

The Mediating Role of Psychological Contract Violation in The Relationship Between Employees' Perception of Nepotism and Organizational Cynicism

Çalışanların Nepotizm Algısı ile Örgütsel Sinizm Arasındaki İlişkide Psikolojik Sözleşme İhlalinin Aracı Rolü

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Öz

Bu araştırma, belediye çalışanlarının nepotizm algılarının örgütsel sinizm üzerindeki etkisinde psikolojik sözleşme ihlalinin aracılık rolünü incelemektedir. Bu amaçla çalışmada nepotizm algısı (bağımsız değişken), örgütsel sinizm (bağımlı değişken) ve psikolojik sözleşme ihlali (aracı değişken) ölçekleri kullanılmıştır. Araştırma tanımlayıcı-ilişki arayıcı türde ve kesitsel olarak tasarlanmıştır. Araştırma Erzincan Belediyesine bağlı şirketlerde çalışan 782 şirket çalışanından 357 kişiye ulaşılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veri toplama aşamasına geçilmeden önce Erzincan Binali Yıldırım Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'ndan gerekli etik onay alındı. Araştırmada ulaşılabilirlik, zaman ve maliyet faktörleri göz önünde bulundurularak tesadüfi olmayan örnekleme yöntemlerinden biri olan kolayda örnekleme yöntemi tercih edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre nepotizm algısı ile örgütsel sinizm arasında, nepotizm algısı ile psikolojik sözleşme ihlali arasında ve psikolojik sözleşme ihlali ile örgütsel sinizm arasında anlamlı ilişkiler tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca araştırmanın temel amacı olan nepotizm algısı ile örgütsel sinizm arasındaki ilişkide psikolojik sözleşme ihlalinin aracılık rolü olduğu bulgulanmıştır. Elde edilen araştırma sonuçlarına göre nepotizm, tüm işyerleri için ciddi bir sorundur. Bu bulgular, örgütlerin bu sorunu ele almak ve olumsuz sonuçlarını önlemek için önemli adımlar atılması gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nepotizm, Örgütsel Sinizm, Psikolojik Sözleşme İhlali, Belediye

Abstract

This research examines the mediating role of psychological contract violation in the effect of nepotism perceptions of municipal employees on organizational cynicism. For this purpose, perception of nepotism (independent variable), organizational cynicism (dependent variable) and psychological contract violation (mediating variable) scales were used in the research. The study was designed as descriptive-correlational and cross-sectional. The research was conducted by reaching 357 people out of 782 employees working in companies affiliated to Erzincan Municipality. Before the data collection phase, the necessary ethical approval was obtained from Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Human Research Ethics Committee. Considering the factors of accessibility, time and cost, convenience sampling method, which is one of the non-random sampling methods, was preferred. According to the results of the research, significant relationships were determined between the perception of nepotism and organizational cynicism, between the perception of nepotism and psychological contract violation, and between psychological contract violation and organizational cynicism. In addition, it was determined that psychological contract violation has a mediating role in the relationship between the perception of nepotism and organizational cynicism, which is the main purpose of the research. According to the research results, nepotism is a serious problem for all workplaces. These findings suggest that organizations should take important steps to address this problem and prevent its negative consequences.

Keywords: Nepotism, Organizational Cynicism, Psychological Contract Violation, Municipality

Giriş

Human beings have been living with the instinct of belonging to a group since the beginning of history. Generally, thanks to the motivation of belonging to the same group, people act with motives such as speaking the same language, having the same ethnic origin, sharing the same political view, having the same belief systems, or having similar cultural characteristics. These groups, which make important contributions to the creation of social order, help to organize individuals' social lives as well as their professional lives.

Nepotism, in its most general definition, can be defined as the abuse of authority and power in order to gain advantage regardless of any talent, skill, ability and education status of employees with close personal relationships such as family members, relatives, spouses, or friends (Pelit, Kılıç and İstanbullu, 2015). The individuals' distrust of people other than themselves and their views that people do not reflect their true characters are defined as cynicism, and the individuals' distrust of their organization and the negative attitudes and behaviours they develop towards their organization are defined as organizational cynicism. The psychological contract refers to the unwritten and unspoken expectations between organizations and employees, in which they have obligations and commitments towards each other (Sims, 1994). When the researches based on these definitions are examined, it is determined that employees' psychological contract violations increase their organizational cynicism levels (Sarıkaya and Kök, 2017). Likewise, Afshan et al. (2021) found that psychological contract violation is associated with increased organizational cynicism. Bari et al. (2020) also found that organizational cynicism mediates the significant relationship between psychological contract breach and turnover intention. Zhiming (2008) found that political perceptions in the organization affect employee cynicism and psychological contract violation mediates this significant relationship. Arıcı et al. (2020) also found that nepotism affects workplace incivility and psychological contract violation mediates this significant effect and authentic leadership has a moderating role. Based on these research results in the literature, it was aimed to examine the effect of nepotism, which is a disease of organizational environments, on organizational cynicism and the mediating role of psychological contract violation in this possible effect.

