

ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ / RESEARCH ARTICLE

IS HUMBLE LEADERSHIP A SAFE PORT IN EMPLOYEE VOICE AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION? RESEARCH IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR*

ÇALIŞAN SESLİLİĞİNDE VE ÖRGÜTSEL ÖZDEŞLEŞMESİNDE MÜTEVAZİ LİDERLİK GÜVENLİ BİR LİMAN MI? EĞİTİM SEKTÖRÜNDE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

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ABSTRACT

In the study, the mediating role of organizational identification in the effect of humble leadership on teachers' voice is examined. The theoretical framework of the research is based on social identity and social change theories. The study is carried out with the participation of 306 teachers working in Şanlıurfa province. Data are collected by electronic means (survey) and snowball sampling method is used. The obtained data are analyzed with SPSS 26.0 and Mplus 7 programs. Data are evaluated with confirmatory factor analysis, correlation and bootstrap regression analyses. As a result of the analysis, it is determined that humble leadership has a statistically significant and positive effect on both employee voice and organizational identification. In addition, it is determined that organizational identification plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between humble leadership and employee voice. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations are made for academics for future research and for managers to develop more effective strategies.

Keywords: Leadership, Humble Leadership, Employee Voice, Organizational Identification.

JEL Classification Codes: D23, L2, M10.


ÖZ


Bu çalışmada, mütevazı liderliğin öğretmenlerin sesliliği üzerindeki etkisinde örgütsel özdeşleşmenin aracılık rolü incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın kuramsal çerçevesi, sosyal kimlik ve sosyal değişim teorilerine dayandırılmıştır. Araştırma, Şanlıurfa ilinde görev yapan 306 öğretmenin katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler, elektronik ortamda (survey) anket yöntemiyle toplanmış ve kartopu örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler, SPSS 26.0 ve Mplus 7 programları ile analiz edilmiştir. Veriler doğrulayıcı faktör analizi, korelasyon ve bootstrap regresyon analizleriyle değerlendirilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda, mütevazı liderliğin hem çalışan sesliliği hem de örgütsel özdeşleşme üzerinde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ve pozitif bir etkisinin bulunduğu tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, örgütsel özdeşleşmenin, mütevazı liderlik ile çalışan sesliliği arasındaki ilişkide kısmi aracılık rolü üstlendiği belirlenmiştir. Bu çalışmanın bulgularına dayanarak akademisyenlere gelecekteki araştırmalar, yöneticilere ise daha etkili stratejiler geliştirebilmeleri için öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Liderlik, Mütevazı Liderlik, Çalışan Sesliliği, Örgütsel Özdeşleşme.

JEL Sınıflandırma Kodları: D23, L2, M10.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Amaç ve Kapsam:

Liderlik, insanlık tarihine dayanan köklü bir geçmişe sahip olup, günümüzde de önemini sürdüren ve sürekli evrilen bir kavramdır. Her geçen gün, değişen koşullar ve ihtiyaçlar doğrultusunda yeni liderlik tarzları ortaya çıkmakta ve bu yeni liderlik anlayışları, farklı sorunlara çözümler üretmek ve daha etkili yönetim stratejileri geliştirmek amacıyla evrilmektedir. Bu çalışmada, yeni nesil liderlik yaklaşımı olarak da ifade edebileceğimiz mütevazı liderliğin çalışan sesliliği üzerindeki etkisi ve bu etkide örgütsel özdeşleşmenin aracılık rolü incelenmiştir. Literatür incelendiğinde, mütevazı liderliğin çalışan sesliliği ve örgütsel özdeşleşme üzerindeki etkilerinin yeterince araştırılmadığı görülmektedir. Özellikle ulusal yazında, bu liderlik yaklaşımına dair sınırlı sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır (Kerse vd., 2020; Özer vd., 2021; Gül ve Timuroğlu, 2023). Bu çalışmalarda, örneklem olarak akademisyenler, kamu çalışanları, hemşireler ve havacılık sektörü çalışanları seçilmiştir. Ancak, eğitim sektörünün en önemli ve itici gücü olan öğretmenleri kapsayan bir araştırmaya rastlanılmamıştır. Şüphesiz ki öğretmenlerin mütevazı liderlik algısı, yalnızca kendi mesleki gelişimleri ve verimlilikleri için değil, aynı zamanda öğrencilerin akademik ve sosyal gelişiminde de hayati bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu liderlik anlayışı, eğitimde daha güvene dayalı, sağlıklı ve başarılı bir öğrenme ortamının oluşumuna katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu doğrultuda araştırmada, mütevazı liderliğin eğitim sektöründe çalışan öğretmenler üzerindeki etkilerinin incelenmesi, hem literatüre hem de örgütsel davranış alanına önemli katkı sağlayacağı öngörülmektedir.

Yöntem:

Çalışmada, nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak analizler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın örneklemi, Şanlıurfa ilinde görev yapan 306 öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Veriler, çevrimiçi anket (survey) yöntemiyle toplanmış olup, örneklem seçiminde kartopu örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmamıştır. Anket dört bölüm olarak tasarlanmıştır: İlk bölümde, yöneticilerin tutum ve davranışlarını değerlendiren, tek boyutlu ve dokuz maddeden oluşan mütevazı liderlik ölçeği; ikinci bölümde, katılımcıların örgütsel özdeşleşme düzeylerini ölçen, tek boyutlu ve dört maddelik örgütsel özdeşleşme ölçeği; üçüncü bölümde ise çalışanların sesliliğini ölçmek amacıyla altı madde ve tek boyuttan oluşan çalışan sesliliği ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Son bölümde ise ankete katılım gösteren bireylerin sosyo-demografik özellikleriyle ilgili verilere ulaşmayı amaçlayan sorular yer almaktadır. Araştırmada kullanılan tüm ölçekler, beşli Likert tipi bir ölçek ile katılımcıların görüşlerini değerlendirmek üzere düzenlenmiştir. Araştırma verileri, SPSS 26.0 ve Mplus 7 yazılımları kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Öncelikli olarak, SPSS ile katılımcıların betimleyici istatistikleri hesaplanarak demografik özellikler belirlenmiştir. Ardından, kullanılan ölçeklerin yapı geçerliliğini test etmek amacıyla Mplus 7 programı aracılığıyla DFA uygulanmıştır. Ölçeklerin geçerlilik ve güvenilirliğini değerlendirmek için Cronbach Alpha, CR ve AVE değerleri hesaplanmıştır. YEM kullanılarak yol analizleri gerçekleştirilmiş ve bağımsız değişkenin bağımlı değişken üzerindeki etkileri incelenmiştir. Sonrasında model oluşturularak aracılık etkileri ile hipotezlere ilişkin bulgular detaylı bir şekilde analiz edilmiştir.

