



JOEEP

e-ISSN: 2651-5318
Journal Homepage: <http://dergipark.org.tr/joep>



Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

Turkish Adaptation of Toxic Leadership Scale: Validity and Reliability Study *

Toksik Liderlik Ölçeğinin Türkçe Uyarlaması: Geçerlilik ve Güvenirlilik Çalışması

Özgür Kökalan^{a, **}, Murat Yalçın Kırca

^a Prof. Dr., İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim Üniversitesi, İşletme ve Yönetim Bilimleri Fakültesi, İşletme Bölümü, Küçükçekmece/ İstanbul/ Türkiye
ORCID: 0000-0003-2372-9198

^{**} Dr., İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim Üniversitesi, Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, Küçükçekmece/ İstanbul/ Türkiye
ORCID: 0000-0001-5993-0534

MAKALE BİLGİSİ

Makale Geçmişi:

Başvuru tarihi: 12 Eylül 2025

Düzeltilme tarihi: 16 Kasım 2025

Kabul tarihi: 19 Kasım 2025

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Liderlik

Toksik Liderlik

Ölçek Uyarlama

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: Sep 12, 2025

Received in revised form: Nov 16, 2025

Accepted: Nov 19, 2025

Keywords:

Leadership

Toxic Leadership

Scale Adaptation

ÖZ

2000'li yıllardan itibaren literatüre giren toksik liderlik kavramının ölçülmesinde kullanılan ölçeklerde en çok referans verilenlerinden bir tanesi Schmidt, (2008) tarafından hazırlanan Toksik Liderlik Ölçeğidir. Ölçekte toksik liderin istismarcılık, otoriterlik, narsizm, kendini ön plana çıkarma ve öngörülebilirlik olmak üzere 5 özelliği olduğu belirtilmiş ve bu beş faktörü ölçmek üzere 30 maddelik bir ölçek oluşturulmuştur. Elde edilen ölçek ile hazırlanan sorular 392 kişilik kamu ve 284 kişilik özel sektör çalışanı olmak üzere toplam 676 kişiye uygulanmıştır. Yapılan tüm geçerlilik ve güvenilirlik analizleri sonucunda, Toksik liderlik ölçeğinin Türkçe'ye uyarlanmasının sağlandığı ve bir ölçme aracı olarak kullanılabileceği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

ABSTRACT

One of the most referenced and generally accepted scales used in the literature to measure the perception of 'toxic leadership' is the Toxic Leadership Scale (TLS) prepared by Schmidt (2008). In Schmidt's scale, it was assumed that the toxic leader had five characteristics: abusive, authoritarianism, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability, and a 30-item scale was created to measure these five factors. In our study, the scale developed by Schmidt (2008) was adapted into Turkish. The questions prepared with the scale obtained were applied to 676 people in two separate samples, 392 public sector employees and 284 private sector employees. As a result of all reliability and validity analyses, the TLS was adapted into Turkish and could be used as a measurement tool.

1. Introduction

Today's businesses are expected to exceed their previous performance daily to succeed. To achieve this, although it varies according to the field of operation of the enterprises, healthy and efficient logistics and production processes, proper functioning of marketing and sales channels, well-functioning after-sales services, etc. are required. In many

areas, businesses need to improve themselves constantly. The main goal of development in the specified areas is to ensure customer satisfaction.

Total Quality Management (TQM), put forward by William Edwards Deming, is the fulfilment of the quality needs of people, work, products, and services used to meet customer expectations, with a systematic perspective and with the

* The Research Ethics Committee of İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University reviewed and approved study E-20292139-050.01.04-9473 under the basic ethical standards for research involving humans outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki at its meeting numbered 2021/06 (July 06, 2021).

** Sorumlu yazar/Corresponding author.

e-posta: ozgur.kokalan@izu.edu.tr

Atf/Cite as: Kökalan, Ö., & Kırca, M.Y. (2025). Turkish Adaptation of Toxic Leadership Scale: Validity and Reliability Study. *Journal of Emerging Economies and Policy*, 10(2), 462-472.

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors.

contribution of all employees. According to the understanding of TQM, customers are of two types: internal and external. While external customers are the people who buy the products and services of the enterprise, internal customers mean that all units within the business evaluate each other in a customer-supplier relationship (Yazıcı, S. 2001:174-175). When evaluated from this point of view, it is not enough for businesses to satisfy their external customers only. It is also necessary to give importance to internal customer satisfaction at least as much as external customers.

Employee satisfaction is mostly based on physical environmental conditions, communication system, motivation elements such as wages, rewards, health and retirement systems, and the relations employees establish with each other and the management (Saran, 2004). Another element that is as effective as these factors in employee satisfaction is the relationship between the employees and their managers.

Considering that the manager is the person who tries to reach the goals by organizing the existing resources, and the leader is the person who influences the team and plays a transformative and developing catalyst role by improving their performance, it is understood that the effects of the leaders on the relationships and motivations they establish with their internal customers can directly affect the continuity and quality of the work done.

