

# The Role of Trust on the Relationship Between Organizational Engagement and Corporate Reputation

Araş. Gör. Dr. Emel ESEN

Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, İİBF, İşletme Bölümü, İSTANBUL

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of organizational trust between corporate reputation practices and organizational engagement in airline sector. In the first section, results of the relationship between corporate reputation practices, organizational trust and organizational engagement are examined. In the following section, data was gathered from 343 participants. According to the results of the study, corporate reputation practices and organizational trust have effect on organizational engagement but organizational trust hasn't had any intervening role between these variables.

**Key Words:** Trust, Organizational Engagement, Corporate Reputation

**Jel Classification:** M19, M30

## Çalışanların Örgüte Cezbolması ve Kurumların İtibarı İlişkisinde Güvenin Rolü

### ÖZET

Bu araştırmanın amacı, havacılık sektöründe çalışanların kurumsal itibar uygulamaları ile örgüte cezbolma ilişkisinde, kuruma güvenin rolünü ortaya koymaktır. Bu doğrultuda ilk bölümde, araştırma modelinde yer verilen değişkenlerden kurumların itibar uygulamaları, kuruma güven ve örgüte cezbolma kavramları açıklanmıştır. İlerleyen bölümde ise, havacılık sektöründe yapılan ve 343 denekten toplanan anket verileri değerlendirmeye alınmıştır. Çıkan sonuçlara göre, kurumların itibar uygulamaları ve kuruma güvenin örgüte cezbolmayı ortaya çıkardığı ortaya konmuştur. Bununla birlikte kurumların itibar uygulamaları ile örgüte cezbolma arasındaki ilişkide kuruma güvenin aracı olmadığı ifade edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Güven, Örgüte Cezbolma, Kurumların İtibar Uygulamaları

**Jel Sınıflaması:** M19, M30

## I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of reputation, as an important asset for organizations has not yet reached a clear and precise definition and measurement so far. Corporate reputation is a stakeholder's overall evaluation of a company over time. It is the perception and evaluation about the organization's actions by employees and customers, shareholders and competitors. Positive corporate reputation practices contribute to trust in organizations. Trust improves interactions between individuals and organizations, reduces uncertainty in negotiations and improves cooperation among partners. Organizational trust in work relationships has been consistently shown to relate positively to a range of behaviors and outcomes, such as job satisfaction, job engagement, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior and organizational engagement. Organizational engagement leads to continuous fulfillment about the organization exposing itself as enthusiasm and passion, higher than average levels of concentration and focus,

and an irresistible boost of energy. The purpose of this study is to examine in airline companies, the intervening role of organizational trust between corporate reputation practices and organizational engagement.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Organizational Engagement

Work related emotions can have important implications for both individuals and organizations. Positive psychology concerns the application of psychology to improve the quality of work life and protect and promote the safety, health, and well-being of workers. The study and application of positive psychology in organizations enable us to focus on the importance of positivity, employee health and well-being, highly motivated and less stressed employees instead of negative emotions in workplace (Klusman et al, 2008: 129; Shimazu et al, 2008: 511). We determined *organizational engagement* as a dependent variable in our research. While we have been investigating organizational engagement, two main concepts, organizational commitment and job engagement inspire us to investigate. Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979: 225) conceptualize the strength of the psychological relationship between the individual and the organization in terms of individual's commitment to the organization. Allen and Meyer (1990: 3-4) differentiated organizational commitment into three components: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Koç, 2009: 202; Iverson and Buttigieg, 1999: 308). Organizational commitment emphasizes individual's identification and involvement in the organization, it reflects the process by which individuals link themselves to an organization and focuses on the actions of the individuals (Van Knippenberg and Sleebos, 2006: 572-573; Gautam, Van Dick and Wagner, 2004: 302; Yücel, 2009: 448). One of the positive concepts of the study about positive outcomes, processes and attributes of organizations and members (positive organizational behavior) is *job engagement*. Engagement can be defined as long-term commitment, written or unwritten agreement between parties (Welbourne, 2007: 45; tdk.gov.tr). Organizational commitment also differs from engagement in that it refers to a person's attitude and attachment towards their organization. Engagement frequently refers as *job engagement* in management literature with different Turkish meaning (Doğan, 2002: 3; Bal, 2010; Turgut, 2010: 57, Ardiç and Polatçı, 2009: 36). Job engagement is the state in which individuals are emotionally and intellectually committed to their jobs, also it is the extent to which employees put discretionary effort into their work in the form of brainpower, extra time and energy (Doğan, 2002: 3). *Organizational engagement is a psychological state which has embraced job satisfaction, organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, job commitment and job engagement* (Macey and Schneider, 2008: 6-7). Engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction, organizational commitment is an important facet of the state of engagement and the outcomes of empowerment include effort, persistence and initiative ([www.workforce.com/section/09/article/23/53/40.html](http://www.workforce.com/section/09/article/23/53/40.html),4). Wellins and

