



Examining the relations among Social Justice Leadership, Attitudes towards School and School Engagement

Murat Özdemir ¹

Abstract

In the present study, the relations among social justice leadership, attitudes towards school and school engagement were examined based on the high school students' opinions. 530 students from 11 high schools located in 7 districts in the province of Ankara participated in the study. Participants filled in the Scale for Social Justice Leadership (SSJL), Scale for Attitudes towards School (SAS) and Scale for School Engagement (SSE). Data were examined with descriptive statistical techniques including arithmetical mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation and structural equation modelling (SEM) together with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and path analysis as well. Findings showed that principals perform social justice leadership moderately. Similarly, participants' scores for attitudes toward schools and school engagement are also moderate. It was observed that there is a positive, moderate and significant correlations among research variables. The analysis of SEM revealed that social justice leadership is a significant predictor of attitudes towards school and school engagement. Path analysis results indicated that attitudes towards school has a partial mediating effect between social justice leadership and school engagement. It was concluded that social justice leadership is one of the crucial factors in shaping the students' attitudes towards school and school engagement.

Keywords

Social justice leadership
School engagement
Attitudes towards school
Student
Principal

Article Info

Received: 02.08.2016
Accepted: 06.06.2017
Online Published: 07.06.2017

DOI: 10.15390/EB.2017.6281

Introduction

The relative effect of school leadership on students' attitudes and behaviors has become one of the basic research topics catching the attention of educational scholars in the last decades (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). One of the reason behind this trend aims to explore the relations between strong leadership and school effectiveness (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Edmonds, 1979). In fact, the argument that the school leadership is one of the significant predictors of behavior modification among students, has been supported by many empirical studies in the following years (Hallinger, 2003; MacBeath & Cheng, 2008; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008; Valentine & Prater, 2011). In those studies, it is seen that school leadership has been conceptualized based on the instructional and transformational leadership approaches (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Harrison, 2011; Leithwood, 1994).

¹ Hacettepe University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Turkey, mrtozdem@gmail.com

When the dimensions of instructional and transformational leadership approaches have been taken into account, it can be posit that mainstream leadership approaches have neglected the micro-sociological structure of the school community. One of the reasons behind this claim is that students constitute a heterogeneous group which is made up of different gender, ethnicity, social class, and at times differing levels of disability (Banks, 1997; Ensign, 2009; Resnik, 2009; Rhoads, 1995). Parallel with this view it can be argued that mainstream leadership approaches do not consider the multiplicity among students. Hence mainstream studies on school leadership neglect the social context of school community. However, principals who show interest in students who are disadvantaged and attempt to improve their educational needs have become the research focus of scholars recently (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). The principals who concentrate on the disadvantaged students' needs and support those students' developments are conceptualized as social justice leaders (Oplatka, 2010).

One of the reasons why the social justice leadership studies have increased in literature is the role of critical pedagogical approach which assumes that social inequalities are reproduced in schools (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Indeed, some critical authors think that many of the educational problems result from inequalities among students in terms of gender, class and ethnicity (Archer, Hutchings, & Ross, 2003; McWhirter, 1997). The main function of the principals as social justice leaders is to minimize the negative effects of inequalities in schools and to support the marginal groups in accessing high educational opportunity. To that end, another orientation of the social justice leaders in schools is also to support the marginal students' academic success by increasing their school engagement. In a study, it was reported that disadvantaged students' school achievements are low (Finn, 1993). One of the reasons why the school success of the disadvantaged students is low is low school engagement (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Opportunity of having a qualified education for disadvantaged students may affect their development in a positive way. For this reason it is vital to support these students. The principal is one of the main supporters. The support they get may reinforce their school engagement as Murray (2009) found out in his studies on this issue. Likewise, in some studies it was revealed that there are close and significant relations between leadership and school engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, 2000).

Previous studies regarding with social justice leadership have been mainly conducted as qualitative case studies. Some of those studies examined the content and the effectiveness of leadership training programs, and others explored the obstacles which the social justice leaders encounter. Likewise, various studies have focused on the conceptual development of social justice leadership (Furman, 2012; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Gewirtz, 1998; Miller & Martin, 2015). However, Turkish literature related with social justice leadership is limited. In one of those studies Tomul (2009) explored the target population of the social justice policies and the obstacles in front of the social supports. Similarly Polat (2007) discussed the effects of educational policies on social justice. In another study, it was reported that the ethical behaviors of the administrators are the significant predictors of the social justice in schools (Turhan & Çelik, 2011).

During the literature review, the studies about the relationships between social justice leadership and school engagement have not been observed in Turkish literature. Therefore, the main purpose of the present study is to examine the relations between principals' social justice behaviors and students' school engagement. In the study it is also questioned whether the attitudes towards school play a mediating role between social justice leadership and school engagement. In the literature it is getting a more accepted opinion that the effects of leadership on different school output are 'indirect' rather than 'direct' (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003). In relation to the 'indirect effect' approach to leadership, in the present study we also assumed that the attitudes towards school may play a mediating role between the social justice leadership and school

engagement. Previous studies have indicated that there indeed is a relationship between leadership and attitudes towards school (Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995; Özdemir, 2012). In some other studies it was indicated that there is a significant relation between attitudes towards school and school engagement (Özdemir & Kalaycı, 2013). Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to examine the relations among social justice leadership, attitudes towards school and school engagement based on high school students' opinions. Below, the conceptual framework of research variables are presented and then sub-problems were formulated.