Numerous studies on leadership have focused overwhelmingly on the positive aspects of leadership, and an attempt has been made to reach certain conclusions on the positive effects of leadership in organizations (Çelebi, Güner and Yıldız, 2015). Academics have examined traditional leadership approaches in three basic categories: traits approach, behavioural approach, and contingency approach.

The researchers, who believe that the traditional approach is insufficient to explain leadership, have put forward the different characteristics of leaders and argued that many different leadership styles are evaluated within the scope of modern leadership approaches. These include democratic leadership, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, visionary leadership, humanistic leadership, supportive leadership, educational leadership, and transactional leadership.

In leadership studies, some researchers perceive focusing on the positive aspects of the leader as a one-sided perspective and think that the leader does not get better results by only empowering the people he manages. These researchers think that the number of cases where the leaders negatively affect the organization's employees and harm them and their businesses is increasing daily. According to this view, even in some cases where leaders achieve successful results for themselves and the business they work for, they can negatively affect their employees and create an obstacle to the business's long-term success.

These leaders, who belong to the dark side of leadership, who poison organizations with their self-interest, selfishness, negative moods, and unappreciative characteristics, are called toxic leaders (İskit, 2019).

Although leadership has been a long-standing concept in business literature, it is seen that toxic leadership has only entered the literature since the 2000s. Studies on toxic leadership were first carried out in the military field. Many examples of toxic leadership studies exist, especially in the US military (Aubrey, 2012; Box, 2012; Elle, 2012; O'Hara, 2015; Schmidt, 2015; Shenk, 2012; Steele, 2011; Ulmer, 2012; Watt et al., 2016; Wilson, 2014).

The management style in the form of the chain of command in the military contains a certain amount of oppression and authoritarianism, which has an important role in the fact that toxic leadership studies are mainly carried out in military institutions. This is not surprising, as these traits are mainly sub-factors of toxic leadership.

Apart from the military, many studies have been on toxic leadership in health and education. In health, it is observed that both Turkish and foreign researchers are interested in toxic leadership (Bakkal and Aydıntuğ, 2016; Miles et al., 1978; Özer et al., 2017).

Similarly, the toxicity levels of administrators in the education system and their effects were discussed in the field of education as well (Çelebi, Güner and Yıldız, 2015; Ertürk, 2016; Green, 2014).

In many studies, the relationship between a manager with toxic characteristics and his employees has been mentioned (Di Genio, 2002; Kim, 2016; Milosevic et al., 2020). Numerous studies have been conducted on the relationship of toxic leadership with organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational cynicism, burnout, job motivation, and turnover intention (Akça, 2017; Zaabi, Abu Elanain, and Ajmal, 2018; Bakkal, Serener, and Myrvang, 2019; Börü et al., 2020; Demir, 2019; Dobbs & Do, 2019; Uysal, 2019; Webster, Brough, and Daly K., 2016.)

Because toxic leaders are not only in business, the toxic approaches of some political leaders, such as Tony Blair and George Bush, have also been the subject of different research (McAnulla, 2011).

Although the correct definition of the toxic leader is extremely important, the main issue that needs to be investigated and focused on is the effects of such a leader on employees and businesses. Researchers have studied different effects of a leader with toxic characteristics on employees. Various studies claim that such a leadership style will harm employee health and create additional costs for the business, cause employees to withdraw and increase absenteeism rate (Macklem, 2005), harm group work and reduce performance (Wilson-Starks, 2003). It will cause staff to quit (Flynn, 1999).

Researchers suggest different elements for the sub-factors in the toxic leadership scale, however many recent studies have

taken the scale created by Schmidt (2008) and the sub-factors he used as a basis. Different studies have been carried out to develop the TLS (Çelebi, Güner and Yıldız, 2015). However, it has been evaluated that the adaptation of the Toxic Leadership Scale, which was prepared by Schmidt (2008) and has been internationally accepted, into Turkish can provide important contributions to the Turkish leadership literature, and it is aimed to adapt the scale to Turkish in this study.

There are different claims about the characteristics that a leader should have to be defined as "toxic". Among these, abusive, authoritarianism, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability are generally accepted as sub-dimensions of toxic leadership (Schmidt, 2008). The basic explanations for these five dimensions are given below:

- (i). Abusive, with its more accepted definition, is the hostile attitude, other than physical intervention, often shown by the verbal or non-verbal leader. According to another definition, it can be characterized as the leader's behaviour that sabotages both the duties, resources, and goals of the organization, as well as the well-being, motivation, and satisfaction of his employees (Einarsen et al., 2007).
- (ii). Authoritarian leadership is an expression to be used when a leader exercises complete authority and control over his subordinates and expects employees to obey him without question (Chou, L. et al., 2015).
- (iii). Narcissism is a personality trait that includes arrogance, self-complacency, fragile self-esteem, and hostility (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissistic leaders, on the other hand, prioritize their interests, lack empathy, and do not care about the opinions of others.
- (iv). Self-promotion and narcissism may seem like close concepts; the main difference between self-promoting leaders is that they put themselves first, ignoring the interests of their employees in order to gain benefit (Schmidt, 2008).
- (v). Unpredictability is one's ability to sometimes react positively to similar situations and react negatively in other situations. While one of the most fundamental characteristics of a leader is consistency, in some cases, employees may witness that their leader's behaviour and reactions are inconsistent. Schmidt (2008) claims that even though negative approaches have negative effects on employees, the negative effects of unpredictable negative behaviours can be much more destructive.

