LEARNING JOURNEY OF GOLD COLLAR LEADERS

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2024

LEARNING JOURNEY OF GOLD COLLAR LEADERS

Thesis submitted to the

Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Educational Sciences

by

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Boğaziçi University

2024

Learning Journey of Gold Collar Leaders

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Learning Journey of Gold Collar Leaders

The purpose of this study is to explore how senior executives, known as gold collar leaders, learned to be gold collar leaders. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the learning experiences of leaders throughout their leadership journey. This research is a qualitative study and involves conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 gold collar leaders who hold senior positions with decision-making and signature authority within their organizations. Recognized for their exceptional expertise, strategic vision, and influence, gold collar leaders often undergo significant personal and professional development. This development is not simply the acquisition of new knowledge or skills; it involves a deep internal transformation that enhances their ability to lead effectively and inspire others. Research shows that developing knowledge and skills does not happen automatically; leaders need to understand their expected role, be aware of their competencies, and recognize what is required to meet expectations. During this process, leaders need to consider various factors such as organizational culture, the dynamics of the business world, personal values and principles, all of which simultaneously influence their leadership and learning journeys. From an existential learning perspective, the study examines the learning of gold collar leaders and concludes that the learning journey is a complex model that includes learning models such as experiential learning, self-directed learning, and transformational learning, all of which emphasize the social dimension of knowledge acquisition. They equip leaders with critical competencies such as business adaptability, vision, and inclusiveness. The journey results in leaders evolving their leadership style and competencies to the level of a gold collar leader.

ÖZET

Altın Yakalı Liderlerin Öğrenme Yolculuğu

Bu çalışmanın amacı, altın yakalı liderler olarak bilinen üst düzey yöneticilerin altın yakalı lider olmayı nasıl öğrendiklerini araştırmaktır. Bu sayede liderlerin liderlik yolculukları boyunca yaşadıkları öğrenme deneyimlerinin daha iyi anlaşılması hedeflenmektedir. Bu araştırma nitel bir çalışmadır ve kurumlarında karar verme ve imza yetkisine sahip üst düzey pozisyonlarda bulunan 15 altın yakalı liderle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler aracılığıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Olağanüstü uzmanlıkları, stratejik vizyonları ve etkileriyle tanınan altın yakalı liderler genellikle önemli kişisel ve profesyonel gelişim sürecinden geçerler. Bu gelişim sadece yeni bilgi veya becerilerin edinilmesi değildir; etkili bir şekilde liderlik etme ve başkalarına ilham verme yeteneklerini geliştiren derin bir içsel dönüşümü içerir. Araştırma, bilgi ve becerilerin geliştirilmesinin otomatik olarak gerçekleşmediğini; liderlerin kendilerinden beklenen rolü anlamaları, yetkinliklerinin farkında olmaları ve beklentileri karşılamak için nelerin gerekli olduğunu bilmeleri gerektiğini göstermektedir. Bu süreçte liderlerin örgüt kültürü, iş dünyasının dinamikleri, kişisel değerler ve ilkeler gibi liderlik ve öğrenme yolculuklarını aynı anda etkileyen çeşitli faktörleri göz önünde bulundurmaları gerekmektedir. Varoluşsal öğrenme perspektifinden altın yakalı liderlerin öğrenme süreçlerini inceleyen çalışma, öğrenme yolculuğunun deneyimsel öğrenme, öz-yönelimli öğrenme ve dönüşümsel öğrenme gibi modelleri içeren ve bilgi edinmenin sosyal boyutunu vurgulayan karmaşık bir model olduğu sonucuna varıyor. Liderleri iş adaptasyonu, vizyon ve kapsayıcılık gibi kritik yetkinliklerle donatırlar. Bu yolculuk, liderlerin liderlik tarzlarını ve yetkinliklerini altın yakalı lider seviyesine yükseltmeleriyle sonuçlanır.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis advisor Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Havva Caner, for her constant support, constructive comments and inspiring ideas. She illuminated this thesis journey with her positive energy and eternal patience. Her unique work discipline and commitment to learning played a major role in my development as an academician and researcher.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisory committee members, Prof. Özlem Ünlühisarcıklı and Prof. Mine Afancan Fındıklı, for their constructive and supportive feedback, suggestions and encouraging comments throughout this journey. Their views and comments guided and motivated me to complete this journey.

I would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Gülistan Gürsel Bilgin, Assoc. Prof. Şükrü Erhan Bağcı and Assist. Prof. Cem Kirazoğlu for accepting to be part of my thesis committee, and for their constructive criticism and suggestions they provided after my thesis defense.

Special thanks to my dear friends, Aleyna Erdoğan, Erkan Oruçoğlu, Hülya Gündüz Yetik, Ebru Ozan, Aişe Nur Kalkan and Zehra Şeyma Özcan, for helping me get through difficult times, and for their friendship and emotional support they provided. I feel very fortunate to have their support throughout this journey.

Also, I would like to thank all the 15 gold collar leaders who participated in my study with their sincere narratives which are the backbone of this study.

Most of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents Nejat Bektaş and Havva Bektaş and also my brother Ahmet Kutay Bektaş. Without them, my achievements would be meaningless and impossible. I am very grateful for their endless love, support and guidance throughout my life.

I am proud of myself for successfully completing this educational journey without taking a break.

My parents, my brother, my best friends and my teachers - thank you for all the wonderful things that you have added to my life.

To my beloved parents, my dear brother and myself…

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Adult education is considered as a crucial tool that can strengthen an organization's ability to adapt to market demands and help individuals adapt to changes in a timely manner (Soares, 2009). Organizations provide various training programs to improve the skills of their employees and leaders. However, the most important area among these training programs is the development of leaders, as leaders significantly influence the present and future of institutions, industries, and markets (Kshirsagar et al., 2020).

The rapidly changing business world poses numerous challenges. One of the most crucial steps for organizations to cope with these challenges is to have a leader or leaders who can adapt rapidly to changes, produce innovative solutions, and quickly acquire the competencies of the future. It is evident that the role of leaders is of paramount importance for organizations that wish to survive in the contemporary business environment, characterized by the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) paradigm. These leaders are particularly gold collar leaders, who possess the authority to determine the future direction of the organization and to create its vision. Gold collar leaders not only strive for the success of the organization but also seek to advance the interests of the wider community. Additionally, they inspire their teams, bring everyone together around a common goal, motivate them, and ensure that they work together for the success of the organization.

Leaders are always striving to improve themselves to be prepared for every new condition that arises in the fast-changing world. Especially leaders in decision-

making positions, directing institutions, and managing people have chosen education as a guide for their own readiness. Learning is a key concept in the field of leadership development, as it facilitates the establishment of enduring shifts in the learner's perspective, mindset, and behavior.

This study specifically examines the manner in which gold collar leaders acquire learning experiences during their leadership journeys and the reflections of this learning on their leadership styles. It also examines the learning journeys of gold collar leaders, encompassing the acquisition of technical and managerial skills, as well as the leader's ability to make sense of the culture, environment, and dynamics of the environment, enabling the leader to shape their leadership style and problem-solving strategy.

The development journeys of leaders encompass a variety of learning methods, including formal learning, experiential learning, reflection, coaching, mentoring, case studies, and so forth. The objective of this study is to ascertain the learning methods that gold collar leaders prefer, the stages and processes they undergo, and their learning experiences. Furthermore, this thesis examines the principal factors influencing the learning journeys of leaders and elucidates their contributions to the leadership journey. An understanding of the learning experiences of gold collar leaders and the elements influencing these experiences will provide insights into common patterns, which in turn will enable the design and implementation of more effective leadership development programs.

Organizations have increasingly recognized the importance of leadership development to survive in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world, leading to increased investment in this area. By creating environments that facilitate leaders' learning journeys and implementing effective leadership

development programs, organizations aim to enhance leadership capabilities. This study aims to provide insights and patterns for the literature regarding the learning of gold collar leaders.

The following chapters will present a review of the related literature, a description of the research methodology, an analysis of the findings, and a discussion and conclusion. The following sections will examine the learning journeys of gold collar leaders to identify common patterns and insights that can be used to achieve excellence in leadership development.

1.1 Statement of the problem

As leaders develop into leaders and move towards being gold collar, expectations from them increase; so, it is expected that gold collars create a vision for the future (Lester & Costley, 2010). That is why, gold collars should prepare themselves for the future by gaining knowledge in areas that even educators cannot foresee.

The purpose of this study is to explore how senior executives, known as gold collar leaders, learned to be gold collar leaders. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the learning experiences of leaders throughout their leadership journey.

1.2 Research questions

This study seeks to reveal how the participants learned to be gold collar leaders by answering the sub-research questions below:

- How do the gold collar leaders describe their learning experiences in their leadership journey?
- What were the sources and ways of learning in their leadership journey?

1.3 Significance of the study

The journey of leadership runs parallel to the journey of learning, and each leader takes this path in their own unique way. In academic literature, leadership and management are considered as two separate concepts. A manager is defined as the person who is hierarchically responsible for ensuring the continuation of operational processes for a group of people. On the other hand, a leader is defined as the person who unites a group of people around a common goal, develops and empowers them to move forward. It can be concluded that while every leader can also be defined as a manager, not every manager can also be defined as a leader. This has caused much debate in the literature. Although this assessment is still a matter of contention in the literature, this study approaches management from a level perspective on the path to leadership.

In the transition from management to leadership, from leadership to gold collar leadership, individuals undergo a learning process that parallels the leadership journey, whether consciously or unconsciously. A review of the literature reveals that the learning process of leaders is discussed from a variety of perspectives in numerous studies. The primary focuses of these studies are the learning journeys of leaders as they progress to the next level and the resources leaders utilize when establishing a vision (Feser et al., 2018).

The study focuses on the learning processes of leaders as they transition from management to gold collar leadership. It examines their learning journeys in detail. While there are existing studies that look at leaders' learning journeys from perspective of different learning models such as informal learning, formal learning and so on, there is limited focus on learning journey as a whole. The study's results, based on the collected data and analysis, aim to contribute to the development of

leaders across various fields. This includes enhancing competencies, designing programs, providing learning resources, methods, and strategies.

The study's findings will not only be shared within the adult education field but also across other disciplines such as human resources, business administration, and management. In today's tech-focused business environment, studies like this one also support the creation of extensive libraries to train machines and produce data for artificial intelligence. Any study that seeks to structure human behavior and make sense of it is foundational for the datasets used in artificial intelligence. The data from this study will uncover personas that can aid human resources employees in talent management and promotion processes, through the use of artificial intelligence-supported modeling methods. Ultimately, this will contribute to the digitalization of the human resources field.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter describes the main theories and models that form the basis of this work, which aims to analyze the learning journeys of gold collar leaders. First, it delves into adult learning by exploring its primary theories and models which are andragogy, informal learning, experiential learning and transformative learning. Then, it shifts focus to workplace learning, examining it within the framework of corporate organizations. After outlining the conceptual framework, the review concludes by explaining the leadership development.

2.1 Adult learning

The objective and focus of adult learning theory have been redefined in light of the effects of neo-liberal policies and its potential contribution to the economy (Milana, 2012). The policies and ideologies regarding education have had a profound impact on the entire system. However, in order to comprehend this transformation, it is essential to examine the evolution from its inception to the present. Adult learning theory has a long and distinguished history, with roots extending from research and collaborations with fields such as psychology and sociology, both in the past and in the present. From the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, it has been recognized that adults require the opportunity to learn and study throughout their entire lives. Consequently, those who dedicated their lives to lifelong learning were designated as "scholars." The term is still in use in the academic world. Prior to the work of Edward Thorndike and colleagues (1928) on this field, adult learning theory was not a particularly prominent area of study and was not yet regarded as a distinct field in

its own right. The focus of this work was on the different profiles of learners accessing new information in different ways. In terms of profile, learners were categorized separately according to their age, such as children and adults. This study has demonstrated that the methods that facilitate effective learning in adults are distinct from those that are effective in children. Consequently, studies focusing on adult learning began to increase, and the field began to become more specialized. Although there are numerous descriptions, adult learning is defined as systematic and sustained general and vocational learning activities of adults after formal initial schooling (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; European Union, 2011). Okçabol (2006, p. 20) elucidates this adult learning as follows:

> It is of paramount importance for individuals who are considered to be adults to develop their skills, increase their knowledge, improve their technical or professional abilities, or give a new direction to these abilities, knowledge, and competences. This encompasses their attitudes and behaviors, both in terms of personal development and in terms of participating in a balanced and independent social, economic, and cultural development. All of the regular education processes that allow them to change are defined as adult education.

Adult learning encompasses any and all forms of learning that occur with or without intention and awareness of adults. This learning may be based on a curriculum or not, and it may occur in formal or informal educational settings. In general, adult learning may be distinguished from other forms of learning based on three key characteristics: Formal, informal, and non-formal learning are three distinct categories of adult learning. The term "formal learning" is used to describe learning within curricular practices, which is mainly observed in schools (Pettenati & Cigognini, 2007). In such learning, the objectives and framework of the learning are defined by the curriculum. Consequently, the learner has little effect on what is learned and how it is learned. Non-formal learning occurs within the context of pre-

defined learning outcomes. The occurrence of non-formal learning does not necessitate the presence of an institution or organized learning environment. In contrast to formal learning, which is based on the predefined objectives and framework of the curriculum, informal learning is based on the learner's self-developed experience.

The term "adult learning" encompasses a wide range of processes, including the acquisition of new information and the development of new skills. It encompasses all forms of formal, informal, or non-formal learning that are undertaken with the objective of enhancing the learner's capabilities, developing new skills at work, or acquiring a new hobby. The primary focus of adult learning is the learner, as each learning experience may occur in an informal, incidental, or intentional manner. These variations are influenced by the learner's characteristics, needs, background, and readiness. These variables are considered in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of learning. For this reason, adult learning theory is the most comprehensive of the three terms.

In 1926, Eduard Lindeman presented his insights and research, which would serve as the foundation for the understanding of adult learning, its theories, and models, particularly andragogy theory, in his book The Meaning of Adult Education. In Lindeman's view, the life experiences of the adult learner should serve as the foundation for learning. Learning should be constructed upon this foundation in order to achieve truth. Lindeman proposed that adult education should persist throughout the lifespan by embracing the tenet of collaboration without rivalry. In this context, he posited that learning should be designed with a focus on real-life situations, rather than on specific subjects. Moreover, he held the view that the responsibility for the design and implementation of this educational journey should

be borne by the individual. This self-directed learning principle of Lindeman also formed the basis for Knowles' theory of andragogy.

2.2 Theory of andragogy

The concept of andragogy was first introduced by Alexander Kapp in 1833, but it gained popularity in the mid-20th century, between 1960 and 1970. This was due to Malcolm Knowles's argument that adult learning was different from pedagogy based on principles. Knowles's work was built on the basis of Lindeman's principles. The primary distinction between the two approaches lies in the learner's role within the learning process. In the field of pedagogy, the learner is typically in a passive role, receiving information from the teacher. In andragogy, the learner assumes an active role in managing the learning process.

According to Knowles, adults direct their learning, build this learning on their experiences, and learn in line with their needs and readiness. Knowles stated the 6 principles of adult learning in his book "The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species" (1984):

- Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.
- Adults need to be responsible for their decisions on education; involvement in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
- Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for learning activities.
- Adults are most interested in learning about subjects having immediate relevance to their work and/or personal lives.
- Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.
- Adults respond better to internal versus external motivators.

Andragogy theory has been criticized for taking the adult learner as a single homogeneous profile, ignoring social context and personal differences. After these criticisms, Knowles et.al. (1998) improved the andragogy theory and created a new model which is called as Andragogy in Practice. As can be seen in Figure 1, in the new model, individual differences, subject matter differences and situational differences are taken into consideration. Thus, all variables that differentiate the audience were included in the model.

The theory of andragogy has been quite influential in the understanding, development, and study of adult learning. Andragogy is one of the most widely acknowledged theories in the field of adult learning which encompasses a number of theories. Since it is not possible to incorporate and discuss all these theories in this section, only the ones that are directly related to the framework of the study will be presented.

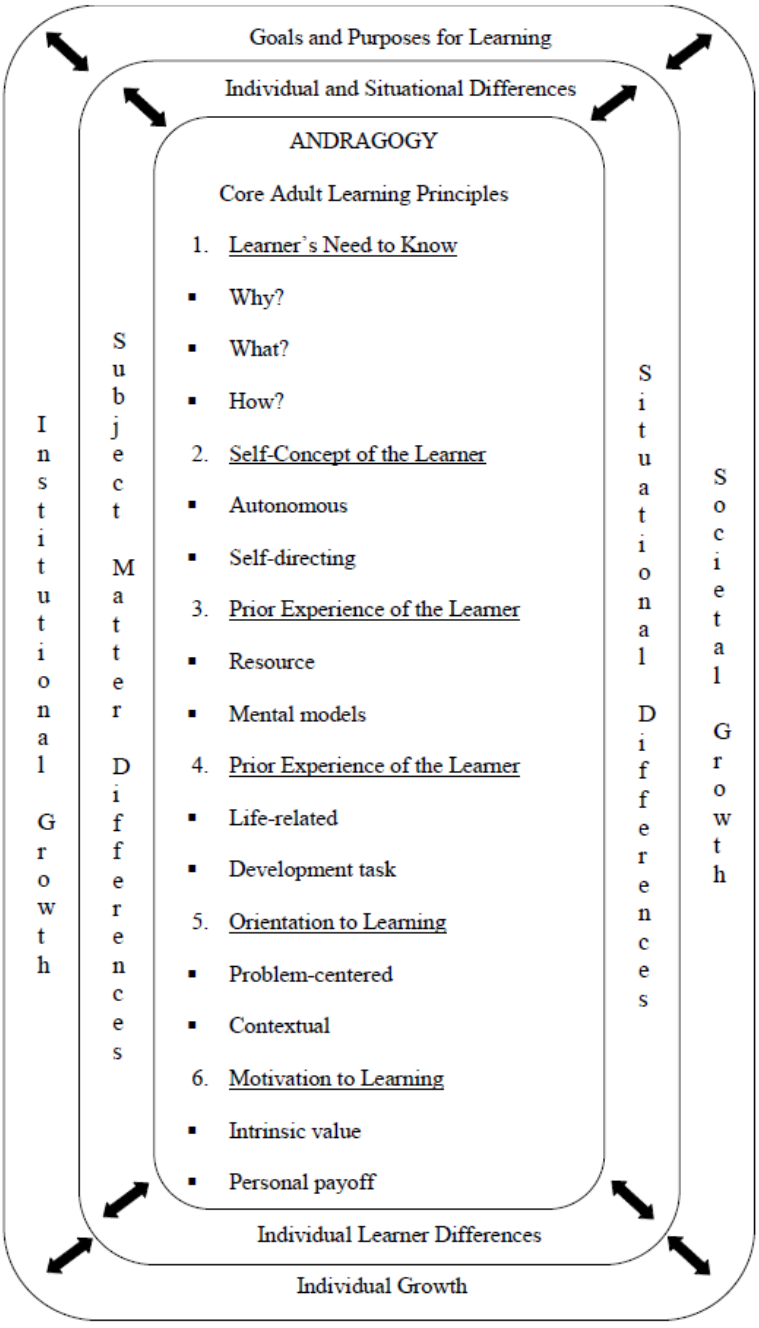

Figure 1. Andragogy in practice
Source: Knowles, Holton III and Swanson, 1998, p.182.

2.3 Theory of experiential learning

With the increasing popularity of andragogy, the effect of experience on adult learning was also recognized (Schön, 1983). In fact, the effect of experience on learning can be traced back to ancient China and ancient Greece. In Confucius's and Aristotle's works, there is an emphasis on the importance of doing while learning.

However, a modern theory of experiential learning was developed by David Kolb, in the 1980s. In the field of adult learning theory, which develops cumulatively, Kolb's experiential learning theory is also built with the influence of the work and principles of earlier psychologists and educational theorists such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget. Experiential learning theory, as shown in Figure 2, is depicted as a cycle consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation stages that focus on the effect of experience on learning. These four steps are also called experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting in terms of practice.

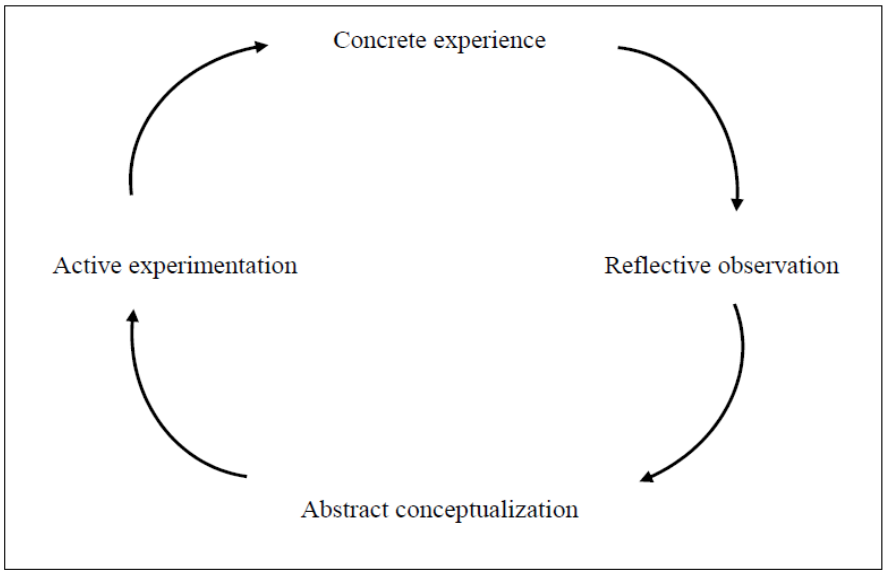

Figure 2. Kolb's experiential learning cycle
Source: Kolb, 1984, p.42.

Experiential learning theory, which deals with learning from a holistic perspective, argues that learning is pervasive and active learner-centered. In addition, according to Kolb, reflection on it after the experience of learning, then applying it again and receiving feedback are the characteristic features of experiential learning. Experiential learning can take place in a wide range of settings such as classrooms, workplace, forest, virtual environments, through skills such as problem-solving,

critical thinking and decision making. It starts with the existing experience of the learner, then continues with the linking of the new learning with the existing experience, and is a cycle that ends with the learner applying the newly learned knowledge to the new subject that the learner needs in business life or real life.

One of the basic principles of adult learning is that the learner actively guides the learning process. This principle has also been built cumulatively from the past to the present. Since the Ancient Greeks, adults have been positioned as responsible for their own learning journeys. Developments such as the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution led to an increase in individualization in society. Despite the increasing trend of the institutionalization of education, adults have invested in themselves by taking responsibility for their own education outside of formal education to increase their competencies and knowledge in business life.

2.4 Informal learning

Informal learning is the result of daily life experiences that are not linked to a specific curriculum or framework (Merriam et al., 2007). This learning can take place as a result of the socialization of adults or within/out the awareness and intention of adults (Livingstone, 2001). Although they are used interchangeably, there is difference between informal learning, informal education and informal training too. As Livingstone (2001) stated informal training and informal education requires institutional recognition whereas informal learning is based on self-direction and self-decision of adult learner.

Informal learning occurs in every environment from home to street. Also, it continues during every part of life. Besides, informal learning can occur during other types of learning are taking place in institutions or schools. For this reason, topics

such as how informal learning takes place and what types it has are explained through the formal learning structure and the differences between it and formal learning. In order not to be limited to making a definition focused only on education and learner, Colley et al. (2002) listed the differences between formal and informal learning in line with 20 main criteria, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Differences between Formal Learning and Informal Learning

FORMAL LEARNING	INFORMAL LEARNING
Teacher as authority	No teacher involved
Educational premises	Non-educational premises
Teacher control	Learner control
Structured, planned	Evolving, organic
Summative assessment, accreditation	No assessment
Externally determined outcomes / objectives	Internally determined objectives
Open to participants according to set criteria	Preserves inequality and sponsorship
Interests of powerful and dominant groups	Interests of oppressed groups
Propositional knowledge	Practical and process knowledge
High status	Low status
Measured outcomes	Immeasurable / imprecise outcomes
Education	Not education
Learning predominantly individual	Learning predominantly communal
Learning to preserve status quo	Learning for resistance /empowerment
Pedagogy of transmission and control	Learner centered, negotiated pedagogy
Mediated through agents of authority	Mediated through learner democracy
Fixed and limited timeframe	Open ended engagement
Learning is the main explicit purpose	Of secondary significance or is implicit
Learning is applicable in a range of contexts	Learning is context-specific

Source: Colley et al., 2002, p. 18-19

As these criteria reveal, the definition of informal learning can be made through the differences between formal learning and formal learning. However, since this definition does not clearly explain how informal learning occurs and cannot explain the overlapping structure of informal learning categories in a continuum, van Noy et al. (2016) prepared the following Table 2 summarizing this structure.

Table 2. Continuum of Learning Formality

	Formal learning	Organized informal learning	Everyday informal learning		
			Self-directed learning	Incidental learning	Tacit learning
Location	School awarding formal credential	School not awarding formal credential, work, or community	Work, community, home	Work, community, home	Work, community, home
Process	Instructor led	Instructor led	Learner led	Contextual	Contextual
Content	Organized curriculum	Organized curriculum	Learner organized	Spontaneous based on need	Social norms and practices
Purpose	Intentionally sought	Intentionally sought	Intentionally sought	Not intentionally sought but aware after	Not intentionally sought, not aware after

Source: van Noy et al., 2016, p. 6

When this continuum is shown as a straight line, the first end is determined as formal learning, which has the most structural and clear definition. The other end is stated as everyday informal learning. van Noy et al. (2016) divided everyday informal learning into 3 different categories in terms of process, content and purpose. Self-directed learning has been widely used since the middle of the 20th century, as it came to the fore as one of Knowles' six basic principles. An adult learner can be included in a formal course on a subject he/she wants to receive education, or he/she can take this training in an informal environment. According to Knowles, as an adult matures, he takes a more active role in the decision stage of subjects such as the subject he wants to learn, how he wants to learn, where he wants to learn, and how he wants to learn.

Incidental learning, on the other hand, is the learning that is obtained instantly from need or as a result of processes such as trial and error. In these

processes, even if the learner does not realize that he is in the learning activity, he knows that the knowledge he has acquired as a result is learning. With the development of technology, education, and training have become accessible to learners whenever they want and in any context. For this reason, adults recently started to learn more during their daily activities or social interactions, without depending on the structured content of a certain institution (Cofer, 2000). While these learnings are called informal learning at the point where the adult learner consciously learns, it is defined as incidental learning if the adult learner has unwittingly learned while continuing his daily life (Livingstone, 2001; Marsick & Watkins, 2005). Tacit learning, on the other hand, takes place through the context that is included non-intentionally. During Tacit learning, as in incidental learning, the learner does not know that he is in the learning process, but unlike incidental learning, the learner does not realize that he has learned after the learning takes place. van Noy et al. (2016) thus categorized informal learning within the continuum.

Basing on the learner's state of consciousness and intention, Schugurensky (2000), also classified informal learning into three categories as self-directed learning, incidental learning, and socialization. For a more inclusive definition, socialization was used instead of tacit learning (Bennett, 2010). Due to the informal nature of informal learning, scholars such as van Noy, Schugurensky, Marsick, and Watkins working in this field have tried to explain both the formation and types of informal learning in inclusive terms as possible. For this reason, Bennett (2010) added integrative learning as the fourth informal learning category. He stated that learning processes that are both unconscious and intentional, such as a sudden solution that comes to mind about a subject, are characterized as integrative learning.

When all categories of informal learning are considered, it seems that the main factors in how it happens are the context and the learner (Straka, 2004). The mediums where the adult learner performs learning can be contexts such as the workplace, school, and daily life. Personal activities such as talking to a colleague, looking out the window, seeing an advertisement, and solving a problem in these environments create information for the person by nature. Every activity provides information, even if it doesn't seem like an information-providing activity. This information is consciously or unconsciously interpreted by the adult within the socio-cultural structure of the environment, institution, period, and society. Competences, values, knowledge and motivation of the adult are also counted among the factors that affect this interpretation. Straka (2004) categorized all these factors as external and internal factors and schematized them in Figure 3, the details of which are shared below.

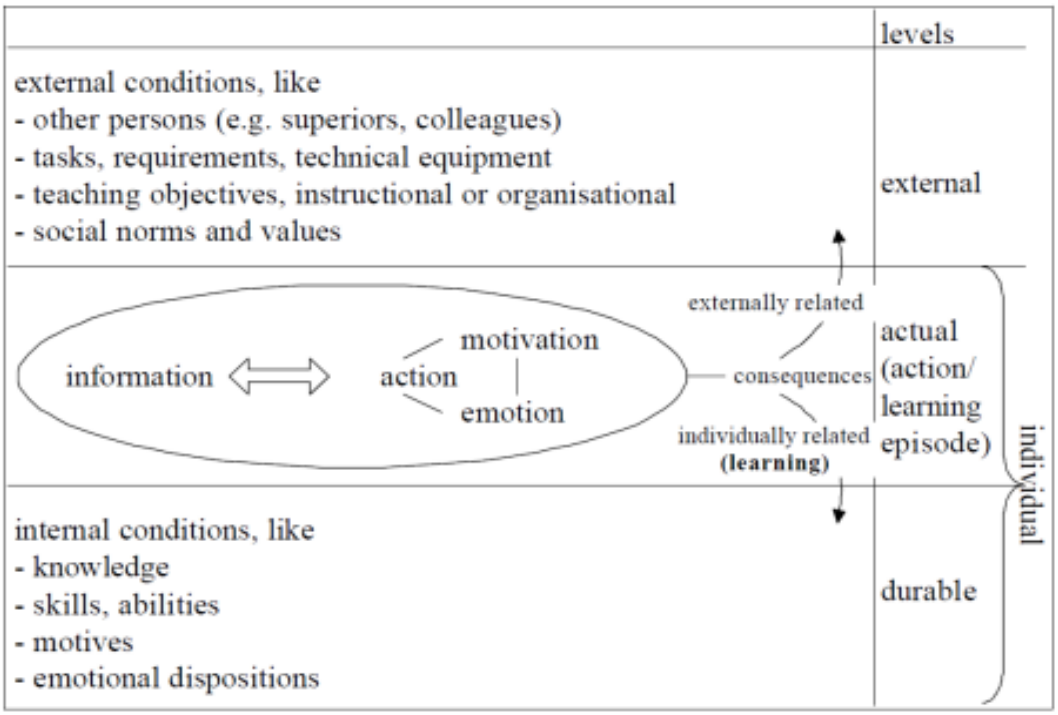

Figure 3. Informal learning concept
Source: Straka, 2004, p. 8

As can be seen in Figure 3, informal learning begins when the learner encounters information in any context in his daily life. Later, the learner interprets and interprets this information consciously or unconsciously in the socio-cultural structure of the society, institution, and family in which he/she lives in line with his/her own competencies, motivation, feelings, and values. In line with his/her reflections on this learning and interpretation process, he/she applies this learning to the new situation, consciously or unconsciously, when there is a situation where he/she can apply this learning.

Within the focus of informal learning, not only the learner but also the experience of the learner takes the main place of the learning journey (Marsick & Watkins, 2005). Informal learning occurs through personal activities like observation and reinforcement of the observed behavior. Marsick and Watkins (2005) developed an informal and incidental learning model. In line with the model whose details are shown in Figure 4, Marsick and Watkins emphasized that some features of informal learning and incidental learning are similar. The fact that both learnings are part of daily life, that both learnings are triggered by an internal or external event, that the level of consciousness of the learner is not very high in both learnings, and that both learnings are related to the learning of others are among the similar characteristics (Marsick & Watkins, 2005).

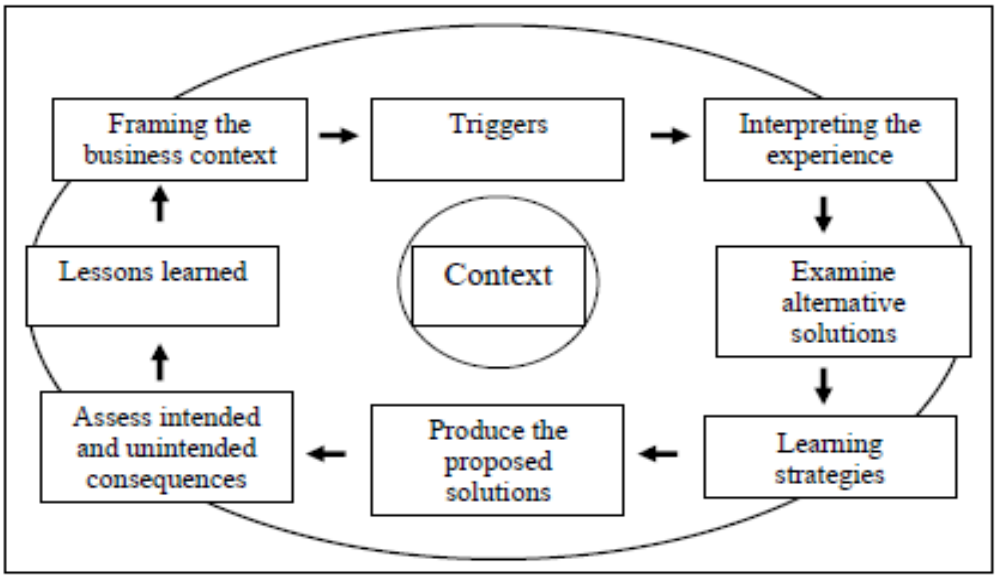

Figure 4. Informal and incidental learning model
Source: Marsick and Watkins, 2005, p. 155.

According to the model, daily activities or workflow in the workplace initiate learning. In every situation or difficulty experienced, the adult learner evaluates the situation, finds the most appropriate solution based on previous learnings, and takes the necessary actions. Afterward, the learner evaluates whether the results were realized as expected. This cycle summarizes the informal and self-directed learning processes of the adult learner in the workplace, and enables them to make sense of their previous learning, furthermore, the model emphasizes the importance of the learning environment and context. Marsick and Watkins (2005) argue that informal or incidental learning that takes place in this learning environment is affected at three levels: individual, communal and organizational.

