The effects of servant leadership on teachers’ organizational commitment in primary schools in Turkey

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This study examines the effects of servant leadership behaviours of primary school principals on teachers’ school commitment. The research data were collected from 563 teachers working in primary schools in Düzce. Servant leadership behaviours of principals were measured with a servant organizational leadership assessment scale, and the teachers’ organizational commitment was measured with an organizational commitment scale. This study reveals that there was a significant and positive relationship between servant leadership behaviours of principals and the teachers’ commitment to school. Servant leadership was a significant predictor of teachers’ school commitment.

Introduction

Turkey has undergone a series of educational reforms to enhance education quality in elementary schools and adapt to the developing education since the 1990s. The purpose of primary education is to ensure that every Turkish child:

● is taught the basic knowledge, skills, behaviours, and habits to become a good citizen,
● is raised in line with the national moral concepts, and
● is prepared for life and for the next education level parallel to his/her interests and skills.

Primary education is compulsory for all citizens, boys or girls, and is offered free of charge in public schools. Primary education institutions are schools that provide eight years of uninterrupted education, at the end of which graduates receive a primary education diploma. Primary education covers the education and teaching for children between the ages of 6–14. In the academic year 2008–2009, 453,318 teachers were employed in 33,769 schools (MEB [Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, Ministry of National Education] 2009). Turkish primary teachers work from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. five days a week. Primary teachers spend on average 1260 hours teaching each year.

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Turkey has a centralized educational system. The Ministry of National Education is responsible for the administration of education and the enforcement of educational laws. The appointment of teachers is made by the Ministry of Education. The curricula are exactly the same in both public and private schools. All students are taught the same subjects and use the same textbooks in primary and secondary schools. The budgets and the financial resources of the schools are mostly allocated by the Ministry of Education.

One of the recent school reform efforts in Turkey targeted instructional programmes. As such, educational quality and success of reforms are mainly dependent on teachers who carry out the tasks and educational activities in schools (Tsui and Cheng 1999). For this reason, this study asserts that teachers’ organizational commitment is a significant factor in all efforts to improve school education quality. That is, organizationally committed teachers are more likely to work toward school goals, invest more effort in their job, and are more willing to exert considerable effort in school reforms (Yousef 2000). Therefore, teachers are the key factor for the success of school education reforms (Tsui and Cheng 1999), and that success demands greater commitment from teachers (Nguni et al. 2006).

Concomitantly, principal leadership behaviours are important factors affecting teachers’ performance and commitment. Some of these leadership factors include group consciousness, participation in decision making, administrator-employee relationships, and a supportive organizational structure (Dessler 1999). When these factors are considered within the framework of servant leadership, that is, caring and developing employees, sharing leadership, and helping teachers (Laub 1999), teacher organizational commitment increases. This is likely to be the case especially in people-extensive organizations such as schools where servant leadership emphasizes the relationship between leaders and followers, empowerment, the development of followers, and the valuing workers. All of these variables might positively affect organizational commitment. In addition, it has been argued that employees’ commitment increases with the focus on people (Agarwala 2003). Conversely, employees’ commitment does not develop in those organizations where administrators ignore the needs of organization members (Rowden 1999). Examining the effects of servant leadership on organizational commitment is particularly important because it contributes to heightening the awareness of principals regarding the relationship between servant leadership and teachers’ school commitment. Although there are many studies on servant leadership and organizational commitment in developed nations and within individualistic Western cultures and contexts (Laub 1999, Drury 2004, Janssen 2004, Letting 2004, Perryer and Jordan 2005, Fuller et al. 2006), only a limited number of studies have examined these constructs in developing and collectivistic countries such as Turkey (Tsui and Cheng 1999, Balay 2003, Al-Qarioti and Al-Enezi 2004). No research exists on the influence of servant leadership on organizational commitment in within the Turkish school context. Hence, there is a need to explore the effects of the servant leadership on teachers’ school commitment in different cultural settings. Therefore, based on theoretical notions above-
mentioned, and to answer this need, this study attempts to explain how servant leadership affects teachers’ school commitment in Turkish primary schools.

