



## The Relationships between Organizational Ethical Climate and Political Behavior Perceptions of the Faculty Members

### Öğretim Elemanlarının Örgütsel Etik İklim ve Politik Davranış Algıları Arasındaki İlişkiler

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between organizational ethical climate and political behavior on the basis of the faculty members' perceptions. The sample of the study is comprised of 440 faculty members employed at Mugla Sıtkı Koçman University. The data of the study were collected through the Ethical Climate Questionnaire and the Political Behavior Questionnaire. In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics, t-test, ANOVA, LSD test, and multiple regression analysis were employed. The findings of the study revealed that the faculty members have a medium level of ethical climate perception and political behavior perception, and the faculty members' ethical climate perception is a significant predictor of their political behavior perception. There are no significant differences among faculty members' organizational ethical climate and political behavior perceptions regarding their gender and academic rank. The results of the study have provided opportunities for the executives of higher education to develop better policies and practices regarding ethical climate and political behaviors.

**Keywords:** Organizational ethical climate perception, political behavior perception, higher education, faculty members

**ÖZ:** Bu çalışmanın amacı öğretim elemanlarının algılarına dayalı olarak örgütsel etik iklim ile politik davranış arasındaki ilişkileri belirlemektir. Araştırmanın örneklemini Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi'nde görevli 440 öğretim elemanı oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın verileri Etik İklim Ölçeği ve Politik Davranış Ölçeği'nin örnekleme uygulanması ile elde edilmiştir. Araştırmanın verileri betimsel istatistikler, t-testi, ANOVA testi, çoklu regresyon analizi kullanılarak çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma bulguları öğretim elemanlarının orta düzeyde bir etik iklim ve politik davranış algısına sahip olduklarını ve etik iklim algısının politik davranış algısının anlamlı bir yordayıcısı olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Öğretim elemanlarının etik iklim algıları ve politik davranış algıları cinsiyet ve akademik unvana göre anlamlı farklılık göstermemektedir. Araştırma yükseköğretim yöneticilerinin etik iklim ve politik davranış konularında daha iyi politika ve uygulamalar geliştirebilmelerine olanak sağlayan sonuçlar sağlamaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Örgütsel etik iklim algısı, örgütsel politik davranış algısı, yükseköğretim, öğretim, öğretim elemanları

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Maintenance of the voluntary efforts made by the members of organizations to improve organizational goals and minimization of the attempts directed towards the prevention of the accomplishment of organizational goals are closely connected with employees' having positive or negative perceptions of some issues. One of the elements that can contribute to the development of employees' positive perception of their working environment is ethical climate perception. The perceptions of employees of their working environment as a place where just decisions are made and implemented can play an important role in the formation ethical climate perception (Shalley et al., 2004). Positive ethical climate perception is expected to increase organizational trust and reduce tendencies towards political behaviors that can endanger organizational objectives and result in negative outcomes. In the following sections; a comprehensive literature review is presented on the issues of organizational ethical climate,

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political behavior and the relationships between these two concepts to lay out the theoretical context of the study.

### 1.1. Organizational Ethical Climate

Ethical climate is a popular framework for assessing the ethical characteristics of human organizations. It emerged from the more general concept of organizational climate. Ethical climates are conceptualized as general and pervasive characteristics of organizations, affecting a broad range of decisions. Organizational ethical climate is viewed as the shared perception of the members of the organization about how to deal with ethical problems and what an ethically correct behavior should be (Akdoğan and Demirtaş, 2014).

Organizational ethical climate refers to a set of thoughts and principles shared by the associates about which behaviors should be exhibited towards the staff and how to deal with problems experienced in the ethical climate (Peterson, 2002a; Peterson, 2002b). These ideas are converted to criteria to be used in identification, evaluation and solution of ethical problems and give rise to a construct that can offer guidance to leaders in decision-making process (Suar and Khuntia, 2004; Weber and Seger, 2002). Ethical climates identify the normative systems that guide organizational decision making and the systemic responses to ethical dilemmas (Duh Belak and Milfelner, 2010).

Ethical climate is a type of work climate that is best understood as a group of prescriptive climates reflecting the organizational procedures, policies, and practices with moral consequences. It is the employees' perception of what constitutes right behavior, and thus becomes a psychological mechanism through which ethical issues are handled. Ethical climate influences both the decision-making and subsequent behavior in response to ethical dilemmas (Martin and Cullen, 2006).

The first theoretical and experimental study in the field of ethical climate was conducted by Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988). They utilized philosophical and sociological perspectives in developing a theoretical basis for creating a measure of ethical climate. They used a two-dimensional theoretical perspective to explain the different types of ethical climate that exist in organizations (Figure 1). The first dimension, *ethical criterion*, maps on to the three major types of ethical theory: egoism (i.e. maximizing self-interest), benevolence (i.e. maximizing joint interests,) and principle or deontology (i.e. adhering to principles). The second dimension is referred to *locus of analysis* which relates to who the referent is for one's action. The three loci of analysis include self (i.e. oneself), local (i.e. one's organization or subunit), and cosmopolitan (i.e. the environment external to the organization) (Victor and Cullen, 1987; 1988; Mayer et al., 2009; Parboteeah et al., 2010). This three (ethical criteria) by three (loci of analysis) matrix forms nine theoretical dimensions of ethical climate.

**Figure 1: Ethical climate typology**

Ethical Criteria	Locus of Analysis		
	Self	Local	Cosmopolitan
Egoism	Self-Interest (Instrumental)	Company Profit	Efficiency
Benevolence	Friendship (Caring)	Team Interest	Social Responsibility
Principle	Personal morality (Independence)	Organization Rules and Procedures (Service)	Laws and Professional Codes (Laws and Codes)

(Source: Victor and Cullen, 1988. The Organizational Bases of Ethical Work Climate. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 33:101-125.)

