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CONSEQUENCES OF CORPORATE ETHICAL CULTURE INTEGRITY FACTORS

Master Thesis

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Supervisor

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Turkish Anstract	**:**	Bu çalışma, kurumsal etik kültür bütünlüğü faktörlerinin (hesap verebilirlik, kötü hedefler, liderin rol modellemesi, itaat ve taviz baskısı) işten ayrılma niyeti üzerindeki etkilerini ve bu ilişkide işe ilişkin stresin aracılık rolünü incelemiştir. İstanbul'daki hizmet sektöründe çalışan 160 beyaz yakalı çalışanla yapılan araştırma, PLS-SEM yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, liderin rol modellemesi, itaat ve taviz baskısının stresle anlamlı şekilde ilişkili olduğunu; hesap verebilirlik ve kötü hedeflerin ise ilişkili olmadığını göstermiştir. İşe ilişkin stresin, işten ayrılma niyetini artırdığı bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, kötü hedefler ve taviz baskısı doğrudan işten ayrılma niyetini artırırken, liderin rol modellemesinin

etkisi önemsiz kalmıştır. Arabuluculuk analizleri, iş stresinin bazı bütünlük faktörleri ile işten ayrılma niyeti arasındaki ilişkide tamamlayıcı kısmi bir aracı rol oynadığını ortaya koymuştur.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that in the preparation of this thesis, scientific ethical rules have been followed, the works of other persons have been referenced in accordance with the scientific norms if used, there is no falsification in the used data, any part of the thesis has not been submitted to this university or any other university as another thesis.

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TO ISTANBUL GELISIM UNIVERSITY

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The thesis study of Samia KANDOUSSI titled as Consequences of Corporate Ethical Culture Integrity Factors has been accepted as MASTER THESIS in the department of Business Administration by out jury.

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SUMMARY

This study investigates the relationship between corporate ethical culture integrity factors —accountability, ill-conceived goals, leader's role modeling, obedience, and pressure to compromise— and employees' turnover intention. In addition, it examines whether perceived work-related stress as a mediating variable in these relationships. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were collected from 160 white-collar employees working in service organizations in Istanbul. The resarch data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

The results revealed that leader's role modeling, obedience, and pressure to compromise significantly influence work-related stress, while accountability and ill-conceived goals did not show significant associations. Moreover, work-related stress was found to significantly predict turnover intention. Among the integrity factors, ill-conceived goals and pressure to compromise directly increased turnover intention, whereas leader's role modeling exhibited a non-significant negative effect. Mediation analysis indicated that work-related stress significantly mediated the effects of leader's role modeling, obedience, and pressure to compromise on turnover intention, confirming a complementary partial mediation pattern.

The study contributes to the organizational ethics literature by clarifying how integrity dimensions within ethical culture influence employees' psychological responses and turnover behavior. From a managerial perspective, the findings emphasize the importance of strengthening ethical leadership and reducing pressures that compromise moral standards to mitigate work-related stress and retain talent.

Key Words: Corporate Ethical Culture, Integrity Factors, Work-Related Stress, Turnover Intention, PLS-SEM, Mediation Analysis**.**

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, kurumsal etik kültür bütünlüğü faktörleri (hesap verebilirlik, kötü tasarlanmış hedefler, liderin rol modellemesi, itaat ve taviz verme baskısı) ile çalışanların işten ayrılma niyeti arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktadır. Ayrıca, algılanan işe ilişkin stresinin bu ilişkilerde aracı bir değişken olup olmadığını incelemektedir. Nicel bir araştırma tasarımı kullanılmış ve İstanbul'daki hizmet sektörü kuruluşlarında çalışan 160 beyaz yakalı çalışandan veri toplanmıştır. Araştırma verileri Kısmi En Küçük Kareler Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi (PLS-SEM) kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir.

Sonuçlar, liderin rol model olması, itaat ve taviz verme baskısının işe ilişkin stres ile ilişkili olduğu, hesap verebilirlik ve kötü tasarlanmış hedeflerin ise ilişkili olmadığı ortaya koymuştur. Dahası, iş stresinin işten ayrılma niyeti ile pozitif olarak ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Bütünlük faktörleri arasında, kötü tasarlanmış hedefler ve uzlaşma baskısı doğrudan işten ayrılma niyetini artırırken, liderin rol modellemesi önemli olmayan olumsuz bir etki göstermiştir. Arabuluculuk analizi, iş kaynaklı stresin liderin rol modellemesi, itaati ve taviz verme baskısının işten ayrılma niyeti üzerindeki etkilerini önemli ölçüde aracılık ettiğini ve tamamlayıcı kısmi bir arabuluculuk modelini doğruladığını gösterdi.

Çalışma, etik kültür içindeki bütünlük boyutlarının çalışanların psikolojik tepkilerini ve işten ayrılma davranışlarını nasıl etkilediğini açıklığa kavuşturarak örgütsel etik literatürüne katkıda bulunmaktadır. Yönetimsel bir bakış açısından, bulgular etik liderliği güçlendirmenin ve iş kaynaklı stresi azaltmak ve yetenekleri elde tutmak için ahlaki standartları tehlikeye atan baskıları azaltmanın önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kurumsal Etik Kültür Bütünlük Faktörleri, İşe İlişkin Stres, İşten Ayrılma Niyeti, PLS-SEM.

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ABBREVIATIONS

GECS	**:**	German Ethical Culture Scale
PLS-SEM	**:**	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
CR	**:**	Composite Reliability
AVE	**:**	Average Variance Extracted
HTMT	**:**	Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations

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INTRODUCTION

During the last years, ethics in the workplace have become an increasingly hot topic since organizations came to realize that it is indeed the promotion of ethical values that leads to success and stability for the organization. After all, fraud, theft, deception, and harm to others do not come from the individuals themselves only, the "bad apples," but from the organizational environment, the "bad basket.". In other words, the organizational context constitutes the axis around which individuals' behaviors are guided, and their ethical attitudes take shape. It has been seen in various studies that factors in the surroundings of an employee in a working environment, including organizational values and culture, greatly influence ethical behavior (Tanner, Gangl and Witt, 2019).

It is important that organizations apply accurate tools and metrics that would help explain what factors cause employees to act a certain way by measuring the ethical culture dimensions of an organization. These instruments are necessary not only for measuring the ethical situation in the organization but also for determining the level at which employees respect general ethical values and guiding them towards behavior contributing to the survival of the organization and realization of its goals. These tools also enable organizations to compare the same with the benchmarks set within the industry and thus identify how far they have traveled in forming a positive organizational culture that ensures ethical commitment on the part of their employees (Maesschalck and Bertók, 2009).

The significance of the study is that it assesses the impact of ethical culture on employees' commitment to organizations and intentions to stay at work or move to other jobs, focusing on how job stress mediates this relationship. The integrity approach has been one of the most common approaches with which to study ethics in the business world, and it suggests that promoting values of integrity is necessary not only to promote ethical behavior but also to ensure the sustainability of organizations. This approach needs to be applied in various cultural contexts, such as the Turkish work environment, in order to gain further insight into how the organizational values in various diverse environments influence the behaviors of individuals.

Importantly, the tools developed elsewhere, such as the German Ethical Culture Scale, provide a good analytical framework for ethical values and a measure of employee commitment to those values. Although the GECS was developed in a different cultural context, testing it in other settings will contribute to our understanding of how ethical culture affects diverse organizations. The current study aims to test this scale within a Turkish context; the results may contribute to the scientific literature of organizational ethics with a model fit for the local culture.

The results of this study will, therefore, help explain how ethical factors are enigmatically connected with guiding employee behaviors and how those factors influence the levels of organizational commitment and the intentions to stay or leave. Based on the findings, organizations can thus build strategies that foster ethical culture and minimize the negative effects of job stress, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Ethical Culture

The essence of culture can be defined as the values, norms and practices shared by individuals in a group. Organizational culture can be defined as the common beliefs shared by the members of the organization, and ethical culture can be considered as the beliefs about the ethics of the organization shared by the members of the organization (Key, 1999).

Treviño (1990) revealed that ethical culture has a very important place in organizational culture. In another study, Treviño et al. (1998) stated that ethical culture will help us understand what is legitimate and what is unacceptable in organizations. At the same time, Treviño et al. (1998) revealed three important factors in his study on ethical culture: Firstly, the ethical environment, secondly, the commitment to authority, and finally, code enforcement, which basically means that individuals follow the prescribed behaviors and act accordingly.

According to Murphy (1988), ethical culture includes an informal organizational structure; on the other hand, Ferrell et al. (2002) state that ethical culture offers a formal structure in the spiral of policies, processes and programs.

According to Hofstede (1978, 1980, 1983, 1984), societies have four major cultural dimensions: Power distance, individualism, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. All of these cultural dimensions are related to ethics. An individual's perception of the ethical situation can affect many factors such as rules for behavior (Vitell, Nwachukwu and Barnes, 1993). When analyzed in the light of moral philosophy, ethical theories are analyzed in two different clusters in terms of deontological and theological aspects: While the deontological approach examines a specific ethical or particular behavior, the theological approach deals with the consequences of these actions (Vitell, Nwachukwu and Barnes, 1993).

Authors such as Peters, Waterman and Schein (2022) have stated that organizational culture plays an important role in organizational success. However, the impact of organizational culture on ethical behavior and unethical behavior has been

expressed by Baucus and Beck-Dudley (2005). In this parallel, Treviño (1986) has brought to the agenda the studies and ideas that a democratic cultural structure is a mirror of ethical behavior in the organization and that ethical behavior increases more. He stated that ethical behaviors increase more when they are supported by the culture, otherwise, when unethical behaviors are supported by the culture in the organization, these behaviors also increase. Accordingly, the findings show that the organizational environment has a direct positive relationship with ethical decision-making (Sims and Keon, 1999).

Treviño and Weaver (2001) found that a certain ethical culture affects the ethical behavior of individuals in an organization. In addition, an earlier study by Treviño et al. (1998) revealed that an ethical environment and compliance with authority are the best predictors of unethical behavior.

