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## Instructional leadership and its relationship with some variables

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the instructional leadership and its relationship with some variables such as gender, educational status, career and working year in the same school in Turkey. The study conducted with 614 teachers at 45 schools all over Turkey in the 2017–2018 academic year. Data were collected via instructional leadership scale which was applied to teachers and it had two dimensions: trust and focus on instruction. The findings showed that teachers' perception of trust about school administrators had a significant relationship according to their gender. In other words, male teachers thought school administrators more trustful than female teachers. Another result indicated that perceptions of teachers on instructional leadership had no significant relationship according to teachers' educational status and their career years. However, teachers' perceptions of school administrators' focusing on teaching had a statistically significant relationship to teachers' working years in the same school.

**Keywords:** Instructional leadership, age, gender, career year, working years in the same school.

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## 1. Introduction

The key to manage people and to lead them is to strive for people to achieve their goal, and to use their strengths in this success (Drucker, 1994). In fulfilling this task, the manager or leader should monitor social changes and set goals and objectives accordingly (Basaran, 2004). This also applies to school administration. Educational administrators should strive for the success of schools and students by monitoring social changes and manage their schools by using the theories, principles, techniques and methods of management science in the best way (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982). In other words, education managers should keep a close eye on both areas and social changes and keep themselves up to date. Leadership is playing a vital role in school improvement and student achievement (Coban, 2011; Cotton, 2003; Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Ozdemir, 2019; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012) as well as for the positive school climate (Freiberg, 1999; Sergiovanni, 2001).

Instructional leadership, in general terms, is the focus of education and training processes by the school administrator on the in-school and school-related environmental factors to achieve the goals of the school. The aim of instructional leadership is to create a strong system of values throughout the school community in order to provide qualified education and training to the students, to direct teachers, students and parents to a common vision and mission, to lead the teaching process, to organise the students, teachers and the society in order to improve the quality of teaching in line with the curriculum (Aksoy & Isik, 2008; Sisman, 2011). The instructional leader has high academic expectations. In this context, the instructional leader believes that each student can learn and develop, that the vision and mission adopted in the school can make a difference in student achievement, and that teachers, parents and other school communities have an important role in student learning (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu & Easton, 2010).

The behaviours that the instructional leader should exhibit in the literature are to identify and share the mission and objectives of the school, to manage the curriculum, to develop an environment and school climate suitable for teaching and learning, to provide resources for curriculum development and implementation, to be the source of teaching, to supervise curriculum development and to evaluate the impact of the curriculum. Different behaviours such as managing the teaching process, ensuring effective communication between teachers and students, supporting and improving teachers, evaluating the teaching process and students and being visible people were determined (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Hallinger, 2011; Sisman, 2011). These determined behaviours include not only the behaviour of the school head but also the behaviour of the school head, which affects everyone in the school community. In this context, school administrators should interact with students, teachers, staff and the environment, create a positive school culture in the school and make the school a learning centre not only for students but also for the whole school environment (Sebastian, and Allensworth, 2012; Sisman, 2011; Yalcin, 2018).

School administrators can show their instructional leadership behaviours by themselves as well as show them by others. In this regard, it can be said that instructional leaders directly or indirectly affect the situations of teachers' teaching and students' learning. According to Blase and Blase (2000), when school principals focus directly on classroom activities and advise teachers on educational processes, teachers' self-efficacy and confidence increases, motivation and job satisfaction levels increase and skills for collaboration between teachers develop. This impact on teachers increases students' academic achievement (Lambert, 2002). The same result was also demonstrated by Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008). In this study, it has been determined that school administrators contribute to the learning of the students as a result of improving the working conditions by increasing the teacher's capacity and motivation.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Sample

The population of the research consisted of the whole secondary schools and their teachers all over Turkey. According to TurkStat Level 1 (12 regions), 45 secondary schools were selected, and totally 614 teachers of these schools joint the study. The detailed information about teachers is given in Table 1.

**Table 1. Teachers' distribution according to some variables**

Gender		Educational status		Career year			Years in the same school		
Male	female	Under graduate	graduate	1–10 years	11–20 years	21+	1–3 years	4–6 years	7+
247	367	575	39	333	189	92	375	164	75

As seen in Table 1, 60% of teachers were female and 93% of them were undergraduate. Most of them were in their 1–10 years' period.

### 2.2. Instruments

Data were collected via instructional leadership scale which was applied to teachers and it had two dimensions: trust and focus on teaching. In the first part, there were personal information, such as age, gender, career and working year in the same school.

*Personal information part (SES):* In this part, there was some information about teachers' age, gender, career, working year in the same school, etc. These variables were used in the analysis phase of the study.

