

## Research Article

# The relationship between inclusive leadership and teachers' perceptions of organizational trust: A cross-sectional survey in Türkiye

Murat Polat<sup>1</sup> and Kübra Turhaner<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Muş Alparslan University, Education Faculty, Muş, Türkiye (ORCID: 0000-0002-2921-7831)

<sup>2</sup>Ministry of National Education, Türkiye (ORCID: 0000-0002-6950-4368)

Significant scholarly attention has been devoted to investigating the relationship between school leadership and trust, with recent emphasis shifting towards inclusive leadership. This study specifically explores the connection between inclusive leadership and the level of trust within educational organizations. The main objective is to evaluate how administrators' Inclusive Leadership behaviors in public schools impact teachers' perceptions of Organizational Trust. To achieve this, the researchers engaged with teachers from various public schools in a city located in East Anatolia, Türkiye, employing a cross-sectional survey approach. A total of 273 teachers from diverse educational levels, including pre-school, primary, secondary, and upper-secondary school, participated in the study, with a gender distribution of 143 females and 130 males. Data were collected through the Inclusive Leadership scale and Organizational Trust scale, and data analysis utilized regression analysis techniques. The findings reveal a robust and positive correlation between inclusive leadership practices in educational settings and the trust teachers place in their institutions. This implies that the level of inclusivity in leadership significantly contributes to an optimistic shift of approximately 68% in educators' perspectives on institutional trust. Additionally, it is noteworthy that male teachers report significantly higher levels of organizational trust compared to their female colleagues. In summary, this research highlights the importance of considering the educational context when examining the correlation between organizational trust and inclusive leadership in educational institutions.

Keywords: Inclusive leadership; Organizational trust; School administrators; Public schools

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## 1. Introduction

In the past decade, there has been a growing interest in inclusive leadership. Moreover, the relationship between school leadership and the concept of trust has always been the focus of attention in academic circles. Leadership and organizational trust [OT] are becoming increasingly important for organizations (Oh et al., 2023). In fact, it can be said that organizations where OT is absent or low tend to suffer from leadership issues. According to research (Currall & Epstein, 2003; Reina & Reina, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Walker et al., 2011), it can be challenging to change environments with low levels of trust. Distrust tends to be self-sustaining and resistant to

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### Address of Corresponding Author

Murat Polat, PhD, Niğde Omer Halisdemir University, Education Faculty, Department of Educational Sciences, 51240, Niğde, Türkiye.

✉ [m.polat@alparslan.edu.tr](mailto:m.polat@alparslan.edu.tr)

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improvement, even when presented with positive information or events. The implication of this trend is that when individuals perceive a lack of trust in their leaders, they may contemplate leaving due to concerns about the leaders' decision-making abilities. This lack of trust may arise from perceptions of the leader's lack of integrity, fairness, honesty, or competence. It is crucial for leaders to build trust with their team members to prevent such situations (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

Over the past decade, research (Ağalday, 2022; Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2016; Raiz et al., 2023; Siyal et al., 2023; Zeng et al., 2020) has focused on inclusive leadership (IL) to address current leadership problems in organizations with regard to OT. IL aims to enhance the viewpoints and input of its members in an organization, enabling them to increase competence and performance. Such leadership can be viewed as a reciprocal process of learning within the organization (Culha, 2023). Schmidt (1996) maintained that a successful organizational leader should be culturally inclusive. Schmidt (1996) defined culturally inclusive leadership as having cultural awareness, taking organizational risks, carefully listening, considering cultural differences as assets, accepting differing perspectives as valid, and being able to move beyond stereotypes. Thompson and Matkin (2020) noted an increase in research on inclusive leadership in the literature since the early 1990s. Therefore, the notion of inclusive leadership has arisen from the exploration of different methods of leading and organizing, rendering it a unique facet of leadership in contemporary times.

As Shields and Mohan (2008) emphasize, it is possible to create a more socially just educational environment. This is crucial not only for the intellectual development and improved outcomes of students, but also for the cultivation of citizens who can act as agents of change for themselves and others in the pursuit of a more just society. Inclusive leadership can further facilitate this process through its distinctive characteristics. Bourke et al. (2020) refer to the first of these characteristics as commitment to diversity. This characteristic implies a visible commitment to diversity by challenging the status quo, holding others accountable, and making diversity and inclusion a personal priority. Furthermore, inclusive leaders demonstrate humility by being humble about their abilities, admitting mistakes and creating space for others to contribute. Finally, they demonstrate an awareness of bias. Individuals demonstrate self-awareness of their personal biases and system flaws and strive to build a merit-based system. They adopt an open-minded approach and have a genuine interest in others, listen without prejudice and empathies and seek to understand those around them. They have cultural intelligence and adapt accordingly, collaborate effectively, empower colleagues, value different perspectives, ensure psychological safety and priorities team cohesion (Bourke et al., 2020).