Though the model indicates the existence of nine types of ethical climate, empirical studies have revealed that in practice, mostly there are five types of ethical climate: *instrumental*, *caring*, *independence*, *service* and *laws and codes* (Martin and Cullen, 2006; Peterson, 2002a). In an instrumental ethical climate, organizational members look out for their own interests, even to the exclusion of the interest of others who may be affected by their decisions. In caring atmosphere, individuals perceive that decisions are and should be based on an overarching concern for the well-being of others. They perceive that ethical concern exists for others within the organization, as well as society at large. Independence climate indicates that individuals believe they should act on deeply held, personal moral convictions to make ethical decisions. The climate of law and rules is based on the perception that the organization supports principled decision-making based on external codes such as the law or professional codes of conduct (Martin and Cullen 2006). Service climate is based on the effects of decisions on customers; always do what is right for customers (Wimbus et al., 1997).

Organizational ethical climate is not a construct coming into being on its own. Many organizational and environmental antecedents such as personal interests, individual profits, friendships, group concerns and interests, social responsibility, personal rights, rules, standards, procedures, laws, and professional codes affect the formation of organizational ethical climate (Mayer et al., 2009; Akdoğan and Demirtaş, 2014). When the functions of ethical climate are considered, it becomes clear that it should not be allowed for these antecedents to haphazardly affect ethical climate. This requires both regulations at the organizational level and conscious efforts of executives of the organization.

The research has revealed that ethical climate perception is a powerful variable affecting whether the organizational outcomes will be positive or negative (Martin and Cullen, 2006). Employees develop positive attitudes towards organizations having clear standards to distinguish ethical behaviors from unethical ones (Trevino et al., 2001; Valentine and Barnett 2003). Strong organizational ethical climate contributes to the promotion of unity and solidarity and morale in the organization (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Dickson et al., 2001). Moreover, the research have shown that ethical climate is an important variable having profound impacts on organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job performance, organizational trust, organizational justice, turnover intention, organizational citizenship and burnout (Elçi, et al., 2015; Mumcu and Öven, 2016, Büte, 2011; Bulut, 2012; Kaplan, Ögüt, Karayel and İlhan, 2013; Örucü and Özafşarlıoğlu, 2013; Podsakoff et al., 1996; Schwepker et al., 1997; Vardi, 2001; Weeks et al., 2004; Okpara, 2004; Jaramillo et al., 2006; Sagnak, 2005).

## 1.2. Political Behaviors in Organizations

Employees in organizations put forth efforts to affect each other and direct their colleagues to certain behaviors through different methods and techniques. Such attempts of employees to gain and execute power constitute organizational politics. Organizational politics can result in positive or negative outcomes and on the basis of these outcomes, political behavior can be defined as good or bad. However, no matter what the outcomes are, political behavior is inevitable within the organization (Islamoglu and Boru, 2007).

It is possible to define political behavior in different ways. As can be seen in the following paragraphs, the common feature of these definitions is self-servicing; that is, helping the individual to accomplish the desired objectives faster but not being appreciated by the organization. For instance, Mintzberg (1983, 1985) defined political behavior as “individual or group behavior that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all, in the

technical sense, illegitimate – sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise”.

Some researchers discussed political behavior within a broader framework (Bies and Tripp, 1995; Pfeffer, 1992) and emphasized that it is a social reality. For instance, Pfeffer (1981) defined political behavior in a very simple term as “the use of power”. According to this definition, any efforts engaged into influence others can be put within the definition of political behavior. Some other researchers; on the other hand, discussed political behavior in a narrow framework (as defined by Mintzberg), and defined it as every kind of effort invested to affect others for self-interest even if it is against organizational objectives and not appreciated within the organization (Drory and Romm, 1990; Ferris et al., 1995; Ferris and Judge, 1991; Ferris et al., 1989a; Kacmar and Ferris, 1993). In the current study, the latter approach was adopted. In this regard, in general, political behaviors in organizations may be defined as those activities that are not required as part of one's organizational role but that influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization (Farrell and Peterson, 1986; Ferris et al., 1989b). Similarly, Ferris et al. (1989) define political behavior as the maximization of short- or long-term interests through strategic planning to seek self-interests by sacrificing that of others (e.g. colleagues).

Ferris et al. (2007) also relate political behavior to personal attributes and define it as the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives. Valle and Perrewé (2000) regard political behavior as “the exercise of upward tactical influence which is strategically goal-directed, rational, conscious and intended to promote self-interest, either at the expense of or in support of others' interests”. Subordinates use upward influence tactics in their attempts to receive desired outcomes, such as positive performance ratings, promotions or salary increases (Wayne et al., 1997). Ringer and Boss (2000) identified six upward influence tactics including reason, friendliness, bargaining, assertiveness, coalitions, upward appeal.

As many studies have shown, political behaviors are actually an inherent part of every organization (Gandz and Murray, 1980; Madison et al., 1980), but there are major differences among organizations in the level and intensity of political behaviors. These differences may generate quite distinctive organizational outcomes such as variations in employees' performance appraisals, a particular atmosphere, climate, reputation, and image in the eyes of internal or multiple stakeholders (Poon, 2003).

Forming coalitions within and outside the organization, concealing important information from decision-makers, engaging in lobbying activities to gain the support of the top management, disseminating news through gossips and rumors, releasing secret documents of the organization and while helping others, making them recognize that it is reciprocal are some examples of political behaviors (Islamoglu and Boru, 2007).

