



Examining The Relationship Between Distributed Leadership and Organizational Trust According to Opinions of Teachers

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Abstract

In the present study the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational trust was examined based on teachers' opinions. Totally 410 teachers from 15 different public high schools located in the province of İzmir participated in the study. Research data were collected through Distributed Leadership Inventory (DLI) and Scale for Organizational Trust (SOT). Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics as well as Pearson correlation and hierarchical regression. Results showed that school administrators performed their leadership functions moderately. In addition it was seen that teachers' level of organizational trust was moderate. Pearson correlation indicated that there is a significant correlation between distributed leadership and organizational trust perception. Finally, it was revealed that distributed leadership is significant predictor of organizational trust. Based on the results, it was concluded that distributing the leadership function among school administrators is one of the key element in forming the trust perceptions among teachers.

Keywords

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Introduction

During the last decades, relatively new kinds of leadership approaches have been emerged in school administration and leadership studies. One of those approach is distributed leadership. In opposition to traditional leadership approaches which solely focus on the leader-follower interaction, the proponents of the distributed leadership think that leadership process is distributed to the whole organization (Baloğlu, 2011). In fact, traditional solo leadership approaches like transformational, transactional and instructional assume that leadership function is performed solely by school principals (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The solo men approaches to leadership argue that leaders determine the organizational visions and decide the all managerial processes on his/her own. In this process, leader influence followers and the followers act based on the leaders expectations. Therefore, the basic function of the leader in traditional approach is to influence and motivate the followers towards the expected aims (Northouse, 2012).

However, the multifaced and rapid change trends which are observed in societal and organizational life have revealed that traditional leadership and managerial paradigms are not suitable for the contemporary organizations. In this context, workers' participation and organizational democracy has gain momentum in managerial processes (Cheney, 1995; Chiles & Zorn, 1995). Parallel

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with this trends, vertical organization charts gradually replace with horizontal designs (Ikeda, Ito, & Sakamoto, 2010). These developments also force to distribute the leadership proceses among school administrators who works in different positions of school organizations. Hence, scholars are increasingly focusing on the distributed properties of leadership in last decades (Bolden, 2011).

In literature review it is seen that distributed leadership is examined with various organizational behaviors. In one of those studies the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational commitment was questioned (Hulpia, Devos, & Keer, 2011). Similarly it was reported that job satisfaction is affected by distributed leadership (Ağırdaş, 2014). Devos (2009) found out that distributed leadership is related to academic success of students in schools. It is also indicated that there is a close correlation between distributed leadership and psychological contract (Özdemir & Demircioğlu, 2015). In a different study, the relationship between value-based leadership and distributed leadership were examined (Baloğlu, 2012). Hence, based on mentioned studies it can be concluded that the effects of distributed leadership on different kinds of organizational behaviors have been studied frequently.

Therefore it can be assumed that distributed leadership might effect teachers' trust perceptions in schools. In a study conducted by Beycioğlu, Özer, and Uğurlu (2012) it was confirmed that there is a close relationship between distributed leadership and organizational trust in elementary schools in Turkey. Yet, we do not know whether distributed leadership has an effect on teachers' trust perceptions in public high school. In previous studies it was seen that other form of leadership styles other than distributed leadership are related to organizational trust (Bökeoğlu & Yılmaz, 2008; Cerit, 2009; Memduhoğlu & Zengin, 2011).

Hence, the problem of the present study is the relationship between distributed leadership and teachers' trust perceptions. Therefore, in the present study the relationships between distributed leadership and organizational trust was examined based on teachers working in public high schools. In this context it can be assumed that teachers' trust perceptions can contribute their job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance. Previous studies have revealed that leadership contribute developing the organizational trust (Teyfur, Beytekin, & Yalçinkaya, 2013). In addition, it is hoped that the effect of leadership on organizational trust will be observed. Therefore, it is hoped that present study can contribute the literature focusing on the leadership and organizational trust. In the following section the conceptual framework regarding with the distributed leadership and organizational trust is discussed and the purpose of the present study was explained.

