

Strategic Leadership Perceptions: A Research in the Turkish Context

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56293/IJMSSSR.2026.6104>

IJMSSSR 2026

VOLUME 8

ISSUE 2 MARCH - APRIL

ISSN: 2582 – 0265

Abstract: There is a jungle of managerial theories and paradigms related to business context that have been scrutinized by countless studies so far. Despite this abundancy, there are still some gaps that require further research. This current study aims to make such a contribution by considering the issue of strategic leadership in Turkish businesses. Due to the nature of leadership, workers' perceptions about existence and in case of existing, components of strategic leadership features as revealed by their businesses' top managers have been investigated. The results based on a large data set collected from businesses in the city of İstanbul, Mecidiyekoy district point out that aforementioned managers are perceived to be strategic leaders due to a combination of five organizational level, task and people-oriented components.

Keywords: Strategic leadership, top managers, Turkish businesses, Turkey.

1. Introduction

Modern life is gradually enforcing two concepts in many occasions - complexity and perplexity, and therefore it is just natural that business environment is getting harder to survive every day. The reflection of this reality on business-related research is a jungle with a gigantic mixture of topics, analysis units, formal and informal issues as well as different settings. What stands out is the goal of providing solutions for business success. Unlike many past solutions that depend on various technical and business-sided management approaches, changing dynamics urge the necessity for more human-focused approaches for the sake of business success (Kitana, 2016), and eventually point out the vitality of leadership in business context (Mironescu, 2013).

Leadership is a very rooted and inclusive concept (Alvesson, 1996; Collinson, 2011; Thompson and Matkin, 2020) and it has become a point of scientific interest since the 19th century (Harrison, 1891; Rogers, 1897) with the first egress of business-related leadership studies in the early 20th century (Gantt, 1916; Haddock, 1918).

However, the result achieved over time is again a mixture. This time there are various types, styles, and practices of leadership targeting different business objectives. Nevertheless, prioritizing business success as the focal point and staying in line with a business-dedicated approach simultaneously give rise to the application of strategic leadership. There is indeed satisfactory evidence that strategic leadership has an immense connection with the success of businesses (Rahman et al., 2018; Serfontein, 2010).

There is, however, a gap about strategic leadership studies. Due to its nature, leadership is an informal issue (Lawson and Fleshman, 2020; Marion et al., 2016) and one of leadership pillars is followers' perception (Eman et al., 2024; Lord, 1977; Lord et al., 1984; Shondrick and Lord, 2010). In other words, leadership should be "earned" (Helms, 2025; Kiluange et al., 2024). This important point, on the contrary, has not taken enough scientific attention when strategic leadership is scrutinized and it is exactly about what this study aims to make a contribution. Therefore, this study reaches out to reveal if and how workers of businesses perceive their top managers as strategic leaders.

The research process takes place in one of the densest commercial districts – Mecidiyekoy district in İstanbul in two steps. There is preliminary research to find out if and how workers of businesses in the district perceive their top managers as strategic leaders. The second step involves a confirmation about these perceptions. A peripheral

approach is taken to reach as many businesses in various sectors as possible. The ultimate finding is that workers genuinely perceive their top managers as strategic leaders and this leadership style is believed to stand on five main components. A detailed approach unveils that the most prominent component is the top managers' role in setting up and communicating the visions of their businesses, and carving the path for workers. While these managers' urge to gather collaborative influence to get things done stands out as the second most important component; their respect and concession towards workers, and regard for organizational adaptation follow during their emphasis on responsibilities.

2. Strategic Leadership in Businesses

The literature hints that there is a vast antecedent before strategic leadership and business environment are scrutinized together. Leadership is essentially an ancient issue (Sulkowski et al., 2024; Tan, 2024) and it has started to be an object of research in the late 19th century (Harrison, 1891; Jeans, 1898; Rogers, 1897) with an increasing interest right at the beginning of the 20th century (Mumford, 1906; Murphy, 1907; Terman, 1904). Throughout time, advancing research leads to various leadership approaches (Davies and Davies, 2004; Dong, 2023; Fry, 2018; Gandolfi and Stone, 2018) within many fields (Bolden et al., 2008; Garfield et al., 2019; Palmer, 2009; Wong et al., 2003).