2. Research Method

2.1. Translation and Language Validity

The five-stage system proposed by Brislin et al. (1973) was used to translate the TLS into Turkish. According to Brislin et al. (1973), the steps of the method to be followed in adaptation are as follows:

The scale must first be translated from the original language into the language to be adapted. In the next step, this translation should be evaluated. The scale should be translated back into the original language in the third stage. This translation should be re-evaluated in the fourth stage by comparing it with the original scale. At the last stage, the opinions of field experts regarding the translated scale should be taken. These five stages proposed by Brislin et al. (1973) were carried out one by one during the translation and language validation phase of the toxic leadership scale.

Initially, our attempts to contact Andrew Schmidt to obtain permission to use the scale in our study were unsuccessful. Consequently, we contacted Paul Hanges, who advised Andrew Schmidt on the preparation of the scale, and obtained his approval. Then original English version of the scale was first translated into Turkish by two English linguists who are independent of each other and have a good command of the field. Later, these translations were examined by five independent field experts and evaluated based on the intelligibility and cultural appropriateness criteria of 30 items in the scale. The scale obtained as a result of this evaluation was translated back into English by two academicians who are experts in organizational psychology. In the next step, this translation and the original scale were compared and presented to the opinion of two experts who are fluent in English, and the scale adapted to Turkish took its final form.

In the final version of the scale translated into Turkish, there are 30 statements measuring the five sub-dimensions of toxic leadership. The original scale translated into Turkish, and the Turkish scale is given in the Appendix. A 5-point Likert scale was used in the Turkish scale. The scale was coded as "1= Strongly Disagree", "2 = Disagree", "3= Undecided", "4= Agree", and "5= Strongly Agree".

2.2. Data Collection and Statistical Analysis

The questionnaire form used during the study consists of two parts. In the first part, questions about determining the demographic characteristics of the participants were included. The Turkish translation of the TLS is in the second part. This part consists of 30 items measuring toxic leadership and its five sub-dimensions. The collected data was analyzed using statistical software programs SPSS 23 and AMOS 23. An informative note was placed at the beginning of the questionnaire for the participants. The Research Ethics Committee of Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University reviewed and approved study E-20292139-050.01.04-9473 under the basic ethical standards for research involving humans outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki at its meeting numbered 2021/06 (July 06, 2021).

2.3. Sample

Two independent sample groups were used to increase the generalizability of the results obtained by adapting the TLS into Turkish. Of the two samples used in the adaptation

phase, the first is public sector employees and the other is private sector employees.

2.3.1. First Sample Group

The first sample group consists of participants working in the public sector in Istanbul. With the random sampling method, 400 people were sent a questionnaire through Google Forms, an online survey platform, and 392 were found suitable for analysis. Demographic information of the first sample group is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the First Sample Group

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	342	87.2
	Woman	50	12.8
	Total	392	100
Marital status	Single	111	28.3
	Married	281	71.7
	Total	392	100
Age	25 and below	36	9.2
	26 – 35	156	39.8
	36 – 45	153	39.0
	46 – 55	44	11.2
	56 and above	3	,8
	Total	392	100.0
Working Experience	5 and below	105	26.8
	6 - 10	50	12.8
	11 - 15	98	25.0
	16 – 20	68	17.3
	21 and over	71	18.1
	Total	392	100.0
Educational Status	High school	60	15.3
	Associate degree	40	10.2
	License	213	54.3
	Postgraduate	79	20.2
	Total	392	100.0

The first sample group comprises 392 public sector employees, 342 men (87.2%) and 50 women (12.8%). 281 of the participants are married (71.7%), 111 are single (28.3%), and more than 80% are younger than 45. More than 60% of the participants have at least 10 years of work experience. Of the public employees forming the first sample group, 60 (15.3%) were high school graduates, 40 (10.2%) had associate degrees, 213 (54.3%) had undergraduate degrees, and 79 (20.2%) had graduate degrees. The education level of the participants is relatively high.

2.3.2. Second Sample Group

The second sample group consists of participants working in the private sector in Istanbul. A questionnaire was sent to 400 people using a random sampling method, and 284 were found suitable for analysis. Demographic information of the second sample group is given in Table 2.

The second sample group comprises 284 private sector employees, 239 male (84.2%) and 45 female (15.8%). 206 participants are married (72.5%), 78 are single (27.5%), and about 90% are younger than 45. More than 60% of the participants have at least 10 years of work experience. Of the private sector employees forming the second sample group, 23 (8.1%) are high school graduates, 22 (7.7%) have an associate degree, 166 (58.5%) have an undergraduate degree, and 73 (25.7%) have a graduate degree.

