

## Article

# The Mediating Effect of Organizational Justice Perception on the Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Workplace Deviant Behaviors

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**Abstract:** The present study examines whether there is a relationship between the ethical leadership (EL), organizational justice perception (OJP), and deviant behaviors (WDB) of customs officers working at international airports in Turkey, and aims to determine whether OJP has a mediating effect on the relationship between EL and WDB. For this purpose, the study was conducted on the 487 customs officers working at 28 airports open to international flights in Turkey. In this study, which was carried out with the quantitative method, the obtained data were analyzed with structural equation modeling (SEM). The results showed that EL had a direct and significant effect on OJP. On the other hand, OJP had a negative direct, and significant effect on deviant workplace behaviors. Moreover, there was no direct and consequential effect of EL on WDB. In addition, EL indirectly affected WDB through OJP, and the OJP had a full mediation effect between these two variables. The findings were interpreted by using social exchange theory. This study develops our understanding of the organization-level antecedents of WDB and mediating role of OJP as the social mechanism of EL. In the Conclusion section of the study, some theoretical conclusions are discussed, and recommendations are offered for customs managers.

**Keywords:** ethical leadership; organizational justice perception; workplace deviant behaviors; customs officers; mediating effect

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## 1. Introduction

In her book titled “Measuring and Evaluating Sustainability: Ethics in Sustainability Indexes”, Sarah Fredericks [1] emphasizes the importance of ethics in sustainability and underlines justice as it is the most general ethical principle in the sustainability literature. Ethics provides a framework to facilitate a more holistic and integrative view of sustainability [2]. Beyond that, ethics is at the core of true sustainability [3]. The close relationship of ethics with sustainability also reveals the threat of unethical behaviors to sustainability. Then, we believe that the variables in the current study are closely related to sustainability. Understanding the relationships between ethical leadership, organizational justice perception, and workplace deviant behaviors may contribute to the sustainability literature.

Business ethics is a cultural norm that contains moral and positive values for doing a desirable job appropriately. However, given that people who display unethical behaviors focus on their interests rather than the interests of internal and external stakeholders of the organization, this situation creates concern for governments, researchers, and

practitioners [4]. An individual who models ethical behaviors that significantly impact groups or group members and who assists them as they work toward reaching a common objective is called an ethical leader [5]. Due to their status, the leaders of an organization are suitable role models for their subordinates to learn from and imitate, and their attitudes toward ethical norms also have a significant impact on the entire ethical structure of the organization [6].

In addition to being ethical role models, leaders can affect employees' organizational justice perception and ethical and/or deviant behaviors [7]. In this regard, the relationships between the current study's variables can be built on solid ground by depending on Adams' equity theory and social exchange theory. In the context of Adams' equity theory [8], individuals' perceived inequality will encourage them to struggle to rebalance equality, and the magnitude of motivation to struggle will be balanced with perceived disparities. Social exchange theory [9], which constitutes a basis of organizational justice, deals with social life as a series of successive transactions between two or more sides. Resources are exchanged through a reciprocity process in these transactions. The quality of the exchange relationship with the organization is determined by the employee's perception of justice. Employees will feel obligated to create good behavior in return if they are treated fairly by the organization and its managers. Employees who feel the organization does not properly appreciate their efforts may engage in rude and deviant behavior [10]. Brockner and Wiesenfeld [11] state that organizational justice affects the individual's satisfaction with the results of any decision so that the employee will develop an attitude toward the work, the organization, and her friends, which will turn into performance results. Given this, it can be thought that the perception of organizational justice can play an essential mediating role in reducing employees' deviant behavior through ethical leadership in organizations.

Some institutions are perceived as unethical in the eyes of citizens in Turkey [12]. One of these institutions is customs. As in other public institutions and organizations, adherence to ethical values is also essential in customs administrations, which significantly contribute to the public purse, primarily through taxes. However, because the customs administrations are among the institutions with intense face-to-face relations, it is stated that unethical behaviors are encountered more frequently here [13]. In this regard, this study has been conducted in customs administrations, where unethical, corrupt practices are frequently seen, as they are in many developing countries.

Furthermore, this study fills the gap in the literature by examining the relationships between ethical leadership, organizational justice perception, and deviant behaviors in the workplace, in a non-Western country, following the call of some researchers as future research proposals [14–16]. The effect of ethical leadership on workplace deviant behaviors should be given more importance and stated that more studies should be done in this area [6]. According to Xu et al. [17], more study is needed to scientifically analyze the relationship between organizational justice perception and ethical leadership. Furthermore, Yesiltas et al., Demirtas, and Al halbusi et al. [15,18,19] suggested that different variables that may have a mediating effect between ethical leadership and workplace deviant behaviors should be addressed. To respond to these calls, this study will expand the knowledge in the literature by examining the effect of ethical leadership on workplace deviant behaviors and the mediating role of organizational justice perception in the relationship between these two variables in customs administrations in Turkey.

