



Ethical Leadership and Workplace Bullying in Higher Education

Yükseköğretimde Etik Liderlik ve İşyeri Zorbalığı

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying and the mediating roles of psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment on that relationship in higher education. The sample of this study is composed of 591 faculty members along with their deans from 9 private universities chosen by random method in İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Kayseri, Konya and Gaziantep in 2011-2012 spring semester. Faculty members' perceptions of psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment were measured using the scale developed by Kahn (1990) and psychological contract fulfillment scale developed by Robinson and Morrison (1995). Brown, Treviño, and Harrison's (2005) ethical leadership scale and Einarsen and Hoel's (2001) the Negative Act Questionnaire-Revised scale were used to assess faculty member's perception of the ethical leadership and workplace bullying respectively. The results revealed a significant negative relationship between ethical leadership and bullying and mediating roles of psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment on that relationship.

Keywords: ethical leadership, workplace bullying, psychological safety, psychological contract fulfillment.

ÖZ: Bu çalışma yükseköğretimde etik liderlik ve işyeri zorbalığı arasındaki ilişkiyi ve bu ilişkide psikolojik güvenlik ve psikolojik sözleşme tatmini kavramlarının aracılık rollerini araştırmaktır. Çalışma 2011-2012 bahar eğitim-öğretim döneminde İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Kayseri, Konya ve Gaziantep illerinde bulunan ve rastlantısal olarak seçilen 9 vakıf üniversitesindeki 591 öğretim üyesi ve dekanlarını kapsamaktadır. Öğretim üyelerinin psikolojik güvenlik ve psikolojik sözleşme tatmin düzeyleri sırasıyla Kahn (1990) tarafından geliştirilmiş "psikolojik güvenlik ölçeği" ile Robinson ve Morrison (1995) tarafından geliştirilmiş "psikolojik sözleşme tatmin ölçeği" ile değerlendirilmiştir. Brown, Treviño, ve Harrison'un (2005) "etik liderlik ölçeği" ile Einarsen ve Hoel'in (2001) "gözden geçirilmiş işyeri zorbalığı ölçeği" öğretim üyelerinin bağlı oldukları fakülte dekanlarının etik liderlik düzeyleri ve işyeri zorbalığı algılarını ölçmektedir. Sonuçlar etik liderlik ile işyeri zorbalığı arasında olumsuz ve önemli bir ilişki ve bu ilişkide psikolojik güvenlik ve psikolojik sözleşme tatmin kavramlarında aracılık rolleri bulunduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: etik liderlik, işyeri zorbalığı, psikolojik güvenlik, psikolojik sözleşme tatmini.

1. INTRODUCTION

In proposing the theory of ethical leadership, Brown et al. (2005) suggested that ethical leadership behavior plays an important role in promoting enhanced employee attitudes and behaviors. In support, prior work has linked ethical leadership to prosocial and negatively bullying behaviors (Walumbwa et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2005; Stouten et al., 2010). However, relatively few studies have tested how and why ethical leadership relates to bullying behavior. Important exceptions are recent researches by Mayer, Kuenzi, and Greenbaum (2011) and Wouters and Maesschalck (2011). Mayer et al. (2011) examined the role of ethical climate in the relationship between ethical leadership and bullying behaviors and found that ethical climate mediated the positive relationship between ethical leadership and bullying behaviors. In another study, Wouters and Maesschalck (2011) found that values congruence mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and bullying behaviors. Accordingly, the primary goal of the present research is to extend this early and more recent research as to examine the roles of psychological safety as a psychological climate process and psychological contract as a social exchange process in the ethical leadership–bullying relationship.

Based on psychological climate theory, psychological safety refers to an absence of fear regarding the potential punishment or reduced social esteem that may result from expressing

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one's opinion freely, reporting mistakes, seeking feedback or help, critically evaluating the performance of an individual or team and asking questions or generally seeking information (Edmondson, 2002). Furthermore, the psychological contract has been defined as "individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization" (Rousseau, 1995: 9). Together, we argue that the reason why ethical leadership predicts bullying behaviors is that ethical leadership behavior enhances psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment within an organization. In turn, higher levels of psychological safety and contract fulfillment result in lower workplace bullying.