Concelman suggested that engagement is “an amalgamation of commitment, loyalty, productivity and ownership.” (Macey and Schneider, 2008: 3-7).

### **B. Corporate Reputation**

Positive psychology tells us that in order to engender the highest levels of engagement, organizations need to focus their efforts in the following areas: Organizational affiliation, role factors, work-life balance, opportunities to growth, reward culture, quality of relationships, work environment, organizational communication, leadership effectiveness, quality of supervision (Stairs et.al, 2006: 21-22). If we want to get employees engaged, we also get involved them in extra role activities. Employees should be taken place in *corporate reputation practices*. In the literature, corporate reputation is described as organizational standing, goodwill, organizational identity, organizational image and brand, prestige (Eryılmaz, 2008: 158; Yılmaz and Karademirlidağ, 2007: 174; Shenkar and Yuchtman Yaar, 1997: 1361). Corporate reputation is shareholders’ reaction to organization’s actions that are strong or weak, good or bad (Ural, 2002: 85). Reputations are the outcomes of repeated interactions and cumulative experiences (Castro et al, 2006: 362; Dortok, 2006: 323). Corporate reputation is created by cumulative attribution of various shareholders (Tutar, 2008: 130). *Corporate reputation is an emotional capital that reflects the various shareholders’ perceptions about organization’s past and future actions and intangible asset* (Esen, 2011:10).

### **C. Organizational Trust**

Trust is defined as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the other party (Zhang, et.al, 2008: 112; Tüzün, 2007: 96). As a result, *trust is a psychological state that is based on dependency to reflect the coordination, positive beliefs and expectations and to assume risks and ambiguity between parties* (Esen, 2011: 17). Organizational trust involves the employees’ expectations about corporate relations and behaviors. It is described as organizational support given to employees by building and maintaining honest and sincere relations (İslamoğlu, et.al, 2007: 25). Supporting employees, focusing on solving problems, forming organizational structures consistent with climate help in developing and maintaining trust (Asunakutlu, 2002: 1; Thomas, et al, 2009: 288; Mishra and Morrissey, 1990: 449). On the other hand, insensitive organizational practices, inappropriately high executive salaries, deficient working conditions, job insecurity, unfair practices contribute decline in trust in organizations (Zhang, et.al, 2008: 113; Albrecht and Travaglione, 2003: 7; Hartog, 2003: 133).

### **D. The Purpose and Hypothesis of The Study**

As it is discussed in the theoretical framework, corporate reputation practices affect employees’ beliefs and expectations positively. As a result of loyalty and trust, engaged employees will be highly motivated and work more effectively. This study contributes to the literature with reputation, trust and

engagement concepts especially in airline companies. Studies on the concept of engagement generally focus on job engagement, while this study gives a perspective to this concept by focusing on organizational engagement. The purpose of this study is to examine the intervening role of organizational trust between corporate reputation practices and organizational engagement. Research hypothesis is as follows:

*H1: Organizational trust has an intervening role on the relationship between corporate reputation practices and organizational engagement.*

### **III. METHOD**

#### **A. Participants**

343 employees who are working in 9 different companies in airline sector have participated in the research. The sample consists of 159 women, 183 men (1 missing gender value). 209 employees have graduate and master degrees. The number of employees who are working in 100% domestic companies are 117. Convenience sampling method was used for the reason of convenience and accessibility of the participants (Altunışık et al, 2007: 132).

