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TOXIC LEADERSHIP: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS BASED ON THE OPINIONS OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS¹

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ABSTRACT

Toxic leadership is a type of leadership that affects others for selfish goals and personal interests, and those results in negative consequences for followers and long-term organizations by disrupting organizational health through such behavior. In this study, the toxic leadership behaviors of Vocational School lecturers were tried to be determined based on student perceptions. The research was designed in the type of survey. The study group of the study consisted of a total of 239 students in Vocational School of a university in Central Anatolia, 68 of which were technical and 171 were in social programs. The data were collected with the help of the Toxic Leadership Scale developed. In the analysis of the data, arithmetic mean, binary comparison techniques and correlation analysis technique were used. Findings showed that the perception level is generally 2.38 in terms of toxic leadership. The toxic leadership perception in the students was found to be lowest level with 2,23 means at the dimension of ignorance and to be highest level with 2,55 means at the dimension of negative mood. There is no significant difference between these views of students regarding the social and technical program factors of gender and education. Positive correlations between the subscales of the toxic leadership scale ranged from .63 to .73. The results of the research are discussed on the basis of the related literature and some suggestions based on the findings are presented.

Keywords: Toxic leadership, vocational school, students.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the behavior that affects members to achieve organizational goals (Balci, 2016). There are many definitions of leadership. Some have argued that leadership is an art, some are innate, and others are a skill that can be learned and taught. According to Bennis (2016) leaders are people who know who they are, their strengths and weaknesses. Leaders know what they want, why they want it, and how others need to communicate in order to provide support and cooperation. Just like being a doctor or poet, being a leader is not easy too, and the person who claims the opposite is deceiving himself.

Kellerman (2004) stated that the concept of leadership has always been evaluated in terms of good and positive models and that bad and negative leadership models should also be emphasized. According to the author, especially toxic leadership is an issue that needs to be analyzed very well. Toxic leadership is a type of leadership that affects others for selfish goals and personal interests, disrupts organizational health with such behaviors and has long-term negative consequences for its followers and organization. Toxic leaders see themselves at the center of the system. They take great pleasure in having power against others and skillfully concealing their personal inadequacy. Ego satisfaction is one of the most evident characteristics of toxic leaders. Toxic leaders are quite successful in despising their employees and dragging them into despair (Türkmenoğlu, 2016).

According to the model of Lipman-Blumen, toxic leaders have various destructive behaviors. Such leaders do serious harm to their organization and cause toxicity of the organization (Heppell, 2011). Many researchers focusing on toxic leadership could only reveal the effects of toxicity on members, not the cause of the disease. Culture is an important strategic factor in predicting behaviors and their consequences. The culture of an organization can also have a significant impact on member behavior. As a result of this, toxicity leadership behaviors may make a premium in the organization (Darrell, 2012). Defining or discussing how an organizational culture can contribute to toxicity should be seen as a reality that cannot be sufficient to develop a holistic view on this issue.

The negative or destructive characteristics of the toxic leader adversely affect the cultural and psychological structure of the organization. The organization that has been exposed to such an effect is called a toxic organization (Reed, 2004). The communication of toxic leaders and managers with subordinates is one-way, giving orders and instructions. The two most important techniques used in informal communication are rumors and gossip. Toxic leaders exaggerate themselves in the flow of information with the organization and rely on misleading and guiding information (Türkmenoğlu, 2016).

There are also institutional reasons for toxicity. These; poor internal communication, disruption of organizational culture, and the organization's employees in the relationship between themselves to put forward interest, wrong and ineffective decision processes lead to waste of time and resources, the ambiguity of organizational objectives, weakening of organizational commitment, organizational structure is disrupted

(Bacal, 2000). Along with these, the weakening of the results of the toxicity of written and oral rules, which are a part of organizational culture, can be shown as an institutional reason.

Organizational and personal toxicity has negative, destructive and destructive consequences for leaders, managers, employees and the organization. The management style of the poisoned leaders and managers is bad. A management approach based on being authoritarian, taking decisions alone and applying, over-control and supervision are the clear indicators of this (Türkmenoğlu, 2016).

Çelebi, Güner and Yıldız (2015) discussed toxic leadership characteristics in four sub-dimensions. These are *Self-interest*, *Unappreciative*, *Selfishness* and *Negative Mood*. An attempt to rise to higher levels by using others, placing oneself in the center and trying to cover the inadequate personality, not giving confidence, being arrogant and narcissistic personality are the general characteristics of toxic leaders (Reed, 2004; Kasalak, Aksu, 2016). Frost (2003) reports that toxic leaders and managers exhibit insidious and disrespectful attitudes and behaviors that are unkind to their aces and employees. Toxic leaders and managers are also likely to have maladaptive, restless, and malicious features (Whicker, 1996; Çelebi et al., 2015).