Business environment has also been put under the spotlights by scholars interested leadership studies. An overall result is that leadership generally provides positive contributions to business issues such as performance (Chung-Wen, 2008; Sorenson, 2000; Valdiserri and Wilson, 2010), innovativeness (Dunne et al., 2016), sustainability (Suriyankietkaew, 2023), business process reengineering (Sutcliffe, 1999), growth (Koryak et al., 2015), and ethics (Palanski et al., 2021). A breakdown of leadership, moreover, reveals that the nature of the contributions could vary according to different leadership styles. While strategic (Jaleha and Machuki, 2018) and transformational (Eduzor, 2024) styles are generally considered to be powerful catalysts for business issues at organizational level, transactional leadership (Hamstra et al., 2014; Pedraja-Rejas et al., 2006) as well as more sentimental styles such as spiritual (Fry and Matherly, 2006; Salehzadeh et al., 2015; Supriyanto et al., 2020) and servant (DeConinck et al., 2018; de Waal and Sivro, 2012) leadership are considered to be more effective at individual and group levels.

Though leadership is posited to be beneficial for businesses, this benefit depends on various circumstances. There is indeed a line of research that emphasizes contingency theories of leadership within business context (Vidal et al., 2017) but as these theories are not solely specific to business environment, they are not able to embrace the essence of business-dedicated issues thoroughly (Popp and Hadwich, 2018). Put other way, these theories focus on behaviors of leaders in business context, but a leadership approach with meaning and purpose creation "for the business" is needed considering that the businesses are complex adaptive systems (Boal and Schultz, 2007). Adaptation is truly an essential challenge due to the vast variety of contextual factors that are fueled by globalization (Arraes, 2010), innovation (Dervitsiotis, 2011), socio-demographic changes (Heitzlhofer, 2008), and legal and ethical issues (Haftor, 2011; Macaulay, 1993), and therefore business managers (Van den Oever and Martin, 2015) and leaders (Reber, 2014) have to consider, re-elaborate, and if necessary, update their business-dedicated approaches and tactics to achieve business success and sustainable competitive advantage if possible (Liu, 2013).

Many scholars posit strategic leadership to be the answer to all these concerns, and thus there is an emerging research interest about strategic leadership in businesses. Strategic leadership focuses on the entire business or the group of businesses (McKay, 2008) with the ultimate long-term goal of sustainable competitive advantage (Mahdi and Almsafir, 2014; Willis et al., 2022). How this goal is to be achieved varies according to different definitions. For example, Ireland and Hitt (1999) highlight innovativeness and posit that innovative ideas are behind the business success, and that innovativeness could be fostered by the strategic leader through envisioning, maintaining flexibility, encouraging creativity, and empowering business members. Rowe and Nejad (2009) claim the strategic leadership to have two important aspects, one of which is communicating shared values and vision to business members and the other to be effective decision making by lessening controls over decision making process. Organizational vision is also reinforced by Elenkov et al. (2005), who elaborate this leadership style as having the ability to form and update the future vision by making collaboration with business members. A definition with a greater focus on adaptation and survivability is made by Boal and Hooijberg (2000), positing that strategic leadership is actually the management wisdom with the goals of absorbing negativities, adapting to

changes, and exploiting environmental opportunities. In a similar manner, Boal (2007) debates that this leadership style is essential to provide a meaning to environmental turbulences and opportunities, and act accordingly via the leader's ability to develop structural, human, and social capital. A very broad definition that belongs to DeChurch et al. (2010) simply claims strategic leadership to be the skill of setting up and updating organizational direction in line with environmental changes.