#### **B. Instruments**

In this section, instruments used to measure independent, dependent, intervening variables are stated as follows:

##### **1. Corporate Reputation Instrument**

Preliminary research was conducted to determine the corporate reputation practices in airline companies, because it was assumed that almost all measurements about reputation of companies are not valid for airline sector. On the questionnaire form which was designed by this preliminary research the purpose of the study was stated and, the operational definition of “reputation” was given: *(The reputation definition stated as: an organization’s reputation is an assessment of employees, customers, stakeholders, suppliers, government, media, competitors, community’s impression and ideas about the organization).* Participants were asked to answer three questions in this frame of reputation definition: *How do you evaluate your organization’s reputation level?, What are the corporate reputation practices in your organization?, Would you list these reputation practices according to their level of importance?* Preliminary research was also applied to employees from banking sector; because of the idea of evaluating reputation in a broader perspective. Total number of employees was 30. At the end of the research, number of reputation practices was 57 for airline sector and 30 for the banking sector. 35 of reputation practices which were specific for the airline sector were selected by the researcher. The corporate reputation practices scale consists of 35 items with five-point rating scale, ranging from *never used* (1) to *very frequently used* (5).

##### **2. Organizational Trust Instrument**

Organizational trust items were used from İslamoğlu, Birsnel and Börü (2007)’s trust in organizations emic research which includes 36 items. Four items

were omitted from the scale because of similar positive image items in the reputation scale, so organizational trust was measured by 32 items with six-point rating scale, ranging from *never agree* (1) to *completely agree* (6).

### 3. Organizational Engagement Instrument

Organizational engagement instrument was prepared by using Güneşer's (2007), Saks's (2006), Doğan's (2002) and Schaufeli, Bakker and Salavona's (2006) studies about "job engagement". Job related items in the related scales were translated to organizational related items, such as "my job excites me" turned to "my organization excites me". The scale consists of 15 items with six-point rating scale, ranging from *almost never* (1) to *almost ever* (6).

## IV. FINDINGS

The results of the relationship between the research variables will be examined in this section. Normality tests, factor analysis and reliability test results and hypothesis testing will be presented.

### A. Normality Tests of Variables

In order to determine the normal distributions of variables, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, skewness and kurtosis analysis were done. It is accepted that all variables were distributed normally.

**Table 1 : Normality Test Results**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Kol.-Smir.
Corporate Reputation	343	3,60	,067	-,467	,240	,070
Organizational Trust	343	3,77	,98	-,022	-,627	,078
Organizational Engagement	343	3,78	1,08	-,169	-,213	,056

## B. Factor Analysis Results

### 1. Factor Analysis of Corporate Reputation Practices

Corporate reputation instrument consists of 35 items. At the end of the factor analysis, 19 items remained and 5 factors appeared. These factors were named as *organization's discriminative characteristics, institutionalization, high technology, private customer practices, and employee based practices*.

**Table 2: Factor Analysis and Reliability Results of Corporate Reputation Practices**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Factor Variance(%)</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha</b>
<b>F1: Organization's discriminative characteristics</b>	Broad flight facilities	,716	0,36	,846
	Distinguished corporate image	,705		
	Customer based practices	,695		
	Advertisement and promotion	,695		
	Broad fleet construction	,662		
	Foreign agency services	,595		
<b>F2:Institutionalization</b>	Working with well-known CEOs	,730	0,079	,754
	Comfortable air planes	,687		
	Rapid service	,669		
	Private services to standby passengers	,603		
<b>F3: High technology</b>	E-learning	,759	0,069	,726
	Advanced technology	,755		
	High service quality	,633		
<b>F4:Private customer practices</b>	Business and first class practices	,820	0,062	,746
	Membership of Star Alliances	,740		
	Flight servings	,653		
<b>F5:Employee based practices</b>	Social responsibility projects with employees participation	,785	0,053	,717
	Internal promotion system	,714		
	Reminding past history of the organization	,600		
	<b>Total variance(%)</b> :0,63			
<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin</b>	,898			
<b>Bartlett's Test</b>	Approx. Chi- Square	2567,763		
	df	171		
	Significance	,000		

## 2. Factor Analysis of Organizational Trust

Organizational trust instrument consists of 32 items, but at the end of the factor analysis, 23 items remained and 4 factors appeared. These factors were

named as *providing sensitive and comfortable working environment, make people committed, have financial power, concerned with employees* (Table 3).

