THE MODERATING ROLE OF MACHIAVELLIAN ORIENTATION IN THE REACTIONS TO ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Etik Liderliğin Üzerinde Makyavelist Yönelimin Düzenleyici Rolü

Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

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Abstract

The aim of this paper was to explore the moderating role of Machiavellian orientation in ethical leadership's relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study was conducted in a healthcare setting and data was collected from nurses through survey. According to the results, ethical leadership was positively related to job satisfaction, affective commitment and normative commitment. Moreover, Machiavellian orientation significantly moderated the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction.

Key words: ethical leadership, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, Machiavellian orientation

Özet

Çalışmanın amacı etik liderlik ile iş tatmini ve örgütsel bağlılık arasındaki ilişkinin üzerinde Makyavelist yönelimin düzenleyici rolünü ortaya koymaktır. Çalışma, bir hastanede gerçekleştirilmiştir ve veriler anket aracılığıyla hemşirelerden toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre etik liderlik, iş tatmini, duygusal bağlılık ve normatif bağlılık ile pozitif ilişkiye sahiptir. Buna ek olarak, iş tatmini ile etik liderlik arasındaki ilişki, Makyavelist yönelim tarafından düzenlenmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: etik liderlik, iş tatmini, örgütsel bağlılık, makyavelist yönelim

1.Introduction

The increase in number of ethical failures and scandals in the business world have recently taken attention of scholars. The story of Enron is one of the most well-known examples of ethical scandals. "The lack of ethical leadership at Enron has harmed thousands of employees, undermined the credibility of brokerage services, consumer confidence in the US stock market" as noted by Odom and Green (2003). Especially, the negative

consequences of Enron scandal have affected businesses in terms of implying ethical strategies. Therefore, ethical leadership as a concept has become more important for businessmen and scholars. In this study, ethical leadership's relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment was examined. The study was conducted in a healthcare setting since healthcare sector has a greater tendency to experience unethical behavior or moral dissolutions and the level of satisfaction and commitment of nurses directly impact vital service quality.

2.Theoretical Background

As theoretical background, since the study aims to find out the moderating role of Machiavellian orientation on ethical leadership, ethical leadership, machiavellism would be analyzed. In addition to these, ethical leadership's relation with job satisfaction and organizational commitment would also be analyzed as they are being the other variables of the study.

2.1 Ethical Leadership

People have started to question more ethical concepts and ethical leadership, due to ethical scandals and failures which have taken place in business world. Since then, there is an increment in the number of studies involving ethics and leadership. Most of the time, the meaning of good leadership is being questioned by many scholars emphasizing that being competent is not solely an adequate qualification in order to be a good leader; a leader should be ethical in everyday conduct (Ciulla, 1995). Therefore, ethical dimension of leadership is highlighted and a construct called "ethical leadership" has been developed (Brown et al., 2005; Treviño et al., 2003; Treviño et al., 2000). According to Brown et al. (2005), ethical leadership can

be defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate (e.g., honest, trustworthy, fair, and caring) conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement through providing ethical standards, rewarding ethical conduct, and discipline the wrongdoers, and decision-making by understanding the importance of their decisions and making fair decisions" (Brown et al., 2005) while Ciulla (2004) specifies ethical leadership as how ethical leaders "ought" to behave.

If a leader is perceived as honest, trustworthy, fair and just in decision making and ethical in his/her own personal life, then it would be appropriate to perceive him/her as an ethical leader according to Treviño et al. (2000; 2003). For the leader to be perceived as a moral manager, s/he should also perform positive efforts to influence followers' ethical and unethical behavior and making ethics an explicit part of his/her agenda. This is considered as another crucial characteristic of ethical leadership (Brown & Trevino, 2006).

Ethical leaders are the ones having positive impact on employees' behavior and ethical conduct by supporting fair and just behavior in the work. They set up as ethical or moral role models for the employees in the organization by underlining the importance of ethical values both in their personal and professional life (Brown et al., 2005; Mayer et al., 2009). Leaders' ethical actions is considered as the vital role in guiding every member of the organization to behave ethically (Brown et al., 2005). Managers and leaders' ethical actions and guidance shape and build organization's ethical standards.

