



ASOS JOURNAL

The Journal of Academic Social Science

Akademik Sosyal Arařtırmalar Dergisi, Yıl: 13, Sayı: 166, Temmuz 2025, s. 493-511

ISSN: 2148-2489 Doi Number: <http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/ASOS.82592>

Yayın Geliř Tarihi / Article Arrival Date

17.06.2025

Yayımlanma Tarihi / The Publication Date

29.07.2025

Lec. Mine ÖZER MUTLU

Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University
mine.ozer@bilecik.edu.tr
Orcid: 0000-0002-4372-9497

Prof. Dr. İsa İPÇİOĞLU

Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University
isa.ipcioglu@bilecik.edu.tr
Orcid: 0000-0002-6912-3290

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE¹

Abstract

In the contemporary business environment, characterised by its complexity and variability, the ability to achieve sustainable success is contingent upon the presence of effective leadership. The present study investigates the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational silence. The positive impact of ethical leadership on employee outcomes is well-documented. Indeed, employees who perceive their leaders to value their ideas and suggestions, to be fair, trustworthy, and to apply business ethics standards are more likely to be engaged and productive. Consequently, the notion of ethical leadership has garnered significant attention. A review of the extant literature reveals a positive correlation between ethical leadership and organizational trust, employee commitment and performance. Furthermore, there are behaviours that have been demonstrated to have a negative relationship with ethical leadership. One such behaviour is organizational silence. The present study aims to contribute to the extant literature

¹ This study is produced from the ongoing doctoral dissertation titled “The Moderating Role of Ethical Leadership in the Relationship Between Perceived Organizational Justice and Organizational Silence.”

on organizational behaviour by providing insights that can improve organizational performance. This study aims to contribute to the organizational behavior literature by presenting studies investigating the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational silence and to provide insights that can improve organizational performance.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Organizational Silence, Organizational Behavior, Leadership.

ETİK LİDERLİK VE ÖRGÜTSEL SESSİZLİK ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİNİN İNCELENMESİ²

Öz

Liderlik, günümüzün karmaşık iş çevresinde örgütlerin sürdürülebilir bir başarı sağlaması açısından oldukça önemlidir. Bu çalışma, örgütlerde etik liderlik ve örgütsel sessizlik arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktadır. Etik liderler, çalışanların fikir ve önerilerine değer veren, adil, güvenilir, iş etiği standartlarını uygulayan kişiler olarak çalışan çıktıları üzerinde olumlu etkiler yaratmaktadır. Literatür incelendiğinde etik liderliğin örgütsel güveni, çalışan bağlılığını ve performansını pozitif yönde etkilediği gözlenmektedir. Etik liderlik ile arasında negatif yönlü bir ilişki bulunan davranış biçimleri de vardır. Bu davranış biçimlerinden birisi de örgütsel sessizliktir. Bu çalışma, etik liderlik ile örgütsel sessizlik arasındaki ilişkiyi araştıran çalışmaları sunarak, örgütsel davranış literatürüne katkıda bulunmayı ve örgütsel performansı artırabilecek içgörüler sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Etik Liderlik, Örgütsel Sessizlik, Örgütsel Davranış, Liderlik.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the issue of ethics in leadership has been brought to the forefront as a result of the emergence of ethical problems in companies. Ethical behaviour is of paramount importance for leaders' credibility and their potential to influence followers at all levels of an organization. Consequently, within the contemporary business environment, the enhancement of leaders' moral and ethical conduct is imperative for the success of organizations (Brown et al., 2005; Piccolo et al., 2010). Concurrently, the notion of morality has emerged as a pivotal subject within the domain of organizational behaviour/psychology. This development has precipitated an escalation in researchers' interest in moral and ethical concerns (Den Hartog, 2015). The concept of ethical leadership encompasses the manifestation of appropriate behaviours through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, alongside the cultivation of these behaviours among employees through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making processes (Brown et al., 2005).

In the contemporary business environment, characterised by intense competition among organizations, customers with elevated expectations, evolving needs, and heightened standards

² Bu çalışma devam etmekte olan “Örgütsel Adalet Algısı ile Örgütsel Sessizlik İlişkisinde Etik Liderliğin Düzenleyici Etkisi” başlıklı doktora tezinden üretilmiştir.

of quality, businesses are compelled to place greater expectations on their employees. Concurrently, there is an expectation that individuals will demonstrate initiative, articulate their ideas, and assume responsibility for change and development (Li, 2018). Organizations require employees who are motivated to acquire knowledge, defend organizational beliefs, and express their thoughts freely. Human resources are of paramount importance to organizations. Organizations can achieve competitive advantage or develop with human resources. Consequently, organizations require the insights and proposals of their workforce. The antithesis of this scenario, wherein employees refrain from articulating their perspectives and recommendations, is designated as "organizational silence". The failure of employees to voice their opinions has been demonstrated to have a detrimental effect on the success of the organization (Khan et al., 2021).