Our contribution is to deepen understanding of the complex relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying by drawing on two major traditions in testing mediation in leadership research. We view psychological safety as representing a major theme in psychological climate perspective as mediator. Furthermore, psychological contract represents the social exchange perspective as a psychological state that mediates the ethical leadership effect on workplace bullying. Up so far, the ethical leadership literature focused solely on social learning and social exchange explanations for the effects of ethical leadership. Thus, this research contributes to the ethical leadership literature by integrating psychological climate theory and including psychological safety in its theoretical model. To our knowledge, we are aware of no prior research that has simultaneously tested these perspectives to explain the influence of ethical leadership on workplace bullying. Building on and extending on this very research area, we believe it is worthwhile to draw from the distinct advantages of each perspective to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms that link ethical leadership to workplace bullying.

1.1. Ethical leadership and workplace bullying

Leymann (1996), Cemaloglu (2007) and Apaydın (2012) argued that leadership plays an important role in allowing bullying to emerge in the work environment. Even though bullying research has focused extensively on leadership, the majority of research largely examined leadership behaviors that allowed for a climate of bullying (e.g. Hoel, Glaso, Hetland, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2010). Indeed, leaders have the power to influence followers to be vulnerable to being bullied by signaling what is (in) appropriate conduct (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Here, we argue that leaders who encourage a positive work environment, and more specifically, by communicating what is appropriate and ethical behavior, should be able to reduce bullying. Ethical leaders have a positive influence on employees' prosocial behavior and ethical conduct (Brown et al., 2005; Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009). Such ethical behavior has been shown to enhance moral reasoning (Singhapakdi, Vitell, & Franke, 1999) which, in turn, affects the extent that employees are a target of morally questionable work situations. Since workplace bullying is a morally questionable work situation, it is expected that ethical leadership negatively relates to bullying. Treviño, Brown, and Pincus-Hartman (2003) argued that in order to be perceived as an ethical leader, a leader needs to be characterized as a moral person –as being honest, trustworthy, fair, principled in decision making and ethical in one's personal life. A second important trait of ethical leadership is that he/she has to be perceived as a moral manager; a one who makes proactive efforts to influence followers' ethical and unethical behavior and values ethics an explicit part of his/her agenda. Thus, ethical leaders stress ethical values both in their personal and professional lives, encourage fair behavior in the workplace, and serve as role models for their followers in the organization (Brown et al., 2005; Mullane, 2009; Plinio, 2009; Yılmaz, 2006).

Brown et al. (2005: 130) argued that ethical leaders engage in "demonstrating integrity and high ethical standards, considerate and fair treatment of employees, and holding employees accountable for ethical conduct". These authors demonstrated that ethical leadership is related to leader honesty, supervisor effectiveness, interactional fairness, satisfaction with supervisor,

employee willingness to report problems, and job dedication. Mayer et al. (2009) also showed that ethical leadership could engender prosocial behavior in employees. Furthermore, Baillien, Neyens, De Witte, and De Cuyper (2009) suggested that aspects of the work environment may define a climate in which bullying is allowed or encouraged. In light of the research on ethical leadership, it is likely that ethical leaders discourage bullying given their emphasis on ethical conduct and through continuous discussions with subordinates on what is an appropriate behavior or not. Indeed, ethical leaders are role models for ethical behavior and, therefore, are less likely to tolerate bullying. Given that ethical leadership is able to enhance ethical behavior and the relevance of leadership in bullying in accordance with social learning theory, we expect a negative relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying.

Hypothesis 1: Ethical leadership is negatively related to bullying.

1.2. The mediating roles of psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment

Psychological safety describes a perception that ‘people are comfortable being themselves’ (Edmondson, 1999: 354) and ‘feel able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career’ (Kahn, 1990: 708). It can be regarded as a psychological climate, a property of individuals denoting their perception of the psychological impact that the work or study environment has on his or her personal wellbeing (James & James, 1989, 1981).

Edmondson (2004: 252) proposes that the existence of trusting relationships among team members can play a pivotal role in engendering feelings of psychological safety. She suggests that if the relationships between leader and employees are characterized by trust and mutual respect for each other, “individuals are more likely to believe that they will be given the benefit of the doubt – a defining characteristic of psychological safety”. Ethical leaders are more concerned with establishing trusting relationships with followers through solicitation of employees’ ideas without any form of self-censorship (Brown et al., 2005). They establish positive connections with followers, expressing concern and practicing two-way communication. They are seen as approachable, provide information about the values and principles behind important organizational decisions, solicit input, and practice effective listening skills (Treviño et al., 2003). These behaviors appear closely tied to the openness, concern, and follower trust that play key roles in promoting feelings of psychological safety (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004).

