



Evaluation of Perceptions on Leadership Dimensions in Applications for Community Services

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Abstract

The current study aims to evaluate Informational and Instructional Technologies 3rd year students' perceptions of leadership dimensions in Community Service Practices course. The current research was designed as quantitative study. Survey method, a quantitative research method, was utilized. A structured form was utilized in the research. Totally four open-ended questions, one for each leadership dimension, are included in the form. The form, prepared based on general purposes of the research, aims to measure leadership dimensions. Study group consisted of 73 students taking Social Service Practices class. The forms filled out by the students were carefully examined and the findings were reached through content analysis and descriptive analysis techniques. In the study, 8 important leadership behaviors were identified. To reinforce these behaviors, incentive systems such as additional courses, coaching and mentoring have been proposed to the students.

Keywords: Leadership, Leadership Dimensions, Community Services.

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Introduction

We often hear about the concept of leadership today. In relation to this topic in developed countries, courses, curricula, and even departments are available. Recently, we observed some significant developments in our country as well. The topic of leadership in social sciences is discussed in different respects and these discussions attract serious attention.

English language did not used to have the word leadership until 1800. It took another hundred years for social scientists to be able to study the notion of leadership. However, only during the past forty years, researchers have begun to learn how people become leaders, how they retain their leadership characteristics, and what is required for an effective leadership, because of serious and in-depth studies. Although these studies look multiplied in numbers, leadership as a new field is known to be open for new inquiries (Gordon, 1999).

How should leadership be described as a technical term? There is not an agreed-upon and commonly known definition. Leadership according to Bennis (1989) means beauty. Bennis (1989) described leadership as “it is hard to describe but you know it when you see it”. Many resources explain leadership through different definitions and roles. Leadership may be considered an individual’s personal characteristic or his role in the organization or in the process (Hoy and Miskel, 2010). We may say that leadership is now in every field of our lives. We may be required to act as a leader any time. Kaser et al. (2006) described leadership through 124 items in their work titled *Everyday Leadership*. However, leadership has four basic characteristics. These characteristics at the same time constitute the four basic dimensions of leadership. They are:

1. The process of motivating and influencing people coming together for a common cause,
2. An activity including influencing, as individuals or in groups, people’s behaviors towards achieving certain objectives,
3. The process of influencing individuals’ or a group’s efforts towards achieving their objectives in a certain case,
4. In a certain case, a rational and determined process of approaching including individual influence on group members for volunteer contribution toward completing group tasks.

Social Service Practices course, one of those that leadership may be most required for, was added in the curriculum in the Department of Computer and Instructional Technologies teaching in 2007. The course aims to make students efficient individuals in the society. Therefore, the teaching staff responsible for this course should make use of leadership dimensions and influence students. Community service practices course, as the name suggests, is a course in which beneficial activities are carried out. The relevant course is one of the compulsory courses of the education faculties and requires 2 hours of practice per week. It can be said that the success in community service practices may be related to the dimensions of leadership. This study aims to investigate the students’ perceptions of leadership dimensions in this course.

Purpose of the Study

The current study aims to evaluate Informational and Instructional Technologies 3rd year students’ perceptions of leadership dimensions in Social Service Practices course. Based on this purpose, answers to the following sub-purpose research questions were sought:

1. Based on the course objectives, how were the students motivated and affected?
2. How were the students affected as individuals and in groups?

3. How were students' efforts influenced in problematic and special cases associated with the course?
4. How did students put voluntary contribution in issues associated with the course?

Assumptions

1. Data collection tool to be used in the current research satisfies the proper features for data collection based on study purposes.
2. Students filled out open-ended, structured form in required openness.

Scope and Limitations

The current study is limited to the Social Service Practices course at Informational and Instructional Technologies Department, Faculty of Education, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University.

Methodology

The current research was designed as quantitative study. Survey method, a quantitative research method, was utilized. Among the scientific research methods, studies conducted on the largest samples in general, in which the opinions, knowledge and interests, abilities and attitudes of individuals on a particular subject are determined, are defined as survey studies (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Survey studies generally; by looking at the characteristics of the universe (target audience), such as age, gender information, socioeconomic status, it is depicted in terms of the existing thoughts, attitudes, and opinions regarding a certain phenomenon, directly related to the situation or in terms of its relations with certain factors (Büyüköztürk, 2014).

Data Collection Tool

A structured form was utilized in the research. Totally four open-ended questions, one for each leadership dimension, are included in the form. The form, prepared based on general purposes of the research, aims to measure leadership dimensions. Experts were consulted about the form before it was applied. Four questions, measuring the four dimensions based on the research purposes, are as follows:

1. Based on your course objectives, how did the professor responsible for the course motivate and affect you throughout the course?
2. How did your course professor affect you as individuals and in groups? Please explain separately.
3. In problematic and special cases associated with your course, how did the professor teaching the course affect your efforts?
4. How did the professor teaching the course have you voluntarily contribute?