First, the literature review is given, then the research hypotheses are developed, and the research model is presented. Afterward, information about the scales and the sample is provided, and the analyses and findings conducted to test the research hypotheses are given. Finally, the research findings are evaluated, the research limitations are stated, and suggestions are made for future research and customs managers.

## 2. Literature Review

In this section, the variables of the study and the envisaged relationships among them are discussed. In this regard, the relationships between ethical leadership and organizational justice, organizational justice and deviant behaviors, and ethical leadership and deviant behaviors are discussed. Then, the mediating role of organizational justice perception on the relationship between ethical leadership and deviant behaviors is explained.

### 2.1. Ethical Leadership and Organizational Justice

OJP refers to employees' perceptions of equity within the organization [20]. Justice is being impartial, admitting faults, treating individuals equally, and not taking advantage of others' mistakes or shortcomings [21]. It is argued in the organizational justice literature that a high perception of justice causes positive attitudes and behaviors in employees [22].

There are different opinions about the dimensions of OJP. Some researchers, such as Colquitt [23], argued that OJ—defined as people's subjective perception of justice in organizations—comprises four subdimensions. These dimensions are distributive justice, procedural justice [24], and interactional justice, which have two subdimensions: informational justice and interpersonal justice [20]. According to Folger and Cropanzano [25], distributive justice is employees' perceptions of whether the gains they make are distributed equitably. Procedural justice refers to the decision-making process or the policies used to make allocation decisions [26]. The interpersonal dimension shows the value, courtesy, and respect shown to employees by supervisors who participate in determining achievements and the execution of transactions. Informational justice is giving information about the execution of transactions or the distribution of gains [27].

In this study, we directly focused on the effect of ethical leadership on the perception of organizational justice. However, ethical leadership has a multifaceted impact on employees. Therefore, it is possible that different mediating variables may appear in the effect of ethical leadership on the perception of organizational justice, which is not included in the current study but necessarily should be kept in mind to explain the relationship between ethical leadership and in the perception of organizational justice. For example, in their study, Xu et al. [17] found that a positive relationship exists between ethical leadership behavior and justice perceptions. They stated that trust mediates both positive relationships between ethical leadership behavior and procedural and distributive justice. Similarly, there may be different hidden mediating variables that can explain the relationship between ethical leadership and subdimensions of organizational justice perception that needs further research. Broadly speaking, ethical leadership affects all subdimensions of organizational justice, including distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice [4]. On the other hand, some different leadership types accepted very close to ethical leadership—such as servant leadership—positively affect the distributive justice perceptions of employees [28].

Ethical leaders increase the perception of justice in their organizations due to their moral aspects. Furthermore, although ethical leaders are fair, they also try to prevent and correct unethical behavior within the organization [15]. Therefore, fairness is considered an essential attribute of EL, as ethical leaders make qualities such as fairness, trustworthiness, and honesty explicit parts of their leadership. Thus, in this fair environment, employees will be confident to trust the application of justice and act ethically to eliminate the uncertainties in their relations with their employers [19].

Various studies in the literature show that EL has a positive and significant effect on OJP [14,17,19]. Based on this literature and the above discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *Ethical leadership is positively related to organizational justice perception.*

### 2.2. Organizational Justice and Deviant Behaviors

In modern organizations, competitive advantage is attempted through manpower. But unfortunately, some employees exhibit deviant behaviors in almost every organization, which can affect organizational productivity and pose a significant threat to organizational welfare [29]. As a result, most deviant behaviors arise from the injustice occurring in an organization's events that reduces employee satisfaction [30]. Therefore, the concept of "deviant behavior" has been defined as "voluntary behavior" that violates significant organizational norms and threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both [31].

According to Blau's social exchange theory [9], when employees perceive an injustice, they attempt to create a balance to correct it [32]. Such behaviors include reducing their effort and showing less motivation by developing negative feelings toward the organization and even acting against it by distrusting the organization and its leader [33].

Alias and Rasdi [34] stated that OJP is one of the most critical determinants of WDB. From a practical point of view, because WDB covers a wide range of organizational costs, identifying such behaviors is vital in every organization to increase productivity. Then, increasing impartiality and fairness in organizations will reduce WDB [35].

Various studies have found a negative relationship between OJP and WDB [32,36,37]. As a result, based on the reasons and theories above, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H:** *Organizational justice perception is negatively related to workplace deviant behaviors.*

### 2.3. Ethical Leadership and Deviant Behaviours

Leaders of an organization are suitable models for their subordinates to learn from and imitate, and their attitudes toward ethical norms also have a significant impact on the entire ethical structure of the organization [6]. Moreover, employees assimilate these ethical codes behaviorally and cognitively as long as the leaders act ethically and encourage their employees to behave ethically [38]. Thus, the quality of two people's social interchange encourages them to act positively or adversely toward one another [39].

Social exchange theory argues that when followers perceive their leaders to be ethical and fair, they respond by contributing to group or organizational performance, reducing the occurrence of WDB [6,40].

