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An Analysis of Youth Leadership Traits Among Students at Faculty of Sports Sciences

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Abstract

Youth is defined as a period between childhood and adulthood for personal and mental development and preparation for future life. Individuals who succeed in integrating their leadership skills during their childhood into their educational experiences during their youth improve their power in an area of specialization and activate their youth leadership skills. Thus, they become skilled individuals who can take responsibility easily against various events in their lives and manage and direct their respective organization. The present study aims to analyze youth leadership skills among students at Faculty of Sports Sciences based on various variables and to improve these students' leadership abilities through making a number of suggestions derived from the analysis findings. Survey was used as a research method in the present study. The population of the study consisted of students studying at Faculty of Sports Sciences at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, and the sample of the study consisted of 394 students studying at the same faculty and university. "Youth Leadership Scale" developed by Turan and Cansoy (2016) was used for data collection. A statistically significant difference was found between the participants' university departments and their determination/goal setting and trusting/reliability sub-dimension scores. In addition, a statistically significant difference was observed between the participants' grade levels and their communication sub-dimension scores. Similarly, there was a stistically significant difference between the participants' grade point average scores and their group skills and problem-solving sub-dimension scores. Finally, a statistically significant difference was found between students' participation in leadership classes and all scale sub-dimension scores. As a result, it was found that the students who participated in a leadership class displayed more leadership traits compared to those who did not take such classes.

Keywords: Youth, Leadership, Youth Leadership, Sports Sciences.

Introduction

UNESCO and the United Nations have determined the age range for youth as 15-24 (UN, 2020, UNESCO, 2016). Turkey, on the other hand, adopted the age of 15-24 as the youth period determined by the UN. During this period, young individuals receive education in different areas of specialization in order to meet their needs and improve their skills, thus advancing their life knowledge in this process of learning. From their birth to their death, due to some genetic traits (Freedman, 1974) and environmental factors (Skinner, 2002), individuals are likely to display many different behaviors in terms of managing various situations in their lives (Buss, 2011; Kandler and Papendick, 2017). Therefore, it is important to identify the reasons for these differences and help young individuals to overcome difficulties in their lives, which will eventually prepare them for their future career (Cansoy and Turan, 2016). Most leadership development targets youth, a "fuzzy category" that includes pre-teens, adolescents, students, and young or developing adults (Carroll and Frith, 2020). Youth leadership development research has been an issue that has been emphasized for a long time. Youth leadership and policy have long recognized the value of connecting schools, young people, parents, families and communities (Bezinde, Foroughi and Godwyll, 2018; Carroll and Firth, 2021; Marsh, Strunk, Bush-Mecenas and Huguet, 2015; Seemiller, 2020; Thompson and Miller, 2017). In this respect, the determination and improvement of young individuals' leadership traits have become a crucial research topic.

Youth Leadership

In order to understand the concept of youth leadership, firstly, what is the concept of leadership should be looked at. Northouse (2004) proposes leadership as a process in which an individual influence a group of people to achieve a common goal. Chemers (2002) suggests that leadership is a process of social impact in which one can get the help and support of others to accomplish a common task.

There are differences between adult leadership and youth leadership. Unlike adult leadership, youth leadership focuses on methods in which leadership can be discovered, taught or experienced by young people (Redmond and Dolan, 2016). While these methods are based on learning by experience, they not only develop skills, but also impose the opportunity to practice using original and meaningful ways (MacNeil, 2006).

The widely used definition of youth leadership development by Zeldin and Camino (1999) is known as "providing experiences that help young people develop the qualities necessary to lead others, from highly structured to highly informal". According to Jolly and Kettler (2004), individuals with youth leadership traits are defined as individuals who who has the ability to guide and direct members of youth communities within the framework of various activities in those communities. Similary, youth leadership focuses on working together for a common target or cause as well as young leaders in a certain organization (Redmond and Dolan, 2016). Leadership development is generally considered to involve focusing on decision-making skills, communication skills, feedback skills, awareness of the group's initiative, and self-awareness (Sibthorp, Paisley and Gookin, 2007). Those with increased leadership abilities through specific leadership experiences may be more likely to participate in leadership positions in the future and pass on what they learn to others (Allen-Craig and Hartley, 2012). As a result of the literature reviews on youth leadership, "problem solving skills (Connelly et al., 2000; Karnes and Bean, 1990; Meyer, 1995; Mumford et al., 2000), goal setting (Addison, 1985; Anyon et al., 2007), decision-making skills (Anyon et al., 2007; Fertman and Linden, 1999; Joy, Yang and Farzanehkia, 2000), group skills (Conner and Strobel, 2007; Kouzes and Posner, 2006), knowing individual and group values (Amirianzadeh, 2012; Henderson,

