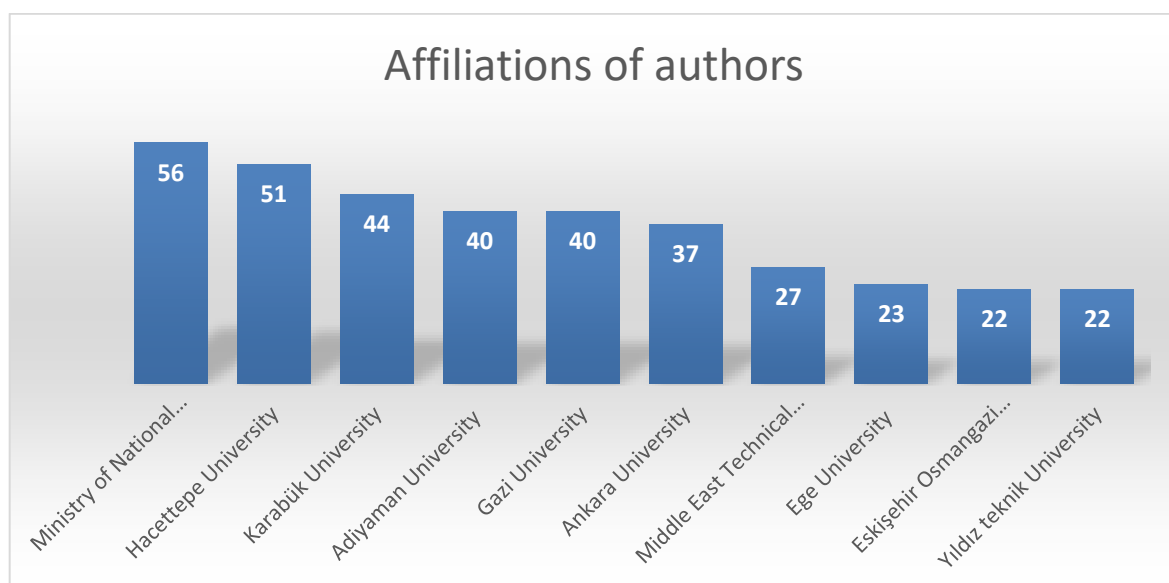


Figure 7. The Distribution of Author Affiliations

Citation

The citation status of the publications is given under the titles number of citations of articles by year and most cited articles.

Number of Citations of Articles by Year

Figure 8 presents the citation graph for articles. There is a significant increase in the number of citations, especially after 2020. Although the increase in the number of publications has also affected the number of citations, it is seen that the number of citations remained low until 2020.