Robinson and Bennett [31] classified WDB in two ways: interpersonal and organizational deviance. Interpersonal deviance comprises verbal abuse, assault, spreading gossip about employees, and physical acts. On the other hand, organizational deviance contains behaviors against the organization, such as wasting resources, stealing, sabotaging tools and equipment, and deliberately working slower.

Employees who evaluate their leaders negatively are more likely to participate in deviant behaviors [41]. Various studies have revealed that EL affects WDB [6]. This leads us to the following hypothesis:

**Hs:** *Ethical leadership is negatively related to workplace deviant behaviors.*

### 2.4. The Mediating Role of Organizational Justice Perception

Leadership style is of great importance in the development of positive attitudes and behaviors of employees toward their organization because leaders are the people who work on strategic decisions and direct the employees [42]. Employees of an organization are influenced in their behavior by observing the behavior of their leaders, and they take their leaders as role models [43]. Ethical leaders also encourage employees to participate by treating them with sincerity and respect. In this way, they play an essential role in developing and maintaining ethical cultures and behaviors by interacting positively with their employees [44].

Ethical behaviors increase the climate of justice within the organization. This encourages all organization members to act ethically for the organization's and their colleagues' benefit [45]. The ethical behavior of group members also promotes justice among colleagues. The ethical behavior of members encourages civilized and mutually respectful interactions among group members and increases the likelihood of being treated fairly and respectfully by their colleagues [40].

Employees develop negative attitudes such as displeasure, distrust, and stress when they believe their workplace is unfair. These negative attitudes then lead to WDB, affecting both individuals and the organization [37]. Deviant behavior may include employees' intentional negative actions and behaviors that endanger other organizational members and violate the organization's norms and standards [46]. Researchers have presented empirical evidence that perceived injustice in the workplace causes employees to display deviant behaviors [47,48].

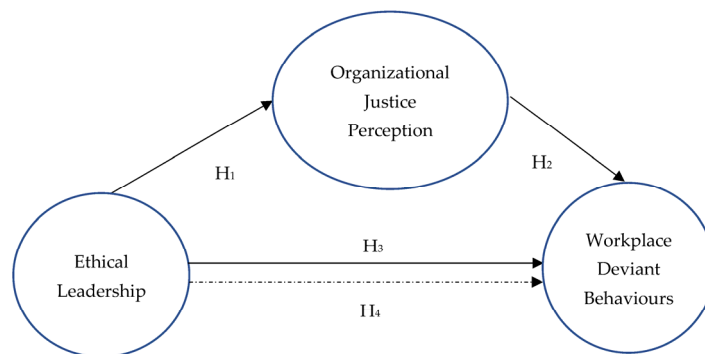
Chang and Smithikrai [49] found that OJ had a moderating effect on the relationship between personality traits and counterproductive deviant behaviors. Liu and Ding [50] focused on interactional justice in the workplace and found that the relationship between those who performed more passively at work and deviant behaviors at work was regulated by their perceptions of interactional justice so that higher levels of perceived interactional justice would cause lower levels of deviant behaviors. Gillet et al. [51] found that OJP mediated between transformational leadership and nurses' quality of work life. Al Halbusi et al. [19] found that OJP had a mediating effect on the relationship between the EL of managers and the ethical behavior of employees.

Organizational justice perception plays an important role in the occurrence of deviant workplace behavior [27]. An unjust environment is at the forefront of the factors that are effective in the emergence of deviant behavior. Because the necessary response and punishment may be given to the deviant behaviors if a justice environment exists. Ethical leadership can reduce deviant behavior by providing employees with a sense of a just environment in which what is right will be done to address deviant behavior, including punishment. However, this reduction can only be possible with the mediating role of organizational justice because prevention or punishment of deviant behaviors is possible only by virtue of functioning organizational sanctions and systems beyond the attitudes and behaviors of the leader. Otherwise, it remains good will that is not implemented.

Based on this, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H<sub>4</sub>:** *Organizational justice perception mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace deviant behaviors.*

In conclusion, based on the above literature, discussion, and hypotheses, the conceptual model of the research stated is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Solid lines have direct effects; dashed lines have indirect effect via organizational justice perception. The conceptual model of the research.

### 3. Materials and Methods

In this section, the materials and methods used in the study are explained in detail. In this content, the demographics of respondents and data collection process, measures, and analyses of hypotheses are explained, respectively.

#### 3.1. Respondents and Data Collection

We sent the questionnaire to the personnel services of each customs directorate via e-mail. Personnel services forwarded this questionnaire to the officers in charge of passenger transactions via the corporate intranet network. The research population consisted of 946 people. Because customs officers work in shifts, the number of female personnel cannot exceed 20% according to the regulation. Therefore, this situation was also reflected in our sample. Responses were obtained from 487 of the questionnaires sent. The research data were analyzed by SPSS 21 and Amos 23 programs. The officers participating in the research were 82% male and 18% female; 55.7% were in the 25–35 age range; 33.6% were 36–45, and 10.7% were 46 years old and over. On the educational level, 80.5% of the participants were university graduates and 19.5% of those had earned a master's degree or Ph.D. Concerning marital status, 74.9% were married and 25.1% were single. Their working status was 80.5% officers and 19.5% supervisors. The corporate tenure of the participants was 1–5 years (22.6%), 6–10 years (40.4%), 11–15 years (22.1%), 16–20 years (4.6%), and over 20 years (10.3%).

