Research Article

The Effect of Ethical Leadership on Employees' Work Ethics. The Mediating Role of Interpersonal Justice

Etik Liderliğin Çalışanların İş Etiği Üzerindeki Etkisi. Kişilerarası Adaletin Aracı Rolü

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Abstract

The primary goal of this research is to explore ethical leadership and its role in organizations, as well as its contributions to the overall success of the organization. Ethical leadership creates an organizational culture of trust, justice and honesty, ensures the participation of managers and employees, encourages ethical behaviour and thus acts as a catalyst to achieve sustainable corporate success goals. The ethical behaviours exhibited by leaders are reciprocated by employees and they imitate these behaviours. The mutual display of ethical behaviours leads to the development of a sense of mutual justice. This article sheds light on the relationship among ethical leadership and work ethics of organization's members by examining the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence. In addition, the contributions of ınterpersonal justice in this relationship are presented. The study was conducted in Ankara Organized Industrial Zone (OSTIM). After the analysis with 232 valid data, it was concluded that ethical leadership positively impacts employees' work ethics and ınterpersonal justice serves as a mediator in this relationship. After the findings are presented, the findings' implications are analysed in the conclusion section.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Employees' Work Ethics, Interpersonal Justice

EL Classification: M10,M12

Article Type: Research Article

Öz

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı etik liderlik kavramını ve organizasyon içindeki işlevini ve ayrıca bu liderlik tarzının organizasyona katkılarını koymaktır. Etik liderlik örgütsel güven, adalet ve dürüstlük kültürü oluşturur. Yöneticilerin ve çalışanların katılımını sağlar, etik davranışı teşvik eder ve böylece sürdürülebilir kurumsal başarı hedeflerine ulaşmak için bir katalizör görevi üstlenir. Liderlerin sergilediği bu etik davranışlar çalışanlar tarafından karşılık görür ve onlarda bu davranışları taklit eder. Etik davranışların karşılıklı sergilenmesi karşılıklı adalet duygusunun gelişmesine yol açar. Bu makale, teorik temelleri ve ampirik kanıtları inceleyerek etik liderlik ile organizasyonlardaki çalışanların iş etiği arasındaki ilişkiye ışık tutmaktadır. Ayrıca, kişilerarası adaletin bu ilişkideki katkıları sunulmaktadır. Çalışma Ankara Organize Sanayi Bölgesi'nde (OSTİM) yürütülmüştür. 232 geçerli veri ile yapılan analizin ardından, etik liderliğin çalışanların iş etiği üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahip olduğu ve kişilerarası adaletin bu ilişkide aracı bir rol oynadığı sonucuna varılmıştır. Bulgular ortaya konulduktan sonra sonuç kısmında bu bulguların çıkarımları tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Etik Liderlik, Çalışanların İş Etiği, Kişilerarası Adalet

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethical leaders are leaders who evaluate the decisions they make within the organization through a certain mental process and evaluate their long-term results, limitations and benefits, and convey these to other

members by taking into account customs, rules, beliefs, standards, and morality while performing work-related tasks. Ethical leaders establish elevated expectations and follow through with assignments and actions that align with those standards. They set an example in terms of behaviours and draw a picture for other members on how ethics will be applied in their work. With this series of behaviours transmitted from the leader to the employees, both the ethical concept develops on the part of the organization members and the ethical values of the organization are affected. Leaders serve as examples for their followers and demonstrate the behavioural limits set within a company. They are seen as fair, truthful, reliable, responsible, and trustworthy (Engelbrecht et al., 2017).

The concept of ethical leadership has become a noteworthy phenomenon in many studies in terms of the positive values it offers (Yukl et al., 2013). The concept has begun to be examined in the organizational environment together with many organizational reasons and outputs. It has been a matter of curiosity whether ethical leadership affects not only the leader dimension but also the ethics of the followers. The extent to which followers are affected by the moral behaviours presentations of their leaders is at least as important as the quality of the leader's behaviours.

Ethical leaders draw a roadmap for their followers. The group affected by these behaviours does not only consider the behaviours in terms of material benefits but also checks their moral appropriateness. This cycle develops an expectation that a moral behaviours reaction and behavioural standard will occur in the subsequent behaviours for the affected and influencing parties. However, this situation is quite difficult and ensuring that the expected behaviours emerge is an art of influence related to the personal characteristics, power and charisma of the leader. In this respect, ethical leaders use a power beyond the hierarchical power (Koçak, 2019) given to them by the organization.

Ethical leadership demonstrates to followers and others the morality or immorality of specific actions. Understanding that leadership involves a reciprocal bond with followers is a force that increases commitment. In this way, the cycle of transferring exemplary behaviours, acceptance by the other party, and the display of expected attitudes and behaviours can occur. In this respect, the ethical perception of the followers and the level of acceptance of these attitudes and behaviours are as important as the leader's mission. The level of the relationship between the leader and the members and the fair behaviours of the leader towards his followers are the supporters of this entire relational cycle. This study aims to uncover the significance of interpersonal justice within this relationship by examining the leader-member relationship.

2. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2. 1. Ethical Leadership

Leadership is an art and skill in which the manager motivates and positively influences a group of people towards specific objectives (Dinibutun, 2020). As can be understood from this explanation, leaders have a dual responsibility. On the one hand, they strive for the sustainability of businesses, while on the other hand, they help retain, guide and motivate staff (Deng et al., 2023). This is a difficult process. It requires both certain characteristics that the leader must have and certain attitudes and behaviours that he must exhibit towards his followers (Ayar, 2022, p. 3).

Ethics consists of principles and standards that act as guidelines for evaluating individual behaviour in a holistic sense. It is the mechanism for understanding whether the behaviour is right or wrong (Eluka et al., 2015). Ethical behaviour consists of general criteria, without any specific environment or time constraints, without being attributed to an individual or group. Thus, it defines what is acceptable or unacceptable.

Ethical leadership also means open communication, recognition, reward, availability of resources and encouragement of staff (You et al., 2022). These leaders are leaders who exhibit behaviours and principles not only for their followers within the organization but also for the benefit of society and their development. They are individuals who carry moral responsibilities (Esmer, 2013, p. 43). Ethical leadership attracts attention due to its characteristics such as moral excellence, authenticity and honesty. It is suitable for the development of personnel and the organization. It has a beneficial effect on staff and other stakeholders as well (Stavropoulou et al., 2023).

2.2. Employees' Work Ethics

Ethics is a discipline that investigates how human behavior aligns with societal expectations (Malloy, 2003). Work ethics are the behavioural standards that guide the relationships of individuals working in an organizational environment with stakeholders in the work environment or outside. Ethical perception develops

the ability of the individual to think and decide about what is good and what is bad, to comprehend and reason events from this perspective (Grace & Cohen, 2005).

Work ethics emphasize the positivity of work and the ability to overcome challenges and achieve success through hard work (Yoder & Staudohar, 1982). People's behaviour patterns designed with their beliefs about work and also their orientation towards work are understood as their expectations from work (Zabel et al., 2016). Therefore, organizational ethics represents what should or should not be done at work. In Turkish culture, the concept of organizational ethics is as old as the existence of the state. Even the Orhun Inscriptions (732-735 AD), which are among the oldest inscriptions belonging to the Turks, constitute a moral model by providing information about the accountability of state administrators and officials to society, the mutual duties of the state and society, culture and laws, justice, welfare and the concept of a social state. They organized social life with cultural elements, state institutions, religious system and social rules. These are laws and customary law. Turkish state tradition understands justice as an impartial application of an unchangeable custom or law (Kantarcı, 2007).

The tradition of society and state is quite clear. Ethical rules that have penetrated into social life have also established rules with different organizations in organizational life. In this direction, it has also ensured the emergence of the business tradition and its operation with relevant procedures and rules. The most well-known of these in recent times have been the Ahi Organizations and Guilds. These organizations have existed from small tradesmen and craftsmen to modern organizational life and have served as a rule-making, implementing and controlling mechanism (Akbaş et al., 2018). In this respect, the concept of organizational ethics in Turkish organizational life dates back to earlier times than the Western business ethics perception that took shape with the industrial revolution and is more deep-rooted. In addition, these rules have served as a role model and a supervisory and punitive authority for all attitudes and behaviours in organizational and individual processes in organizational life. The concept of organizational ethics encompasses culture, values, norms, trust, procedures, rules, policies, and outcomes (Butts, 2017). For this reason, establishing organizational ethics in these organizations is a very comprehensive and difficult process.

Organizational ethics involves defining an organization's mission and values, identifying challenging situations and events causing issues, finding solutions to conflicts, and overseeing operations to uphold values. The ethics process serves as a means for the organization to tackle ethical dilemmas (Butts, 2017). Work ethics expresses the general personality of an individual and reveals the individual's perspective, belief and behaviour towards work. Thus, it turns into a routine, a trait of performing well and producing improved organizational outcomes (Arifah, 2015).

Work ethic refers to the essence, demeanour, and standard of an individual's internal life, moral and aesthetic preferences, and inner ambiance. Having a strong work ethic is essential for success in both work and relationships with colleagues. The belief is that employee performance is influenced by work ethics. The greater the employee's performance, the greater the work ethic (Rasyid, 2024).

2.3. Interpersonal Justice

Interpersonal justice is one of the most striking issues within the academic discussions on justice in organizations. Organizational justice is a perception related to individuals working within the organization. However, the attitudes and behaviours that are thought to be exhibited by the organization towards employees are taken into consideration in the development of this perception. Situations such as whether the organization treats the individual fairly and respectfully, whether it provides sufficient and accurate information, cause this perception to develop in the individual (Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2014). In this respect, organizational justice is related to four different justice issues. These include: distributive, procedural, interpersonal and informational justice (Cropanzano & Molina, 2015).

Interpersonal justice is about the treatment that individuals receive from their superiors. It pertains to how much superiors or supervisors show a respectful attitude in their interactions with them or the level at which they value their personal presence (Wang et al., 2019). From an employee's perspective, interpersonal justice is a state related to the level of connection between the employee and their supervisors, which is seen as an indicator of the subordinate's social standing in their work groups (O'Neill et al., 2011). Any respectful treatment displayed is seen as valuable and fair; whereas disrespectful behaviour is considered unfair because it causes feelings of being ignored and subsequently excluded (Rai & Agarwal, 2020).

