

## Teachers' Perceptions about Socially Responsible Leadership\*

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**ABSTRACT** This study aimed at investigating teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership and examining their views about what kind of social responsibility activities teachers participate in. This study was designed as mixed research. The quantitative strand of the study is designed as descriptive research. Phenomenological research was used as the qualitative strand of the study. To collect quantitative data, 243 teachers working in Gaziantep were chosen as the sample of the study via random sampling technique. 17 teachers who were chosen via convenience sampling participated in the qualitative interviews. Socially responsible leadership scale and an interview protocol were used as data collection tools. It was concluded that teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership and its sub-dimensions were at a moderate level. The reasons behind teachers' taking on social responsibility were personal, organizational and moral. It was revealed that participating in social responsibility activities made personal and social contributions easier to teachers.

### INTRODUCTION

Leadership has been defined as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members" (House and Javidan 2004: 15). Emerging leadership models have become insufficient in today's world because of rapid development of knowledge and technology. Therefore, a number of leadership models have been developed. Socially Responsible Leadership was developed within the context of Social Change Model (Cilente 2009). In social change model, leadership is treated as a value-based, purposive and collaborative process resulting in positive social change (Komives and Dugan 2010).

Leadership development in social change model is about the process of making positive social change (Wagner 2009). The main assumption of social change model which defines leaders as social change agents in this process (Hogendorp 2012) is to cultivate effective leaders who make positive change for the welfare of people in the society. Effective leaders are those who make positive social change for the good of the society (HERI 1996). Unlike the industrial paradigm, leadership depends on some values, and it is seen as a process which requires good change for society, which is not dependent of a single individual or position and which stresses collaborative work for a common purpose with all members of the groups (Kulekci 2015).

### Socially Responsible Leadership

Socially responsible leadership is considered as a kind of leadership which covers values and collaboration of an organization serving to the public good (Wagner et al. 2010). Wagner (2009) argues that socially responsible leadership undertakes responsibility for the welfare of the society. This leadership process refers to raising awareness for decisions and actions of a group by influencing them. Socially responsible leaders deal with the effects of decisions of group members on the society. These leaders affect how group members can work in collaboration, the purpose of the group and their decision-making styles.

Socially responsible leadership as a means of social change and leadership is comprised of three domains which are individual, group and societal. These domains consist of consciousness of self, responsibility, congruence, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, citizenship and change dimensions. The individual domain includes consciousness of self, responsibility, congruence; the group domain covers collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility, and the societal domain includes citizenship. These dimensions contribute to individuals and the society in socially responsible leadership which aims at positive social change (Dugan et al. 2014).

Socially responsible leadership is a requirement for everyone who attaches importance to

positive change in the society and all educators (Strange 2008). Individuals as a part of the society they live in not only affect the society but also are affected by the society. Individuals should make contributions to social change by assuming active roles in the solution of the problems and become sensitive to societal problems.

Education system and educators are to take charge in the most critical mission in terms of raising awareness about societal problems and galvanizing the society for solution of these problems. Serving the society is an indispensable part of socially responsible leadership. The Social Change Model accepts serving the society as a means of leadership for enhancing students' socially responsible leadership perceptions and initiating social change (Skendall 2012). It is a high priority for all educators and those who want to initiate social change to develop socially responsible leaders. In this sense, schools are the places which have social responsibilities such as preparing students for life. Teachers take on leadership roles in schools through their social responsibility behaviors. Teachers must have socially responsible leadership skills which help them to become role models for their students, and to educate students who are sensitive to the society. For this reason, it is highly significant to know what kind of social responsibility activities teachers participate in the reasons for their participation, the benefits of participating in these activities, and what needs to be done to increase teachers' participation in these activities. Revealing these issues will help to understand teachers' motivation and tendencies to take on leadership roles for the good of the school and the community.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership and examine their views about what kind of social responsibility activities teachers participate in, the reasons for their participation, the benefits of participating in these activities and what needs to be done to increase teachers' participation in social responsibility activities. In line with this purpose, answers were sought for the following problem statements:

1. At what levels are teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership and its sub-dimensions?

2. What kind of social responsibility activities do teachers participate in?
3. Why do teachers participate in social responsibility activities?
4. What are the benefits of participating in social responsibility activities?
5. What can be done to increase teachers' participation in social responsibility activities?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The present study is designed as mixed research. The quantitative strand of the study is descriptive, and the qualitative strand of the study is phenomenological. Teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership were examined using the quantitative strand. The qualitative strand was used to reveal what kind of social responsibility activities teachers participate in, the reasons for their participation, the benefits of participating in these activities and what needs to be done to increase teachers' participation in social responsibility activities.