#### 3.2. Measures

We adopted the measure of EL developed by Brown et al. [52]. We used a validity and reliability study conducted by Tuna et al. [53] in Turkey, which applied a test comprising 10 items and a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree).

To determine OJP, we used Colquitt's [23] four-dimensional OJP scale. Colquitt's scale has four items to measure perceptions of distributive justice (DJ). There are seven items to measure the perception of procedural justice (PJ) and four items to measure the perception of interpersonal justice (Inter PJ) (the fourth item about this dimension is reversed). There are five items regarding the dimension of the perception of informational justice (InforJ). Thus, there are a total of 20 items on the OJP scale. A 5-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire. We translated the OJP survey questions from English to Turkish under the rejection method suggested by McGorry [54]. Finally, we asked the faculty members of the Akdeniz University School of Foreign Languages to translate the items from Turkish to English.

Factor analysis showed that OJP has three dimensions: distribution, transaction, and interaction. The interactional justice dimension is not divided into two dimensions, interpersonal and informational. The OJP scale developed by Colquitt [23] was adapted into Turkish by Ozmen et al., [55], and it was concluded that the scale had a three-factor structure in both studies. Based on this, we examined interpersonal justice and informational justice under the name of interactional justice.

We used the WDB Scale, developed by Bennett and Robinson [46] and adapted by Demir [21] and translated into Turkish, to measure WDB. The scale is divided into two dimensions: interpersonal deviant behaviors (IPD) and organizational deviant behaviors (OD). Of these, the IPD dimension consisted of seven items. OPD dimension consisted of eight items. Thus, there are 15 items on the WDB scale. We measured the items using a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree) (Appendix A).

In Table 1, evaluation of the first-order measurement model, factor loadings of the items, and Cronbach's Alpha values of scales were given.

**Table 1.** Evaluation of the first-order measurement model.

Codes	Skewness	Kurtosis	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
Ethical leadership				0.930
EL_1	0.022	-1.701	0.665	
EL_3	-0.382	-0.405	0.628	
EL_4	0.344	-0.709	0.783	
EL_5	0.330	-0.906	0.799	
EL_6	0.111	-1.082	0.828	
EL_7	-0.112	-0.746	0.814	
EL_8	-0.134	-0.925	0.833	
EL_9	0.218	-1.023	0.789	
EL_10	0.072	-1.073	0.804	
Distributive justice				0.904
DJ_1	-0.277	-0.861	0.770	
DJ_2	-0.182	-0.749	0.883	
DJ_3	-0.239	-0.876	0.835	
DJ_4	-0.126	-1.060	0.867	
Procedural justice				0.900
PJ_1	-0.147	-0.642	0.647	
PJ_2	-0.123	-0.805	0.580	
PJ_3	-0.040	-0.745	0.837	
PJ_4	0.319	-0.744	0.820	
PJ_5	-0.034	-0.753	0.877	
PJ_6	-0.025	-0.893	0.666	
PJ_7	-0.166	-0.853	0.836	
Interactional justice				0.952
InterPJ1	-0.625	-0.088	0.748	
InterPJ2	-0.486	-0.420	0.808	
InterPJ3	-0.676	-0.030	0.765	
InforJ1	-0.341	-0.695	0.851	
InforJ2	-0.050	-0.857	0.872	
InforJ3	-0.266	-0.612	0.889	
InforJ4	-0.234	-0.710	0.886	
InforJ5	-0.449	-0.586	0.813	
Interpersonal deviance				0.945
IP_D1	0.794	0.029	0.813	
IP_D2	0.931	0.151	0.815	
IP_D3	0.751	-0.188	0.915	
IP_D4	0.764	-0.267	0.910	
IP_D5	0.576	-0.453	0.684	
IP_D6	0.743	-0.151	0.895	
IP_D7	0.658	-0.419	0.876	
Organizational deviance				0.935
OD_2	0.359	-0.920	0.848	
OD_3	0.421	-0.739	0.870	
OD_4	0.791	-0.092	0.851	
OD_5	0.009	-1.139	0.680	
OD_6	0.509	-0.721	0.835	
OD_7	0.517	-0.704	0.815	
OD_8	0.497	-0.717	0.848	