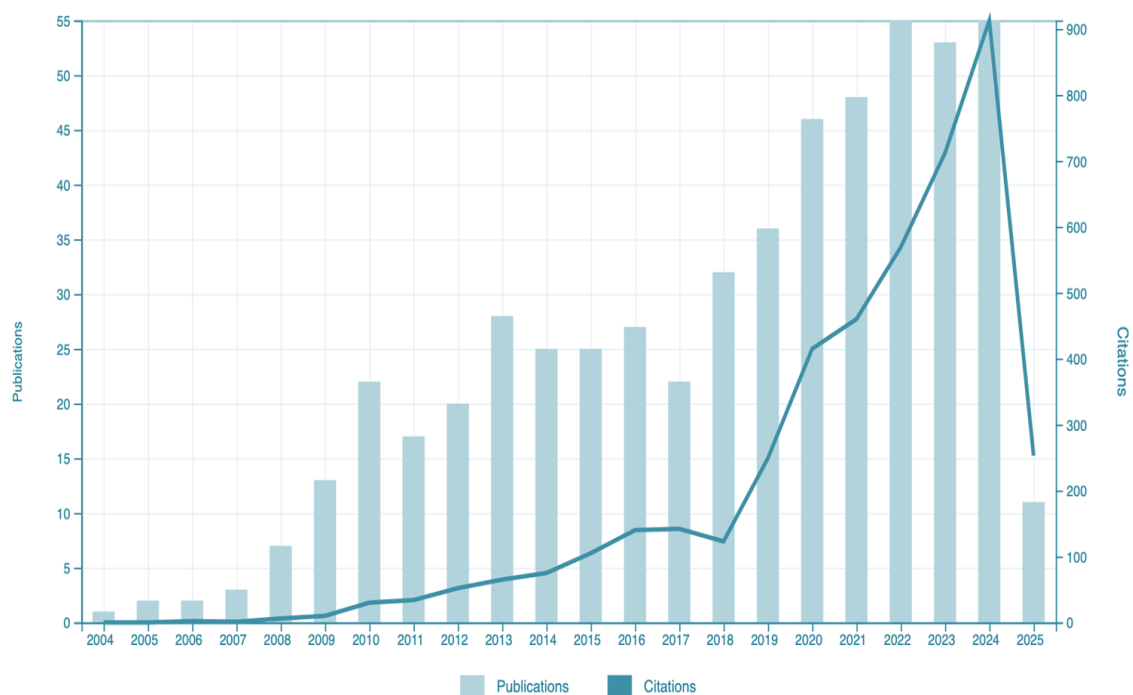


Figure 8. The Citation Graph of The Articles

Most Cited Articles

Table 1 shows the most frequently cited articles. The most cited article published by Gümüş et al. (2018) (n=235); Liu et al. (2021) (n=195); Akşit, (2007) (n110). Gümüş et al.'s (2018) "A systematic review of studies on leadership models in educational research from 1980 to 2014" is the most cited study. The fact that this study, which examines the development of leadership research in educational management literature, is highly cited also reveals the importance of such review studies in the field.

Table 1. Most Cited Articles

Rank	Title	Author and Year	Journal	Total of citations	Citation average
1	A systematic review of studies on leadership models in educational research from 1980 to 2014	Gümüş, S. Bellibaş, M.Ş., Esen, M., Gümüş, E (2018)	<i>Educational Management Administration & Leadership</i>	235	29,38
2	The Effect of Instructional Leadership and Distributed Leadership on Teacher Self-efficacy and Job Satisfaction: Mediating Roles of Supportive School Culture and Teacher Collaboration	Liu, Y., Bellibaş, M.Ş., Gümüş, S. (2021)	<i>Educational Management Administration & Leadership</i>	195	32,5
3	Educational reform in Turkey	Akşit, N. (2007)	<i>International Journal Of Educational Development</i>	110	5,79
4	Principal leadership and teacher professional learning in Turkish schools: examining the mediating effects of collective teacher efficacy and teacher trust	Karacabey, M.F., Bellibaş, M.Ş., Adams, D. (2022)	<i>Educational Studies</i>	72	12
5	Does school leadership matter for teachers' classroom practice? The influence of instructional leadership and distributed leadership on instructional quality	Bellibaş, M.Ş., Gümüş, S., Liu, Y. (2021)	<i>School Effectiveness and School Improvement</i>	68	11,33
6	Examination of Relationships between Instructional Leadership of School Principals and Self-Efficacy of Teachers and Collective Teacher Efficacy	Çalık, T., Sezgin, F., Kavgacı, H. Kılınç, A.Ç. (2012)	<i>Education Sciences: Theory and Practice</i>	65	4,64
7	The effects of distributed leadership on teacher professional learning: mediating roles of teacher trust in principal and teacher motivation	Bektaş, F.; Kılınç, A.Ç. Gümüş, S. (2022)	<i>Educational Studies</i>	61	10,17
8	Factors Effecting Science Achievement of Science Students in Programme for International Students' Achievement (PISA) in Turkey	Anıl, D. (2009)	<i>Education and Science</i>	60	3,53
9	Factors influencing the academic achievement of the Turkish urban poor	Engin-Demir, C. (2009)	<i>International Journal of Educational Development</i>	60	3,53
10	Multilevel analysis of the relationship between principals' perceived practices of instructional leadership and teachers' self-efficacy perceptions	Bellibaş, M.Ş., Liu, Y. (2017)	<i>Journal of Educational Administration</i>	59	6,56

Most Productive Authors

Results on author productivity co-authorship (documents), co-authorship (citation) and co-authorship with other countries are presented below.

Co-Authorship (Documents)

Co-authorship links were analysed using the Vosviewer. In the analysis, the minimum number of publications of the authors was limited to five. Of the 820 authors, 19 meet the thresholds. The researchers with the most publications are M.Ş. Bellibaş (n=29); A.Ç. Kılınç (n=27), S. Gümüş (n=21), M. Polatcan (n=19), N. Özdemir (n=16), M. Özdemir (13).

