



The Role of ethical leadership in teachers' organizational dissent behaviors: a comparative analysis

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Abstract

This study aimed to reveal the effect of ethical leadership competencies of educational administrators on teachers' perceptions of organizational dissent. In order to measure the relationship between school administrators' ethical competencies and teachers' perceptions of organizational dissent, a relational survey design, one of the descriptive survey methods, was used. The Ethical Leadership Competencies Scale and the Organizational Dissent Scale were used to collect data on the variables. The sample of the study consists of 387 teachers working in public schools in Pendik, Maltepe, Sultanbeyli and Kartal districts of Istanbul in the 2020-2021 academic year. In the Ethical Leadership Competencies Scale, teachers think that school administrators have ethical competencies to a great extent. In the organizational dissent scale, it is seen that teachers have a moderate level of organizational dissent perception. It was determined that teachers' perceived ethical leadership and organizational dissent levels revealed a low level positive relationship. Based on the data of this study, it can be said that the effect of managers' ethical leadership behaviors on reducing teachers' organizational dissent behaviors in schools is low. Please add conclusion that describe correlation between variable according to gender, graduation, school type, etc.

Keywords: *Ethics, Ethical Leadership, Organizational dissent*

A. Introduction

The heart of leadership is about the personal vision that a person believes in, values, dreams and is committed to. It is the inner world that forms the basis of the individual's reality (Sergiovanni, 2015). The leadership characteristics demonstrated by the educational administrator have important contributions in shaping the relationships within the organization and the work done. Since leadership is the ability to influence other people, it requires carefully selected personality traits. The leadership characteristics expected to be possessed are ethical values that have been valid from the historical process to the present day (Calabrese, 1988). The adoption of ethical values by managers is very important today. It is seen that some of the managers manage the organizations they manage in line with their own interests and prevent organizational success by making irresponsible decisions in the organization. Therefore, managers should have ethical leadership behaviors. Managers are expected to pay attention to ethical values and be more proactive and effective. In organizations with leaders who have this competence, the level of job satisfaction of employees is high. In addition, it can be said that employees are more loyal to their managers. In such an organization, it is seen that employees

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work harder and are more willing to solve problems. The productivity of employees in an ethical organizational climate is higher (Johnson, 2018).

Ethical leaders can be role models in shaping their groups, organizations and societies in an ethical context when they follow ethical rules and exhibit moral behaviors. Leaders are expected to demonstrate character traits such as fairness, humility, optimism, courage, and compassion, and to master the moral responsibilities of their role in order to make wise choices. School leaders, who are also responsible for the moral behavior of others, need to set a good example for teachers, other staff and students who follow them. How the people who follow the leader behave is largely related to the ethical criteria that leaders have. In this way, the organization encourages its employees to behave ethically and strengthens their character and ability to make ethical choices (Johnson, 2018).

There are many behavioral characteristics of ethical leaders and ethical behaviors expected by the society and these behaviors are expressed by many researchers (Brown, Trevino & Harrison, 2005; Brown & Trevino, 2006; Davis & Rothstein, 2006; Eisenbeiss, Knippenberg & Fahrbach, 2015; Johnson, 2018). When managers exhibit these ethical behaviors expected from them, it creates an environment for other employees to express their opinions openly inside and outside the organization. Well-managed organizations need teachers' opinions and even oppositional behaviors. For this reason, it should be taken into consideration that opposition behaviors will bring positive contributions to organizations rather than negative ones. Conceptually, opposition is defined as being against an attitude, an opinion, a behavior (TDK, 2022). When considered organizationally, opposition means the incompatibility of people's feelings with the organization and their conflicting thoughts about organizational policies and practices (Kassing, 1997). When organizational members encounter any negativity, they have to determine a number of strategies to express themselves. The strategies chosen are shaped in the light of individual, relational and organizational variables. Individual variables are related to job satisfaction, organizational identity, organizational burnout and control variables; relational variables are related to the subordinate-superior relationship in the organization and the relationship style between organizational members; organizational variables are related to organizational justice and organizational democracy (Kassing 2008).