Perceived psychological safety reveals two important aspects of subjective experience within an organization: positive regard and mutuality (Carmeli, Brueller, & Dutton, 2009). When employees perceive a high level of psychological safety, they would have a sense of ‘deep contact’ (Quinn & Quinn, 2002) and experience a feeling of being known or respected by their leaders (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Employees who are known and respected in their work-setting act out of the knowledge that they are appreciated for what they represent. When employees and their leaders engage one another respectfully, they reflect an image that is positive and valued. They create a sense of social dignity, which confirms each other’s worth and sense of competence (Dutton, 2003). Thus, when employees perceive that they are safe to speak up and discuss problems without fearing interpersonal consequences, then they know they are appreciated and valued.

Being restrained from participating in, controlling one’s daily work life and a lack of respect for employees is a well-known hassle that creates frustration, with an increasing risk of aggressive outlets such as bullying behaviors (Lawrence & Robinson, 2007). Thus, we expect that employee perception of psychological safety reduces workplace bullying by creating a work environment in which employees are valued and respected by their leaders and feel safe to express their opinions freely, to report mistakes, or generally seek information without fear within an organization.

Based on the above arguments, we claim that psychological safety acts as an important mechanism through which ethical leadership influences workplace bullying. However, because there may be other processes separate from a social exchange process, such as social learning (e.g., Brown et al., 2005) and social identity, that may also mediate the effect of ethical leadership on workplace bullying, we propose partial rather than full mediation.

Hypothesis 2. Employee perceptions of psychological safety partially mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying.

Psychological contracts consist of the beliefs employees hold regarding the terms and conditions of the exchange agreement between themselves and their organizations (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994). Specifically, psychological contracts are comprised of the obligations that employees believe their organization owes them and the obligations the employees believe they owe their organization in return. Psychological contract breach arises when an employee perceives that his or her organization has failed to fulfill one or more of the obligations comprising the psychological contract (Robinson, 1996).

Research on the impact of psychological contract breach on employee attitudes and behaviors has generally been grounded in social exchange theory (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). Social exchange theory posits that the parties in an exchange relationship provide benefits to one another in the form of tangible benefits such as money or intangible benefits such as socio-emotional support (Blau, 1964). The exchange of these benefits is a result of the norm of reciprocity. According to the norm of reciprocity, individuals are obligated to return favors that have been provided by others in the course of interactions in order to strengthen interpersonal relationships. In addition, social exchange theory maintains that trust is an essential condition for the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Therefore, according to social exchange theory, individuals seek to enter and maintain fair and balanced exchange relationships. In organizations, employees seek a fair and balanced exchange relationship with their employers.

When psychological contract breach is perceived, an employee believes that there is a discrepancy between what he/she was promised and what was delivered by the organization (Rousseau, 1995). Discrepancies represent an imbalance in the social exchange relationship between the employee and employer. From an equity perspective, the employee is motivated to restore balance in the social exchange relationship by various means including negative workplace attitudes and behaviors. Consistent with the predictions of social exchange theory and equity theory, the line of research in the psychological contracts literature that has focused on the outcomes of psychological contract breach has found negative relations between psychological contract breach and a variety of workplace outcomes. For example, psychological contract breach has been found to be negatively related to job satisfaction (e.g. Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), organizational commitment (e.g. Robinson, 1996), intentions to quit (e.g. Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), trust (e.g. Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), in-role job performance (e.g. Robinson, 1996) and employee deviant behavior (Chiu & Peng, 2008).

Based on the social exchange theory of leadership and extant research linking psychological contract to workplace bullying, we expect psychological contract fulfillment to serve as a mediator through which ethical leadership influences bullying behaviors. However, because we have argued in Hypothesis 2 that the influence of ethical leadership on workplace bullying may also be explained through perception of psychological safety, we propose partial mediation rather than full mediation. Thus, we test the following:

Hypothesis 3. Employee's perception of psychological contract fulfillment partially mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying.

2. METHOD

2.1. Samples

The sample of this study included 591 faculty members along with their superiors (deans) from 9 private universities in Turkey. These universities were randomly selected from a list of 65 private universities in the country (The Council of Higher Education, 2012).