There are many theories and models within the scope of adult learning theories. These theories and models are cumulatively built on each other's principles for the field to always improve. Their common goal is to provide different insights into how adults learn at work, at school, or in everyday life. Thus, in a more comprehensive framework, the complex structure of adult learning can be explained

through these theories and models. The common point of all these theories and models is that they focus on the adult learner knowing that they are unique, with different experiences, backgrounds and needs. These theories guide the educational journeys to be designed for adults to be more effective and efficient.

Adult learning is a field that is exposed to many influences because it takes place in many contexts. With the development of technology, the adult learning range continues to develop with new theories and methods, including online learning and e-learning methods. In short, as the world changes, the adult learning field also changes and develops. With the effect of neoliberal education reforms, aim of adult learning become producing good competitors for market by increasing performance and efficiency of adults (Milana, 2012). With the increasing focus on adult learners' needs to survive within conditions of the market, learners become subjected to personal development term and context. With this change in focus, adult learning is degraded to personal development. In order to enable people, become empowered and independent, it has been important to know how learners utilize information. It is the informal learning options, that serve the most labor force production in the focus of the market within the colorful education range of adult learning. As Garrick (1998) pointed out, learner's social position in work life has a great influence on learner's informal learning. He said that informal learning happens within context of management and human resources in order to increase efficiency and productivity of the organization, and incidental learning happens within context of life in order to develop employee as a person. At this point, workplace context work as a unifier medium because it integrates work and daily life (Marsick & Volpe, 1999).

2.5 Transformative learning

During the 1970's, Mezirow developed the transformative learning theory. It is based on the idea of meaning-making process through learning. Mezirow (1991), the founder of the theory, defines transformative learning as an important concept for understanding and managing the change process of individuals and societies. For this reason, it is considered one of the most important theories in the field of adult education and has undergone change and development until today.

Mezirow (2000) explained that transformative learning is the holistic process in which learners who are open to change their perspectives, habits and behaviors through what they learn. During this meaning making process adults use previous inferences and experiences which are created based on contextual factors which are important for formation of identity to create meaning of further experiences. That is why, in transformative learning theory, learning process requires taking cultural, psychological and socioeconomic factors into consideration. Learning journey is built on daily experiences of people and continues with reinforcement of knowledge comes from the experiences (Cofer, 2000). Transformative learning, in general, takes these experiences, intentions of learner during these experiences and outputs of these experiences into focus.

Mezirow (1994) defines transformative learning as "the process of constructing and appropriating a new and revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action" (p. 222) and the person who experiences this transformation changes his/her own identity, relationships and redefines his/her position at work. In this respect, as Cranton (1994) said, transformative learning is a challenge that requires a person to reflect on his past experiences and thoughts, and it begins with learning and ends with a change of perspective.

After Mezirow's transformative learning theory gained popularity, it was adopted by many scholars. However, Chad Hoggan (2016) proposed a metatheory study stating that not every change in a person's behavior qualifies as transformative learning. Hoggan outlined specific framework expressions that an outcome must comply with in order to be considered transformative (Hoggan, 2016, p. 64):

- Shift in basic premises of thought
- Shift in feelings
- Shift in actions
- Shift in consciousness
- Altered ways of being in the world

However, it's important to note that not every change in thought, emotion, and behavior qualifies as transformative learning. In his study, Hoggan identified six categories of transformative learning outcomes and provided their subcategories in Figure 5 (Hoggan, 2016, p. 72).

Outcome Type	Specific Change within Broader Type
Worldview	• Change in Assumptions, Beliefs, Values, Expectations • More Inclusive
Epistemology	• More Discriminating • More Open • More Reflective
Ontology	• Emotionally Capable of Change • More Self-directed
Behavior	• Actions Consistent with New Perspective

Figure 5. Typology applied to Mezirow's description of transformative learning outcomes

Source: Hoggan, 2016, p. 72.

Even if the type of learning outcomes complies with the previously mentioned, it must also be examined in terms of depth, breadth, and relative stability in order to be described as transformative. In the case of Depth, it shows to what extent the

learning outcome has changed. Breadth represents the number of contexts in which this change can be observed. Relative stability is when this change continues to be seen irreversibly in more than one context (Hoggan, 2016).

To provide a broader understanding of the framework of the study, in the following portion, workplace learning is delineated within the context of corporate organizations.

2.6 Workplace learning

In the literature, there are multiple and different definitions of workplace learning because it can be defined from different perspectives due to its purpose, context and application forms (Boud & Garrick, 1999). Workplace learning is defined by Boud and Garrick (1999) as acquiring the knowledge necessary to perform a profession or making existing knowledge available for the necessity of a profession. According to Fenwick's (2001) definition, the change and development that occurs in the skills and competencies of the employee through the activities carried out in the work context is workplace learning.

When we look at the history of workplace learning, this concept emerged with the on-the-job trainings given to new employees in factories with the effect of the Industrial Revolution. Although workplace learning initially took place in the form of trainings given by more experienced people to inexperienced people, as the organizational structures became more complex, the trainings began to be more structured. With the popularity of these trainings, the importance of investing in people has been understood. For this reason, human resources development units continued to invest in employees by developing not only technical training but also soft skill training. Developing adult learning theories also had a great impact on the

structuring of these trainings and meeting with the learner. As the positive effect of the widespread learning culture throughout the organization on the success of the organization was noticed, the concept of learning organization became popular and institutions made investments to create and maintain this culture (Senge, 1990). Being a learning organization is to enable learning processes to take place simultaneously while business processes are taking place, thus enabling development. When we approach today as a date; with the development of technology, the increase in the popularity of online learning, and the widespread use of learning management systems, workplace learning has become more flexible and accessible. The workplace learning trend, which has developed in this direction in terms of access, has methodically evolved towards learning methods such as informal learning, incidental learning, and social learning that are timely, problem-solving oriented, and support team spirit. Although Workplace learning has historically developed in such a flow, it will continue to evolve by changing methodically according to the sector, corporate culture, needs of business, and challenges of business.

There are two basic forms of learning in the workplace: on-the-job training and off-the-job training. If the employee learns the necessary information for that job by doing the job, this learning form is called on-the-job learning. In this type of learning, both learning and production are two simultaneous processes (Silverman, 2003). Off-the-job training, on the other hand, is the training process in which the necessary knowledge and skills are acquired to carry out the job, apart from the process of doing the job. For this reason, off-the-job training can include both formal and informal learning methods, depending on the subject learned and its relation to the job. The extent of this relationship between work and learning forms the basis of

the efficiency obtained from the learned subject and skill (Malcolm et al., 2003). Barnett (1999) stated that this relationship between work and learning should be defined from different perspectives, from the perspective of the individual and the organization. He emphasized that these definitions should be shaped within the framework of the characteristics of informal and formal education (Barnett, 1999). In the case of informal learning, it is the learner who directs the learning, but if the learning journey proceeds with the shaping and direction of the institution, this indicates that the learning is formal (Education Development Center, 1998; Silverman, 2003).

Hagger and Halliday (2008) also divided workplace learning into 2 separate categories. They made this categorization according to the focus of learning on the process or the output. Trainings categorized as learning as a product are training focused on individual learning. Hager (2005, p. 832) listed the common points of the trainings in this category as follows:

- They center of individual learners
- The focus mainly on the rational, cognitive aspects of work performance.
- Work performance tends to be conceived as thinking or reflection followed by application of thinking or reflection, especially Schön's work.
- Learning itself is taken for granted and not theorized or problematized…They tend to assume that workplace learning is akin to formal learning, thereby favoring the acquisition metaphor.
- They downplay the importance of social, organizational and cultural factors in workplace learning and performance…For instance, Marsick and Watkins accept the importance of "organizational context" (1990, p.

> 210). But they do so in the limited sense that organizational context is the environment in which the individual, the unit of human capital theory, is learning informally and incidentally (p. 832-833)

Trainings categorized as learning as a participatory process are trainings focused on social learning. Hager (2005, p. 834-835) stated the common features of the trainings in this category as follows:

> …characterized by a recognition that workplace learning and performance are embodied phenomena, phenomena that are significantly shaped by social, organization and cultural factors that extend well beyond the individual.

Lave and Wenger (1991) also advocate the idea that learning takes place in a social society. For them, what they call legitimate peripheral participation, learning takes place within the activity, context, and culture of a community. However, this perspective has been criticized for excluding people who do not belong to the community (Hager & Halliday, 2007). Building on this theory of Lave and Wenger (1991), Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001) categorize workplace learning by using social participation instead of legitimate peripheral participation, as shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Types of Workplace Learning

	Intentional/planned	Unintentional/Unplanned
Learning that which is already known to others	Planned learning of that which others know	Socialization is not an existing community of practice
Development of existing capability	Planned/intended learning to refine existing capability	Unplanned improvement of ongoing practice
Learning that which is new in the workplace (or treated as such)	Planned/intended learning to do that which has not been done before	Unplanned learning of something not preciously done

Source: Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001, n.p)

To keep up with the changing world, organizations focus on creating learning culture through work-based interactions, learning new skills and knowledge (Collin et al,

2011; Doornbos et al, 2008; Felstead et al, 2005; Fenwick, 2008). Actions taken to create a learning culture take place under the umbrella of workplace learning. These actions can be formal or informal trainings in which the employee is involved alone, or they can be formal or informal sharing among employees.

Another role of workplace learning is to enable organizations to come forward by producing new solutions in the competitive corporate world. For this reason, this area has been focused on and investments have been made on a global scale. At this point, the main purpose of workplace learning is to reinforce the existing skills of everyone in the corporate ecosystem and to ensure that new skills and knowledge are learned (Soares, 2009).

Along with the fact that workplace learning includes both informal and formal learning types and characteristics, the interest in formal learning programs such as certificate programs has declined with the increasing globalization recently and informal learning has become more popular within the context of workplace learning. However, as Silverman (2003) and Bishop et al. (2006) stated, it is the characteristics of the organization, its culture, the value of information, the social network of employees, and the relevance of information for employees that determine the characteristics and type of workplace learning. As Soares (2009) stated, in line with its market position, vision, mission, and experience, organizations determine a roadmap for why and how to train their ecosystems.

Before people internalize information, they evaluate the meaning of the information for their job. While making this evaluation, they use a rubric shaped by the ecosystem, ideas and pre-existing information. In this way, they measure the effect of the new knowledge they have acquired in keeping up with the developing technologies, doing their job better or adapting to their new job (Siemens, 2005). In

this regard, learning in corporate organizations can mutually meet the demands of the market, organizations, ecosystem employees, and employers.

2.7 Leadership development

In an institution, as in management, there is a deep traditional belief in the formation of a learning culture, such as leaders think and employees implement (Senge, 1990). However, the uncertainty of the times we live in, the speed of change, and the necessity of rapid adaptation have changed this traditional belief (Drucker & Senge, 2001). Leaders undertake the tasks of designers, educators, visionaries, and motivators in the formation of the learning culture of the institution. As Senge (1990) said, leaders shape the future of their employees by creating the learning culture of the institution. For this reason, understanding leaders and their leadership styles is crucial for the analysis of both their learning journeys and the learning culture in their organization.

Leadership is the most important concept that is effective in the establishment and management of every state, institution or social structure that has existed throughout history. According to Northouse (2019), leadership is a process with organizational, social and personal dimensions. This process is built on motivating people in the managed community to achieve a common goal (Bolden, 2004). In the literature, there are many different theories, definitions, explanations, and research on the phenomenon of leadership. This diversity stems from the dynamic and multivariate structure of the leadership process and its handling from different perspectives (Gardner, 1990).

Today's organizations are more focused on knowledge, learning, and development than in the past to adapt to the changing conditions and the speed of this

change (Kolzow, 2014). This development-oriented strategy not only increased the competencies of both leaders and employees but also increased the expectations of employees from leaders. At this point, leaders are expected to develop new visions for the organization, employees, industry, and ecosystem, while being in continuous development.

With the effect of globalization, the importance given to knowledge and development by all sectors has increased. Aware of this situation, leaders were closely interested in all educational development opportunities that would upskill or reskill them. In addition, they gave the same importance to the upskill and reskill opportunities of their employees. Thus, they adopted the perspective of leaders who improve both themselves and their team. Realizing that just graduating from a good university is not enough in the journey of becoming a good leader, they adopted a lifelong learning approach. In this way, they maximize their own potential and produce more effective and visionary strategies (Rose, 1998; Wood, 2001).

Leaders take responsibility for their own learning journeys by planning their own learning paths, taking self-development actions, and therefore staying well-connected to their networks. This is one of the most fundamental differences between the employees and leaders in an organization. Leaders both learn from the ecosystem they are in and support ecosystem's development by sharing their own knowledge with the ecosystem. Leaders develop and renew themselves to cope with the challenges brought by global conditions and to adapt to rapidly changing job descriptions and requirements (Castells, 1998).

Overcoming the complexities and challenges that leaders face in business life requires them to use unconventional methods and tools and think outside the box, in addition to their known leadership competencies (Nicolaides & McCallum, 2013).

Leaders collectively transform their own leadership competencies by both overcoming the difficult situations they encounter themselves and by observing how their peers overcome the difficult situations they encounter. The proof of this transformation is that the leader, who is going through the same difficult process, sees that his methods and thoughts to overcome this process are not the same as before. This shows that the leader transforms his behavior and thoughts by reflecting on his experience.

There are studies in the literature that emphasize the possible connection between transformative learning and leadership development (Brooks, 2004; Brown & Posner, 2001; Ciporen, 2010; Donaldson, 2009; Ensign, 2019; Fisher-Yoshida et al., 2005; Hibbert, 2013; Sweet, 2023). These scholars argued that leadership, by its very nature, can be achieved through transformative learning, as competencies such as quick decision-making, self-criticism, ability to transfer learning into practice, flexibility, adaptation and diversity, which are considered to be leadership competencies, can be gained through transformative learning. As the leader experiences conflict management, establishing effective relationships, motivating his/her team, strategy-oriented adaptation, managing complexity and taking his/her business to the next level in business life, he/she transforms with the learnings and awareness he/she gains (Brooks, 2004). In addition to these experiences, with the leadership development training offered by institutions, the development of leaders is supported and their transformation is accelerated with many different techniques such as role playing, case study or simulation (Brown & Posner, 2001). Hilbert (2013), who advocates focusing on programs based on reflection and daily routines when designing leadership development programs, stated that practices such as reflection-based coaching increase the awareness of leaders, enable them to establish

a dialogue with their stakeholders in an inclusive manner, and thus encourage a transformative learning experience. He also emphasized that this transformation can be observed in the leader's behaviors, values and attitudes.

In the century we live in, information is easily accessible and unlimited, especially after the pandemic, so leaders can access the information they want whenever they want (Lumsden, 2022). Thus, by constantly investing in its own knowledge and combining this knowledge with its experiences, it contributes to its own transformation journey (Bersin, 2013). The basis of transformation is reflecting on the combination of knowledge and experience (Mezirow, 2012). Coaching is one of the leadership development tools that serve transformative learning as it allows leaders to think, comment, find alternative solutions and reflect on experienced and possible scenarios in line with their own knowledge and competencies (Price, 2004). In the coaching session, the coach asks the client to express his feelings and thoughts through an old case, to re-evaluate his behavior at that time, and to think about how he could have acted differently now. Thanks to this method, which allows reflection on old experience, thought, behavior or perspective, it has the potential to transform not only the leader, but also the organization as the leader transforms (Gray, 2006; Newman, 2012; Taylor, 2000).

Another factor that supports the learning process of leaders is their international experience (Gabriel, 2008; Gregersen et al., 1998; Hall et al., 2001). The main reason for this is that international experience holistically enriches the experience during the leadership journey. Because, as the difficulties of working, living and communicating in the international context are encountered, the leader goes through experiential learning consisting of 4 stages: experience, reflect, conceptualize and experiment, and this process creates a transformative effect on the

leader (Ng et al., 2009; Salicru, 2015). Caligiuri and Tarique (2012) emphasized that these experiences add new competencies to leaders' leadership competencies, such as flexibility, managing uncertainty and embracing diversity. This learning is called transformative learning because people change their perspectives, values and lives in an uncritical, non-judgmental and open way during this learning.

Ultimately, the person who walks the path to leadership constantly reassesses and reinterprets their own behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and values throughout their various experiences. Someone in the transformative process examines their experience and contributes to the formation of their own identity by reflecting on this experience within the social context (van Dellen & Cohen-Scali, 2015). Thus, through this perpective, leaders' thoughts and behaviors at work transform in line with their reflections on their experiences (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). Illeris (2014) refers to such meaning-making processes as identity transformation. Since the leader has a personal identity and social identity in addition to his/her managerial identity (Ashforth, 2001), the feedback he/she receives, the dialogues he/she establishes and his/her re-evaluation of himself/herself through his/her experiences with all these identities contribute to the leader's identity transformation (Marquardt, 2018).

Experiences and challenges may involve understanding and adapting to different situations, as well as learning from them. This process can be a valuable source of learning and self-improvement, especially for leaders. During this transformation, leaders strive to overcome difficulties and uncertainties by understanding and strategically managing their emotions. This helps them maintain confidence in their leadership as they evaluate themselves. Leaders experiencing a crisis can benefit from communicating with peers facing similar situations, learning from them, and regulating their emotions and thoughts. This process helps them

develop coping strategies and adapt to change. It shows that individuals, especially leaders, are open to actively participating in change and transformation based on their experiences and knowledge.

Neuman (1996), who conducted research on leadership development programs and pointed out that as a leader engages in critical thinking and self-discovery, their personal awareness and self-confidence increase. As a result, their leadership and relationship management skills are positively affected. This is why leaders are more receptive to transformative learning. Leadership involves more than just overseeing operational processes and uniting a group of people. It is a complex process that involves making strategic decisions, constantly adapting, and being flexible. The complexity and need for continuous self-renewal have made transformative learning an important focus for scholars.

Leaders who embark on development journey direct their development journeys in line with their own leadership journey. Leaders are already the leading group of the organizations; however, there are differences and hierarchy among them. In recent studies, these minority leaders, who have the right to intervene in decisive decisions, are described as gold collars. Although there are many definitions, leaders who are in managerial roles at the point of functioning of the existing order are described as white collars. For this reason, classifying leaders as gold collar and white collar in order to make sense of their transformative development journeys facilitates the analysis of development programs and processes.

The term gold collar leader was first used by Robert Earl Kelley in his book The Gold Collar Worker in 1985. Kelley defined gold collar workers as highly skilled and highly valued employees who combine analytical skills and emotional

competencies with creativity. Gold collar leader term defines the managers in this group. The term gold collar is built on the definitions blue collar and white collar. However, with the influence of the knowledge economy and digital transformation, the unique skill sets of gold collar leaders have become the most effective factors on the path to success, especially in sectors where intellectual capital dominates, such as technology and finance. As sectors develop, interest in gold collar leaders has increased due to these competencies. Institutions have designed training and development programs to train gold collar leaders with these skill sets. The basis of these competencies is their ability to solve the most complex situations with their problem-solving skills and to synthesize the information they obtain with emotional intelligence and create new ideas. However, the biggest challenge of gold collar leaders is to adapt to changing skill sets in the constant change of business life (Ahn et al., 2004; Boston Consulting Group, 2022).

Gold collar leaders build their own leadership styles and intellectual capital based on collaboration and innovation. Although most of these leaders have higher education degrees, they are not satisfied with just academic education and closely follow many developments both in their own fields and in other fields. Since their intellectual capital is their most basic asset, they learn throughout their lives in order to nourish it. They contribute to both their own sectors and business life with the research they conduct, publications, projects or patents they produce in line with what they have learned. They solve difficult and complex situations with their creative thinking competencies, which they use in light of the information provided to them by their intellectual capital, and move on to production from this solution. Innovative and strategic decisions fed by the intersection of interdisciplinary

knowledge of gold collar leaders carry the sectors into the future (Boston Consulting Group, 2022).

When we look at workplace learning-focused publications examining the subject of gold collar leaders, which has not yet taken a wide place in the literature, it is seen that this issue is discussed as a phenomenon that combines intellectual capital, emotional intelligence and visionary. In sociology-focused publications, it is seen that the focus is on the glorification of a certain skill-set, inequality of opportunity and the future of work. In these studies, it is emphasized that, due to the subjective nature of leadership, separating a section of managers through such a classification means ignoring other factors, and it is also claimed that the changing business world conditions support this. What many studies agree on is that gold collar leaders and their skill sets shape the business world and direct the sectors. For this reason, they manage teams and lead the masses as both leaders and influencers. They always act with a strong moral stance due to the size of the impact of the strategic decisions they make and the responsibility of the masses they lead. In summary, gold collar leaders are leaders who play a pivotal role in carrying their sectors into the future with their skill sets, moral stance, high level expertise and intellectual capital.

The focus of studies on gold collar leaders was first designed to define this group (Sarkan, 2021). The first of these definitions was made by Reich in 1991. Reich, who calls gold collar leaders as symbolic analysts, describes them not only with skills such as decision-making and people management that come with their managerial roles in institutions; he defined gold collar workers as architects of global economy by emphasizing their distinctive skills such as higher education degrees,

problem-solving skills, intellectual capital production, and differences in leadership styles.

Sklair (2001, 2016) classified gold collar leaders from the global capitalist perspective. This classification includes bureaucrats, politicians and executives who are already in the upper segment of society and play a role in the global spread of capitalism. The reason for this segmentation is that these leaders manage society, economy and politics with the powers they have and the decisions they make due to their positions in society and institutions. Sklair stated the 5 basic common characteristics of these people, whom he calls the transnational capitalist class (TCC), as follows (2009, p. 500-501):

- The economic interests of its members are increasingly globally linked rather than exclusively local and national in origin.
- The TCC seeks to exert economic control in the workplace, political control in domestic and international politics, and culture-ideology control in every-day life through specific forms of global competitive and consumerist rhetoric and practice.
- Members of the TCC have outward-oriented global rather than inward-oriented local perspectives on most economic, political and culture-ideology is-sues.
- Members of the TCC tend to share similar life-styles, particularly patterns of higher education (increasingly in business schools) and consumption of luxury goods and services.
- Finally, members of the TCC seek to project images of themselves as citizens of the world as well as of their places of birth.

In today's and recent past, some scholars have started to call this transnational capitalist class as gold collar workers, representing the leaders of the white-collar group in business life and knowledge workers representing the leaders of the society (Grobler, 2014; Holland et al., 2002; Kolzow, 2014; Roongrerngsuke & Liefoogh, 2013; Tobias, 1999; Zeybek, 2006). Framing this class, which consists of the leaders of the society and directs the society in many issues, with a single definition may cause us to fail to fully understand them and ignore their unique characteristics (Kolzow, 2014). There are differences in their business execution, leadership styles, knowledge accumulation styles, and relationships with their leaders (Grobler, 2014). Due to all these commonalities and differences, the term gold collar is not widely used in the literature. However, the term gold collar worker, which is an effective way to describe this group that is separated from the society or community they are in, was first used by Kelley in 1985.

Kelley's (1985) purpose in using the definition of gold collar workers was to name groups that differ among work groups with their education, performance, salary, learning speed, ability to transfer what they have learned to work, communication, and characteristic features. Kelley (1985, p. 11) stated these distinctive features as vision, strategy determination, problem-solving, problem definition, creativity, intelligence, imagination, entrepreneurship, innovation, decision making and implementation. These characteristics can be seen in the way gold collar workers do their work, in their leadership or in their communication with those around them when observing both their private and business lives. Kelley (1985), who cited high-level managers or high-ranking experts in their fields as examples of the members of these groups, stated that these groups of people are the building blocks of the global economy, calling them the locomotive of institutions.

Işığıçok (2005), looking from the same perspective as Kelley, emphasized that gold collar workers have an important position in global competition because they form the basis of knowledge production in societies.

Although gold collar workers are easy to identify in terms of all their features, this does not mean that they are well known. To understand gold collar workers, we also need them to describe themselves and explain their perspectives. Gold collar workers are employees who decide on their own performance, manage their relationship networks, direct innovation and determine strategies due to the position and authority they have within the institution they work in. While Zeybek (2006) emphasizes that the main responsibilities of gold collar workers are strategic planning, information production and decision-making, as can be understood by looking at their daily routines, he also underlines that these responsibilities do not contain any specific content. For this reason, he emphasized that in order to understand gold collar workers, they should be defined not only through the job description but also by taking into account their relationship networks, personal definitions, images and motivations. Based on the perspectives of Weber (1968), who stated that a group is shaped in line with facts such as common education, interests, and values, and based on the perspectives of Bourdieu (1984), who emphasized that social, cultural and symbolic capital should be considered in addition to material conditions to define a group; some scholars defined gold collar workers based on the psychological, social and intellectual capitals that are effective in leadership (Beechler & Javidan, 2007; Pardue & Morgan, 2008; Yüksel, 2010). Because of their desire and need to have a position in the global network, which is one of the 5 basic characteristics of the transnational capitalist class, as stated by Sklair (2009), gold collar workers are in communication with influential people from

all over the world. Thanks to their psychological, social and intellectual capitals, competencies, motivations and knowledge, gold collar leaders become part of global networks. Although this does not mean that every gold collar worker or leader has international responsibilities, it shows that they have the potential to take responsibility at this level and is one of their distinguishing features (Zeybek, 2006).

Today, leadership has become synonymous with global leadership due to the global integration of economic needs and dynamics and the increase in the multinational structuring of institutions (Jensen, 2008; Zheng et al., 2010). This definitional scope has become a determinant for the competencies and levels expected from leaders. Transnational areas are formed by the networks of the leaders, who have similar values, competencies, and knowledge, of these companies with similar organizational structures and processes (Djodat & zu Knyphausen-Aufseß, 2017). Thus, the activities of these leaders shift decision-making processes from national to global grounds, as they are ambassadors of global culture in the national environment (Dirlik, 2004). This is the practical demonstration of the distinctive features of gold collar leaders, as stated by Sklair (2009).

Educational background plays a critical role in the formation of the identity of the individual or group, formed by the accumulation of social, cultural and intellectual capital and the influence of lifestyle (Adolph, 2013; Freeland, 2014; Grobler, 2014; Power, 2000; Wood, 2001). For this reason, in order to get to know gold collar workers closely, it is important to understand the present, past and future of their education and training situations. Education affects a person's professional position, such as people who graduate from high-status universities working in managerial positions (Power, 2000). When we look at people in high managerial positions, we see that they graduated from similar universities that provide training in

a specific culture, global perspective, and global competencies (Adolph, 2013). At this point, Wood (2001) questioned whether every manager who graduated from similar high-quality universities could be considered gold collar leaders. With this question in mind, Wood's (2001) research has shown that gold collar leaders plan their own learning paths by combining their distinctive features with their training, increase their knowledge and competencies in line with these plans, and stay up to date on development thanks to the network they are in.

Since they cannot exist within this network by simply getting information, constantly learning and sharing what they learn is important for gold collar leaders as it enables them to take part in this network. Due to their impact on the global economy, which is one of their distinguishing features, gold collar leaders continue to exist by improving themselves through continuous learning and surviving in unpredictable global conditions. For this reason, continuous learning is the cornerstone of their continued existence as gold collar leaders. Therefore, learning is positioned as part of organizational strategies in order to pursue career advancement and social status. This journey, defined as personal development, addresses the responsibility of the person and attributes success in this competitive and challenging business life to the person's own performance, motivation, and the extent to which he keeps himself up to date (Reichard & Johnson, 2011).

According to Holland et al. (2002), who explore what learning means for gold collar leaders, gold collar leaders see learning as a dynamic within the group in order to get to know each other better. They use different ways of learning, such as learning on their own, learning from each other, or learning through experience, and they share what they have learned with each other. Thus, their relationships develop both within their own groups and with other groups.

Since gold collar leaders are rare in the business world due to their distinctive competencies and characteristics, there seems to be a race between institutions and sectors to recruit these people. Considering the importance of learning for gold collar leaders, new learning opportunities and new experience opportunities are frequently used in the business world to attract gold collar leaders. Wonacott (2007, p. 356) stated that gold collar leaders see working as a hobby, pursue learning opportunities, are attracted to different experiences, and attach importance to flexibility and autonomy; For this reason, he emphasized that the contracts they signed were psychological. Institutions that want to retain gold collar leaders embrace a learning-oriented culture and offer many learning and development options such as coaching, leadership academy, simulations, experiential learning workshops, case studies, and capstone projects (Roongrerngsuke & Liefooghe, 2013). As Zeybek (2006) stated, the basic building block of the gold collar leaders' group is to learn, keep oneself up to date, and share what you have learned. Members of this group, which takes learning and knowledge as core values, measure every group they are in contact with based on this value and communicate accordingly. Gold collar leaders align their own success and values with the success and values of the organization, and constantly improve, motivate, program and manage themselves in line with this alignment.

Gold collar leaders can be assumed to be leaders in executive positions by definition, but the main feature of gold collar leaders targeted in this study is not that they are only executive level leaders of the organization they work in, but that they have a say in strategic decisions due to their position. In line with their position in business life, understanding the characteristics of gold collar leaders, their perspective on learning, the evolution of their learning journey over time, and how

they change the perspectives of the communities they influence is important. Therefore, the aforementioned literature provides a conceptual framework to make sense of the data collected for this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology of the study is presented. The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section, research design, summarizes the methodology of the study, explains the approach framing the study, and describes the organization of the study. The second section explains the data collection procedure, the development of the interview form used in this study, the participant selection criteria, the pilot study, and the demographic information about participants. The third section of the chapter explains the analysis method of the collected data. In the last section, the details of the ethical processes taken into account during the study are mentioned.

3.1 Research design

This study aims to explore the learning experiences of high-level leaders in their leadership journeys using qualitative research design. Qualitative research is described as revealing people's interpretation of their experiences and meanings of these experiences as a result of their interpretation of the phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Merriam & Simpson, 2001). This definition underlines the importance of people's experiences. As Marshall and Rossman (2016) said, people make sense of their experiences in line with their cumulative lives. Thus, the best way to reveal people’s points of view about a subject is to examine and understand their cumulative experiences as a result of life (Merriam & Simpson, 2001). Since qualitative research design reveals the meaning-making methodology of people and demonstrates the impact of future experiences on one's life, it is selected to reveal

details of learning journey of gold collar leaders. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Creswell (2013) stated, qualitative research defines the insights, feelings, emotions, and thoughts of the target audience to make sense of the experiences that have become universal phenomena from a common perspective. This approach to qualitative research is called phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenology research approach is used in this study to understand the learning experiences of gold collar leaders. Phenomenology helps to uncover the shared perspective of the target audience by comparing the interpretations and perspectives of individuals who have undergone similar experiences. When evaluating experiences, it is essential to consider the environment in which they occur and the significance of this environment for the individual (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Understanding the culture and surroundings where the experience happens is crucial for accurately assessing the information shared by participants in response to research questions (Vagle, 2018).

In the experiences shared by the participants, details that might seem insignificant to someone unfamiliar with the culture can actually provide valuable insights when viewed from within the corporate culture. This study focuses on the learning experiences of gold collar leaders, and it's essential to consider the environment in which these experiences take place. The fact that the researcher works in the same institution offers the advantage of being familiar with the corporate culture, enabling a meaningful analysis of the experiences described by gold collar leaders within this context. Once the purpose and design of the study were established, preparations for the interview questions commenced for the semi-structured interviews. After completing the necessary preparation, including details that will be shared later, the demographic form and interview questions were

finalized. Once approved by my advisor and the thesis monitoring committee, I submitted an application to the Boğaziçi University Social and Human Sciences Master's and Doctoral Theses Ethics Review Commission (SOBETİK) to obtain ethical approval for the participant consent form, interview questions, and demographic questions. After obtaining the required approvals, 2 pilot interviews were conducted to ensure the clarity and understandability of the interview questions. Only minor changes were made after the pilot study, and then interview appointments were proceeded with the participants of the study. The details of these steps are explained under the following headings.

3.2 Research participants

As mentioned in the purpose of the study, the primary target group of the study is gold collar leaders. This term is relatively new and has been defined differently in the literature, as explained in detail in the previous chapter. For this study, gold collar leaders are defined as senior executives who have the authority to contribute strategically and make significant decisions in the organization's management. The research participants were selected from this specific group based on this definition. As Moustakas (1994) and Van Manen (2023) said, it is difficult to learn and observe experiences on the phenomenon because there are many affecting factors such are culture, environment, time so on. Many researchers tried different methods to overcome this and shared their experiences with later researchers. As suggested by these researchers, minimizing the influencing variables, mastering the culture, and limiting the variable differences such as time helps to provide meaningful outputs from the described experience.

From this point of view, the participants were selected among the gold collar leaders working in the institutions affiliated with the same group. Thus, the differences arising from culture were tried to be limited. Participants of the study are the employees of the corporate organizations in the same group which is mainly operating in the telecommunication, energy, mobile payment, health, and education sectors. Due to confidentiality issues, the organization was referred as Company A. Company A is a globally operating company which is mostly located in Turkey and with multiple international locations. It has nearly 7,000 employees who are placed under twenty main business functions. Training activities of Company A are operated by the corporate academy which is a part of the human resources department. The training needs of the company differ based on each business unit.

In addition, in order to control other influencing factors, the researcher in this study acted in accordance with the criteria in the selection of the participant group. These criteria are:

- To be involved in creating the organization's vision.
- To have managerial oversight of at least 15 employees, determined based on the smallest function within the organization.
- To possess over 10 years of leadership experience, determined based on the average experience for senior employees in talent management procedures.
- To have a minimum of 2 years of leadership experience as a gold collar leader.

Even if participants are determined within the framework of these criteria, they will be differed age, gender, educational backgrounds and departments.