1.2. Corporate Ethical Culture

A corporate ethical culture is the cumulative expression of values, norms, and practices that control ethical behavior within an organization. The latter is a basic structure for decision-making processes and defines the way in which employees will function internally and externally. Organizations that build a strong ethical culture are more likely to attract stakeholder trust, decrease potential risks associated with behavior contrary to ethics, and enhance their general reputation. A well-developed ethical culture promotes not only regulatory compliance but also moral reflection and responsibility among employees, thereby making it an indispensable asset in today's business environment (Schein, 2010).

Leadership is at the forefront in creating and sustaining an ethical culture in organizations. As stated by Schein (2010) The unique and essential function of leadership is the manipulation of culture," which highlights leaders' responsibility in embedding ethical norms in behaviors of the organization. Ethical leadership is more than policy setting; it requires leaders to become models, showing the ethical behavior they expect from their employees. Brown and Treviño (2006) highlight that leaders who consistently show ethical behavior create an environment where employees feel they can keep up ethical standards even when situations are hard or pressures from outside are applied.

According to Kaptein (2011) employees working for organizations with strong ethical cultures demonstrate a significantly decreased willingness to engage in unethical behaviors, such as fraud or misconduct. This is because ethical cultures provide clear expectations and give guides for ethical decision-making. The ethical culture within an organization significantly influences employee conduct and overall organizational effectiveness.

As argued by Carroll and Buchholtz (2014), ethical businesses are in a better position to maintain long-term relationships with customers, investors, and regulators.

This trust will translate into very tangible benefits, such as increased customer loyalty, better financial results, and reduced legal exposure. Also, in times of social media and the flow of information, the ethical reputation of an organization can greatly impacts its image in the public eye, maximizing its successes or magnifying its failures. The establishment of a corporate ethical culture is very important in dealing with global issues such as sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Scherer and Palazzo (2011) hold that "Corporations are increasingly perceived as political actors that have to assume responsibility for social and environmental matters." Such a change requires organizations to adopt ethical dimensions in their strategy frameworks so that operations lead toward desirable results for society. For example, ethical cultures push organizations not only to abide by the set regulatory framework but also to go ahead in trying to minimize their ecological footprint or to address social disparities. Put another way, the ethical culture of an organization is more than policies; it is an active system moving with the organization and its diverse stakeholders. The establishment and maintenance of this culture require conscious efforts: leadership commitment, education of employees, clear communication, and efficient mechanisms for the solution of ethical problems. Organizational focus on ethical culture will help to defend against unethical conduct, drive innovation, and contribute toward sustainable development in an increasingly turbulent world (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2014).

1.2.1. Corporate ethical culture integrity factors

1.2.1.1. Accountability

Accountability refers to the perception that individuals must justify their actions

to an audience with the authority to reward or sanction them. Organizations are social systems based on shared expectations, including ethical norms, and individuals within these systems are held responsible for their actions. This responsibility is shaped by social control mechanisms such as laws, rules, and societal expectations (Beu and Buckley, 2004).

Tanner et al. (2019) defined accountability as the clarity regarding who is responsible for which tasks and the obligation to justify one's actions to others. When an organization clearly communicates that its members are accountable for their actions, it can motivate employees to feel a sense of personal responsibility and align their behavior with institutional rules and ethical standards. In contrast, organizations lacking such clarity are more likely to encourage rationalization processes, such as denying responsibility.

Accountability is evaluated in three main dimensions within an organizational context: task, outcome, and procedural accountability. Task accountability refers to the clear definition of who is responsible for which duties. This helps clarify individual roles. However, in hierarchical structures or team-based work environments, individuals are more likely to avoid personal responsibility (Tanner et al. 2019). Bandura (1990, 1999) describes this in two ways: transferring blame to others is referred to as "displacement of responsibility," while distributing responsibility among group members is called "diffusion of responsibility." On the other hand, outcome accountability refers to the obligation of individuals to justify the results of their decisions. Procedural accountability involves the requirement to explain how decisions were made and how the process was conducted. When considered together, these three dimensions show that accountability is not limited to the distribution of tasks but also includes the responsibility to transparently justify both the outcomes of decisions and the processes through which they are made. This approach is widely supported in the literature on social psychology and behavioral ethics (Tanner et al. 2019).

1.2.1.2. Ill-conceived goals

lll-conceived goals can lead to unethical outcomes when organizations focus primarily on competitive and economic objectives. Although previous ethical culture

models have largely overlooked this issue, research in the field of behavioral ethics has increasingly shown that, while goals can enhance motivation and productivity, they may also trigger undesirable side effects by encouraging unethical behavior. In particular, experimental studies have found that individuals faced with highly competitive or overly challenging goals are more likely to cheat and exhibit lower levels of intrinsic motivation (Tanner et al., 2019).

1.2.1.3. Leader's role modeling

Leaders are effective role models because they occupy central positions in organizations, making their behavior highly visible to employees. Frontline managers, in particular, become primary models due to their frequent and close interactions with employees. When they set goals, emphasize behavioral standards, monitor progress, and provide feedback, they attract employees' attention. These interactions offer ample opportunities for employees to observe and learn from them indirectly. Moreover, when observers see that a model is personally engaged in the behaviors being promoted, their perceptions of the credibility and reliability of those behaviors increase (Ogunfowora, Maerz and Varty, 2021).

Leaders are critical in establishing and maintaining an ethical culture. Leaders model the behaviors desired in their organization, such as setting a clear standard for proper behavior and helping to establish a positive ethical climate (Brown, Treviño and Harrison., 2005). Under Bandura's (1971) social learning theory, followers learn by observing and modeling their leaders; therefore, ethical leadership represents one of the salient forces in ensuring organizational integrity (Brown et al., 2005). Fair, transparent, and consistent leaders create an environment where employees are more likely to mimic these qualities, thus creating a positive feedback loop of ethical behavior. For example, when leaders address ethical issues directly and publicly support ethical norms, employees feel encouraged to choose the ethical course of action instead of taking easy ways out (Eisenbeiss, van Knippenberg and Fahrbach, 2015).

1.2.1.4. Obedience

Obedience refers to the belief that individuals are expected to accept authority and their subordinate roles without question. Such expectations tend to foster a culture

of fear and silence rather than a culture of voice (Tanner et al., 2019). According to Obedience to authority refers to the tendency of individuals to comply with the demands of authority figures without questioning. Authority is defined as the power to direct the actions of others; subordinates suspend their own judgment and act according to the instructions given. Individuals often follow orders without question, even when those orders involve unethical behavior (Ghasemaghaei and Kordzadeh, 2024). According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory of moral self, moral behavior is not solely guided by individual reasoning but is also influenced by social environments. The theory suggests that individuals may bypass their self-imposed moral sanctions through mechanisms of moral disengagement. One key mechanism is the displacement of responsibility, which reduces the perceived link between one's actions and their consequences (Ghasemaghaei and Kordzadeh, 2024).

Obedience within the ethical culture refers to the expectation that staff members should comply with the policies and directions set by the organization. While obedience might encourage discipline and consistency, it also has the potential to result in unethical behavior when workers obey harmful directives without question. To avoid this risk, ethical organizations attempt to generate an environment where employees feel incentivized to think critically about directions and to voice any discrepancies with ethical principles. For instance, policies on whistleblowing and ethical training programs give employees the strength to challenge unethical instructions while showing respect for authority (Thoms, 2008).

1.2.1.5. Pressure to compromise

Pressure to compromise refers to the degree to which individuals feel organizational pressure to act against their own roles, values, or sense of right and wrong. Such pressure can stem from job or role demands, authority figures, or work teams that push employees toward behavior inconsistent with ethical standards. Previous research in organizational, business, and behavioral ethics shows that employees who feel compelled to act against their conscience are more likely to experience stress and burnout (Tanner et al., 2019).

Employees often experience ethical conflict when they feel pressured to compromise their personal values to meet organizational goals (Peterson, 2003).

Research has shown that employees often feel pressured to conform to their organization's lower ethical standards. For example, in a study conducted by Carroll (1975) with 238 business managers, more than 64 percent reported feeling pressured to compromise their personal values to achieve organizational goals. Similarly, in a more recent nationwide survey in the USA, Goodell (1994) found that nearly one-third of respondents felt pressured by colleagues or management to engage in behaviors that violated their company's ethical standards.

Organizations will have to proactively identify and mitigate sources of such pressure by encouraging open communication, reducing dependence on unrealistic goals, and ensuring that employees have the necessary resources to meet expectations ethically (Armenakis, Brown and Mehta, 2011). Second, an organizational culture of psychological safety enables employees to feel comfortable in discussing ethical concerns without retaliation and is likely to go a long way in mitigating the adverse effects of pressure to compromise (Schaubroeck et al., 2012).

1.3. Stress

The origin of the word stress, which we encounter in almost every field, is based on Latin. The word was then frequently used in English. In Latin, which is the first point of origin of stress, the word "estrictia" appears in the form of "estrece" in the old French spelling. The general meanings of these terms, which have different meanings, are "strain, tension and pressure". In the 17th century, the word was used in meanings such as "disaster, calamity, calamity, trouble, trouble, sorrow, grief, pain". The word stress first appeared in the world of science as a term in the field of physics in the 17th century. After the field of physics, the concept of stress started to be used in the field of medicine, but the stress in the field of medicine is not measurable like the stress in the definition in the field of physics. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the concept of stress changed its meaning in the context of changing industry and technology, and the word began to be used in meanings such as "power, pressure, difficulty." (Boz, Duran and Bülbül, 2019; Yiğit, 2024).

Stress is defined from a different perspective as "the effort that the individual exerts beyond his/her physical and psychological limits due to incompatible conditions in the physical and social environment". Stress is generally defined as a negative concept. However, it is known that stress also has constructive points. The fact that the

first studies on stress were generally on harmful stress caused positive stress to be partially ignored. In this context, although stress is a concept that affects our lives only with its negative dimensions, it is sometimes necessary to say that stress is necessary to achieve goals in our lives (Yiğit, 2024).