As a result, nepotism, organizational cynicism, and psychological contract violations can be seen in municipalities, which are public enterprises where labour is used intensively, and among municipal employees, as in all sectors. From this point of view, the aim of our research is to reveal the relationship between nepotism perceptions and organizational cynicism perceptions of the employees working in Erzincan Municipality and the companies affiliated to the municipality and to determine the mediating effect of psychological contract violations in this relationship. Although many studies have been conducted on nepotism and organizational cynicism, nepotism and psychological contract violations in both national and international literature, there is no research examining the mediating effect of psychological contract violations on the relationship between nepotism and organizational cynicism (Arıcı et al., 2020; Li and Chen, 2018; Biswas, 2016). Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap in the field of research and contribute to the related literature by preparing a detailed conceptual framework for the variables.

Theoretical Framework

Nepotism

Although the concept of nepotism or favouritism is perceived as a concept that can be encountered in professional business life, it is a phenomenon that occurs in all areas of human life and affects human relations. It is expressed in many different studies that this concept, which is derived from the Latin word "nepos" meaning "nephew", is expressed as "nepotisma" in Italian and derived from the word "nephew" in English (Bute, 2011: 383-404; Ford and McLaughlin, 1985:57; Asunakutlu and Avcı, 2010: 96; Abdalla et al., 1998: 555). The concept of nepotism is the situation where an individual provides employment opportunities to his own family members and relatives regardless of their abilities, skills, and education levels by using his power and authority in the enterprise (Karakaş and Çak, 2007: 78). From a broad business perspective, nepotism can be defined as the practice of employing or

promoting an employee without regard to his or her skills, abilities, experience, achievements, or educational attainment, solely based on kinship relations (Özler, Özler and Gümüştekin, 2007: 438). Ford and Mcloughin (1985: 57) used this concept to describe individuals who use or abuse any position in the organization for the benefit of their family. It is expressed in the form of a job for a man rather than a man for a job, which is widely used among people and in human resources management (Karakas and Çak, 2007: 78).

The concept of nepotism is used synonymously with the words “patronage”, “influence” and “favouritism”. It can also be expressed as the replacement of the principle of “merit” with personal factors such as kinship, fellow countrymen, or friendship in cases of being appointed or promoted to organizational positions within the enterprise (Karacaoğlu and Yörük, 2012: 47). The concept is based on the abuse of one’s position for the benefit of relatives, friends, or persons with whom one has personal relations. According to some biologists, nepotism, which is referred to as “Kin Selection” in English, can be expressed as an instinctual state that also exists in animals and is inherent in human nature. However, unlike relative favouritism, nepotism is described not as an arbitrary, emotional or instinctive behaviour, but as a more rational, deliberate and chosen behaviour and a form of management (Özler and Gümüştekin, 2007: 437-450).

Although the concept of nepotism is known to have many negative effects in the literature, some studies discussing its positive effects stand out (Uygur and Çağatay, 2015: 139). First, when the negative effects of the concept of nepotism are examined, it is found that nepotism negatively affects organizational justice and decreases the perception of justice (Arslaner, Erol and Boylu, 2014: 62; Yavuz and Güçer, 2021: 355), negatively affects job satisfaction and decreases the level of satisfaction (Büte, 2011: 175-184), increases the level of job stress (Büte and Tekarslan, 2010: 16), and increases counterproductive work behaviours (Özüren, 2017). In addition, it can be stated that in organizations where nepotism is intense, it causes negativities such as decreased employee loyalty, weakened commitment to work, increased absenteeism and labour turnover rates (Araslı, Bavik and Ekiz, 2006: 295-308). The positive effects of nepotism can also be found in a small number of studies in the literature. For example, Vinton (1998: 297) indicated that nepotism has positive effects such as shorter learning processes in the organization. He also mentions some positive effects such as increased loyalty of the favoured individual to the organization and higher work performance, lower turnover rates among favoured individuals, and finally, positive/stable relations with the employer. Ichinowski (1988: 106-109) also pointed out that bringing favoured people or family members to top management in organizations would prevent future turnover in top management and this situation is an advantage for the business. Finally, Uygur and Çağatay (2015: 139) stated that nepotism enables faster decisions to be made, especially in businesses where family members are concentrated, and thus helps businesses to adapt to environmental changes faster and eliminate the negative effects of time loss. As a result, it has been determined in the light of the studies in the literature that the concept of nepotism has many positive and negative effects. However, based on these results, it can be stated that it would not be a correct approach to make a distinction such as “good nepotism or bad nepotism”. In this respect, it can be claimed that the phenomenon of nepotism is a practice that has different aspects, and is affected by environmental factors and the outputs created by the concept should be evaluated together with its positive and negative consequences (Vinton, 1998: 299).