Whitaker, Bialeschki, Scanlin and Thurber, 2007; Kouzes and Posner, 2006), written and verbal communication skills (Zimmerman and Burkhardt, 1999a, 1999b; Conner and Strobel, 2007), motivation (Amirianzadeh, 2012; Anyon et al., 2007; Özgün et al., 2017; Henderson, Whitaker, Bialeschki, Scanlin and Thurber, 2007), social and moral responsibility, sense of commitment (Addison, 1985), conflict management and solving (Fertman and Long, 1990; Zimmerman and Burkhardt, 1999a, 1999b), stress management (Fertman and Long, 1990; Fertman and Linden, 1999), self-knowledge (Amirianzadeh, 2012; Anyon et al., 2007; Conner and Strobel, 2007; Meadows, 2012), self-directedness (Garrison, 1997), emotional intelligence (Antonakis, Ashkanasy and Dasborough, 2009; George, 2000; Kul et al., 2014; Kerr et al., 2006), self-regulation (Ent, Baumeister and Vonasch, 2012; Moss, Downling and Callanan, 2009), management (Mabey and Lee, 2007, Smircich and Morgan, 1982), modeling (Kouzes and Posner, 2006), critical thinking (Anyon et al., 2007; Conner ve Strobel, 2007), risk-taking (Drum, 1988; Kouzes ve Posner, 2006), the ultimate goal of the leaders to cause positive change (Rosch ve Anthony, 2012) are the treats of youth leadership.

Liu et al. (2020) argue that there are windows of opportunity for leadership development throughout life, and each stage offers unique opportunities to encourage this development. Especially adolescence is the time to develop many important life skills, including leadership skills (Bates, Anderson-Butcher, Ferrari and Clary, 2020). Various positive experiences such as being respected in a circle of friends during childhoold, being surrounded by classmates in the classroom during early school period or being selected as the classroom president by influencing classmates thanks to genetic features, charisma and self-confidence can be considered as indicators of an individual's innate leadership traits (Edelman et al., 2004). Young individuals need to direct their life towards their respective goals and wishes in order to realize their leadership potentials and, after this stage, they are expected to influence people around them and display their leadership for those people. Finally, their leadership traits are completed when they meet the needs of members in a certain group or organization in relation with organizational goals (McCauley et al., 2010).

The nature and form of leadership is changing in today's dynamic sports industries. The traditional management of the industrial era in the past no longer makes sense at the individual and organizational levels in current sports organizations, given the competitive market and economic uncertainty (Megheirkouni, 2018). Physical education and sports teachers, sports managers, coachs and recreation specialists are trained in universities to overcome these problems. The prevalence of sports activities in the whole world and indispensable role of sports organizations in economic and political contexts underline the importance of taking sports into account in political and economic decision-making processes. There is no doubt that individuals who are expected to undertake active roles in future sports organizations are candidates of physical education and sports teacher, sports manager, coach and recreation expert. In this respect, university students' theoretical education during their university years must be integrated into an active worklife, and their willingness to participate in research activities must be encouraged through related activities in order to help them keep up with the innovations in the world (Bozyiğit and Çetin, 2019).

The present study aims to draw attention to the potential leadership of students at Faculty of Sports Sciences, as they are expected to take part in and lead various sports organizations and thus contribute to the development and success of these sports organizations in the future. This is because, in addition to their roles as a teacher, candidates of physical education and sports teacher who will work at schools affiliated with Ministry of National Education need to become a responsible leader for their students. Similarly, canditates of sports managers, coaches and recreation experts who will be employed in central and local institutions

affiliated with Ministry of Youth and Sports need to act as responsible leaders who guide their respective communities. Considering the complexity of these roles, it is of vital importance for students who study at faculties of sports sciences to gain active and effective leadership traits and skills during their education, to guide and direct a certain sports organization and members of that organization through their related qualities in the future, and, finally, to contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. In the light of these points, the present study aims to evaluate students studying at Faculty of Sports Sciences in terms of their youth leadership traits based on various variables and improve these students' youth leadership skills through practical suggestions based on the obtained findings.