Bulgular:

Yapılan analizler sonucunda, mütevazı liderliğin çalışan sesliliği üzerinde anlamlı ($p < 0,001$) ve pozitif yönde bir etkisi olduğu ($B = 0,349$) belirlenmiştir. Benzer şekilde, mütevazı liderliğin örgütsel özdeşleşme üzerindeki etkisi de anlamlı ($p < 0,001$) ve pozitif yönde ($B = 0,276$) bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, örgütsel özdeşleşmenin çalışan sesliliği üzerindeki etkisini incelemek amacıyla gerçekleştirilen analizde, örgütsel özdeşleşmenin de çalışan sesliliği üzerinde anlamlı ($p < 0,001$) ve pozitif bir etkisi olduğu ($B = 0,450$) tespit edilmiştir. Son olarak, mütevazı liderlik ile çalışan sesliliği arasındaki ilişkide örgütsel özdeşleşmenin aracılık rolünü belirlemek amacıyla yapılan analiz sonucunda, mütevazı liderliğin çalışan sesliliği üzerindeki doğrudan etkisinin anlamlı ($p < 0,002$) ve pozitif yönde ($B = 0,214$) olduğu, ayrıca mütevazı liderliğin örgütsel özdeşleşme aracılığıyla çalışan sesliliği üzerindeki dolaylı etkisinin de anlamlı ($p < 0,001$) ve pozitif yönde ($B = 0,129$) olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu bulgulara dayanarak, örgütsel özdeşleşmenin mütevazı liderlik ile çalışan sesliliği arasındaki ilişkiye kısmen aracılık ettiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Sonuç ve Tartışma:

Yapılan analizler, mütevazı liderliğin hem doğrudan hem de örgütsel özdeşleşme aracılığıyla çalışan sesliliği üzerinde anlamlı ve pozitif bir etkisinin olduğunu doğrulamıştır. Bu bulgu, mütevazı liderlerin yalnızca bireysel düzeyde olumlu sonuçlar doğurmakla kalmayıp, aynı zamanda çalışanların örgütlerine olan aidiyet duygularını güçlendirerek, onların sesliliğini (*çalışanların fikirlerini, önerilerini ve endişelerini dile getirme eğilimleri*) ve örgütsel katılımını artırdığını da göstermektedir. Araştırma sonuçları, örgütlerin liderlik stratejilerini geliştirirken mütevazı liderlik yaklaşımını benimsemelerinin, çalışanların örgütsel süreçlere daha fazla katılım göstermelerini ve daha etkin bir şekilde rol almalarını teşvik edebileceğini vurgulamaktadır. Tüm bu bulgular bir bütün olarak değerlendirildiğinde mütevazı liderlik, örgütlerin çalışan katılımını ve performansını artırmada önemli bir stratejik araç olarak değerlendirilebilir. Bu tür liderlik yaklaşımlarının, organizasyon kültürü üzerinde uzun vadeli olumlu etkiler yaratarak, sürdürülebilir başarıyı sağladığı söylenebilir. Örgütler, mütevazı liderlik ilkelerini benimseyerek çalışanların katılımını artırabilir ve böylece iş yerinde daha yaratıcı, yenilikçi ve verimli bir atmosfer yaratabilirler. Bu araştırma da diğer bilimsel çalışmalar gibi belirli sınırlılıklara sahiptir. Verilerin öz değerlendirmeye dayalı anketlerle toplanması, katılımcı yanıtlarının subjektif olmasına yol açabilir ve sonuçların tam nesnellliğini sınırlandırabilir. Ayrıca, yalnızca yönetici pozisyonunda olmayan öğretmenlerden elde edilen veriler, bulguların genellenirliğini kısıtlayabilir ve farklı yönetim düzeylerinde farklı sonuçlar doğurabilir. Araştırmanın yalnızca eğitim sektörüyle sınırlı kalması, bulguların diğer sektörlerde genellenmesini zorlaştırmaktadır. Gelecekte, farklı sektörlerden daha geniş örneklem gruplarıyla çalışmalar yapılması önerilmektedir. Ayrıca sadece nicel yöntem kullanılması, derinlemesine analiz imkânını sınırlamaktadır. Bu nedenle, gelecek çalışmalarda karma yöntemin (nicel+nitel) kullanımı daha kapsamlı bilgi sağlayabilir.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the ever-changing and developing business world, human resources are undoubtedly the most valuable strategic asset and the most critical element among the production factors for organizations that want to gain a competitive advantage. What makes human resources so important and valuable is the fact that the knowledge, experience and behaviours of these resources cannot be imitated and copied by others in a short time (Saa-Perez & Garcia-Falcon, 2002, p. 125). In addition to this, the effective utilisation of other factors of production depends on human resources. Despite these positive characteristics, human resources are the most difficult factor of production to manage effectively. Because employees are not only rational but also emotional beings. For this reason, all kinds of positive or negative situations that occur within the organization firstly affect employees' emotions towards the organization and then their behaviours (Nur & Kaya, 2022, p. 110). For this reason, a well-designed human resources strategy will both increase individual competencies and improve the overall performance of the organization by supporting the continuous development of employees. The vision and role of the leader has a critical role in human resources strategies that support employee development. In particular, the transformation and changing expectations in the current business world have necessitated the evolution of leadership approaches and in this process, the humble leadership approach has come to the fore.

Humble leadership was first recognised in the literature in a study by Owens and Hekman (2016). This concept refers to a leadership style where the leader objectively assesses both themselves and their subordinates, recognizing the strengths of their team members. These leaders typically refrain from actions like arrogance, boasting, or demeaning others. It is stated that as their status and knowledge increases, the quality of their behaviours towards their followers also increases (Kerse et al., 2020, p.1770). When the related literature is analysed, it is seen that conceptual explanations are in line with empirical findings. In the limited number of studies conducted in the national literature, it has been found that humble leadership positively affects vocal behaviour (Kerse et al., 2020) and personal initiative (Gül & Timuroğlu, 2023) and negatively affects turnover intention (Özer et al., 2021). In addition, there are also studies in the international literature showing that humble leadership increases employee voice (Bharanitharan et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019; Ma et al., 2020) and organizational identification (Dutton et al., 2010; Qu et al., 2013; Li et al., 2016). In light of this information, it is predicted that humble leadership will have positive effects on organizational identification and employee voice.