**Servant leadership**


> The servant leader is servant first ... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve ... first. Then, conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead ... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people's highest-priority needs are being served. The best test and the most difficult to administer is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived?

Greenleaf’s study described the characteristics of the servant leader as listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community (Spears 2004). Laub (1999) states that facilitating servant leadership is a change in the workplace and the society as a whole. The primary change expressed by Laub is the increase in the tendency to create an environment to improve the staff and focus on staff happiness, namely supportive leadership used in a team approach. This tendency requires examining the effectiveness of leadership models based on traditional power and authority. Spears (1995) states that the traditional leadership approach focuses on the power concept and the traditional autocratic and hierarchic leadership has had to undergo a change to allow for a new model. This new approach aims to develop the organizational quality and improve the individual development of employees with the combination of effective supportive behaviour, joint decision-making and teamwork (Spears 1995). This new leadership idea extols a different vision based on serving others instead of egoism and self-aggrandisement (Taylor 2002).

It is argued that transformational leadership and servant leadership are the same theory because both are people-oriented leadership approaches, both emphasize the importance of valuing people, listening and empowering followers (Nguni et al. 2006). However, servant leadership and transformational leadership have different characteristics. The principal difference is the focus of the leader. While both transformational and servant leaders show concern for their followers, the overriding focus of the servant leader is to serve their followers (Russell and Stone 2002). Stone et al. (2004) argue that transformational leadership does not adequately explain the behaviours such as altruism, or focused followers. Servant leadership explains such behaviours. Therefore, servant leadership is different from transformational leadership.

According to the definition by Laub (1999: 83) which is widely used in literature and which also constitutes the basis of this study:
Servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led, and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization, and those served by the organization.

Servant leaders’ merits are defined as high morality or kindness in general, and the moral virtue of the person (Dennis and Bocarnea 2005). Servant leadership is an understanding and implementation of leadership that focuses on leading for the sake of people instead of the egoism of a leader (Drury 2004). Servant leaders improve people and help them work and develop. They provide a vision, gain followers’ confidence and trust and have an influence on others (Farling et al. 1999). Servant leaders may have positional and individual power, but the desire to serve is at the heart of the motivation to act (Miears 2004).

As stated by Hardin (2003), in servant leadership, great passion to improve individually and promote school development has a primary place over all other needs within the organization. Spending the education day dealing with unnecessary issues is avoided by creating an environment in which individuals volunteer to give, rather than an environment in which egoism is accepted, and efforts towards dealing with desired educational issues are encouraged.

Organizational commitment

The second key construct of this study is organizational commitment. Steers (1977) defined organizational commitment as making an effort to embrace the organization’s aims and values as a member of the organization with strong family member feelings. Organizational commitment can also be defined as an individual’s identification with and involvement in the organization, characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values, and a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization (Mowday et al. 1979). Organizational commitment is more closely related to the achievement of long-term organizational goals. Committed employees feel the need to go beyond normal job requirements in order to make a significant personal contribution to the organization (Mowday et al. 1982). Mowday et al. (1979) described three elements defining organizational commitment:

1. a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values,
2. a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization,
3. a definite desire to maintain organizational membership.

Organizational commitment is one of the basic activities and ultimate purposes of organizations seeking to preserve their existence, because individuals with organizational commitment are more compatible, more satisfied and more productive. Moreover, they work with more commitment and responsibility, so they cause less cost for the organization (Balcı 2003). Organizational commitment has become a vital issue for
organizations because it is relevant to behavioural, affective and cognitive aspects such as improving job satisfaction (Balay 2003). Employees working in organizations where organizational commitment is strong are empowered to serve common purposes. In other words, commitment helps employees define organizational values, rules and awards (Al-Qarioti and Al-Enezi 2004).