Interactional justice				0.952
InterPJ1	−0.625	−0.088	0.748	
InterPJ2	−0.486	−0.420	0.808	
InterPJ3	−0.676	−0.030	0.765	
InforJ1	−0.341	−0.695	0.851	
InforJ2	−0.050	−0.857	0.872	
InforJ3	−0.266	−0.612	0.889	
InforJ4	−0.234	−0.710	0.886	
InforJ5	−0.449	−0.586	0.813	
Interpersonal deviance				0.945
IP_D1	0.794	0.029	0.813	
IP_D2	0.931	0.151	0.815	
IP_D3	0.751	−0.188	0.915	
IP_D4	0.764	−0.267	0.910	
IP_D5	0.576	−0.453	0.684	
IP_D6	0.743	−0.151	0.895	
IP_D7	0.658	−0.419	0.876	
Organizational deviance				0.935
OD_2	0.359	−0.920	0.848	
OD_3	0.421	−0.739	0.870	
OD_4	0.791	−0.092	0.851	
OD_5	0.009	−1.139	0.680	
OD_6	0.509	−0.721	0.835	
OD_7	0.517	−0.704	0.815	
OD_8	0.497	−0.717	0.848	

### 3.3. Testing the Structural Model and Hypotheses

To see to what extent the variables included in the model as second-order structures represent the first-order structures, the path coefficients, and significance among the first-order structures, which are the subdimensions of the second-order structures, were examined. Because the effect of the OJP variable, which is a second-order structure, on the subdimensions of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice variables is statistically significant and positive, and because the variance they explain is greater than 50% ( $R^2 = 0.50$ ), it can be seen that the second-order variables are sufficient to represent the first-order variables, which are the subdimensions of the second-order variables.

Likewise, because the effect of deviant behaviors, which is the second-order variable, on the subdimensions of interpersonal deviation and organizational deviation variables is statistically significant and positive, and the variance they explain is greater than 50% ( $R^2 = 0.50$ ), it can be seen that the second-order variables are sufficient to represent the first-order variables, which are the subdimensions of the second-order variables.

Detailed information about the analysis is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Examination of second-order structures.

Path	$\beta$	P	$R^2$
OJP → PJ	0.932	0.000	0.869
OJP → DJ	0.671	0.000	0.869
OJP → InterPJ	0.755	0.000	0.450
WDB → IP_D	0.828	0.000	0.685
WDB → OD	0.864	0.000	0.746

We separately tested both first-order and second-order structures of the created model, and I concluded that the goodness-of-fit values were at an acceptable level. Detailed information on the goodness-of-fit values is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Goodness-of-fit values.

Goodness-of-Fit Criterion	Chi-Square $\chi^2$	SD -	P $p < 0.01$	$\chi^2/SD < 3$	SRMR < 0.05	CFI $\geq 0.90$	RMSA $\leq$ 0.08
First-order structures	1,818,818	797	$p = 0.000$	2282	0.039	0.943	0.051
Second-order structures	1,837,955	804	$p = 0.000$	2286	0.047	0.942	0.051

As a result of the path analysis, because the effect of EL on OJ was statistically significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.766$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) hypothesis H1 was accepted. Hypothesis H2 was accepted because the direct effect of OJP on WDB was statistically significant and negative ( $\beta = -0.516$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Because the direct effect of EL on WDB was statistically insignificant ( $\beta = 0.096$ ,  $p = 0.278$ ), the H3 hypothesis was rejected. Detailed information about these results is shown in Table 4.

In addition, we examined the mediating effect of EL on WDB through OJP. We used the bootstrap method via the PROCESS macro to test the mediating effect. Unlike simple regression tests, bootstrap uses the resampling method expressed as a confidence interval [56]. In addition, upper (ULCI) and lower (LLCI) values showing the degree of confidence are presented to determine the significance value. For these values to be considered significant, both must be greater than or less than zero. There was partial mediation when both the indirect effect and the direct effect were significant. In cases in which the indirect effect was significant while the direct effect is insignificant, there is a full mediation effect [56]. As a result of this analysis, the H4 hypothesis was accepted, because the direct effect of EL on WDB was insignificant ( $\beta = 0.096$ ,  $p = 0.278$ ) and the indirect effect on OJ was statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.570$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ). This means that OJP has a full mediating effect on the relationship between EL and WDB. Detailed information about the analysis is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Results of hypothesis tests.

Hypothesis	Path	B	p	%95 Confidence Interval		+/-
				LLCI	ULCI	
	Direct effect					
H1	EL → OJP	0.766	0.000	0.702	0.823	Supported
H2	OJP → WDB	-0.516	0.000	-0.712	-0.343	Supported
H3	EL → WDB	0.096	0.278	-0.061	0.294	Not Supported
	Indirect effect					
H4	EL → OJP → WDB	-0.570	0.013	-0.557	-0.244	Supported

Note: LLCI, lower-level confidence interval; ULCI, upper-level confidence interval.

## 4. Discussion and Implications

### 4.1. Discussion

In this study, we analyzed the linkage mechanism between ethical leadership and workplace deviance in a sample of Turkish public sector employees. Taking in to account that Turkey is a country with a high power distance and a collectivist culture, the variables covered in the research were investigated within the scope of social change theory in a non-Western country. In cultures with high power distances and collectivist cultures, the role of leaders is prominent in terms of organizational sustainability. Thus, our study offers some implications for the sustainability of organizations in developing countries such as Turkey.