Organizational Cynicism

The concept of cynicism is a philosophical movement with its roots dating back to 500 BC, that is, to Ancient Greece. It is thought that the concept of cynicism may have come from the Greek word “kyon” meaning “dog” or from Cynosarges, a town in Ancient Greece, especially near Athens, where the “School of Cynics” was located. While the concept of “Cynic” in the ancient Greek period was expressed as a concept that criticized the order fiercely and emphasized the individual, expressed outspokenness and was thought to have a positive meaning, albeit partially, by some thinkers of that period, today it has turned into a concept that expresses negativity (Memduhoğlu and Yılmaz, 2017: 520-521). Although cynicism is a very broad concept, it is a concept based on philosophical foundations as can be understood from its word origin. In addition, this concept is a subject of

research in different disciplines of social sciences such as religion, political sciences, management, sociology, and psychology. In particular, many researchers studying cynicism explained the definitions of the concept in different disciplines from different perspectives (Brandes, 1997; Hançerlioğlu, 1993; Hançerlioğlu, 2000).

Cynicism can be expressed as distrust of other people's intentions or the belief that one's interlocutors do not reflect their true character (Memduhoğlu and Yılmaz, 2017: 520). Andersson and Bateman (1997: 449-470) called individuals who only think about their own interests and put their interests above everything and everyone else, and who also see everyone else as self-interested as "cynical" and defined the idea that tries to explain this situation as cynicism. Tokgöz and Yılmaz (2008: 285) also defined cynicism as the tendency of individuals to be pessimistic, especially about hidden and undisclosed goals, to explain events based on disappointment, or to be interested in others in order to protect or increase their own interests and to maintain their jobs.

When the literature on the concept of cynicism is examined, it is determined that it is handled in many different types and scopes. It has been observed that it is handled in many contexts such as personal cynicism, social cynicism, employee cynicism, professional cynicism, institutional cynicism, organizational or workplace cynicism, and has been intensively examined in the organizational context in recent years (Johnson and M. O'leary-Kelly, 2003:629). According to the related literature, the concept of cynicism, which is described as negative, can be exhibited against a person, group, ideology, or social order, as well as against an institution, organization, or employees. The form of cynicism exhibited against institutions, organizations or employees is called organizational cynicism (Andersson, 1996: 1397-1398; Karacaoğlu and İnce, 2013: 186). The theoretical foundations of this concept are based on theories such as expectancy theory, attribution theory, attitude theory, social exchange theory, emotional events theory, and social motivation theory (Cartwright and Holmes, 2006: 199-208).

Organizational cynicism refers to negative and distrustful attitudes towards the organization or the management that constitutes the authority in the organization (Andersson and Batemen, 1997: 450). Dean, Brandes and Dharwadkar (1998: 341-352) defined organizational cynicism as "negative attitudes, states or actions that have cognitive, affective or behavioural dimensions that an individual exhibits towards his/her organization". Dean et al. defined organizational cynicism in its broadest sense as a negative attitude developed by an individual towards his/her organization and consisting of three dimensions. These dimensions are defined as the "belief" that the employee develops that the organization lacks integrity, the negative "emotion" he/she exhibits towards his/her organization, and the dismissive and critical "behaviours" he/she exhibits towards the organization that contains this belief and effect (Memduhoğlu and Yılmaz, 2017: 528). Based on these definitions, it is possible to define organizational cynicism as the employee's cynical, dismissive, and disparaging attitudes towards his/her organization because of the negative feelings he/she develops towards the organization, the disbelief he/she develops towards the decisions taken by the organization and the state of not trusting the intentions of the employees of the organization.

Psychological Contract and Contract Violation

A psychological contract, in general terms, is an important contract established between the organization and the employee, which does not constitute a formal document but enables the establishment and regulation of working relationships. This concept is becoming an increasingly popular concept, especially in modern business and organizational behaviour literature (Hırlak, 2018: 387). In this respect, a psychological contract is defined by Argyris (1960) as an unwritten agreement between two parties (Demirkasımoğlu, 2012: 4). This unwritten agreement determines the expectations of employees from the organization before starting work and the expectations of organizations from employees during recruitment and how these expectations will be met and regulate the business relations that will be formed due to these mutual expectations (Hırlak, 2018: 387).