On the other hand, Ryan (2007) has stressed the importance of IL in creating a substantive impact on educational institutions. Several key behaviors are necessary to realize this potential. These practices encompass engaging the entire educational system in inclusion; educating all educational stakeholders about inclusion; cultivating critical consciousness in the school; involving teachers, students, and parents in educational processes; advocating for inclusion and for marginalized individuals and groups in schools; promoting continuous communication; emphasizing learner-centered learning; adopting inclusive decision-making and policy-making processes; and considering leadership as an egalitarian collective process rather than a hierarchical process of viewing individuals as distinct from others. From an educational perspective, adopting inclusive leadership based on the attitudes outlined presents a significant opportunity to ensure the sustainability of today's school system. Taylor and Brownell (2017) emphasized the importance of IL in reconstructing the leadership paradigm concerning diverse approaches and paradigms in leadership. To develop a better understanding of the relationship between IL and OT in educational organizations, a thorough analysis of pertinent literature is necessary.

Trust is a pivotal concept in the information-led competition in present-day network societies (Seppänen et al., 2007). Tüzün (2007) has posited that "trust" is more widely acknowledged in academic literature as the extent of positive anticipation that the other party will act, decide, and speak in a consistent, reliable, and truthful fashion, and not in an egocentric and self-centered manner. OT is a communication-driven, multifaceted structure shaped by cultural values that

continuously reshape the workplace (Demircan & Ceylan, 2003). Therefore, patience and consistency are pivotal in establishing and bolstering trust, as expected from leaders. However, this perspective is not novel. OT is based on long-term observations and interactions that develop over time, as explained by Mayer et al. (1995). According to their OT model, cooperation was a key variable.

Blomqvist and Ståhle (2000) contended that OT is a complex process that operates at both individual and organizational levels. Therefore, it can be argued that the goodwill, competency, and behavior of all parties involved significantly impact the development of OT. Furthermore, Asunakutlu (2002) suggested in the relevant literature that certain features are necessary to establish a trustworthy environment within an organization. Numerous behaviors can aid in the establishment of OT, including effective and harmonious implementation of rules and regulations, fostering a robust communication system, encouraging delegation of authority and involvement in decision-making by managers, implementing an ongoing training system for employees, and prioritizing ethical values.

Research on OT is crucial for the sustainability of educational institutions. For instance, a meta-analysis undertaken by Akar (2018) reported that employees' OT levels are enhanced when they perceive high levels of organizational justice, support, and ethical leadership from educational stakeholders. An essential discovery of the study is that a significant amount of OT within educational institutions heightens employees' job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and their perception of organizational commitment. Moreover, Tschannen-Moran (2020) confirmed that in a dynamic world, educational institutions that foster an environment of high trust are better equipped to tackle the demanding task of educating diverse groups of students. An environment of trust is essential as it ensures a culture of innovation and continuous learning in schools, while simultaneously ensuring the continued effectiveness and sustainability of reform efforts. Therefore, it is important to study trust within schools, as it provides support for these essential functions. Hunt et al. (2009) assert that building and preserving high levels of trust in both publicly funded and privately owned educational institutions is crucial for achieving short-term success and long-term effectiveness in the 21st century. Such trust benefits all schools and is, thus, not subject to any form of bias.

ILs are expected to become more prominent than others in terms of establishing OT within educational institutions and shaping their future, contributing to the long-term sustainability of education. According to Okçu and Deviren (2021), IL is typically defined in the literature as a leadership approach that aims to maximize employee competencies and talent, establish collaborative relationships, and influence various stakeholders. Najmaei and Sadeghinejad (2019) emphasized the increasing prevalence of IL research in the education and healthcare sectors. However, they contend that inclusive leadership encompasses more than a simple leadership strategy. IL is increasingly being recognized as a universally desirable leadership style. This is in line with the growing diversity in many countries and global emphasis on inclusion.

According to Moya et al. (2020), inclusive leaders are committed to implementing school-based initiatives that aim to open educational institutions to the community. In their view, schools constitute an inclusive community, where the focus lies on creating shared visions, promoting participation, cooperation, and the dynamics of positive reflection on diversity. In other words, an inclusive school leader aims to facilitate collective teacher action in the teaching and learning processes by promoting continuous training, professional development, and professional learning communities. Rayner (2009) emphasized that IL constitutes a specific form of 'learning leadership' or a pedagogy applicable in an educational setting. Inclusive leadership inherently aims to engage all members of the learning community in some kind of 'learning leadership'. This encompasses contributing to inclusive management and, arguably the most significant factor, fostering a professional ethos rooted in the idea of the professional learning community.

