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DOES GENDER INFLUENCE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEES' AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT?

***Hasan Cem DEMIR** *(Orcid: :0000-0001-7959-7679)*[1]
***Meral ELCI** *(Orcid: 0000-0002-0547-0250*
*****Gebze Technical University

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to address the research gap in the existing literature by examining the moderating influences of leaders' gender and employees' gender on the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' affective commitment to their organizations.

The research sample consisted of 636 employees working in an industrially developed region in Turkey. Initially, factor analysis, correlation analysis, and reliability analysis were conducted for all variables. To test the hypotheses, the study investigated the various effects of gender-based variables through correlation and regression analyses.

The correlation analysis revealed that the relationships between the gender of leaders and employees and all other variables were insignificant. In the regression analysis, when female leaders were selected from the sample, it was found that only the justice dimension significantly influenced affective commitment. In the remaining selections, both the morality and justice dimensions had a significant influence on affective commitment. In general, the moderation analyses indicated that neither leaders' nor employees' gender significantly moderated the relationship between the four dimensions of ethical leadership and affective commitment. Although the overall results did not yield significant implications, the findings related to women and the ethical leadership dimensions can shed light on future studies.

This study contributes to the existing literature on employees' affective commitment, ethical leadership, and gender differences in organizations by examining the potential moderating variables that impact affective commitment. Additionally, the use of an unverified ethical leadership scale as an independent variable can be considered an original contribution to the methodology.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, affective commitment, moderating influence, gender difference

INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies have examined the impact of ethical leadership on affective commitment. Additionally, some research investigates whether gender and affective commitment moderate organizational and employee outcomes. In recent years, many studies have explored differences arising from leaders' gender. Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2014) suggested that women and men are perceived as equally effective leaders in various settings. However, they noted that women were considered more influential, particularly in business and educational institutions. Bandura's social learning theory (1977), which has significantly influenced leadership studies, explains how certain leader characteristics and situational factors lead followers to perceive a leader as ethical.

The economic challenges combined with longstanding political tensions in Turkey have led society to seek more powerful leadership. Within this context, there is a prevailing belief that physical power (hard power) holds greater value than qualitative aspects (soft power), possibly stemming from cultural norms associated with masculinity.

Consequently, discussions often focus on the physical attributes of leaders, such as charisma, age, gender, and temperament, rather than genuine leadership qualities. It is essential to recognize that the use of power, regardless of its source, can lead to social injustice without ethical justification (De Hoogh & Den Hartog,

[1] Corresponding Author

2009). As a result of inequality and disorder, many qualified individuals have chosen to leave the country and settle elsewhere, leading to a brain drain. Although not extensively explored, these issues have sparked discussions on commitment and essential leadership qualities.

Building upon these social implications and discussions, the study aims to investigate the impact of ethical leader behaviors in the workplace on employees' commitment to their organizations. Specifically, this study focuses on the moderating effect of leader and employee gender on this relationship. After a rigorous literature review, we discovered a lack of explicit reference studies supporting or criticizing this research topic, namely a research gap. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine the extent to which the gender of ethical leaders and followers moderates employees' affective commitment to their organizations and uncover gender-based differences in opinions and expectations, rather than issues of gender discrimination. Understanding the potential influence of gender on employee commitment and identifying the leadership qualities that strengthen this effect would contribute to the literature, albeit within a limited geographical scope. Based on the research objective, the following research questions were formulated:

(a) Is there a significant relationship between ethical leadership and employees' affective commitment?

(b) Does the leader's gender moderate the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employees' affective commitment?

(c) Does the gender of employees moderate the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and the affective commitment of followers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical leadership (EL)

Based on a social learning perspective, Brown et al. (2005, p. 120) describe ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.” Gabriunas (2017, Abstract) defines ethical leadership as “a style emphasizing the ethical dimension of leadership that refers to the values, moral characteristics, and behaviors of leaders in the organizational settings and the relationship of all these with employees, organizations, and society.” Stouten (2013), referring to Gini (1998), ascribed ethical leaders “as leaders who exert their social authority in their decisions and actions, influence others in such a manner that they act in the best interest of followers, and do not enact harm upon them by respecting the rights of all partakers” (p. 681). While Gini (1997) mentioned that all leadership is value-laden (p. 72), Mendonca (2001) defined genuine and effective leadership as leadership in that the leader's behavior and the implementation of the leadership influence are consistent with ethical and moral values.

Kanungo and Mendonca (2007) emphasized that ethical leadership is fundamental for the welfare of organizations and society. Brown and Mitchell (2010) stated that “leaders who are perceived as ethically positive influence employees' productive work behavior” (p. 583) and that ethical leadership is related to organizational commitment (p. 586). Accordingly, this study believed ethical leadership could be a significant motive for reinforcing employees' emotional commitment to their organizations.

Affective Commitment (AFF)

Mowday et al. defined organizational commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (1979, p. 226). Organizational commitment refers to an employee's psychological adherence to the organization (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1982). Matherne & Litchfield (2012) suggested that “organizational commitment is a psychological attribute that explores the relations of employees with their organizations and is related to whether employees prefer to stay in the organization” (p. 37).

Allen and Meyer (1990) conceptualized organizational commitment based on three components: affective, continuance, and normative. They suggested that "affective or emotional attachment is the most prevalent approach to organizational commitment in the literature." Furthermore, they mentioned that affective commitment "is considered an affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in the organization" (p. 2). Additionally, they proposed: “job challenge, role clarity, goal clarity, goal difficulty, management

receptiveness, peer cohesion, organizational dependability, equity, personal importance, feedback, and participation as the antecedents of affective commitment", when constructing the scale (p. 17). On the other hand, Mowday et al. (1982) stated that "the antecedents of (affective) commitment fall generally into four categories: personal characteristics, structural characteristics, job-related characteristics, and work experiences."

Meyer and Allen (1991) pointed out that affective commitment is widely used instead of the term commitment to imply the emotional orientation towards the organization (p. 64). And they suggested that "emotionally engaged employees are inclined to be deeply committed to the organization and its goals" (p. 74). Loi et al. (2015) claimed that employees possessing affective commitment would have a powerful feeling of attachment and provide positive relations with their company (p. 647). Lyndon and Rawat (2015) referred to the argument that commitment may be one of the results of effective leadership (p. 99).

This study posits that emotional commitment is a consequence that leads employees to serve their organizations faithfully, and it can be influenced by internal factors such as organizational values and the quality of management, as well as external factors like economic conditions. The stronger the emotional commitment to the organization, the greater the outcomes, such as the willingness to stay with the organization and work more efficiently.

Based on explanations of key concepts, numerous and varied studies examining and discussing the role of ethical leadership in influencing affective commitment and the relationships between these concepts were reviewed. Al Muhannaa (2023) conducted a research study in a higher education institution in the United States and examined the effects of ethical leadership on employees' emotional engagement and job satisfaction and the cause-effect relationships among study variables through structural equation modeling. The study revealed significant and positive effects of ethical leadership on affective commitment and job satisfaction, in addition to significant positive correlations among all variables. He especially noted that the care dimension (equivalent to the respectfulness component) yielded significant and direct positive effects on affective commitment and job satisfaction. The comprehensive meta-analysis by Bedi et al. (2016) on the consequences of ethical leadership reported a positive correlation between ethical leadership and affective commitment ($\rho = .45$). Benevene et al. (2018) investigated the influence of ethical leadership on various variables, including the emotional commitment of volunteers in a group of non-profit organizations in Italy. Their analyses based on structural equation modeling revealed a positive association between ethical leadership and both the intention to stay and the emotional commitment of the volunteers, additionally the direct effect of ethical leadership on the emotional adherence of the volunteers. They also quoted that a "leader's ethical dimension has constantly proven to be an important predictor of high levels of affective organizational commitment" (p. 4). A literature review by Brown & Treviño (2006) that addressed the antecedents and consequences of ethical leadership suggested that it should be linked with a set of positive follower attitudes. Çelik et al. (2015) examined the relationship between ethical leadership, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction in the hospitality industry to determine the mediating role of organizational commitment between ethical leadership and job satisfaction. The results disclosed the positive effect of ethical leadership on organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Demirtaş et al. (2015) examined a mediated ethical leadership model for ethical climate, turnover intention, and emotional commitment in three aviation maintenance centers. As a result, they found that ethical leadership has both direct and indirect effects on affective commitment and turnover intention. They mentioned that the indirect influence of ethical leadership shapes ethical climate insight, which causes an increasing affective commitment and a decreasing turnover intention.

Based on values, a close connection between transformational and transactional leadership and ethical leadership has been proposed (Armstrong and Muenjohn, 2008; Aronson, 2009; Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Bedi et al. 2016). Treviño et al. (2003) suggested that ethical leadership and transformational leadership overlap with the dimension of individualized consideration (parallel to the respectfulness and non-arrogance dimensions) particularly (p. 21-22). As a result of their meta-analysis, Eagly et al. (2003) stated that, albeit slightly, female leaders are more prominent in transformational leadership (p. 586). In this direction, several papers suggesting the impacts of different moderators on the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment have been regarded. Abasilim et al. (2019) examined the relationship between various leadership manners and employee engagement and the impact of demographic variables on the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement in Nigeria. Their findings urged that employees' adherence is more probable to be reached when the appropriate

