Social Justice Leadership in Education: What Do School Principals Do for Social Justice?

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This study aims to explore school principals' perceptions of social justice in education and their social justice leadership behaviors at school. The data of the study, which was conducted with the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods, were obtained through semi-structured interviews with nine school principals and then analyzed by thematic analysis. The results of this study reveal that school principals mostly have distributive and recognitional justice perceptions of social justice in education and participatory justice perceptions at a relatively lower level. It has been revealed that principals have perceptions of distributive justice with the phenomena of equality, equality of opportunity, and fairness; recognitory justice with the phenomena of awareness of disadvantaged groups, supporting disadvantaged groups, and respect for diversity; and participatory justice with the phenomenon of democracy. It was found that school principals mostly exhibited social justice leadership behaviors concerning the dimensions of critical consciousness and support, while their behaviors in relation to the dimension of inclusion were limited compared to the other two dimensions. In their schools, principals exhibited respect for diversity among students, awareness of social injustices, raising critical consciousness about social justice, providing financial support, supporting students' academic and social development, creating an inclusive educational environment, and participatory management behaviors. Some implications were made for school principals' leadership behaviors regarding the conduct of educational activities within the framework of the principle of social justice. It has been revealed that we need to rethink the duties of school principals on how they ensure justice in education services, how they protect disadvantaged groups, and how they distribute resources.

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Introduction

School principals today are faced with new and highly variable contextual changes with complicated repercussions on the school. The student population has grown more diversified, with kids from immigrant families representing a variety of languages, skills, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and religious beliefs (Richardson & Sauers, 2014). As a result of this increasing diversity, new challenges to social justice have emerged, and these equity-based issues continue to hinder student learning, participation, and development (Chiu & Walker, 2007). In the face of this increasing diversity in the student population, context-specific social justice leadership behaviors of school principals are becoming increasingly important (Hallinger, 2016).

It is not possible to say that all individuals in the world benefit from educational services fairly. The focus of this study is our belief in the need to rethink social justice in educational activities. In this regard, the call of UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay is striking: "We need a collective mobilization to ensure that every child's right to quality education is respected." This call is motivated by UNESCO data showing that 244 million children and young people aged 6-18 are still out of school worldwide and that there is a risk that the goal of quality education for all will not be achieved by 2030 (UNESCO, 2022). The educational system, policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers all share responsibility when it comes to how to ensure fairness in education services, how to protect disadvantaged groups, and how to distribute scarce resources. It would not be wrong to say that each of them has a responsibility in this regard. Who is most responsible for carrying out educational activities the scope of the principle of social justice is debatable. However, it should be said that school principals have significant responsibilities in this regard. Ryan (2006) states that schools should fulfill certain duties for a just world. Therefore, it is essential for school principals to ensure social justice in educational activities as a leader.

Finding out how school principals, who are expected to be social justice leaders, perceive social justice, how much they adopt the make sense of social justice and their views on their experiences are important in terms of developing policies to promote social justice in education. Undoubtedly, the efforts of school principals, who are the implementers, are very important in the success of the policies determined by the top administrations in educational systems. In recent years, the importance of school leadership in enabling disadvantaged groups to benefit from educational services fairly has attracted the attention of researchers in the educational sciences literature (Bates, 2006; Berkovich, 2014; Bogotch, 2002; Bozkurt, 2017; Chiu & Walker, 2007; DeMatthews, 2014; Gürgen, 2017; Özdemir, 2017; Ryan, 2006; Scanlan, 2007; Theoharis, 2007a; Wang, 2018; Zufiaurre & Wilkinson, 2014). Varying school demographics, especially with increasing achievement gaps among disadvantaged individuals and groups, and increasing multiculturalism in educational environments, have revealed the need to discuss social justice leadership in education (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks, Normore & Wilkinson, 2017; Furman, 2012; Furman & Shields, 2005; Jean-Marie, 2008; Jean-Marie, Normore & Brooks, 2009).

Social justice leadership refers to the leadership approach in which school principals promote the values of fairness, equality, and inclusiveness in every aspect of the school. This understanding of leadership requires school principals to understand the needs of each student, evaluate the differences and develop strategies suitable for these differences (Theoharis, 2007a). Examining social justice leadership enables school principals to recognize inequalities among student groups and take steps to address these inequalities. For example,

school principals can ensure the equitable distribution of educational resources, combat discrimination and develop policies for diversity and inclusion (Ryan & Rottmann, 2007). The implementation of this leadership approach can reduce achievement gaps among students in schools, provide support to disadvantaged groups and make the school climate more equitable and inclusive. In addition, social justice leadership may help students create stronger relationships with one another and adoption of social justice understanding. Hence it can be claimed that examining the social justice leadership of school principals is important to make the education system fairer and more inclusive. This leadership approach is crucial in reducing inequalities among students, enabling each student to realize their potential, and laying the foundations for social justice.