Recently, a range of studies have examined IL in educational organizations. These studies may be either correlational or causal. For instance, Castillo-Acobo et al. (2022) explored how IL affects

teachers' innovative behavior, while Ryan (2006) explored the role of IL in promoting social justice in schools. Aboramadan et al. (2022) examined the relationship between organizational learning and IL. The level of IL in school management was evaluated by López-López et al. (2021) from the parents' perspective. Egitim (2022) explored inclusive leadership through organizational culture. Hollander (2012) analyzed the leader-follower relationship. Additional studies (Guo et al., 2020) searched for the psychological roots of IL. These studies concentrate on the impact of power distance and employee behavior within an organization. Here, a limited number of studies (Ağalday, 2022; Azarian & Taghipour, 2020; Oh et al., 2023; Raiz et al., 2023; Siyal et al., 2023) have directly assessed the employees' perceptions on the correlation between IL and OT in educational establishments.

Moreover, Bryk (2003) highlights the vital role of relational trust in establishing successful educational communities in a longitudinal investigation of 400 primary schools situated in Chicago. This is due to the persistent conflicting interests encountered in a school community, that notwithstanding, prioritises children's education and well-being. According to Bryk (2010) not surprisingly, obtaining teacher support and commitment is crucial in promoting the necessary profound cultural transformations within the school. This is where the establishment of relational trust-building becomes especially important. In this context, inclusive leadership can have a significant impact on establishing relational trust in Turkish schools.

On the other hand, for the past two centuries, Turkey has been in the process of modernization, and educational institutions have been indispensable instruments in this process (Ceylan, 2017). To understand the dynamics of inclusion and trust in the education system and Turkish society, it is crucial to limit subjective evaluations and account for cultural, social, and historical factors. For instance, Turkey is known for its diverse population and rich cultural heritage, yet its past has witnessed challenges regarding ethnicity, language, and religion, rendering inclusion a difficult objective to achieve. Efforts have been taken to promote inclusivity, but ongoing discussions exist regarding the recognition of diverse identities throughout society. Recent years have seen progress made towards gender equality, however, traditional gender roles can still impact societal expectations. Inclusion initiatives aim to address gender disparities and empower women across different sectors. Furthermore, there is an increasing awareness of the rights and needs of disabled individuals (Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010). Nevertheless, challenges remain, particularly surrounding accessibility and social integration. Trust levels in Turkish society are susceptible to the influence of historical events and political developments experienced by institutions. Therefore, periods of instability or political changes have the potential to impact public trust. Moreover, the government-citizen relationship plays a fundamental role in shaping the trust levels. Cohesive family bonds and community ties are also highly valued in Turkish culture. With trust often extended to social connections and relationships. However, to comprehend the concepts of IL and OT in Turkish society and its education system, it is necessary to analyze how leaders and institutions promote inclusivity and build trust within their organizational structures.

In sum, successful leadership of inclusive practices and development of organizational trust within the Turkish society and education system necessitates a careful combination of cultural awareness, collaborative endeavours, transparent communication, and diligent response to the varied needs of individuals and communities. It is through persistent efforts to promote inclusiveness and establish a foundation of trust that organizations and educational institutions solidify their well-being and continued success.

There is a potential correlation between Inclusive Leadership (IL) and the level of trust within an organization (Bozdoğan, 2022). However, limited studies (Culha, 2023; Eruslu et al., 2023; Kurtgöz & Polat, 2023; Özdemir et al., 2023) exist in the national literature on IL. Furthermore, there is currently no research that directly examines the relationship between IL and organizational trust. Thus, conducting this study to investigate the correlation between IL and Organisational Trust [OT] is of significant importance, as it will enable a causal comparison to be made. Therefore, this research can offer educators and school leaders valuable insights into the

significant role of IL in developing OT within educational institutions. Additionally, given the scarcity of studies on inclusive leadership in schools located in eastern Turkey, this research carries exceptional significance.

This study aimed to ascertain how administrators' inclusive leadership behaviors in public schools affect teachers' perceptions of organizational trust. This study had the following goals: 1) To examine whether demographic variables had a significant impact on teachers' perceptions of OT and IL. 2) To determine whether educators' perceptions of inclusive leadership are related to their organizational trust. 3) To explore the consequences of teachers' perceptions of inclusive leadership on organizational trust.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Research Methodology

This study adopts a cross-sectional survey research design, aiming to gather data on specific characteristics or situations of individuals within a community at a particular moment. Cross-sectional studies are conducted to gain insights into the general characteristics, conditions, or learned behaviors of a population, typically utilizing survey or observation methods. While these studies are valuable for comprehending overall trends and situations within a population, they are not designed to establish causal relationships (Olsen & George, 2004). As a result, the information collected regarding Organizational Trust and Inclusive Leadership in this study reflects correlational findings observed at a specific point in time.

