

UDC 37

## PREDICTIVE FACTORS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: THE ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP, ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST, AND TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims to investigate the predictive role of instructional leadership, organizational trust, and teacher self-efficacy on student achievement among teachers in primary and secondary schools in Artvin, Türkiye. Employing a survey methodology, the research targeted teachers from secondary and high schools in Artvin, Türkiye. Data were collected from 100 teachers selected through random sampling, with 34 completed forms subsequently analyzed. The analysis utilized the Support Vector Machine (SVM) method, a machine learning technique, to evaluate the data. Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE) was employed to identify and rank the factors contributing to student achievement. The findings indicate that the variables influencing student success, in order of importance, are: school type, age, trust in the principal, gender, tenure at school, experience, teacher self-efficacy, and instructional leadership. These results highlight the critical role of both organizational and demographic factors in educational outcomes, providing valuable insights for policy makers and educational leaders aiming to enhance student achievement through targeted interventions and support.*

**Keywords:** *Instructional Leadership, Organizational Trust, Teacher Self-Efficacy, Student Achievement, SVM*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The effectiveness of the hardware and structural qualities of educational institutions, which play an important role in raising qualified people, as well as the quality of their teaching services, is important in order to keep up with innovations in line with the requirements of the age and technological developments. Zigarelli (1996) discussed the basic factors in increasing the quality and effectiveness of schools under six headings: qualified teachers, high teacher satisfaction levels, high family participation, creating school culture, positive relations between school management and stakeholders, and effective instructional leadership in the school. . Effective use of the instructional leadership feature of administrators, which is one of the necessary factors for the effectiveness of the school and the qualified execution of education for the stakeholders of education, is also important in terms of meeting the expectations and needs of teachers and other staff. If the administrator is a good leader, instructional leadership occurs. In this respect, instructional leadership also requires being an expert in management (Bush, 2011; Çelik, 2012).

In the literature (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Harchar & Hyle, 1996), the leadership behaviors of administrators are discussed in direct relation to the concept of instructional leadership. According to Şişman (2016), studies on the concept of effective schools since the late 19th century have also revealed the importance of the concept of instructional leadership. In recent studies, having administrators with instructional leadership qualities (Şişman, 2002; Çelik, 2012); It is accepted as one of the main points in the success of education and the effectiveness of the education given.

Although the concept of instructional leadership is used for school administrators, today it is seen that teachers and other stakeholders, as well as school administrators, have a say in the management processes of schools and the school environment. According to Beycioğlu and Aslan

(2012), leadership responsibility is a difficult situation for school administrators to overcome due to the increasingly complex tasks for the school and its environment.

For this reason, it is emphasized in the literature that the concept of instructional leadership should be redefined and addressed not only for administrators but also for teachers and other stakeholders (Balçı, 2014; Beycioğlu and Aslan, 2010). The indicators that a person has instructional leadership characteristics are discussed under the headings of finding resources for instruction, being a resource in instruction, having communication skills, and being a visible and accessible person (Smith and Andrews, 1989; Bulduklu, 2014). In addition, Tanrıöğen (2000) stated in his study that the instructional leadership behaviors expected by teachers are grouped under six main headings. These are listed below:

- Development of teachers and teaching
- Developing an instructional climate
- Increasing communication skills
- Supervision of teaching
- Defining/determining goals
- Monitoring student progress

It has been stated in many studies that the ability of school administrators and other stakeholders to effectively use instructional leadership behaviors is related to teachers' trust in the organization and their self-efficacy. Organizational trust is defined as the individual's belief that the organization strives to act based on its promises, acts honestly, and provides equal opportunities to each individual (Cummings & Bromiley, 1995). Studies show that employees who trust their organizations, managers and colleagues are more willing to come to work and are happier while working. In addition, they make more efforts to make the organization better by fully embracing their role within the organization (Halis, Gökgöz and Yaşar 2007; Yılmaz 2006). In this respect, ensuring organizational trust and using the organizational leadership feature of school administrators to share their duties and authorities with teachers in line with their interests and wishes can contribute to the development of their self-efficacy (Kurt, 2012; Glanz, Shulman, & Sullivan, 2007).

