


Reflection of Toxic Authority: Mediating Role of Perceived Victimization in the Relationship between Dark Leadership and Inner Resignation

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Reflection of Toxic Authority: Mediating Role of Perceived Victimization in the Relationship between Dark Leadership and Inner Resignation	Toksik Otoritenin Yansıması: Karanlık Liderlik ve İçsel İşten Ayrılma Arasındaki İlişkide Algılanan Mağduriyetin Aracı Rolü
Abstract <p>This study aims to determine the relationship between dark leadership, perceived victimization, and inner resignation from the perspective of employees of public institutions. For this purpose, data were collected from 385 public institution employees using the survey technique. The findings showed that dark leadership has a positive relationship with inner resignation and perceived victimization. In addition, a positive relationship was also found between inner resignation and perceived victimization. The remarkable finding of the study is that perceived victimization plays a mediating role in the relationship between dark leadership and inner resignation. The study provides evidence of the existence of dark leadership in public institutions and emphasizes the need for positive leadership in organizations. Thus, the results offer important implications for managers and researchers.</p>	Öz <p>Bu çalışma; karanlık liderlik, algılanan mağduriyet ve içsel işten ayrılma arasındaki ilişkiyi, kamu kurumu çalışanları perspektifinden belirlemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu amaçla, anket tekniği kullanılarak 385 kamu kurumu çalışanından veri toplanmıştır. Bulgular, karanlık liderlik algısının içsel işten ayrılma ve algılanan mağduriyet ile pozitif bir ilişkisinin olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca, içsel işten ayrılma ile algılanan mağduriyet arasında da pozitif bir ilişki tespit edilmiştir. Araştırmanın dikkat çekici bulgusu ise algılanan mağduriyetin karanlık liderlik ve içsel işten ayrılma arasındaki ilişkide aracı bir rol oynamasıdır. Bulgular, kamu kurumlarında karanlık liderliğin varlığına dair kanıtlar sunmakta ve kurumlarda pozitif liderliğe duyulan ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır. Bunun yanında çalışma; yöneticiler ve araştırmacılar için önemli çıkarımlar sunmaktadır.</p>
Keywords: Leadership, Dark Leadership, Perceived Victimization, Inner Resignation	Anahtar Kelimeler: Liderlik, Karanlık Liderlik, Algılanan Mağduriyet, İçsel İşten Ayrılma
JEL Codes: D23, M12, M54	JEL Kodları: D23, M12, M54

Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı	Bu çalışma, Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi Girişimsel Olmayan Klinik Araştırmalar Etik Kurulununun 06.03.2024 tarih ve GO2024/114 sayılı onayı çerçevesinde bilimsel araştırma ve yayın etiği kurallarına uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.
Yazarların Makaleye Olan Katkıları	Yazar 1'in makaleye katkısı %60, Yazar 2'nin makaleye katkısı %40'tır.
Çıkar Beyanı	Yazarlar açısından ya da üçüncü taraflar açısından çalışmadan kaynaklı çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

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1. Introduction

Leadership is a complex construct with light and dark sides (Yukl, 2018). Understanding all aspects of leadership enables organizations to understand, be aware of, and avoid the dark and unproductive aspects of leadership. There is evidence of these dysfunctional aspects of leadership; however, in much of the organizational behavior research on leadership, these negative aspects have often been ignored while the constructive aspects of leadership have been examined (Itzkovich et al., 2020; Schyns & Schilling, 2013); however, recently, there has been increasing interest in the dark and destructive styles of leadership (Higgs, 2009; Thoroughgood et al., 2018; Itzkovich et al., 2020). The prevalence of the destructive effect of leadership in organizations and the serious damages that can negatively affect employees' attitudes and the atmosphere of the organization make it worthy of more in-depth research. Therefore, dark leadership with proven negative effects continues to attract the attention of researchers (Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Mumtaz, 2019; Bhandarker & Rai, 2019).

Dark leaders are responsible for the toxic atmosphere in organizations. They lead to employee victimization (Khan et al., 2020). Over time, they can trigger undesirable outcomes such as employees' withdrawal and inner resignation. Poor treatment experienced at work can cause employees to experience psychological tension (Coetzee & Oosthuizen, 2017; Itzkovich et al., 2020). On the other hand, existing studies in the literature have generally investigated the positive attitudes and behaviors of leadership that can increase factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and performance (Mumtaz, 2019); effective leaders can also sometimes promote unrest and maltreatment in organizations. It is important to discuss how authority can be harmful and destructive when it falls into the wrong hands (Harris & Jones, 2018), as leaders with bad attitudes are said to disrupt organizational functioning (Braun et al., 2018). In this context, it would not be the right approach to focus only on the positive side of leadership and ignore its dark sides. Covering up the hidden aspects of leadership causes problems to continue. It is mentioned that it is necessary to be brave and willing to reveal the implicit structure of dark leadership for the efficiency of organizations (Clements & Washbush, 1999; Lopes Henriques et al., 2019).

Dark leadership has been examined in some studies (Clements & Washbush, 1999; Mumtaz, 2019; Khan et al., 2020; Itzkovich et al., 2020). Some other studies have addressed the perception of victimization (Dadaboyev et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020) and some have addressed inner resignation (Wenck, 2013; Hartner-Tiefenthaler, 2021). As a matter of fact, it is claimed that inner resignation and perceived victimization are becoming increasingly common in modern workplaces (Harris & Jones, 2018). In this study, it was investigated how inner resignation is affected in employees exposed to the attitudes and behaviors of dark leadership and the mediating effect of perceived victimization in this relationship. These three variables were tested in a model. Destructive attitudes and behaviors of dark leaders may increase subordinates' perception of victimization. This may cause employees to experience stress and then internally consider leaving their jobs because it is difficult to work efficiently in an environment of abuse and bullying (Mumtaz, 2019). It is argued that victimization has an important place in organizational behavior studies; however, this perception has not yet been fully discussed in terms of how it creates changes in the attitudes and behaviors of the victim. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the perception of victimization will play a critical function in

the relationship between dark leadership and inner resignation (Harris & Jones, 2018; Khan et al., 2020).