A general point among all these and many other definitions (Hambrick, 2007; Ridge and Ingram, 2017) is that strategic leadership is actually considered as a feature of top managers. Although there is evidence about early studies' assumption that the top management team (TMT) that is composed of chief executive officer (CEO) and all other senior managers exercise this feature in unison (Hambrick, 2007; Nielsen, 2010), some studies scrutinize the idea of distinguishing between CEO and the rest of the TMT due to differences in their dominance and roles (Cannella and Holcomb, 2005). The outcome of this discrepancy is that there are vast differences in terms of strategic leadership practices between CEO and the rest of the team due to differences in personality traits (Barsade et al., 2000; Colbert et al., 2014; Lin and Rababah, 2014; Malhotra et al., 2018). A final disposition is that it is not the unity, but the interactions, collaboration, and balance between CEO and other members of TMT that shape a "collective" strategic leadership practice (Bromiley and Rau, 2016).

Regardless of the practitioner or practicing mechanism, there must also be business-dedicated contextual factors considered in order to be able to talk about a leadership style specific to business environment. A quick review of the strategic leadership literature provides noteworthy evidence in this manner. Besides general external factors similar to the ones considered in contingency theories of leadership such as environmental complexity (Tang et al., 2015), environmental uncertainty (Waldman et al., 2001), environmental turbulence (Eisenmann, 2002), and social culture (Elenkov et al., 2005); there are also business-dedicated external factors like industry uncertainty (Luo et al., 2014), industry dynamism (Hambrick and Cannella Jr, 2004), market complexity (Souder et al., 2012), and institutional support (Qian et al., 2013). On the other hand, internal contextual factors are automatically business-dedicated, and thus issues such as business size (Ling et al., 2007), age (Jayaraman et al., 2000), life stage (Tzabbar and Margolis, 2017), ownership (Strike et al., 2015), and organizational culture (Hartnell et al., 2016) are scrutinized.

At this point, it becomes clear that business strategic leadership is a dedicated leadership practice, and therefore it overarches the issue of being a general approach in comparison to contingency theories of leadership. The next issue, in this case, is to treat its connections with organizational outcomes. Literature reveals that the primary outcome is business performance with the dominance of financial criteria. Examples involve the use of return on assets and return on equity (Ridge et al., 2015), Tobin's q (Ndofor et al., 2015), return on investment (Henderson et al., 2006), and market-to-book ratio (Menz and Scheef, 2014) along with some non-financial outcomes containing worker productivity (Chadwick et al., 2015) and firm survival (Bermiss and Murmann, 2015). A second set of outcomes that draws attention relates to strategic decision-making and refers to issues like risk-taking (Kish-Gephart and Campbell, 2015), diversification (Alessandri and Seth, 2014), acquisition decisions (Gamache et al., 2015), and restructuring (Chen, 2015). While innovation success in the form of new product introduction (Nadkarni and Chen, 2014), research and development spending (Barker III and Mueller, 2002), and patent achievements (Wu et al., 2005) are related to strategic leadership, there are also some ethics-related outcomes encircling corporate social responsibility (Petrenko et al., 2016) and tax avoidance (Christensen et al., 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1. Aim, Scope and Data Collection Method

The aim of this research is to find out if and how workers in businesses in one of the largest commercial districts, Mecidiyekoy district of İstanbul, perceive their top managers as strategic leaders. As there is no record about the number of businesses or workers in this district, it is impossible to determine the population size. It is, moreover, significant that the target businesses operate in various sectors. To cope up with these issues and take a peripheral picture of the subject, the official list of sectors from the Turkish Ministry of Trade (2025) is obtained and an equal number of businesses is determined to be added from each sector. This list involves 11 sectors in general, and thus a consulting firm is used to gather information about the businesses in the aforementioned district to group these businesses according to the 11 formal sectors. Adjusting for the same number of businesses in each

sector, this step gives rise to a total of 341 businesses in 11 sectors, and therefore all workers in these businesses are to be contacted in data collection process.