2.4. Developing Hypothesis

To understand and explain this relationship, Social Learning Theory will be used. A model has been proposed using this theory.

Social Learning Theory: This theory proposes that people acquire the actions of their leaders through watching and copying them (Bandura, 1977). When it comes to ethical leadership, these leaders already serve as role models. Their behaviours are imitated by their followers according to Social Learning Theory (SLT). This leads to the development of ethical norms and values within the organization. SLT has emerged as possibly the most impactful theory on learning and development. It is connected to numerous fundamental principles of learning theory. Bandura (1977) argued that people do not only act individually in their learning processes, but can also learn new information and behavioural patterns by observing the behaviour of other people.

This theory posits that individuals learn by observing and imitating others. When the leadership exhibited is ethical leadership, it suggests that employees are more likely to adopt ethical behaviours and attitudes and to repeat those behaviours when they observe their leaders behaving ethically.

There are studies in the literature showing that employees imitating the leaders' ethical acts. For example, within the scope of Social Learning Theory, the positive effect of ethical leadership on employees' work engagement (Junaidi, 2023), on work ethics (Julian et al., 2023; Abun et al., 2023), work performance (Acidera et al., 2023) relationships are revealed. However, the positive effects of ethical leadership on organizational justice (Kılıç et al., 2024; Al Halbusi et al., 2021) and organizational justice and its dimensions (Amna et al., 2021) have been revealed. Based on this information, we present our hypothesis as follows:

H1. Ethical leadership positively influences interpersonal justice.

Interpersonal justice is the extent to which a person feels that management treats them with dignity, respect, and fairness (Colquitt, 2001). These actions are expected to result in ethical conduct within the organization. The prediction here is that employees who are treated fairly and well will respond similarly in the organization in the context of the norm of reciprocity (Blau, 1964). When employees feel valued and appreciated, they will develop positive feelings toward the organization and their managers, and as a result, they will be more likely to reciprocate with positive behaviours consistent with reciprocity processes (Gouldner, 1960). Drawing on this information, we put forward the following hypothesis:

H2. Interpersonal justice has positive effect on employees' work ethics

Ethical leadership plays a convening and integrating role in promoting and sustaining organizational integrity (Brown & Treviño, 2006). When leaders demonstrate ethical behaviour and make decisions based on strong moral foundations, they provide a positive role model for their employees and foster a culture of unity throughout the organization (Mayer et al., 2005). Ethical leaders achieve this integrity through honesty, transparency, fairness, and accountability (Treviño et al., 2000). These behaviours are contagious and are reflected in the collective behaviour of employees (Bandura, 1977). Ethical leaders who treat employees fairly often find their behaviours reciprocated by employees, which in turn develops more ethical principles for their work (Blau, 1964). This reciprocal dynamic, where fair treatment leads to increased ethical behaviour, leads to the proposal of the following hypothesis:

H3. Interpersonal justice has a mediating role in the relationship between ethical leadership and work ethics.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Participants

This research investigates the mediating role of interpersonal justice in the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' work ethic (shown in Picture 1.). Analysis revealed a statistically significant mediation effect, demonstrating that interpersonal justice plays a crucial role in transmitting the influence of ethical leadership on employees' work ethic. The study involved employees from various businesses operating in the technology and informatics sector in Ankara Organized Industrial Zone (OSTIM). Although there were 93 companies registered with the organized industrial zone directorate at the time of the research, It has been determined that 47 companies are actively operating. The main body consists of the employees of these businesses. The majority of the businesses are small-scale enterprises. In general, the maximum number of employees is unknown in these groups, which consist of between 5 and 20 employees. This sector was taken as a sample to ensure the comprehensibility of the questions in the survey content created as part of the study's

parameters and because digital studies are intensive and there may be an expectation that the perception of ethics from employees will be high. 232 valid data were obtained, 11 invalid and 7 unanswered.

Permission for this study was granted by the Science and Engineering Research Ethics Committee (Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University) with the decision numbered 2024.09.213 dated 27.09.2024

As a result of the analysis of demographic variables 45.7% of the participants are single, 54.3% are married; female 29.3%, male 70.7%. The rate of those between the ages of 18-25 is 19.0%, the rate of those between the ages of 26-35 is 44.3%, the rate of those between the ages of 36-45 is 29.8%, and the rate of those aged 46 and over is 6.9%. It was found that 24.8% of the participants were high school graduates, 27.5% has an associate degree, and 48.3% has a bachelor's degree. According to their status in the business administrative staff is 11.7%, service class staff 56.3%, technical staff 22%, and other 10%. 68.2% of the participants worked in businesses with 0-50 employees and 31.8% worked in businesses with 50-100 employees. In terms of seniority in organizations, 15.1% of the participants were evaluated as 1-3 years, 22.7% as 4-6 years, 12.3% as 7-9 years, 14.2% as 10-15 years, and 35.7% as 16 years and above.
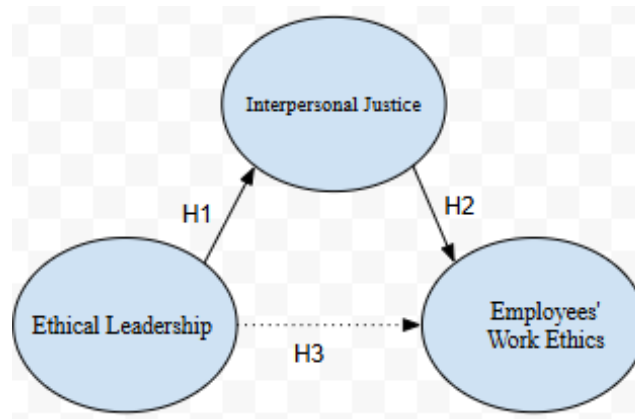
Picture 1. Researh Model