Gümüştekin and Öztemiz, (2004) defined stress as the physical and psychological burden on the living being as a whole. When a living being is faced with a threat, if it believes that it can fight the threat, it resists and fights; if it believes that it cannot fight, it moves away from that environment. Some physical changes occur in people under stress. In addition to physical changes, psychological changes also occur. While physical changes have the same characteristics, psychological changes may differ from person to person (Gümüştekin and Öztemiz, 2004).

1.3.1. Sources of stress

The connection between technology and industry and the stress factor shows us that the effect of stress can change with nature and development. When we look at the causes of stress in human beings, it is possible to say that the following three factors emerge (Hu and Cheng, 2010).

1.3.1.1.Personal stress source

The personality structure of the employee is among the most important sources of stress in the working environment. From the moment a person is born, his/her personality is formed through the influence of his/her environment or his/her family. The fact that the employee's personality structure is emotional or irritable, the solution of the events or the relations with the employees in the work environment are related to the structure of the employee. The fact that the employee is social in daily life, not closed in, emotionally resistant or vice versa affects the stress in resisting stress. The excitement of rapid promotion within the organization also causes stress (Ulukaya, 2019).

1.3.1.2. Organizational stress sources

Stress has an effect that collapses the employee mentally and physically. The fact that a long part of the employee's life passes in the work environment can reveal stress factors in the work environment. The effect of the work environment on the

formation of work-related stress is very high. There may be general causes of work stress as well as stress sources specific to the employee's workplace. If the workplace environment poses a threat during the time the employee is in the work environment, all these reasons are stress factors (Unur and Pekerşen, 2017).

The lack of discipline in the workplace is a source of stress. The lack of a system in the workplace creates the problem of not being able to fully distribute responsibilities and duties within the organization. The fact that the products do not reach the desired quality and on time puts both the employer and the employee under the influence of stress. The distance of the employees to the workplace and the workplace service is also a source of stress. The fact that the employee starts the day early with the anxiety of being late for work affects physically. This discomfort causes employees to be unhappy and sullen, especially in the accommodation business (Soysal, 2009).

Appointments based on merit in the promotion of employees within the organization reduce stress. In addition, if the merit-oriented wage policy is not applied, the stress in the employee increases. Dissatisfaction with the employee increases stress and this negatively affects his/her work (Hung et al., 2022).

1.3.1.3. Environmental stress sources

The employee is affected by internal causes of stress as well as the events developing around him/her. Changes in the environment over time cause changes in the employee.

The stability of the world economy is within the sources of stress because it will affect the purchasing power of the employee. Internal turmoil or war in the country negatively affects the employee and the employer, which creates uncertainty. Transportation problems and heavy traffic are among the sources of environmental stress for employees working in big cities. Cultural and social changes in major wars or coups create a source of stress. In rapidly developing technology, adaptation to technology in workplaces increases expectations in positive or negative dimensions (Hung et al., 2022).

1.3.2. Work-related stress

Stress is a factor that has always been a part of human life since the beginning of human existence. The first human beings were stressed in the struggle for life in nature and struggled with nature, and as technology and industry developed, the sphere of influence of stress became more differentiated. The relevance of technology and industry to the stress factor shows that the impact of stress can change with nature and development. Employees spend most of their days in the work environment. At this time, employees both produce and try to communicate with other employees. During this time, they adapt to the environment and work environment. This adaptation is affected by stress due to physical, environmental and organizational reasons over time. Stress has started to be emphasized in recent years due to the development of the business environment, the occurrence of serious health problems in people, etc. (Cooper, Dewe and O'Driscoll, 2001).

The performance of employees, the loss of production in the workplace has been identified and stress has been recognized as a problem that urgently needs to be solved today. It is accepted that stress causes various psychological disorders in individuals and that there is a directly proportional interaction between the individual and the individual's psychology (Koçak and Erebak, 2019).

The concept of job stress has a very broad meaning for stress. Job stress is defined as a state of tension that arises as a result of the interaction between the physical and social environment of the employee. Individual and organizational reasons have important roles in the emergence of job stress. Job stress is considered as a positive stress for the employee, but sometimes it can harm the organization. It creates a negative effect by negatively affecting employees, especially on the basis of productivity of employees. (Unur and Pekerşen, 2017).

According to Ulukaya (2019) the health and work performance of employees who are exposed to stress for a long time are negatively affected. This may cause people to quit their jobs. On the other hand, positive stress can bring the employee to the goal they set. A certain level of stress affects the employee positively and increases the employee's job satisfaction, performance and efficiency in the work environment. Therefore, a certain level of stress in the work environment can positively affect the employee and the workplace.

When the employee starts working life, in addition to production, he/she makes efforts to communicate with his/her colleagues, to comply with the rules of the workplace and to take part in different groups at work. During this time, the employee is exposed to job stress caused by the work environment in the process of adaptation. It is seen that there are different approaches to the definition of job stress. The incompatibility between the employee and the work environment, as well as the lack of competence of the employee in the given job, etc. The tension that arises in the work environment where the employee works due to various reasons can be defined as job stress (Hu and Cheng, 2010).

Job stress is in a complex interaction with the person and the environment. Dealing with and solving the problems of guests staying in the business environment, dealing with difficult customers and solving their problems and managing stress can also cause job stress. Getting away from work stress is beneficial in reducing stress. Intense stress in the work environment, which gives employees a sense of burnout, reduces their commitment to work and the workplace. It may even lead to employee resignation (Hu and Cheng, 2010).

Employees spend a significant amount of time in production and service in the work environment, which may influence their well-being and performance. Since a peaceful physical environment where people can be comfortable for a long period of time will make the employee happy, this situation naturally reflects positively on production and service. In the opposite case, it can be reflected negatively on the workplace. In addition, the high level of danger of the workplace working environment, hot or cold working environment, too noisy working environment, insufficient lighting, lack of sufficient tools and equipment in the working environment, especially for the service sector, and the inability of the employee to produce adequate service can be counted among the physical stress sources (Eurofound and ILO, 2017; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). A research conducted by Unur and Pekerşen (2017) found that kitchen workers are psychologically negatively affected by the conditions because they work in a very hot and sweltering environment in the kitchen department of the hotel at an intense pace physically, and in parallel with this, in direct proportion to the stress of the employees, employees may enter into conflicts with other employees at work time. The negative physical environment

causes employees to be constantly unhappy. Especially in the hospitality sector, since customer satisfaction is based on customer satisfaction, the quality of work done by employees, smiling face and solving customer problems reduce customer complaints and thus increase the quality of the service provided. The fact that the performance of hotel employees is smooth until the employees are working in the kitchen, front office, housekeeping and technical service is related to the stress situation on the employees. Guests' complaints as a result of dissatisfaction are also among the causes of stress. For this reason, employees should be solution-oriented, especially in the problems they encounter with guests, and they should take the guest away from the problem (Cuma and Olcay, 2020). Especially those who cannot fulfill the responsibility given in the work environment and lack self-confidence and people who fail to establish a relationship with their coworkers are affected by job stress (Gümüştekin and Öztemiz, 2004).

Stress arises from the intertwined causes that develop between the employee and the work environment. In some cases, the main cause of stress may be the person himself/herself. The psychological structure and character of the person affects the way he/she looks at his/her work and working environment and his/her performance. Whether the person is male or female, his/her educational status, his/her emotional approach to social or asocial events and his/her struggle against people can be the cause of the stress experienced by the person in the work environment. There is a direct proportion between the personality of the employee and the employee's being affected by stress in the work environment. The struggle against stress in the work environment differs from person to person. Job stress affects each employee at different levels. Job stress that is felt at a high level for one employee may not have the same effect for another employee (Karabulut, 2018).

The formation of job stress reveals that the perception of job stress differs between professions due to the difference in the stress that employees working in production-oriented enterprises and service sector are under the influence of according to the environment in which they work. In this context, it is possible to say that the work stress pressure affecting the employee group and perceived by the employee varies according to professions, and in this context, it is possible to say that the work stress factors of each occupational group are different and their effects are different.

In addition, it has been determined that the perception of job stress may vary according to the gender, marital status and the environment in which the employee was raised (Çam and Çakır, 2008).

1.4. Turnover Intention

Mobley (1977) defined turnover intention as “employees' voluntary plans to leave the organization they work for and all the behaviors they perform in line with these plans”, while Laschinger and Fida, (2014) defined it as “all the plans made by an employee who decides to leave the job in line with this decision”.

While turnover is defined as the actual separation of an employee from the organization, turnover intention is defined as a behavioral manifestation of an employee's desire to leave the organization. As a matter of fact, turnover intention constitutes the basis of the plan made by employees to leave the organization, while subsequent turnover behavior emerges as an individual preference. As a result, it is thought that turnover intention can be defined as all behaviors related to employees' plans to leave an organization (Laschinger and Fida, 2014).

Considering all these reasons, it is clear that various measures should be taken to reduce turnover intention, including providing support for the individual needs of employees at the individual level and improving policies and working conditions at the organizational level (Zeren, 2022).

At the organizational level, employee turnover is one of the important factors that directly affect the turnover rate of the organization. In addition to the selection of new personnel, training and adaptation of personnel, the increase in the turnover rate in the workplace causes high costs. The departure of an employee who contributes to a positive working environment in the workplace causes dissatisfaction and low performance among other employees. The organization's reputation suffers when team dynamics are disrupted, and joint projects are affected. It takes time for a new employee to adapt to the team and the incompatibility experienced in this process results in high costs, low efficiency and profitability, and low productivity. (Çelik, 2022).

In addition to the organizational level, the process of leaving the job has consequences at the individual level. Employees who leave their jobs are especially

affected psychologically. In addition, inability to find a new job, inability to adapt to the new job, loss of competencies gained at work and loss of income are experienced. These situations require evaluating the effects of turnover from a broader perspective. (Favaro et al., 2020).

Considering its importance for organizations in terms of labor turnover and working environment, turnover should be managed and prevented. However, it is thought that understanding the effects of turnover on employees can help to provide a healthier working environment in the workplace. Prevention of turnover intention Since turnover intention is generally seen as a precursor of turnover behavior, it is important to investigate and resolve the related causes. In this context, preventing turnover intentions is recognized as an effective approach. (Favaro et al., 2020).