### 3. Reliability Analysis of Organizational Engagement

Organizational engagement instrument consists of 15 items. At the end of the factor analysis, all items gathered in a single factor. Cronbach alpha values of items are found as ,939.

**Table 3:** Factor Analysis and Reliability Results of Organizational Trust

Items	Factor Loading	Factor Variance (%)	Cronbach Alpha
<b>F1: Providing sensitive and comfortable working environment</b>		0,46	,928
Sensitive to employees' needs	,750		
Open communication	,743		
Supporting employees	,737		
Right to employees	,724		
Satisfactory orientation	,687		
Social activities	,647		
Peaceful working environment	,640		
Consistent with organizational culture	,627		
Objective in hiring employees	,601		
Low turnover	,513		
<b>F2: Make people committed</b>		0,10	,886
Waging related with performance	,788		
Keeping promise	,735		
Claim to employees	,720		
Objective in performance evaluation	,697		
Satisfactory working environment	,627		
Good career planning.	,620		
<b>F3: Have financial power</b>		0,05	,837
Powerful about financial performance	,875		
High profitability	,795		
Continuity in business affairs	,723		
Good reference	,717		
<b>F4: Concerned with employees</b>		0,04	,797
Respectful to private lives	,764		
Permission to employees	,684		
Compatible with laws	,632		
<b>Total variance(%)</b>	0,65		
<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin</b>	,938		
Bartlett's Test Approx. Chi- Square	5045,158		
df	253		
Significance	,000		

### 4. Intervening Role of Organizational Trust between Corporate Reputation Practices and Organizational Engagement

In order to test the organizational trust as an intervening variable, first the effect of independent variable on dependent variable is analyzed. Secondly, the relationship between independent and dependent variables is tested. If the results of each step are significant, in the third level independent and intervening

variables are tested together to see their effect on dependent variable. If the effect of independent variable on dependent variable disappears, intervening variable is proven (Baron and Kenny, 1986: 1176). Results are presented in Table 4.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	F	(p)	β	t	(p)	VIF
Organizational Engagement	Corporate Reputation Practices	,125	50,024	,000	,358	7,073	,000	1,000
Organizational Trust	Corporate Reputation Practices	,162	67,287	,000	,406	8,203	,000	1,000
Organizational Engagement	Corporate Reputation Practices	,215	47,896	,000	,223	4,255	,000	1,197
	Organizational Trust				,332	6,328	,000	1,197

**Table 4 :** Intervening Role of Organizational Trust between Corporate Reputation Practices and Organizational Engagement

According to three step multiple regression analysis, in first step, corporate reputation practices have effect on organizational engagement (β=,358). In the second step, corporate reputation practices have effect on organizational trust (β=,406). When corporate reputation practices and organizational trust are taken together, corporate reputation practices have effect on organizational engagement (β=,223). As a result, organizational trust is not found as an intervening variable between corporate reputation practices and organizational engagement. H1 hypothesis is rejected. As organization trust has effect on organizational engagement (β=,332), the effect of corporate reputation on organizational engagement don't disappear. The same analysis is conducted again, this time with sub-dimensions of organizational trust, but it is also rejected. In Table 5, it is shown that corporate reputation practices have an effect on factors of organizational trust. Corporate reputation practices mostly effect the financial power of the organization (Table 5).

**Table 5:** Corporate Reputation Practices Effect on Factors of Organizational Trust

Organizational Trust Factors	F-value	β value
F1:Sensitive and comfortable working environment	40,91***	,327***
F2:Objective and make people committed	41,68***	,330***
F3:Financial Power	76,09***	,427***
F4:Concern with Employees	45,24***	,327***