While organizations strive to achieve certain goals, in this movement, organizations are also faced with some disagreements and conflicts of people and organizations (Garner, 2006). Especially when employees think that there is injustice within the organization, it creates a basis for the emergence of work and conflicts (Googboy, Chory & Dunleavy, 2008; Kassing & Armstrong, 2002). These conflicts may evoke negativity where opposing ideas are confronted and clashed, but opposition can also be an opportunity to identify problems in the organization and take necessary measures to solve them. Dissent in organizations should firstly be considered as an active process rather than a passive voice moving upwards. Secondly, upward dissent can be done openly and covertly. Third, upward dissent indicates a relational and contextual focus. Fourth, upward dissent can be interpreted as constructive and destructive voice. As a result, organizational dissent is interpreted as active, explicitly and implicitly expressed, relationally and contextually destructive and constructive (Kassing, 2002). It is not possible for managers who cannot divide organizational opposition into destructive or constructive opposition and interpret it as a voice that can sometimes be an opportunity for the organization to transform their organizations into a modern institution that has a mission, vision, teamwork, is open to critical thinking, and focuses on creativity and innovation. Contrary to these definitions, it is also seen that organizations far from contemporary values value order and authority more (Alford,

2001, Schwartz, 1990). This is evidenced by the fact that those who challenge the status quo in such organizations often face great personal difficulties and stiff resistance (Shahinpoor & Matt, 2006). Therefore, ethical leadership behaviors of managers can play a critical role in reversing the negative climate. Leaders need to see organizational dissent as important for improving decision-making and increasing employee engagement and satisfaction. In understanding organizational dissent, the messages of dissenters should be considered and analyzed. It is important to listen to what people are saying and what they want to say (Garner, 2009). In the last 20 years, organizations have attempted numerous innovations to create more transparency and increase ethical practices. Adults believe that managers in the business world bureaucratically manipulate employees and oppose constructive criticism and principled dissent. When organizations oppose dissent, they have to suffer the consequences of mistakes that they could have prevented in advance. This creates an unethical and toxic environment in the organization (Shahinpoor & Matt, 2007).

Managers should distinguish constructive dissent from other forms of criticism and consider dissenting voices as an opportunity to add value to the organization. Constructive dissent should be defined as a person who wants to contribute to the welfare of the organization with what he/she expresses most of the time. Treating dissenting voices with dignity by valuing them helps to create an ethical commitment in the organization (Shahinpoor & Matt, 2007). Constructive dissenters can be loyal employees with high moral principles (Uys, 2000). Loyalty also enables leaders in the organization and community they serve to improve their behavior and act with honesty and integrity whenever possible. Undoubtedly, such an individual is exactly what is desired in the fulfillment of the organization's mission. Therefore, instead of dismissing the dissident from his/her position, he/she should be brought out as a leader in the organization to help in solving the problems (Shahinpoor & Matt, 2007). As a requirement of this perspective, it is obvious that organizations should radically change the way they perceive and react to dissidents. It is necessary to develop policies that create an ethical climate in the organization and create opportunities for critical thinking and questioning (Shahinpoor & Matt, 2007). Graham (1986) defines principled organizational dissent as the effort of individuals in the workplace to express their conscientious objection to the current situation, to protest and change the organizational status quo. Accordingly, the appreciation of principled dissent by the manager supports virtuous behaviors such as loyalty, authenticity, autonomy, honesty, courage and individual conscience. Being virtuous sensitizes leaders to ethical issues and encourages them to act morally. Therefore, it is important to identify and compare the extent to which managers who exhibit ethical behaviors and virtuous behaviors affect organizational dissent in their organizations. Virtuous behaviors are thought to contribute to reducing organizational dissent and increasing the effectiveness and success of the organization. On the other hand, leaders who correctly define organizational dissent and act ethically also contribute to the development of organizational democracy and play a critical role in identifying problems that may occur in the organization in advance. Identifying organizational problems in advance will help to take preventive measures. Thus, it will be possible to develop solution-oriented strategies, renewal and development of the organization. For this purpose, it is thought to be important to reveal the effect of managers who have ethical leadership competencies on organizational dissent in the organization.