Although a psychological contract is a concept that has been discussed in the organizational behaviour literature, especially in 1980 and after, and many studies have been conducted on it, it has been observed that there is not a complete consensus on the content and dimensions of the concept (Özdaşlı and Çelikkol, 2012: 142). For this reason, it has been determined that different researchers who have conducted research on the subject in the

literature have defined it in various ways. For example, Walker and Hutton (2006: 433) defined the psychological contract as obligations that can vary depending on the individual's personal perceptions and that the individual and the organization must mutually fulfil. Rousseau (1995) defined this concept as the beliefs of both the employee and the organization regarding the unwritten rules and expectations between the employee and the organization. Rousseau (2004: 120-121) listed many suggestions for the proper organization of such contracts between the parties. These suggestions are as follows; first of all, psychological contracts should be voluntary, the parties should perceive the obligations in the same way, both the employee and the employer should discuss all the details of a long-term business relationship at the beginning, the information sources of the parties in the established contract should be the same, different information sources may cause the messages to be conveyed incorrectly, and finally, the terms of the psychological contract allow the parties to fulfil their commitments, but the focus should be on managing the losses that may arise when these commitments are difficult to fulfil.

Psychological contract violation is a situation that occurs when employees feel that their organization has failed to fulfil one or more of its commitments or implied responsibilities. Sometimes these violations can also occur when promises are not fulfilled or when the fulfilment of promises is delayed. In short, the employee's perceptions of what he/she gets as a result of the commitments made to him/her by the organization and the inconsistencies experienced as a result of these perceptions constitute the subject of psychological contract violations. Especially when the parties feel a deficiency or a gap in the contract as a result of comparing whether they fulfil their obligations, it reveals that the psychological contract has been violated (Morrison and Robinson, 1997: 231).

As a result, the psychological contract is based on trust between the parties. This trust develops with the belief that the parties will mutually fulfil their obligations. Any dispute or damage that may occur in the contracts established between the parties may not be easily corrected. Violation of this contract is based on the relationship of trust and goodwill between the employee and the organization, and the resulting damage to this relationship can cause trauma between the parties. Restoring relationships may therefore require rebuilding trust and goodwill and repeating the process that built the relationship in the first place (Rousseau, 1989: 128).

Research Model and Hypotheses

In the model developed in line with the purpose of the research, the hypotheses established between the perception of nepotism as the dependent variable, organisational cynicism as the independent variable and psychological contract violation as the mediating variable are as follows.

The Relationship between Nepotism and Organisational Cynicism

It can be stated that one of the concepts that cause organisational cynicism and cynical behaviours of employees is nepotism. Organisational cynicism is the negative feelings, behaviours and thought patterns that employees develop against their organisations. It is an undeniable fact that this situation will reflect negatively on the performance of employees and reduce organisational efficiency (Özkoç, Kendir, Arslan and Özgün, 2019: 2963).

In order to better comprehend the negative effects of the phenomenon of nepotism on organisational cynicism, it is necessary to mention the theories of social exchange, expectancy and attribution, which constitute the theoretical foundations of the concept. Expectancy theory is based on the principle that individuals choose the best value for their individual results among alternatives. In this theory, individuals contribute to their organisations with a certain motivation, experience, knowledge, and expectations for the needs, and as a result of these contributions, they decide how to behave in the organisation (Lunenburg, 2011: 1-6). According to Homans, the social exchange theory is based on the principle that employees in the organisation shape their relationships with other employees by considering the status of rewards, promotions, punishments, or costs that they will obtain as a result of their behaviours in their relationships with other employees (Cook, Cheshire, Rice and Nakagawa, 2013: 61-88). Finally, attribution theory is known as a theory developed to understand and explain the reasons for which individuals attribute their own and others' behaviours. This theory is based on the principle that individuals develop logical strategies to adapt to the explanations and reactions they use to construct their world (Rogers and Stainton, 2003: 147).

Based on these theoretical explanations, it can be stated that employees approach their behaviours in the organisation as a means of exchange, attribution or expectation and evaluate the behaviour patterns they will exhibit as a result of the nepotism phenomenon that emerges in the organisation within the framework of these theories. Based on these approaches, the first hypothesis formed within the scope of the research;

H₁: There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perception of nepotism and organisational cynicism levels.

The Relationship between Nepotism and Psychological Contract Violation

A psychological contract is defined as closed agreements that are not verbally expressed between the employee and the organisation, which have a psychological aspect that the parties commit to each other in the business relationship and expect to receive from each other (Kotter, 1973: 91-99). As can be understood from the definition, psychological contracts are a phenomenon that is evaluated within the social exchange relationship and can be defined based on the "social exchange" theory. In this respect, it can be stated that psychological contracts are a concept used to make sense of the business relationships established between the parties. Therefore, psychological contracts express mutual exchange relationships based on social exchange theory. In the simplest terms, there is a business relationship arising from the exchange of the contributions made by the employee to the organisation and the incentives given by the organisation to the employee in return, and the basis of the psychological contracts arising from this business relationship is the principle of reciprocity (Cassar, 2001: 194-208).