This study focuses on how school principals see social justice in education and how they use leadership to promote it in their institutions. It is aimed to reveal the social justice leadership behaviors by determining the extent to which school principals have internalized the understanding of social justice and their experiences in providing social justice at school. The reflections of their unique understanding of social justice on their social justice leadership behaviors are another focus of this study. It is claimed that the internalization of the social justice understanding of school principals will enable them to exhibit social justice leadership behaviors. It is hoped that the study will raise awareness in school principals, enable them to develop social justice understanding and social justice leadership behaviors in education by interpreting their personal experiences, provide decision-makers with ideas about social injustices in education and measures that can be taken, and contribute to the development of social justice understanding in education policies. In addition, the results of the study may add to the existing information on social justice leadership, spark new research, and attention from academics. Answers to the following questions were sought in this study, which was conducted to disclose the "social justice leadership" behaviors of school principals in accordance with their beliefs about social justice in education and their actions to assure social justice at school: i) What are school principals' perceptions of social justice in education? ii) What are the social justice leadership behaviors exhibited by school principals? iii) What are the reflections of school principals' perceptions of social justice on their social justice leadership behaviors and practices?

Theoretical Background

Social Justice in Education

Mayer (2003) defines being disadvantaged as "not being self-sufficient" due to certain obstacles. At this point, as Gürgen (2017) states, there is a need for "social justice" which is a movement to empower those who are disadvantaged. In fact, social justice is the act of eliminating disadvantaged situations through positive discrimination (Walzer, 1983).

In the literature, social justice in education is analyzed in three sub-dimensions, namely, as "recognitory justice", "distributive justice" (Gewirtz, 2006; Bates, 2006; Fraser, 2001), and "participatory justice" (Enslin, 2006). According to Rawls, distributive justice is the equal distribution of goods, social rights, and status to all members of society. Recognitory justice is associated with treating disadvantaged groups with respect, protecting them by countering the dominance of the dominant culture (Fraser, 2001), and protecting their rights (Bates, 2006). Participatory justice can be considered as the participation of individuals in social decisions and democracy (Fraser, 2001).

It can be said that the "barriers to self-sufficiency" mentioned by Mayer (2003) have always existed. We cannot share the benefits of economic development and social progress equally. Events caused by historical, sociological, political, ideological, economic, and cultural processes lead to the formation of disadvantaged groups in society (Hurst, 2016). For this reason, social injustice is one of the blatantly observable phenomena of the world. Although there are significant differences between countries, it does not seem possible to say that social justice is generally achieved. At this point, it is clear that we still cannot establish a world order free from poverty or inequality and we need to be "social justice activists" (Williamson, 2022). It should be said that this work should start with ensuring social justice in school.

Without access to high-quality education for all members of society, social and economic inequalities that have long-lasting effects on society as a whole will persist. Education policies and practices that are based on an understanding of social justice are powerful tools for establishing social justice in society (Tarrou & Holmesland, 2002). By ensuring social justice in education, it will be possible to achieve broader social justice goals. By providing equal educational opportunities to individuals in educational activities, listening to marginalized voices, breaking the cycle of inequality, and encouraging a critical and empathetic approach to social injustices, the foundations for a just social order can be laid. It is quite difficult to achieve practical results by developing policy implications for social justice in education (Capper & Young, 2014). This is a result of the social justice ideal's complexity, which is assumed (Sarid, 2021). However, Ryan and Higginbottom (2017) call for inclusive policies and social justice leadership, which they argue is under-discussed.

Social Justice Leadership

The education system should stand against the marginalization and exclusion of people and society while providing them the information and abilities they need to advance their own position (Luczynski, 2011). School principals have an important position as a controlling power in the realization of the organizational goals of schools. School principals should focus on ensuring the welfare of students at all levels in all educational activities and be social justice leaders (Murillo, Krichesky, Castro & Hernandez-Castilla, 2010; Ryan 2006). Social justice leadership is a leadership approach that acts the behaviours of school principals that enable disadvantaged students to access and benefit from education at the highest level (Theoharis, 2007a). School principals have important roles in ensuring social justice in education (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll & Russ, 2010). They ensure students' participation in educational activities by trying to eliminate injustices that may occur due to their individual differences (Theoharis, 2007a); they take bold action with a questioning and critical perspective on the unfair policies and practices of the education system (Wang, 2018), they support the development of democracy in schools with a participatory management approach (Furman, 2012), and they enable students to gain awareness of inequalities in society and acquire the skills to take action against these inequalities (McKenzie, Christman, Hernandez, Fierro, Capper, Dantley & Scheurich, 2008). On the other hand, the school principal's social justice approach, practices and leadership in this direction provide teachers and students, and even the whole society, with a broad perspective on the perception of social justice and actions in this direction.

In the literature, social justice leadership is analyzed in three dimensions: "critical consciousness", "inclusion" and "support" (Büyükgöze, Şayir, Gülcemal & Kubilay, 2018; McKenzie et al., 2008; Özdemir, 2017; Özdemir & Kütküt, 2015; Theoharis, 2007a). The critical consciousness dimension includes being aware of social, political and economic

injustices, displaying a critical attitude towards unfair situations, taking necessary measures against these situations (Berkovich, 2014; Brooks & Miles, 2006), and ensuring that the school community creates a consciousness against discrimination by giving students a critical perspective (Brooks & Miles, 2006; Dantley, 2007; Furman, 2012; McKenzie et al., 2008) The inclusion dimension includes inclusive and integrative school practices for disadvantaged students (Cooper, 2009; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007a) and creating a participatory school culture by preparing a democratic environment (Furman & Shields, 2005; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Theoharis, 2007a). The support dimension, on the other hand, includes supporting disadvantaged students to overcome their disadvantages arising from their differences in order to ensure their access to quality educational practices (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Theoharis, 2007a) and ensuring academic success for all students (McKenzie et al., 2008; Tomul, 2009).