The importance and necessity of the study can be evaluated in two dimensions. Firstly, it is thought that this study on humble leadership will contribute to the field with this research on the concept since it has not been sufficiently analysed in the national literature. The elimination of this deficiency in the literature will provide a new perspective to leadership theories and will play a role in the expansion of the theoretical framework especially on organizational behaviour and leadership dynamics. It is anticipated that this study will enrich the literature by outlining key aspects of humble leadership and its associated factors.

Another factor that reveals the importance of the study is the quality of the selected sample. In the limited number of studies conducted in the national literature, public employees and academicians (Kerse et al., 2020), health sector employees (Özer et al., 2021), and aviation sector employees (Gül & Timuroğlu, 2023) were generally preferred as samples. In this study, teachers, who are the dynamo of the education sector, were preferred as the sample. Undoubtedly, teachers have an important role in shaping society and the future. Success in education depends on a leader who is open to innovations and constantly updates himself/herself and the teachers who travel with this leader. It is predicted that humble leaders will create an environment of open communication and trust within the school and enable teachers to express their criticism and creative ideas freely. In this way, teachers can contribute to the formation of an innovative and solution-oriented organizational culture within the school by expressing their thoughts freely and vocally. At the same time, the leader's sincere and supportive management model may strengthen teachers' sense of belonging to the organization by making them feel more valuable. When all these factors are considered together, this process may contribute to the increase of teachers' organizational identification levels by establishing a stronger bond with organizational goals and values.

Aligned with the theoretical framework, the primary objective of this study is to identify whether organizational identification plays a mediating role in the impact of humble leadership—a relatively recent concept in the national literature on teachers' voice. For this purpose firstly, a detailed literature review on the related concepts was conducted and then hypotheses were developed within the framework of social change theory and social identity theory. In the methodology section the purpose of the study, the research model and the scales used are discussed

comprehensively. Then, the findings were analysed and the study was completed with conclusions and recommendations.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this part of the study, the following topics will be examined to gain a deeper insight into the research problem: 'humble leadership', 'employee voice', 'organizational identification', 'the link between humble leadership and employee voice', 'the connection between humble leadership and organizational identification', 'the relationship between organizational identification and employee voice', and finally, 'organizational identification as a mediating variable'. It is posited that an examination of these issues will facilitate a deeper understanding of the impact of humble leadership on employees' organizational identification and their capacity to articulate their voices, thereby allowing for the formulation of recommendations aimed at enhancing organizational dynamics.

2.1. Humble Leadership (HL)

Changes in the business world and social structure, technological advances, and digital transformation process have reduced the effectiveness of traditional leadership approaches over time. These changes have led to the revision of leadership understanding and practices and their adaptation according to the necessities of the age. This process has led to the emergence and development of new leadership approaches. One of these leadership approaches is HL. The HL approach is a leadership paradigm that has recently gained increasing popularity and has become an important subject of study for academic research (Owens et al., 2013, p. 1518). In this context, HL stands out with its ability to respond effectively to the changing dynamics of organizations and attracts significant attention in terms of its potential to increase employee motivation.

The novelty of the concept in the literature has prompted researchers to create various definitions, each highlighting different characteristics. When these definitions are evaluated as a whole, HL is defined as a leadership style characterised by a leader's realistic evaluation of both himself and his employees from an objective point of view, accepting and appreciating the strengths and contributions of his employees (Owens et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2018) and taking their thoughts and suggestions (Owens et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2019). As can be seen from the definition stated here, humble leaders do not adopt the '*I know everything best*' approach. Instead, they value the opinions of their followers, get ideas from them when necessary, and encourage their strengths (Baş, 2022, p.1896). From this point of view, it would not be a correct approach to evaluate HL only from the perspective of a leadership style. Because HL is also a philosophy of life. This philosophy requires rejecting self-centredness and believing in the power of collective mind and cooperation. Thus, humble leaders can create stronger and more successful teams. Owens and Hekman's (2016, p.1091) research clearly demonstrates this. In the study, it was observed that collaborative and other-oriented interactions were more common in the teams of humble leaders. This situation contributed to a better understanding of the value of collective effort, while personal interests remained in the background.

In line with all these explanations, it can be said that HL reflects an approach in which the leader is aware of his/her personal strengths and weaknesses and does not hesitate to improve himself/herself by avoiding arrogant attitudes (Alimoğlu Özkan et al., 2022, p. 1181). Moreover, considering HL not only as a leadership style but also as a philosophy of life can make important contributions to the organizational behavior literature. These leaders have the potential to increase levels of cooperation and commitment by valuing individuals' opinions and offering strong member support. This process can create a collective work environment by strengthening the trust relationship. Long-term moderate management can have a positive impact on organizational development, becoming a critical element for sustainable success. Therefore, the study of humble managers offers important opportunities from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

2.2. Employee Voice (EV)

In the organizational behaviour literature, EV is defined as the active expression of employees' thoughts and feelings about workplace situations (Dyne et al., 2003; Morrison, 2011). Therefore, the concept is considered not only as a perception or attitude but also as a concrete behaviour (Ng & Feldman, 2012). Vocalism, which is defined as employees expressing constructive ideas to improve or change the status quo (Takeuchi et al., 2012), is considered as a voluntary behaviour. Employees can choose whether or not to perform this behaviour according to their own preferences (Morrison, 2011). According to Kassing (2002), EV is defined as the behaviour of employees to openly communicate problems in the workplace. In addition, while this form of behaviour reveals

dissatisfaction with the current situation, it can be seen as an opportunity to improve working conditions. To expand on Kassing's statement, EV is considered not only as a complaint mechanism but also as a tool to support organizational development. This perspective shows that employees are not only individuals doing their jobs but also part of the organization and have the potential to contribute to the success of the organization. When evaluated from this perspective, it is seen that EV is of great importance in strategy formation (Lewin & Sherer, 1993, p. 235), decision-making process (Armstrong, 2009, p. 937), quality and productivity (Wilkinson & Fay, 2011, p. 67), information sharing (Morrison, 2011, p. 399), innovative behaviours and effective problem-solving process (Bogosian & Rousseau, 2017, p. 389).

In the literature, EV is a concept that is usually expressed verbally, but it can also be realised through different communication tools such as e-mail, messaging or written documents (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). This statement shows that EV is not only limited to verbal communication but can be realised in a wider range of written communication channels.

EV, which is a very detailed concept, can emerge in three different ways according to the individual's perspective (positive/negative) towards the organization. Dyne et al. (2003, p. 1373) explained the forms of EV as follows:

Positive Social Voice: It is important for individuals to express their ideas, knowledge and opinions openly and to cooperate, while taking into account the general interests of the organization. This approach supports effective communication and interaction within the organization by increasing employee participation. In addition, individuals sharing their thoughts plays an important role in achieving the organization's goals.