The relationship between the variables was tried to be explained based on the assumptions of Conservation of Resources (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989) and Social Exchange (Blau, 1964) theories. According to research based on the Conservation of Resources theory, the destructive, cynical and pessimistic attitudes of dark leadership victimize and psychologically destroy employees. These negative social exchanges between dark leaders and subordinates cause employees to react negatively (Tepper et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2020). Indeed, according to the Social Exchange theory, the employee-organization relationship is generally based on mutual exchange. Employees expect economic and socio-emotional resources (e.g. respect, appreciation, recognition, etc.) in return for their labor and loyalty. However, when these expectations are not always met, the psychological contract is breached (Blau, 1964; Rousseau, 1995). When leaders do not fulfill their obligations and start bullying employees, employees focus on protecting their existing psychological resources. As the stress and threats deepen, the individual's resources may become depleted. This situation may trigger the need for employees to retaliate due to social exchange. These retaliatory behaviors include inner resignation and self-withdrawal. Employees will start to prefer to be invisible in order to avoid being subjected to the leader's harassing, toxic and aggressive treatment (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2000; Dadaboyev et al., 2019).

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Dark Leadership

It is accepted that there is a dark side to leadership in organizations (Conger, 1990). It is difficult to define dark leadership because it is difficult to know what the boundaries of destructive and abusive leadership behaviors are (Tepper, 2007; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Furthermore, dark leadership is a leadership that is generally unpopular, intimidating, insincere, rude, and abusive (Mehraein et al., 2023). Dark leadership is the dark box that expresses the extreme of negative leadership behaviors (Harris & Jones, 2018). Dark leaders are usually detached from the environment and lack empathy. These characteristics cause them to be indifferent to the needs of employees. They show low levels of conscience and remorse. Therefore, they have weak emotional bonds with their subordinates (Rauthmann & Will, 2011; Volmer et al., 2016). Such leaders focus on their own interests and manipulate people accordingly (Khan et al., 2020; Volmer et al., 2016). Dark leaders can often be cynical, intimidating, humiliating, exclusionary, harassing, lying, deceptive, accusatory and aggressive (Mehraein et al., 2023; Elbers et al., 2023). Thus, dark leadership creates unrest by making the daily experience of going to work unpleasant (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

2.2. Perceived Victimization

Victimization is an individual's self-perception that he or she has been subjected to aggressive acts from one or more people, either momentarily or repeatedly (Aquino, 2000). It is the person's acceptance that she/he is a victim (Gupta & Bakhshi, 2018; Jockin et al., 2001). This victimization is generally examined under topics such as hostile behaviors, bullying, harassment, etc. in organizations (Mumtaz, 2019). Of course, the perception of victimization can be caused by many factors. Structural conditions (e.g., low hierarchical position), organizational factors (e.g., high role conflict or role ambiguity), and personal characteristics (e.g., negative affect) can play a critical role in fostering the perception of victimization

(Aquino & Thau, 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Dadaboyev et al., 2019). Regardless of the cause, the cost of victimization in the workplace is high. Victims of aggressive acts suffer psychologically, and become tired, stressed, ill, and sometimes traumatized. Many studies have found significant relationships between perceived workplace victimization and negative psychological, emotional and physiological outcomes. These outcomes include increased burnout (Hogh et al., 2005; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007), low levels of job satisfaction and high resignation intention (Ülbeği et al., 2014; Lapiere et al., 2005).

2.3. Inner Resignation

The concept of inner resignation, which continues to be developed, is that employees feel trapped in their jobs. On the other hand, it refers to the situation where employees do not see an option other than the organization they are currently working for and stay in the organization by thinking about their previous efforts (Wenck, 2013). In such a situation, employees often adopt a cynical attitude by detaching and distancing themselves from work. Employees reduce their performance by fulfilling the requirements of their duties at a minimum level (Seçer, 2011). Therefore, they refuse to perform prosocial behaviors and undefined tasks (Schmitz et al., 2002). Employees react to job dissatisfaction with an inner resignation (Brinkmann & Stapf, 2005). In this process, employees start to behave like retirees (Seçer, 2011). Among the main reasons for this is the perception that the social exchange between the employee and the organization is unfair and that there is a violation of the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995). Therefore, employees who experience inner resignation do not feel loyalty to the job and the organization (Wenck, 2013; Hartner-Tiefenthaler, 2021). This shows that it is important to explore the antecedents of inner resignation in organizations.