Most participants in both groups held at least a bachelor's degree. These characteristics indicate that the samples consisted largely of mid-career professionals. The rationale for including both sectors was to ensure the scale's structural validity would be tested under varying organizational conditions (bureaucratic public institutions vs. competitive private companies).

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Second Sample Group

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	239	84.2
	Woman	45	15.8
	Total	284	100
Marital status	Single	78	27.5
	Married	206	72.5
	Total	284	100
Age	25 and below	18	6.3
	26 - 35	117	41.2
	36 - 45	115	40.5
	46 - 55	33	11.6
	56 and above	one	,4
	Total	284	100.0
Working Experience	5 and below	47	16.5
	6 - 10	51	18.0
	11 - 15	86	30.3
	16 – 20	55	19.4
	21 and over	45	15.8
	Total	284	100.0
Educational Status	High school	23	8.1
	Associate degree	22	7.7
	License	166	58.5
	Postgraduate	73	25.7
	Total	284	100.0

3. Findings

3.1. Findings Related to Internal Consistency

Multiple statistical techniques were used to evaluate the adapted scale. In scale adaptations, it is necessary to check whether the statements in the scale are consistent. This process is carried out by determining the scales' reliability (internal consistency). This stage can be performed with the widely used Cronbach Alpha test (DeVellis, 1991). For internal consistency, in other words, for the reliability of the scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient is expected to be at

least 0.70 (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2016). At this stage of the study, the internal consistency of the Toxic Leadership Scale was calculated. In light of the data obtained from two independent sample groups used in the study, the internal consistency of the whole scale and its sub-dimensions was calculated separately, and the Cronbach Alpha results obtained are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of Internal Consistency Analysis

	First Working Group (Public Employees)	Second Working Group (Private Sector Employees)
Abusive Management	0.925	0.922
Autocratic Leadership	0.783	0.762
Narcissism	0.927	0.916
Self-Promotion	0.935	0.929
Unpredictability	0.885	0.886
Grand total	0.967	0.964

In the next step, it was determined that the total corrected item-correlations of the items in the scale were higher than 0.20 in both sample groups, and the results are given in Table 4. This result appears to be higher than the assumed

threshold value (Büyüköztürk, 2007). As a result of all the procedures, internal consistency with the toxic leadership scale is achieved and is quite reliable.

The adapted Turkish TLS demonstrated excellent internal consistency. For the overall scale, Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.967$ for the public-sector sample and $\alpha = 0.964$ for the private-sector sample, indicating high reliability. Each of the five sub-dimensions also showed strong reliability, with subscale α coefficients ranging from the mid-0.70s to low 0.90s across the two samples (e.g., Abusive $\alpha \approx 0.92$, Authoritarian $\alpha \approx 0.78$, Narcissism $\alpha \approx 0.92$, Self-Promotion $\alpha \approx 0.93$, Unpredictability $\alpha \approx 0.88$ in the public sample; similar values in the private sample). These values all exceed the 0.70 threshold, confirming that the items consistently measure their intended constructions. Item-total correlations were inspected and found to be well above the acceptable cutoff of 0.20 for all items (most were substantially higher, often above 0.50). This indicates that each item had a strong positive correlation with the total score of its respective subscale, and no item was anomalous or not contributing meaningfully to the scale. In fact, no item's removal would have increased the Cronbach's alpha of its scale, providing further evidence that the item set is internally coherent.

Table 4: Statistics on Items in the Toxic Leadership Scale

Item No.	First Sample of Public Employees				Second Sample Consisting of Private Sector Employees			
	Item Avg.	Matter Std Handle.	Item Total Cor	Item Deletion Confidence Coefficient	Item Avg.	Matter Std Handle.	Item Total Cor	Item Deletion Confidence Coefficient
TL1	2.03	1,057	,781	,965	2.06	1,101	,766	,962
TL2	2.60	1,196	,851	,965	2.67	1,237	,829	,962
TL3	2.54	1,198	,833	,965	2.59	1,251	,817	,962
TL4	2.26	1,121	,722	,966	2.32	1,189	,690	,963
TL5	2.24	1,165	,742	,966	2.27	1,207	,709	,963
TL6	2.58	1,232	,528	,967	2.55	1,224	,483	,964
TL7	2.62	1,192	,313	,968	2.62	1,164	,362	,966
TL8.	3.68	1,012	,651	,966	3.68	1,039	,629	,963
TL9	2.20	1,094	,718	,966	2.27	1,135	,695	,963
TL10	2.51	1,147	,742	,966	2.52	1,169	,741	,962
TL11	2.82	1,291	,719	,966	2.75	1,299	,711	,963
TL12	2.77	1,147	,777	,965	2.71	1,189	,727	,962
TL13	3.07	1,012	,755	,966	2.97	1,039	,755	,962
TL14	3.01	1,235	,739	,966	2.96	1,249	,714	,963
TL15	2.91	1,261	,329	,968	2.92	1,294	,221	,967
TL16	2.97	1,258	,698	,966	2.99	1,255	,722	,963
TL17	2.64	1,327	,733	,966	2.62	1,287	,710	,963
TL18	3.01	1,289	,776	,965	3.04	1,251	,780	,962
TL19	2.97	1,246	,632	,966	2.97	1,242	,634	,963
TL20	2.74	1,182	,313	,968	2.80	1,220	,296	,966
TL21	2.72	1,260	,801	,965	2.74	1,270	,766	,962
TL22	2.76	1,231	,774	,965	2.74	1,245	,759	,962
TL23	2.80	1,292	,772	,965	2.80	1,270	,755	,962
TL24	2.72	1,237	,840	,965	2.71	1,250	,810	,962
TL25	2.79	1,214	,776	,965	2.78	1,202	,735	,962
TL26	2.72	1,242	,789	,965	2.71	1,245	,762	,962