leadership manner is espoused and some particular demographic variables, including gender, are considered regarding their function in the relationship between leadership manners and employees' adherence. Aghashahi et al. (2013) investigated the relations among diverse leadership styles, particularly transformational and transactional, and the three elements of organizational commitment in a communication center setting in Malaysia. Their findings suggested the positive impacts of transformational leadership style on affective and normative dimensions of organizational commitment in the service sector. Citing Hayward et al., Keskes (2014) noted that transformational leadership had a moderate positive relationship with affective commitment in her study, where she examined the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership manners and the components of organizational engagement. Khasawneh et al. (2012) examined the association between the transformative leadership of vocational school leaders and the organizational engagement of teachers, and they found a strong, positive, and significant association between transformational leadership (overall) and organizational engagement. Lyndon and Rawat (2015) examined the consequences of transformational and transactional leadership styles on organizational commitment in India and determined a positive link in this relationship. Ramli and Desa (2014) examined "the relationship between servant leadership and employees' organizational commitment in a Malaysian situation and added trust in the leader as the mediator" (Abstract). As a result of the correlation and multiple regression analysis, they found a significant relationship between servant leadership and employee organizational commitment in the study context. Siegel (2013) attempted to specify the antecedents and impacts of supervisor-ethical leadership, particularly organizational commitment, as an influence on supervisor-ethical leadership. As a result, perceived supervisor-ethical leadership revealed a direct and positive correlation with employee affective commitment. Steyrer et al. (2008) investigated the effect of the behaviors of executive leaders on the organizational commitment of subordinate managers and corporate performance. They found that desirable leadership "(charismatic/value-based, team-oriented, participative, humane, and self-protective)" behaviors were positively related to subordinates' organizational commitment, which strengthens organizational performance even when analyzed in concurrence with influential contextual variables. Sušanj and Jakopec (2012) analyzed the relationship between various leadership styles and organizational commitment by employing structural equation modeling. And they found that executives' perceived active leadership manners are positively related and have direct and indirect consequences on employees' corporate adherence. Sutherland (2010) researched the association between ethical leadership and the three forms of organizational commitment and found positive and statistically significant relationships between ethical leadership and affective commitment ($r = .55$, $p < .01$). Tamer (2021) attempted to determine the effect of the managers' ethical approach on employees' organizational commitment (OCM), performances, and the role of OCM in this effect, focusing on the health sector. The results demonstrated positive and significant relationships between ethical leadership, OCM, and employee performance. In addition, ethical leadership approaches yielded a positive and significant impact on three dimensions of organizational commitment parallel to employee performance. Torlak et al. (2021) examined the relationship between many variables, including ethical leadership and affective commitment, through structural equation modeling and mediation analysis among accountants working in Istanbul. Concerning the topic, they declared a significant association between ethical leadership and affective commitment. Yiing and Ahmad (2009) investigated the moderating effect of organizational culture on the associations between leadership behavior and organizational engagement between various constructs in the Malaysian setting, and the outcomes disclosed a significant association between leadership behavior and organizational commitment overall.

Three primary theories have guided the formulation of hypotheses regarding the interrelationships between ethical leadership and affective commitment. These are the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and Moral Identity Theory (Blasi, 1983), which explain the role model effects on righteous action, and the Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, which points out the consequences of leadership qualities. Furthermore, considering the suggestions in the cited studies, to it was hypothesized that ethical leadership (EL) (a) would have some positive and various influences on the affective component of organizational commitment (AFF) and (b) a significant relationship with AFF. Accordingly, the following hypotheses have been put forward:

H1. Ethical leadership is positively related to employees' affective commitment.

H2. Ethical leadership significantly influences employees' affective commitment.

Gender on Leadership

Among the studies regarding the association between gender and leadership, the editorial article of Eagly & Heilman (2016) about gender and leadership and the review study of Lord et al. (2017) stand out. Many research focusing on the gender of leaders introduced comparisons of the features of female and male leaders, particularly emphasizing the distinct or disadvantageous characteristics of female leaders, their leadership styles, and the effects of these differences on employees and organizations (Eagly and Johnson, 1990; Eagly, 2007; Nash et al., 2017; Pew Research Center; Rink et al., 2013; Rosener, 1990; Van Engen & Willemsen, 2004; Vial et al., 2016).

Some studies have investigated leadership behavior or style in the context of the leader's gender. Eagly and Johnson's (1990) meta-analysis outlined relationships between gender and leadership style. The results revealed that, while female and male leaders in organizations did not vary in their interpersonal or task leadership styles, female leaders tended to lead with democratic and participative leadership styles. A later meta-analysis by van Engen and Willemsen (2004) supported their claims. Johnson (1993) noted that research on whether women and men in leadership positions differ in their behavior toward subordinates suggested conflicting answers. She quoted that although measurement results based on subordinates' views do not disclose a gender-based difference in leadership behavior, several studies provide evidence of differences, for example, that female executives are more people-oriented than males (p. 193). Similarly, Eagly and colleagues (1995) found that "female leaders were evaluated well concerning follower satisfaction with their leader compared to male leaders" (p. 134). Lord et al. (2017) suggested that women demonstrated to be relatively "more transformational than men as leaders, specifically in constructing supportive associations with followers" (p. 443).

Silva and Mendis (2017) sought to determine if female leadership styles are distinct from males' by comparing women and men on transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles, and they suggested that "female leaders possess more transformational qualities" (p. 24). Carless (1998, p. 898-900) discussed that "superiors evaluate female managers as more transformational than male managers, while female managers also assess themselves as more transformative than males." She also stated that significant gender differences emerge only on the more interpersonally focused subscales related to behaviors, and subordinates rate male and female leaders equally. Korabik and Ayman (2007) noted that "leaders' gender-role orientation affects self-perceptions of their behavior, competencies, effectiveness, and organization-related outcomes, as well as their supervisors' and subordinates' evaluations of them" (p. 14). Furthermore, Snaebjornsson (2012) underlined contradictory findings regarding gender differences in leadership styles (p. 90).

On the other hand, some studies have explored the effects of a leader's gender in the context of managerial positions or roles. Eagly et al. (1995) examined the efficacy of leaders based on their genders and found that female and male leaders were evenly influential. The study of Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2014) supports this finding when all leadership contexts are regarded together (p. 1140). Moreover, they specified settings and leadership roles where women might conform to role anticipations better than men "(e.g., middle management positions, in business and educational organizations, and situations with a high percentage of female raters)" (p. 1139). Eagly et al. (1992) found that women were undervalued in male-dominated roles, in autocratic or directive leadership styles, and when evaluated by mostly male evaluators (p. 16-18). Shen and Joseph (2021) quoted the findings of the meta-analysis by Eagly and Karau (1991) that "although men were assessed higher in general leadership, women were rated higher in social leadership in leadership emergence" (p. 4). In addition to suggesting that "gender may be an indirect determining factor in leadership processes" (p. 3), they also stated that "while the gender of the leader directly or indirectly affects the leadership processes, it seems to shape the development of this process through moderate effects" (p. 14). However, Eagly (2016, p. 199) argued the claims that female leaders in senior positions positively affect organizational performance are varied and suggested that it is essential to investigate which conditions affect gender diversity. Past research has also provided no explicit evidence supporting that employees favor their leader's gender under any circumstances (Carless, 1998, p. 889; Eagly et al., 1992, p. 12; Elsesser & Lever, 2011, p. 1574; Johnson, 1992, p. 208).

Role congruence (Eagly and Karau (2002) and gender schema (Bem, 1981) theories formed the basis of hypotheses about gender. Although the claims and findings cited from the limited number of studies in the ethical leadership literature that do not fully correspond to the research topic are various, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H3. The Leader's gender moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' affective commitment.

Gender difference

While the debate on whether men and women are fundamentally different or similar has continued for a long time, Kark and Eagly (2010) emphasized this issue in the leadership context, claiming that "no topic with more profound implications for gender equality than leadership" (p. 443). Mazzuca et al. (2020) argued that "gender is a multifaceted and flexible concept comprised of social, biological, cultural, and linguistic components" (p. 2). Whereas before that, Bem (1981) introduced a cognitive theory named gender schema theory, which says gender is a product of the norms of someone's culture. The theory focuses on how people process and use the knowledge provided by their culture about masculinity and femininity, which also shapes gender-appropriate behaviors and roles. For instance, a traditionally masculine culture may assign different social roles to men and women, such as women running the household and raising children and men working outside the home and caring for the family (Hofstede, 1986, p. 308). Afterward, Eagly et al. (1992) defined the gender-role congruence theory as the "extent to which leaders behave in a manner that is congruent with gender-role expectations." They also suggested that the "gender-role theory maintains that people develop expectations for their own and others' behavior based on their beliefs about the appropriate behavior for men and women" (p. 5). Hyde (2014) summarized major theories developed to explain gender differences.

Eagly and Karau (2002) stated that the abundant evidence about descriptive norms or stereotypes associated with men and women shows that people believe that each gender has characteristics and behaviors that are typical and different (p. 574). Saint-Michel (2018) noted that the identical behaviors exhibited by female and male leaders are recognized dissimilarly by their followers based on their gender. Eagly et al. (1992) suggested that "women simply did not demonstrate gender prejudice and did not favor female over male leaders" (p. 17) and similarly, Johnson (1992) stated that some research results do not show gender differences in leadership behavior based on subordinates' perceptions (p. 193). However, Meyer and Allen (1991) have suggested that, as a personal characteristic and demographic variable, gender may be indirectly related to commitment rather than significantly or consistently (p. 69).

Although one could not reach numerous research studies on whether the gender of the leader or the employee moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment, some studies and their findings that are close to the research topic of this study were scrutinized. In their original article on gender differences and organizational commitment, Berkovich et al. (2018) stated that a manager of the same gender positively influences the employee's affective commitment. Chen et al. (2010, p. 258) did not either reach any finding that gender moderates the association between transformational or transactional leadership and organizational engagement in their research conducted in China examining the causal impacts of transformational and transactional leadership on follower outputs.