The expectation is that the managers and leaders performing ethical and moral behavior for organizational members by setting a good example for the employees (Aronson, 2001). Ethical leaders should build appropriate conditions and organizational culture since they have responsibility for enhancing the development of ethical behavior. In addition to these, it is expected from ethical leaders to display fair treatment to their employees which will be held in an unbiased way. The leaders, who treat their followers or employees fairly (Meyer and Allen, 1990), have high concern for them (Bycio et al., 1995; DeCottis & Summers, 1987) and include them in the decision-making process (Jermier & Berkes, 1979; Rhodes & Steers, 1981) which will higher employees' organizational commitment. In line with these, ethical leaders are expected to treat employees more fairly and consider their needs more leading to higher organizational commitment and job satisfaction of employees. As long as the followers perceive that they are being treated fairly, their job satisfaction and commitment will be higher (Dailey & Kirk, 1992; Koh& Boo, 2001). Therefore, it is crucial to consider the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction and organizational commitment and review the researches about their relationship in the literature to determine the hypotheses of the study.

2.2 Ethical leadership and Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is all the feelings that an individual has about his/her job in the traditional sense, or it is a function of satisfaction with the various elements of the job (Lu et al., 2005; Spector, 1997). The past research conducted regarding job satisfaction intuitively expects a positive relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. However, there

are some contradictory findings about this relationship (Iaffaldano and Muchinsky,1985; Judge et al.,2001;Iaffaldano and Muchinsky, 1985; Rain et al., 1991; Steers & Rhodes, 1978; Hom et al., 1992; Meyer et al., 2004; Organ, 1988). However, in a more recent study, Judge et al. (2001) present more positive findings regarding job satisfaction-job performance relationship. In this study, they distinguished between past studies based on how they defined the two concepts and the relationship between them and they found out that the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance is higher than what is presented by Iaffaldano and Muchinsky (1985).Although there have been such contradictory findings for the job satisfaction-job performance relationship, the assumption that high job satisfaction positively affects organizational effectiveness and employee's well-being is widely accepted because of studies linking job satisfaction with life satisfaction (Rain et al., 1991) absenteeism (Steers & Rhodes, 1978), intention to leave (Hom et al., 1992), organizational commitment (Meyer et al., 2004) and organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988).

Piccolo and colleagues (2010) have investigated the impact of ethical leadership on the work environment and employees. By fostering employees' autonomy and feelings of significance at work, ethical leaders can be considered as positively affecting the work environment. They aim to make fair and balanced decisions even in the process of designing jobs (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leaders are the ones who are concerned for the well being of the employees. Therefore; they consider the job satisfaction of their employees.

As a result, it is expected that ethical leadership provides greater task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors among followers. Ethical leadership also increases performance by enhancing job characteristics such as task significance and job autonomy. This will lead to productive behaviors at work and an increase in job satisfaction of the followers as well. (Piccolo et al., 2010)

Ethical leaders are also defined as leaders who have high concern for their followers, include employees in decision making stage and make fair judgments about them which are determined as positive attributes of effective leadership in the literature. These positive attributes of ethical leadership leads to enhancement in job performance and job satisfaction (Bycio et al., 1995; DeCottis & Summers, 1987; Jermier & Berkes, 1979; Rhodes & Steers, 1981).Therefore, it expected that the level of job satisfaction of the employees to be higher when they work with ethical leaders as postulated in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Ethical leadership is positively related to job satisfaction.

Besides job satisfaction, ethical leadership's relationship with organizational commitment would be analyzed in the following part as part of the literature.

2.3 Ethical leadership and Organizational commitment

A familiar definition of organizational commitment is an individual's identification or attachment with the organization. If the individual feels highly involved in a specific organization then that individual is said to be highly committed to the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). Many scholars

who are expert in the fields of organizational behavior and industrial psychology have studied the concept of organizational commitment (Mathiue & Zajac, 1990). It is crucial to comprehend the processes which are in relation with organizational commitment since it has major implications for the employees and the organization (Conger, 1999; Koberg et al., 1999; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1982; Potterfield, 1999; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Spreitzer et al., 1999).

Organizational commitment is known as a multi-dimensional construct which Meyer and Allen created a Three-Component Model of organizational commitment (1991, 1997; Meyer & Allen, 1990). According to this model; there are 3 dimensions of commitment which are listed as affective, normative and continuance commitment. Meyer and Allen, explained affective commitment as "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" whereas continuance commitment representing "the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization". Third component of commitment - normative commitment- symbolizes "a perceived obligation to remain in organization". Normative commitment is also identified as "obligation dimension". Penley and Gould (1988) expanded normative commitment dimension by labeling it as moral commitment defining "acceptance of and identification with organizational goals".

Organizational factors, personal factors and work experience are variables which have great impact on organizational commitment (Eby et al., 1999; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday et al., 1982). According to Mowday et al. (1982), effective leadership is one of the noteworthy organizational factors that could affect employee commitment.