In this study, the level of ethical leadership behaviors of school administrators and teachers' perception of organizational dissent were examined through correlational comparison. In this direction, the aim of the study is to reveal the level of relationship between school administrators'

ethical leadership competencies and teachers' perceptions of organizational dissent. In line with this purpose;

- 1) Do school administrators' ethical leadership behaviors differ according to gender, graduation, school type and professional seniority variables?
- 2) Do teachers' perceptions of organizational dissent differ according to gender, graduation and professional seniority variables?
- 3) Is there a significant relationship between school administrators' ethical leadership competencies and teachers' perceptions of organizational dissent?

B. Methods

Research Model

In this study, in order to measure the relationship between school administrators' levels of ethical competencies and teachers' perceptions of organizational dissent, relational survey design, one of the descriptive survey methods, was used. In the relational survey model, a situation is described as it is, the relationship between the variables that cause a situation and the degree to which the variables affect each other are determined (Kaya, Balay & Göçen, 2012). In the descriptive research model, it is ensured that the participants express their opinions with a close view. In addition, in survey-type research, it is interested in how the opinions are distributed in terms of participants rather than what the source of opinions and characteristics are (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Research Sample

The sample group of this research consists of 387 teachers in Pendik, Maltepe, Sultanbeyli and Kartal districts. Participant information is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Participants and demographic information

Groups	Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Woman	218	56,3
	Man	169	43,7
Graduation	Licence	351	90,7
	Degree	36	9,3
Professional seniority	1-5 Years	142	36,7
	6-10 Years	115	29,7
	11-15 Years	76	19,6
	16-20 years	23	5,9
	21-25 Ages	31	8,0
School type	Primary school	213	55,0
	Middle school	79	20,4
	High school	95	24,5
	Toplam	387	100,0

In table 1, according to the gender variable of the participants, 218 of them are female and 169 of them are male. The percentage distribution of the participants according to gender type is 56.3% female and 43.7% male. According to the educational status of the participants, 351 of them have undergraduate education, 36 of them have postgraduate education and when we look at the distribution according to the percentage ratios, 90.7% of them have undergraduate

education and 9.3% of them have postgraduate education. According to the seniority year variable, 142 of the participants have 1-5 years of service, 115 have 6-10 years, 76 have 11-15 years, 23 have 16-20 years, and 31 have 21-25 years of service. When the distribution of years of seniority according to percentages is analyzed, it is seen that 36% of the participants have 1-5 years of service, 29.7% have 6-10 years of service, 19.6% have 11-15 years of service, 5% have 16-20 years of service, and 8% have 21-25 years of service. According to the type of school, 213 of the participants work in primary schools, 79 in middle schools, 95 in high schools and according to the percentages, 55% of them work in primary schools, 20.4% in middle schools, 24.5% in high schools.

Data Collection Tools

Ethical Leadership Competencies Scale and Organizational Dissent Scale were administered to 387 teachers among the participants in this study. Ethical Leadership Competencies Scale: The respondents marked their level of agreement with each item on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Undecided, (4) Agree to (5) Strongly Agree. Ethical Leadership Competencies Scale was developed by Yilmaz (2006) to determine the ethical leadership competencies of educational administrators. The scale consists of 44 items. The sub-dimensions of the scale are communicative ethics, climatic ethics, ethics in decision making, and behavioral ethics. Organizational Dissent Scale: Individuals responding to the scale indicate their level of agreement with each item on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Undecided, (4) Agree to (5) Strongly Agree. The organizational dissent scale was developed by Kassing (1998). The scale has three dimensions, namely vertical dissent, horizontal dissent and externalized dissent, and 18 items.