Social justice leaders are individuals who accept and respect individual differences (Berkovich, 2014; Kenny & Romano, 2009), recognize economic, political, and social differences among students (Boske, 2014) and take action to address the problems that arise in this regard (Bogotch, 2002; DeMatthews, 2014). The understanding of social justice is based on respect, recognition, and empathy (Theoharis, 2007a); it is an approach where awareness of social injustices is at the forefront (Brooks & Miles, 2006; DeMatthews, 2014). Brooks and Miles (2006) and DeMatthews (2014) emphasize that social justice leaders should have a high and critical awareness of oppression, exclusion, and marginalization in schools. Indeed, Jansen (2006) draws attention to the courage of principals who are social justice leaders to criticize inequalities caused by differences; Wang (2018) draws attention to their willingness to take action against the unfair practices of the education system. They are voluntary defenders of disadvantaged students (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). In addition, the social justice leader tries to bring critical consciousness to students. Social justice understanding requires students to take the stance of being critical citizens regarding inequalities in society (McKenzie et al., 2008). The social justice leader helps students develop their perceptions of democracy, equality, justice, and respect for differences by creating an understanding of social justice (Furman & Shields, 2005). Brown (2005) argues that it is important for social justice leaders to educate students in the context of "awareness, acceptance and action" related to social justice; for this, cultural autobiographies, life story interviews, bias reduction workshops, various panels, and activist action plans are necessary.

Method

Study design

In this study, the qualitative research method was used in order to understand the perceptions of school principals about the phenomenon of social justice in education and to determine the social justice leadership behaviors they exhibit in line with the practices they carry out to ensure social justice in their schools. The qualitative research method, which is frequently used in educational research, focuses on the perspectives of the participants, how they interpret their experiences, and the meanings they attribute to their experiences by describing events and phenomena in their natural environments (Merriam, 2009). This research was conducted with a phenomenological design, which is one of the qualitative research methods since the aim was to evaluate the experiences of the participants in relation to the phenomenon of "social justice leadership" in detail and in-depth (Creswell, 2016).

Participants and sampling method

This research was conducted with nine school principals. In educational research, it is common to conduct qualitative research with the life experiences of small groups to obtain in-depth information about a phenomenon (Coe, Waring, Hedges & Arthur, 2017). Participants were determined by the criterion sampling technique (Patton, 2005), which provides situations that meet a set of criteria determined in relation to the research problem from purposive sampling methods, and the maximum diversity sampling technique (Suri, 2011), which allows the experiences of different stakeholders to be determined in order to create a heterogeneous sample group. Thus, it is thought that the findings and results obtained may be richer than the findings and results obtained with other sampling methods (Marshall, 1996). For criterion sampling, critical situations determined to explain the phenomenon under investigation were used (Grix, 2010). For this reason, among the schools in the district where the research was conducted, schools with a demographic profile that included certain difficulties for school principals in social justice leadership practices were identified. The number of special education students enrolled in the schools, being located in a migrant neighborhood, the number of students from families with low socio-economic status, and the number of students with racial and ethnic differences were determined as critical situations for the sample. Interviews were conducted with the principals of schools that had these critical situations. For this purpose, an information note containing the relevant data was requested from the District Directorate of National Education where the research was conducted. In order to ensure maximum diversity, school principals working in kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, and high schools were included in the study group. Two of the participants worked in kindergartens, two in primary schools, three in secondary schools, and two in high schools. The participants were given code numbers such as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5,…P9. Characteristics regarding the demographic information of the school principals participating in the research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Occupational Seniority	Type of School
P1	M	46	23	Primary School
P2	F	42	21	Kindergarten
P3	M	38	16	Primary School
P4	M	42	22	Secondary School
P5	F	43	17	Primary School
P6	M	31	9	Kindergarten
P7	M	44	16	High School
P8	M	55	34	Secondary School
P9	F	47	21	High School

In the interviews conducted with the school principals who participated in the study, information about the characteristics of the schools where they work was requested and an effort was made to reveal the demographic profiles of these schools which include certain difficulties related to social justice leadership practices. Information on the characteristics of disadvantaged students in the schools where the research was carried out is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Characteristics of Disadvantaged Students in the Schools Where the Research was Conducted

Disadvantaged Status	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Students whose families have a low socio-economic status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Students with racial/ethnic diversity	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Students who have experienced parental bereavement		✓					✓		
Students with families who are oblivious and indifferent					✓				✓
Students from broken households	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Students in need of Special Education		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Students whose parents are disabled/in prison		✓							✓

Table 2 shows that students whose families have low socio-economic status, with racial/ethnic diversity, who have experienced parental bereavement, with families who are oblivious and indifferent, from broken households, in need of Special Education, and whose parents are disabled/in prison study in the schools where this research was conducted. School principals stated that these situations created disadvantageous situations for the students.

Data collection tool

The social justice in school/education data collection instrument, which consists of a semi-structured interview form with open-ended questions created by the researchers, was used to collect the study data. At the beginning of this data collection tool, there were questions regarding the personal information of the school principals; in the following part, there was a question about the characteristics of the students studying in the schools where this study was performed; moreover, in the last part, there were questions that worked to find out school principals' opinions in regard to their perception of social justice in education and their experiences towards ensuring social justice. The draft interview form including open-ended questions that the researchers created in line with the information obtained after the literature review was presented to two educational sciences lecturers who have published about social justice leadership, three school principals, three teachers, and one Turkish studies teacher. The question form was reorganized based on their feedback. For the pre-testing of the interview form, three school principals who were not included in the scope of this research were interviewed and it was tried if the questions were correctly understood by the school principals and if they were acceptable for the purpose of this study.