Conceptual Framework

Social Justice Leadership

In the process of accessing public education, inequalities among genders, social classes and ethnicity have been debated among scholars for many years (Archer et al., 2003; McWhirter, 1997). The social inequalities mainly result from historical, societal, economic and cultural reasons (Hurst, 2012). The war against the social inequalities have gained momentum during the twentieth century. After World War II, welfare regimes become prevalent among developing and developed countries to build and provide the social justice in societies (Jordan, 1998). The idea of social justice includes equal opportunity, rights, equalities and multiplicity. As a political discourse, social justice is three-fold including distributive, cultural and relational. Distributed justice comprise sharing all the wealth to all members of the society equally. Cultural justice means that all the sub-cultures are equal. In relational justice, all marginalized groups in society have equal rights to participate in the decision making process (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). As a summary the thought of social justice comes from the idea that all the societal groups who see themselves as 'others' should integrated to the whole society (Gewirtz, 1998).

The issue of social justice in schools has been discussed among educational sociologists for many years. But, the principals' role in providing the social justice in schools has been examined since the beginning of 2000's among scholars (Oplatka, 2010). Social justice and the leadership relations in schools are investigated based on the multicultural leadership, feminist leadership, Afro-American and Latin leadership which are all in the scope of critical social approaches (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). In this context, there are several definitions of social justice leadership. In one of those definitions, social justice leadership was defined as the leadership which mainly concentrates on improving the achievement of minority groups, disadvantaged people, women and homosexuals (Marshall & Oliva, 2006). Similarly Theoharis (2007, p. 223) thinks that social justice leader is the person who stands up for groups who are othered historically on account of their race, class, gender, disability and sexual preferences.

Based on the relevant literature, it can be said that social justice leadership has three sub-dimensions. One of those dimensions is 'critical consciousness'. Principals as social justice leaders have critical perspectives about suppression, exclusivity and being othered (Brooks & Miles, 2006). Freire (2004) conceptualized the concept of critical consciousness as the awareness of social, political and economic contradiction and opposing to those suppressions. In this context, principals firstly realize the values, assumptions and prejudice against race, class, language and sexual preferences, and their effects on his or her daily life. And then he or she questions how those values and assumptions affect his or her decisions. After that, principals are purified from their own prejudice (Furman, 2012). However, social justice leaders not only settle for changing their level of consciousness, but also try to transmit this consciousness to students (McKenzie et al., 2008).

Another dimension of social justice leadership is 'to support' meaning that the principals try to satisfy the needs of marginalized students. For this purpose, social justice leaders make an effort to help his or her students with having access to qualified educational opportunities. Behind this effort, there is a purpose to increase the academic achievement of the students. So, he or she creates an environment

in schools for students to have access to rich academic programs (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton, 2000). Indeed, previous studies have shown that if the students do not access the rich programs, their academic success automatically decreases. In some other studies, it was explored that the students from sub-cultural groups, low socio-economic levels, having different mother tongue and, disabled students are not successful in schools (Brown, 2006; Eshleman, 1988). So, the priority of the principal is to increase the academic success of all students. In order to achieve that success, principal focuses on developing the professional quality of teachers. Another duty of the social justice leaders is to built a support climate in school by improving the community sense among all stakeholders (McKenzie et al., 2008).

The third dimension of the social justice leadership is 'inclusion'. In this context, social justice principals try to bring students together so that all of them reach the educational opportunity equally. In line with this practice, social justice principal aims to create equality among students (Katzman, 2007). Hence, he or she prepares heterogeneous classes instead of homogenous classes. This policy of principals contributes to ensuring equal access to educational opportunities in schools (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007). The concept of inclusive education arises from the resistance to the practice underlying that the students who need special education should be educated in special classes or schools. However, nowadays those practices do not find acceptance among educators. Instead, it is now widely accepted that all students whether they need special education or should not come together in the same classes and schools (Peetsma, Vergeer, Roeleveld, & Karsten, 2001). In a meta-analytic study, it was reported that the students who need special education attending normal classes were found more successful than the students attending special classes (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1995).

There are various studies which concentrate on the personality traits of social justice leaders in schools. In one of those studies, it was explored that social justice leaders are unpretending, they work hard, spend time to expand their visions about school, give importance to students and try to maintain equality and justice among students (Theoharis, 2008). In another study which was conducted by Furman (2012) it was reported that social justice leaders' first priority is to establish a good rapport with the school community based on trust. They are also found to be participative, democratic and they try to improve the educational environment. In addition, they constantly try to stimulate teachers and students to be aware of the inequalities of society.

School Engagement

School success depends upon various factors. One of those factors is school engagement. The issue of school engagement is one of the important variable which the scholars focus on (Finn & Rock, 1997; Libbey, 2004). School engagement can be defined as the acceptance of school purposes by students (Finn & Voelkl, 1993). Joining various school activities and identifying themselves with the school are also other aspects of school engagement (Finn & Voelkl, 1993). So, based on those definition it can be concluded that high level of school engagement mean high levels of internalization of school's goals and adoption of those goals. Scholars mention that school engagement has three dimensions including behavioral, emotional and cognitive sides (Jimerson, Campos, & Greif, 2003). Emotional engagement consists of the positive feelings towards peers, teachers and school. In this context, it can be said that the students whose engagement level is high, have more positive attitudes towards their friends and teachers. Cognitive engagement includes psychological belief about learning. That is, the students having high level of cognitive engagement have more motivation and concern towards academic studies. Lastly, behavioral engagement means students are more motivated to take part in sportive and cultural activities in schools (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).

School engagement is correlated with many variables including academic achievement. In a study it was determined that students with high academic success are also more committed to their schools (Conchas, 2001). Hence, it can be posit that school engagement is one of the most important variables related to student outcomes. In a different study, it was reported that school engagement is negatively correlated with dropout (Janosz, Archambault, Morizot, & Pagani, 2008). To increase the level of school engagement, good relationships between parent-teacher is necessary (Murray, 2009). It was also showed that teacher support to students predicts behavioral and emotional engagement (Brewster & Bowen, 2004). Based on the studies cited above, it can be inferred that school administrators' and teachers' support to students may contribute to increasing school engagement.