Nepotism is defined as the act of showing favouritism to family members in situations such as recruitment, promotion, reward, etc. Nepotism can be expressed not only among family members but also in the situation of bringing the people with whom the individual has a close relationship to the position they want or promoting them in their careers (Akkoyun and Ayça, 2022: 2616). Based on these definitions, it has been observed that studies examining the relationship between nepotism and psychological contract violation and finding a positive relationship are included in the relevant literature. For example, Arıcı et al. (2020) found a positive relationship between nepotism and psychological contract breach.

H₂: There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perception of nepotism and their perception of psychological contract violation.

The Relationship between Psychological Contract Violation and Organisational Cynicism

Psychological contract violation is a concept related to organisational cynicism. This concept is a determinant of organisational cynicism and an emotional response to organisational cynicism behaviour. From an organisational point of view, cynicism is a phenomenon that occurs immediately after a psychological contract violation and has negative effects. Employees exhibiting cynical behaviours get disappointed with their organisations and have more negative feelings and thoughts about their jobs (Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly, 2003: 639). Based on these explanations, many studies in the relevant literature have revealed results that support this relationship. Aslan and Boylu found a positive and significant relationship between organisational cynicism and psychological contract violation in their research conducted in five-star hotel enterprises (Aslan and Boylu, 2014). Similar results were found in studies (Tarakçı and Akın, 2017; Çetinkaya and Özkara, 2014; Üçok and Torun, 2014; Çetinkaya, 2018). As a result, the third hypothesis based on these conceptual explanations is as follows;

H₃: There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perception of psychological contract violation and organisational cynicism levels.

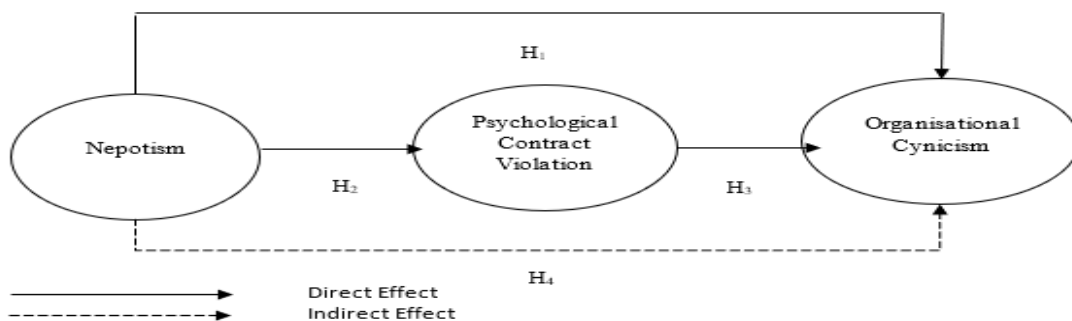
The Mediating Role of Psychological Contract Violation in The Relationship between Nepotism and Organisational Cynicism

Nepotism can be defined as employing, promoting, or conducting business relations with employees in the organisation based solely on personal or kinship relations, disregarding variables such as the individual's ability, knowledge, skills, or education level (Özler, Özler and Gümüştekin, 2007; 438). Nepotism in business relationships or organisations affects the psychological contracts established between the employee and the organisation based

on mutual expectations and obligations. The employee may perceive that the psychological contract is violated due to the belief that the organisation does not fulfil its commitments to him/her. This situation brings about various behavioural or psychological consequences for the employee. These negative behaviours and attitudes developed by the employee against the organisation cause organisational cynicism and cynical behaviours with the contribution of nepotism and psychological contract violations (Sunman, 2017: 2). Based on these definitions, when the relevant literature is examined, studies have been observed that there are various levels of relationship between nepotism and organizational cynicism, between nepotism and psychological contract violation, and between psychological contract violation and organizational cynicism (Apaydın, 2016; Üçok, 2012; Gençer Çelik, 2020; Sunman, 2017; Lim, Srivastava, Jain, Malik and Gupta, 2023: 1; Arıcı, Arash, Çakmakoglu Arıcı, 2020: 597-613). In conclusion, based on these conceptual explanations and research results, the fourth hypothesis formed within the scope of the research is as follows;

H₄: Perception of psychological contract violation has a mediating role in the relationship between nepotism and organisational cynicism.

Figure 1: Research Model



Research Method

Purpose of the Research

Within the scope of the research, it is aimed to examine the mediating role of psychological contract violation in the effect of nepotism perceptions of municipal employees on organisational cynicism.

Population, Sample, Ethical Permissions of The Research and Demographic Characteristics of The Participants

The population of the research consists of Erzincan Municipality employees. In order to determine the sampling frame of the research, Erzincan Municipality Personnel Directorate was contacted, and it was found that there are 782 employees working in the companies affiliated to Erzincan Municipality (August 2022 data). Before the data collection stage, the necessary ethical approval was obtained from Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Human Research Ethics Committee (Meeting protocol date 25.07.2022/ Protocol no: 07/07). Considering the accessibility, time and cost factors, the convenience sampling method, which is one of the non-random sampling methods, was preferred in the research. A total of 400 questionnaire forms were distributed both electronically (doc.google.com/form) and face-to-face to the employees of Erzincan Municipality, which is the sample of the research. However, 357 questionnaires were subjected to analysis after the wrong and incomplete questionnaires were removed. The questionnaire data of the research were obtained between August 2022 and October 2022.