For schools, commitment means feeling committed to school rather than to an instrumental value, in terms of roles and relations between purposes and the values of teachers. Adopting school purposes and values is a process of integrating individual purposes and value systems and identification with the school. Teachers who fulfil their roles successfully can achieve the feeling of school commitment (Eren 2001). True school commitment may be achieved by neglecting beneficial instrumental expectations to some extent because employees who feel truly committed to school make this commitment continually for the sake and safety of the school and spend most of their time dealing with school issues (Wiener 1982).

Three types of teachers’ commitment are emphasized in schools. The first one, commitment to teaching, reflects a high psychological commitment in the name of service providers (teachers) for teaching. Such commitment is enhanced by the level of teaching via increasing professional development and improvement. The second, commitment is to students. That is, students help their teachers and facilitate improving the level of teachers’ commitment (Kushman 1992) leading to the social integration of students in the class (Nir 2002), regardless of social background and academic difficulties. Teachers most likely show great commitment to students’ achievements when they believe there is a relation between success and a potential development in their professional prestige and symbolic rewards they receive from children, families and principals. Finally, organizational commitment refers to employees’ commitment to the organizational workplace. Such commitment in schools reveals teachers’ commitment to school and identification with school values and aims (Mowday et al. 1982).

Certain reform efforts in education expand the tasks, roles and responsibilities of principals and teachers because of the need to adapt to changing circumstances, and the differentiation and diversification in the expectations. Moreover, considering that the main function of a school is to help the development of children and that teachers are the ones who interact with students, many teachers play a key role in ensuring the success of school reforms.

The relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment

The commitment of a qualified workforce will help ensure the use of all abilities and knowledge for the organization. Individuals will be successful at work as much as they feel committed to their organizations. Otherwise, they will seek an opportunity to get away from the organization and not be able
to meet the expectations (Ozdevecioglu 2003). Thus, school administrators need to increase organizational commitment among their employees.

Doubtlessly, the concept of organizational commitment affects all organizations including educational institutions. Teachers’ commitment is also important in terms of school effectiveness. As emphasized by Dinham (2005), the leadership abilities of principals are significant in developing schools and increasing teaching and learning quality.

The relationship between the followers and the leader is important at schools. Leaders need to understand human nature to lead effectively. This is important, particularly in educational institutions, which are dependent on a common purpose, trust, commitment and cooperation. For this reason, the participation of all members, especially teachers, should be considered a vital aspect of educational leadership. Turan (1998) states that teachers will commit to work harder in a school that facilitates a higher level of interaction among the organization members. In this context, a servant leadership approach, which advocates creating a reliable and honest organizational environment tending to focus on the employees rather than the organization, emphasizing caring for them, esteeming and respecting employees and realizing the importance of working with them (Letting 2004), may contribute to improving employees’ commitment to the organization.

Teachers’ commitment is affected by support of principals and the relation between principals and teachers (Dannetta 2002). Kushman (1992) states that schools with higher organizational commitment provide students’ educational service, promote a school climate to help learning and facilitate teachers in participating in decision-making process more actively. In this respect, a servant leadership approach, which focuses on serving teachers (Russel and Stone 2002), acts to develop teachers, stimulates participation in decision-making, shares leadership and suggests that effective and sincere communication will positively affect school performance.

Many factors increasing the organizational commitment of employees are coherent with the behaviours recommended for leaders for effective organizational management, according to the servant leadership approach. In this respect, increasing the level of teachers’ school commitment can be considered as a necessity for school principals based on research finding that reveals that improving education quality is dependent on teachers performing well at schools (Tsui and Cheng 1999) and from studies that suggest that organizational commitment improves employees’ performance (Marchiori and Henkin 2004).