Attitudes towards School

Attitudes can be defined as the positive or negative feelings towards other people, object or events. The concept of attitude has three dimensions including cognitive, emotional and behavioral (Robbins, 2003). Cognitive dimension is related to knowledge about the attitude objects. For example, knowing the principals' name, how big the school is, having information about teachers or other students and also other information about the school are example to cognitive dimension of the attitude. Emotional aspects of the attitudes include the positive or negative feelings towards the attitude objects. For example, if a student has negative feelings when he thinks of his school it can be considered that he has a negative attitude toward the school. Since attitudes force the individuals to behave in a certain way, this also has a behavioral component (Baron & Byrne, 1987). Behavioral dimension of the attitudes include school dropout, playing truant, school violence and so on. However, there are also some positive behaviors towards school such as staying at schools after school and protecting school goods. In this context, attitudes towards school could be defined as the positive or negative feelings and behaviors towards school. Based on these definitions, it can be assumed that attitudes towards school is also correlated with learning in schools and attitudes towards teachers (Stern, 2012).

Many factors including family background, society and other socio-demographic ones have an effect on forming the school attitudes. Family members' attitudes towards school are the key in shaping the students' feelings and behaviors towards school (Bankston & Zhou, 2004). Student-teacher communication style is also another component which impact school attitudes (Yoon, 2002). School principals' various behaviors in school are also an important variable which plays a role in forming school attitudes. Moreover, it is also argued that attitudes towards school predict school achievement (Alici, 2013). Based on these arguments, it can be said that positive attitudes towards schools may contribute the development of students. On the contrary to this argument, it can also be claimed that negative feelings and attitudes towards school may result in low levels of school engagement. Regardingly, in a study it was indicated that students who have negative attitudes towards schools show high levels of dropout and low level of academic achievement in schools (Adıgüzel & Karataş, 2013).

The Relation between Social Justice Leadership, Attitudes towards School and School Engagement

Within the scope of the research, literature review was conducted concentrating on the relations among social justice leadership, attitude towards school and school engagement. Concerning this focus, in the relevant literature it was witnessed that social justice leadership contributes mostly to family engagement (DeMatthews, Edwards, & Rincones, 2016). In another study conducted, it was observed that the principal's social justice leadership behaviors paved the way to creating supportive school ethos. Alongside these, there are other studies, though indirectly, which look for the relationship between school engagement and attitude towards school. To illustrate, Özdemir and Kalaycı (2013) report back in theirs that the way high school students conceptualize school is one of the crucial elements in developing a sense of school engagement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationships among social justice, attitudes towards school and school engagement based on the students' opinions. The research questions are as follows;

1. To what extent the principals exhibit social justice leadership behaviors in schools?
2. How are the participant opinions about attitudes towards school and school engagement?
3. Is there a significant correlation among research variables?
4. Is the social justice leadership a significant predictor of attitudes towards school and school engagement?
5. Do the attitudes towards school plays a mediating role between social justice leadership and school engagement?

Method

The present study which concentrates on the relationships between social justice leadership, attitudes towards school and school engagement is a correlational survey. The collected data were analyzed with quantitative statistical techniques.

Study Group

Present study was conducted in 11 public high schools which are located in 7 districts in the center of Ankara province in academic year of 2015-2016 (Çankaya, Mamak, Altındağ, Keçiören, Yenimahalle, Etimesgut and Sincan). The purpose of the study is just to examine the relationships among variables. So, it was not aimed to generalize the study results to a specific target population. Hence, it is an "internal-validity" study which examines the relationships among research variables (Balci, 2005, p. 79). During the data collection process, 700 scales were distributed and 530 of them were returned fully for the data analysis. 306 participants are women (57.7%); other 224 are men (42.3%). Participants' grades are as follows; 170 students are in 9th grades (32.1%), 144 students are 10th grades (27.2%), 141 students are 11th grades (26.6%) and the rest of the 75 students are 12th grade (14.2%). Participants' school types are as follows; 66 percent from Anatolian high schools and the other 44 percent from Anatolian vocational high schools.

Data Collection Tools

Research variables were collected through "Scale for Social Justice Leadership-SSJL" (Özdemir & Kütküt, 2015), "Scale for School Engagement-SSE" (Arastaman, 2006) and "Scale for Attitude towards School-SATS" (Alıcı, 2013).

SSJL consists of 24 items and 3 factors. The scale is designed according to 5-degree of Likert type ranged between "never agree" and "totally agree". Explained variance of SSJL is 56.758 percent. The first factor of SSJL was named as "support" which includes 12 items (Sample item "Our principal supports our friends who are poor"). Cronbach alfa value of this factor was reported as .91. The second factor of the SSJL is named as "critical consciousness" which includes 9 items. Alfa value of this factor was reported as .92. The third factor of the SSJL is named as "participation" which consists of 3 items. The alfa value of the factor was reported as .72. CFA results are as follows; ($\chi^2/sd= 2.11$, RMSEA= .05, GFI = .97; AGFI = .96; CFI = .96; NNFI = .95; NFI .92 (Özdemir & Kütküt, 2015). The validity and reliability structure of the SSJL was re-examined in our study. To examine the factor structure of the SSJL, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used. Results of CFA is as follows ($N = 530$); $\chi^2= 893.58$, $df = 249$, $\chi^2/df= 3.58$, RMSEA= .07, GFI= .95, AGFI=.94, CFI= .85 and IFI= .85. Cronbach alpha coefficients of the sub-dimensions of SSJL were calculated and the results were found as follows; SSJL is .95, "support" is .90, "critical consciousness" is .93 and "participation" is .72. Based on the validity and reliability results we have concluded that SSJL is suitable for our study.