In the research, the data containing demographic information about Erzincan Municipality company employees who participated in the questionnaire were included in the analysis. In this context, 15.2% (N=54) of the participants in the research are women and 84.8% (N=303) are men. When the marital status of the participants is analysed, it is found that 63.3% (N=226) of the employees are married and 36.7% (N=131) are single. When the employees participating in the research are analysed in terms of age groups, 35.4% (N=126) of the employees are in the 18-28 age group, 34.2% (N=122) are in the 29-39 age group, 20.3% (N=72) are in the 40-50 age group and finally, 10.1% (N=37) are 51 years and over. When the educational status of the employees participating in the

research is analysed, 20.5% (N=73) of the employees are high school graduates, 67.1% (N=240) are associate degree graduates and 30.4% (N=44) are bachelor's degree graduates. In the last part of our questionnaire, employees' length of service in the municipality is questioned. As a result of the data obtained, 46.8% (N=167) of the employees have served the municipality for 1-5 years, 20.3% (N=72) for 6-10 years, 19% (N=68) for 11-20 years and 13.9% (N=50) for 21 years or more.

Data Collection Tools and Variables of The Research

The research consists of dependent, independent, and mediating variables. The independent variable of the research is nepotism perception, the dependent variable is organisational cynicism, and the mediating variable is a psychological contract violation.

In the research, data were obtained from the employees by questionnaire method. The content of the questionnaire includes questions about the demographic characteristics of the employees, the nepotism scale, the psychological contract scale and the organisational cynicism scale. The participants were asked to respond to the statements using a 5-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree).

Nepotism Scale: The scale developed by Finelli (2011) was used to measure the nepotism perceptions of the employees participating in the research. The scale used in the research consists of one dimension and 9 statements, and the scale was adapted into Turkish by Demirel and Savaş (2017). In the scale, there are statements such as; "Everyone works under equal conditions in this organisation. Relatives should work in the company. Nepotism (favouritism) is applied for unavoidable reasons".

Psychological Contract Violation Scale: The scale developed by Robinson and Morrison (2000) and consisting of 9 statements was used to determine the psychological contract violation perception of the participants. The scale includes statements such as "My employer has fulfilled almost all of the promises made during the recruitment process. I did not receive everything I was promised in return for my contribution to the workplace". The participants were asked to respond to the statements using a 5-point Likert scale.

Organisational Cynicism Scale: In the research, a 13-item scale developed by Brandes et al. (1999) was used to measure the level of organisational cynicism of the participants. The scale includes statements such as "I get angry when I think about the organisation I work for. I criticise with others the practices and policies in the institution where I work". Previous studies have confirmed the factor structure and predictive efficiency of the scale.

Data Analysis

Mean, standard deviation, reliability and correlation analysis of the scales used in the research were obtained with SPSS 22 program. Before conducting hypothesis tests in the research, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with AMOS 23 package program. Then, the hypotheses of the research were analysed with PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013). The reliability of the scales used in the research was measured by the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. A Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.70 and above is sufficient for internal consistency (Kalaycı, 2010).

Findings

The results of the correlation analysis of the scales used in the research are shown in Table 1. Since the analyses regarding the validity of the scales in the research were accepted in previous research, the validity analysis of the variables did not need to be conducted again.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Inter-variable Correlation Coefficients of Scales (n=357)

	α	Mean	Standard D.	NP	PSV	OC
Perception of Nepotism	0,879	3,93	6,83	1		
Psychological	0,914	4,07	6,31	0,563**	1	

Contract Violation

Organizational Cynicism	0,925	3,75	5,53	0,514**	0,411**	1
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** = $p < 0,01$ NP: Nepotism Perception, PSV: Psychological Contract Violation, OC: Organizational Cynicism

Table 1 shows data regarding the reliability coefficients, averages, and standard deviations of the variables of the research. The table also shows a positive relationship between nepotism and organizational cynicism at a 99% significance level ($r = 0,514$; $p < 0,01$). Another finding in the table is that there is a 99% significant positive relationship ($r = 0,563$; $p < 0,01$) between nepotism and psychological contract violation. The last finding in the table indicates that there is a 99% significant positive relationship ($r = 0,411$; $p < 0,01$) between psychological contract violation and organizational cynicism. These results shown in Table 1 can be expressed as an indicator that as the nepotism perception increases, the level of organizational cynicism and psychological contract violation also increases.