2.4. Hypotheses Development

When employees face a negative leadership approach, they feel vulnerable. When they feel that they do not have the capacity to cope with mistreatment, they become fearful. As a result, employees will either look for a place to escape from the supervisor or they will want to quit (Mumtaz, 2019). It is known that employees will not feel safe in such an environment where well-being and peace are not established. When there is no trust, the sense of belonging decreases (Duffy & Ferrier, 2003). Dark leaders who do not see subordinates' job satisfaction as important (Volmer et al., 2016) lead to negative attitudes toward work. Loss of job satisfaction leads to a decrease in performance and motivation (Duffy et al., 2002; Bhandarker & Rai, 2019; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). The findings of previous studies show that prolonged exposure to the destructive behaviors of dark leadership causes stress (Kesen & Dincer, 2021). It is stated that this situation creates the intention to resign (Ashforth, 1997; Tepper, 2000; Tatlı & Öngel, 2023; Kesen & Dincer, 2021), high labor resignation, absenteeism, low organizational commitment and decreased productivity (Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Tepper et al., 2006; Duffy et al., 2002), because the impact of the destructive leader makes it difficult to commit to work (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). These results support the assumptions of Conservation of Resources (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989) and Social Exchange (Blau, 1964) theories. Therefore, the hypothesis that dark leadership is negatively related to these concepts is generally supported. It has been proven that employees seek the opportunity to leave the organization in retaliation for their leaders' mistreatment (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Bhandarker & Rai, 2019). In light of the evidence of these studies, hypothesis H1 was developed.

H1: Dark leadership has a positive effect on inner resignation.

There is a consensus that employees are subjected to mistreatment by dark leadership (Hatfield et al., 1994; Mehraein et al., 2023; Tepper et al., 2017). When employees are mistreated in organizations, their self-esteem is threatened (Elbers et al., 2023) and they start to feel pressure (Kesen & Dincer, 2021). In some studies, dark leadership leads to symptoms such as outbursts of anger, anxiety and perception of victimization (Tepper, 2007; Seçkin, 2021; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Employees show more effort while struggling with these difficult conditions (Mumtaz, 2019). The perception of victimization starts to increase among employees who have limited resources to defend themselves (Volmer et al., 2016). In fact, according to the Conservation of Resources (Hobfoll, 1989) theory, having insufficient resources turns employees into victims by making them open targets of dark leaders. In line with the Social Exchange (Blau, 1964) theory, mistreatment damages trust toward the leader and increases counterproductive behaviors (Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Duffy & Ferrier, 2003). This situation leads to burnout and job dissatisfaction (Mumtaz, 2019; Harvey et al., 2007). Over time, it has been observed that tired and resentful victimized employees adopt an introverted attitude (Coyne et al., 2000) and intention to leave the job has increased (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Based on the evidence of the studies in the literature, hypotheses H2 and H3 were developed.

H2: Dark leadership has a positive effect on perceived victimization.

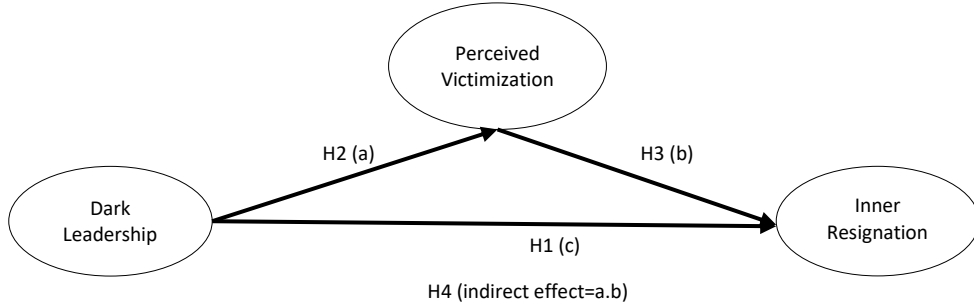
H3: Perceived victimization has a positive effect on inner resignation.

One of the basic psychological needs is to avoid pain. It is assumed that being the target of aggressive behaviors of dark leaders can prevent the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and cause pain (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Existing literature has revealed that bullying behaviors of leaders create a toxic atmosphere in the organization and lead to severe perceptions of victimization (Gupta & Bakhshi, 2018; An et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2020). Retaliation against perceived aggressive behaviors becomes likely. Employees who perceive organizational actions as unfair and are subjected to mistreatment desire revenge (An et al., 2016). In such cases, subordinates may hold their managers or organizations responsible for mistreatment (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Due to social exchange, subordinates may tend toward counterproductive behaviors (An et al., 2016; Zellars et al., 2002). It has been revealed that employees exposed to high levels of abuse exhibit less organizational citizenship behaviors. Employees may sometimes sabotage other employees in such situations. Employees often interpret such reactions as a way to take revenge on their leaders (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Indeed, Park and Ono (2017) found that being exposed to bullying in the workplace weakens employees' commitment to work. This situation may actually be a reason for inner resignation. An employee who loses interest in work will probably focus on defined tasks. He/she will minimize dedication. He/she will lose his/her former enthusiasm for work. Therefore, as in the study of Seçkin (2021), who identified the mediating role of perceived victimization in the relationship between abusive management and trait anger, perceived victimization may play an effective mediating role in the relationship between dark leadership and inner resignation. Based on the evidence in the literature, hypothesis H4 was developed.

H4: Perceived victimization has a mediating role in the effect of dark leadership on inner resignation.

Based on the developed hypotheses and the purpose of the research, the developed model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research Model



3. Methodology

In order to collect data on the subject, scales available in the literature and proven to be valid were used. Before data collection, The Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee of Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University (Decision number: GO 2024/114) was obtained. Informed consent was obtained from the participants at the beginning of the survey. They were then asked to answer the questionnaire.

3.1. Sample and Procedures

The data were collected from 385 people working in different public institutions in Burdur and Isparta cities by using convenience sampling method and questionnaire technique. The main reason why convenience sampling is preferred is that it is economical and convenient. Due to bureaucratic obstacles, information about the size of the population of the study could not be reached. However, in studies where quantitative research methods are preferred, it is appropriate to reach a sample size of 384 if the population size is between 500.000 and 1.000.000 (Kozaklı, 2015). From this point of view, the sample of the study was determined as 385. Participants answered scales related to dark leadership, inner resignation and perceived victimization. Participation in the study was completely voluntary.