Data Collection Tools and Analysis Procedures

The quantitative data obtained as a result of the application of the scale to the participants were analyzed by SPSS for 21.0 program. Related statistical analyzes were made depending on the purpose of the research. Factor analysis was performed to determine the construct validity of the Ethical Leadership Competencies and Organizational Dissent Scale. Independent Groups The T-Test will be used to compare the settings of two independent groups, the One-Way Anova Test to compare the mean values of two or more groups and reveal the difference between the groups, and the Correlation Tests to reveal the level of correlation between the total scores or mean scores of two different scales. were performed to determine whether there is a difference between independent groups in the data obtained.

C. Findings

The results of the independent samples t-test conducted to determine whether teachers' perceived ethical leadership and organizational dissent levels differ significantly according to their gender are given in Table 1.

Table 1. T-test results of ethical leadership and organizational dissent scale scores according to gender

Variables	Groups	N	X	ss	t-test		
					t	sd	p
Ethical leadership	Female	218	4,10	.56	-1,64	385	.101
	Male	169	4,20	.56			

Organizational dissent	Female	218	3,28	.42	-1,41	385	.158
	Male	169	3,34	.47			

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the groups when teachers' perceived ethical leadership levels are examined according to their gender ($t[385]=-1,64$; $p>.05$). When the perceived organizational dissent levels of teachers are examined according to their gender, there is no significant difference between the groups ($t[385]=-1,64$; $p>.05$). When the table is examined, the organizational dissent perceptions of male teachers ($x=169$) ($x=3.34$) are higher than the organizational dissent perceptions of female teachers ($x=3.28$).

Table 2. T-test results of ethical leadership and organizational dissent scale scores according to graduation

Variables	Groups	N	X	ss	t-test		
					t	sd	p
Ethical leadership	License	351	4,13	.56	-1,370	385	,172
	Postgraduate	36	4,26	.56			
Organizational dissent	License	351	3,30	.44	-,003	385	,997
	Postgraduate	36	3,30	.46			

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the groups when teachers' perceived ethical leadership levels are analyzed according to graduation ($t[385]=-1,37$; $p>.05$). When teachers' perceived organizational dissent levels are examined according to graduation, there is no significant difference between the groups ($t[385]=-0,003$; $p>.05$). When the table is examined, the perceived ethical leadership levels ($x=4.26$) of graduate teachers ($x=36$) are higher than the perceived ethical leadership levels ($x=3.28$) of undergraduate teachers ($x=351$). The results of one-way variance (ANOVA) analysis conducted to determine whether teachers' perceptions of ethical leadership differ according to school type variable are given in Table 3.

Table 3. ANOVA results of ethical leadership scale scores according to school type

Class	N	X	Ss	Source of Variance	KT	sd	KO	F	p	Significance
Primary school	213	4,21	.56	S. Between	2,73	2	1,36	4,45	.012	Primary and high school
Secondary school	79	4,10	.60	Intra S.	117,80	384	,31			
High school	95	4,02	.50	Total	120,52	386				
Total	387	4,14	.56							

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of ethical leadership according to school type ($F=4.45$; $p<.05$). According to the results of the LSD test conducted to determine which school type teachers' perceptions of ethical leadership differed between, it was determined that the perceived ethical leadership levels of primary school teachers ($x=4.21$) were more positive than the perceived ethical leadership levels of high school teachers. In other words, primary school teachers think that school administrators have more ethical competencies than high school teachers. The results of one-way variance

(ANOVA) analysis conducted to determine whether teachers' perceptions of ethical leadership differ according to professional seniority variable are given in Table 4.