Despite the numerous factors that may contribute to this phenomenon, one notable reason is the leadership style employed (Taşkıran, 2010). Ethics-oriented managers are responsible for the creation of a climate characterised by comfort, security and assurance, and they attach importance to human relations in the workplace. In such relationships, emphasis is placed on the cultivation of a sense of care and support for employees, the mitigation of employee silence, and the enhancement of their performance (Zehir and Erdoğan, 2011; Parhizgar et al., 2019). Ethical leaders advocate fair behaviour and support participatory management. The involvement of employees in the decision-making process has been shown to facilitate the exchange of information, thereby reducing the tendency towards silence (Khan et al., 2021).

The primary objective of this article is to examine the "relationship between ethical leadership and organizational silence" in the international literature and to provide a comprehensive explanation of the relationship between these two variables and their dimensions. The study examines the research conducted in the "Google Scholar" and "Web of Science" databases, without imposing any temporal constraints. Moreover, the article makes a significant contribution to the extant literature by offering insights into salient organizational behaviour themes, including "Ethical Leadership" and "Organizational Silence".

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Ethical Leadership

According to Brown et al. (2005), the concept of ethical leadership encompasses the manifestation of suitable behaviours through personal actions and interpersonal relationships. The acquisition of these behaviours by employees is facilitated through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making processes (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120).

Trevino et al. (2000) explained ethical leadership through two key aspects: the "moral person" and the "moral manager." The "moral person" represents the leader's individual ethical traits, while the "moral manager" reflects how the leader uses their role to promote ethical behavior within the organization (Brown and Mitchell, 2010, p. 584). Trevino et al. (2000) posit that an individual may be considered ethical if they are honest and trustworthy, demonstrate effective communication skills, and exhibit a willingness to listen to and address the concerns of others. Furthermore, they argue that such individuals are characterised by their fairness and adherence to principles. Furthermore, individuals who demonstrate ethical behaviour in their personal lives are also considered ethical in their professional lives (Trevino et al., 2000, p. 128;

Brown and Mitchell, 2010, p. 584). The moral manager dimension of ethical leadership can be defined as the leader's efforts to influence the ethical and unethical behaviours of followers. Moral managers serve as exemplars in promoting ethical conduct, through the dissemination of ethical principles and values to their adherents. They employ a system of rewards and discipline to ensure the adherence of their followers to ethical standards (Trevino et al., 2000, p. 131; Brown and Trevino, 2006, p. 597).

It is evident that ethical leaders promote the adoption of appropriate behaviours among employees, facilitating two-way communication in personnel behaviours and interpersonal relationships, particularly in the context of decision-making (Piccolo et al., 2010, p. 259). Moreover, they are instrumental in developing ethical standards that serve as a guide for the behaviour of organizational employees, integrating values and ethical standards (Connock and Johns, 1995, p. 68).

Harvey (2004) enumerates ten characteristics of ethical leadership. The following are key elements in this process: The creation of values and ethical awareness, The delegation of responsibility, The setting of an example for others, The making of decisions based on values, The ensuring that policies and practices are in harmony, The provision of training on values and ethics, The paying of attention to perceptions, The focusing on steady and accelerating change, The hiring and promotion of people with ethical values, The support of initiative.

Ethical leaders are defined by their moral integrity, compassion, and adherence to principles, qualities that manifest in their decision-making processes, leading to outcomes that are both equitable and balanced. Ethical leaders also communicate frequently with their followers on ethical matters, establish clear ethical standards, and utilise rewards and punishments to ensure the adherence to these standards. It is important to note that ethical leaders do not merely advocate ethical principles; rather, they embody them in their actions and serve as exemplars of ethical conduct (Brown and Trevino, 2006, p. 597).

In an organizational context, ethical leaders place significant emphasis on ethical issues by regularly engaging in discourse on ethical matters and ensuring that the ethical message is prominent (Brown and Trevino, 2006).

Organizational Silence

Morrison and Milliken (2000) define organizational silence as "a collective phenomenon that occurs when employees consciously withhold their opinions and suggestions about problems in the organization" (Morrison and Milliken 2000, p. 707). In contrast, Pinder and Harlos offer an alternative definition of silence, characterising it as "the failure of employees to consciously communicate their cognitive, behavioural and emotional evaluations and information about the organization to those who have the power to change and correct the organization". Pinder and Harlos identify two situations in which this non-communication occurs: firstly, the employee has no desire to change the conditions, and secondly, the situations are not directed at those who are thought to be capable of correcting the silence (Pinder and Harlos 2001, p. 334).