When it comes to leaders in educational institutions, the first thing that comes to mind is school administrators. Although the leadership of the administrators is frequently raised, the real leaders of the education and training activities are the teachers and instructors in the classroom (Beycioğlu, 2010; Uğurlu & Yiğit, 2014).

When it comes to leaders in educational institutions, the first thing that comes to mind is teacher leadership. Although the leadership of the administrators is frequently spoken, the real leaders of the education and training activities are the teachers and instructors in the classroom (Beycioğlu, 2010; Uğurlu & Yiğit, 2014).

According to Can (2007) teacher's leadership in all areas of the institution is important. Bakioglu (1998) defines teacher leadership as those who collaborate with teachers' colleagues, who care about teacher training and follow innovations and continue this revision throughout their career and make this way of thinking willing to continue and develop professional dialogues with colleagues in education and training. As a leader, the teacher should first of all be a person who directs his or her colleagues to a positive change in the direction of professional development. If schools support such teachers in stepping into their professional development roles, they will have benefited greatly for their institutional goals (Catapano, 2017).

Instructional leadership refers to the power and behavior used by school principals, teachers and supervisors to influence individuals and situations related to school (Şişman, 2004). Instructional leadership is a type of leadership that can be considered not only for school principals but also for teachers. Jawas (2014) interprets teaching leadership as leadership practices focused on teaching and learning activities of teachers and students. Raising good students, providing more desirable learning conditions for colleagues, and transforming

the working environment of the school into a satisfying and productive environment are competencies that express instructional leadership (Çelik, 1999: 41).

The majority of educational policies in higher education directly or indirectly depend on the role of faculty members or lecturers. Despite the importance given to the determinants of teachers' academic performance and the studies and comparisons on this subject, there is little consensus among the researchers about the characteristics of a good instructor (Hanushek, 2006).

Vocational schools are higher education institutions which aim to train qualified manpower for certain occupations as two institutions of education and training, have two years of education and training period and give associate degree diploma. Students who have the right to graduate from these schools receive the title of Technician or Professional Staff. Graduates of vocational schools form qualified intermediate manpower between engineers or experts and workers. They are the basic elements of production or service sectors. Engineers or experts who implement the projects that perform production or service staff. Vocational Schools are the most important institutions that train qualified intermediate staff needed in this process (Erbir & Ceylan, 2015).

A serious decline in the number of students who choose vocational schools in Turkey, the researches done on the toxic leadership reveals that the toxic leadership should start from these institutions.

There may be different perceptions regarding the leadership behaviors of the instructors in vocational schools as well as in every field where leadership is concerned. In this study, it is tried to reveal the level of toxic leadership behaviors of lecturers of vocational school with the perspective of vocational school students.

METHOD

Research Model

The research was designed with relational screening model. Relational screening model It aims to determine whether there is a co-change between two or more variables and the degree of change. Relationships found through screening cannot be interpreted as a true cause-effect relationship. However, it gives some clues to researchers (Karasar, 2016).

Study Group

The research was carried out in a Vocational School with 500 students from a university in Central Anatolia. The study group consisted of 239 students (68 technical and 171 social programs) who were active in the study and participated in the study on a voluntary basis through appropriate sampling.

Instrument

In the research, Toxic Leadership Scale developed by Çelebi, Güner and Yıldız (2015) was used to determine the toxic leadership behaviors of the instructors based on student perceptions. The five-point Likert scale consists of 43 items and 4 dimensions. These dimensions are named as *Self-interest*, *Unappreciative*, *Selfishness* and *Negative Mood*. The items of the scale explain 67.07% of the total variance. Factor loads of the items ranged from .87 to .47. The discriminative properties of the scale items were found to be high. The reliability analysis results of all items and four sub-dimensions (Cronbach's Alpha, Spearman-Brown and Guttman) were above .80. The correlation values between the sub-dimensions of the scale were also examined and it was determined that the scale could be used according to the one-dimensional or multi-dimensional feature. The results of the analysis in this study group showed that the scale items explained 65.24% of the total variance. Item factor loads were observed between .44 and .80. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be ($R = .96$)

Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine whether the distributions meet the normality assumptions. The results of this analysis showed that the responses to the scale did not fulfill the normal distribution assumption. Arithmetic mean, median values, correlation analysis and Mann-Whitney U Test techniques were used for pairwise comparisons. In the interpretation of the mean scores obtained by the application of the toxic leadership scale and the expression of student levels, the values given in Table 1 are taken into consideration.

