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Within the scope of leadership: a review of doctoral dissertations in turkey conducted between 2018-2022

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study are to analyze doctoral theses on leadership conducted in Turkey between 2018 and 2022 in order to have a holistic understanding of literature in the field of leadership. The study was designed as a qualitative descriptive study based on content analysis. Data of the study was collected from the thesis center database provided by Turkish Council of Higher Education. The keyword “leadership” was searched in the database. A total of 424 results were reached. Out of 424 theses, 369 were excluded, 55 theses were selected and analyzed. Data analysis indicates that doctoral theses mostly focused on leadership behaviors and leadership styles. The majority of the doctoral dissertations employed quantitative methods such as descriptive and correlational survey method. The majority of the study participants were teachers.

Keywords: Leadership, leadership styles, leadership behavior, leadership levels

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a universal concept and the complex nature of leadership makes it difficult to achieve a specific and common definition. A lot has been written but still difficult to find the best definition as the definitions varied according to individual perspectives and aspects of the phenomenon. It is clear that leadership is defined using various aspects such as traits, leader behavior, styles, relationship, situation, impact on followers and impact on organizational culture. Leadership is explained as the capacity to determine people to act, and it means enhancing human potential by communicating clearly and effectively. “A process of influence” is the central element of most definitions used for leadership (OECD, 2001). Most of these leadership definitions have emphasized on a social influence process (Yukl, 2002). At the core of most definitions related to leadership are setting directions and exercising influence (Leithwood, 2005). On the other hand, leadership is defined as the one who envisions goals, sets standards and communicates effectively” (Thelbert and Roe, 1999). The central focus for defining leadership is the process, activity or roles to achieve organizational goals through people by motivating and influencing them.

Leadership has become a priority in education and educational policy agendas around the world. It has gained an increasing importance to improve teaching and learning. Research has shown that leadership can make a difference in education and contributes to effectiveness of the school. Literature consistently highlights the key role of leadership in school effectiveness and improvement in teaching and learning (OECD, 2008). Leadership is valued as a factor in the creation of quality in educational settings (Teske & Schneider, 1999). All these development have made leadership a topic of concern in education system.

Leadership is the most pivotal factor in achieving improvements in school performance. The profession of educational leadership has increased significantly. Different theories of educational leadership reflect very different ways of understanding and interpreting events and behavior in educational settings. The theory behind the educational leadership is based on 6 leadership and these are defined as instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership and contingency leadership (Atkinson, 2013).

Leadership is about investing in people, building relations and inspiring them. John Maxwell outlines 5 levels of leadership. These levels are Position, Permission, Production, People Development and Pinnacle. Position is the lowest level of leadership and at this level, people choose follow because they have to. Permission is the second level which people follow because they want. Production qualifies true leaders and at this stage people follow because of what you have done for the organization. At the level of “People development” people follow because of what you have done for them personally. Pinnacle is the highest level that people follow because of who you are and what you represent.

The effort toward explorations for leadership theory concluded that there are three theories in chronological order, these are trait theory, behavioral leadership theories and situational leadership theories. The theory of traits states that inherit characteristics and certain identifiable qualities set the leader apart from the followers.

Leaders are regarded as born to lead according to trait theory. Behavioral theory focuses on the specific behaviors and is about the learning the required skills to become a good leader. This leadership is the result of many learned skills. Behavioral leaders are considered to learn leading. Situational theory explained that leaders adopt a leadership styles depending on the situation. Situational leadership can be different in different situations.

People are exposed to a broad and ever growing variety of theories that explains the concept and the practice of leadership. DuBrin (2001) defines leadership style as the relatively consistent pattern of behavior which characterizes a leader. Leaders have the potential of affecting the effectiveness of the performance of various organizations such as information industries, high-tech corporations, tourism firms and educational companies. For instance, when universities are concerned, Jui-Kuei Chen and I-Shuo Chen (2007) found out that active participant leadership style has a significant relationship with innovative operations in Taiwanese universities.