Studies on mistreatment in public institutions have concluded that bad leadership leaves workplace conflicts unresolved and eventually escalates into bullying (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2006; Aquino & Thau, 2009). Therefore, it is argued that dark leadership (Üngör, 2021; Seçkin, 2021), inner resignation (Nink, 2014; Hartner-Tiefenthaler, 2021; Seçer, 2011) and perceived victimization (Kaya & Özdevecioğlu, 2008) are common among public institutions employees. Üngör (2021) found a negative relationship between dark leadership and job satisfaction in public institutions. In the study conducted by Seçer (2011), it was found that inner resignation decreased life satisfaction in public institution employees. Kaya and Özdevecioğlu (2008) revealed that perceived victimization in public institutions harms organizational commitment. In a study conducted by Seçkin (2021), a positive relationship between abusive leadership and perceived victimization of employees was found. In addition, perceived victimization was positively related to trait anger and revenge intentions. Employees in a manufacturing company reported being subjected to bullying significantly more than employees in hospitals. However, there are no clear results on the level of victimization in the context of organization

type and sectors. It is generally estimated that the frequency with which subordinates communicate and interact with others and their leaders may increase the risk of victimization (Aquino & Thau, 2009). On the other hand, the number of employees in the workplace (Einarsen & Skogstad 1996), stressful and competitive work environments are associated with higher levels of victimization and resignation (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Therefore, it was decided to conduct the research in public institutions.

The socio-demographic structure of the sample population of the study was analyzed. Accordingly, 136 (35.3%) of the participants were female and 249 (64.7%) were male. Of these participants, 299 (77.7%) were married and 86 (22.3%) were single. The age distribution of the sample population is as follows: 62 (16.1%) of the participants are between the ages of 18-30, 165 (42.9%) between the ages of 31-40, 103 (26.7%) between the ages of 41-50 and 55 (14.3%) between the ages of 51+. The participants were asked how many years they have been actively in business life. Accordingly, the distribution of the answers given is as follows: 52 (13.5%) of the participants have been working for less than 5 years. 114 (29.6%) have been working for 5-10 years, 56 (14.6%) for 11-15 years, 62 (16.1%) for 16-20 years and 101 (26.2%) for 21+ years.

3.2. Instruments

Dark Leadership Scale: It was developed by Başar (2020). The scale includes three factors and 17 items measuring wearisome, insincere, and tyrannous behaviors of dark leadership. Some of the sample items are as follows: "Gives overwork to subordinates", "Slanders others and subordinates" and "Humiliates subordinates". On the scale a 5-point Likert rating is used ranging from 1) never to 5) always. Başar (2020) developed this scale in the context of Turkish society and culture ($\alpha=0.95$).

Perceived Victimization Scale: The perceived victimization scale developed by Aquino, Grover, Bradfield and Allen (1999) was used in the study. The scale consists of two factors direct victimization and indirect victimization behaviors and 8 items. Some of the sample items are as follows: "Embarrassed you in front of other employees", "Did something to make you look bad". In the scale, a 5-point Likert-type scoring ranging from 1) never to 5) always was used. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Ülbeği et al. (2014) and proved to be suitable for Turkish culture ($\alpha=0.88$).

Inner Resignation Scale: This scale developed by Jehle and Schmitz (2007) consists of one factor and 5 items. Sample questions related to the scale are as follows: "I have worked myself into the ground at my job." and "I used to be much more dedicated to my work". The scale was adapted to Turkish by Seçer (2011) and its suitability for the Turkish population was proved ($\alpha=0.71$). On the scale, a 5-point Likert score was used, with 1) strongly disagree and 5) strongly agree.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

In the study, all SEM tests were performed with Amos 23 and normal distribution, correlation, reliability (Cranbach's Alpha) and descriptive analyses were performed with Spss 22. Amos 23 program was used for two important reasons. The first one is that it provides fit indices showing the suitability of the model for the observed variables. The second important reason is that it gives the regression coefficients and mediation effect of the variables in a single diagram instead of testing the regression analyses of the variables separately (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In order to test the hypotheses, first and second level CFA

analyses of the scales were performed to measure their construct validity. At this stage, reliability, factor loading, and fit indices of each scale were tested. Then, a structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to reveal the reliability and discriminant validity of latent variables. Hypotheses were then tested with the SEM model (Byrne, 2010).

Before testing the hypotheses, kurtosis and skewness, which reveal the normality assumption, were examined. These values are between -1 and +1 (Şimşek, 2007; Gürbüz & Şahin, 2015) and one of them is between -1.5 and +1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The findings showed that the variables were normally distributed, and the related values are shown in Table 2.

The fit indices and acceptable value ranges obtained as a result of CFA analyses are shown in Table 1 (Hair et al., 2013; Meydan & Şeşen, 2011). Accordingly, it is seen that both the first and second level CFA fit indices of the variables are above the acceptable values. Therefore, it can be said that the theoretical structures of the variables were confirmed.