Individuals' beliefs about their power to achieve a performance they target or want to achieve are defined as the concept of self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998). For this reason, the concept of teacher self-efficacy, which is one of the important concepts discussed in the world and in Turkey, is seen to be related to the selection of strategies, methods and techniques required for an effective teaching process, and the efforts made to increase students' motivation and success.

The foundations of the concept of teacher self-efficacy are based on the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory developed by Bandura (1993, 1997, 2006). Accordingly, self-efficacy is defined as individuals' belief in their own skills and abilities to overcome possible difficulties they may encounter in reaching their targeted level of success in any situation. If considered from another perspective, the concept of self-efficacy is the process of individuals defining how much effort they make when encountering a problem, a situation or difficulty that will disturb them, and how long it will take to face this problem (Bıkmaz, 2002).

The concept of self-efficacy constitutes the focal point of studies in very different fields such as business, sports, health, media, social and political change, ethics, development, psychology, international relations, and attracts attention especially in the fields of psychology and education (Pajares and Urdan, 2005).

It is stated in the literature that there is a strong relationship between teachers' self-efficacy perceptions and student success (Künsteing et al., 2016; Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2009). The higher the instructional leadership and self-efficacy of teachers, the more likely they are to be successful in planning and managing instruction at school (Allinder, 1994). There are studies in the literature stating that instructional leadership, organizational trust and teacher self-efficacy are effective on the quality of teaching and students' learning success (Ashton and Webb, 1986; Pearce, 2017; Kılınç, Bellibaş and Bektaş, 2021).

The most obvious purpose of education, which has an important place in the development of societies, and schools, which are institutions that provide education, is to raise individuals who are socially, psychologically and physically healthy, useful to society and who have adopted social culture. The role of teachers, as well as schools, is undeniable in raising individuals who have transformed the knowledge, skills and competencies targeted by the information society into behavior, who understand and interpret scientific data, produce and use what they have learned in life.

In order to achieve the achievements targeted by societies in the context of the variables discussed above, every teacher is expected to know the concept of instructional leadership, to trust the organization in this regard, and to have self-efficacy as a teacher. In this respect, it is important to determine the relationship between these variables discussed in the study (instructional leadership, organizational trust and teaching self-efficacy) and their reflection on student success accordingly. In this respect, this study aims to reveal the predictor role of instructional leadership, organizational trust and teacher self-efficacy exhibited by teachers working in primary and secondary schools in Artvin, Türkiye in student achievement. The research will seek answers to the following questions:

- Can students be classified as successful and unsuccessful according to instructional leadership, trust in the principal, teacher self-efficacy and demographic variables?
- If classification is possible, which variables are most effective in this classification?

## METHOD

The research was conducted by survey method. With this method, data is collected from a wide audience with previously developed data collection tools and generalization is made with the results obtained (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun, 2012). Depending on the time period in which the data was collected, it is divided into two: cross-sectional and longitudinal. A cross-sectional survey was conducted because the data were collected in a single time period and at a single time.

### Population and Sample

The population of the research consists of teachers working in secondary and high schools in Artvin, Türkiye. Scale forms were distributed to 100 teachers determined according to the random sampling technique. 34 forms returned were analyzed.

**Table 1.** *Participants*

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Male	19	56
	Female	15	44
School Type	Secondary school	8	24
	High school	26	76
Age	20-29	5	15
	30-39	18	53
	40 and above	11	32
Experience	1-5 years	18	53
	6-10 years	9	26
	11 years and above	7	21
Tenure at school	1-3 years	13	39
	4-6 years	10	29
	7-9 years	2	6
	10 years and above	8	24

### Data Collection Tools

**Organizational Trust Scale.** In this study, the trust in principal subscale, which is the first dimension of the Organizational Trust Scale developed by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) and adapted into Turkish by Yılmaz (2006), was used to measure teachers' perceptions of organizational trust. The scale is a 5-point Likert type and is arranged as (1) Never, (2) Very rarely, (3) Sometimes, (4) Often and (5) Always. The original form of the scale consists of a total of 26 items in three sub-dimensions. There are 8 items in the trust in principal dimension, 8 items in the trust in colleagues dimension, and 10 items in the trust in stakeholders dimension.