There are various leadership styles discussed in literature. One of these styles is ethical leadership. Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) define ethical leadership whereby the leaders perform in accordance with the rules. Bolman and Deal (1995) considered ethical leadership as the core of leadership. This style is often considered as a source of inspiration for their followers. Another prominent leadership style is transformational leadership. Leaders who adopt this style rely on personal values such as freedom, justice and equality (Sheilds, 2011). Devanna and Tichy (1990) state that there is a relationship between transformational leadership and organizational transformation and change management which takes place through flexible management (Bass, 1999). The opposite of transformational leadership is transactional leadership which is based on a strict management style rather than inspiring people. It can be defined as a trade-off between the leaders and his/her followers in order to reach a target and the desired outcomes (Yukl, 1981). Hunt and Schuler (1976), point out that this style of leadership positively affects job satisfaction. Another approach to leadership is participative or democratic leadership. It is in between autocratic and laissez-faire leadership. This style is found to encourage innovation by making sure that decision-making is implemented through active participation (Mumford, et al., 2002). Joint decision making in participative leadership is known to increase job satisfaction (Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006). A leadership style that is highly effective in chaotic environments is charismatic leadership. A charismatic leader aspires to enable his/her followers to show superior performance with the help of his/her charisma, vision and perspective. S/he is known to oppose the status quo and try to change it (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Authentic leadership is based on a leader's self-awareness and being honest with himself/herself. Knowing who they are, what they believe in lead them to be transparent and consistent, displaying positive, optimistic and flexible behavior (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). They are concerned with empowering their followers rather than being served (George, 2003).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addressed the following research questions;

1. What is the scope of the doctoral theses conducted between 2018-2022 in Turkey?
2. What methods were used in the doctoral theses conducted between 2018-2022 in Turkey?
3. Who are the study participants of the doctoral theses conducted between 2018-2022 in Turkey?

METHOD

This study aims to analyze doctoral theses on leadership conducted in Turkey between 2018 and 2022 in order to have a holistic understanding of literature in the field of leadership. The study was designed as a qualitative descriptive study based on content analysis. Qualitative descriptive studies have been commonly used in various fields including psychology, education and social sciences (Nassaji,2015). Defined as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts' (Krippendorff, 2004), content analysis was deemed suitable for this study.

Data in the study was collected from the thesis center database provided by Turkish Council of Higher Education (<https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/giris.jsp>). The keyword "leadership" was searched in the database. A total of 424 results were reached. Out of 424 theses, 369 were excluded, 55 theses were selected. There were two selection criteria; being conducted during 2018 and 2022 and their subject being listed within the scope of education and training. List of the doctoral theses investigated in the study can be found in Appendix 1.

Theses were downloaded and archived by researchers. Data was coded under three headings; aim of the study, study participants and method. Each researcher coded data separately after analyzing all the studies according to the coding criteria as suggested by Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999). They went over the coded data together to check for reliability. For each research question, data was analyzed based on frequency and percentages.

RESULTS

RQ1. What is the scope of the doctoral theses conducted between 2018-2022 in Turkey?

Data analysis indicates that doctoral theses mostly focused on leadership behaviors (30,9%) such as agile leadership behavior, sustainable leadership behavior, authentic leadership behavior, ethical leadership behavior and etc. Leadership styles (27,3%) were also a topic of interest to the researchers. They investigated styles such as toxic leadership, authentic leadership, charismatic leadership, transformational leadership, and etc. Leadership perception (12,7%) was another scope of the studies conducted at the doctoral level. This scope was followed by leadership programs (10,9%) that were designed to increase the effectiveness of leaders. 10,9% of the studies focused on leadership styles. The least investigated area was found to be leadership tendencies (7,3%).