### Sample/Study Group

A total of 243 teachers were chosen from schools located in Gaziantep province (Turkey) via random sampling technique to collect quantitative data. Table 1 demonstrates demographic

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants**

Variable		N	%
<i>Gender</i>	Female	124	51.0
	Male	119	49.0
<i>Age</i>	30 and below	87	35.8
	31-39	100	41.2
	40 and above	56	23.0
<i>Seniority</i>	10 and below	127	52.3
	11-20	91	37.4
	21 and above	25	10.3
<i>Branch</i>	Classroom teacher	49	20.2
	Subject teacher	194	79.8
<i>School Type</i>	Primary	66	27.2
	Middle	115	47.3
	High	62	25.5
<i>Having Children</i>	Yes	149	61.3
	No	94	38.7
<i>Education Level</i>	Undergraduate	213	87.7
	Graduate	30	12.3
<i>Total</i>		243	100

characteristics of the sample. To collect qualitative data, 17 teachers (male=9, female=8) were chosen to be included in the study group via convenience sampling.

### Data Collection Tools

Socially Responsible Leadership scale and an interview form were used to gather data.

#### *Socially Responsible Leadership Scale*

To determine participants' perceptions of socially responsible leadership, Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS), which was developed by Tyree (1998) and adapted to Turkish by Külekci (2015) by conducting validity, reliability and norm studies, was used. The adapted scale consists of 8 dimensions which are "Controversy with Civility", "Responsibility", "Congruence", "Collaboration", "Citizenship", "Change", "Consciousness of Self" and "Common Purpose". These dimensions are made of individual, group and societal values. The scale (SRLS) includes 60 items. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .93, and test-re-test reliability coefficient was found to be .80. The SRLS is a five-point Likert-type scale. Score intervals and levels in the SRLS and its sub-dimensions are given in Table 2.

**Table 2: The SRLS score intervals**

SRLS / Sub-dimensions	Low	Moderate	High
SRLS	- 229	229.01-261.99	262 +
Consciousness of Self	-29	29.01-33.99	34
Congruence	-28	28.01-32.99	33
Responsibility	-24	24.01-28.99	29
Collaboration	-30	30.01-35.99	36
Controversy with civility	-22	22.01-25.99	26
Common purpose	-34	34.01-39.99	40
Citizenship	-29	29.01-34.99	35
Change	-28	28.01-32.99	33

#### *Interview Form*

Qualitative data were gathered through interviews. The interview form was generated in line with the sub-problems of the research. In the interview form, there were questions about what kind of social responsibility activities teachers participate in, the reasons for their participation, the benefits of participating in these activ-

ities and what needs to be done to increase teachers' participation in social responsibility activities. Each participant was given a code for anonymity.

### Data Analysis

The SPSS package program was used for analysis of the quantitative data. Frequencies, arithmetic means and standard deviations were used to calculate the level of teachers' SRLS perceptions. Qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive analysis technique. Themes and codes were formed based on teachers' perceptions. In the last phase of the data analysis, the findings were explained, and interpretations and results were presented. In the current study, direct quotations from teachers' perceptions were used for "validity". It was seen as a result of data analysis that the findings were internally consistent, meaningful and congruent with previously proposed theoretical frameworks and theories. This demonstrated internal reliability of the research. While presenting the findings, participants' codes and direct quotations from participants' perceptions were used, and this supported reliability of the research.

## RESULTS

This section presents both quantitative and qualitative research findings. First of all, the level of teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership was examined. It was found that teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership and its dimensions were at moderate level. In addition, qualitative research findings elaborated the social responsibility activities that teachers participated in, the reasons behind teachers' participation in social responsibility activities, the benefits of participating in social responsibility activities and what needs to increase teachers' participation in social responsibility activities.