Data collection process

School principals working in the district where the study was performed were instructed about the purpose and content of the study, along with the purpose for which the results would be used. The participants consented that they participated in the study on a voluntary basis. It was preferred to obtain data through face-to-face individual interviews since this was thought to be the best method for determining the opinions, perceptions, and experiences of individuals about a social reality (Mason, 2002). During the interview, the principles were offered the opportunity to describe their experiences without restriction. As the interviews continued, it was understood that data saturation was reached, so no new interviews were performed. The interviews were audiotaped by the researcher and then transcribed in order to be analyzed. The recordings were listened to by the other researcher and the written document was checked.

Data analysis

The research data were analyzed by thematic analysis in order to reveal repeated experiences and opinions and to provide insights into reality. Thematic analysis is an appropriate and powerful method that can be used especially in studies conducted with a phenomenological design in order to identify repeated patterns and thus gain insight into external reality by trying to understand a series of experiences, thoughts, or behaviours of individuals through the process of analyzing a wide range of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2003). With this analysis, it was aimed to reveal the reality by describing more hidden, deeper information in the data (Braun & Clarke 2006; Joffe, 2011). In the creation of the themes, the research questions prepared by the researchers with the information gained after the literature review were utilized. The dimensions of the concepts of "social justice in education" and "social justice leadership" were utilized as an outcome of the literature review in the creation of sub-themes relating to the themes determined as "social justice in education" and "social justice leadership" in the scope of the study questions. Accordingly, across the field of the first research question, school principals' views on social justice in education were discussed under the sub-themes of "recognitory justice", "distributive justice" and "participatory justice"; and within the scope of the second research question, school principals' views on social justice leadership behaviors in education were discussed under the sub-themes of "critical consciousness", "inclusion" and "support". Table 3 dispalys the themes and sub-themes and the codes that came out as a result of the data analysis.

Table 3. Themes, Sub-Themes, and Codes Resulting from the Analysis of Data

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes
Social Justice in Education	Distributive Justice	Equality (P4, P7, P9)
		Equality of Opportunity (P1, P2)
		Fairness (P5, P6)
	Recognitory Justice	Awareness of Disadvantaged Groups (P1, P7)
		Supporting Disadvantaged Groups (P1, P3)
		Respect for Diversity (P3, P7)
	Participatory Justice	Democracy (P8)
Social Justice Leadership	Critical Consciousness	Respect for Diversity (P2, P8, P9)
		Awareness of Social Injustices (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9)
		Raising Students' Critical Consciousness on Social Justice (P3, P4, P5, P7, P9)
	Inclusion	Creating an Inclusive Educational Environment (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6)
		Participatory Management (P8)

The answers given to each question in the data collection tool were evaluated independently by the researchers in different environments and times and coded under the determined themes and sub-themes. The determined codes were assessed altogether by the researchers, a consensus was studied on the codes that displayed similarities, furthermore, the codes that did not show similarities were canceled. Direct quotations from the views of the participants were included so that the data is better understood by the readers. The obtained information from the raw research data and analysis results were presented to an independent researcher that is a professional in qualitative research to guarantee the reliability of the results. With the response obtained from the expert researcher, the qualitative findings were interpreted and reported in their final form.

Validity and Reliability

In the research, multiple strategies were utilized to guarantee credibility, transferability, consistency, and confirmability for validity and reliability. Creswell (2021) recommends long-term interaction, participant confirmation, triangulation, reducing researcher biases for credibility in qualitative research; purposeful sample selection for transferability, inclusion/exclusion criteria, detailed description, description of participants' characteristics; checking for consistency, detailed literature review, detailed explanation of the research method, triangulation, examination of another researcher's research process and results; for confirmability, he recommends using multiple strategies such as reducing research biases and triangulation. In order to ensure long-term interaction with the participants during the data collection phase, the principles were presented with the opportunity to describe their experiences without restriction in the interviews, and the notes taken for each question were presented to the participants for confirmation before moving on to a new question. In qualitative research, being in the same environment with the participants and long-term interaction allow the development of a relationship based on mutual trust and obtaining accurate and in-depth answers (Houser, 2015). In order to prevent data loss, the audio was taped with the consent of the participants. Criterion sampling along with maximum diversity sampling, which are within the purposeful sampling techniques, were preferred in the research study group's selection. Thus, the research's credibility, consistency, and confirmability were ensured by using the triangulation technique in sample selection, and transferability was ensured by using purposive sample selection and inclusion/exclusion criteria. In order to support the research results' transferability, the demographic qualities of the school principals in the study group and the demographic profiles of the schools they work in were reported in detail. The interview form for data collection was prepared by consulting expert opinion. In addition, the research report was submitted for expert review to critically examine all processes of the research such as research design, data collection methods, analysis methods together with the reporting of results. It is an important strategy that can be taken in terms of credibility to ensure that the research is examined in various dimensions by people who have knowledge about the research subject and are experts in qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2003). The transferability of the research results was supported by explaining in particular how the data were collected, recorded, analyzed; how the results were reached, how the results were interpreted, and how the research was reported. In the presentation of the study findings, it was aimed to make sure of reliability and consistency by including direct quotations from the participants' own statements instead of the researcher's prejudices or opinions. So much so that citations are a very important strategy to demonstrate the confirmability of research (Guba ve Lincoln, 1982).

