



**An Investigation of the Relationship between Organizational Commitment Levels of Academic Staff and Ethical Conducts in Behavioral and Decision Making Process of University Management**

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**Abstract**

This research is a descriptive study in correlational design, which aims to identify the relationship between the ethical conduct of university management in the behavioral and decision-making processes and organizational commitment levels of academic staff. The population of the study consists of the academic staff working in Kilis 7 Aralık University in 2014-2015 academic years. The sample is 152 academics selected by simple random sampling model. Ethical Leadership and Organizational Commitment Questionnaires were used to collect data. In data processing, arithmetic mean, correlation and regression analyses were conducted. At the end of the study, it was found out that academic staffs had high-level perceptions related to ethical behaviors of managers and mid-level organizational commitment perceptions. According to the regression analysis results, it was discovered that the perception of the academics on the ethical leadership levels of their managers is a meaningful predictor of their organizational commitment level.

*Keywords:* Ethics, Ethical Leadership, Organizational Commitment

**Üniversitedeki Yöneticilerin Davranışsal ve Karar Vermede Etik Davranışları ile Akademisyenlerin Örgütsel Bağlılık Düzeyleri Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi**

**Özet**

Üniversitedeki yöneticilerin davranışsal ve karar vermede etik davranışları ile akademisyenlerin örgütsel bağlılık algıları ve bunlar arasındaki ilişkiyi tespit etmeyi amaçlayan bu araştırma, ilişkisel tarama yönteminde betimsel bir çalışmadır. Çalışmanın evreni, 2014-2015 eğitim öğretim yılında Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesinde görev yapan akademisyenlerden oluşturmaktadır.



Örnekleme ise evrenden basit seçkisiz örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen 152 akademisyendir. Verileri toplamak için Etik Liderlik Ölçeği ve Örgütsel Bağlılık Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Verilerin çözümlenmesinde aritmetik ortalama, korelasyon ve regresyon analizleri yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda akademisyenlerin, yöneticilerin etik liderlik davranışlarına ilişkin algı düzeylerinin yüksek, örgütsel bağlılık düzeylerinin ise orta düzeyde olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Regresyon analizi sonuçlarına göre ise; akademisyenlerin, yöneticilerinde algıladıkları etik liderlik düzeyi, örgütsel bağlılık düzeylerinin anlamlı bir yordayıcısı olduğu sonucu elde edilmiştir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Etik, Etik Liderlik, Örgütsel Bağlılık



## Introduction

The rapid change and innovation in the social life require educational institutions to be organizational structures which are; more productive, capable of responding to needs, capable of being in communication with its environment and workers (Ertürk, 2012), and guiding the society in all spheres.

In order to realize organizational effectiveness and to increase individual competence, maximum contribution is expected from organizational management (Sağır, 2013). In educational organizations, a manager is viewed as a formal leader who affects and directs members of organization. The leadership, on the other hand, is a result of the relationship and interaction of the leader with other individuals; and is a role taken by an individual who is different from others in a particular group (Teyfur, Beytekin and Yalçinkaya, 2013). The role behaviors, strategies and tactics of a leader affect values. In addition beliefs and behaviors of the audience can ensure the accomplishment of tasks and harmony within the organization (Aslantaş and Dursun, 2008).

As leaders, managers in educational institutions are expected to provide confidence in interpersonal communication; be fair in the distribution of reward and punishment; create ethical standards and gather the staff around this purpose; to be honest in their work and private life; and set examples with their behaviors. With this study, the relationship between the behavioral and ethical decision making process of managers and organizational commitment perception of academic staff was evaluated with an application study in specific to Kilis 7 Aralık University staff.

## Ethics

The nature of the behavior of managers also affects the quality of people's ties with their organizations. However, when the behaviors include some unethical points, reactions against these behaviors will be laid out differently. Today, in an environment where intense social relationships are experienced, to reflect on and discuss ethical behaviors seem to be an ever-increasing necessity (Uğurlu, Sincar and Cinar, 2013).