The scale form, adapted to Turkish by Yılmaz (2006), was applied to a group of 107 primary school teachers within the scope of validity and reliability study. As a result of factor analysis, it was seen that the scale consists of 22 items and three dimensions, as in its original form. The scale's explanation rate of cumulative variance according to three factors was found to be 45.31%. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the entire scale was .92. On the basis of dimensions, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as “.89” for the first dimension, “.87” for the second dimension and “.82” for the third dimension.

In a study conducted by Cerit (2009), exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the data to determine the factor structure of the scale. The scale's explanation rate of cumulative variance according to four factors was found to be 65.68%. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the entire scale was .91. On the basis of dimensions, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as “.90” for the first dimension, “.88” for the second dimension, “.82” for the third dimension and “.86” for the fourth dimension.

Since the factor structure of the scale varies between studies, the factor structure in Kalkan's (2015) research was taken as basis. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, the rate of explaining the cumulative variance of the survey according to three factors was found to be 65.39%. It was found that the eigenvalue of the first factor structure was 8.519, the eigenvalue of the second factor was 3.572 and the eigenvalue of the third factor was 2.294. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the Trust in Manager, Trust in Colleagues, Trust in Stakeholders sub-dimensions of the Organizational Trust Scale and the overall scale were .92, respectively; .92; .89; It was calculated as .92.

**Instructional Leadership Scale.** In the study, the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) developed by Hallinger (1982) was used to determine teachers' opinions about the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals. The scale, which was first prepared as three dimensions and 11 sub-functions, was revised as 10 functions in 1990 and is now used as a scale consisting of 3 dimensions, 10 functions and 50 items prepared in a 5-point Likert type (Hallinger and Wang, 2015). The adaptation of the scale to Turkish culture was made by Bellibaş, Bulut, Hallinger and Wang (2016). As a result of its adaptation to Turkish culture, it was seen that the scale consists of 44 items, including 3 dimensions and 9 functions.

The six items in the original version of the scale, which have the function of coordinating the curriculum in the dimension of managing the curriculum, were not found to be suitable for Turkish culture. The scale has three dimensions: defining the school mission, managing the curriculum and ensuring a positive learning climate. The definition of school mission dimension aims to measure the competencies of school administrators in setting goals for the school (5 items) and sharing school goals (4 items). The dimension of managing the curriculum aims to measure the competencies of school administrators in the functions of supervising and evaluating teaching (5 items) and monitoring student success (5 items). The dimension of providing a positive learning climate includes school administrators' functions of controlling the time spent on teaching (5 items), being visible at school (5 items), encouraging teachers (5 items), supporting professional development (5 items), and encouraging learning (5 items). It aims to measure their competencies.

Scale was rated on a five-point Likert scale: “1 = Almost never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often and 5 = Almost always.” Examples of items included in the scale are, “My school principal develops goals that can be easily understood and implemented by teachers.”, “My school principal effectively conveys the mission of the school to school staff, students and parents.”, “My school

principal meets one-on-one with teachers to evaluate the academic development of students.” Holds talks.” And “My school principal makes sure that students are not called from the classroom during lesson time.” Statements can be given. While the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the original scale was calculated as .99 for the entire scale and each of the three dimensions, it was observed that it had values varying between .95 and .99 for the functions.

**Teacher Self-Efficacy Perception Scale.** The short form of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Perception Scale used in this study and structured by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) consists of 12 items. The short form of the scale has a 3-factor structure. In the original scale, there are three factors called (1) Efficacy in Student Engagement, (2) Self-Efficacy in Using Instructional Strategies and (3) Self-Efficacy in Classroom Management. There are 4 items in each factor. The scale called Teacher Self-Efficacy Perception Scale-Short Form (TSES-SF) is a Likert-type scale and is rated from “1” (not at all) to “9” (very much).

The alpha value for the original short form of the scale was announced as .90. The alpha value of the “Self-Efficacy for Student Participation” subscale in the short form of the scale was announced as .81, the alpha value for the “Self-Efficacy for Using Teaching Strategies” subscale was .86, and the alpha value for the “Self-Efficacy for Classroom Management” subscale was .86 (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

The factor structure of the Turkish adapted version of the scale (ÖÖAÖ-KF) was examined and its validity and reliability were tested by Karaoğlu (2019). 943 teachers took part in the study. The factor structure of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Perception Scale adapted to Turkish was examined by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results calculated for the Turkish adapted scale show that the scale has acceptable and good fit values. For all scale items Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated as .88.