Based on social exchange theory, it was concluded that EL has a positive and direct effect on the OJP. In addition, OJP has a negative impact on WDB. In situations in which OJP is shared, employees are less likely to engage in deviant behaviors. They develop a sense of trust that can reduce deviant behaviors toward their organizations. Similarly, the findings show that WDB significantly depends on employees' decisions about justice. That result is compatible with previous studies [32,37,43,47,48,57] and enhances social exchange theory that states that when employees do not perceive a sense of OJP, they are prone to engaging in deviant behavior toward both individuals and the organization. More importantly, the findings revealed that OJP has a full mediating effect between EL and WDB. EL does not have a direct effect on WDB, but it does have an indirect effect on WDB through OJP. This may have something to do with the effects of Turkish culture. According to the classification of national cultures [58], Turkey shows a collectivist cultural characteristic that values emotional and social commitment. This may have something to do with the effects of Turkish culture. Collective thinking, collective action and harmony are the concepts that are given importance in Turkish culture [59]. Therefore, it is strongly felt in Turkish culture to carry out works by procedures and fair and social contracts. Therefore, the awareness of justice in the employees' minds is also strong. As a matter of fact, in the research conducted by Omurgonulsen and Oktem [60] on the values of public employees in Turkey, it was concluded that the most important values embedded in the Turkish bureaucracy are "collectivism, harmony and solidarity" within "groups" or a "community". Organizational justice perception plays a significant role in the behavior of employees in the Turkish public sector toward establishing harmonious relations. Considering the background of Turkish culture, it shows that employees' sense of organizational value, organizational reputation, goals of success, sense of collective action in harmony with organizational ideals, organizational support, and perceptions of justice have a significant impact on the confirmation of this hypothesis. Another reason for not finding a direct effect of EL on WDB may be explained by the sample of the study that consists of a majority of males. This issue can be clarified if a sample of equal representation of women and men can be selected in future studies on this subject.

Riskey and Birnbaum [61], in a study of ethical behavior, concluded that human judgments are more strongly influenced by actions that may be morally bad and that, once established, cannot be easily overcome by good actions: good works have comparatively less impact. As seen in this example, the enormous power of OJP draws attention to influencing the impressions and reactions of employees regarding EL. Empirical studies show that employees in organizations with a positive OJ environment are less likely to maintain organizational deviant behaviors [47]. In other words, the unfair-behavior perceptions of employees lead to lower job performance, motivation, and job satisfaction, absenteeism, and higher employee turnover. On the other hand, OJ perceptions lead to higher satisfaction, productivity, a sense of commitment, and a decrease in deviant behavior tendencies and staff turnover rates [47]. Based on these findings, we concluded that the existence of OJP is necessary to reduce WDB in the conceptualization of the research. From this, it can be concluded that only when OJ is available can ethical leaders reduce WDB through their activities and styles.

The findings described above contribute to the literature in several ways. First, social exchange theory explains employee reciprocity as employees respond to their perceptions of justice within the organization by reducing their deviant behavior in the workplace. The first contribution is understanding the importance of social relations in reducing WDB. Secondly, it contributes to our knowledge of how the OJP of employees can be increased in reducing the effect of deviant behaviors, which means a significant loss of time and cost for organizations. This is of great importance in today's globalizing world because employees with a perception of organizational justice in the workplace are valuable corporate assets that can increase an organization's success and improve, develop, and maintain corporate sustainability [62]. Workplace deviance has generally been addressed by research on social psychological factors (i.e., justice and social exchange perceptions)

aimed at explaining why employees engage in such acts. Despite the recent proliferation of such research, we have yet to learn much about the process behind such behavior [63]. Therefore, the present study has expanded this literature by integrating such factors with contextual determinants to better understand why workplace deviance occurs. Thirdly, this study fills the gap in the literature as it is one of the rare studies conducted on customs personnel on deviant behavior at work, especially in Turkey. In organizational theory and behavior, EL, OJP, and WDB have been essential concepts and research topics. Deviant behaviors are more common in organizations operating in developing countries such as Turkey, which is located in the triangle of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East [64]. For this reason, our study contributes to the literature by revealing the interaction between OJPs of customs officers, EL, and WDB, which may have significant effects on the air transport, tourism sector, and therefore the country's economy to which they are assigned.

#### 4.2. Implications

The findings of this study demonstrate the value of strengthening OJP in practical applications. In this context, the customs officers of a country are the first persons who directly communicate with those who will travel abroad and who form an opinion about the country they are visiting. For this reason, the EL approach of superiors and the OJP of the employees will have an important place in the behavior of the customs officers in representing their country. Therefore, managers should take care in creating an organizational culture based on OJ, ensuring its continuity, exhibiting EL behavior, and being role models for employees [43].