SSE consists of 27 items and 5 factors. The scale is designed according to 5-degree of Likert type between “never agree” and “totally agree”. Explained variance of SSE is 52.565 percent. The first factor of SSE was named as “internal engagement” which consists of 9 items (Sample item “I pay attention to what the instructor says”)Alfa value was reported as .82 and explained variance ratio is 14 percent. Second factor of SSE was named as “school environment-engagement” which includes 6 items. Alfa value was reported .78 and explained variance ratio is 11 percent. Third factor of the SSE is “program-engagement” which consists of 4 items. Cronbach alfa coefficient was reported as .75 and explained variance ratio is 9 percent. The fourth factor was named as “Administration-engagement” which includes 5 items. Alfa value is .65 and explained variance was reported as 8 percent. And, the fifth factor of the SSE was named as “teacher-engagement” which includes 3 items. Cronbach alfa value of this factor was reported as .69 and explained variance ratio was calculated as 7 percent (Arastaman, 2006). SSE with five factor structure was re-examined by means of CFA. Goodness of fit indexes were calculated as follows; $\chi^2= 1012.51$, $df = 314$, $\chi^2/df= 3.22$, $RMSEA= .06$, $GFI= .96$, $AGFI=.95$, $CFI=.92$ and $IFI=.92$. These findings indicates that SSE is a valid instrument. Calculated Cronbach alfa values are as follows; SSE = .93, “school environment-engagement” = .85, “internal engagement” = .82, “program engagement” = .85, “administration-engagement” = .76 and “teacher-engagement” = .84. This results confirms that SSE is also valid in the present study.

SATS is composed of 20 items and 3 factors. The scale is designed as 5 degree of Likert type between “never agree” and “totally agree”. SAT explained 54 percent of the variance. The first factor was named as “school as a barrier in personal development” which includes 8 items (Sample item; “going to school is like torture”). Cronbach alfa value was reported as .87. Second factor of SATS was named as “supports for personnel development”. Alfa value of this factor was reported as .81. The third factor of SATS consists of 4 items. The factor was named as “school as a missing place”.

Cronbach alfa value was reported as .79. CFA results are as follows ($RMSEA= 0,056$; $CFI= 0,98$; $GFI= 0,92$; $AGFI= 0,90$; $RMR= 0,088$) (Alici, 2013). The validity and reliability of the SATS which is composed of 3 factor was re-examined with our data. CFA results are as follows; $\chi^2= 479.36$, $df = 167$, $\chi^2/df= 2.87$, $RMSEA= .05$, $GFI= .97$, $AGFI=.96$, $CFI=.91$ and $IFI=.91$. Cronbach alfa results are as follows; SATS is .91, “school as a barrier in personnel development” is 86, “supports for personnel development” is .85 and “school as a missing place” is .72. All these results show that SATS is also valid and reliable instruments in the present study.

Procedures and Data Analysis

Data were collected by the researchers through visiting the schools. Participants filled in the scales voluntarily during class hours. Necessary explanations and instructions were done by the researchers. Scales were filled in approximately within 15 minutes. Data were loaded to computer. Before analysis, missing values and outliers were controlled by the researchers. Additional checks took place if necessary. In order to examine whether the data set was suitable for the multi-variate analysis, we prepared the covariance matrixes. Maximum likelihood estimation was performed to test the assumption of normality. Results showed that data set is not normally distributed (skewness and kurtosis values exceeded the normal range of -1.5 and +1.5). Hence it was decided to use asymptotic covariance matrix. To examine the linearity of the data we used scatter graphs and saw that data were distributed in elliptical shapes. To explore whether there was a multicollinearity problem we used correlation coefficient and saw that there is not such a problem (correlation coefficients among research variables were below .85). For the first two research question we used arithmetical mean scores of the variables. Correlation among variables were examined with Pearson correlation coefficient. That whether independent variables were a significant predictor of the dependent variables and mediating effect were examined using structural equation modeling (SEM).

Results

In the study, social justice leadership behaviors of principals, students' engagement and their attitudes towards school were examined based on students' opinions. In addition, the relations among research variables were investigated. For this reason, arithmetical mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient were calculated based on the 5 degree of Likert scale. Results were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Scales and Sub-Dimensions

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.SSJL	2,67	0,90													
2. Support	2,67	0,91	,951**												
3. Critical Consc.	2,84	1,06	,932**	,803**											
4. Participation	2,16	1,11	,689**	,581**	,544**										
5. SATS	3,15	0,75	,478**	,458**	,432**	,356**									
6. Barrier	3,29	0,97	,440**	,420**	,397**	,332**	,916**								
7. Supported	3,51	0,81	,403**	,391**	,369**	,272**	,853**	,627**							
8. Missing	2,12	0,85	,345**	,324**	,303**	,302**	,714**	,577**	,443**						
9. SSE	3,23	0,74	,536**	,507**	,499**	,378**	,743**	,674**	,643**	,526**					
10. Internal	3,45	0,75	,303**	,269**	,300**	,225**	,549**	,476**	,506**	,381**	,812**				
11. Environment	2,99	0,98	,439**	,415**	,404**	,323**	,746**	,687**	,583**	,625**	,871**	,629**			
12. Program	3,22	1,94	,400**	,381**	,380**	,253**	,635**	,543**	,612**	,407**	,801**	,542**	,672**		
13. Administ	3,15	0,95	,620**	,586**	,567**	,469**	,527**	,508**	,447**	,322**	,762**	,428**	,572**	,540**	
14. Teacher	3,20	1,15	,434**	,466**	,383**	,252**	,474**	,455**	,396**	,307**	,714**	,439**	,520**	,490**	,584**

** $p < .001$; $N = 530$

As it can be seen in Table 1, principals' social justice leadership behaviors are in moderate level based on students' opinions ($M = 2.59$). Students' attitudes towards school ($M = 3.15$) and school engagement level ($M = 3.23$) are also "moderate". There is a positive, moderate and significant correlation between social justice leadership and attitudes towards school ($r = .48$; $p < .001$). There is also a moderate and significant correlation between social justice leadership and school engagement ($r = .54$; $p < .001$). The correlation between attitudes towards school and school engagement is high and significant ($r = .74$; $p < .001$).