Study Group

Study group consisted of 73 students taking Social Service Practices class at Informational and Instructional Technologies Department, Faculty of Education, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University during 2017-2018 spring semester.

Data Analysis

The forms filled out by the students were carefully examined and the findings were reached through content analysis and descriptive analysis studies. Students' statements on forms were categorized and

coded. Forms were read many times; the category and codes were analyzed; and a description table was built. To provide code reliability, a random interview and a description table were given to 2 experts. They were asked to create codes, looking at the description table, and the codes were found to be similar. Students' perceptions of leadership dimension fell under 8 categories. Later, behaviors associated with perception of each dimension were given and the result was obtained. Characteristics obtained in general fell under 8 categories and these categories were coded. Table 1 contains the categories and the codes assigned on them.

Table 1
Research categories and their Codes

Categories	Codes
Personal Characteristics	1
Classroom management	2
Communication Skills	3
Setting an Example	4
Guidance and Encouragement	5
Raising Social Awareness	6
Professional Skill and Field Knowledge	7
Being Democratic	8

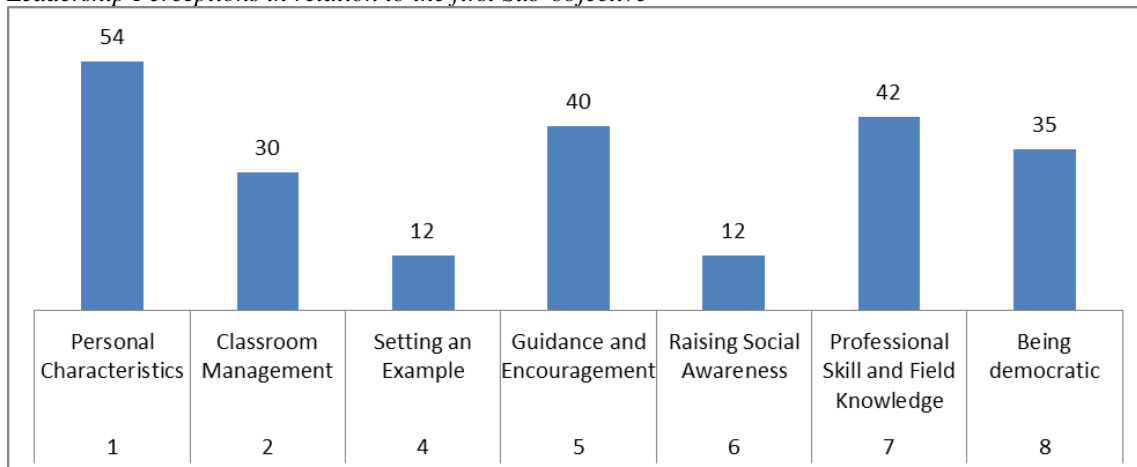
Findings

This section includes findings obtained upon analyses associated with each sub-purpose and interpretation of these findings. Upon analysis of the collected data, it was concluded that students did not perceive leadership dimension through limited behaviors and worked on many different behaviors. Findings obtained in this section are presented in bar graphs. With categories and codes, formed through interviews, figures presented the number of students using the related characteristic.

1. In consistence with course objectives, how were the students motivated and influenced?

Students' responses to the first question on the interview form were taken into consideration in relation to this sub-objective. These behaviors were categorized and coded under 7 headings. Students' perceptions of leadership dimensions were given in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Leadership Perceptions in relation to the first Sub-objective