Material Method

Research Model

Survey was used as a research method in the present study. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first part, participants' demographic information such as sex, age, department, grade level, grade point average (GPA) and history of participation in a leadership class was obtained. In the second part, "Youth Leadership Scale" developed by Seevers et al. (1995) adapted into Turkish by Cansoy and Turan (2016) was used.

Participants

The population of the study consisted of students studying at Faculty of Sports Sciences at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University. The sample of the study consisted of 394 students, 134 female and 260 males, who study at the same faculty and university and voluntarily participated in the survey.

Measures

Developed by Seevers et al. (1995), adapted into Turkish by Turan and Cansoy (2016) "Youth Leadership Scale" with 40 questions and 7 sub-dimensions was used in the present study. Item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 belong to "Determination/Goal Setting" sub-dimension, Item 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 belong to "Communication" sub-dimension, Items 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 belong to "Group Skills" sub-dimension, Item 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27 belong to "Trusting/Reliability" sub-dimension, Item 28, 29, 30 and 31 belong to "Decision-making" sub-dimension, Item 32, 33, 34 and 35 belong to "Problem-Solving" sub-dimension and Item 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40 belong to "Responsibility" sub-dimension.

Procedure

A reliability test was performed in order to calculate Cronbach alpha coefficients of the data obtained from the present study. In addition, a normality test was also applied to the obtained data to reveal whether they displayed a normal distribution, and parametric tests were applied due to the normal distribution of the obtained data. After data frequency values were calculated, a T-test was applied between sex and history of participation in a leadership class and scale sub-dimensions. One-way analysis of variance was used between age, department, grade level and GPA and scale sub-dimensions.

Results

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

	Variable	***f***	***%***
Sex	Female	134	34
	Male	260	66
Age	18-19	98	24.9
	20-21	159	40.4
	22-23	101	25.6
	24 and over	36	9.1
Department	PE Teaching	57	14.5
	Sports Management	175	44.4
	Coaching	55	14.0
	Recreation	107	27.2
Grade Level	Freshman	118	29.9
	Sophomore	94	23.9
	Junior	105	26.6
	Senior	77	19.5
Grade Point Average	1.99 or lower	22	5.6
	2.00-2.49	109	27.7
	2.50-2.99	133	33.8
	3.00-3.49	93	23.6
	3.50 or higher	37	9.4
Have you ever taken a class on leadership?	Yes	133	33.8
	No	261	66.2
Total		394	100%

As seen in Table 1, 34% of the participants were female students, while 66% of them were male students. 40.4% of the participants were aged 20-21, 25.6% of them were aged 22-23, 24.9% of them were aged 18-19 and 9.1% of them were aged 24 or over. 44.4% of the participants studied Sports Management, 27.2% of them studied Recreation, 14.5% of them studied Physical Education and Sports Teaching and 14% of them studied Coaching Education. %29.9 of the participants were freshman students, 23.9% of them were sophomore students, 26.6% of them were junior students and 19.5% of them were senior students. 33.8% of the participants had a GPA of 2.50-2.99, 27.7% of them had a GPA of 2.00.2-49, 23.6% of them had a GPA of 3.00-3.49 and 9.4% of them had a GPA of 3.50 and higher, while only 5.6% of them had a GPA of 1.99 or lower. Finally, while 33.8% of the participants stated that they took a class on leadership in the past, 66.2% of them answered in the negative.