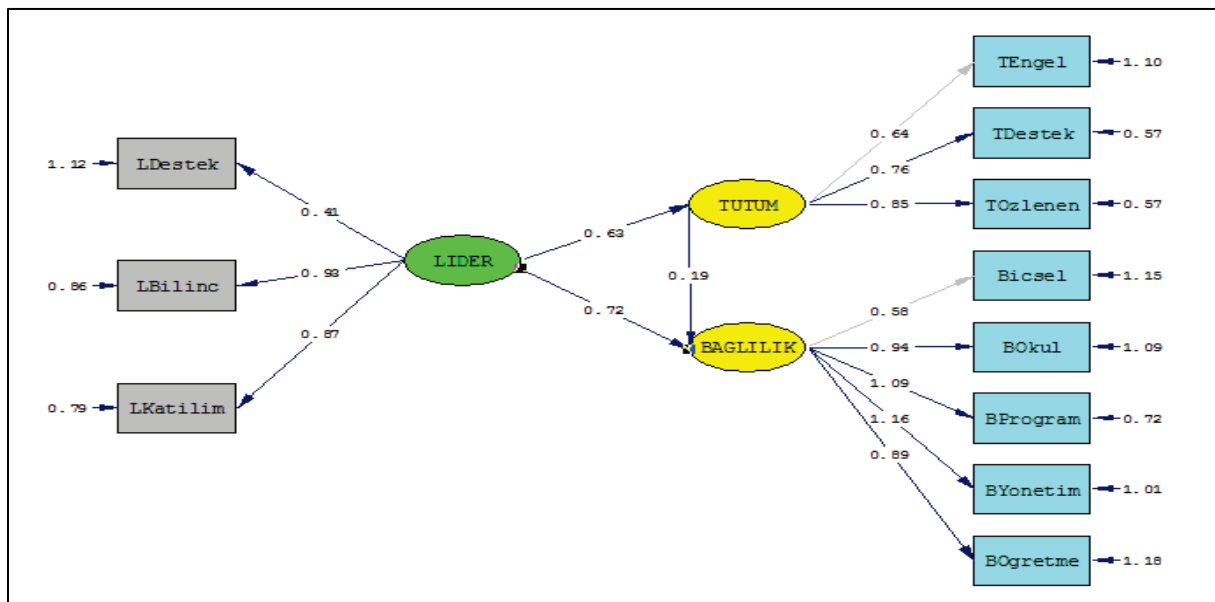
The mediating role of attitudes towards school between social justice leadership and school engagement was examined according to Holmbecks' (1997) model. Holmbeck (1997) assumed two kinds of effects between variables including 'mediating' and 'moderating'. According to this model, if the significant correlation between independent variable and dependent variable in the first analysis decreases, it is assumed that there is a mediating effect between the variables. If the correlation is not significant after adding the direct path to the model, it is called as "full mediation". On the contrary, if the correlation between variables is still significant; but the standardized value decreases, this time it is assumed that there is "partial mediation". In our study, the mediating effect of attitudes towards school between social justice leadership (independent variable) and school engagement (dependent variable) were examined. For this reason, direct and indirect paths among variables were examined using regression analyses separately. So, before testing the model, assumption of mediating tests were investigated. Results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Structural Paths among Variables

<i>Structural Paths</i>			β	<i>T</i>
Direct Effects				
Social Justice Leadership	→	Attitudes towards School	0.60	5.22*
Attitudes towards School	→	School Engagement	0.67	12.65*
Social Justice Leadership	→	School Engagement	0.89	5.65*
Indirect Effects				
Social Justice Leadership	→	School Engagement	0.72	3.49*

* $p < .05$; $N = 530$

As it can be followed in Table 2, social justice leadership is a significant predictor of 'attitudes towards school' ($\beta = .89$; $p < .05$). Similarly, 'attitudes towards school' predicts 'school engagement' significantly ($\beta = .67$; $p < .05$). The findings among research variables indicated that assumptions of mediating test were justified. The mediating effect of attitudes towards school between social justice leadership and school engagement was examined by means of path analysis. Results were presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Path Diagram of Research Model

As it can be seen in Figure 1, after adding the 'attitudes towards school' as a mediating variable, the relation between social justice leadership (independent variable) and school engagement (dependent variable) was still significant ($\beta = .72$, $p < .05$). However, the estimate value of .89 between two variables in the direct model (see Table 2) decreased to .72 (see Figure 1) after adding the 'attitude towards school' (mediating variable) into the model. So, it is concluded that attitude towards school plays *partial mediating* role between social justice leadership and school engagement (Holmbeck, 1997). Goodness of fit statistics also supports these findings [χ^2 (261,14 $N = 530$); $df = 54$; $\chi^2/df = 4.83$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .08; AGFI = .90; GFI = .92; CFI = .94; IFI = .94; NFI = .93]. To interpret the results, firstly the ratio of chi-square to degree of freedom were calculated and seen that the value of this ratio is below 5. In addition, calculated RMSEA value is .08. AGFI, GFI, CFI, IFI and NFI values are above .90. All these results confirmed the theoretical model (Çokluk, Şekercioglu, & Büyüköztürk, 2012). In addition, the significance of mediating test was re-tested with Sobel Test ($z = 8.38$, $p < .001$). This result showed that the data fits to theoretical model.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study investigated the social justice leadership based on the opinions of 530 students from 11 high schools in seven districts of province of Ankara. In addition to this goal, the effects of social justice leadership on students' attitudes towards school and school engagement were also explored. For these purpose, the collected data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling as well.