3.2. Measures

Ethical Leadership scale: The 8-item scale developed by Yukl et al. (2013) was used to measure ethical leadership. In this study, we utilized the Turkish adaptation of the Ethical Leadership Scale developed by Yukl et al. (2013). This adaptation was conducted by Altunışık et al. (2005) and has been previously used in Turkish research contexts.

Employees' work ethics scale: The **Work Ethic scale** developed by Mirels and Garrett (1971) was used to measure employees' work ethics. The **hard work dimension** of the scale reflects a moral responsibility and commitment to work. The scale was taken from the study by **Gök** and **Akgemci (2020).**

Interpersonal justice scale: The Interpersonal Justice scale, a four-item scale created by Colquitt (2001), was utilized for interpersonal justice, as previously employed by Yelboğa (2012). One sample item is, 'Does your manager treat you with respect?

There are no reverse items in any of the scales. After these measurements, the analysis phase was started.

4. FINDINGS

The study employed SPSS 25.0 and AMOS 24.0 software packages for statistical analysis. While SPSS program was used for descriptive statistics and correlation analyses, AMOS program was used for reliability and validity analyses of structures and hypothesis testing.

4.1. Data Analysis

The mean, standard deviation and correlation values of the variables are presented in Table 1. According to the correlation analysis results, a positive and significant relationship was found between ethical leadership and interpersonal justice (r=0.61; p<0.01). Similarly, a positive and significant relationship was found between interpersonal justice and work ethics (r=0.68; p<0.01).

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Values

Constructs	M	SD	1	2	3
1. EL	3.92	1.14	1		
2. IJ	3.83	0.80	0.61**	1	
3. WE	3.90	0.99	0.46**	0.68**	1
Notes: n=231; **p<0.01; M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation; EL=Ethical Leadership; IJ= Interpersonal Justice; WE=Work Ethics					

4.1.1. Measurement Model

The research tested the measurement model with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the AMOS software. In this scenario, the maximum likelihood approach was employed to determine if the expected configurations of the scales were consistent with the data gathered (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006).

The adequacy of the measurement model was evaluated using fit indices recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999). The fit indices utilized included chi-square (χ^2/df), RMSEA, SRMR, GFI, CFI, AGFI, and NFI.

Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Fit Indices

Fit Indices	Recommended Value	Obtained Value
χ^2/df	< 3	2.58
RMSEA	< 0.05	0.08
SRMR	< 0.05	0.03
GFI	> 0.95	0.89
CFI	> 0.95	0.97
AGFI	> 0.95	0.92

In structural equation modelling high model fit is typically indicated by χ^2/df values below 3, RMSEA and SRMR values below 0.05, and GFI, CFI, AGFI, and NFI values above 0.95 (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016). For this study confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) demonstrated the following fit indices: χ^2/df = 2.58, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.03, GFI = 0.89, CFI = 0.97, AGFI = 0.92, and NFI = 0.95.

Although the GFI value (0.89) was slightly below the ideal threshold of 0.95, strong model fit was supported by the other indices. Specifically, the χ^2/df ratio (2.58) was within the acceptable range, and excellent model fit was indicated by SRMR (0.03). A moderate level of fit was indicated by the RMSEA value (0.08). Confirmation of robust comparative fit was provided by the CFI (0.97) and NFI (0.95) values, suggesting significant improvement of the proposed model over the baseline model. Furthermore, good fit was indicated by the AGFI (0.92), accounting for model complexity.

However, given the overall pattern of fit indices, which predominantly demonstrate good fit, the measurement model was concluded to adequately represent the data. Examination of the AGFI and NFI values strengthened the model evaluation and provided a more comprehensive viewpoint.

In the study, after structural validity analysis, reliability, convergent and discriminant validity were tested. For internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR) should be > 0.70. For convergent validity, standardized factor loadings should be > 0.50; CR > 0.70; average variance extracted (AVE) > 0.50; CR > AVE. For discriminant validity, it is recommended that AVE > maximum shared variance (MSV); AVE > average squared variance (ASV) (Hair et al., 2014).