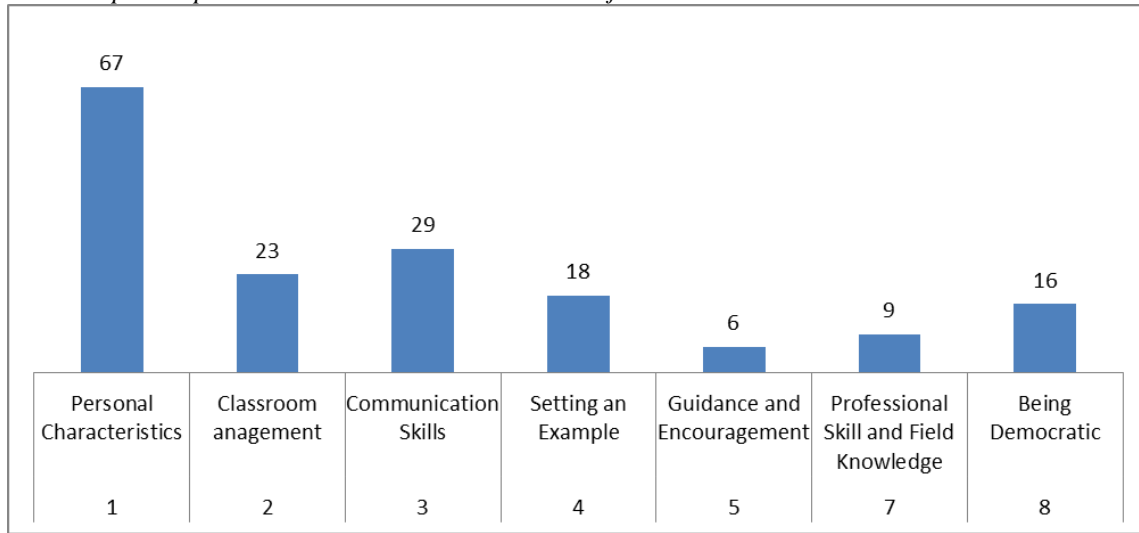


According to Figure 1, the most perceived characteristics in the leader are personal characteristics (74%). Professional skill and field knowledge (58%) with guidance and encouragement (55%) are the characteristics considered after personal characteristics. Being democratic (48%) after these characteristics is another important characteristic. Leader’s classroom management (41%) is the other leadership characteristic. Setting an example (16%) and raising social awareness (16%) are less considered characteristics by the students.

2. How were the students affected as individuals and in groups?

Students’ responses to the second question on the interview form were taken into consideration in relation to this sub-objective. These behaviors were categorized and coded under 7 headings. Students’ perceptions of leadership dimensions were given in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Leadership Perceptions in relation to the second Sub-objective

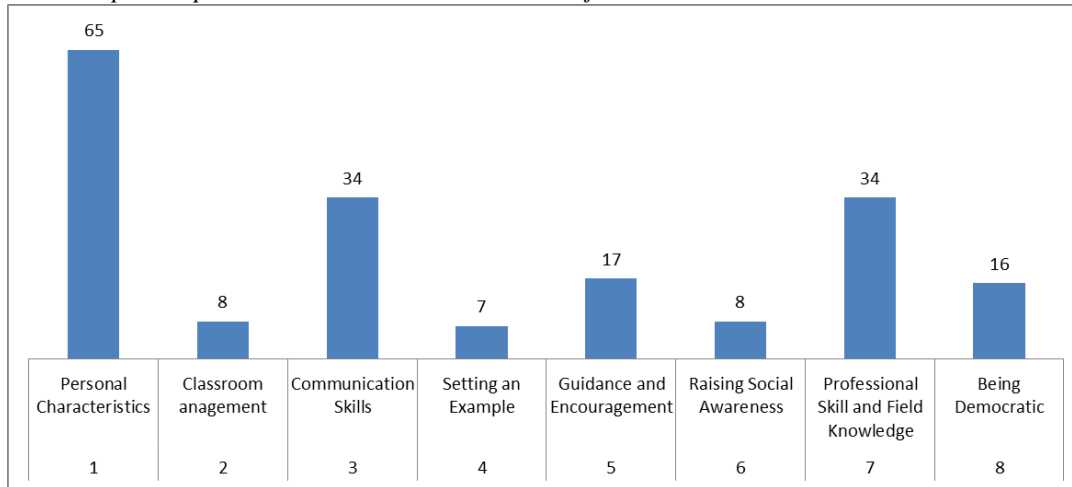


According to Figure 2, students perceived leader’s personal characteristics (92%) as the most important. These characteristics form an outlier with a distinction. The second important characteristic is the communication skills (40%). Students pointed out to other characteristics as follows: classroom management (32%), setting an example (25%), being democratic (22%), professional skill and field knowledge (12%), and guidance and encouragement (8%).

3. In problematic and special cases associated with your course, how did the professor teaching the course affect your efforts?

Students’ responses to the third question on the interview form were taken into consideration in relation to this sub-objective. These behaviors were categorized and coded under 8 headings. Students’ perceptions of leadership dimensions were given in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Leadership Perceptions in relation to the third Sub-objective