Table 4. ANOVA results of ethical leadership scale scores according to professional seniority

Class	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>S_s</i>	Source of Variance	<i>KT</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>KO</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Significance
1-5 years	142	4,05	.46	S. Between	5,25	4	1,31	4,35	,002	1-5 years with 16-20, 11-15 years
6-10 years	115	4,13	.61	Intra S.	115,27	382	,30			
11-15 years	76	4,19	.65	Total	120,52	386				
16-20 years	23	4,56	.47							
Over 21	31	4,18	.47							
Total	387	4,14	.56							

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference in teachers' perceived ethical leadership scores according to the professional seniority variable ($F=4.35$; $p<.05$). LSD test was conducted to determine between which professional seniority level teachers' perceptions of ethical leadership differed. According to the LSD results, the perceived ethical leadership levels of teachers with 16-20 years of seniority ($x=4.56$) were more positive than the perceived ethical leadership levels of teachers with 1-5 years of seniority ($x=4.05$); the perceived ethical leadership levels of teachers with 6-10 years of seniority ($X=4.13$) between the perceived ethical leadership levels of teachers with 6-10 years of seniority and the perceived ethical leadership levels of teachers with 16-20 years of seniority in favor of teachers with 16-20 years of seniority; there was a significant difference between the perceived ethical leadership competence levels of teachers with 11-15 years of seniority ($x=4,19$) and the perceived ethical leadership levels of teachers with 16-20 years of seniority ($x=4,56$) in favor of teachers with 16-20 years of seniority. In other words, teachers with 16-20 years of seniority think that school administrators have ethical leadership competencies more than other professional seniorities. The results of the one-way variance (ANOVA) analysis conducted to determine whether teachers' perceptions of organizational dissent differed according to the professional seniority variable are given in Table 5.

Table 5. ANOVA results of organizational dissent scale scores according to professional seniority

Class	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>S_s</i>	Source of Variance	<i>KT</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>KO</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Significance
1-5 years	142	3,25	.39	S. Between	2,47	4	.62	3,17	.014	11-15 years, 21 years and over
6-10 years	115	3,35	.44	Intra S.	74,37	382	.19			
11-15 years	76	3,41	.49	Total	76,84	386				
16-20 years	23	3,26	.55							
Over 21	31	3,13	.47							
Total	387	3,30	.45							

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference in teachers' perceived organizational dissent scores according to the professional seniority variable ($F=3.17$; $p<.05$). LSD test was conducted to determine between which professional seniority level teachers' perceptions of organizational dissent differed. According to the LSD results, it is seen that the perceived organizational dissent levels of teachers with a seniority of 11-15 years ($x=3.41$) differ significantly from the perceived organizational dissent levels of teachers with a seniority of 21 years and above ($x=3.13$). In other words, it can be said that teachers with 11-15 years of seniority have higher levels of organizational dissent than teachers with 21 years of seniority and above. The results of the correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of ethical competence and organizational dissent are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlation analysis results between teachers' perceptions of ethical competence and organizational dissent levels

		Climatic ethics	Decision-making ethics	Behavioral ethics	Communicative ethics	Ethical leadership Total
Vertical dissent	r	.233	.202	.206	.269	.248
Horizontal dissent	r	.022	.099	.091	.102	.084
Externalized dissent	r	-.064	-.010	-.017	-.057	-.044
Organizational dissent total	r	.096	.143	.137	.154	.142

