

Does Social Justice Leadership in Education Improve the School Belonging and Resilience of Students?

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the relations between social justice leadership, sense of school belonging, and student resilience. The research was conducted with 549 high school students. The data was collected through the social justice leadership scale, the psychological sense of school membership scale, and student resilience scale. The research tested the mediator role of sense of school belonging in the relationship between social justice leadership and student resilience. The findings showed that sense of belonging has a full mediator role; in other words, social justice leadership improves student resilience by increasing the sense of school belonging. In this context, a school leader who wants to increase the academic and social resilience of the students should carefully consider all harmful effects caused by social differences at school and improve the quality of school life. School leaders also should involve students in their decision-making processes and provide students with a critical consciousness that can criticize and challenge discriminatory and oppressive practices. Generally, school leaders should contribute to the development of student resilience by improving students' school context in all aspects.

Keywords: Social justice leadership, Social justice in education, Sense of school belonging, Student resilience.

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English Version

Introduction

Turkey hosts a diverse population in terms of “race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, culture and social class” (Polat & Kılıç, 2013, p.357). In addition to this diversity, it has hosted 850,000 school-age Syrian children since 2016 and has been developing various policies to integrate them fully into the Turkish education system (ERG, 2017). According to the report by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (2017), the extent of the participation of disabled students at the national level has increased considerably over the last 15 years. This shows that Turkey has a rich diversity in terms of student population. Social justice leadership (S JL), which aims to provide equal education opportunities, effective schooling and inclusive school experience to all students without discrimination, has become an important phenomenon for schools (Blackmore, 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007; 2008). It is important not only for disadvantaged groups, but indeed for all students to develop a perspective based on social justice in their lives, because creating a fair school environment seems to be possible by developing an awareness of social justice in all students.

Multiculturalism and widening class-based inequalities are increasing not only in Turkey but also across the world. This situation necessitates raising the awareness of students about the democratic governance and intercultural dialogue (Apple & Beane, 1995; Cho & Choi, 2016; Gay, 1997; Mcnae, 2014, p.94; Murakami-Ramalho, 2010, p.197). The research shows that economically disadvantaged groups and students with disabilities are not able to benefit equally from educational sources and accordingly show low levels of achievement (Alexander, Entwisle & Olsen, 2001; Chiu & Walker, 2007; Enslin, 2006; Gökşen, Cemalçılar & Gürlelel, 2017; Kim, 2008; OECD, 2010; Ortiz, 1997; UNESCO, 2015; 2017; Valenzuela, 1999; Wagner, Newman, Cameto & Levine, 2006). Other research shows that marginalized students experience depressive feelings and have a perception of low status, feel deprived, and are reluctant to attend school (Brown, 2004; Chiu & Walker, 2007; Dar & Resh, 2003; Fine, 1989; Komba, 2013; McLaren, 2011, p.338; OECD, 2012). Those students who are marginalised because of their social differences tend to lose their resilience (Gizir, 2007; Little, Axford & Morpeth, 2004; Masten, 2001; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). However, the provision of social justice in education points to a qualified school life for not only disadvantaged groups but also for all students. Because social justice in education has a wide scope, which includes the participation of students in decision-making processes, and the inclusion and development of critical consciousness (McKenzie et al. 2008; Özdemir & Kütküt, 2015). These practices improve the attitudes of all students towards the school in a positive manner and increase their engagement with school (Özdemir, 2017). Therefore, equality-oriented activist leadership practices for all students are a necessity (Mckenzie et al., 2008).

So, in this study, I consider whether social justice leadership practices can affect students' resilience by increasing their sense of belonging.

This study was carried out at the secondary education level. Secondary education represents a highly critical period for students who want to attend higher education in Turkey. Therefore, social justice in public secondary education is vital as it can directly prevent widening socio-economic inequalities. In fact, the idea of social justice in education is influenced by the critical view that education reproduces the existing economic order and the associated inequalities (Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Freire, 2004; Schwebel, 2006). For this reason, it is not only disadvantaged students but rather *all* students who need to be raised with social justice consciousness to ensure a subsequent democratic and happy life. Besides, the increasing diversity in Turkey and necessity to provide a democratic high school education to prepare students for social and professional life emphasises the importance of studying social justice leadership for all students. Indeed, the starting point for this study was the view that not only could disadvantaged students but all students in schools could benefit from an understanding of the practices of social justice leadership. As a matter of fact, social justice leadership includes not only the support of disadvantaged groups but also the principles that enable all students to live with their differences as a whole (Carlisle, Jackson & George, 2006). Drawing on this, this research aims to explore the relations between social justice leadership, school belonging and student resilience, and examines the mediator role of sense of school belonging in the relationship between social justice leadership and student resilience. In other words, this study examines whether social justice leadership has an effect on student resilience by increasing sense of school belonging.