The data collection process has two steps. In the first step, data are collected for preliminary research purpose - to find out how the mentioned perception unfolds statistically. The second step is aimed at confirming the findings of the first step with a greater data set. The first step takes place between September 1, 2025 and October 30, 2025 with the participation of 429 individuals from a total of 88 businesses (eight businesses in each sector) while the second step occurs between November 6, 2025 and February 10, 2026 totaling the rest of 1266 participants from 253 businesses (23 businesses in each sector). All data are collected via the application of physical questionnaires by the same consulting firm.

The questionnaire used depends primarily on the “Strategic Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ)”, originally developed and tested by Pisapia et al. (2005) and Pisapia (2009), and later translated to Turkish by Coban (2016). The 35 questionnaire items are reworded to grasp workers’ perceptions about the possibility of strategic leadership features to be revealed by their top managers.

3.2. Preliminary Research

This phase emphasizes an investigation of statistical structures, and thus involves exploratory factor and reliability analyses. The data obtained from 429 participants form a five-factor structure as pointed out in Table 1.

Table 1 Statistical Structure and Reliability of Strategic Leadership Perceptions

Strategic Leadership Perceptions Factor (Named by the author)	Number of Items	Reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha)	Score Variance Explained (%)
Respect and Collaboration	5	0.822	21.384
Tasking and Orientation	6	0.801	19.949
Influence	4	0.847	13.672
Mutual Pragmatism	4	0.789	9.225
Responsibility	3	0.736	7.346
<i>Total number of items</i>	22		
<i>Total Variance Explained</i>			71.576
<i>Overall Reliability Score (Cronbach’s Alpha)</i>		0.793	
<i>KMO Value</i>		0.781	
<i>Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity</i>			X ² : 2221.82; Sig: 0.001

Table 2 provides insights about these factors by presenting factor loading of each item with its respective factor. Although the original questionnaire involves 35 items, thirteen of these are eliminated due to very low factor loadings.

Table 2 Factor Loadings of Strategic Leadership Perceptions Items

Item (Our top manager...)	Respect and Collaboration (RC)	Tasking and Orientation (TAO)	Influence (I)	Mutual Pragmatism (MP)	Responsibility (R)
respects and considers our opinions. (RC1)	0.866				
negotiates differences with	0.841				

us. (RC2)					
is honest with us. (RC3)	0.817				
respects the privacy of people. (RC4)	0.804				
provides small favors in appreciation for good work. (RC5)	0.769				
establishes work rules. (TAO1)		0.844			
enforces rules and policies. (TAO2)		0.823			
decides how things are to be done. (TAO3)		0.815			
encourages us to use uniform procedures. (TAO4)		0.804			
works hard to develop a shared vision for the organization. (TAO5)		0.767			
promotes our commitment to the organization's long-term goals. (TAO6)		0.702			
seeks access to people who have influence over getting things done. (I1)			0.804		
uses his/her connections and networks to make things happen. (I2)			0.785		
builds relationships with influential people. (I3)			0.742		
associates with individuals who have influence. (I4)			0.716		
develops alliances with				0.881	

people from inside the organization for organizational adaptation. (MP1)					
develops alliances with people from outside of the organization for organizational adaptation. (MP2)				0.872	
tries to create win-win solutions in dealing with us. (MP3)				0.817	
tries to preserve relationships by finding compromise solutions. (MP4)				0.796	
holds us responsible for our commitments. (R1)					0.718
lets us know what is expected of us. (R2)					0.685
monitors our work. (R3)					0.661

An investigation of the factors in Table 2 reveals that “Respect and Collaboration” involves the perceived respect of top managers towards workers in the realms of objectivity, privacy, and honesty. This factor also hints a mutual commitment in terms of opinion forming, and appreciation of performance. While “Tasking and Orientation” clearly projects the perceived sensibility of top managers on rules, policies and procedures, it also reflects their emphasis on organizational direction and goal setting. It is also intriguing that “Influence” and “Mutual Pragmatism” share some similarities; “Influence” relates to the perception about top managers’ eagerness to get things done through support and “Mutual Pragmatism” is the willingness towards tradeoffs with insiders and outsiders for organizational adaptation. The final factor, “Responsibility”, reflects the perception that top managers encharge, check, and hold workers accountable.