Defensive Voice: It is the expression of one's thoughts and opinions for the purpose of self-protection. This type of expression usually occurs in situations where the person feels threatened and is an attempt to defend himself or respond to opposing views.

Accepting Voice: The verbal communication of work-related ideas, information, and opinions accompanied by a sense of yielding. This is expressed through a reluctance to speak up, stemming from the belief that change is unattainable.

In summary, EV represents a dual-edged phenomenon within organizations, offering both opportunities and risks. While a positive social voice enhances innovation and performance, it can also lead to passive employee attitudes towards change, diminishing productivity. Organizations that encourage EV foster a culture of openness and collaboration, enhancing job satisfaction and retention. However, it's essential to balance this encouragement with clear expectations to avoid complacency. Implementing effective feedback mechanisms and support systems is crucial for ensuring that EV positively influences organizational dynamics.

2.3. Organizational Identification (OI)

The basis of OI, which is a well-established concept in the organizational behaviour literature, is the social identity theory introduced to the literature by Tajfel and Turner (1979). Social identity theory argues that individuals are in the process of constructing a dynamic identity through social interactions and that basic psychological needs such as uncertainty avoidance, social approval and acceptance are determinant in this process (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). According to the assumptions of social identity theory, as individuals see themselves as part of a social group, this group becomes an integral part of their self. The same situation is also valid for organizations. When employees perceive the organization as a social group, the process of identification with the organization begins (Turner, 1982).

Based on this statement, OI is the psychological bond that an individual establishes with the organization as a social group to which he/she feels that he/she belongs. This bond becomes evident when the individual internalises the successes and failures of the organization and experiences them as if they were his/her own successes and failures. In other words, the individual sees himself/herself as a part of the organization and adopts the goals of the organization as his/her own goals (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 103; Riketta, 2005, p. 360; Ashforth et al., 2008). Hall et al. (1970) described this situation as a process in which the goals of the individual and the organization become more and more integrated and harmonised. Through this process, employees exhibit attitudes and behaviours that support their organizations and make efforts for the benefit of the organization without being subjected to any coercion and pressure (İşcan, 2006, p. 161; Turunç & Çelik, 2010; Turunç, 2011). In many studies conducted in the literature, it has been found that OI plays an important role in the emergence of desired organizational behaviours, increasing organizational performance and the effectiveness of human resources

management (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Feather & Rauter, 2004; Fuchs, 2012; Tokgöz & Seymen, 2013). Therefore, increasing the level of OI of individuals has the potential to both increase employee satisfaction and improve organizational efficiency. This dynamic is crucial for the attainment of competitive advantage in the long term. An increase in OI can yield substantial contributions to the realization of overarching organizational goals by enhancing individuals' job performance and commitment. In this context, the implementation of strategies that foster OI emerges as an indispensable prerequisite for achieving sustainable success.

3. DEVELOPING HYPOTHESES

3.1. The Relationship Between HL and EV Within the Framework of Social Change Theory

The link between HL and EV can be assessed through the framework of Social Exchange Theory. Social Exchange Theory suggests that interactions between individuals and groups are shaped by mutual benefits and expectations, and the basic principle of this theory is the 'norm of reciprocity'. According to this principle, when a person is given a positive behaviour, this person has an obligation to show an unspecified positive behaviour in return (Çetin & Şentürk, 2016). According to the Social Exchange Theory, it is assumed that employees with high quality leader-member interactions tend to be more effective (Walumbwa et al., 2011) and in this framework, it is emphasised that social exchange relationships will have positive results in business environments (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to the related theory, when employees receive support from their organizations, they tend to contribute more to organizational results in return for this support (Akgündüz et al., 2018, p. 106). Humble leaders' humble behaviours, appreciating employees and encouraging them to participate actively facilitate employees to express their ideas freely. This, in turn, contributes to employees feeling valued and participating more intensively in organizational processes. As a result, this cycle can support the development of an open and effective communication culture in the work environment. When the relevant literature is examined on the theoretical framework described here, it is seen that there are studies that HL increases EV (Bharanitharan et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019; Ma et al., 2020; Kerse et al., 2020). As a result, considering both the theoretical framework and previous research findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H1: HL has a significant effect on EV.

3.2. The Relationship Between HL and OI Within the Framework of Social Identity Theory

The link between HL and OI can be analyzed through the perspective of Social Identity Theory. Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals define themselves through the social groups they belong to and classify themselves in line with these groups (Turner, 1982, p. 30). This classification leads to the identification of individuals with the group they belong to and thus the formation of their social identity (Baykal, 2018, p. 165). In the opposite case, that is, if the position of the group to which the individual belongs in society is not attractive enough, this membership creates an unsatisfactory, negative social identity in the individual (Demirtaş, 2003, p.140). Here, one of the most important factors that play a role in determining the type of identity (positive/negative) is the leader's attitudes and behaviours. According to Li et al. (2016, p. 1147), the loyalty and commitment of humble leaders towards the organization creates a contagious effect on their followers and this situation encourages followers to identify more strongly with the organization to which they belong. Moreover, humble behaviours of leaders to their subordinates tend to be internalised and imitated by their followers. This process supports the development of authentic and trusting relationships among members of the organization. In this framework, HL can significantly contribute to the further consolidation of employees' social identities in the organizational context by enabling them to establish a stronger bond with their organizational identities.

In the national literature, no study has been found that addresses the relationship between HL and OI. However, the limited number of studies available in the international literature reveal that HL behaviors positively promote employees' OI levels (Dutton et al., 2010; Qu et al., 2013; Li et al., 2016). This situation indicates that more research should be conducted on the importance and effects of the concept of HL. Grounded in the theoretical framework and the results of prior research, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H2: HL has a significant effect on OI.

3.3. The Relationship Between OI and EV Within the Framework of Social Identity Theory

Investigating the connection between OI and EV through the lens of Social Identity Theory is crucial for a deeper understanding of the subject. This theory posits that when employees feel valued and appreciated by their organization, they cultivate a stronger allegiance to it. According to this perspective, employees who receive respect within the organization attain higher status (Tyler, 1999; Fuller et al., 2003, p. 789-790). As a result, individuals who strongly identify with the organization are likely to emerge. Numerous studies have demonstrated that employees who resonate with their teams and/or organizations experience greater happiness and are more inclined to engage in extra-role behaviors (Riketta & Van Dick, 2005). Mael & Ashforth (1992) and Van Knippenberg (2000) suggest that OI motivates employees to voice their opinions, prompting them to adopt the organization's goals and objectives as their own. In other words, when employees feel secure and satisfied in expressing themselves in the workplace where they spend most of their time, they are able to exceed their expected job performance and propose enhancements. For instance, they may confidently speak up to their superiors to address issues and provide feedback that benefits the organization (Yalçın & Fayganoglu, 2022, p. 335). Several studies conducted on various samples in the literature have also discovered that OI enhances EV (Ali Arain et al., 2016; Can Yalçın & Fayganoglu, 2022; Altıntaş, 2024). Therefore, taking into account both the theoretical framework and the findings from prior research, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H3: OI has a significant effect on EV.