Table 1: Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Analysis Models

	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	GFI	TLI	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Acceptable Values	-	-	-	<5	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08	<0.08
^a DL	312.99	115	0.00	272	0.91	0.96	0.97	0.03	0.07
^b DL	312.99	115	0.00	272	0.91	0.96	0.97	0.03	0.07
^a PV	44.79	17	0.00	2.64	0.97	0.98	0.99	0.03	0.07
^b PV	44.79	17	0.00	2.64	0.97	0.98	0.99	0.03	0.07
^a IR	4.29	2	0.00	2.13	0.99	0.99	1.00	0.02	0.06

Dark Leadership (DL), Perceived Victimization (PV), Inner Resignation (IR), ^a First Order CFA, ^b Second Order CFA, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI)

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Relationships between Study Variables

After the factorial structures of the variables were verified, their means, standard deviation values, normal distribution and correlation coefficients were analyzed. The findings are shown in Table 2. According to the results of the analyses, the mean of dark leadership was M=2.63; SD=0.99, the mean of perceived victimization was M=1.89; SD=1.01 and the mean of inner resignation variable was M=3.19, SD=1.12. In addition, it was determined that dark leadership had a positive relationship with perceived victimization ($r=0.724$, $p<0.01$) and inner resignation ($r=0.690$, $p<0.05$). Moreover, perceived victimization had a positive relationship with inner resignation ($r=0.613$, $p<0.01$). It was determined that the normal distribution values of all three variables were approximately between -1 and +1 and therefore, they showed a normal distribution (Table 2).

Table 2: Mean, Correlation and Normal Distribution Values

	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. DL	2.63	0.99	-			0.465	-0.501
2. PV	1.89	1.01	0.724**			1.026	-0.129
3. IR	3.19	1.12	0.690**	0.613**	-	-0.246	-0.947

** $p<0.01$, Dark Leadership (DL), Perceived Victimization (PV), Inner Resignation (IR), Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD)

4.2. Assessment of Measurement Model

The measurement model was tested by considering the model fit index values generally accepted in the literature. As a result of the analysis, the measurement model was confirmed ($\chi^2=801.314$, $df=366$, $\chi^2/df=2.189$, $p=0.00$, $CFI=0.955$, $TLI=0.951$, $SRMR=0.049$ and $RMSEA=0.056$). In addition, these should be expected for the reliability and convergent validity values of the model $AVE>0.50$, $CR>0.70$, $MaxR(H)>0.70$, CR and $\alpha>AVE$ (Hair et al., 2013). CR and Cronbach's values of all factors are greater than AVE values. The fact that CR values are higher than AVE values reveals convergent validity. For discriminant validity, $MSV<AVE$, $ASV<AVE$ and $\sqrt{AVE}>$ 'Correlation between factors' criteria need to be met (Hair et al., 2013; Gürbüz, 2019). When Table 3 is analyzed, it is seen that all criteria are met. In this case, discriminant validity of the scales is provided.

Table 3: Assessment of Discriminant and Convergent Validity and Reliability

Scales	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	MaxR(H)	Cronbach's α	1	2	3
1. DL	0.925	0.805	0.687	0.618	0.931	0.959	0.897		
2. IR	0.847	0.582	0.549	0.510	0.852	0.843	0.741***	0.763	
3. PV	0.918	0.848	0.687	0.579	0.923	0.928	0.829***	0.687***	0.921

***Correlation between factors ($p<0.01$), \sqrt{AVE} is shown in bold along the diagonal. Dark Leadership (DL), Perceived Victimization (PV), Inner Resignation (IR), Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Maximum Shared Variance (MSV), Average Shared Variance (ASV), Maximal Reliability (MaxR(H)).

4.3. Hypotheses Testing

SEM was performed using Amos 23 to test the research hypotheses. Table 4 and Figure 2 show the results of the analyses in four separate paths to reveal the effect of variables on each other. First, the effect of dark leadership on inner resignation intention (H1: path c) was tested without including the mediating variable (perceived victimization). As a result of the analysis, it was found that 'the estimate of the standardized regression weight (beta)' value of dark leadership towards inner resignation intention was positive and significant ($\beta=0.750$, $p<0.01$). It was found that dark leadership explained 56% of the variance ($R^2=0.562$) in the inner resignation variable. As a result, H1 was supported.

In order to test the other hypotheses of the study, a separate model in which perceived victimization is a mediating variable was established. At this stage, mediation was tested using the bootstrapping resampling method. The results of the test were analyzed according to the confidence intervals Percentile Bootstrap Confidence Intervals (CI)=95% obtained with 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrapping resampling. The presence of an indirect effect within the 95% confidence interval indicates that the mediating effect is valid. Here, the lower and upper values of the confidence interval should not include zero '0' (Hayes, 2018; MacKinnon et al., 2004). The results of the path analysis show that the model is compatible ($\chi^2=879.828$, $df=367$, $p=0.00$, $\chi^2/df=2.397$, $CFI=0.947$, $TLI=0.942$, $SRMR=0.056$ and $RMSEA=0.0616$). The obtained results are shown both in Table 4 and Figure 2.

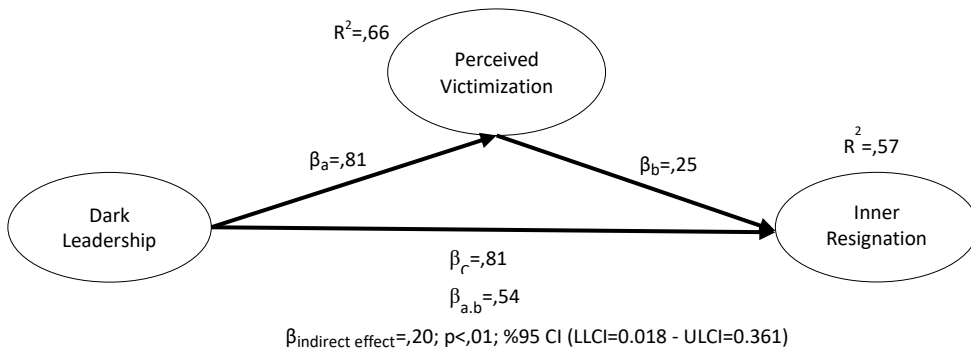
Table 4: Path Analysis Results

Prediction Variables	Result Variables			
	Perceived Victimization		Inner Resignation	
	β	SE	β	SE
Dark Leadership (Path c)	-	-	0.750**	0.069
R ²	-	-	0.562	-
Dark Leadership (Path a)	0.813**	0.042	-	-
R ²	0.660	-	-	-
Perceived Victimization (Path b)	-	-	0.250**	0.147
Dark Leadership (Path a.b)	-	-	0.539**	0.108
R ²	-	-	0.571	-
Indirect Effect	0.203** %95 CI (LLCI=0.018 and ULCI=0.361)			
Model Fit Summary: $\chi^2=879.828$, $df=367$, $p=0.00$, $\chi^2/df=2.397$, $CFI=0.947$, $TLI=0.942$, $SRMR=0.056$ and $RMSEA=0.062$				