Data showed that principals exhibit social justice leadership behaviors moderately. This findings is coherent with related literature. Previous studies have also explored that principals' leadership behaviors are moderate (Bozdoğan & Sağnak, 2011; Gündüz & Balyer, 2012; Taş & Çetiner, 2011). However, those studies examined school leadership in terms of leadership effectiveness. In a study about social justice leadership it was reported that principals exhibit social justice leadership behaviors at a high level (Turhan & Çelik, 2011). This finding contradicts with our findings. The difference between two studies might come from sampling differences. While Turhan and Çelik's study group includes administrators and teachers, our sampling consisted of students who are mostly influenced from the principals' social justice behaviors. Participants of our study think that principals exhibit social justice leadership moderately. Based on this finding, it can be thought that principals do not satisfy the needs of disadvantaged students effectively. Previous studies have shown that social justice leaders in schools support the marginal students (Theoharis, 2008). In a study, it was revealed that social justice leaders establish relationships with the school community on the basis of trust and transmit his or her thoughts about inequalities in the society to school community (Furman, 2012). In this context, it can be said that school principals do not exhibit the social justice leadership behaviors decently. One of the reasons for this result might be the restrictions of the administrative authorities of the school principals. Under these conditions, principals might hesitate to show the social justice leadership behaviors including 'support', 'critical consciousness and 'participation' in schools.

The participants' attitudes towards school are also at moderate levels in the present study. This finding is parallel with the previous studies. For example, it was reported that students' attitude towards schools as regards to the dimensions of 'love', 'value' and 'coherence' is at a moderate level (Adıgüzel & Karadaş, 2013). Similarly, it was also explored that students' attitudes towards school are moderate (Özdemir & Kalaycı, 2013). There may be many reason for students' moderate attitudes toward the school. Parents' perceptions of education are important among these. In a study it was indicated that families are one of the main factors affecting the students' attitudes towards school (Bankston & Zhou, 2004). Moreover, teacher-student relations are also predictors of developing positive attitudes (Yoon, 2002). Consistent with the literature, our findings about school attitudes have might be explained by family factors and teacher-students relations. All these findings might produce some results. For example, in a previous study it was explored that school attitudes predict attendance to school and academic successes (Adıgüzel & Karadaş, 2013).

Findings showed that students' school engagement level is moderate. This finding is consistent with previous studies. For example, in a study it was seen that students' school engagement level is at a moderate level (Arastaman, 2009). In another study it was also determined that participants' level of school engagement is moderate (Özdemir & Kalaycı, 2013).

Another finding of the present study is that social justice behaviors of principals are significant predictors of school attitudes and school engagement. This finding is consistent with the similar studies focusing on the effects of leadership on students outcomes (Harrison, 2011; MacBeath & Cheng, 2008; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008; Valentine & Prater, 2011). In those studies, it was discovered that school leadership is correlated with various student outcomes including academic success. In one of the studies, it was explored that school leadership predicts the school performance of students (Koh et al., 1995). Leithwood and Jantzi (1999, 2000) reported that leadership is also related to the school engagement. In our study we concentrated on the effects of social justice leadership on the students' school engagement and attitudes towards school. Similarly, Murray (2009) found out that

supporting the disadvantaged students contribute the school engagement. Hence our findings are consistent with the assumption that school leadership is correlated with the students' outcomes in schools.

Another purpose of the present study is to determine to what extent the school attitude shows a mediating effect between social justice leadership and school engagement. Path analysis indicated that school attitudes play a *partially* mediating effect between social justice leadership and school engagement. This finding supports the theoretical model which assumed that the relationship between leadership and students' outcomes are indirect (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Witziers et al., 2003). In those studies, it was reported that leadership effect on various students' performance and behaviors is indirect rather than direct. We found that principals' social justice behaviors including 'support', 'critical consciousness' and 'inclusion' have an impact upon students' school attitudes positively; as a result of this positive effect, students school engagement levels increase relatively. In a study, it was indicated that there is a correlation between academic performance and school engagement (Conchas, 2011). Based on this discussion it can be concluded that social justice leadership behaviors might contribute to school engagement of disadvantaged students which in turn improve their school performance. Thus it can be said that improving the school attitudes might also contribute to the disadvantaged students' school engagement. Indeed, in a study it was asserted that supporting all students produce positive results in schools (Candeias, Rebelo, & Oliveira, 2013). Similarly, it was also discovered that positive attitude towards school predicts academic achievement of students (Kpolovie, Joe, & Okoto, 2014). Based on all those discussions in light of results and the relevant literature, we can argue that principals' social justice leadership behaviors might influence students' school attitudes and school engagement. Taking a holistic stance, it could be declared that school principal's demonstrating social justice leadership behaviors is highly influential in all students' developing a positive attitude towards school. This attitude has an expected outcome which is increased levels of student engagement. In this study of ours, it was found out that social justice leadership, attitude towards school and school engagement are interrelated.

Based on the results of the study we concluded that (i), principals exhibit social justice leadership behaviors moderately; (ii) participants' school attitudes and engagement are at moderate levels; (iii) there is a positively, moderate and significant correlation among social justice leadership, school attitudes and school engagement; (iv) social justice leadership is a significant predictor of school attitudes and school engagement and (v) school attitude has a partially mediating effect between social justice leadership and school engagement.

Based on the overall results of our study, the following suggestions can be made; (i) further studies focusing on the effects of social justice leadership on school attitudes and school engagement might be conducted on bigger samplings; (ii) the relations between social justice leadership and academic success of students can be examined; (iii) qualitative studies might contribute to exploring the effects of social justice leadership on various school outcomes deeply; (iv) social justice leadership behaviors of school principals can be examined based on the opinions of administrators, teachers and parents. For practical purposes it can be suggested that; (i) Ministry of National Education (MoNE) might develop the social justice leadership behaviors of principals during in-service trainings so that they can support the disadvantaged students in schools; (iii) social justice leaders who gained attention of public opinion for supporting disadvantaged students might be rewarded by MoNE.