It can be productive for organizations to select and train ethical leaders who can build employee trust and improve their justice perception toward the organization. To do this, organizations must strictly adhere to ethical rules and recruit leaders with a strong moral compass [44]. Such leaders should be fair in the personnel selection process and choose talented candidates who can be helpful to the organization. Because managers will know which jobs will be more suitable for which employees to achieve the best results for the organization, they must adopt a balanced attitude when deciding on the work and workloads of the employees. To increase the EL perception of employees, managers should be guided in their relations with employees by ethical values and standards. For these reasons, enterprises could consider forming ethics committees. To improve the EL understanding of managers, training on contemporary leadership in business can be given to managers. Employees' perceptions of their leaders as being ethical and fair and including them in the decision-making mechanisms leads them to more significant commitment to the organization. Therefore, leaders should involve their employees in the decision process and encourage them to contribute to the 'organization's goals [17]. As reflected in the results, the positive and robust relationship between EL and OJP supports this idea. In this sense, giving importance to employees' ideas, employing a participatory management approach and acting fairly will effectively prevent many undesirable behaviors within the organization.

The results of the present study show that OJP has a negative and significant effect on WDB. However, considering the findings of the study, it can be concluded that because of OJP, customs personnel is respected and valued, and they see themselves as valuable members of the organization.

Otherwise, when employees feel they are not treated fairly and respectfully and are not seen as valuable to the organization, their attitude will affect their colleagues, the institution they work for, and at least 60 various sectors, which make up approximately 13% of Turkey's \$754 billion economy. It will also likely create physical and psychological costs for the tourism sector [65]. In addition, because such negative behaviors may cause incoming visitors to have negative thoughts about the country in which the customs officers are working, such behaviors will likely adversely affect the country's tourism.

It should also be noted that as a result of employees' general OJP, they will react constructively or destructively to an unfair event they encounter. Conversely, in a

situation of injustice, people who perceive their organizations to be generally just will display constructive responses and avoid defensive responses [32]. Considering all this, customs managers must focus on creating an OJ environment in the workplace.

In the study, we found no significant direct effect of EL on WDB. This result may be due to the general perception of customs officers in Turkey that they are frequently employed on temporary assignments by their superiors, that they are exposed to a promotion system that is not based on merit, and that they are unfairly treated in relocation (appointment) procedures. It is known that their supervisors' provision of career opportunities and promotion opportunities plays a critical role in employees [66]. Therefore, customs managers must provide promotion opportunities to customs officers to motivate their high-performing employees and retain skilled and experienced human capital. This leads to the conclusion that their superiors should improve the working conditions and personal rights of customs employees in Turkey.

Another result of the study is that OJP has a full mediation effect between EL and WDB. This result emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the perception of justice between the employees and the institution they work for. Accordingly, OJP acts as an organizational intermediary mechanism for EL to prevent WDB. Furthermore, the results show that EL behavior significantly affects employees' OJP. This result was confirmed by Bedi et al. [39] and Xu et al. [17].

Organizations that focus on reducing the frequency of WDB should provide a working environment that supports the OJP through EL practice. In addition, the findings of this study show that the OJP will reduce the incidence of WDB, and this will increase managerial concerns in finding ways to improve the OJP. For instance, through a less formal relationship model, customs officers and managers can come together and negotiate their employees' current concerns and find ways to deal with them. Such informal meeting sessions will enhance customs officers' OJP. Regarding the frequency of WDB in developing and underdeveloped countries [67–69], we should provide public managers in such countries with a holistic program of education on the nature and significant negative impacts of WDB.

Researchers who want to study the subject can apply the current study's variables to different countries and sectors. In addition, researchers may conduct further studies that will test the relationships between different leadership styles, OJP, and WDB.

## 5. Conclusions

To conclude, ethical leadership reinforced by justice is needed to reduce deviant workplace behavior, which significantly threatens sustainability. Sustainability in organizations depends on not only doing the right things that should not be done but also avoiding and preventing the mistakes that generally occur as unethical behaviors. In this context, it is essential to prevent deviant behaviors that occur in organizations. In this study, a framework that is crucial for organizations' sustainability is drawn by drawing attention to the ethical leadership and perception of justice, which are effective in preventing and reducing deviant behaviors.

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### Appendix A. The Items of the Scales (Turkish & English)