Table 2. The Cronbach Alfa, skewness and kurtosis coefficients of scale sub-dimensions

Sub-dimension	**Items**	**N**	**X**	***Std. D.***	**Cronbach Alfa**	***Skewness***	***Kurtosis***
Determination / Goal setting	7	394	3,9511	,68070	,878	-,792	,844
Communication	7	394	3,8390	,69223	,862	-,507	,344
Group Skills	7	394	4,0664	,60446	,857	-1,135	1,119
Trusting / Reliability	6	394	4,1510	,61537	,778	-1,091	1,407
Decision-making	4	394	4,0742	,63384	,811	-,701	,788
Problem-solving	4	394	4,0977	,63754	,802	-,727	,779
Responsibility	5	394	4,0264	,65032	,768	-,860	1,150

When sub-dimension reliability scores of the data obtained from "Youth Leadership Scale" in the present study were analyzed, it was observed that Cronbach alpha coefficients of determination/goal setting, communication, group skills, trusting/reliability, decision-making, problem-solving and responsibility sub-dimensions were calculated as .87, .86, .85, .77, .81,

.80 and .76, respectively. Cronbach's alpha values for all the constructs were >.70 indicating the reliability of the scale (Nunnally, 1978). Therefore, it can be stated that while responsibility and trusting/reliability sub-dimensions of the scale had high Cronbach alpha values, decision-making, problem-solving, group skills, communication and determination/goal setting sub-dimensions had excellent Cronbach alpha values. In addition, it was observed that the normality test applied to mean scale and sub-dimension scores in the present study displayed a distribution varying between +1.5 and -1.5. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), a distribution value between +1.5 and -1.5 was considered as an indicator of normal data distribution. Therefore, it is evident that mean scale scores in the present study displayed a normal distribution.

Table 3. The results of T-test between the participants' mean scale and sub-dimension scores in terms of gender

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	Std. D.	df	p
Mean Scale Score	Female	134	4.0922	.46942	392	**.031***
	Male	260	3.9798	.51696		
Determination / Goal setting	Female	134	4.0416	.63474	392	.051
	Male	260	3.9044	.69983		
Communication	Female	134	3.9083	.66371	392	.146
	Male	260	3.8033	.70507		
Group Skills	Female	134	4.1407	.56413	392	.071
	Male	260	4.0280	.62181		
Trusting / Reliability	Female	134	4.2027	.57458	392	.217
	Male	260	4.1244	.63480		
Decision-making	Female	134	4.1530	.62971	392	.076
	Male	260	4.0337	.63335		
Problem-solving	Female	134	4.1437	.64261	392	.307
	Male	260	4.0740	.63485		
Responsibility	Female	134	4.1299	.57583	392	**.017***
	Male	260	3.9731	.68048		

(p<.05*p<.01)**

According to Table 3, female participants' mean scale scores significantly differed from those of male participants. In addition, only in terms of responsibility sub-dimension, female participants significantly differed from male participants.

Table 4. The results of one-way analysis of variance among the participants' mean sub-dimension scores in terms of department

Variable		Department	N	Mean	Std. D.	p	Tukey
Mean Scale Score	A	PE Teaching	57	3.8281	.53959	**.013***	**A<B,C,D**
	B	Sports Management	175	4.0781	.44678		
	C	Coaching	55	4.0150	.58738		
	D	Recreation	107	4.0224	.50730		
Determination / Goal setting	A	PE Teaching	57	3.6942	.79376	**.014***	**A<B,C,D**
	B	Sports Management	175	4.0310	.58198		
	C	Coaching	55	3.9558	.77317		
	D	Recreation	107	3.9546	.69172		
Communication	A	PE Teaching	57	3.6216	.67412	.082	
	B	Sports Management	175	3.8873	.64864		
	C	Coaching	55	3.8597	.71982		
	D	Recreation	107	3.8652	.74278		
Group skills	A	PE Teaching	57	3.9398	.58774	.193	
	B	Sports Management	175	4.1273	.53921		

	C	Coaching	55	4.0779	.65224		
	D	Recreation	107	4.0280	.67960		
Trusting / Reliability	A	PE Teaching	57	3.9678	.66177	**.030***	**B > A**
	B	Sports Management	175	4.2362	.55343		
	C	Coaching	55	4.0939	.67796		
	D	Recreation	107	4.1386	.63547		
Decision-making	A	PE Teaching	57	3.8772	.69937	.080	
	B	Sports Management	175	4.1257	.59383		
	C	Coaching	55	4.0955	.66578		
	D	Recreation	107	4.0841	.63315		
Problem-solving	A	PE Teaching	57	3.9518	.64337	.310	
	B	Sports Management	175	4.1271	.60699		
	C	Coaching	55	4.1364	.68180		
	D	Recreation	107	4.1075	.65796		
Responsibility	A	PE Teaching	57	3.8421	.67690	.088	
	B	Sports Management	175	4.0754	.61047		
	C	Coaching	55	3.9709	.77691		
	D	Recreation	107	4.0729	.61699		