** $p < 0.01$; SE= Standard Error; 95% Lower Confidence Interval (LLCI); Upper Confidence Interval (ULCI)

The path shown in Table 4 tests hypothesis H2. In this model, it was found that dark leadership positively affects perceived victimization ($\beta=0.813$ $p < 0.01$). Dark leadership explains approximately 66% of the variance in the perceived victimization variable ($R^2=0.660$). According to the results of the analysis, it can be said that dark leadership increases the perceived victimization of public employees. In the third model, hypothesis H3 (path b) was tested. It was found that perceived victimization positively affected the inner resignation variable ($\beta=0.250$, $p < 0.01$); however, when perceived victimization was included in the model, the effect of dark leadership on inner resignation continued ($\beta=0.539$, $p < 0.01$). Here, dark leadership and perceived victimization together explain approximately 57% ($R^2=0.571$) of the change in the inner resignation variable. In the fourth and final model of the study, H4 (indirect effect) was tested and illustrated with a diagram (Figure 2). The effect of dark leadership on inner resignation through perceived victimization was found to be significant [$\beta=0.203$, 95% CI (LLCI=0.018 - ULCI=0.361)]. In this case, it can be said that H4 is supported.

Figure 2: SEM Model



5. Discussion and Recommendations

In this study, the relationship between dark leadership, which has a destructive effect, and subordinates' perception of victimization and inner resignation was investigated. The mediating role of victimization perception in the effect of dark leadership on inner resignation was tested. The results and implications of the study provide important contributions to theory and practice.

Dark leadership was found to positively affect and increase perceived victimization and inner resignation. This result supports some evidence in the literature. As it is known, dark leadership has been proven to be associated with various negative outcomes in leadership studies (Elbers et al., 2023). The fact that some dark leaders who exhibit bad attitudes and behaviors feed employees' perception of victimization (Khan et al., 2020), thus dark leadership makes employees feel vulnerable, humiliated and ridiculed has been revealed once again. In this way, the hypothesis that employees who are exposed to aggressive attitudes and behaviors face burnout and disengagement from work is supported. This situation then triggers harmful consequences for the organization such as decreased performance and intention to leave (Nevicka et al., 2018; Volmer et al., 2016). Therefore, it is concluded that leadership quality has a significant impact on employees' health and occupational well-being and should be further investigated (Elbers et al., 2023).

In this study, it was found that perceived victimization plays a mediating role in the effect of dark leadership on inner resignation. Dark leadership frustrates employees. Employees cannot respond to the bullying behaviors of the leader to the same extent due to a lack of resources. Employees are exposed to sadness and stress in the face of the violation of the psychological contract and the threat of existing psychological resources. According to the assumptions of the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), the absence or depletion of resources is known to create low levels of commitment or high burnout (Park & Ono, 2017). Therefore, employees are likely to feel victimized and suffer. On the other hand, this does not mean that employees will remain completely silent. It pushes them to leave the job internally. Because the need to respond to this injustice arises due to the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) and the social exchange equation (Blau, 1964). Their retaliation is in the form of indifference towards work, avoiding prosocial behaviors, living introverted and acting like a retiree.

Leaders' attitudes and behaviors are influenced by the cultural context. For example, in cultures where power distance is relatively low, an effective leader is expected to be egalitarian and participatory. Türkiye, on the other hand, has a relatively collectivist culture with high uncertainty avoidance and power distance (Hofstede, 1980; Aycan et al., 2001). In such a culture, destructive and negative leaders are more likely to emerge. In a cultural context with high power distance, followers are more tolerant of power differences that characterize tyranny and authoritarianism (Paşa et al., 2001; Karakitapoğlu-Aygün & Gumusluoglu, 2013). In such cultures, managers also have the power to shape employees' work. Some of this shaping activity may be a part of disruptive leadership (Ashforth, 1997). For example, it is seen that a paternalistic leadership style is common in Turkish society. This leadership style can exploit the labor of employees by becoming benevolent authoritarian when necessary (Karakitapoğlu-Aygün & Gumusluoglu, 2013). Despite this, loyalty to the leader is high. It is argued that employees may be vulnerable to victimization in the workplace where obedience to managers and work dependency is high (Dadaboyev et al., 2019).

5.1. Theoretical Implications

Many studies have examined dark leadership; however, to the best of the knowledge, none of these studies have examined the relationship between dark leadership and inner resignation in the context of the mediating role of victimization perception. The results of this study showed that dark leadership still exists in organizations. It is seen that the leadership style that creates a destructive and negative atmosphere causes employees to become passive. An employee who withdraws into his/her own shell cannot be expected to behave

proactively. It is not realistic to expect an employee who feels threatened to be happy and peaceful. This study sheds light on this situation and makes an important contribution to the literature. It shows important inferences about the consequences of bullying behaviors in organizations. The study contributes to the expansion of studies (Park & Ono, 2017; Coetzee & Oosthuizen, 2017; Tepper, 2007; Martinko et al., 2013; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Mackey et al., 2015; Nevicka et al., 2018) that reveal the factors that negatively affect the perspective of dark leadership on work and the organization and trigger the perception of victimization and retaliatory behaviors. Dark leadership, which is considered an independent variable, has been shown to disrupt the social exchange balance and violate the psychological contract. It has revealed that the loss of psychological resources causes employees to feel victimized because it creates helplessness and employees need to respond. It can be said that dark leadership inhibits employees' potential by silently resigning. Based on these results, it can be said that the findings of the study support the assumptions of resource conservation (Hobfoll, 1989), social exchange (Blau, 1964) and psychological contract violation (Rousseau, 1995) theories.