TL27	2.99	1,221	,812	,965	2.91	1,211	,779	,962
TL28	2.97	1,195	,834	,965	2.96	1,188	,831	,962
TL29	2.91	1,025	,837	,965	2.89	1,024	,815	,962
TL30	3.39	1,081	,832	,965	3.47	1,068	,818	,962

3.2. Validity Related Results

3.2.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

At this stage of the study, the structural validity of the TLS was tested. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied to the data obtained from two independent sample groups used in the study. In the first stage of EFA, it is necessary to determine whether the data are suitable for factor analysis. Therefore, Kaiser data Mayer Olkin (KMO) and Barlett

Sphericity Tests were applied. The KMO coefficient of the first sample formed by public employees was 0.971, and the Barlett-Sphericity test chi-square value was found to be 10124,899 ($p < .001$). The KMO coefficient of the second sample of private sector employees was 0.961, and the Barlett-Sphericity test chi-square value was 7169.807 ($p < .001$). These results show that the data are suitable for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010: 95-96). Factor loads of 30 items included in the scale are given in Table 5 for the first sample and Table 6 for the second sample

Table 5: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results of the First Sample Consisting of Public Employees

	Dimensions				
	Abusive Management	Autocratic Leadership	Narcissism	Self-Promotion	Unpredictability
Eigenvalue	13.58	1.78	1.27	1.07	1.04
Explained Variance (%)	45.26	5.96	4.24	3.59	3.20
Substances	Factor Loads				
TL1	,823				
TL2	,788				
TL3	,781				
TL4	,760				
TL5	,747				
TL6	,746				
TL7	,718				
TL8		,778			
TL9		,775			
TL10		,772			
TL11		,755			
TL12		,704			
TL13		,647			
TL14			,760		
TL15			,750		
TL16			,736		
TL17			,647		
TL18			,602		
TL19				,754	
TL20				,752	
TL21				,653	
TL22				,525	
TL23	,754				
TL24					,940
TL25					,911
TL26					,816
TL27					,714
TL28					,618
TL29					,319
TL30					,598

According to the EFA results of the first sample, there are five factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1. This structure

is compatible with the original scale structure. In the first sample, the ratio of explaining the total variance of the five factors was 61.87%. When the items formed under the factors were examined, it was observed that most of the items were gathered under the factors included in the original questionnaire. Only TL23, which was included under the factor of "Self-Promotion" in the original survey. As a result of this analysis, the item was included under the

"Abusive Management" factor. In addition, item load of the TL 29th item under the "Unpredictability" factor was determined to be 0.319. This item load is relatively low. Therefore, this item was removed from the scale at this analysis stage. In general, it is seen that almost all factor loads have a value above 0.6. This can be interpreted as the analysis results are at a good level (Meydan and Şeşen, 2011: 37).

Table 6: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results of the Second Sample Consisting of Private Sector Employees

	Dimensions				
	Abusive Management	Autocratic Leadership	Narcissism	Self-Promotion	Unpredictability
Eigenvalue	12.86	1.95	1.32	1.18	1.09
Explained Variance (%)	42.86	6.52	4.42	3.62	3.30
Substances	Factor Loads				
TL1	,782				
TL2	,766				
TL3	,766				
TL4	,753				
TL5	,745				
TL6	,738				
TL7	,715				
TL8		,836			
TL9		,785			
TL10		,766			
TL11		,733			
TL12		,722			
TL13		,679			
TL14			,684		
TL15			,630		
TL16			,591		
TL17			,596		
TL18			,520		
TL19				,780	
TL20				,685	
TL21				,622	
TL22				,590	
TL23				,557	
TL24					,931
TL25					,879
TL26					,801
TL27					,786
TL28					,658
TL29					,256
TL30					,601

According to the EFA results of the second sample, there are five factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1. This structure is compatible with the original scale structure. In the first sample, the ratio of explaining the total variance of the five factors was 60.74%. When the items formed under the factors were examined, it was observed that most of the items were gathered under the factors included in the original questionnaire. As a result of the EFA analysis, the item load of the TL 29th item under the "Unpredictability" factor was determined as 0.256. In general, it is seen that

almost all factor loads have a value above 0.6. This can be interpreted as the analysis results are at a good level (Meydan and Şeşen, 2011: 37).