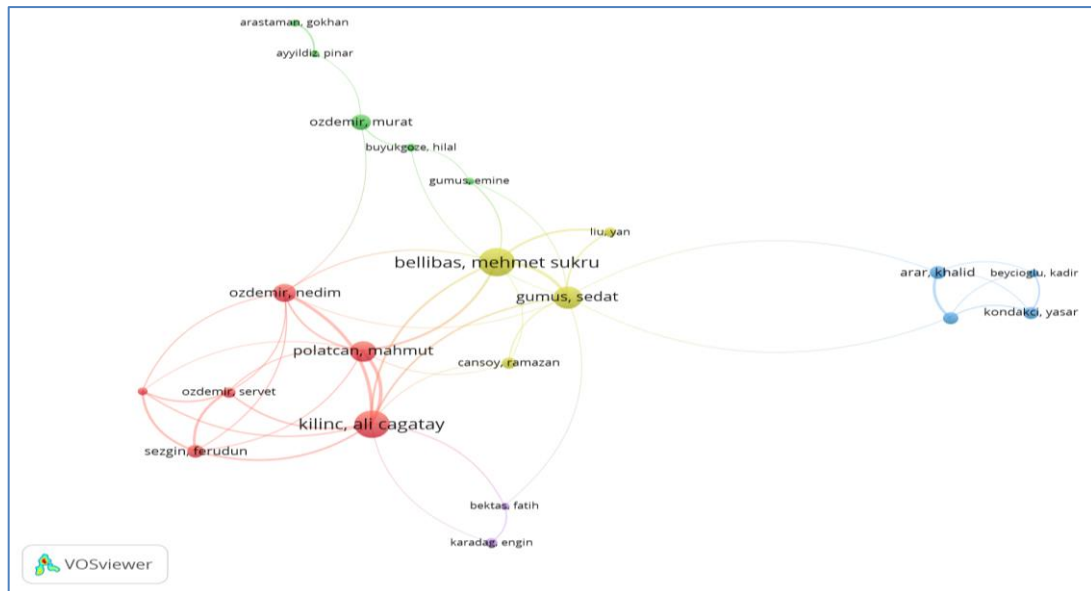


Figure 9. Co-Authorship (Documents).

Co-Authorship (Citation)

While analysing the authors' partnerships according to the number of citations, the minimum number of citations of the author was taken as five. The researchers with the highest number of publications cited were M.Ş. Bellibaş (n=1153); S. Gümüş (n=823), A.Ç. Kılınç (n=428), M. Polatcan (n=277), E. Gümüş, (n=267), N. Özdemir (n=170),

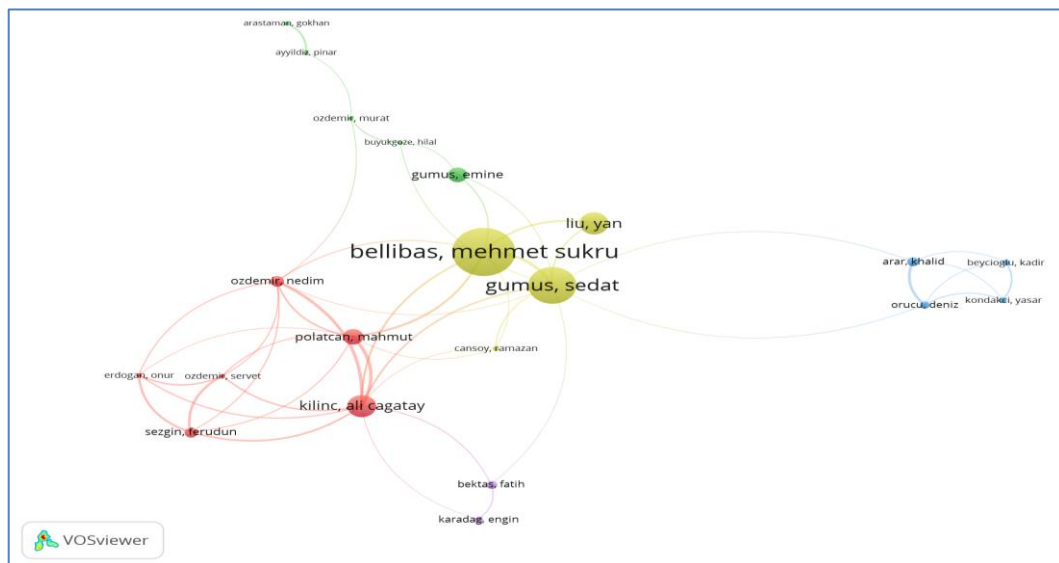


Figure 10. Co-Authorship (Citation).