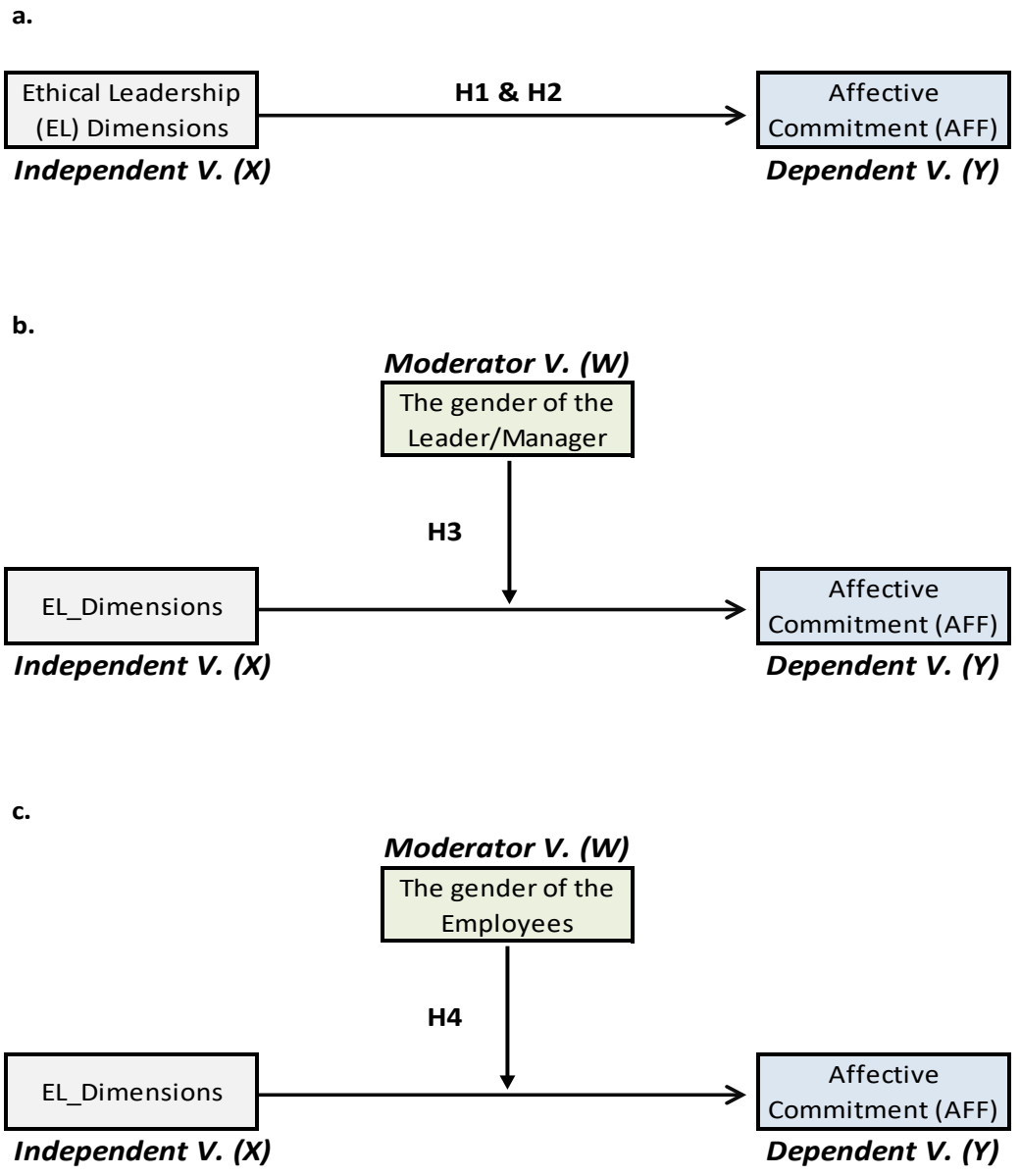
In terms of contradictory findings, Indartono and Wulandari (2014) investigated the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between workplace spirituality and commitment in the Indonesian banking sector. They found that employee gender had a significant moderating effect (p. 76). Noman et al. (2020) examined the moderating impact of gender on the association between organizational citizenship behavior and organizational engagement, and they discovered a significant positive association between organizational engagement and organizational citizenship behavior, but only for women. Ramamoorthy and Stringer (2017) explored the role of gender in the relationship between the concept of equality, closely linked to organizational justice and affective commitment. They observed that gender-based differences arise based on perceptions of equality (p. 11)

Even if not directly related to the research topic, several studies reporting the moderator influence between leadership types other than ethical leadership and various variables, such as trust, motivation, performance, job satisfaction, and emotional intelligence, were examined. Lemoine & Blum (2019) hypothesized that servant leadership's impacts on outcomes are more powerful when undertaken by women and when it occurs within teams high in feminine gender role composition. However, they could not find that a moderated effect emerged for leader sex. These discussions have led to the following hypothesis being put forward:

H4. The gender of the employee moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment.

We designed the research in a way that each dimension of ethical leadership serves as an independent variable, while the gender of the leaders and employees functions as the moderator variable, and affective commitment is the dependent variable. Figure 1 illustrates the research model.

Figure 1. The Hypothesized Models.



In addition, similar to the studies by Appelbaum et al. (2013) and Tourigny et al. (2017), this research attempted to identify the ethical leadership dimensions that might play an influential role in the potential moderation effect based on the gender of the participants. For this purpose, the moderator effects of the gender factor on the relationships between the components of ethical leadership and affective commitment were examined by hierarchical regression analysis.

METHOD

As the research was conducted based on a sole sample, the questionnaire was organized in such a way as to avoid the common method variance (CMV) problem as possible. Accordingly, introductory information about the survey was provided on the opening page of the e-questionnaire to encourage potential survey participants. Namely, the data collected would be securely protected and used solely for research purposes, and the responses would not be considered right or wrong. Subsequently, the configuration of the questionnaire was adjusted accordingly. First, to prevent respondents from misinterpreting scale questions and to reduce random responses, the wording of the questions was constructed as clear and concise and defined unfamiliar or complex concepts in explanations of the related parts of the questionnaire. Then, to reduce the monotony in the questionnaire, the questions of the arrogance dimension were designed reverse-worded, thus named this dimension non-arrogance. In addition, the data were collected from various sectors to reduce any potential sectoral biases. Aside from the precautions taken when creating survey questions to address a potential CMV problem, Harman's single-factor test was performed to detect any potential CMV issues due to its simplicity (Fuller et al., 2016, p. 3197), even though Podsakoff et al. (2003, p. 889) did not recommend it as a proper solution. This test examines the unrotated factor solution to identify the components with an eigenvalue greater than one that explains the total variance. In this context, inter-dimensional excessive correlations were also examined, which may indicate a potential CMV problem, as Bagozzi et al. suggested (1991).

The questions of (a) the not yet validated ethical leadership scale (Demir & Elçi, 2022) and (b) the affective dimension of Meyer and Allen's Organizational Commitment Scale (1991) formed the questionnaire. Using the random sampling technique, the questionnaire was sent to 1128 people working in different sectors between 2019-2022 via a web-based survey tool (Surveey). However, only 657 people completed the survey, resulting in a 58.25% response rate. As a result of the appropriateness test conducted after the data collection process, 21 inadequate entries were eliminated, and the analyses were performed with 636 eligible data. The questionnaire consisted of 40 questions in five dimensions belonging to two different scales, and accordingly, the item-to-response ratio was 1:15.9. While all participants answered the question about their gender, five answers to the question about leaders' gender were missing, which indicated a missing data issue of less than one percent, and therefore no corrective action was taken. All analyses were performed in SPSS.

Factor, inter-item correlation, and reliability analyses were the initial procedures applied to examine the qualities of the responses to the questions on the scales used. Then, correlation analyses were performed to comprehend the nature of the relationship among (employee and leader) gender, ethical leadership, and affective commitment, and regression analyses were performed to understand the effects of each dimension of ethical leadership on employees' affective commitment. Last, the moderation effect of the leader's and employees' gender on the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment by performing multiple regression analyses was examined.

As with male and female leaders, male and female employees should have distinctions in beliefs, thoughts, behavior, and evaluation. Therefore, the opinions of leaders and employees of different genders were attempted to identify by segmenting the sample to gender and examining whether the likely moderator influence deviated according to gender (MacKinnon et al., 2007, p. 606). In this way, analyses were conducted for the five groups separately, while in the first group (classified as a whole), all data were processed without segmentation. The segmented groups represent female executives, male executives, female employees, and male employees.

The Sample

The sample did not have a balanced distribution regarding the research topic, as 66.7% of the participants were men, and the majority were white-collar employees. Of the participants, 61.3% were younger than the age of 36 years, and 79.2% had a minimum of a bachelor's degree. 74.5% of the participants are employees reporting to a male manager and 17% work in managerial positions. The distribution of the sample population according to the sectors they work in is as follows: 18.9% public sector, 13.5% automotive sector, 12.4% finance sector, 10.1% education sector, 7.1% construction sector, 6.4% service sector, 5.6% food sector, 5.0% IT sector, and 5.0% marketing and sales sector. 53.1% of the participants had up to 10 years of work tenure, 32.5% had 11 to 20 years, and 14.3% had over 20 years.

Measures

Although several ethical leadership scales examined (Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven et al., 2011; Yukl et al., 2013) interrogate most of the major problems experienced in working life in Turkey, ethical leadership behaviors were measured using a not yet validated scale, which includes a unique factor with its original questions. By considering the actual issues, the definition of ethical leadership in Turkey should first and foremost involve four elemental dimensions: morality, justice, respectfulness, and non-arrogance. The morality dimension (MRL) consists of 14 questions (e.g., my leader regards honesty and integrity as essential personal values). The justice dimension (JST) consists of seven questions (e.g., my leader treats all employees equally regardless of their status). The respectfulness dimension (RSP) comprises eight questions (e.g., My leader respects their subordinates and superiors equally). The non-arrogance dimension (ARR_R) includes eight questions (for example, my leader does not believe that their capabilities and abilities are superior to those of other employees).

Employees' affective commitment to their organizations was measured using Allen and Meyer's three-dimensional Organizational Commitment Scale (1990). Nevertheless, Cohen (2007) mentioned some limitations of this scale and pointed out that affective commitment is a more comprehensive and precise dimension than other dimensions and proposes a different organizational commitment scale with two dimensions, one of which is affective commitment. Mercurio (2015, Abstract) also suggested that "the affective dimension is an important core essence of organizational commitment." Agreeing with the suggestions of Cohen and Mercurio, only the affective dimension of the Organizational Commitment Scale was used to collect data. This dimension consists of eight questions (e.g., I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization).

Moderation Analysis

"A moderator is a variable that impacts the direction or strength of the association between an independent and a dependent variable" (Baron and Kenny, 1986, p. 1174). As Frazier et al. (2004) mentioned that "a moderator is a variable that alters the direction or strength of the relation between a predictor and an outcome" and addresses "when" or "for whom" a predictor is more strongly related to an outcome" (p. 116).