Political behaviors as power and influence can play a substantial role in shaping relationships and behaviors among employees and other stakeholders; therefore, it is important to know the causes of a political behavior. In general, it has been reported that political behaviors are more commonly encountered in environments where radical changes are introduced, resources are scarce, the objectives are unclear, technological and environmental changes are introduced or organizational changes are introduced and in situations in which decisions must be made through bargaining or by affecting others (Farrell and Petersen 1986; Drory and Romm, 1990; Ferris et al., 1996; Islamoglu and Boru, 2007).

Political perceptions are more important than political behavior as employees react not on the basis of reality but on the basis of their perceptions of the political phenomenon (Vredenburg and Maurer, 1984). Perceptions of political behaviors in organizations may have various negative outcomes which include wastage of time, damaging information sharing of critical factors, creating communication barriers and ultimately affecting employee performance (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988).

Organizational politics perceptions in worksites have been viewed as an empirically evident of its negative relationship with job satisfaction (Miller, Rutherford and Kolodinsky, 2008; Kacmar et al., 1999), organizational commitment, and job performance (Miller, Rutherford and Kolodinsky, 2008; Maslyn and Fedor 1998). In a recent study by Kane-Frieder et al. (2014), it was established that when there is high supervisor political support, the employees are able to survive and cope with this situation more effectively. They argued that in the presence of politics perceptions and supervisors political support simultaneously, job satisfaction, anxiety, work engagement and organizational citizenship behaviors are at favorable level.

### **1.3. The Significance of the Study**

The literature above indicates that ethical climate of an organization is linked directly to the positive behaviors of employees and also to a range of negative work behaviors. In a similar manner, it can be inferred that ethical climate perception and political environment and behaviors are organizational behavior variables that can influence each other. The current study aimed to determine the relationships between organizational ethical climate and political behavior perceptions on the basis of the faculty members' views. As the most prevailing reasons behind the occurrence of deviant workplace behaviors is the conflicting perception that the organization supports such behaviors (Appelbaum et al., 2007), determination of such relationships is of importance for the management and performance of higher education.

In Turkey, when the studies focusing on ethics in higher education are examined, it is seen that most of these studies are limited to scientific research and publishing ethics (Gerçek et al., 2011), there is no study addressing the issues of ethical climate and political behavior perceptions of the faculty members at all, but there is a very limited amount of research dealing with ethical climate at pre-university levels (e.g, Sağnak 2010; Demir and Karakuş, 2015; Balyer and Özcan, 2014; Uğurlu and Arslan, 2015; Şimşek and Altinkurt, 2009, Altinkurt and Yılmaz, 2011) and there is again limited amount of research dealing with organizational ethical climate and political behavior simultaneously (e.g, Akdoğan and Demirtaş, 2014; Mohan Bursali and Bağcı, 2011; Erkmen et al., 2011). Though there is also a great deal of studies on organizational behavior variables in literature abroad such as employee satisfaction, organizational citizenship, organizational trust, organizational justice, ethical climate, organizational commitment, but there is no reached study in organizational ethical climate and political behavior perceptions of the faculty members. Within this frame, the findings of the study is important from one aspect that there is a lack of evidence and research in Turkey considering the relationship between employees' perceptions of ethical climate and that of political behavior in higher education sector. The consequences of the study are also valuable since this study may guide administrators to realize how their employees perceive ethical climate in their workplace and how the perceptions of ethical climate can be related to the perceptions of political behavior. In short, the results of this study are expected to provide multiple implications for higher education intuitions as it provides empirical data examining the perceived ethical climate and political behavior of the employees and potential use of the data to develop policy and practice measures.

## 1.4. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationships between the organizational ethical climate perceptions and political behavior perceptions of the faculty members in higher education in Turkey. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. How do the faculty members perceive organizational ethical climate?
2. Do organizational ethical climate as perceived by the faculty members differ based on their gender and academic rank?
3. How do the faculty members perceive political behaviors?
4. Do organizational political behaviors as perceived by the faculty members differ based on their gender and academic ranks?
5. Is the ethical climate perception of the faculty members a significant predictor of their political behavior perception?

## 2. METHOD

This is a descriptive study seeking to reveal the relationships between the ethical climate perceptions and political behavior perceptions of the faculty members in higher education.

### 2.1. The Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of the faculty members (professors, associate professors, assistant professors, research assistants, instructors and lecturers) employed in academic units located on the main campus of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University (MSKU) and have already graduated some students. The number of the faculty members meeting these criteria is nearly 900. While the sample size that could represent this population with 95% reliability was calculated to be 270, all of the faculty members available when the data collection application was conducted (those who were in their offices and accepted to participate in the study) were included in the study for the random construction of the sampling. In this way, a total of 462 faculty members were reached; yet, 440 valid questionnaires were obtained for the analysis. Of the participants, 39% are females (n=171) and 61% are males (n=269). Of all the faculty members, 14% are professors (n=62), 15% are associate professors (n=68), 26% are assistant professors (n=113), 25% are research assistants (n=109), 20% are instructors and lecturers (n=88).

### 2.2. Instrumentation

The data of the study were collected through The Ethical Climate Questionnaire and The Political Behavior Questionnaire. The psychometric properties of the instruments are explained briefly below.

The Ethical Climate Questionnaire was developed by Victor and Cullen (1988). The questionnaire was adapted to Turkish by Akdoğan and Demirtaş (2014). The scale is comprised of 26 items and five factors (F1: Laws and Codes; F2: Benevolence; F3: Independence; F4: Instrumental and F5: Efficiency). These factors explain 62.3% of the total variance and their factors loadings vary between .38 and .81. Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated to determine the reliability of the questionnaire was found to be .84 (Akdoğan and Demirtaş, 2014). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to be .92 in the current study. The items in the questionnaire were constructed on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1-Strongly disagree to 5-Strongly agree. The higher scores taken from the scale are, the more positive ethical climate perception is.