(p<.05*p<.01)**

It can be understood from Table 4 that the participants studying Physical Education and Sports Teaching significantly differed from other participants and had a lower mean scale score in terms of determination/goal setting sub-dimension. However, in terms of trusting/reliability sub-dimension, the participants studying Sports Management significantly differed from those studying Physical Education and Sports Teaching and had a higher mean scale score. The results of one-way analysis of variance between mean scale score and departments indicated that Physical Education and Sports Teaching department significantly different from other departments and had a lower mean scale score.

Table 5. The results of one-way analysis of variance among the participants' mean sub-dimension scores in terms of grade level

Variable		***Grade Level***	***N***	***Mean***	***Std. D.***	***p***	***Tukey***
Mean Scale Score	A	Freshman	118	4.0100	.51661	.215	
	B	Sophomore	94	3.9327	.56209		
	C	Junior	105	4.0679	.51244		
	D	Senior	77	4.0666	.37325		
Determination / Goal setting	A	Freshman	118	3.9794	.67247	.490	
	B	Sophomore	94	3.8860	.79099		
	C	Junior	105	4.0150	.62331		
	D	Senior	77	3.8998	.62273		
Communication	A	Freshman	118	3.8668	.71969	**.015***	**D > B**
	B	Sophomore	94	3.6505	.63599		
	C	Junior	105	3.8789	.72079		
	D	Senior	77	3.9722	.63973		
Group skills	A	Freshman	118	4.0351	.61066	.462	
	B	Sophomore	94	4.0076	.64719		
	C	Junior	105	4.1048	.63650		
	D	Senior	77	4.1336	.48575		
Trusting / Reliability	A	Freshman	118	4.1031	.64085	.228	
	B	Sophomore	94	4.0780	.68727		
	C	Junior	105	4.2254	.61498		
	D	Senior	77	4.2121	.45694		
Decision-making	A	Freshman	118	4.0530	.66494	.632	
	B	Sophomore	94	4.0372	.66797		

	C	Junior	105	4.0714	.63711	
	D	Senior	77	4.1558	.53502	
Problem-solving	A	Freshman	118	4.0911	.69543	.470
	B	Sophomore	94	4.0160	.65048	
	C	Junior	105	4.1405	.60040	
	D	Senior	77	4.1494	.57677	
Responsibility	A	Freshman	118	4.0068	.67580	.476
	B	Sophomore	94	3.9638	.72198	
	C	Junior	105	4.1048	.60389	
	D	Senior	77	4.0260	.57706	

(p<.05*p<.01)**

It can be seen in Table 5 that senior students significantly differed from sophomore students in terms of communication sub-dimension and had a higher mean scale score. However, no statistically significant differences were found in one-way analysis of variance between mean scale scores and grade levels.

Table 6. The results of T-test among the participants' mean sub-dimension scores in terms of history of participantion in a leadership class

Variable	***Have you ever taken a class on leadership?***	***N***	***Mean***	***Std. D.***	***df***	***p***
Mean Scale Score	Yes	133	4.1897	.36575	392	**.000****
	No	261	3.9306	.54089		
Determination / Goal setting	Yes	133	4.0827	.57338	392	**.003****
	No	261	3.8840	.72116		
Communication	Yes	133	4.0559	.59757	392	**.000****
	No	261	3.7285	.71183		
Group Skills	Yes	133	4.2299	.46552	392	**.000****
	No	261	3.9830	.64932		
Trusting / Reliability	Yes	133	4.3233	.43362	392	**.000****
	No	261	4.0632	.67380		
Decision-making	Yes	133	4.2124	.52809	392	**.001****
	No	261	4.0038	.67153		
Problem-solving	Yes	133	4.2820	.49754	392	**.000****
	No	261	4.0038	.68006		
Responsibility	Yes	133	4.2180	.51136	392	**.000****
	No	261	3.9287	.69147		

(p<.05*p<.01)**

It is evident in Table 6 that a statistically significant difference was found between the participants' mean scale and sub-dimension scores and their history of participation in a leadership class in the past.