As mentioned before, gold collar leaders who work in companies affiliated with a group, in order to eliminate cultural differences, are the potential target group of the study. Working in the same institution as a researcher enabled me to reach the list of these leaders. Although the list is long, an elimination phase was carried out to remove ineligible leaders according to predetermined criteria. After this elimination, all the leaders on the list were sent an email to get their volunteering to participate in the study. The reason for sending emails to the leaders who met all the criteria was to alleviate the difficulties experienced due to the agenda density during the pilot study. I aimed to reduce the email traffic by adding the assistants of the leaders to the emails sent. Because, in accordance with the corporate culture, in such requests, the assistants confirm whether the leader has knowledge and whether verbal or written consent has been obtained.

In all these processes, convenience and purposeful sampling methods were used as a guide. Convenience sampling guided the participant selection process in terms of easy access to the participants. Purposeful sampling guided the participant selection process in terms of limiting and selecting the target audience for a specific purpose. Because convenience and purposeful sampling collaboration is described as a way of sampling, such as being available at an easily accessible time, compatible with the purpose of the study, if the members of the target audience meet the researcher's predetermined criteria (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012).

The demographic information of all the participants who were reached and interviewed as a result of these selection criteria and strategy are shown in the table below.

Table 4. Participants of the Study

Coded Name	Management Level	Gender	Age	Total Years of Experience	Total Years of Leadership Experience	Education Level (Last Graduated)	Function	Title	Scope of Control (person)
A	N-1	Female	49	27	23	Master's Degree x 2	Corporate Customer Operations	Assistant General Manager	726
B	N-2	Female	49	27	26	Bachelor's Degree	Network Technologies	Director	82
C	N-2	Male	46	23	17	Bachelor's Degree	Supply Chain Management	Director	29
D	N-2	Female	45	24	16	Master's Degree	Finance	Director	15
E	N & N-2	Male	47	23	19	Master's Degree	Finance	General Manager	393
F	N-2	Male	41	18	10	Master's Degree	Finance	Director	57
G	N & N-2	Female	43	22	14	Master's Degree	Digital TV Platform & Digital Services Solutions	General Manager & Director	77
H	N-2	Male	54	32	26	Bachelor's Degree	Information & Communication Technologies	Director	225
I	N-2	Male	45	21	10	Doctor of Philosophy	Network Technologies	Director	139
J	N-2	Female	53	28	13	Master's Degree	Network Technologies	Director	142
K	N-1	Male	47	24	23	Bachelor's Degree	IT Services and IT Consulting	General Manager	168
L	N & N-2	Male	44	15	10	Doctor of Philosophy	Cyber Security & Network Technologies	General Manager & Director	155
M	N & N-1	Male	45	23	17	Bachelor's Degree	Telecommunication Services & Sales	General Manager & Director	56
N	N	Male	53	25	10	Master's Degree	Internal Audit	Director	43
O	N-2	Female	40	18	12	Bachelor's Degree	Human Resources	Director	25

Within the scope of the study, 15 gold collar leaders were interviewed. The emergence of similar patterns during the interviews showed that the study reached saturation in terms of the number of participants. The management levels of the interviewed participants were defined as N being the highest level. While 5 of the gold collar leaders interviewed directly have the N level of management role, 2 of them are at the N-1 management level and 8 of them are at the N-2 management level. 3 participants are positioned at two different management levels as they have 2 different managerial duties due to the group company structure.

N level leaders are called the CEO or general manager of the company. The N-1 level is called deputy general manager. The N-2 level is called director. When

we look at this classification based on corporate culture, it is observed that a leader who is at the N level in a company affiliated with the group is simultaneously carrying out a different role at the N-2 level in another company affiliated with the group. When the target audience of participants is examined in the light of this information, 5 of the 15 leaders interviewed are at the top management level of their institutions. 1 of these 5 leaders has N-1 level management responsibilities in other companies belonging to the group, and 3 of these 5 leaders have N-2 level management responsibilities in other companies belonging to the group. 2 of the 15 leaders work at the N-1 management level. 10 of the 15 leaders work at the N-2 management level.

The leadership experience of gold collar leaders, whose total work experience is between 13 and 27 years, is between 10 and 26 years. In terms of total work experience, this issue was approached from two different perspectives. Both the total work experience and total leadership experience of the participants were examined. The total work experience of the 15 leaders varies between 15 and 32 years, with an average of 23.3 years. In addition, their total leadership experience varies between 10 and 26 years, but the average is 16.4 years. The fact that the target group has an average of 23.3 years of work experience and 15 years of leadership experience indicates that the target audience takes managerial responsibility at a young age. The fact that the leaders were responsible for many different functions provided rich data for the study. The age of the participant group of leaders, 9 men and 6 women, ranges between 40 and 54, with an average age of 46.7.

Although the functions they manage vary in a wide range from human resources to IT departments, when technical and non-technical units are grouped into two main categories, 7 of the 15 leaders interviewed are responsible for technical and

8 are responsible for non-technical functions. Besides the functions they are responsible for, considering the number of people the leaders are responsible for, the scope of control consists of an average of 141.2 people, with a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 726 persons.

Considering the educational backgrounds of the participant leaders, 6 of them have a bachelor's degree, 7 of them have a master's degree and 2 of them have a doctor of philosophy degree. One of the 7 leaders with a master's degree has 2 master's degrees. While most of the participant group's bachelor's degrees are in engineering fields, half of their master's degrees are in business administration. Doctorate degrees are in engineering fields. While most of the participants graduated from leading schools in Turkey such as Boğaziçi University, Istanbul Technical University, and Middle East Technical University, there are also four leaders who received some or all of their degrees abroad.

To provide a deeper grasp about the participants of the study, detailed biographical information of the participants within the leadership role context is presented in the following section.:

Participant A, N-1

She works as the assistant general manager in the group company responsible for the customer experience services. In addition to the company's deep experience in the telecom sector; it provides services in the global spectrum with its 15000 employees in the finance, insurance, retail, e-commerce, transportation and energy sectors. Participant A, who served as the assistant general manager in this institution, is responsible for producing customer experience-oriented solutions, collection, customer value development, customer information management and experience analytics. There are 11 senior managers, 65 managers and approximately 650 experts

in her team. Her team is spread all over the country, but it provides services on a global scale. She has to manage the effects of many different variables, as her team is widespread throughout the country and does operational work. Based on geographical and strategic priorities, her team works to produce outputs in line with group strategies. Due to the size of the team and the focus of the work, her most important priority is to exhibit a leadership with a human focus.

Participant B, N-2

She works as a director in the main function of the telecommunication business, which is the cornerstone of the group. She is responsible for the strategy and execution of infrastructure and access technologies. Her main job description is to analyze the existing infrastructure and access conditions, to determine the short and long-term infrastructure and access goals of the company, to make decisions to make relevant investments in line with these goals, to achieve business outputs in line with the goals, to develop new strategies and activities for providing quality services in communication technologies. In addition to these responsibilities, Participant B was deemed worthy of the most influential female executive award globally with her achievements. She has close relations with global companies operating in the field of telecommunication and takes part in the boards of associations and institutions in the field of telecommunication. She is known as a pioneer in the telecommunications and 5G ecosystem with her achievements. There are 7 senior managers and 75 experts in her team. She directs the developments in communication technologies and makes the decisions about the infrastructure investments of the group with the strength she gets from her team. Due to the roles and responsibilities of her and her team, being visionary is the most important competence for her and therefore she displays a visionary leadership.

Participant C, N-2

He is the director of supply chain function of the company. He is responsible for the strategy and execution of supply chain functions. He is a member of the committee that decides on the steps to be taken in the field of purchasing and logistics. His direct team consists of 29 people which includes 3 senior managers and 26 experts. His main responsibility includes digitalizing procurement processes align with the digitalization vision of the group. Since there are companies operating in many different fields within the group, the procurement processes are spread over a wide range. For this reason, it is the most important issue to have knowledge about the sectors in a wide spectrum and to keep a team that will adapt to this knowledge level. He exhibits a leadership example that encompasses diversity in order to ensure that experts, who can adapt to digital processes and who have the rapid action competency required by the age, work in harmony. As a result of this harmony, his team produces outputs suitable for the strategy.

Participant D, N-2

She works as the director responsible for the tax processes of the companies within the group. Since there are many regulatory processes and laws related to each field of activity as a group, the tax processes to which all businesses are subject are also in a wide range. Monitoring the intersecting and diverging fields of activity and strategic management of regulatory processes is the main responsibility of participant D. She reports directly to the CFO of the group; however, she works one-on-one with all the executives in the group and creates value in line with the strategies by taking quick action. There are 2 managers and 13 experts in her team. Due to the strategic position of the team's role and responsibility area, she plays a role in all decisions concerning the activities of the group. Since the company is a multinational and a

global group, the regulations it is subject to vary. In this direction, participant D maintains close relations with the relevant institutions and authorities operating globally. In addition, she is shown among the pioneers of the field with the model she developed on the management of multiple regulatory processes. She explains the model and its application by making speeches on the dissemination of this model at international platforms such as the United Nations (UN). Due to the roles and responsibilities of her and her team, being visionary is the most important competence for her and therefore she displays a visionary leadership.

Participant E, N & N-1

He has two different strategic roles. His first role is being the general manager of the financial lending company, and his second role is being responsible executive for the fintech companies affiliated with the group. For this reason, he can be defined as the general manager and the group financial coordinator in line with his roles and responsibilities. He reports on the coordination of the group's fintech companies to the group general manager. His direct team consists of 63 people. On the other hand, 330 people work in the fintech companies that he is responsible for the coordination of. From the perspective of both roles, his main job description is to analyze the current financial conditions, to determine the short and long-term financial goals of the company, to ensure that these goals are in coordination with the goals of the whole group, to ensure that the goals of other group companies are determined in line with this coordination, to achieve business outputs in line with the goals and to develop new strategies and activities for the growth of the business. In addition to these responsibilities, he has close relations with companies operating in the EMEA region and takes part in the boards of fintech-based associations and institutions. He is known as a pioneer in the fintech ecosystem with his visionary

activities. His pioneering activities in the field of digital finance are the biggest challenge in this period. Since he is responsible for the financial coordination of many companies besides the company he is the general manager of, having strong communication with the team is the most important area for him in order to create harmony within the teams of the group companies that report to him.

Participant F, N-2

He works as the director responsible for the treasury and risk management of the companies within the group. Align with his role, he mitigates money-related risks of companies within group such as liquidity, investments, FX and interest exposures, and payments. Participant F and his team examine risks posed by treasury activities and develop appropriate response plans ahead of time to reduce potential downsides by doing activities such as cash flow forecasts, structured debt repayments, hedging investments, liquidity planning, and setting up treasury policies. They are also responsible for report financial positions accurately. There are 6 senior managers and 51 experts in his team. Due to the strategic position of the team's role and responsibility area, he has to follow up all trends and last minute news and make inferences to protect benefit of the organization. Since the company is a multinational and a global group, there are many variables which affects cash flow. That is why, he has to maintain close relations with the relevant institutions and authorities. Due to the roles and responsibilities of his and his team, risk taking and ability to inference are the most important competencies for him and therefore he displays a visionary leadership.

Participant G, N & N-2

She is general manager of the digital television platform which is a company within the group. The coordination of all digital services within the group is reported

to the assistant general manager responsible for digital services and solutions. Participant G also reports to this assistant general manager within the group. She is responsible for all the end-to-end stages of the platform, such as setting up the platform, producing the content, and designing the customer experience. In the broad spectrum of responsibility brought by the title, there are many different tasks such as the creation of the technical infrastructure of the platform, the design of the marketing strategy, and the sales policy so on. Together with her team of 7 managers and 70 experts, they work to achieve the strategic goals of the platform. Since the digital television ecosystem includes many competitors globally, it is very important for Participant G to follow the platforms operating in this field and to create the vision and strategy that will put the company forward. Since it is important to work in harmony with many different parties in line within this field, she is in close relations with all companies inside and outside the sector. Due to the roles and responsibilities of her and her team, being visionary is the most important competence for her and therefore she displays a visionary leadership.

Participant H, N-2

He is director who are responsible for customer and channel solutions. Participant H reports to chief technology officer of the group. The main job of all companies in the group is to provide services to customers in different areas. There are many different channels where these services can meet the customer. These channels range from traditional stores to websites and applications. Customers expect the same quality of service no matter which channel they use. The development, design, function and service quality of these channels are the responsibility of participant H and his team. It is important that the channels used by group companies, which are in a competitive ecosystem, to deliver their services to their

customers, are ahead of those of other companies. For this reason, participant H and his team are in close relations with both internal and external institutions in order to stay up to date on technology trends and customer demands. Together with his team of 16 senior managers and 219 experts, they work to stay ahead of the ecosystem as technology and customer demands converge to create new service opportunities.

Participant I, N-2

He works as a director in the main function of the telecommunication business, which is the cornerstone of the group. He is responsible for the strategy and execution of access network technologies. His main job description is to analyze the existing network access conditions, to determine the short and long-term access network goals of the company, to develop new strategies and activities for providing quality services in communication technologies. In addition to these responsibilities, Participant I is advisory board member and deputy chair of the vendor based associations. He has close relations with global companies operating in the field of telecommunication. There are 14 senior managers and 125 experts in his team. He directs the developments in communication technologies and makes the decisions strategic execution of network access. Due to the roles and responsibilities of his and his team, being visionary is the most important competence for him and therefore he displays a visionary leadership.

Participant J, N-2

She works as a director in the main function of the telecommunication business, which is the cornerstone of the group. She is responsible for radio network investments, products and architecture including integration of new technologies. Her main job description is to analyze the existing conditions, to determine the short and long-term goals of the company, to make decisions to make relevant investments

in line with these goals, to achieve business outputs in line with the goals, to develop new strategies and activities for providing quality services in communication technologies. In addition to these responsibilities, Participant J is the representative of the company in the global telecommunications association. She is also among the pioneers in this field worldwide, as she heads the 5G research and development teams. She has close relations with global companies operating in the field of telecommunication. There are 17 senior managers and 125 experts in her team. Due to the roles and responsibilities of her and her team, being visionary is the most important competence for her and therefore she displays a visionary leadership.

Participant K, N-1

He works as the general manager in the company of the group, which is responsible for training software developers and producing code. It is a company established to meet the need for quality software and trained software developers that emerged with the digitalization trend brought by the age. Participant K, who works as the general manager in this institution, is responsible for the end-to-end management of the company. He directly reports to group's general manager. He has 3 senior managers, 2 managers and 163 developers and analysts. Although the team is spread throughout the country, it provides services on a global scale. Participant K works to produce outputs suitable for group strategies by managing the impact of many different variables, since his team is widespread throughout the country and does software work. Due to the size of his team and the focus of his work, participant K demonstrates leadership with a focus on people and technology. Participant K has designed the company's strategy in 3 steps. Its first priority is to meet the industry's need for software developers, its second priority is to develop its own products, and its third priority is to produce software. Participant K, who believes in the importance

of exhibiting an inclusive leadership perspective, works not only with those who work with software, but also with those who want to become software developers by providing training support.

Participant L, N & N-2

He is general manager of the cyber security company within the group. It is a company established to meet the cyber security needs that emerged with the digitalization trend brought by the age. Participant L, who is the general manager of this organization, is responsible for the end-to-end management of the company. He reports to assistant network general manager within the group. Together with his team of 9 senior managers and 146 experts, they work to provide cyber security services to other companies. In the broad spectrum of cybersecurity, there are many different specializations. That is why, it is very important for Participant L to follow the trends in the field to create the vision and strategy that will put the company forward. In addition to these responsibilities, he has close relations with companies operating in cybersecurity, especially in the EMEA region. He is known as a pioneer in the cybersecurity ecosystem with his visionary activities and experience. Since it is important to work in harmony with many different parties in line within this field, he is in close relations with all companies inside and outside the sector.

Participant M, N & N-1

He has two different strategic roles. His first role is being the general manager of the company which provides technology solutions to individual, corporate, national and international operator customers and his second role is being responsible director for international business operations and customer management of roaming and digital partnerships. He directly reports to group's general manager. From the perspective of both roles, his main job description is to produce solutions

focused on customer experience, to develop of customer value, to manage and improve customer experience, to achieve business outputs in line with the goals and to develop new strategies and activities for the growth of the business. In line to these responsibilities, he has close relations with companies operating globally, especially in the EMEA region. He is a pioneer in becoming Turkey's regional data communication base. With his team of 3 directors, 6 senior managers and 47 experts, they provide services that support the digitalization of the ecosystem in line with the group's digitalization strategy.

Participant N, N

He is a director who reports directly to the board of the group. He is responsible of audit processes of the group. The responsibilities of the audit team are setting the strategy and vision, analyzing the activities and the results of the company and consulting the regulation and execution of the processes. His and his team’s responsibility is to advise the management team and their functions to act in line with the control and reporting systems. His team consists of 5 senior managers and 38 experts. Participant N exhibits a mix of authoritarian and servant-leader competencies due to the requirements of his role.

Participant O, N-2

She is HR Director who are responsible for strategy setting and excellence. In addition to being responsible for HR processes of all companies in the group, she also consults on the HR processes of the overseas group companies. Her direct team consists of 3 senior managers and 22 experts. Her main responsibilities include developing strategy for people management, ensuring the excellent delivery of all HR processes, executing reformative projects for bettering HR processes, and establishing and managing architecture with employee data.

3.3 Data collection

Semi-structured interview was selected as the method in the data collection since it is the most appropriate method that enables the participant to remember all their conscious and unconscious learnings about the relevant subject and to reveal their feelings and thoughts in line with these learnings (Fuller et al., 2007). The semi-structured interview method was used to have a better grasp of the deeper and richer perspectives and experiences of the participants regarding their learning path.

The data collection process started with the development of the interview form for data collection. The form was developed by the researcher with the guidance of the advisor and the committee members of the study.

The form consists of two parts: first part includes the demographic information, (APPENDIX A). The second part of the interview form consists of 8 semi-structured interview questions inquiring learning experiences of the participants in their learning journey.

In the interview (APPENDIX B) part, each question was asked for a specific purpose. I had the participants recount their journey from expertise to leadership in the first question, and I had them recall the overall picture. In the second question, the aim was to remember the learning journey that continued parallel to this leadership journey. In order to connect these two processes and to position themselves as the main subject of the two processes, I asked the participants in the third question which competency was at the forefront of their progress in both processes and had them analyze themselves. With the fourth, fifth and sixth questions, I aimed to learn the details and relationship between the learning journey and the journey of becoming a gold collar leader. In the seventh question, I aimed for them to review the situations they faced at work by asking the resources they used to

stay up to date in their position and job, and to review what resources they used and what strategies they used while struggling with these situations. The last question is positioned to learn their advices for the people who want to come to this position. The purpose of asking these recommendations is to make participants look at their own journey from instructor/coach perspective so that they can restate again what the distinctive competence and learning that brought them to this leadership level. By doing so, as a researcher I had a chance to compare these recommendations with the answers to the previous questions.

Pilot Study

After the participant pool was clarified, demographic form (APPENDIX A), interview form (APPENDIX B) and participant consent forms (APPENDIX C) were prepared, I applied to Boğaziçi University Social and Human Sciences Master's and Doctoral Theses Ethics Review Commission (SOBETİK) to get the necessary ethical approvals (APPENDIX D) before the pilot study. With obtaining the necessary approvals, the pilot study was conducted. The purpose of this pilot study is to test the interview questions, to see whether the statements are understandable, to clarify unclear statements, to get insight about research design and to see whether the desired data can be reached through these questions.

The pilot study was conducted with 2 gold collar leaders who have similar demographic features to the participant group of the study. This pilot study aimed to test understandability and clarity of the interview questions for the participants. Participants for the pilot study were selected according to the purposeful and convenient sampling method. Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad (2012) explained convenience sampling as a way of sampling, such as being available at an easily accessible time, compatible with the purpose of the study, if the members of the

target audience meet the researcher's predetermined criteria. 2 gold collar leaders who met the criteria for the pilot study were reached via e-mail.

In order to determine the appropriate interview dates, they were informed about the scope of the study, and the consent form and research questions were shared with them by e-mail, including their assistants. In addition, in this e-mail, they were asked whether they wanted to conduct the interview face-to-face or online. After the consent form was filled in the planned interviews, it was proceeded with the demographic form and interview protocol. Each interview session took nearly 40-45 minutes.

Demographic details of the participants are presented in the table below:

Table 5. Participants of the Pilot Study

Coded Name	Management Level	Gender	Age	Total Years of Experience	Total Years of Leadership Experience	Education Level (Last Graduated)	Function	Title	Scope of Control (person)
Ayşe	N-2	Female	35	13	10	Doctor of Philosophy	HR	Director	30
Ali	N-2	Male	49	22	22	Master's Degree	HR	Director	39

Ayşe is HR Director who is responsible for learning and development of the group and the ecosystem which is nearly 80.000 people. In addition to being responsible for reskill and upskill trainings in line with strategies, she and her team also provide consultancies regarding L&D to other companies. Her direct team consists of 3 senior managers and 27 experts. Her main responsibilities include developing a strategy for people development, ensuring the excellent delivery of all L&D processes, and executing programs for reskilling and upskilling the workforce. She has close relations with global universities and corporate academies. She takes part in the boards of associations and institutions in the field of education. Due to the roles

and responsibilities of her team, being visionary is the most important competence for her and therefore she displays visionary leadership.

The second pilot study was done with Ali. He is the HR Director who is responsible for campus services and occupational health and safety. In addition to being responsible for the smooth disruption of processes in line with strategies, he and his team also provide consultancies regarding occupational health and safety to other companies, institutions, and universities. His direct team consists of 3 senior managers, 1 manager and 35 experts. His main responsibilities include ensuring the excellent delivery of all logistics and administrative processes and providing end-to-end health-related employee experience. He has close relations with other companies and he provides benchmarking examples. He takes part in the boards of associations and institutions in the field of occupational health and safety.

After the pilot interviews, as a researcher, I had several takeaways for the continuation of the data collection process. The first was how difficult it was to get into the Gold Collar leaders' schedules. The dates offered by the assistants after the initial request were usually for 1-2 weeks out. However, as the proposed dates approached, these dates were also revised. For this reason, I tried to find a solution by contacting all potential Gold Collar leaders for the data collection phase and planning with all the appropriate ones until I reached the targeted number.Another learning I gained after the pilot study was that the participants were much tend to engage in professional technical issues that were beyond the scope of the study. I solved this issue by adding probing questions that would attract the participant in the interview protocol to the focus of the problem.

In line with the minor adjustments made after the pilot study and the learnings gained, participant pool was generated for the data collection phase of the study, and potential participants were contacted.

3.4 Data collection procedure

After the interview invitations were sent for the gold collar leaders' agenda and went through all the cancellation and delay processes, I conducted the interviews over a two-month period. In the e-mails sent for volunteering, I asked the participants whether they wanted to conduct the interviews face-to-face or online, and I adjusted the meeting invitations in line with their answers. However, as the group's corporate culture adopted the business model where anyone who wants to work from wherever they want, the meeting type as well as the date and time constantly changed. Face-to-face meetings were held in the executives' rooms, while online meetings were held via the organization's online meeting platform.

When we came together for the interview, I first introduced myself to the participants and went over the purpose of the study. I answered their questions about the study. Afterward, I asked them to sign the consent form by stating their rights as a participant. Simultaneously, I started the recording by getting their approval to record the audio. One participant stated that he did not feel comfortable about the audio recording. One participant also gave instructions in some places during the interview that we should turn off the audio recording here. The other 13 participants gave consent for the audio recording.

I then conducted the interview by first asking for the answers to the demographic questions and then asking the interview questions. I completed the interview protocol without asking the questions that the participant answered in the

flow of the interview even before I asked the question. At the end of the interviews, I asked the participants if they would like to see the transcript of the audio recording, but they stated that they could not go over the transcripts due to their busy schedules. However, they stated that I could reach them at any time if I had any further questions and that they would definitely like to read the results of the study after it was completed.

The interview protocol allowed participants to express their experience of the phenomenon and allowed the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the perspectives of the participants. All interviews, online or face-to-face, took approximately 40-45 minutes.

3.5 Data analysis

Before the data analysis process started, the data collected from the participants was transcribed. Due to the essence of the qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to have knowledge of the data (Chase, 2005). Because in qualitative research, the relevant interpretations, making sense of the data, and establishing a relationship with the literature in the analysis of data are highly dependent on the competence and positioning of the researcher (de Casterlé et al., 2012). From this point of view, I read all the transcripts and listened to the audio recordings many times to become familiar with the data. After getting familiar with the data, I performed the data analysis in two major phases. In the first phase of the analysis, I followed Smith et al.'s (2009) six-step analysis method. In the first step, the answers to all questions were read to create a comprehensive question-based understanding. Afterward, descriptive notes were written for each answer and significant quotes were noted. In the third stage, based on descriptive notes, the answers were coded

and main themes were created. In the fourth and fifth stages, the connections between the themes were established and the main themes were created. In the last stage, the patterns formed around the main themes were emerged.

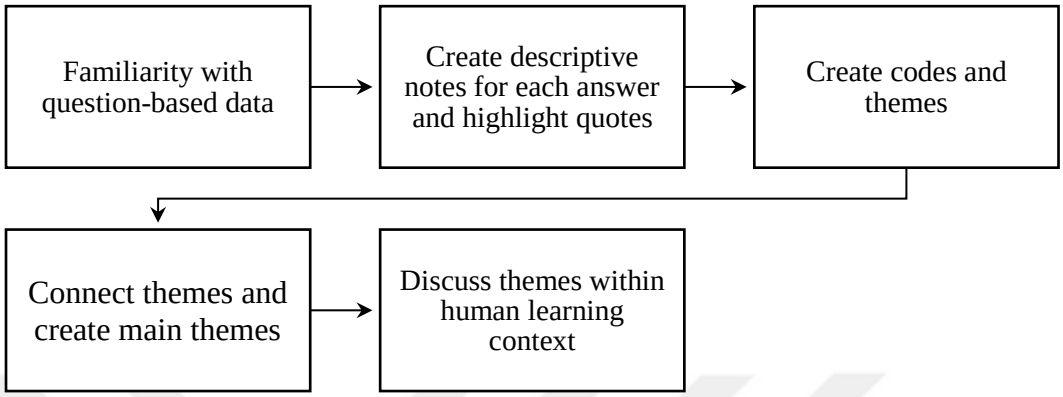

Figure 6. Data analysis process

At this point, a structural and conceptual description of the phenomenon can be made in line with the pattern and main themes (Creswell, 2013), and research questions can be answered based on this description. Findings of these analyses are explained in detail in the next chapter.

3.6 Research permission and ethical consideration

In order to avoid any risks or problems, the participants are informed and protected through the thesis process. The ethical treatment of the participants' data was considered throughout the design and continuum of the study. To ensure that, after the demographic form (APPENDIX A), interview questions (APPENDIX B), and participant consent forms (APPENDIX C) were prepared, necessary applications were made to Boğaziçi University Social and Human Sciences Master's and Doctoral Theses Ethics Review Commission (SOBETİK). With the approval after the application (APPENDIX D), the data collection process started with the pilot study.

The names of all institutions and persons mentioned during both the pilot study and the study were coded and used. In addition, the possibility of not reading the consent form was taken into account and all the rights of the participants were verbally communicated to the participant at the beginning of the interview sessions. During all the phases of the study, the participants were informed about their options to continue or withdraw from the study. All participation was strictly on a voluntary basis. After the verbal and written consent of the participant, the interview sessions continued.

Besides, in order to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, member check which is one of the five ways suggested by Creswell (2013) but was not deemed necessary by the participants due to their heavy agendas.

While all the steps were being implemented, first the advisor and then the thesis monitoring committee were informed and the work was progressed by obtaining their approval. In the analysis process, support was received from another doctorate candidate from the same field in order to control the cross-checking of the codes and themes. By using the peer review method which is one of the five ways suggested by Creswell (2013) credibility and trustworthiness of the study enhanced.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the findings from data analysis are presented and discussed within the scope of research questions and the related literature. The data is presented under the main focus of gold collar leaders' learning journeys. The common features of the participant gold collar leaders are described to understand gold collar leaders' learning journey. The data will be presented under main themes that will capture the learning objectives, learning strategies, learning resources, and learning methods of gold collar leaders. Finally, the overall findings will be discussed as a whole with a focus on human learning.

4.1 Common features of participants

Before starting the questions in the interview sessions, demographic information such as the participants' education level, age, and working life experience was collected verbally from the participant during the interview. General demographic information about the participants was reported in the participants' section in the Methodology Chapter. In this section common features that are shared by all participating gold collar leaders are presented in order to better understand the participant group of the study and thus to make better sense of the data presented in the study.

- Working in companies affiliated with the same group

Since all gold collar leaders interviewed within the scope of the study worked in companies affiliated with the same group, this is the first common feature among the participants. Each participant plays a different role and responsibility within the

same corporate culture in similar companies that are part of a large group. During the analysis of the collected data, knowing that the participants came from the same corporate culture helped to make sense of the data. For example, besides diversity of the functions participants are responsible for, considering the number of people the leaders are responsible for, the scope of control consists of an average of 141.2 people. Scope of control data gives clues on one's leadership features such as the complexity of the processes that a person needs to manage, the strategy of monitoring and auditing processes, and the communication method (Schumacher, 2021).

All of these participants, regardless of their management seniority, take an active role in the management of the companies within the group by having positions in the executive and consultation teams that have the authority to decide on many issues due to their roles and responsibilities. As Ashkenas et al. (2015) stated, depending on the size of the institution, leaders at management level N-1 and level N-2 become closer to the top management as the size of the institution increases. Leaders at the management level N-1 and N-2 levels in the participant group of this study are considered close to the top management due to their high number of scope of control, their decision-making positions and their strategy creating positions.

- Having strong educational background

In terms of educational backgrounds, it can be said that most of the participants followed similar academic paths to increase their expertise in their fields. Talking about the reasons why their educational background is so strong, some participants stated that the common reason is that they realize that when they want to move forward in their work, the way to do this is to support this process with an academic career. Some people realized this awareness by observing the life journey

of their own parents, some realized it by observing the life journey of their own managers, and others realized it by observing the life journey of their peers. This state of awareness is one of the common characteristics of the participants that they attach importance to academic background.

While talking about educational backgrounds, one of the issues that the participants emphasized as contributing to their development was the training offered to leaders by institutions. The corporate academy of the group the participants belong to offers many formal and informal training opportunities for leaders. These trainings include many end-to-end development solutions such as executive education programs offered by universities, 1-1 coaching programs with professional coaches, and certified training programs offered through global platforms. Leaders who participate in any of these solutions gain networking opportunities as well as development opportunities. In addition, execution is also contributed by focusing on the real-life problems of the institution in the applications and case studies included in the training programs. For these reasons, many participants stated during the interview that these development opportunities offered by the corporate academy are an important milestone for their educational background.

> When I first became a leader, there was a teacher we trained with. His education was effective as follows. There was a follow-up program, but it wasn't just for the sake of it. How was it? First, you would take a survey to see yourself, your own motivation style, your own leadership style, and your own development areas. Then you went and did the same survey to your team. You were putting your team's individual motivation types and leadership styles in tables like this. Then you went to the instructor and said, "This is my team." He said, "This is your material." For example, he was looking at it and saying, these are dead soil, these are dead trees. He was listing people against these definitions. All the leaders of that period in closed rooms. Then what will you do about them? What will you do about the dead tree? What are you going to do about the glowing boy? he would ask there. And you would work up front and say, I'll do this about this, I'll do that about that. Let's see, the surveys were repeated 3 months later. "Where did you bring these?" he asked. It was a very serious learning.

> Since I am a curious person, I was very curious about what would happen. You see yourself, you see them, you see the team and you do something to improve it. Because you will appear in front of the teacher, if I went unprepared, they would crush me. He also reported to the general manager. I am also a first level manager. After that, we were explaining it together with all the leaders in that classroom environment. I was telling. My peer was hearing me, listening, saying that he had done this, that he had taken a new action. It also gave us the chance to learn together. It was very impressive for me. It was one of the most effective topics. (Participant A, N-1, Appendix E, 1)

In addition to these development opportunities, many participants also stated that they used many self-directed learning channels such as listening to podcasts, watching videos, following sites that focus on their areas of expertise, receiving feedback, following global reports, and reverse mentoring.

> I try very hard to follow the world. There are a lot of e-mail groups, there are podcasts I follow, there are blogs I read, there are interviews, there are these, there are those. In other words, I try to follow how these things happen in the world, what are the global problems of that business I am in, where is the trend in the global, what is the market for that business, where is the competition in that market, etc. It's not just like that I'm a monthly HBR member and I read it every month or something. Frankly, I think that learning is not that linear anymore. So, as I said, on social media, through podcasts and blogs, sometimes I can grab the end of the rope and go from there to somewhere, from there to the source. The place I catch can be a conversation on YouTube, where someone is talking about a book, for example. I go back and read an article about that book. If I am very interested in it, I buy that book and I read the book, etc. I put myself on such a journey. (Participant G, N & N-2, Appendix E, 2)

Another participant described the learning network she created by positioning different learning sources as follows:

> I try to keep my network alive. I think there are very serious and practical resources in consulting firms. I try to keep my network alive there. Thirdly, we are members of Gartner, HBR and McKinsey. Those and the team. How do I learn from the team? I assign tasks to the team and try to enrich our own learning by teaching us what they have learned. I try to do all of this as a blend. (Participant O, N-2, Appendix E, 3)

- Having similar annual and daily work flows

Even though it was not a direct question while collecting demographic information, the participants shared both the processes they were involved in at regular intervals due to their general roles and responsibilities and the details of their daily workflows during the interview process while describing their professional lives. Since it can be observed that there are similarities in both annual work flows and daily work flows, this similarity can also be mentioned. Participants have certain flows that they are responsible for during the year, because of their management level. The most important of these is to create a vision by following the trends and developments in the business field for which they are responsible, to establish strategies that will implement this vision, and to prepare execution plans that will implement these strategies. While doing all these, they need to ensure that these visions, strategies and plans are compatible with the main umbrella of the group and other companies affiliated with the group. They are also responsible for making the necessary plans for intra-group and inter-company coordination and collaboration. After all these plans are prepared, they are responsible for closely following global and local economic, political and sectoral developments and determining the decisions and direction that will keep the plans updated accordingly.