Co-Authorship with Other Countries

When analysing the collaboration with researchers from other countries, a minimum of five publications was again limited. Researchers usually collaborate with Turkish researchers, followed by USA (n=38), China (n=13) and UK (n=10). However, when the co-authors in these countries are examined, it is seen that these authors are mostly Turkish academics.

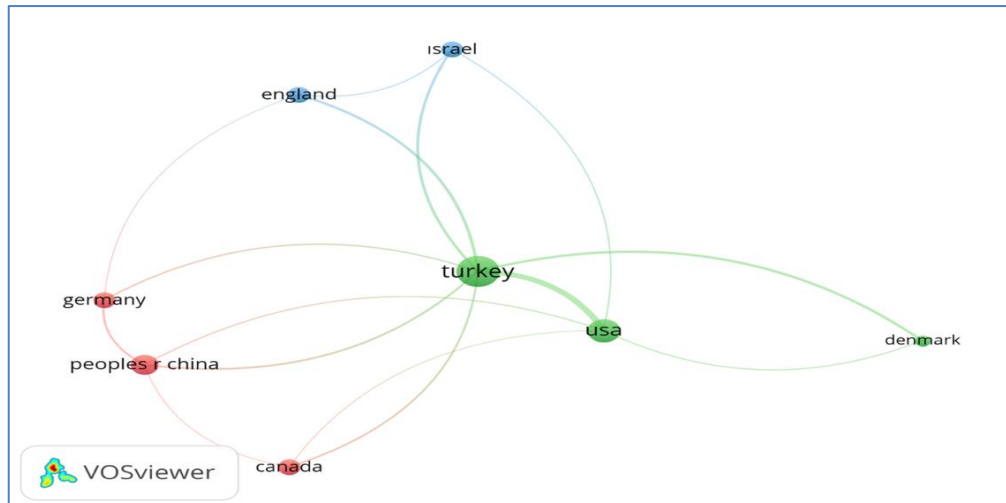


Figure 11. Co-Authorship with Other Countries.

Most Used Keywords

While analysing the common keywords in the author keywords, it was ensured that there were common keywords in at least five publications. 69 out of 1349 keywords met this requirement. Figure 11 shows the results of the cluster analysis generated by VOSviewer, including dynamic change and network map. Figure 10 shows the most frequently used keywords: Turkey (n=54), distributed leadership (n=26), instructional leadership (n=35), leadership (n=21), transformational leadership (n=16).