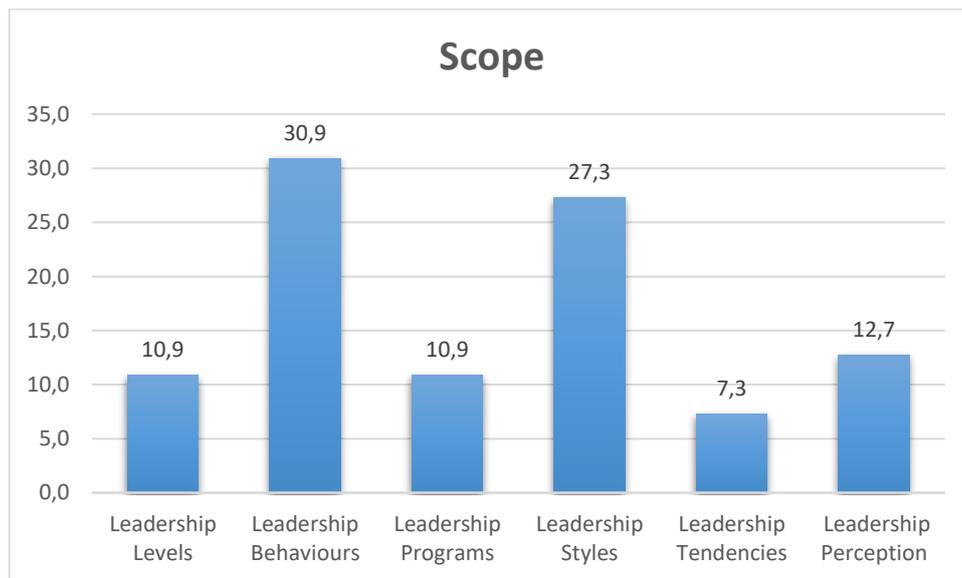


Figure 1: Scope of doctoral theses conducted between 2018-2022 in Turkey

RQ2. What methods were used in the doctoral theses conducted between 2018-2022 in Turkey?

Analysis of data showed that the majority of the doctoral dissertations (49,1%) employed quantitative methods such as descriptive and correlational survey method. Only 6% of dissertations were designed using qualitative methods such as action research and etc. 45,5% of the dissertations used mixed methods as study design. Research findings can be seen in Figure 2.

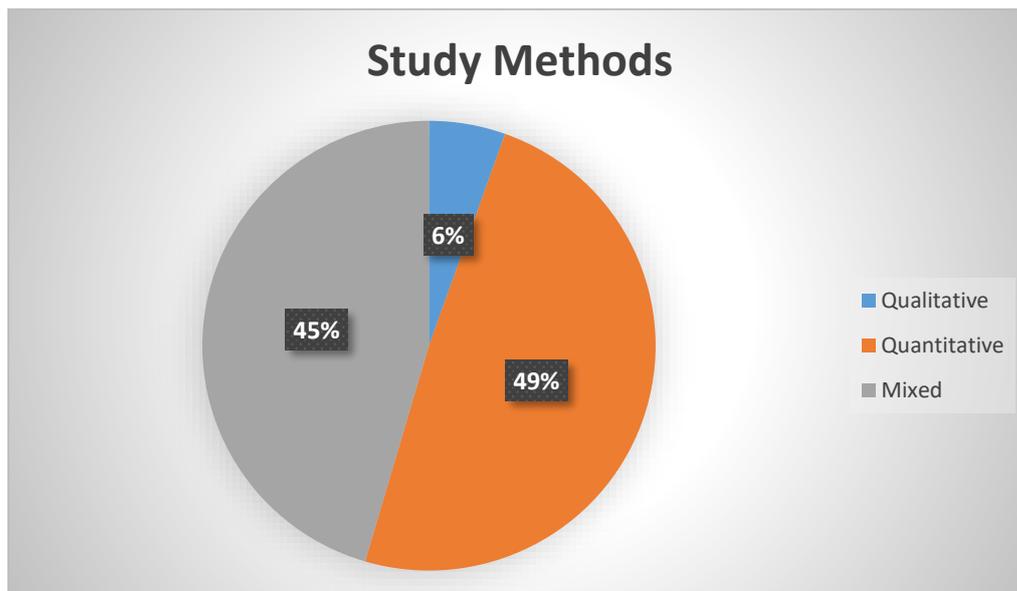


Figure 2: Study methods of doctoral theses conducted between 2018-2022 in Turkey

RQ3. Who are the study participants of the doctoral theses conducted between 2018-2022 in Turkey?