The participants' daily workflows consist of consecutive meetings with their teams, managers, peers, customers and other teams in order to keep all stakeholders on track towards the targeted vision and strategy. Actions such as making the necessary delegations according to the outputs of these meetings, solving problems at the managerial level, and determining precautionary steps against possible risks intensify the daily workflows of the leaders. In addition to all these, many of the participating leaders stated that they tried to include networking with their peers,

socializing with their teams, listening to podcasts, reading reports and mentoring in their daily routine. When all these come together, some leaders said that their daily working hours exceed normal working hours, but they also stated that they think this is normal for leaders in these levels if they want to do their job properly.

> I like to keep a close eye on my work. After all, there are many departments that report to me, and there are tasks that we assign to people who report to me. I follow them closely and call my friends at 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening if something comes to mind. There was a theme of what happened and what went away. It is necessary to make the team feel this part a little bit. With my attitude you can make them take this job seriously. It has to be felt. As I said, I think that contributes to sustainability. Leadership that is both balanced and situational. (Participant L, N & N-2, Appendix E, 4)

Another participant leader explained the issues that have been added to their workflow as a result of recent events such as the pandemic:

> In this context that both the pandemic and economic conditions have changed dramatically in recent years. Loyalties to the workforce and the workplace have also become very different. To read them, for example, it is necessary to understand people. Being in a team is also important. Let me give you an example. We talked about a topic by connecting to what is happening in the cities every month during this pandemic. Because people were in a very bad situation psychologically. Being locked in their homes, fear of death, fear of losing their loved ones, and some of them did. During this process, we spent a month discussing hope. We spent another month discussing the meaning of life, and so on. We were trying to keep people in a certain way. Leaders should be able to do such things spontaneously. They should always be in the people.. (Participant A, N-1, Appendix E, 5)

Knowing the common characteristics of participant gold collar leaders, such as working in organizations with similar organizational cultures, having strong and diverse educational backgrounds, and having similar yearly and daily workflows, is valuable for making sense of the other findings of this study as it examines the learning journeys of gold collar leaders.

4.2 Becoming a leader

During the interviews, the participants explained in detail their journey from specialization to leadership, from leadership to gold collar leadership. When we look at these journeys from a general perspective, it can be seen that although the journey of becoming a gold collar leader includes differences in terms of duration and experience for each, in the big picture each journey is very similar. The majority of participants (13 participants) stated that the cornerstone of this journey from specialist to gold collar leader is learning.

> If a person wants to advance in leadership, he or she must continue to learn about people. What are the characteristics of a person? What does he need? What is this human being like? How does he take an action? How do you get motivated? You definitely need to learn about people. Since we leaders do business with people, we need to be around people more. Of course, the second thing is that there has to be a growth mindset, a learning mindset. I have been a leader for 25 years. If I didn't have an academic foundation and if I didn't continue to improve myself, I don't know how I could continue on my leadership journey. Because the easiest part is to maintain it, especially when a person has somehow become a leader. Because there is a team underneath. But the most important thing to move forward and become a Gold Collar leader is to be able to say I am not complete, I have a long way to go. It is valuable to be in that mindset, to keep learning, to keep meeting people, to keep learning about people, to keep building an academic foundation. Because life changes. Conditions change. It is necessary to look at what I am learning from experiences, what I am doing, and to continue this learning journey.. (Participant A, N-1, Appendix E, 6)

For this reason, the gold collar leaders' journeys were delineated with their depictions of how they learned to act and think as leaders. The leaders' journey begins by being shaped by whether or not they take advantage of the opportunities that arise under the influence of many external factors that may or may not be under their control, while they are still in the expert role.

> I was working in a global technology company that produced hardware. I heard that there was a career opportunity at the technology company I am currently working at. This thing called networking is important in business life, it is very important. Because

> it helps you to hear about such opportunities. Everyone communicates with each other. These individual relationships can also benefit business relationships in institutions. That's exactly what happened to me. There was a management position here. I entered the process. I was elected as manager. Actually, I was happy with my previous organization and the work I did. But I thought about what the pros and cons are. I examined the pros of the job there. I examined the pros of this opportunity. This place seemed more attractive. Being a manager, being able to manage a team, and the fact that this is a big company were the advantages of this opportunity. That's when the recruitment processes came into play and I passed them. I started here. I did that job here for 3 years. When my current position as a manager became vacant, I took it as an opportunity and got involved in human resources processes again. After interviews, assessments, cross-assessments, etc., I reached the position I am currently in during my leadership journey. So, I saw the opportunities, took the necessary actions and now I am here. (Participant C, N-2, Appendix E, 7)

There are situations where they face many complex tasks on the way to shaping their roles and responsibilities. Each problem they solve becomes a new learning experience for them. This learning journey takes place in the form of understanding the crisis encountered, evaluating the solutions, reaching a decision by examining the resources and implementing the decision. The real learning comes from following this path and understanding whether the resulting solution is effective or not. This learning, which can be called incidental learning in a way, was described by van Noy et al. (2016) says, it occurs as an outcome of a process or arising from a need. The interviewed participant leader goes through a process in the workplace where his main purpose is not to learn, but he is involved in it as per his role and responsibility. At the end of the process, the results obtained, the resources used during the process and the strategies applied shape the learning. The leader's motivation and interest in learning increases as the outcomes obtained as a result of learning move the leader forward in his leadership journey, support him in producing quality outputs and overcoming the difficulties he faces.

> Two weeks before I started my current position, there was a crisis in one of the country's leading institutions. This crisis and its effects

> lasted for 2 days. My manager at the time called me into work early. Since it was one of the leading institutions in the country, the problem affected all the institutions in the country. It was a time to get to know the institution I was about to lead, to learn through realistic experience what was expected of this position, and to feel the stress to the core of my being. In two days, I quickly experienced, observed and learned the issues that a leader learns in his first months, such as whether the methods we tried to solve the crisis worked or not, the team's competence in implementing these solutions, the suitability or lack thereof of the team's organizational structure. After all, when a person assumes a leadership position, he or she must first understand these things. He has to see what the problem is. He has to understand what problems he has to solve first. For example, going through that two-day crisis and experiencing that stress was an opportunity for me. It showed me directly what was wrong with the organization. Because we could not solve this crisis with the solutions we were implementing and the competencies we had. No leading institution in the country could solve it. This crisis was one of the crises that occur every 5 years in our country, and I dealt with it a week before I started working. When I dealt with it, my priority was clear from the moment I started working. Since we couldn't solve such a crisis, I understood this problem as my priority and looked at why we couldn't solve it, whether there was a problem with the team, a problem with the technology, etc., and I made improvements. It was not an easy experience. It was very instructive because in our field you can empathize, but to experience it is a completely different thing. Experiencing that moment when I first came to the company helped me a lot in understanding the seriousness of the job. (Participant L, N & N-2, Appendix E, 8)

Another participant shared what he learned from a challenging experience and how he applied the lessons to his life afterward:

> We had won a big tender, but the other party could not complete the tender. If this process was not completed, the business would come to a dead end and cause great losses. The leader of our bid team made a very effective offer to the other party. This final work, which accelerated the decision and ensured the signing of the contract, was also a very important lesson for me. I always used it afterwards. So, as I always said, closing the deal is a different thing, it is not about knowing the job well. So we have very valuable lawyers. In other words, explaining a task to the regulator, which is not the client side, and being able to see what that task looks like from their perspective, that was a very different learning experience. I see that most of the things that were not in my core competencies or that I acquired later, I actually acquired through those cases. I myself have always researched the areas I am interested in online, attended academies or training, or the institution has given me some opportunities and I have taken advantage of them, but the people I have worked with have

> contributed to the development of my non-strength competencies. Through observation and experience. By experiencing this crisis, by experiencing this problem. For example, I think of cases where my sales manager or marketing manager friends who worked with me on the marketing team came up with a different perspective on a problem, suggestions or methods that I later learned and transferred to our new teams, even after those friends left. I think of it more as a give and take. It is very valuable to be able to take that initiative, that creativity, that learning and share it with new friends. (Participant M, N & N-1, Appendix E, 9)

As the expectations of the business world and the institution transform and their roles and responsibilities change, the leader's knowledge begins to expand, his leadership style begins to reshape, his skills begin to increase and diversify (Ng et al., 2009; Nicolaides & McCallum, 2013). However, since this increase in knowledge and skills is not a process that occurs automatically, leaders need to understand what is expected of them, be aware of their own competencies, and realize what they need to do to achieve what is expected of them. At this point, the leader needs to take into account many factors that shape both the leadership journey and the simultaneous learning journey. These factors are the main players in the leader's ability to best implement his leadership role and create his leadership style. When the leadership and learning journeys of the interviewed participant leaders were examined, it was seen that these main factors were similar, but they were described by the participants as changing throughout the leadership journey. For this reason, the data collected from the participants was discussed in two main themes to examine the leader's learning journey: Becoming a Leader and Becoming a Gold Collar Leader. The findings regarding the first theme, Becoming a Leader, are shown in Table 6 below, with 5 dimensions and 50 codes.

Table 6. Dimensions and Codes for Becoming a Leader Theme

Theme	Becoming a Leader				
Dimentions	Leadership Mindset & Style	Responsibilities	Skills	Way of Learning	Knowledge
Codes	1.Fostering the organizational culture	1.Making decisions	1.Communication	1.Adapting self to stay up to date	1.Industry knowledge (Risk and Prevention, Problems & Solutions)
	2.Representing the organization	2.Solving problems	2.Emotional intelligence	2.Understanding the significance of leadership values and principles	2.Leadership knowledge
	3.Building self-knowledge/ self-awareness	3.Creating effective communication with shareholder ecosystem	3.Analytical & critical thinking	3.Modifying leadership styles, behaviors, and attitudes	3.Organizational structure & Culture
	4.Discovering own values and principles	4.Building teams	4.Dealing with uncertainty	4.Developing new knowledge and skills for increasing role scope	4.Team management information
	5.Growth mindset	5.Planning & coordinating	5.Engaging people	5.Early work experiences	5.Information on access to the required resource, person or information
	6.Curiosity	6.Delegation		6.Challenging assignments	
	7.Passion	7.Evaluating the employee performance and results		7.Project groups / assignments with limited time	
	8.Adaptability	8.Monitoring		8.Bosses as mentors/role models/coaches	
	9.Success orientation	9.Managing risks		9.Shareholder network (Clients, Consultants, Experts, Colleagues, Direct Reports)	
	10.Support and tolerance for trials and mistakes	10.Managing crisis		10.Sources to read, watch and listen (Books, journals, blogs, articles, documentaries, videos, podcasts)	
				11.Social media	
				12.Virtual learning platforms	

				13.Global conferences	
				14.Failures, mistakes, errors, trials, practices	
				15.Designing and using company processes	
				16.Reviewing data and experiences in other cases	
				17.Collaborating & Observing	
				18.Surviving the crisis and tough responsibilities	
				19.Assessing and evaluating self	
				20.Being curious & Asking questions	

This theme, with its 5 main dimensions, and the codes will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Becoming a leader – Leadership mindset & style

In this theme, which can be defined as the first phase of the journey from management to leadership, the first dimension is seen in the data collected from the participants as the leader's mindset and leadership style begin to take shape. The person who is promoted to a managerial position first begins to build his own self-awareness and self-knowledge. The main reason for turning to this in the first place is that the assessment processes applied to candidates during the promotion process are considered to be the basis of the leader's self-awareness, as they reveal the analysis about themselves. With this self-awareness, the leader begins to improve himself by increasing his self-knowledge, focusing on his aspects that are open to improvement. It has been emphasized that the leader's understanding of himself, realizing his strengths, and focusing on areas open to development are very important

as they form the basis that governs the leader's decisions, communication and interaction.

The leader, who shapes his/her own leadership journey and, in parallel, his/her own learning journey with his/her self-awareness, clarifies his/her own values and principles as a result of his/her experiences. The leader shares these values and principles with his/her teammates through his/her behaviors, decisions and communication. Thus, these values and principles guide the team in doing business, like signs that keep them on the road. Acting in line with these values and principles not only gathers the team around a common goal, but also ensures consistency and integrity on the way to this goal. It keeps the team on track.

The leadership journey is a process of continuous learning and development, the cornerstones of which are passion and curiosity for the job. Participant leaders state that they encounter many new projects, crises, and opportunities during their leadership journey, and that they discover new ideas and find innovative solutions while experiencing all these processes. Each experience or each new responsibility caused the leader to constantly seek knowledge and perspective. This sense of curiosity has been the primary motivator that carries the leader step by step to the top in his/her leadership journey. The leader approaches every experience with curiosity and continues to grow and develop with every knowledge he/she learns from different perspectives. This curiosity for continuous improvement is accepted as the most important indicator of the leader's passion for his/her job and leadership. As participant leaders noted, passion is considered an indicator of a leader's energy and determination. The fact that a passionate leader increases the motivation of the team is repeatedly emphasized in the answers given to different questions.

After participant leaders receive the title of manager, they also assume the role of representing the organization in internal and external environments. They emphasized that this representation reflects both the corporate values, the organization's culture and the person's leadership style. They stated that since this representation has the mission of being a reliable spokesperson in a sense, they invested in effective communication and relationship building competencies in order to strengthen the representation. They stated that they observed that employees in organizations where values and corporate culture are strongly represented do their jobs more happily, tend to cooperate and have an increased tendency to innovation.

In leadership journeys based on innovation and development, leaders focus on success and encourage the team to achieve these goals while working towards their goals. Many of the participant leaders stated that the most important issue in this process was learning from trials and errors, both for themselves and their teams. They emphasized that it was actually difficult to allow and support their teams to take risks during this trial and error process, but they saw how creativity improved when they did. As they see the benefits of getting used to these difficult flexibilities, they emphasize that change is inevitable and that they understand the importance of quickly adapting to changing conditions.

To summarize the data obtained when looking at this theme and dimension in general terms, it can be said that adopting a developing mindset, giving importance to learning from experience, being flexible, adapting and applying an effective leadership approach takes the leader one step further in his leadership journey and increases the success of the organization.

Becoming a leader – Responsibilities

Responsibilities were mentioned by our participant leaders as an important learning tool in an individual's leadership journey, and they expressed their awareness that the learning journey is necessary to further their leadership levels. The main topics that our participant leaders emphasized when asked about their roles and responsibilities were making decisions, solving problems, creating effective communication with shareholder ecosystem, building teams, planning, coordinating, delegation, evaluating the employee performance and results, monitoring, managing risks and crisis. Participant leaders stated that these responsibilities constitute their daily lives and routines, and therefore they have to improve themselves in the knowledge and competencies required by these responsibilities.

Decision-making is one of the primary responsibilities mentioned by participant leaders. As Participant N emphasizes, the basis of leadership requires timely, precise and correct decision-making. The issues on which leaders are expected to make decisions actually reach them through a filter. For this reason, they are expected to make decisions on complex, difficult and vital issues rather than easy and solvable issues. When making these decisions, they are expected to consider the organization's goals, values and corporate culture, analyze existing data, consult with their stakeholders and make these decisions by foreseeing their long-term effects on the institution. Being able to make decisions by combining so many parameters is considered as a skill (Participant M). For this reason, leaders are constantly trying to acquire new knowledge and practice with experiences in order to improve these skills. Practices such as analyzing the stages of this decision retrospectively after each decision-making experience or after witnessing a correct decision, and reflecting on what it would have been like if the decision had been made in a

different direction are the methods of developing this skill suggested by the participating leaders.

Problem solving, as a process that proceeds hand-in-hand with the decision-making process, was frequently included in the narratives of the participants. In addition, it was also observed in their statements that there were cases in which they were only positioned as problem solvers rather than solving problems in matters in which they were in a decision-making position. Since the problems raised with the leaders are complex issues, the team generally states the root cause of the problem and conveys the problem to the leader. However, it was also emphasized that in cases where this stated root cause is accepted as it is, this may be misleading and caution should be taken (Participant K). Based on this, it is very important for the leader to react effectively when faced with a problem and to understand the problem thoroughly without preconceptions. The experiences of the majority of the participant leaders in their narratives show that not every decision is always right and not every problem can always be solved. In such cases, leaders can continuously improve their problem-solving competencies by reflecting on these experiences or evaluating different perspectives.

Complex processes such as decision making and problem solving, which are affected by many variables such as economic conditions, corporate culture, and simultaneous crises, are the main responsibilities of leadership as they include core areas such as the leader's knowledge, skills, behaviors and communication. The leader, who is responsible for making a decision or solving a problem, also has to direct the units and people affected by this decision or problem in the direction of this decision or solution and manage the possible acceptance or objections that may arise from them. Participant leaders said that as they progressed in their leadership

journey, they gained a lot of experience in problem solving and thanks to these experiences, they became advanced in uniting everyone involved in the problem process around the solution and managing stakeholder reactions. As Participant M emphasizes, understanding the processes and flows related to your own business or another business is the most critical learning source that provides the necessary knowledge and skills to find solutions to any problem.

The leader's responsibility does not end with just producing the solution. While implementing this solution, preventing or eliminating problems that direct reports or team members may encounter is also among the responsibilities of the leader. However, as the leader gains experience in solving problems and progresses in his/her leadership journey, the solutions he/she produces become so advanced that they do not encounter any obstacles, and even if a problem is discovered, it becomes much easier for the leader to prevent or solve it.

Complex processes such as making decisions or solving problems are processes in which the leader takes action alone. However, the narratives of the participant leaders also show that this is actually the opposite. Leaders reach the right decision or the right solution through effective communication they manage with all stakeholders related to the process. For this reason, many of the participant leaders emphasized the importance of effective communication with internal and external stakeholders for the leader's success. They stated that they understood from experience that the most important factor in the sustainability of this communication is that it is transparent, reliable and includes mutual understanding. Although they laugh at some of the communication accidents they made at the beginning of their leadership journey, they started to give importance to understanding the needs of

their stakeholders and receive development support such as mentoring and coaching in order to improve their skills in this field.

Leadership, by its very meaning, requires the existence of a group of people who are led. 12 of our participant leaders were appointed as managers to an existing team when they were first promoted. The other 3 established their own teams after being promoted. Leaders who were appointed as managers to a ready-made team also reshaped their teams in line with their own leadership values and mindset during their leadership journey. Many of these leaders emphasized that a leader's success depends on their ability to build an effective team, motivate this team, support their strengths and guide them to improve their weaknesses. There can be very different people in a team. However, as Participant M and K point out, keeping this diverse manpower together is both a skill and a strategy for the leader. Because the leader bases his/her strategy on this, knows who can use which strengths and how, and delegates work in line with this strategy. Thus, leader makes plans to use resources effectively to achieve the goal. Participant leaders stated in their narratives that the two most basic elements of their planning to implement their strategies were delegation and outcome evaluation. Leaders stated that after delegating the work in a way that supports the strengths of the people in their team and improves their weaknesses, they evaluate the work outputs on a person-by-person basis by following the systematics of this delegation, and in the overall, they evaluate the organization by monitoring to what extent it has achieved its targeted success. As a result of these evaluations, leaders provide regular feedback to team members about their individual and team performance, support the development of areas that need improvement, and take action on issues that need changes.

Other responsibilities of leaders that are frequently emphasized in their narratives is managing risks and crises. Due to the constantly and rapidly changing dynamics of the business world and the uncertain parameters of the global economy, most organizations, and therefore leaders, work in a world where they take many risks and face many crises. Risks taken or unmanaged crises can bring the end of an institution, as well as end a leader's leadership journey or cause great damage to this journey. Nearly half of the participant leaders emphasized that managing crises and managing risks is the real test of leadership. According to most of them, although these crises are generally caused by external parameters such as politics or economy, they stated that they believe that a leader should be able to foresee all these risks and prevent crises by being aware of the conjuncture. In cases where the measures taken in advance are not sufficient, the leader is responsible for ensuring that the institution overcomes the crisis with minimum damage. Participating leaders emphasized that they learned the most during times of crisis or risk management.

As Marsick and Watkins (2005) emphasized, when individuals are triggered by internal or external events, reflection on the processes and outcomes of these events triggers their learning. For this reason, crisis management and risk management responsibilities become two important learning sources for leaders. A leader who encounters a crisis first tries to understand what is happening, gets to the root cause of the issue, and tries to find a way out by checking the competencies of himself/herself and his/her team in this crisis. Since this crisis, caused by an external or internal event, triggers the leader too, it actually makes him/her open to learning at some point. At this point, since our participant leaders quoted a lot from the crisis moments they experienced in their own narratives and defined these moments as learning, these experiences were examined end-to-end. Most of the leaders stated that

in such a crisis, they first check whether they have had such an experience before or whether they have prior knowledge about the subject of the crisis. As a next step, they check whether their existing competencies are sufficient to overcome this crisis. They also called this self-examination process as a reflection process on whether they are competent to be a leader. They stated that, especially in times of crisis at the beginning of their careers, they questioned whether they were competent to be leaders and therefore they became very demoralized and crisis management process was negatively affected at that time. Now, after the gold collar leader position, they said that this questioning phase has almost disappeared and they quickly moved on to steps such as creating the necessary vision, executing the necessary strategy, and making the right decisions to overcome the crisis. While doing all this with the awareness that they need their teams to overcome the crisis, they get effective and rapid results in a short time by uniting their teams around the right strategy and giving them the motivation to keep them on track. Although there were cases where participant leaders encountered failures while managing crisis moments at the beginning of their leadership journey, their self-confidence increased after successfully overcoming many crises in the later stages of their leadership journey. One of the important factors in this increase in confidence is that each crisis become an experience and learning. Thanks to that learning, during subsequent crises, the process will be overcome more easily. Again, thanks to this perspective, the knowledge and skills of leaders in crisis management and risk management validate why leaders are leaders. Thus, their confidence about that they will manage other crises successfully increases.

Managing a crisis makes a leader more courageous about the risks to be taken. Team members or direct reports who take their leaders as an example are more

motivated by not being afraid to make decisions and make mistakes. Because a leader who successfully manages crises can predict future situations with the skills and learning he/she has acquired after successfully overcoming this sudden situation. In this regard, it enables the management of these risks by making plans such as what kind of risk will arise under what conditions and how we can prevent it. Since crises occur suddenly, it is not possible to make any preparations other than being calm and having previous experience, but this situation differs in risk management. All scenarios such as natural disasters, economic fluctuations, changes in institutional management have prevention plans prepared in advance with the cooperation of all stakeholders. When anticipated risks turn into a crisis, the leader's duty is to remain calm and analyze the situation, to execute the existing plan if it is suitable for the conditions, and if not, to revise the plan and take the relevant decisions and actions. Of course, keeping the motivation of the team high while doing all this is another responsibility of the leader, because it is very difficult to overcome a crisis or manage risks with a demotivated, frightened and distracted team.

Participant leaders cited crisis management and risk management as primary sources of learning. These processes taught leaders a lot of new knowledge, skills and behaviors such as foreseeing possible dangers, producing different solutions according to different scenarios, making pinpoint decisions, implementing these decisions, communicating with stakeholders, staying calm, motivating the team and being able to calculate the consequences of the decisions taken. Although these crisis management techniques are explained in books or case studies, the participant leaders agree that this learning will not be effective enough without going through this experience. For this reason, many leaders state that they are reborn with a different leadership mindset after each crisis. A similar emphasis is found in the

literature on leadership development by Barton et al. (2012) and emphasized that the leader is not the same leader before and after the crisis due to the transformative effect of the crisis.

In summary, the data obtained when examining this theme and dimension in general terms indicates that responsibilities such as crisis management, risk management, team management, decision making, and performance monitoring are critical for both the leader's own success and the organization's success. A leader who is seeking to develop an effective leadership style, set of competencies, and knowledge throughout their leadership journey places importance on reinforcing their strengths in the areas they are responsible for and supporting the areas that require improvement.

Becoming a leader – Skills

When it comes to learning during leadership journey, many participant leaders talked about the skill set that should be possessed or learned the most, in addition to responsibilities. The most important skill in this skill set was communication. This skill was included in the narratives of the participants in terms of communication with all stakeholders, regardless of whether they are inside or outside of the organization. Leaders have learned to build an effective communication styles parallel to their own leadership styles, which will support them in implementing their strategies, sustaining team management, and performing business activities such as collaboration, negotiation, and discussion. Having effective communication skills enables a leader to clearly express his vision and collaborate effectively with the team he needs to gather around this vision. Two-thirds of participant leaders stated that they were both accepted as leaders and

progressed in their leadership journey, thanks to the clear, transparent and empathetic communication style they established with their teams.

The leader's primary tool in fulfilling his/her responsibilities is always communication. In order to ensure cooperation among stakeholders, one must understand them with his/her own listening and questioning style, synthesize the information he/she receives from stakeholders with his/her dialogue and facilitation skills, and share it with the stakeholders in a way that is understandable, and gather all stakeholders around the same message with the language of persuasion. In order to take all these actions, the leader must communicate with stakeholders through the right channels, using his own communication style. Participant leaders stated that they understood the importance of communication while fulfilling responsibilities such as problem solving, creating a vision, and crisis management, and that they fulfilled their responsibilities more easily as they gave importance to communication skills.

As they progressed in their leadership journey, they developed their own alternative communication methods and channels to differentiate themselves from other leaders, achieve excellence in their business practices, and influence their teams and sectors. Participating leaders emphasized that the failures experienced in the development of this language and the successful communication examples witnessed were very effective. While determining this unique communication method, it is also observed in their narratives that they do not actually contact all stakeholders with a single method, but that they differentiate their communication styles according to the characteristics of the stakeholder or the purpose of the communication. All these processes such as creating a unique language, differentiating this unique style according to stakeholders, and designing

communication based on output are the outcomes of the learning that the leader has gained as a result of his experiences.

One of the issues that participatory leaders emphasize about communication is the suitability of communication to the corporate culture if it is within the institution, and its suitability to the relevant environment and hierarchy if it is outside the institution. Hierarchical balances and the strength of communication within the institution may not be as sensitive outside the institution. Since leaders also have the responsibility of representing the institution, it is important to develop communication skills accordingly. Participating leaders agree that how advanced a leader is in his leadership journey and how competent he is can be understood from the strength of his communication. As Participant G stated, the stronger your communication, the more effective you will be considered as a leader.

Emotional intelligence is one of the skills that increase the effectiveness of communication and the efficiency of team management. In fact, it is an umbrella term that brings together more than one skill. This concept represents the whole of many abilities such as understanding people, empathizing with people, managing emotions and behaving situationally. A leader with emotional intelligence establishes strong bonds with his/her team, supports the integrity of the team, demonstrates the appropriate leadership approach by analyzing the situations encountered, and ensures that both he/she and his/her team manage emotions in every situation they encounter. Thanks to emotional intelligence, which is emphasized as the basic skill for situational leadership be participant leaders, leaders make more effective decisions, make more accurate evaluations and exhibit a more empathetic leadership approach. As Participant B explained, leaders who do not have strong emotional intelligence skills at the beginning of their leadership journey therefore show behaviors that lack

empathy and receive feedback on team management. Over time, they learn from these mistakes, learn to analyze the situation and empathize, and improve these skills.

As we see in this example, learning happens like this. Our participant leader first realizes his/her mistake through feedback. He/she then observes and acknowledges the impact of the situation and acknowledges the importance of emotional intelligence. From this point on, he/she begins to learn and improve his/her skills by learning from his/her mistakes. When he/she experiences a similar situation, he/she first calms himself/herself down quickly and avoids giving a similar reaction to the previous one. Then, as a result of the empathic behaviors he/she observes and the feedback he/she receives, the leader first regulates himself/herself in order to behave correctly and responds using emotional intelligence. As this example shows us, being aware of the situation one is in, being able to analyze the consequences of one's actions, and calculating the possible consequences of one's decisions are of critical importance for the leader to decide how to act. At this point, we will talk about analytical and critical thinking, another skill that our participating leaders emphasize a lot.

The most effective skill that a leader uses to understand the world, atmosphere, institution, ecosystem, team, meeting and so on is analytical & critical thinking. In a way, it is an indispensable skill for the leader to effectively fulfill his/her responsibilities such as making decisions, drawing a vision, and managing a crisis. Participant leaders emphasized in most of their narratives that being a leader means understanding where and how to act and understanding what can cause what. A leader who understands the situation and environment well determines the target path and strategy in the long term. As Participant H explains, in order to be an

effective leader, a manager first evaluates the situation he/she is in, and then looks at what he/she needs to reach the goal he/she wants to achieve. Finally, he/she decides how to walk this path. At this point, analytic and critical thinking are with the leader on this journey as the most powerful weapons in a leader's toolbox.

Although analyzing the situation sheds light on the leader's path, as the participating leaders emphasized, the situation may not always have clear parameters that can be analyzed. Because today's business world and sectors are quickly and frequently affected by global economic fluctuations, natural disasters or politics, sometimes it is not easy for leaders to analyze the situation they are in. In these uncertain situations, the leader's duty is to think about all possible scenarios, calculate the risks, reflect on past experiences and make decisions accordingly. Adapting flexibly to changing conditions in uncertain situations is the skill that a leader acquires thanks to the learning he has acquired in line with his reflections on his previous experiences. Leaders who can cope with uncertainty without losing their cool once again prove their leadership validity in the eyes of both their teams and the organization. That leader turns into a hero if the decisions made with correct analysis amid uncertainties are at a level that will affect the future of the institution. As Participant I mentioned, in situations where there is a lot of uncertainty, the right decisions made by relying on reflections on past experiences and information sources can deeply affect the future strategy of an institution, as well as the leadership journey of the leader.

Leadership, by definition, is based on managing and engaging with people. The leader cannot make this journey alone without the ecosystem of stakeholders and their engagement. For this reason, regardless of whether he/she is a customer, subordinate, direct report, or peer, the leader always engages with the individuals in

the ecosystem around him/her. This engaging people skill is actually used as an umbrella term by participant leaders and includes many skills such as bringing people together around a common vision, inspiring people and motivating people. Engaging with people and influencing them through interactions validates the leader's leadership, builds a sense of trust and motivates stakeholders to walk towards a common goal. While most of the participant leaders agree that the basis of being a leader is to influence people by engaging them, they also agree that this skill is not easily learned. We can clearly see the efforts made by Participant A, Participant D and Participant F in the narratives below about engaging people.

Although there are many skills that make a leader a leader, in this section, the five skills most emphasized by participant leaders are explained with examples. While each of the skills has an important place in the leader's toolbox as he/she progresses in his/her leadership journey, they also play an interconnected and complementary role. What is learned while acquiring these skills or what is learned from the experiences gained thanks to these skills constitute important milestones in the leader's continuous development journey.

Becoming a leader – Way of Learning

Although the topics that I explained in the previous sections or will focus on in the following sections, such as mindsets, responsibilities, skills, leadership style, were explained by our participant leaders as learning stops in their leadership journeys, each leader actually has his or her own way of learning by using all these processes or resources. Since the participant leaders' narratives included a lot of learning journeys and the leadership journey was not considered separate from the learning journey, 20 separate codes summarizing the way of learning of individuals

on the way to becoming a leader emerged as a result of the analysis. In this section, the prominent ones of these codes will be explained with examples.

Since the main focus of this study was built on the learning journeys of leaders, there were also many questions in the interview questionnaire that encouraged the participant leaders to convey their way of learning. Some of the learning journeys described were purposeful and structured, some were developed as a solution to immediate needs, and some were learned unnoticed, but were understood to have been learned when a similar situation was encountered again. As each piece of information or learning takes the leader further in leadership and makes his/her job easier, the importance the leader attaches to learning increases and the leader's learning becomes more rapid. Many of the participant leaders stated that their learning in business life after their academic education was primarily due to responsibilities and processes, but then, as they saw the benefits of this learning, they seriously focused on the learning task and strategically managed their own learning processes.

The ways of learning highlighted by participant leaders can be summarized under two main headings: learning from experiences and learning from resources. All these learnings will be detailed in the following parts of the chapter. In addition, these learning processes are under the influence of many factors such as the person's character, mindset, and values. However, this effect works in two directions. Just as these factors affect the leader's learning, learning also changes these factors.

When an individual is appointed as a manager, he/she is not chosen because he/she has all the information to fulfill the leadership role. However, he/she is chosen because he/she has the values, mindset, skills and attitude that can quickly learn and execute the requirements of the role he/she is assigned to. For this reason, after being

appointed, leaders become involved in the learning process, intentionally or unintentionally, in every environment they are in during the day, including routines, business processes, and stakeholder relationships, and increase their knowledge. As leaders gain experience, involvement in this learning becomes more conscious. Participant C states that while he was in the evaluation process for his current role, he was with very strong competitors, but he was chosen. When he later asks the leader who selected him why he was chosen, he learns that he was selected because he has the values, mindset, skills and attitude that will bring this job to life.

The gold collar leaders all acknowledged that when they are appointed as managers, most of the processes they go through while developing themselves on the path to leadership are self-directed. Now, even though all our participant leaders are affiliated with the same institution with a corporate academy, some are at different institutions at the beginning of their leadership journey. From those early career experiences to now, as can be understood from their narratives, all the processes in which leaders learn useful information are processes that they initiate, demand, consciously participate in or observe. For this reason, many of our participant leaders emphasized that the learning journey to leadership is self-directed.

Each question posed to the participant leaders was answered and explained with reference to an experience from the entire interview process. This revealed that the participant leaders had constructed their journeys on experiences. The same situation was observed throughout the entire data collection process for the learning processes. From this perspective, it was consistent that the first word that came to the leaders' minds when it came to the way of learning was experience. In line with this, they emphasized throughout the interviews that they were still experiencing and still learning. The term "experience" is used by participant leaders to encompass a wide

range of experiences, including early career experiences, first management experiences, crises encountered, challenging projects, and risks taken. When each experience is considered as a source of learning, the search for alternatives, trials and errors, successes and failures during that experience are listed as highly developmental ways of learning.