Conceptual Framework

Social Justice Leadership in Education

Social justice as a concept has many definitions and, therefore, social justice leadership (SJL) is defined in numerous ways. (Bogotch, 2002; Theoharis, 2007). According to Furman and Shields (2005, p.125), SJL is an attempt to eliminate the educational and economic inequalities experienced by students by providing them with a democratic school life. In schools, SJL is seen as a kind of leadership which supports marginalized groups in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, disability and sexual orientation, and this understanding is placed at the centre of school leadership (Theoharis, 2007; 2008). In another definition, SJL is defined as a leadership approach that focusses on improving the level of achievement of disadvantaged students such as minorities, women, homosexuals and class (Marshall & Oliva, 2006, p.6). However, this type of leadership includes a wide range of applications. In this regard, it is important not only with respect to supporting disadvantaged students, but also in terms of advocating the rights that all members in the school should have. Therefore, social justice in education

means providing opportunities for all students to live happily despite – or indeed with – their differences and diversity.

Although SJL is inclusive and can be widely applied in a variety of contexts, it has some fundamental principles in education. For example, McKenzie et al. (2008) lists these principles as (1) supporting disadvantaged students and providing a holistic achievement for all students, (2) creating critical consciousness, and (3) ensuring integration of all students with an inclusive management approach. On the other hand, Özdemir and Kütküt (2015), in their work, developed their Social Justice Leadership Scale (SJLS), which has three subscales: (a) support, (b) critical consciousness, and (c) participation (including students in the decision-making process).

The sub-scale of support is associated with challenging the limitations of race, class, disability, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic situation with regard to students' access to education, and with taking measures to increase achievement amongst all students. Likewise, Enslin (2006) argues that social justice in education is important to the goal of building a democratic society through strengthening disadvantaged groups. Social justice leaders who seek to develop a supportive school policy attach a certain importance to the preparation and implementation of an enriched curriculum for all students, despite their individual and social differences (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000) and develop teacher qualifications to attain a holistic success (McKenzie et al., 2008; Sharp, Macleod, Bernardinelli, Skipp & Higgins, 2015, p.7). Therefore, social justice leaders focus on the academic development of all students, including disadvantaged groups (Özdemir & Pektaş, 2017). One of the strategies that is important for the development of disadvantaged schools is to 'strengthen and support school leadership' (OECD, 2012, p. 146).

One of the focal points of critical pedagogy is creating critical consciousness among students, which is also another important area of implementation for social justice leaders. According to Freire (2004; 2005), critical consciousness in education is to be aware of social, political and economic pressures and oppressive factors, and to find the power to act to transform them. In this context, Foster (1986, p.185) defines leadership as a process of empowering individuals to evaluate their situation. Thus, the task of social justice leaders is to raise awareness of students' social rights and to provide the hope of an active existence in everyday social life (Alsbury & Shaw, 2005). Within such a school culture, students are respected for differences such as race, language, religion, gender or sexual orientation. Despite these differences, there is a dominant understanding that everyone has equal rights. Regardless of their social position, all students know that every school member has equal rights and, further, they have a certain consciousness about protecting each other's rights. According to them, no student is superior to another.

The other important component of SJL is to create an inclusive and participative school environment. According to UNESCO (2005), inclusion is about:

(a) welcoming diversity, (b) benefiting all learners, not only targeting the excluded, (c) children in school who may feel excluded, and (d) providing equal access to education or making certain provisions for certain categories of children without excluding them (p.15). In line with this, leaders of social justice ensure that all students benefit equally from available educational opportunities by creating heterogeneous classes that merge all differences (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McKenzie et al., 2008). In addition, they try to develop an understanding that rejects 'othering' by allowing students to fully socialize with each other (Tomul 2009). In doing so, they incorporate the students into the decision-making processes that concern them and form a democratic school community (Özdemir & Kütüküt, 2015). In this context, Ryan (2006, p.9) discusses social justice leadership, inclusive decision making and policy-making processes based on the promotion of participation and dialogue. Therefore, inclusive education is a broad concept that includes not only disadvantaged students but also the active participation of all students in education under the umbrella term of inclusion, participation, socialisation and democracy (ERG, 2016; UNESCO, 2005).