3.3. Confirmatory Analysis

The final step is the confirmation of the emerged factors to check if these factors could be aggregated under the scope of strategic leadership perceptions. Therefore, a second level confirmatory analysis is run to test the model proposed in Figure 1 with the data collected from 1266 participants.

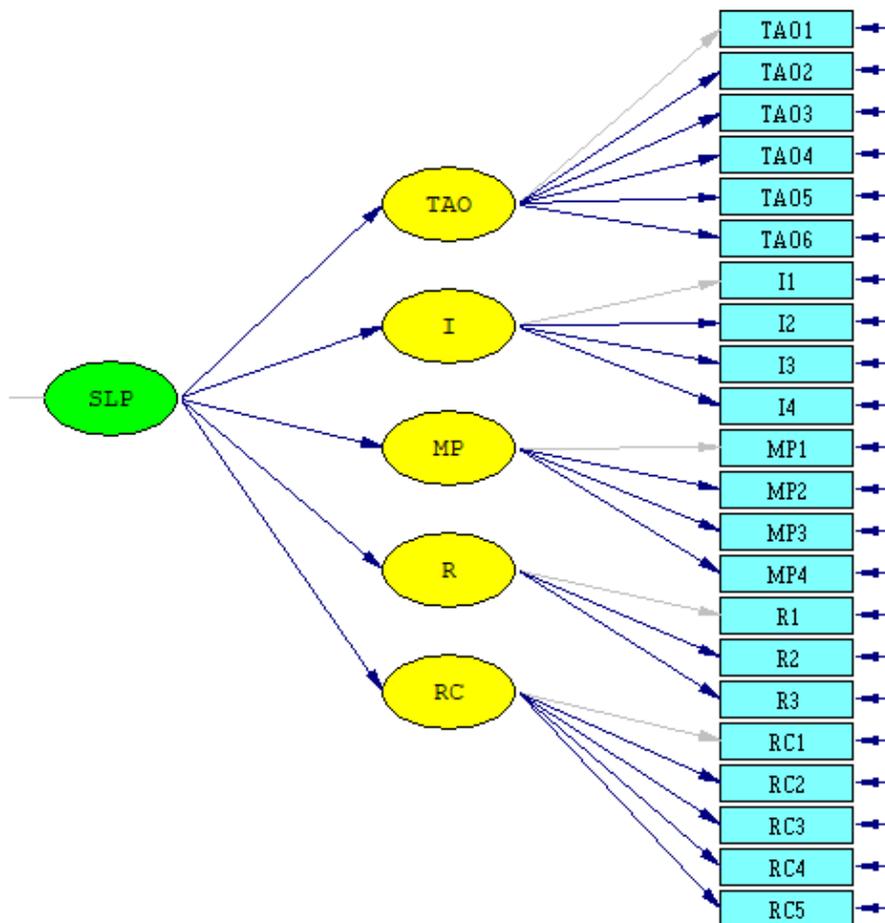


Figure 1. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model for Strategic Leadership Perceptions

(SLP: Strategic Leadership Perceptions, TAO: Tasking and Orientation, I: Influence, MP: Mutual Pragmatism, R: Responsibility, RC: Respect and Collaboration. Please refer to Table 2 for item abbreviations)

The initial findings in Table 3 reveal that this second level structure is realistic when its fit indices are compared to their respective limits given in the literature (Hooper et al., 2008; Schermelleh-Engel and Moosbrugger, 2003).