## Analysis of Data

The data collected in the research was analyzed with Support Vector Machine (SVM), one of the machine learning methods. In the field of machine learning, SVM is a supervised learning model that examines data for classification purposes. SVM is suitable for classification tasks. By considering a range of variables, SVM can be used to predict student performance. The dependent variable in this study was the students' test scores. To identify factors influencing student performance, the benchmark score was transformed into a new variable, serving as the identification variable for training a machine learning model. This variable had to indicate whether each student was successful or not. Hence, scores below 61 were categorized as unsuccessful. The resulting identification variable had two categories: 1) low performance (n=5), and 2) high performance (n=29).

## RESULTS

The average score of the instructional leadership dimension was found to be 3.00 and the standard deviation was 0.70. Trust in the principal, which is the dimension of teachers' trust in school administrators, was found to have an average of 2.81 and a standard deviation of 1.03. The third dimension, teacher self-efficacy, was found to have an average of 2.38 and a standard deviation of 0.45.

**Table 2.** Scale Statistics

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Instructional Leadership	3.00	0.70
Trust in Principal	2.81	1.03
Teacher Self-Efficacy	2.38	0.45

After five rounds of testing using a 10-fold cross-validation method, an optimized SVM model, incorporating a total of 8 independent variables, achieved a classification accuracy of 80%. This suggests that the model was highly accurate in predicting whether a student would perform well or poorly. Consequently, it was confirmed that the SVM model could effectively distinguish between the two groups of students. Utilizing Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE), a 5-times repeated 10-fold cross-validation sampling method was implemented, and a list of 8 factors was produced in descending order of importance:

- School Type
- Age
- Trust in Principal
- Gender
- Tenure at school
- Experience
- Teacher Self-Efficacy
- Instructional Leadership

## DISCUSSION

According to the results of the research, the average score of the instructional leadership dimension was found to be 3.00 and the standard deviation was 0.70. This shows that the leadership support provided by school administrators to teachers is at an average level. The low standard deviation of the instructional leadership dimension may indicate either that the leadership support provided by school administrators to teachers is generally similar or that there are no significant differences among teachers in this regard.

Trust in the principal, which is the dimension of teachers' trust in school administrators, was found to have an average of 2.81 and a standard deviation of 1.03. This shows that teachers' level of trust in school principals is at an average level, but varies slightly. A high standard deviation may indicate that trust in the principal may vary among teachers and that some teachers trust the principal more than others.

The third dimension, teacher self-efficacy, was found to have an average of 2.38 and a standard deviation of 0.45. This shows that teachers' confidence in their own abilities is at an average level, but lower than the other two dimensions. A low standard deviation may indicate that there are no significant differences among teachers in this regard or that they have generally similar perceptions of self-efficacy.

The effect of school grade on teacher performance and therefore student achievement has been an important research area in the literature. In this context, by reviewing the findings of similar studies, important information can be obtained on the factors affecting student success of teachers working at different school levels. For example, the studies of Hallinger and Heck (1996) and Leithwood (2004) revealed that teachers at the high school level use different strategies than those at the secondary school level. However, there are also contradictory findings among different studies in the literature. The study by Robinson (2008) and Spillane and Healey (2012) suggested that school grade did not have any significant effect on teacher performance. These contradictory findings demonstrate the complexity of the way school grade influences teachers' pedagogical approaches and student achievement (Harris, 2013).

Trust in the principal and teacher self-efficacy are one of the critical components in education (Brown and Crego, 2017) and can have a significant impact on teachers' professional performance. In the study, the relationship between trust in the principal and teacher self-efficacy among teachers working at secondary and high school levels in Artvin was examined. Findings showed that trust in the principal was positively related to teachers' self-efficacy. In other words, as teachers' trust in school principals increases, their self-efficacy perceptions also increase. This result suggests that

healthy relationships between school administration and teachers positively affect teachers' professional performance by increasing their self-confidence.

Similar studies in the literature also support these findings. For example, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (1998) study found that teachers' trust in their administrators positively contributed to their perceptions of teacher self-efficacy. However, more research is needed on how these findings can be applied in practice (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2012). In particular, more in-depth studies should be conducted on how school administrators can gain and maintain the trust of teachers. Additionally, more research is needed on the effectiveness and feasibility of programs that can be developed to increase teacher self-efficacy.