Discussion and Conclusion

It was observed in the present study that 40.4% of the participants were aged 20-21, 25.6% of them were aged 22-23, 24.9% of them were aged 18-19 and 9.1% of them were aged 24 or over. UNESCO (2016) and UN (2020) also point out, individuals aged between 15 and 25 are accepted as "young". It can be thus said that the students who participated in the present study conform to the definition of "youth" given above.

The results of T-test between the participants' sex and mean scale scores demonstrated that female participants differed from male participants significantly. However, in terms of sub-dimension scores, female participants differed significantly from male participants only in responsibility sub-dimension. Brick (1998), Chan (2000), Dugan and Komives (2007), and Çelik and Durmuş (2011) reported that women displayed more youth leadership traits compared to men. Again, Osmane and Brennan (2018) concluded in their study that the leadership skills of women are higher than that of men. Therefore, the findings of the present study overlap with those of the above-mentioned studies. The fact that women displayed more youth leadership traits compared to men can be associated with their higher participation in collaborative activities and studies, while men usually tend to participate in activities requiring individual physical strength for the improvement of their youth leadership traits (Mullen and Tuten, 2004). Studies in the literature suggest that men and women develop different aggression or cooperative tendencies. Men exhibit more competitive behaviors and women more collaborative behaviors (Balliet et al., 2011; Nichols, 2015; Van Vugt, 2009; Van Vugt & Spisak, 2008). Previous research in the literature reveals a number of sociocultural barriers that may explain women's underrepresentation in leadership, particularly male-dominated networks, social stereotyping, gender discrimination, and women's excessive workload due to greater family responsibilities. (Huang and Aaltio 2014; Zhao and Jones, 2017).

According to the one-way analysis of variance between the classes of the individuals participating in the study and the sub-dimensions of the scale, as the class in which they study increases, the ability of individuals to communicate also increases. However, according to the results of one-way analysis of variance, no statistically significant differences were found between mean scale scores and grade levels. The present study also found a statistically significant difference between the participants' departments and mean scale scores. It is seen that the leadership traits of the departments where the education is taken are higher in the participants who study in the sports management department. This may be due to the fact that the courses that can develop leadership qualities in the curriculum of the students who study in the department of sports management are more intense.

The results of T-test between the participants' history of participation in leadership classes and mean sub-dimension scores demonstrated that the participants who took a leadership class significantly differed from those who did not take such a class in terms of all scale sub-dimensions. Durlak and Weissberg (2007) reported that individuals who took part in various activities to improve their leadership abilities increased their performance compared to those who did not. Many studies in the literature have shown that youth leadership programs contribute significantly to the leadership characteristics of individuals (Bates et al., 2020; Osmane & Brennan, 2018; Puxley & Chapin, 2020; Sewell et al., 2020; Sherif, 2019). Parkhill, Deans, and Chapin (2018) stated that leadership programs have the potential to enable adolescents to create and discover their own personal and group identities, to gain self-confidence and to act in an original way. These findings suggest that community-based group programs have the potential to significantly allow adolescents to acquire and practice leadership skills before and potentially. It was also observed that young individuals who participated in leadership-oriented activities improved their leadership abilities (NCYD, 2011). Therefore, the present study is supported by the findings of the above-mentioned studies in terms of the argument that individuals who take leadership classes display more leadership behaviors.

In conclusion, it was found in the present study that female students had more leadership traits compared to male students, that the students studying at the department of sports management had more leadership traits compared to the students studying at other departments, that the senior students had more communication abilities compared to the sophomore students, that the students who took a leadership class had more youth leadership traits compared to those who did not take any leadership classes.

Suggestions

- The integration of a mandatory leadership course into undergraduate curricula at different departments of sports sciences will contribute to the development of young individuals' active leadership skills for their prospective positions in related sports organizations and institutions.
- The present study may be conducted on an experiment and control group.
- The present study may be conducted at different faculties of different universities in different geographical regions of Turkey.

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