The Political Behavior Questionnaire was developed by Islamoğlu and Boru (2007). The scale consists of 37 items and five factors (F1: Acting Two-Faced and Making Concession, F2: Ingratiation, F3: Forming Coalitions, F4: Exchange of Favors, F5: Inspirational Appeals). The total variance explained by these factors is 61.8% and factor loadings range from .49 to .85. As there were 20 items in the first factor, a secondary factor analysis was conducted and it yielded two factors named as “Making Concession (F1a) and “Acting Two-Faced (F1b)”. The total variance explained by these two factors is 62.7% and factor loadings range from .49 to .79. For the two factors, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient calculated to determine the reliability level was found to be .90 and .93 respectively. Secondary factor analysis was done for the other factors but no change occurred in factor construction.

For the whole questionnaire, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated to determine the reliability of the scale and found to be .93. Moreover, over that data of the current study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated to be .95 for the whole scale. The responses to the scale items are scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1-Never to 5-Always. The higher the scores are, the higher the political behavior perception is.

### 2.3. The Data Collection and the Analysis

Faculty members were visited at their offices to complete the questionnaires in the spring term of the 2014-2015 academic year. In this way, a total of 462 faculty members were reached; yet, only 440 of them returned questionnaires eligible for analysis.

In the data analysis, descriptive statistics, t-test for independent samples, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and LSD test were employed. In cases of significant difference in LSD figures,  $\eta^2$  (eta-squared) statistic was conducted to determine effect size of the difference.  $\eta^2$  explains the proportion of variance associated with or accounted for by each of the main effects, interactions, and error in an ANOVA study (Thompson, 2006).  $\eta^2$  values regarded between .01 and .05 as a low effect size, between .06 and .13 as a moderate effect size and over .14 as a high effect size (Büyüköztürk, 2014). In order to determine to what extent the faculty members’ organizational ethical climate perception predicts their political behavior perception, multiple-regression analysis was conducted. Correlation coefficient as an absolute value is considered from 0.70 to 1.00 as a high correlation, from 0.69 to 0.30 as moderate correlation, and from 0.29 to 0.00 as low correlation (Büyüköztürk, 2014).

## 3. FINDINGS

In this section, findings related to the faculty members’ ethical climate perceptions, political behavior perceptions and the relationships between their ethical climate perceptions and political behavior perceptions are presented respectively.

### 3.1. Findings on Organizational Ethical Climate Perceptions

The overall ethical climate perception of the faculty members is medium ( $M=3.02$ ,  $SD=.72$ ). When the faculty members’ ethical climate perceptions are examined in terms of the sub-dimensions, the means vary between 3.38 and 2.70. While all the means for the sub-dimensions are located at the medium level, the highest positive perception belongs to the sub-dimension of *laws and codes* ( $M=3.38$ ,  $Ss=.72$ ); this sub-dimension is followed by *independence* ( $M=3.11$ ,  $SD=.85$ ), *instrumental* ( $M=2.97$ ,  $SD=.94$ ), *efficiency* ( $M=2.93$ ,  $SD=.71$ ) and *benevolence* ( $M=2.70$ ,  $SD=.94$ ) sub-dimensions.

The faculty members' mean scores calculated for their general perception of ethical climate and for their perceptions of the sub-dimensions were found to be not varying significantly by gender [Overall:  $t_{(438)} = 1.009$ ,  $p > .05$ ; laws and codes:  $t_{(438)} = .869$ ,  $p > .05$ ; benevolence:  $t_{(438)} = .109$ ,  $p > .05$ ; independence:  $t_{(438)} = 1.938$ ,  $p > .05$ ; instrumental:  $t_{(438)} = 1.415$ ,  $p > .05$  and efficiency:  $t_{(438)} = .349$ ,  $p > .05$ ].

The faculty members' mean scores calculated for their general perception of ethical climate and for their perceptions of the sub-dimensions were found to be not varying significantly by academic rank [Overall:  $F_{(4-435)} = .505$ ,  $p > .05$ ; laws and codes:  $F_{(4-435)} = .505$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $F_{(4-435)} = 2.103$ ,  $p > .05$ ; benevolence:  $F_{(4-435)} = 1.141$ ,  $p > .05$ ; independence:  $F_{(4-435)} = 1.428$ ,  $p > .05$ ; instrumental:  $F_{(4-435)} = 2.276$ ,  $p > .05$ ; efficiency:  $F_{(4-435)} = .391$ ,  $p > .05$ ].

### 3.2. Findings on Political Behavior Perception

The faculty members' overall political behavior perception is medium ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = .84$ ). When the faculty members' political behavior perceptions are examined in terms of the sub-dimensions, the means vary between 3.09 and 3.50. Of the sub-dimensions of political behaviors, *ingratiation* has the highest mean ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 1.021$ ) that is over medium level. Means for the other sub-dimensions of political behavior perception are at the medium level (*making concession*:  $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = .94$ ; *acting two-faced*:  $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = .91$ ; *forming coalitions*:  $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = .93$ ; *exchange of favors*:  $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = .98$  and *inspirational appeals*:  $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = .98$ ; respectively).

The faculty members' mean scores calculated for their general perception of political behavior and for their perceptions of the sub-dimensions were found to be not varying significantly by gender [Overall:  $t_{(438)} = .254$ ,  $p > .05$ ; making concessions:  $t_{(438)} = .594$ ,  $p > .05$ ; acting two-faced:  $t_{(438)} = .385$ ,  $p > .05$ ; ingratiation:  $t_{(438)} = 1.454$ ,  $p > .05$ ; forming coalitions:  $t_{(438)} = .210$ ,  $p > .05$ ; exchange of favors:  $t_{(438)} = 1.596$ ,  $p > .05$ ; inspirational appeals:  $t_{(438)} = .688$ ,  $p > .05$ ].