In these learning journeys, which are intentionally or unintentionally undertaken to learn the job, managers progress from novice leadership to expert leadership as they learn how to manage a team, debate, persuade, cooperate, manage relationships, carry that responsibility as a part of the management team, and work with experienced stakeholders. As an example, Participant E's parallel and accelerated career and learning journey in this direction is as follows:

> For many years, I supported the chairman in the management of partnerships in a family company based on joint ventures. In the decision-making mechanisms of these partnerships, when any new agreements, capital increases, dividend distributions, etc. were to be made, I learned, did and carried out their legal and financial follow-up. Here, I started from taking notes at meetings, and then I was on the advisory committee, and then I became a member of the board of directors. I gradually gained experience, but we were mainly responsible for financial and strategic decisions. I managed the MENA (Middle East North Africa) region projects. The financial analysis, balance sheet analysis, company valuation that I learned here contributed a lot to me. But while I was there, I worked very close to the shareholder. The shareholder's perspective also improved. I was still in the corporate role in terms of partnerships, joint venture agreements, mergers and acquisitions. Later, I was appointed as the assistant general manager in charge of finance in one of the group's subsidiaries, where I was responsible for both retail and the company's end-to-end CFO, treasury, reporting, controlling and law. Then logistics was assigned to me. And every 6 months a new unit was connected to me. So each new unit brought a new responsibility and learning. Of course, every day in the operation there is an issue, a crisis, something. There are more people, more issues. Then we came to my current organization. Thanks to my experience in MENA projects, I started here in a senior role responsible for MENA. Then, after a change in management, my role and area of responsibility increased. In addition to this, I assumed the management role in 2 different companies affiliated to the group. The impact of the different responsibilities I took up to that day and what the large teams I

> managed taught me had a great impact on this rise. Those who see the work done choose you for the new task because they see that you can overcome these works. (Participant E, N&N-2, Appendix E, 10)

Although many of the participants had graduate degrees from prestigious universities, they stated that the learning required to advance in leadership could come from the leader's own experiences. When looking at the literature, the findings of the study overlap with Neuman's (1996) assertion that "as the leader's personal awareness increases, so does their learning," along with Rose's (1998) and Wood's (2001) indication that "one can progress on the journey to becoming a good leader not by graduating from good schools but by embracing a perspective of continuous learning," and with Lave and Wenger's (1991) statement that "learning takes place within the activity, context, and culture of a community."

As mentioned before, the way of learning emphasized in the interviews by the participant leaders can be discussed under two main roofs: learning from experience and learning from the source. Let's take a closer look at the topics that the participating leaders highlight most. One of the ways of learning based on experience is early work experiences. While explaining their learning journeys, all of the participants stated that they started learning from the moment they stepped into business life and emphasized that it started and progressed cumulatively. As they began to spend time in business life, they saw what kind of knowledge and skills they needed and improved themselves in order to progress in these areas. They built a new perspective and mindset by evaluating whether their predictions and dreams about business life during their student years were consistent with real business life. An example of this situation can be cited as Participant O's fear of the magnitude of the work output expected from her when she started working full-time, despite having completed an internship. Participant O thought that she would not be able to

handle this situation as the number of issues she had to deal with at the same time increased due to the scope of her job. She lost her self-confidence because she thought that she did not have the necessary competencies because she was new to business life. However, as she fulfilled the responsibilities given to her, her self-confidence increased step by step. Although the area of responsibility expected from her has always grown throughout her subsequent business life, Participant O has overcome all of them without fear, thanks to the self-confidence she built with his early work experiences.

When all the concerns she had when she first started working, such as how to follow the processes under all headings, how to communicate with stakeholders, how to convey the results, such as being responsible for more than one area at the same time, turned into success one by one, despite all the reality of business life, she became an expert thanks to her experiences in business life, which she started as a novice.

Since the knowledge and skills gained through early work experiences enables people to meet the realities of business life, 5 of our participants stated that they made changes in the sector where they started their career journey with the awareness they gained. This awareness enabled them to search for meaning in line with their values and evaluate different options, that is, to discover what they expect from their careers. Regardless of whether they lead to major changes in career direction, early work experiences are invaluable to participants as they teach leaders what to expect from their careers. They are accepted foundational stones of the positions they have reached today.

The reason why all experiences trigger learning processes, whether at the beginning of business life, in the middle or now, is that these experiences include

challenging assignments. For the participants, challenging assignments are projects, roles and responsibilities that they may or may not have knowledge about, that arise suddenly, involve challenging stakeholders, have a tight schedule, have a very large scope of target group affected by outputs. Participant F emphasizes that this situation has now become a daily work routine and explains what is expected from him in challenging assignments as follows:

> Challenging tasks have now become our daily routine. What I mean by these challenging tasks is the issues that we navigate by taking risks in a decision-making position. Sometimes we are decision makers in vital decisions for a project, sometimes for an investment, or sometimes for a process. Being in this position requires advanced evaluation from you. You should evaluate the issue from many perspectives and shape this evaluation in parallel with other existing decisions, strategies and vision. In addition, as the main responsible person, you need to minimize the problems encountered, remove obstacles, ensure the continuity of the process and produce results in order to achieve a reliable and successful execution. Of course, it is your responsibility to review the process by evaluating the final results. (Participant F, N-2, Appendix E, 11)

While performing these challenging and complex tasks, you can learn to use many skills at the same time, such as person analysis, generating alternative solutions, effective planning, effective resource use, correct team management, effective stakeholder management, correct monitoring, on-site evaluation and successful business conclusion. Thanks to that, leaders increase their knowledge and experience, expand their perspective of expertise, take their expertise to an advanced level and increase their self-confidence. Participant G explained that while going through a similar challenging assignment period, she realized that her own competency set and knowledge were not sufficient and that she improved herself with training in this field in order to achieve better performance. Of course, it was emphasized by many participating leaders that being responsible for this challenging assignment process, successfully getting through this process, being able to analyze

oneself during the process, and learning from both the process and the results of the process do not happen overnight. These challenging assignment experiences have shaped the career journeys of many leaders as a long but instructive process.

> If you ask me can you do something, I say of course I can and let me get into the game of being able to do it. Of course I said I would, and I can say that it was the most difficult period of my life. In the total of my 20-21 years of career, that one year was the most difficult period of my life. Why was it so difficult? First of all, the experience of transitioning from specialist to manager was very critical for me. There were many things I didn't know or understand, for example, I had the opportunity to learn there by sometimes beating my head against the walls. The second one was not a very smooth transition. There was no warm-up period, I entered and as I said, we redrew the organization. There was a team of 18 people, if I remember correctly. 11 friends moved to different positions or different companies. New friends came to their place. Adaptation of those new friends… Triggering that transformation and change was a very difficult process for me. But the really difficult part was that it was one of the things I have done very easily in terms of business until today, but this time I have people for whom I am responsible, and those people for whom I am responsible have many needs, problems, expectations, motivators or different concerns in daily life. I can say that turning on those sensors, understanding and grasping them, and being able to manage the expectations was such a brand new process for me in all the chaos. I can say that I remember the end of that year well. Things went pretty well too. The structure sat down. The organization came to where we wanted it to be. It was a process that made me very tired and worn out, but it was also a process that taught me a lot. Sometimes this is needed to learn. Now read this book and apply what you know in this book here. This is not a learning method I have encountered in real life. (Participant G, N & N-2, Appendix E, 12)

During their narratives, participating leaders shared many examples that referenced this issue. They stated that among these examples, even the challenging assignments that were more challenging in themselves were related to a new field. They explained that the most challenging thing was that they received an assignment on a subject that they had not studied or had no knowledge about before. Participant B said that when going through such a period, the first thing she did was try to learn this context that she did not know. Afterwards, she stated that what is needed to successfully

overcome this assignment is to allow yourself to make mistakes and then learn from these mistakes.

> For example, let's say you buy a product from the vendor, the manufacturer would put the training related to that product into the package and sell it. People were also selected and sent to those package trainings according to their subject. I also attended those trainings. A few years later, we were talking about topics such as how the training received from vendors could be done, how we could turn it into internal training, how we could contribute more to this, and how we could disseminate this information more. Because at that time, the training received from the vendor was initially given abroad. It had changed a little and returned to Turkey around the time I entered. But at that time, very limited people could be sent abroad. You have a team of 100 people, you can send 3 people. Of course, these numbers could increase even more after returning to Turkey. It corresponded to 10 people out of 100. But we needed to popularize it. Because we have a very large staff of technicians, not just engineers. They also need to receive education because they could not go to any education. Afterwards, the issue of becoming an internal trainer came up. I also became an internal trainer. At that time, we actually objected to how we could become internal trainers. We were even surprised, we don't know how to give lessons, we are just doing our job, how will we prepare documents, how will we explain, how will we provide training, what are the rules for these. We never had such an experience. Afterwards, the selected people, those who knew better at that time, became internal trainers. I also became an internal trainer. But first we prepared ourselves through that internal training. We did not receive such external instructor training, it was like how to become an instructor. After that, that training job felt very good to me. From where? Because I realized that I learn much better when I explain myself or from my mistakes. (Participant B, N-2, Appendix E, 13)

Participant O approached the challenging assignment issue from the perspective of the difficulties of changing existing processes, especially by removing the old process and commissioning a new process, and emphasized that this experience taught a lot to the person managing the process. Our participant stated that it is even more difficult to take these actions, especially in human resources-related processes, and said that the key to overcoming this difficulty is to convey the issue to stakeholders with clear, positive and optimistic communication. She states that during the processes she experienced while communicating the human resources

processes that she had to rebuild for different reasons in different institutions, she realized that the communication language she and her team used while conveying the subject was influenced by two different reactions.

Overcoming the obstacles that arise in such a situation, especially when starting a new business in an unknown field, managing uncertainty, not losing motivation, and supporting the people around him to learn while learning, has taught me new things at every step. Having these achievements in their careers has been one of the important factors that brought our participant leaders to the leadership level they are at now. Because the process of building something from scratch taught them what is important, what they should prioritize, how to plan, how to manage people towards the goal, and how to communicate strategically with them. These learnings changed the entire perspective they had before and enabled them to continue with a broader vision. Until all of our participating leaders reach the position they are in now, they have successfully completed many challenging assignments that affect the institution, sector or country, such as entering a new business field, introducing a new product, establishing a new company, at least once, both in their current institutions and their previous institutions.

Participant leaders embark on a learning journey with every experience they encounter. This experience may have resulted from different reasons such as a challenging assignment, increased role scope, a new business process designed, involvement in any of the processes of the institution, or a crisis. Regardless of the reason or the beginning, the leader who begins to experience such an experience first tries to understand the situation and its dynamics. Then, he/she evaluates himself/herself in terms of knowledge and competence according to the requirements of this situation. During this analysis process, he/she realizes the importance of

his/her own leadership values and mindset because these become his/her guides. As a result of these evaluations, leader first updates herself/himself as necessary in terms of knowledge, skills, leadership stance and perspective. He/she reviews his/her previous experiences and knowledge and takes what he/she can transfer from here to there. It obtains the necessary learning and information by collaborating with and observing all stakeholders of the process. At the same time, he/she learns from his/her own actions by trying different solutions and reflecting on their outcomes. At the end of the experience, he/she re-evaluates the entire process and creates an action plan for himself/herself as a result of this evaluation. Focusing on the development of aspects that he/she realizes are open to improvement constitutes the majority of these action plans. According to participant leaders, the resources used significantly for this development are bosses (positioned as role models, mentors or coaches), stakeholder network (consist of people such as clients, colleagues and consultants), reading resources (such as books, journals, blogs, articles), social media, watching resources (such as documentaries and videos), listening resources (such as podcasts), conferences and virtual learning platforms. I will explain some of these sources in detail with examples.

Learning from others, that is, using other people as a source of information, is the most frequently used way of learning by our participant leaders. In parallel, when the workplace learning literature is examined, it is seen that social interaction is stated as the primary source of learning in the workplace (Marsick & Watkins, 2005; Marsick & Volpe, 1999; Siemens, 2005). The person used as a source here can be defined as the managers, leaders or bosses with whom the participant leader had the opportunity to work at certain periods throughout his/her business life or with whom he/she still works. Likewise, the person used as a resource here may be a customer

we work with. Or the person used as the source may be a peer. The common point of all these definitions is that this person, who is positioned as a source of learning, has done something that leaves a mark on the participant leader's life, or has a great impact on the participant's leadership journey, or is someone who deeply affects the participant leader with his/her stance, behaviors and attitudes. While working with this person, whom he/she identified as a learning source, the participant leader received his/her support and guidance, observed his/her behavior in difficult situations, received feedback from him/her, consulted his/her thoughts, and evaluated himself/herself by taking his/her behavior as a parameter. They synthesized all stances, behaviors and mindsets and acquired teachings for themselves by reflecting on this synthesis. They shaped how they wanted to be leaders by imitating the behavior of these role models, receiving feedback from these people, receiving mentorship from these people, and observing these people. All participating leaders shared anecdotes about their managers, teammates or customers whom they positioned as sources of learning in their narratives:

As can be seen from the sample quotations, these learnings support participant leaders in many areas such as interpersonal skills, developing role performance, developing leadership performance, collaboration skills, influencing people, and convincing customers. Many of our participant leaders stated that the transformation of their leaders, whom they took as role models, played a major role in transforming them from a novice leader into an expert leader. When we look at the literature, the basis of effective role modeling is not to directly take the behavior of the role model person, but to adopt that behavior as a result of reflection by passing it through the filter of one’s own values (Ashforth, 2001). Thus, the novice leader sees in a role model the synthesis of the information he/she will learn through a lot of

experience or researching a lot of other sources and put into practice. By adapting this to his/her own life in line with his/her own values, he/she reaches this learning in a short and effective way.

> The first 4 years of our field are actually a world where people learn these things and put their feet on the ground. 4 years are the period when you can transfer a certain mathematical concept to excel and get the printouts, make judgments, make serious observations about the course of events, and small risks evolve into big risks and larger risks are not taken. There I chose a leader and a role model for myself. In fact, I observed who my leader should be, how he/she should act, how he/she acts in a stressful world or a stable world, what type of vision he/she puts, what type of positions he/she takes and on what basis. Because you can be very successful and hold on in this business by observing role models. (Participant F, N-2, Appendix E, 14)

In contrast to that, some of our participant leaders stated that they positioned their former managers as a negative example and a source of learning. Their common feature is that they all position these negative examples as a source of learning, but they have left their relationships with these negative leaders behind. However, they continued on their way by adding the learnings they gained while working with them to their own skill pool. Participant C explained that after changing his institution based on the negative experience he had with his previous manager regarding recognition and promotion, he achieved a different result when it came to a situation related to appreciation and promotion, as he acted by adopting a different stance and communication with the knowledge he gained from his previous experience:

> In my old institution, the next level I would advance in the hierarchy was director. We were working as a director reporting to the Deputy General Manager and three managers reporting to that director. They parted ways with that relevant director. Three of us worked under the deputy general manager. I waited for them to make me a director. Why? Because I work hard. The Deputy General Manager saw this. He gave me the invisible responsibility of those two friends. He gave me overall ownership of the business, which was not written down or announced anywhere, but he did not make me a director. I didn't want to go again, but I worked. I'm always waiting because I did whatever he wanted. Then the management changed. A new general manager came. He was a general manager whom I knew and loved very much.

> Now I was waiting for the promotion. The second week they appointed someone else as director. I was shocked. I said why didn't I go and ask for it? It was one of the biggest slaps in my face in my business life. Then I couldn't get along with that manager and left that organization. Now I look back. The deputy general manager employed a manager for 2 years without giving any director benefits or giving any director title. And it did its job. I should have asked for it from day one. The big change in me came after I learned from that experience. (Participant C, N-2, Appendix E, 15)

Another participant leader explained that in his first years of business life, he witnessed a leader who was unfair to his team's efforts in the environment he worked in, and that after this incident, he observed that the team's performance and work outputs decreased in the same way. Following this observation, he stated that after he became a manager, he was very careful to share with the team what they deserved openly, transparently and equally (Participant F, N-2).

As can be seen from the narratives of the participant leaders, they position their managers/leaders as the most significant learning source in terms of both learning the job and learning leadership, as their managers/leaders leave a significant impact on their career journeys.

Considering the details in all narratives, the participant leaders strategically positioned their experiences, managers, stakeholder networks and resources such as books, social media, blogs and podcasts to learn leadership, their roles and responsibilities and the industry, and each leader has a unique learning path. We also see that leaders have adopted that one of the foundations of being a good leader requires having a continuous learning mindset.

Becoming a leader – Knowledge

The last dimension of this theme is knowledge. Participants conveyed the areas of knowledge they needed as they progressed towards becoming a leader, during their narratives. They stated that leaders attach great importance to having

knowledge in these areas as it moves them forward in their business execution, leadership and team management. When we analyze these, we come across these information areas with 5 different codes.

The first area that leaders focus on to gain knowledge is industry knowledge. Every leader starts his/her career journey in a sector, and as he/she does business, he/she learns the flow, functioning and systems of that sector. Although not every leader continues their career in the sector they started in, 10 of our participant leaders advanced in the sector they started in. Gaining experience in the same sector is important for leaders to move forward in their career journeys as it offers opportunities such as mastering the risks of the sector, foreseeing possible opportunities, and leadership in the sector. For this reason, our participant leaders have self-directed learning processes in line with their own strategies in order to become more specialized in their fields and to gain advantages such as improving the scope of their business by keeping themselves up to date, foreseeing new opportunities, assuming sector leadership, and becoming the consulted person in the sector. Participant L explained one of these examples as follows:

> I had the opportunity to experience this firsthand in the environments where I worked abroad. Universities are ahead of the industry. There is no mobile application in the industry, there is nothing. But research on this is being done at the university. In fact, the academy reveals whether such a thing is possible or even whether a business can arise from this. Afterwards, this turns into a separate business in the sector. In other words, the academy directs the industry. Frankly speaking, mastering the industry allows you to be a bit of a visionary. Because the academies that I have seen a little bit in our country follow the sector. Frankly, the opposite happens abroad. Therefore, by completing my doctorate, I gained in-depth industry knowledge in my field. Because if I were to say that there are many sub-branches of our field, I would list 100 different fields. Another advantage I had was this. Since I got into this job very early, I had the opportunity to contact many different areas until I completed my doctorate. This took my industry knowledge to the top. I also write an academic article. While writing an academic article, a slightly broader perspective gives

> you a perspective that touches every part of the field. (Participant L, N & N-2, Appendix E, 16)

Another advantage of mastering industry knowledge is that it allows the leader to quickly solve the problems he/she encounters. A leader who is knowledgeable about the sector knows both the stakeholders of the sector and the most effective methods of doing business with these stakeholders. Since leader has a consultant position in the sector, he/she also plays a key role in the connection of the sector with other sectors. For this reason, he/she can prevent problems in advance and solve them quickly. The important way to achieve this dominance is to have industry knowledge consisting of information obtained by closely following the reflection outputs made after experiences and learning resources.

The second area of knowledge most emphasized by participant leaders, who emphasize mastery of industry knowledge, is leadership knowledge. Participant leaders define this field as a body of information that answers the questions of what is attitude towards leadership, what is mindset, what is value, what is style, what is stance and why are all these headings important for leadership. As mentioned before, when an expert is first appointed as a manager, the main determinant is industry knowledge. It is checked whether there is potential in terms of leadership competence. Participant leaders, who are evaluators in the committees for the appointment of new leaders in the leadership processes, stated that this is the criterion. The person appointed as a manager then has to acquire leadership knowledge both through the training he/she receives and the responsibilities expected from him/her. He/she determines his/her values, establishes his/her mindset, clarifies his/her stance, and understands the leadership style that will be good for his/her teammates. As Participant M stated, all this does not happen at once, but when you look back now and make sense of that process, the manager creates this knowledge

with the inferences he/she gained from his/her experiences after being appointed to gain leadership knowledge.

Another issue that the participating leaders emphasized about leadership knowledge is that as the generation of the workforce changes, this leadership knowledge, like other information, needs constant updating. As more young generations, namely Generation Z, join organizations, the leadership styles that leaders experienced in their relationships with the previous generation are no longer very effective. For this reason, leaders update their leadership knowledge by taking into account and synthesizing the parameters of the relationships they have established with this new generation, the expectations of the new generation, and the harmonization and balancing of the old and new generations.

> People's perspectives enrich me from their perspective on work. Because I started in this group in 2000. When I first became a manager in 2004, the experts I worked with were mostly people born in the 1960s. Currently almost 80% of my team are people born around the year 2000. 95 96 98 We have around 15% of our friends who were born over the year 2000. Therefore, these people's perspectives are very different. I have to constantly update myself. In other words, what does he think, what does he think about life, what is his ambition, how does he view his goal, technology, how does he view the company? I need to know all of these to effectively lead them. (Participant K, N-1, Appendix E, 17)

One of the issues that participatory leaders emphasize is having information about the organizational structure and culture of the institution they are in. All participating leaders have worked in different institutions throughout their career journeys. For this reason, they stated that the most fundamental shaper of their competencies, business practices, mindsets and the vision they created is the institution and culture they are affiliated with. Since the corporate structure directly affects the way of doing business, it shapes every aspect of a person, from communication to leadership style. For this reason, mastering the institutional structure and culture is very

important in order to make sense of previous knowledge and skills and to adapt them to new situations and conditions. When leaders who come from a culture where decision mechanisms are very sharp due to the hierarchical structure move to an institution that is more flexible and gives initiative in terms of hierarchy without being able to develop some of their competencies such as creating a vision, decision-making, risk-taking or crisis management, they will not be successful if they use the knowledge, skills and habits they brought from their previous institution in the new institution. . For this reason, learning and understanding the structure of the institution you are in and constantly updating your knowledge and skills in this direction are of vital importance in the journey of becoming a good leader and effective leadership.

> At the beginning of my career, when I was working in the public sector, we had to stand back a little on issues such as taking initiative due to the hierarchy. Even the communication established due to the culture of those institutions had a style and sharpness. After moving to the corporate world, and especially after advancing in the leadership journey, the corporate culture becomes very supportive when creating your own communication language, shaping your business conduct, and determining your leadership style. Even though the field I work in is the same, I feel as if I have worked in two different sectors while doing this job in public institutions and private institutions. (Participant N, N, Appendix E, 18)

This situation works both ways. Because leaders and employees also shape the structure and culture of the institution. After a person learns the structure and culture of the institution he is involved in, he adopts it through his own value filter. Leaders reflect their own values, principles and culture into the corporate culture because they influence and determine the main dynamics of the institution. Thus, a synthesized corporate culture is formed. When the leaders of companies focused on growth and leading the industry are examined in the literature, it is seen that they embrace continuous learning in their leadership culture and reflect this on the

corporate culture (Soares, 2009; Zheng et al., 2010). This continuous learning-oriented culture is reflected from the leadership culture to the organizational culture and then to the employees. Leaders who see the positive benefits of a learning-oriented corporate culture on their business outcomes begin to embrace continuous learning in their own leadership cultures and strive to have their employees adopt it as well by including it in their corporate culture.

> In our industry, it's important for all teams to collaborate and support each other to fill in any gaps. Sharing information is crucial because what one person knows can be valuable to others. Continuous learning and information sharing is essential in our work. This mindset has played a significant role in my career, even helping me land a job in the early years. I also prioritize fostering a culture of learning within my teams. I believe that knowledge sharing and learning from one another are crucial. In our department, we have a dedicated group on a messaging platform where I regularly share relevant documents. Our architectural team plays a key role as educators, tasked with researching and presenting trending industry topics to the rest of the team. Today, the team conducted a session where they discussed a trending topic in our field with all the leaders. I strongly believe that creating a culture of learning and disseminating it throughout the team is fundamentally important for a manager. In our industry, knowledge can quickly become outdated, so continuous learning is crucial for staying ahead. Learning is truly a never-ending journey in our field. . (Participant L, N & N-1, Appendix E, 19)

Another issue that participant leaders focus on and improve themselves to become knowledgeable about is team management. The meaning of this concept for participant leaders is the whole of titles such as team building, delegation, giving feedback, and creating synergy. What differentiates it from leadership knowledge is that leadership knowledge focuses on the leader himself/herself, while team management knowledge focuses on the team. Team management knowledge is necessary for the leader to specialize in his/her leadership journey. In order to produce successful business results, a leader cannot act alone and needs his/her team. For this reason, his/her relationship with his/her team, the relationship of the people in the team with each other, and the harmony between these relationships should be

compatible. As the team grows and the scope of roles and responsibilities expected from the team increases, the leader's need for team management knowledge also increases. If the team and responsibilities are growing, the leader is also gaining experience in a sense, but the person who wants to be an effective leader must keep his/her team management knowledge and skills up to date in order to adapt to changing dynamics. Emphasizing the importance of establishing an effective and harmonious team, Participant I explained how he acquired the knowledge on this subject, how he implemented this knowledge and how he updated himself on this subject:

After the global pandemic, workforce-related problems affected all institutions as well as participatory leaders. There have been great movements in the workforce due to the increasing job change rate and remote working models due to the impact of the pandemic. In addition, with the increasing technological advancement, the need for employees with a deep expertise in their field, especially those with a technical profile, has increased. At this point, leaders have new challenges such as attracting talent, creating a competent team, and keeping the team together. For this reason, leaders updated their team management knowledge and learned to manage teams that have adapted to the working model brought by new conditions. Leaders manage hybrid teams that include individuals who work both remotely and face-to-face. Participant K explained his experiences in this new generation team management and how he updated himself as follows:

> The younger generation's perspective is very different. I have to constantly update myself. In other words, what does he think, what does he think about life, what is his ambition, how does he view his goal, technology, how does he view the company? Accordingly, we started to update our company's working models. Here is part time work model. I could never imagine working in three places at the same time, working in 3 different companies. We're starting to learn this. There are people working in 3 departments at the same time. He

> actually works in a department 2 days a week and does a different job. He works 3 days in another department. He is a trainer in one day. He works extra at nights on his own. We need to put forward working models that will model this. He works as an academic lecturer at the university 2 days a week. He works with us 3 days a week. Now, as I talk to these friends, I see that the world has actually come here. I see that people's belonging to one place does not remain in the new world. Independence, contribution to work, etc., these come to the fore. This paradigm has shifted. While people were actually looking for places to work, companies started looking for people to work for. This is a very important change, so it has been a very important source of development for me. I need to feed on them constantly. (Participant K, N-1, Appendix E, 20)

The skill needed by leaders who transform both themselves and their institutions by adapting to the new business world conditions, and which is emphasized as one of the issues that a leader must know in order to progress in his leadership journey, is the knowledge of how to reach the right information, the right resource and the right person.

Leaders face many complex problems or crises due to their positions. Although they work with their teams to find solutions to these situations, it is necessary to reach a resource, person or institution higher up the hierarchy in solving complex situations. At this point, expectations arise from a leader such as removing the obstacles in front of his team, accelerating his team by feeding them with the right resources, attracting the right talents to his team, and improving work outcomes. The leader needs to create his own connections, resources and strategy to meet these expectations. However, someone newly appointed to a managerial position may not be able to establish this balance, may not have this network, or may not know where to learn this information because they do not have experience yet. As some of the participating leaders emphasized, this is one of the issues that should be learned by getting support from a role model, a mentor, or an advisor when

embarking on the leadership journey. Participant J explained the advantages of having this information as follows:

> I worked in different departments in many companies for certain periods. So I didn't stay in the same role for many years. This gave me different roles and different skills. I think this has contributed a lot to my journey, both in my professional development and in my leadership development. Having seen the academics and R&D side of the business, seeing the supplier side of the business in front of us, what the suppliers are doing in terms of technology, what the international companies are doing, what the customers who use it later do, and when I move to the corporate side, seeing the customer side and seeing the service operator side. In fact, for me, it was like pieces of the picture completing each other. Of course, I would like to emphasize this again, and in terms of expertise, I have developed expertise in 2 or 3 different vertical specializations, that is, I have developed a good expertise in terms of expertise before becoming a manager. In fact, coming to the management position gave me a significant advantage in terms of mastering the work that I was managing a little more. Knowing different roles and the experiences I gained from them have been a feature that I have benefited from not only in the field I manage, but also in terms of being able to see a little bigger picture. Looking at the same picture from different points of view in different companies and different cultures gave me very important experiences. (Participant J, N-2, Appendix E, 21)

As discussed through the narratives shared in this part, under the “Becoming a Leader” theme, there were 50 different codes in 5 different dimensions: leadership mindset & style, responsibilities, skills, way of learning and knowledge. The theme was examined in detail in line with the dimensions and prominent codes and supported with examples taken from the narratives of the participating leaders.

4.3 Becoming a gold collar leader

As explained earlier, the participant leaders described their learning journey in two phases: first learning to be a leader and then learning to be a gold collar leader. Accordingly, the codes of the narratives were organized under two main themes. In this direction, the first theme, that is, how they became leaders and the factors affecting this process were explained in the previous part of the chapter. In this part,

the second theme, which covers the journey of gold collars to become leaders and the factors affecting this process, will be explained.

The second theme was analyzed as “Becoming a Gold Collar Leader”. In fact, this theme highlights findings that are additional to the previous “Becoming a Leader” theme; thus, the codes in the previous theme are also valid for this theme. The relationship between the two themes can be explained with the analogy of getting there and being there. Based on this, apart from the first theme, the 5 dimensions and 52 codes (21 codes separated from the previous theme and explained in the chapter are highlighted in the table) under the second theme, Being a Gold Collar Leader, are shown in Table 7 as follows:

Table 7. Dimensions and Codes for Becoming a Gold Collar Leader Theme

Theme	Becoming a Gold Collar Leader				
Dimentions	Leadership Mindset & Style	Responsibilities	Skills & Strategies	Way of Learning	Knowledge
Codes	1.Leading transformation and change	1.Creating vision & Providing directions	1.Inclusive & Strategic Communication	1.Adapting team & organization to stay up to date	1.Industry knowledge (Risk and Prevention, Problems & Solutions)
	2.Fostering the global culture	2.Solving problems	2.Emotional intelligence	2.Revising leadership knowledge and skills	2.Interindustrial knowledge
	3.Representing the industry	3.Managing shareholder ecosystem to provide sustainable results	3.Analytical & Critical thinking	3.Practicing new ways/strategies of being a leader	3.Leadership knowledge
	4.Getting more confident by observing the impacts created / results taken	4.Inspiring teams	4.Surviving in VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) world	4.Developing new knowledge, cognitive capacities, and skills for increasing role scope and complexity	4.Institutional structure & Culture
	5.Defining the purpose and commitments as a leader	5.Coordinating	5.Managing diversity and differences	5.First managerial experiences	5.Team management information

	6.Empowering and developing people	6.Delegation		6.International interindustrial experiences	6.Information on access to the required resource, person or information
	7.Growth mindset	7.Evaluating the team performance and results		7.Bosses as mentors/role models/coaches	7.Global business world parameters
	8.Passion	8.Managing risks		8.Shareholder network (Clients, Consultants, Experts, Colleagues, Direct Reports)	
	9.Flexibility	9.Managing crisis		9.Sources to read, watch and listen (Books, journals, blogs, articles, documentaries, videos, podcasts)	
	10.Self-evaluation & Self-management	10.Executing judgement		10.Social media	
	11.Sharing knowledge and expertise, collaborating	11.Strategizing		11.Executive coaching	
				12.Virtual learning platforms	
				13.Failures, mistakes, errors, trials, practices	
				14.Generating and examining alternatives / scenarios	
				15.Collaborating & Observing	
				16.Surviving the crisis and tough responsibilities	
				17.Assessing and evaluating self	
				18.Being curious & Asking questions	

The details of this theme, 5 main dimensions and the codes below will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Becoming a gold collar leader – Leadership mindset & style

After the person is appointed as a manager, he/she progresses on his/her leadership journey with his/her experiences and learnings. In this process, leadership mindset and style are shaped. As the scope of role and responsibility in leadership increases and he/she begins to lead leaders, his/her leadership style and mindset adapt to this, depending on his/her position. Of course, just as the leader himself changes and transforms as he/she gains experience, the business world, economy and institutions continue to change and transform. Just as they manage the change in themselves, gold collar leaders in particular have the responsibility of managing the change in institutions and the business world. When we look at the narratives of the participating leaders, we see that the gold collar leader is one of the first to realize that the institution must also change in order to adapt to changes in different parameters in the business world. In order for the organization to adapt to this change and transformation, the leader first leads the organization in raising awareness about the necessity of this transformation. Then, he/she creates this transformation vision and gathers other people in the organization around this vision. The next step is to make the necessary plans to realize this vision and ensure that these plans are completed successfully by executing and monitoring them. When we look at the literature, the steps of the leaders who lead the transformation of the institution in this process coincide with these three steps listed (Powell, 2007).

Participant leaders stated that as they have reached advanced levels in their leadership journey, their operational work has decreased and they now have roles and responsibilities such as creating a vision, determining a strategy, determining execution plans that will implement this strategy and vision, and monitoring throughout the year. They explain that they are responsible for following and

analyzing the global and local business world, sector and other parameters, evaluating the compatibility of the institution's existing conditions with these parameters, deciding on the necessity of change and transformation and creating a strategy and vision accordingly.

As can be seen in the examples selected from the participants' narratives, a leader leading the change and successfully implementing the transformation creates a change and transformation effect on the leader. The leader's self-confidence increases as he/she sees the improvement in business outcomes after the transformation he/she has created, as he/she observes the adaptation of employees to change and transformation, as he/she sees the impact of his/her leadership style on the success of this transformation, and as he/she sees that this transformation inspires other institutions operating in the same sector or another sector. With this increase in confidence, leader leads the other change and transformation processes he/she encounters more confidently and boldly.

Because the impact of successful businesses is felt by the sector, by institutions in the sector, and by other sectors, the leader who creates that impact remains not only a representative of his or her own institution but also becomes a representative of the sector. While the leader represents his sector in global and interindustrial environments, he/she then analyzes the vision he/she has acquired in that environment, reflects it on his/her own sector and creates a vision for his/her sector. As our participant leaders frequently mentioned in their narratives, when you reach the gold collar leader level, it is no longer just your institution that you influence. As can be seen from the example of Participant E, many participant leaders adopt a global perspective and culture by taking an active role in global formations. In this way, they gain new perspectives and recreate their own leadership

mindset by approaching events with a different mindset. With this broad perspective and mindset shift, they contribute to the sector and at the same time support the development of the sector.