In this study, the three dimensions of silence discussed by Dyne et al. (2003) are examined. Dyne et al. (2003) conceptualise the first type of silence as "Acquiescent Silence", as outlined by Pinder and Harlos. Acquiescent silence is defined as the deliberate withholding of relevant ideas, information or opinions, motivated by a submission to authority or a perceived

need to avoid conflict. Acquiescent silence has been shown to encompass a range of passive behaviours. In such circumstances, individuals often perceive speaking as futile and deem their ideas to be incoherent. Employees who experience a sense of irrelevance in their role are likely to exhibit a lack of engagement with the organization. This can manifest in a reluctance to proactively contribute ideas and suggestions. Acquiescent silence is defined as deliberate, passive behaviours, submission, and the belief that speaking up will have no meaning for the organization (Dyne et al., 2003, p. 1366).

Pinder and Harlos (2001) coined the term 'passive silence' to denote Defensive Silence (Dyne et al., 2003: 1367). This form of silence can be attributed to a state of neglect, which is predicated on an individual's personal apprehension of the repercussions that might ensue from voicing their concerns. This finding aligns with the seminal work of Morrison and Milliken (2000), which emphasised personal feelings of fear as the predominant motivator of silence. Defensive silence is defined as the deliberate withholding of ideas, information or opinions about the organization as a form of fear-based self-protection. This behaviour can be defined as deliberate and proactive. In contrast to the acceptance of silence, defensive silence can be regarded as a more proactive strategy. In such instances, the individual is cognisant of the available options and seeks to assess them. Additionally, there is a reluctance to voice concerns or propose changes, which is further compounded by a fear of the potential repercussions (Dyne et al., 2003, p. 1367).

In developing the third type of silence, Prosocial Silence, researchers draw on the literature on organizational citizenship behaviour. Organizational citizenship behaviour is defined as prosocial forms of employee behaviour. Prosocial silence is predicated on altruistic or cooperative motives. In this type of silence, employees refrain from disclosing work-related ideas, information or opinions, with the intention of benefiting other individuals or the organization as a whole. The emphasis is placed on the consideration of others. It is an elective endeavour, not a mandatory requirement imposed by the organization. It is also a deliberate decision to refrain from disclosure of ideas, information and opinions. In contrast to defensive silence, which is often characterised by a reluctance to speak up due to fear or negative personal consequences, silence for the benefit of the organization is not driven by these same factors (Dyne et al., 2003, pp. 1367-1368).

The Relationship Between Ethical Leadership and Organizational Silence

Parhizgar et al. (2019), organizations reap direct and indirect benefits from ethical behavior. They endeavor to establish ethical standards and make optimal decisions in the workplace. Numerous studies in the extant literature posit that ethical content related to leadership style and leaders' moral behavior curtails and forestalls immoral behavior in the organization (Brown et al. 2005; Xu et al. 2016). According to Brown and Trevino (2006), ethical leaders make decisions based on ethical principles, influence employees' ethical behavior by setting rewards and sanctions, and set a moral example for them. The adoption of an ethical leadership style has been demonstrated to facilitate the acquisition of beneficial behaviors among employees, thereby contributing to the enhancement of organizational outcomes (Qiu et al., 2020). According to De Hoog and Den Hartog (2008), ethical leaders garner the attention of their followers by consistently exercising fairness in their decision-making. This environment fosters a conducive work atmosphere, thereby enhancing employees' morale and their professional success (Zehir and Erdoğan 2011; Chehraghi et al. 2016). Employee participation

is of paramount importance to the functioning of organizations. Furthermore, ethical leaders prioritize employee engagement within their respective organizations (Chehraghi et al., 2016). Ethical leaders exhibit a greater degree of openness with their employees, and their expectations are more clearly defined. Consequently, employees possess a clear understanding of the organizational expectations (Brown et al., 2005). Employees who are cognizant of organizational expectations exhibit heightened commitment to the organization (Khan et al., 2021).

It is incumbent upon leaders to exemplify ethical leadership behaviors in their daily conduct, decisions, and actions. In the context of organizational leadership, ethical leaders have been shown to foster an environment conducive to employee empowerment, characterized by a sense of confidence and readiness to voice concerns (Zehir and Erdoğan, 2011). Ethical leaders endeavor to demonstrate respect for their employees and foster a secure and encouraging environment for them. In light of the aforementioned characteristics of ethical leadership, it can be concluded that ethical leadership contributes to the mitigation of silence within organizational settings (She et al., 2023).