While the faculty members' both overall political behavior perception [ $F_{(4-435)} = 2.047$ ,  $p > .05$ ] and their perceptions of the sub-dimensions of making concessions [ $F_{(4-435)} = 1.507$ ,  $p > .05$ ], acting two-faced [ $t_{(4-435)} = 1.853$ ,  $p > .05$ ], forming coalitions [ $F_{(4-435)} = .967$ ,  $p > .05$ ], exchange of favors [ $F_{(4-435)} = 1.025$ ,  $p > .05$ ] and inspirational appeals [ $F_{(4-435)} = 1.914$ ,  $p > .05$ ] do not vary significantly depending on the academic rank, their perceptions of ingratiation vary significantly by the academic rank [ $F_{(4-435)} = 3.992$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .035$ ].  $\eta^2$  value indicates that the effect size of rank on ingratiation is very low. The political behavior perceptions of the faculty members having the ranks of instructor and lecturer (3.13) are lower than those of the faculty members having the other academic ranks. The means for the perceptions of the other faculty members range from 3.54 to 3.71.

### 3.3. Findings on the Relationships between Ethical Climate Perception and Political Behavior Perception

As can be seen in Table 1, there are reverse and medium level relationships between political behavior perception and the following sub-dimensions of ethical climate perception (predictive variable); *laws and codes* ( $r = -.39$ ), *benevolence* ( $r = -.44$ ), *instrumental* ( $r = -.58$ ) and there are reverse and very low level relationships with the sub-dimensions of *independence* ( $r = -.25$ ) and *efficiency* ( $r = -.19$ ). When the other variables are controlled, it is seen that there is a reverse and negative significant relationship between political behavior perception and ethical climate's sub-dimensions of *benevolence* ( $r = -.13$ ) and *instrumental* ( $r = -.45$ ).



**Table 1: Results of the regression analysis regarding the prediction of political behavior perception**

Variables	B	Standard error	$\beta$	t	p	Zero-order (r)	Partial (r)
Constant	2.355	.258		9.144	.00	-	-
Laws and codes	-.005	.070	-.005	.078	.94	-.39	-.00
Benevolence	-.147	.054	-.163	2.715	.01	-.44	-.13
Independence	-.056	.048	-.056	1.160	.25	-.25	-.06
Instrumental	-.439	.042	-.488	10.442	.00	-.58	-.45
Efficiency	.060	.079	.038	.758	.45	-.19	.04
R= .60; R <sup>2</sup> =.36		F <sub>(5,434)</sub> = 49.47; p= .00					

All the dimensions of ethical climate together are significantly correlated at a medium level with the faculty members' political behavior perception ( $R=.60$ ,  $p<.01$ ). All of these dimensions together explain 36% of the total variance in political behavior perception. According to the standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ), the relative order of importance of the predictive variables in terms of influencing the faculty members' political behavior perception is as follows; *instrumental*, *benevolence*, *independence*, *efficiency* and *laws and codes*. When t-test results related to the significance of regression coefficients are examined, it is seen that ethical climate's sub-dimensions of *instrumental* and *benevolence* have a significant influence on political behavior perception; yet, the other three dimensions do not have a significant influence on it.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In this section, first, the findings pertinent to the faculty members' ethical climate perceptions are discussed and then the findings related to their political behavior perceptions and finally the findings related to the relationships between their ethical climate perceptions and political behavior perceptions are discussed.

The faculty members' overall ethical climate perception and their perceptions of the sub-dimensions are at the medium level. These results show that the faculty members considerably believe that not enough attention is paid the ethical codes and principles by the employees while conducting their duties and jobs. The existence of ethical principles and adherence to these principles can contribute to employees' trust in their organization. Thus, the employees might think that decisions are made and applications are conducted in a just manner in the organization (Akdoğan and Demirtaş, 2014). As the ethical climate has a positive impact on organizational trust (Büte, 2011), formation of such trust might lead to the minimization of unethical attempts and behaviors. The faculty member' medium level of ethical climate perception might be interpreted as inadequate development of this feeling of trust.

The faculty members' both overall ethical climate perceptions and their perceptions of the sub-dimensions of ethical climate are not high enough. This result may be an indication of the limitedness of common understandings, values and behaviors that lay the ground for social capital that has an important impact on organizational functioning (Akdoğan and Demirtaş, 2014). Moreover, it can be argued that such a level of ethical climate perception is not incentive enough for adherence to ethical principles. A great amount of research has revealed that in an environment where employees are promoted in terms of exhibiting ethical behaviors, the number of unethical behaviors is reduced (Trevino et al., 1998; Doğan and Kılıç, 2014).

The findings regarding the sub-dimensions of ethical climate can be addressed within the context of egoism, benevolence and principle that are considered to be the criteria of ethical climate (Victor and Cullen, 1988). Laws and codes sub-dimension corresponding to the criterion of principle and independence sub-dimension have higher means than the other sub-dimensions

(3.38, 3.11, respectively). This finding might be interpreted as greater importance is attached to the principles of the criterion of principles than the other criteria in the organization where this study was conducted. That is, legislative and administrative rules and professional codes are cared about more than the other sub-dimensions. This finding concurs with the literature. Peterson (2002) stated that in organizations where ethical codes exist, the perceived ethical climate level is higher and unethical behaviors are encountered to a lesser extent. This result might be connected with the fact that the context of the current study is a university. At universities, ethical framework for the activities of the faculty members is set by both laws and professional codes. For instance, in Turkey, ethical principles to be considered by the faculty members while conducting their activities in different areas were set by The Council of Higher Education (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2014). Furthermore, a large number of laws and regulations established rules to be obeyed in many issues and they are reinforced with various sanctions. All of these factors might have led to a higher perception of the sub-dimensions pertinent to the criterion of principle. The faculty perceptions of the sub-dimensions of instrumental and efficiency connected to the criterion of egoism are lower than that of the sub-dimensions related to the criterion of principle. This finding might be interpreted as the employees do not much care about the interest of the organization. The perception of the sub-dimension of benevolence corresponding to the criterion of benevolence is at the lowest level when compared to the other sub-dimensions and quite close to the lower limit of the medium level. This finding indicates that the faculty members have the perception that not very much attention is paid to principles (attaching importance, respecting and valuing, etc.) asking favors for others.