### 2.2. Sample

Simple random sampling method was preferred in this study. The population of the study consists of 242 public schools in Muş city center. Eight randomly selected public schools were included in the study. The participants of the study were teachers working in the compulsory education levels from pre-school to secondary education in the city center of Muş, which is located in the east of Turkey. Accordingly, 48% of a random sample of  $n = 273$  teachers who voluntarily participated in the study were 130 males and 52% were 143 females. The majority of participants (~64%) had an average of 1-10 years of teaching experience. The highest number of participating teachers were from secondary schools (41%). Table 1 provides detailed demographic information about the sample group.

Table 1  
*Demographic information of participants*

| <i>Variables</i>                                      | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> |
|---|-------------|---------------|----------|----------|
| School type   |             |               |          |          |
| Pre-school  | 1           | 20            | 21       | 7.7      |
| Primary   | 45          | 46            | 91       | 33.3     |
| Secondary   | 50          | 62            | 112      | 41       |
| Upper-secondary school                                | 34          | 15            | 49       | 18       |
| Professional Seniority (Years of teaching experience) |             |               |          |          |
| 1-5   | 24          | 64            | 88       | 32.2     |
| 6-10  | 41          | 46            | 87       | 31.9     |
| 11-20   | 50          | 29            | 79       | 28.9     |
| Over 20   | 15          | 4             | 19       | 7        |

### 2.3. Instrument and Procedures

The study used a personal information form and two scales to collect data. The form asked participants about their gender, professional seniority, and type of school where they worked. The study used two scales: the "Organisational Trust Scale" developed by Çalışkan (2021) and the "Inclusive Leadership Scale for Educational Organisations" adapted into Turkish by Okçu and Deviren (2020).

According to the report by Çalışkan (2021), the scale includes 17 items organized into three sub-dimensions that correspond with one another: "Trust in Co-workers" (7 items), "Trust in Leader" (5 items) and "Trust in Institution" (five items). The scale achieved good structural fit through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses ( $\chi^2/df = 2.61$ ,  $RMSEA = .03$ ,  $NFI = .96$ ,  $CFI = .98$ ,  $AGFI = .95$ ,  $GFI = .96$ ). The reliability of the scale was tested and resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .93, McDonald's  $\omega$  of .95, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .95 ( $M = 3.76$ ;  $SD = .80$ ). In this study, the reliability of the scale was retested, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of .93, McDonald's  $\omega$  of .95, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .95 ( $M = 3.76$ ;  $SD = .80$ ). The recalculated reliability values from this study were acceptable. Additionally, the second-order CFA results for the scale showed that it had an acceptable fit with the total score ( $\chi^2/df = 2.31$ ,  $RMSEA = .07$ ,  $NFI = .94$ ,  $CFI = .96$ ,  $IFI = .96$ ,  $GFI = .97$ ).

Okçu and Deviren (2020) also reported that their scale, adapted into Turkish, consisted of 16 items and three sub-dimensions: "Recognition and Support (6 items)", "Justice, Communication, and Action (5 items)", and "Selfishness and Disrespect (5 items)". Items from 'Selfishness and Disrespect,' which is one of these dimensions, are inverse-coded. The scale produced acceptable fit values ( $\chi^2/df = 3.86$ ,  $RMSEA = .07$ ,  $NFI = .93$ ,  $CFI = .92$ ,  $AGFI = .93$ ,  $GFI = .91$ ) based on exploratory factor analysis [EFA] and confirmatory factor analysis [CFA]. The scale's reliability was calculated as Cronbach's alpha = .88. In this study, McDonald's  $\omega = .94$  and Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$  were the reliability values recalculated for the scale ( $M = 3.79$ ;  $SD = .86$ ). In addition, the outcomes of the second-level CFA revealed that the scale appropriately fit with the overall score of the scale ( $\chi^2/df = 2.64$ ,  $RMSEA = .07$ ,  $NFI = .92$ ,  $CFI = .95$ ,  $IFI = .95$ ,  $GFI = .97$ ).

The researchers created a web-based survey using Google Forms (<https://t.ly/000pZ>) and distributed random links to educators employed at publicly funded schools (pre-school, primary, secondary, and upper-secondary) located in the Muş city centre via WhatsApp groups affiliated with the schools. During this process, school administrators provided assistance in disseminating the research link to the teachers. The school administrators, who coordinated with the participating teachers, sent the research form access link to the participants. Two reminders were given to teachers, two weeks apart, to complete the said form. Consequently, the data collection took around two months during March and April of 2023.