Conceptual Framework: Distributed Leadership and Organizational Trust

Distributed Leadership

It can be thought that leadership is a process in which it is distributed to whole school organization. This argument have gained momentum in literature in recent years. The conceptual basis and the development of the distributed leadership can be traced back to Gibb. Gibb (1954) claimed that leadership is a process in which leadership is distributed among group members. In school context, distributed leadership is an approach in which it is distributed among school administrators, teachers, students and parents. That is, all members of the school take part in leadership process through cooperation (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Based on this approach it can be said that participation is the key factor of distributed leadership (Smylie, Lazarus, & Conyers, 1996). In literature review it has been seen that many scholars like Elmore, Spillane, Yukl and Gronn contribute to conceptual development of distributed leadership

Elmore (2000) argue that it is almost imposible to control the whole organizational processes only by single administrators. Therefore, according to Elmore, traditional and mainstream leadership approaches which are based on "solo men" ideas can not understand the leadership process in organizational context. In this framework it is considered that leadership is distributed among different positions of hierarchical organization. Hence Elmore (2000) argue that it is appropriate to understand the leadership as a distributed process in organizations.

Like Elmore, Yukl (2002) also have contribute the conceptual development of distributed leadership. Yukl (2002) has criticised heroic leadership paradigm. According to Yukl, leadership functions are distributed to whole organizational processes. On the other hand, Gronn (2000) put an emphasis on 'interaction' in organizations. According to Gronn, distributed leadership is a fundamental properties of organization where members of it interact. In one of his studies, Gronn (2002) criticises the 'leader-follower' dualism which is one of the main aspects of traditional leadership theories. The main reason of this criticism is that there is a division of labour in organizations. Gronn (2002) thinks that as the tasks of the organization become different, the demand for specialization increase. As a result of specialization, the dependence among workers in organization emerge. This mutual dependency force the workers to work in cooperation. Consequently, distributed leadership emerge as a natural process in organizational life.

Another contribution was made by Spillane, Helverson and Diamond to the conceptual development of the distributed leadership. Their (Spillane, Helverson, & Diamond, 2001) conceptualization of distributed leadership is a little bit different from other authors. They think that duties and tasks are distributed among administrators and workers within organizations. As a result of distribution of duties and task among members of organization, leadership is distributed among workers. In the last phase of this process, leaders and followers combine their efforts to get the best results. As it can be understood distributed leadership is a normal result of interaction among leaders and followers. To explain their conceptualization of distributed leadership, Spillane et al. (2001) use 'metaphore of dance'. According to them, distributed leadership is a dance between leaders and followers. The performance of the dance depends on the harmony between leader and followers.

Organizational Trust

The trust among organizational members are vital for organizations. The origin of the conceptual development of trust perception can be traced back to Cold War. During the Cold War era, suspect become prevalent among youngs. Especially youngs distrusted to authority. Again during cold war years, divorce rate increased as a result of distrust among married couples. Those sociological and cultural shifts captured the distrust among members of society. Since then, organizational trust has become one of the main research subject among scholars (Hoy & Tschannen-Morgan, 1999).

Trust is an instrument to eliminate the ambiguity in human relations. Therefore, trust is the belief that other people would meet our expectations (Holmes & Rempel, 1989 as cited in Hoy & Tschannen-Morgan, 1999). According to Baier (1985), trust is an unprotected condition of the individuals who have belief that others do not have bad will. Trust sense have various aspects. One of them is to *will to take risk*. That is, individuals who have trust do not hesitate to take risk. Another dimension of dimation of trust is *benevolence*. In other words, individuals think that other people will protect their well-being. *Reliance* is another dimation of trust. Individuals who have the belief of reliance have high expectations from others. Other aspects of trust is *competency*. That is, some people assume that other individuals who are trusted have the capacity of meeting the expectations of them. *Honesty* is also the other dimation of trust meaning that trusted people give always fair play. The last dimension of trust is *openness*. According to this dimension, trusted people are expected to be clear and open (Hoy & Tschannen-Morgan, 1999).