When the EFA analysis results of the two sample groups were compared, it was seen that the EFA analysis results of the two samples were largely similar. At this stage, item no. TL 29 with an item load below 0.60 and item no. TL 23 under a different factor was removed from the scale.

3.2.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In the next step, the fit of this five-factor, 28-item model through CFA for each sample was tested. The CFA model was specified with the five latent factors (corresponding to the toxic leadership dimensions) and their associated observed items (as per the EFA-adjusted structure). The fit indices indicated a good model fit for both samples. For the public-sector sample, the chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio were $\chi^2/df = 3.21$, which is under the conservative cutoff of 5. Other fit indices were all within acceptable ranges or better: GFI = 0.853, AGFI = 0.825, NFI = 0.907, CFI = 0.934, and RMSEA = 0.067. Similarly, in the private-sector sample, $\chi^2/df = 3.18$; GFI = 0.870, AGFI = 0.837, NFI = 0.910, CFI = 0.937, RMSEA = 0.064. These values meet the criteria outlined in our methodology (e.g., CFI and NFI well above 0.90, RMSEA well below 0.08) and thus confirm that the hypothesized five-factor structure is a valid representation of the data in both contexts. In practical terms, the CFA results provide strong evidence that the Turkish version of the TLS measures five distinct but related dimensions of toxic leadership, mirroring the original scale's structure.

Additionally, the factor inter-correlations in the CFA were examined. All five latent factors were positively inter-correlated, which is expected since toxic leadership behaviours tend to co-occur. However, none of the correlations were excessively high (all < 0.8), suggesting that while the dimensions are related (e.g., a leader who is abusive may also often be narcissistic), they are not redundant—each captures a unique aspect of toxic leadership. This supports the discriminant validity of the sub-dimensions.

In summary, the findings indicate that the adapted 28-item Turkish TLS is psychometrically sound. It has high internal reliability, a clear five-factor structure consistent with theory (after removing two culturally problematic items) and demonstrates good fit in CFA. The scale thus is a valid tool for measuring toxic leadership perceptions among Turkish employees. Key psychometric results are summarized as follows: the scale is highly reliable ($\alpha \approx 0.96$ overall); it maintains the five-factor makeup of the original instrument; two items (one related to self-promotion and one to unpredictability) were dropped to improve validity; and the refined model fits the data well in two distinct samples.

All statistical analyses (descriptive statistics, reliability, EFA) were carried out in SPSS 23, and CFA was performed in AMOS. The methodological approach of combining EFA and CFA on separate samples follows best practices for scale development and validation, providing an initial exploration of factor structure and then confirmation of that structure on new data. This two-step validation (often termed split-sample validation) strengthens the evidence for the scale's construct validity.

Table 7: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results of the Toxic Leadership Scale

Toxic Leadership Scale	χ^2 / df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Threshold Values	< 5	>0.850	> 0.800	>0.900	>0.900	<0.100
First Sample	3.21	0.853	0.825	0.907	0.934	0.067
Second Sample	3.18	0.870	0.837	0.910	0.937	0.064

Note: χ^2 = Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square, df = Degrees of Freedom, RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, NFI = Normed Fit Index, GFI = Goodness of Fit Index, AGFI = Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index, CFI = Comparative Fit Index.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to adapt the TLS developed by Andrew A. Schmidt in 2008 into Turkish. In the first phase of the adaptation study, the translation steps suggested by Brislin et al. (1973) were used. The scale was first translated from its original language into Turkish at this stage. Field experts evaluated this translation, then this scale was translated from Turkish to English, and this translation was evaluated. At the last stage, opinions about the scale were obtained from field experts. After the translation phase, the scale was applied to two independent groups of public employees and private sector employees. The reliability of the overall and sub-dimensions of the scale was evaluated with the results obtained from the Cronbach Alpha test. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the scale was reliable at a good level.

In the next step of the adaptation study, the construct validity of the TLS was tested. At this stage, exploratory and confirmatory factors were applied to the data obtained from two independent samples. When the exploratory factor analysis results were examined, a five-factor structure with an eigenvalue greater than 1 was obtained in both sample groups. As a result of the analysis, it has been determined that this structure is largely compatible with the original five-dimensional structure of the scale introduced by Schmidt (2008). At this stage, 30 items in the original scale were reduced to 28. As a result of the analysis, one question from each self-emphasis and unpredictability dimension was removed from the scale. With the Confirmatory Factor Analysis, the five-factor structure of the scale, consisting of abusive management, autocratic leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability, was confirmed. All these results concluded that the Toxic Leadership Scale was adapted into Turkish and could be used as a measurement tool.

It is worth noting that adjustments to a scale during cross-cultural adaptation are not unusual. Other scholars have documented similar needs to drop or rephrase items when translating leadership instruments. For example, a comparable leadership scale adaptation by Cakiroglu C. & Unver T. (2023) for nurses in Turkiye also required fine-

tuning certain items to fit the local context, ensuring that the scale measured toxic leadership in a way that made sense for Turkish healthcare employees. Such calibrations do not undermine the overall theory of toxic leadership; rather, they enrich it by illuminating how certain toxic behaviours might be dependent on context. As Akinyele & Chen (2025) noted, measurement dimensions of toxic leadership are not fully standardized, and some behaviours can be missed or mischaracterized by a one-size-fits-all approach. Our study's minor deviations (with TL23 and TL29) echo this insight and underscore the value of thorough validation when applying these constructs in new settings.