Observing Table 3 reveals that α and CR values are > 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Standardized factor loadings were noted to be > 0.50, CR is greater than 0.70, AVE is greater than 0.50, and CR values for each factor are higher than AVE. In addition, measurements showed that AVE values are greater than MSV and ASV (Hair et al., 2014; Malhotra & Dash, 2011). The results obtained reveal that the model has sufficient construct validity, internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 3. Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	α	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Ethical Leadership	EL1	0.92[**]	0.97	0.97	0.82	0.43	0.33
	EL2	0.90[***]					
	EL3	0.94[***]					
	EL4	0.90[***]					
	EL5	0.90[***]					
	EL6	0.91[***]					
	EL7	0.90[***]					
	EL8	0.88[***]					
Interpersonal Justice	IJ1	0.72[**]	0.86	0.86	0.61	0.59	0.51
	IJ2	0.84[***]					
	IJ3	0.82[***]					
	IJ4	0.74[***]					
Work Ethics	WE1	0.82[**]	0.91	0.91	0.78	0.59	0.41
	WE2	0.93[***]					
	WE3	0.88[***]					

Notes: [***]$p<0.01$; [**]$p<0.05$; α=Cronbach's Alpha; CR=Composite Reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted; MSV=Maximum Squared Variance; ASV=Average Shared Square Variance

4.1.2. Structural Model

This research utilized a structural model analysis with 5,000 bootstraps and estimated a 95% confidence interval (CI) to establish the upper and lower limits, which assists in understanding the level of significance. Estimation of a 95% confidence interval (CI) using 5,000 bootstrap samples in the structural model analysis was conducted to obtain more reliable results. This was done when the distribution of parameter estimates does not conform to a normal distribution, or when support for this assumption is not provided by the sample size. Determination of confidence intervals more accurately eklendi is enabled by the bootstrap method through estimating the sampling distribution of parameter estimates, thus increasing the reliability of results. The findings of the hypothesis test can be seen in Table 4. Ethical leadership explains 42% (R^2) of the change in interpersonal justice, while ethical leadership with interpersonal justice explains 58% (R^2) of the change in work ethics. Conceptual model results are presented in Figure 2.
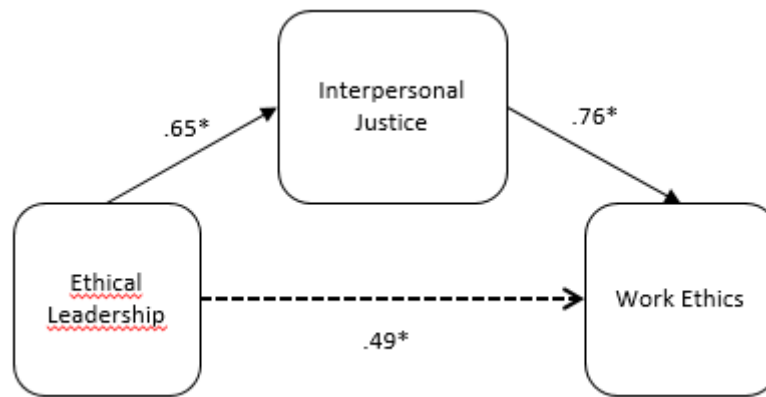
Picture 2. Conceptual Model Results

According to the findings, ethical leadership has a positive significant effect on interpersonal justice (β=0.65; p<0.001). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported. Interpersonal justice has a positive significant effect on work ethics (β=0.76; p<0.001). This result also shows that hypothesis 2 is accepted. Following an examination of the bootstrap results, it is seen that the indirect effect of ethical leadership on work ethics through interpersonal justice is significant (β=0.49; p<0.001). This last finding also reveals that hypothesis 3 is supported.

Table 4. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Paths	β	p	CI	Result
H1	EL → IJ	0.65	0.00***	(0.562–0.730)	Supported
H2	IJ → WE	0.76	0.00***	(0.698–0.824)	Supported
H3	EL → IJ → WE	0.49	0.00***	(0.411–0.575)	Supported
Notes: ***p<0.01; Coefficients are standardized (β); EL=Ethical Leadership; IJ=Interpersonal Justice; WE=Work Ethics; CI=Confidence Interval					

5. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Ethical leadership is a type of leadership that is rooted in honouring moral principles and ideals and directs relationships from this perspective. It places great importance on respecting the honour and rights of others and is both a defender and role model of these moral norms. Thus, it is linked to ideas like trustworthiness, integrity, consideration, charm, and fairness. Ethics involves the kinds of principles and morals that are considered favourable or fitting by either an individual or a society. Furthermore, ethics is connected to the virtuousness of individuals and behaviours of them. A leader's decisions are influenced by their moral growth as well. The leadership style exhibited by leaders in an organizational environment has positive or negative effects on many behaviours of followers. In this respect, the possible effect of the individual on work ethics is a matter of curiosity. This relationship has been addressed within the scope of this study. In this respect, revealing the organizational reflection of the concepts presented within the scope of the model will provide information to the literature on this subject. The data with the questionnaire prepared within the scope of the research was obtained from the employees of the enterprises in the technology and informatics sector in Ankara Organized Industrial Zone (OSTIM). The data obtained within the scope of the study model were subjected to analysis and the following results were reached.

It has been determined that ethical leadership has a positive impact on interpersonal justice (H1). This finding aligns with the connections found in previous studies (Al Halbusi et al., 2021; Amna et al., 2021). Ethical leaders serve as examples for others, and the behaviors they exhibit are considered an indicator of the organization's ethical identity. These behaviors mediate the development of the organizational climate in an ethical direction. There are findings in the literature indicating that employees who are treated fairly exhibit fair behaviors towards others (Rasyid, 2024; Blau, 1964). These learned behaviors develop and are

reciprocated in environments where the organizational climate supports them. This positive interaction is also reflected in employees' positive behaviors towards work.