Before initiating the moderation analysis, the appropriateness of the prerequisites for the moderation tests was inspected. The gender (of the leader and employees) as a moderator variable is a categorical variable, and it was analyzed by separating it into gender subgroups. However, only 25.5% of the respondents' leaders were female, while only 33.3% of the participants were female, which indicates that the sample was not balanced concerning gender distribution and contradicts the preconditions. On the positive side, according to the histogram plots, continuous variables demonstrated almost normal distribution and were sufficiently reliable (Cronbach coefficient alpha emerged above .90).

To perform a moderation analysis, the three causal paths suggested by Baron & Kenny (1986, p. 1174) were applied by processing the sample as a whole and then dividing it by gender based on the moderator variable. To create the interaction terms, first, all variables were standardized and then multiplied each independent variable by the moderator variable. Multiple regression analyses involving gradual steps were performed to disclose and interpret the moderating effect. Initially, the regression analysis revealed the direct impacts of each component of ethical leadership on affective commitment. Next, a moderator variable was added to the model and examined the effects of these two variables on AFF. Finally, in the hierarchical regression analyses, together with the interaction term, each component of the EL scale was included in the model one by one. Accordingly, the extent of the moderating effects of both the gender of the leaders (H3) and the employees (H4) on the association between ethical leadership attributes and followers' affective commitment was examined.

RESULTS

Harman's single-factor test revealed that a single dimension accounted for 57.57% of the total variance involving all the questions (other dimensions explained 16%, 11%, and 5%, respectively), which may point to a potential CMV issue. Therefore, the correlation matrix was also examined to determine the excessive correlation (exceeding 0.90) between any pair of constructs in the model. As a result, correlations ranging from .440 to .835 at a significance level of 0.01 occurred between all variables, while the highest correlation

was between morality and justice (r= .835) and morality and respectfulness (r= .819) dimensions (see Table 1). The justification for such high correlations may be the converging contents and meanings of the concepts of morality and justice.

The mean values of continuous variables were bigger than three, and their standard deviations were less than one. In addition, the fact that skewness and kurtosis values are less than ± 1.5 indicates a normal distribution. However, it can be concluded that categorical variables do not demonstrate a normal distribution due to the majority of male respondents (see Table 1).

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Variables.

#	Variables	N	*M*	*SD*	*Skewness*	*Kurtosis*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	MRL	636	3.624	.865	-.702	.126	-						
2	JST	636	3.374	.981	-.451	-.334	.835**	-					
3	RSP	636	3.603	.950	-.863	.375	.819**	.784**	-				
4	ARR_*R*	636	3.300	.881	-.371	-.008	.711**	.723**	.782**	-			
5	AFF	636	3.380	.948	-.492	-.345	.527**	.530**	.469**	.440**	-		
6	LG	631	1.745	.436	-1.126	-.734	-.042	-.011	-.008	-.020	.030	-	
7	EG	636	1.667	.472	-,709	**-1.502**	-.027	.014	.057	.055	.062	.196**	-

Note. **MRL** = Morality; **JST** = Justice; **RSP** = Respectfulness; **ARR_*R*** = Non-arrogance; **AFF** = Affective commitment; **LG** = Leader gender**; EG** = Employee gender.
N= Sample size. **M** and **SD** are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Factor Analyses, Inter-item Correlation, and Reliability Analyses

As a result of the factor analysis, in which all the variables that were the subject of the research were included, the structures of all different dimensions emerged quite adequately. However, only one question*[2] of affective commitment yielded poor factor-loading and significant cross-loading (see Table 2). Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy coefficient was .977, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significance coefficient was .000. Besides, the mean values of questions did not reveal a significant difference according to gender groups.

Furthermore, inter-item correlation (r_i) and reliability analyses (Cronbach's alpha: α) were also performed for each of the five variables in the research model. When the alpha coefficients were ordered from largest to smallest, the results were as follows: Morality = .962, .474 ≤ r_i ≤ .765; Respectfulness = .954, 544 ≤ r_i ≤ .809; Justice = .953, 638 ≤ r_i ≤ .828; Non-arrogance = .924, .444 ≤ r_i ≤ .760. And finally, the reliability coefficient of the affective commitment was a bit higher (α = .874) than Allen and Meyer's (1996) finding (α = .85), and the inter-item correlations were significant except for one question and ranged from -.003*[2] to .828.

Correlation Analyses

Bedi et al. (2016), using the ethical leadership scale constructed by Brown et al. (2005), found that the perception of ethical leadership is positively related (ρ = .45) to the affective commitment of followers (p. 525). The first-stage correlation tests aimed to check whether a result compatible with the declared result can be obtained and to reveal the essence of the relationship between the variables. As a result, significant correlations occurred between each dimension of the ethical leadership scale and the affective commitment varying between r (634) = .440, p = .000 (non-arrogance), and r (634) = .530, p = .000 (justice), which appears to be consistent with the result found by Bedi et al. (2016).

Table 2. Factor Analysis.

[2] I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one (*R*).

Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Extraction	Component				
				MRL	JST	RSP	ARR_R	AFF
MRL1	3,62	1,034	,698	,740				
MRL2	3,70	1,041	,737	,737				
MRL3	3,78	1,050	,770	,789				
MRL4	3,44	1,112	,663	,644				
MRL5	3,57	1,058	,771	,727				
MRL6	3,60	,967	,599	,615				
MRL7	3,57	1,045	,685	,670				
MRL8	3,68	1,064	,590	,642				
MRL9	3,75	1,064	,521	,566				
MRL10	3,62	1,111	,727	,649				
MRL13	3,81	1,003	,679	,666				
MRL15	3,65	1,086	,734	,695				
MRL16	3,38	1,135	,704	,619				
MRL20	3,59	1,038	,721	,643				
JST23	3,38	1,156	,723		,616			
JST25	3,44	1,090	,786	***,504***	,601			
JST26	3,41	1,155	,753		,667			
JST27	3,27	1,179	,764		,655			
JST29	3,31	1,142	,702		,599			
JST35	3,44	1,115	,742		,615			
JST36	3,36	1,112	,758		,633			
RSP31	3,73	1,102	,775			,757		
RSP32	3,50	1,147	,790			,708		
RSP40	3,62	1,089	,690			,598		
RSP41	3,66	1,086	,825			,681		
RSP42	3,54	1,198	,778			,608		
RSP43	3,52	1,178	,568			,537		
RSP49	3,60	1,089	,651	***,455***		,488		
RSP50	3,67	1,064	,778			,696		
ARR44	3,45	1,208	,717			***,520***	,464	
ARR48	3,55	1,105	,681				,529	
ARR51	3,21	1,106	,727				,738	
ARR52	3,20	1,127	,785				,762	
ARR53	3,07	1,090	,720				,767	
ARR54	3,15	1,070	,733				,774	
ARR55	3,29	1,001	,663				,724	
ARR56	3,52	,987	,466				,616	
AFF1	3,33	1,170	,647					,711
AFF2	3,24	1,153	,352					,450
AFF3	3,65	1,102	,630					,764
AFF4	3,21	1,097	,818					***<.449***
AFF5	3,39	1,153	,786					,820
AFF6	3,33	1,179	,829					,865
AFF7	3,47	1,167	,785					,845
AFF8	3,34	1,210	,816					,871

Note. **N** = 636. **MRL** = Morality; **JST** = Justice; **RSP** = Respectfulness;
ARR_R = Non-arrogance; **AFF** = Affective Commitment
Extraction : Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation : Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Factor Loadings > .0449

Subsequently, correlation analysis was performed with all variables, including two categorical and potential moderator variables. Among ethical leadership dimensions, significant and positive correlations were found between r (634) = .711, p = .000, and r (634) = .835, p = .000. Leader gender correlated with employee gender positively but poorly (r = .196, p = .000). The correlations of the leader's gender to all variables were negligible and negative (-.042 ≤ r ≤ -.008), with a positive correlation only occurring for affective commitment (r = .030, p = .226). On the other hand, the correlations of the gender of the employees with all the variables are negligible (-.027 ≤ r ≤ .055), and a negative correlation occurred only for the morality

dimension of ethical leadership. Besides, its correlation with affective commitment was very low (r = .062, p = .060) (see Table 1).

Using the correlation tables produced by the regression analysis, the data were also analyzed according to the genders of the leaders and employees, and the results were intriguing. Positive, significant, and moderate correlations ($.411 \leq r \leq .565$) occurred between affective commitment and the dimensions of ethical leadership scale in all different gendered groups. The strongest correlation (r (208) = .565, p = .000) was found in the group of female employees and for the morality dimension. Additionally, the results for female employees, representing the highest values on average across all groups, were similar to the tendency and sequence of results for male leaders. The results for male employees, representing relatively lower values on average across all groups, yielded the lowest correlation (r (419) = .411, p = .000) for the non-arrogance dimension.

These results support the findings of previous research (Keskes, 2014; Khasawneh et al., 2012; Ramli and Desa, 2014; Steyrer et al., 2008; Torlak et al., 2021; Yiing and Ahmad, 2009). The found positive and moderate correlations provide evidence for the significant relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment, and accordingly, the first hypothesis (H1) is supported. Moreover, the results of the correlation analysis, conducted by controlling the gender of leaders and employees, were slightly higher in women than in men (see Table 3).

Table 3. Group-based correlations between the AFF and EL Dimensions.

Segments	N	*M*	*SD*	MRL	JST	RSP	ARR_R	EG	LG
Entire Sample	631	3.389	.945	0.524	0.531	0.470	0.438	0.06	0.03
Sig. (1-tailed)				***.000***	***.000***	***.000***	***.000***	*.077*	*.226*
Female Leaders	161	3.340	.941	.478	.541	.509	.488	.109	-
Sig. (1-tailed)				***.000***	***.000***	***.000***	***.000***	*.084*	-
Male Leaders	470	3.41	0.95	.542	.528	.458	.422	.030	-
Sig. (1-tailed)				***.000***	***.000***	***.000***	***.000***	*.255*	-
Female Employees	210	3.313	.963	.565	.563	.514	.480	-	.062
Sig. (1-tailed)				***.000***	***.000***	***.000***	***.000***	-	*.185*
Male Employees	421	3.426	.935	.507	.514	.443	.411	-	-.008
Sig. (1-tailed)				***.000***	***.000***	***.000***	***.000***	-	*.439*

Note. **N**= Sample size; **M**= Mean; **SD**= Standart deviation.
MRL= Morality; **JST**= Justice; **RSP**= Respectfulness; **ARR_*R*** = Non arrogance; **AFF**= Affective commitment;
EG= Employee gender; **LG**= Leader gender.