Measurement Models

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to determine the internal consistency of the scales used in the research and the research model. The goodness of fit values of the scales analysed and the measurement model of the research are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Measurement Model and Goodness of Fit Values of Alternative Models

Modeller	$3 < (\chi^2/df) < 5$	RMSEA <.08	CFI>.90	GFI>.90	TLI>.90	SRMR<.08
Araştırma Modeli	1,63	0,05	0,96	0,91	0,95	0,06
Model 1	4,26	0,09	0,89	0,87	0,90	0,08
Model 2	7,31	0,12	0,81	0,87	0,89	0,11
Model 3	8,16	0,14	0,78	0,80	0,88	0,12

Note: $n=357$; χ^2/df = Chi-Square Fit Test; SRMR= Square Root of Standardized Mean Errors; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA= Root Mean Square of Approximate Errors

When the values in Table 2 are examined, it is seen that the goodness of fit values of the measurement model of the research model ($\chi^2/df = 1.63$; RMSEA=0.05; CFI=0.96; SRMR=0.06) show a better fit than the goodness of fit values of other alternative models (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Mishra & Datta, 2011). It can be said that the goodness of fit values of the research model are within the accepted ranges (Nye and Drasgow, 2011).

Hypothesis tests

After the validation of the measurement model, the research hypotheses (Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2, Hypothesis 3, and Hypothesis 4) were analysed. The results of the research hypotheses are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results for Mediation Test (n=362)

Psychological Contract Violation						
Variables	β	SH	T	P	LCI	HCI
Nepotism	0,56	0,06	9,44	0,00	0,44	0,67
Organizational Cynicism						
Variables	β	SH	T	P	LCI	HCI

Psychological Violation	Contract	0,22	0,08	2,47	0,00	0,06	0,38
Nepotism (Direct Impact)		0,70	0,09	7,90	0,00	0,52	0,87
Nepotism (Total Impact)		0,82	0,08	10,72	0,00	0,67	0,97
				Impact	SH	LCI	HCI
Indirect Impact				0,12	0,01	0,02	0,24

Note: EDGA: Lowest confidence interval, EYGA: Highest confidence interval

In the H_1 hypothesis of the research, it was questioned that there is a significant and positive effect between employees' perception of nepotism and organizational cynicism levels. According to the analysis results in Table 3, nepotism has a significant and positive effect on organizational cynicism ($\beta = 0.70$; 95% CI [0.52, 0.87]). This result shows that hypothesis H_1 is supported. In the second hypothesis of the research, it was questioned that employees' perception of nepotism significantly and positively affects the perception of psychological contract violation. In this context, when the data in Table 3 are analysed, it is seen that nepotism has a significant and positive effect on psychological contract violation ($\beta = 0.56$; 95% CI [0.44, 0.67]). According to this result, the H_2 hypothesis is accepted. In the third hypothesis of the research, it was questioned that employees' perception of psychological contract significantly and positively affects the level of organizational cynicism. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that psychological contract violation significantly and positively affects organizational cynicism ($\beta = 0.22$; 95% CI [0.06, 0.38]). This result supports hypothesis H_3 . In the last hypothesis of the research, H_4 , it was questioned whether psychological ownership has a mediating role in the relationship between nepotism and organizational cynicism. To analyse the mediation effect, regression analysis based on the Bootstrap method was conducted using the Process Macro package developed by Hayes (2018). In the implementation phase of the mediation analyses conducted with the bootstrap method, Model 4 and 5000 re-samples were selected. Moreover, in mediation analyses conducted with the Bootstrap method, 95% confidence interval (CI) values should not be zero (0) in order to support the hypotheses (Mallinckrodt et al., 2006). When the results of the indirect impact in Table 3 are examined, it is seen that nepotism has a significant and indirect ($\beta = 0.12$; 95% CI [0.02, 0.24]) effect on organizational cynicism through psychological contract violation. The H_4 hypothesis of the research is supported by this result.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

In this research, the mediating role of psychological contract violation in the effect of nepotism perceptions of municipal employees on organizational cynicism was examined. In addition, the binary relationships between the variables in the research (nepotism- organizational cynicism, nepotism- psychological contract violation, organizational cynicism- psychological contract violation) were also examined. In this context, data were collected via questionnaires from 357 employees working in Erzincan Municipality Personnel Directorate and companies affiliated to Erzincan Municipality. As a result of the analyses made through the data obtained, the following findings were reached.

When the first hypothesis of the research, "There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perception of nepotism and organizational cynicism levels" was tested, it was found that there was a statistically significant and positive relationship between the perception of nepotism and organizational cynicism and hypothesis H_1 was accepted. According to this result, it can be stated that in organizations where the phenomenon of nepotism exists and this perception is high, employees may exhibit cynical behaviours and show more negative attitudes towards their organization. This result is also consistent with other studies in the literature (Özkoç, Kendir, Arslan, and Özgün, 2019: 2960; Karademir, 2016; Aydoğan, 2009).

