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# The analysis of organizational creativity in schools regarding principals' ethical leadership characteristics

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of ethical leadership behaviors on organizational creativity in schools. The study was conducted between 2008 and 2009 with 527 teachers who worked in primary schools in Konya region of Turkey and who were chosen with the random cluster exemplification method. The results of the study showed that a significant relationship was found between organizational creativity and the ethical leadership behaviors of principals regarding the dimensions of environmental ethic, ethical decision making and behavioral ethic. School administrators' behavioral ethic and environmental ethic dimensions explain organizational creativity in schools significantly.

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## 1. Introduction

In order to form a quality sensitive organizational structure in organizations, leaders are supposed to set their employees a good example in the process of establishing supportive ethical principles and values and putting them into practice in creating organizational culture (Kalder, 2000). Because people now expect to be taken into consideration, understood correctly, respected and they would like to feel to be part of the organization, honesty, reliability, self esteem in the organization in which they work (Toktamışoğlu, 2003). The person who provide such a work environment with those criterias is absolutely a leader. First of all his behaviors must reflect ethical abilities. The principles of honesty and honor must determine his whole life. A leader must abide by the ethical values (Howard, 2005). Transparency underlies organizational structure. A leader must obey the ethical rules which are telling the truth, trying to do his best, and being honest all the time in order to generate a transparent organization (Dilenschneider, 2005).

As a result, ethical values are essential qualifications for the leaders. Because the scientists working on leadership argue that ethic and efficient leadership are in close relationship (Butcher, 1987). Generally the studies on ethical leadership are carried out to dignify the term fairness without exaggerating and to use it effectively. In this respect as the theoreticians are defining the ethical leadership they started out behaviors and personal qualities accepted as

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various ethical values. These personal qualities and behaviors are available in the table below with the theoreticians defining them (Morgan, 2002).

Ethical leadership is a form of the leadership requiring development of ethical standards managing employees' behaviors and application of the ethical standards effectively with their behaviors (Connock and Johns; 1995). Ethical leadership can be described as trying to spread fairness, showing respect to others' personal qualities, and the combination of the abilities of honesty, reliability, trustworthiness, sincerity, reciprocity, democratic decision making and supporting participation, being sympathetic and gentle. Ethical leadership is having ethical values of a leader and acting upon these values (Cuilla, 1998).

It is known that giving a quality education in schools is crucial for a community to develop and prosper. But only quality teachers can provide quality education for the students. Success rates can be increased by accomplished teachers in schools (Seferoğlu, 2004). Principals play an essential role in ensuring teacher quality and fostering creativity. Ethical leadership is also significant in terms of schools. Having strong leadership abilities school principals are supposed to create an organized school context encouraging teaching and learning (Şişman, 1996). The principal as an instructional leader must be aware of the major functions of the school, interpret the objectives of the school to the staff, visit teachers in their classes, take necessary precautions by not allowing interruptions in education (Algün, 1998). It's possible to explain the ethical leadership behaviors of the principal in four dimension. These are principals' own personal behaviors, creating a healthy school context, decision making and ethical behaviors in communication process (Yılmaz, 2004).

The concepts of organizational creativity and creativity are interrelated. Creativity refers to the process of transforming existing products into unique products or eliciting a unique product (Gümüştuyu, 2004). Organizational creativity is the situation come out of the employees' ability to design new ideas, processes and products individually or in groups beneficial for the organization (Taggar, 2002). From different viewpoint, organizational creativity is the sum total of employee creativity (Çekmecelioğlu, 2002). It is the result of an interaction. The major components of this interaction are individual creativity, group creativity and organizational characteristics (Gümüştuyu, 2004).

The existing culture of creativity in schools depend upon several variables. The structural characteristics and administrative practices generating motivation conditions are of primary importance (Çekmecelioğlu, 2002:554). Therefore school principals must give great importance to the practices such as staff meetings, setting up committees to evaluate skills and suggestions, encouraging participation in decision making process and developing family-school cooperation. All of these practices will emerge new creative ideas and skills in order to create a better educational environment for the students (Kochanek, 2005). The research results showed that principals displayed unethical behaviors such as injustice, scragginess, getting unearned income and slander (Aktan, 1999). It's really hard to increase institutional performance in such an institution with these negative leadership behaviors. Principals, that is leaders must behave ethically and morally in order to achieve institutional success as a result of institutional ethic (Aktan, 1999). In that case administrators have to demonstrate their ethical skills. Ethical behaviors of the leaders can affect organizational creativity of the institutions. The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of ethical leadership behaviors on organizational creativity in schools. Within the scope of this aim this study sought to answer the following questions.

Is there a significant relationship between organizational creativity and ethical leadership behaviors of the administrators in schools?

Do principals' ethical leadership behaviors explain organizational creativity in schools significantly?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

The study was conducted between 2008 and 2009 with 527 teachers who worked in primary schools in Konya region of Turkey and who were chosen with the random cluster exemplification method. The make-up of the sample by gender was 46,2 % female (n =243) and 53,8 % male (n = 284). The seniority (years at work) and the corresponding ratios for the experimental group were as follows; 1-5 years 38.3% (n = 210), 6-10 years 30.1% (n = 165), 11 or more years 31.6% (n = 173). Out of these school principals, 23.5% had a high school degree, 72.8% had a bachelor degree, and 3.6% had graduate degrees.