Regression Analyses

Following correlation analyses, first-stage regression analyses were performed to reveal the direct effect of each variable on affective commitment separately. The results indicated that each component of ethical leadership significantly influences affective commitment. Accordingly, the H2 hypothesis was supported. However, there was no evidence of the influence of the leader or the employee's gender on affective commitment, which can be considered a priori indicator of any moderating impact (see Table 4 [a]). Furthermore, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed in which the variables were sequentially included in the regression model with the enter method. As a result, morality and justice components of ethical leadership showed significant and consistent influences on affective commitment, yet, the effects of the respectfulness and non-arrogance components and gender variables were non-significant (see Table 4 [b]).

Table 4. Regression Results (All Variables) not segmented according to genders

[a] Direct Effects of each Variables on Affective Commitment

Variables / Model	Model Summary			ANOVA*[1]		Coefficients					Collinearity Statistics
	R	R^2	Adj R^2	df	F	β	Std. Error	95,0% CI LL	95,0% CI UL	*p*	VIF
MRL	.527	.278	.276	(1,634)	243.571	.578	.037	.505	.651	**.000**	1.000
JST	.530	.281	.280	(1,634)	247.926	.512	.033	.449	.576	**.000**	1.000
RSP	.469	.220	.219	(1,634)	178.926	.468	.035	.399	.537	**.000**	1.000
ARR_R	.440	.193	.192	(1,634)	151.861	.473	.038	.398	.549	**.000**	1.000
LDR GNDR	.030	.001	-.001	(1, 629)	.568	.065	.086	-.104	.235	.541	1.000
EMP GNDR	.062	.004	.002	(1,634)	2.421	.124	.080	-.032	.280	.120	1.000

[b] Hierarchical Models

1.	MRL	.524	.274	.273	(1, 629)	237.850	.573	.037	.500	.646	**.000**	1.000
2.	MRL	.550	.303	.301	(2, 628)	136.458	.290	.067	.159	.421	**.000**	3.345
	JST						.297	.059	.182	.412	**.000**	
3.	MRL	.551	.303	.300	(3, 627)	90.999	.268	.076	.119	.417	**.000**	4.343
	JST						.286	.062	.164	.407	**.000**	3.710
	RSP						.036	.061	-.083	.156	.549	3.374
4.	MRL	.552	.305	.300	(4, 626)	68.521	.264	.076	.115	.413	**.001**	4.354
	JST						.272	.063	.147	.396	**.000**	3.888
	RSP						.006	.068	-.126	.139	.927	4.165
	ARR_R						.062	.060	-.056	.179	.303	2.801
5.	MRL	.554	.307	.301	(5, 625)	55.245	.271	.076	.121	.420	**.000**	4.374
	JST						.269	.063	.145	.393	**.000**	3.893
	RSP						.003	.068	-.130	.135	.967	4.171
	ARR_R						.063	.060	-.054	.180	.292	2.802
	LDR GNDR						.097	.072	-.045	.239	.181	1.005
6.	MRL	.556	.309	.302	(6, 624)	46.491	.284	.077	.134	.435	**.000**	4.435
	JST						.268	.063	.144	.392	**.000**	3.894
	RSP						-.006	.068	-.140	.127	.924	4.207
	ARR_R						.059	.060	-.058	.176	.322	2.807
	LDR GNDR						.076	.074	-.068	.221	.302	1.043
	EMP GNDR						.102	.069	-.033	.237	.139	1.062

Note. **N** = 636 (All). Affective commitment is the dependent variable.
Ethical leadership dimensions are the independent variables:
MRL= Morality; **JST**= Justice; **RSP**= Respectfulness; **ARR_R**= Non-arrogance.
Moderating Variables: **LDR GNDR**= Leaders Gender; **EMP GNDR**= Employees Gender.
β and **Std. Error** are the Unstandardized Coefficients. **CI** = Confidence Interval.
LL= Lower Bound; **UL**= Upper Bound. **ANOVA*[1]** p- Values (Sig.) are < .001.; **VIF**: Variance Inflation Factor.

Afterward, regression analyses were conducted to comprehend the effects of each dimension of the ethical leadership scale on affective commitment under all the gender-based selections. In the analysis performed by selecting female leaders from the sample, it was found that only the justice dimension, and in the remaining selections, the morality and justice dimensions, influenced the affective commitment significantly. On the other hand, it was determined that the dimensions of respectfulness and non-arrogance did not affect this relationship (see Table 5_[a]).

In the subsequent selection, the effects of ethical leadership dimensions and the gender of the leaders on affective commitment were examined together. According to the findings, only the morality and justice dimensions of ethical leadership significantly influence affective commitment. Additionally, the results did not support any effect of leaders' gender on this relationship (see Table 5_[b]).

Table 5. Regression Results (All Variables)

	Variables	*Selection	Model Summary			ANOVA*[1]		Coefficients					Collinearity Statistics
			R	R^2	Adj R^2	df	F	β	Std. Error	95,0% CI LL	95,0% CI UL	*p*	VIF
[a]	MRL	Whole Sample	.553	.306	.302	(4, 631)	69.566	.284	.076	.136	.433	**.000**	4.313
	JST							.264	.063	.141	.388	**.000**	3.859
	RSP							-.006	.067	-.139	.126	.926	4.160
	ARR_R							.067	.059	-.050	.185	.262	2.808
	MRL	Female Leaders	.567	.321	.304	(4, 156)	18.433	-.117	.163	-.438	.205	.474	5.101
	JST							.376	.123	.133	.619	**.003**	3.918
	RSP							.149	.150	-.148	.445	.323	5.195
	ARR_R							.172	.121	-.067	.411	.158	3.067
	MRL	Male Leaders	.560	.313	.307	(4, 465)	53.017	.377	.086	.208	.546	**.000**	4.167
	JST							.245	.074	.100	.390	**.000**	3.911
	RSP							-.035	.075	-.183	.113	.641	3.919
	ARR_R							.023	.069	-,112	.158	.735	2.749
	MRL	Female Employees	.589	.346	.334	(4, 207)	27.428	.377	.130	.121	.632	**.004**	4.273
	JST							.214	.108	.001	.427	**.049**	4.734
	RSP							-.047	.118	-.281	.186	.691	5.184
	ARR_R							.096	.103	-.106	.298	.351	3.274
	MRL	Male Employees	.536	.287	.281	(4, 419)	42.227	.265	.097	.075	.455	**.006**	4.683
	JST							.287	.079	.132	.443	**.000**	3.538
	RSP							-.001	.084	-.167	.164	.987	3.805
	ARR_R							.048	.074	-.098	.194	.516	2.579
[b]	**MRL**	Whole Sample	.554	.307	.301	(5, 625)	55.245	.271	.076	.121	.420	**.000**	4.374
	JST							.269	.063	.145	.393	**.000**	3.893
	RSP							.003	.068	-.129	.135	.967	4.171
	ARR_R							.063	.060	-0.05	.180	.292	2.802
	LDR GNDR							.097	.072	-.045	.239	.181	1.005
	MRL	Female Employees	.590	.348	.332	(5, 204)	21.775	.329	.131	.071	.587	**.013**	4.378
	JST							.224	.108	.009	.437	**.041**	4.834
	RSP							-.011	.118	-.245	.222	.925	5.272
	ARR_R							.081	.102	-.120	.282	.430	3.285
	LDR GNDR							.098	,112	-.124	.319	.386	1.005
	MRL	Male Employees	.534	.286	.277	(5, 415)	33.171	.261	.098	.069	.454	**.008**	4.729
	JST							.290	.079	.133	.447	**.000**	3.551
	RSP							.000	.085	-.166	.166	.999	3.807
	ARR_R							.048	.075	-.099	.194	.524	2.577
	LDR GNDR							.057	.098	-.136	.251	.559	1.011
[c]	**MRL**	Whole Sample	.557	.310	.304	(5, 630)	56.592	.302	.076	.153	.451	**.000**	4.381
	JST							.262	.063	.139	.386	**.000**	3.860
	RSP							-.018	.068	-.151	.114	.786	4.197
	ARR_R							.063	.060	-.055	.180	.293	2.812
	EMP GNDR							.127	.067	-.005	.259	.059*	1.022
	MRL	Female Leaders	.569	.323	.302	(5, 155)	14.822	-.109	.163	-.431	.213	.506	5.120
	JST							.374	.123	.130	.617	**.003**	3.920
	RSP							.150	.150	-.147	.446	.320	5.195
	ARR_R							.160	.122	-.082	.401	.194	3.120
	EMP GNDR							.096	.126	-.153	.344	.448	1.028
	MRL	Male Leaders	.562	.316	.308	(5, 464)	42.815	.392	.087	.222	.563	**.000**	4.246
	JST							.244	.074	.099	.389	**.001**	3.911
	RSP							-.047	.076	-.197	.102	.532	3.981
	ARR_R							.022	.069	-.113	.157	.746	2.749
	EMP GNDR							.107	.082	-.054	.268	.194	1.027

Note. **N** = 636 (Whole Sample). **Affective commitment** is dependent variable.
LDR GNDR = Leader Gender. Female Leaders, ***N*** = 161; Male leaders, ***N*** = 470.
EMP GNDR= Employee gender. Female employees, ***N*** = 210; Male employees, ***N*** = 421.
Ethical leadership dimensions: **MRL**= Morality; **JST**= Justice; **RSP**= Respectfulness; **ARR_*R*** = Non-arrogance.
Selection refers to the chosen segment of the sample. **β** and **Std. Error** are the Unstandardized Coefficients.
CI = Confidence Interval. **LL**= Lower Bound ; **UL**= Upper Bound

In the last selection, the effects of ethical leadership dimensions and the gender of the employees on affective commitment were analyzed together. Consequently, while the morality and justice dimensions of

ethical leadership significantly impact affective commitment, it can be assumed that the gender of employees may have somewhat influenced in general (p = .059). However, when the sample was partitioned by gender of the leaders, only the justice dimension of ethical leadership significantly influenced affective commitment. In contrast, the morality dimension also had a significant impact, except for the case of female leaders. In this separation, the gender of the employee did not influence affective commitment (see Table 5_[c]).