3.4. OI as a Mediating Variable

Van Knippenberg (2000) asserts that OI fosters a strong sense of connection between employees and the organization, leading individuals to adopt the organization's perspectives and goals as their own (Van Dick et al., 2006, p. 285). In this regard, OI serves as a link between the organization and its employees, enhancing their commitment and causing them to view the organization's interests as aligned with their own. Research findings on this concept also reinforce this notion. Numerous studies have indicated that OI contributes to the promotion of positive organizational behaviors (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Feather & Rauter, 2004; Karabey & İşcan, 2007; Turunç & Çelik, 2010; Tokgöz & Seymen, 2013; Guo et al., 2020; Öztürk et al., 2024) while reducing negative organizational behaviors (Van Dick et al., 2004; Bedeian, 2007; Turunç, 2011; Serinkan & Tülü, 2021; Özkaya & Tayfun, 2023). In this context, when examined through the lens of the attitude-behavior process, the "we" philosophy promoted by HL encourages followers to engage more deeply with their work and perceive themselves as integral parts of the organization. This behavioral engagement may lead to the emergence of "expressing their thoughts to solve problems and contribute positively," which reflects EV. Indeed, research clearly demonstrates that HL has a positive impact on OI (Dutton et al., 2010; Qu et al., 2013; Li et al., 2016), and OI positively influences EV (Arain et al., 2018; Yalçın & Fayganoglu, 2022; Altıntaş, 2024). Therefore, based on the theoretical framework and previous research findings, this study predicts that OI will serve as a mediating variable in the relationship between HL and EV. In this context, the following hypothesis is proposed:

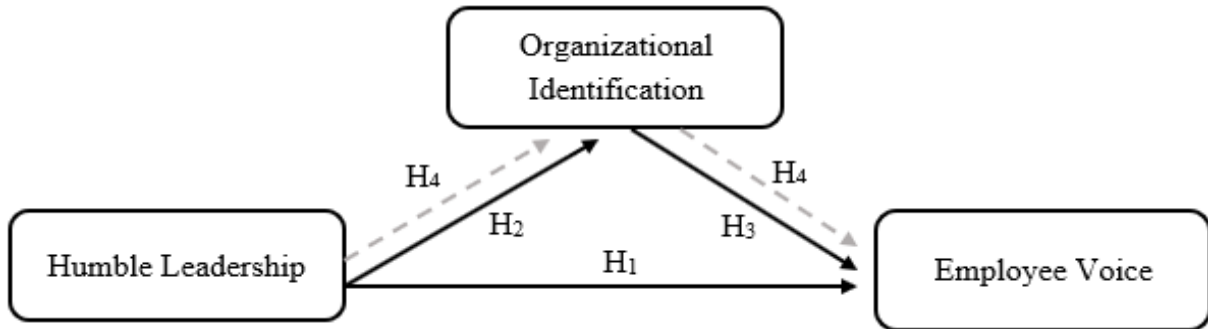
- H4: OI has a mediating role in the relationship between HL and EV.

4. METHOD

4.1. Research Model and Hypothesis

According to relevant literature, the HL significantly affects encouraging employees to voice their opinions and contribute positively to the organization. This type of leadership is also believed to have a crucial role in fostering employees' identification with their organizations. It is estimated that employees who have a strong identification with their organization can contribute to its improvement by expressing their thoughts and feelings more openly, helping to identifying and resolving the obstacles they face while carrying out their work-related procedures. So that, the research model designed according to the hypotheses is as follow:

Figure 1. Research Model



Before conducting the research, we obtained ethics approval permission from the “Harran University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board” at the meeting numbered 2023/152 on 19.10.2023. The research was conducted from May 1st to May 31st, 2023. The study involved 306 teachers from various high school branches in Urfa. Among the respondents, 43% were female, 57% were male, and 76% were married. Additionally, 48% of the respondents were between the ages of 34 and 40.

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

		The Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Age	21-30	75	24
	31-40	144	48
	41-50	77	25
	51 and above	10	3
Gender	Female	133	43
	Male	173	57
Marital status	Single	74	24
	Married	232	76
Tenure	0-5	65	21
	6-10	88	29
	11-15	68	22
	16-20	51	17
	21 and above	34	11
Total		306	100

4.2. Method and Study Tools

The research employed the snowball sampling method, which involves contacting one or more individuals related to the study's subject and creating a chain sample with their assistance. As a result, teachers in Urfa, where researchers had easier access, were chosen as the population. The data collection took place by distributing an online survey form to the teachers working in the province through the contacts made between May 1 and May 31, 2023.

The first section of the survey comprises questions aimed at gathering demographic information such as age, gender, and marital status. In the second part of the survey, we will use the following scales to statistically evaluate the discussed variables.

4.2.1. HL Scale

The HL scale, which consists of 9 items, was developed by Owens, Johnson, and Terence in 2013. The researchers found Cronbach's Alpha was 0.94 and reported that item factor loadings were between 0.74 and 0.88. In our study,

we used the Turkish adaptation of the scale by Kerse, Koçak, and Özdemir in 2020. Researchers tested the structural validity with explanatory and confirmatory factor analyses and found Cronbach's Alpha was 0.95.

4.2.2. OI Scale

The 4-item OI scale adapted into Turkish by Kırkbeşoğlu and Kalemci Tüzün (2009) that developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992), was used in this research. The scale's structural validity, along with Cronbach's Alpha was 0.71 as determined by Kırkbeşoğlu and Kalemci Tüzün (2009), has been established by various researchers through both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (Beğenirbaş et al., 2021; Erdem, 2020).