## 2.4. Data Analysis

After an initial assessment by the researchers, unprocessed data were sent to the JASP (2023) open-source analysis program (version 0.17.1) using an Excel file. First, descriptive analyses were performed on data with normal distribution and homogeneity tests. Second, correlational and causal comparative data analyses was conducted. In the analysis of the effect sizes of the significant findings of the research, the effect size ranges suggested by Cohen (1988) were adopted.

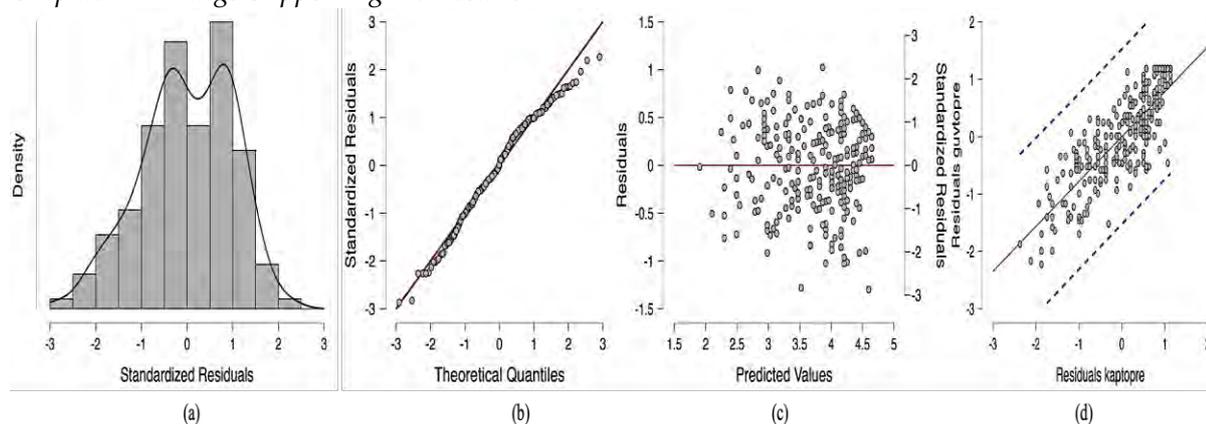
## 3. Results

As a result of the data analysis, no significant relationship was found between inclusive leadership and its subdimensions and teachers' demographic information. However, the relationship between the two sub-dimensions of organizational trust [Trust in the Manager [TM] and Trust in the Institution [TI]] and the gender of the participants differed significantly. The Mann-Whitney  $U$  test was conducted to evaluate whether TM and TI differed according to sex. The results showed that male teachers had significantly more TM and TI than did female teachers ( $UTM = 10825.5$ ,  $p = .018$ ,  $r = .17$ ;  $UTI = 10696.0$ ,  $p = .030$ ,  $r = .15$ ). The effect size for both the significant differences was small (Fritz et al., 2012).

Second, a linear regression was conducted to examine whether Inclusive Leadership could predict the level of Organizational Trust. A scatterplot showed that the relationship between IL and OT was positive and linear, and did not reveal any bivariate outliers. An analysis of the standard residuals showed that the data contained no outliers ( $Std. Residual Min. = -2.88$ ,  $Std.$

*Residual Max.* = 2.26). The independence of residual errors was confirmed using the Durbin-Watson test ( $d = 1.87$ ). Residual plots showed homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The IL significantly predicted OT,  $F(1, 271) = 518.15$ ,  $p < .001$ , accounting for 68.2% of the variability in OT, with adjusted  $R^2 = .682$ . This is a moderately strong relationship (Cohen, 1988). The correlation between IL and OT was statistically significant  $r(271) = .81$ ,  $p < .001$ . The regression equation for predicting the OT from IL was  $\hat{y} = .795 + .784x(\text{IL})$ . The confidence interval for the slope to predict OT from IL was 95% CI [.851, .716] with a  $B = .78$ ; thus, for each one unit of increase of IL, OT increases by about .72 to .85 points. Predictions were made for mean OT among teachers with IL scores of 1.88, 3.12, and 4.18 ( $M \pm 1 SD$ ). For IL scores of 1.88, mean OT was predicted as 2.27; for IL scores of 3.12, mean OT was predicted as 3.24; and for IL scores of 4.18, mean OT was predicted as 4.07 points. The graphical findings supporting the results are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1  
Graphical Findings Supporting the Results



Note.  $n = 273$ ; (a) Histogram of dependent variable; (b) P-P Plot of residual errors; (c) Scatter Plot of predicted and residual errors; (d) Regression result.