The acceptance of the H2 supports this indirect development. Employees reflect the positive interaction they receive from managers in their relationships and exhibit more ethical and responsible behaviors in work and relationships, rather than behaviors that harm the organization or disrupt processes. Thus, individuals positively reflect the treatment and response they receive. This result contributes to the development of a healthy relationship environment by creating a snowball effect of desired behaviors.

Finally, the positive relationships that develop will be a determinant of individuals' behaviors towards work. The positive communication process that develops between them and the leaders, their ethical evaluation by the leader, and their ethical and fair treatment in work and processes ultimately lead to positive feelings in individuals. These feelings lead individuals to exhibit fair and rational attitudes towards work. The literature confirms this finding (Kılıç et al., 2024; Tufan et al., 2023). This indicates that the H3 of the study has been accepted.

The results provide important information about human resources management and processes in organizational management. As a basic function of management, leadership covers organizational aspects related to the effectiveness and efficiency of services, sustainability and continuous quality improvement, user satisfaction and personnel development. Leadership styles directly affect the management of human resources (Al-Khaled & Fenn, 2020). As can be understood from the definition, in the management role, the leader/manager motivates a group of people to achieve certain goals and positively affects them (Mulugeta & Hailemariam, 2018). Ethical leadership is one of the desired behaviours within the organization. These behaviours are not only related to the individual's own organizational activities, but are also instilled in others or adopted by their followers.

Leadership in modern organizations is faced with various challenges arising from a rapidly changing environment, such as the radical transformation of organizational functions and the implementation of innovative regulations and practices. In this extremely challenging context, leaders have serious responsibilities for both the sustainability of businesses and the retention of qualified personnel (Deng et al., 2023). In this respect, the study's findings offer crucial information in order to realize the transformation of ethical behaviours into positive attitudes towards organizational relations and work by encouraging them. Ethical leadership behaviour development and the creation of an organizational role model will trigger organizational learning and accelerate the receipt of many positive feedbacks in terms of management.

5.1. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The present research only used data gathered from participants operating only in the Ankara Organized Industrial Zone (OSTIM) and a certain business line regarding the selection of the participants for the study. Therefore, the current findings may not be generalizable to all other sectors and all organized industrial zones or sectors in Turkiye. In this respect, while addressing the limitations of the current study, future studies should involve employees from other sectors and industrial lines. Furthermore, it can be suggested that future research include other employee behaviours that ethical leadership behaviours may affect in organizations, such as organizational commitment, behaviours that harm the organization, or cynical behaviours. In addition, relationships with concepts such as organizational climate and employee empowerment can be examined in terms of mediating behaviours.

Another limitation observed in our research is related to the goodness-of-fit assessment of our structural equation model. The GFI value was observed to be 0.89. This value is below the acceptable threshold of 0.95. This indicates that our model may not fully reproduce the observed covariance matrix. Additionally, our sample consists of individuals with specific demographic characteristics, which may limit the generalizability of our findings. Future research can test the validity of this model by using larger and more diverse samples and can enhance the robustness of our findings by using different data collection methods.

However, although the study results have provided us with meaningful data, future studies can be a longitudinal study that includes measurements at different time points to confirm the relationships established in the proposed theoretical model in terms of timing.

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The Effect of Ethical Leadership on Employees' Work Ethics. The Mediating Role of Interpersonal Justice

Etik Liderliğin Çalışanların İş Etiği Üzerindeki Etkisi. Kişilerarası Adaletin Aracı Rolü

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Bu çalışma, etik liderlik tarzının çalışanların iş etiği üzerindeki etkisini ve bu etkide kişilerarası adaletin aracılık rolünü incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Etik liderlik, örgütsel güven, adalet ve dürüstlük üzerine kurulu bir liderlik tarzıdır ve etik liderler davranışlarının çevre ve paydaşlar üzerindeki etkilerini düşünerek hareket eden liderlerdir (Engelbrecht et al., 2017; Yukl et al., 2013). Bu davranışlar örgüt içinde kendisini takip edenler tarafından benimsenmesi ve taklit edilme düzeyi yüksek davranışlardır. Örgüt kültürünün bu yönde gelişmesine ve örgütsel öğrenmeye olumlu yönde etki eden davranışlardır. Sonuç olarak iletişim ve etkileşim içerisinde olan diğerlerinin kendilerini önemsenmiş hissetmelerine ve değer verildikleri ve adil davranıldığını hissetmelerine yol açar. Örgüt içerisinde sonuçları bakımından oldukça fazla pozitif sonuç ile ilişkilendirilmişti (Koçak, 2019; Engelbrecht et al., 2017).