In addition, the multicollinearity issue was investigated by reviewing the variance inflation factors (VIF) values. The lowest VIF score (2.577) emerged in the male employees' group for the non-arrogance dimension, whereas the highest score (5.195) occurred in the female leaders' group for the respectfulness dimension. These results disapprove of any multicollinearity.

Moderation Effect *(W)*

Although some dimensions of ethical leadership do not significantly influence affective commitment, gender seems to play a partial role in the occurrence of some slight moderator influences. The findings related to the gender variable were summarized in the following subsections.

The moderating effect of the leaders' gender

Initially, in the moderated hierarchical regression analysis, the leader's gender variable did not yield a significant direct effect on affective commitment in any circumstance (either alone or in combination with other variables sequentially entered the models). As a result of examining the moderating effect of the leader's gender on affective commitment based on each EL component, the overall results revealed that the gender of the leader did not significantly moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment. Thus, the third hypothesis (H3) was not supported. However, according to hierarchical regression results, for female employees, the gender of the leaders may moderate the relationship between the non-arrogance dimension of ethical leadership and affective commitment, albeit nonsignificantly (.245 $\leq R^2 \leq$ .359; -.092 $\leq \beta \leq$ -.085; .065 $\leq p \leq$ .072) (see Table 6).

Besides, an Excel template by Dawson (n.d.) plotted two-way interaction effects. Accordingly, the impact of the leaders' gender (LG) indicates that the relationship between non-arrogance and affective commitment becomes more robust with high(er) levels of LG (see Figure 2).

The moderating effect of the employees' gender

Initially, in the hierarchical regression analyses, the direct effects of the employee gender variable on affective commitment were examined, and the results were intriguing. In cases where the sample was not fragmented according to the leaders' gender, the morality dimension's effect was significant when included in the hierarchical regression, whereas the inclusion of justice and respectfulness dimensions produced slight influences. However, the impact of the non-arrogance dimension has not been found.

The overall results suggested that the gender of the employees did not significantly moderate the relationship between the dimensions of ethical leadership and affective commitment. However, the hierarchical regression analyses' results showed that the gender of the employee moderated the effect of the arrogance dimension on affective commitment only slightly when the leader was a woman (R^2 = .255; β = -.109; p = .076). On the other hand, the moderator effect became almost significant (R^2 = .291; β = .253; p = .051) when the morality dimension entered the model (see Table 7). Figure 3 exhibits the diagram of the effect of the employees' gender (EG) indicating that the relationship between non-arrogance and affective commitment becomes more robust with high(er) levels of EG. These partial findings can be interpreted as having the same gender as the leader positively influences affective commitment, which supports the suggestions of Berkovich et al. (2018). However, the overall results were compatible with prior findings (Chen et al., 2010, p. 258; Eagly et al., 1992, p. 17; Johnson, 1992, p. 193) and did not support the fourth hypothesis (H4).

Table 6. Moderating Effect of Leaders' Gender.

Regression Analyses Results		HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION MODELS											
		Model 1 ARR_R, LG, INTARR_R (ARR_R*LG)			Model 2 ARR_R, LG, INTARR_R, MRL			Model 3 ARR_R, LG, INTARR_R, MRL, JST			Model 4 ARR_R, LG, INTARR_R, MRL, JST, RSP		
		ALL	EG (1)	EG (2)	ALL	EG (1)	EG (2)	ALL	EG (1)	EG (2)	ALL	EG (1)	EG (2)
Model Summary	R	.440	.495	.414	.535	.587	.514	.554	.599	.535	.554	.599	.535
	R^2	.194	.245	.171	.286	.344	.264	.307	.359	.286	.307	.359	.286
	Adj R^2	.190	.234	.165	.282	.331	.257	.302	.343	.278	.301	.340	.276
ANOVA*1	df	(3, 627)	(3, 206)	(3, 417)	(4, 626)	(4, 205)	(4, 416)	(5, 625)	(5, 204)	(5, 415)	(6, 624)	(6, 203)	(6, 414)
	F	50.248	22.299	28.702	62.748	26.880	37.309	55.425	22.829	33.318	46.114	18.932	27.698
Independent Variable's Coefficients: **ARR_R**	β	.469	.465	.459	.141	.145	.112	.063	.067	.046	.063	.071	.046
	Std. Error	.038	.061	.050	.051	.081	.067	.054	.088	.069	.060	.102	.075
	95,0% CI LL	.394	.346	.361	.040	-.014	-.021	-.042	-.106	-.089	-.055	-.129	-.101
	95,0% CI UL	.545	.585	.558	.242	.304	.244	.169	.240	.182	.180	.271	.192
	p	**.000**	**.000**	**.000**	**.006**	.074*	.098	.240	.445	.502	.296	.485	.540
	VIF	1.001	1.011	1.009	2.020	2.057	2.048	2.270	2.471	2.201	2.802	3.294	2.580
Moderating Variable's Coefficients: **LG**	β	.086	.080	.039	.111	.084	.058	.098	.080	.048	.098	.079	.048
	Std. Error	.078	.121	.106	.073	.113	.100	.072	.112	.099	.072	.112	.099
	95,0% CI LL	-.067	-.158	-.170	-.033	-.138	-.140	-.044	-.140	-.147	-.044	-.142	-.148
	95,0% CI UL	.238	.318	.248	.255	.306	.255	.240	.300	.242	.240	.301	.243
	p	.271	.508	.713	.130	.456	.566	.174	.475	.630	.175	.480	.632
	VIF	1.001	1.009	1.025	1.003	1.009	1.025	1.004	1.009	1.026	1.006	1.013	1.031
Interaction Term's Coefficients: INTARR_R (ARR_R*LG)	β	-.022	-.092	.039	-.021	-.085	.040	-.025	-.087	.031	-.025	-.087	.031
	Std. Error	.034	.050	.046	.032	.047	.043	.031	.047	.043	.031	.047	.043
	95,0% CI LL	-.087	-.192	-.050	-.083	-.178	-.045	-.086	-.179	-.053	-.086	-.179	-.053
	95,0% CI UL	.044	.007	.129	.041	.008	.124	.037	.005	.114	.037	.006	.115
	p	.519	.068*	.389	.507	.072*	.357	.429	.065*	.469	.430	.066*	.469
	VIF	1.001	1.019	1.022	1.001	1.020	1.022	1.002	1.020	1.025	1.002	1.020	1.026
Independent Variable's Coefficients: **MRL**	β				.472	.498	.473	.271	.318	.264	.270	.321	.263
	Std. Error				.052	.090	.065	.069	.122	.086	.076	.130	.098
	95,0% CI LL				.369	.322	.344	.135	.078	.094	.121	.065	.070
	95,0% CI UL				.576	.675	.601	.407	.558	.434	.420	.578	.456
	p				**.000**	**.000**	**.000**	**.000**	**.010**	**.002**	**.000**	**.014**	**.008**
	VIF				2.020	2.052	2.044	3.640	3.860	3.696	4.374	4.382	4.732
Independent Variable's Coefficients: **JST**	β							.271	.224	.287	.270	.226	.287
	Std. Error							.062	.103	.079	.063	.108	.080
	95,0% CI LL							.148	.020	.131	.146	.013	.130
	95,0% CI UL							.393	.427	.443	.395	.438	.444
	p							**.000**	**.032**	**.000**	**.000**	**.037**	**.000**
	VIF							3.768	4.454	3.529	3.896	4.835	3.564
Independent Variable's Coefficients: **RSP**	β										.002	-.009	.001
	Std. Error										.068	.118	.085
	95,0% CI LL										-.131	-.241	-.165
	95,0% CI UL										.134	.223	.168
	p										.980	.939	.986
	VIF										4.172	5.272	3.809

Note. **N** = 631 (All). Affective commitment is the dependent variable. **LG**= Leader gender is the moderating variable.
EG (1): Female Employees, N= 212; **EG (2):** Male Employees, N = 424.
Ethical leadership dimensions are the independent variables:
MRL= Morality; **JST**= Justice; **RSP**= Respectfulness; **ARR_R**= Non-arrogance.
β and **Std. Error** are the Unstandardized Coefficients. **CI** = Confidence Interval.
LL= Lower Bound; **UL**= Upper Bound. **ANOVA*1** p- Values (Sig.) are < .001.; **VIF**: Variance Inflation Factor.

Table 7. Moderating Effect of Employees' Gender.