Third, multiple regression was performed to evaluate the predictive ability of Recognition and Support [RS], Justice, Communication and Action [JCA], and selfishness and respect [SD] on Organizational Trust [OT]. The 16-item Inclusive Leadership Scale for Educational Organizations (Okçu & Deviren, 2020) was used to assess recognition and support, justice, communication and action, and selfishness and disrespect. Organizational trust was measured using the Organizational Trust Scale (Çalışkan, 2021). Data were screened for accuracy and missing data, and the dataset was complete.

Residuals met the assumption of independence ( $Durbin-Watson = 1.847$ ). Linearity and homoscedasticity were assessed using a plot of standardized residuals against the predicted values. The collinearity statistics indicated that multicollinearity was not a problem (RS,  $tolerance = .34$ ,  $VIF = 2.97$ ; JCA,  $tolerance = .33$ ,  $VIF = 3.05$ ; SD,  $tolerance = .55$ ,  $VIF = 1.82$ ) and no bivariate outliers were detected ( $Std. Residual Min. = -2.79$ ,  $Std. Residual Max. = 2.76$ ).

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and Cronbach's alpha reliability values for the four variables are presented in Table 2. The internal consistency alphas for each of the variables of interest ranged from  $\alpha = .83$  (selfishness and disrespect) to  $\alpha = .95$  (organizational trust). According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), alpha values exceeding  $\alpha = .70$  indicate that the instruments used in the study were adequately reliable. Justice, Communication and Action and Recognition and Support significantly predicted Organizational Trust scores,  $F(2,270) = 275.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .67$ , and adding selfishness and disrespect significantly improved the model,  $B = .14$ ,  $t(273) = 2.98$ ,  $p = .003$ . Table 3 presents the multiple regression results for the four variables of interest. These results indicate that the JCA, RS, and SD are significant predictors of OT.

Table 2  
Descriptive statistics for study variables

| Variable | M    | SD  | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8      |
|----------|------|-----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. OT    | 3.76 | .77 | (.951)  |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |
| 2. RS    | 3.80 | .82 | .761*** | (.924)  |         |         |         |         |         |        |
| 3. JCA   | 3.69 | .79 | .791*** | .800*** | (.912)  |         |         |         |         |        |
| 4. SD    | 3.87 | .79 | .625*** | .629*** | .643*** | (.830)  |         |         |         |        |
| 5. IL    | 3.79 | .80 | .810*** | .913*** | .906*** | .837*** | (.942)  |         |         |        |
| 6. TC    | 3.83 | .73 | .791*** | .403*** | .800*** | .629*** | .451*** | (.926)  |         |        |
| 7. TI    | 3.80 | .78 | .896*** | .768*** | .747*** | .638*** | .799*** | .536*** | (.918)  |        |
| 8. TL    | 3.63 | .83 | .895*** | .801*** | .809*** | .641*** | .844*** | .499*** | .820*** | (.938) |

Note.  $n = 273$ ; \*\*\*Correlation is statistically significant at the .001 level. Recognition and support, justice, communication and action, and selfishness and disrespect scores could range from 16 to 80. Items in parentheses on the diagonal represent Cronbach's alpha reliability values. RS: Recognition and Support, JCA: Justice, Communication and Action, SD: Selfishness and Disrespect, OT: Organizational Trust, TC: Trust in Co-workers, TI: Trust in Institution, TL: Trust in Leadership.

Table 3  
Multiple regression results for study variables

| Variable | B   | SE <sub>B</sub> | t     | p        |
|----------|-----|-----------------|-------|----------|
| Step 1   |     |                 |       |          |
| JCA      | .77 | .04             | 21.25 | <.001*** |
| Step 2   |     |                 |       |          |
| JCA      | .49 | .06             | 8.66  | <.001*** |
| RS       | .34 | .05             | 6.16  | <.001*** |
| Step 3   |     |                 |       |          |
| JCA      | .44 | .06             | 7.49  | <.001*** |
| RS       | .30 | .06             | 5.30  | <.001*** |
| SD       | .14 | .05             | 2.98  | .003**   |

Note.  $n = 273$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ .

In addition, a multiple regression analysis was performed to predict TL from JCA, RS, and SD. These variables significantly predicted TL,  $F(3, 269) = 242.435, p < .001, R^2 = .730$  (~73%). All three variables were added statistically significantly to the prediction,  $p < .001$ . Moreover, a multiple regression analysis was performed to predict TI from JCA, RS, and SD. These variables significantly predicted TL,  $F(3, 269) = 172.888, p < .001, R^2 = .658$  (~66%). All three variables were added statistically significantly to the prediction ( $p < .001$ ). A multiple regression analysis was performed to predict TC from JCA, RS, and SD. These variables significantly predicted TL,  $F(3, 269) = 26.094, p < .001, R^2 = .225$  (~23%). Only the JCA variable was added statistically significantly to the prediction ( $p < .001$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

This study conducted a quantitative analysis of teachers' views to explain the possible effects of the relationship between IL and OT in educational organizations. Descriptive, correlational, and causal comparative statistical analyses were conducted.