The analysis conducted to determine teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership and its sub-dimensions is presented in Table 3. When Table 3 is examined, it can be seen that teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership were at moderate level ( $X=254.13$ ). Their perceptions of sub-dimensions of socially responsible leadership, which are "controversy with civility", "responsibility", "congruence",

**Table 3: Findings about teachers' perceptions of the SRLS and its sub-dimensions**

<i>SRLS /Sub-dimensions</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>Level</i>
SRLS total	243	254.62	4.24	31.09	Moderate
Consciousness of self	243	33.13	4.14	4.86	Moderate
Congruence	243	30.56	4.36	4.11	Moderate
Responsibility	243	26.42	4.40	3.46	Moderate
Collaboration	243	33.95	4.24	4.38	Moderate
Controversy with civility	243	38.27	4.25	5.31	Moderate
Common purpose	243	25.79	4.29	3.77	Moderate
Citizenship	243	33.48	4.18	4.57	Moderate
Change	243	32.98	4.12	4.70	Moderate

“collaboration”, “citizenship”, “change”, “consciousness of self” and “common purpose”, were also at moderate level. Among the sub-dimensions, the highest means were in the responsibility, congruence, controversy with civility, common purpose, collaboration and citizenship sub-dimensions, respectively. The lowest means were in the consciousness of self and change sub-dimensions.

Table 4 demonstrates what kind of social responsibility activities teachers participate in schools. It is demonstrated in Table 4 that teachers participate in social responsibility activities such as aid/fund campaigns, collecting/delivering books, contact meetings, recycling, assistance to schools and environment. Teachers participate in aid/fund campaigns at most. One teacher commented: “*We started an aid/fund campaign to buy milk for children of Syrian families who live in jerry-built houses under daunting challenges. We held a charity fair to do that.*” (P4). Another teacher stated that he participated in the activities organized for poor students: “*I took part in school-based projects which sought support from private sector firms to meet the needs of students, such as clothing and stationery.*” (P6). “*We helped people who were damaged by the Van earthquake with participation of our students and teachers.*” (P11).

**Table 4: Social responsibility activities that teachers participate in**

<i>Social responsibility activity</i>	<i>F</i>
Aid/fund campaigns	6
Collecting/delivering books	5
Contact meetings	4
Recycling	4
Assistance to schools	4
Environment	4

Teachers mostly participate in the campaigns aiming at collecting books. They stated that they participate in such campaigns to collect books for both poor students in their own schools and in other schools which need books in their libraries. Furthermore, it is revealed that teachers participate in environmental social responsibility activities. One participant noted: “*We participated in a tree planting campaign. We organized a cleaning campaign in our street with the motto “Let’s keep our street clean!”*” (P17). They expressed the importance they attach to environment in these ways.

It can be suggested that teachers take on their social responsibility mostly through aid/fund raising campaigns. It can be seen that teachers organize activities aiming at raising funds for those in need. Teachers’ participation in tree planting campaigns, recycling and environmental cleaning demonstrates how sensitive they are for environment.

The reasons for teachers’ participation in social responsibility activities and their frequencies are presented in Table 5. The reasons for teachers’ participation in social responsibility activities were examined in personal, organizational and moral dimensions. Most of the teachers stated that they participated in these activities because of personal reasons. Teachers explained the reasons for participating in these activities: “*To improve myself, to do something for people...*” (P15), “*As an individual being a*

**Table 5: The reasons for teachers' participation in social responsibility activities**

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>F</i>
Personal	12
Moral	9
Social/Organizational	8

part of the society, I would like to show that I am an active and sensitive person by contributing to the society both financially and morally.” (P8), “I took part in these activities to be a role model for my students.” (P14). Teachers take on social responsibility because of personal reasons such as feeling themselves active and sensitive, being a role model for others and doing something good for the society.

One of the reasons for teachers’ participation in social responsibility activities is social/organizational reasons. Two participants commented: “To develop a sense of unity and solidarity, help people, feel and have others feel a sense of sharing...” (P17), “To place the first ring of the chain which is formed with the purpose of helping the posterity to cultivate the habit of making beneficial things for the society...” (P6). Another participant stated her views: “To represent my organization in the best way and to increase my organization’s prestige...” (P15). This participant delineated that enhancing her school’s reputation is significant, and it is one of the reasons for her participation in such activities. Emphasizing his school’s goal, one participant commented: “My school has a vision for social responsibility.” (P17). He stated that he felt obliged to participate in such activities. Overall, it can be suggested that teachers participate in social responsibility activities because of some social and organizational reasons such as doing something good for the society, being a pioneer in development of the society and enhancing the reputation of their organizations.