This study was completed in March - May 2012. A research team consisting of 4 research assistants visited 9 private universities in different regions of Turkey. In their first visit, they received approvals from the deans of economics and administrative sciences, fine arts, engineering and education. The research team of this study, then, gave information about the aim of this study to faculty members and were told that the study was designed to collect information on the workplace bullying and their relationship perceptions with superiors (deans) in the higher education workforce. They were given confidentially assurances and told that participation was voluntary. Faculty members, wishing to participate in this study, were requested to send their names and departments via e-mail to the research team members. In the second visit (2 weeks later), all respondents were invited to a meeting room in their departments. A randomly selected group of faculty members completed the psychological contract fulfillment, psychological safety, ethical leadership and workplace bullying scales (44 - 68 faculty members per university, totaling 615). Sixty-four per cent of the faculty members were male with an average age of 36.12 years. Moreover, faculty members' average tenure was 9.18 years. Missing data reduced the sample size to 591 out of 615 participants, with the overall response rate being 96 percent.

2.2. Measures

Ethical leadership. It was measured using Brown et al.'s (2005) ethical leadership scale (10 items). Using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree), respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with statements about their leader such as "my supervisor. . .defines success not just by the results but also by the way they are obtained" and "disciplines employees who violate ethical standards". Permission to use this instrument was requested from Brown et al. (2005) and granted. Turkish adaptation of the ethical leadership was carried out by Tuna, Bircan, and Yesiltas (2012). A factor analysis for the ethical leadership in this study was conducted. The principal components analysis method was used to extract a set of independent factors. The varimax rotation method was then applied to clarify the underlying factors. Factor analysis revealed that 10 items gathered under one factor and the total variance was 0.71. The Cronbach's α factor of items was 0.94 and the factor loads varied between 0.66 and 0.89 in this study.

Workplace bullying. It was measured using a Turkish adaptation of the Negative Act Questionnaire- Revised (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001). The NAQ-R consists of 22 items. Each item describes a typical bullying behavior that prevails in workplaces with no reference to the term bullying. Respondents are asked to indicate on 5-points Likert-type scales the frequency with which they have been the target of behaviors described in the items during the past six months. Response choices are "never", "now and then", "monthly", "weekly" and "daily". This version of the NAQ has been used in other studies (Glaso, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2009). Its reliability and validity have been demonstrated (e.g., Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009). Turkish adaptation of the NAQ-R was carried out by Aydın and Öcel (2009). A factor analysis for the workplace bullying in this study was conducted and revealed that 22 items gathered under one factor and the total variance was 0.73. The Cronbach's α factor of items was .88 and the factor loads varied between .61 and .91 in the study.

Psychological safety. It was measured by averaging 3 items based on Kahn's (1990) work. These items assessed whether the individuals felt comfortable to be themselves and express their

opinions at work or whether there was a threatening environment at work. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .78 in the study.

Psychological contract fulfillment. Two dimensions of psychological contract fulfillment were examined in this study. Specifically, we focused on the dimensions of pay and a supportive employment relationship. The items comprising these scales were taken from Robinson and Morrison (1995). While Robinson and Morrison identified 6 separate dimensions of the psychological contract, only those items assessing pay and a supportive employment relationship were used here. These dimensions were chosen both because of their salience to employees and because they anchor the ends of the transactional-relational continuum of psychological contract research as the previous studies (Rousseau, 1995; Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003) suggested. Particularly, Robinson and Morrison's (1995) scale included three items, which specifically assessed psychological contract fulfillment regarding pay (competitive pay, fair pay, and pay tied to one's performance). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .88 in the study. In addition, three items representing a supportive employment relationship were used (respectful treatment, fair treatment, and management support). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .89 in the study.

Control variables. We controlled for gender (0 = female, 1 = male) because it has been suggested to affect an individual's perceptions of others' ethics (Schminke, Ambrose, & Miles, 2003) and employee bullying behaviors (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001). In addition, tenure with the supervisor (in years) and age (in years) (Kohlberg, 1981) were controlled.

2.3. Data analysis

To determine if psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying in this study, we followed procedures for testing multiple mediation outlined by MacKinnon (2000). First, the independent variable (ethical leadership) should be related to the dependent variable (workplace bullying) and it is in this step that we test Hypothesis 1. Second, the independent variable (ethical leadership) should be significantly related to the mediator variables (psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment). Finally, the mediating variables (psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment) should be related to the dependent variable with the independent variable (ethical leadership) included in the equation. It is in this step that we test Hypotheses 2 and 3. If the first three conditions hold and the beta weights for the independent variable (ethical leadership) drops from step 2 to step 3 but remains significant, partial mediation is present. If the independent variable (ethical leadership) has an insignificant beta weight in the third step, and the mediator (psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment) remains significant, then full mediation is present.

3. FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations for the study variables. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses in this study. The mediating roles of psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment were analyzed by using procedures for testing multiple mediation outlined by MacKinnon (2000). As a straightforward extension of Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal step approach, this procedure involves estimating three separate regression equations. Since mediation requires the existence of a direct effect to be mediated, the first step in the analysis here involved regressing ethical leadership on workplace bullying and the control variables. The results presented in Table 2 (model 2) show that ethical leadership is significantly and negatively related to workplace bullying ($\beta = -.36, p < .001$), thus providing support for the direct effect of ethical leadership on bullying (Hypothesis 1).

As the mediation hypotheses in this study imply that ethical leadership is related to both psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment, the first part of the second step in the mediation analysis involved regressing psychological safety, psychological contract fulfillment and the control variables on ethical leadership. The results in Table 2 indicate that ethical leadership has a significant, positive relationships with psychological safety ($\beta = .32, p < .001$) and psychological contract fulfillment ($\beta = -.26, p < .01$), thus offering support for the main effects of ethical leadership on psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment.

In addition, in forwarding the mediation hypotheses, a positive relation between psychological safety or psychological contract fulfillment and workplace bullying was presumed. The second part of the second step of the mediation analysis, therefore, involved regressing workplace bullying on both psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment. Rather than performing a separate regression analysis for each affect-related variables, psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment, they were simultaneously entered in a single regression analysis to correct any multicollinearity among these variables. The results reported in Table 2 (model 3) confirm the two presumed relationships. The results indicate that both psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment have significant and positive relationships to workplace bullying ($\beta = -.30, p < .001$; $\beta = .34, p < .001$ respectively).

In the final step of the mediation analysis, workplace bullying was regressed on ethical leadership, psychological safety, psychological contract fulfillment and the control variables. As predicted, the results (model 4) indicate that the significant relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying becomes insignificant when psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment are entered into the equation ($\beta = -.12, n.s.$). At the same time, the effect of psychological safety ($\beta = -.28, p < .01$) and psychological contract fulfillment ($\beta = -.31, p < .001$) on workplace bullying remained significant. These results suggest that psychological safety and psychological contract fulfillment mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying, a pattern of results that support Hypotheses 2 and 3.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations^a

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Faculty member's age	33.12	1.18									
2. Faculty member's gender	0.64	.46	.03								
3. Faculty member's tenure (years)	9.18	2.08	.29*	.06							
4. Dean's age	48.06	1.12	.03	.04	.03						
5. Dean's gender	0.68	0.32	.06	.08	.08	.06					
6. Dean's tenure (years)	16.12	1.18	.07	.10	.07	.18*	.04				
7. Psychological safety	3.08	.82	.06	.03	.06	.11	.09	.09			
8. P.c. fulfillment	3.83	.91	-.10	.06	.09	.13	.11	-.10	.29**		
9. Ethical leadership	3.42	.71	.08	.10	.08	.09	.04	.07	.33***	.27**	
10. Workplace bullying	3.12	.73	.09	.06	.12	.07	.06	-.08	-.34***	-.38***	-.42***

^a $n = 591$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 2: Results of the Standardized Regression Analysis for the Mediated Effects of Ethical Leadership via Psychological Safety and Psychological Contract Fulfillment^a

Variables			Workplace bullying			
	Psychological safety	P.c. fulfillment	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Faculty member's age	.05	-.10	.06	.05	.03	.03
Faculty member's gender	.03	.06	.06	.04	.04	.02
Faculty member's tenure	.07	-.10	-.08	-.04	-.01	.00
Dean's age	.10	.09	.08	.07	.07	.03
Dean's gender	.03	.04	.07	.05	.03	.01
Dean's tenure (years)	.11	.13	-.06	-.06	-.03	-.02
Ethical Leadership	.32***	.26**		-.36***		-.12
Psychological safety					-.30***	-.28**
P.c. fulfillment					-.34***	-.31***
<i>R</i> ²	.28**	.34***	.21**	.23**	.26**	.30***
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²	.22**	.31***	.18**	.21**	.23**	.26**
<i>F</i>	8.12**	9.18***	1.89**	3.18**	4.28**	6.99***
ΔR^2	.09*	.08*	.08*	.02*	.02*	.01*

^a *n* = 591.* *p* < .05.** *p* < .01.*** *p* < .001.

4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to simultaneously test the role of psychological safety as a psychological climate process, and psychological contract fulfillment as a social exchange process on how ethical leadership influences workplace bullying. Our results showed that ethical leadership was positively related to psychological safety, and psychological contract fulfillment, which, in turn, were all negatively related to bullying.