Regression Analyses Results		HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION MODELS											
		Model 1 ARR_R, EG, INTARR_R (ARR_R*EG)			Model 2 ARR_R, EG, INTARR_R, MRL			Model 3 ARR_R, EG, INTARR_R, MRL, JST			Model 4 ARR_R, EG, INTARR_R, MRL, JST, RSP		
		ALL	LG (1)	LG (2)	ALL	LG (1)	LG (2)	ALL	LG (1)	LG (2)	ALL	LG (1)	LG (2)
Model Summary	R	.441	.505	.424	.540	.539	.547	.557	.572	.562	.557	.575	.562
	R^2	.195	.255	.180	.291	.291	.300	.310	.328	.316	.310	.331	.316
	Adj R^2	.191	.240	.174	.287	.273	.294	.304	.306	.309	.304	.305	.308
ANOVA*1	df	(3, 632)	(3, 157)	(3, 466)	(4, 631)	(4, 156)	(4, 416)	(5, 630)	(5, 155)	(5, 415)	(6, 629)	(6, 154)	(6, 414)
	F	50.944	17.871	34.034	64.868	15.990	49.727	56.593	15.105	42.861	47.108	12.694	35.713
Independent Variable's Coefficients: **ARR_R**	β	.470	.470	.458	.125	.253	.081	.055	.197	.008	.062	.143	.023
	Std. Error	.039	.076	.045	.052	.107	.060	.054	.106	.063	.060	.123	.069
	95,0% CI LL	.394	.321	.369	.022	.042	-.036	-.052	-.012	-.116	-.055	-.099	-.112
	95,0% CI UL	.546	.619	.547	.227	.464	.198	.161	.407	.131	.180	.386	.158
	p	**.000**	**.000**	**.000**	**.017**	**.019**	.174	.314	.065*	.902	.299	.244	.742
	VIF	1.021	1.095	1.009	2.085	2.279	2.028	2.313	2.355	2.312	2.815	3.152	2.749
Moderating Variable's Coefficients: **EG**	β	.075	.082	.042	.133	.112	.110	.125	.101	.101	.127	.101	.107
	Std. Error	.072	.131	.089	.068	.128	.082	.067	.125	.081	.067	.125	.082
	95,0% CI LL	-.066	-.176	-.132	.000	-.142	-.052	-.007	-.147	-.059	-.005	-.147	-.054
	95,0% CI UL	.216	.341	.216	.267	.365	.272	.256	.348	.261	.259	.349	.268
	p	.295	.530	.639	**.049**	.385	.182	.063*	.424	.214	.060*	.421	.194
	VIF	1.004	1.021	1.002	1.013	1.028	1.010	1.014	1.029	1.011	1.022	1.029	1.027
Interaction Term's Coefficients: INTARR_R (ARR_R*EG)	β	-.008	-.109	.034	-.026	-.117	.011	-.009	-.083	.027	-.010	-.078	.024
	Std. Error	.033	.061	.039	.031	.060	.036	.031	.059	.036	.031	.060	.036
	95,0% CI LL	-.072	-.229	-.042	-.087	-.235	-.060	-.069	-.200	-.044	-.070	-.196	-.047
	95,0% CI UL	.056	.011	.110	.034	.001	.082	.052	.034	.097	.051	.040	.095
	p	.812	.076*	.382	.390	.051*	.756	.780	.164	.459	.756	.192	.502
	VIF	1.019	1.073	1.009	1.024	1.076	1.014	1.045	1.119	1.032	1.057	1.129	1.045
Independent Variable's Coefficients: **MRL**	β				.488	.304	.538	.296	-.002	.362	.306	-.066	.382
	Std. Error				.053	.108	.060	.070	.149	.080	.077	.166	.088
	95,0% CI LL				.385	.091	.419	.159	-.295	.205	.155	-.394	.209
	95,0% CI UL				.591	.516	.656	.433	.292	.518	.458	.262	.555
	p				**.000**	**.005**	**.000**	**.000**	.990	**.000**	**.000**	.690	**.000**
	VIF				2.049	2.139	2.015	3.698	4.267	3.596	4.519	5.325	4.377
Independent Variable's Coefficients: **JST**	β							.257	.360	.243	.260	.344	.250
	Std. Error							.062	.123	.073	.063	.125	.074
	95,0% CI LL							.134	.116	.099	.136	.098	.104
	95,0% CI UL							.379	.604	.386	.384	.591	.395
	p							**.000**	**.004**	**.001**	**.000**	**.007**	**.001**
	VIF							3.808	3.968	3.841	3.916	4.051	3.956
Independent Variable's Coefficients: **RSP**	β										-.021	.131	-.042
	Std. Error										.068	.150	.076
	95,0% CI LL										-.155	-.166	-.192
	95,0% CI UL										.113	.428	.109
	p										.761	.385	.587
	VIF										4.249	5.242	4.034

Affective commitment is the dependent variable. **EG**= Employee gender is the moderating variable.
LG(1): Females, N= 161; **LG(2)**: Males, N = 470.
Ethical leadership dimensions are the independent variables:
MRL= Morality; **JST**= Justice; **RSP**= Respectfulness; **ARR_R**= Non-arrogance.
β and **Std. Error** are the Unstandardized Coefficients. **CI** = Confidence Interval.
LL= Lower Bound; **UL**= Upper Bound. **ANOVA*[1]** p- Values (Sig.) are < .001.; **VIF**: Variance Inflation Factor.

Figure 2. Interaction Effect Diagram of Leader Gender

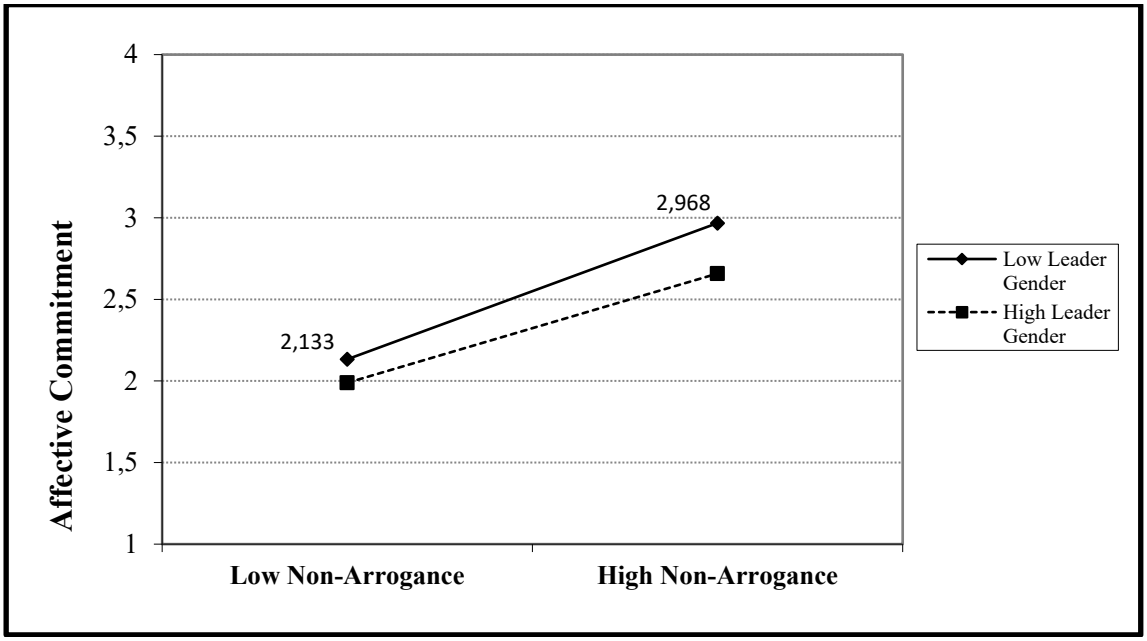
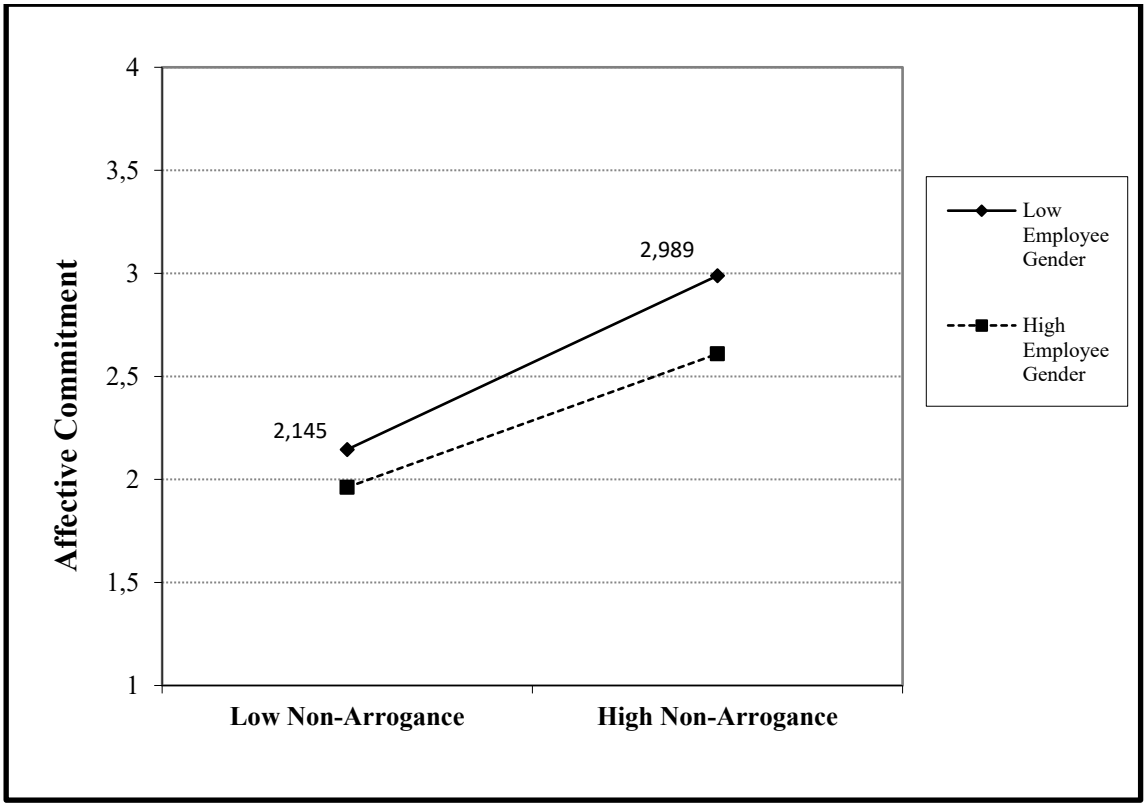


Figure 3. Interaction Effect Diagram of Employee Gender



DISCUSSION

When each of the four components of ethical leadership was analyzed with the moderator variables in the regression analyses jointly, it was found that the justice dimension significantly influenced affective commitment under all conditions, as the morality dimension was also a significant influencing factor except for female leaders.

Although the general results do not suggest that leader gender significantly moderated the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment, it can be argued that leader gender slightly moderates the effect of non-arrogance on affective commitment among female employees. On the other hand, while there is no finding that employee gender significantly moderated the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment in general, it can be argued that employee gender slightly moderates the effect of the non-arrogance dimension on affective commitment only in the female leader option.

Even though no significant effect was found in the regression analyses, the potential of the non-arrogance dimension of ethical leadership to hold a moderator influence on people's affective commitment to their institutions, particularly for women (regardless of their title and role), is a distinctive finding. Because this unique dimension is specific to the new and not yet validated ethical leadership scale.