Table 3 Initial Findings about the Second Level Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Strategic Leadership Perceptions Factor	Number of Items	Reliability Score (Cronbach's Alpha)	
Respect and Collaboration	5	0.796	
Tasking and Orientation	6	0.764	
Influence	4	0.771	
Mutual Pragmatism	4	0.723	
Responsibility	3	0.716	
<i>Total number of items</i>	<i>22</i>		
<i>Overall Reliability Score (Cronbach's Alpha)</i>		0.732	
Fit Indices of the Model			
	Upper and Lower Limits (For Good and Acceptable Fit)	Model's Fit Indice	Result

	Levels)		
RMSEA	RMSEA < 0.05 0.05 ≤ RMSEA ≤ 0.1	0.079	Acceptable fit
GFI	0.95 ≤ GFI ≤ 1.00 0.9 < GFI < 0.95	0.93	Acceptable fit
AGFI	0.95 ≤ AGFI ≤ 1.00 0.9 < AGFI < 0.95	0.92	Acceptable fit
CFI	0.90 ≤ CFI	0.91	Acceptable fit
Standardized RMR	Standardized RMR < 0.05	0.037	Acceptable fit

A general look on the measurement equations in Table 4 indicates that the five factors have moderate to powerful relationships with their items. It is moreover attention-taking that there are positive contributions of all items to their respective factors.

Table 4 Measurement Equations of the Strategic Leadership Perceptions Model

RC1 = 0.72* RC , Errorvar.= 0.19 , R ² = 0.48 (0.077) 4.39	I1 = 0.71* I , Errorvar.= 0.31 , R ² = 0.46 (0.11) 4.36
RC3 = 0.66* RC , Errorvar.= 0.23 , R ² = 0.52 (0.18) (0.089) 4.57 4.26	I2 = 0.63* I , Errorvar.= 0.34 , R ² = 0.37 (0.079) (0.082) 8.16 7.98
RC2 = 0.53* RC , Errorvar.= 0.31 , R ² = 0.42 (0.078) (0.086) 5.18 2.48	I4 = 0.51* I , Errorvar.= 0.31 , R ² = 0.39 (0.16) (0.11) 3.74 2.83
RC5 = 0.67* RC , Errorvar.= 0.28 , R ² = 0.47 (0.17) (0.085) 5.63 5.21	I3 = 0.46* I , Errorvar.= 0.29 , R ² = 0.32 (0.15) (0.083) 3.48 3.06
RC4 = 0.61* RC , Errorvar.= 0.26 , R ² = 0.53 (0.11) (0.081) 4.99 5.17	MP1 = 0.59* MP , Errorvar.= 0.34 , R ² = 0.51 (0.097) 4.39
TAO1 = 0.69* TAO , Errorvar.= 0.23 , R ² = 0.55 (0.078) 6.84	MP2 = 0.53* MP , Errorvar.= 0.41 , R ² = 0.49 (0.16) (0.094) 2.79 5.09
TAO2 = 0.64* TAO , Errorvar.= 0.39 , R ² = 0.51 (0.19) (0.068) 3.44 5.36	MP3 = 0.64* MP , Errorvar.= 0.46 , R ² = 0.44 (0.59) (0.092) 2.47 3.94
TAO3 = 0.66* TAO , Errorvar.= 0.37 , R ² = 0.48 (0.11) (0.073) 5.41 6.12	MP4 = 0.61* MP , Errorvar.= 0.47 , R ² = 0.51 (0.22) (0.093) 2.93 3.74
TAO4 = 0.63* TAO , Errorvar.= 0.42 , R ² = 0.39 (0.14) (0.097) 3.05 5.99	R1 = 0.72* R , Errorvar.= 0.28 , R ² = 0.53 (0.09) 3.26