İşletmelerde işgörenler çalıştıkları ortamın kendileri için huzur veren, istek ve bağlılığını artıran bir ortam olmasını ve ayrıca gerek etkileşimin gerekse de prosedürlerin kendileri için adil işletilmesini isterler. Birlikte çalıştıkları yöneticilerin kendilerine karşı tutumu işgörenlerin işe yönelik tutumunu da belirler (Junaidi, 2023; Cropanzano & Molina, 2015). Bu bakımdan lider ve yöneticilerin kendilerine yönelik etik bir tutum sergilemesi çalışanların huzurunu, güvenini ve mutluluğunu artıracak aynı zamanda onların işe karşı daha etik davranışlar sergilemelerine neden olacaktır. Sonuç olarak pozitif bir girdi olarak liderin etik davranışları çalışanlar üzerinde pozitif bir çıktıya yani etik davranışlara sebep olması gibi bir beklentiyi hesaplamak mantıklı olacaktır.

Yine de insan davranışlarının pek çok farklı etmenden etkilenerek şekil alması muhtemeldir (Butts, 2017; Bandura, 1977). Her ne kadar iki davranış arasında doğrudan bir etki beklense de bazı davranışların ya doğrudan ya da dolaylı etkilenimlerle ortaya çıkması muhtemeldir. Bu açıdan liderlerin işgörenlere karşı etik davranması ile birlikte izleyiciler arasında adaleti sağlaması da sadece kendi davranışları üzerinde bir kontrolden çıkarak aynı zamanda bu davranışlardan etkilenenleri dikkate alması ve sonuçları kontrol etmesi noktasında belirleyici olacaktır. Etik davranışlar ilişkilerin adaleti ile desteklenmedikçe davranışın etkisi sadece liderin kendi davranışı üzerindeki kontrolü ile sınırlı kalacaktır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma lider-üye ilişkisini inceleyerek bu ilişkide kişilerarası adaletin önemini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu ilişkiyi anlamak ve açıklamak için Sosyal Öğrenme Teorisi kullanılarak bir model önerilmiştir. Sosyal Öğrenme Teorisi, bireylerin liderlerinin davranışını onları gözlemleyerek ve taklit ederek öğrendiklerini ileri sürmektedir (Bandura, 1977). Etik liderlik söz konusu olduğunda, bu liderler zaten rol model olarak hizmet etmektedir. Sosyal Öğrenme Teorisine (SÖT) göre davranışları takipçileri tarafından taklit edilmektedir. Bu, organizasyon içinde etik normların ve değerlerin gelişmesine yol açar. SÖT belki de öğrenme ve gelişimin en etkili teorisi haline gelmiştir. Geleneksel öğrenme teorisinin birçok temel kavramıyla ilişkilidir. Bandura (1977), insanların öğrenme süreçlerinde yalnızca bireysel olarak hareket etmediklerini, aynı zamanda diğer insanların davranışlarını gözlemleyerek yeni bilgiler ve davranış kalıpları da öğrenebileceklerini ileri sürmüştür. Bu teori, bireylerin başkalarını gözlemleyerek ve taklit ederek öğrendiklerini ileri sürmektedir. Sergilenen liderlik etik liderlik olduğunda, çalışanların liderlerinin etik davrandığını gözlemlediklerinde etik davranış ve tutumları benimseme ve bu davranışları tekrarlama olasılıklarının daha yüksek olduğunu göstermektedir.

Literatürde çalışanların liderlerin etik davranışlarını taklit ettiğini gösteren çalışmalar bulunmaktadır. Örneğin, Sosyal Öğrenme Teorisi kapsamında, etik liderliğin çalışanların işe bağlılığı (Junaidi, 2023), iş etiği (Julian vd., 2023; Abun vd., 2023), iş performansı (Acidera vd., 2023) ilişkileri üzerindeki olumlu etkisi ortaya konmuştur. Bununla birlikte, etik liderliğin örgütsel adalet (Kılıç vd., 2024; Al Halbusi vd., 2021) ve örgütsel adalet ve boyutları (Amna vd., 2021) üzerindeki olumlu etkileri ortaya konmuştur.

Araştırmanın hipotezleri:

H1. Etik liderlik, kişilerarası adalet üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahiptir.

H2. Kişilerarası adalet, çalışanların iş ahlakı üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahiptir.

H3. Kişilerarası adalet, etik liderlik ve iş ahlakı arasındaki ilişkide aracı bir role sahiptir.

Buradan yola çıkarak çalışma modeli kapsamında bu ilişkiler incelenmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında hazırlanan anket ile veriler Ankara Organize Sanayi Bölgesi'nde (OSTİM) teknoloji ve bilişim sektöründe faaliyet gösteren işletmelerin çalışanlarından 232 katılımcıdan elde edilmiştir. Araştırmanın yapıldığı tarihte organize sanayi bölge müdürlüğüne kayıtlı 93 firma olmasına rağmen aktif olarak faaliyet gösteren firma sayısı 47 olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında oluşturulan anket içeriğindeki soruların anlaşılırlığını sağlamak ve dijital çalışmaların yoğun olması ve çalışanlarda etik algısının yüksek olması beklentisi olabileceği için bu sektör örneklem olarak alınmıştır. 232 geçerli veri elde edilmiş, 11 geçersiz ve 7 cevapsız veri elde edilmiştir. Çalışma modelinde yer alan değişkenlere ilişkin veriler analiz edildikten sonra, aşağıdaki bulgular elde edilmiştir.