Findings

The research results reveal school principals' insights into social justice in education altogether with their social justice leadership behaviors. It includes school principals' perceptions of social justice within education and principles' leadership experiences toward making sure of social justice in their schools, respectively. Each sub-theme was explained in line with the participants' narratives.

Findings Related to School Principals' Views on Social Justice in Education

The research's results reveal that school principals perceive the phenomenon of social justice in education as distributive justice by emphasizing the concepts of "equality", "equality of opportunity" and "fairness" and as recognitory justice by emphasizing the

concepts of "awareness of disadvantaged groups", "supporting disadvantaged groups" and "respect for diversity", while very few school principals perceived it as participatory justice by emphasizing the concept of "democracy". It is possible to say that school principals perceive social justice in education as distributive and recognitory justice, and to a relatively limited extent, as participatory justice.

Their Views on Distributive Justice

Research findings show that school principals perceive social justice in education as "equality", "equality of opportunity", and "fairness". The school principal coded P7 explains social justice as equality and fairness, saying: *"...When justice is mentioned, it comes to mind that everyone should be equal, have equal rights, opportunities, and power. But we are born with some differences, this is natural. These differences can be the economic opportunities that families have, the environment where students live, and maybe even the people we know, or meet can affect this situation. Social justice is how equitable and fair the state approaches students in order to eliminate these innate differences".* Another school principal explains it with the following statement: *"Social justice is when people living together are close to each other in terms of living standards, it is not giving equal opportunities to students but ensuring equality ...students experiencing similar standards with each other can be considered as social justice."* (P9). These quotations belong to only two school principals who perceived social justice in education in terms of distributive justice. Eight of the nine participant principals emphasized the need to establish equality among all students and eliminate their disadvantages, to ensure that students from all social classes benefit from education, to allow disadvantaged students to have equal opportunities with other students, and to act fairly by giving more to those in need. It was understood that the majority of school principals perceived the phenomenon of social justice in education in terms of distributive justice.

Their Views on Recognitory Justice

Research findings show that school principals view social justice in education as "awareness of disadvantaged groups", "supporting disadvantaged groups", and "respect for diversity". A school principal shared their thoughts as follows, *"Not everyone is born equal, we have differences. Naturally, this exists in every segment. Among our students, there are students with poor economic status and students from broken households. We try to bring such disadvantaged students closer to students who have better means."* (P1). It is understood that the school principal is aware that students with poor economic status and who come from broken households are disadvantaged students and has a perception that disadvantaged students should be supported.

Their Views on Participatory Justice

The research findings show that only one school principal perceived social justice in education as "democracy". This one principal said, *"It is every student having the same social rights, having a say in economic, educational, and political fields, and having freedoms. That means do not assume privileges, and students can express their opinions and feel democracy by experiencing it."* (P8). It is an interesting result that there is only one school principal who perceives social justice in education as participatory justice. What is understood from that is that the other participant principals perceived social justice in education only with regard to recognitory and distributive justice.

Findings on School Principal Behaviors as Regards to Social Justice Leadership

The results reveal that school principals display social justice leadership actions in the critical consciousness dimension with the behaviors of "Respect for Diversity", "Awareness of Social Injustices" and "Raising Critical Awareness of Social Justice in Students"; in the inclusion dimension with the behaviors of "Creating an Inclusive Educational Environment" and "Participatory Management"; and in the support dimension with the behaviors of "Academic Support for Students", "Support for Students' Social Development", and "Financial Support for Students". It is then possible to say that school principals mostly present social justice leadership ways of behaving in the context of critical consciousness and support dimensions, while they exhibit limited social justice leadership behaviours in the inclusion dimension compared to other two dimensions.

Their Views on Critical Consciousness

The discovery of the research display that the leadership behaviors exhibited by school principals in the critical consciousness dimension are "Respect for Diversity", "Awareness of Social Injustices" and "Raising Critical Consciousness of Social Justice in Students". It was determined that the principals who exhibited the behavior of awareness towards social injustices were in the majority, while the principals who exhibited the behavior of respect for diversity were in the minority. In addition, it was determined that the principals exhibited raising critical consciousness about social justice as secondary among social justice leadership behaviors.

One principal conveyed their view as follows: *"First of all, disadvantaged students are not on an average level when they come to us because they cannot spend their childhood like others. Even in kindergarten, they have a lot of deficiencies in basic skills and in meeting their personal needs, and their level of readiness is low. This is unfair and unjust. ... If the family does not have positive values and is not sufficiently conscious about education, this is where the biggest disadvantage begins. In addition, the environment in which the family lives, the level of awareness about education, and being part of a broken household are also disadvantageous. Children who have been abused are important disadvantaged groups. I can say that students with low socio-economic status are the most disadvantaged groups, followed by disabled individuals and children from broken households"* (P3). Another principal stated, *"Of course, there are other disadvantages besides the disadvantages of financial status. Foreign students or students who migrated from another city, gypsy students are also disadvantaged. They have differentiations from other students in terms of education. This causes a significant injustice in terms of access to education. ...Students whose parents have a low level of awareness about education are also disadvantaged. I see that it is quite difficult for students to overcome such problems which causes them to be disadvantaged."* (P4). It is understood that school principals have a critical perspective and a very high level of awareness about social injustices in education.