Our findings extend research on ethical leadership and make several important contributions to the literature. The primary contribution is identifying psychological processes by which ethical leadership relates to workplace bullying. Brown et al. (2005) proposed that social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is primary mechanism by which ethical leaders influence their followers. Along this line, our study makes two important contributions. First, consistent with Brown and colleagues' theorizing, we found psychological contract fulfillment to be important intervening variable in the ethical leadership–bullying relationship. Thus, this study empirically tested the social perspective explaining the ethical leadership–workplace bullying relationship. However, since this variable only partially mediated the relationship, the second important contribution of the study comes. Our findings showed that psychological climate theory (James & Sells, 1981) is another important mechanism that, in combination with social exchange perspective, can help explain the complex ethical leadership–workplace bullying relationship. Thus, our study represents the first attempt to integrate social exchange, and psychological climate perspectives in explaining the relationship between ethical leadership and bullying behaviors.

We focused on the two mediators that we thought were most theoretically relevant, recognizing that there may be more mediating mechanisms than the ones examined in this research. We do not argue that all mechanisms are equal in strength; yet suggest that certain mechanisms may be more influential on certain individuals than others. For example, an individual with high-quality interpersonal relationships may perceive greater psychological safety from an ethical leadership as compared to an individual who has low-quality interpersonal relationships with a leader (Carmeli et al. 2009). Moreover, an individual who has worked at an organization for a long time and, thus, is committed to the organization's values may be more likely to respond to an ethical leader by feeling more psychological safety and contract fulfillment

as compared to an individual who has less of a value congruence with the organization. In addition, since ethical leadership research is still in its infancy (Mayer et al., 2009), further research is needed to elucidate the myriad of boundary conditions (e.g., moderators) that serve to either promote or impede the effectiveness of ethical leadership in facilitating employee performance through various mechanisms.

Furthermore, this research has theoretical implications that extend beyond the ethical leadership literature. For example, it contributes to the emerging area of research integrating leadership, psychological climate and social exchanges (Zohar, 2002). Indeed, we examined how a form of leadership central to these constructs affects psychological safety as well as psychological contract. In addition, although leadership scholars generally acknowledge that there are typically several mechanisms that link leader behavior to employee outcomes, leadership research tends either not to measure the theorized mediator or to measure one mediator per study (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Our research highlights the value in examining multiple mediators within the same study—as this approach allows one to determine the relative importance of each of the mediators.

This study has some limitations. First, because subordinates provided ratings of ethical leadership, workplace bullying, psychological safety and contract fulfillment, the hypothesized relationships between ethical leadership and the two mediating variables must be interpreted with caution due to same-source concerns. For example, it is possible that subordinates' evaluations of ethical leadership biased their ratings of perceptions of psychological safety and high-quality leader-subordinate relationship. Future research should strive to measure all predictors and workplace bullying ideally from different sources or utilize manipulations or objective outcomes.

Second, because our study is cross-sectional by design, we cannot infer causality. Indeed, it is possible that, for example, psychological safety could drive perceptions of ethical leadership as opposed to the causal order we predicted. Additionally, employing an experimental research design to address causality issues would be useful. For example, a lab study could aid in making causal claims for each of the specific mediators investigated in the present study.

Third, although we did examine two theoretically relevant mediators and test their effects simultaneously, other mechanisms could help explain the relationship between ethical leadership and employee bullying behaviors. For example, Stouten et al. (2010) found that both workload and working conditions mediated this relationship. Future research should provide a more exhaustive test of different mediators including task significance, the mediators we assessed, as well as other potential mediators such as supervisor support, dedication, and cohesion.

Finally, we did not control for other forms of related leadership theories. Future research could overcome this limitation by controlling for other styles of leadership that have been found to positively relate to ethical leadership such as transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994) or authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) to examine whether ethical leadership explains additional unique variance.

In summary, despite the importance of ethical leadership and ethical behavior in organizations, research investigating the potential mechanisms through which ethical leadership influences workplace bullying has been lacking. This study makes an important contribution by examining how and why ethical leadership is more effective in reducing employee bullying behaviors by highlighting the importance of psychological safety and followers' perception of psychological contract fulfillment. Thus, we provide a more complete picture on how to translate ethical leader behavior into follower action such as reduced workplace bullying. We hope the present findings will stimulate further investigations into the underlying mechanisms and the conditions under which ethical leadership relates to various individual and group outcomes.