Table 1. Value Ranges of Toxic Leadership Points

Score Range	Perception Level
4.21-5.00	Fully agree
3.41-4.20	Mostly
2.61-3.40	Moderate
1.81-2.60	Little
1.00-1.80	Never agree

FINDINGS (RESULTS)

The numerical distributions of the students participating in the research according to the department they study are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of Students Attending Research

Department		Students (N)
Mechatronics		38
Electronic	TECHNICAL	17
machine		13
Business Administration		5
Finance		52
Office management and executive assistance	SOCIAL	40
Banking and Insurance		47
Accounting		25
Total		237

As shown in Table 2, a total of 237 vocational school students took in the study group. 68 of these students continue their education in the field of social sciences in 169 technical programs. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the students for evaluating toxic leadership behaviors in the teaching staff are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Student Perception Level of Toxic Leadership Behaviors in Instructors

	N	X	S
Toxic Leadership Scores of lecturer	237	2,38	,82

As seen in Table 3, the arithmetic mean of the students' perception related to toxic leadership behaviors in instructors was 2.38 and the standard deviation value was found as 82. This statistical result shows that the students have a perception of toxic leadership for vocational school lecturers at the level of "I Agree". Table 4 shows the results of toxic leadership behaviors perceived by the students in the study group in terms of the dimensions of toxic leadership.

Table 4. Toxic Leadership Perception Level of Instructors by Sub-Dimensions

Sub Dimensions	N	X	SS
Self-Seeking	237	2,23	,86
Unappreciative	237	2,34	,92
Selfishness	237	2,40	,92
Negative Mood	237	2,55	1,08

The toxicity behaviors of the students participating in the research were observed; When this leadership type is analyzed according to the four dimensions of "Self-interest, Unappreciative, Selfishness and Negative Mood,

the lowest perception was self-seeking with 2.23 arithmetic average and the highest perception was Negative Mood with 2.55 average for dimension were seen.

Mann Whitney U test results regarding gender variable, were given in Table 5.

Table 5. Mann Whitney U Test Analysis Results on the Differences Between Male and Female Students

	Gender	N	X	SS	z	p
Overall Average	Woman	97	2,43	,82	-,583	,560
	Male	140	2,35	,82		

($p > 0.05$)

As it is seen in Table 5, when the students' views evaluating the instructors in terms of toxic leadership are considered according to gender variable, it is seen that both averages are quite close to each other. The results of Mann-Whitney U test regarding the difference between means show that there is no significant difference between these opinions at the 0.05 level.

Mann-Whitney U test results are given in Table 6, which shows whether there is a significant difference in terms of gender variable in the averages related to the scores obtained when the student views evaluating the teaching staff in terms of toxic leadership behaviors according to the sub-dimensions of toxic leadership.

Table 6. The Results of Mann-Whitney U Test on the Distribution of Score and Differences Between Scores in Toxic Leadership Sub-Dimensions by Gender

Sub Dimensions	Gender	N	X	SS	z	p
Self-Seeking	Woman	97	2,31	,99	-,682	,495
	Male	140	2,17	,75		
Unappreciative	Woman	97	2,39	,89	-,944	,345
	Male	140	2,29	,93		
Selfishness	Woman	97	2,39	,89	-,379	,705
	Male	140	2,41	,93		
Negative Mood	Woman	97	2,61	1,08	-,667	,505
	Male	140	2,50	1,08		

($p > 0.05$)

As it is seen in Table 6, the distribution of the evaluation scores of the students who evaluated the lecturers in terms of toxic leadership according to gender variable and the Mann-Whitney U test results related to the significance of the differences between these scores are seen. According to the statistical results, no significant difference was found in any dimension at the level of 0.05 according to the gender factor.

The results of the mann-whitney u test analysis on the assessment of the toxic leadership behaviors of the students in the study group regarding the mean score differences created by grouping according to the technical and social program types they are studying are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Analysis Results of Average and Standard Deviation and Differences by Technical and Social Vocational School Programs

	Department	N	X	SS	z	p
Overall Average	Technical	68	2,35	,76	-,22	,83
	Social	169	2,39	,84		

(p>0.05)

As it is seen in Table 7, when the toxic leadership behavior scores of the students participating in the research were observed in terms of the department variable of the students, it was observed that the scores of students studying in social programs were 2.39 and higher than those of technical program students (2,35). Mann-Whitney U test results on the difference between the scores showed that this difference between the averages was not significant at the 0.05 percent level.

Table 8 shows the distribution of the scores of the students by grouping the assessment according to the sub-dimensions of toxic leadership.