4.2.3. EV Scale

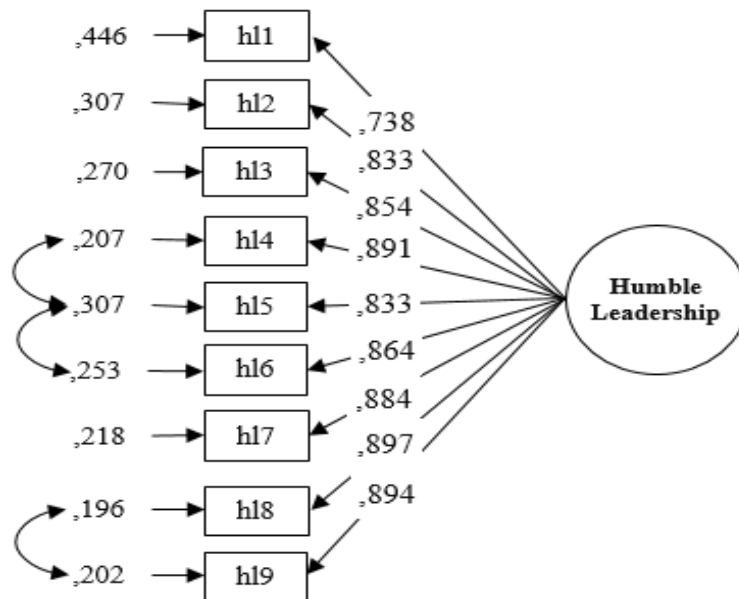
The 6-item EV scale developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998) and adapted into Turkish by Çetin and Çakmakçı (2012) was used in this research. While Van Dyne and LePine (1998) reported an internal consistency coefficient of 0.95, Çetin and Çakmakçı (2012) found it to be 0.87. Additionally, it was noted that the scale, whose structural validity was confirmed through factor analysis, demonstrated good fit values.

4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Scales

In this section, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted by MPlus7 for the scales. Firstly, the Kaiser-Meier-Olkin test and Bartlett's sphericity tests were performed to determine the suitability of the scales for CFA. The results of these tests showed that the scales used had appropriate values, and CFA were carried out for each scale (HL: KMO= 0.913, Bartlett= $p < 0.001$; OI: KMO= 0.688, Bartlett= $p < 0.001$; EV: KMO= 0.869, Bartlett= $p < 0.001$).

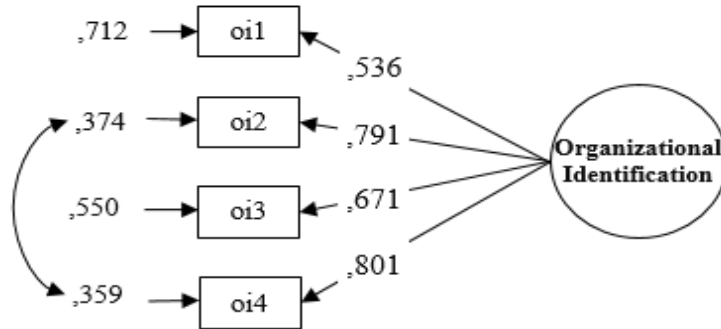
The results of the CFA for the HL scale, showed factor loadings ranging from 0.738 to 0.897. The fit indices indicated a good fit for the HL scale ($\chi^2/df = 2.54$; RMSEA= 0.071; CFI= 0.981; TLI= 0.970; SRMR= 0.019). In order to demonstrate the validity and reliability of the scale, we analyzed the AVE, CR, and Cronbach's Alpha values. The HL scale yielded AVE value of 0.73, CR value of 0.96, and Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.96, indicating strong reliability. These results exceed the minimum thresholds of 0.5 for AVE and 0.7 for CR, confirming the scale's validity and reliability.

Figure 2. CFA Path Diagram of HL Scale



Based on the CFA conducted on the scale of OI, the item factor loadings ranged from 0.516 to 0.801. The fit indices for the scale indicated a good fit with " $\chi^2/df = 1.208$; RMSEA= 0.026; CFI= 0.999; TLI= 0.996; and SRMR= 0.011". The calculations demonstrate that the OI scale has an AVE of 0.50, CR of 0.73, and Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.74, meeting the criteria for validity and reliability.

Figure 3. CFA Path Diagram of OI Scale



After conducting a CFA for the scale of EV, it was found that the item factor loadings ranged from 0.705 to 0.847, indicating a good fit ($\chi^2/df= 2.551$; RMSEA= 0.071, CFI= 0.980, TLI= 0.957 and SRMR= 0.021). However, it was determined that the AVE value of the EV scale was 0.60, the CR value was 0.89, and Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.90.

Figure 4. CFA Path Diagram of EV Scale

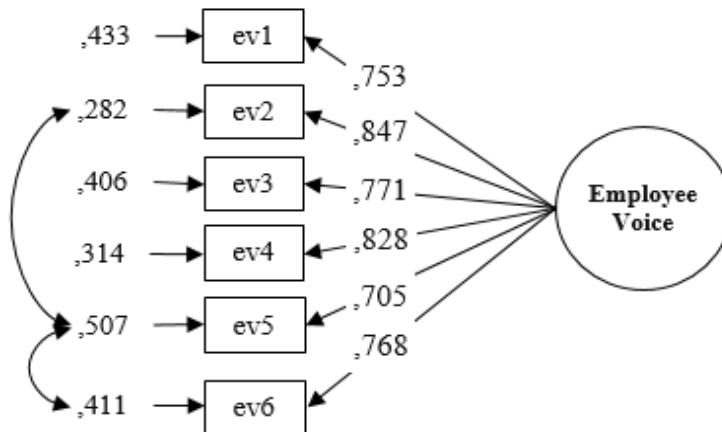


Table 2. CFA Fit Indices of Scales, Results of Validity and Reliability

Scales	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR	AVE	CR	α
HL	2,54	0,071	0,981	0,970	0,019	0,73	0,96	0,96
OI	1,20	0,026	0,999	0,996	0,011	0,50	0,73	0,74
EV	2,55	0,071	0,980	0,957	0,021	0,60	0,89	0,90

4.4. Testing Hypotheses

4.4.1 Model Hypotheses and Structural Paths

Two-factor simple structural equation models (H_1 , H_2 , and H_3) were tested using the MPlus7 package program. Table 3. shows the “goodness of fit values” for the models and the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables in the structural regression analysis.

Table 3. Model Hypotheses and Structural Paths

Model 1	HL		EV	
B	S.H.	t	p	R ²
0,349	0,054	6,490	0,000	0,121

x2/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
3,010	0,081	0,964	0,952	0,058
Model 2	<i>HL</i>	—————▶	<i>OI</i>	
B	S.H.	t	p	R²
0,276	0,058	4,736	0,000	0,076
x2/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
2,826	0,077	0,969	0,960	0,055
Model 3	<i>OI</i>	—————▶	<i>EV</i>	
B	S.H.	t	p	R²
0,553	0,051	10,812	0,000	0,305
x2/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
2,445	0,069	0,968	0,955	0,037

As per the findings presented in Table 3, Model 1 indicate that “*HL significantly and positively impacts EV*” ($B=0.349$; $p<0.001$). The fit indices for Model 1 are as follows: $x^2/df= 3.010$; $RMSEA= 0.081$; $CFI= 0.964$; $TLI = 0.952$, and $SRMR = 0.058$. The R^2 value of 0.121 suggests that HL can explain for 12% of the variation in EV, leading to the acceptance of H_1 .