**The structure of Turkish education**

The Turkish educational system consists of two parts: formal and non-formal education. The formal education system consists of preschool education, elementary education, secondary education and higher education. The Ministry of National Education has the overall responsibility for preschool, elementary and secondary education. The responsibility of higher education is under the Higher Education Council. Except for higher education, formal education is provided free of charge in the public schools even though
private schools exist at all levels of education. Elementary education is a compulsory eight-year programme for all children beginning from the age of six. Schools of elementary education use the centralized curriculum suggested by the Ministry of National Education throughout the country. Secondary education encompasses general high schools and vocational/technical high schools where, depending on the type of high school, additional three or four years of training takes place after elementary education. Higher education takes place at universities of at least four-year or two-year programmes (Saban 2003).

Research questions

Based on the theoretical notions described above in the literature review, six research questions were formulated in the present study:

1. What is the effect of valuing people factor on teachers’ organizational commitment in Turkish primary schools?
2. What is the effect of development of people factor on teachers’ organizational commitment in Turkish primary schools?
3. What is the effect of building community factor on teachers’ organizational commitment in Turkish primary schools?
4. What is the effect of displaying authenticity factor on teachers’ organizational commitment in Turkish primary schools?
5. What is the effect of providing leadership factor on teachers’ organizational commitment in Turkish primary schools?
6. What is the effect of sharing leadership factor on teachers’ organizational commitment in Turkish primary schools?

Method

Sample

The study was conducted in primary schools in a city in the western Black Sea region of Turkey. Among the 29 schools, the smallest school had 251 students enrolled while the largest school had 1737 students. Eight of the schools had population between 501 and 737 students. Four of the schools had populations between 1009 and 1234 students. Fifteen of the schools had populations between 269 and 500 students. There were 7827 female and 8788 male students in the schools. These schools had first- to eighth-grade classes. These students ranged in age from 6 to 14 years. Socio-economic status was measured based on the education level of family and income of family. 44.82% of the schools were considered to have enrolled students with low socio-economic status. The other schools were also considered to have enrolled students from high (24.13%) and medium (31.03%) socio-economic status.

The participants in this study consisted of 700 primary school teachers in the 29 schools. A total of 563 teachers, representing a response rate of
80.42%, responded to the questionnaire. Of these teachers, 57% were female and 43% were male. 21.8% of teachers had completed a two-year programme, 67.1% of teachers completed a four-year programme, and 11% of teachers had a master’s degree. The mean years of teaching experience for teachers was 14 years (SD = 9.14).

Data collection

The questionnaire for this study consisted of items referring to the following two themes: (1) servant leadership and (2) organizational commitment. In the following section, the measurement of these two themes will be explained.

Measurement of servant leadership

The level at which school principals performed servant leadership behaviours was measured using the servant organizational leadership assessment (SOLA) scale developed by Laub (1999). This study employed the school as the unit of analysis. Organizational leadership assessment (OLA) is designed to provide organizations a tool with which to assess the perceived presence of servant leadership characteristics within the group. OLA is an organizational assessment that provides the perception of workforce on the six key areas of servant leadership. Black (2008) suggested that the OLA was the best-suited leadership instrument for measuring servant leadership at the school level of analysis. Therefore, OLA was utilized in terms of appropriateness of the unit of analysis in this study. Also, Laub (1999) reported strong reliability for the OLA, with an alpha coefficients of the six sub-scores all .90 or above. Additionally, Laub indicated that the validity of the instrument is strongly based on Delphi process. Six factors of OLA are distinguished: (1) valuing people (10 items); (2) developing people (nine items); (3) building community (10 items); (4) displaying authenticity (12 items); (5) providing leadership (nine items); and (6) sharing leadership (10 items). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements using a five-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A factor analysis was done to find out whether the factors were coherent with the ones mentioned in the Laub (1999) scale, because this study was carried out in an environment with a different cultural structure. Results of factor analysis revealed six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. Eigenvalue was 3.55 for Factor 1, 3.43 for Factor 2, 2.53 for Factor 3, 1.39 for Factor 4, 1.28 for Factor 5 and 1.12 for Factor 6. As a result of the factor analysis with varimax rotation, the factors were set as follows: the first one was valuing people (e.g. I am listened to by my principal in the school). The second was the development of people (e.g. my principal creates an environment that encourages learning). The third was building community (e.g. my principal works to maintain positive working relationships). The fourth was displaying authenticity (e.g. my principal is open to receiving criticism and challenges from teachers). The fifth was providing leadership (e.g. my
principal is clear on the key goals of the school). The sixth was sharing leadership (e.g. I am encouraged by my principal to share in making important decisions). Load values of the items of the valuing people factor ranged from .446 to .795, that of the development of people factor from .504 to .739, that of the building community factor from .473 to .704, that of the displaying authenticity factor from .471 to .690, that of the providing leadership from .468 to .687, and that of the sharing leadership factor from .485 to .708. The variance explained by the factors for the scale was found to be 65.33%. In this study, the results of the correlation analysis showed that there was strong correlation among the OLA’s factors. Laub (1999) found that there was a strong significant positive correlation among the six factors of the OLA (ranged from .736 to .892). Also, a majority of previous studies using OLA utilized the six constructs of the OLA (Laub 1999, Miears 2004, Black 2008). As a result, the six construct form of the OLA was considered appropriate for the research.