*School principals' instructional leadership scale:* School leadership's instructional leadership scale had two dimensions. The first one was about 'focusing on instruction' and that was developed by Supovitz, Sirinides and May (2010) as five items for the purpose of teacher perceptions of principal expertise and focus on instruction. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the scale was 0.95. The scale was prepared on a five-point Likert scale (1 – Never, 5 – Always) to measure the response frequency of the response system. The second one was on 'Teacher–principal trust' and that was developed by Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) to assess the trust relationship between principals and teachers. It is consisted of five items. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the scale was 0.95. The scale was prepared in a five-point Likert scale (1 – Strongly disagree, 5 – Strongly agree) to measure the response frequency of the response system for the items.

According to teachers' gender, age, career year and the working year in the same school, their perception of school principals' leadership was examined. It was researched whether there was a significant difference between teachers' perception of school principals' instructional leadership behaviours (focus on instruction and teacher–principal trust) and teachers' gender, age, career year and the working year in the same school.

### 2.3. Procedures

First, the researcher selected a sample to TurkStat level 1 (12 regions) and according to secondary school distribution in these 12 regions, he selected 45 secondary schools. Next, the researcher got official permission letter in which he could carry out the study in these schools. After that, he contacted the school principals via telephone and he explained the aim of the study and asked them help to be filled the data forms by teachers. School principals gave data forms to volunteer teachers, and after teachers filled the forms, they collected them and posted the researcher. The researcher conveyed the data into SPSS.23. At the analyse phase, the researcher first, whether or not the scale

was distributed normally, used scatter diagrams and descriptive statistics. As a result of the examinations, it was found that the values were close to normal because the coefficients of kurtosis and skewness were less than  $\pm 1$ , and it was seen that the mean and median were close to each other (Kline, 1998). Then, he analysed the variables teachers' gender and their educational status with their perception of school principals' instructional leadership behaviours via *t*-test. Then, in order to indicate whether there was a significant difference between teachers' career and the working year in the same school and their perception of school principals' instructional leadership behaviours, he carried out a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) *t*-test, respectively.

### 3. Findings

Table 2 shows the level of instructional leadership behaviour of school administrators according to teachers' perceptions.

**Table 2. Teachers' view on school principals' instructional leadership level**

Variables	$\bar{X}$	sd
Teacher–principal trust	3.96	0.94
Focus on instruction	3.97	0.88

Table 2 indicates that teachers' view on school principals' instructional leadership level. In the table, teacher–principal trust and their focus on instruction level are relatively very high. According to this finding, school principals behave as an instructional leader in their schools. Table 3 indicates *t*-test results of the instructional leadership behaviour of school principals according to teachers' gender.

**Table 3. T-test results of instructional leadership behaviour of school principals according to teachers' gender**

Variables	Male <i>n</i> = 247		Female <i>n</i> = 367		t	p
	$\bar{X}$	sd	$\bar{X}$	sd		
Teacher–principal trust	4.07	0.92	3.89	0.95	2.37	0.01*
Focus on instruction	4.02	0.89	3.94	0.89	1.07	0.28

As seen in Table 3, teacher–principal trust shows a significant difference with teachers' gender [ $t(612) = 2.37, p < 0.05$ ]. Looking at the gender type of difference, male teachers ( $\bar{X} = 4.07$ ) thought that school administrators' are more trustful when compared to female teachers ( $\bar{X} = 3.89$ ). This may be due to the fact that male teachers are more confident about trust than female teachers. In Table 4, *t*-test results of instructional leadership behaviour of school principals according to teacher's educational status are given.

**Table 4. T-test results of instructional leadership behaviour of school principals according to teacher's educational status**

Variables	Graduate <i>n</i> = 575		Postgraduate <i>n</i> = 39		t	p
	$\bar{X}$	sd	$\bar{X}$	sd		
Teacher–principal trust	3.97	0.94	3.91	0.92	0.34	0.72
Focus on instruction	3.98	0.89	3.85	0.97	0.84	0.40

Table 4 indicates that the instructional leadership behaviour sub-dimensions of the school administrator do not show significant differences according to the teacher's educational status. Table 5 displays the results of one-way ANOVA between instructional leadership behaviour and teachers' career years.

**Table 5. The results of one-way ANOVA between instructional leadership behaviour and teachers' career years**

Variables	A) 1–10 years <i>n</i> = 333		B) 11–20 years <i>n</i> = 189		C) more than 20 <i>n</i> = 92		F	<i>p</i>
	$\bar{X}$	sd	$\bar{X}$	sd	$\bar{X}$	sd		
	teacher–principal trust	3.96	0.93	3.93	0.96	4.06		
Focus on instruction	3.96	0.90	3.93	0.90	4.07	0.87	0.72	0.48

As seen in Table 5, there is no significant difference between the sub-dimensions of instructional leadership behaviours of school administrators and teachers' career years. In Table 6, the results of one-way ANOVA between school leadership behaviour and teachers in the same school durations are provided.