It is argued that besides human relations, trust is also vital for organizational life (Asunakutlu, 2002; Demircan & Ceylan, 2003). In this context Asunakutlu (2002) speculate that in order to get efficiency and effectiveness in organization, workers should trust to themselves, other workers and administrators. Therefore, organizational trust is an expectation that organization would help and support himself or herself. Based on this conceptualization it is argued that trust is in the centre of in all form of communication within the organization (Mishra & Morrissey, 1990 as cited in Demircan & Ceylan, 2003).

Trust is also crucial in school context, since the actors like school administrators, teacher, students and parentes exist together in schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2003 as cited in Brewster & Railsback, 2003). Trust perception among skateholders strenghten the interaction in school life and this in turn contribute the achievement of schools' purposes. In fact, previous empirical studied confirm this argüments (Antonio & Gamage, 2007). Likewise, in another study, it was determined that there is a close correlation between trust in schools and efficiency (Siegall & Worth, 2001). More importantly, it was reported that in schools where trust perception is high, academic success of students increase dramatically (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

In literature review it was seen that organizational trust have been studied extensively by scholars (Arslan, 2009; Bökeoğlu & Yılmaz, 2008; Cerit, 2009; Çağlar, 2011; Ercan, 2006; Erden & Erden, 2009; Gören & Özdemir, 2015; Kursunoğlu, 2009; Memduhoğlu & Zengin, 2011; Polat & Celep, 2008). However, limited studies which directly concentrates on the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational trust in schools have been seen in literature review (Beycioğlu et al., 2012). Therefore, a gap in the literature is seen. Hence, it is hoped that additional studies focusing on the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational trust might contribute to the relevant literature. The purpose of the present study is to contribute to the school leadership processes. One of the assumption of the study is that all the participants have completed the scales sincerely. The present study was conducted with the participation of 410 teachers in 2015-2016 academic year in İzmir province. In this context, the main purpose of the present study is to examine the effects of distributed leadership on teachers' organizational trust perceptions. Therefore, the following research questions are asked;

1. How do the participants think about distributed leadership and organizational trust?
2. Is there a significant correlation between distributed leadership and organizational trust?
3. Is the sub-scales of distributed leadership significant predictor of organizational trust?

Method

Present study which concentrates on the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational trust is a correlational model. Data were analyzed with quantitative thechniques. Detailed information about the method is presented as followings.

Study Group

Totally 410 teachers from 15 different public high schools located in province of İzmir participated in the study voluntarily. In the study the relations between two variables were questioned; for this reason, it was not aimed to generalize the results to any target population. Since the purpose of the present study is only to examine the correlations between two variables, the results is not suitable to be generalized to spesific target population. 210 participants are women and rest of the study grup are men (200). The age avarage of the participants is 39. 2. The lenght in service is as follows; 40 participants are between 1-5 years; 90 participants are between 6-10 years, 175 participants are between 11-15 years, 85 participants are between 16-20 years and rest 20 participants are between 12 and above years.

Data Collecting Tools

Two data collecting tools were used in the study. One of them ise Distributed Leadership Inventory (DLI), and other one ise Scale for Organizational Trust (SOT). The reason why the DLI was selected in the present study is that, DLI is used frequently in the international literature and there exist its Turkish version. Detailed description of data collection tools are presents in following section.

Distributed Leadership Inventory (DLI)

DLE was originally developed by Hulpia, Devos, and Rosseel (2009). DLI was designed to measure the school administrators' (like principals, chief assistant of principal and assistant principals) leadership function as well as their harmony in schools. 13-items of DLI try to measure the school administrators' leadership functions individually. There are additional 10-items to measure the harmony school administrator. DLI was prepared as five-scale Likert form (never agree and certainly agree). Example items as follows in DLI; "School principal evaluate the teachers' performance" and "There is a well-functioning leadership team in my school". During the development process of the DLI, exploratory (EFA) and confirmatory (CFA) factor analyses were used. EFA and CFA results showed that there are two dimension including "support" and "supervision" in leadership functions sub-scales of DLI. Other sub-scale of DLI which is named as "team coherence" is made up of one dimension. Reliability results of DLI was examined with Cronbach alpha coefficient. Results showed that Cronbach alpha coefficient of sub-scale for team coherence is .91. The alpha results of leadership function of leadership members are as follows; for all school administrators is .93 in support sub-dimension. For assistant principals is .85 and for principals is .83 in supervision sub-dimensions. The Turkish adaptation of DLI was performed by Özdemir (2012). Adaptation study showed that all the sub-scales of DIL have one dimension. Adaptation results indicated that all the sub-scales of DLI is reliable (Cronbach alpha results; for principals is .96; for chief assistant principal is .95; for assistant principals is .96; and for leadership team coherence is .98. In the present study Cronbach alpha values were re-examined and following result have been calculated; for school principal is .92; for chief assistant principals is .90; for assistant principals is .91; and leadership team coherence is .97. Those results showed that DLI is also appropriate for the present study.