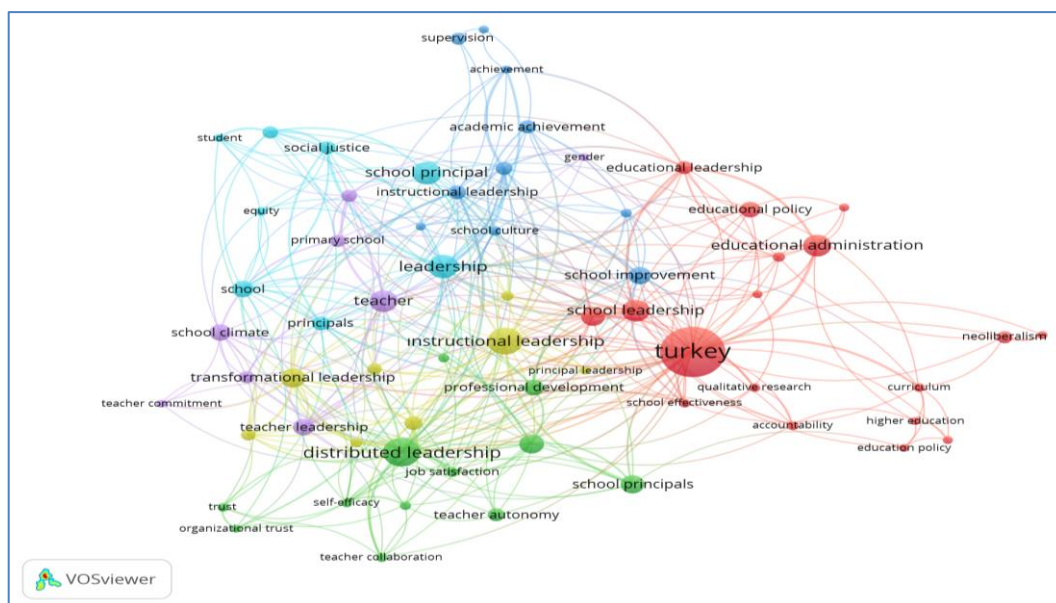


Figure 12. The Most Used Keywords.

Co-Citation

When analysing the most cited authors, the minimum number of citations was limited to 10. Philip Hallinger, Kenneth Leithwood, Alma Harris and Albert Bandura are the most cited researchers.

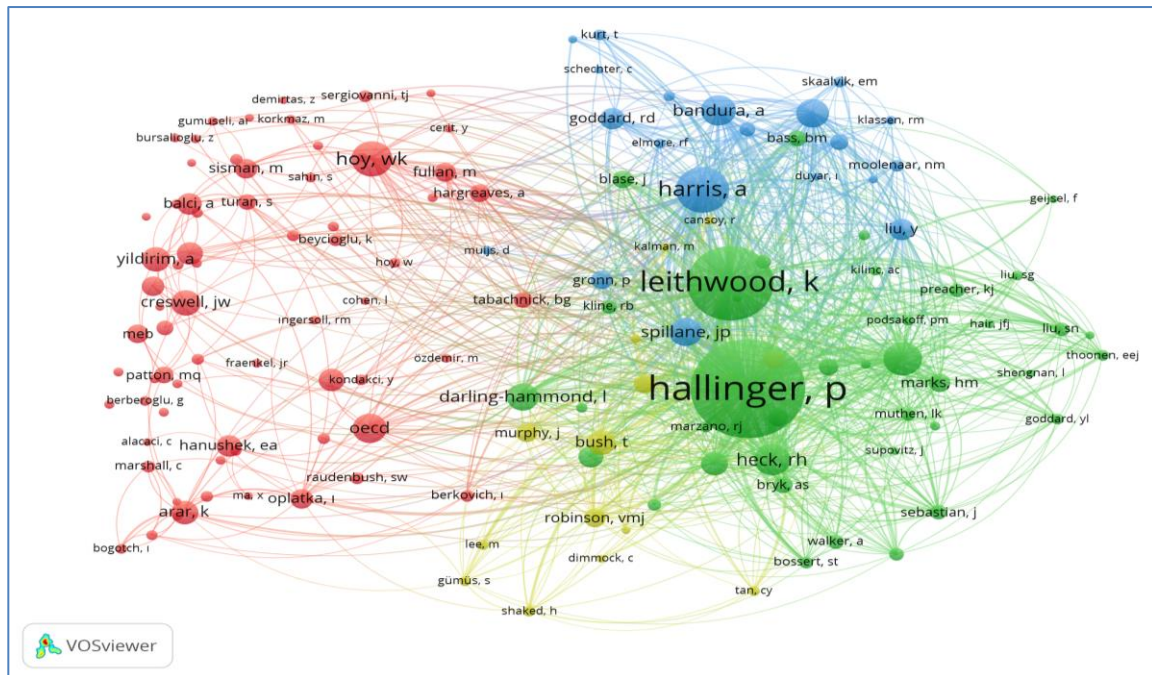


Figure 13. The Most Cited Authors (Co-Citation Analysis).

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to use bibliometric analysis of research and review articles written by Turkish researchers on the topic of “school leadership” indexed in the Web of Science database by 2025 to reveal changes in trends in school leadership research over time, the journals with the most articles published, the leading academics, and research collaborations.