Internal consistency was measured using the Cronbach alpha coefficient. The alpha was .90 for valuing people, .90 for development of people, .91 for building community, .92 for displaying authenticity, .88 for providing leadership, .92 for sharing leadership and .98 for the whole questionnaire. It was also found that the item-total correlation of the servant leadership scale ranged from .52 to .78. Therefore, the internal consistency of the survey instrument was reliable at an acceptable level.

Measurement of organizational commitment

Mowday et al.’s (1979) organizational commitment questionnaire (OCQ), the most widely utilized measure of commitment (Price 1997), was used to measure teachers’ commitment to school in this study. A majority of research using the OCQ reported a validity and reliability instrument and this scale’s Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged from .82 to .95 (Mowday et al. 1979, Nir 2002, Dee et al. 2006). Therefore, teachers’ organizational commitment was measured using the OCQ developed by Mowday et al. (1979). The 15 items of the OCQ (e.g. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is normally expected in order for this school to be successful) have been widely used in research studies of organizational commitment (Dee et al. 2003, Nguni et al. 2006). In this study, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements using a five-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The organizational commitment scale developed by Mowday et al. (1979) has been used by some researchers because it consists of two factors (Lee and Gao 2005, Nguni et al. 2006). It has been used as a whole by some researchers (Munduate and Dorado 1998, Tsui and Cheng 1999, Perryer and Jordan 2005). This is why a factor analysis was applied to the OCQ in this study. Results of factor analysis revealed one factor with eigenvalues greater than 1. Eigenvalue was .5.44 for the factor. Load values of items of the OCQ ranged from .689 to .844. The variation explained by the factor for the scale was found to be 55.04%.
Internal consistency was measured by using the Cronbach alpha coefficient. The alpha was .91 for the questionnaire. It was also found that the item-total correlation of the OCQ ranged from .61 to .78. Therefore, the internal consistency of the survey instrument was reliable at an acceptable level.

Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in the data analysis. The unit of analysis was the school, not the individual teacher. Thus, analyses were performed on school means rather than on individual teacher scores; that is, individual responses were aggregated for each instrument at the school level. Mean and standard deviation values were used to determine the level that primary school principals performed servant leadership behaviours and teachers’ organizational commitment levels. A bivariate Pearson correlation test was used to determine the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment. To assess the effect of servant leadership factors on organizational commitment, multiple regression analyses were applied.