5.2. Practical Implications

This study has important practical implications. It is important to prevent dark leadership, protect employees from its influence, and sustain organizational success (Einarsen et al., 2007; Lopes Henriques et al., 2019). For this, of course, it is necessary to understand and develop a good understanding of the positive and negative aspects of leadership. It is not easy for victims to interpret their bad experiences with dark leaders positively. It is natural for employees to react to the bad attitudes and behaviors they are exposed to. Therefore, first of all, managers should be aware that victimized employees may internally resign. Providing counseling and other psychological services to reduce the cost of workplace victimization can help employees defend themselves more effectively against bullying managers (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). More importantly, bold and proactive steps need to be taken to identify dark leaders and take necessary actions. Otherwise, rumors that may affect the image of the organization may be inevitable. In this sense, anonymous reporting mechanisms can be developed to expose dark leadership in the organization. This can reduce the subordinates' perception of victimization caused by dark leadership and the inner resignation rate. Therefore, organizations may urgently need to intervene in the harassing and aggressive behaviors of the dark leader.

In Bhandarker and Rai's (2019) study, it was proven that dark leaders make employees suffer. Therefore, based on Park and Ono's (2017) suggestion, an environment that can create additional psychological and socio-emotional resources for employees can be prepared. Social support should be encouraged. In this way, victimized employees may experience less stress and anxiety (Park & Ono, 2017). Because interaction can reduce depression. Positive support from the social environment helps to increase the self-confidence of victimized employees. When victims share their feelings with close friends or family members, they can gain psychological comfort. Sometimes the immediate environment can help victims solve the problems they experience (Hirsch, 1980). In addition, studies reveal that employees with strong social support mechanisms face victimization bravely and overcome their negative emotions more easily than others (Mumtaz, 2019). It is claimed that people who experience positive emotions are more confident, cope effectively with stress, and show signs of better psychological adjustment can overcome bullying (Ogińska-Bulik & Kobylarczyk, 2016). Positive emotions and psychological capital, which provide high levels of resilience, act as a shield that protects an employee against the harmful effects of negative treatment in the workplace

(Gupta & Bakhshi, 2018; Elbers et al., 2023). Therefore, it can be said that the way to break the cycle of negativity can be realized by demonstrating coping strategies.

The results of the study show the urgency of the need to prevent the destructive impact of dark leadership. It is not a rational expectation that employees who are not valued, appreciated and discouraged in the work environment will show organizational commitment. They cannot generate new ideas, and even if they do, they do not want to share them. Therefore, it is necessary to implement a culture of respect, an open communication mechanism, a reward system and conflict resolution methods. Therefore, the focus should be on reducing or even completely eliminating the influence of dark leaders.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The study has a number of limitations that need to be taken into account and suggestions that are expected to inspire future research. First of all, it should be kept in mind that the data were collected only from public institution employees in Türkiye. Turkish society generally has a collectivist culture with high power distance. Therefore, the findings presented should be approached with caution. Turkish society has a high expectation of traditional, authoritarian and paternalistic leadership (Karakitapoğlu-Aygün & Gumusluoglu, 2013). Therefore, it is important to evaluate countries with different cultural contexts and levels of development together. In addition, the main purpose of the study is not to examine the complexity of dark leadership in depth. The scope of the study was limited to examining whether dark leadership only fosters the perception of victimization and whether it leads to a negative outcome such as inner resignation. This examination, of course, has a cross-sectional design. According to Podsakoff et al. (2012), in this type of study, the relationships between variables are exaggerated. Causality could not be established between the variables. Therefore, it is believed that future research with a longitudinal or mixed design approach to support and strengthen the findings of this study will reinforce the findings of this study. However, it is acknowledged that the sample of the study is relatively small, and it is recommended that future studies should collect data from larger samples from more diverse populations. How employees with different personality traits evaluate the attitudes and behaviors of dark leadership, how perceptions of victimization and inner resignation develop over time, and the relationship with psychological resilience can be examined. Based on the view that leadership in organizations is complex (Braun et al., 2018), the relationship of various other leadership styles with inner resignation and perception of victimization can be examined. Studies that will examine such different variables are believed to be of great value to organizations.

5.4. Conclusion

A significant number of previous studies have focused on the positive aspects of leadership. This study helps to expand the literature on dark leadership. In the context of a collectivist and power-distanced culture, this study proves that dark leadership affects employees' moods and causes them to develop a negative perception. It shows how the influence of aggressive and destructive leaders leads to a series of negative effects. As a matter of fact, there is still little knowledge about the factors that increase or decrease inner resignation. This study contributes to the inner resignation literature and reveals that perceived victimization plays an important role in this regard. The importance of minimizing the impact of dark leadership in the workplace to prevent inner resignation and employee victimization is once again confirmed. A new perspective on the subject has been gained.