Moral reasons are other reasons for teachers’ participation in social responsibility activities. Two participants explained: “I participate in these activities as I see them as a way of reaching religious, traditional and spiritual happiness and relief.” (P8). “I believe that if our students take part in aid campaigns, this will affect them in a positive way spiritually, which will positively influence their behaviors in the classroom and school.” (P11). Teachers expressed the importance of moral/spiritual emotions for their participation in social responsibility activities.

Table 6 demonstrates the benefits of teachers’ participation in social responsibility activities. Table 6 shows personal and social benefits of teachers’ participation in social responsibility activities. One participant who emphasized par-

**Table 6: The benefits of teachers’ participation in social responsibility activities**

Benefits	F
Social/organizational	13
Personal	12

ticipating in social responsibility activities increased her happiness and sense of responsibility commented: “I become more conscious personally, and I feel happy to help people. I believe that my sense of responsibility has enhanced.” (P3). Another participant focused on enhancing social sensitivity and stated: “As I participate in such activities, my sense of social sensitivity improves. New ideas have come up about social responsibility as I undertake roles in new projects.” (P6). Stating the importance of gaining experience in social responsibility activities, one participant commented: “... I have become experienced in social responsibility.” (P7). One participant drew attention to the communication dimension and noted: “I have strengthened my dyadic relationships by meeting more people. I have had a chance to see what happens in its actual field.” (P15). Another participant argued: “Helping other people in the society gives me a great pleasure spiritually. This pleasure facilitates my taking on responsibility and increases my entrepreneurship in different issues. It also enhances my confidence and encourages me to contact with other people.” (P11). Social responsibility activities contribute to personality development.

Teachers emphasized the importance of personal benefits of participating in social responsibility activities. Personally, teachers stated that participating in these activities contributes to being more sensitive to the society, communicating with people from all walks of life, enhancing their communication skills, and helping them to feel more confident and happier.

It is seen that participation in social responsibility activities contributes to teachers socially/organizationally. The participants stated that some positive changes happened in their school culture through social responsibility activities. A participant expressed her thoughts: “Thanks to this responsibility that I undertake, I go on my duty with the relief of helping people who are in need. This influenced my institution’s image as it supports these activities.” (P10). Emphasizing collaboration with other teachers in

their schools, two participants commented: *"These activities made positive contributions to the spirit of collaboration in our school."* (P9). *"This affects the relationships between our students and the school staff (the principal, assistant principals, teachers and support personnel). Furthermore, these activities positively affect parents' views about the school and school staff."* (P11). Another participant drew attention to introduction of organizational image and stated: *"These activities help the school to be known and lead other people to have positive perceptions regarding our school."* (P15).

Some participants argued that they feel more comfortable conscientiously because of participating in these activities: *"Contributing to the development of students' personal, social and conscientious aspects makes me feel comfortable."* (P13). *"These activities helped me to feel peaceful and happy conscientiously. I felt the joy of helping other people through these activities."* (P17). Participation in social responsibility activities helped teachers to serve the society, publicize their organizations by undertaking responsibility on behalf of their organizations and enhance their communication skills by working in collaboration.

Another problem of this research is related to teachers' views about what needs to be done to enhance teachers' participation in social responsibility activities. Teachers elucidated views about school principals, teachers, students, parents, current practices and non-governmental organizations. One teacher commented on the school staff's collaboration: *"Social responsibility projects should be managed in collaboration. There should be communication with non-governmental organizations."* (P2). One teacher, focusing on the importance of encouragement in social responsibility activities, stated his views as follows: *"More responsibility can be given to teachers and students. Teachers can be encouraged to participate in these activities."* (P5). Students' activities in social responsibility projects were another issue accentuated by the participants: *"Sensitivity training should be provided for students. They need to be raised as individuals who are sensitive to problems."* (P4). *"Projects and performance tasks regarding this issue can be assigned to students."* (P7). *"Students should be taught that taking on our responsibilities will help the construction of a happy society."* (P12). Teachers

emphasized the importance of students' playing an active role in taking on responsibility activities.