Results

According to means and standard deviations of teachers’ scores for servant leadership and teachers’ organizational commitment, it can be seen that the mean rating of valuing people (mean = 3.57), development of people (mean = 3.53), building community (mean = 3.53), displaying authenticity (mean = 3.55), providing leadership (mean = 3.61) and sharing leadership (mean = 3.57) is higher than the midpoint of 3.0 on rating scale. Nonetheless, it can be observed that the level of teachers’ commitment to school (mean = 3.51) is over the average. Moreover, mean scores of teachers’ responses on the servant leadership dimensions were generally homogeneous, which may give an opportunity to make an argument about the level at which principals are perceived as servant leaders. A large discrepancy in mean scores among the factors may affect the mean scores of servant leadership as a whole. In cases where some dimensions are realized at a high level while some are realized at a low level, an estimation made according to the mean scores of servant leadership may not be very meaningful. Thus, it can be said that teachers perceive school principals as servant leaders according to these mean scores.

The research questions were tested using correlations and multiple regression techniques. Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted to explore whether a relationship exists between total servant leadership and its factors, and teachers’ organizational commitment (see Table 1). Analyses revealed that there was a significant and positive correlation between servant leadership and these factors (ranging from $R = .837$ to .932). The correlation matrix in Table 1 showed that valuing people ($R = .761$, $p = .000$), development of people ($R = .775$, $p = .000$), building
community \((R = .639, p = .000)\), displaying authenticity \((R = .801, p = .000)\), providing leadership \((R = .684, p = .000)\) and sharing leadership \((R = .721, p = .000)\) are significantly and positively correlated with teachers’ organizational commitment. Correlation analysis indicated that there was a significant and positive relationship between servant leadership and teachers’ organizational commitment \((R = .830, p = .000)\). According to this result, it can be said that the servant leadership and its factors are correlated positively with organizational commitment. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of the servant leadership factors on teachers’ organizational commitment. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 2.

The regression analysis reported in Table 2 indicated that there was a significant relationship between teachers’ organizational commitment and the servant leadership factors affecting their commitment to school such as principals’ valuing people, development of people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership and sharing leadership \((R = .869, R^2 = .755, p = .000)\). These factors together explained 75.5% of the variation of school commitment.

### Table 1. Correlations coefficients for factors of servant leadership and organizational commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valuing of people</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of people</td>
<td>.779**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building of community</td>
<td>.731**</td>
<td>.675**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displaying of authenticity</td>
<td>.787**</td>
<td>.722**</td>
<td>.646**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing of leadership</td>
<td>.735**</td>
<td>.659**</td>
<td>.715**</td>
<td>.623**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of leadership</td>
<td>.875**</td>
<td>.803**</td>
<td>.692**</td>
<td>.785**</td>
<td>.770**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total servant leadership</td>
<td>.931**</td>
<td>.873**</td>
<td>.837**</td>
<td>.874**</td>
<td>.841**</td>
<td>.932**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment</td>
<td>.761**</td>
<td>.775**</td>
<td>.639**</td>
<td>.801**</td>
<td>.684**</td>
<td>.721**</td>
<td>.830**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

### Table 2. Regression analysis of the servant leadership factors on organizational commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.251</td>
<td>.968</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2.243</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing of people</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>2.421</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of people</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>.377</td>
<td>2.753</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building of community</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.207</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displaying of authenticity</td>
<td>.457</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td>2.557</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing of leadership</td>
<td>.321</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>1.373</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of leadership</td>
<td>.314</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>1.073</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ R = .869, R^2 = .755, F_{(6, 22)} = 1.306, p = .00. \]
Results of regression analyses revealed that valuing people, development of people and displaying authenticity had a significant effect on teachers’ organizational commitment. Yet, building community, providing leadership and sharing leadership had no significant impact on teachers’ organizational commitment (see Table 2). According to these results, valuing people, development of people and displaying authenticity are significant predictors of teachers’ organizational commitment.