The ethics is described as socially appropriate "moral law" (Aydin, 2002 as cited by Acar, 2011). In Turkish the word "ethics" is used to mean "morality" (Cevizci, 2002). Yatkın (2013) defines ethics as the expression of right or wrong assumptions of past and present and interpret it



as a philosophy which investigates people's customs or moral relations, behaviors and views. Similar to that definition, Celep (2004, as cited by Celebi, 2014; 31) defines ethics as an area of philosophy which evaluates behaviors and views in terms of morality. Ethics, according to Yaran (2010), is used to mean as the equivalent of morality concept in social life.

### **Ethical Leadership**

Serious ethical issues experienced recently in business, sports, academia, media, management, faith and health have made executors, legislators and governments obliged to focus on ethical leadership (Brown and Trevino, 2006; Resick, Hargis, Shao and Dust, 2013; Marsh, 2013; Çelik, 2012; Akdoğan and Demirtas, 2014). Ethical leadership has also been the subject of many studies.

If we consider the concept that ethics is present where an interaction occurs among more than one person, the leadership as a social phenomenon can be said to have an ethical dimension (Turhan, 2007). In this regard, today it became more of a must than a necessity for managers to demonstrate ethical leadership behaviors (Yıldırım, 2010). The concept of ethics in terms of leadership is more related to professional ethics (Celep, 2004; actin: Celebi, 2014). Brown and Trevino (2006) define ethical leaders as “demonstrating norms-appropriate-behaviors through individual actions and relationships among individuals; and conveying this behavior to audiences through decision-making and incentive.”

Ethical leadership is a factor related to the method of encouraging ethical behavior in leaders' organizations. The ethical behavior, on the other hand, is a collection of behavioral patterns that reflect ethical values adopted by organizations and partners, establish and maintain relationships based on trust (Podger and Menzel, 2014). In their studies, Trevino and his friends demonstrated ethical and individual leader aspect which is one of the important characteristics of an ethical leader (Brown and Trevino, 2006). The concept of moral person emphasizes the individual qualities of the ethical leaders. Strong ethical leaders are honest and trustworthy and set an example for others. Ethical leaders are seen as moral examples, both in their personal and professional lives (Brown and Mitchell, 2010).

According to Robbins and Judge (trans. Erdem, 2013), senior managers as formal leaders determine the moral standards in an organization. Managers should determine high ethical standards, show them in their behaviors and encourage others to these behaviors.



It is also important for leaders working in the field of education to show ethical leadership behavior. According to Acar (2011), the task of educational organizations is to give individuals new knowledge and skills in accordance with a defined curriculum and objectives. Managers who succeed in incorporating ethical leader roles and behaviors can turn ethical dilemmas in the organizations into positive outputs.

In conclusion, one of the basic building blocks of an effective leadership is to demonstrate ethical leadership behavior. A leader has to feel the ethical responsibility for his audience in his behaviors and reflect them with behaviors. A leader, in short, should set an example for his employees by showing ethical leadership behaviors (Yilmaz, 2006).

### **Organizational Commitment**

Maximizing the contribution of people, who have crucial place in change, harmony and existence efforts of the organizations, increases the importance of "organizational commitment" concept which is one of the main focus of study of today's management concepts (Kök and Özcan, 2012). Organizational commitment implies the power of bond an employee feels towards the organization she or he works for. It is believed that organizational commitment feeling affects organizational performance in a positive way; in this context, it is argued that organizational commitment reduce unintended consequences, such as tardiness, absenteeism and leaving work; and contribute positively to product and service quality (Bayram, 2005). While Baysal and Paksoy (1999) define organizational commitment as the individuals' preferring organizational interests to theirs, Robbins and Judge (trans. Ed. Erdem, 2013) define it as the level of an individual's desire to identify themselves with the organizations and its objectives; and to remain its member.