Araştırmada kullanılan ölçüm modeli AMOS programı kullanılarak doğrulayıcı faktör analizi (DFA) ile test edilmiştir. Bu bağlamda ölçeklerin öngörülen yapılarının toplanan verilerle desteklenip desteklenmediği maksimum olabilirlik yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir (Jöreskog ve Sörbom, 2006).

Sonuçlar incelendiğinde öncelikle etik liderliğin kişilerarası adalet üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahip olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu sonuç literatürdeki ilişkilerle tutarlıdır (Al Halbusi vd., 2021; Amna vd., 2021). Etik liderler rol modeldir ve sergiledikleri davranışlar organizasyonun etik kimliğinin bir göstergesidir. Bu davranışlar örgütsel iklimin bu yönde gelişmesine aracılık eder. Bu olumlu davranışlar aynı zamanda bulaşıcıdır ve takipçilerin onları taklit etme olasılığı yüksektir. Literatürde bu yönde sonuçlar vardır (Rasyid, 2024; Blau, 1964). Adil davranılan bir çalışan, karşılığında diğer taraflara adil davranışlar sergiler. Bu öğrenilmiş davranışlar örgütsel iklimin bunu desteklediği ortamlarda gelişir ve bir karşılık bulur. Bu olumlu değişim çalışanların işe yönelik olumlu davranışlarına da yansır.

Bu dolaylı gelişim, çalışmanın ikinci hipotezinin kabul edilmesiyle de desteklenmektedir. Çalışanlar yöneticilerinden aldıkları olumlu enerjiyi ilişkilerine yansıtır ve örgüte veya süreçlere zarar veren, süreçleri aksatan davranışlardan ziyade iş ve ilişkilerde daha etik ve sorumlu davranışlar sergilerler. Böylece birey, aldığı muameleyi ve tepkiyi olumlu yansıtır. Bu sonuç, istenen davranışları bir kartopuna dönüştürerek sağlıklı bir ilişki ortamının gelişmesine katkıda bulunur. Bu çalışma ortamı muhtemelen birçok bireyin çalışma ortamlarına ilişkin beklentilerinin çoğunu karşılayacaktır.

Son olarak, gelişen olumlu ilişkiler bireyin işe yönelik davranışının belirleyicisi olacaktır. Liderlerle aralarında gelişen olumlu iletişim süreci, lider tarafından etik olarak değerlendirilmeleri, iş ve süreçlerde etik ve adil muamele görmeleri, nihayetinde bireyde olumlu duygulara yol açar ve bu duygular bireyin işe karşı adil ve rasyonel tutumlar sergilemesine neden olur. Literatürdeki bazı çalışmalar bu sonucu desteklemektedir (Kılıç vd., 2024; Tufan vd., 2023). Bu durumda çalışmanın 3. hipotezinin kabul edilmiş olmasının bir göstergesidir.

Çalışma sonucunda her üç hipotezde desteklenmiştir. Sonuçlar, insan kaynakları yönetimi ve örgütsel yönetimdeki süreçler hakkında önemli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Yönetimin temel bir işlevi olarak liderlik, hizmetlerin etkinliği ve verimliliği, sürdürülebilirlik ve sürekli kalite iyileştirme, kullanıcı memnuniyeti ve personel gelişimi ile ilgili örgütsel yönleri kapsar. Liderlik stilleri, insan kaynaklarının yönetimini doğrudan etkiler (Al-Khaled ve Fenn, 2020). Tanımdan da anlaşılacağı üzere, yönetim rolünde lider/yönetici, bir grup insanı belirli hedeflere ulaşmaya motive eder ve onları olumlu yönde etkiler (Mulugeta ve Hailemariam, 2018). Etik liderlik, örgüt içinde istenen davranışlardan biridir. Bu davranışlar yalnızca bireyin kendi örgütsel faaliyetleriyle ilgili olmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda başkalarına da aşılanır veya takipçileri tarafından benimsenir.

Mevcut çalışma örnekleminin seçimi konusunda sadece Ankara Organize Sanayi bölgesinde ve belli bir iş kolunda faaliyet gösteren katılımcılardan elde edilen veriler ile sınırlı kalmıştır. Bu nedenle, mevcut bulgular tüm diğer sektörler ve Türkiye'deki tüm organize sanayi bölgelerine ya da sektörüne genelleştirilemeyebilir.

Bu açıdan mevcut çalışmanın sınırlamalarını ele alırken, gelecekteki araştırmaların diğer sektör ve sanayi kollarının çalışanlarını içermesi önerilir. Dahası, mevcut çalışma gelecekteki araştırmaların etik liderlik davranışlarının örgütlerde etkileyebileceği diğer çalışan davranışlarından örgütsel bağlılık, örgüte zarar veren davranışlar ya da sinik davranışlar gibi faktörleri de içermesi önerilebilir. Ayrıca aracı davranışlar bakımından örgütsel iklim, personel güçlendirme gibi kavramlarla da ilişkiler incelenebilir.

Bununla birlikte her ne kadar çalışma sonuçları anlamlı verilere ulaşmamızı sağlamış olsa da zamanlama bakımından ilerideki çalışmalar önerilen teorik modelde kurulan ilişkilerin onaylamasını sağlayan farklı zaman noktalarında ölçümler içeren uzunlamasına bir çalışma olabilir.