The fit values for Model 2 are as follows: $x^2/df= 2.826$; $RMSEA= 0.077$; $CFI= 0.969$; $TLI = 0.960$, and $SRMR = 0.055$. These values suggest that the model developed to assess the impact of HL on OI is a good fit. Additionally, the findings indicate that “*HL has a significant and positive effect on OI*” ($B= 0.276$; $p<0.001$). The R^2 value is 0.07, indicating that 7% of the variance in OI can be attributed to HL. As a result, it can be concluded that HL accounts for 7% of the variance in OI, and H_2 was accepted.

Based on the analysis, it is evident that Model 3 exhibits acceptable fit values ($\chi^2/df= 2.445$; $RMSEA= 0.069$; $CFI= 0.968$, $TLI= 0.955$, and $SRMR= 0.037$). Moreover, the results indicate that OI significantly and positively influences EV ($B= 0.450$; $p<0.001$). The R^2 value of 0.305 suggests that approximately 30% of the variation in EV can be explained for by HL. Consequently, H_3 was also confirmed.

4.4.2. Mediated Structural Equation Model

A mediated structural model was created to test H_4 in alignment with the research's objectives. The analysis utilized the Bootstrap method ($n= 5000$), which involves repeated sampling from observed data to estimate the significance of indirect effects (95% confidence interval). The SEM analysis indicates that the model, incorporating the variables of HL, OI, and EV, exhibits favorable fit values ($\chi^2/df= 2.830$; $RMSEA= .91$; $CFI= .947$; $TLI= .936$; $SRMR= .063$) in line with the specified index values (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2015; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). This indicates that the model is in line with the expected standards.

Table 4. Mediated Structural Equation Model Goodness of Fit Values

Reference Indexes	Acceptable Indexes	Values of Structural Model
x^2/df	$2 \leq x^2/df \leq 5$	2,830
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0,077
CFI	≥ 0.90	0,947
TLI	≥ 0.90	0,936
SRMR	≤ 0.08	0,063

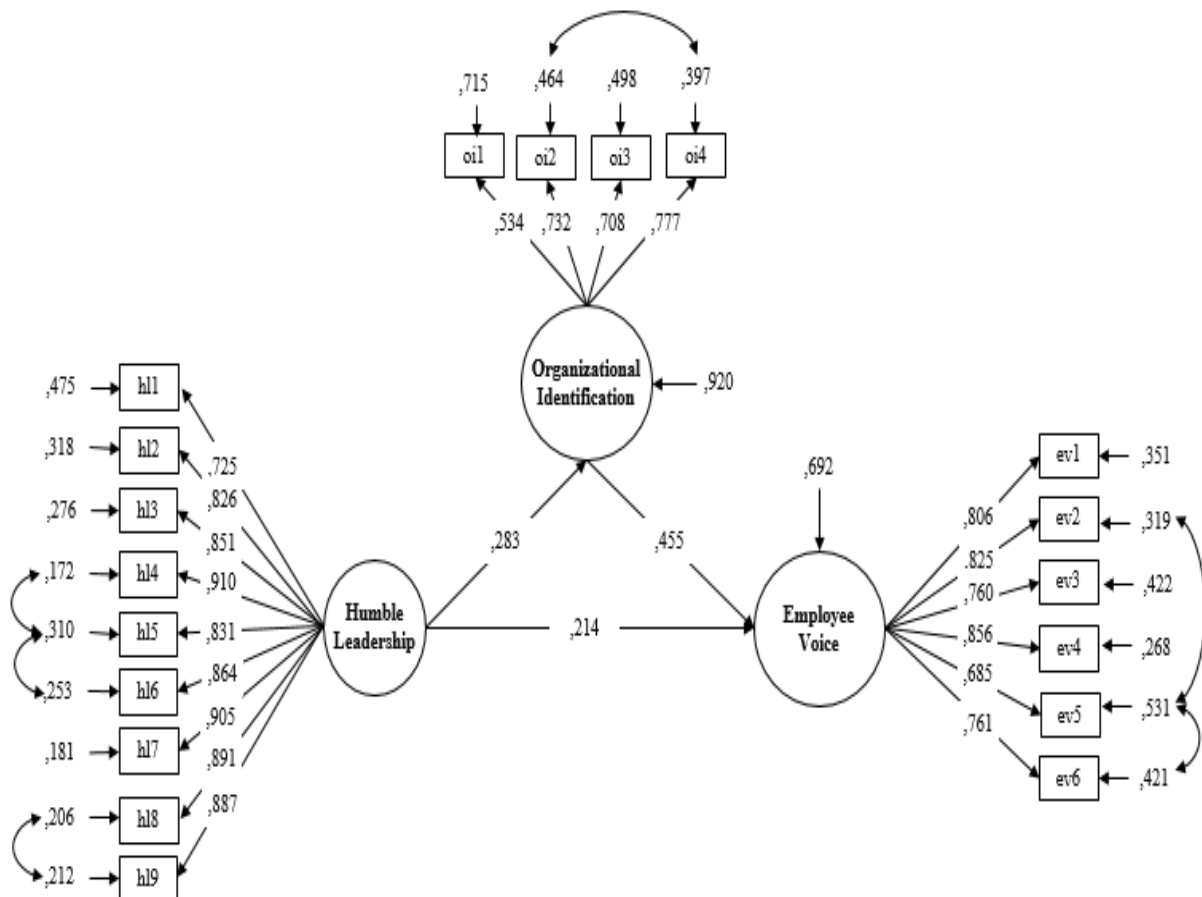
With the analysis, we attempted to determine the direct, indirect, and total effects of HL on EV through OI.