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Extended Summary

Reflection of Toxic Authority: Mediating Role of Perceived Victimization in the Relationship between Dark Leadership and Inner Resignation

It is assumed that being the target of aggressive behaviors of dark leaders can prevent the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and cause pain (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Existing literature has revealed that bullying behaviors of leaders create a toxic atmosphere in the organization and lead to severe perceptions of victimization (Gupta & Bakhshi, 2018; An et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2020). Retaliation against perceived aggressive behaviors becomes likely. Employees who perceive organizational actions as unfair and are subjected to mistreatment desire revenge (An et al., 2016). In such cases, subordinates may hold their managers or organizations responsible for mistreatment (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Due to social exchange, subordinates may tend towards counterproductive behaviors (An et al., 2016; Zellars et al., 2002). It has been revealed that employees exposed to high levels of abuse exhibit less organizational citizenship behaviors. Employees may sometimes sabotage other employees in such situations. Employees often interpret such reactions as a way to take revenge on their leaders (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Indeed, Park and Ono (2017) found that being exposed to bullying in the workplace weakens employees' commitment to work. This situation may actually be a reason for inner resignation. An employee who loses interest in work will probably focus on defined tasks. He/she will minimize dedication. He/she will lose his/her former enthusiasm for work. Therefore, perceived victimization may play an effective mediating role in the relationship between dark leadership and inner resignation.

This study aims to determine the relationship between dark leadership and the perception of victimization and inner resignation from the perspective of employees of public institutions in Turkey. An important objective of the study is to reveal the mediating effect of perceived victimization on the effect of dark leadership on inner resignation. To contribute to theory and practice by utilizing the results of this model. For this purpose, data were collected from 385 public institution employees using convenience sampling method and questionnaire technique. The questionnaire includes three scales: dark leadership, inner resignation and perceived victimization. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive, correlation and structural equation modeling analyses.

According to the results of the analysis, the mean of dark leadership was $M=2.63$; $SD=.99$, the mean of perceived victimization was $M=1.89$; $SD=1.01$, and the mean of inner resignation variable was $M=3.19$, $SD=1.12$. In addition, it was found that dark leadership had a positive relationship with perceived victimization ($r=0.724$, $p<0.01$) and inner resignation ($r=0.690$, $p<0.05$). In addition, perceived victimization also had a positive relationship with inner resignation ($r=0.613$, $p<0.01$). As a result of the analysis conducted with the Structural Equation Model, it was determined that dark leadership had a positive effect on inner resignation ($\beta=0.750$, $p<0.01$). In the mediator model, it was found that dark leadership positively affected perceived victimization ($\beta=.813$, $p<0.01$). Perceived victimization also had a positive effect on the dependent variable of inner resignation ($\beta=.250$, $p<0.01$); however, when perceived victimization was included in the model, the effect of dark leadership on inner resignation continued ($\beta=.539$, $p<0.01$). In the fourth and final model of the study, the indirect effect was tested. It was found that the effect of dark leadership on inner resignation through perceived victimization was significant [$\beta=.203$, 95% CI (LLCI=.018 - ULCI=.361)].

As a result, leaders' attitudes and behaviors are influenced by the cultural context. For example, in cultures where power distance is relatively low, an effective leader is expected to be egalitarian and participatory. Türkiye, on the other hand, has a relatively collectivist culture with high uncertainty avoidance and power distance (Hofstede, 1980; Ayçan et al., 2001). In such a culture, destructive and negative leaders are more likely to emerge. In a cultural context with high power distance, followers are more tolerant of power differences that characterize tyranny and authoritarianism (Paşa et al., 2001; Karakitapoğlu-Aygün & Gumusluoglu, 2013). In such cultures, managers also have the power to shape employees' work. Some of this shaping activity may be a part of disruptive leadership (Ashforth, 1997). For example, it is seen that a paternalistic leadership style is common in Turkish society. This leadership style can exploit the labor of employees by becoming benevolent authoritarian when necessary (Karakitapoğlu-Aygün & Gumusluoglu, 2013). Despite this, loyalty to the leader is high. It is argued that employees may be vulnerable to victimization in the workplace where obedience to managers and work dependency is high (Dadaboyev et al., 2019). The results of the study provide evidence for the existence of dark leadership in public employees. Dark leadership had a negative impact on both the psychological state of employees and their attitudes towards work. It caused employees to feel victimized and disengaged from work. These results highlight the need for constructive and supportive leadership that is essential for the success of public organizations and the well-being of employees. The study provides insights and helps managers of public institutions to see the reactions of employees who face victimization.

It should be noted that the data for this study was collected only from Turkey's public institutions employees. Turkish society generally has a collectivist culture with high power distance. Therefore, the findings presented should be approached with caution. Turkish society has a high expectation of traditional, authoritarian and paternalistic leadership (Karakitapoğlu-Aygün & Gumusluoglu, 2013). Therefore, it is important to evaluate countries with different cultural contexts and levels of development together. In addition, the main purpose of the study is not to examine the complexity of dark leadership in depth. The scope of the study was limited to examining whether dark leadership only fosters the perception of victimization and whether it leads to a negative outcome such as inner resignation. This examination, of course, has a cross-sectional design. Therefore, it is believed that future research with a longitudinal or mixed design approach to support and strengthen the findings of this study will reinforce the findings of this study. However, it is acknowledged that the sample of the study is relatively small, and it is recommended that future studies should collect data from larger samples from more diverse populations. How employees with different personality traits evaluate the attitudes and behaviors of dark leadership, how perceptions of victimization and inner resignation develop over time, and the relationship with psychological resilience can be examined. Based on the view that leadership in organizations is complex (Braun et al., 2018), the relationship of various other leadership styles with inner resignation and perception of victimization can be examined. Studies that will examine such different variables are believed to be of great value to organizations.