Table 8. Distribution of Toxic Leadership Perceptions of Technical and Social Program Students According to Sub-dimensions

	Department	Students (n)	Mean	SD	z	p
<u>Self-Seeking</u> Unappreciative	Technical	68	2,16	,73	-,696	,486
	Social	169	2,27	,90		
Selfishness	Technical	68	2,30	,89	-,449	,653
	Social	169	2,36	,93		
<u>Self-Seeking</u> Unappreciative	Technical	68	2,43	,87	-,548	,584
	Social	169	2,40	,93		
Selfishness	Technical	68	2,52	1,00	-,026	,979
	Social	169	2,56	1,12		

(p>0.05)

As can be seen in Table 8, when students were compared and compared in terms of department variable according to the sub-dimensions of the toxic leadership behaviors observed in the teaching staff, the scores of the social program students were high, but these scores were significantly higher than the average score of the students in the technical program. It is observed that there is no difference. The results of the correlation analysis between the sub-dimensions of Toxic Leadership Scale, which is used as a data collection tool, are given in Table 9.

Table 9. Spearman'srho Correlation Coefficients Between Scale Subdimension Total Average Scores

Toxic Leadership Dimensions	1	2	3	4
<u>Self-Seeking</u>	----			
Unappreciative	,689**	----		
Selfishness	,629**	,687**	----	
Negative Mood	,671**	,736**	,646**	----

As can be seen in Table 9, all sub-dimensions have a moderate and high positive relationship with each other.

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

Higher education institutions have an important role for scientific research and publication, education and community service. This role puts the members of higher education institutions under the obligation to act in accordance with the standards of ethical conduct against their interlocutors based on the principle of trust and responsibility awareness (YÖK, 2018).

According to the perceptions of the vocational school students in the scope of the research, the average score of toxic leadership behavior of lecturers is were found between 2,3 and 2.38. This results shows that it is observed that students generally observe a moderate level of toxicity leadership behavior in their instructors. In addition, the negative mood state dimension of toxic leadership was evaluated with the highest score in this assessment. At this point, it is understood that the most reflected characteristics of students in the middle level of toxic leadership behaviors are negative mood. Negative mood in teaching staff can have many social, economic, cultural and professional reasons. The ability to manage teaching stress professionally is an important competence for lecturers and the negative mood behaviors of the lecturers within the scope of the research can be explained by associating them with the concept of teaching stress.

According to Balci (2000), stress is a phenomenon that is faced or confronted by contemporary human life at any time and place. Stress affects human satisfaction, job performance and physiological and psychological health. The health and efficiency of the individual depends in a sense on their ability to cope with stress. That is why contemporary organizations often educate their employees through stress management courses and seminars. Zagross and Jamileh (2016) examined the relationship between work stress and toxic leadership. As a result of the study, it was determined that work stress and toxic leadership were in a high positive relationship.

The teaching task is a series of competences that must be carried out professionally. Reflecting the negative moods of the instructors within the scope of the research suggests that the professionalism skills of the instructor should be revised. In a study conducted by Karaca (2016), it was found that teachers' perceptions about their professionalism were "high". This also suggests that care must be taken to identify and meet the professional training needs.

Although the toxic leadership behaviors of the lecturers in the scope of this researches were moderate, general toxic leadership analyzes showed the presence of stored toxicity in many organizations. That is, many organizations can potentially have toxic leadership characteristics. Toxicity is spreading regularly and quickly from the moment it finds its place in the organization or class and all individuals in this environment are under threat. Omar, Robinson, and Dudau (2017) conducted a perceptual study of the toxic leadership characteristics of academics and the impact of culture that promotes toxic leadership at public universities in Malaysia. According to the results of this research, the perception of toxic leadership of academicians working in public universities was found to be moderate. The study also attempts to provide a general template on how to identify toxic leaders in universities. Whip (2013) mentions that teachers or lecturers who are toxic leaders may exhibit unethical behaviors in their achievements. This author also emphasizes that toxicity may spread to all individuals at once in the atmosphere of the organization or school / classroom.

Toxic leadership is a system problem and an ethical violation. Members of higher education institutions, such as the teaching staff in every educational institution, should always be aware of the ethical values and principles that they should strictly follow in organizing their professional lives.

Members of higher education institutions should exhibit behaviors that will enable them to gain the trust and respect of colleagues, students, families and other people in the education and training network during the education and training process, and should adopt ethical values and principles in order to make it sustainable ”.

SUGGESTIONS

Quantitative researches on the existence of toxic leaders and the damage they cause to their organizations can reveal a important perspective. Situations causing toxicity in educational organizations should be continuously investigated through in-depth qualitative research and necessary precautions should be taken on this subject. Valid and reliable measurement tools should be developed for institutions to determine their toxicity levels. Efforts should be made to remove toxicity from academic environments as in all institutions.

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