Researchers view employee voice as a proactive and constructive form of communication that allows individuals to participate in decision-making. Ethical leaders promote high moral standards and encourage employees to speak up against unethical or inappropriate conduct. Brown et al. (2005), such leaders support open communication and urge employees to report issues to management. By encouraging open expression, ethical leaders create a workplace where staff feel confident sharing their concerns. They also provide a psychologically safe environment that supports employees affected by colleagues' unethical or harmful actions (Imam and Kim, 2022). When employees feel secure, they are less likely to withhold important information and more likely to contribute to organizational improvement, rather than remain silent (Khan et al., 2021).

The present study elucidates two theories that support the notion that ethical leadership can influence employee silence. Social Exchange Theory and Social Learning Theory.

Social Exchange Theory

In accordance with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), employees are said to "reward" and "feedback" the behaviour of the organization or leaders. This dynamic fosters a reciprocal social exchange relationship. It is evident that ethical leaders who successfully address the needs of employees and demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives are likely to foster a sense of respect and gratitude among their staff. Consequently, these employees are more likely to offer suggestions that contribute to the advancement and growth of the organization. Employees who are rewarded by ethical leaders for voicing concerns within organizations understand the necessity and importance of doing so by learning that it is expected and rewarded (Qi and Ming-Xia, 2014).

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) posits that ethical leaders exert a significant influence on employees' ethical behaviour through the medium of modelling. Employees observe the behaviours of leaders and other individuals within the organization and are influenced by these behaviours without being aware of it. Acknowledgement of the organization's interests and the provision of suggestions for its improvement are indicative of

employees' responsibility. The communication of the moral spirit is an integral component of the leadership ethos, with responsibility to employees being a fundamental aspect of this communication. Consequently, employees are likely to transition from silent behaviour to vocal behaviour (Brown et al., 2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on Ethical Leadership

Walumbwa et al. (2011), an examination was conducted into the mediating role of leader-member interaction, self-efficacy and organizational identification in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee performance. The present study was conducted in China, and data were collected from 72 managers. The findings of the study indicated that ethical leadership exhibited a positive and significant relationship with employee performance, with leader-member interaction, self-efficacy, and organizational identification playing a mediating role in this relationship.

Mo and Shi (2015), 93 supervisors and 486 employees of a pharmaceutical retail chain company in China were surveyed. The results of the study demonstrate a positive correlation between the increase in ethical leadership behaviours and the increase in organizational citizenship behaviours. The relationship between ethical leadership and employees' organizational citizenship behaviours is mediated by supervisors' and employees' organizational concerns.

Stouten et al. (2018) advanced the argument that silence can serve a functional value within organizational contexts, particularly in relation to the strategic response to destructive and unethical leadership. While they emphasise that silence should not be the initial reaction when something goes wrong in the organization, they argue that silence can be the most effective first step to properly assess the situation.

Asif et al. (2019) conducted a study that examined the relationships between ethical leadership, affective commitment, work engagement and employee creativity. The data presented herein were obtained from 233 Chinese public sector employees. The findings of the study indicated the emergence of a positive correlation between ethical leadership and work engagement, as well as between ethical leadership and employee creativity. The present study hypothesises that emotional commitment partially mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and work engagement. Furthermore, it is predicted that both emotional commitment and work engagement fully mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and employee creativity.

Varner (2020) conducted a study with 92 employees from the U.S. food and beverage industry to examine how perceived ethical leadership influences job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior. The results showed that ethical leadership was positively and significantly associated with both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Additionally, a significant positive link was found between ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. These findings suggest that ethical leadership in this sector may help reduce employee turnover, foster a healthier organizational culture, and ultimately improve customer satisfaction.

Aksoy Kuru (2020) examined the relationships between employees' perceptions of ethical leadership and their organizational identification and the extent to which they felt

emotionally and psychologically connected to their organization. The data were collected from employees of a blue-collar background who were employed within the corporate sector in Istanbul. Consequently, a substantial relationship has been identified between ethical leadership perception and person-organization fit, person-organization fit and organizational identification, and ethical leadership and organizational identification. Furthermore, person-organization fit has been demonstrated to exert a partial mediating effect between the perception of ethical leadership and organizational identification.

Huang et al. (2021) surveyed 495 nurses across six hospitals in China to explore how perceived ethical leadership, trust, and psychological well-being relate to nurses' organizational citizenship behaviors directed at patients. The findings of the study indicated that perceived ethical leadership exhibited a positive correlation with trust in management and psychological well-being. Trust in management has been demonstrated to be positively associated with nurses' organizational citizenship behaviours. The present study hypothesises that trust in management and psychological well-being mediate the relationship between perceived ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behaviours.