As an important research field of organizational psychology, organizational commitment, also expressed as organizational dedication, is considered one of the important dynamics that determine the life of the organization (Usta, 2013).

There have been many classifications on organizational commitment. Allen and Meyer (1990) approached organizational commitment from three perspectives; affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Ed. Örgücü and Üngören, 2013). Affective commitment is the commitment that the employees feel in proportion that they adopt the values, goals and objectives of their organizations. Employees show positive attitude towards work and



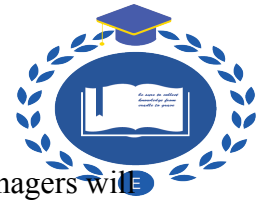
are ready to show additional effort when required (Bayram, 2005). In other words, the affective commitment means the emotional commitment of the individuals and is defined as individuals identifying organizational objectives and embracing them (Chen and Francesco, 2003: 490-516; Cheng and Stockdale, 2003: 465-489; cited in Gül, 2002). Continuance commitment is the commitment that develops after the employees invest on their organizations. In this case, the employee thinks that she or he has spent much time and effort on the organization, invested and therefore, it is an obligation to remain within the organization (Bayram, 2005). The normative commitment, on the other hand, is that the employees feel themselves attached to the organization since they believe – with a moral sense of mission – in the necessity of not leaving the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1997: 1, Boylu, Pelit, and Güçer, 2007). Organizational commitment has an important place in the social transformation efforts of the educational institutions and it is of crucial importance to increase the employees' organizational commitment (Uğurlu and Üstüner, 2011).

### **Ethical Leadership and Organizational Commitment Relationship**

Managers are expected to have certain behavioral skills within ethical rules in that they must set examples both to his followers and others with their ethical behaviors (Kılınç, 2010). The most important one among these, perhaps, is ethical dimension in decision-making process.

The managers intending to show their decision-making process are expected to demonstrate fair, honest, egalitarian behaviors that will create a sense of trust on their followers. In the decision making process, discussions, options and evaluations concerning the results should have ethical grounds to make right decisions (Uğurlu, 2009). According to Usta (2013), the organizational commitment level increases in organizations where employees are recognized while it decreases in organizations where the organization does not adopt participatory decision making.

Organizational commitment is the feeling of loyalty towards organizational processes such as employee work ethic, communication, trust, respect, participation, sharing, business continuity, the policies and strategies, teamwork and organizational citizenship behavior. In other words, the organizational commitment is formed depending on the organization-employee compliance. The higher the level of harmony between organizational values and beliefs and individual values and beliefs, the higher the commitment level to the organization (Demirel,



2009). In this respect, it can be predicted that ethical leadership behaviors of the managers will increase the organizational commitment.

In this research, the question "What is the relationship between behavioral and ethical conducts in decision-making of the managers and organizational commitment level of the academic staff?" forms the main problem statement.

Under this main problem, we seek to answer following sub-problems:

1. What are the perceptions of academic staff in the university regarding ethical conduct of managers in behavioral and decision-making process?
2. What are the perceptions of academic staff regarding organizational commitment?
3. Is there a meaningful relationship between ethical conduct of managers in behavioral and decision-making process and the organizational commitment of academic staff?

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

The study is a descriptive research in correlational design. Correlational design is the suitable model in research which aims to determine the relationship between two or more variables and to obtain cause-effect relations (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2009).

### **Population and Sample**

The population of the study consists of 306 academic staff working in Kilis 7 Aralık University in 2014-2015 academic year. Since 56 people were stationed to other universities within the OYP program, the population was reduced to 250 people. In addition, the managers of the university were excluded from the study since it aims to determine the perceptions of academic staff regarding ethical conduct of the managers.