Sense of School Belonging

A significant human need is to be loved by other people and feel a sense of belonging to a group/community (Maslow, 1943; 1954, p.43). Belonging is defined as an emotion that develops with positive human relationships and encourages the individual to be part of a given system (Anant, 1967). Identity, which is seen as a basic human need and source of motivation, is associated with concepts such as community, participation, loyalty, connectedness, support and acceptance, bonding, and membership (Osterman, 2000; Allen & Kern, 2017, p.6). McMillan and Chavis (1986, p.10) describe belonging as follows: *[it] involves the feeling, belief, and expectation that one fits in the group and has a place there, a feeling of acceptance by the group, and a willingness to sacrifice for the group... It may be represented in the reciprocal statements 'It is my group' and 'I am part of the group'*.

School belonging is a subjective perception that looks into the extent students are accepted by other individuals at school, and how much they are respected for their individual differences and personality within the social and academic environment of the school (Goodenow, 1992; 1993a; Goodenow & Grady, 1993). The concept has often been associated with the extent to which students believe that they are a part of the school environment and that their actions at school are meaningful and important (Finn, 1989; Goodenow, 1993b). Therefore, it is vital that school leaders provide a social and academic school environment in which students feel happy and confident in order to increase their school belonging (Cunningham, 2007; Rowe & Stewart, 2011; Sari, 2013; Whitlock, 2006). Students who have developed a sense of school belonging display more proactive attitudes in terms of participation in academic and social activities at school.

Student Resilience

Resilience is defined as the process of adapting to difficult conditions and achieving despite the associated challenges (Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990; Masten, 2001). It has significant impacts on well-being (Cowen, 1991) and can be categorised under three components (Werner-Wilson, Zimmerman & Whalen, 2000, p.167): *(1) the ability to change or adapt to harsh or negative life circumstances; (2) the capacity to “bounce back” and succeed in the face of experiencing negative outcomes; and (3) the capacity for a determined engagement, rather than avoidance, with the risk factor in question.* Drawing on these definitions, it would not be wrong to argue that resilience reflects a psychological situation and accordingly can have behavioural consequences.

Student resilience is associated with the determination to pursue academic achievement in school life, the development of healthy social relations with peers and teachers, participation in school activities, and the aspiration to achieve despite difficult situations (Arastaman, 2011; Arastaman & Balcı, 2013; Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990). So, it can be said that it is about showing resistance to risk factors to success. Students with high resilience *can be described as those who sustain high levels of achievement motivation and performance, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school and, ultimately, dropping out altogether* (Alva, 1991, p.19).

Student resilience is important in terms of problem solving, taking risks, relieving the negative effects of life, stimulating effective thinking in social relations, and coping with stress and depressive feelings (Hart, Hofmann, Edelstein & Keller, 1997; Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990; Xing & Sun, 2013; Werner & Smith, 1992). It is also an important factor in academic achievement and motivation (Waxman, Huang & Wang, 1997). Therefore, supporting student resilience is of great importance. Indeed, resilience is closely related to the context in which the student is situated (Morrison & Allen, 2007). In other words, student resilience can be developed and supported by external factors such as school, family and society (Arastaman & Balcı, 2013; Çelik, 2013; Benard, 1991; Egeland, Carlson & Sroufe, 1993; Clarke & Clarke, 2001; Gizir & Aydın, 2009; Green, Oswald & Spears, 2007; Karairmak, 2006; Masten, 2001; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). It might be possible to say that one of these external supports is the social justice leadership practices adopted in schools. For example, Thomsen (2002) emphasizes that student resilience is a phenomenon that can be improved by making the environment suitable and eliminating unsuitable conditions in the students' environment. Henderson and Milstein (2002, p.12-14) describe ways to improve resilience through a process of six steps. Accordingly, the first three steps are related to eliminating risk factors: increasing bonding, setting clear and consistent boundaries, and teaching life skills. The other three steps are aimed at building resilience: providing caring and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation. As it is understood, school principals have the important responsibility to develop and support student resilience.

Relationships between Social Justice Leadership, Sense of School Belonging and Student Resilience

The Relationship between Social Justice Leadership and Sense of School Belonging

The research shows that disadvantaged students a reduced sense of belonging and are more likely drop out (Komba, 2013; OECD, 2012). Therefore, social justice leaders should create inclusive school cultures, particularly in multicultural schools (Stevenson, 2007) and strengthen students' sense of belonging. In parallel with this, Özdemir (2017) found a positive correlation between social justice leadership, school engagement and school-related attitudes. On the other hand, Arastaman (2009) revealed that it was important to include students in school decisions to increase their school engagement, to establish fair rules in the school, to improve relations among students and to involve particularly disadvantaged students in social activities. Further research stresses the significance of a democratic school environment in promoting school belonging (Hope, 2012; Vieno, Perkins, Smith & Santinello, 2005). Based on these studies, it can be argued that that social justice leadership may well play a vital role in strengthening students' sense of belonging. Thus, the first hypothesis of this research is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The higher the perception of social justice leadership is, the higher the sense of school belonging.