$TAO6 = 0.71*TAO$, Errorvar.= 0.24 , $R^2 = 0.41$ (0.13) (0.076) 5.26 6.33	$R2 = 0.74*R$, Errorvar.= 0.37 , $R^2 = 0.45$ (0.52) (0.096) 2.49 4.13
$TAO5 = 0.75*TAO$, Errorvar.= 0.22 , $R^2 = 0.54$ (0.16) (0.14) 6.85 3.54	$R3 = 0.69*R$, Errorvar.= 0.48 , $R^2 = 0.44$ (0.13) (0.071) 3.07 5.26

(Abbreviations could be found in Table 2)

A detailed scrutinization of Table 4 reveals that the participants mostly enjoy their top managers’ respect towards their opinions (RC1), followed by these managers’ work appreciation (RC5) and honesty (RC3) when top managers’ respect and collaboration regarding workers (RC) is in question. The least considered fact related is these managers’ negotiations with workers about differences in work context (RC2).

A more formal-toned factor, namely tasking and orientation (TAO) instantly reveals the essence of a strategic leader. The highest level of contributions emerges from the perception that the top managers are striving for a shared organizational vision (TAO5) along with the workers’ organizational commitments (TAO6). The rest of the items are technical, and thus relate to establishing rules (TAO1) and motivating workers towards obeying these rules and procedures (TAO2, TAO3, and TAO4).

Top managers’ attitudes regarding influence (I) as perceived by the workers clearly hint collaborations. Details prioritize top managers’ main emphasis on task accomplishment via influential people (I1 and I2) as well as the reiteration of maintaining relationships with such people (I3 and I4 respectively). In other words, this attitude refers to top managers’ demands to benefit from influence with a collaborative style in their own tasking.

Mutual pragmatism (MP) is indeed another issue within top managers’ own tasking and it refers to two important aspects, the greater one being fairness in terms of trade-offs with workers (MP3) and utilization of compromise to have sustainable relationships (MP4). The lesser aspect gives rise to forming coalitions with insiders primarily and outsiders secondarily for the sake of organizational adaptation (MP1 and MP2 in order).

The last pillar involves perceptions of the workers about their top managers’ attitudes for responsibility (R). An obvious point is that the workers are held responsible by their top managers (R1), and the responsibility comes right after informing about expectations from workers (R2). Workers also perceive that this focus of managers on responsibility and expectations has a higher priority than being controlled (R3).

The last table, Table 5 presents the structural equations of the second-level analysis. The overall output is that all five factors contribute positively and moderately to the perceptions about top managers’ strategic leadership feature.

Table 5 Structural Equations of the Strategic Leadership Perceptions Model

$Respect\ and\ Collaboration = 0.33*Strategic\ Leadership\ Perceptions$, Errorvar.= 0.39 , $R^2 = 0.28$ (0.29) (0.082) 2.93 5.31
$Tasking\ and\ Orientation = 0.42*Strategic\ Leadership\ Perceptions$, Errorvar.= 0.34 , $R^2 = 0.36$ (0.038) (0.071) 3.92 9.16
$Influence = 0.39*Strategic\ Leadership\ Perceptions$, Errorvar.= 0.33 , $R^2 = 0.39$ (0.056) (0.066) 2.59 11.14
$Mutual\ Pragmatism = 0.31*Strategic\ Leadership\ Perceptions$, Errorvar.= 0.42 , $R^2 = 0.27$ (0.035) (0.031)

	4.57	17.96
Responsibility = 0.29* Strategic Leadership Perceptions , Errorvar.= 0.43 , R ² = 0.32	(0.066)	(0.053)
	4.27	10.62