<b>Etik liderlik /Ethical leadership</b>
Bu kurumda yöneticiler, iş görenlerin önerilerini dikkate alırlar/In this institution, managers listen to what employees have to.
Bu kurumda yöneticiler, etik standartları ihlal eden iş görenlere yaptırım uygularlar. In this institution, managers discipline employees who violate ethical standards
Bu kurumda yöneticiler, özel hayatını etik tarzda yürütürler/. In this institution, managers conduct his/her personal life in an ethical manner
Bu kurumda yöneticiler, çalışanların fikirleriyle yakından ilgilenir/In this institution, managers have the best interests of employees in mind.
Bu kurumda yöneticiler, adil ve dengeli kararlar verirler/In this institution, managers make fair and balanced decisions
Bu kurumda yöneticiler, güvenilir kişilerdir/In this institution, managers can be trusted
Bu kurumda yöneticiler, çalışanlarla iş etiği veya değerlerini tartışırlar/In this institution, managers discuss business ethics or values with employees
Bu kurumda yöneticiler, işlerin etik bakımdan doğru biçimde nasıl yapılacağına ilişkin örnekler ortaya koyarlar/In this institution, managers set an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics
Bu kurumda yöneticiler, başarıyı sadece sonuçlarla değil, aynı zamanda başarıya giden yolla da değerlendirirler/In this institution, managers define success not just by results but also the way that they are obtained.
Bu kurumda yöneticiler, karar verirken “yapılacak doğru şey nedir?” diye sorarlar/In this institution, managers when making decisions, ask “what is the right thing to do?”
<b>Örgütsel adalet/Organizational justice</b>
Bakış açınızı ve duygularınızı bu süreçler esnasında ifade edebiliyor musunuz?/Have you been able to express your views and feelings during those procedures?
Bu süreçler neticesinde elde edilen sonuçlar üzerinde etkiniz var mıdır?/Have you had influence over the (outcome) arrived at by those procedures?
Bu süreçler tutarlı bir şekilde uygulanıyor mu?/Have those procedures been applied consistently?
Bu süreçler önyargılardan uzak uygulanıyor mu?/Have those procedures been free of bias?
Bu süreçler doğru ve tutarlı bilgilere mi dayandırılmıştır?/Have those procedures been based on accurate information?
Süreçler neticesinde sonuçların düzeltilmesini talep edebilir misiniz?/Have you been able to appeal the (outcome) arrived at by those procedures?
Bu süreçler etik ve ahlaki standartlara uygun mudur? Have those procedures upheld ethical and moral standards?
İş yerinde elde ettiğiniz sonuçlar gösterdiğiniz çabayı yansıtır mı?/Does your (outcome) reflect the effort you have put into your work
Elde ettiğiniz sonuçlar ile tamamladığınız işler birbiriyle uyumlu mudur?/Is your (outcome) appropriate for the work you have completed?
Elde ettiğiniz sonuçlar işyerine yaptığınız katkılarla doğru orantılı mıdır?/Does your (outcome) reflect what you have contributed to the organization?
Performansınız göz önüne alındığında elde ettiğiniz sonuçlar makul müdür?/Is your (outcome) justified, given your performance?
Yöneticiniz size nazik davranır mı? /Has (he/she) treated you in a polite manner?
Yöneticiniz onurunuzu kırarak davranışlardan kaçınır mı?/Has (he/she) treated you with dignity?

Yöneticiniz size saygılı davranır mı?/Has (he/she) treated you with respect?
Yöneticiniz size karşı uygunsuz yorum ve eleştirilerden kaçınır mı?/Has (he/she) refrained from improper remarks or comments?
Yöneticiniz sizinle olan iletişimde samimi midir?/ Has (he/she) been candid in (his/her) communications with you?
Yöneticiniz süreçleri bütünüyle açıklar mı?/Has (he/she) explained the procedures thoroughly?
Yöneticiniz süreçlere yönelik açıklamaları mantıklı mıdır?/Were (his/her) explanations regarding the procedures reasonable?
Yöneticiniz süreçlere yönelik ayrıntıları zamanında aktarır mı?/Has (he/she) communicated details in a timely manner?
Yöneticiniz iletişim kurarken bireylerin ihtiyaçlarını dikkate alır mı?/Has (he/she) seemed to tailor (his/her) communications to individuals' specific needs
<b>Örgütsel Sapma /Workplace Deviance</b>
İş arkadaşlarım arkadaşlarını küçük düşürür/My colleagues played a mean prank on someone at work
İş arkadaşlarım arkadaşlarına küfür eder/My colleagues cursed at someone at work
İş arkadaşlarım arkadaşlarını utandırır/My colleagues publicly embarrassed someone at work
İş arkadaşlarım arkadaşlarına kaba davranır/My colleagues acted rudely toward someone at work
İş arkadaşlarım dini söylemlerde bulunur/My colleagues made an ethnic, religious, or racial remark or joke at work
İş arkadaşlarım arkadaşlarıyla kırıcı konuşur/My colleagues said something hurtful to someone at work
İş arkadaşlarım iş arkadaşlarıyla dalga geçer/My colleagues made fun of someone at work
İş arkadaşlarım işyeri kurallarına uymazlar/My colleagues neglected to follow your boss's instructions
İş arkadaşlarım görevi kaytarırlar/My colleagues spent too much time fantasizing or daydreaming instead of working
İş arkadaşlarım mola sürelerini uzun tutarlar/My colleagues taken an additional or a longer break than is acceptable at your workplace
İş arkadaşlarım kasıtlı olarak yavaş çalışır/My colleagues intentionally worked slower than you could have worked
İş arkadaşlarım dedikodu yapar/My colleagues repeated a rumor or gossip about your boss or coworkers
İş arkadaşlarım görev yerini erken terk eder/My colleagues left work early without permission
İş arkadaşlarım görev yerine geç gelir/My colleagues come in late to work without permission
İş arkadaşlarım çalışırken az çaba gösterir/My colleagues put little effort into your work

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