Increased turnover and the recruitment of new employees in an institution and organization lead to high costs by causing a decrease in customer satisfaction and loyalty and a decrease in revenues. Therefore, it is important to retain existing employees. Hua et al., (2023) argue that employees with strong organizational commitment increase job satisfaction by enabling other employees to stay at work. It is stated that organizational factors including reward and support play an important role in increasing employees' organizational commitment. Kaihlanen et al. (2020). reveals that leadership practices that encourage organizational support and workplace conditions that promote person-job fit play a critical role in the retention of new graduate employees. However, it is emphasized that health managers should take initiatives to ensure that new graduate employees have a manageable workload. Piotrowski (2022), reported that mentoring programs implemented in hospitals were effective on the turnover rates of newly recruited employees. Newly graduated employees experience high levels of job stress because they experience reality shock during the transition process from the student role to the nursing role. High job stress results in the intention to leave the profession. Therefore, it is important for nurse managers to implement mentoring programs and provide a more positive and supportive working environment during the transition to professional life (Cheng et al., 2014).

The process of employees staying in an organization depends primarily on their intentions and then on their actions. Therefore, strong communication between

organizational management and employees can help prevent turnover intentions before they turn into action. Investigating the reasons underlying the behaviors and attitudes of employees who intend to quit and finding solutions for these reasons can reduce the tendency to quit (Favaro et al., 2020).

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPING

2.1. Corporate Ethical Culture Integrity Factors and Work-Related Stress

Accountability refers to the extent to which individuals clearly understand who is responsible for specific tasks and are required to justify their actions to others (Tanner et al, 2019). However, when there is ambiguity in these areas of responsibility, it is likely to lead to increased work-related stress among employees (Beard, 1999).

Leader role modeling refers to the extent to which employees perceive their senior managers or direct supervisors as role models for ethical behavior. Several authors have argued that ethical leadership is a key element of a value-based organization that guides employees' thoughts and actions (Schwepker and Dimitriou, 2021; Tanner et al, 2019; Treviño et al., 1998). Ethical leaders provide guidance on what defines appropriate ethical behavior. Research indicates that work-related stress can be reduced by establishing clear job expectations. Accordingly, by setting clear ethical standards, ethical leaders can play a significant role in reducing work-related stress. In addition, when leaders share a common vision with their subordinates, it fosters alignment and clarity, which in turn helps reduce employee stress (Schwepker and Dimitriou, 2021).

Poor ethical culture increases stress because of organizational ambiguity, pressures for conformity, and authoritarian practices. When employees are made to conform to unethical demands or work in an atmosphere of distrust, they are emotionally strained, which often results in burnout (Mayer, Kuenzi and Greenbaum, 2012). Similarly, ill-conceived goals—whether unrealistic or vague—amplify workplace stress by creating confusion and unattainable expectations, leaving employees emotionally and mentally drained (Treviño et al., 2014). Considering theoretical and empirical studies, the hypotheses have been formulated as follows:

H1a: Accountability is negatively related to work-related stress.

H1b: lll-conceived goals are positively related to work-related stress.

H1c: Leader's role modeling is negatively related to work-related stress.

H1d: Obedience is positively related to work-related stress.

H1e: Pressure to compromise is positively related to work-related stress.

2.2. Work-Related Stress and Turnover Intention

Work stress is one of the most important elements affecting organizational commitment. High levels of stress, particularly those generated by position ambiguity, work overload, or interpersonal difficulties, can erode an employee's emotional and psychological attachment to their firm. This divergence leads to lower motivation, a loss in performance, and less devotion to the business. (Allen and Meyer, 1990).

Such employees usually view their job as unsupportive; this alienates them further from organizational objectives. For example, if responsibilities remain unclear or demands unrealistic, an employee is at risk of being overwhelmed and underappreciated, hence a less willing contributor (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Stress-based dissatisfaction also cuts down the collaborative effort because the workers are more interested in surviving than succeeding together (Maslach, 2001).

On the other hand, organizations encouraging a strong ethical culture weaken negative effects of stress and strengthen commitment to the organization. Ethical workplaces emphasize supportiveness, fairness, and open communication that is crucial in reducing stress levels and increasing employee alignment towards the organizational values. In this regard, Kaptein (2011) established that an organization that prioritizes ethical practices enjoys high levels of trust and engagement among employees.

In addition, it is ethical leadership that brings a transformational role for commitment. Leaders who are highly concerned with ethical practices and effectively reduce stressors in the workplace create more loyal teams (Den Hartog and Belschak, 2012). Recent findings also support the efficiency of stress management programs, flexible working opportunities, and mental health initiatives that enhance organizational commitment even within a high-stress environment (Lemoine et al., 2019). On the other hand, work-related stress is considered a major determinant of turnover intention, where a high level of stress can be experienced as more inclined toward seeking jobs elsewhere. Stress from unrealistic expectations, lack of support within an organization, or a toxic work environment may generate a negative attitude

that results in dissatisfaction and disengagement from work (Podsakoff, LePine and LePine, 2007).

Emotional exhaustion, a direct result of chronic stress, exacerbates turnover intentions. Employees who feel overworked and unsupported are less likely to stay loyal to their company and are more likely to seek chances elsewhere (Mayer et al., 2012). High-stress situations can diminish employee resilience and reduce their capacity to cope with organizational issues, making them more susceptible to external employment offers (Maslach, 2001). Drawing upon both theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H2: Work-related stress is positively related to turnover intention.

2.3. Corporate Ethical Culture Integrity Factors and Turnover Intention

Ethical culture has a direct impact on the organizational commitment of the individuals whereby its implementation may allow a proper ground where workers and organizational values blend easily because of trust. Where a perception is created that employees' organizations apply the principle of fairness, accountability and ethical behavior, it tends to guarantee safety and a motivated work force. The outcomes therefore will be organizational loyalty and commitment assured (Den Hartog and Belschak, 2012).

Accountability reflects the extent to which employees clearly understand their roles, responsibilities, and the expectation to justify their decisions and actions to others (Tanner et al., 2019). In ethical organizational cultures, high levels of accountability promote fairness and clarity, which foster psychological safety and reduces role ambiguity—an established antecedent of job stress and turnover intention (Beard, 1999). According to social exchange theory, when organizations demonstrate structural fairness and hold individuals accountable in a transparent manner, employees perceive this as a form of organizational support, leading to increased affective commitment and lower turnover intention (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Moreover, accountability has been found to enhance employee engagement and reduce unethical behavior, which contributes to a more stable and trusting work environment (Tanner et al., 2019). Studies on ambiguity are generally addressed within the context of stress in organizational literature. It is suggested that ambiguity may lead not only

to work-related stress but also to other negative individual and organizational outcomes, such as job dissatisfaction and turnover intention (Beard, 1999).

Leader role modeling refers to the extent to which employees perceive their supervisors or senior managers as ethical exemplars — individuals whose behavior is worthy of imitation. Ethical leaders not only communicate values and expectations clearly, but also demonstrate those values through their own behavior, thereby shaping the ethical climate of the organization (Brown, et al., 2005). Empirical research has consistently shown that ethical leadership, as perceived through the leader's role modeling, reduces turnover intentions among employees. For instance, Kim and Brymer (2011) found that ethical leadership significantly decreased employees' intentions to leave by enhancing their affective organizational commitment. Similarly, Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) demonstrated that ethical leadership had a strong negative effect on turnover intention, mediated by ethical climate and affective commitment, in a sample of service sector employees in Turkey.

Furthermore, ethical leaders create environments of fairness, trust, and open communication, which enhance employees' perceptions of procedural justice and organizational support—two important predictors of reduced turnover intention (Walumbwa et al., 2011).

Pressure to compromise and blind obedience regarded as unethical alienate the workers and make them lose their commitment to the organization. An employee who feels that his or her values are disregarded or misaligned with the organizational goals is more likely to disengage and sometimes even quit the organization. Organizations reported to have a history of unethical practices face difficulties in rebuilding trust and re-establishing employee commitment (Brown et al., 2005; Treviño et al., 2014)

Drawing upon both theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H3a: Accountability is negatively related to turnover intention.

H3b: Ill-conceived goals are positively related to turnover intention.

H3c: Leader's role modeling is negatively related to turnover intention.

H3d: Obedience is positively related to turnover intention.

H3e: Pressure to compromise is positively related to turnover intention.

2.4. The mediating role of Work-Related Stress

Accountability, in organizational settings, refers to the expectation that individuals will take ownership of their actions and be held responsible for their outcomes (Frink and Klimoski, 1998). When accountability structures are transparent, fair, and coupled with autonomy, they tend to promote ethical awareness, intrinsic motivation, and psychological clarity (Lerner and Tetlock, 1999). Such environments help reduce role ambiguity and uncertainty—key antecedents of work-related stress (Beehr and Newman, 1978).

Accordingly, accountable organizational cultures that emphasize responsibility without punitive surveillance may actually decrease psychological strain. Employees who feel clear about their responsibilities and confident that their efforts are recognized are less likely to experience work-related stress (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012). Reduced stress, in turn, is strongly associated with lower turnover intention (Podsakoff et al., 2007).

Ill-conceived goals are performance targets that focus on results without regard for ethical or psychological consequences (Ordóñez et al., 2009). Such goals can generate moral tension and unrealistic performance pressure, which may manifest as increased psychological strain. Prior studies have shown that goal-setting mechanisms that conflict with personal values or ethical standards lead to emotional exhaustion and disengagement (Grant and Schwartz, 2011). Consequently, work-related stress is expected to mediate the effect of ill-conceived goal structures on employees' intention to leave the organization.

Leaders who serve as ethical role models provide moral guidance and clarity, which reduce ambiguity and foster a psychologically safe climate (Brown and Treviño, 2006). This role modeling not only enhances ethical norms but also buffers against occupational stressors by offering consistent expectations and support (Kalshoven et al., 2011). In contrast, the absence of ethical leadership may increase stress levels, which in turn may heighten turnover intentions. Therefore, leader role modeling is expected to reduce turnover intention indirectly by lowering perceived work-related stress.