Since ethical leaders are defined as the ones caring for their followers and consider their individual needs and rights, an emotional attachment between leader and employee will be formed. This emotional bond will be effective in increasing the employee's commitment. Especially, it will be expected ethical leadership to be positively related with affective commitment.

Ethical leaders encourage employees to take part in decision-making process and treat them fairly which will affect follower's decision when they plan to leave the organization. The good will of their leaders will make employees feel obliged to stay in the organization in terms of moral behavior. Therefore, it will be expected ethical leadership to be positively related with normative commitment.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

Hypothesis 2: Ethical leadership is positively related to affective commitment.

Hypothesis 3: Ethical leadership is positively related to normative commitment.

Machiavellianism would be analyzed in the next part since its moderating role is examined as part of the study.

2.4 The moderating role of Machiavellian orientation in ethical leadership-job satisfaction and ethical leadership-organizational commitment relationship

Machiavellianism, derived from the statements in Niccolo Machiavelli's books, especially in his famous book The Prince, is a

personality trait which describes misleading behavior and the ability to manipulate others for personal gain and success (Machiavalli,1532). He worked as chief political advisor to the ruling Medici Family in Italy in 16th century. He believed that to maintain political control, one has to have effective tactics and manipulative strategies. His popular phrase reflects this clearly: "the end justifies the means" (Jones and Paulhus, 2009).

People high in Machiavellian orientation hold unflattering and cynical opinions of others, show emotional detachment, manipulate more, win more, are persuaded less and persuade more compared to people low in Machiavellian orientation (Christie & Geis, 1970).

Thus, people high in Machiavellian orientation are expected to show contempt for conventional morality and have tendency to employ unethical behavior in situations where their rational self-interest is involved. Accordingly, studies indicate that Machiavellians tend to regard organizational behaviors of an uncertain ethical nature as generally acceptable (Mudrack, 1993; Mudrack & Mason, 1995). Similarly, research shows that Machiavellianism is related with unethical decision-making (Beu et al., 2003) and counterproductive behaviors such as absenteeism (Aziz, 2004). Also, as Cooper and Peterson (1980) indicated that in low risk setting where competition was impersonal, people high in Machiavellian orientation are more likely to cheat. Under some conditions, Machiavellian individuals can sacrifice ethics to attain specific goals (Gable & Topol, 1991). Hence, people high in Machiavellian orientation are unlikely to place much value on ethical behavior if it stands in the way of personal rewards and would not

appreciate ethical leadership as much as people low in Machiavellian orientation.

Christie and Geis (1970) indicate that loosely structured situations allow Machiavellians to emerge and flourish. Since ethical leadership involves structures such as establishing ethical standards, rewarding ethical conduct and disciplining wrongdoers, it does not provide a very attractive environment for people high in Machiavellian orientation. Brown and Trevino (2006) proposed that ethical leadership would be negatively related to Machiavellianism since they lack trust in others and perform manipulative behavior whereas Den Hartog and Belschak's (2012) researches found out support for leader Machiavellianism as a moderator of the relationship between ethical leadership and work engagement. However, it was not a significant relationship between Machiavellianism and ethical leadership and risked that Machiavellian leaders may be able to mask their manipulative ways through impression management. It is possible that Machiavellians may 'act' ethical leader behaviors if they feel this benefits them. If acting ethical is a necessity for them to obtain a goal, then they may try to act ethically. Machiavellians give importance to strong impression management motive (Bolino and Turnley 2003; Becker and O'Hair 2007), they may act as an ethical leader, if they believe it is the best path to a good reputation and achieve their goals. Thus, they will differ in their reactions to ethical leadership compared to people low in Machiavellian orientation.

Given the above discussion, Machiavellianism should be considered as an individual level moderator in the relationship of ethical leadership with job satisfaction and organizational commitment since the reactions to ethical

leadership may differ for individuals with high Machiavellian orientation compared to individuals with low Machiavellian orientation. Thus, the following hypotheses have been formed:

Hypothesis 4: Machiavellian orientation moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5: Machiavellian orientation moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment.

Hypothesis 6: Machiavellian orientation moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and normative commitment.

Following the literature review, method of the study including participants, procedures and measures would be analyzed. Based on the literature review, the hypotheses of the study are also determined. Therefore, it would be meaningful to explain the methods that would be implemented in order to test hypotheses and to attain the results of the study in the upcoming part.

3.Method

3.1 Participants and Procedures

The data of this study were collected from nurses working in a public university that is located in the Aegean Region of Turkey. Nurses as being the backbone of health care organizations, high turnover rates and absenteeism of nurses are one of the crucial topics discussed in both developing and developed countries all around the world (Lu et al., 2005: 211).In order to find out the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction and commitment, a

survey was prepared and sent to the board of directors of the hospital for approval. After approval, the survey was distributed to nurses working in different departments of the hospital. Over a period of one month, a total of 152 nurses completed the questionnaire, resulting in an 38% response rate.