Although inclusive education policies continue to be developed in many European countries, Precey (2011) argued that inclusion in education is still utopian. In other words, inclusive education is an ideal worth achieving in the future. However, to go beyond rhetoric and ensure that inclusive education is in line with existing education policies, effective inclusive leadership is necessary. At this point, the values, knowledge, skills, and competencies of inclusive leaders determine whether leadership practices are more or less inclusive. More importantly, they should take actions to create inclusive schools. For current and future leaders, necessary knowledge can be developed and learned. In this regard, Devecchi and Nevin (2010) pointed out that in many countries, particularly the United States of America (USA), there are contrasting and polarizing discourses that focus on leaders' attention solely on student achievement and performance. This appears to be in strong competition with the leadership role in effectively educating students with known achievement gaps. Therefore, alternative perspectives are needed to frame leadership for an inclusive education system within broader concepts of leadership as a kind of mutual learning leadership. From these perspectives, inclusive leadership remains a key element in the successful implementation of more inclusive schools that aim to create learning environments in which all students of different abilities benefit equally (Agbenyega & Sharma, 2014).

Kugelmass (2003) emphasized the importance of building an inclusive culture in schools for both pupils and staff. He argued that the collaborative nature of an inclusive school culture has clear implications for the nature of leadership and decision-making in educational institutions. This is because a growing body of research has emphasized that strong school leaders who are committed to inclusive values are crucial in promoting and supporting educational collaboration. According to Ferdman et al. (2020), the process of inclusive leadership in organizations is an important component of 21st century leadership for the future. They argue that inclusive leadership has great potential to improve the levels of collaboration among staff. Rayner (2009) highlighted the importance of the potential of inclusive leadership. Indeed, inclusive leadership as a form of organizational professional learning is, in many ways, an important means of moving educational organizations to the level of learning organizations. This is because inclusive leadership is also a kind of 'learning leadership' related to educational theory, professional knowledge, personal development, and contributions to practice.

Similarly, the results of this study showed that the view that inclusive leadership significantly and positively explains the level of organizational trust in schools is common among teachers working in different public schools. This is in line with the findings of many other studies that have examined the relationship between inclusive leadership and organizational trust in a limited number of organizations (Ağalday, 2022; Azarian & Taghipour, 2020; Oh et al., 2023; Raiz et al., 2023; Siyal et al., 2023). In other words, it can be said that in schools where inclusive leadership behaviors are in place, there can be a significant increase in teachers' organizational trust.

However, the differences between the subdimensions of inclusive leadership and teachers' demographic variables were not significant.

Another important finding is that the relationship between the two sub-dimensions of the organizational trust scale and the teachers' gender variables was found to be significant. Thus, it can be seen that there is a significant difference with a small effect size in favour of male teachers working in public schools on the subscales of trust in the administrator and trust in the institution. In other words, male teachers are more likely than female teachers to have a significant level of trust in school administrators and institutions. This result is consistent with the findings of recent studies (Aygün, 2021; Çelebi & Tatık, 2019; Demir, 2021; Manzoor & Zaman, 2023). However, this is not consistent with the findings of other studies (Erden & Erden, 2009; Ertürk, 2016; Kursunoglu, 2009; Tasdan & Yalcin, 2010; Yassien, 2023). Özcan et al. (2023) posit that teachers trust male and female leaders based on different behaviors or characteristics. Generally, female leaders are trusted for their objective, idealistic, dedicated behaviors, as well as their maternal, sensitive, and caring personalities. Meanwhile, male leaders are relied upon due to their fairness, reliability, straightforwardness, competence, rationality and communication skills. Although there is a perception that male leaders demonstrate initiative and stricter enforcement of laws and regulations, female administrators tend to have a greater interest in the profession of administration, act with meticulousness and work with devotion. Thus, the recommendation is for school administrators to establish an environment of impartiality and trust within schools. In other words, the effect of gender on organizational trust in education remains controversial. Comparing the results of different studies, it can be said that there is no clarity regarding organizational trust among male and female teachers. Furthermore, gender inequality can also be associated with this phenomenon. As highlighted by Sayılan (2012), despite the appearance of our education system aligning with global gender equality policies, it may harbor inequality and discrimination at various levels. This observation aligns with the findings of Çelikten (2007). In essence, while Turkish women have made significant strides in entering male-dominated professions, they encounter hurdles in assuming roles in school management. This predicament consequently influences the level of trust within the organization. Sari (2012) proposes that this trust deficit can be linked to the stress experienced by female teachers in juggling responsibilities at school, as mothers or wives, and their perceived lack of authority.