The final research question of the study explored the effect of total servant leadership on teachers’ organizational commitment. According to the regression analysis conducted to examine the effect of servant leadership on teachers’ organizational commitment (see Table 3), servant leadership is a significant predictor on teachers’ organizational commitment ($R^2 = .690$, $F_{(1, 27)} = 60.010$, $p = .000$). It explains 69% of the total variation of organizational commitment.

Table 3. Regression analysis of the servant leadership on organizational commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$T$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>.853</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.466</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant leadership</td>
<td>.456</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td>7.747</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R = .830$, $R^2 = .690$, $F_{(1, 27)} = 60.010$, $p = .000$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of principals’ servant leadership practices on teachers’ school commitment. In order to explore this relation, a survey study was undertaken in primary schools in Turkey where data were collected from a sample of primary school teachers.

The results of this study reveal that three strongest servant leadership predictors of teachers’ organization commitment are valuing people, developing people and displaying authenticity. Although there have been a limited number of studies on the relation between servant leadership and organizational commitment, there is a significant amount of research on the relation between organizational commitment and transformational leadership which we reported as similar to servant leadership. For example, the individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation factors in transformational leadership share similarities with the dimensions of valuing people and development of people in servant leadership. The individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation factors have positive effects on organizational commitment (Nguni et al. 2006). These findings are consistent with the results of this line of research. It is possible to explain this finding in light of the high collectivism characterizing the Turkish culture. The collectivist Turkish culture focuses more on relationship than rules in preferring to show emotion. The relationship between principal and teacher is based on trust and harmony and a deep understanding of moral values.
Also, for collectivists, interpersonal relationships are one of the key mechanisms through which teachers become attached to their schools (Wasti 2003). Thus, principals working in collectivist societies such as Turkey may develop high quality relationships with teachers and value teachers to ensure organizational commitment. In addition, the previous research, conducted in both non-educational and educational settings, revealed that the support of administrators to employees and displaying the developing behaviours positively affected the organizational commitment of employees (Turan 1998, Ozdevecioğlu 2003, Janssen 2004, Perryer and Jordan 2005, Fuller et al. 2006). These findings support the results of the present study that teacher development encouraged by principals affects teachers’ commitment to school positively and significantly. Based on these results, it can be said that Turkish school principals should exert an effort to develop teachers in order to improve teachers’ commitment to school.

Successful principals should have interpersonal skill and communication abilities, and should empathize and act honestly and overtly (Dinham 2005), listen to teachers’ ideas and feelings and show respect and understanding (Oplatka 2004). These characteristics are compatible with such behaviours of servant leadership as esteeming others (Laub 1999, Letting 2004). Principals may demonstrate their esteeming behaviours through listening, caring, helping and respecting teachers. It was found that teachers’ commitment to school was considerably affected by the esteem shown by the principals. It is possible to explain this finding in light of the paternalism characterizing Turkish culture. In the paternalistic exchange between the principal and the teacher, the principal provides a holistic and benevolent concern for the teachers in return for unquestioned obedience and loyalty. In a paternalistic relationship, the role of principal is to provide guidance, protection, nurturance and care to teachers (Aycan and Kanungo 2000). In this regard, in Turkish paternalistic culture, it is natural that the teachers may expect their principal to respect and care for them. Accordingly, it can be said that feeling esteemed is more important than teamwork and participation in decision-making processes for teachers. For this reason, school principals must esteem and respect teachers to improve teachers’ commitment.