Scale for Organizational Trust (SOT)

Trust perceptions of participants were measured by Scale for Organizational Trust (SOT) which was developed by Yılmaz (2006). SOT includes 22-items. In addition SOT is made up of three sub-dimensions which are "trust for co-workers", "trust for administrators" and "trust for skateholders". SOT is designed in 5-degrees Likert form between "never" and "always". Sample items in SOT is as follows; "I believe in the other teachers", "Students in this school never cheat their teachers" and "There is a consistent relationship in this school". In Yılmaz's (2006) study following Cronbach alpha results have been reported; trust in administrators is .89; trust in skateholders is .82 and trust in co-workers is .87. In the present study validity and reliability studied were re-done with the data. DFA results showed following goodness of fit indexes [$\chi^2=620,87$; $df=206$; $\chi^2/Sd=3.01$; AGFI = .92; GFI = .94; NFI = .97; CFI = .97; IFI = .98; RMR = .04; RMSEA = .07]. This results showed that SOT is also valid in the present study. Reliability result showed that SOT has high level of alpha result (.97 for whole scale). When examined in sub-dimensions, alpha values as follows; trust in administrator is .93; trust in co-workers is .98 and trust for skateholders is .96. All the validity and reliability results indicates that SOT is also suitable tool for the present study.

Procedures and Data Analyses

Research data were collected by researcher after visiting the schools. Schools were visited in the lunch time. Teachers participated in the study voluntarily. Average time for filling in the scales is 12 minutes. 500 scales were distributed during data collection processes. 410 scales returned fully for data analyses. Data were analyzed with SPSS 20 and LISREL 9.1. To detect the missing value and other problems in data set, all the data set was reexamined carefully and all the problems were corrected. In order to decide whether the data set meet the assumption of analysing the multi-variate statistical

the technique, normality, linearity and multi-collinearity were examined. Normality and linearity were examined with scatter diagram. With the help of this diagram it was seen that research variables scatter as elliptical. Hence it was decided that data set is normal and linear. To examine the multicollinearity variance-covariance matrix have been used. Result showed that Box M test is not significant ($p > .025$). This result indicate that variance-covariance matrix is not homogenous (Çokluk, Şekercioğlu, & Büyüköztürk, 2012).

Results

To answer the first and second research question arithmetical mean, standard deviation and Pearson correlations were calculated. Results are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Regarding with the Research Variables

	Mean	Sd	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. DL_P	3.9	.92	1						
2. DL_CAP	3.7	.91	.65*	1					
3. DL_AP	3.5	.87	.68*	.70*	1				
4. DL_TC	4.5	.95	.70*	.61*	.71*	1			
5. OT_A	4.4	.87	.72*	.73*	.65*	.73*	1		
6. OT_Co	4.1	.89	.68*	.75*	.49*	.71*	.72*	1	
7. OT_S	3.9	.99	.65*	.63*	.57*	.74*	.71*	.70*	1

* $p < .001$

As it is followed from Table 1, according to participants, school principals perform their leadership function moderately ($M = 3.9$). Similarly, both chief assistant principals ($M = 3.7$) and assistant principals ($M = 3.5$) perform their leadership function moderately. Table 1 shows that team coherence among school administrator is high ($M = 4.5$). According to participants, trust in administrators is high ($M = 4.4$). However, trust in co-workers ($M = 4.1$) and trust in stakeholders ($M = 3.9$) is moderate.