Table 5. Direct, Indirect (Through OI) and Total Impact of HL on EV

Total Effect	HL	→				EV (direct effect + indirect effect)
B	S.H.	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
,343	0,065	5,309	0,000	0,177	0,510	
Direct Effect	HL	→				EV
B	S.H.	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
,214	0,067	3,172	0,002	0,040	0,388	
Indirect Effect	HL	→				OI → EV
B	S.H.	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
,129	0,038	3,384	0,001	0,010	0,227	

Please make a note of the following information:

The data in Table 5 provides insights into the direct, indirect, and total impact of “HL” on “EV” and “OI”. It is evident that the direct impact of HL on EV is significant and positive ($p < 0.002$; $B = 0.214$; $S.H. = 0.067$ / Bootstrap; $LLCI = 0.040$; $ULCI = 0.388$). Additionally, the indirect impact of HL on EV through OI is also significant ($p < 0.001$; $B = 0.129$; $S.H. = 0.067$ / Bootstrap; $LLCI = 0.010$ and $ULCI = 0.227$). This suggests that OI plays a partially mediating role between HL and EV, thus supporting H4. The total effect is the sum of the direct and indirect effects, resulting in a total effect of 0.343 for HL on EV ($LLCI = 0.324$; $ULCI = 0.549$ within a 95% confidence interval). The path diagram in Figure 5 illustrates the mediating role of OI in the impact of HL on EV in the mediated structural equation analysis.

Figure 5. Path Diagram of Mediated Structural Equation Model

5. CONCLUSION

In today's dynamic business environment, research on the effects of leadership styles within organizations is of great importance in understanding the factors that have a crucial role in the success of organizations. Leadership directly influences "employee motivation", "commitment", and "overall job satisfaction". This study focuses on the impact of HL, which involves a supportive approach and values employee contributions, on employees' relationships with the organization, specifically in terms of "identification" and "EV." The research, conducted with the voluntary participation of teachers in Urfa, shows that HL significantly affects OI ($B = 0.349$; $R^2 = 0.121$; $p < 0.001$) and EV ($B = 0.276$; $R^2 = 0.07$; $p < 0.001$). Additionally, OI significantly influences EV ($B = 0.450$; $R^2 = 0.305$; $p < 0.001$). As a result, H_1 , H_2 , and H_3 are accepted.

The results align with those of previous similar studies. For instance, Li et al. (2018) concluded that HL significantly influences EV behaviors in a study involving 325 participants in China. The researchers highlighted that humble leaders' open-mindedness, low self-orientation, and willingness to acknowledge their own weaknesses and limitations contribute to building trust between subordinates and superiors. This, in turn, enables employees to express their thoughts and opinions freely to both their managers and colleagues, without the fear of facing ridicule or negative consequences as a result. Similar results were also observed in the studies by Liu (2016), Kerse et al. (2023), and Siachou et al. (2024). In addition, only a few recent studies examine the relationship between "HL" and "OI". Zheng et al. (2023) conducted a two-stage research on different groups and concluded that HL significantly impacts OI. They also found that OI enhances the influence of HL on employees' performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. Additionally, Carnevale et al. (2019) found that HL enhances OI. Besides, various studies have shown that OI positively influences employee attitudes and behaviors (Riketta, 2005; Lee, et al., 2015). One of these positive behaviors is EV. However, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive studies that thoroughly analyze the relationship between the two variables. In empirical studies on OI, researchers often focus on in-role and extra-role behaviors such as performance and organizational citizenship behavior as outcomes (Ruan & Chen, 2021). Since EV is categorized among extra-role behaviors, the number of studies between OI and EV is estimated to be low. In one of the few studies by Arain et al. (2018), they found that OI significantly affects and increases EV. Here, the importance of social identity formation in employees' extra behaviors that contribute to the organization was emphasized.

In quantitative studies related to OI, it is generally possible to say that the variable is included as a mediating or moderating variable in research models (Chen et al. 2018; Qiuyun et al. 2020). refers to their feeling psychologically connected to their organization, showing loyalty, and strongly experiencing the organization's successes and failures (Pratt, 1998). According to the Social Identity Theory, OI means that "employees accept the organization's identity as part of their own and attribute some of the organization's successes and failures to themselves". Employees who feel a strong connection to the organization are more likely to demonstrate behaviors that benefit the organization, address problems, and strive for improvement to ensure its success (and by extension, their own success) and maintain its reputation. OI significantly influences the various behaviors of employees and can mediate and moderate the impact of different attitudes and behaviors on each other. Factors such as working conditions, job meaningfulness, organizational culture, person-organization fit, personality traits, individual needs, and leadership can all contribute to employees' identification with the organization (Weisman et al., 2023).

The HL approach has emerged as a significant managerial style in recent years. It plays a critical role in motivating employees to demonstrate positive behaviors that contribute to the organization's success by strengthening their sense of belonging and connection to it. Our research indicates that HL influences EV through OI, supporting our hypothesis (H_4). This finding is a key contribution of our research. Previous research has demonstrated how various leadership styles can influence employees' attitudes and behaviors by enhancing their identification with the organization (Humphrey, 2012; Vondey, 2010; Suifan et al., 2020). We believe that the results of our research will significantly contribute to the literature on HL, fostering strong bonds between employees and organizations, and how this, in turn, affects their behavior in the workplace.

When drawing managerial implications from statistical findings, it is important to consider modern "employee-oriented" leadership styles. These include transformative, ethical, and servant leadership, as well as specific characteristics of HL, such as maintaining a neutrality, being open to new ideas, and promoting cooperation. These qualities can lead to positive employee behaviors. Considering the general traits of Generation Z, who are new to the workforce and value interaction, are impatient, and are open about expressing their opinions and criticisms, it's believed that a humble approach taken by managers will help them adapt to the work environment and their

colleagues, and will impact their integration into the organization. Instead of using positional power to penalize employees, a manager's humble approach that values input in problem-solving will encourage employees to embrace the organization and express their thoughts constructively, ultimately leading to organizational learning. Additionally, regular meetings in the form of sessions or gatherings, where employees can comfortably express themselves, discuss, and resolve issues, will undoubtedly positively impact business processes.

Finally, it should be mentioned that this research has some limitations. One of the main limitations is that the data was collected through questionnaires based on individuals' self-assessments and only on the responses of teachers who were not in managerial positions. Additionally, the research was only conducted in the education sector, limiting the findings' generalizability. Furthermore, since the study focused only on HL, OI, and EV, it does not allow for more comprehensive and in-depth managerial inferences to be drawn from the results. Therefore, further research across various industries and diverse sample groups is essential to comprehensively grasp the influence of HL on employee attitudes and behaviors. Another important limitation is related to the method used in the study. In this study, the fact that the analyses were conducted only with the quantitative research method has created some limitations. Although the numerical data provided by the quantitative method is a powerful tool in terms of revealing certain relationships and patterns, it limits the opportunity to deeply understand the experiences, motivations and perceptions of the participants. This situation may cause the findings of the study not to fully reflect the context and perspectives of the participants. Therefore, the use of mixed methods in future studies will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the participants by combining the advantages of numerical data with the in-depth analysis opportunities of qualitative data. This approach can increase the richness of the research findings and contribute to the evaluation of the results in a more robust context.

DECLARATION OF THE AUTHORS

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