Sawitria et al. (2021) conducted a study with the objective of analysing the relationship between leaders' political skills and ethical leadership on the attitudes and behaviours of employees. In order to achieve this aim, the survey method was used and the study was conducted in municipalities in the cities of Klaten and Surakarta in Indonesia. The result of the study indicates that the leader's political skill positively impacts ethical leadership. Moreover, the present study demonstrates that ethical leadership exerts a significant influence on employees' organizational citizenship behaviour, operating through the mechanisms of leader-member exchange and self-efficacy.

Mishra and Tikoria (2021) conducted a survey in 10 public and private hospitals in India to investigate the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational climate, with a view to its effect on the commitment of doctors. The conclusion drawn from this analysis was that ethical leadership exerts a significant influence on organizational climate, which in turn has a significant relationship with doctors' commitment.

Amoah et al. (2022) conducted a study with the objective of examining the causal links between ethical leadership and job satisfaction, as well as the commitment of healthcare workers in Ghana. A total of 617 health professionals participated in the study, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, physician assistants and laboratory workers. The findings of the study indicated that ethical leadership and job satisfaction exert a positive influence on organizational commitment.

Studies on Organizational Silence

Elçi et al. (2014) examined the relationships between organizational silence, mobbing and turnover intention variables. In this context, the data was obtained through the administration of a questionnaire to 1,794 employees from 39 different companies operating in the service, manufacturing, finance and information technology sectors. The analysis of the data yielded a positive and significant relationship between organizational silence and turnover intention, as well as between organizational silence and mobbing. Furthermore, a significant relationship was identified between mobbing and turnover intention. Furthermore, a partial

mediation effect of mobbing on the relationship between organizational silence and turnover intention was identified.

Acaray and Akturan (2015) conducted a survey of 462 full-time employees of a multinational private company headquartered in Istanbul, with a view to examining the effect of organizational silence dimensions on organizational citizenship behaviours. The data collected from the questionnaires indicated that acceptance of the silence dimension, as well as the defensive silence dimension, exerted a negative influence on organizational citizenship behaviour. Conversely, the prosocial silence dimension was found to have a positive effect on organizational citizenship behaviour.

Jung and Yoon (2019) surveyed 344 employees working in a five-star hotel in South Korea in order to investigate the impact of social undermining on organizational voice and silence, as well as deviant behaviours. The findings of the study indicated that employees who have experienced undermining behaviours from customers, supervisors and co-workers have demonstrated a negative impact on their voice and a positive impact on their silence.

Rai and Agarwal (2018) study examined the impact of workplace bullying on employee silence and the mediating role of psychological contract violation in this relationship. To this end, a survey was conducted among 835 Indian managers employed in various Indian organizations. The findings of this study suggest a positive correlation between workplace bullying and employee silence, with the psychological contract violation playing a mediating role in this relationship.

Wu et al. (2018) examined the mediating role of job complexity and stress in the relationship between destructive leadership and employee silence. The study, conducted in China, posits that destructive leadership engenders a state of reticence among employees. The study further asserts a positive correlation between destructive leadership and reticence, and it is further posited that the complexity of the job environment exacerbates this effect.

Srivastava et al. (2019) collected data from 286 managers working in four different states of India to investigate the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between employee silence and job burnout. Contrary to the extant literature, the present study found a negative relationship between employee silence and job burnout. Furthermore, it was determined that emotional intelligence serves as a mediator in this relationship.

Kazak and Karaca Güzel (2020) sought to ascertain the perspectives of educators employed in secondary educational institutions regarding organizational silence. To this end, a case study design was employed to evaluate 12 teachers working in Düzce Province, a qualitative analysis method. Consequently, it was disclosed that educators remained silent due to being excluded and mistreated. This included the desire for a consistent schedule, the protection of their interests, such as taking leave, and the recognition that they lacked the capacity to effect change.

Knoll et al. (2021) developed a model that posits the notion that theories of implicit voice—defined as beliefs concerning the circumstances under which it is deemed risky to voice one's opinions within an organizational context—have the capacity to elucidate the tacit knowledge structures that are shared among teams and organizations. These theories, the model suggests, exert a significant influence on the phenomenon of silence within these social structures. The conclusion of this study indicates that shared tacit voice theories serve as a

means to conceptualize the underlying assumptions that underpin employee silence.

Parlar Kılıç et al. (2021) examined the effect of organizational silence among nurses on their job satisfaction and work performance. In this context, a face-to-face survey was administered to 671 nurses in two public and two private hospitals in a province in Turkey. In light of the data collected, it was ascertained that all sub-dimensions of the factors contributing to organizational silence exerted a detrimental and substantial influence on nurses' job satisfaction and performance levels. The findings of this study indicate that an increase in organizational silence among nurses is associated with a decline in job satisfaction and performance.