Table 1 indicates that there is high, significant and positively correlation between principals' leadership functions and trust in them ($r = .72, p < .001$). In addition, there is moderately, significant and positively correlations between principals' leadership function and trust in co-workers ($r = .68, p < .001$) and stakeholders ($r = .65, p < .001$). There is high, significant and positively correlations between chief assistant principals' leadership functions and trust in administrators ($r = .73, p < .001$) and stakeholders ($r = .75, p < .001$). Yet, the correlation between chief assistant principals' leadership functions and trust in stakeholders is moderate, significant and positive ($r = .63, p < .001$). As it can be followed from Table 1, there is a high, positively and significant correlations between leadership team coherence and trust in administrators ($r = .73, p < .001$), trust in co-workers ($r = .71, p < .001$) and trust in stakeholders ($r = .74, p < .001$).

In order to determine whether distributed leadership is a significant predictor of organizational trust in schools, hierarchical multi-variate regression analyses was performed. To eliminate the multicollinearity problem, independent variables were standardized. Gender and seniority were entered as covariate in the first step of regression model and coded as dummy. In the following steps of the model, 4 sub-scales of DLI were entered as main predictor. Results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Result of Multi-Variate Hierarchical Regression

Predictor Variables	Organizational Trust									
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>
<i>Model 1</i>										
Gender	.065	1.223	.065	1,555	.062	.345	.334	.345	.044	.234
Seniority	.076	1.332	.024	1,345	.299	.432	.567	.657	.034	.654
<i>Model 2</i>										
DL_P			.395	6.757*	.234	2.397*	.103	1.797	.087	1.654
<i>Model 3</i>										
DL_CAP					.234	3.326*	.432	3.876*	.234	2.567
<i>Model 4</i>										
DL_AP							.345	4.345*	.324	2.567
<i>Model 5</i>										
DL_TC									.234	3.543*
R ²	.031		.175		.334		.367		.401	
R ² Change	.019		.160		.149		.034		.028	
F	1.543		12.472*		23.143*		24.145*		21.985*	

* $p < .001$

As it can be seen in Table 2, explained variance ratio increased in each step and regression coefficient is significant [$F_{(4-406)}=21,985$, $p < .001$, $R^2=.40$]. According to Model 1, gender and seniority are not significant predictor of organizational trust. However, 3 percent of variability in organizational trust is explained by gender and seniority. According to Model 2, DL_Pis correlated with organizational trust ($\Delta R^2=.175$, $p < .001$). With DL_P, determination coefficient increased and DL_P explained 16 percent of variability in organizational trust. It was observed in Model 3 that DL_CA is a significant predictor of organizational trust ($\Delta R^2=.334$, $p < .001$) and explains 15 percent of organizational trust. In addition to this, DL_AP is also predictor of organizational trust ($\Delta R^2=.367$, $p < .001$). DL_AP explains 3 percent of organizational trust. In the last step, it was determined that DL_TC is a significant predictor of organizational trust ($\Delta R^2=.40$, $p < .001$). In addition, 3 percent of the variance in organizational trust was explained by DL_TC. Based on those findings it was observed that independent variables explained the 40% of the variance in organizational trust.

Discussion

In the present study, it was aimed to examine the relationship between distributed leadership in schools and organizational trust perception based on the opinions of 410 teachers working in 15 different high schools in province of İzmir. In the study, it was seen that school administrators perform their leadership function moderately according to participants. This finding is parralel with the previous study results. In fact, similar studies indicated that school leaders perform their leadership functions moderately. In one of those study, Özdemir and Demircioğlu (2005) reported that they also found out that school leaders perform their leadership skills moderately. Similarly, Gümüşeli (1996) indicated that school principals perform their leadership behaviors moderately.

One of the main reason why the school administrators do not play their leadership roles in optimum levels might be result from their insufficient trainings about management and leadership. Indeed, it is argued that school principals' trainings about leadership role before attaining to the position have been neglected for many years in Turkey. Şimşek (2002) thinks that school administration training proceses have been followed three phases. Since the beginning of the Republic, school principals have been trained based on the job-training. In the following years, school principals have been trained based on the scientific perspectives. With the beginning of the new millienium, principals have been selected by exams.