References

- Adıgüzel, A., & Karadaş, H. (2013). Ortaöğretim öğrencilerinin okula ilişkin tutumlarının devamsızlık ve okul başarıları arasındaki ilişki. *YYÜ Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 10(1), 49-66.
- Alıcı, D. (2013). Okula yönelik tutum ölçeği'nin geliştirilmesi: Güvenirlilik ve geçerlik çalışması. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, 38(168), 318-331.
- Andrews, R., & Soder, R. (1987). Principal instructional leadership and school achievement. *Educational Leadership*, 44(6), 9-11.
- Arastaman, G. (2006). *Ankara ili lise birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin okula bağlılık durumlarına ilişkin öğrenci, öğretmen ve yöneticilerin görüşleri* (Unpublished master's thesis). Ankara University, Institute of Educational Sciences, Ankara.
- Arastaman, G. (2009). Lise birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin okula bağlılık durumlarına ilişkin öğrenci, öğretmen ve yöneticilerin görüşleri. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 26, 102-112.
- Archer, L., Hutchings, M., & Ross, A. (2003). *Higher education and social class*. London: Routledge Farmer.
- Baker, E. T., Wang, M. C., & Walberg, H. J. (1995). The effects of inclusion on learning. *Educational Leadership*, 52(4), 33-35.
- Balcı, A. (2005). *Sosyal bilimlerde araştırma* (5th ed.). Ankara: Pegem.
- Banks, J. A. (1997). *Educating citizens in a multicultural society*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bankston, C., & Zhou, M. (2004). Social capital, cultural values, immigration, and academic achievement: The host country context and contradictory consequences. *Sociology of Education*, 77(2), 176-179.
- Baron, R. A., & Byrne, D. (1987). *Social psychology: Understanding human interaction* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Blumberg, A., & Greenfield, W. (1980). *The effective principal: Perspectives on school leadership*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bossert, S. T., Dwyer, D. C., Rowan, B., & Lee, G. V. (1982). The instructional management role of the principal. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 18, 34-64.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1990). *Reproduction in education society and culture* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publication.
- Bozdoğan, K., & Sağnak, M. (2011). İlköğretim okulu müdürlerinin liderlik davranışları ile öğrenme iklimi arasındaki ilişki. *AİBU Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 11(1), 137-145.
- Brewster, A. B., & Bowen, G. L. (2004). Teacher support and the school engagement of Latino middle and high school students at risk of school failure. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 21(1), 47-67.
- Brooks, J. S., & Miles, M. T. (2006). From scientific management to social justice... and back again? Pedagogical shifts in educational leadership. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning*, 10(21).
- Brown, K. M. (2006). Leadership for social justice and equity: Evaluating a transformative framework and andragogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42(5), 77-108.
- Candeias, A. A., Rebelo, N., & Oliveira, M. (2013). Students' attitudes toward learning and school-study of exploratory models about the effects of socio-demographics and personal attributes. Retrieved from <http://www.projectored.uevora.pt/documentos/LICE.pdf>
- Conchas, G. Q. (2001). Structuring failure and success: Understanding the variability in Latino school engagement. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), 475-505.
- Çokluk, Ö., Şekercioğlu, G., & Büyüköztürk, Ş. (2012). *Sosyal bilimler için çok değişkenli istatistik SPSS ve LISREL uygulamaları*. Ankara: Pegem.

- DeMatthews, D., & Mawhinney, H. (2014). Social justice leadership and inclusion: Exploring challenges in an urban district struggling to address inequalities. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(5), 844-881.
- DeMatthews, D., Edwards, D. B., & Rincones, R. (2016). Social justice leadership and family engagement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(5), 754-792.
- Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership*, 37, 15-24.
- Ensign, J. (2009). Multiculturalism in four teacher education programs: For replication or transformation. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 11(3), 169-173.
- Eshleman, J. R. (1988). *The family: An introduction*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.
- Finn, J. D. (1993). *School engagement and students at risk*. Retrieved from ERIC databases (ED362322).
- Finn, J. D., & Rock, D. A. (1997). Academic success among students at risk for school failure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(2), 221-234.
- Finn, J. D., & Voelkl, K. E. (1993). School characteristics related to school engagement. *Journal of Negro Education*, 62, 249-268.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109.
- Freire, P. (2004). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum Press.
- Furman, G. (2012). Social justice leadership as praxis: Developing capacities through preparation programs. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(2), 191-229.
- Furman, G. C., & Gruenewald, D. A. (2004). Expanding the landscape of social justice: A critical ecological analysis. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(1), 47-76.
- Gewirtz, S. (1998). Conceptualizing social justice in education: Mapping the territory. *Journal of Education Policy*, 13, 469-484.
- Gewirtz, S., & Cribb, A. (2002). Plural conceptions of social justice: Implications for policy sociology. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17(5), 499-509.
- Gündüz, Y., & Balyer, A. (2012). Okul müdürlerinin etkili liderlik davranışlarının incelenmesi. *Kuramsal Eğitim Bilim Dergisi*, 5(2), 237-253.
- Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(3), 329-351.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1998). Exploring the principals' contribution to school effectiveness: 1980-1995. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 9(2), 157-191.
- Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1985). Assessing the instructional management behavior of principals. *Elementary School Journal*, 86(2), 217-248.
- Harrison, J. L. (2011). Instructor transformational leadership and students outcomes. *Emerging Leadership Journal*, 4(1), 82-136.
- Holmbeck, G. N. (1997). Toward terminological, conceptual, and statistical clarity in the study of mediators and moderators: Examples from the child-clinical and pediatric psychology literatures. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 65(4), 599-610.
- Hurst, C. (2012). *Social inequality: Forms, causes, and consequences* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Janosz, M., Archambault, I., Morizot, J., & Pagani, L. (2008). School engagement trajectories and their differential predictive relations to dropout. *Journal of Social Issues*, 63, 21-40.
- Jimerson, S. R., Campos, E., & Greif, J. L. (2003). Toward an understanding of definitions and measures of school engagement and related terms. *The California School Psychologist*, 8, 7-27.
- Jordan, B. (1998). *The new politics of welfare*. London: Sage.
- Katzman, L. (2007). High-Stakes testing. In A. Bursztyrn (Ed.), *The Praeger handbook of Special Education* (pp. 127-129). Westport, CN: Praeger.