Furthermore, the main findings of the study revealed that the relationship between all dimensions of inclusive leadership of educational organizations and the level of teachers' organizational trust was significant and highly positive. Accordingly, an important sign of organizational trust for teachers is the display of inclusive leadership behaviors with the dimensions of justice, communication, and action in a school. For example, a school administrator is expected to show behaviors such as being personally interested in how the work is carried out in the school, providing the necessary solutions to the problems identified by the school staff in a timely manner, setting clear goals to be achieved by the school staff, taking care to treat all staff fairly, with consistent application of the rules (Okçu & Deviren, 2020).

These behaviors have a direct impact on trust in the organization. In addition, an inclusive leader is also not expected to be selfish or disrespectful. Such behaviors were expected to have some significant effects on teachers' trust in the organization, as well as on the leadership sub-dimension of recognizing and supporting. It could be said that these findings of the study are consistent with the findings of previous studies in the literature (Hollander, 2012; Malik et al., 2017; Ryan, 2006; Roberson & Perry, 2022). Roberson and Perry (2022) highlighted the importance of recognition and support in the name of inclusive leadership. This means establishing a professional relationship with others in the team, showing genuine interest in them, and building trust. This is because demonstrating inclusive leadership is about responding to individual needs and working styles and actively listening to what team members are expressing. It also creates time and space within the organization to benefit from employee input in the decision-making

process by creating an environment where employees can freely share and develop each other's ideas without selfishness or disrespect from the leader.

However, the most significant effect of inclusive leadership on teachers' trust in the organization was found to be on the dimension of 'fairness, communication and behavior.' This finding produces a significant overall effect on organizational trust when combined with the sub-dimension of 'recognition and support' in the organization. In other words, behaviors such as allowing teachers to take the initiative in making decisions about education and training and recognizing teachers for their contributions to their work (Okçu & Deviren, 2020), combined with fairness, communication, and action, have been found to have a significant effect on the level of organizational trust in teachers when administrators, based on inclusive leadership in the school, take special interest in teachers' practices related to education and training, encourage teachers to ask questions about these activities, ask teachers' opinions about different educational activities in the school, and listen carefully to the news of teachers. This effect is also enhanced by less selfish and disrespectful behavior in the organization. This important finding supports other recent studies reported in the literature (Ashikali et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2017; Korkmaz et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to develop action plans within the framework of inclusive leadership, especially in educational institutions, in terms of the high levels of institutional trust among teachers and the importance of teamwork. This is because inclusive leadership should support an inclusive climate in an organization in which employees are valued for what they bring to work practices (Ashikali et al., 2021).

To summarize, Turkish schools should recognize the importance of inclusivity and organizational trust for their school culture. They could do so by promoting inclusive practices, fostering trust among stakeholders, and creating a positive and supportive learning environment that benefits their students. This approach is consistent with the overarching objectives of promoting diversity, equity, and social cohesion within the education system.

It should also be noted that this is a quantitative study and therefore, has limitations (Queirós et al., 2017) due to the lack of qualitative data, to explain the phenomenon in more depth. This limits the sharing of teachers' views collected through the scale. While the scale used in the study collected valuable data, it did not include qualitative data support, which could have provided further insights into the teachers' views. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the teachers who participated in the study did so voluntarily and provided their honest opinions on the problem at hand.

## 5. Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

The relationship between inclusive leadership and the level of organisational trust in schools was the focus of this study. At the conclusion of the research, it was found that inclusive leadership with all its sub-dimensions is directly related to the level of organisational trust in schools. Accordingly, it was found that inclusive leadership behaviour can positively and significantly increase the level of organisational trust in schools. In other words, by demonstrating inclusive leadership behaviours in a school, the level of teachers' organisational trust in the school can be increased. On the other hand, no significant relationship was found between teachers' demographic variables and inclusive leadership and its sub-dimensions. In addition, it was observed that male teachers had significantly higher levels of trust in the institution and trust in the administrator than female teachers.

The results of this study highlight the importance of inclusive leadership in educational organizations. Inclusive leadership, with its multidimensional structure, is far from selfishness and disrespect, where justice and communication combined with action, and where behaviors of knowing and supporting teachers are at a high level, can be used as a tool to provide organizational trust in educational organizations to a great extent, with the effect of increasing the level of organizational trust among teachers. Also it can be used to inform national educational policies. School administrators can encourage inclusive leadership in their work within the

framework of new educational policies. The Ministry of National Education [MoNE] can implement national-or internationally supported training projects to raise awareness of inclusive leadership practices among school administrators and teachers. This study will form the basis for, researchers to conduct more experimental and empirical studies on the relationship between inclusive leadership and organizational trust in Turkish Schools.

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