The Relationship between Social Justice Leadership and Student Resilience

The risk factors associated with student resilience are those of socio-economic status/social class, language skills, special needs, living apart from parents, and negative life experiences (Gizir, 2007; Little, Axford & Morpeth, 2004; Masten, 2001; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). On the other hand, social justice leadership is explained according to the efforts to prevent social differences or different social experiences as a barrier to students' learning experiences (McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). Therefore, as a leader of social justice, a school principal should be able to negate the risk factors that might otherwise have a negative impact on student resilience.

The reason why school principals can contribute to student resilience is because student resilience can itself be supported by external factors (Egeland, Carlson & Sroufe, 1993; Gizir & Aydın, 2009; Masten, 2001; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Werner, 2005), for example, to create a school climate where the students socially support each other, to have high expectations for all students without discrimination, to offer students active participation and involvement in school life, to create positive school life are some essential factors that can increase student resilience (Benard, 1991; 2004, p.108; Foster, 2013; Henderson & Milstein, 1996). So, support from the school principal strengthens students' resilience behaviours (Hernandez & Cortes, 2011). Based on all these studies, it is thought that SJL has the potential to positively impact student resilience. The hypothesis 2 is as follows:

Hypothesis 2: The higher the perception of social justice leadership is, the higher the student resilience.

The Relationship between School Belonging and Student Resilience

As Maslow argues, sense of belonging is a fundamental human need. Especially, teenage students' sense of belonging (students at secondary level) play a role on their general well-being, psychological health status, academic motivation and success (Sari, 2012; Savi, 2011; Qualter & Munn, 2002). One of the positive psychological outcomes of the sense of school belonging and engagement is student resilience. Indeed, studies have shown that school engagement is an important predictor of student resilience (Malindi & Machenjewe, 2012; Finn & Rock, 1997; Nowicki, 2008). School engagement also has a positive relationship with optimism, which is an indicator of resilience and a negative relationship with depression (Anderma, 2002). Similarly, students' sense of belonging and commitment to school is seen as one of the protective factors for developing student resilience (Resnick, 1997; Resnick, Bearman & Blum, 1997; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1997). Within this context, hypothesis 3 and 4 are as follows:

Hypothesis 3: The higher the sense of school belonging is, the higher the student resilience.

Hypothesis 4: Sense of school belonging will mediate the relationship between social justice leadership and student resilience.

Research Methods

This study examines the relationship between social justice leadership, sense of school belonging and student resilience. Thus, the research tests the mediator effect of school belonging in the relationship between student resilience and social justice leadership, for which the relational screening model was used.

Participants and Procedure

High school in Turkey lasts for four years, or in other words consists of four levels. Students at this level take part in compulsory education. The fourth grade of high school is the last year students are at school and during which they prepare for university exams. This research was conducted with 22 high schools in the centre of Uşak, Turkey. The population of the study consisted of 11,395 of the students studying in these institutions. The sample size of this 'universe', with a 5% margin of error, is 375 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). To collect data from the students, the necessary legal permits were obtained from the Uşak Provincial Directorate of National Education. It took 10-15 minutes for the students to fill out the scales. 600 questionnaires were distributed to the students via a simple random sampling method by considering the problems that could be experienced in the return rates, and data was collected from 549 students with a 91% return rate. Since the 22 schools that constitute the universe of the research are located

in the centre of Uşak, they have similar characteristics in terms of their social-economic-cultural environments and the opportunities offered to students. Based on this, the sample was created by means of taking into account the grade levels to be able to increase the representability of the sample derived from this universe. So, all grade levels are included in the sample. The data were collected from 16 schools randomly selected from these schools. The profiles for the students are reported in Table1.

Table 1.
Profile of Participations

Gender	Female: 383 (69.8%) Male: 166 (30.2%)
Level of Education	High School 1st grade: 170 (31%) High School 2nd grade: 165 (30.1%) High School 3rd grade: 109 (19.9%) High School 4th grade: 105 (19%)
Total	549

As shown in Table 1, 383 (69.8%) of the students were female and 166 (30.2%) were male. 170 (31%) of these students were in the first year of high school; 165 (30.1%) were in the second; 109 (19.9%) were in the third, and 105 (19%) were in the last.