The sample of the study is 152 academics selected according to simple random sampling method. The demographic characteristics of participants are: 69.1% male, 30.9% female. Marital status distribution is: 59.9% married, 40.1% single. According to distribution based on academic titles, there are 36.8% lecturers, 30.3 % research assistants, 23 % assistant professors, 7.9 % associate professors and 2 % instructors. In addition, the places of work of the academic staff are: 21.7 % from Vocational School, 20.4% from Faculty of Education, 19.1% from Faculty of Arts



and Science, and remaining 13.8% from Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Engineering, Rector  
Affiliated Departments, Vocational School of Health, Faculty of Theology and Faculty of  
Agriculture.

### **Data Collection Tools**

Two scales were used for data collection in the study. The first one is the "Ethical Leadership Questionnaire" (ELQ) developed by Yılmaz (2005). The Ethical Leadership Questionnaire composed by Yılmaz consists of four dimensions. Two of these dimensions - behavioral and decision-making in ethical conduct - were implemented. Ethical Leadership Questionnaire consists of options; Totally Agree (5) Agree (4), No Idea (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1) and is scored according to 5-point Likert-type scale.

The second scale created by Meyer and Allen (1984, 1997) and adapted to Turkish by Bolu, Pelit and Güçer (2007) is Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Meyer and Allen aim to assess organizational commitment by dividing it into three basic components; affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Karacaoğlu, 2013). It is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of options Agree (5) Agree (4), Partially Agree (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1).

Yılmaz (2005) used Cronbach Alpha coefficient to predict the reliability of Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ). Yılmaz found out that the reliability score of ELQ's decision-making dimension was 0.94; behavioral ethical dimension was 0.90; the average value of the two dimensions was 0.92 (Yılmaz, 2006). As for this study, reliability score of decision making was 0.90 while behavioral ethical dimension score was 0.93. Average reliability coefficient of the two dimensions was 0.91. Boylu, Pelit and Güçer (2007), after analyses, found the reliability score of affective commitment 0.92, progressive commitment 0.79 and normative commitment 0.80. Organizational Commitment Questionnaire reliability score of this study is 0.83 for affective commitment, 0.69 for progressive commitment and 0.84 for normative commitment.

### **Data Analysis**

SPSS 18.0 statistical software package was used to analyze the data collected. Before data analysis, assumptions on analysis like short-value and over-value were tested. To rank and interpret the average scores of the ethical perception and organizational commitment of the academic staff, each option were categorized as: 4.20-5.00 (Strongly Agree), 3.40-4.19 (Agree),





2.60-3.39 (Partially Agree), 1.80-2.59 (Disagree), 1.00-1.79 (Strongly Disagree). These were interpreted as 00-1.79 (very inadequate), 1.80-2.59 (inadequate), 2.60-3.39 (moderate), 3.40-4.19 (Adequate), 4.20-5:00 (very adequate) (Helvacı 2010). This situation was evaluated in levels given in tables 1 and 2.

In data analysis, the relationship between behavioral and decision-making in ethical conducts of managers and organizational commitment of academic staff was measured with a correlation. In order to determine to what extent ethical conducts in behavioral and decision making process of the managers affects organizational commitment of the academic staff, ethical leadership and organizational commitment scores were analyzed and a simple regression analysis was conducted.

### Findings

Arithmetic average values to determine perceptions of organizational commitment level of academic staff and ethical and behavioral decision making of managers in the university are given below.

Table 1

*Mean and standard deviation values of perceptions of academic staff regarding ethical leadership behavior and its sub-dimensions .*

	N	$\bar{X}$	sd
Behavioral Ethics	152	4,056	0.631
Ethical Decision Making	152	4,036	0.710
<b>Ethical Leadership</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>4,0460</b>	<b>0.633</b>

At the end of data analysis conducted in order to determine the level in which the academic staff perceive the ethical leadership, ethical conduct in behavioral and decision-making process, it was observed that behavioral ethical perceptions and decision-making ethical perceptions were at the level of "Agree." It can be concluded that behavioral ethics ( $\bar{X}=4,056$ ) and decision making ethics ( $\bar{X}=4,036$ ) perceptions of academic staff towards the managers were adequate at many levels. When the total ethical behaviors were examined, it was observed that the average value of the ethical leadership scores ( $\bar{X}=4,046$ ) of the academic staff was within the range of "Agree." In other words, it can be summarized that the perceptions of the academic staff



regarding the ethical leadership behaviors of managers at university was sufficient at many levels.