- Koh, W. L., Steers, R. M., & Terborg, J. R. (1995). The effects of transformational leadership on teacher attitudes and student performance in Singapore. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 16(4), 319-333.
- Kpolovie, P. J., Joe, A. I., & Okoto, T. (2014). Academic achievement prediction: Role of interest in learning and attitude towards school. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, 1(11), 73-100.
- Leithwood, K. (1994). Leadership for school restructuring. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 30, 498-518.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1999). The relative effects of principal and teacher sources of leadership on student engagement with school. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(5), 679-706.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2000). The effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement with school. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 112-129.
- Libbey, H. P. (2004). Measuring student relationship to school: Attachment, bonding, connectedness, and engagement. *Journal of School Health*, 74(7), 274-283.
- MacBeath, J., & Cheng, Y. C. (2008). *Leadership for learning: International perspectives*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Marshall, C., & Oliva, M. (2006). *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- McCabe, N. C., & McCarthy, M. M. (2005). Educating school leaders for social justice. *Educational Policy*, 19(1), 201-222.
- McKenzie, K. B., Christman, D. E., Hernandez, F., Fierro, E., Capper, C. A., Dantley, M., ... Scheurich, J. J. (2008). From the field: A proposal for educating leaders for social justice. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(1), 111-138.
- McWhirter, E. H. (1997). Perceived barriers to education and career: Ethnic and gender differences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 50, 124-140.
- Miller, C. M., & Martin, B. N. (2015). Principal preparedness for leading in demographically changing schools: Where is the social justice training?. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 43(1), 129-151.
- Mulford, B., & Silins, H. (2003). Leadership for organizational learning and improved student outcomes - what do we know?. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(2), 175-95.
- Murray, C. (2009). Parent and teacher relationships as predictors of school engagement and functioning among low-income urban youth. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 29(3), 376-404. doi:10.1177/0272431608322940
- Murtadha, K., & Watts, D. M. (2005). Linking the struggle for education and social justice: Historical perspectives of African American leadership in schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 41(4), 591-608.
- Oakes, J., Quartz, K. H., Ryan, S., & Lipton, M. (2000). Becoming good American schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(8), 568-576.
- Oplatka, I. (2010). The place of "social justice" in the field of educational administration: A journal based historical overview of emergent area of study. In I. Bogotch, & C. M. Shields (Eds.), *International handbook of educational leadership and social justice*, Vol 1. (pp. 15-36). London: Springer.
- Özdemir, M. (2012). The impact of principals' leadership behaviors on teachers' attitudes towards works: Some evidence from Turkey. *International Journal of Educational and Policy Studies*, 4(6), 147-153.
- Özdemir, M., & Kalaycı, H. (2013). Okul bağlılığı ve metaforik okul algısı üzerine bir inceleme: Çankırı ili örneği. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri*, 13(4), 2125-2137.

- Özdemir, M., & Kütküt, B. (2015). Sosyal adalet liderliği ölçeği'nin (SALÖ) geliştirilmesi: Geçerlik ve güvenilirlik çalışması. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Kırşehir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 16(3), 201-2018.
- Peetsma, T., Vergeer, M., Roeleveld, J., & Karsten, S. (2001). Inclusion in education: Comparing pupils' development in special and regular education. *Educational Review*, 53(2), 125-135.
- Polat, S. (2007). *Eğitim politikalarının sosyal adalet açısından sonuçları konusunda yönetici ve öğretmen görüşleri* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Ankara University, Institute of Educational Sciences, Ankara.
- Resnik, J. (2009). Multicultural education – good for business but not for the state? The IB curriculum and global capitalism. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 57(3), 217-244.
- Rhoads, R. A. (1995). *Multiculturalism and the community college: A case study of an immigrant education program*. Symposium on Organizational Frameworks and Strategies for Multicultural Campuses. Annual Meeting of the American Educational Researchers Associations, San Francisco, CA.
- Robbins, S. P. (2003). *Essentials of organizational behavior* (7th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Robinson, V., Lloyd, C., & Rowe, K. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635-674.
- Stern, M. (2012). *Evaluating and promoting positive school attitude in adolescents*. New York: Springer.
- Taş, A., & Çetiner, A. (2011). Ortaöğretim okulu müdürlerinin dönüşümcü liderlik davranışlarını gerçekleştirme durumlarına ilişkin öğretmen görüşleri. *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 9(2), 369-392.
- Theoharis, G. (2007). Social justice educational leaders and resistance: Toward a theory of social justice leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(2), 221-258.
- Theoharis, G. (2008). Woven in deeply: Identity and leadership of urban social justice principals. *Education and Urban Society*, 41(1), 3-25.
- Tomul, E. (2009). İlköğretim okullarındaki sosyal adalet uygulamalarına ilişkin yönetici görüşleri. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, 34(152), 126-137.
- Turhan, M., & Çelik, V. (2011). Ortaöğretim okulu müdürlerinin dönüşümcü liderlik davranışlarını gerçekleştirme durumlarına ilişkin öğretmen görüşleri. *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 9(2), 369-392.
- Valentine, J. W., & Prater, M. (2011). Instructional, transformational, and managerial leadership and student achievement: High school principals make a difference. *NASSP Bulletin*, 95(1), 5-30.
- Witziers, B., Bosker, R. J., & Krüger, M. L. (2003). Educational leadership and student achievement: The elusive search for an association. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 398-425.
- Yoon, J. S. (2002). Teacher characteristics as predictors of teacher-student relationships: Stress, negative affect, and self-efficacy. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 30(5), 485-493.