That the dimensions of providing leadership, sharing leadership and building community had no significant effect on teachers’ organizational commitment was an unexpected result in this study. The factors, including behaviours such as participation in decision-making and cooperation, had no significant effect on teachers’ organizational commitment. Yet, the results of previous studies indicated that worker participation in decision-making increases organizational commitment (Somech and Bogler 2002, Terzi and Kurt 2005). These results are consistent with the findings of the present study. Results of this study suggest that participation in decision-making regarding instructional activities and working in cooperation with principals had no significant effect on teachers’ organizational commitment. It is possible to explain this finding in light of the collectivism, paternalism and high power distance characterizing Turkish culture. In such a culture, the involvement of the teachers in decision-making processes is viewed as a sign of poor leadership. This means that teachers of such culture would
likely prefer to defer to principal directives rather than make decisions themselves. Decisions by authority figures in collectivist and paternalist cultures are likely to be obeyed with less questioning. In addition, in Turkish culture, there is respect for managerial hierarchy. The principal typically makes the decisions and the teachers are expected to comply with the demands and decisions of the principal (Yavas 2001). Thus, in the Turkish administration structure, decisions are generally made by the administrators alone. Teachers may not consider it important to participate in decision-making. This may result from the fact that teachers may internalize this situation because principals do not have too much initiative regarding school decisions because of the perception that teachers are limited to instructional activities and they have little control over the centralized and bureaucratic control of the Turkish education system (Simsek 1997).

Results of this study showed that servant leadership had a significant effect on teachers’ organizational commitment. Unlike this study, in a study carried out by Drury (2004), the only research on the relation between servant leadership and commitment in the literature, it was found that there was a weak negative relation between servant leadership and commitment. That servant leadership stimulates a democratic understanding (Crippen 2005) requires the school to be administrated in cooperation with teachers and by esteeming and caring teachers. In research conducted by Terzi and Kurt (2005), it was found that the behaviours of authoritarian administrators affected teachers’ commitment negatively, whereas those of democratic administrators affected commitment positively. These results support the finding of this study. Based on these findings, it can be said that Turkish school principals should administer the school with a democratic understanding in order to improve teachers’ commitment to school. In various studies (Agarwala 2003), it is also emphasized that organizational commitment affects employee performance and organizational productivity positively, and administrator behaviours are related to the organizational commitment of employees. In this respect, the school commitment of teachers, who have the potential to positively affect achievement of success at schools and realization of objectives, should be improved. For this, principals should be democratic, supportive and participatory, and should administer schools accordingly.

**Implication**

The results of the present study have two principal implications for practical and future research. First, empirical evidence on the effects of servant leadership has been more confined to the developed western world than in the developing countries including Turkey. This study continues and extends this line of inquiry by examining the effects of servant leadership on teachers’ organization commitment in developing countries by taking Turkey as a case study. Bass (1997) argued that when research is conducted in different cultural settings, the discrepancy in the results of this research can be explained by the characteristics of the organizations and cultures. Aycan and Kanungo (2000) showed that cultural differences exist between Turkey and
the USA where research was conducted on servant leadership: Turkey has a lower score on individualism and higher score on power distance and collectivism than western countries like the USA. The results of this study add testimony to the fact that cultural context had effects on teachers’ attitudes and behaviours. However, it is suggested that more research in the developing and collectivistic cultural settings such as Turkey is needed in order to further confirm the results of this study.

Second, because organizational commitment has basic components including a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values, and a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, teachers who are highly committed to their school should be expected to engage in behaviours to help the employing organization achieve its goals and to exert considerable effort beyond minimal expectations (Somech and Bogler 2002). To foster teachers’ organizational commitment, school principals need to be more aware of how their behaviour affects teachers’ organizational commitment. The results of the present study indicated that valuing teacher, developing teachers and displaying authenticity of servant leadership factors had effects on teachers’ organizational commitment. Based on these results, so that they develop teachers’ organizational commitment, principals should provide teachers’ opportunities to acquire knowledge regarding how to use new teaching strategies in instructional activities and develop education. Also, principals should support teachers with access to high-quality professional development, attendance of professional conferences and provide feedback on their skill acquisition and efforts. In addition, principals who demonstrate servant leadership behaviour, such as paying personal attention to the needs and interest of the teachers, might help build teachers’ organizational commitment. From a cultural perspective, Turkish principals ought to display behaviours including celebrating teachers’ special days such as birthday and recognize the important work done by teachers in educating students. Principals, therefore, should be friendly, open and supportive.

References