Ölçer and Coşkun (2022) investigated whether organizational silence mediates the relationship between organizational justice and creativity within organizations. The findings of the analysis demonstrated that organizational justice exerted a positive influence on organizational silence, with organizational silence acting as a partial mediator in the relationship between organizational justice and organizational creativity.

Kim and Song (2024) surveyed 242 employees in Korea to examine the effect of workplace spirituality on organizational silence and innovative work behavior. The findings of the study indicate that workplace spirituality is associated with a decline in silence and an increase in innovative work behavior.

Çobanoğlu et al. (2024) sought to comprehend the association between organizational climate and organizational silence in public and private companies operating in Istanbul, with the objective of conducting a comparative analysis of organizational climate and organizational silence behavior. The study's findings indicated that the three dimensions of organizational climate—namely, supervisors' attitudes toward silence, top management's attitudes toward silence, and communication opportunities—exert a significant influence on organizational silence.

Ergül and Kerse (2024) examined the relationships between obligatory citizenship behavior, organizational identification, and employee silence in the context of resource conservation theory. An evaluation of the data obtained from employees in the manufacturing sector operating in a province in Turkey revealed that organizational identification exerted a negative influence on employee silence. Furthermore, the study found that identification played a mediating role in the relationship between obligatory citizenship behavior and silence.

Studies Examining the Relationship Between Ethical Leadership and Organizational Silence

Zehir and Erdoğan (2011) investigated the mediating role of ethical leadership in the relationship between organizational voice and silence behaviour, and employee performance. To this end, a questionnaire was administered to 714 employees working in national and multinational companies in Turkey. The study revealed that ethical leadership exerts a substantial influence on the phenomenon of employee silence. The relationship between employee voice types and ethical leadership is complex. Indeed, the literature suggests that the defensive voice type is an exception to this relationship, exhibiting a negative correlation. Furthermore, the present study hypothesises that ethical leadership plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between organizational voice and silence behaviour, and employee performance.

Bormann and Rowold (2016) study examined the mediating role of employee silence in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement. The study also examines the moderating role of policy perceptions and personal change effect. The study's sample population comprises 263 employees encountering organizational changes, selected from diverse organizations and professions across Germany. The findings indicate that ethical leadership merely mitigates acquiescent silence, which subsequently forecasts a shift in affective commitment. However, this effect is mitigated by a high level of policy perception and a high level of personal change effect.

Chehraghi et al. (2016) sought to examine the impact of ethical leadership on employee performance, with a particular focus on the mediating role of employee voice and silence in this effect. The study encompasses a sample of 285 employees from Mega Motor Company. The findings of the study indicate that ethical leadership exerts a direct and positive influence on employee performance. The present study hypothesises that ethical leadership exerts an inverse and negative effect on employee voice, and that ethical leadership has no significant effect on employee silence. Furthermore, the presence of employee voice has been demonstrated to exert an inverse and negative influence on employee performance, while employee silence has been shown to have no significant impact on employee performance. Furthermore, employee voice assumes a modest mediating role in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee performance. However, employee silence does not exert a mediating effect on these two variables.

Paşa and Işık (2017) administered a questionnaire to 380 teachers working in Konya province in order to examine the effect of teachers' level of trust in the school principal and ethical leadership behaviours exhibited by the school principal on organizational silence. The findings of the research indicate a negative correlation between trust in the school principal, the ethical leadership behaviours exhibited by the school principal, and organizational silence. The assertion is made that an increase in ethical behaviours exhibited by school administrators will result in a corresponding decrease in organizational silence.

Mirkamali et al. (2017) conducted a study that examined the relationship between organizational justice, as mediated by ethical leadership, and organizational silence among employees of Tehran University. The conclusion drawn from this analysis was that there exists a significant and negative relationship between managers' ethical leadership and organizational silence. Furthermore, a positive relationship has been identified between managers' ethical leadership and organizational justice. It is evident that there is a substantial and adverse correlation between organizational justice and organizational silence. The present study hypothesises that organizational justice plays a mediating role in the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational silence.

Alijani and Talepasand (2017) conducted a study with the objective of examining the structural effect of ethical leadership on employee silence behaviour, with the mediating role of climate of silence. The findings of the research indicate that ethical leadership exerts a negative influence on organizational structure. The present study seeks to explore the impact of ethical leadership on both silence climate and employee silence, hypothesising a negative effect. Furthermore, it has been determined that an organizational silence climate exerts a direct structural effect on employees' silence behaviour.