Research findings indicate that in 55 theses, the majority of the study participants (60%) were teachers. 14,5% of participants were both administrators and teachers. In 7 studies (%12,7) data were collected from administrators, and in 5 studies (%9,1) study participants were composed of students. There was only 1 study (%1,8) in which data was collected from student teachers and 1 study (%1,8) both students and teachers.

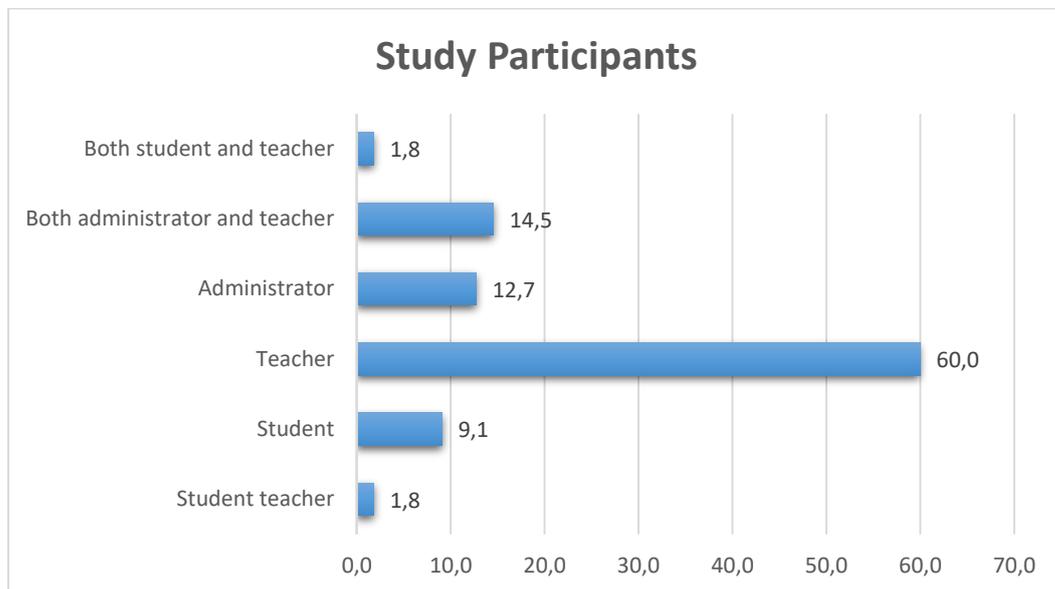


Figure 3: Study participants of doctoral theses conducted between 2018-2022 in Turkey

CONCLUSION

Leadership in education is an important concept to discuss as leaders have an enduring influence over how teachers, administrators and students in educational contexts behave and perform.

Results in this study show that doctoral studies in Turkey mainly focus on leadership styles and behaviors, investigating the relationship between these variables and variables such as organizational learning, school culture, teachers' performance, teachers' organizational commitment. There are few curriculum development and evaluation studies too, which aim to investigate how leadership programs affect participants' knowledge and attitude toward leadership skills and development. It can be concluded that Turkish researchers focus on similar topics in different contexts. Future research might inquire the specific practices of principals or teachers in Turkey by taking characteristics of the Turkish culture into account. The effect of how leadership styles and behavior might on educational outcomes could also be studied.

Quantitative and mixed methods studies dominate the dissertations. Within the scope of quantitative methodology, correlational survey model seems to be the mostly preferred design. In mixed methods studies, explanatory sequential and exploratory sequential models are preferred. Only 3 qualitative studies were detected among 55 dissertations researchers analyzed.