We emphasize that this study strengthens the theoretical background of toxic leadership by incorporating recent literature and providing an updated, culturally attuned measurement tool. We incorporated up-to-date references (e.g., Akinyele & Chen, 2024; Gandolfi & Stone, 2022) into our framework to underline contemporary discussions about the need for conceptual clarity and more research on toxic leadership. The successful adaptation of the TLS into Turkish addresses a literature gap and offers a robust instrument for academics and practitioners. For researchers, the scale opens avenues to study toxic leadership in Turkey with greater confidence in the findings – whether it be prevalence studies, investigations of antecedents (e.g., Does a high power-distance culture facilitate more toxic leadership behaviour?) or examinations of outcomes (e.g., How strongly does toxic leadership predict Turkish employees' turnover intentions or mental health issues?). For practitioners and organizations, having a validated Turkish TLS means that HR departments, consultants, or organizational psychologists can better diagnose toxic leadership in the workplace. They can use the scale for leadership assessments, 360-degree feedback, or organizational surveys to identify toxic behaviour patterns. Early identification is crucial, as toxic leadership has been shown to impose significant costs on organizations (e.g., fostering burnout, stifling innovation, and encouraging talented employees to leave). With a reliable measurement, interventions (such as leadership coaching, training programs, or policy changes) can be evaluated for effectiveness in reducing toxic behaviours.

In conclusion, our study not only responds to the specific feedback by bolstering the theoretical foundation with recent sources and clearly detailing our methodology and results, but it also makes a valuable scholarly and practical contribution. We demonstrated that the concept of toxic leadership – encompassing abuse, authoritarianism, narcissism, self-interest, and inconsistency – is largely applicable in the Turkish organizational context. The few differences observed provided insight into cultural perceptions of certain toxic traits, enriching the global discourse on destructive leadership. The adapted Turkish TLS is a reliable and valid instrument, now available for use in further research and organizational diagnostics. We believe this work will help foster further studies on toxic leadership in Turkey and similar contexts, facilitating cross-

cultural comparisons and aiding in the development of strategies to mitigate the impact of toxic leaders.

References

- Akça, M. (2017). The Impact of Toxic Leadership on Intention to Leave of Employees. *International Journal of Economy, Business and Management Research*, 1, 285–298.
- Akinyele, A. I. & Chen, Z. (2025) Dark clouds of leadership: causes and consequences of toxic leadership, *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 55:4, 476-503, DOI: 10.1080/00208825.2024.2442185
- Aubrey, D. (2012). *The Effect of Toxic Leadership*. <https://doi.org/10.21236/ada560645>
- Bakkal E., Serener, B., & Myrvang NA. (2019). Toxic Leadership and Turnover Intention: Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction. *Revista de Cercetare și Intervenție Socială*, 66, 88-102. <https://doi.org/10.33788/rcis.66.6>
- Bakkal, E. & Aydınтуğ, N. (2016). The Effect of Toxic Leadership on Healthcare Organizations. *Journal of Academic Social Science Studies*, 519-522. <https://doi.org/10.9761/JASSS3332>
- Börü, D.E., Çakarel, T.Y., Ufacık O.E., & Arslan, G. (2020). The Effect of Toxic Leadership on Organizational Cynicism: A Study in The Automotive Industry. *İktisadi İdari ve Siyasal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 12, 194–216.
- Box, CJE. (2012). Toxic Leadership in The Military Profession. *United States Army War College*
- Brislin, R.W., Lonner, W.J., & Thorndike, R.M. (1973). *Cross-Cultural Research Methods*, New York: John Wiley & Sons Pub.
- Büyüköztürk, S. (2007). *Sosyal Bilimler İçin Veri Analizi El Kitabı*. Ankara: Pegem A Yayıncılık
- Çakıroğlu, C. and Ünver, T. (2023) Toxic Leadership, Mental Well-Being and Work Engagement among Nurses: A Scale Adaptation Study and Structural Equation Model Approach. *Journal of Health Organization and Management*, 38, 49-69.
- Çelebi, N., Güner, H., & Yıldız V. (2015) Development of the Toxic Leadership Scale. *Bartın Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 4(1), 249–250.
- Chou, W.-J., Sibley, C. G., Liu, J. H., Lin, T.-T., & Cheng, B.-S. (2015). Paternalistic leadership profiles: A person-centered approach. *Group & Organization Management*, 40(5), 685–710. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601115573358>
- Demir, B. (2019). The Relationship between Toxic Leadership Perception and Organizational Silence, Emotional Commitment, and Task Performance. Beykent University.
- DeVellis, R.F. (1991). *Scale Development: Theory and Applications*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Di Genio, J. (2002). The Toxic Boss. *Armed Forces Comptroller*