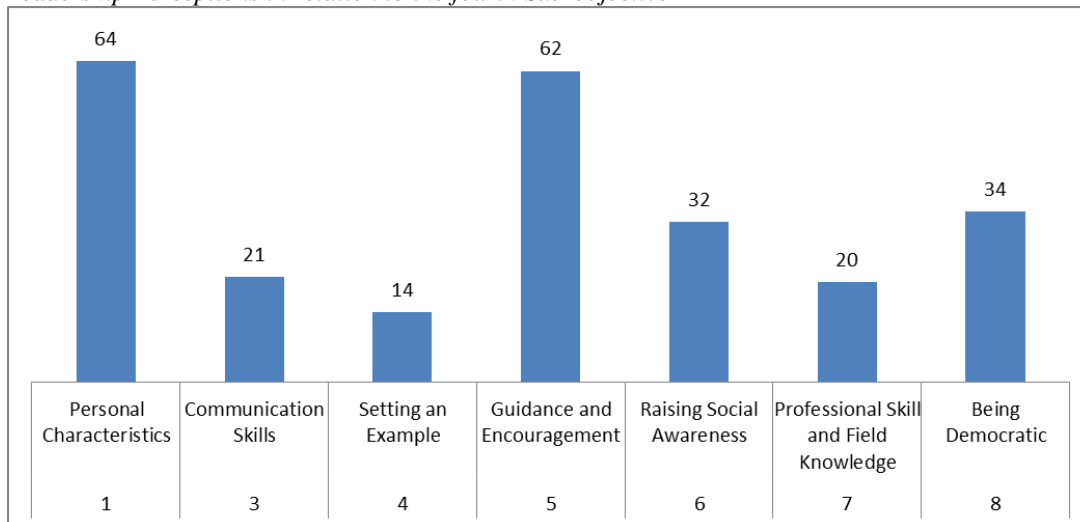


According to Figure 3, students put forward the personal characteristics of the leader as the most-perceived characteristic (89%). Communication skills (47%) and professional skills and field knowledge (47%) were following prominent leadership characteristics. Other important leadership characteristics were general guidance and encouragement (23%) and being democratic (22%). Classroom management (11%), raising social awareness (11%), and setting an example (10%) followed the above characteristics.

4. How did the students voluntarily contribute in course-related areas?

Students’ responses to the fourth question on the interview form were taken into consideration in relation to this sub-objective. These behaviors were categorized and coded under 7 headings. Students’ perceptions of leadership dimensions were given in Figure 4.

Figure 4
Leadership Perceptions in relation to the fourth Sub-objective



According to Figure 4, the most-perceived characteristics that the students brought up were personal characteristics (87%) and guidance and encouragement (84%). Being democratic (47%), raising social

awareness (44%), communication skills (29%), professional skills and field knowledge (27%), and setting an example (19%) were other leadership characteristics that students mentioned.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In this section, results, obtained in the light of findings from the current research conducted to examine the Informational and Instructional Technologies 3rd year students' perceptions of leadership dimensions, are included. Many leadership behaviors were encountered in the examination of students' perceptions in relation to 4 leadership dimensions.

Students were observed to have perceived the leadership dimensions in 8 sub-categories such as leader's personal characteristics, classroom management, communication skills, setting an example, guidance and encouragement, raising social awareness, professional skills, and field knowledge, and being democratic. Related concepts in the findings of the research are also expressed in many studies on leadership (Kaser et al, 2006; Kırıl, 2020; Ünal, 2012; Viitala, 2004). Students perceived the valuing, well-treating, guiding, and example-setting professors highly skilled in communication, with professional and field knowledge, and effectively managing classrooms as leaders. Students were found to have perceived the leadership dimensions through different behavior patterns. The implementation of the leadership dimensions put forward by the students coincides with the charismatic and academic leadership behaviors. In addition, this course can make an important contribution to the training of future academic leaders. For this reason, it is an important issue to manage the course by considering the leadership dimensions. According to Durmaz (2017), it was emphasized that higher education institutions should raise awareness in the training of academic leaders. These statements support the study. Charismatic leadership characteristics are those that attract attention in students' perceptions of leadership dimensions. There are a few studies on academic leadership and leadership dimensions. Future experimental and observational studies on leadership dimensions may be conducted.

Many researchers defined the following leadership characteristics: honor, providing support, being keen, interpersonal relation skills, participatory management style, being able to organize open debates on teaching approaches, being a trustworthy leader, being able to use public and private channels for knowledge communication, sharing experience and ideas, harmony between internal and external mediums, encouraging transformation and change, being altruistic and conscious, personality development and partnerships with others, providing employees with better work environments, and getting support from others (Güncavdı, 2017; Juurikkala, 2012; Siddique, Aslam, Khan & Fatima, 2011). Characteristics such as guidance skill, unite under a group, offer target, empower, motivate, support, offering praising feedback, recognizing performance, interpersonal relation skills, participatory management skills, organizing debates, being a trustworthy leader, being altruistic and aware, found in related research, are like the findings of the current study and support it.

Due to the personal characteristics coming to the fore, it can be considered very important to provide students with a successful personality development education throughout their education life. Appropriate courses can be opened for teacher candidates to gain leadership dimensions, lessons such as diction, communication skills and drama can be given as examples. It can be suggested that teachers should study their lessons by considering the leadership dimensions. To understand leadership, it is necessary to consider multivariate situations. In future research, observational and experimental studies on leadership dimensions can be done. It can be suggested that guiding, encouraging, and guiding systems such as coaching or mentoring systems should be integrated into educational institutions, especially universities. Various active tasks can be given to students in social activities, and they can be given the right to express ideas.

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