The results of the Spearman Correlation test, which was applied to determine the relationship between the ethical leadership competencies of school administrators and their perceptions of opposition to society, are presented. If the correlation variable is weak between 0 and 0.29; between 0.30 and 0.64 is moderate; between 0.65 and 0.84 strong; If it is between 0.85 and 1, it means that there is a very strong relationship (Ural & Kılıç, 2013). According to the correlation analysis given in Table 6, there is a low level and positive ($r=.14$; $p<.01$) relationship between perceived ethical leadership levels and organizational dissent levels; there is a significant relationship between vertical dissent and climatic ethics ($r=.23$; $p<.01$), ethics in decision making ($r=.20$; $p<.01$), behavioral ethics ($r=.20$; $p<.01$), communicative ethics ($r=.27$; $p<.01$) and its sub-dimensions ($r=.25$; $p<.01$). There is a significant relationship between horizontal dissent and communicative ethics ($r=.10$; $p<.05$). There is a low and positive correlation between teachers' total organizational commitment score and ethical leadership competencies sub-dimensions of decision-making ethics ($r=.14$; $p<.01$), behavioral ethics ($r=.13$; $p<.01$) and communicative ethics ($r=.15$; $p<.01$).

D. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results of the ethical leadership competencies scale, teachers think that school administrators have a high level of ethical competencies. Effective communication between administrators and their employees is an important factor in organizational success (Koçel, 2007). Effective communication plays a critical role in the access of employees to the right information and in solving organizational problems. In organizational structures, from time to time, there are discussions and disagreements between employees. In situations that employees do not like, they may show oppositional behaviors in order to impose their thoughts on managers (Kassing, 2008). In the findings of the study, it is seen that teachers in educational organizations exhibit oppositional behaviors at a moderate level. This situation is important in terms of showing that educational organizations cannot benefit from organizational dissent sufficiently. Although organizational dissent is considered by many as a negative situation for organizations, it is known that teachers' dissenting behaviors provide important corrective

feedback to organizations and play an important role in managers' making the right decisions (Sprague & Rudd, 1988). For this reason, organizations should give importance to employee polyphony and implement various policies to increase dissent behaviors.

There is no significant difference between teachers' perceived ethical leadership and organizational dissent levels according to gender and graduation variables. It can be said that gender and graduation have no effect on teachers' perception of school administrators' ethical competencies and perceived organizational dissent levels. When it is examined whether teachers' perceptions of ethical leadership differ according to the school type variable, it is seen that there is a significant difference between primary school and high school teachers in favor of primary school teachers. Primary school teachers perceive school administrators as having a higher level of ethical competence than high school teachers. When it is examined whether teachers' perceptions of ethical leadership differ according to the professional seniority variable, teachers with 16-20 years of seniority perceive the ethical competence of school administrators to be higher. When it is examined whether teachers' perceptions of organizational dissent differ according to the professional seniority variable, it can be said that teachers with a seniority of 11-15 years exhibit more dissent behaviors than teachers with a seniority of 21 years and above.

There is a positive but low level relationship between teachers' perceptions of ethical competence and organizational dissent. This relationship shows that ethical behaviors exhibited by managers will have a positive effect on teachers' oppositional behaviors in the organization. Although it is known that opposition behaviors have positive effects for the organization (Püsküllüoğlu & Altınkurt, 2018), some managers define it as a harmful situation. The fact that employees express their opposing views and emphasize that some practices are wrong is perceived as a threat by some managers. Due to the perception of threat, managers are more likely to exhibit destructive behaviors towards employees. In addition, employees may face being labeled as "dissenters" due to their dissenting behaviors (Acaray, 2018). This situation also leads to an increase in employees' organizational silence behaviors (Kahya, 2015). In increasing the effectiveness of the organization and improving the quality of education in schools, the feedback received from teachers helps managers to make effective decisions (Baydar, 2021). Therefore, increasing the quality of education and creating a positive school climate can be possible by increasing the ethical behaviors of administrators. Increasing ethical behaviors will create organizational opportunities for employees to express themselves better. It can be said that ethical leaders who receive effective feedback and do not perceive them as threats have more opportunities to transform organizations into effective organizations. In this context, it is thought that measuring the ethical leadership competencies of administrators will contribute to increasing the oppositional behaviors of teachers for the benefit of the organization. In future studies, the effects of ethical leadership behaviors of administrators on other teacher behaviors that will increase organizational effectiveness can also be investigated.

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