\*\*\*p<,000

## DISCUSSION

As it is defined in the literature review section, reputation reflects the employees' perceptions and expectancies about the organization; therefore

employees' benefits are important and should create a positive atmosphere in the organization (Haywood, 2005: 21; Watson, 2007: 371; Solmaz, 2006: 66). Absolutely, this atmosphere creates positive consequences for everyone. One of the positive consequences is trust which is based on past experiences and long-term relations. In our study, organizational trust is taken as an intervening variable. If there are reputation practices in the organization, employees' trustworthiness to organization will be high, because respected organizations are also trusted organizations. If the reputation is damaged, trust will also be damaged (Gainess-Ross, 2008: 23; Yang, 2007: 113-115; Robinson, 2008: 14; Argüden, 2003: 33). Our research results showed that corporate reputation practices increase organizational trust ( $\beta=,406$ ). At the end of the factor analysis, corporate reputation practices factors are defined as *organizations' discriminative characteristics, institutionalization, high technology, private customer practices and employee based practices*. When we evaluate which reputation practices explains organizational trust, we see that all reputation practices explain the organizational trust, but mostly institutionalization and employee based practices; On the other hand, private customer practices have lower effect on organizational trust. Although mean value of private customer practices are high (3.57/5), the most effective reputation practice on trust is the employee based practices. This means that employees' demands should be considered and good communication should be enhanced to develop reputation (Bronn, 2007: 377). The effect of corporate reputation is mainly on the financial power attributes of organizational trust. While organizations are trying to be reputable, these efforts reflect themselves on their financial performances. Revenues of reputable organizations are exposed positively on their balance sheets (Eberl and Schwaiger, 2005: 839). Powerful organizations, especially if they are financially powerful, create a positive milieu which cover employees' future, regularity in salaries, and a more secure work life with no serious embarrassment.

Our research hypothesis which is expressed as "*Organizational trust has an intervening role on the relationship between corporate reputation practices and organizational engagement.*" is not supported. On the other hand both variables effect organizational engagement. Corporate reputation practices are related to organizational engagement more strongly than organizational trust. When broad flight facilities, distinguished corporate image, advertisement and promotion, broad fleet construction and foreign agency services increase corporate reputation practices, employees are more engaged to organization. Although, these practices are evaluated as customer based practices, reputable and respectable organizations effect employees' perceptions as *I am working for this organization, I belong to this organization, I feel excited in this organization, I express myself with this organization, For a long time I will continue to work in this organization*. This positive corporate image appeals to employees' emotions and creates such employees who identify themselves with their organization beyond commitment. If trust level is low in business relationships, low performance would appear, as a result, employees' success level would decrease

(Reynolds, 1997: 21). In high trust organizations, trust will have positive effects on working conditions, human resource policies, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational justice, empowerment, organizational citizenship behavior and above all, organizational engagement (Klusman et al, 2008: 129; Macey and Schneider, 2008: 14; Zhang, et.al, 2008:112; Ganesan, Hess, 1997: 440; Kovac and Jesenko, 2010: 11-12). It is not inappropriate to say that organizational trust effects organizational engagement. In our study, when organizational trust increases, employees' engagement to organization is high ( $\beta=,422$ ). When organizations are perceived as objective and make people committed (F2), are concerned with employees (F4) this does not create organizational engagement; but when perceived as providing sensitive and comfortable working environment (F1) and have financial power (F3), this increases organizational engagement. Organizations which have sensitive and comfortable working environment are responsive to employees' needs, support them and create open communication. Especially, providing organizational engagement with social capital, trust can play an important role (Thomas et.al, 2009, 288). If employees are ready to share their ideas, a good communication environment will be established. One of the main results of corporate reputation is financial power of organizations which enable organizational engagement, since profitable organizations provide positive expectancies related with the employees' future. This situation can be attractive and can create cohesiveness for employees.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

This study is conducted in airline companies. We can't generalize these results to other sectors. Also, during the application procedure, some participants found the questionnaire too long and they withdrew (n=12). For further researches, we can suggest that reputation measurements should be developed specific to organizations or sectors. Developing criteria specific to the sector, will make organizations see their shortcomings and they will be more informed while trying to increase their reputation. On the other hand, if other researchers want to use the organizational engagement measure which we prepared and used in this research, new items can be added to this test. While we were developing our engagement test, we used job engagement scales adapting the items to "organization". One of the important dimensions of job engagement is "identification". This dimension can be valid also for organizational engagement. The factor analysis we made for organizational engagement, defined it only with one dimension. If organizational engagement is enriched with new and emic studies; more extensive information could be held about this concept.

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