Data Collection Tools

Social Justice Leadership Scale: The Social Justice Leadership Scale developed by Özdemir and Kütüküt (2015) was used to obtain the views of students regarding their school principals. The scale consists of a five-point Likert style with 24 items and three factors (support, critical consciousness and participation). The variance rate was 56.75%. The support subscale has 12 items (e.g., our school principal helps our low-income friends); the critical consciousness has nine items (e.g., our school principal encourages us to respect different cultures); and the participation consists of three items (e.g., our school principal listens our opinions when making rules). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to determine whether the scale was a valid instrument. Goodness of fit values are as follows: ($\chi^2=954.35$; $df= 247$; $\chi^2/df= 3.86$; $GFI = 0.89$; $AGFI = 0.85$; $RMSEA = 0.07$; $CFI = 0.98$; $NFI = 0.97$). Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients were calculated for the overall scale and its subscales (.90 for the support, .91 for the critical consciousness, .71 for the participation, and .94 for the overall scale).

The Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) Scale: This scale was developed by Goodenow (1993a) to measure students' sense of school belonging and was adapted to the Turkish language by Sarı (2013). The five-point Likert-

type scale consists of 18 items and has a two-factor structure (sense of school belonging and a sense of rejection). Sense of school belonging has 13 items (e.g., I feel like a real part of my school); sense of rejection consists of five items (e.g., I wish I were studying at another school) with reverse coding. The results of the analysis in the adaptation process of the scale showed that it was a valid and reliable tool (Sarı, 2013). The results of the CFA goodness of fit to test whether the scale is valid for this research are as follows: ($\chi^2=454.35$; $df=132$; $\chi^2/df=3.44$; $GFI=0.92$; $AGFI=0.89$; $RMSEA=0.06$; $CFI=0.96$; $NFI=0.94$). In addition, the reliability coefficient of the scale for school belonging was .87; .78 for the sense of rejection, and .86 for the overall scale.

Student Resilience Scale: This scale was developed by Arastaman (2011) and has 17 items and four sub-scales (determination, sociability and communication, self-efficacy and hope, and problem solving). The percentage of the variance explained by the scale is 51.05%. Determination has four items (e.g., I work hard to achieve the best); sociability and communication has five items (e.g., I like to participate in social activities like sports, music, theatre); self-efficacy and hope has four items (e.g., I believe that I will experience good things in the future); and problem solving has four items (e.g., when I encounter difficulties, I know how to solve them). CFA was conducted to determine whether the scale was a valid instrument. The goodness of fit values are as follows; ($\chi^2=455.25$; $df=110$; $\chi^2/df=4.13$; $GFI=0.91$; $AGFI=0.89$; $RMSEA=0.07$; $CFI=0.97$; $NFI=0.95$). However, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients were calculated for the overall scale and its sub-scales (.75 for determination, .76 for sociability and communication size, .79 for self-efficacy and hope dimension, .75 for the problem-solving dimension, and .89 for the overall scale). The goodness of fit values and reliability coefficients were evaluated, and it was decided that all scales were valid and reliable tools (Hooper, Coughlan and Mullen, 2008; Kline, 2011).

Data Analysis

Lost data and extreme value analyses were conducted to prepare data for analysis. For the univariate normality analysis, the kurtosis and skewness coefficients were analysed, and the associated values were within a ± 1 range. The distribution graphs were analysed, and the data showed a normal distribution. Mahalonobis distances were calculated to identify the multivariate endpoints. In total, 549 questionnaire data were included in the analysis. Correlation coefficients and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were examined to determine whether there were multiple interconnectedness problems among the independent variables, though no problem was identified.

Descriptive statistics such as arithmetic mean and standard deviation were used; Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated when determining the relationships between variables. Before examining the structural paths, the measurement model was tested to assess the independence of the subscales of the three main variables. For this purpose, CFA was performed, and maximum likelihood

estimation and the covariance matrix were used. Then, path analysis was conducted to evaluate the hypothesised structural pathways (direct and indirect effects) among variables and to determine the mediator effect. However, Sobel, Aroian and Goodman tests were performed to reverify the mediation effect. The web page of Dr Kristopher J. Preacher “*Calculation for the Sobel Test²*” was used.

Findings

Firstly, descriptive statistics were determined. Means and standard deviations of variables, and subscales and the correlation matrices between variables were calculated. The associated analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix for Study Variables

	\bar{X}	<i>Sd</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. SJL(Total)	3.08	.911	-											
2. <i>Support</i>	3.12	.927	.94	-										
3. <i>Critical cons.</i>	3.18	1.05	.93*	.69*	-									
4. <i>Participation</i>	2.58	1.20	.70*	.55*	.58*	-								
5. SoSB(Total)	3.33	.689	.55*	.57*	.49*	.31*	-							
6. <i>Sense of rejection. (reverse coding)</i>	3.36	.877	.25*	.28*	.20*	.11*	.66*	-						
7. <i>Sense of belonging</i>	3.31	.763	.58*	.58*	.51*	.34*	.96*	.45*	-					
8. SR(Total)	3.57	.735	.35*	.35*	.34*	.16*	.52*	.19*	.55*	-				
9. <i>Determination</i>	3.42	.921	.33*	.32*	.32*	.14*	.45*	.18*	.47*	.84*	-			
10. <i>Sociability and communication</i>	3.69	.789	.27*	.28*	.26*	.11*	.42*	.13*	.46*	.84*	.57*	-		
11. <i>Self-efficacy and hope</i>	3.70	.909	.29*	.28*	.30*	.13*	.48*	.24*	.49*	.89*	.66*	.69*	-	
12. <i>Problem solving</i>	3.45	.859	.30*	.29*	.29*	.17*	.41*	.11*	.45*	.84*	.63*	.56*	.68*	-