Some participants stressed the importance of collaboration: *"Service activities for the welfare of the society can be planned with joint efforts of teachers, students and parents' opinions, and thus, collaboration can be made with other organizations."* (P7). *"Examples from social responsibility projects can be introduced and initiated in schools under the leadership of school managers and teachers."* (P6). *"All schools should develop projects just as corporate companies do. They can effectively implement projects in collaboration with non-governmental organizations."* (P11). *"All of the organizations must take part in these activities in order to localize social responsibility projects, put them into practice and obtain feedback-outcomes regarding the projects."* (P16). In sum, coordination is needed among school administration, non-governmental organizations, teachers, students and parents to enhance teachers' participation in social responsibility activities.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the research demonstrated that teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership and its sub-dimensions were at "moderate" level. According to the means of teacher perceptions for the sub-dimensions, it was revealed that the highest means were in the responsibility, congruence, controversy with civility, common purpose, collaboration and citizenship sub-dimensions, respectively. The lowest means were in the consciousness of self and change sub-dimensions.

Similar findings were obtained in the related literature. Dugan (2006) found that the highest means were in the "responsibility" sub-dimension, while the lowest were in the "controversy with civility" and "citizenship" sub-dimensions. Ricketts and Bruce (2008) concluded that students had higher means in the consciousness of self, congruence and responsibility sub-dimensions when compared to other sub-dimensions. In Haber's (2006) study, it was revealed that the highest means were in the "responsibility" sub-dimension, while the lowest were in the "change" sub-dimension. Likewise, Dugan et al. (2008) found that students had the highest means in the "responsibility" sub-dimension, while the lowest means were in the "change" sub-dimen-

sion. Külekci (2015) concluded that students' perceptions were at "moderate" level, and the highest means were in the "responsibility" sub-dimension, while the lowest were in the "change" sub-dimension. Overall, the results of this study are consistent with those of previous research.

Teachers participated in social responsibility activities such as aid/fund campaigns, collecting/delivering books, contact meetings, recycling, assistance to schools and environment. Teachers participated in aid/fund campaigns at most. The activities that aim at helping people and schools in need were among the activities that teachers participated in at most. Teachers' participation in tree planting campaigns, recycling and environmental cleaning demonstrates how sensitive they are for environment.

It was revealed that teachers participated in social responsibility activities because of personal, social, organizational and moral/spiritual reasons. Teachers stated that participating in social responsibility activities made personal and social contributions profitable to them. They placed stress on personal benefits of these activities. Personally, teachers had benefits such as social sensitivity, meeting different people and working with them, enhancing their communication skills, increasing their self-confidence, feeling conscientiously comfortable, having spiritual satisfaction and becoming happier. These benefits are consistent with the findings of research in the literature. In Ugurlu and Kiral's (2012) study, students noted that serving the society within the context of Community Service Practices (CSP) course resulted in enhancement of their feeling of happiness, gaining experience, teamwork and development of robust self-confidence. Dincer et al. (2011) and Yilmaz (2011) revealed that the activities carried out within the context of CSP course helped prospective pre-school teachers to translate theory into practice to gain sensitivity for social problems, integrate with the society and become a part of life. These results are consistent with the results in the present study.

### CONCLUSION

One of the significant results of this study is that teachers displayed socially responsible leadership behaviors in responsibility, congruence, controversy with civility, common purpose, collaboration and citizenship sub-dimensions at

moderate levels. Teachers participated in social activities because of personal, social, organizational and moral/spiritual reasons. The activities that teachers participated in covered social activities which were carried out both for schools and the broader community. This study focuses on teachers' perceptions of socially leadership using a mixed methods approach, which offers a detailed lens towards teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership. Although there are a number of studies regarding socially responsible leadership both in education and business, this study is one of the first studies investigating teachers' perceptions of socially responsible leadership. Furthermore, the study is unique as it attempts to place an emphasis on the social activities that both the teachers carry out and intent to participate in apart from their academic duties at schools.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is suggested that all of the stakeholders and non-governmental organizations must collaborate and participate in these activities, and teachers and students must be provided with sensitivity training. Furthermore, project and performance assignments must be given to students, people must be encouraged to participate in these activities, and good examples must be introduced to enhance teachers' participation in social responsibility activities.

### LIMITATIONS

This research has some limitations. First, this study was conducted with the participation of public schools teachers. Teachers who work at private schools were excluded. Second, teachers' perceptions were evaluated based on their self-report views.

### NOTE

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