When the second hypothesis of the research, "There is a significant and positive relationship between employees'

perception of nepotism and perception of psychological contract violation” was tested, it was found that there was a statistically significant and positive relationship between the perception of nepotism and perception of psychological contract violation and hypothesis H₂ was accepted. According to this result, it can be stated that employees face psychological contract violations in organizations where the phenomenon of nepotism exists, and this perception is high. In addition, psychological contracts, which are established between the employee and the organization through unofficial channels and are subjective, can be negatively affected by nepotism practices. This result is also consistent with other studies in the literature (Sunman, 2017; Polat, 2019; Araslı and Arıcı, 2020: 597-613; Lim, Srivastava, Jain, Malik and Gupta, 2023: 1).

When the third hypothesis of the research, “There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perception of psychological contract violation and organizational cynicism levels” was tested, it was found that there was a statistically significant and positive relationship between the perception of psychological contract violation and organizational cynicism and hypothesis H₃ was accepted. According to this result, it can be indicated that individuals working in organizations where psychological contract violation is experienced and perception is high may show cynical behaviours and employees may exhibit more negative attitudes towards their organization due to contract violations. This result is also consistent with other studies in the literature (Aslan and Boylu, 2014: 33-45; Tarakçı and Akın, 2017; Çetinkaya and Özkara, 2014; Üçok and Torun, 2014; Johnson and O’Leary - Kelly, 2003: 629; Pugh, Skarlicki, and Passell, 2003: 201-212; Mason and Chorobot, 2003: 22-45).

When the last hypothesis of the research, “Perception of psychological contract violation has a mediating role in the relationship between nepotism and organizational cynicism” was tested, it was found that psychological contract violation has a mediating role in the relationship between nepotism and organizational cynicism and hypothesis H₄ was accepted. In other words, it can be expressed that psychological contract violations have indirect effects on the cynical behaviours of employees in organizations where nepotism practices and perceptions are high and psychological contract violations are an important factor in the emergence of cynical behaviours. In addition, it is thought that employees will exhibit more cynical behaviours in work environments where the perception of nepotism is high. In addition, in organizations where the perception of nepotism is high, it will be difficult to fulfil the psychological contract commitments that the employee has developed with the organization. In this respect, it can be stated that the perception of nepotism influences employee cynicism and psychological contracts have some indirect effects within this effect.

Within the framework of the results of the research, some suggestions have been developed for managers and organizations. First, managers should take care to establish psychological contracts with the same sensitivity apart from formal contracts when hiring employees at the very beginning of the work. Employers should attach importance to merit in recruitment and promotion processes and take necessary measures to eliminate the perception of nepotism. As a requirement of psychological contracts, managers should take care to keep their promises to their employees and pay close attention to employees’ problems. In addition, managers should determine objective task distribution principles for the distribution of tasks within the organization in accordance with personal skills, abilities, and experiences. Career development opportunities within the organization should be increased to prevent the spread of the perception of nepotism among employees and appointments should be made on the basis of fairness in promotions and promotions.

In order for organizations to overcome the negative effects of phenomena such as nepotism, psychological contract violations and organizational cynicism with the least damage, they should be aware that their most valuable resources are their employees, and they should make their employees feel this. It is recommended that decisions, practices, or activities taken within the organization should be distributed fairly among employees, employees should be treated equally, and nepotistic attitudes and actions should be avoided. Both organizational management and employees should be informed about the concepts of organizational cynicism, cynical act and behaviour, and techniques to combat this type of behaviour should be explained.

Encouraging actions and practices that increase the cooperation activities of employees within the organization,

establishing communication channels where employees can easily reach their managers about their problems, creating constructive discussion environments, and even expressing their thoughts, suggestions, and criticisms within the framework of a participatory management approach enable the prevention of cynical behaviours and psychological contract violations.

A healthy psychological contract is expected to be formed when the mutual expectations of the parties are met. For this reason, the contracts established between managers/organizations and employees should be organized on the basis that both parties will continuously contribute to each other and develop mutual good relations. In addition, psychological contracts established with the right methods create a greater sense of control within the organization. Effective contracts between the parties create a sense of indebtedness between the parties, which can increase the likelihood of both parties achieving what they want. The parties' belief that they owe or have obligations to each other increases commitment in the relationship between the parties, prevents cynical behaviour and helps to prevent favouritism such as nepotism.

As a result, this research has some limitations. First, the research was conducted on individuals working in Erzincan Municipality Personnel Directorate and companies affiliated to Erzincan Municipality. This is one of the biggest obstacles for generalising the variables. In addition, the subject of the research can be generalized by conducting it on municipalities in different provinces or employees of different sectors. This cross-sectional research can be analysed through data collected in different time periods using longitudinal methods and more rational results can be reached.

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