It is understood that school principals who have shared their experiences by saying *"...when students realize the differences and see that their disadvantages are eliminated, they do not rebel against their disadvantages. This is also important because the injustices that students see in life affect their view of life and their criticism of social justice"* (P9) and *"...the student in charge of the class collects students' phones in a box before class starts. They separate their own phone or the phones of their favorite friends and do not put them in the box. The student says that my phone does not deserve to be put there. They want to have a privilege or privilege their friends. I say this because it shows us that the understanding of fairness starts*

from the grassroots. I make sure that all phones, regardless of their prices, regardless of their brands, are put in that box so that they understand justice and fairness and think about it and develop an idea about it. ...We have a social aid and solidarity club within our school. Our aim is to draw attention to social justice in all students and to raise their awareness on this issue." (P7), exhibit social justice leadership behaviors to raise students' critical awareness of social justice.

The school principal P2, with their statement *"There are many migrant students in our school intake area. We enroll all of these students without preconditions. We also have children from broken households, children whose families have a low economic status, and students with special needs. After all, our society is made up of many colors, and it is only natural that we have different students. This is something that needs to be respected...",* and the school principal P (8), with their statement, *"As a principal, but most importantly as an educator, it is important to see each student as an individual, to respect the student's life and characteristics by acting with the awareness that they will have different characteristics and talents, and we should think in line with and strive to provide fair educational opportunities for each student"* are one of the few principals who exhibited the behavior of respect for diversity.

Their Views on Inclusion

The findings of this research imply that the leadership behaviors exhibited by principals in the inclusion dimension are "Creating an Inclusive Educational Environment" and "Participatory Management" behaviors. However, it was determined that only one of the school principals exhibited participatory management behavior.

Among the school principals, P6 stated their experiences as *"First of all, as I said, I try to create mixed classes in line with the understanding of giving fair opportunities to every child. I think this is an important detail. I create classes that mix children from families with good and poor financial situations. I try to make all classes the same in terms of the physical environment. ... Then, in terms of communication with students and their parents in the classroom, we approach every student and every parent without discrimination. I facilitate the enrollment of children with special education needs or physical disabilities. I do this by thinking within the context of social justice and thinking that these are things I am ethically obliged to do."* and P4 as *"The biggest obstacle to social justice in education is the lack of positive discrimination for disadvantaged groups. In our school, we do not discriminate between disadvantaged students and other students. We do not discriminate between disadvantaged students and other students in lessons, courses, and activities, and we even make special efforts to include them more in these environments."* It is understood that school principals include inclusive and integrative school practices for disadvantaged students.

Another school principal said, *"We try to ensure equality in the distribution of disadvantaged students to classes. However, sometimes it takes us a while to identify the disadvantaged students. When such situations arise later, we send student interns to those classes so that we can pay more attention to those students."* (P2). It was understood that the school principal created an inclusive educational environment for all students by creating heterogeneous classes.

P8, who is the only principal exhibiting participatory management behavior, expressed this social justice leadership behavior with the following statements: *"We prepare environments for each of our students to express their feelings so that they become aware that they are*

individuals, we make them feel such that they have a say in the school environment, in the school activities and we take their opinions into consideration."

Their Views on Support

The findings of this research show that leadership behaviors exhibited by principals in the support dimension are "Academic Support for Students", "Support for Students' Social Development", and "Financial Support for Students". It was determined that school principals mostly exhibited the behavior of providing financial support to disadvantaged students, while they exhibited the behavior of providing academic support at a limited level. Adding to that, it was resolved that school principals exhibited the behavior of supporting pupils' social development as secondary.

Sharing their experiences with the statements of *"Yesterday we met the clothing needs of three students. We did this at the beginning of the year, and we did it in the second semester, too. We meet these needs with an income that we have created among our teachers, with the income of the PTA, and donors. We always have a list. A list of disadvantaged students. We prepare meals for students who lack nutritional opportunities due to their economic situation, alternating with parents in the classroom. Some of them are provided free of charge by the canteen. Lunch is provided to children."* (P1), and *"Our PTA provides material and financial support to families with low socio-economic status. At the same time, we inform our higher institution about families with low socio-economic status. The District Governorship Social Assistance Foundation provides support."* (P2), it is recognized that these school principals exhibit social justice leadership behaviors through providing financial support to students who are disadvantaged due to economic insufficiencies.

Another school principal stated that *"... disadvantaged students whose families are not financially well-off may lack educational materials for homework or in-class work. There may be students who cannot afford to eat lunch. Or there may be a student who tries to hide himself/herself in terms of clothing. When we see a lack in educational materials, when we see a lack in clothing, when we see that they cannot eat lunch, we try to support students by means of our school facilities. We try to identify these by monitoring the students. We have a social aid and solidarity club within the school. ... We pay the monthly commuting cards of students who come from far away through this club. This year we distributed clothes to 10-15 students free of charge. We created a grocery card for the families of 30 students."* (P7). It can be said that the school principal exhibited social justice leadership behaviors by providing financial support to disadvantaged students due to their economic insufficiency such as providing educational materials, covering lunch fees, giving clothes, and covering transportation costs.

From the statements of the school principal P2, saying that *"We encourage disadvantaged students to participate in trips and theater events organized by our school for their social development. Their social development is important for us, it is of course our duty as a school to ensure that they have these opportunities."* and P8, saying that *"We organize various social activities to ensure that our disadvantaged students are not segregated from other students, to increase their sense of belonging to the school and to ensure their attendance. Thus, we support their social development. We ensured their participation in social activities together with all students."* it is understood that school principals have leadership behaviors that support the social development of disadvantaged students.