The findings obtained in relation to whether the faculty members' ethical climate perceptions vary significantly depending on gender and academic rank revealed that these variables do not have significant effects on the faculty members' perceptions. This might indicate that their observations are common and consistent. As there is no study dealing with the faculty members' organizational ethical climate perceptions in the literature regarding Turkey, no comparison can be made with other studies. But, in some studies gender was found to be significant on ethical climate perceptions of employees (Parboteeah et al., 2008) and in some others it was found to be insignificant (Van Sandt, 2001). There may be various reasons of these inconsistent results originating from as social status of women, work environments, lack of administrative policies favoring gender equality, traditional perceptions and practices in the work setting etc.

The faculty members' both overall political behavior perceptions and their perceptions of its sub-dimensions are at the medium level and not low enough. The lower level of political behavior perception in any organizations is associated with both lower use of organizationally undesired political tactics and higher use of more ethical behaviors. High level of political behavior perceptions is of some negative implications for the employees who do not attempt to use such tactics. For instance, they may see political behaviors as a threat for their well-beings (Başar et al., 2015). These results show that the faculty members have the perception that organizational personnel resort to political behaviors to a great extent to increase their personal interest (to accelerate their career advancement, gain more power within the organization or maintain the possessed power and be awarded with material and non-material prizes etc.). There might be many reasons for the faculty members to have developed such a perception. There are some studies in the literature reporting that in organizations where means of problem solving are not clear, job descriptions are not explicitly made, duties and responsibilities are not clearly defined and ethical principles are not clear or not adequately heeded employees' resorts to political behaviors more frequently (Pfeffer, 1992). It has also been reported that political behaviors are more commonly encountered in environments where radical changes are introduced, resources are scarce, the objectives are unclear, technological and environmental

changes are introduced or organizational changes are introduced and in situations in which decisions must be made through bargaining or by affecting others (Farrell and Petersen, 1986; Drory and Romm, 1990; Ferris et al., 1996; Islamoglu and Boru, 2007). Thus, this finding of the current study might indicate that there are organizational conditions leading the faculty members to perceive political behaviors. A qualitative study on the political tactics of faculty members in an education faculty also indicates that faculty members use political behaviors as self-serving purposes (Kaya, 2014).

When the faculty members' political behavior perceptions are examined in terms of its sub-dimensions, it is seen that the means for the perceptions of the sub-dimensions are at the medium level and the perceptions of the sub-dimensions of ingratiation and making concessions are at a higher level than the others. These two dimensions are related to attempts made to influence others by being approved and accepted rather than to influence others by using power.

The results obtained in relation to whether the faculty members' political behavior perceptions vary by gender revealed that this variable does not have significant effects on the faculty members' both overall perception and perceptions of the sub-dimensions. In this regard, both groups of participants seem to have similar perceptions.

The results obtained from the comparison of the faculty members' political behavior perceptions on the basis of their academic rank revealed that there is a significant difference between the faculty members having the titles of instructor and lecturer and the faculty members with the other academic ranks only in terms of the sub-dimension of ingratiation. While the mean of the instructors and lecturers for this dimension is 3.13, the means for the others range from 3.54 to 3.71. Thus, it can be argued that the instructors and lecturers' perceptions of the sub-dimension of ingratiation are lower than the other faculty members' perceptions, which may mean that they observe political behaviors in this sub-dimension to a lesser extent. The instructors and lecturers are not probably in search of political tactics that much as mostly they work in less hierarchically organized units such as foreign language schools, vocational schools and their expectations for the career advancement are low and limited.

The third objective of the current research is to determine the relationships between the faculty members' ethical climate and political behavior perceptions. For this purpose, multiple-regression analysis was conducted. The results of this regression analysis showed that of the sub-dimensions of ethical climate perception, benevolence and instrumental sub-dimensions are significant predictors of political behavior perception. These two sub-dimensions can be claimed to be related to personal, organizational or more comprehensive interests. Accordingly, perceived inadequacies in regulations related to individual and organizational rewarding and interests naturally affect tendencies to exhibit political behaviors. There are reverse relationships at a medium level between the faculty members' ethical climate perceptions and the three sub-dimensions of political behavior perception (instrumental, laws and codes, benevolence) and at a low level between the faculty members' ethical climate perception and the two sub-dimensions (independence and efficiency). All the dimensions of ethical climate perception together explain more than one-third of political behavior perception. When all these results are considered together, it can be claimed that political behavior perceptions of the faculty are closely associated with ethical climate perception. Thus, it seems to be possible to decrease undesired political behaviors by adopting regulations and applications that could positively affect ethical climate perceptions. Though no study specifically focusing on faculty members is found in the literature, there are some opinions stated in the literature in favor of this finding of the current study. Trevino et al. (1998) reported that in a working place where employees are encouraged to demonstrate ethical behaviors unethical behaviors are reduced and Peterson (2002) stated that in organizations where ethical rules are clear, the level of organizational ethical climate is higher

and unethical behaviors are encountered to a lesser extent. Ki et al. (2012) stressed that the support of the top management and ethical rules have the potential of affecting workers' ethical practices and behaviors to a great extent. Ethical leadership behaviors positively affect ethical climate and negatively affect organizational political behavior perceptions (Akdoğan and Demirtaş, 2014; Demirdağ and Ekmekçioğlu, 2015); therefore, the attitudes of directors towards their ethical responsibilities in higher education intuitions are of vital importance. Though instructional and research activities in higher education institutions are carried out to a great extent on the basis of individual decisions and evaluations, the functioning of the structure framing these activities may be influential on individual tendencies. Therefore, administrators' overseeing ethical principles in higher education institutions and making others feel this are of great importance for the formation and maintenance of ethical climate.