Table 2

*Mean and standard deviation values related to organizational commitment perception of academic staff.*

	N	$\bar{X}$	sd
Affective Commitment	152	3,401	0,798
Continuance Commitment	152	2,909	0,672
Normative Commitment	152	3,107	0,644
<b>Organizational Commitment</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>3,142</b>	<b>0,491</b>

As seen in Table 2, it can be observed that the affective commitment score ( $\bar{X}=3,401$ ) of the academic staff is in the range of 'Agree', continuance commitment ( $\bar{X}=2,909$ ) and normative commitment ( $\bar{X}=3,107$ ) values are in 'Partly Agree.' In accordance with these results, it can be said that academic staffs mostly show affective commitment towards the university they work for. Total commitment scores ( $\bar{X}=3,142$ ) of academic staff is within the range of "Partially Agree." In other words, it can be argued that the commitment level of academic staff is at moderate level.

Correlation and regression results of the ethical leadership and organizational commitment perceptions of academic staff are shown in table 3 and 4.



Table 3

*Ethical leadership and organizational commitment correlation of academic staff for their managers at university*

	Ethical Leadership	Organizational Commitment
Ethical Leadership	1	,492 **
Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
N	152	152
Organizational Commitment	,492 **	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
N	152	152

\*\* P <0.01

Table 3 shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between organizational commitment and ethical leadership behavior of managers and academics in the university examined ( $r = ,492, p < 0.01$ ). Accordingly, the higher managers show their ethical leadership style, the higher their commitment level to the university will be. Considering the determination coefficient ( $r^2 = 0.242$ ), 24% of organizational commitment of the academic staff originates from the ethical leadership behaviors of the managers.

Table 4

*Simple Regression Analysis Results regarding Ethical Leadership predicting Organizational Commitment*

Model	Dependent Variable: Organizational Commitment				
	B	Std.Error	Beta	T	p
Arguments					
Ethical Leadership	1,599	,226		7.084	,000
	,381	,055	492	6,919	,000

$\Delta R^2 = 0,242^{**}$

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001



According to the results in Table 4, the ethical leadership behaviors of the managers seem to be a meaningful predictor of organizational commitment of the academic staff ( $B = 492 \Delta R^2 = 0.242, p < .01$ ). It can be concluded that the ethical leadership behaviors form the 24 % of the total variance of organizational commitment of the academic staff.

### **Results and Discussion**

It is an undeniable fact that the ethical leadership behaviors of the managers have impact on behaviors and perceptions of the employees. At the end of analyses, it was found out that the arithmetic average ( $\bar{X} = 4,046$ ) of the perception level of ethical leadership behaviors of managers was within the range of "Agree". According to this result, the academic staffs perceive their managers as highly competent ethical leaders.

It is observed that the results of this study show similarities with other studies conducted before. In his study related to the relationship between the ethical leadership behaviors of managers and organizational commitment of the employees, Altun (2013) conducted studies on mid-level and senior managers, employees and health workers working in corporate firms and public institutions and found out that the participants perceived their managers as adequate in many levels. Similarly, Uğurlu, Sincar and Çınar (2013), in their studies where they researched the impact of leadership behaviors of managers on the organizational commitment of secondary school teachers, found out that school managers mostly showed ethical leadership behaviors. Uğurlu's (2009) research shows similarities with the study.