Only two of the school principals exhibited the behavior of supporting students' academic

development. The school principal P3 said, *"I ask teachers to give lessons to illiterate students in their free time. Thus, we ensure that we increase the success of students who are disadvantaged for any reason and who have not learned to read and write or whose academic achievement is low."* P6 shared their experiences by saying, *"...in our schools - let's take for example the students who are preparing for an exam - there were students who could not take private lessons, who could not be sent to a tutoring center for the LGS exam, who could not take private lessons, and now DYK courses are being opened. DYK courses are free support and training courses organized by the Ministry of National Education. We direct our disadvantaged students to these courses, we especially care about them and follow their participation in these courses. We strive to minimize the academic differences between them and other students and to increase the academic success of disadvantaged students. These courses are important for students who do not have a good financial situation."*

Discussion

In this research, the purpose was to reveal school principals' perceptions of social justice in education and their "social justice leadership" behaviors based on their personal experiences in line with their practices for ensuring social justice in schools. The data obtained through individual interviews with the study group consisting of nine school principals were analyzed by thematic analysis. By revealing the multidimensional structure of social justice perception and social justice leadership, the research contributes to the literature, school leaders, and the development of a social justice understanding in educational policies.

Within the scope of the first research question, school principals' perceptions of the phenomenon of social justice in education were determined. The research's results reveal that the participating school principals have perceptions of social justice in education mostly by means of distributive and recognitory justice, and to a relatively limited extent, participatory justice. They perceive equality, equal opportunity, and fairness as distributive justice; awareness of disadvantaged groups, supporting disadvantaged groups, and respect for diversity as recognitory justice; and democracy as participatory justice. The distributive justice dimension of social justice, which refers to Rawls's principle of equal distribution of goods and social rights to all individuals in society, is related to the distribution of educational resources in education in which students have fair opportunities and more resources are allocated to these individuals due to their disadvantaged status (Bates, 2006). In other words, social justice in education refers to the efforts to eliminate social and economic inequalities (Furman & Shields, 2005). Therefore, school principals should provide educational opportunities to disadvantaged students with positive discrimination (Bogotch, 2002; Karagiannis, Stainback & Stainback, 1996) and provide effective educational services to all students, especially to disadvantaged students (Scanlan, 2007). Recognitory justice involves the acceptance and recognition of disadvantaged groups, the observance of their rights, and being respected by others (Bates, 2006; Fraser, 2001). Theoharis (2007a) associates social justice in schools with the recognition, respect, and empathy towards disadvantaged groups and argues that this can prevent the marginalization of students in schools. Thus, it must be said that social justice is an action to reduce prejudice and privilege (Gaudelli, 2001).

In the research, the result that the majority of the participating school principals do not have a perception of social justice in the context of participatory justice is worrisome for providing democratic education. Yet, participatory justice in education is in reliance to ensuring that individuals have a say in decisions regarding their education and that they have the right to develop and realize themselves (Fraser, 2001). Indeed, democracy is at the center of the

concept of social justice (Enslin, 2006). With this existence of social justice, democratic education will be possible (Hunt, 1998). It can be said that these two concepts fuel each other.

In the scope of the second research question, the social justice leadership behaviors of the participating principals were revealed in line with their practices related to ensuring social justice in schools. The study's results reveal that the participating school principals mostly display social justice leadership behaviors in the context of critical consciousness and support dimensions, while they exhibit limited social justice leadership behaviors in the inclusion dimension compared to the other two dimensions. Within the educational sciences literature, many researchers have noted the increasing diversity of students (Goddard, 2005), cultural differences brought about by living together in the process of globalization (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia & Nolly, 2004), and deepening inequalities due to socio-economic differences (Zufiaurre & Wilkinson, 2014), emphasizing that the education system should focus on social inequality, social justice in education, educators' responsibilities in this regard, and the state should no longer ignore the problems of educational inequality (Blackmore, 2002; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001; Oplatka & Arar, 2015; Ryan, 2006; Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2007b). The concept "social justice leadership" has been frequently mentioned in the educational sciences literature and educational policies in recent years and it aims to reduce inequalities in educational systems (Blackmore, 2002; Bogotch, 2002; King & Travers, 2017; Lugg & Shoho, 2006; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Oplatka, 2010). Researchers claim that social justice leadership is crucial for schools with diverse students (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005), that administrators create a process of change in their schools with leadership orientations that prevent disadvantages arising from diversity (Skrla & Scheurich, 2001), and that leadership for social justice in schools is a powerful intervention variable (Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005). According to Theoharis (2007a), a social justice leader has a vision that creates solutions to disadvantageous situations caused by students' differences.

Within the scope of the second research question, it was discovered that the participating school principals exhibited social justice leadership behaviors in the dimension of respect for diversity among students, awareness of social injustices, and critical consciousness of social justice in students. Berkovich (2014) and Kenny and Romano (2009) also emphasized the importance of social justice leaders accepting and respecting individual differences. Similarly, Boske (2014) stated that school principals who recognize that economic, political, and social differences among students are natural will be effective in ensuring social justice in education. Furman and Shield (2005) concluded in their study that social justice leaders develop students' perceptions of democracy, equality, justice, and respect for diversity by creating a social justice understanding in students. Brown (2005) recommends school principals to conduct cultural autobiographies, life story interviews, bias reducing workshops, various panels along with activist action plans to raise students' critical awareness about social justice.