Organizational cultures that demand strict obedience and suppress dissent may create psychological strain, especially when employees feel compelled to comply with directives that conflict with their values (Milgram, 1974; Treviño et al., 1998). Such environments limit autonomy and personal agency, both of which are crucial for occupational well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000). As previous research has demonstrated, lack of autonomy and perceived coercion increase stress and eventually contribute to turnover (Tett and Meyer, 1993). Therefore, stress is likely to mediate the relationship between obedience-based organizational culture and turnover intention.

Pressure to compromise refers to organizational expectations or implicit norms that encourage employees to disregard ethical standards for the sake of performance or conformity (Kaptein, 2011). This internal conflict creates a misalignment between personal and organizational values, leading to psychological discomfort and stress (Bandura, 1999). The cognitive dissonance and emotional toll of compromising ethical principles are known precursors of burnout and disengagement (Moore, 2008), both of which are positively associated with turnover intention. Thus, stress is proposed to mediate the influence of ethical compromise on employees' intentions to leave.

H4a: Work-related stress mediates the relationship between accountability and turnover intention.

H4b: Work-related stress mediates the relationship between Ill-conceived goals and turnover intention.

H4c: Work-related stress mediates the relationship between leader's role modeling and turnover intention.

H4d: Work-related stress mediates the relationship between obedience and turnover intention.

H4e: Work-related stress mediates the relationship between pressure to compromise and turnover intention.

Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework.

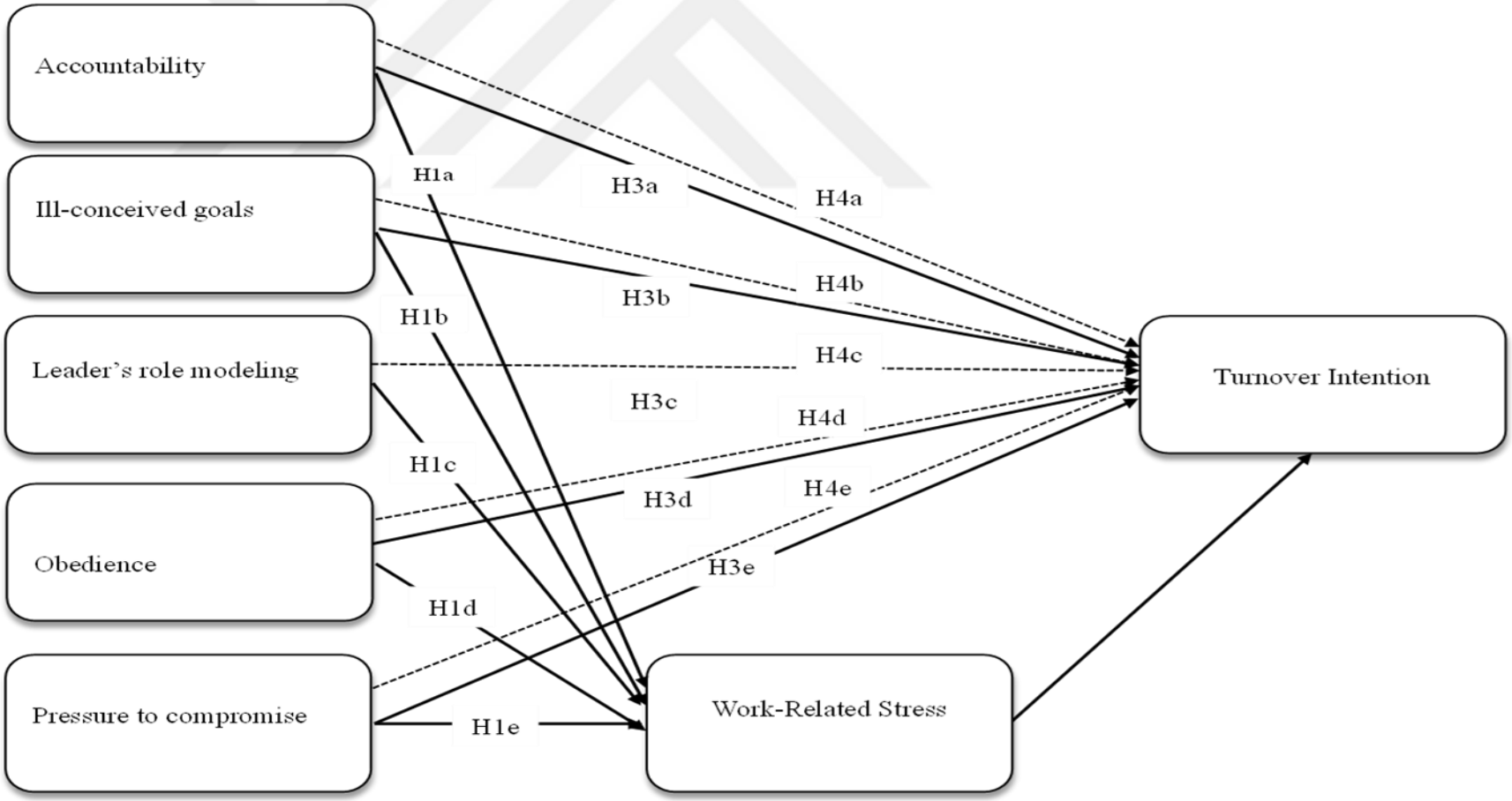


Figure 1. Theorical Framework

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions, which aim to explore the relationship between ethical integrity factors within corporate culture and employee behavioral outcomes.

1. What is the relationship between corporate ethical culture integrity factors (accountability, ill-convinced goals, leader's role modeling, obedience, and pressure to compromise) and employees' turnover intention?

2. Which integrity factors within corporate ethical culture are the most significant predictors of turnover intention?

3. Does perceived work-related stress mediate the relationship between corporate ethical culture integrity factors and turnover intention?

3.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between corporate ethical culture integrity factors (accountability, ill-convinced goals, leader's role modeling, obedience, pressure to compromise, and turnover intention. Additionally, the study will test whether perceived work-related stress mediates the relationship between corporate ethical culture integrity factors and turnover intention.

3.3. Importance and Contribution of the Study

This research makes a significant contribution to the growing body of literature on organizational ethics by exploring the link between corporate ethical culture integrity factors and employees' turnover intention. In particular, it highlights the critical role of perceived work-related stress as a mediating variable in this relationship. While previous studies have examined ethical climate and employee outcomes, limited attention has been given to how specific integrity-related components—such as accountability, ill-convinced goals, obedience, leader role modeling, and pressure to compromise—jointly influence turnover intention through psychological mechanisms like stress.

From a practical perspective, the findings can guide organizational leaders and HR professionals in designing more ethically grounded work environments that minimize stress and reduce employee turnover. By identifying which integrity factors are most strongly associated with turnover, organizations can prioritize targeted interventions to strengthen ethical conduct, improve leadership behavior, and mitigate harmful pressures that compromise employees' moral values.

In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of fostering ethical integrity not only as a matter of corporate responsibility but also as a strategic approach to employee retention and well-being.

3.4. Sample and Procedure

The study was conducted with a sample of 160 employees working in various service sector organizations in Istanbul, primarily consisting of white-collar professionals. Data was gathered through an online questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire focused on collecting respondents' demographic information. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants (n = 160). The majority of respondents were female (n = 129, 80.6%), while 31 participants (19.4%) were male. The average age of the participants was 30.47 years, with a standard deviation of 8.91, indicating that the sample primarily consisted of young to middle-aged adults.

In terms of marital status, 55% of the participants were single (n = 88), and 45% were married (n = 72). Regarding educational background, most participants held an undergraduate degree (n = 122, 76.3%), followed by graduate degrees (n = 30, 18.8%) and postgraduate degrees (n = 8, 5%).

The average tenure with the current leader was 3.62 years, with a standard deviation of 3.95. Finally, all participants (n = 160, 100%) were employed in the service sector. These characteristics help define the sample profile and provide a foundation for interpreting the study's findings within the context of the service industry.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants (n=160)

Features	Category	N	%	Mean	Std.Dev.
Gender	Female	129	80,6		
	Male	31	19,4		
Age (years)				30,47	8,91
Marital Status	Single	88	55		
	Married	72	45		
Education	Undergraduate	122	76,3		
	Graduate	30	18,8		
	Postgraduate	8	5		
Tenure with Leader				3,62	3,95
Sector	Service	160	100		

3.5. Measures

All measurement instruments employed in this study were adapted from validated scales previously established in the literature.

3.5.1. Corporate ethical culture integrity factors

Corporate ethical culture integrity factors were assessed using items adapted from the German Ethical Culture Scale (GECS) developed by Tanner et al. (2019). The scale captures five dimensions of ethical culture within organizations: accountability (6 items), ill-conceived goals (3 items), role modeling by leaders (5 items), obedience (3 items), and pressure to compromise ethical standards (3 items). Participants rated each item using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

3.5.2. Work-related stress

Work-related stress was measured using a 5-item scale developed by Lambert et al. (2006), which evaluates the extent of psychological strain experienced by employees due to workplace demands. The scale includes statements addressing feelings of frustration, pressure, nervousness, and tension. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

3.5.3. Turnover intention

Turnover intention was assessed using a 3-item scale developed by Bluedorn (1982), designed to measure the likelihood that employees are considering or planning to leave their current job. Items reflect thoughts of quitting and intentions to seek new employment. Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

3.6. Data Analysis Strategy

To test the proposed research model and examine the hypothesized relationships, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed. This technique was chosen due to its suitability for analyzing complex models, particularly when the primary objective is prediction rather than confirmation (Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2021).

PLS-SEM is especially appropriate in contexts where the data set is relatively small and does not meet the assumptions of multivariate normality (Rigdon, Sarstedt and Ringle, 2017). Moreover, it enables simultaneous estimation of both the measurement model (relationships between latent constructs and their indicators) and the structural model (relationships among latent constructs), allowing for a more comprehensive assessment of mediation effects (Sarstedt et al., 2014).