Günay et al. (2018) administered a questionnaire to 321 academic staff members at

Süleyman Demirel University with the objective of examining the impact of ethical leadership on organizational silence and subjective well-being. The findings of the study indicate a negative correlation between ethical leadership and employee silence, and a positive correlation between ethical leadership and subjective well-being.

Li X. (2018) conducted empirical research on Chinese and Australian participants in order to demonstrate the causal effect mechanisms of ethical leadership on employee voice and employee silence. The findings demonstrate that ethical leadership exerts a direct influence on both employee voice and employee silence. The study also demonstrates the significance of individual differences among employees in terms of cognition and culture in influencing the ethical leadership process.

Parhizgar et al. (2019) investigated the mediating role of ethical leadership in the effect of organizational silence and voice on employee performance. Questionnaires were administered to 317 employees at the Tehran Metropolitan Fire Station. The study revealed a significant relationship between organizational silence and voice on the one hand, and employee performance on the other. Once more, a substantial relationship was identified between organizational silence and voice, ethical leadership, and employee performance, suggesting that ethical leadership functions as a mediating factor.

Khan et al. (2021) explored how ethical leadership influences the tendency of project team members to remain silent, as well as the mediating role of trust and loyalty toward supervisors. Data were gathered from 334 individuals working on construction projects. The findings indicate that ethical leadership can reduce team members' silence across three identified types: accepting, defensive, and prosocial. Additionally, the impact of ethical leadership on silence is partially mediated by the subordinates' trust and loyalty toward their leaders.

Turan et al. (2021) conducted a study in which they administered a questionnaire to employees of five-star hotels in Istanbul. The objective of the study was to make a comparison between the types of Accepting Silence, Defensive Silence and Community Benefit Silence, which are sub-dimensions of Ethical Leadership, Ethical Climate and Organizational Silence. The study was conducted from the perspective of green and non-green hotel employees, with the aim of revealing whether there is a significant difference. Following a thorough analysis, it was determined that there was no statistically significant discrepancy in the perceptions of 'Ethical Leadership', 'Ethical Climate' and 'Organizational Silence' (Accepting, Protective and Protective Silence) between employees of green hotels and employees of conventional hotels. However, a significant discrepancy was identified between the typical hotel employees and the green hotel employees in the study.

Demir (2022) collated data from 208 academic and administrative staff members at Kırıkkale University in order to investigate the possible effects of ethical leadership on organizational exclusion and organizational silence. The findings of the analysis indicate that ethical leadership exerts a substantial and adverse influence on organizational exclusion and the acceptance and protective dimensions of organizational silence.

Fathalian et al. (2022), aims to investigate the role of ethical leadership on organizational bullying, organizational apathy and organizational silence, all of which are mediated by job plates among employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth of Iran. The

study's sample comprised 400 employees. Consequently, it has been determined that ethical leadership exerts a substantial negative influence on organizational silence and organizational bullying, while organizational bullying, in turn, demonstrates a significant positive effect on organizational silence. A substantial negative correlation has been identified between ethical leadership and organizational bullying. Furthermore, the present study hypothesises that organizational bullying and organizational apathy variables have a mediating role in the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational silence. The aforementioned variables have been demonstrated to engender an increase in organizational silence amongst personnel.

Mako (2022) conducted a study to investigate the role of ethical leadership between nepotism and organizational silence and nepotism and organizational justice. A total of 580 personnel working in four hospitals in Pristina and Prizren cities of Kosovo were surveyed. The findings of the research indicate a correlation between ethical leadership and organizational silence. Furthermore, the investigation revealed a partial mediating role of ethical leadership in the relationship between nepotism and organizational silence, and organizational justice.

Wu et al. (2022), is to investigate the effects of ethical leadership on organizational silence, and the dual mediating effects of psychological safety and organizational justice. To this end, a sample of public and private national secondary school teachers in Taiwan was selected. Consequently, the positive correlation between ethical leadership and teachers' constructive behaviour, as well as between ethical leadership and teachers' constructive behaviour, has been established. Conversely, a negative relationship has been identified between ethical leadership and organizational silence. It is also concluded that teachers' sense of psychological safety has a positive full mediation effect on principals' ethical leadership and teachers' constructive behaviours, and a negative full mediation effect on principals' ethical leadership and organizational silence.

She et al. (2023) investigated the mediating role of organizational justice in the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational silence. An empirical investigation was conducted with 896 nurses in 11 hospitals in Henan Province of China. Consequently, the ethical leadership exhibited by the manager has a negative correlation with organizational silence and a positive correlation with organizational justice. The present study hypothesises that organizational silence is inversely related to nurses' sense of organizational justice. The present study hypothesises that ethical leadership has a direct and negative effect on nurses' organizational silence. Furthermore, the study found that organizational justice plays a partially mediating role in ethical leadership and nurses' organizational silence.