All respondents were female and 5% were under age 25 while 56% of them were between ages 25 and 34, 30 % were between ages 34-44 and 9% were over age 44. Among them, 6% were high school graduates,17 % were vocational school graduates, 67% were university graduates and 10% held Master's degrees. Their job tenure ranged from less than one year to 32 years, averaging 10.41 years (SD = 7.33).

3.2 Measures

Ethical leadership Scale. In this study, ethical leadership perceived by the respondent was measured by using Brown et al.'s (2005). scale consisting of 10 items that were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=totally disagree to 5=totally agree. Respondents determined their agreement with the items such as ''my supervisor disciplines employees who violate ethical standards.'' The Cronbach's alpha obtained for this measure in the present study was .94.

Machiavellian orientation. Machiavellian orientation of the respondent was measured by Mach IV scale (Christie & Geiss, 1970). since it was found to be reliable and widely used in many studies (O'Connor & Morrison, 2001). Mach-IV scale consisted of 20 statements that respondents indicated their level of agreement on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1=totally disagree to 5=

totally agree. A sample item included: "It is hard to get ahead without cutting corners here and there." Cronbach's alpha of the scale was α=.70.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction of the respondent was measured through the job satisfaction index developed by Brayfield and Rothe (1951) with 18 items that were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=totally disagree to 5=totally agree. A sample item included: "Most days I am enthusiastic about my work." The internal consistency of the scale was α=.88.

Organizational commitment scale. Organizational commitment of the respondent was measured with the scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=totally disagree to 5=totally agree. The two dimensions captured by the scale and which were of interest, namely affective and normative commitment have Cronbach's alpha of .76 and .68 respectively, in the present study.

Control variable. Job tenure of the respondent was included as a control variable.

The results of the study would be given in the following part.

4.Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations for key variables are presented in Table 1, with higher scores indicating higher levels of ethical leadership, job satisfaction, affective commitment, normative commitment and Machiavellian orientation.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables

Key Variables	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.Tenure	135	10.41	7.33					
2.Ethical Leadership	142	3.36	.82	.093				
3.Machiavellian Orientation	122	2.53	.38	-.088	-.273**			
4.Job Satisfaction	127	3.31	.57	.260**	.357**	-.267**		
5.Affective Commitment	143	2.93	.74	.242**	.489**	-.227*	.549**	
6.Normative Commitment	142	2.73	.61	.208*	.503**	-.048	.477**	.646**

* p< .05

** p< .01

Steps and Variables	Affective Commitment			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	Beta	t	Beta	T
1. Tenure	.24**	2.74**	.20*	2.47*
2. Ethical Leadership			.45**	5.75**
F	(1, 121) 7.51**		(2, 120)21.25**	
ΔR^2	.06**		.20**	
Adjusted R^2	.05		.25	

* p< .05

** p< .01

Table 4: Hierarchical Regression Results for Hypothesis 3

Steps and Variables	Normative Commitment			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	Beta	t	Beta	T
1. Tenure	.19*	2.09*	.14*	1.81*
2. Ethical Leadership			.47**	5.95**

F	(1, 120) 4.36*		(2, 119)20.50**	
ΔR^2	.04*		.22**	
Adjusted R^2	.03		.24	

* p< .05

** p< .01

To test hypothesis 4 to 6, hierarchical regressions are run to test the interaction effect of Machiavellian orientation. According to the hierarchical regression results summarized in Table 5, the interaction term between ethical leadership and Machiavellian orientation explained a significant increase in variance in job satisfaction ($\Delta R2 = .07$, F(1, 99) = 9.4, p< .01). Thus, Machiavellian orientation is a significant moderator of the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction.

Table 5: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Job Satisfaction as the Dependent Variable (n=102)

Steps and Variables	Job Satisfaction					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Beta	t-value	Beta	t-value	Beta	t-value
1. Ethical Leadership	.37**	4.00**	.33**	3.50**	2.11**	3.59**

2. Machiavellian Orientation			-.19	-1.97	.84*	2.43*
3. Ethical Leadership * Machiavellian Orientation					-1.86**	-3.07**
Model F	(1, 101)15.95**		(2, 100) 10.15**		(3, 99) 10.47**	
Total Adj. R^2	.13		.15		.22	
ΔR^2	.14**		.03		.07**	

* p< .05

** p< .01

The moderating effect of Machiavellian orientation in the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction is demonstrated in Figure 1. At low levels of Machiavellian orientation, ethical leadership-job satisfaction relationship is stronger compared to higher levels of Machiavellian orientation.