Especially in the last 20 years, it is seen that Turkish educational administration researchers have been more interested in analysing school leadership. When the research findings are analysed, it is seen that the number of articles has increased since 2010. The reasons for this may be the increase in the number of international journals, easy access to international publications, the fact that the issue of school leadership attracts the attention of western researchers, and the research inspires other researchers, more comparison of the education systems of countries and taking international school practices as examples. New research methods and methods of analyses and the internet environment that allows sharing of these methods may also be an important reason for this increase. The reason for this increase may be the requirement to publish in journals indexed in the WoS database, especially in the SSCI index, in the associate professorship and promotion criteria in Türkiye. When the number of articles by years is analysed, it is seen that there has been a dramatic increase in school leadership

research after 2005. However, the reason for this may be that the number of educational journals indexed in the Web of Science database increased significantly after 2005.

Some of the journals in which the authors have published are journals published by Turkish publishers (e.g: Education and Science, Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, Hacettepe University Journal). On the other hand, it was observed that a considerable number of publications were made in journals that are considered to be the most important journals in the field of educational administration (e.g. Educational Administration Administrative Leadership, Journal of Education Administration). Some of the journals were included in the WoS database after 2005 (e.g. Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice) (WoS, 2025). This is also reflected in the distribution of publishers. While Taylor & Francis and Sage stand out as international publishers. There are also Turkish publishing houses such as Turkish Education Assoc., Hacettepe Univesity and Ani. The majority of the journals in which the articles are published are indexed in SSCI, while the rest are indexed in ESCI.

When the organisations to which the authors are affiliated are analysed, the Ministry of National Education comes first, followed by Hacettepe University, Karabük University and Adıyaman University. The reason for the concentration in certain institutions and universities may be that the culture of publishing in that university is widespread and inspires other researchers. Although the increase in the number of publications has also affected the number of citations, it is seen that the number of citations remained low until 2020. The most cited article published by Gümüş et al. (2018), Liu et al. (2021), Akşit, (2007). Gümüş et al.'s (2018) "A systematic review of studies on leadership models in educational research from 1980 to 2014" is the most cited study. The fact that this study, which examines the development of leadership research in educational management literature, is highly cited also reveals the importance of such review studies in the field.

The researchers with the most publications are Bellibaş, Kılınç, Gümüş, Polatcan. The researchers with the highest number of publications cited were Bellibaş, Gümüş, Kılınç and Polatcan. Researchers usually collaborate with Turkish researchers, followed by the USA, China and the UK. However, when the co-authors in these countries are examined, it is seen that these authors are mostly Turkish academics. However, when we look at the leadership studies of international authors, it is seen that the most publications are from the USA, while the UK, China and Canada also stand out in the number of publications (WoS, 2025).

When the most used keywords were analysed, the most studied leadership models were also revealed. As emphasised in the literature (Bellibaş et al., 2016; Gümüş et al., 2018), the most studied leadership models were seen as distributed leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership. It is seen that Turkish researchers follow the general trend of leadership research. Although it is newer than other models, the high interest in transactional leadership proves that this model has an important place in the literature. The distributed leadership perspective aims to advocate the involvement of all stakeholders in school processes and to hold them accountable for students' learning outcomes (Leithwood, 2001), and the interest in distributed leadership also indicates a shift from one-man leadership to a shared form. On the other hand, although

instructional leadership is an old model, the fact that it is still being studied shows that it is still up-to-date (Hallinger, 2005).

Philip Hallinger, Kenneth Leithwood, Alma Harris and Albert Bandura are the most cited researchers. Hallinger, Leithwood and Harris are among the authors with the most publications on leadership (Gümüş, et al., 2018). Bandura's social cognitive and social learning theories and his important studies on self-efficacy explain these references.

SUGGESTIONS

When the results of the current study are analysed, it is seen that more and more importance is given to school leadership research in Türkiye. The findings of this research are important in terms of influencing Turkish educational policies and administrator training practices. The results of these research should be analysed by decision makers and policy makers. The results of leadership research can be evaluated in order to review school administrator training policies, and the findings of these studies can be utilised in programme development efforts aimed at equipping school administrators with leadership skills. The development of both national and international education management literature should be grounded in the practical needs of schools. It is therefore suggested that research collaboration between universities and MoNE be increased to ensure the coordination between theory and practice in order to facilitate more studies with the aim of improving schools. On the other hand, it would be enriching for Turkish researchers to connect with more researchers from different countries in research collaborations. Finally, it may be recommended to conduct research on newer and less studied leadership models.

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