> In my last position, I served as vice chairman of the board of directors of the financial institutions association and served as a board member. There you are in contact with all the players in the industry. You go back and forth to public organizations regarding regulations. You meet with them not only for your company but also because you represent the industry. A pure form of that network is formed. You are not asking for anything on behalf of the company, you are visiting on behalf of the industry. That relationship becomes sweeter. Having worked in a sectoral position and being in contact with all business partners doing business in the sector. Not necessarily the competition, but knowing the suppliers etc. In short, being a connected person is very critical. (Participant E, N & N-2, Appendix E, 22)

Another issue emphasized by the participant leaders is that they have now become the consulted person for both the business world, the sector and the institution. For this reason, they talked a lot in their narratives about the importance they attach to sharing the knowledge they have, transferring their expertise and collaborating. They are ready to share their experience and knowledge by providing mentoring and consulting or by giving the message that they are always available to share information. Thus, they have the mindset of empowering and developing both their employees and those inspired by them. Participant H explains the basis of his approach on this issue as follows:

> People who are at the very beginning of their leadership journey may have reservations about sharing knowledge and expertise. After sharing this information, a manager may think, "What if I lose my workforce and my team?" However, as you accumulate experience and progress on your leadership journey, experiences teach you this: The stronger your team, the stronger you are. You know as much as your team knows. The more competent your team is, the more competent you are. For this reason, you empower them, develop them so that you can invest in yourself. It is very unfounded to be afraid that they will leave. What should be feared is if they continue to be on your team with their undeveloped competencies and lack of ability to learn. That's why I'm always ready to share what I know. My door is always open to my employees, people I have worked with in the past,

> my customers, my peers, those who know me from the industry even if we have not had the opportunity to work together, and anyone who wants to consult, regardless of who they are. (Participant H, N-2, Appendix E, 23)

Each of the participant leaders uses different methods to develop their team. Although there are some that show similarities, each leader has adopted his/her own style in this regard. For example, Participant A, Participant O and Participant L teams decide on certain issues, do research on that subject, come together in designated sessions, share information and then share their experiences on this subject with each other. Leaders such as Participant G and Participant M recommend any resource they find useful to the people in their direct team, allowing them to learn from the same source.

To summarize the data obtained when looking at this theme and dimension in general terms, it can be said that leading transformation and change, fostering the global culture, representing the industry, getting more confident by observing the impacts created or results taken and empowering and developing people create leadership mindset shifts and reshapes leadership styles. Because all these factors, like blocks, enable the formation of the leadership mindset and style required by this leadership level and the reconstruction of the leadership mindset that was formed until reaching this level.

Becoming a gold collar leader – Responsibilities

After a leader reaches the gold collar leader level, he/she also assumes responsibilities that differ from a normal leader. One of the main reasons for this is that he/she is now a leader who manages leaders. For this reason, as the participant leaders mentioned, the operational workload has been replaced by different responsibilities. The most important of these differentiated responsibilities is creating vision and providing directions. Before a leader becomes a gold collar leader, he/she

expresses his/her opinion as part of processes such as creating a vision or setting direction. However, these ideas then pass through the filter of the gold collar leader who is responsible for this process, are synthesized and take on a new shape. For this reason, before a leader becomes a gold collar leader, creating a vision or providing direction is not something he is directly responsible for. However, after the leader becomes the gold collar leader, this responsibility is directly assigned to him. As the participant leaders mentioned, before reaching this level, when they were involved in the vision creation or direction processes while they were leaders, they learned not only by expressing their opinions, but by observing the parameters according to which the gold collar leader of that period analyzed or how he/she synthesized different views or how he/she communicated this vision.

> A former manager of mine taught me great discipline and taking work seriously. He said, "We don't have to know the details of everything, we don't have to get lost in the little details. He said, "You know where this business is going. When you look at the 2-year and 3-year financials, don't just look at the picture of the moment, look at the change, the trend, and the transformation by putting those pictures side by side. That was a very valuable, value-added perspective for me. I used it a lot after that. Whether I'm looking at the balance sheet or the income statement, I try to make sense of it not just by looking at it, but by trying to perceive where it's going. So I don't look at anything as a set of numbers or an Excel spreadsheet. I look at this business, this operation, this company to understand it. Where did it come from and where is it going? It was very important, I remember. (Participant M, N & N-2, Appendix E, 24)

Participant leaders stated that they constantly keep themselves up to date with a continuous learning mindset in order to create a vision or direct their teams. In this way, thanks to the knowledge and analysis skills they have acquired, they can foresee the parameters that will change or the crises that will occur or the opportunities that will arise with the dominance they have established. They use these competencies in vision creation. In this way, the leader ensures that the company is not negatively affected by possible changes and transformations, that they make the relevant

investments by anticipating the opportunities that will arise, and that they adapt to changing conditions.

Participant leaders, who stated that they took the opinions of my entire team and synthesized them while creating the vision, emphasized in their narratives that a strong vision cannot be created alone, and even if it is created, it cannot be realized unless there is a strong team that believes in this vision. This refers to inspiring teams, which is another responsibility of gold collar leaders. If the created vision does not excite, motivate or inspire employees, direct reports or subordinates, the leader cannot gather these people around that vision and cannot implement that vision. For this reason, the gold collar leader should inspire teams with the vision, leadership mindset and leadership style he creates. Teams should also be motivated to work to realize the vision created with this inspiration. Participant E explains the process of creating a vision, giving direction and inspiring teams as follows:

> On Monday, the first day I became the Gold Collar leader, we met with the management team. We talked about why we weren't investing in this area. We said let's try it. We tried it and it didn't work, but we could try it. We said let's try again with these parameters. We tried and it worked. We expanded sales. Then we expanded the business by adding another target group. Then we decided to offer services to customers outside the industry. You know, whether you do it or not, it's your business. We think as a team. We liked it a lot and working on it motivated all of us.. (Participant E, N & N-2, Appendix E, 25)

In order for the created vision to come true, it is not enough for the teams to just be motivated or inspired. Even if the team works very motivated and produces successful work outputs, if these outputs do not serve a common strategy or if these teams do not work in cooperation, it will not be possible to achieve the vision. For this reason, the gold collar leader must create a vision and provide direction and then determine the strategy to achieve this vision. Afterwards, it should ensure coordination among the relevant teams by delegating them in a way that will serve

the strategy it has created. In the narrative of Participant I, coordination and strategizing are exemplified as follows:

> My perspective on leadership has evolved over the years from a cm^2 perspective to a km^2 perspective. In other words, I moved from a micro perspective to a macro perspective and thus experienced a leadership evolution. When my leadership perspective focused on the bigger picture, I realized that not everything is right. Not every success is always a success. From a strategic point of view, that right may not be right at another time. For this reason, before making my right or wrong judgments and decisions, I make my decisions by thoroughly analyzing the situation we are in and checking our strategic positioning in that situation. I base this on team management as well. (Participant I, N-2, Appendix E, 26)

When we look at the findings regarding this theme and dimension, we see that the operational responsibilities of gold collar leaders in the journey of becoming a leader have decreased, but more advanced responsibilities such as creating vision, providing direction, inspiring teams, coordinating and strategizing have been assigned to them. These responsibilities are responsibilities that reinforce the leader's self-confidence and courage when they have effective results due to their importance for the future of the institution. Therefore, to outperform these responsibilities, leaders must constantly nurture their knowledge and skill sets with a continuous learning mindset.

Becoming a gold collar leader – Skills

Gold collar leaders fill their knowledge and skill pools until they reach this level in their leadership journey. They reach this level by acquiring many competencies that overlap with the literature significantly mentioned by the participant leaders explained in the previous sections. However, new responsibilities and expansion of the scope of influence also require new skills. As participant leaders stated, although these responsibilities are actually advanced versions of competencies such as communication, collaboration and adaptation, gold collar leaders strive to excel in these skills. In fact, while they were chosen to reach this

level because they had potential in these skills, as their experience at this level increases, these skills also reach an advanced level. As many participant leaders stated, being a gold collar leader does not mean that they have learned everything or they do not need to learn anymore, or that they can do everything with their existing competencies. Our participant leaders are aware of the necessity of updating their skill sets with each new responsibility and stated the actions they took in this regard during their narratives. Based on this, the way of learning of gold collar leaders will be explained in detail in the following section.

One of the skills that gold collar leaders should add to their skill sets was stated by the participant leaders as inclusive and strategic communication. Inclusive communication has a separate operational definition here. First of all, since gold collar leaders are now the managers who manage the leaders, they are actually in communication with more than one team, that is, more than one business line. For this reason, instead of communicating only with his/her own team or only with his/her own business unit, he/she should acquire a communication skill that covers all business units. One should acquire a more inclusive communication style by expanding the scope of existing effective communication skills. Participant B describes its benefits to work output and team motivation as follows:

> It may seem strange, but I observe people a lot. For example, sometimes my manager friends who report to me say to me, that you can see better than us what and how the person working in our team or in the side team might be upset. Because I observe people a lot. How does he/she behave? What are their responses in normal daily life? For example, we are having lunch one day. I can observe, perceive and capture the sensitivities in the story he/she tells. Based on these observations, I communicate that person. I have always been able to interact so well with the people I work with. In this way, both my managers, my peers, the friends working in my team, and the friends working in the field never hesitated to communicate with me. This good communication was also reflected in work outputs. Because you are more motivated to work where you feel understood

> and listened to. So, I can say that my correct communication strategy improves business outcomes. (Participant B, N-2, Appendix E, 27)

As the number of leaders managed increases, and therefore the number of units managed increases, the diversity of people and businesses affected also increases. This increasing diversity also causes expectations from the leader to diversify. In order to manage this diversity, the gold collar leader is expected to exhibit a leadership stance towards the teams based on diversity and difference. Blanchard (2018) says that the leadership stance displayed by the leader is the most effective solution depending on the situation, the problem, the team, in short, the necessity of the moment. Situational leadership is the ability of the leader to adapt his vision and strategy by taking into account the developmental stage of the team and the current conditions in order to manage differences and diversity. The way the leader handles the situation, supports the development of the team, delegates and gives initiative varies depending on the experience level and expertise of the team he/she communicates with.

In order to do this management correctly, the leader is in a continuous learning and observation process. The gold collar leader is expected to understand the strengths and weaknesses of all employees at all levels, support their strengths, provide them with the opportunity to improve their weaknesses, make strategic delegations accordingly, monitor the coordination of work outputs, and motivate everyone by including them with the communication language they strategically adapt to the need.

The skill most used by gold collar leaders in this level of leadership, of which inclusive communication and management is a part, is surviving in the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) world. The business world is rapidly affected by many issues such as natural disasters, economic crises, war,

technological developments and pandemics and is undergoing sudden transformations. Since all these external factors occur suddenly and their impact on the business world, the sector in which it operates, and the parameters cannot always be predicted, the whole of these conditions is defined as VUCA world. Gold collar leaders, on the other hand, have to ensure that in this uncertain world, an institution can withstand existing conditions, move towards a new vision, be prepared for possible/unlikely crises, emerge from crises with minimum damage, and not miss new investment opportunities. Managing this very complex situation and meeting these expectations requires the skill of surviving in VUCA world, which is also quite complex. In order to gain this skill, which Participant F likens to sailing a ship in a wavy ocean, gold collar leaders shape the vision and strategy of the institution by always following global cases and constantly analyzing the direction of economic parameters and political fluctuations. Their most strategic supporters are the networks they have established within the sector, inter-sectorally, locally and globally. Thanks to this network, they can diversify their information sources and make more consistent analyses, predictions and syntheses based on the information they collect from them. Participant I described his experience of surviving in the VUCA world as follows:

> There are two main factors that changed my perspective that allowed me to survive in this environment full of uncertainties. The first of these is the events we experience and the experiences we gain, and the other is continuous learning. The workload left after the resignation of the very good experts in their field with whom I worked together changed my life in a short time. The fact that I shouldered this workload and continued without dropping the ball strengthened my managers' trust in me. Feeling this trust of my managers motivated me to take my work one step further and expand my vision. Due to our position, numbers are critical and responsibilities are risky. Therefore, there is no room for inertia. For this reason, I realized that in order to design the future, I always need to keep learning alive and on a wide range. Since 2011, I have been investing in myself through active

> observation and nourishment from a wide range of sources to improve myself. (Participant I, N-2, Appendix E, 28)

In this section, in addition to the skills under the theme of becoming a leader, the complex skills expected from gold collar leaders emphasized by the participating leaders are explained in detail. All these skills come together to make the leader's performance outstanding. Although these skills are the product of cumulative business life experiences, they are also indispensable for the continuity of the leadership journey that enables the accumulation of these experiences.

Becoming a gold collar leader – Way of Learning

As mentioned in previous parts, leaders, especially leaders who are advanced in their leadership journey, have their own special way of learning. Participant leaders stated in their narratives that throughout their leadership journey, this way of learning changed and reshaped according to their needs. The first step of this change is the analysis of existing prior knowledge due to the expanding domain and complexity of the roles and responsibilities. As a second step, synthesizing this prior knowledge to make it suitable for new situations and the development of cognitive capacity. Participant M explained how he synthesized his old knowledge and used it in a new definition of responsibility:

> I still spend most of my time researching areas that interest me. Sometimes it is economic, sometimes it is global.For example, we are currently in a period where I read and watch a lot about global politics. Money theory is not related to my job at all, I read about it. For example, I conducted an audit 15 years ago. While I was auditing, there was a concept called inflation accounting. When I left finance, Türkiye was already out of an inflationary environment and I stopped doing inflation accounting in 2004-2005. But today we are back in that environment and we are accounting for inflation again this year for the first time. For example, I also know where the IFRS sources are. I can go back and read them again. I am currently refreshing my old knowledge about inflation accounting. This, for example, is very detailed information, but it also speeds up the financials I come across while making sense of things, or our normal financials that have been converted into inflation accounting. It makes it easier to make

> decisions, make comments easier, or ask the right questions. As I advance in management and leadership, knowing actually helps me make decisions. I think it is very valuable because of the effect of asking the right questions. (Participant M, N & N-2, Appendix E, 29)

It has been explained in previous chapters that the most basic source of learning for leaders is experiences. However, while leaders lead their subordinates, gold collar leaders lead other leaders, that is why, their most important resource is their first managerial experience. Because at that time, he/she knows both what he/she needs as a leader to manage his/her team and what he/she expects from his/her own leader. During this period, participant leaders learned to communicate in a managerial role with their subordinates, managers and peers, had the opportunity to try many management styles in many situations, tried and failed or succeeded, and learned to persuade people to work for the same goal. Moreover, they achieved these by developing their own strategies in both familiar and unfamiliar environments. They took risks and managed crises. All these experiences became their source of learning. When leaders become gold collar leaders, their responsibilities are similar to their previous responsibilities, but they become more advanced, more complex and more important. For this reason, they synthesize what they have learned from their first managerial experiences and apply it to their current experiences by considering it from a broader perspective. The first managerial role teaches the leader how to manage a team within the framework of the dynamics and rules of his own institution. The gold collar leader takes these teachings and applies them to larger target audiences both within the institution and acquires new skills by adding what he has learned from his new experiences in the inter-institutional or global arena.

> As I rose in management and became a director, I always attached great importance to understanding the systems I was involved in, perhaps because I had a special interest in them. How is it? Which system does it work with? What is he talking about? I never lost this curiosity. I always continued. I am very interested in understanding

> the mechanisms. I continued this, but my responsibilities in management and leadership were still soft skills. Areas such as mentoring, creating a vision, determining strategy, developing follow-up mechanisms for teams to not deviate from the strategy, measuring performance efficiently, driving performance, not only measuring but also managing performance started to take up more of my time. On the other hand, I started to move further and further away. As I move towards higher levels of director, now senior director and general manager, I see that I am now in a place where I follow the global world more, follow the sector not only in Turkey but also abroad, and do a significant part of my learning independently of the sector. At first, I was learning business-oriented. As I progressed through the ranks, I started learning in a human-centered manner. As the level progresses, I learn with a focus on making more sense of the global world. So, I have 3 stages in my learning journey. (Participant M, N & N-2, Appendix E, 30)

10 of the 15 participating leaders are in environments where they can gain global experiences due to their gold collar leader position. They gain international and interindustrial experience while doing business with global customers at the events of the international institutions of which they are members, when they represent their own sector in the international arena, in the overseas units of the teams they manage, and when doing business with global customers. 5 of our participating leaders also have experience working abroad at some point during their leadership journey. Producing work output in another culture and professional life, establishing a team, managing a team, and communicating enable the leader to learn and develop many skills such as flexibility, inclusiveness, openness, and managing uncertainty. Participating leaders who have experience of working or studying abroad, 14 out of 15 leaders have experience of working, studying or having a business relationship abroad, state that the teachings they gained during these experiences transformed them. When we look at the literature, the experience gained in the global ecosystem is defined as valuable and rare due to the global perspective and cross-cultural leadership it adds to the leader (Ng et al., 2009).

In this global experience, the gold collar leader first learns the culture, unwritten rules and requirements of the environment he is unfamiliar with. Afterwards, the leader tries to understand and make sense of the mindsets, attitudes and behaviors of the stakeholders with whom he/she communicates and interacts. Then, he/she determines his/her communication language and leadership style in line with these teachings. Since he/she is exposed to many personal, institutional and professional frameworks in this process, he/she constantly learns and adapts by synthesizing what he/she has learned. As a result of all this learning, gold collar leaders' adaptation skills are improved, they learn to manage diversity and have a more comprehensive perspective. Participant J, who has done business with many foreign stakeholders, explained what this experience has brought to her as follows:

> Although it is not within the scope of my current role, due to my competencies, there are a few institutions in which I have worked in the past, one of which is XXX and the other is XXXX. Both of these are institutions where the technology-focused agendas created by operators coming together are discussed. I represent our institution at XXX and XXXX. Here, we talk with representatives of operators abroad about their agenda, especially on these technology issues. These are very important to me as resources to improve myself. Both in terms of Networking and to learn about what is on the agenda and what is being done. (Participant J, N-2, Appendix E, 31)

During the international experience, the leader becomes aware of his/her own cultural and institutional patterns and learns to break them and become more open, flexible and tolerant towards other people's points of view. Thus, his/her self-confidence increases as he/she expands the scope of his/her leadership and validates his/her leadership internationally.

Gold collar leaders participate in many trainings until they reach this level. However, at their current level, the development processes they are involved in with the support of the corporate academy are built on executive coaching. They direct their own development by having one-to-one meetings with executive coaches, who

were former gold collar leaders and have expertise in areas such as persuasion, negotiation, vision creation and financial leadership. During these sessions, they find solutions to existing problems by getting advice based on their own cases and benefiting from the coach's previous experiences, and they also work on what attitude, stance and behavior they should exhibit in these situations by discussing possible scenarios they may encounter. Since the sessions are individually designed, the gold collar leader first decides on the coach he wants to work with by having chemistry meetings with the coaches offered in the field he needs. Afterwards, sessions are held in the direction and number of sessions that he decides on the subject he wants to focus on during the session. The important thing here is that the selected coach has industry experience and coaching experience.

The findings regarding the way of learning of gold collar leaders explained in this section show that leaders update their way of learning in line with the requirements of their duties. At the same time, they add resources such as international experience or first managerial role to their learning resources, synthesizing the teachings they receive from these and putting them into practice. In addition, it is seen that when leaders become gold collar leaders, they do not move away from the continuous learning mindset, on the contrary, the importance they attach to this issue increases and they continue their development with processes such as executive coaching that they customize for themselves.

Becoming a gold collar leader – Knowledge

Knowledge is a concept built cumulatively. The gold collar leader has also accumulated a lot of knowledge in the areas explained in the previous sections throughout his/her leadership journey. However, they also stated that after gold collar

became the leader during the narratives, new ones were added to these knowledge areas.

The first of these areas is interindustrial knowledge. Gold collar leaders, as representatives of their sectors, take part in different institutions, unions, associations and events in the business world, and interact a lot with other sectors. During these interactions, in addition to mastering the parameters of other sectors, they also build the relationship between these parameters and the parameters of their own sectors. They analyze the teachings they have acquired in this process and use this information in the processes of creating vision and providing direction. If the institution will invest in new business lines or provide services to different customers in the future, the insights obtained from the synthesis of this information form the basis of these investments. Participant E explains the impact of having interindustrial knowledge on business output as follows:

> The sources of learning are primarily a work cycle. For example, you start as an expert, your white shadow or your deskmate teaches you something. You can sometimes learn technique there too. Your manager is teaching. After a while, you may get something from your peers but also from other units. You try to understand marketing in this way, you add something to yourself from there. If you are not in finance, you are trying to understand a little bit of finance, what they do. You try to integrate what you have learned into your work to create added value, to progress, to do the job better. It expands a little to peers. Then, ultimately, it seems like it is necessary to create a network with anonymous mentors, industry experts, and friends of friends in certain sectors. That network teaches a lot. Actually, maybe I won't shoot it until today. I worked in the stock market for two years in the mid-2000s, in the fifth or seventh year of my career. I wasn't senior yet when I left. Later, there were things I looked back and learned from my more senior friends while I was at the holding company. Some of this is technical information, some is market information. Sometimes, information such as these two companies in the market are merging, this is the reason for this, can give you both power and an idea and direction at a decision point at the table. Hearing and knowing a little bit about what's going on in the market, related to your business, gives you weight at any table. They say oh, is that how it is done? Does someone have something like that? What are they doing in this country? Then, we may decide to think about

> this country, but it is important to be a little bit deaf, of course, within the ethical boundaries of these matters. (Participant E, N & N-2, Appendix E, 32)

Having international knowledge, just like having interindustrial knowledge, is one of the requirements that come into the gold collar leader's life with the expansion of his/her responsibilities. As the participant leaders stated, the leader keeps himself/herself up to date by following global developments throughout his/her career. However, when the leader is a gold collar leader, he/she becomes one of the leaders who influences, determines and gives direction to global parameters. Especially a prominent leader of the country's leading institutions represents both his/her country and his/her sector in the global arena. If his/her country is the leader of that sector, he/she is the leader who determines and influences the global parameters. For this reason, regardless of the size of the domain, gold collar leaders are always in interaction with global business world parameters. The gold collar leader either directs these parameters or creates a vision and provides direction with the direction and insight he/she receives from these parameters. Participant D describes her experience in shaping the parameters of the global business world as follows:

> We were the first and only company that could give an opinion to the OECD from the private sector. We presented a model and received an invitation because they wanted us to explain that model there in person. That day, they only invited 300 people for their live broadcast to the whole world. An average of two people was called from the companies. We were both able to go together. So, think of it as if 150 companies from all over the world were actually invited. Of course, we are from Turkey and it is the first in the history of our country. They invite bureaucrats for government meetings, but normally there is no one representing the private sector. But we were invited because the model we presented was deemed worthy of evaluation. Then I had to go and explain it there and talk a little bit about it. Then they began to examine the model even more deeply. That day, for example, was a very critical day for me. You are speaking on behalf of your country and as someone who comes from Turkey, but you are actually describing a model that can affect the whole world. I remember that

> day, when that speech was over and there was a break, everyone came and found me. Everyone came, they say that we want to support the model, etc. Therefore, I think that meeting was a very critical meeting. (Participant D, N-2, Appendix E, 33)

In addition to the knowledge areas presented in the previous section, having interindustrial knowledge and global business world parameters knowledge enables gold collar leaders to fulfill the leadership responsibilities expected from them. In addition, due to the abundance of experience of gold collar leaders and their consulted leadership positions, they are now positioned as leaders who produce information and are sources of information, rather than being in the position of receiving information.

In sum, in this portion of the chapter, findings on gold collar leaders' way of learning are presented with two main themes, five dimensions and 102 codes, and discussed in light of literature. The themes of "Becoming a leader" and "Becoming a gold collar leader", generated with the concept of getting there and being there, were examined within the dimensions of "leadership mindset & style", "responsibilities", "skills", "way of learning" and "knowledge". In the following portion of the chapter, the learning journey of gold collar leaders will be examined as a whole.

4.4 Learning journey: A mix of learning models

In the fast-changing world of leadership, a leader's leadership journey is shaped by deep learning experiences, mindset changes and perspective shifts. The main aim of the study is to look at the learning journeys of gold collar leaders as a whole and to reveal their main learning resources and strategies. With the data collected within the scope of this study, the main elements of the learning experiences of gold collar leaders in their leadership journey, the difficulties they experienced in this process,

and the effects of these difficulties or learning on their leadership styles and mindset changes were revealed.

During the interviews, the participants explained their leadership journeys and the learning experiences they had during this journey with examples. All these learning journeys and effecting factors were examined in the previous portions of the chapter.

When the narratives of the participant leaders were examined, it was seen that the learning processes they experienced as they progressed on their leadership journeys consisted of a mixture of many learning models such as experiential learning, self-directed learning and transformative learning, and that these learnings started with the social environments and interactions brought about by corporate life, made sense within this social environment and were used in other situations arising from this environment.

At this point, when we look at the literature, we see that Jarvis (2005) characterizes human learning as the development of human beings both by being in the position they are in and by being nourished by what this position brings. To explain this definition in detail, according to Jarvis, learning is based on both experiential and existential foundations and involves the integration of cognitive, emotional and practical processes based on the social context and interactions. Peter Jarvis and Stella Parker (2005) in their book "Human Learning: A Holistic Approach" suggested that in order to understand human learning, a holistic perspective should be taken. According to them, in order to understand human learning, the combination of various models and views should be understood and analyzed by taking into account the social context in which learning takes place or originates. From the same point of view, they emphasized that learning should not be

viewed only in formal settings and that it is important to approach the processes studied with the awareness that learning takes place at any time throughout life in order to make sense of the learning process.

The leadership and learning journeys of participant leaders in this study are similar to each other and to the outcomes of other studies in the literature based on similar target groups (Powell, 2007; Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Sarkan, 2021; Salicru, 2015; Tobias, 1999; Zeybek, 2006; Wonacott, 2007). When all these studies and similar ones are analyzed, it is seen that leaders' learnings are centered around certain experiences they had when they acquired the most skills and knowledge. Examples of these experiences include launching a new project, entering a new sector and starting a business, establishing a new company, saving a project or a company that is going badly, moments of crisis, risk-taking, decisions made in the daily flow, increasing roles and responsibilities. It has been stated in many similar studies that as a result of the teachings brought by all these experiences and the changes and transformations experienced by leaders, leaders move forward in the leadership ladder. However, this does not mean that there are learnings that emerge at the end of all these experiences or that these learnings are adopted by the leaders and thus the learnings have a transformative effect on the leaders (McCall, 2004; Hoggan, 2016). Even if leaders have gone through the same experience, the process of transforming it into learning is different for each leader. Therefore, in order to facilitate the transformation of experience into learning, it is necessary to know the learning process of the learner and the factors that affect this learning.

Although the main focus of their learning processes seems to be the experiences they encounter in their professional lives, the fact that participant leaders' learning journeys are fed from a single source is not enough for their

development. Participant narratives support this, showing that their learning process is a complex and multifaceted process involving many learning models. Gold collar leaders have learning journeys that they design with similar learning methods and resources, where the main elements are similar but the design is personalized to them. They are supported by experiential learning as they learn and apply the knowledge and skills required by the daily workflows that come with their leadership responsibilities. They use self-directed learning in the design of their learning journeys to ensure that their own development is sustainable and that it continuously nurtures them and moves them forward in their leadership levels. They use transformative learning to create change that impacts themselves, their organizations, their ecosystems or society at large.

The creation and continuity of these learning processes are influenced by many factors such as leadership mindset, skills and knowledge. Therefore, in this study, in order to understand the learning that leaders experience in their leadership journey, firstly, the learning paths of leaders are examined in detail and the factors affecting the learning journey and the relationship between them are revealed. In this process, we also looked at whether leaders learn from their experiences and whether they adopt these learnings. In their answers to the interview questions, the leaders gave examples of both the experiences they had encountered in their leadership journeys, the teachings they had gained from these experiences, and how they had used these teachings. They emphasized that the lessons they learned from the difficulties or failures they encountered in these experiences had an effect on them. One of the best examples of this is when Participant L was expected to solve a nationwide crisis in his field of expertise, but no one was able to solve the crisis, Participant L used what he learned in this process to change his leadership style and

adapt his team to it, and then he became the go-to leader in every crisis, regardless of the issue. Participant L characterizes this experience as a transformative one and the knowledge and skills he learned as transformative learning.

The leader's transformative learning journey is a complex process that includes elements such as disorienting dilemma, critical thinking, critical reflection, meaningful dialogue, behavioral change, and mentality change. This process provides the leader with important competencies in the business world such as adaptability, visionary and inclusivity. The leader changes as he/she learns, and as he/she changes, his/her leadership style changes. Leader development improves business results and shapes the future and culture of the organization.

However, when viewed from another perspective, as explained in the review section of the literature, not every change in a person's behavior, attitude or discourse can be described as transformative. For this reason, the metatheory (Hoggan, 2016) made to define transformative experiences brought together all these criteria found in the literature.

In this study, where we examine the learning journeys of gold collar leaders, we can evaluate whether the learning experiences of leaders in their journey of becoming gold collar leaders have transformative features by evaluating the emerging learning methods, learning and resources according to this metatheory. Although participant leaders describe most of the learning they describe in their answers as transformative, the fact that they describe their learning in this way does not mean that it is transformative.

According to Hoggan (2016), calling a learning experience transformative means that that learning process creates both significant and permanent changes in the learner's stance, behavior, perspective and perception. However, just the fact that

these changes have occurred is not enough to call that experience transformative. According to Hoggan (2016), for a change or transformation to be transformative, there must first be a change. However, this change should not have outcomes that involve small changes such as "I decided to be more careful when communicating." Hoggan (2016) grouped learning outcomes into six separate categories in his metatheory: worldview, self, epistemology, ontology, behavior and capacity. The learning outcome that a person obtains may be a worldview or a change in behavior, but in order to be called transformative, the depth is first taken into consideration, that is, the degree to which there is a change. Afterwards, the breadth is checked to see how many different contexts can show this change. Finally, the permanence of this change, that is, its relative stability, is checked.

In this regard, if we look at the learning experiences of the gold collar leaders, many of them described the leadership mindset they acquired with each new experience as transformative. For example, Participant I described the change in his perspective on leadership as follows:

> My perspective on leadership has evolved over the years from a cm2 perspective to a km2 perspective. In other words, I moved from a micro perspective to a macro perspective and thus experienced a leadership evolution. When my leadership perspective focused on the bigger picture, I realized that not everything is right. Not every success is always a success. From a strategic point of view, that right may not be right at another time. For this reason, before making my right or wrong judgments and decisions, I make my decisions by thoroughly analyzing the situation we are in and checking our strategic positioning in that situation. I base this on team management as well. (Participant I, N-2, Appendix E, 34)

Based on this example, we can see that there is a change in mindset. Based on this, we can say that this learning outcome has depth. When we examine Participant I's answers to interview questions in detail, we can see that he uses this mindset not only in the business environment but also in other contexts such as academia and family

life. When we look at its relative stability, there are examples in his answers where he continues this mindset with determination. When viewed from these perspectives, it can be said that Participant I's learning experience is transformative.

With a similar analysis approach, when the transformative properties of all participants' learning experiences, especially those they defined as transformative, were examined, it was seen that there was not enough evidence for this on the basis of all criteria. Although we can talk about a change and transformation, that is, depth, for each participant leader. Unfortunately, it seems that more detailed data is needed or questions should be asked directly with explaining what transformative learning is in order to show evidence of breadth or relative stability.

Many of the experiences or learnings that participant leaders described as were characterized by a sense of inadequacy. When a leader realizes that his/her leadership style, knowledge or skills are inadequate, such as when he/she is unable to solve a crisis, lead a team, or successfully implement a project, he/she resorts to different ways of learning to overcome this inadequacy. He/she invests in himself/herself in the area where he/she feels inadequate by choosing the appropriate learning method for himself/herself and the situation, such as reflecting on his/her mistakes, receiving counseling support, consulting with peers, receiving mentoring support, receiving coaching. Mezirow (1994) defines this experience as a disorienting dilemma in transformative learning theory, which creates awareness of inadequacy, and after the leader comes out of it with learning, the leader acquires new and altered beliefs, assumptions and perspectives in the context of their lives and careers. Kolb (1984) refers to this as concrete experience, the stage in the experiential learning cycle where the individual experiences concrete experience at the beginning of learning. Marsick and Watkins (2005), on the other hand, in their

informal and incidental learning model, refer to it as trigger, which is the event or situation that initiates the learning process.

For many leaders, these moments such as a major crisis, a challenging project, or feedback received, that cause a disorienting dilemma or concrete experience or trigger, are opportunities to evaluate themselves and improve. During the interviews with the participant leaders, many leaders shared the moments when they experienced such moments. The crisis faced by Participant L and the failure to resolve this crisis, Participant K's decision to support his employee despite predicting the outcome of his entrepreneurial journey, Participant A's difficult time after the death of his own manager, Participant G's taking responsibility of establishing new company, Participant I's realization of that his leadership perspective was insufficient as his sphere of influence and the risk of his responsibilities increased, were some of the examples that can be given.

In these moments, leaders engage in critical reflection and realize that their previous knowledge or assumptions are not sufficient. They then begin to search for new ways of thinking or behaving that will solve the situation they are in. They acquire new learning through learning solutions in their own style, that is, through different solutions such as receiving feedback, consulting with their mentor, observing, and trial and error. In the previous portions of the chapter, the learning moments of participant leaders and the factors affecting this learning were discussed in detail. It was observed that leaders were not alone in their learning journey, that is, they experienced perspective changes in constant communication and interaction with their coaches, mentors, peers, managers, or colleagues; which are personal learning network resources of leaders. As a result of these discussions and interactions, leaders experience a mindset shift by synthesizing and adopting the

insights or learnings they obtain. As a result of this learning, the outcomes they obtain not only help them understand themselves but also transform and shape their leadership journeys.