Figure 1: Moderating Role of Machiavellian Orientation in the Ethical Leadership - Job Satisfaction Relationship
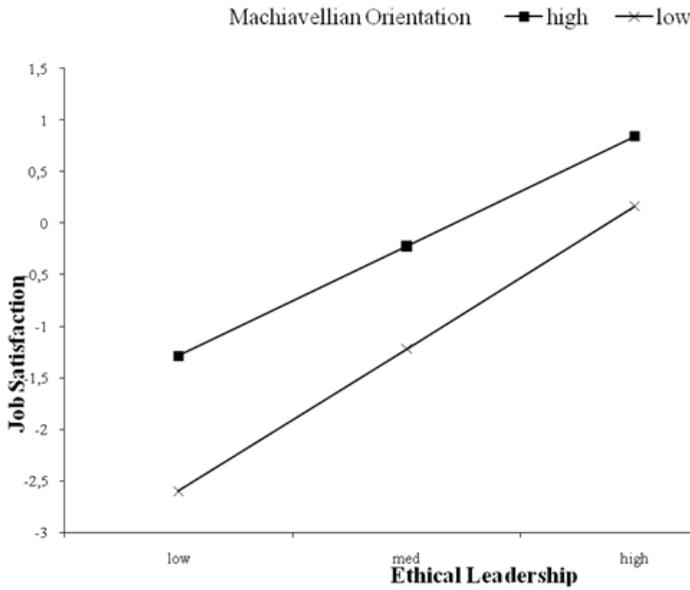
According to the hierarchical regression results run for testing the moderating effect of Machiavellian orientation on ethical leadership-organizational commitment relationship, the interaction term between ethical leadership and Machiavellian orientation did not explain a significant increase in variance in affective commitment ($\Delta R2 = .00$, F(1, 107) = .01, p > .05)or normative commitment ($\Delta R2 = .00$, F(1,106) = .24, p>.05).

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine ethical leadership's relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment as well as to explore the role of Machiavellian orientation in these relationships. Healthcare setting was selected for the study since ethical issues are more frequently faced and how they are resolved may have vital results for human life. Hence, exploring

these relationships for nurses and confirming that ethical leadership is positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment was an important motivation for this study. Followers high in Machiavellian orientation, characterized by manipulative and misleading behavior to serve self-interests, were not expected to give the same reactions as followers low in in Machiavellian orientation. Thus, Machiavellian orientation was evaluated as a moderator.

Our findings confirm that ethical leadership is positively related to job satisfaction, affective commitment and normative commitment. As also mentioned in the literature, scholars believe that ethical leaders enhance productive work behavior since they make fair treatment to their employees and consider well being of the workers. Thus, it is expected that ethical leaders would have a positive impact on job satisfaction of the workers (Bycio et al., 1995; DeCottis & Summers, 1987; Jermier & Berkes, 1979; Rhodes & Steers, 1981Brown & Treviño, 2006, Piccolo et al, 2010). The results of the study are in accordance with the researches that took place in the literature and hypotheses as well.

In addition to that, the results of study confirm that ethical leadership is also positively related with organizational commitment. It is stated in the literature review that an emotional attachment is formed between ethical leaders and their followers since ethical leaders care their followers and consider their well being of their employees. Additionally ethical leaders' fair treatment and let their employees participate in decision making enhances the attachment between followers and leaders and the organization (Eby et al., 1999; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday et al., 1982). It can be stated that the

results of the study are as expected and in accordance with the researches performed in literature.

Besides, the level of Machiavellian orientation moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction. Here, the relationship is stronger for nurses with low Machiavellian orientation. If we present it with another approach, although Machiavellian orientation seems like a characteristic which is in contrast with ethical leadership, it does not change the direction of the ethical leadership-job satisfaction relationship. Even for highly Machiavellian orientated nurses, as their perceptions of ethical leadership increases, their job satisfaction still increases. The moderating role of Machiavellian orientation in the ethical leadership-organizational commitment relationship was not supported.

The study contributes to literature by exploring the moderating role of Machiavellian orientation in reactions to ethical leadership. It also examines the impact of ethical leadership on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It can be a guide for businessmen, human resources specialists, managers and researchers who study or focus on ethical leadership. According to results of the study, managers and businessmen can give more importance to ethical issues and training in the organizations in order to enhance ethical leadership in the organization to have a more effective and efficient workplace.

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