The analysis followed a two-stage approach: first, the measurement model was evaluated in terms of reliability and validity (e.g., indicator loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted), and second, the structural model was examined to assess the significance and strength of the hypothesized paths. Bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples were conducted to test the significance of direct and indirect effects, as recommended by Hair et al. (2021).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1. Assessment of Measurement Model

The assessment of the measurement model was conducted to evaluate the reliability and validity of the reflective constructs. This process involved examining indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, as suggested in widely accepted methodological literature (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2019).

Table 2. Measurement Model Results

Variables	Indicators	Indicator Loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Accountability	ACC1	Removed	0.859	0.605
	ACC2	Removed		
	ACC3	0.657		
	ACC4	0.806		
	ACC5	0.855		
	ACC6	0.779		
Ill-Conceived Goals	ILG1	Removed	0.784	0.549
	ILG2	0.810		
	ILG3	0.702		
	ILG4	0.706		
Leader's Role Modeling	LRM1	0.881	0.923	0.706
	LRM2	0.837		
	LRM3	0.882		
	LRM4	0.803		
	LRM5	0.793		
Obedience	OBE1	0.732	0.816	0.598
	OBE2	0.864		
	OBE3	0.715		
Pressure to Compromise	PCO1	0.822	0.888	0.664
	PCO2	0.806		
	PCO3	0.823		
	PCO4	0.810		
Turnover Intention	TIN1	0.866	0.929	0.815
	TIN2	0.932		
	TIN3	0.908		
Work-Related Stress	STR1	0.834	0.914	0.680
	STR2	0.853		
	STR3	0.815		
	STR4	0.788		
	STR5	0.833		

Item reliability was evaluated through the outer loadings of each indicator on its respective latent construct. In line with the guidelines proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), indicator loadings above 0.70 are considered satisfactory. As

presented in Table 2, most indicators met this criterion. However, three items—ACC1, ACC2, and ILG1—had loadings below the acceptable threshold. Based on the recommendation that low-loading items should be removed to improve construct reliability and model fit (Hair et al., 2021), these items were excluded from the measurement model. Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). An AVE value of 0.50 or higher indicates that the construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). All constructs in the model exceeded this criterion, demonstrating adequate convergent validity. Composite reliability (CR) was used to assess internal consistency reliability. Values above 0.70 are considered acceptable (Dijkstra and Henseler, 2015; Hair et al., 2021). In this research the CR values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold, indicating satisfactory reliability.

To evaluate discriminant validity, both traditional and contemporary criteria were employed. First, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was applied, whereby the square root of each construct's AVE should exceed its highest correlation with any other construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As presented in Table 3, the diagonal values—representing the square roots of the AVEs—were greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlations, providing evidence of satisfactory discriminant validity (Sarstedt, Ringle and Hair, 2017).

Table 3. Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker) means and standard deviations.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Accountability	0.78						
2.Ill-Conceived Goals	0.13	0.74					
3.Leader's Role Modeling	0.66	0.10	0.84				
4.Obedience	0.13	0.50	0.03	0.77			
5.Pressure to Compromise	-0.04	0.39	-0.04	0.54	0.82		
6.Turnover Intention	-0.16	0.46	-0.23	0.38	0.50	0.90	
7.Work-Related Stress	-0.12	0.37	-0.26	0.52	0.48	0.61	0.83
Means	*3,47*	*2.79*	*3.19*	*3.04*	*2,33*	*2,61*	*2,85*
Std. Dev.	*1.00*	*1.05*	*1.19*	*1.07*	*1,07*	*1,34*	*1,16*

Note: Square root of AVE on the diagonal (bold).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait – Monotrait Ratio)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Accountability							
2.Ill-Conceived Goals	0.247						
3.Leader's Role Modeling	0.779	0.190					
4.Obedience	0.262	0.785	0.100				
5.Pressure to Compromise	0.081	0.537	0.093	0.731			
6.Turnover Intention	0.174	0.555	0.255	0.483	0.570		
7.Work-Related Stress	0.147	0.427	0.281	0.670	0.547	0.658	

In addition to this classical approach, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was computed as a more rigorous assessment of discriminant validity, following recent methodological advancements (Franke and Sarstedt, 2019; Voorhees et al., 2016). HTMT values below the conservative threshold of 0.85 suggest that the constructs are empirically distinct. As shown in Table 4, all HTMT values fell well below this threshold, confirming the absence of multicollinearity and further supporting discriminant validity. Hence, the results from both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio confirm that the measurement model demonstrates acceptable discriminant validity. Thus, the constructs can be considered conceptually and statistically distinct, fulfilling essential conditions for evaluating the structural model.

Taken together, the measurement model results confirm that all constructs meet the minimum acceptable criteria for indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity and discriminant validity providing a sound basis for proceeding to the structural model assessment.

4.2. Assessment of Structural Model

The structural model was assessed to examine the hypothesized relationships among the latent constructs. To evaluate the significance and strength of the proposed paths, the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples was employed, as recommended in recent methodological literature (Hair et al., 2021). This approach allows for estimating standardized path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values, which are essential for testing the research hypotheses.

The results of the structural model analysis—including the significance levels of the hypothesized paths—are presented in Figure 1 and summarized in Table 5. These findings provide empirical support for evaluating the direct and indirect effects within the proposed conceptual framework.

Hypothesis 1a predicted that accountability is negatively related to work-related stress. However, the analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship between the two variables (β = -0.041, t = 0.419, p > 0.05). Therefore, H1a was not supported. Hypothesis 1b proposed that ill-conceived goals are positively related to work-related stress. The results did not confirm this relationship, as the path coefficient was not statistically significant (β= 0.134, t = 1.794, p > 0.05). Consequently, H1b was also not supported. Hypothesis 1c assumed that leader's role modeling is negatively related to work-related stress. The results supported this assumption, revealing a significant negative relationship (β= -0.273, t = 2.772, p < 0.01). Thus, H1c was supported. Hypothesis 1d predicted a positive association between obedience and work-related stress. The analysis confirmed this relationship with a statistically significant result (β= 0.335, t = 3.921, p = 0.000). Accordingly, H1d was supported. Hypothesis 1e suggested that pressure to compromise is positively related to work-related stress. Consistent with this expectation, the findings revealed a significant positive effect (β= 0.230, t = 2.976, p < 0.01), indicating that H1e was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted a positive relationship between work-related stress and turnover intention. The analysis confirmed this relationship with a significant result (β = 0.399, t = 4.519, p = 0.000), indicating that H2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3a assumed that accountability is negatively related to turnover intention. However, the findings revealed no significant association (β = 0.003, t = 0.029, p > 0.05), and thus, H3a was not supported. Hypothesis 3b proposed a positive

link between ill-conceived goals and turnover intention. The results confirmed this expectation, revealing a statistically significant relationship ($\beta = 0.280$, $t = 4.193$, $p = 0.000$). Therefore, H3b was supported. Hypothesis 3c assumed that leader's role modeling is negatively related to turnover intention. Yet, the data did not support this hypothesis, as the path was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.119$, $t = 1.324$, $p > 0.05$). Hence, H3c was not supported. Hypothesis 3d posited a positive relationship between obedience and turnover intention. The results did not confirm this assumption; the relationship was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.085$, $t = 0.925$, $p > 0.05$), and H3d was not supported. Hypothesis 3e assumed that pressure to compromise is positively related to turnover intention. The findings supported this assumption, revealing a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.235$, $t = 2.675$, $p = 0.000$). Consequently, H3e was supported.

Hypothesis H4a proposed that work-related stress mediates the relationship between accountability and turnover intention. The results revealed no significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.001$, $t = 0.029$, $p > 0.05$), indicating that H4a was not supported. Hypothesis H4b suggested that work-related stress mediates the relationship between ill-conceived goals and turnover intention. However, the mediation effect was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.054$, $t = 1.681$, $p > 0.05$), and therefore, H4b was not supported. Hypothesis H4c posited that work-related stress mediates the relationship between leader's role modeling and turnover intention. The findings confirmed a significant indirect effect ($\beta = -0.109$, $t = 2.468$, $p < 0.05$), providing support for H4c. Hypothesis H4d stated that work-related stress mediates the relationship between obedience and turnover intention. The analysis revealed a significant mediation effect ($\beta = 0.134$, $t = 2.879$, $p < 0.01$), thus H4d was supported. Hypothesis H4e proposed that work-related stress mediates the relationship between pressure to compromise and turnover intention. The results indicated a significant partial mediation ($\beta = 0.092$, $t = 2.410$, $p < 0.05$). In this study, the type of mediation is complementary partial. Complementary partial mediation, as defined by Nitzl et al. (2016), occurs when both the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable and the indirect effect via the mediator are statistically significant and exhibit the same sign. This pattern suggests that the mediating variable transmits a portion of the effect while the direct pathway remains significant, thereby reinforcing the total effect. Hence, H4e was partially supported.

Table 5. Structural Model Results

Paths	Path Coeff. (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Statistics	p Values	Confidence Interval Bias Corrected		Results
						2.5%	97.5%	
ACC-> WRS	-0.041	-0.055	0.099	0.419	0.675	-0.176	0.253	H1a: Not Supported
ILG-> WRS	0.134	0.141	0.075	1.794	0.073	-0.019	0.273	H1b: Not Supported
LRM-> WRS	-0.273	-0.267	0.099	2.772	0.006	-0.474	-0.090	H1c: Supported
OBE-> WRS	0.335	0.334	0.085	3.921	0.000	0.152	0.492	H1d: Supported
PCO-> WRS	0.230	0.232	0.077	2.976	0.003	0.076	0.377	H1e: Supported
WRS-> TIN	0.399	0.394	0.088	4.519	0.000	0.224	0.564	H2: Supported
ACC-> TIN	0.003	-0.012	0.110	0.029	0.977	-0.214	0.188	H3a: Not Supported
ILG-> TIN	0.280	0.286	0.067	4.193	0.000	0.140	0.400	H3b: Supported
LRM-> TIN	-0.119	-0.111	0.090	1.324	0.186	-0.284	0.064	H3c: Not Supported
OBE-> TIN	-0.085	-0.085	0.092	0.925	0.355	-0.261	0.099	H3d: Not Supported
PCO-> TIN	0.235	0.237	0.088	2.675	0.008	0.069	0.413	H3e: Supported
ACC-> WRS-> TIN	0.001	-0.005	0.044	0.029	0.977	-0.073	0.105	H4a: Not Supported
ILG-> WRS-> TIN	0.054	0.055	0.032	1.681	0.093	0.000	0.125	H4b: Not Supported
LRM ->WRS-> TIN	-0.109	-0.104	0.044	2.468	0.014	-0.221	-0.040	H4c: Supported
OBE -> WRS -> TIN	0.134	0.132	0.046	2.879	0.004	0.059	0.244	H4d: Supported
PCO-> WRS -> TIN	0.092	0.092	0.038	2.410	0.016	0.031	0.183	H4e: Partially Supported

Note: ACC: Accountability, ILG: Ill-Conceived Goals, LRM: Leader's Role Modeling, OBE: Obedience, PCO: Pressure to Compromise, TIN: Turnover Intention, WRS: Work-Related Stress.