Participant leaders stated that they experienced perspective transformation or mindset shift in many places in their narratives. What they describe as transformed in their statements is actually a change in how they see themselves, their roles and the organization. This change is achieved by critically reflecting on the situation they are in and then synthesizing and adopting the outputs of their dialogues to make sense of them. Experiencing and adapting to these transformations has enabled leaders to become more inclusive and visionary as they progress in their leadership journey.

As the participant leaders stated, the dynamics of the business world and the requirements of surviving in corporate life offer leaders an environment that makes it possible to experience disorienting dilemma or concrete experience or trigger, which are the first steps of learning, every day and every moment. What is really important here is that the leader evaluates this as a learning and development opportunity by doing critical thinking and reflection after this experience. They stated that even though the leaders adopted the growth mindset, they still encountered resistance to this change both within themselves and in their environment. As Participant M says, “I wasn't always this wise and accepting while I was learning these things. Now, with this knowledge and experience, I can say these when asked and when I examine it from past to present. At that time, I could not adopt these learnings so easily.”

Changing adopted behaviors and beliefs requires resilience. In order to overcome all this resistance and obstacles, embrace the change and development, internalize and implement the learnings brought by these experiences, leaders must have a growth mindset, get support from their mentors within their personal learning

network, cooperate reliably with consultants, and take these actions with courage. Of course, at this point, it is very important that the culture of the institution supports this learning environment. As the corporate culture provides an environment for the leader to take risks and experiment and make mistakes, the leader has the opportunity to learn by experience. With the insights he/she gains from these, he/she transforms himself/herself and the institution due to the leader's impact on the corporate culture. The transformed leader, the progressive leader, the developing leader brings new energy and vision to the organization. The strategies he/she creates to achieve this vision lead the institution to success.

As the participant leaders stated, even though each of them is at the highest leadership level of their current institution, both the leadership journey and the learning journey are not a journey with an end. Leaders continue to learn every day. The new situations they will encounter may cause new experiences that show that their current knowledge is not sufficient. For leaders who embrace continuous learning and have a growth mindset, this can lead to new learning journeys. Adopting lifelong learning not only enables the leader to successfully overcome challenging situations, but also is one of the factors that lead the organization to success.

In conclusion, it can be conceived that as gold collar leaders progress in their leadership careers, they also engage in a parallel learning process. During this period of development, they gain a great deal of knowledge from a variety of sources and experiences. They obtain this knowledge through their distinctive method of learning and then apply it in practice. Gold collar leaders see this learning process as a ladder to reach the top leadership status and the skills and competencies required for this level of leadership. The study reveals that the development of knowledge and skills is not automatic; leaders need to understand their expected role, be aware of their

competencies, and recognize what is required to meet expectations. During this process, leaders need to consider various factors such as organizational culture, dynamics of the corporate world, personal values, and principles, all of which influence their leadership and learning journeys simultaneously. From the perspective of the human learning, it is concluded that their learning journeys are a mix of several learning models, such as experiential learning, self-directed learning and transformative learning, and involve the integration of cognitive, affective and practical processes based on social interactions within the organizational world. These learning journeys equip leaders with crucial competencies such as adaptability to the business world, vision, and inclusiveness.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a summary of the study, including its conclusions based on the findings and subsequent discussions. It also offers recommendations for organizations and aspiring gold collar leaders, and suggests potential avenues for future studies.

5.1 Summary and conclusion

The purpose of this study is to explore how senior executives, known as gold collar leaders, learned to be gold collar leaders. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the learning experiences of leaders throughout their leadership journey. A qualitative research design was used to collect data through semi-structured interviews with 15 gold color leaders working in different or the same companies within the same group. The data were then coded and analyzed to address the following sub-research questions:

- How do the gold collar leaders describe their experiences in their leadership journey?
- What were the sources of learning in their leadership journey?

The data was collected through interviews with participant leaders who described their learning and leadership journeys. The data reveals the learning mindsets, methods, and resources of the participating leaders. It is organized around two main themes, five dimensions, and 102 codes.

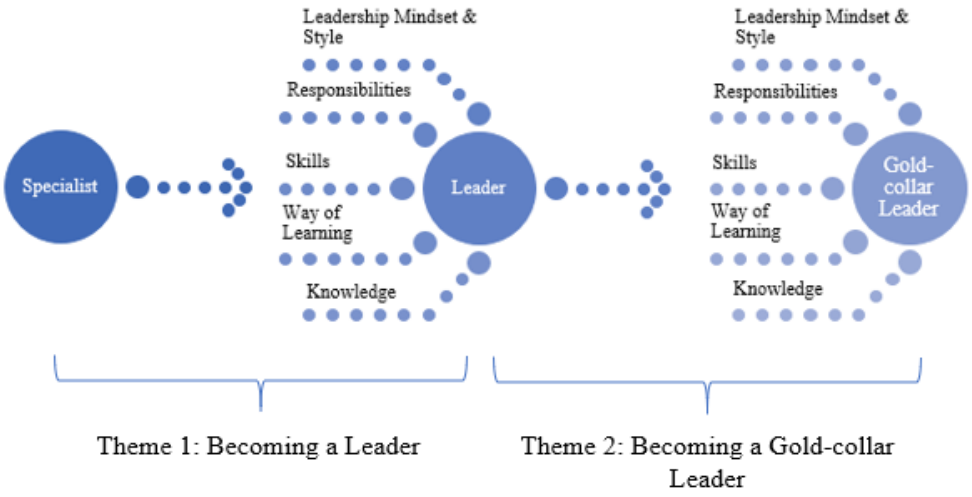

Figure 7. Summary of findings

During the interviews, participant leaders shared their journey of becoming a gold collar leader, progressing from specialization to leadership, and then to gold collar leadership. This progression is illustrated in Figure 7, along with the dimensions that the leaders emphasized as influencing this journey. The specific codes for each dimension are detailed in the Findings and Discussion chapter.

After analyzing the data collected, it seems that the desire to improve task and role performance is what drives the learning journey of the participating leaders, in addition to their strong educational background. Leaders aim to properly fulfill their responsibilities, lead effectively, and continuously enhance their leadership mindset, perspectives, and styles. As leaders embrace opportunities to learn with a growth mindset, they become more effective leaders and progress in their leadership journey through the success of their work outcomes. Their roles and responsibilities expand and become more complex, and their learning methods and journeys develop accordingly. A detailed examination of these journeys reveals the experiences of leaders and the impact of their learning experiences on their leadership.

When viewed through the lens of the research questions, the study revealed that the vast majority of the participating gold collar leaders said that their learning journey took them to this level of leadership and transformed them into the leaders they are today. They also said that the training programs provided by their organizations were beneficial to them. However, they emphasized that what is necessary for learning all this knowledge, acquiring skills and putting them into practice in real life is to be in an environment where that knowledge or skill can be used meaningfully. Based on these outputs, it can be said that gold collar leaders design their own learning journeys by using many learning resources such as trainings offered by the organization, resources where they get information about their own interests, consultants, mentors, coaches, peers. In this learning design and management process, they become more innovative, more inclusive and more visionary by constantly reshaping their values, mindsets and perspectives in line with the observations they make in the ecosystem they are in.

Besides these, they also emphasized that the source of the learning that took them one step further in leadership was experiences and interaction with people in the ecosystem they were in. They emphasized that experiences often begin with a triggering event or disorienting dilemma, such as a crisis, conflict, or feeling of incompetence. They provided examples of learning in different situations and emphasized that the knowledge acquired in training programs is not fully internalized unless it is applied to a relevant problem or personal experience. When examining the responses of the participant leaders detailing their learning journeys, it is evident that the most influential and beneficial types of learning for them are learning by doing, coaching, mentoring, self-directed learning, and observation.

In today's rapidly changing business world, organizations are investing significantly in the knowledge economy to stay competitive and adapt to economic changes. It is evident that organizations with a knowledgeable and competent workforce are better equipped to thrive in this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. As a result, organizations are heavily investing in learning and development to establish a sustainable competitive advantage. A crucial component of this investment is the cultivation of gold collar leaders; who are the innovative, visionary management team that guides both the organization and the ecosystem they are in with agility and strategic intelligence. Therefore, the learning journeys of these influential leaders, who shape the future of the organization with their decisions and visions, are of utmost importance.

Participants' narratives show that no single learning model is sufficient for the development of gold collar leaders, nor is there a single structured learning path to follow to become a gold collar leader. Instead, leader-specific learning journeys where each learning model is positioned and utilized based on need are the most effective. Self-directed learning, transformative learning and experiential learning are the learning models that the gold collar leaders interviewed for this study most frequently use in their learning journeys. We can infer that experiential learning is used to solve real world problems encountered in the daily workflow process of leadership, self-directed learning is used to manage the personal learning network built to make learning sustainable, and transformative learning is used to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable the person to bring about changes that will affect themselves, the organization or the society.

The most important point is for the leader to analyze the situation and the environment well, to be aware of his/her own skills and competencies, to understand

what he/she needs and to know through which learning pathway he/she can achieve that knowledge or skill. The data collected in this study shows that leaders' learning journeys are specifically tailored to each leader, influenced by factors such as mindset, skills, and knowledge. Leaders recognize that progress in their leadership journey is closely linked to their learning journey. It can be said that, leaders embrace learning outcomes and continuously enhance their leadership styles, skills, and mindsets based on these outcomes. According to the leaders who participated in the study, leaders have the potential and opportunity to learn in every moment of their daily lives. However, the leaders explained that it is the learning that leaves a lasting impact and moves the leader forward in their leadership journey that truly shapes and transforms them.

In summary, Gold Collar leaders go on a learning journey as they progress in their leadership roles. During this journey, they gain insights from a variety of sources and experiences. They assimilate this learning in their own unique way and put it into practice. Gold collar leaders view this learning and progress as transformative for themselves. From the perspective of the human learning, it is concluded that gold collar leaders' learning process as they move through their leadership journeys. This learning journeys are a mix of several learning models, such as experiential learning, self-directed learning and transformative learning, and involve the integration of cognitive, affective and practical processes based on social interactions within the organizational world. The learning journey results in leaders undergoing a development process, evolving their leadership style to reach the top level of leadership. While there are programs designed by the training professionals of the organization with which they are affiliated, because learning is a lifelong journey, most leaders essentially design and manage their own learning journeys.

Therefore, they can draw inspiration from the learning journeys of their peers in designing their own learning journeys. In this way, they can position the learning journeys of other leaders as learning resources in their personal learning network.

5.2 Recommendations

After reviewing findings of the current study, recommendation for organizations, aspiring gold collar leaders and further studies are presented.

Those responsible for training and developing leaders in institutions can benefit from the findings of this study, especially when creating training programs for leaders preparing to reach the gold collar leader level. Education experts can design training programs based on the responsibilities highlighted by the leaders in the study, focusing on the skills needed to fulfill these responsibilities. Instead of focusing solely on theoretical knowledge transfer, they should incorporate experiential learning applications to help leaders acquire the necessary skills. Furthermore, the study's findings can help education experts understand the expectations of the participants. By recognizing these expectations, experts can develop more effective training programs and offer solutions tailored to gold collar leaders.

In this rapidly changing environment, education experts struggle to meet the needs of gold collar leaders for up-to-date information due to economic conditions, business world parameters, and leadership competencies. For this reason, to keep the institution up to date, it is essential to have well-informed leaders. Establishing information-sharing networks can ensure this up-to-dateness. Consultants, peers, and customers can be part of this network. Naturally, every leader can establish this

network on their own, but the support of education experts within the institution will enhance this network.

Leaders preparing for the gold collar leadership position may not always have access to information about the responsibilities undertaken in that position. Or, they may not have access to a resource where they can view the competencies required for a potential promotion to that position. The findings of this study provide valuable insights for gold collar leadership candidates, helping them understand their responsibilities and competencies. The potential leaders can enhance their skills as outlined in this study to better prepare for the mentioned responsibilities. They can also expand their knowledge in the specified areas. Furthermore, gold collar leader candidates can further develop themselves by drawing inspiration from the emphasized learning approach in the study.

Also, considering the outcomes of this and similar studies, other aspiring gold collar leaders should design and manage their own learning journeys supported by different learning models. In designing and managing these learning journeys, aspiring gold collar leaders can be supported by the training departments of the organizations they are affiliated with and can be taught which learning method provides which knowledge in which situation. Institutions can also prepare inspiring training programs on how these models can be positioned in an optimal balance within the learning journey.

First of all, for future studies, this study can be conducted with a more diverse participant group from various sectors. Conducting a cross-sectoral study could lead to the design of a more effective development program for gold collar leaders.

Finally, further research on the demographics of gold collar leaders could yield valuable information, such as exploring gender-based learning experiences and differences in leadership journeys.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Gender:

Age:

Education history:

- Your latest degree:

  Bachelor Degree/ Masters Degree / PhD

Current Title:

Work Experience (years distributed according to title):

Total:

As Professional:

As Manager:

As Gold Collar:

Scope of Control (number of employees reporting to you):

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Lider olarak mesleki yaşam deneyiminizden bahseder misiniz lütfen? Önceki yıllardan bir farkı var mı? Varsa ne gibi bir farkı var? Örneklerle açıklar mısınız lütfen?

2. Mesleğinizde deneyim kazandıkça öğrenmeye bakış açınızın değiştiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Değiştiyse nasıl? Örneklerle açıklar mısınız lütfen?

3. Bu düzeye yükselmenizde hangi yetkinliklerinizin etkili olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz? Nedenleriyle örnek vererek açıklar mısınız lütfen?

- Bu yetkinliklerinizin gelişiminde hangi bilgi ve beceriler sizi ileriye taşıdı?

4. Liderlik tarzınızdan biraz bahsedebilir misiniz?

5. Liderlik tarzınız açısından ne tür öğrenme deneyimlerinin size yardımcı olabileceğini düşünüyorsunuz? Nedenleriyle örnek vererek açıklar mısınız lütfen?

6. Ne zaman önemli bir öğrenme perspektifi değişikliği yaptınız ve bu değişikliği yapmanıza neler sebep oldu? Nedenleriyle örnek vererek açıklar mısınız lütfen?

7. Pozisyonunuzda ve işinizde güncel kalmak için ne yaparsınız? Kendinizi nasıl geliştirirsiniz? Nedenleriyle örnek vererek açıklar mısınız lütfen?

8. Bu pozisyona gelmek isteyen yöneticilere öğrenme yolculukları açısından nasıl tavsiyeler verirsiniz?

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Araştırmayı destekleyen kurum: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi
Araştırmanın adı: Liderlik Rollerinde Öz-Yönelimli Öğrenme Yolunun İnşası: Jung'un Liderlik Arketipleri Perspektifi
Proje Yürütücüsü: Doç. Dr. Havva Ayşe Caner
E-mail adresi:
Telefonu:
Araştırmacının adı: Rukiye Bektaş
E-mail adresi:
Telefonu:

Proje konusu: Bu çalışmada, altın yakalı liderlerin dönüşümsel öğrenme deneyimleri ve bu deneyimlerin liderlik yolculukları içerisindeki rolü incelenecektir. Çalışma kolay ulaşılabilir durum örnekleme yöntemi ile belirlenmiş, 15 katılımcı ile yapılan yaklaşık 40 dakikalık görüşmelerden oluşacaktır. Görüşme soruları demografik bilgi ve dönüşümsel öğrenme deneyimleri hakkında detay bilgisi olmak üzere iki kısım olarak organize edilmiştir. Görüşme yapılacak katılımcılar kurumsal organizasyonda minimum 2 yıl altın yakalı lider olarak görev almış olmaları, kendilerine bağlı çalışan sayısına ve toplam liderlik deneyimine göre belirlenecektir. Çıkan sonuçlar doğrultusunda kurumsal organizasyonlardaki eğitimler için yeni uygulama önerilerinde bulunulacaktır.

Onam:

Sayın katılımcı,

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü öğretim üyesi Doç. Dr. Havva Ayşe Caner'in danışmanlığında Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü Doktora öğrencisi Rukiye Bektaş'ın "Liderlik Rollerinde Öz-Yönelimli Öğrenme Yolunun İnşası: Jung'un Liderlik Arketipleri Perspektifi" başlıklı tez çalışmasında kullanılmak amacıyla yapılacaktır. Çalışma kapsamında, altın yakalı liderlerin dönüşümsel öğrenme deneyimleri ve bu deneyimlerin liderlik yolculukları içerisindeki rolü incelenmek üzere görüşmeler yapılacaktır.

Görüşme sonrasında yapılacak olan analizin geçerliliğine katkısı açısından, izin verdiğiniz taktirde görüşmemizin ses kaydını alacağım. Alınan kayıt araştırmacı olarak tarafım dışında kimse tarafından dinlenilmeyecek, kullanılmayacak ve üçüncü kişilerle paylaşılmayacaktır. Görüşmelerin yazılı dökümü yapılırken katılımcıların isimleri gizli tutulacaktır. Sizle yapılan görüşmeler ileride akademik nitelikli çalışmalar için kullanılacaktır. İstediğiniz zaman çalışmaya katılmaktan vazgeçebilirsiniz. Bu durumda o ana kadar sizden toplanan veriler imha edilerek çalışma kapsamı dışında bırakılacaktır.

Çalışmaya katılmanız tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Sizden herhangi bir ücret talep edilmiyor ve size herhangi bir ödeme yapılmayacaktır.

Bu formu imzalamadan önce, çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız varsa lütfen sorun. Daha sonra sorunuz olursa, tez danışmanı Doç. Dr. Ayşe Havva Caner'e ve araştırmacı Rukiye Bektaş'a sorabilirsiniz. Araştırmayla ilgili haklarınız ve/veya

şikayetleriniz konusunda Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Tezleri Etik İnceleme Komisyonu'na (SOBETİK) mail adresinden ya da telefondan ulaşabilirsiniz.

Adres ve telefon numaranız değişirse, araştırmacıya haber vermenizi rica ederiz.

Ben, (katılımcının adı) ....., yukarıdaki metni okudum ve katılmam istenen çalışmanın kapsamını ve amacını, gönüllü olarak üzerime düşen sorumlulukları tamamen anladım. Çalışma hakkında soru sorma imkanı buldum. Bu çalışmayı istediğim zaman ve herhangi bir neden belirtmek zorunda kalmadan bırakabileceğimi ve bıraktığım takdirde herhangi bir olumsuzluk ile karşılaşmayacağımı anladım.

Bu koşullarda söz konusu araştırmaya kendi isteğimle, hiçbir baskı ve zorlama olmaksızın katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Formun bir örneğini aldım / almak istemiyorum (bu durumda araştırmacı bu kopyayı saklar).

Katılımcının Adı-
Soyadı:.....
İmzası:.....
Adresi (varsa Telefon No, Faks No):.....
.....
Tarih (gün/ay/yıl):...../...../.....

SES KAYDI ALINACAKSA:
☐ Ses kaydı alınmasını kabul ediyorum.

Araştırmacının Adı-Soyadı:.....
İmzası:.....
Tarih (gün/ay/yıl):...../...../.....

APPENDIX D

APPROVAL OF BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL THESIS ETHICAL REVIEW COMMISSION

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 02.03.2023-115797

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER YÜKSEK LİSANS VE DOKTORA TEZLERİ ETİK İNCELEME KOMİSYONU
TOPLANTI KARAR TUTANAĞI

Toplantı Sayısı : 40
Toplantı Tarihi : 08.02.2023
Toplantı Saati : 14:00
Toplantı Yeri : Zoom Sanal Toplantı
Bulunanlar : Prof. Dr. Feyza Çorapçı, Doç. Dr. Arhan S. Ertan, Doç. Dr. Senem Yıldız, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ayşegül Metindoğan
Bulunmayanlar :

Rukiye Bektaş
Eğitim Bilimleri

Sayın Araştırmacı,

"The Construction of Self-directed Learning Path in Leadership Roles: The Perspective of Jung's Leadership Archetypes" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığınız SBB-EAK 2023/18 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 8 Şubat 2023 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar üyelerin toplantıya çevrimiçi olarak katılımı ve oy birliği ile alınmıştır. Onay mektubu üye ve raportör olarak Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen tarafından toplantıya katılan bütün üyeler adına e-imzalanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla, bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin
SOHTORİK İLKMEN
Öğretim Üyesi

e-imzalıdır
Dr. Öğr. ÜyesiYasemin Sohtorik
İlkmen
Öğretim Üyesi
Raportör

SOBETİK 40 08.02.2023

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

APPENDIX E

NARRATIVES IN TURKISH

1 – İlk lider olduğumda eğitim aldığımız bir hoca vardı. Onun eğitimi şöyle etkiliydi. Bir takip programı vardı ama böyle yapmış olmak için değildi. Nasıldı? Önce kendini, kendi motivasyon şeklini, kendi liderlik şeklini, kendi gelişim alanlarını göreceğin bir anket yapıyordun kendine. Sonra gidiyordun aynı anketi takımına yapıyordun. Takımının tek tek motivasyon tipleri, liderlik stilleri böyle tablolara koyuyordun. Sonra gidiyordun eğitmenin karşısına benim takımım bu diyordun. O da malzemen bu diyordu. Bakıyordu mesela diyordu ki bunlar ölü toprak diyordu, bunlar ölü ağaç diyordu. Bu tanımların karşısına sıralıyorduki nsanları. Kapalı odalarda bütün o dönemin liderleri. Sonra bunlarla ilgili ne yapacaksın? Ölü ağaçla ilgili ne yapacaksın? Parlayan çocukla ilgili ne yapacaksın? diye orada sorardı. Sen de önden çalışıp bununla ilgili bunu yapacağım, bununla ilgili bunu yapacağım derdin. Hadi bakalım 3 ay sonra anketler tekrarlanıyordu. Nereye getirdin bunları diye soruyordu. O çok ciddi bir öğrenmeydi. Ben de meraklı bir insan olduğum için acaba ne olacak ne çıkacak diye çok merak ederdim. Sen kendi kendini görüyorsun, onları görüyorsun, takımı görüyorsun ve geliştirmek için bir şey yapıyorsun. Çünkü hocanın karşısına çıkacaksın. Hazırlıksız gidersem paralardı beni. Bir de genel müdüre de rapor veriyordu. Ben de daha ilk level yöneticiyim. Ondan sonra o sınıf ortamında bütün liderler birlikte anlatıyorduk. Ben anlatıyordum. Beni işte peer'ım duyuyor, dinliyor, böyle yapmış, yeni bir aksiyon almış diyordu. Birlikte de öğrenme şansı veriyordu. O çok etkileyici olmuştu benim için. En etkili konulardan bir tanesiydi. (Participant A, N-1)

2 - Dünyayı da takip etmeye çok gayret ediyorum. Bir sürü e-mail grupları var, takip ettiğim podcastler var, okuduğum bloklar var, röportajlar var, onlar var, bunlar var. Yani dünyada da bu işler nasıl oluyor, hangi işin içerisinde isem o işin global sıkıntıları ne, globaldeki dertleri ne, globaldeki eğilim yönelim ne tarafta, o işin pazarı nasıl, o pazardaki rekabet nerede falan bunları da böyle çok takip etmeye çalışıyorum. Şöyle değil atıyorum aylık HBR'a üyeyim her ay onu okuyorum falan değil. Ben artık öğrenmenin o kadar lineer olmadığını düşünüyorum açıkçası. Yani sosyal medyadan da dediğim gibi podcastler üzerinden de bloklar üzerinden de bazen bir yerden ipin ucunu yakalayıp oradan bir yere oradan bir yere oradan bir yere oradan kaynağına gidebiliyorum. O yakaladığım yer bir YouTube'daki bir sohbet olabiliyor orada birisi mesela bir kitaptan bahsediyor. Dönüyorum o kitapla ilgili bir makale okuyorum. Çok ilgimi çekiyor o kitabı alıyorum, kitabı okuyorum falan. Öyle bir yolculuğun içerisine sokuyorum kendimi. (Participant G, N & N-2)

3 - Bir networkümü canlı tutmaya gayret ediyorum. Danışmanlık firmalarında çok ciddi ve pratik kaynak olduğunu düşünüyorum. Oradaki network'imi canlı tutmaya çalışıyorum. Üçüncü olarak online platformlardaki gartner üyeliğimiz var, HBR

üyeliğimiz var, McKinsey ile ilgili üyeliklerimiz var. Bunlar ve aynı zamanda ekip. Ekipten de nasıl öğreniyorum? Ekibe bu konuda görevler veriyorum ve onların öğrendiklerini bize öğreterek kendi öğrenmemizi zenginleştirmeye gayret ediyorum. Bunların hepsini bir mix olarak yapmaya çalışıyorum. (Participant O, N-2)

4 - Yakından iş takibini severim ben. Sonuçta bana bağlı bir çok bölüm var ve bana bağlı insanlara verdiğimiz tasklar var. Onları yakından takip edip akşamın 8'inde 9'unda aklıma bir şey geldiyse ararım arkadaşları. Bir konu vardı ne oldu ne gitti diye. Ekibe bu kısmı biraz hissettirmek gerekiyor. Onların da bu işi ciddiye almalarını benim duruşumla birlikte sağlayabiliyorlar. Onu hissettirmek gerekiyor. Bunun da dediğim gibi sürdürülebilirlik açısından katkı sağladığını düşünüyorum. Hem dengeli hem durumsal bir liderlik. (Participant L, N & N-2)

5 - Özellikle şu şartlarda son birkaç yıldır gerek pandemi, gerek ekonomik koşullar, bağlam çok değişti. İşgücüne, iş yerine bağlılıklar da çok değişik bir hal aldı. Mesela bunları okuyabilmek için insanı da anlamak gerekli. Takımın içerisinde olmak da önemli. Bir örnek vereyim. Biz bu pandemide her ay şehirlerde olanlara bağlanarak bir konu etrafında konuştuk. Çünkü insanlar çok kötü durumdaydı psikolojik olarak. Evlere kapanmak, ölüm korkusu, sevdiklerini kaybetme korkusu ki bir kısmı da kaybetti. O süreç boyunca işte bir ay umudu tartıştık. Başka bir ay hayatın anlamını tartıştık falan öyle. İnsanları bir manada anlamda tutmaya çalıştık. Bu tarz şeyleri de kendiliğinden yapabilmeli liderler. Hep insanın içinde olmalılar. (Participant A, N-1)

6 - Bir kişi eğer liderlik basamaklarında ilerlemek istiyorsa bir kere insanla ilgili konuları hep öğrenmeye devam etmelidir. Bir insanın özellikleri neler? Neye ihtiyacı var? Bu insan denen mahlukat nasıl bir şey? Nasıl harekete geçer? Nasıl motive olur? İnsanla ilgili mevzuyu mutlaka öğrenmeleri lazım. Biz liderler insanla iş yaptığımız için daha çok insanların içinde olmamız gerekiyor. Tabi ikinci bir şey mutlaka gelişim odaklı zihniyet, öğrenme olması lazım. Ben 25 yıldır yöneticiyim. Hiçbir akademik bir temelim olmasaydı, kendimi geliştirmeye devam etmeseydim bilmiyorum nasıl ilerleyebilirdim liderlik yolculuğunda. Çünkü en kolay kısmı hele de bir kişi bir şekilde yönetici olduysa idame ettirmek. Çünkü altında ekip var. Ancak ilerlemek ve gold collar lider olmak için önemli olan ben tamamlanmadım, daha çok yolum var diyebilmek. Bu zihniyette olabilmek, öğrenmeye devam etmek, insanları tanımak, insanla ilgili konuları öğrenmek, akademik bir temel oluşturmak kıymetli. Çünkü hayat değişiyor. Şartlar değişiyor. Tecrübelerden ne öğreniyorum, ne yapıyorum buna bakmak lazım ve bu öğrenme yolculuğunu devam ettirmek lazım. (Participant A, N-1)

7 - Global bir hardware üreten teknoloji firmasında çalışıyordum. 2011 yılından 2016 sonuna kadar. Şu an yer aldığım teknoloji firmasında bir kariyer fırsatı oluştuğunu duydum. Networking denen şey önemli iş hayatında, çok önemli. Herkes birbirleriyle iletişim kuruyor. Bu bireysel ilişkiler kurumlarda iş ilişkilerine de yarayabiliyor. Benim de tam öyle denk geldi. Burada bir yönetici pozisyonu vardı. Sürece girdim. Yönetici olarak geldim. Aslında önceki kurumumdan ve yaptığım işten memnundum.

Ancak artıları eksileri nelerdir diye düşündüm. Oradaki işin artılarını bir yere koydum. Bu fırsatın artılarını bir yere koydum. Burası daha cazip geldi. Yönetici olmak, ekip yönetecek olmak, buranın büyük bir firma olması. O zaman da işte iş alım süreçlerine girdi devreye ve onları geçtik. Burada başladım. Burada 3 yıl o işi yaptım. Yöneticilik sırasında şu an bulunduğum pozisyon boşalınca bunu da bir fırsat olarak değerlendirdim ve yine insan kaynakları süreçlerine dahil oldum. Görüşmeler, assessmentlar, çapraz görüşmeler falan derken liderlik yolculuğumda şu an bulunduğum göreve ulaştım. Yani fırsatları gördüm, gerekli aksiyonları aldım ve şimdi buradayım. (Participant C, N-2)

8 - Şu anki görevime başlamadan 2 hafta önce ülkenin önde gelen kurumlarından birinde bir kriz yaşandı. Bu kriz ve etkileri 2 gün boyunca devam etti. O zaman ki yöneticim arayarak beni işe erken çağırdı. Ülkenin önde gelen kurumlarında biri olduğu için konu tüm ülkenin kurumlarını ilgilendirdi. O dönem hem yeni başlayacağım kurumu tanıdığım hem bu pozisyondan beklenenleri gerçekçi bir şekilde deneyimleyerek öğrendiğim hem de stresi iliklerime kadar hissettiğim bir dönemdi. Krizi çözmek adına denediğimiz yöntemlerin işe yarayıp yaramaması, ekibin bu çözümleri uygulamaktaki yetkinliği, ekibin organizasyonel yapısının uygunluğu ya da eksikliği gibi bir liderin ilk aylarını harcayarak öğrendiği başlıkları ben 2 gün için de hızlıca deneyimledim, gözlemledim ve öğrendim. Sonuçta bir insan bir lider pozisyonuna geldiği zaman ilk bunları anlamaya ihtiyacı vardır. Burada problem neler var onları görmeye ihtiyacı var. İlk düzeltmesi gereken konular neler anlamaya ihtiyacı var. Mesela iki gün boyunca süren o krizi deneyimlemek ve o stresi yaşamak benim açımdan doğruydu bana direkt gösterdi organizasyonda neler hatalı. Çünkü uyguladığımız çözümler ve sahip olduğumuz yetkinliklerle biz o krizi çözemedik. Ülkenin önde gelen hiçbir kurumu çözemedi. Bu kriz ülkemizde 5 yılda bir yaşanan krizlerden bir tanesiydi ve ben daha işe başlamadan bir hafta önce onunla muhattap oldum. Onunla muhatap olunca işe başladığım an önceliğim belliydi. Biz bu kadar kriz bir şeyi çözemediğimiz için benim öncelik olarak bu problemi anlayıp biz bunun neden çözemedik ekipte mi sıkıntı var teknolojide mi bir sıkıntı var vesaire baktım ve iyileştirmeler yaptım. İnsanın kolay kolay yaşayabileceği bir tecrübe değildi. Çok öğretici oldu çünkü bizim alanımızda empati yapabiliyorsunuz ama mesela bunu yaşamak bambaşka bir şey. O anı daha şirkete ilk geldiğim zaman yaşıyor olmak bana işin ciddiyetini anlamam konusunda da çok destek oldu. (Participant L, N & N-2)

9 - Biz büyük bir ihale almıştık ama karşı taraf ihaleyi bağlayamıyor sonuçlandıramıyordu. O süreç sonuçlanmadıkça iş çıkmaza giriyor ve büyük zararlara sebebiyet veriyordu. İhale ekibi olan bizlerin yöneticisi karşı tarafa çok etkili bir teklifte bulunmuştu. Kararı hızlandıran ve kontratı bağlayan imza atılmasını sağlayan o iş bitiricilik de benim için çok önemli bir öğrenmeydi. Onu sonra hep kullandım. Yani her zaman söylemişimdir kontratı kapatmak farklı bir şeydir, işi iyi bilmekle alakalı bir şey değildir. Yani çok değerli avukatlarımız var bizim. Yani işi müşteri tarafı olmayan düzenleyici olan kuruma bir işi anlatmak, o işin onların

açısından nasıl görüneceğini algılayabilmek mesela bu çok farklı bir öğrenmeydi. Bakıyorum aslında ben benim temel yetkinlik setimin içerisinde olmayan ya da sonradan kazandığım şeylerin çoğunu böyle vakalarla elde etmişim. Kendim zaten ilgi duyduğum alanları hep detaylı yani online araştırmışım, akademilere gitmişim ya da eğitimler almışım ya da kurum bana bazı fırsatlar açmış onları değerlendirmişim ama esas benim kuvvetli olmayan yetkinliklerimi geliştirmemde hep beraber çalıştığım insanların katkısı olmuş. Gözlem yaparak ve yaşayarak. O krizi yaşayarak, o sorunu yaşayarak. Mesela düşünüyorum bu tarz vakaları benim satış müdürüm olan ya da pazarlama ekibinde benimle çalışan pazarlama müdürü olan arkadaşlarımızın bir soruna karşı farklı bir bakış açısı geliştirdikleri önermeler ya da metotlar benim sonradan öğrenip o arkadaşlar buradan ayrıldıktan sonra bile yeni gelen ekiplerimize aktardığım deneyimler olmuşlar. Daha böyle alma verme olarak düşünüyorum. O insiyatifi o yaratıcılığı o öğrenmeyi oradan alıp yeni gelen arkadaşlara paylaşabilmek çok kıymetli. (Participant M, N & N-1)