## 5. CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study indicate that faculty members do not have a desired level of ethical climate perception as the faculty members' ethical climate perceptions are not high enough. The existence of such perceptions seems to be one of the sources of considerable amount of political behaviors observed by faculty members. In this respect, the findings provide evidence that ethical climate perception is a significant predictor of the political behavior perception.

Based on the major conclusion of the study, two recommendations can be made: (1) The relationships indicated with the study should encourage administrators in higher education institutions to take some actions such as having clear standards to distinguish ethical behaviors from unethical ones, observing the ethical procedures strictly, trying to make transparency and accountability as an organizational value, having polices and procedures not allowing self-serving behaviors, exhibiting ethical leadership behaviors to increase ethical climate perception and to decrease political behavior perceptions of the faculty members. (2) This study focused on the perceptions of the faculty members and their perceptions were determined through a survey type study. As this sort of studies allow for overall assessments, which can be accepted as a limitation of the present study, further in-depth studies designed in qualitative research methodology are needed to see the actual case and reasons behind the above mentioned perceptions.

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## Uzun Özet

Bir örgütün çalışanlarının örgütsel amaçların gerçekleştirilmesine yönelik gönüllü çabalarının sürekliliğinin sağlanması, aynı zamanda örgütsel amaçların gerçekleşmesini engellemeye yönelik çabalarının azaltılması çalışanların bazı konulardaki algılarının olumlu ya da olumsuz olmasıyla yakından ilişkilidir. Çalışanların etik iklim algısı bu etkenlerden birisi olarak görülmektedir. Olumlu etik iklim algısının örgütsel güveni artırarak çalışanların örgüt amaçlarına zarar verecek ve olumsuz sonuçlara yol açabilecek politik davranışlara olan yönelimlerini azaltması beklenebilir. Etik iklim örgütlerin etik özelliklerini değerlendirmede kullanılan yaygın bir çerçevedir. Örgütsel etik iklim, etik sorunlarla nasıl başa çıkılacağı ve etik açıdan doğru davranışın ne olduğu konusunda örgüt üyelerinin ortak algılamaları olarak görülmektedir. Örgütsel etik iklim, örgütlerde çalışanlara yönelik hangi davranışların doğru olacağını ve ahlaki ikilemlerde sorunların nasıl ele alınması ve çözülmesi gerektiğine ilişkin paylaşılmış düşünceleri ifade etmektedir. Bu düşünceler etik sorunların tanımlanması, değerlendirilmesi ve çözülmesinde kullanılacak ölçütlere dönüşerek karar alma sürecinde yöneticilere rehberlik eden bir yapı (construct) oluşturmaktadırlar. Bu çerçevede etik iklim etik ikilemlere karşı oluşmuş sistematik tepkileri ve karar verme sürecine rehberlik eden değer sistemini ifade etmektedir. Ancak, örgütsel etik iklim kendiliğinden oluşan bir yapı değildir. Kişisel çıkarlar, bireysel arkadaşlıklar, grup çıkarları ve ilgileri, sosyal sorumluluk, kişisel ahlak, kurallar, standartlar, prosedürler, kanunlar, profesyonel kodlar gibi birçok bireysel, örgütsel ve çevresel etken örgütsel etik iklimin oluşmasına etki eder. Yapılan araştırmalar etik iklim algısının örgütsel sonuçların olumlu ya da olumsuz olarak şekillenmesini sağlayan güçlü bir değişken olduğunu göstermektedir. Çalışanlar, etik ve etik olmayan davranışların ayırt edilmesini sağlayacak tarzda açık standartlara sahip örgütlere karşı olumlu tutum geliştirmektedir. Örgütsel etik ikliminin güçlü olması, örgütün birlik ve beraberliğinin ve moral gücünün artmasına etki etmektedir. Araştırmanın ikinci temel kavramı örgütsel politik davranışlardır. Örgütlerde çalışanlar bazı amaçları gerçekleştirmek için çeşitli yol ve yöntemlerle birbirlerini etkilemek ve belirli yönde davranışa yönlendirmek için çaba gösterebilirler. Çalışanların güç kazanma veya güç kullanma yönündeki bu çabaları örgüt içi politikayı oluşturmaktadır. Örgüt içi politika kurum için yararlı veya zararlı sonuçlar doğurabilir ve bu sonuçlara göre politik davranışın iyi veya kötü olduğu söylenebilir. Ancak, sonuçları ne olursa olsun, kurum içinde politik davranış kaçınılmaz olduğu söylenebilir. Politik davranış tanımlarında öne çıkan ortak özellik politik davranışın kişinin çıkarlarına hizmet etmesi (self-servicing), istenilen sonuçlara daha çabuk ulaşabilmesi için kişiye yardımcı olması, ancak kurum tarafından hoş görülmemesidir. Bazı araştırmacılar politik davranış çok geniş çerçevede ele almış ve sosyal bir gerçek olduğunu vurgulamışlardır. Basit anlamda politik davranış “güç kullanımı” olarak ele alınmaktadır. Buna göre kurum içinde kullanılan her türlü etkileme süreci politik davranış tanımı içine girmektedir. Bazı araştırmacılar ise, politik davranış daha dar bir çerçevede ele alıp, kurumun hedeflerine ters düşse bile, kişinin kendi çıkarlarına hizmet eden ve kurum içinde hoş görülmeyen her türlü etkileme çabası olarak tanımlamışlardır. Bu çalışmada da bu yaklaşım tercih edilmiştir. Bu kapsamda, kurum içi ve dışında birlikler ve ilişkiler (koalisyon) kurmak, karar verenlerden önemli bilgileri saklamak, üst yönetimin desteğini almak için lobi faaliyetlerinde bulunmak, ispiyonculuk, dedikodu yaparak haber dağıtmak, kurumla ilgili gizli bilgileri medyaya sızdırmak, başkalarına yardım ederek onlardan aynı karşılığı beklediğini hissettirmek politik davranışlara örnek olarak verilebilir. Politik davranışlar güç ve etki olarak çalışanlar ve paydaşlar arasındaki ilişkileri şekillendirmede önemli bir rol oynadığından politik davranışın nedenlerinin bilinmesi önemli görülmektedir. Örgütlerde çalışanlar gerçeklerden daha çok algılara göre hareket ettiklerinden, çalışanların etik iklim algılarının ve politik davranış algılarının bilinmesi önemli görülmektedir. Alanyazın bir örgütün etik ikliminin çalışanların olumlu davranışları ve birçok olumsuz davranış doğrudan ilgili olduğunu göstermektedir. Benzer şekilde etik iklim algısı ile politik ortam ve davranışların birbirlerini etkileyebilecek örgütsel davranış değişkenleri olabileceği çıkarımında bulunulabilir. Bu çalışma bir üniversite özelinde öğretim elemanlarının algılarına dayalı olarak örgütsel etik iklim ve politik davranış algıları arasındaki ilişkileri belirlemeye yöneliktir. Bir işyerinde istenmeyen davranışların oluşmasının gerisinde çatışan algılar en çok bilinen nedenlerdir. Bu nedenle bu ilişkilerin belirlenmesi yükseköğretim yönetimi ve performans açısından önemlidir. Türkiye’de yükseköğretimde etik ile ilgili çalışmalara bakıldığında, çalışmaların çoğunlukla bilimsel araştırma ve yayın etiği ile sınırlı kaldığı örgütsel etik iklim konusunun yükseköğretim öncesi eğitim kurumları düzeyinde çok sınırlı ölçüde de olsa çalışılmış olduğu, yükseköğretim düzeyinde ise örgütsel etik iklim konusunu ele alan bir çalışmanın olmadığı belirlenmiştir. Araştırma bu eksikliği gidermeye katkı getirmeyi amaçlaması bakımından önemli görülebilir.