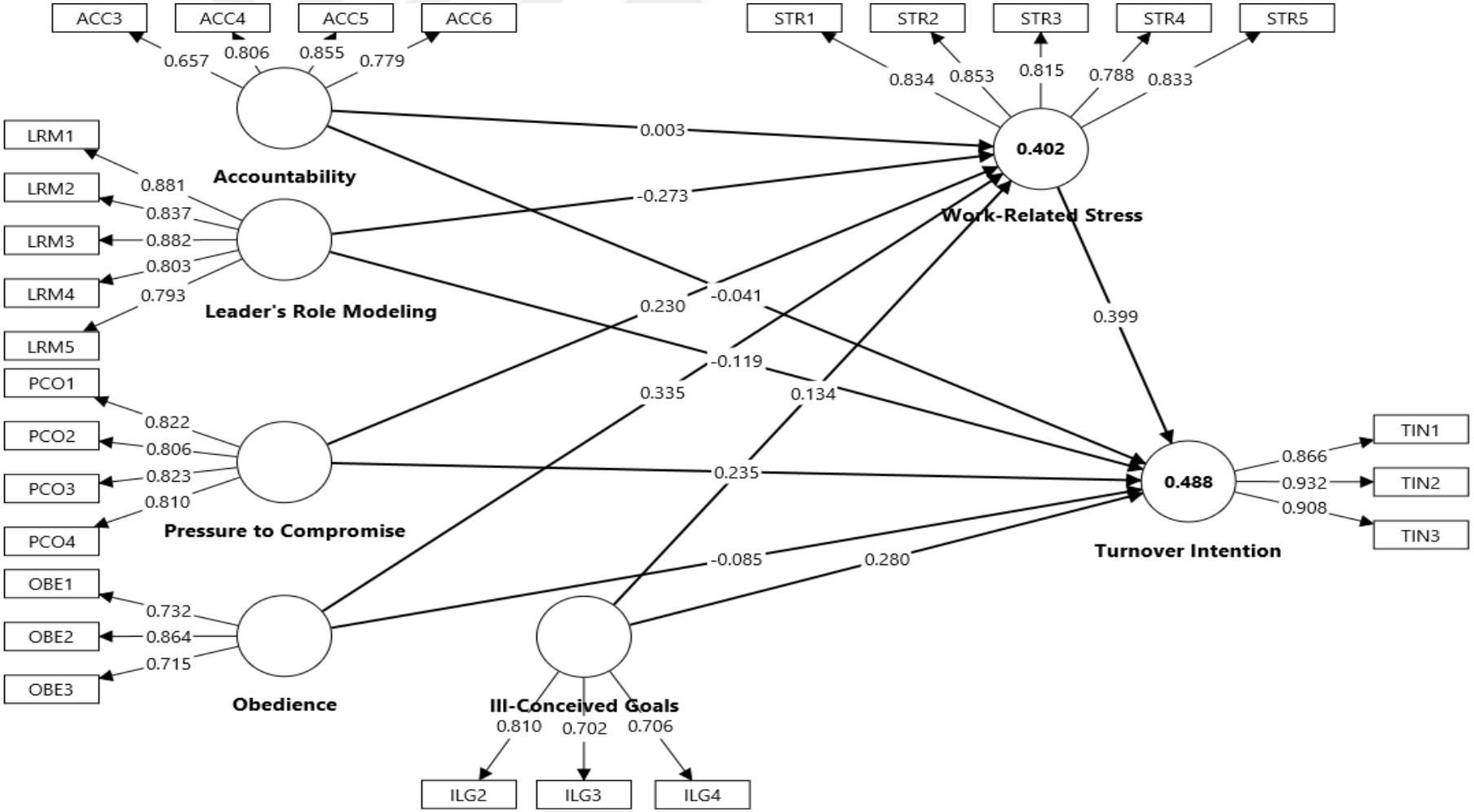


Figure 2. Structural Model Results

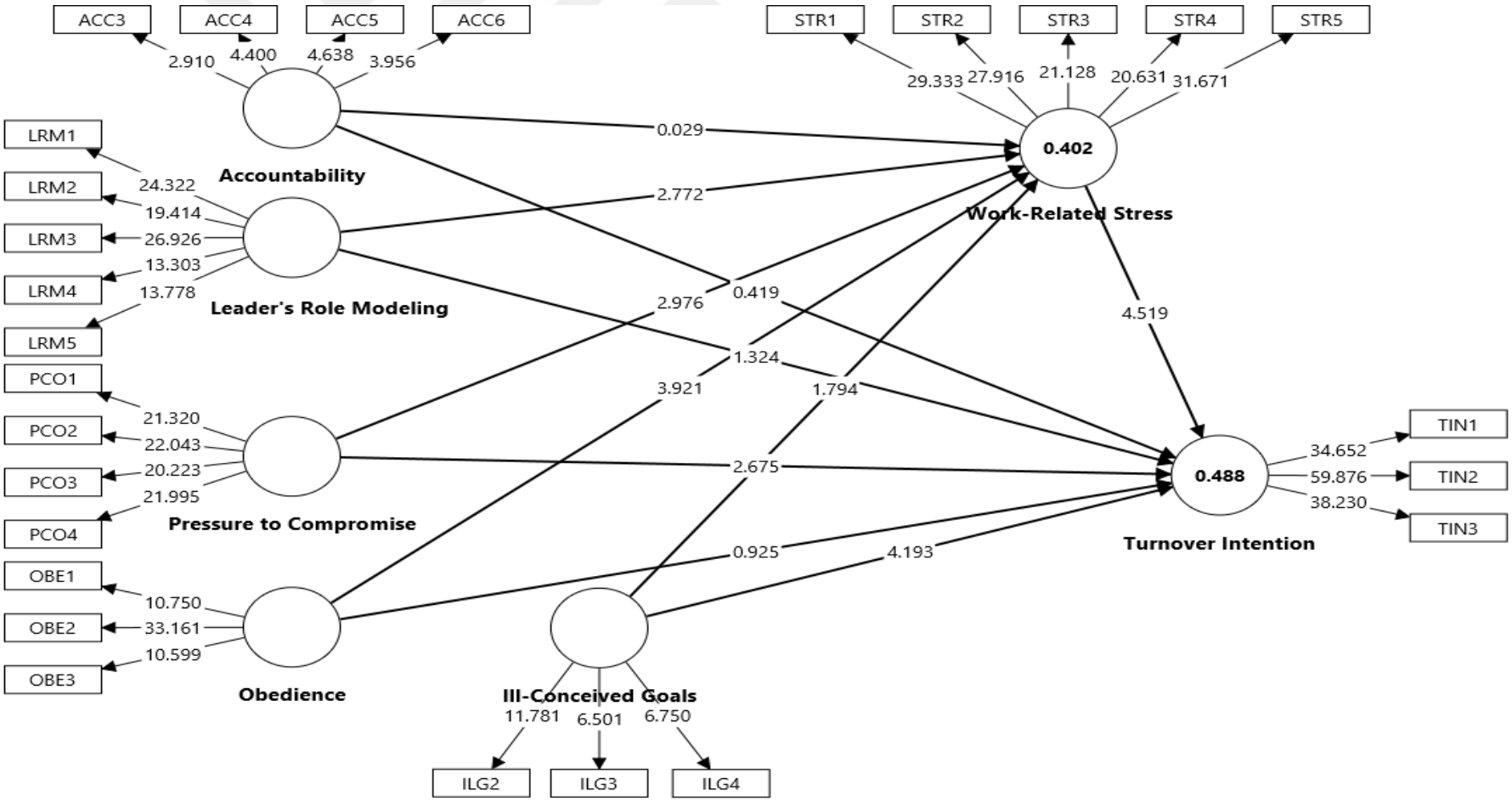


Figure 3. t Test Results of Structured Model

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is commonly used in PLS-SEM to evaluate the explanatory power of the structural model by indicating the proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by their respective predictors (Hair et al., 2021). It serves as a key indicator of model quality in terms of in-sample prediction. While earlier studies, such as Falk and Miller (1992), suggested that an R^2 value of at least 0.10 indicates a minimum acceptable level of explanatory power, more recent literature provides a refined interpretation. According to Chin (1998), R^2 values of 0.67 or higher can be considered substantial, values around 0.33 as moderate, and values of approximately 0.19 or lower as weak.

In the current study, the R^2 values for perceived work-related stress, and turnover intention were 0.402, and 0.488, respectively. Based on these thresholds, the model demonstrates moderate explanatory power for perceived work-related stress, and turnover intention.

To evaluate the predictive relevance of the structural model, the PLSpredict procedure was employed. This approach generates out-of-sample prediction errors for the endogenous constructs by comparing the model's predictive performance against a benchmark, typically a linear regression model. In line with established guidelines, a model is considered to have meaningful predictive power when the majority of indicators exhibit lower prediction errors—such as RMSE—in the PLS-SEM model compared to the linear model (Shmueli et al., 2019). In this study, all indicators showed lower RMSE values under the PLS-SEM framework than the corresponding values from the linear benchmark model, indicating strong predictive performance.