Imam and Kim (2023), examined the mediating effect of prosocial silence and organizational commitment in the relationship between ethical leadership and academically positive behaviours, including performance, organizational citizenship behaviour, and work engagement. The present study collected data from 325 faculty members from higher education institutions in Pakistan. Consequently, the findings of this study demonstrate a positive correlation between ethical leadership and the adoption of favourable academic behaviours within the workplace. Furthermore, the relationship between ethical leadership and academically positive behaviours is mediated by prosocial silence and organizational commitment. It is also concluded that ethical leadership is positively related to prosocial silence.

Zhuang (2023) sets out to examine the mediating role of organizational identification in

the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational silence. The investigation will also examine the moderating role of power distance in the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational silence. Consequently, it has been determined that ethical leadership exerts a positive influence on employees' organizational identification, while concurrently exerting a negative influence on organizational silence. Empirical evidence suggests that employees with low power distance orientation effectively reduce employee silence compared to employees with high power distance orientation.

Al-Dhuhori et al. (2024), the mediating role of perceived organizational exclusion in the relationship between interpersonal mistrust and person-organization incompatibility, and employee silence, was investigated. The present study also investigates the moderating effect of ethical leadership on the relationship between perceived organizational exclusion and organizational silence. A survey was conducted among 242 service sector employees in the United Arab Emirates. The phenomenon of exclusion has been demonstrated to mediate the relationship between interpersonal distrust and person-organization mismatch, in addition to employee silence. This suggests that in an environment characterised by interpersonal mistrust and misalignment, organizational exclusion becomes more likely, which in turn can lead to an increase in employee silence. The ethical leadership approach has been demonstrated to mitigate the impact of exclusionary practices on the maintenance of silence among affected individuals.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The present study aims to elucidate the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational silence, and its effects on the organization. Ethical leaders are characterised by their equitable treatment of followers. This behaviour engenders a sense of appreciation among employees, thereby fostering an environment conducive to the articulation of their perspectives (Colquitt et al., 2001). Furthermore, ethical leaders place significant emphasis on values such as transparency and integrity. Such an environment fosters a culture of openness and transparency, encouraging employees to voice their concerns, complaints, and ideas without hesitation. In an organization where employees feel secure, they are more likely to share their opinions (Mayer et al., 2009).

Social learning theory is utilised to elucidate the impact of ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005). Social learning theory posits that individuals acquire suitable behaviours through a process of role modelling, whereby they observe the behaviours of others (Bandura, 1977). The influence of supervisors on their subordinates is well-documented; the supervisory figure wields the authority to reward and punish, as evidenced by seminal studies such as those by Brown et al. (2005) and Trevino et al. (2000). Consequently, ethical leaders encourage their employees to engage in desired behaviours by offering incentives for ethical conduct and taking disciplinary measures against unethical behaviour. Consequently, employees are less prone to engage in unethical behaviours (Mayer et al., 2009, 2012).

Another theory that is utilised to elucidate the consequences of ethical leadership is the social exchange theory. Social exchange theory posits that employees' behaviour is a response to the behaviour of their leaders (Brown and Mitchell, 2010; Blau, 1964). The development of social exchange relationships between leaders and subordinates is theorised as arising from interactions between these parties, with the mutual benefits derived from these exchanges serving as a motivating factor (Brown and Trevino 2006). Social exchange relationships characterised by high levels of trust, low levels of control and long-term obligations can develop

(Hansen, 2011).

The existence of organizational silence has been identified as a negative situation for the development and change of the organization (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). Consequently, it is imperative that employees within organizations are at liberty to articulate their ideas, sentiments and proposals with uninhibited freedom. The establishment of such an environment is dependent on the presence of open and participatory communication culture (Milliken et al., 2003), participatory and supportive leadership styles (Vakola and Bouradas, 2005), a perception of justice (Colquitt, 2001), and feedback and suggestion systems (Morrison, 2011). Consequently, these factors must be present in organizations in order to prevent employee silence.

A close analysis of extant studies on ethical leadership and silence reveals a significant and negative relationship between the two. In addition to these two variables, the links with variables such as employee performance, organizational justice, job commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour, trust in the organization and identification are examined. It is recommended that future research endeavours focus on the evaluation of various regulatory or mediating variables in the relationship between ethical leadership and silence. This evaluation should be conducted utilising a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, thereby contributing significantly to the existing body of literature on the subject.

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