N = 549, **p* < .001 (SJL: Social Justice Leadership, SoSB: Sense of School Belonging, SR: Student Resiliency)

As Table 2 suggests, school principals exhibit social justice leadership behaviour at a medium level (\bar{X} = 3.08). The average for the support and critical consciousness subscales are medium and close to each other, but the average of

2 <http://quantpsy.org/sobel/sobel.htm>

participation sub-scale is low ($\bar{X}=2.58$). Similarly, sense of school belonging is at a moderate level ($\bar{X}=3.33$) and the mean values for resilience levels and subscales are at the lower end of the high level. Pearson correlation coefficients showed that there was a moderate positive correlation between social justice leadership and school belonging (and its sub-scales). Similarly, there was also a significant positive relationship between social justice leadership and student resilience. All relations between the participation subscale of social justice leadership and student resilience (and its subscales) were low.

Bilateral relations between variables were examined to evaluate the hypothesized structural relationships, and goodness of fit values for each path confirmed the structure. Thus, the accuracy of H1, H2 and H3 were tested. Table 3 shows the standardized regression coefficients, standard error values, and the variances.

Table 3.

Standardized Regression Weights Showing Direct Effects (SRW)

Structural Paths		β	<i>Sd</i>	R^2
Direct Effects				
Social Justice Leadership	————> Sense of School Belonging	.600*	.054	.360
Sense of School Belonging	————> Student Resiliency	.526*	.080	.276
Social Justice Leadership	————> Student Resiliency	.392*	.049	.154

* $p < .05$ N=549

As can be seen in Table 3, Social Justice Leadership predicts Sense of School Belonging to be positive ($\beta=.60$), where Sense of School Belonging predicts Student Resilience ($\beta=.52$) to be positive and significant ($p < .05$). In addition, social justice leadership explains 36% of sense of school belonging, and sense of school belonging explains 28% of the variance in student resilience. Likewise, social justice leadership is a positive and significant predictor of student resilience ($\beta=.39, p < .05$) and explains 15% of the variance in social resilience. Therefore, H1, H2 and H3 are confirmed.

The technique proposed by Holmbeck (1997) was used to test the effect of mediation after direct paths were examined separately. If the first relationship between the independent and dependent variable reduces when the mediator variable is included in the analysis, then it has a ‘partial mediation effect’. If there is no statistical difference, then there is a ‘full mediation effect’. Table4 presents the model testing the mediator effects of sense of schooling in the relationship between social justice leadership and student resilience, as well as the standardised regression analysis and goodness of fit value.

Table 4.
Structural Paths, Regression Analysis and Goodness of Fit Values

<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Regression Weights and Fit indices</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Regression weights Fit indices</i>
<i>SJL → SR</i>	<i>.39*</i>	<i>SJL → SoSB</i>	<i>.58*</i>
		<i>SoSB → SR</i>	<i>.48*</i>
		<i>SJL → SR</i>	<i>.11</i>
χ^2	30.206	χ^2	71.845
df	13	df	24
χ^2 / df	2.32	χ^2 / df	2.99
RMSEA	.04	RMSEA	.06
RMR	.03	RMR	.03
AGFI	.96	AGFI	.95
CFI	.99	CFI	.98
TLI	.98	TLI	.97
IFI	.99	IFI	.98

* $p < .05$ N=549

(*SJL*: Social Justice Leadership, *SoSB*: Sense of School Belonging, *SR*: Student Resiliency)

As shown in Table 4, the significant positive correlation between Social Justice Leadership and Students Resilience in Model 1 ($\beta = .39, p > .05$) was statistically insignificant when Sense of School Belonging was added to the model ($\beta = .11, p > .05$). Furthermore, goodness of fit values of the model in which the mediation effect was tested indicated that the model showed good fit [$\chi^2 = 71.845$; $Sd = 24$; $\chi^2 / Sd = 2.99$, RMSEA = .06; AGFI = .95; CFI = .98; IFI = .98; TLI = .97]. Thus, it was found that sense of school belonging has a full mediating effect between social justice leadership and student resilience. H4 was also confirmed in this context. Figure 1 shows the path analysis of Model 2.