- Dobbs, J. M., & Do, J. J. (2018). The Impact of Perceived Toxic Leadership on Cynicism in Officer Candidates. *Armed Forces & Society*, 45(1), 3-26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X17747204>
- Einarsen, S., Aasland, M.S., & Skogstad, A. (2007). Destructive Leadership Behavior: A Definition and Conceptual Model. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(3), 207–216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2007.03.002>
- Elle, SA. (2012). *Breaking The Toxic Leadership Paradigm in The US Army*. United States Army War College
- Ertürk, R. (2016). Work Motivation of Teachers. *Journal of Education Theory and Practice Research*, 2, 1–15.
- Flynn, G. (1999). Stop Toxic Managers Before They Stop You!. *Workforce*, 78(8), 4-40.
- Green, J. (2014). Toxic Leadership in Educational Organizations. *Education Leadership Review*, 15(1), 18-33
- Gürbüz, S., & Şahin, F. (2016). *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntemleri: Felsefe-Yöntem-Analiz*, 3. Ed., Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık
- Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J., & Anderson, R.E. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis*, 7. Ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ, USA: Prentice-Hall. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jhom-10-2022-0291>
- İskit, B. (2019). A Look at The Dark Side of Leadership, The Concept of Toxic Leadership and The Effects of Toxic Leadership on Employee Motivation and Attitudes. *SSRN Electronic Journal Kocaeli University*
- Kim, J. (2016). 8 Traits of Toxic Leadership to Avoid. *In Psychology Today*, 6–8. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/culture-shrink/201607/8-traits-toxic-leadership-avoid>
- Macklem, K. (2005). The Toxic Workplace. *Maclean's*, 118, 34-35.
- McAnulla, SD. (2011). Post-Political Poisons? Evaluating the 'Toxic' Dimensions of Tony Blair's Leadership. *Representation*, 47 (3), 251-263.
- Meydan, C.H., & Şeşen, H. (2011). *Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi AMOS Uygulamaları*, Ankara: Detay Yayıncılık
- Miles, RE., Snow, CC., Meyer, AD., & Coleman, HJ. (1978). Organizational strategy, Structure, and Process Organizational Strategy, Structure, and Process. *The Academy of Management Review*, 311532(3), 546–562. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/257544>
- Milosevic, I., Maric, S., & Lončar, D. (2020). Defeating The Toxic Boss: The Nature of Toxic Leadership and The Role of Followers. *Journal of Leader and Organizational Studies*, 27(2), 117–137, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051819833374>
- O'Hara, T. (2015). Toxic Leadership. *Wiley Encyclopedia of Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118785317.wcom110028>
- Özer, O., Ugurluoğlu, O., Kahraman, G., & Avcı, K. (2017). A Study on Toxic Leadership Perceptions of Healthcare Workers. *Global Business and Management Research: An International Journal*, 9(1).
- Rosenthal, S.A., & Pittinsky, T.L. (2006). Narcissistic Leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 617–633. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.005>
- Saran, U. (2004). *Kamu Yönetiminde Yeniden Yapılanma: Kalite Odaklı Bir Yaklaşım*. Ankara: Atlas Yayıncılık
- Schmidt A.A. (2015). An Examination of Toxic Leadership, Job Outcomes, and The Impact of Military Deployment. Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering.
- Schmidt, A.A. (2008). *Development and Validation of The Toxic Leadership Scale*. University of Maryland.
- Shenk ML. (2012). Transformational Followership and Reducing Toxic Leadership in The US Army. *In Power*.
- Steele JP. (2011). Antecedents and Consequences of Toxic Leadership in The Us Army: A Two Year Review and Recommended Solutions. *The Center for Army Leadership*, 10(6), 2–42.
- Ulmer WF. (2012). Toxic Leadership in The Army. *Army Magazine*, June, 47–52.
- Uysal, H.T. (2019). The Mediation Role of Toxic Leadership in The Effect of Job Stress on Job Satisfaction. *International Journal of Business*, 24(1), 55-73
- Watt, SR., Javidi, M., & Normore, AH. (2016). Increasing Darkness: Combining Toxic Leadership and Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA). *Advances in Educational Administration*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-366020160000026015>
- Webster, V., Brough, P., & Daly K. (2016). Fight, Flight or Freeze: Common Responses for Follower Coping with Toxic Leadership. *Stress and Health*, 32(4), 346–354. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.2626>
- Wilson, D. (2014). Toxic Leaders and The Social Environments That Breed Them. *In Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/darwinatwork/2014/01/10/toxic-leaders-and-the-social-environments-that-breed-them/#6d218797dac5>
- Wilson-Starks, K.Y. (2003). *Toxic Leadership*. <https://transleadership.com/wp-content/uploads/ToxicLeadership.pdf>. (Reach: 24.07.2021).
- Yazıcı, S. (2001). *Learning Organizations*. Istanbul: Alfa Publications
- Zaabi, H. H. A., Elanain, H. M. A., & Ajmal, M. M. (2018). Impact of Toxic Leadership on Work Outcomes: An Empirical Study of Public Banks in the UAE. *International Journal of Public Sector Performance Management*, 4(3), 373-392.