Bu araştırmanın temel amacı öğretim elemanlarının etik iklim algıları ile örgütsel politik davranış algıları arasındaki ilişkileri belirlemektir. Araştırma tarama modelinde betimsel bir çalışmadır. Araştırmanın örneklemini Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi'nde çalışan 440 öğretim elemanı (profesör, doçent, yardımcı doçent, araştırma görevlisi, öğretim görevlisi ve okutman) oluşturmaktadır. Bu öğretim elemanlarının %39'u kadın, %61'i erkeklerden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmanın verileri Etik İklim Ölçeği ve Politik Davranış Ölçeği'nin 2014-2015 bahar yarıyılında örnekleme uygulanması ile elde edilmiştir. Araştırma verileri betimsel istatistikler, t-testi, ANOVA testi, çoklu regresyon analizi kullanılarak çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma bulguları şöyle özetlenebilir: (1) Öğretim elemanlarının etik iklim algıları hem genel olarak hem de alt boyutlar temelinde orta düzeydedir ve yeterince yüksek değildir. (2) Öğretim elemanlarının etik iklim algıları, öğretim elemanlarının cinsiyet ve akademik unvanlarına göre anlamlı farklılık göstermemektedir. (3) Öğretim elemanlarının örgütsel politik davranış algıları hem genel olarak hem de alt boyutlar bazında *göze girmeye çalışmak* alt boyutu dışında orta düzeydedir ve yeterince düşük değildir. *Göze girmeye çalışmak* boyutuna ilişkin politik davranış algısı yüksek düzeydedir. (5) Öğretim elemanlarının politik davranış algıları hem genel olarak hem de alt boyutlar temelinde cinsiyete göre anlamlı farklılık göstermemektedir. (6) Okutman ve öğretim görevlileri diğer unvan gruplarına göre daha düşük düzeyde politik davranış algısına sahiptirler. (7) Etik iklimin boyutları tümü birlikte, öğretim elemanlarının politik davranış algıları ile orta düzeyde ve anlamlı bir ilişki vermektedir ( $R=,60$ ,  $p<,01$ ). Etik iklim boyutlarının tümü birlikte politik davranış algısının üçte birinden fazlasını açıklamaktadır. Bu sonuçlar topluca değerlendirildiğinde politik davranış algısının önemli ölçüde etik iklim algısı ile ilişkili olduğu görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla çalışanların etik iklim algılarını olumlu etkileyecek düzenlemeler ve uygulamalar yaparak etik iklim algısını olumlu yönde etkilemek ve bunun sonucu olarak istenmeyen politik davranışlara yönelimi azaltmak olanaklı görünmektedir. Sonuç olarak, araştırma kapsamındaki öğretim elemanlarının örgütsel etik iklim algılarının yeterince yüksek olmadığı, politik davranış algılarının yeterince düşük olmadığı ve etik iklim algısının politik davranış algısını önemli ölçüde etkilediği söylenebilir.