Parrallel with this, it is considered that being a school administrator is not different from being a teacher as a profession. That is, the position of school administrators do not be seen as an independent profession. This wiew is also supported by the 43th item of the Act of 1739 which regulates the Turkish education system. According to Act, performing the administrative task is the second duties of teachers. Therefore, it is seen that school administrators do not take formal education about school management and their managerial roles are seen as the secondary roles of teachers. As a result, school administrators come to managerial positions without taking formal education, which in turn influence their performance in schools.

In the study, it was observed that participants' views on organizational trust is high in dimension of 'trust in administrators' and moderate in dimension of 'trust in coworkers and skateholders'. Previous literature have revealed contradictory results about the organizational trust perception of teachers. In one of those studies, it was reported that teachers' trust perception is moderate (Memduhoğlu & Zengin, 2011). Similarly, in a study conducted in elementary schools, it was indicated that teachers' trust perceptions are moderate (Özer, Demirtaş, Üstüner, & Cömert, 2011). However, in some studies it was observed that participants' opinions on organizational trust is high (Arslan, 2009; Bökeoğlu & Yılmaz, 2008). Our findings is similar with those results. Trust in school principals might be explained with organizational justice. In fact, it is indicated that teachers' justice perceptions is possitive in Turkish schools (Titrek, 2009). Positive justice perception might be the resason of why the participants' trust perceptions is high in our study.

In the present study, it was seen that there is a significant correlation between distributed leadership and organizational trust. This finding is coherent with the previous studies. In one of those studies, it was reported that organizational trust perception plays modiating role between leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). In another study, it was revealed that there is a close relations between school principals ethic leadership behaviors and organizational trust perceptions of teachers (Cemaloğlu & Kılınç, 2012). Similarly, it was reported that organizational trust perception plays a mediating role between servant leadership and organizational identification (Ateş, 2015). When we evaluate all those results, it can be concluded that the quality of school administrators' leadership performance is closely related with organizational trust.

In the study, it was detected that distributed leadership is a significant predictor of organizational trust perceptions of teachers. Indeed, regression results showed that sub-dimensions of distributed leadership significantly predicted the organizational trust perception. The results also indicated that the 40 percent of the variation of organizational trust is explained by school administrators' individual leadership performance and coherence among them as well. In a similar study questioning the correlation between distributed leadership and organizational trusts, it was indicated that distributed leadership highly correlated with trust towards administrators (Beycioğlu et al., 2012). On the other hand, it was seen that variation in organizational trust perception is mostly explained by school principals' leadership performance. Based on that finding, it can be conluded that school principals are still mode effective on many aspects of school organizations. In facat, previous literature shows that school principals effective performance result in possitive school culture, possitive workers behaviours and academic succes of students (Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

Conclusions

Based on the current study, it was concluded that *i)* school administrators perform their leadership roles moderately, *ii)* teachers' trust perception towards principals are high, but moderate towards assistant principals, *iii)* there are high and moderate correlations among sub-dimensions of distributed leadership and organizational trust, and lastly *iv)* distributed leadership in schools is significant predictor of trust perception of teachers. This study has potential to contribute the present literature. However the probability to generalization to specific population is weak.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions of the present study, following suggestions might be made. School administrators should be selected based on merit. Therefore, teachers who have the leadership traits should be chosen to the administrative position of schools. All school administrators should participate to in-service training on leadership and administration. Trust towards co-workers and stakeholders in school should be improved. For this purpose, measures should be taken to improve the professional solidarity among teachers in schools. Administrators, teachers and stakeholders should meet in a regular basis. Present study specifically concentrate on the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational trust. Yet the size of the study group is small. So, to generalize the results to the population is weak. In addition, it was assumed that the participants were filled the scales sincerely. But, this might have caused to some ethical problems. Further studies might also examine the effect of distributed leadership on students outcomes including academic success and school engagement. Likewise, further studies might examine the distributed leadership bases on qualitative studies. Qualitative studies might contribute understanding the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational trust.

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