A comparison among these contributions in Table 5 reveals that the foremost perception is about top managers' focus on a shared organizational vision with a demand for workers' commitments according to managers' own ruling (tasking and orientation). This fact is important evidence in favor of strategic leadership as this leadership style is needed at the organizational level, and it is about organizational direction setting and communicating the vision to workers. Secondly, perceptions about top managers' intentions of using supported influence for practicableness emerge; and these intentions actually signify an important aspect of strategic leaders - effective decision-making and collaboration with influential people. Respect and collaboration, being the third most powerful contributor to the aforementioned perception, has two functions. It expands the pool of strategic leaders' collaboration by involving the workers and it clearly reveals these leaders' worker empowerment feature. Mutual pragmatism is the fourth component in terms of its contribution and it calls for the collaborative nature of the strategic leader via fairness and sustainable relationships. It moreover unearths an important uniqueness about this leadership style as it stresses the leaders' organizational adaptation goal with an emphasis on internal and external coalitions. The last component is the responsibility that overarches strategic leadership practices by its profound consideration in many leadership and management approaches in general.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

As explained before, not only the art of business survival but also sustainability is becoming more threatening challenges every day due to the turbulence caused by countless issues. Whatever these issues are, the common necessity is the focus on people-centered approaches in work contexts; thus, taking a more humanistic tone within management is advised. The literature proves that such a tone could lead to business success if it materializes as leadership practices. A noteworthy issue, however, is that many leadership practices are general, and therefore they are not specifically tailored for business contexts. In other words, such practices have their starting points as "leadership" and ending points as "business" although there is the debate in the literature that this should be reversed for the sake of business success. This fact gives rise to the vitality of strategic leadership because of its fundamental roles within almost every business issue from the very beginning, thus ruling out considering the business as a "final destination". This leadership style is indeed active in business-related antecedents (e.g., setting up business vision), processes (such as empowering workers and communicating the vision with them, and using collaborations and trade-offs for effective results and decision-making), and outcomes (e.g., financial results, acquisitions, diversifications, investing activities, and innovativeness). Whether or not such a tailoring is facilitated, a common and somehow overlooked issue is that leadership is tied to followers' perceptions; therefore, any practice of any leadership style is not genuinely leadership unless followers perceive these practices within the leadership frame. Put other way, leadership must be earned.

All these mentioned facts, as well as the gap in the Turkish literature, act as the catalysts for this research; resulting in a two-phased analysis via scrutinization of a large-scale data from one of the densest commercial districts in İstanbul, Turkey. Overall result indicates that the participating workers perceive their top managers to be strategic leaders and this leadership style is believed to stand on five main components, namely leaders' perceived respect towards workers and collaboration in terms of idea exchange; leaders' orientation role in vision setting and determination of workers' tasking; use of influence for task accomplishment; fairness within trade-offs with workers and benefiting from coalitions for organizational adaptability; and finally an obvious delicacy towards workers' responsibilities.

A thorough investigation of these components hints the sheer existence of strategic leadership perceptions. Above all, workers posit that their top managers are setting up their businesses' vision, sharing this vision with them and demand their contributions to turn the vision into reality. The tasking side related to this demand is also set up and ruled by top managers. Secondly, these managers are considered to be very practical with their tasks and they are believed to use others' influence for immediate result achievement if needed. This practicableness and related collaboration intentions are also not believed to be limited to these managers' own tasks; the necessity of

organizational adaptation is claimed to be recognized by top managers and they are ready to form coalitions with both insiders and outsiders for this issue. These facts signify an organizational level leadership with task orientations so far, but workers believe that their top managers exert people-oriented behaviors as well. For instance, workers are content as these managers show interpersonal respect and appreciation, consider workers' ideas, act honestly and fairly during trade-offs, and tend to compromise for retainable relationships in general while showing a great emphasis on workers' responsibilities.

This study sheds light on strategic leadership perceptions and it is logical to make a call for further research. There is only one commercial district with a variety of sectors considered currently, which opens the door for a possible investigation and comparison once multiple districts at national and possibly international levels of analysis are taken into consideration. It is also advisable that future research could account for any potential differences in this perception across different sectors and different types of businesses. Regardless of analysis unit, another contribution could be to perform time series analyses to detect potential changes in the perception. Briefly, there is still room available for future research.

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