## 1.2. Instruments

### 1.2.1. Ethical Leadership Scale:

There are four main factors in Yılmaz's (2004) Ethical Leadership Scale: communicational ethic, behavioral ethic, ethic in decision making and environmental ethic. The calculated alpha internal stability variable was 0.95 for communicational ethic, 0.90 for behavioral ethic, 0.94 for ethic in decision making and 0.92 for environmental ethic.

### 1.2.2. Organizational Creativity Scale

Organizational Creativity Scale developed by Cavus (2006) and adapted to school context by Yılmaz and Sunbul (2008) was used for measuring the organizational creativity within the schools. Yılmaz and Sunbul found Cronbach's alpha to be 0.94.

### 1.2.3. Procedure

Person Product-Moment Coefficients' technique is used to test whether there is a significant relation between organizational creativity and ethical leadership level of school principals. In order to explain the organizational creativity levels, ethical Leadership level of school principals, stepwise multiple regression was used.

## 3. Results (Findings)

Pearson Product-Moment coefficients were computed to determine which independent and dependent variables had significant relationships with each other (see Table 1).

Table 1. Relationships Between Organizational Creativity and Ethical Leadership of School Principals

| Organizational Creativity | Ethical Leadership    |                     |                          |                  |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
|                           | Communicational ethic | Environmental ethic | Ethic in decision making | Behavioral ethic |
|                           | 0,060                 | 0,091*              | 0,103                    | 0,113*           |

\*p<0.05

Behavioral ethic, ethic in decision making and environmental ethic. dimensions of Ethical Leadership were positively and significantly correlated with organizational creativity within a school context. On the other hand, communicational ethic dimension of Ethical Leadership wasn't correlated with organizational creativity within a school context.

To determine whether there is a significant predictive effect of dimensions of ethical leadership (independent variables) on the organizational creativity within a school context (dependent variable), a stepwise multiple regression analysis was used (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. Dimensions of Ethical Leadership and Organizational Creativity within a School Context

| Variable           | R     | R2    | F     | p      | Dimensions               | $\beta$ | p     |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------------------------|---------|-------|
| Ethical Leadership | 0,191 | 0,036 | 4,930 | 0,001* | Environmental ethic      | -2,918* | 0,004 |
|                    |       |       |       |        | Ethic in decision making | -0,058  | 0,954 |
|                    |       |       |       |        | Communicational ethic    | 0,567   | 0,571 |
|                    |       |       |       |        | Behavioral ethic         | 3,382*  | 0,001 |

Dependent variable: Organizational Creativity within a School Context

\*p<0.05

When the stepwise multiple regression was computed, environmental ethic and behavioral ethic dimensions of ethical leadership variables had a statistically significant predictor effect on the organizational creativity within a school context. Ethical Leadership accounted for 3.6% of the adjusted variance in the organizational creativity within a school context with a multiple R of .191 (F = 4,930; p < 0.05).

#### 4. Discussion

A significant relationship was found between organizational creativity and the ethical leadership behaviors of principals regarding the dimensions of environmental ethic, ethical decision making and behavioral ethic. School administrators' behavioral ethic and environmental ethic dimensions explain organizational creativity in schools significantly.

In order to promote organizational creativity in schools the principals' ethical leadership is of great importance. Ethical values supporting total involvement practices in schools are integral part of institutional culture thanks to principals' ethical leadership skills. All the problems hindering total involvement disappear. It's known that schools exist for the students and the society. The educational employees become the focus group and they are appreciated. Continuous progress can be possible thanks to exchanging ideas freely. Their intellectual property rights are protected. Also the employees are responsible for their own work and act courageously to develop skills in their work (Yılmaz, 2006). The principals again create positive organizational school climate. And they support team work. They accept that individual work is not enough for success in principle and defend the idea of school team success (Rebore, 2001). Using ethical leadership skills, principals explain the school works and what criterias are required for these works. They use a fair award system according to employee success and develop processes for success. Institutional success increases in this way (Rebore, 2001). These results indicate that ethical leadership skills of principals can promote creative culture in schools. In some studies it can be seen that leadership especially transformational leadership affected organizational creativity (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Shin & Zhou, 2003). All these results support the result of the study.

In the process of creating high-risk environments delegation of authority in the school management is also significant. According to research results successful leaders inspires the power and energy in employees (Miles & Creed, 1995). Principals need teachers' creative ideas in order to increase school efficiency (Kochanek, 2005). These explanations correspond to the research finding that ethical behaviour increases organizational creativity when the research results are taken into account.

Positive organizational climate is based on ethical values. All staff play a vital role in organizational creativity. However principals' perspective is the key factor in organizational creativity. Leadership styles have considerable influence in forming, establishing and finally obtaining certain organizational climate (Ertekin, 1978). In positive school climate everyone should be respected for being a human, have the right for self-protection, fulfil the responsibilities in time (Rebore, 2001). People working in such an environment can produce creative ideas. Institutions need to have an environment producing and supporting creative ideas in order to have innovation (Barker, 2001:63). Aikman (2003) found that ethical leadership skills are primary factors for the institution and ethical leadership behaviors and ethical tendency of the institutions have close relationship. It has been found that positive work environment have a significant effect on organizational creativity (Isaksen, Lauer, & Ekvall, 1999; Shalley, Gilson, & Blum, 2000). All these explanations support the result of the research.

These suggestions can be offered regarding the results of the research. Teachers can take part in decision making process along with the principals to promote creativity. Also schools can be more enthusiastic to perform the co-decision.

Principals can be willing to create an environment of respect, peace, politeness and freedom for a creative work environment and to show these ethical values. Principals can get training in ethical values and leadership

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