**Table 6. Results of one-way ANOVA analysis of school leadership behaviour and teachers' school durations**

Variables	A) 1–3 years <i>n</i> = 375		B) 4–6 years <i>n</i> = 164		C) more than 7 <i>n</i> = 75		F	<i>p</i>
	$\bar{X}$	sd	$\bar{X}$	sd	$\bar{X}$	sd		
	Teacher–principal trust	4.02	0.91	3.82	0.97	4.00		
Focus on instruction	4.02	0.86	3.80	0.96	4.06	0.85	3.93	0.02*

As seen in Table 6, there is a significant difference between a focus on instruction of school principals and teachers' school durations. In particular, 1–3 years' duration of teachers, especially teachers who work in the same school for 1–3 years, will be more focused on teaching than teachers who work in the same school for 4–6 years. Besides this, especially teachers who work in the same school for more than 7 years find school principals more focused on teaching than teachers who work in the same school for 4–6 years.

#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the instructional leadership and its relationship with some variables such as gender, educational status, career and working year in the same school in Turkey. The study conducted with 614 teachers at 45 schools all over Turkey in the 2017–2018 academic year. Data were collected via instructional leadership scale which was applied to teachers and it had two dimensions: trust and focus on instruction. According to this finding, school principals mostly behaved as instructional leader in their schools. Another finding was the sub-dimension – teacher–principal trust – showed a significant difference with teachers' gender. Looking thorough the gender type, it was seen that male teachers found school principals more trustful than a female teacher. This finding was contrasted to the studies of Tahaoglu and Gedikoglu (2009) and Lee, Smith and Cioci (1993). According to Tahaoglu and Gedikoglu's (2009) research, there was no difference in the teachers' perceptions about the leadership behaviours of the school principal in terms of teachers' gender. However, Lee, Smith and Cioci (1993), who examined the relationship between leadership and gender, found that perceptions of female and male principals were higher among female teachers. In the same study, it was revealed that male teachers' perceptions of female principals were lower.

According to another finding, there was no significant difference between teachers' educational status and administrative behaviours of school principals. This finding differed from Ozdemir and Kavak's (2017) study. In his study, they found that there was a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of the school principal about managerial behaviours and educational level. One possible reason why the teachers' level of education did not affect their perceptions of the school principal might be due to the same expectation of teachers' behaviours. As teachers faced similar

problems in the school and gave similar responses to these problems, the level of education was not an important variable in perceiving these problems. According to the instructional leadership theory, it was argued that the education level of the principal rather than the educational level of the teachers was important in shaping these behaviours (Hallinger, 2011).

One of the findings obtained in the study was that there was no significant difference between the seniority of teachers and instructional leadership behaviours of school principals. This situation could be evaluated as the teachers who had different seniority perceived the level of managerial behaviours of the school principal in a similar way. This finding obtained from the study was similar to the research findings showing that seniority variables did not cause a difference in teacher perceptions regarding the behaviours of the school principal (Balci, 2009; Kaya, 2002). One possible reason why teachers' perceptions did not differ according to their level of education could be shown to be the same experience as the school principal.

The climate of the school was influenced by the behaviour of the principal. This climate also shaped teachers' perceptions. Indeed, the study conducted in Turkey expressed that the perception of the school climate of a teacher was shaped via the behaviours of school principals (Yalcin, 2018). This situation led to a common belief among teachers.

The last finding of the study was that there was a significant difference between teachers who stayed in the same school and instructional leadership behaviour of school principals. Especially, 1–3 years' duration of teachers especially teachers who worked in the same school for 1–3 years saw school principals more focused on instruction than teachers who worked in the same school for 4–6 years. Besides this, especially teachers who worked in the same school for more than 7 years found school principals more focused on teaching than teachers who worked in the same school for 4–6 years. School principals in Turkey were assigned to the first 4 years in the same school. This assignment was extended to 8 years. According to this finding obtained from the present study, the teachers working in the school might have found the school principal's behaviour – focus on instruction – high because they were in the stage of recognising and adopting the school principal in their first years. On the other hand, 3–6 years' teachers might think that the school principal did not exhibit a good focus on instruction behaviour since they knew the school principal was better and began to see their inadequacies. The reason why teachers who worked seven or more thought that the school principal displayed a better focus on teaching behaviour might be due to the fact that the ex-principal had gone and a new principal came to his place. Since those who worked in the school for seven or more years were in the phase of recognising and adopting the school principal just like the teachers who worked in the same school for 1–3 years. Therefore, their perceptions of the school principal's focus on teaching behaviour were more positive. (Ozdemir and Kavak, 2017).

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