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Geniş Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı psikolojik güvenlik ve psikolojik sözleşme tatmini kavramlarının etik liderlik ve işyeri zorbalığı arasındaki ilişkideki aracı rollerini araştırmaktır. Bu amaç için şu sorulara yanıtlar aranmıştır: 1. Fakültede Dekanın etik liderlik düzeyi ile işyeri zorbalığı arasında bir ilişki var mıdır? 2. Dekanın etik liderliği ile işyeri zorbalığı arasındaki ilişkide öğretim üyelerinin psikolojik güvenlik ve psikolojik sözleşme tatmin düzeylerinin aracılık rolleri bulunmakta mıdır?

Bu çalışmanın kavramlarından birisi olan etik liderlik Brown, Treviño, ve Harrison (2005) tarafından “kişisel faaliyetlerinde ve kişilerarası ilişkilerinde normatif olarak uygun faaliyetler sergileyen ve sergilemiş olduğu bu tarz faaliyetleri artırmayı hedefleyen, bunu yaparken de iki yönlü iletişim, güçlendirme ve etkin düşünme yöntemlerini kullanan liderlik tarzı” olarak tanımlanmıştır. Bu tanımlama liderin sadece etik rol modelliği üzerinde durmamakta, bununla birlikte liderin takipçilerine kendilerini rahatlıkla ifade etmelerine olanak sunan, bunu da yaparken örgüt içerisinde etik kuralların oluşmasını sağlayan kişi olarak ifade etmektedir. Çalışmanın diğer kavramı olan iş yeri zorbalığı ise Einarsen, Hoel, ve Notelears (2009) tarafından “yöneticilerin iş arkadaşlarının ya da astların saldırgan ve olumsuz davranışlarına sürekli olarak hedef olma durumu” olarak tanımlanmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın örneklemini 2011-2012 bahar döneminde İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Kayseri, Konya ve Gaziantep’te rassal metotla seçilen 9 vakıf üniversitesindeki 591 öğretim üyesi ve onların dekanları oluşturmaktadır.

Çalışma Mart-Mayıs 2012 tarihleri arasında tamamlanmıştır. Katılımcılara, çalışmanın yüksek eğitim işgücü içerisinde öğretim üyelerinin işyeri zorbalığı algıları ve dekanlarının etik liderlik düzeyleri konularında bilgi toplamak için tasarlandığı bildirilmiştir. Katılımın gönüllü olduğu ifade edilmiştir. Anketler hemen toplanılmıştır. Çalışmada toplam 630 öğretim üyesine psikolojik güvenlik, psikolojik sözleşme tatmini, etik liderlik ve işyeri zorbalığı anketleri verilmiş olup bunlardan 591 kişinin anketleri kullanabilecek durumda geri alınmıştır. Çalışmadaki öğretim üyelerinin %54’ü erkek olup yaş ortalaması 33.12 yıldır. Ayrıca dekanların %68’i erkek olup yaş ortalaması 48.06 yıldır. Anketlerin geri dönüş oranı %94’dir.

Bu çalışmada dört farklı anket kullanılmıştır. Öğretim üyelerinin psikolojik sözleşme tatmin düzeyleri Robinson ve Morrison (1995) tarafından geliştirilmiş bulunan ve 6 maddeden oluşan psikolojik sözleşme anketi kullanılarak ölçülmüştür. Ankette yer alan örnek maddeler “Yöneticim bana karşı adil ve tarafsız davranır.”, “Yöneticim bana saygılı davranır.”, “Yöneticim bana gereken sosyal desteği sağlar.” biçimindedir. Ankete verilen yanıtlar 1 (hiç) ile 5 (çok fazla) arasında değişmektedir. Anketin güvenilirlik katsayısı 0.89’dir. Öğretim üyelerinin psikolojik güvenlik düzeyini ölçmek için Kahn (1990) tarafından geliştirilmiş olan psikolojik güvenlik anketi kullanılmıştır. Anket 3 maddeden oluşmaktadır. Bu maddeler çalışanların iş ortamında kendilerini rahat hissedip hissetmediklerini ve fikirlerini yöneticiden gelen bir tehdit olmadan söyleyip söyleyemeyeceklerini değerlendirmektedir. Anketin güvenilirlik katsayısı 0.78’dir. Dekanın etik liderlik düzeyinin ölçümü için Brown ve diğerleri (2005) tarafından geliştirilmiş bulunan etik liderlik ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Ölçek 10 maddeden oluşmakta olup: “Yöneticim işyerindeki etik standartları