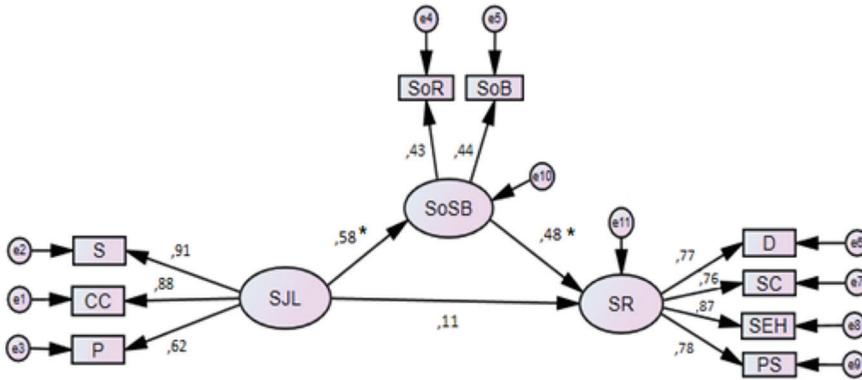


Figure 1. Path analysis between SJL, SoSB and SR (* $p < .05$) of Model 2

Table 5 presents the results of the Sobel, Aroian and Goodman tests conducted to retest the full mediating effect.

Table 5.
Test Results Regarding Mediating Effect of Mediator Variable

Independent Variable	RC	SE	Mediator Variable	RC	SE	Dependent Variable		
SJL	.325	.043	SosB	.969	.109	SR		
<i>Sobel Test</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Aroian Test</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Goodman Test</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
	5.75	.000		5.73	.000		5.77	.000

As shown in Table 5, z values and the significance levels of the Sobel, Aroian and Goodman analyses showed that school belonging has a mediating effect between social justice leadership and student resilience [($z_{\text{sobel}}=5.75, p < .05$), ($z_{\text{aroiian}}=5.73, p < .05$), ($z_{\text{goodman}}=5.77, p < .05$)].

Discussion

Student resilience, despite the difficulties, can be explained by the determination to gain academic achievement, hope for the future, and the ability to establish effective social relations at school (Arastaman & Balci, 2013; Masten, Best & Garnezy, 1990). Due to these important outputs, it can be seen as a ‘feature’ that should be supported and protected by social factors. (Benard, 1991; Clarke & Clarke, 2001). In this study, Social Justice Leadership was considered one of the external factors supporting student resilience. Therefore, this research aimed to explore the relationships between SJL, SoSB and SR.

The research findings show SJL has a positive effect on SoSB. In other words, SJL strengthens students' SoSB. The literature shows that providing a happy, safe, academic and socially supportive school environment increases students' sense of school belonging. (Cunningham, 2007; Rowe & Stewart, 2011; Sari, 2013; Whitlock, 2006). Furthermore, the emergence of a sense of belonging depends on associated feelings of support, acceptance, participation, community and membership (Osterman, 2000; Allen & Kern, 2017, p.6). Therefore, one can argue that SJL is an important element in strengthening school belonging because social justice leaders create a happy and safe environment by integrating students despite differences in race, ethnicity, culture, neighbourhood, or home language. (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p.3). These leaders also strengthen participation and social inclusion and support all students socially and academically (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McKenzie et al., 2008; Özdemir & Kütüküt, 2015). In this way, they contribute to the development of a sense of belonging by preventing alienation, marginalization and exclusion. The overall objective of SJL in schools is to strengthen school engagement and belonging by ensuring the active participation of all students and promoting a holistic academic development (Özdemir, 2017).

Previous studies also point out that SJL is important in terms of providing school engagement and SoSB. One study found that SJL ensured effective school engagement amongst students (Özdemir, 2017). On the other hand, students in schools where social justice could not be provided were found to have lower school engagement (Komba, 2013) and a higher potential for dropping out of school altogether (OECD, 2012). Moreover, school life in such schools reduces the enthusiasm of socio-economically disadvantaged students and minority groups in terms of furthering their education (McLaren, 2011, p.338). For this reason, SJL is an important element in promoting school belonging.

Another finding of this study suggests that SoSB has a positive effect on SR. There are different studies in the literature showing that school belonging and engagement are important predictors of student resilience (Malindi & Machenjedze, 2012; Finn and Rock, 1997; Nowicki, 2008). However, school engagement and belonging seem to be closely related to the levels of students' emotional and social resilience. Research shows that there is a negative relationship between school engagement and depression, emotional distress and suicidal tendencies (Anderman, 2002; Resnick, Bearman & Blum, 1997); in other words, students who do not have a sense of school belonging have lower levels of resilience in coping with other difficulties. For this reason, one of the important ways to increase student resilience is to develop school belonging and school engagement (Resnick, 1997; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1997).