Study participants are mainly teachers. Administrators follow teachers as research participants. Although leadership styles indirectly influence students, they seem to be not getting enough attention by researchers in Turkey. If authorities make it easy to access participants, this might have a positive effect on the studies. It is usually difficult in Turkey to reach research participants in public schools. This might be the reason why researchers do not prefer to work with students.

Findings indicate that there needs to be more emphasis on qualitative studies to support quantitative findings. Leadership is a multidimensional concept and it needs to be analyzed from various perspectives. Teachers are valuable stakeholders, yet students' points of view should not be ignored. Student teachers might be considered as another critical stakeholder. Their initial perceptions about leadership might be beneficial to illuminate the styles of leadership which they find inspiring, and such leadership might be adopted in schools to increase teachers' belongingness and performance.

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Table 1. List of the doctoral theses investigated in the study

No	Year	Author	Title
1	2022	Asli Yurttas	Relationship between middle school managers' leadership styles, school culture and school dynamism
2	2022	Alpamys Rakhymzhanov	Examining the relationships between school principals' leadership style, organizational learning, and teacher leadership
3	2022	İsrafil Yaşın	Examining physical education teachers' interpersonal self-efficacy levels and leadership orientations
4	2021	Burcu Ertürk Kiliç	Program development for leaders in the post-truth era: Arts-based creative leadership communication program
5	2021	Yasin Hiçyılmaz	The Role of Learning Organization and Talent Management in the Effect of

			the Transformational Leadership Styles of School Principals on Innovation Management in Their Schools
6	2021	Ümit Doğan	Research of the relationship between teachers' perceptions of chaotic leadership, organizational alienation and organizational happiness by structural equation modeling
7	2021	Vildan Akbulut	An investigation of middle and high school students' transformational leadership perceptions, predisposition and motivation for physical education lessons through mixed method
8	2021	Methi Çelik	The effect of school managers' quantum leadership behavior on management styles and teachers' organizational commitment level
9	2021	Mesut Demirbilek	A mixed method study on the mediation effect of sustainable management behaviors in the effect of school principals 'entrepreneurship competences on generative leadership skills
10	2021	Ömer Murat Öter	The relationship between the servant leadership behaviors of principals and the organizational health of schools and teachers' life satisfaction
11	2021	Mehmet Ali Yarim	Investigation of organizational moral values and natural leadership profiles in schools with social network analysis
12	2021	Mehmet Sabir Çevik	Analysis of the plasma leadership behaviors of the school administrators and citizenship perceptions of the students through the spatial analysis method
13	2021	Gamze Tuti	Teacher's opinions on charismatic leadership, trust in leader and emotional labor: The example of Trabzon province
14	2021	Riza Akkaya	Entrepreneurial leadership, teacher entrepreneurship and positive psychological capital: A mixed design research in educational organizations
15	2021	Sakine Sincer	Examining the relationships among teacher performance, organizational loyalty and charismatic leadership: A mixed design study
16	2020	Ahmet Alireisoğlu	Examining the effect of leadership style and leadership intensity on organizational culture
17	2020	Mehmet Özdoğru	The relationship between school administrators' instructional leadership behaviors and their institutional reputation perceptions
18	2020	Nurten Aydinoğlu	Investigation of the effects of authentic and paternalist leadership behavior of administrators on teachers' motivation, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Ankara province private schools example)
19	2020	Behiye Dağdeviren Ertaş	Examining the relationship between sustainable leadership and learning organization
20	2020	Azime Nehir Özdemir	The effect of agile leadership characteristics of school administrators on organizational commitment: A comparative analysis at educational settings in the UK and Turkey
21	2020	Oğuz Kaya	The investigation of the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors of school administrators and social capital levels of teachers
22	2020	Ümit Kalkan	The relationship between school administrators' leadership styles and school culture and organizational image
23	2020	Özkan Küçük	The intermediary effect of organizational cynicism and psychological capital on the relationship between toxic leadership behaviors of school administrators and school effectiveness
24	2020	Nüket Özbey	A study on the motivation factors shaping leadership behaviors of school principals
25	2020	Sara Manafzadehtabriz	Study on relationship between university administrators' spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence and their transformational leadership behaviors
26	2020	Kelemu Zelalem Berhanu	The effects of pedagogical leadership practice of primary school principals on principals' and teachers' psychological empowerment: The case of East Gojjam, Ethiopia
27	2019	Necati Çobanoğlu	Investigation of positive psychological capital and shared leadership in primary and secondary schools in terms of some variables and relationship between them
28	2019	Mevsim Zengin	The relationship between transformational leadership characteristics of principals and school security and organizational image in secondary schools
29	2019	Osman Koçak	The relationship between school leaders' authentic leadership behavior and

			teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors and organizational commitment levels
30	2019	Baran Barış Yıldız	Analyzing the relationships between open leadership, organizational justice and organizational virtue of the school administrators
31	2019	Fatime Erol	The effect of teachers' perception of organizational support on social responsibility-based leadership: The mediation role of positive psychological capital
32	2019	Muhammed Çelik	The relationship between communication competence and team leadership behaviors of principals
33	2019	Yılmaz Kiliç	The influence of school administrators' taking personal initiative and leadership behaviors on teacher motivation
34	2019	Reyhan Şekerci	The effect of teacher leadership training program on the leadership skills of master instructors and teachers at non-formal education institutions: An embedded mixed methods research
35	2019	Muhammet Emre Kiliç	Investigation of the relationship among authentic leadership of school administrators, teachers' motivation and job satisfaction
36	2019	Sath Sorm	The principal's praxis of pedagogical leadership in nurturing teaching and learning in Cambodian primary school
37	2019	Yusuf Türker	Effect of school principals' leadership style on teachers' social and emotional intelligence
38	2019	İsmail Karsantik	Investigation of the relationship between academic leadership, higher education culture and academic identity in higher education
39	2019	Ayşenur Duran	Development of early childhood leadership scale and the investigation of the relationship between leadership qualities of children and language skills
40	2019	Berrin Emran Özbulak	The effect of class teachers' attachment styles on principals' leadership style: The mediating effect of the locus of control
41	2018	Şükrü Hangül	An analysis of social structure and emergent leadership processes in schools through the lens of social network theory: A case study
42	2018	Mehmet Durnali	The views of teachers on technological leadership behaviors of school principals and school knowledge management
43	2018	İsmail Eser	An analysis of the effects of mediative role of positive psychological capital on the relationship between ethical leadership perceptions and work engagement of teachers'
44	2018	Melih Mustafa Haban	A mixed-method study on the ethical leadership behaviors of secondary school administrators
45	2018	Serkan Gökalp	The investigation of the school managers' cultural capital competencies and the degree of cultural leadership roles which the school managers perform
46	2018	Ayşe Özge Küpeli	The relationship between the coaching competency and predisposition to authentic leadership of school administrators
47	2018	Aysun Akçay Güngör	The relationships among effective school characteristics, teacher commitment and transformational leadership
48	2018	Vahit Çiriş	Investigation of the effect of social skills level of 11th and 12th grade students on the leadership characteristics in terms of sports engagement
49	2018	Turgut Uslu	University students' perception of leadership, academic self-efficacy and school alienation (Erzincan University sample)
50	2018	Burcu Çimen	The effect of spiritual leadership, organizational culture and organizational silence on the school achievement
51	2018	Çiğdem Çakır	Investigation of the in-school factors affecting distributed leadership practices
52	2018	Orkun Osman Bilgivar	Archetypal leadership education model (ALEM): Mixed embedded experimental research
53	2018	Didem Erdel	Full-range leadership in language classrooms, leadership outcomes and effects on learner autonomy: A mixed methods study
54	2018	Semih Çayak	Examination of sustainable leadership behaviors of school principals: A mixed method research
55	2018	Gürol Yokuş	Analysis of online professional learning networks' effect on pre-service teachers' researcherly dispositions, socially responsible leaderships and social networks based learning: Digital teacher community