Researchers can utilize various predictive metrics to assess the degree of prediction error in a model. Among them, Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE) is commonly used as a default measure; however, its interpretation is limited due to its dependence on the scale of the observed indicators. Therefore, RMSE values cannot be meaningfully interpreted in isolation. To overcome this limitation, it is recommended to compare the RMSE of the PLS-SEM model with that of a benchmark linear regression model (LM). This comparison involves regressing each indicator of the dependent (endogenous) construct on the indicators of the exogenous constructs included in the model, allowing for the evaluation of predictive performance based on relative error (Shmueli et al., 2019).

A comparison between the RMSE values obtained from the PLS-SEM model and those from a linear regression (LM) benchmark indicates strong predictive performance when the RMSE values for all indicators in the PLS-SEM model are lower than those in the LM model (Shmueli et al., 2019). In the present study, all indicators demonstrated lower RMSE values in the PLS-SEM analysis compared to the LM benchmark, suggesting that the model possesses substantial predictive accuracy.

Table 6. Differences of RMSE values

Indicators	Q^2	PLS-SEM_RMSE	LM_RMSE	PLS-SEM – LM - RMSE
TIN1	0.345	1.184	1.244	-0,06
TIN2	0.239	1.297	1.420	-0,123
TIN3	0.191	1.383	1.517	-0,134
STR1	0.255	1.230	1.303	-0,073
STR2	0.159	1.312	1.385	-0,073
STR3	0.197	1.267	1.367	-0,100
STR4	0.227	1.198	1.250	-0,052
STR5	0.269	1.203	1.347	-0,144

Note: TIN: Turnover Intention, SRT: Work-Related Stress

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study was to examine the effects of specific corporate ethical culture integrity factors—namely accountability, ill-conceived goals, leader's role modeling, obedience, and pressure to compromise—on employees' turnover intention, with perceived work-related stress considered as a mediating variable. The findings provide meaningful insights into both theory and practice.

According to the results, leader's role modeling significantly reduces perceived work-related stress, whereas obedience and pressure to compromise ethical standards significantly increase it. This suggests that ethical leadership may play a protective role in supporting employees' psychological well-being, while authoritarian management practices and pressures to act unethically may elevate stress levels and weaken employee commitment. Additionally, ill-conceived goals and pressure to compromise were found to be direct and significant predictors of turnover intention. These findings highlight the potential harm of performance structures that conflict with employees' ethical values and demonstrate their role in fostering disengagement and turnover.

In terms of mediation, perceived work-related stress was found to partially mediate the relationship between leader's role modeling, obedience, and pressure to compromise with turnover intention. This underscores the importance of stress as a psychological mechanism through which ethical work climates influence employee behavior. However, stress did not mediate the effects of accountability or ill-conceived goals, suggesting that other psychological processes may be at play in these relationships.

The research model demonstrated moderate explanatory power for both turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.488$) and work-related stress ($R^2 = 0.402$). Furthermore, the PLSpredict analysis confirmed strong predictive performance of the model. These results support the model's applicability in organizational contexts and provide empirical evidence for its robustness.

The findings contribute to the literature on organizational behavior and business ethics by illustrating that corporate ethical culture is not a uniform construct, but rather a complex structure composed of various elements with distinct effects on employee behavior. The study also clarifies the role of stress as a key mediator in the ethical

culture–turnover intention link. From a managerial perspective, the results emphasize the importance of fostering ethical leadership, avoiding goal structures that conflict with employee values, and reducing pressures that encourage unethical behavior. HR professionals may benefit from implementing ethics training, stress management programs, and value-driven performance evaluation systems aligned with these insights.

In conclusion, this research reveals that corporate ethical culture is a multidimensional construct with differential impacts on employee well-being and organizational commitment. Considering the influence of these integrity factors on psychological and behavioral outcomes, fostering an ethical and psychologically safe work environment is essential not only from a moral standpoint but also as a strategic imperative for long-term organizational sustainability.

LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Despite its theoretical and practical contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. These limitations also open avenues for future research.

First, the sample consisted exclusively of employees from service sector organizations in Istanbul, with a predominance of white-collar professionals. While this sample provided useful insights into ethical culture dynamics within service-oriented workplaces, it limits the generalizability of the findings to other sectors (e.g., manufacturing, public administration) and cultural contexts. Future studies are encouraged to replicate this research in different industries and regions to examine whether the observed relationships hold across diverse organizational environments.

Second, the data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to common method bias and social desirability effects. Although established scales were used and anonymity was ensured, the reliance on cross-sectional, perceptual data constrains the ability to infer causality among the studied variables. Longitudinal or experimental designs would provide stronger evidence for directional and causal relationships.

Third, the conceptual model focused solely on one mediating variable—perceived work-related stress. While this variable proved to be a significant mechanism in several paths, the inclusion of additional mediators such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, or moral disengagement could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how ethical culture influences turnover intention. Expanding the model to include such constructs would deepen insights into the psychological processes underlying employees' behavioral outcomes.

Fourth, although five integrity factors were selected based on a well-established scale, other dimensions of ethical culture such as transparency, fairness, or openness were not included. Future research may benefit from a broader conceptualization of ethical culture that captures a wider range of normative and structural factors.

Lastly, the study does not consider the role of individual differences, such as personality traits, ethical orientation, or resilience, which may moderate the relationships between ethical culture, stress, and turnover intention. Incorporating

these variables could enrich the model by explaining why some employees are more sensitive to ethical violations or stress than others.

In light of these limitations, future research should consider employing multi-source data, diverse sampling frames, and more complex models that integrate moderators and additional mediators. Practitioners and scholars are also encouraged to explore context-specific interventions that not only reduce ethical risk but also promote employee psychological well-being and organizational commitment.

In conclusion, while this study offers valuable insights into the ethical antecedents of turnover intention, a more nuanced and contextually diverse research agenda is needed to strengthen the understanding and practical applications of corporate ethical culture.

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APPENDIXES

Questionaire: Consequences of Corporate Ethical Culture Integrity Factors

Dear Participants

This is a personal invitation to participate in research to understand the consequences of corporate ethical culture integrity factors. All responses will be compiled together and analyzed as a group. None of the information collected will be shared with anyone outside myself and my supervisor. Your participation is voluntary.

PART A

Please read the following sentences carefully and select a suitable answer.

1. How old are you? …….
2. What is your gender?
   Female
   Male
3. What is your education level?
   High School
   Undergraduate
   Graduate
   Postgraduate
4. What is your Marital status?
   Single
   Married
5. How long have you been working for your immediate company?
   ……..
6. What industry do you currently work for? …….

PART B

All the following items are measured using a five-point Likert scale of 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.

(**Please choose as appropriate**)

NO	STATEMENT	SCALE				
		1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 neutral	4 agree	5 Strongly agree
	Corporate Ethical Culture Integrity Factors					
1	In my work environment, employees are responsible for the successful implementation of an initiative.					
2	In my work environment, employees are accountable for the good and the bad consequences of their work.					
3	In my workplace, people willingly undertake responsibility for the tasks assigned to them.					
4	My direct supervisor is a good model of integrity					
5	The top management is a good model of integrity.					
6	For the top management, social responsibility is not an empty phrase.					
7	In my work environment, I am sometimes asked to do things that are in conflict with my conscience.					
8	To be successful in my organization, I sometimes have to sacrifice my own norms and values.					
9	In my organization, I have already been encouraged to break the rules.					
10	In my work activities, I often find myself in a conflict of values.					
11	I am expected to do what I am told.					

12	I am expected to obey my manager without argument.					
13	Opposition is not tolerated in my workplace.					
14	My workplace is all about quantifiable performance targets.					
15	At my workplace, the employees have only economic goals.					
16	In my workplace, I can only make a career by outperforming others.					
17	In my workplace, I am evaluated first and foremost on whether I have achieved more than my colleagues.					
	Work-Related Stress					
1	A lot of time my job makes me very frustrated or angry.					
2	I am usually under a lot of pressure when I am at work.					
3	When I'm at work I often feel tense or uptight.					
4	I am not usually calm and at ease when I'm working					
5	There are a lot of aspects of my job that make me upset.					
	Turnover Intention					
1	I often think about quitting my job					
2	It is likely that I will actively look for a new job next year.					
3	I will probably look for a new job in the next year.					

T.C.
İSTANBUL GELİŞİM ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Etik Kurul Başkanlığı

ETİK KURUL KARAR ÖRNEĞİ

Toplantı No	Toplantı Tarihi	Toplantı Saati	Toplantı Yeri
2024 – 06	10.05.2024	14.00	Online

KARAR NO: 2024-06-54: Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, İşletme Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı 221401020 numaralı öğrencisi Samıa KANDOUSSI' nın, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Arzu SERT ÖZEN' in danışmanlığında yürütülen "Consequences of Corporate Ethical Culture - Integrity Factors" konulu çalışması hakkında yapacağı anket sorularının, etik kurallara uygun olup olmadığını tespit etmek üzere, İGÜ Etik Kurulumuzun 19.04.2024 tarih ve 2024-05 sayılı toplantısında, İGÜ Etik Kurul Yönergesinin 12(1) maddesine göre değerlendirme yapmak üzere görevlendirilen öğretim elemanlarının raporları incelenmiş olup, ilgili çalışmada yer alan bilimsel araştırmanın etik kurallara uygun olduğuna oy birliği ile karar verildi.

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RESUME

Personal Information

Name and Surname: Samia KANDOUSSI

Professional Summary

I am a motivated and detail-oriented graduate in Arabic Studies with a strong educational foundation and a diploma in Educational Sciences. Passionate about language, education, and communication. Eager to contribute to a dynamic team, learn new skills, and grow professionally.

Education

Bachelor's Degree in Arabic Studies
Faculty of Specializations - Selouan, Nador, Morocco
Graduated: 2020

Diploma in Educational Sciences
Completed: 2020

Skills

- Languages: Arabic (Native), Turkish (Fluent)
- Communication: Strong written and verbal skills in Arabic and Turkish
- Interpersonal: Adaptable, team-oriented, and quick learner
- Educational Knowledge: Foundations in pedagogy and teaching methods

Certifications

Diploma in Educational Sciences - 2020

Experience

No formal work experience yet, but open to internships, volunteer work, or entry-level opportunities in education, translation, or administrative support.