10 - Hep joint venturelar üzerine kurulu bir aile şirketinde o ortaklıkların yönetimi konusunda başkana destek verdim uzun yıllar. Bu ortaklıkların karar mekanizmalarında, herhangi bir yeni anlaşma, sermaye artırımı, temettü dağıtımı gibi şeyler yapılacağı zaman bunların hem hukuki hem de finansal açıdan takiplerini öğrendim, yaptım, yürüttüm. Burada toplantıda not tutmaktan başladım en son danışma komitesindeydim. Sonrasında Yönetim kurulu üyesi oldum. Böyle kademe kademe tecrübelenerek ilerledim ama ağırlıklı olarak finansal ve stratejik kararlardan sorumluyduk. MENA (Middle East North Africa) bölgesi projelerini yönettim. Burada öğrendiğim mali analiz, bilanço analizi, şirket değerleme işleri çok şey kattı bana. Ama orada bulunduğum sürede hissedara çok yakın çalıştım. Hissedarın bakış açısı da geliştirdi. Ortaklık joint venture anlaşmaları birleşmeler satın almalar tarafında burada ben hala corporate rolde gidiyordum. Daha sonrasında gruba bağlı şirketlerden birinde finanstan sorumlu genel müdür yardımcısı olarak atandım. Orada da hem perakende hem de şirketin uçtan uca CFO'luğu işte hazinesi, raporlaması, controllingi, hukuk da bana bağlıydı. Daha sonra lojistik bana bağlandı. Bir de herr 6 ayda bir böyle yeni birim bana bağlana bağlana ilerledi. Yani her yeni bağlanan birim yeni bir sorumluluk ve öğrenme getirdi. Tabii operasyonda her gün bir konu var, bir kriz var, bir şey var. Daha çok insan var, daha çok konu var. Derken geldik şimdiki kurumuma. MENA projelerindeki deneyimlerim sayesinde burada MENA'dan sorumlu bir üst düzey rolde başladım. Sonra yaşanan yönetimsel değişiklik sonrası rol ve sorumluluk alanım arttı. Buna ek olarak gruba bağlı 2 ayrı şirketinde Yönetim rolünü üstlendim. Bu yükselişte o güne kadar aldığım farklı sorumlulukların ve yönettiğim büyük ekiplerin bana öğrettiklerinin etkisi çok büyüktü. O yapılan işleri görenler yeni görevi verirken bu işlerin üstesinden gelebileceğini gördüğü için seni seçiyor. (Participant E, N & N-2)

11 - Zorlu görevler artık günlük rutinimiz haline geldi. Bu zorlu görevlerden kastım karar verici konumda risk alarak yön verdiğimiz konular. Bazen bir proje için, bazen bir yatırım için ya da bazen bir süreç için hayati kararlarda karar verici konumunda

oluyoruz. Bu konumda olmak sizden advanced bir değerlendirme bekliyor. Bir çok açıdan konuyu ele alarak değerlendirmeli, var olan diğer kararlar stratejiler ve vizyon ile paralel olarak bu değerlendirmeyi şekillendirmelisiniz. Ayrıca ana sorumlu olarak güvenilir ve başarılı bir execution gerçekleştirilmesi için karşılaşılan sorunları minimize etmeniz, engelleri kaldırmanız, sürecin devamlılığını sağlamanız ve sonuç üretmeniz gerekiyor. Tabi finalde çıkan sonuçları değerlendirerek süreci gözden geçirmek de size sorumluluğunuz oluyor. (Participant F, N-2)

12 - Bana bir şey yapabilir misin dersin ben tabii ki yaparım derim ve onu yapabilme şeyinin içine gireyim oyununun içerisinden gireyim. Tabii ki yaparım dedim ve benim mesela hayatımın en zor dönemi diyebilirim. 20-21 yıllık kariyer hayatımın toplamında o bir sene hayatımın en zor dönemiydi. Neden çok zordu? bir kere uzmanlıktan yöneticiliğe geçiş tecrübesi benim için çok kritikti. Bilmediğim anlamadığım birçok şey varmış mesela orada böyle bazen kafalarıma duvarlara vura vura öğrenme fırsatım oldu. İkincisi çok soft bir geçiş de değildi. Isınma süreci olmadı ben girdim ve dediğim gibi işte organizasyonu yeniden çizdik. 18 kişilik bir ekip vardı yanlış hatırlamıyorsam. 11 arkadaş farklı pozisyonlara ya da farklı şirketlere geçtiler. Onların yerine yeni arkadaşlar geldi. O yeni arkadaşların adaptasyonu. O dönüşümü değişimi tetiklemek bayağı zor bir süreç oldu benim açımdan. Ama işin asıl zor olan tarafı şuydu bugüne kadar iş anlamında çok kolaylıkla yaptığım şeylerden bir tanesi ama bu sefer sorumlu olduğum insanlar var ve o sorumlu olduğum insanların gündelik hayatta birçok ihtiyaçları var, sorunları var, beklentileri var, motivatörleri var veya farklı farklı kaygıları var. O sensörleri de açmak onları da anlayıp kavramak ve oradaki beklentileri de yönetebilir hale gelmek bütün karmaşanın içerisinde benim için böyle yepyeni bir süreç oldu diyebilirim. O bir senenin sonunu iyi hatırlıyorum diyebilirim. İşler de gayet güzel gitti. Yapı da oturdu. Organizasyon da istediğimiz yere geldi. Beni çok yoran ve yıpratan bir süreçti ama çok şey de öğreten bir süreçti. Bazen öğrenmek için buna ihtiyaç oluyor. Şimdi şu kitabı oku, bu kitapta bildiklerini gel burada uygula. Bu çok böyle gerçek hayatta karşılaştığım bir öğrenme yöntemi değil. (Participant G, N & N-2)

13 - Mesela bir ürün alıyorsunuz diyelim vendordan, üretici firma o ürünle ilgili olan eğitimleri de paketin içerisine koyup satıyordı. O paket eğitimlere de seçilerek insanlar konusuna göre gönderiliyordu. O eğitimlere de katıldım. Birkaç yıl sonrasında vendorlardan alınan eğitim nasıl yapılabilir, nasıl iç eğitme çevirebiliriz, buna nasıl daha fazla katkı koyabiliriz, nasıl bu bilgiyi daha fazla yaygınlaştırabiliriz gibi konuları konuşuyorduk. Çünkü o dönemde vendordan alınan eğitimler ilk başlarda yurtdışında oluyormuş. Benim girdiğim zamanlarda biraz değişmiş ve Türkiye'ye dönmüştü. Ama o zamanlar yurt dışına çok sınırlı insan gönderilebiliyordu. 100 kişilik ekibiniz var 3 kişiyi gönderebiliyorsunuz. Türkiye'ye döndükten sonra bu sayılar tabii daha da artabiliyordu. 100 kişiden 10 kişiye tekabül ediyordu. Ama bizim bunu yaygınlaştırmamız lazımdı. Çünkü çok büyük bir teknisyen kadromuz var, sadece mühendisler değil. Onların da eğitim alınması lazım çünkü onlar hiçbir eğitime gidemiyordu. Sonrasında işte iç eğitmen olma konusu

gündeme geldi. Ben de iç eğitmen oldum. O dönemde aslında biz karşı çıkmıştık nasıl iç eğitmen olacağız diye. Hatta şaşırmıştık biz ders vermeyi falan bilmiyoruz, sadece işimizi yapıyoruz, nasıl döküman hazırlayacağız, nasıl anlatacağız, nasıl eğitim vereceğiz, bunların kuralı nedir diye. Hiç öyle bir deneyimimiz yoktu. İşte sonrasında seçilen kişiler, biraz daha o dönemde iyi bilen kişiler iç eğitmen oldu. Ben de iç eğitmen oldum. Ama o iç eğitmenlikte işte önce kendimizi hazırladık. Böyle dışarıdan bir eğitmen eğitimi almadık, nasıl eğitmen olunur tadında. Ondan sonra o eğitim verme işi çok güzel geldi bana. Neden? Çünkü kendim çok daha iyi öğrendiğimi fark ettim. (Participant B, N-2)

14 - Bizim alanın ilk 4 yılı aslında bu işleri öğrenip de ayağını yere bastığı bir dünya. 4 sene senin belirli bir matematik nosyonunu excel'e aktarıp çıktılarını alabildiğin, muhakeme edebildiğin ve olayların gidişatıyla ilgili ciddi gözlemler yapıp, ufak risklerin büyük risklere evrildiği ve daha büyük risklerin alınmadığı dönemler. Orada kendime bir lider bir role model seçtim. Aslında benim liderim kim olmalı, nasıl hareket etmeli, stresli dünyada ya da stabil dünyada nasıl hareket ediyor, ne tip vizyon koyuyor, ne tip pozisyonları neye dayanarak koyuyor, bunları gözlemledim. Çünkü bu işte role model gözlemleyerek çok başarılı olup tutunabilirsiniz. (Participant F, N-2)

15 - Eski kurumumda ilerleyeceğim bir sonraki aşama direktörlüktü hiyerarşide. Genel Müdür Yardımcısına bağlı bir direktör ve o direktöre bağlı üç müdür olarak çalışıyorduk. O ilgili direktörle yolları ayırdılar. Biz üçümüz genel müdür yardımcısına bağlı çalıştık. Ben beni direktör yapmalarını bekledim. Niye? Çünkü ben çok çalışıyorum. Genel Müdür Yardımcısı bunu gördü. O iki arkadaşın görünmeyen sorumluluğunu bana verdi. Yazılı olmayan, hiçbir yerde duyurulmayan, işin genel sahipliğini bana verdi ama beni direktör yapmadı. Ben yine gidip bir kere bile istemedim ama çalıştım. Hep bekliyorum çünkü ne istediyse yapmışım. Sonra yönetim değişti. Yeni bir genel müdür geldi. Tanıdığım çok sevdiğim bir genel müdürdü. Artık terfiyi bekliyordum. İkinci hafta başka birini direktör yaptılar. Şok oldum. Niye gidip istemedim ben dedim. İş hayatımda suratıma çarpan en büyük tokatlardan biri odur. Sonra zaten o yöneticiyle anlaşamadım ve o kurumdan ayrıldım. Şimdi geriye dönüp bakıyorum. Genel müdür yardımcısı 2 yıl boyunca hiçbir direktör benefiti vermeden, hiçbir direktör title'ı vermeden müdür çalıştırdı. Ve işini de gördü. Ben ilk günden istemeliydim. Bendeki büyük değişim o deneyimden elde ettiğim öğrenmeden sonra oldu. (Participant C, N-2)

16 - Yurt dışında benim çalıştığım ortamlarda bunu birebir yaşama fırsatı buldum. Üniversiteler sektörün önünde gidiyorlar. Sektörde mobil uygulama yok, hiçbir şey yok. Ama üniversitede bunun araştırmasını yapılıyor. Aslında böyle bir şeye imkan olup olmadığını hatta buradan bir business çıkıp çıkmayacağını ortaya çıkartıyor akademi. Sonrasında bu, sektörde ayrı bir business'a dönüşüyor. Yani akademi sektöre yön veriyor. Sektöre hakim olmak size biraz vizyoner olmanızı sağlıyor açıkçası gerçekten. Çünkü benim ülkemizde biraz gördüğüm akademiler sektörü

takip ediyor. Yurtdışında ise tam tersi oluyor açıkçası. Dolayısıyla ben doktorayı da bitirerek kendi alanımda derinlemesine sektör bilgisi edindim. Çünkü bir de bizim alanın kendi alt dalı çok fazla yaz desem alt alta 100 farklı alan sayarım. Benim bir avantajım da şu oldu. Bu işe çok erken girdiğim için çok farklı alanlarda doktoraya kadar temas etme imkanım oldu. Bu da sektör bilgimi zirveye çıkardı. Bir de akademik makale yazıyorsunuz. akademik makale yazarken biraz daha geniş perspektif de alanın her yerine dokunacak şekilde bakış açısını size kazandırıyor. (Participant L, N & N-2)

17 - İnsanların bakış açısı işe bakış açılarım beni zenginleştiriyor. Çünkü 2000 yılında ben bu grupta başladım. 2004 yılında ilk yönetici olduğumda birlikte çalıştığım uzmanların ağırlıklı 1960'lı yıllarda doğmuş insanlardı. Şu anda benim ekibimin %80'i neredeyse 2000 yılının etrafında doğmuş kişiler. 95 96 98 2000 yılının üzerinde doğmuş %15 civarında arkadaşımız var. Dolayısıyla bu insanların bakış açıları çok farklı. Benim kendimi sürekli update etmem lazım. Yani o ne düşünüyor, hayata dair ne düşünüyor, hırsı ne, hedefine teknolojiye nasıl bakıyor, şirkete nasıl bakıyor? Etkili bir liderlik yapabilmek için bunları bilmeliyim. (Participant K, N-1)

18 - Kariyerinin başlangıcında public sektörde çalışırken hiyerarşi gereği insiyatif alma gibi konularda biraz geride durmamız gerekiyordu. O kurumların kültürü gereği kurulan iletişimin bile bir tarzı ve keskinliği vardı. Kurumsal dünyaya geçtikten sonra hele de liderlik yolculuğunda ilerledikten sonra hem kendi iletişim dilini oluştururken, hem iş yapışını şekillendirirken hem de liderlik tarzını belirlerken kurum kültürü çok destekleyici oluyor. Çalıştığım alan aynı olsada bu işi public kurumlarda ve private kurumlarda yaparken sanki iki ayrı sektörde çalışmışım gibi hissediyorum. (Participant N, N)

19 - Bizim alanda bütün ekiplerin birbirinin açığını kapatacak şekilde çalışması gerekiyor. Bu sebeple birinin bildiği bilgi direk diğerinin işine yarıyor olabilir. Bu sebeple sürekli bu bilgiyi paylaşmaları gerekiyor. Sürekli öğrenmeleri gerekiyor. Birbirlerinden öğrenmeleri gerekiyor. Bu bilinç benim hayatımda da çok önemli bir yere sahiptir. Hatta bu bakış açım kariyeriminin ilk yıllarında işe alınmamı sağlamıştı. Dolayısıyla sonu yok benim adıma. Ekiplerimde de ben çok önemserim. Birbirinizle bilgi paylaşın, dolayısıyla öğrenin derim. Öğrenmek bizim için çok önemli. Bizim direktörlüğün mesajlaşma platformunda bir grubu var. ben oradan zaman zaman dökümanlar paylaşıyorum. Bizim özellikle bir mimari ekibimiz var. Mimari ekibimizi öğreten olarak konumlandırıyoruz. Dünyadaki yeni trend konuları araştırıyorlar. Onlara böyle görevler veriyoruz. Bugün bir seans vardı. Alanda trend bir konuyu araştırdılar. Tüm yöneticileri topladılar ve aktardılar. Bence yönetici açısından öğrenme kültürüne sahip olması ve de bütün ekibine o kültürü yaygınlaştırılması çok temel konulardan biri. Çünkü bu belki bölümden bölüme değişir ama bizim gibi alanlarda öyle deniyor ki bir yılda bir bilgi eskiyor ve üzerine

bir şey koymazsan geride kalıyorsun. Böyle alanlarda öğrenmenin sonu yok. (Participant L, N & N-2)

20 - Genç neslin bakış açısı çok farklı. Benim kendimi sürekli update etmem lazım. Yani o ne düşünüyor, hayata dair ne düşünüyor, hırsı ne, hedefine teknolojiye nasıl bakıyor, şirkete nasıl bakıyor? Buna göre çünkü bizim şirketin çalışma modellerini biz güncellemeye başladık. İşte yarım zamanlı çalışma. Ben hiç hayal edemezdim aynı anda üç yerde çalışma, 3 farklı şirkette çalışma. Bunu öğrenmeye başladık. Aynı anda 3 departmanda çalışan var. Gerçekten haftanın 2 günü bir departmanda çalışıyor kel alaka bir iş yapıyor. 3 günü diğer departmanda çalışıyor. Bir günde eğitim veriyor. Ekstra geceleri kendi çalışıyor. Bizim bunu modelleyecek çalışma modellerini ortaya koymamız lazım. Haftanın 2 günü üniversitede akademik olarak öğretim görevliliği yapıyor. Haftanın 3 günü bizimle çalışıyor. Şimdi ben bu arkadaşlarla konuştukça aslında dünyanın buraya geldiğini görüyorum. İnsanların tek yere aidiyetinin yeni dünyada kalmadığını görüyorum. Bağımsızlık, işe katkı vb bunlar çok fazla ön plana çıkıyor. Bu paradigma shift etti. İnsanlar gerçekten çalışacak yer ararken şirketler çalışacak insan aramaya başladı. Bu çok önemli bir değişim dolayısıyla bu da benim için çok önemli bir gelişim kaynağı oldu. Onlardan sürekli beslenmem lazım. (Participant K, N-1)

21 - Birçok şirkette belli sürelerde farklı bölümlere çalıştım. Yani aynı rolde çok uzun yıllar boyunca kalmadım. Bu da bana farklı roller farklı yetenekler kazandırdı. Hani benim belki hem meslek alanında gelişimimde hem de liderlik anlamındaki gelişimimde benim yolculuğumda bunun bana çok şey kattığını düşünüyorum. İşin hani akademisyenlik ve Arge tarafını görmüş olmak, yine önümüzde işin tedarikçi tarafını görüyor olmak, teknoloji konusunda tedarikçiler ne yapıyor, uluslararası şirketler ne yapıyor, bunu daha sonra kullanan müşteriler ne yapıyor, kurum tarafına geçtiğimde de müşteri tarafını görmek servis veren operatör tarafını görüyor olmak. Aslında böyle resmin birbirini tamamlayan parçaları gibi oldu benim açımdan. Tabii bu özellikle tekrar vurgulamak istiyorum hem uzmanlık anlamında dikey uzmanlıklarda 2 tane ya da 3 tane farklı ana dalda uzmanlık geliştirdim yani yöneticilik öncesinde de uzmanlık noktasında iyi bir uzmanlık geliştirdim. Bunun üzerine aslında yöneticiliğin geliyor olması benim biraz daha yönettiğim işe hakimiyet anlamında da önemli bir avantaj sağladı. Farklı rolleri biliyor olmam ve oralardan kazandığım tecrübeler sadece yönettiğim alan değil ama biraz daha büyük resmiden görebilmek anlamında benim çok faydalandığım bir özelliğim oldu. Farklı şirketlerde farklı kültürlerde aynı resme farklı noktalardan bakıyor olmak yine çok çok önemli deneyimler kazandırdı bana. (Participant J, N-2)

22 - Son görevimde finansal kurumlar birliğindeki yönetim kurulu başkan yardımcılığı yaptım, yönetim kurulu üyeliği yaptım. Orada sektördeki bütün oyuncularla iletişim halindesin. Düzenlemeler ile ilgili kamu kurumuna gidip geliyorsun. Onlarla sadece şirketin için değil sektörü temsil ettiğin için de görüşüyorsun. O network'ün saf bir hali oluşuyor. Şirket adına bir şey istemiyorsun

sektör adına ziyaret ediyorsun. O ilişki daha tatlı oluşuyor. Bir sektörel görev yapmış olması, sektördeki iş yapan bütün iş ortaklarıyla iletişimde olması. İlla rekabet değil tedarikçileri vesaire biliyor olması. Kısaca connected biri olması çok kritik. (Participant E, N & N-2)

23 - Liderlik yolculuğunun henüz başında olan kişiler bilgi ve uzmanlıklarını paylaşma konusunda çekinceler yaşayabilir. Bir yönetici bu bilgileri paylaştıktan sonra "Ya iş gücümü ve ekibimi kaybedersem?" diye düşünebilir. Ancak deneyim kazandıkça ve liderlik yolculuğunuzda ilerledikçe, deneyimler size şunu öğretir: Ekibiniz ne kadar güçlüyse siz de o kadar güçlüsünüz. Ekibiniz ne kadar biliyorsa siz de o kadar bilirsiniz. Ekibiniz ne kadar yetkinse siz de o kadar yetkinsiniz. Bu nedenle onları güçlendirir, geliştirirsiniz ki kendinize yatırım yapabilesiniz. Onların ayrılacağından korkmak çok yersiz. Korkulması gereken, gelişmemiş yetkinlikleri ve öğrenme becerisi eksikliğiyle ekibinizde kalmaya devam etmeleridir. Bu yüzden bildiklerimi paylaşmaya her zaman hazırım. Çalışanlarıma, geçmişte birlikte çalıştığım kişilere, müşterilerime, meslektaşlarıma, birlikte çalışma fırsatımız olmasa da beni sektörden tanıyanlara ve kim olursa olsun danışmak isteyen herkese kapım her zaman açık. (Participant H, N-2)

24 - Eski bir yöneticim disiplini ve işi ciddiye alma konusunu müthiş bana öğretmiştir. Bizim bütün her şeyin detayını bilmemize gerek, yok ufak ayrıntılarda da kaybolmamıza gerek yok demişti. Sen bu işin nereye gittiğini anla, 2 senelik 3 senelik finansallara baktığında sadece o anın resmine bakma, o resimleri yan yana koyarak değişime, akıma, trende bak demişti. Çok değerli, çok katma değerli bir bakış açısı olmuştu bana. Ben ondan sonra hep çok kullandım. Bilançoya da bakıyorsam gelir tablosuna da bakıyorsam sadece ona değil onun nereye doğru gittiğini algılamaya çalışarak bakarak anlam vermeye çalışırım. Yani hiçbir şeye bir rakam seti bir excel tablosu olarak bakmam. O işi, o operasyonu o şirketi anlamak için bakarım. Nereye nereden gelmiş nereye gidiyor diye. Çok önemliydi bunu hatırlıyorum. (Participant M, N & N-1)

25 – Gold collar lider olduğum ilk gün pazartesi şöyle bir araya geldik yönetim ekibiyle. Biz neden şu alana yatırım yapmıyoruz diye konuştuk. Hadi deneyelim dedik. Denedik olmadı ama deneyebildik. Dedik ki işte şu şu parametrelerle yeniden deneyelim. Denedik oldu. Satışı büyüttük. Ondan sonra başka bir hedef kitleyi dahil ederek işi büyüttük. Sonra sektör dışındaki müşterilere de hizmet götürme kararı aldık. Hani yapıyorsun oluyor veya olmuyor senin işin o. Ekipçe düşünüyoruz. Bu çok hoşumuza gitti ve bunun üzerine çalışmak hepimizi motive etti. (Participant E, N & N-2)

26 - Liderlik konusundaki perspektifim yıllar içinde cm2 bakış açısından km2 bakış açısına evrildi. Yani micro bakıştan macro bakmaya geçtim ve bu şekilde bir liderlik evrimi geçirdim. Lider bakış açım daha büyük resme odaklı olunca gördüm ki her doğru her zaman doğru değil. her başarı her zaman başarı değil. Stratejik bakış açısıyla o doğru başka zaman doğru olmayabiliyor. Bu sebeple doğru yanlış

yargılarımı ve kararlarımı vermeden önce içinde bulunduğumuz durumu iyi analiz edip o durum içerisindeki stratejik olarak konumlanmamızı kontrol ederek kararlarımı alıyorum. Ekip yönetiminde de bunu temel alıyorum. (Participant I, N-2)

27 - Garip gelebilir ama şöyle insanları çok gözlemliyorum. Mesela bazen bana bağlı yönetici arkadaşlar bana diyor ki Elif sen bizim ekipte çalışan kişinin ya da yan ekipte çalışan kişinin üzülebileceğini, neyi, nasıl daha iyi yapabileceğini bizden daha iyi görüyorsun diyorlar. Çünkü ben çok gözlemliyorum insanları. Nasıl davranıyor? Normal gündelik hayattaki responseları nasıl? İşte bir öğlen yemek yiyoruz mesela o anlattığı hikayedeki hassasiyetleri neler onları çok gözlemleyip algılayabiliyorum, yakalayabiliyorum. Bu gözlemlerim doğrultusunda o kişiyle iletişime geçiyorum. Hep birlikte çalıştığım insanlarla böyle iyi etkileşim içerisinde olabildim. Bu sayede hem yöneticilerim, hem peerlarım, hem ekibimde çalışan arkadaşlar, hem sahada çalışan arkadaşlar benimle iletişimde olmaktan hiç çekinmediler. Bu iyi iletişim de iş çıktılarına yansıdı. Çünkü anlaşıldığını, dinlendiğini hissettiğin yerde daha bir motive çalışıyor insan. Yani doğru iletişim stratejimin iş çıktılarını iyileştirdiğini söyleyebilirim. (Participant B, N-2)

28 - Bu belirsizliklerle dolu ortamda survive etmemi sağlayan bakış açımın değişmesini sağlayan iki ana etken var. Bunlardan ilki yaşadığımız olaylar ve kazandığımız deneyimler diğeri sürekli öğrenme. Birlikte çalıştığım, alanında çok iyi uzmanların işten ayrılmasıyla kalan iş yükü kısa zamanda hayatımı değiştirmiştir. Bu iş yükünü sırtlanıp topu yere düşürmeden devam etmem yöneticilerimin bana olan güvenini pekiştirmiştir. Yöneticilerimin bu güvenini hissetmek de yaptığım işi bir adım ileri taşımak ve vizyonumu genişletmek için beni motive etti. Bulunduğumuz pozisyon gereği rakamlar kritik, sorumluluklar riskli. Bu sebeple atalete yer yok. Bu sebeple ileriyi/geleceği design etmek için her daim öğrenmeyi canlı ve geniş yelpazede tutmam gerektiğini anladım. 2011'den beri kendimi geliştirmek için çok geniş yelpazede kaynaklardan beslenip aktif gözlem ile kendime yatırım yapıyorum. (Participant I, N-2)

29 - Vaktimin çoğu hala ilgimi çeken alanlarda araştırarak geçiyor. Bu bazen ekonomi ile ilgili oluyor bazen globalle ilgili oluyor. Şu anda mesela global politika ile ilgili çok fazla şey okuduğum ve izlediğim bir dönemdeyiz. Atıyorum money teori hiç benim yaptığım işle alakalı bir şey değil onunla ilgili okuyorum. Bundan 15 sene önce denetim yaptım mesela ben. Ben denetim yaparken enflasyon muhasebesi diye bir kavram vardı. Ben sonra finanstan çıktığımda Türkiye zaten enflasyonist ortamdan çıktı ve enflasyon muhasebesi yapmayı 2004'lerde 2005'lerde bıraktım. Ama bugün tekrar o ortama döndük ve ilk defa bu yıl tekrar enflasyon muhasebesi yapıyoruz. Ben mesela kaynakların nerede olduğunu da biliyorum. Tekrar dönüp onları da okuyabiliyorum. Şu anda enflasyon muhasebesi ile ilgili o eski bilgilerimi tazeliyorum. Bu mesela çok detaylı bir bilgi ama şeyi anlamlandırırken karşıma çıkan finansalları ya da bizim normal finansallarımızı enflasyon muhasebesine dönüştürülmüş finansalları algılarken de çok hızlandırıyor, karar vermeyi

kolaylaştırıyor, yorum yapmamı kolaylaştırıyor ya da doğru sorular sormam kolaylaştırıyor ki ben yöneticilikte ve liderlik de yükseldikçe bilmenin karara varmakta aslında doğru soruları sorma etkisi sebebiyle çok değerli olduğunu düşünüyorum. (Participant M, N & N-1)

30 - Yöneticilikte yükseldikçe direktörlüğe doğru gittikçe ben hep içinde bulunduğum sistemleri anlamaya, özel olarak ilgim olduğu için olabilir, çok önem verdim. Nasıl oluyor? Hangi sistem ile çalışıyor? Ne ile konuşuyor? Hiç bu merakımı hiç kaybetmedim. Hep devam ettim. Mekanizmaları anlamaya çok meraklıyım. Bunu devam ettirdim ama yöneticilikteki ve liderlikteki sorumluluklarım daha böyle soft beceriydi. Mentorluk yapma, vizyon oluşturmak, strateji belirleme, stratejiden sapmaması için ekiplerin takip mekanizmaları geliştirme, performansı verimli ölçme, performansı drive etme, sadece ölçme değil performansı yönetme tarzı alanlar daha çok vaktimi almaya başladı. Diğer taraftan daha çok uzaklaşmaya başladım. Daha da üst seviyelere doğru direktörlük artık senior direktörlük ve üstünde genel müdürlüğe doğru giderken bakıyorum şimdi global dünyayı daha çok takip ettiğim, sektörü sadece Türkiye'de değil dışarıda da takip ettiğim ve öğrenmenin önemli bir kısmını sektör bağımsız öğrenme yaptığım bir yerdeyim. Başlarda iş odaklı öğreniyordum. Kademe ilerledikçe insan odaklı öğrenmeye başladım. Kademe biraz daha ilerledikçe global dünyayı daha çok anlamlandırabilmek odaklı öğreniyorum. Yani benim 3 kademem var öğrenme yolculuğumda. (Participant M, N & N-1)

31 - Şu anda rolüm kapsamında olmamasına rağmen benim yetkinliklerimden dolayı geçmişte de rol aldığım birkaç tane kurumda bir tanesi XXX bir tanesi de XXXX. Bunların ikisi de operatörlerin bir araya gelerek oluşturduğu teknoloji odaklı gündemlerin konuşuldu kurumlar. XXX ve XXXX'de kurumumuzu temsil ediyorum. Burada yurtdışındaki kurumların temsilcileri ile özellikle bu teknoloji konularında gündemleri konuşuyoruz. Bunlar benim için çok önemli kendimi geliştirmek adına kaynak olarak. Hem networking anlamında hem neler gündemde, neler yapılıyor konusunu öğrenmek için. (Participant J, N-2)

32 - Öğrenmenin kaynakları başta bir iş devridir. Mesela en basitinden uzman olarak geldin başladın beyaz gölgeniz veya işte masa arkadaşınız size bir şeyler öğretir. Orada da bazen teknik de öğrenebiliyorsun. Yöneticiniz öğretiyor. Bir süre sonra gene biraz peerlardan ama başka birimlerden bir şeyler aldığınız oluyor. Pazarlamayı böyle bir anlamaya çalışıyorsun, oradan bir şey katıyorsun kendine. İşte finansta değilsen finanstan biraz böyle ne yapıyorlar onu anlamaya çalışıyorsun. Öğrendiklerini işine entegre etmeye çalışıyorsun katma değer yaratmak için, ilerlemek için, işi daha iyi yapabilmek için. Biraz peerlara genişliyor. Daha sonra da nihai olarak şeye gidiyor sanki böyle adı konmamış mentorlar, sektör uzmanları, böyle belli sektörlerdeki arkadaşların arkadaşları kontaklarınla diyelim bir network oluşturmak gerekiyor. O network çok şey öğretiyor. Aslında belki bugünlere kadar çekmeyeyim. Ben 2000'lerin ortasında yani kariyerimin beşinci yedinci yıllarında borsada iki sene çalıştım. Daha kıdemlenmemiştim ayrıldığımda. Daha sonra daha

kıdemli arkadaşlarımdan holdingteyken geriye dönüp öğrendiğim şeyler oldu. Bazısı bunun teknik bilgi bazısı piyasa bilgisi. Bazen piyasada şu iki şirket birleşiyormuş, işte şunun gerekçesi buymuş gibi bilgiler de sana masada hem bir güç hem bir karar noktasında bir fikir ve yön verebiliyor. Biraz böyle piyasada ne olup bittiğini işinle alakalı biraz etrafında duyup bilmek bir defa sana herhangi bir masada bir ağırlık getiriyor. Ooo diyorlar işte öyle mi yapılıyor, birinin böyle bir şey mi var, şu ülkede şu ne yapıyorlar. O zaman biz de şu ülkeyi düşünelim kararlarına da varabilir ama en basitinden biraz kulağı delik olmak önemli bu işlerin etik sınırlar çerçevesinde tabii ki. Bir de bir noktada belki yaptığım işin biraz emeği de olabilir. (Participant E, N & N-2)

33 - OECD'ye özel sektörden ilk ve tek görüş verebilen şirket biz olduk. Bir modeli sunduk ve o modeli orada bizzat anlatmamızı istedikleri için de davet aldık. O gün bütün dünyaya yaptıkları canlı yayın için 300 kişi sadece davet ettiler. Şirketlerden ortalama İki kişi çağrıldı. İkimiz birlikte gidebildik. Yani bütün dünyadan 150 şirket aslında davet edildi gibi düşün. Türkiye'den de biz tabii ve Türkiye tarihinde yok. Bürokratlardan çağırıyorlar devlet görüşmeleri olsun diye ama özel sektörü temsili ile gelen kimse yok aslında normalde. Ama bizim sunduğumuz model değerlendirmeye değer görüldüğü için davet edildik. Sonra gidip onu orada anlatmam biraz bahsetmem gerekti. Sonra modeli daha da derin incelemeye başladılar. O gün mesela benim için çok kritik bir gündü. Hem ülken adına konuşuyorsun hem Türkiye'den gelmiş biri olarak konuşuyorsun ama bütün dünyayı etkileyebilecek bir model anlatıyorsun aslında. O günü hatırlıyorum o konuşma bittiğinde sonra ara olduğunda herkes gelip buldu beni. İşte herkes geldi biz modele destek vermek isteriz vesaire falan gibi. Dolayısıyla o görüşme bence çok kritik bir görüşmeydi. (Participant D, N-2)

34 - Liderliğe bakış açım yıllar içinde cm2'lik bir perspektiften km2'lik bir perspektife doğru evrildi. Başka bir deyişle, mikro bakış açısından makro bakış açısına geçtim ve böylece bir liderlik evrimi yaşadım. Liderlik perspektifim büyük resme odaklandığında, her şeyin doğru olmadığını fark ettim. Her başarı her zaman başarı değildir. Stratejik bir bakış açısıyla, o doğru başka bir zaman doğru olmayabilir. Bu nedenle doğru ya da yanlış yargılarıma ve kararlarıma varmadan önce içinde bulunduğumuz durumu iyice analiz ederek ve o durumdaki stratejik konumlanışımızı kontrol ederek kararlarımı veriyorum. Bunu da ekip yönetimine dayandırıyorum. (Participant I, N-2)

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