Teachers' length of service and professional seniority represent teachers' professional experience and long-term presence in a school. When examining the relationship between teachers' tenure and professional seniority and student achievement, a complexity was observed in the findings. First of all, research has shown that teachers who work in the same school for a long time and have professional experience can have a positive effect on increasing student success. These teachers may have been more integrated into the school's culture and formed stronger bonds with students (Bandura, 1997). In this context, the study found a positive relationship between tenure and professional seniority and student success.

However, the relationship between teacher tenure and professional seniority and student achievement is not clear-cut. While some research shows that teachers, especially those who work in the same school for a long time, are more effective at improving student achievement, other studies characterize this relationship as unclear. In particular, the experience of teachers is sometimes associated with them staying away from innovative approaches.

Instructional leadership represents the impact of school management on teachers' professional development and student success (Henson, 2012). Instructional leadership refers to the ability of school administrators to support teachers' pedagogical practices and take a leadership role in instruction (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). The study found that strong instructional leadership can positively affect student success by increasing teachers' motivation and creating effective learning environments. That is, instructional leadership, as well as tenure and professional seniority, are important factors that affect the success of teachers and therefore students. However, the effects of these factors are complex and related to many variables. Therefore, it is important that educational policies and practices are shaped by taking these factors into account (Klassen and Tze, 2014).

In conclusion, these findings reveal teachers' perceptions of the dimensions of instructional leadership, trust in the principal, and teacher self-efficacy. Teachers' leadership support provided by the school administrator and their trust in the principal are at an average level, but teachers' confidence in their own abilities is slightly lower. These findings may provide important clues for the development of policies and practices that support school management and teacher development. In particular, developing support programs to increase teachers' self-efficacy perceptions can increase teachers' professional satisfaction and student achievement.

## CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to examine the perceptions of instructional leadership, trust in the principal and teacher self-efficacy of teachers working at the secondary and high school levels in Artvin. The findings reveal teachers' perceptions of these three dimensions. In the instructional leadership dimension, it was observed that the leadership support provided to teachers by the school administrator was at an average level and its standard deviation was low. This finding indicates that administrative leadership practices in schools are generally consistent, but there are no significant differences among teachers. However, this average value shows that there are potential areas for improvement in meeting teachers' leadership expectations.

In the dimension of trust in the principal, it was found that the level of trust of teachers in school principals was at an average level, but was slightly more variable. This finding indicates that trust in the principal varies among teachers and that some teachers trust the principal more than

others. Therefore, various strategies may need to be used to improve the leadership skills of school administrators and increase trust among teachers.

In the teacher self-efficacy dimension, teachers' confidence in their own abilities was found to be at an average level, but lower than the other two dimensions. This shows that teachers' self-confidence is generally average but can be improved. At this point, special programs and support mechanisms can be developed to support teachers' professional development and increase their sense of self-efficacy.

In conclusion, this study made a significant contribution to understanding teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership, trust in the principal, and teacher self-efficacy. These findings emphasize that school administrators should improve their leadership skills, increase trust among teachers, and support teachers' professional development. In this way, educational institutions can operate more effectively and efficiently and increase student achievement.

## SUGGESTIONS

**Leadership Development Programs:** Leadership development programs should be organized for school administrators and participation in these programs should be encouraged. These programs can support administrators in communicating more effectively with teachers, strengthening leadership skills, and increasing trust among teachers.

**Trust and Communication in the Principal:** School administrators should adopt more open and transparent communication strategies to increase trust in the principal among teachers. Regular meetings, an open-door policy, and feedback mechanisms can increase trust in the manager and cooperation.

**Teacher Self-Efficacy Support Programs:** Schools should offer support programs and resources to increase teachers' professional self-efficacy. It is possible to strengthen teachers' abilities and self-efficacy perceptions by providing teachers with mentoring programs, professional development courses and self-improvement opportunities.

**Promoting Cooperation and Teamwork:** School administrators should encourage cooperation and support teamwork among teachers. Common goals should be determined, shared decision-making processes should be established, and the sharing of knowledge and experience among teachers should be encouraged.

**Strengthening Feedback Mechanisms:** School administrators should create effective mechanisms to provide regular feedback to teachers. This feedback can be used to highlight teachers' strengths as well as identify and support areas for improvement.

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