Within the scope of the second research question, the participating school principals exhibit the behaviors of providing financial support, supporting students' academic and social development, and social justice leadership behaviors in the support dimension. It was determined that school principals exhibit the behavior of providing financial support to students most frequently and the behavior of providing academic support to students least frequently. Research in the literature has revealed that school principals exhibit behaviors within the scope of social justice leadership, mostly to support pupils with less economic means (Tomul, 2009; Koçak & Özdemir, 2019). This situation is thought to stem from the fact that inequalities in income distribution in Turkey prevent students from accessing educational services fairly (Kondakçı, Kurtay & Oldaç, 2016). Many researchers in the

literature associate social justice in education with the fair distribution of resources and services required for all students to benefit equally from educational services (Alsbury & Shaw, 2005; Bates, 2005; Bogotch, 2002; Boyles, Carusi & Attick, 2009; Furman & Shields, 2005). Therefore, it is important that children of poverty-stricken families are supported financially in schools. Characteristics such as gender, language, race, socioeconomic status, family structure and having special needs can create obstacles and limitations for students to access quality education (Archer, Hutchings, Leathwood & Ross, 2003; Ferreira & Gignoux, 2010). Studies in the literature indicate that students with these disadvantages cannot benefit from education equally and therefore have low academic achievement (Chiu & Walker, 2007; Enslin, 2006). Social justice is the efforts to combat the negativities experienced by pupils that are disadvantaged because of their differences (Furman & Shields, 2005; Theoharis, 2007b). Shields (2004) stated that social justice is related to an egalitarian educational approach to student academic achievement. The social justice leader supports the academic development of disadvantaged pupils by ensuring that they benefit fairly from educational services like other students (Arastaman & Fidan, 2022; McKenzie et al., 2008; Özdemir, 2017). Oakes et al. (2000) emphasize that social justice leaders should support disadvantaged students by implementing quality educational practices. In addition, supporting the social development of disadvantaged students in the support dimension of social justice is a social justice leadership behavior that school principals are presumed to have. Social justice leaders support the social development of disadvantaged students by enabling them to participate in social, cultural, and sportive activities at school (Theoharis, 2008).

Within the scope of the second study question, the participating school principals exhibit social justice leadership actions in the dimension of creating an inclusive educational environment and participatory management behaviors and inclusion. It is noteworthy that school principals mostly exhibit the behavior of creating an inclusive educational environment, but only one of the school principals exhibits participatory management behavior. Furman (2012) considers inclusive practices synonymous with social justice. Creating educational environments that include all students with different abilities and skills and realizing their learning will ensure social justice in education (Bozkurt, 2017). Therefore, social justice leaders should focus on efforts that allow every individual in school to learn and eliminate barriers to learning (McKenzie et al., 2008), and create educational opportunities for all students (Fraser, 2012). Inclusive practices support disadvantaged students (Berkovich, 2014). In addition, Ryan (2006) argues that social justice can be achieved by including individuals in practices and processes. Indeed, according to Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002), participation is the key to social justice practices. Social justice leadership is a leadership outlook that supports decision-making participation (Brekovich, 2014; Wasonga, 2009). Social justice leaders focus on evolution of democracy in schools by supporting the participation of diverse pupils in school choices (Furman, 2012).

The research's results showed that the participating principals' perceptions of social justice are reflected in their social justice leadership behaviors and practices. The participating school principals mostly have perceptions of recognitory and distributive justice, and similar to this result, they mostly exhibit social justice leadership behaviors related to respect for diversity among students, awareness of social injustices, raising critical awareness of social justice among students, providing financial support to students, and supporting students' academic and social development. It was found that they had a relatively limited level of participatory justice perception and similar to this result, they exhibited social justice leadership behaviors related to participatory management at a limited level compared to other social justice leadership behaviors.

Conclusion

This research acts as a supply to the literature and school leadership by revealing the multidimensional structure of social justice perception and social justice leadership behaviors of school principals. It has been revealed that we need to rethink the duties of school principals on how they ensure justice in education services, how they protect disadvantaged groups, and how they distribute resources.

On the other hand, we know that the results of this study, which is based only on perceptions and experiences of principals included within the study, cannot be generalized. The phenomenon of social justice in education and the social justice leadership actions exhibited by school principals were evaluated within the specific conditions of the sample. The results may help school principals interpret their personal experiences and develop an understanding of social justice in education and social justice leadership. In addition, the results of this research may add to the living knowledge on social justice leadership, attract the interest of researchers, and lead to new research.

It should be said that school principals have a number of duties to carry out educational activities within the framework of the principle of social justice. The results reveal the contributions of school principals to social justice leadership practices by exhibiting respect for diversity among students, awareness of social injustices, raising students' critical awareness of social justice, providing financial support, supporting students' academic and social development, creating an inclusive educational environment and participatory management behaviors in line with their perception of social justice.

In this context, school leaders who are sensitive to this issue are required to ensure social justice in education. Leadership programs can be designed to improve school principals' social justice perceptions and social justice leadership behaviors. Educational policies that support principals' social justice leadership and a sustainable education system that adopts a social justice approach should be created.

Finally, it is recommended to conduct exploratory empirical research on social justice leadership practices with a larger sample group and research on the factors that limit principals' social justice leadership practices.

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