At the end of analyses conducted to determine the level of behavioral and ethical conduct, which are the sub-dimensions of ethical leadership, the academic staff perceived the managers as adequate in both levels. In his study related to ethical behaviors of primary school managers, Helvacı (2010) argued that teachers perceived their managers as moderately adequate in behavioral ethics and highly adequate in decision-making ethics. Uğurlu (2009) concluded that teachers perceived behavioral and decision-making ethics of their managers as being quite high in many respects. In addition, he stated that teachers participating in peer-teacher meetings affect decision-making ethical levels positively.

In this study, the aim was to determine the organizational commitment level of the academic staff and the arithmetic mean was within the range of "Partially Agree." In consideration of this data, the organizational commitment levels of participants seem to be at



moderate level. Considering the sub-dimensions of organizational commitment, it was found that the affective commitment scores ( $\bar{X}=3,401$ ) of academic staff was within the range of "Agree"; continuance commitment ( $\bar{X}=2,909$ ) and normative commitment ( $\bar{X}=3,107$ ) were within the range of "Partially Agree." We can conclude that the academic staffs mostly show affective commitment to the university they work for. That the affective commitment was high can be interpreted as that they internalized the commitment to the university and that it is not a compulsory commitment. This result supports the studies conducted before. In a study conducted in TC Ziraat Bank, Esmer (2011) found out that the commitment level of employees towards the organization was at moderate degree. Özgen, Külekçi and Özkan (2012) concluded that 185 academic staff working in Gaziantep University and Kilis 7 Aralık University had moderate level organizational commitment. Boylu, Pelit and Güçer (2007) identified that academic staffs mostly show affective commitment to the university they work for; and it is followed by normative and progressive commitment respectively. In his study related to the impact of ethical leadership and organizational justice behaviors of managers on the organizational commitment level of primary school teachers, Uğurlu (2009) determined that teachers show progressive commitment mostly; and he linked this situation with the fact that teachers have compulsory commitment relationships with the schools.

One of the aims of the research is how much the ethical leadership behaviors of the managers predict the organizational commitment of academic staff. As the results show, it can be concluded that the ethical leadership behaviors of the managers are the meaningful predictors of organizational commitment of academic staff ( $r = 492, r^2 = 0.242$ ). Of the total variance related to organizational commitment of academic staff, 24% can be linked back to ethical leadership behaviors of managers. Studies in the literature have been made to support this claim. Ponni and Tennakoo (2009) found a positive and meaningful relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment and showed that 21% of ethical commitment was ethical leadership. Watson (2010) supports the same claims.

In the study conducted in Canadian Armed Forces to determine the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment, Siegel found a meaningful relationship between ethical leadership and affective and normative commitment but could not find any with the progressive commitment. In Uğurlu and Üstüner's (2011) research on the impact of leadership



and organizational justice behaviors of the managers on organizational commitment level of teachers, it was found out that the ethical behaviors of managers are predictors of organizational commitment and concluded that 14% of organizational commitment can be explained with ethical leadership. In their studies Madenoğlu, Uysal, Sarier and Banoğlu (2014) established that ethical leadership determined 17% of organizational commitment and ethical values are important predecessors of organizational commitment. Sahin, Cengiz and Abakay (2013) found out that ethical behaviors of managers -at a very low level- predict the organizational commitment of physical education teachers.

At the end of the study, the ethical leadership behaviors of managers at university are meaningful predictors of organizational commitment of the academic staff. It was found out that the perceptions of academic staff on the ethical leadership behaviors of their managers were adequate in many levels while their organizational commitment was moderately adequate. It is considered that to have mid-level organizational commitment scores might cause some negative consequences for the organization and academic staff. Low-level organizational commitment can reduce work efficiency and satisfaction; and lead to negative outcomes such as absenteeism, being late and quitting. Considering the results, the following suggestions can be made;

In order to increase the level of ethical behaviors and create an organizational culture in the organizations, the managers should constitute ethical standards and policies. Managers should further incorporate the employees in decision-making process. This way, the employees' sense of belonging can be increased. Managers should give more value to their employees without any exception. Increasing social activities in the organizations may increase the organizational commitment of employees.



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