The main finding of this study is that SJL strengthens SR, as mediated by school belonging. In this context, social justice leaders develop a community awareness in schools by establishing positive relationships with students and families (Wang, 2018). They address the negative effects that lead to gaps in achievement

between students (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). Another task of social justice leaders is to prevent or otherwise negate situations that result in exclusion and alienation and to create an inclusive approach for all students at school (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McKenzie et al., 2008; Tomul, 2009). Lastly, they work to reduce the feelings of alienation and disengagement, provide an environment of positive interactions and school-wide practices among students, and support their resilience by creating a sense of belonging (Morrison & Allen, 2007; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1997). Moreover, studies have shown that students with a sense of belonging and who have school engagement display resilient social and academic behaviours (Anderman, 2002; Resnick, 1997; Resnick, Bearman & Blum, 1997; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1997). In this way, SJL strengthens SR by increasing school belonging.

Another practice that improves resilience by ensuring a sense of belonging is the opportunity to participate in decisions. In this context, social justice leaders convince students that they are important to the school by including them in the decision-making process (Özdemir & Kütük, 2015). Those students who believe that they are a valuable part of the school and that their actions are valuable to the school have strong SoSB (Finn, 1989; Goodenow, 1993b), and - naturally - they exhibit more resilient behaviours in their social relations and academic settings. Indeed, the active participation of students, the strengthening of school involvement, and positive school life are considered the major factors supporting student resilience (Benard, 1991; 2004, p.108; Foster, 2013; Henderson & Milstein, 1996). Therefore, SJL's practices related to the participation dimension also have an indirect effect on students' resilience behaviours.

In-school practices of SJL also play an important role in critical theory discussions. Foster (1986, p.185-186) emphasizes that leadership must be educative and notes that: "*it is empowering individuals in order to evaluate what goals are important and what conditions are helpful.*" Similarly, Freire (2004; 2005) emphasizes that education should provide students with critical consciousness and empowers them to challenge oppressive forces. Otherwise, education merely serves the interests of the ruling classes and further silences already oppressed voices (Brown, 2004). In addition, previous studies show that marginalized and disadvantaged students experience a lower status perception than others (Chiu & Walker, 2007), and that they tend to suffer more from depression (Fine, 1989). So, social justice leaders should promote critical consciousness among students and encourage them to practice their social rights (Alsbury & Shaw, 2005). Such behaviour improves the dispositions and resilience of students.

Lastly, SJL is an important external factor in increasing school belonging and student resilience. However, a school leader needs to address social justice practices within the context of the school and identify the requirements to ensure such. When these are not done, it is not possible to ensure student belonging. Indeed, student resilience depends on the context in which students are situated (Morrison & Allen, 2007). Otherwise, as DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014,

p.845) argues, *“For many of the students and their families, the concept of schooling as a vehicle for social mobility or equalizer of inequality appears to be nothing more than rhetoric of policymakers and politicians.”* Within the framework of the views supporting this, the promotion of social justice in schools seems to depend on the dispositions of the principals and school-based micro-level efforts with regard to SJL (Chiu & Walker, 2007; Furman & Shields, 2005).

Conclusion and Suggestions

This research showed SJL has a role in SR as mediated by SoSB. In other words, social justice leadership develops student resilience by creating a sense of school belonging. The findings of the research show that SJL practices that aim to support participation and promote critical consciousness play a vital role in students' sense of belonging to their school. The sense of school belonging developed by SJL has a significant effect on students' resilience. Therefore, in this study, it is concluded that SoSB has a full mediating effect on the relationship between SJL and SR.

The research findings posit that a school leader who wants to increase the academic and social resilience of their students should first address any harmful effects caused by social differences at school and improve the quality of school life, regardless of social differences, to ensure that every student gains equal benefit from the available educational opportunities. School leaders also should involve students in their decision-making processes and provide students with a critical consciousness that can criticize and challenge discriminatory and oppressive practices. In addition, school principals must raise students' critical consciousness to ensure that they are equipped to criticize segregationist and oppressive practices and struggle against difficulties. This means that social justice leaders in schools should respect all students regardless of their race, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or ideology, and they should create a culture of respect for differences and instill this consciousness in all students. These practices will increase the sense of school belonging and improve student resilience; in other words, improving the context in which students are involved can be an effective way of increasing student resilience.

This research was conducted with high school students. Similar studies could be carried out with primary school students. Qualitative research can be conducted to explore the social injustices leading to low levels of resilience amongst students and low expectations from social justice leaders. A study with only disadvantaged students might well also be beneficial.

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