Practical Implications

Saint-Michel (2018) asserted that leaders and managers, in particular, should be aware of gender stereotypes in organizational environments, as "the same behaviors exhibited by female and male leaders are perceived differently by their followers according to their gender" (p. 960). Therefore, it is important to note that special considerations may be necessary for female employees, especially in regions with a relatively conservative culture. In this regard, Eagly and Heilman (2016) cited a study examining the effects of family-oriented work-life practices. The study's findings suggested that "work-life practices, particularly family-friendly leave arrangements and direct provision of services (e.g., childcare or eldercare), can positively influence the proportion of women in management, but only after a significant time lag and only in certain organizational contexts" (p. 350). This finding can be assumed to apply to female employees as well.

The results of this study can provide organizations with insights into which ethical leadership behaviors should be reinforced among leaders and managers at different levels. While arrogance may not be a prominent issue in every society, institutions can include such concerns in their leadership selection, orientation, and development programs. For example, during the recruitment process, emphasis can be placed on communication skills, such as active listening, two-way communication, and receptiveness to criticism. In addition to implementing HR practices based on rigorous egalitarian policies that value employees, incorporating group work into leadership orientation and development programs can facilitate close collaboration between different levels of employees. This close interaction can help reduce potential biases employees may have towards their leaders, enable leaders to better understand their employees, and ultimately enhance leadership effectiveness.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can offer practical insights to organizations, particularly regarding the appropriate appointment of female executives and employees, taking into account the working environment conditions (cultural norms, potential biases, communication needs, privacy, etc.), job positions, and tasks (Carli, 2001; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Knight & Saal, 1984). Thus, implementing such measures can potentially improve the working conditions for women, who already face limited opportunities in certain fields and may have advantages over men in others. These arrangements may contribute to fostering positive affective commitment among employees.

Theoretical Implications

Based on the concept of tokenism, Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2014) argued that “when the percentage of male raters becomes very high, women might be seen as less effective due to the increased perceptions of their femininity and lessened leadership abilities” (p.1133). Accordingly, uneven gender distribution (the ratio of male raters was 66.7%) in the research sample might have suppressed some gender-based views. However, the quantitative dominance of the male employees' group did not affect the outcomes of the regression analyses. On the contrary, R^2 values, as well as beta values, emerged better in the women's groups. This effect was not so pronounced in the moderation analysis relative to the regression analysis.

The positive and moderate correlations that emerged indicate a significant relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment. Overall, the fact that the direction of the correlation between gender and the variables in the research model is changeable and its magnitude is negligible demonstrates that gender is not related to ethical leadership and affective commitment. Remarkably, the results of the correlation analysis, controlling for the gender of leaders and employees, were slightly higher in women than in men, indicating that ethical leadership is somewhat more associated with the affective commitment of women than men.

Even though there was no evidence that the gender of the leader or employee directly impacted affective commitment, it was analyzed whether the gender factor influences the employees' affective commitment concurrently with any ethical leadership behavior. Ultimately, the justice dimension influenced affective commitment in all circumstances. Furthermore, the morality dimension was also an influencing factor for affective commitment, except for the option of female leaders. Aside from these, respectfulness and non-arrogance dimensions did not affect this relationship.

Last, the overall results suggested that the gender of the employees and the leaders did not significantly moderate the relationship between the four dimensions of ethical leadership and affective commitment. However, hierarchical regression results showed that for female employees, the gender of the leader slightly moderated the non-arrogance dimension's impact on affective commitment. On the other hand, employee gender slightly moderated the non-arrogance dimension’s influence on affective commitment only when leaders are women. It is a remarkable result for this context that the effect of the non-arrogance became almost significant when combined with the morality dimension.

The joint points in these results are the non-arrogance dimension of ethical leadership and the fact that women are the factors that affect and are affected. This finding may be worth examining regarding the individualized consideration dimension suggested by Treviño et al. (2003, p. 21-22). Furthermore, the findings regarding the partial moderating effect comply with Allen & Meyer's (1991) suggestion that "demographic characteristics such as age, tenure, gender, and education are associated with commitment, while the relationships are neither strong nor consistent" (p. 69).

While the study did not reveal significant and new findings and claims, neither theoretically nor practically, it may expand the literature on ethical leadership and affective commitment with its results on female leaders and employees.

CONCLUSION

The reflection of the gender differences of leaders on their behaviors, the impacts of these differences on employees and institutions, and the divergence arising from gender differences in how employees perceive leaders are topics that have been researched and theorized for decades. Although some problems related to these issues have emerged undeniably in Turkey, one can easily understand from open media sources that reasonable steps have not been taken to solve them in a well-timed and proper manner. Even though it is a different research topic, it can be claimed that women in Turkey face certain prejudices in their social and working lives.

This study aims to fill the gap in the literature and the country on the moderating impacts of the gender of leaders and employees on the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' affective commitment to their organizations.

Correlation and hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the four proposed hypotheses. Statistical analyses did not result to support the hypotheses regarding the moderator effect of gender. Correlation analyses revealed a significant, positive, and moderate relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment. However, gender yielded negligible correlations between ethical leadership dimensions and affective commitment. Regression analyses indicated the substantial influences of justice and morality dimensions of ethical leadership on affective commitment. However, any gender-based effects did not occur. Finally, the moderation effect of gender (both leaders and employees) was non-significant in the examined relationship. These general findings align with prior research.

The probability that the non-arrogance dimension of ethical leadership may have a moderating influence on the affective commitment to their institutions, particularly for women (regardless of their titles and

roles), is the key finding of this study and deserves attention. Accordingly, the non-arrogant behaviors of female leaders may stimulate female employees' affective commitment to their institution.

Limitations and Future Research

The study sample comprised a relatively well-educated urban population living and working in an industrially developed and limited geographic area. The percentage of the population of Turkey with college graduates and higher education is only 16% (Gökçadır, 2022), but this rate was over 79% in the sample. Potential difficulties such as technical problems in accessing the online questionnaire, time pressure, hesitation, indifference, and others may have caused the low participation of labor-intensive employees in the survey. Regardless of the reason, consisting of the vast majority of the sample from white-collar employees may be a severe limitation. This situation may have limited the possible cultural prejudices of the employees regarding the gender of the leader and the differences of opinion arising from the gender differences of the employees and, thus, the generalisability of the results. Accordingly, the study results may be sensitive to the features of the sample. The rate of female participants in the sample was around 33%, which is not a balanced distribution. However, it is consistent with the official data (36.4%) on women's participation in business life in Turkey (TUIK, 2023). Among the participants, the number of employees reporting to female managers is 161, and their ratio is 25.3%, which is higher than the statistical average (19.3%) of Turkey (TUIK, 2022). In the research sample, where gender distribution was uneven (the proportion of men was 66.7%), some gender-based opinions may have been seriously affected. Despite the relatively large sample of the study, the findings related to the gender of the employee can be evaluated as indistinct rather than significant.

When morality and justice dimensions were analyzed accompanied by employee gender, significant effects on emotional commitment were found in the cases of the whole sample and male leaders. The unequal gender distribution in the sample may be the reason for these results. As Paustian-Underdahl (2014) suggested, gender-balanced samples may yield different results (p. 1137). Therefore, future studies should aim to test the results in a more balanced sample and comprehensive setting.

In moderation analysis, especially when a categorical moderator is involved, arranging the scale questions accordingly may provide more easily interpretable results. For example, using the question sentence: "I find female managers more trustworthy than males" instead of "My manager can be trusted" may simplify some processes and ease the interpretation of the results. For multidimensional scales, examining the effects of each dimension rather than expecting a moderation based on the whole construct (scale) may be more rational. The challenge may be how to interpret the results for each dimension separately and then integrate these interpretations, as there may be tight relationships between dimensions in social science scales.

Future research is needed to validate the conclusions that can be drawn from this study and to highlight its shortcomings. Eagly and Heilman (2016, p. 353) stated that the previous claim (Eagly & Johnson, 1990) that female leaders in senior positions have positive effects on organizational outcomes did not fully comply with the facts of social sciences and also suggested that the conditions under which the gender diversity may be valid, should be investigated. Our findings on the effect of a leader's gender on employee commitment to the organization lend support to the proposal of Eagly et al. to identify the conditions under which business leaders' gender may be influential. Accordingly, future studies may address the moderating influence of the leader's gender in different settings, contexts, locations, and cultures. In addition, investigating which ethical leadership characteristics will be more effective under which conditions would contribute to management science.

Considering Hofstede's (1986) suggestion about the traditional masculine culture, it is expected that men's commitment to their institutions (jobs) would be high, regardless of the circumstances, due to their role in earning their family's prosperity. However, in the end, it turned out that the relationship between employee gender with affective commitment was negligible, its effect on affective commitment was weak, and it did not moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment in general. Investigation of the underlying cause of this finding would contribute to the literature. Whether women, especially the leaders of a political movement in Turkey, can act according to the gender-role congruence theory by Eagly et al. (1992) can be another issue to be examined more extensively. Society may demand that female leaders in these posts demonstrate preferably masculine behaviors.

The argument that most female leaders have slightly more developed emotional abilities and are more trustworthy and kinder than males may be largely realistic. The relatively superior or disadvantageous characteristics of female executives who demonstrate leadership quality, and the possible impacts of these characteristics on the organization and its employees, should be overarching pillars of HR policies and decisions. Brown and Treviño (2006) suggested developing ethical leadership in the recruitment process and through training (p.609). Therefore, organizations should establish appropriate HR policies and practices that reflect the emphasis they place on ethical standards, regardless of the gender of executives.

All dimensions of the proposed but not yet validated ethical leadership scale were moderately associated with affective commitment. The justice dimension of this scale significantly influences affective commitment in all conditions. However, while the effect of the morality dimension was non-significant in the case of female leaders, it was significant in other conditions. However, the rationale for why these two dimensions do not have any moderator influence needs to be investigated further.

The almost absence of supporting and counter studies that could compare and discuss research findings posed a severe challenge. Considering that the number of studies on whether gender moderates the association between ethical leadership and affective commitment in the leadership literature is limited, the results achieved may be an instance of future research. If the number and scope of studies in which gender is the moderator variable on employees and organizational consequences increase, the discussions on this subject will be expanded.

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