ihlal eden çalışanları cezalandırır.” örnek bir madde olarak verilebilir. Anket soruları 1 (kesinlikle katılmıyorum) ile 7 (tamamen katılıyorum) arasında bir ölçekte değerlendirilmiştir. Anketin güvenilirlik katsayısı 0.94’tür. Çalışmada kullanılan son anket Einarsen ve Hoel (2001) tarafından geliştirilmiş bulunan “Gözden geçirilmiş işyeri zorbalığı ölçeğidir.” Ölçek maddelerinde zorbalık kelimesi kullanılmaksızın ya da herhangi bir biçimde zorbalık ima edilmeksizin, “hakkınızda dedikodu yapılması”, “üstesinden gelebileceğinizden fazla iş yüklenmesi” ve benzeri gibi ısrarlı ve devamlı bir biçimde yapıldığı taktirde zorbalık olarak nitelendirilebilecek durumlar betimlenmektedir. Böylelikle katılımcıların ölçek maddelerinde tanımlanan davranışları zorbalık olarak etiketlemeden tepkide bulunmaları sağlanmaya çalışılmaktadır (Einarsen ve Hoel, 2001). Katılımcılar her maddede ifade edilen davranışa son altı ay içinde ne sıklıkta maruz kaldıklarını 5 basamaklı ölçekler üzerinde kendilerine uygun olan seçeneği işaretleyerek doldurmaktadırlar. Anketin güvenilirlik katsayısı 0.88’dir.

Bu çalışmada, aracılık rollerinin test edilmesinde MacKinnon (2000) tarafından detayları açıklanan yöntem izlenilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, dekanların yüksek etik liderlik düzeyleri ile işyeri zorbalığı arasında olumsuz bir ilişkinin varlığını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Ayrıca öğretim üyelerinin psikolojik güvenlik ve psikolojik sözleşme tatmin düzeyleri, etik liderlik ve işyeri zorbalığı arasındaki olumsuz ilişkiye aracı rolleri göstermişlerdir.

Etik liderler çalışanlara dürüst ve adil davranan, yüksek etik standartlar geliştirmeye çalışan, bütünleştirici, çalışanların etik olmayan davranışlarını kesinlikle hoş görmeyen ve sahip olduğu etik değerleri çalışanlara da aktarmaya çabalayan liderlerdir. Etik liderlerin öncelikli amacı, yanlış olan bir durumun gerçekleşmesini engellemek ve yanlış olana karşı durmaktır. Çünkü kurumlar yanlış uygulamalarla, doğru ve tatmin edici bir yere varamayacaklardır. Bundan dolayı etik liderler, yasal ve ahlaki uygunsuzluklara, örgütsel başarı ve performansı engellemelere karşı önemli bir kişilik olacaktır. Etik liderlik davranışları, zamanla çalışanların da etik davranmasını sağlayacaktır (Yılmaz, 2006). Etik liderler, etik standartları koyarak etik davranışları ödüllendirmekte ve etik standartlara uymayanları cezalandırmaktadır (Plinio, 2009). Bu durumda etik ilkeler, kurumun bir parçası haline gelerek etik bir çevre oluşturulmuş olacaktır. Etik bir çevre oluştuğunda da yöneticiler ve çalışanlar arasında güven ortamı sağlanmış olacaktır (Mullane, 2009). Yöneticilerin yüksek etik liderlik düzeylerine sahip bulunmaları işyeri zorbalığının azalmasına sebep olacaktır. Etik liderlerdeki eşitlik, doğruluk, yüksek etik standartlar ve etik dışı davranışlara esnek olmama durumları işyeri zorbalığını düzeyini düşürecektir (Baillien, Neyens, De Witte, ve De Cuyper, 2009).

Çalışmanın aracı rollerinden olan psikolojik güvenlik “bireylerin kendilerini rahat hissetmeleri ve herhangi bir korku veya tehdit olmaksızın kendilerini ifade edebilmeleri” (Edmondson, 1999; Kahn, 1990), psikolojik sözleşme tatmini ise “bireyin bir ilişkide kendisi ile karşısındaki arasında oluşan geleceğe dönük alışveriş anlaşmasının koşullarına ilişkin olumlu algılama derecesi” (Rousseau, 1998) olarak tanımlanabilir. Etik liderler çalışanları etik standartlar içerisinde kendilerini korkusuzca ifade edebilmelerine yol açtıkları ve çalışan ile yönetim arasında oluşacak iş ilişkisinin koşullarına uygun biçimde saygı, dürüstlük, adil davranma vb. davranışlar çerçevesinde hareket etmeleri işyeri zorbalığının azalmasına neden olacaktır.

Citation Information

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